POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' AND SUPERVISORS' PERSPECTIVES ON THESIS SUPERVISION PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

BY

RUGUT CORNELIUS KIPLETING

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DECLARATION

Declaration by Candidate

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University. No part of this thesis may be reproduced without the prior written permission of the author and/or Moi University.

Signature …………..……………………Date………...............................………

Rugut Cornelius Kipleting

DPCS/4197/20

Declaration by Supervisors

This thesis was submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

Signature……………………………….. Date………………………………

Prof. Anne Syomwene Kisilu

Associate Professor

Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Media,

Dean School of Education,

Moi University,

Eldoret, Kenya

Signature……………………………….. Date………………………………

Prof. John Changach

Professor

Department of Educational foundations

Dean Emeritus, School of Education

Moi University

Eldoret, Kenya

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family who were my strength in writing this thesis; my wife Juliet and my children Kalya, Kigen and Kibet, that one day they will go beyond my achievements.

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ABSTRACT

According to the policy framework for education and training (2012), university education in Kenya should provide globally competitive quality research and training. The aim is to produce highly trained researchers who can contribute significantly to the country's national and economic development. However, there are a number of supervision shortfalls in universities in Kenya; and this presents a great concern in training of research students. Effective supervision of postgraduate students is yet to be achieved. While a number of studies have been undertaken on thesis supervision elsewhere, there are a few documented studies that have established the nature of thesis supervision in the context of Kenyan universities. The purpose of this study therefore, was to explore the perspectives of postgraduate students and supervisors on thesis supervision practices in universities in Kenya. The guiding objectives were; to explore the experiences of supervisors on thesis supervision practices in universities, to examine the experiences of postgraduate students on thesis supervision practices in universities, to investigate the supervisors perspectives on the capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in universities in Kenya, and to explore the perspectives of students and supervisors on how postgraduate supervision can be strengthened for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in Kenya. The study was guided by Vygotsky's social cultural theory and employed a qualitative approach located within a social constructivist paradigm and positioned as a phenomenological study. Convenient and purposive sampling was utilised to select three public universities in Kenya and 30 participants (18 postgraduate students and 12 academic supervisors). Data collection was done using unstructured individual interview, focus group discussion and drawing (as a method of data collection). The generated data was analysed thematically following the steps outlined by Creswell (2014) and Braun and Clark 2006) that involves immersion in the data, coding, Categorising and generating themes. The findings revealed that supervisors play a critical role in the thesis supervision process. However, it was clear that universities are yet to support their work in an optimal way. While it was revealed that students can derail the supervision process through non-commitment, lack of integrity, poor research skills and disappearing in the process, the findings also revealed supervisors' shortcomings, which include; unavailability for consultation, disagreements with colleagues or students and power-play. The participants' views disclose that there is need for universities to develop supervisors through motivation, formal and regular in-service training and building structures, both physical and online, that support the supervision process. The views also exhibited that there is need to engage students to fully participate in a comprehensive research program and a constructive student-supervisor relationship. In conclusion, therefore, effective thesis supervision could be achieved when universities invest in motivating supervisors and consistently developing their skills and knowledge as well as improving the supervision environment by setting up the necessary support structures. It is also recommended that University management should develop student –centered programs that enable students' active participation, as well as creating mechanisms that promote student and supervisor commitment to the research process, and a positive student-supervisor relationship.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CERM-ESA   East and South African-German Centre of Excellence for Educational Research Methodologies and Management

CUE   Commission for University Education

MKO   More Knowledgeable Other

NACOSTI   National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ZPD   Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study. It begins by providing the relevant information on the background of the study from the global, regional and local contexts. This is drawn from related prior studies on postgraduate supervision in higher education. The chapter also presents statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, justification, assumptions of the study, scope, limitations, theoretical framework, conceptual framework and operational definition of terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Postgraduate supervision is an ever changing and complex activity (Janssen, van Vuuren & de Jong, 2021). It is a pedagogy that is yet to be fully understood. Hamid, Rahman and Hamidin (2021) point out that supervision of postgraduate students may appear easy and deceptively simple but the actual practice is enormously challenging. For many years, practitioners, professionals and researchers have made attempts in different perspectives to comprehend and make sense of the world, with research supervision particularly noted as a practice that is extremely challenging (Shafig, Sharif & Jan, 2020).

Supervision of postgraduate students is one of the most important functions of any university; it is a high level and complex form of teaching in higher education (Turhan &Karadag, 2019). Many institution of higher learning are now trying to embrace effective supervision practices for achievement of quality research (Shafig et al., 2020). Although universities have guidelines and policies for postgraduate

supervision, they are confronted by a drastically changing learning and teaching environment dictated by internationalization, the moving nature of knowledge and the demands of employers and funding bodies (Noel & Wambua., 2021). Postgraduate supervision is therefore fluid and supervision practices are not simply prescribed by institutional policies, but are also mainly determine by continuity and change

Transfer of Knowledge is an inevitable process in higher education where research outputs are mostly associated with the production of doctoral and masters graduates (Van Rensburg, Mayers & Roets, 2016) The supervision of postgraduate students at universities is therefore one of the core responsibilities of academics. It is a practice that is considered a measure of academic output (Van Rensburg et al., 2016). The purpose of supervision is not only to transfers research and related skills, but is also an intensive and interconnected form of supervisor-supervisee engagement. The role of the supervisor is to provide a constructive, supportive and engaged supervision process (Syomwene, 2021). This is important in the development of future researchers who have the correct educational skills to fulfill the needs of the profession. The fundamental principle of student support during supervision is that an experienced supervisor will be able to guide the student through the learning processes in an effective way possible to produce quality output (Turhan & Karadag, 2019)..

The task of postgraduate supervision is a pedagogical process in higher education curriculum that involves teaching students about research (Burns & Badiali, 2016). It is an advanced and complex teaching process in which knowledge production is vital (Igumbor, Bosire, Karimi, Katahoire, Allison, Muula & Ajuwon, 2022). It includes teaching the students how to develop their research problem, the expected way of writing the proposal and the necessary skills which they need to use in carrying out

their research (Emilson & Johnson, 2007). It also involves teaching the research students how to review their literature as well as the methods of generating and analysing data (Emilsson & Johnsson, 2007). According to Burns and Badiali (2016) research students work better when they are engaged in an interactive teaching process where knowledge is shared between the research student and the supervisor

Globally, postgraduate supervision has currently received a great deal of attention (Hamid et al., 2021). This is especially because of the growing need to nurture talents in this complex and challenging world (Matheka, Jansen & Hofman, 2020b). Governments are recognising that quality supervision of postgraduate students translates to production of highly skilled researchers that are essential in the current society (Hamid et al., 2021). Universities all over the world, even the most established universities find the process of postgraduate supervision as a complex phenomenon that evolves over time (Phillips & Johnson, 2022).

Various postgraduate supervision practices have been adopted even in some top world universities like Oxford, Harvard and Cambridge in an attempt to achieve effective postgraduate supervision (Mbogo, Ndiao, Wambua, Ireri & Ngala, 2020). Such supervision practices include; close monitoring of postgraduate supervision process, regular training of postgraduate supervisors, co-supervision, research schedules and adoption of supervision styles such as mentorship and cultivation of intellectual environment (Mbogo et al., 2020). However, it is still not contestable that postgraduate supervision is a challenging pedagogy that is yet to be fully understood. Universities are trying to pool their expertise in an effort to realise effective supervision (Jansen et al., 2021). The world has become a global village and in an endeavor to enhance postgraduate supervision; the current trend is that institutions of

higher learning all over the world are now networking with each other with the aim of sharing, borrowing and adopting relevant supervision practices in their universities (Jansen et al., 2021).

