

Doctorate Research Scholars' Perceptions about Research Supervision and their Academic Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study was about the doctoral research scholars' perceptions about research supervision and their academic satisfaction. The main objectives were to examine the perceptions of research scholars about supervisory practices used by the research supervisors and their gender wise comparison of academic satisfaction. All the research scholars who enrolled at doctorate level were the participants of the study. Seven hundred research scholars were approached randomly for data collection. The self-developed questionnaire, Doctoral Students' Satisfaction and Research Skills Survey (DSSRSS) was used for data collection. The descriptive and inferential tests were applied. The result showed that research scholars were dissatisfied with the research supervision of their research supervisors. Gender wise comparison showed that female scholars were highly dissatisfied than male research scholars with respect to research supervision and research expertise of supervisors. The process of research supervision may be facilitated to get better results and higher academic satisfaction by the researchers.

Keywords: supervisory practice, expert facilitation, academic satisfaction

Introduction

The role of researchers is admitted worldwide. Due to growing fields of knowledge, innovation and technology, the tasks and responsibilities of teachers become more complex as they are performing various tasks (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Vloet & Van Swet, 2010). The supervisors' main mission is to deliver both emotional and technical support. The supervisory relationship revolves around emotional and technical expertise. Therefore, the supervisor needs sufficient technical and social skills to manage cognitive and emotional aspects of doctoral research (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2002). Practice in research is the part and parcel of the competence needed for teachers and supervisors (Korthagen, 2004; Tateo,

2012).

The teachers with innovative research practices are called reflective practitioners. The research skill is a lasting self-renewal of ability (Mitchell & Weber, 1999). It is a blend of deep investigation, sensible concerns and values of teaching practice with personal beliefs about academic learning and potential. The practice in research is helpful for researchers and teachers in detecting the strengths and weaknesses about research practices (Ahmed & Al-Khalili, 2013).

The role of doctorate level supervision is admitted worldwide amongst doctorate scholars (Fenge, 2012; Hopwood & Paulson, 2012). Supervisory practices are key indicators in empowerment, training, and facilitating of doctoral scholars for independent investigators (Fenge, 2012). Similar is the case of research attitude in researchers' professional development (Pring, 2003; Roulston, Legette, Deloacha, & Pitmana, 2005).

Innovative teaching experiences are the result of teachers' research practices (Russell, 1999). Diving deep into the research practice improves the sense of identity (Drew & Bingham, 2001; Farrell, 2007). The professional development of teachers need extensive research practices before and after the award of research degree (Vloet, 2009). According to Farrell (2008), the reflective practitioners are equipped with wholeheartedness, responsibility, and open-mindedness.

The supervisor is helpful for promoting research attitude and research skills among research scholars. The social aspect of the scholars should also be considered during the completion of research degree (Gillespie, 2007). The supervisors who showed the sympathy and interest towards their scholars may exert positive effect on research work (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). According to Tschannen-Moran (2009), research professionalism needs hard work, extreme commitment, and kind expectations to fulfil the needs of research scholars. There are different strategies a supervisor may use to keep up the morale of scholars. The arrangement of question answer sessions, showing attitude toward studies; making record of important actions; sharing of stories about scholars' learning; insights from colleagues and peers; and orientation about modern technology (Harrison, 2012). The study of Neville and Smith (1995) showed that practices of research need metacognitive skills that are helpful for teacher's thinking (Chen, 2013). Cunliffe (2004) showed that stimulating critical reflective practices are necessary for fruitful results of research. The researcher may involve in continuous growth process. With the help of different queries, one may reach the new realms of possibilities (Larivee, 2000).

Different collaborative practices are required for research skills to improve practice and knowledge (Simoncini, Lasen, & Rocco, 2014). It is needed to create stable correlation for professional aspirations and passion for research purpose. There is a dire need for professional targets to ensure research progress (Meijer, Korthagen, & Vasalos, 2009) with the collaboration of the academic institutions.

Attention towards research has increased in academic setting these days but the results of

recent research studies show weak research culture in institutions and supervisors hardly use the results of researches for the improvement and research attitude (Kress, 2011; Leeman & Wardekker, 2014). Many studies emphasized the importance of researchers' positive attitude toward research work (Dobber, et al., 2012; Hagevik, Aydeniz, & Rowell, 2012). Research enables the research scholars and supervisors to improve the attitude toward their research practices (Hall, 2009).

