

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Post-graduate diploma students' evaluation of the academic supervision practices at the post-graduate diploma level

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ABSTRACT

Supervisors' engagement in the teaching and learning process is crucial in assisting the organisation's objectives to be successfully achieved. This study evaluated post-graduate diploma students' perceptions of academic supervision practices. The study was conducted using a quantitative design. Data were collected through an online questionnaire to explore the students' views towards the supervision practices conducted at the higher institute. The target group was all post-graduate diploma students enrolled at the institute in the current academic year. The SPSS statistics package program was used to analyse the data. The findings indicated positive results that reflect the effectiveness of the efforts made in the supervision practices at the higher institute. The results also obtained more understanding and further insights into the key factors affecting supervision practices, which helped to draw recommendations on enhancing the efficiency of the supervisor's interactions in the supervision process and increasing student supervision competence.

Key Words: Academic supervision practices, Supervision, Supervisor effectiveness, Challenges, Supervisor-supervisee, Teacher, Student, Teacher-student, Student support, Post-graduate diploma

1. INTRODUCTION

Student supervision is considered an essential part of the teaching mission in higher education. This involves knowledge of subject-specific quality requirements and precise approaches to support students' study requirements efficiently. It plays a vital role in enhancing students' and teachers' skills and confidence, thus forming a more successful educational setting. This process is key to generating high-quality graduates and supporting the growth of human resources.^[1] Ismail et al.^[2] defined supervision as a formal approach built on the relationship between supervisor and supervisee, where the supervisor's responsibility is to assist the supervisee in obtaining proper professional behaviour and competence in

professional activities. They emphasised that supervision is a two-way interactional process that necessitates the student and the supervisor to unite purposely with each other and within the essence of professionalism, collegiality, and respect.

The supervisor's role is to facilitate students' learning by stimulating student interest by asking questions and helping students identify their learning needs and become active participants in their educational voyage.^[3] The student and the supervisory relationship are intricately linked. Teaching and learning in higher education institutions is a communal process, with shared responsibilities and accountabilities on

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both the supervisor and student, impacting their success and enabling the academic journey. The roles and functions of supervision are multiple; for students, the ideal supervision helps them achieve a scientific result or a personal goal.^[4] Saleem and Mehmood^[5] expressed successful supervisory relationships may include professionalism, agreed standards, good communication, and consideration of the needs of the other individual as well as ethical behaviour. Concerns facing the supervisory voyage are managing the overall process and levels of expectations.

The quality of supervisory practice has a noticeable effect on post-graduate outcomes. Delany^[6] emphasised that the institutions of higher studies (HIS) should continuously work to improve the effectiveness of post-graduate supervision to help the students achieve their potential, which, in turn, boosts the institution's reputation. Okeke-Uzodike^[7] emphasised that post-graduate supervision can be an individual discovery trip. It is a relational and empowering process because the supervisor is considered the closest person who can offer the required support and guidance to the student in need. This can lead to the improvement of the supervisor's knowledge capacity and also leads to alteration and the formation of a solid personal identity for the supervisee as a professional.^[8]

Several supervision approaches exist, and researchers have articulated a range of empirically driven frameworks delineating and evaluating the diverse features of supervisory practices. Gatfield^[9] presented a model using four main supervisory styles. The four elements proposed by Gatfield are Pastoral Care (low structure and high support), Contractual Style (high structure and high support), laissez-faire (low structure, low support), and Directorial Style (high structure and low support). Lee^[10] also proposes four models of supervision: Functional, Critical Thinking, Enculturation, & Mentoring. Sidhu et al.^[11] explained that the development of academic supervisors and supervisory models had been inhibited by a lack of a conceptual understanding of what supervision involves. They also highlighted that effective post-graduate supervision involves many aspects from different levels, for example, from the individual students and supervisors, availability of infrastructural support, institutional guidelines, and governmental policies and procedures.