One of the most important factors currently emphasized globally on thesis supervision is developing the expertise of supervisors (Guerin, Walker, Aitchison, Laming, Meeta & Bronwyn, 2017). Supervising Postgraduate students has become more challenging (Calma, 2014). Professional development of supervisors is therefore inevitable given that research supervision is dynamic (Wisker & Robinson, 2016). According to Bacwayo, Nampala and Oteyo (2017) universities should address the increasingly complex roles and skills required of supervisors by putting in place the strategies that can provide different levels of support for supervisors. During the process of the supervisory relationship, a supervisor engages in a number of diverse supervisory strategies. There is therefore an urgent need to put more attention on preparedness of supervisors in order expose them to new supervisory strategies in thesis supervision (Bacwayo et al., 2017). There are also several models of supervision that have been developed and there is need for supervisors to get informed and apply the models in their practice as well as create more progressive models that fit to their supervision context and their expectations (Wisker & Robinson, 2016).

In the African setting, postgraduate supervision in universities has different characteristics when compared to supervision in other parts of the world. Such differences arise from its specific African context, culture of education, policies, and resource constraints in the universities (Cekiso, Tshotsho, Masha & Saziwa, 2019). Several studies show that postgraduate supervision in Africa presents a great concern (Manyike, 2017; Ngulube, 2021; Azure, 2016; Keane, 2016). There is a large number

of postgraduate students in Africa who fail to complete their studies or take longer than the expected period to graduate (Manyike, 2017). The main challenge causing the attrition or delayed completion is inadequate supervision in universities (Ngulube, 2021).

Supervising postgraduate students is a challenging process that encompasses several issues at all levels from that of individual students and supervisors, to available infrastructural support and institutional and governmental policies which are not well developed in Africa (Cekisto et al., 2019, Turhan & Karadag, 2019). One of the major challenges of postgraduate supervision in Africa is lack of supervision capacity (Manyike, 2017). Most African universities do not have enough supervisors who are experienced and skilled to guide and mentor postgraduate students (Manyike 2017). The experienced supervisors have a big workload and they are busy with administration, teaching responsibilities or have too many students to supervise (Azure, 2016). Many African universities also do not have regular training programs to enhance the skills of supervisors who are new in the field (Ngulube, 2021). Furthermore, some universities lack proper supervision policies and guidelines on thesis supervision (Ngulube, 2021).

Conceptualisation of effective supervision in the African context is also not clear, given that the models of postgraduate supervision in many African universities continue to parallel those in the developed countries (Cross & Backhouse, 2014). Many African universities have adopted the programmes from European universities that are not well suited for the African realities (Cross & Backhouse, 2014). It is paramount to consider what effective postgraduate supervision entails, particularly in

African context (Cekisto et al., 2019). This is the aim of this study, focusing specifically in Kenyan universities.

In the Kenyan context, thesis supervision is faced by challenges and there are still a number of supervision shortfalls, thereby affecting the quality of research and completion rates (Syomwene, 2021). Many Kenyan universities, both public and private, are struggling to be at breast with the international standards in postgraduate supervision (Mbogo et al., 2020). The commission for university education (CUE, 2016) has set specific guidelines and procedures for postgraduate supervision in Kenyan universities (CUE, 2016). However, despite the efforts to streamline academic programs in universities, effective postgraduate supervision is yet to be achieved in Kenya. It is even more challenging given that each university has their own specific policies, guidelines and procedures of postgraduate supervision.

There is no common curriculum for higher education in Kenya, and thus, the style of supervision could vary from one university to another depending on the nature of postgraduate programs in the university. The Commission for University Education (CUE) provides guidelines, but universities have the freedom to design their own curriculum and programs. The programs are developed in relation to the market needs (CUE, 2016). There is therefore no common curriculum for a specific discipline that is followed by undergraduate and graduate programmes in universities, as each university has the freedom to develop its own curricular. This kind of education system tends to borrow from the American education system which is much renowned for its flexibility and academic freedom.

Following the CUE guidelines, the postgraduate programs in Kenyan universities has been designed in such a way that the curriculum is more than simply the pattern of

lessons and classes that the institution offers in coursework, but it also includes thesis writing (CUE, 2016). This involves a one-to-one supervision process where the supervisor mentors the student by teaching the necessary research skills and guiding on how to write the research (Igumbor et al, 2022). The supervisor plays a key role of executing the curriculum through teaching and evaluation to develop the student to be an independent researcher (Burns & Badiali, 2016; Emilsson & Johnsson, 2007).

According to the policy framework for education and training (2012) the vision for university education in Kenya is to provide globally competitive quality education, training and research for sustainable development. While the mission, is to produce graduates who can respond to the needs of the society, upgrade the skills of the existing workforce and develop a community of entrepreneurs who can contribute to the country's economic wellbeing.

The university Act (2012) outlined the objectives of university education, which include the following;

    i.   Advancing knowledge through teaching, scholarly research and scientific investigation

    ii.   Promote the highest standards and quality in teaching and research

    iii.   Support and contribute to the realization of national economic and social development

    iv.   Provide education, training and retraining higher level professional, technical and management personnel

    v.   Dissemination of the outcomes of research conducted by the university to the general community

The objectives are yet to be fully achieved, and it is now a high time in Kenya to take a critical look at the role of university education in nation building and achievement of sustainable development goals (SDG). Considering the vision and mission of university education, I posit that in order to provide globally competitive quality education, training and research for sustainable development, and at the same time upgrade the skills of the workforce and create entrepreneurs and graduates who can respond to the needs of the society, there must be effective supervision of postgraduate students. This will enabled production of highly skilled graduates and researchers who are important assets for generating and sharing knowledge for social and economic development of a country.

Kenya's vision 2030, which is the country's development program from 2008 to 2030 places quality education and training as an important social pillar for the Country's development (Ministry of State for Planning and National Development, 2008).This is therefore a desired and crucial study for the country as it focuses on how the training of postgraduate students can be enhanced to produce quality graduates who are important researchers for the country's development. Research contributes significantly in every country's national and economic development (Syomwene, 2021). Producing skilled researchers therefore enables the country to achieve its development goals, like the global sustainable development goals (SDG), national goals education and vision 2030.

However, according to a study carried out by Kaluyu (2016) on postgraduate supervision in Kenya, the findings showed that Kenyan universities have poor supervision mechanisms. Even the mechanisms that are in place are not enforced. It has been observed in Kenya that postgraduate students encounter several challenges

in their studies (Syomwene, 2021). They also take longer time in research and a conspicuous movement from one university to another in search for effective supervision (Kaluyu, 2016). There is an outcry from government and non-government sector that universities are producing graduates who are not well trained to address societal and economic needs of the nation (Mbogo et al., 2020). This is mainly attributed to inadequate supervision in universities (Kaluyu, 2016).

Several scholars (Hamid et al., 2021; Janssen et al., 2021; Grant, Hackney & Edgar, 2014) agree that there is need to investigate more on postgraduate supervision in order to help reveal the secret formulas that may exist to inform supervision practice. The topic of supervision and related research is vast and varied, yet little research has been reported on this area in the Kenyan context (Mbogo et al., 2020). The dynamics of supervision have an effect on the possible negative or positive outcomes for research students and the quality of research output (Grant et al., 2014).

A study by Mbogo et al. (2020) describes how the students and their supervisors admit that there are a lot of supervision shortfalls in Kenyan universities. As already stated, each university has its own supervision policies and guidelines that are developed following the regulations of the commission for university education in Kenya. However, the application of these policies to attain effective supervision in the country is yet to be achieved (Kimani, 2014). It is in this view that the researcher will endeavor to explore the postgraduate students' and supervisors' perspectives of thesis supervision in Kenyan universities.

It is my argument that there is need to develop a supervision framework that can be used to enabled effective supervision in Kenyan universities and at the same time promote quality research in universities and the country at large. This study therefore

seeks to understand the dynamics of thesis supervision in the Kenyan context by exploring the postgraduate students' and supervisors perspectives of thesis supervision in Kenyan universities. It aims at identifying ways in which supervision can be natured, strengthened and enhanced in order to achieve effective postgraduate supervision in Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Supervision of postgraduate students is a high level and complex form of teaching in higher education. Many institution of higher learning are now trying to embrace effective supervision practices for achievement of quality academic research (Masek & Alias, 2020). Universities all over the world are now confronted by a significantly changing nature of postgraduate supervision dictated by internationalization, the moving nature of knowledge and the demands of employers and funding bodies (Hamid et al., 2021). Postgraduate supervision is therefore evolving and supervision practices are not simply prescribed by institutional policies, but are mainly determine by continuity and change.