Students' Satisfaction in Higher Education

There are great concerns about the attrition, retention, and outcomes of research scholars are the prime measures of effectiveness and quality in higher educational institutions (Hatcher, et al., 1992). Different policies provide encouragement and incentives for higher educational institutions to trace out the effect of overall quality and effectiveness of such programs. To retain the academic satisfaction among higher degrees' students at university level is perhaps one of the most important reasons behind the quality indicators (Bailey, Bauman, & Lata, 1998; Love, 1993). The retention and recruitment of research scholars are the core responsibilities of higher educational institutions. Students' satisfaction is directly linked to scholars' retention and recruitment (Hatcher, et al., 1992; Love, 1993). The students' satisfaction with learning environment motivates the students to stay in the educational institutions and complete their research work. The institutional effectiveness is integrated with students' performance (Bailey, Bauman, & Lata, 1998).

Study Objectives

Research objectives are as under.

1. To observe the perceptions of research scholars about supervisory practices used by the research supervisors at university level.
2. To compare the gender wise academic satisfaction of PhD scholars.

Research Questions

Following questions were made for achieving the objectives of the study as:

What are the perceptions of doctoral students about supervisory practices used by the research supervisors at university level?

1. What is the gender wise comparison of academic satisfaction among doctoral research scholars?

Research Design

Survey method was used for the collection of perceptions of research supervisors by doctoral research scholars. The data were collected through self-developed questionnaire for doctoral research scholar and for the purpose of qualitative data.

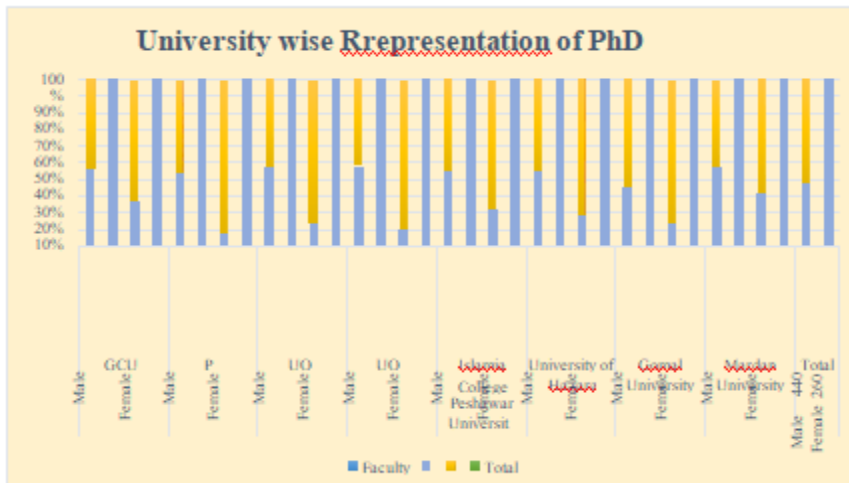
Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised of all the students who conducted/conducting their research work under the supervision of their supervisors from various programs of PhD in different public sector universities of Punjab and KPK. There were 24 general public sector

universities in Punjab & KPK. All students enrolled at PhD level with their relevant supervisors working in those universities were population of the study.

Sample of the Study

The sample comprised of 875 enrolled doctoral research scholars in eight public sector universities in Punjab and KPK. Out of 875, 700 doctorate scholars returned the filled questionnaire to researcher. So, the response rate was 80%. Multistage sampling technique was applied. The graphic representation of sample is as under.



Instrumentation

Tool of Research

To examine the impact of supervisors’ supervisory practices on scholars’ academic satisfaction, a self-developed questionnaire, Doctoral Students’ Satisfaction and Research Skills Survey (DSSRSS) (Javed, 2019). The items of the questionnaire were selected from different studies conducted on the same topic, e.g., “Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship Questionnaire” developed and validated by Saleem (2014).

Data Analysis

After that the data entry, analysis was made using SPSS (24). Inferential and Descriptive statistics were used to find the variation between variables.