Supervising post-graduate students can be a demanding aspect of teaching, and specific contextual or institutional factors can intensify these challenges.^[4] Several studies explored the post-graduate supervision challenges. Ismail et al.^[2] found the tensions between the students and their supervisors when faced with troublesome knowledge at different stages of their journey, lack of positive communication, and

lack of necessary expertise to give support and power. Al-Sakraan^[12] found that some supervisors were weak in the academic and administrative aspects and moderate in the human element. Gratrix and Barrett^[13] highlighted factors such as interpersonal differences, supervisors who appeared demotivated, or organisational factors such as time availability can cause irritability in the relationship between the students and their supervisors. Tlali et al.^[14] explained that challenges can arise from insufficient training and unclear supervisory procedures, as well as from low academic literacy and a lack of commitment among some students.

The post-graduate studies at the diploma level require the students to acquire knowledge through different learning skills and activities, including writing a research proposal, literature review assignment, writing health educational plans, reflection assignments and change management projects. In every assignment, the students expect certain types of support and encouragement from supervisors, such as enthusiasm to begin the study, critical feedback, and an explanation of how to understand the criteria of each task. The complexity of tasks and requirements for students increases in post-graduate studies; therefore, supervisors' evaluation of students' capacities, including a range of motivational, cognitive, behavioural, and self-organisational characteristics, becomes very important.^[15]

Supporting students throughout their assignment writing process, particularly in health professional education, is vital in academic supervision. It raises academic achievement and contributes to student retention. Despite its prominence, there is a lack of research specifically addressing academic supervision for post-graduate diplomas within the health literature. Most existing studies focus on research thesis supervision at the doctoral or master's levels, leaving a gap in understanding how to effectively support students pursuing post-graduate diplomas.

This study addresses this oversight by examining supervision practices tailored to post-graduate diploma students in health specialities. By exploring this area, we aim to identify strategies to enhance student learning and the overall educational experience. Our findings could pave the way for improved supervision practices, ultimately enriching the post-graduate education landscape in health fields. Further investigations from this perspective are essential to better support these students and ensure their success.

Supervision is an essential factor in the success of post-graduate students. Student evaluation indicated that post-graduate supervision encounters challenges with negative consequences on student attainment. Therefore, it was imperative to evaluate this matter in depth to obtain a comprehen-

sive picture of the challenges in post-graduate diploma-level supervision practices. In addition, to discover the knowledge, skills, and competencies that might be required for the academic staff to be more effective in their supervisory role. A broader understanding of these factors will allow better practices in the future if needed.

1.1 Research questions

- 1) What are the student's views on the supervisor's cognitive skills?
- 2) What are the student's views on the supervisor's leadership skills?
- 3) What are the student's views on the supervisor's support?

The study also intended to examine the relationship between the supervisor's cognitive skills, leadership skills, and support and selected demographic variables, such as gender, age, and last certificate.

Secondary research questions

- 1) Is there a relationship between the supervisor's cognitive skills and selected demographic variables (gender, age and last certificate)?
- 2) Is there a relationship between the supervisor's leadership skills and selected demographic variables (gender, age and last certificate)?
- 3) Is there a relationship between the supervisor's support and selected demographic variables (gender, age and last certificate)?

1.2 The context of the study

This study focuses on students' perceptions of academic supervision practices of students from the post-graduate Diploma related to health specialities at the Higher Institute of Health Specialities. Describing the Higher Institute of Health Specialities context is important to help the reader understand the study setting. The post-graduate Diploma lasts one year, distributed over three semesters. The programs include core courses and specialised courses, and all students must complete and succeed in studying these courses as part of the approved study plan. Academic supervisors at the higher institute are expected to assist in guiding students through the process of completing written assignments by offering guidance, feedback, and support. They elucidate task expectations, help to choose an area of focus and recommend proper direction to finalise the task to enhance writing style, reasoning, and substance.

2. METHOD

The study was conducted using a quantitative design.

2.1 Ethical considerations

The study was submitted for ethical approval through the Research & Ethical Review & Approval Committee (RERAC). Participants were required to complete an online questionnaire, so completing the survey was deemed consent to participate in the study. However, the participants were provided with an information sheet with all the necessary information (voluntary nature of the study, risks, benefits, procedures to maintain confidentiality, etc.) for more clarity.

2.2 Participants and setting

All post-graduate students enrolled in any program at the Higher Institute of Health specialities for the academic year 2022-2023 were invited to participate in the current study. The speciality programs involved include the Nephrology Nursing Program, Critical Care Nursing in Pediatrics and Neonatology Program, Midwifery Program, Health Services Management Program, Adult Critical Care Nursing Program, Mental Health Nursing Program, Infection Prevention and Control Program, and Emergency Nursing Program. Community Health Nursing Practice.