According to the policy framework for education and training (2012) university education in Kenya should provide globally competitive quality research and training. To meet this obligation, Kenyan universities must strive to be at breast with international standards in postgraduate supervision (Mukhwana, Oure, Kiptoo, Kande, Njue, Too & Some, 2016). However, there are a number of supervision shortfalls and challenges in universities in Kenya; and this presents a great concern in training of research students. According to Kaluyu (2016) Kenyan universities have poor supervision mechanisms, and even the mechanisms that are in place are not fully enforced. In a study by Mbogo et al. (2020) postgraduate students and supervisors

admit that there is quite a great deal of supervision shortfalls in universities in Kenya. Syomwene (2021) also found that graduate students in Kenyan universities face a lot of supervision challenges that hinder their progress and timely completion.

Inadequate supervision in Kenyan universities therefore denies the country the benefits of an effective research supervision process, which is, to contribute significantly to the country's national and economic development. Despite the inadequate supervision and the considerable debate over various aspects of thesis supervision globally, only a few studies have reported on thesis supervision practices in universities in Kenya. Little is known on the nature of thesis supervision and how it could be enhanced to achieve effective supervision in universities in Kenya. This study therefore, endeavored to fill this gap by exploring the perspectives of postgraduate students and supervisors on thesis supervision practices in universities in Kenya. The findings of the study were utilised to develop a supervision framework and formulate context specific recommendations that could aid in nurturing and strengthening postgraduate supervision in universities in Kenya

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of postgraduate students and supervisors on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in public universities in Kenya.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to explore the perspectives of postgraduate students and supervisors on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya.

Specific objectives were developed as follows:

1. To explore the experiences of supervisors on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities

2. To examine the experiences of postgraduate students on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities

3. To investigate the supervisors perspectives on the capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in universities in Kenya

4. To explore the perspectives of students and supervisors on how thesis supervision can be strengthened for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in Kenya

1.5 Research Questions

The main research question of this study was;

What are the perspectives of postgraduate students and supervisors on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya?

To answer the main research question, the following sub-research questions were formulated:

1. What are the experiences of supervisors on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities?

2. What are the experiences of postgraduate students on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities?

3. What are the supervisors' perspectives on the capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in universities in Kenya?

4. What are the perspectives of students and supervisors on how thesis supervision can be strengthened for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in Kenya?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study explored the perspectives of postgraduate students' and supervisors' on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities Kenya. The study provided a better understanding of thesis supervision practices in universities in Kenya. The views of postgraduate students and supervisors were utilised to develop a supervision framework and formulate context specific recommendations that suits the Kenyan context and could be used to strengthened postgraduate supervision in universities in Kenya. The findings of this study also are expected to guide the management and policy makers of universities in developing appropriate supervision policies and guidelines for improving postgraduate supervision in Kenyan universities. This will go a long way towards developing and achieving effective postgraduate supervision in universities in Kenya, and hence production of quality research and highly trained scholars that Kenya needs to support the national social, economic and environmental goals of the Country.

The knowledge generated in this study contributes to the literature in the field of education and related disciplines. It also enables a better understanding of postgraduate supervision in universities in Kenya and other African universities who share several similarities with the Kenyan context. Finally, achieving effective supervision in universities in Kenya will ultimately lead to production of well-trained researchers that Kenya needs.

1.7 Justification of the Study

Governments today are recognising that the foundation of a productive and prosperous country is to have a well-educated population, especially masters and doctoral graduates who can be involved in research and also take the lead in coming up with new and better ways of dealing with various aspects of the development of a country (Barry, Larsen & Pieper, 2010). Effective supervision is the only way through which quality graduates can be produced; graduates who are well equipped to carry out research in different fields.

As already stated in the background, postgraduate supervision is a very complex pedagogy that is poorly understood in higher education (Abiddin, Hassan & Ahmad, 2009). Successful supervision is expected to produce outstanding professionals who have the necessary research skills to support research and knowledge creation to meet the social, economic and environmental needs of a nation. Unfortunately, there is no specific method or an established procedure for a successful supervision, but, in every specific context there are identifiable unique ways of enhancing supervision. This study is therefore justified as it seeks to identify ways in which postgraduate supervision can be enhanced in the Kenyan context to achieve effective supervision in Kenyan universities.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

The study has the following assumptions:

i. The study assumed that the participants, who were postgraduate students and academic supervisors, provided an honest and true response of their perspectives on postgraduate supervision practices in Kenyan universities.

ii.   The study assumed that the conceptual model developed from the generated data and the recommendations made could be helpful in strengthening postgraduate supervision in universities in Kenya.

iii. The study also assumed that the findings could be utilised by university management and policy makers to develop and improve policies on thesis supervision in universities.

1.9 Scope of the Study

This study was located in teaching and learning in higher education curriculum. The problem was drawn from an educational perspective, particularly in postgraduate supervision as an area of study. The focus of the study was on postgraduate students and supervisors' perspectives on thesis supervision practices in universities in Kenya. The study was carried out in three public universities in Kenya. These are universities which are chartered and within the boundaries of Kenya. The participants were postgraduate students (masters and doctoral) and academic supervisors who were selected from three public universities that were sampled for this study. Literature was drawn specifically from the body of knowledge of postgraduate supervision.

A qualitative approach was used, located within a social constructivist paradigm and positioned as a phenomenological study. Convenient and purposive sampling was utilised to select participants from the three universities. Individual unstructured interview, drawing and focus group discussion was used to generate the data with the participants.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

This study was carried out in three selected universities in Kenya, and therefore the findings are limited to the three universities. However, the findings could be applied

to other similar contexts. The focus of the study was limited to the perspectives of postgraduate students and supervisors on thesis supervision in the school of education. The researcher also considered only the postgraduate students who had collected their data and were at thesis writing stage for participation in the study. Drawing as a method of data collection was used in this study, and one of the challenges was that some people are not good in drawing and could hesitate to draw; but after the researcher explained to them that the meaning attached to the drawing is more important than the artistic nature of the drawing, they were able to make the drawings and provide the meaning.

1.11 Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky social cultural development theory (1978) was employed in this study as an interpretive lens to discuss and make meaning of the findings pertaining to the perspectives of students and supervisors on thesis supervision in universities in Kenya.

1.11.1 Vygotsky social cultural development theory

Social cultural theory is a social learning theory developed by Levy Vygotsky (1978). It posits that individuals are active participants in the creation of their own knowledge (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). Vygotsky believed that learning takes place primarily in social and cultural settings, rather than solely within the individual (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). The social cultural theory focuses heavily upon dyads (Johnson & Bradbury, 2015) and small groups. It emphasizes that teaching and learning are highly social activities and that students learn primarily through interactions with their teachers, peers, parents and instructional materials. The theory suggests that successful teaching and learning is heavily dependent on interpersonal interaction and

discussion, with the primary focus on the students' understanding of the discussion (Powell & Kalina, 2009).

Vygotsky's theory emphasises that learners require mediation from others before they can learnt on their own. He called this process of moving from being mediated by others to learning independently **scaffolding**. Within scaffolding he identified an optimal point where learning takes place and called this **the zone of proximal development (ZPD);** this is a core concept in Vygotsky's social cultural theory. ZPD emphasizes the role of the instructor in an individual's learning. The ZPD demarcates the activities that a student can do without help, and the activities the student cannot do without the help of an instructor. The ZPD suggests that, with the help of an instructor, students are able to understand and master knowledge and skills that they would not be able to on their own (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). Once the students master a particular skill they are able to complete it independently. In this theory, the instructor plays an integral role in the students' acquisition of knowledge, rather than serving as a passive figure (Chen, 2012; Schreiber & Valle, 2013).

This study will explore in the light of Vygotsky's social cultural theory the students' and supervisors' perspectives on thesis supervision practises in Kenyan universities. Postgraduate supervision is a scaffolding process where the supervisor mentors the postgraduate student in a supportive learning environment. It involves a dyadic relationship between the student and the supervisor (Mackinnon, 2004; McCallin & Shoba, 2012). The supervisor is the instructor and advisor whose role is to guide the student in the whole process of research; whereas the student is the trainee who learns through interaction with his/her supervisor who is an experienced expert in the field ((McCallin & Shoba, 2012).