Results of Descriptive Statistics

Table 1

Doctoral Students’ Perceptions about Supervisory Practices of Supervisors

S #	Statements	Mean	SD
1	Availability of research supervisor	3.07	2.07
2	Supervisor’s encouragement and support about research work	4.11	1.99
3	Expectations of supervisor about supervisee	3.63	2.16

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4	Familiarity of supervisor about process of thesis evaluation	3.96	2.31
5	Schedule of supervisor to progress of research work	3.24	2.15
6	Supervisor support about external research funding for supervisee	3.25	2.05
7	Supervisor's effort to check supervisee research work	3.01	1.93
8	Supervisor's poor supervisory practices	4.20	1.92
9	Responsibility of supervisor for poor performance of supervisee	4.23	2.22
10	Overburden to supervise by the supervisor	3.67	2.02
11	Receiving emotional support from supervisor	3.85	2.07
12	Lack of poor feedback from supervisor to supervisee	3.89	1.73
13	Supervisor's care for personal problems of supervisee	4.01	2.10

Table 1 revealed that about 60% of the doctoral scholars disagreed and strongly denied that their supervisor helps the scholar in research work. There are 36% research scholars disagreed and strongly disagreed that their supervisor encourages and supports researcher to publish his/her papers. Majority of the students about 42% denied and strongly disagreed that their supervisors consider their expectations regarding supervision. About 46% scholars disagreed and strongly disowned that their supervisors are familiar with thesis evaluation process. About 55% scholars disagreed and strongly disagreed that research supervisor has clear perceptions in enhancing the research work progress. About 51% scholars disowned and strongly disagreed that their research supervisors help them in receiving external funds for research work. About 53% scholars disagreed and strongly disagreed that their supervisors check and return research work promptly.

Approximately 33% research scholars confessed and strongly agreed about their research progress is disturbed by unskillful supervisors. About 42% research scholars clearly confessed that their research supervisors are responsible for low research skills. There are 42% scholars disagreed and strongly disagreed that sometimes they feel that their supervisors treat them as laborers to promote their research work. Thirty-nine percent scholars disagreed and strongly disowned in getting emotional encouragement and support from their supervisors. About 58% scholars disagreed and strongly disagreed that they experience poor feedback from supervisors in making progress of research work. There are 33% scholars disagreed and strongly disagreed that their supervisors accommodate their particular problems they faced during research work.

Table 2

Opinions of Doctoral Students about Research Expertise of Supervisors

	Supervisor's Research Expertise	Mean	SD
14	Warm recommendation of supervisors to juniors	3.15	2.07
15	Getting technical proficiency from supervisors	4.05	2.02

16	Spending time of supervisor with supervisee in research work	4.02	2.06
17	Supervisor's effort in promoting competence to supervisee	2.39	1.09
18	Supervisor's guidance about digital sites	4.17	1.84
19	Expertise of supervisor about research skills	3.19	2.17
20	Supervisor's clarity about research ideas	4.14	1.98
21	Multidimensional personality of research supervisor	4.50	1.17
22	Improvement of supervisor's research expertise	4.07	1.12
23	Supervisor's expertise in refining research topics	4.69	1.65
24	Friendly nature of supervisor	4.24	1.97

The table 2 demonstrates that majority of research scholars (52%) disagreed and strongly disagreed that they strongly recommend their supervisors to juniors. The research scholars had equal perceptions about getting technical expertise from their supervisor. About 31% scholars disagreed and strongly disagreed that their supervisors spend ample time to guide research scholars. Most of research scholars (61%) disagreed and strongly disagreed that their research work competence is credited to supervisors' efforts. About 29% scholars confessed that their supervisors guide about internet sites and resources. Majority of research scholars (54%) disagreed and strongly disagreed that their supervisors have full competence on their research abilities. The research scholars are unable to show clearly that their supervisor guides about the clarity of research concepts. About 30% scholars agreed and strongly agreed that supervisor helps them in understanding different scopes of research. Majority of scholars (36%) disagreed and strongly disagreed that supervisor's research proficiency always develops research work. About 31% scholars confessed that their supervisors help them to select and refine research topics. Majority of students agreed and strongly agreed that their supervisors behave with them in friendly manner.

Table 3

Perceptions of Research scholars about Academic Satisfaction

	Academic Satisfaction	Mean	SD
34	I am confident that I will complete my research work in time.	3.22	1.74
35	I satisfied that I have learnt during my PhD studies.	4.65	1.77
36	I feel a sense of ownership of my research work.	4.73	1.72
37	I am passionate about doing research.	4.54	1.83
38	It is impossible for me to get research competence without hard work.	3.89	2.31
39	I become tense to perceive that my thesis will submit with a longer delay.	4.41	1.86
40	The feeling of stress is quite productive state of mind for my research studies.	4.10	1.93
41	I work little and hope for greater competence.	4.40	1.92

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42	There are up to date books are available in my departmental library.	2.58	1.76
43	My department has an open discussion forum for research scholars.	2.82	1.78

Majority of research scholars disagreed that they are confident that they will complete their research work in time. Most of scholars told that they are satisfied about learning during PhD studies. They have sense of ownership of their research work and passionate about doing research. They agreed that they cannot get research competence without hard work. Majority of research scholars agreed that their thesis will submit with a longer delay they agreed that feeling of stress is quite productive state of mind for research studies. They agreed that they work little and hope for greater competence. They disagreed that up to date books are available in departmental library and department has an open discussion forum for research scholars.