2.3 The inclusion criteria

Post-graduate students enrolled at the institute for the academic year 2022-2023 (male and female).

2.4 Exclusion criteria

Diploma students.

2.5 Data collection

The sample size was estimated using Altman's nomogram with a power of 80%, a significance level of 0.05, and a medium effect size of 0.5. This determined a minimum sample size of 123. However, total population sampling was used. It is most practical when the total population is manageable. This study chose the entire population as the population is well-defined (complete sampling frame) and small. This can eliminate any potential bias occurring through the sampling technique. A structured questionnaire instrument was adopted and modified based on previous literature, the researcher's personal experiences and the study focus. It consists of two parts. The first part reflects the demographic characteristics of the participants (gender, age, and last certificate), and the second part is related to students' perceptions of their supervisors on supervising practices. This part comprised three domains: Cognitive (knowledge), leadership, and support; each domain consists of a number of items regarding supervision.

2.6 Reliability and validity

For content validity, five supervisors with at least five years of experience confirmed the face validity of the instrument.

The questionnaire was piloted with five (5) post-graduate diploma students. The researchers asked the participants to provide written comments directly on the questionnaire for any poorly worded questions, responses that did not make sense, or if it took excessive time to complete the instrument. Based on the participant’s feedback, the researchers modified the questionnaire, and the piloted participants were excluded from the final study. For the internal reliability Cronbach’s alpha was used.

2.7 Data collection

One hundred Sixty-six (166) questionnaire was distributed to all eligible students at the Higher Institute of Health Specialties in the summer session of the academic year 2022-2023, and 89 students responded to the questionnaire (response rate 53.61%).

2.8 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics measures, including central tendency and variability measures (frequency, percentage distribution, mean, and standard deviation), were used at the baseline phase to describe the characteristics of demographic data for the participants. The Cronbach’s Alpha is used to describe the level of agreement among the statements asked. Secondly, Pearson χ^2 test procedures (chi-square test) was applied to

the data set to test whether the students’ opinions on their supervisors differed by programme, gender and qualification level.

3. FINDINGS

Table 1 is Cronbach’s Alpha; Tables 2 to 4 describe the participants’ demographic characteristics.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
0.989	31

Cronbach’s alpha of 0.989 indicates that the questionnaire instrument is highly reliable, suggesting strong agreement between responses to the questionnaire items. Each student’s response is consistent across the 31 questionnaire items.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents’ gender by age

Age	Gender		Total N (%)
	Male	Female	
25 or less	0 (0.0)	1 (100)	1 (100)
26-35	18 (30.5)	41 (69.5)	59 (100)
36-45	3 (10.3)	26 (89.7)	29 (100)
Total	21 (23.6)	68 (76.4)	89 (100)

Table 3. Distribution of respondents’ Age (in years) by the last certificate

Last Certificate	Age			Total N (%)
	25 or less	26-35	36-45	
General Nursing Diploma	0 (0.0)	17 (68.0)	8 (32.0)	25 (100)
BSc	0 (0.0)	22 (71.0)	9 (29.0)	31 (100)
Post-graduate Diploma	1 (3.0)	20 (60.6)	12 (36.4)	33 (100)
Total	1 (1.1)	59 (66.3)	29 (32.6)	89 (100)

Table 4. Distribution of respondents’ gender by the last certificate

Last Certificate	Gender		Total N (%)
	Male	Female	
General Nursing Diploma	8 (32.0)	17 (68.0)	25 (100)
BSc	6 (19.4)	25 (80.6)	31 (100)
Post-graduate Diploma	7 (21.3)	26 (78.8)	33 (100)
Total	21 (23.6)	68 (76.4)	89 (100)

The following findings are presented based on the research questions. The research questions focus on three areas in this study to investigate post-graduate diploma students’ view of their supervisor’s (cognitive) knowledge, leadership skills, and support. Tables 5-7 show the percentage distribution of the participants’ responses to each questionnaire item.