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) identified by Vygotsky is an important construct in postgraduate supervision. The aim of supervision is to train the postgraduate student to be an independent scholar. However students come with little knowledge about research and can only achieve little on their own with their actual level of development. The role of the supervisor who is a knowledgeable expert is to mediate by mentoring the student to reach his/her level of potential development. With the help of the supervisor the postgraduate student is able to master knowledge and skills that they could not be able to do on their own. The supervisor emphasises on practical learning that is meant to enable the student to gain the required research skills and hence become an independent scholar.

1.12 Conceptual Framework

Creswell (2018) defines a conceptual framework as a visual or written representation that explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied including the key concepts and their presumed relationship. It is what is out there that a researcher plans to study and what is going on with these things (Tracy, 2013).

Figure 1.1 in the next page shows the relationship of factors in this study. It describes that effective thesis supervision, which is at the centre, is contributed by several factors in the supervision process, which include; the experiences of supervisors, student experiences and the available capacity building opportunities for supervisors. Students and supervisors also have their own perceptions, arising from their experiences, on how thesis supervision process could be strengthened for effective supervision.
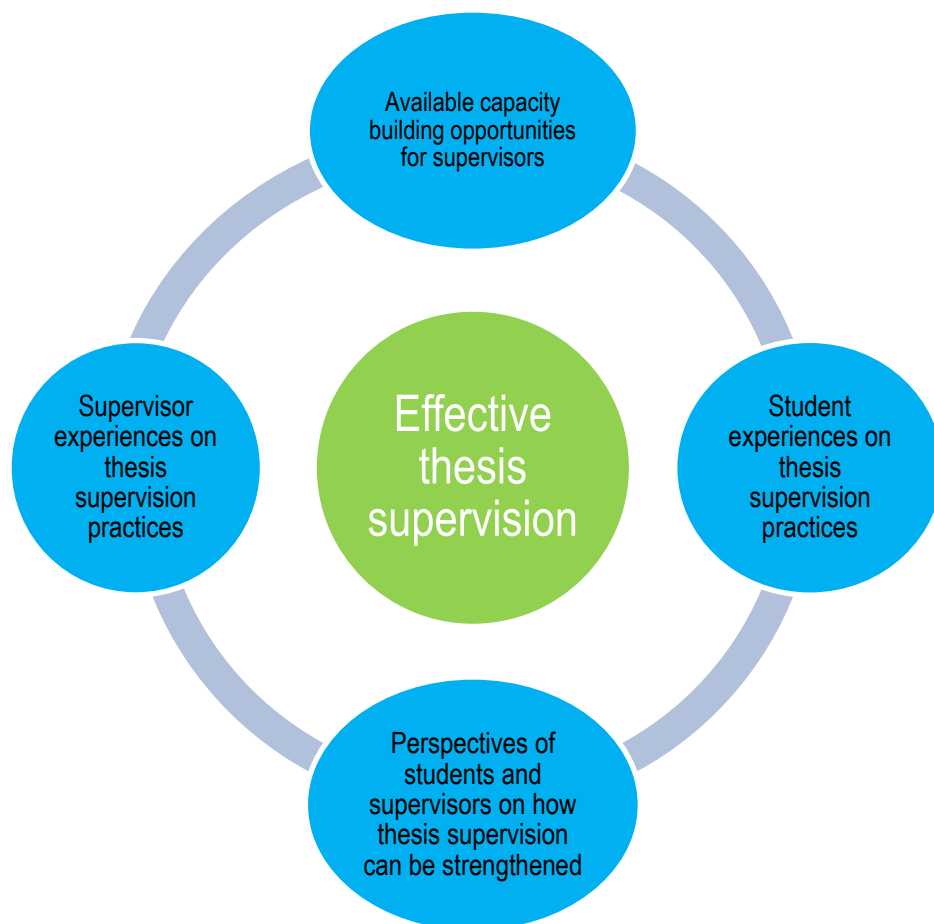
Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

1.13 Operational Definition of Terms

The terms used in this study are explained in this section. The meaning provided is as used in the study;

1.13.1 Postgraduate Program

In practice, postgraduate program refers to a course of study undertaken after completion of a first degree. In this study, it is used to refer to studies that lead to obtaining a masters or a Postgraduate degree.

1.13.2 Postgraduate student

The postgraduate student in this study refers to a student who is registered for masters or PhD program in a university and is studying to obtain a postgraduate degree

1.13.3 Supervision

Postgraduate students make their academic writing with the guidance of a supervisor. In this study, supervision refers to the process where the supervisor works with the student by guiding and directing the entire process of knowledge production until the student graduates.

1.13.4 Postgraduate supervision

In this study, Postgraduate supervision refers to the process of guiding and mentoring the postgraduate student in the research process to write the thesis and be an independent researcher

1.13.5 Supervisor

The word 'supervisor' in this study refers to an academic in a university, who is a professor, senior lecturer or a lecturer, and have the responsibility of guiding and directing postgraduate students in their academic research.

1.13.6 Kenyan universities

These are universities within Kenya as a Country. In this study, it refers to public chartered universities within the Kenyan boundaries.

1.13.7 Effective supervision

In this study, effective supervision refers to the postgraduate supervision that is carried out in the best way possible in an efficient collaboration between the student and the supervisor to produce highly trained scholars and quality research work as per

the set standards and guidelines and within the expected time. Quality here refers to the research output which contributes significantly to the country's national and economic development

1.13.8 Capacity building

This refers to the process of skills development; in this case developing and strengthening skills of postgraduate supervisors in thesis supervision.

1.13.9 Experiences

This refers to what postgraduate students and supervisors encounter in the postgraduate supervision process

1.13.10 Postgraduate supervision process

Postgraduate supervision process in this study refers to the course where the supervisor oversees a research project. During this process the supervisor works with the postgraduate student through the provision and guidance of academic reading, developing logical and critical thinking, as well as providing guidance pertaining to the various writing requirements associated with the academic writing.

1.13.11 Curriculum

A curriculum in this context refers to the academic content that comprises of courses offered in specific fields in postgraduate education in universities, the learning experiences, related objectives, methods and practices involved and the evaluation processes

1.13.12 Perspectives

Perspectives in this context refers to perceptions or viewpoints of students and supervisors

1.13.13 Thesis

In the context of this study, thesis refers to a research project that is carried out by a postgraduate student under the guidance and supervision of a university academic who could be a professor or a doctor

1.13.14 Higher education

Higher education in this study refers to postgraduate education that leads to a Masters' degree or a doctoral degree

1.14 Conclusion

The study focused on postgraduate students and supervisors perspectives on thesis supervision practices in public universities in Kenya. This chapter therefore, provided the problem, digging into its background and outlining the objectives and the research questions of the study. A theoretical framework that was utilised in this study has been expounded stating how it relates to the study. The purpose and the significance of the study have been clearly stated in this chapter also. The study explored the views of postgraduate students and practising supervisors in Kenyan universities with the aim of identifying how postgraduate supervision could be enhanced in universities in Kenya. The next chapter provides a theoretical perspective to the problem

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The literature reviewed in this section aims at putting across a theoretical perspective of thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in Kenya. It draws on literature from several perspectives, which include; (i) Higher education in Kenya (ii) Trends of postgraduate supervision globally and regionally (iii) Supervision related factors in the context of Kenyan universities (iv) Supervision strategies in postgraduate supervision (v) Supervisors' and postgraduate students' experiences on thesis supervision (vi) Capacity building of supervisors in universities and (vi) Perceptions of students and supervisors on how postgraduate supervision could be strengthened. The literature is explored on the basis that there are concerns in most institutions of higher learning, and more so, in Kenyan universities about the need to improve the quality of thesis supervision.