Table 4
Gender wise Comparison of Research Scholars' Perceptions

Indicators	Mean	Mean	MD	t	Sig
	Male	Female			
Supervisor-supervisory Practices	3.6863	3.8557	-.16934	-3.862	.000**
Academic Satisfaction	4.3405	4.1847	.15580	3.340	.001**

Table 4 demonstrates t-test results to compare the insights of males and females research scholars on various indicators. The value of $t=-3.862$ is significant as $p<0.01$. It explains that there are significant differences in the opinions of males and females research scholars regarding supervisors' supervisee practices. Mean difference $-.169$ reflect that female research scholars ($M= 3.8557$) have positive perceptions about supervisors' supervisory practices than their male research fellows ($M= 3.6863$).

The value of $t= 3.340$ is significant at 0.01. There are significant differences in the perceptions of male and female research scholars regarding academic satisfaction. Mean difference $.15580$ reveals that male research scholars ($M= 4.3405$) are comparatively highly satisfied with the academic satisfaction than their female fellows ($M= 4.1847$).

Results and Discussions

The doctoral scholars disagreed and strongly denied about supervisors' availability in helping, encouraging and supporting them to publish their research work and unable to considers their expectations regarding supervision. They also denied that their supervisor is aware for thesis evaluation process and they have clear roadmap in enhancing their research

work. The research supervisor did not help them to get external funds for research work and they check and return scholars' work with punctuality.

The research scholars agreed and strongly agreed that their research work and skills destroyed due to unskilled supervisors. They also claimed that research supervisors are blamed for poor performance in doctoral degrees. Sometimes they perceive that their supervisors treat them as laborers in enhancing their own research work and they unable to get emotional encouragement and support by supervisors. They often experience lack of feedback from supervisors in making progress in research and did not accommodate their personal problems they were facing during research work.

They also claimed not to indorse their research supervisors to their junior researchers. They denied that their supervisors spend much of time to discuss them about research work. Majority of research scholars did not accept that their research competence is credited their supervisors' efforts. Their supervisors did not have full command on research skills. The research scholars are unable to show clearly that their supervisors guide about research ideas. Most scholars agreed and strongly agreed that their supervisor is friendly and accommodating. Majority of research scholars disagreed that they are confident that they will complete their research work in time.

Prior studies also have same results like (Simoncini, Lasen, & Rocco, 2014; Meijer, Korthagen, & Vasalos, 2009; Kress, 2011; Leeman & Wardekker, 2014; Dobber, et al., 2012; Hagevik, Aydeniz, & Rowell, 2012; Hall, 2009; Gore & Gitlin, 2004).

About half of the scholars told that their research supervisor helps them in getting external funding for research work, checks and returns their work promptly. The doctoral scholars feel that their supervisor treats them as a laborer to enhance his own research work. They get emotional support and encouragement from their supervisor. On the other hand, most scholars told they often experience lack of feedback from their supervisor to make progress in their research work. About one third scholars disagreed that their supervisor accommodates their personal problems they face during research. The current study supported the findings of many studies conducted previously as (Abdelhafez, 2007; Jiranek, 2010; McGrail, et al., 2006; Fraser & Matthews, 1999; Bair & Haworth, 1999; Sinclair, 2004; Wao, 2011; Lamm, 2004; Deuchar, 2008; Engebretson, et al., 2008).

The gender wise comparison showed that female research scholars have positive perceptions about supervisors' supervisory practices than their male research fellows. On the other hand, male research scholars were comparatively highly satisfied with the academic satisfaction than their female colleagues. Female doctoral scholars claimed that supervisors were high competent and positive attitude about research than males. The reason is that females are more enthusiastic towards their degree completion. The study confirms the previous studies of (Gillespie, 2007). One the other hand, male research scholars had positive satisfaction with the academics and competence in skills about research. The social sciences' scholars were satisfied with supervision practices and research insolence than basic sciences' scholars. The previous studies were also seen to be aligned with the current studies (Chen, 2013; Cunliffe, 2004; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005; Larivee, 2000; Neville & Smith, 1995; Simoncini, Lasen,

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