3.1 What are the students’ views on the supervisor’s cognitive skills?

Between 59% and 72% of the students who responded to items on their view on the supervisor’s cognitive skills agreed that their supervisor portrayed the eleven knowledge domain items. The majority (70.8%) of the students agreed that their supervisors shared their knowledge with students and/or answered carefully and precisely questions raised by the students. This was followed closely by 68.5% who believed that their supervisor showed confidence in their ability as supervisors and/or helped in choosing topics related to the assignments. The supervisors did not seem to have done enough to stimulate the student’s interest in the topics, with only 59% of the students agreeing that they had. It is worthy of note that between 28% and 41% of the students either

disagreed or were neutral on some of the eleven knowledge domain items. Although the proportion of students who disagreed was small (ranging from 4.5% to 16%), those who opted to stay neutral were not negligible, making up about a quarter of all student respondents, on average (range 18.2% – 27.6%).

Table 5. Frequency table knowledge cognitive domain

Item	Disagree N (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree N (%)	Total N (%)
Supervisors demonstrated a good depth of knowledge in the area of students’ assignments	8 (9.0)	22 (24.7)	59 (66.3)	89 (100)
Supervisors shared their knowledge with students.	7 (8.0)	18 (20.5)	63 (71.6)	88 (100)
Supervisors showed confidence in their ability as supervisors.	7 (7.9)	21 (23.6)	61 (68.5)	89 (100)
Supervisors explained the concepts related to the assignments in an easy manner.	11 (12.4)	25 (28.1)	53 (59.6)	89 (100)
Supervisors helped in choosing topics related to the assignments.	10 (11.2)	18 (20.2)	61 (68.5)	89 (100)
Supervisors answered carefully and precisely questions raised by students.	4 (4.5)	21 (23.6)	63 (70.8)	89 (100)
Supervisors emphasised what was important and related to the assignments.	12 (13.5)	18 (20.2)	59 (66.3)	89 (100)
Supervisors were always curious to understand students’ knowledge and perspectives.	9 (10.3)	24 (27.6)	54 (62.1)	87 (100)
Supervisors stimulated students' interest in the topics related to the assignments.	14 (15.9)	22 (25.0)	52 (59.1)	88 (100)
Supervisors helped students to organise their thoughts about the assignments.	14 (15.9)	16 (18.2)	58 (65.9)	88 (100)
Supervisors were familiar with the evaluation process of the assignments.	14 (15.7)	20 (22.5)	55 (61.8)	89 (100)

Table 6. Frequency table leadership domain

Item	Disagree N (%)	Neutral N (%)	Agree N (%)	Total N (%)
Supervisors assisted in orientating the students towards guidelines and marking rubrics related to the assignments.	10 (11.2)	22 (24.7)	57 (64.0)	89 (100)
Supervisors always remind the students to meet deadlines for the draft and final assignment submission.	8 (9.0)	18 (20.2)	63 (70.8)	89 (100)
Supervisors exhibited a commitment to the students.	11 (10.3)	21 (24.1)	57 (65.5)	87 (100)
Supervisors helped the students to identify their own learning needs.	17 (19.3)	18 (20.5)	53 (60.2)	88 (100)
Supervisors provided constructive advice on how to improve in the areas of weakness and reinforce strengths.	17 (19.1)	20 (22.5)	52 (58.4)	89 (100)
Supervisors ensured that students had the necessary skills, such as library searching and networking opportunities.	17 (19.4)	19 (21.6)	52 (59.0)	88 (100)
Supervisors gave students positive reinforcement for exemplary contributions to assignments.	14 (15.7)	18 (20.2)	57 (64.0)	89 (100)
Supervisors provided frequent constructive feedback on assignments according to the institute guidelines feedback mechanism.	15 (16.8)	20 (22.5)	54 (60.7)	89 (100)
Supervisors gave timely feedback to make progress in the assignments.	17 (19.3)	17 (19.3)	54 (61.3)	88 (100)
Supervisors gave enough freedom to discuss their feedback and agree on what students should change.	16 (18.2)	19 (21.6)	53 (60.2)	88 (100)
Supervisors have collaboration skills.	13 (14.6)	16 (18.0)	60 (67.4)	89 (100)
Supervisors are transparent and inspiring.	14 (16.1)	18 (20.7)	55 (63.2)	87 (100)