2.1 Higher Education in Kenya

In the context of formal education in Kenya, there are three levels of education, namely; primary education level, secondary education level and higher education level (Orodho, Waweru, Ndichu & Nthinguri, 2013). Higher education therefore, is the level of education after secondary education. Figure 2.1 in the next page shows the structure of education system in Kenya.
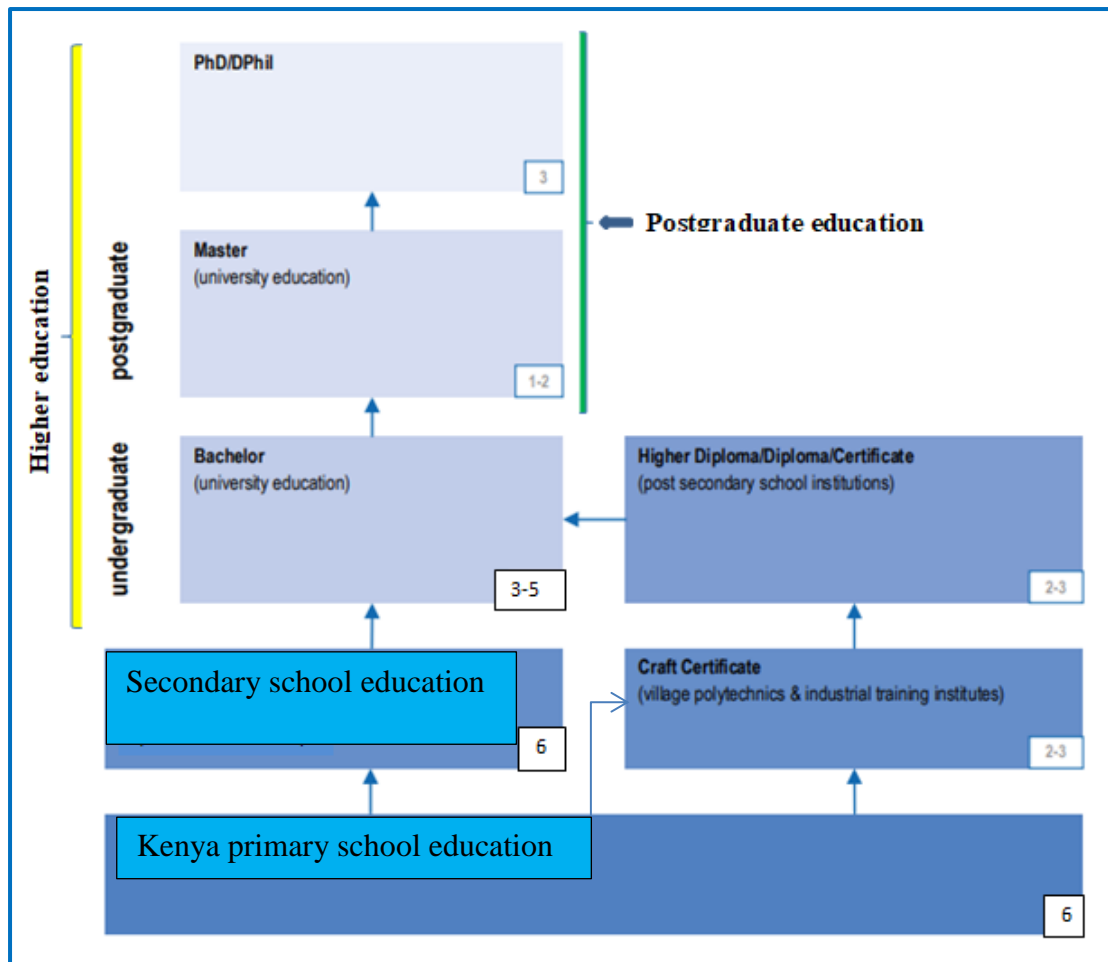
Figure 2.1: Structure of education system in Kenya (Ministry of education)

The education system in Kenya begins with primary and secondary education (see figure 2.1). This is referred to as basic education and every child is expected to achieve this level (Orodho et al., 2013). Higher education is any form of training that comes after the secondary education (*indicated by a yellow arrow*), this is where students begin to specialize in different courses in tertiary institutions which could be universities or middle –level colleges (Riechi, 2021). Middle level colleges include; technical institutions, polytechnics, medical and teacher training colleges; students in these institutions enroll for diploma and certificate courses. University education has two levels, that is; Bachelors' degree (undergraduate) and postgraduate education (*indicated by the green arrow*) which comprises of Masters of philosophy degree and doctor of philosophy degree (McCowan, 2018).

In terms of the curriculum used in higher education, Universities in Kenya have the freedom to develop their own curriculum following the guidelines of the commission for university education (CUE, 2016). However, middle –level colleges use a standardised curriculum which is developed by the Kenya institute of curriculum development (KICD). KICD follows international standards to develop, review and approve programs and curriculum support materials in several levels of education in Kenya, including; primary education, secondary education, adult education, teacher education and training, special needs education, technical and vocational education and training (Wenwa, 2021).

The role of higher education is to impart in-depth knowledge and skills to students or trainees with the aim of producing adequate and qualified human resource in various fields for the economy as a whole (Peercy & Svenson, 2016). According to Haksin and Roy (2022) higher education students should be counted as products to be absorbed in the market to offer services to the society. Adequate and qualified human resource is required for a nation to be self-sustain and vibrant in all sectors of the economy, which include; economic, social, political, cultural and environmental wellbeing (Peercy & Svenson, 2016). Higher education therefore provides a crucial input to the growth and development of any nation.

Postgraduate education, which is the focus of this study, is the highest level of education in Kenya (Riechi, 2021). This is the level where students enroll for their masters and PhD programs in universities. According to the commission for university education (CUE, 2016) the main aim of postgraduate education is to train students in research and knowledge creation in different fields. Masters and doctoral students are therefore referred to as research students (McCowan, 2018). Postgraduate curriculum in Kenya is composed of coursework and research (Mukhwana, Oure, Too

& Some, 2016). In coursework students are taken through designed units which are specific to the course of study. Thereafter, students get into the research stage where a student works with a supervisor or a group of supervisors who have the task of supervising and mentoring the student in the research process (McCowan, 2018; Mukhwana et al., 2016).The aim is to develop the student to be an independent researcher who can make significant contributions in his/her field for the development of the country (Mukhwana et al., 2016).

The achievement of Kenya's vision 2030 depends on creating a well-trained and knowledgeable workforce (Mukhwana et al., 2016). This requires that universities should provide quality education and training (CUE, 2016). The objective of vision 2030 is to transform Kenya to an industrializing middle-income Country (Mukhwana et al., 2016). This transformation can only be attained by producing a well-trained human resource who will take the forefront in spearheading the country's development (CUE, 2016). Mukhwana et al. (2016) argue that a well-trained human resource has the potential of industrializing the economy of a Country. However, the quality of education and training in institutions of higher learning determines the nature of workforce produced (Ndiege, 2019). For universities to produce highly trained researchers who can contribute to the country's development, they need to strengthen the quality of postgraduate education (Mukhwana et al., 2016). While making a report on behalf of CUE, Mukhwana et al. (2016, p. 9) argue that;

> "Vision 2030 can only come about as a result of quality education and training, the heart of this transformation will be the university education system…"

It appears therefore that universities carry a bigger responsibility in the quest to achieve Kenya's vision 2030. However, despite the efforts to improve the quality of postgraduate education in Kenyan universities, there are still challenges that need to

be addressed (Mbogo et al, 2020; Ndiege, 2019). The challenges range from inadequate research funding to thesis supervision challenges (Mbogo et al, 2020).

According to Mwangi and Owino (2012) the objectives of postgraduate education in Kenya include:

- To develop in students and scholars the ability to think independently, creatively and critically

- To develop, preserve and disseminate knowledge as well as desirable values to stimulate intellectual life

- To use basic and applied research to provide skills and knowledge that help in solving the problems facing the society

- To inculcate entrepreneurial skills among graduate students to enable the create employment for themselves and others

The objectives underscore the significant role of postgraduate education in Kenya's development. This study is focus on postgraduate education, which entails supervision in universities, where the supervisor mentors the student in the research process. The following sections will explore more on postgraduate supervision as a body of knowledge.