Table 7. Frequency table support domain

Item	Disagree N (%)	Neutral N (%)	Agree N (%)	Total N (%)
Supervisors demonstrated effective interpersonal relationships, such as building trust	13 (14.6)	20 (22.5)	56 (63.0)	89 (100)
Supervisors demonstrated effective interpersonal relationships, such as emotional intelligence	16 (18.2)	19 (21.6)	63 (60.2)	88 (100)
Supervisors always displayed good communication skills.	9 (10.1)	22 (24.7)	58 (65.2)	89 (100)
supervisors gave emotional support to the students and encouraged them to finalise their assignment	17 (19.1)	18 (20.2)	54 (60.7)	89 (100)
Supervisors encouraged the students to work independently.	9 (10.1)	20 (22.5)	60 (67.4)	89 (100)
Supervisors always motivate students to produce quality work on the assignments.	16 (18.0)	17 (19.1)	56 (63.0)	89 (100)
Supervisors adhered to the appointments set to meet and interview students.	12 (13.5)	18 (20.2)	59 (66.3)	89 (100)
Supervisors were accessible outside appointment times when the students needed help.	12 (13.5)	19 (21.3)	58 (65.2)	89 (100)

Table 8. The *p*-value results for the first secondary question

Item (supervisor's knowledge domain)	Gender <i>p</i> -Value	Age (26-45) <i>p</i> -Value	Last certificate <i>p</i> -Value
Knowledge depth	.717	.742	.318
Shared knowledge	.794	.878	.971
Showed confidence	.666	.436	.569
Explained concept	.186	.690	.443
Helped choose topics	.346	.646	.663
Answered carefully and precisely	.838	.271	.752
Emphasise what is important.	.999	.999	.734
Curious to understand	.505	.314	.245
Stimulated students' interest	.952	.567	.441
Help students organise	.655	.619	.742
Familiar with evaluation	.971	.364	.362

Table 9. The *p*-value results for the second secondary question

Item (Supervisor's leadership skills domain)	Gender <i>p</i> -Value	Age (26-45) <i>p</i> -Value	Last certificate <i>p</i> -Value
Assisted in orientating students	.718	.617	.657
Remind students of the deadline	.697	.551	.538
Exhibited commitment	.612	.742	.609
Helped students identify	.153	.675	.714
Provide constructive advice	.814	.690	.382
Ensure that students have skills	.150	.058	.114
Gave students positive reinforcement	.285	.865	.374
Frequent constructive feedback	.231	.355	.240
Gave timely feedback	.030	.308	.905
Gave enough feedback	.225	.707	.087
Have collaborative skills	.249	.285	.335
Transparent and inspiring	.268	.268	.264

Table 10. The *p*-value results for the third secondary question

Item (Support skills domain.)	Gender <i>p</i> -Value	Age (26-45) <i>p</i> -Value	Last certificate <i>p</i> -Value
Effective interpersonal relationship	.354	.916	.121
Emotional intelligence	.170	.970	.207
Display good communication	.766	.921	.317
Gave Emotional support	.437	.288	.314
Encourage students to work independently	.539	.486	.194
Motivate production of quality work	.651	.884	.031
Adhere to appointments	.740	.869	.428
Accessible outside appointment	.355	.355	.279

3.2 What are the students' views on the supervisor's leadership skills?

The assessment of the supervisor's leadership skills by the students is moderately high as between 58.4% and 70.8%

agree with some of the ten items listed under the leadership domain of the supervisor. Supervisors scored highest for always reminding the students to meet the deadlines for submission; this is the opinion of the majority (70.8%) of

the respondents. Also, more than two-thirds of the students agreed that the supervisors exhibited a commitment to the students (65.5%) and/or gave students positive reinforcement for good contributions to assignments (64%). Less than 60% of the students agreed that supervisors provided constructive advice on how to improve in the areas of weakness and reinforce strengths (58.4%) or ensured that students had the necessary skills, such as library searching and networking opportunities (59%). However, the proportion of students who disagreed with some of the items under this domain should receive some attention. They seem not to think that their supervisors possessed some of the leadership attributes described in the domain. Also, the proportion of students disagreeing under this domain is higher when compared with that in the knowledge or support domain.

3.3 What are the students' views on the supervisor's support?

At least two-thirds (greater than or equal to 63%) of the students agreed with five out of the eight supervisors' support domain items. About 67% agreed that supervisors encouraged the students to work independently. This is followed by 66.3% who agreed that supervisors adhered to the appointments set to meet and interview students, and 65% was of the opinion that supervisors always displayed good communication skills. Two-thirds (63%) of the students agreed that the supervisor either demonstrated effective interpersonal relationships, such as building trust or motivated students to produce quality work on the assignments or both.

3.4 The findings of secondary research questions

3.4.1 Is there a relationship between the supervisor's knowledge and selected demographic variables (gender, age and last certificate)?

The response pattern between the male and female students to each item of the supervisor's knowledge domain is similar. Although slight differences are observed in the proportion of students within each response category, these differences are not statistically significant (p -values $> .05$) across all eleven knowledge domain items. Also, age does not considerably affect students' responses to their supervisors' knowledge domain. The distribution of their responses within each response category is similar among the age groups. Hence, age's effect on the student's response to the supervisors' knowledge domain is not statistically significant (p -value $> .05$) across all the domain items. The student's response to their perception of their supervisors' knowledge domain does not depend on their highest level of education. The distribution of their responses is similar among their education level categories and across all the eleven domain items (p -values $> .05$).

3.4.2 Is there a relationship between the supervisor's leadership skills and selected demographic variables (gender, age and last certificate)?

The pattern of the distribution of responses of male and female students on the leadership skills of their supervisors is similar across eleven out of the twelve leadership domain items as indicated by the chi-square test p -values, which are greater than 5%. However, the males and females significantly (p -value = .030) differ in the distribution of their opinions regarding whether their supervisors gave them timely feedback. The responses of the students on the leadership skills of their supervisors are fairly the same, irrespective of their age category. The differences in the observed differences between proportions within the response category are not statistically significant (p -values $> .05$) across the domain items. The difference between the age groups in their response on whether their supervisors ensure that students have the necessary skills is borderline significant (p -value = .058). The responses of the students about the leadership skills of their supervisors are not significantly influenced by their level of education (p -value $> .05$). There are marginal differences in their responses as to whether their supervisors gave enough feedback (p -value = .087).

3.4.3 Is there a relationship between the supervisor's support and selected demographic variables (gender, age and last certificate)?

There are no statistically significant differences between the responses of male and female students on the support skills of their supervisors (p -value $> .05$). Age has no effect on the student responses across all the support domain items (p -value $> .05$). That is responses are similar irrespective of the age of the student. There are no statistically significant differences between the distribution of responses on the students' opinion about their supervisors' support skills by the level of education of the students on seven out of the eight support domain items (p -value $> .05$). However, there is a statistically significant difference (p -value = .031) between the students' responses in the different education categories to whether their supervisors motivate them to produce quality work.

4. DISCUSSION

The present study explored post-graduate diploma students' views about academic supervision practices in three domains: supervisor's cognitive skills, leadership skills, and support skills. This study indicated that the majority of the students have positive perceptions of the supervisors in the above-stated domains in areas such as addressing the students' inquiries with precision and compassion, assisting in selecting assignment topics and demonstrating confidence in their ca-

capacity as supervisors. The findings of the current study seem to be congruent with the study of Azure (2016),^[16] which revealed that the students indicated that their supervisors were resourceful and knowledgeable; and encouraged students to work and plan independently.

Regarding leadership abilities, supervisors made sure students had the skills they needed, like how to search the library and network, adhere to the deadlines for submissions, show dedication to the students' work, provide positive reinforcement for exemplary contributions to assignments, and offer constructive criticism on areas of weakness. Supervisors consistently demonstrated effective communication skills when it came to support. The findings of this study are in contrast to Lubis et al.'s,^[17] which showed that the students experienced a lack of ability in communicating with their supervisors. They explained interpersonal communication is needed to establish familiarity or establish a good relationship with the supervisor, one of which is in consultation with the supervisor. Davis^[18] pointed out in his study that students attached great importance to interpersonal affiliation or feeling supported by their supervisors.