2.2 Global Trends in Postgraduate Supervision

Postgraduate supervision today has gotten the attention of several stakeholders and is no longer a concern of universities only (Rule, Bitzer & Frick, 2021). Several bodies like employers, funding bodies and government agencies are now keen to scrutinize the postgraduate research process for demands of quality excellence in higher education (Noel & Wambua., 2021). High quality research supervision is now seen as a crucial process for training of skilled human resource that can produce quality research

output that is highly needed for any nation to develop (Bogelund, 2015). Even though the achievement of quality supervision is still a challenge globally, more efficient supervision processes continue to be developed in modern universities with increased participation from several stakeholders (Hamid et al., 2021). Postgraduate supervision is now more seen and more recognised than before in its contribution towards quality research for economic, social and environmental sustainability (Rule et al, 2021).

Postgraduate supervision today occurs within a rapidly changing environment (Sidhu, Lim, Teoh & Muthukrishnan, 2020). Supervision has been progressively developing from the traditional one to one supervision model to recent supervision models like co-supervision and cohort supervision where supervisors work as a group and complement each other as they share the expertise while supervising students (Leshem, 2020). This has become a learning avenue, not only to the research student but also to the supervisors themselves (Bogelund, 2015). Students also learn in a community in what is designed as a collective learning process where students share ideas together (Sidhu et al., 2020). With the new models the student-supervisor relationship is currently changing in universities. It is no longer bound to the traditional way where the postgraduate student is the apprentice of the supervisor (Leshem, 2020). The approach is now tending towards sharing of resources and expertise in group supervision and cohort training (Sidhu et al., 2020).

The role of being a supervisor in the twenty first century University has become more demanding and challenging (Blose, Msiza & Chiororo, 2021). This is attributed to the evolving nature of knowledge and more informed contemporary students. Supervisors can no longer supervise with strict structures like before (Lee & Murray, 2015). They need to be more flexible and accommodative to be able to catch up with new trends of

supervision. Blose, Msiza and Chiororo (2021) argue that in the current changing complexity of supervision in higher education, there is a need for even experienced supervisors to update their skills and enriched their experiences. This is necessary in enabling supervisors to cope with the current trends in postgraduate supervision arising from global expectations, diverse expectations of students and society and national development needs (Hamid et al., 2021).

2.3 Regional Trends in Postgraduate Supervision

Postgraduate supervision in Africa is yet to be fully developed (Costa, 2018). however, it is worth acknowledging that Africa has currently given prominence to the need for quality postgraduate education in universities (Daramola, 2021). Many African universities today have placed emphasis on supervision issues like developing the expertise of supervisors and employing contemporary supervision methods (Gumbo, 2018). This is an effort to catch up with the emerging international best practices in leading universities in developed countries. Supervision Practices are gradually being developed in African universities to be at par with the current standards and practices globally (Daramola, 2021).

Training of staff is an emerging issue in African universities (Okeke-Uzodike, 2021). In an attempt to improve the quality of postgraduate supervision, universities have realised that there is need to strengthen the skills and knowledge of supervisors (Gumbo, 2019). A number of studies have indicated a need for better support of supervisors In African universities (Okeke-Uzodike, 2021). Many universities are currently running several supervision courses that include Strengthening Postgraduate Supervision, enhancing postgraduate environments and creating postgraduate collaborations (Paxton, 2018). Several universities in Sub-Saharan Africa have

developed programs on capacity building of supervisors to reinforce the supervisors and quality of supervision. African universities now have acknowledged the complexity and demanding role of postgraduate supervision (Ngulube, 2021). There are many innovative courses that have been developed in universities in Africa to provide the needed support by academics. The courses are mean to help supervisors engage with the process and practice of supervision in an informed and reflective way. Training of supervisors is now a continuous process in most African universities; this is done both face to face and online (O'Neil, 2018).

Completion of postgraduate studies has been a major problem, not only to students in African universities but globally (Ndayambaje, 2018). In many African universities today, there is pressure to supervisors and students to complete the writing of the thesis within the shortest time possible (Zhou, Okahana, 2019).Supervisors are also taking advantage of this because it is now placed as one of the requirements for promotion in universities (Ndayambaje, 2018). The more the students they supervise successfully the stronger the chances of promotion. Completion rate of students is now being checked keenly by many universities. (Zhou, Okahana, 2019). There are many students who delay and take more than the required time to complete their thesis writing (Zhou, Okahana, 2019). However, many universities in Africa have strategies that have been laid down to overcome the challenge of delayed completion (Banks & Dohy, 2019). Some universities now have mechanisms of promoting timely completion including penalizing students who have over delayed in the system (Banks & Dohy, 2019). There are also many studies today that sought to investigate the challenges encountered by students who delay in African universities, both public and private (Ndayambaje, 2018).

The supervisory capacity is an important element that African universities are still struggling with (Mayeza & Mpofu, 2018). Currently there are increasing numbers of postgraduate students joining universities in Africa despite several challenges. However, even though the universities needs the numbers, and they employ marketing strategies to increase the students, the number of staff to supervise the research is posing a great challenge (Barasa & Omulando, 2018). Sufficient staff to teach and supervise is critical for postgraduate students to be successful .High enrolment becomes a huge challenge more than a benefit to universities when there is no capacity to serve the students. There is need to expand and strengthened the human resource capacity in African universities (Barasa & Omulando, 2018). In many African universities supervision of postgraduate students is compromised because supervisors have many students to supervise and other responsibilities like teaching and research work (Mayeza & Mpofu, 2018). The quality of supervision is therefore a critical issue in African universities in that need to be improved beginning with increasing the number of supervisors (Barasa & Omulando, 2018). However, the number of PhD graduates has gradually increased in African universities. This is a positive development, even though it is yet to match the increasing number of students (Breetzke & Hedding, 2018)

2.4 Supervision Related Factors in the Context of Kenyan Universities

Although there are only a few studies that have investigated on postgraduate supervision in Kenyan universities; the recorded studies have raised different issues related to the nature of postgraduate supervision in Kenya. This section covers the literature related to this study in the Kenyan context. The literature brings out different topics that are outstanding in the studies that have been carried out on postgraduate supervision in Kenyan universities. These include; the supervisor

workload, training of supervisors, contact hours between the student and the supervisor, student-supervisor relationship and disappearing students. These are elaborated as follows;

2.4.1 Supervisor workload

Supervisors in Kenyan Universities have heavy supervision workload due to shortage of qualified supervisors (Mbogo et al., 2020). A Study of three largest Kenyan universities by Ronguno, Okoth and Akala (2016) established that Kenyan universities are generally understaffed and about 50% of the teaching staff in public universities in Kenya are tutorial fellows, who by level of their academic qualifications, should not supervise thesis writing process. This means that senior lecturers have a wider workload to teach and to supervise several graduate students. The recent increase in Ph.D. programs has seen a growth in student enrollment which has overstretched instructors to their limit (CUE, 2018; Matheka, Jansen & Hofman, 2020b).

With the increased demand and subsequent expansion of higher learning in Kenya, quality of supervision is becoming highly compromised because university senior faculty members are becoming overworked (Matheka et al., 2020b). Barasa and Omulando (2018) reported a lack of qualified faculty members to effectively sustain Ph.D. education and research in Kenyan universities. Senior lecturers who are mostly doctors and Professors in Kenyan universities have to cope with the workload of teaching, marking of examinations; own research, publications as well as managing work as departmental heads (Kimani 2014). In many of these cases, the challenge is that such supervisors are unable to guide the student to grasp the whole essence of the

research focus and the entire optimal methodology to bring out the knowledge gap that the research is set to fill (Kimani 2014).