In this study, the supervisors displayed successful interpersonal skills, such as encouraging students to produce high-quality work or establishing trust. Similarly, Bayona-Oré^[19] indicated that the supervisor must have personal qualities that enable them to support the supervisee emotionally. He added that although supervisors have knowledge and skills, their personal aspects are essential because supervision relies heavily on communication and human interaction rules. Relationships in supervision are complex and multidimensional, so supervisors must be careful to keep their students motivated, as a student can feel motivated if the supervisor shows enthusiasm.

The study also identified the relationship between the above domains and demographic variables based on gender, age and last certificate. When considering these factors, the findings showed no significant difference in students' opinions regarding their supervisor's knowledge domain. Also, there is no significant difference in students' opinions regarding their supervisor's support skills when considering gender and age. However, there is a statistically significant difference (p -value = .031) between the students' responses in the different education categories to whether their supervisors motivate them to produce quality work. Yuniar^[20] found a positive correlation between students' academic backgrounds and learning motivation. Li et al.^[21] found that students who come from strong educational backgrounds have a higher level of motivation than students from less advanced educational backgrounds.

The differences may be due to differences in the nature of supervisors and their motivational styles and expectations. For example, students with a bachelor's degree background may receive more specialised and personalised supervision, contributing to their greater motivation than students with a higher diploma or vice versa. The supervisor's expectations may also play an important role in these differences. If the supervisor's expectations are clear and equal to the student's abilities, they may motivate the student to achieve excellent results. However, if expectations are unrealistic or too high, ignoring the student's educational background and experiences may make the student feel frustrated and not motivated.

4.1 Strengths and limitations

Since the results were generally positive, this enhances the strength of the research and shows that the supervisory process is well appreciated by most students, which reflects the effectiveness of the supervisory system at the institute. Using statistical methods such as frequency distribution or means and standard deviation allowed a deeper understanding of the prevailing trends among students. The small sample size in this research could limit the opportunity to generalise the findings. Future research should consider a more significant sample.

4.2 Implications for future research and clinical practice

The study reached some practical results and made some recommendations based on them. The results indicate that the institution and supervisors should adopt more detailed strategies to motivate students according to their educational categories. Providing training for supervisors on effective motivation techniques can also enhance the quality of work that students produce. It is necessary to ensure that motivation techniques are appropriate to the needs of students with different educational backgrounds. The study also points to possibilities for future research, as the results showed that a small percentage of students did not agree with the prevailing opinion, while others chose to remain neutral. These opinions should not be ignored, as they provide insights and perspectives that may be crucial to understanding the full picture. Conducting further studies or in-depth interviews is an important step to better understand supervision practices and gain deeper insight into the topic, as some issues may not have been addressed in the current research. Among these issues, the influence of cultural, social, and environmental factors on gender differences in students' perceptions of supervisor skills could be studied. The findings also suggest that a more extensive investigation must continue exploring the influence of educational backgrounds on academic

motivation; understanding the factors influencing students' motivation will contribute to improving the quality of education.

The difference in responses between age groups regarding whether supervisors ensured that students had the necessary skills was borderline significant ($p = .058$), and marginal differences ($p = .087$) in students' responses regarding whether supervisors provided them with adequate feedback should be considered. This may suggest exploring whether feedback is more influential in a certain age group or whether students at older ages value feedback more. Studying the effectiveness of supervision methods for graduate students of different ages and academic backgrounds is very important. Furthermore, understanding how supervisors can adapt their methods to meet the needs of students of different ages could significantly influence the design of future supervisor development programs.

5. CONCLUSION

Academic supervision is essential for developing students' careers and educational advancement. Developing skills in supervision needs to be tackled in various ways and to form part of ongoing CPD for academics. Academic supervision is a complex process that poses a significant challenge to those involved in the supervisory relationship, and its methods are evolving to meet the needs of this increasing complexity. It is essential that the training of academic supervisors be comprehensive, with a focus on developing the technical skills and personal strategies necessary for adequate supervision of students, taking into account their ages and educational backgrounds. This training should also include motivational methods that keep students engaged, motivated and supported throughout their academic careers.

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed equally to the study.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

INFORMED CONSENT

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

DATA SHARING STATEMENT

No additional data are available.

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