Owing to the insufficient supervision in Kenyan universities the number of graduates being produced by local universities is far too low and not sufficient to meet the country's needs (Ndiege, 2019). Whereas the number of universities is increasing rapidly, the growth cannot be matched with the number of students registering and graduating with Postgraduate degrees (Ndiege, 2019). There is a growing need to have more senior lecturers at the level of a professor in Kenya in order to enhance Postgraduate supervision and build research capacity in the country (Barasa & Omulando, 2018). This is necessary to fulfill the teaching needs at the institutions of higher learning, as well as meet the country's national research and economic agenda (Barasa & Omulando, 2018)

2.4.2 Training of Supervisors

According to Ronguno et al (2016) there is a need to enhance training of supervisors in Kenyan universities in order to update their supervisory skills. Kenya's public universities lack enough qualified lecturers to supervise Postgraduate students' research work (Odhiambo, 2018). A study by Mbogo et al. (2020) found that there is insufficient training of supervisors in Kenyan universities. The recent advancement in technology and knowledge in higher education has brought in new approaches in supervision process of postgraduate students (Ronguno et al., 2016). It is therefore essential for supervisors in universities in Kenya to embrace training and regularly update their supervisory skills (Mbogo et al., 2020). Lack of competence among the untrained and inexperience supervisors is a big challenge that could be affecting the

quality of postgraduate supervision in Kenyan universities; mainly contributing to low and delayed completions of Postgraduate studies (Mbogo et al., 2020).

Ndiege (2019) points out that even though there is an increasing emphasis internationally on professional training for postgraduate supervisors to enhance the quality of supervisors of postgraduate programmes, Kenyan universities have not embraced formal and regular training of postgraduate supervisors. Postgraduate students not only require technical advice in their subject areas, but also need mentorship, coaching, guidance and inspiration (Barasa & Omulando, 2018). These are roles that an effective postgraduate supervisor cannot relegate (Ndiege, 2018). Consequently, there is need for postgraduate supervisors to be prepared for this enormous task (Barasa & Omulando, 2018. It is high time institutions of higher learning in Kenya introduced formal training programmes to ensure that postgraduate supervisors are well prepared for the task of guiding postgraduate students (Ndiege, 2019). Professional training provides an avenue for equipping supervisors to be able to successfully oversee postgraduate research without using trial and error (Barasa & Omulando, 2018). It also provides an environment where sharing of experiences among the supervisors can take place (Ndiege, 2019).

2.4.3 Contact hours between the student and the supervisor

The Postgraduate research process is an arduous task that requires frequent communication and contact between the student and the supervisor (Kimani, 2014). However, as described above, supervisors in Kenyan universities seem to be overworked and there are many instances where the supervisor is too busy and have no time for the student (Kimani, 2014). Ronguno et al. (2016) measured the level of contact hours between the supervisor and the student in Kenyan universities. It was

established that in many supervision cases there is lack of adequate contact time between the supervisor and the student in public universities in Kenya. The study observed that although students attempted to meet their supervisors regularly, their efforts in most cases ended up in vain. The argument given across all the institutions was that supervisors were ever committed. This is an indication that In Kenya's public universities lecturers are overwhelmed by the many tasks they handle in addition to the high number of supervisees assigned to each supervisor.

Similarly, a study by Ndayambaje (2018) reveals that some supervisors in public universities in Kenya are too busy that they rarely have time to guide their students. One student who participated in the study said *"My supervisor…haaa! ...I never had time with her…she was always busy here and there .....Sometimes we could not meet or talk for three months" (*Ndayambaje, 2018 P.64). According to Ndayambaje (2018) the absence of supervisors in the supervision process is caused by other commitments were the supervisor could be busy with administration, teaching responsibilities, having too many students to supervise or sometimes being away from the university. The challenge of absent supervisors has sometimes resulted to change of supervisors in the middle of the research process (Odhiambo, 2018). This affects the quality of supervision and research product depending on the circumstances and how the process of change is handled (Kimani, 2014). . If supervisors commit themselves to meet the students regularly for guidance, it would save time for the students' progress (Ndayambaje, 2018).

2.4.4 Student-supervisor relationship

According to Kosgei, Githinji and Simwa (2019) the relationship between the postgraduate student and the supervisor is paramount to successful completion of

postgraduate studies in public universities in Kenya. The relationship is seen as a two-way interaction process; where the student and the supervisor are expected engage each other professionally with respect and in an open mind (Kosgei et al., 2019). A positive relationship promotes quality interaction between the student and the supervisor; this constitutes a vital determinant of timely completion of postgraduate studies (Macharia, 2019). However, the relationship can be characterised by discontent if not well managed and if it lacks cooperation between the student and the supervisor. Research students experience discontent when they fail to receive the necessary guidance from their supervisors. Furthermore, it is more frustrating to the student to work in a strained relationship with the supervisor (Macharia, 2019).

A study with the postgraduate students by Rugut (2019) and Ndayambaje (2018) in public universities in Kenya also indicate that the supervisor-supervisee relationship plays a key role in the progress of the research student. Some postgraduate students in these studies found it easier to approach their supervisors while others had difficulties. Students who had difficulties in their relationship with their supervisors were totally confused regarding the strategies to adopt for the success of their research. While the students who had friendly and approachable supervisors expressed their happiness on how their supervisors inspired them to progress well in their research. This is an indication that the level of collaboration between the supervisee and the supervisor brings about difference in terms of academic training and emotion which may impact on the timely completion of postgraduate studies. According to Rugut (2019) research students flourish when their supervisors give them the energy to work smarter and produce quality work within the expected time. Students work well to complete their studies on time when they are in relationships where supervisors are approachable, friendly, supportive, and have positive attitude towards the research (Rugut, 2019)

In another study in Kenyan universities by Wairungu & Maina (2021) participants linked poor student-supervisor relationships to students dropping out or delayed completion of the studies. Some supervisory relationships are marred by lack of trust and power play between the student and the supervisor. Wairungu and Maina (2021) found that in some universities in Kenya, students have little input in selecting their supervisors, as it is determined by their departments. This denies the student and the supervisor the opportunity to negotiate and agree before supervision begins (Wairungu & Maina, 2021). Negotiating the relationship early at the beginning of the research creates a sound foundation on which both the student and the supervisor can build that relationship over time (Macharia, 2019). On the contrary, lack of negotiation at the beginning may lead to misunderstanding and hence a poor relationship between the student and the supervisor (Rugut, 2019).

2.4.5 Disappearing students

Although Kenyan universities continue to attract more students to register for Doctor of Philosophy Programmes, the challenge to complete these programmes on time has remained weighty (Ndayambaje, 2018). Completion of PhD programme has been a shared concern by governments, universities, sponsoring bodies and doctorate candidates themselves (Ndayambaje, 2018).

A study by (Mbogo et al., 2020) reveals that almost half of postgraduate students in Kenyan universities disappear in course of supervision. It is noted in this study that many postgraduate students in Kenyan institutions cannot work independently and are almost entirely dependent on their supervisors in writing their research. Some students are lazy and they fail to read literature adequately on their research topics in order to have a clear understanding of their research topics (Wairungu & Maina, 2020). As a

result some do not understand their study and hence end up dropping out without the awareness of their supervisors. Others disappear from their supervisors because of being lazy; they are not able to adhere to the deadlines for submitting work as agreed with their supervisors (Wairungu & Maina, 2021).

According to Macharia (2019) disappearance of students affects the quality of supervision process. The disappearance has been caused by laxity after completion of the course work. Some students even disappear soon after completion of course work and only appear after a long time. Some of the reasons for this are that most students at postgraduate level are on paid employment with some working far away from the Universities (Kimani, 2014). There are also those that disappear soon after conceptualising the research topic or before finalising the proposal. At whatever time they may disappear, the supervision process cannot be of quality, due to disruption (Wairungu & Maina, 2021).

2.5 Supervision Strategies in Thesis Supervision

Supervision strategies refer to the techniques used in universities to supervise postgraduate students. The use of a given strategy depends on universities, faculties and departments, as well as individual supervisors. This section discusses different strategies used in postgraduate supervision, namely; models of supervision and supervision approaches

2.5.1 Models of supervision

There are several models of supervision which can be applied in Postgraduate supervision. These include; (i) the functional model, (ii) Emancipation model, (iii) Enculturation model, (iii) Critical thinking model and (iv) Relationship model. Each of the models is discusses in this section.

2.5.1.1 Functional model

This model gives priority to issues of skills and development (Eley & Jennings, 2005). It involves the supervisor directing and managing the project through practical advice (Wisker & Robinson, 2016). The model provides a list of skills and tasks to be done by the supervisor, which include, Skills such as planning, directing, negotiating resources, getting the work done, monitoring and introducing the student to new colleagues (Eley & Jennings, 2005). There are instructional manuals that the supervisor uses to direct the student. Both the supervisor and the student work together by setting and agreeing on common expectations (Murphy, 2009). They also establish their style of working for the student's progress, which includes, arranging meetings, nature of feedback, adhering to ethics and avoidance of plagiarism (Wisker & Robinson, 2016).

2.5.1.2 Emancipation model

The emancipation model is a mentoring process (Taylor, 2007). The supervisor is involved in providing educational tasks and activities for advancement of the student through mentoring, coaching the research project and guiding student participation in academic practice. Mentoring is a paramount role of the supervisor in the emancipation model (Wright, Murray & Geale, 2007). The aim is to develop the Postgraduate student to be an independent researcher (Taylor, 2007. The expected progress for the student is from needing to acquire knowledge and being subject centered to becoming more performance centered and more autonomous (Murphy, 2009). The mentoring supervisor does not direct, but rather, acts as like a midwife by guiding and supporting the Postgraduate student to develop the dissertation at their own (Murphy, 2009). Taylor (2007) argues that acquiring a postgraduate degree is a transformation process and the supervisor needs to take an active role of mentorship

throughout the research project. As a mentor the supervisor is expected to provide life experiences and constructive criticism to the postgraduate student (Taylor, 2007). The purpose of mentorship is to enable the postgraduate student to develop research skills and gain the confidence of working independently (Murphy, 2009).

2.5.1.3 Enculturation model

In this model learning is seen as developing within a societal context (Lee, 2008). The model describes the importance of becoming a member of an academic discipline and therefore perceives the achieved postgraduate degree as becoming a member of a discipline (Lee, 2008). The postgraduate student is assimilated into the institution, community and philosophical access (Taylor, 2007). The role of the supervisor is to nurture the postgraduate student to gradually acquire the characteristics and norms of the academic discipline and that of the institution (Taylor, 2007). Academics identify themselves by their discipline first and secondly by their university and department (Taylor, 2007). The supervisor will provide some specific expertise to the student as well as being a gatekeeper on learning resources, networks and specialist opinions depending on the stage of research project (Wisker & Robinson, 2016). The Postgraduate student needs to acquire a great deal of professional and interpersonal knowledge about how to research and the academic life in the discipline (Wisker & Robinson, 2016).

2.5.1.4 Critical thinking model

Critical thinking focuses on analysis (Stevenson & Brand, 2006). It's a supervision model which requires the postgraduate student to think critically and look for hidden logic in theories (Lee, 2008). A key requirement for the Postgraduate student in this model is to have the ability to synthesise literature and make coherent arguments (Lee, 2008). Conventionally this is the heart of research supervision (Wisker &

Robinson, 2016). Skills such as constant inquiry, analysis and argument are essential when using this model (Stevenson & Brand, 2006). Brown and Freeman (2000, p. 301) argue that critical thinking comes in many forms, but all possess a single core feature; they presume that human arguments require evaluation if they are to be worthy of widespread respect. Hence the critical thinking model is a form of supervision that focuses on a set of skills and attitudes that requires the Postgraduate student to apply rational reasoning when developing the research project (Stevenson & Brand, 2006).

2.5.1.5 Relationship development: a qualities model

This is called a qualities model because it aims at identifying the qualities of a good supervisor who can work in a productive relationship with the student. Several researchers have shown evidence that poor student-supervisor relationship is a major cause of poor completion rates for Postgraduate students (Jones, 2013; Litalien, 2015; Mbogo et al., 2020, Kiley, 2011). Wisker and Robinson (2016) argue that emotional intelligence and positive relationship play a big part in working with students through to successful completion. The quality of the supervisory relationship is fundamental for the student to succeed (Mbogo et al., 2020). Postgraduate graduates who successfully completed their postgraduate studies within the expected time frame are likely to have had supportive interaction with their supervisors (Litalien, 2015). A good supervisor shows undivided concern to the students by attending to their needs (Kiley, 2011). When the needs of a student are not attended to, it creates an environment of blame and disagreement between the student and the supervisor. Such a situation breaks the focus of the research process and strains the student-supervisor relationship (Litalien, 2015).

2.5.2 Supervision approaches

While using any of the models or style of supervision discussed above, a supervisor can also choose to use a specific approach in guiding the research student. These approaches include;

(i)   The "hands off approach" and (ii) The "hands on" approach

These approaches can be utilised at different stages of the research process depending on the expectations of the student and the supervisor.

2.5.2.1 "Hands off" approach

Some supervisors use the hands off approach mainly for postgraduate students (Sinclair, 2004). In this approach, academic freedom is considered crucial for the Postgraduate student (Sinclair, 2004; Gill & Bernard, 2008). The Postgraduate candidate is expected to be an independent researcher. Therefore, some supervisors leave their postgraduate candidates to work on their own to develop independence (Gill & Bernard, 2008). The contact between the supervisor and the student is minimal, and is limited to the administrative and regulatory formality in many cases (Sinclair, 2004). This approach can work better only when the student is knowledgeable, self-confident and professionally independent. Zainal (2007) outlines three main characteristics of a postgraduate student, these are; autonomy, enthusiasm and development. The "hands off" approach assumes that these characteristics are fully developed in a candidate before joining a postgraduate study (Zainal, 2007).

According to Firth and Martens (2008) the whole idea of personal and emotional support during research supervision does not exist in this approach. Therefore, it is quite evident that slow and low completion of Postgraduate studies can be attributed to this approach (Firth and Martens (2008). Gill and Bernard (2008) acknowledges

the fact that it is not possible to have all the ideal qualities in all postgraduate candidates. Dixon & Hanks (2010) argue that supervisors should work closely with Postgraduate students and introduce them to variety of skills which they need to use in carrying out their research. Students who are equipped with the necessary skills are in a position to work more smartly and manage their research project without digressions or confusion. However, in the hands off approach there is less direction to the student and minimum contact with supervisor (Sinclair, 2004). Therefore, the approach slows down the research and writing process, and in some cases, the student might be tempted to drop out in the middle of the process (Sinclair 2004).

2.5.2.2 "Hands on" approach

The "hands on" approach is a more personal approach where the supervisor and the student establish a close academic relationship (Sinclair 2004). Such an approach enables the development of an appropriate supervisory relationship (Lee, 2008). The student and the supervisor work very closely based on a consistent relationship they have established (Sinclair 2004). Firth and Martens (2008) point out that "the hands on" approach uses an open door consultation approach which is advantageous to a Postgraduate student who needs constant guidance from the experienced supervisor. The approach also allows the student and the supervisor to plan regular meetings and interaction (Sinclair 2004). Given the close relationship between the supervisor and the student, the supervisor clearly plays a significant role in mentoring and coaching the research students (McCallin & Shoba, 2012). The supervisor takes all the responsibility to provide expert coaching and mentoring based experiences (McCallin & Shoba, 2012).

Given the nature of the close and informal relationship, the candidate has more chance to receive formal and informal feedback in their work (Dixon & Hanks, 2010). The close relationship also ensures that there are no power plays; instead, supervisors use their superior position to mentor the students (McCallin & Shoba, 2012). Supervisors relate with the students without showing that they have more power than them, and as such, provide the necessary space to enable them engage as emerging independent scholars (Dixon & Hanks, 2010).

2.6 Supervisors' Experiences of Thesis Supervision Practices

Supervisors have varied experiences of the thesis supervision process. This section outlines the experiences that supervisors encounter while supervising their students;

According to Burns and Badiali (2016) one of the most challenging experiences for any supervisor is adopting a suitable supervision style. Supervisors are often faced with the difficulty of adopting a specific supervision style in supervising their students (Schulze, 2012). There are several supervision styles and a supervisor as the choice to adopt any style as may seem suitable to him/her. However, several supervisors have described that it is not possible to use a specific supervision style due to diversity of the nature of students and the kind of research at hand (Lee, 2008). It appears from the experience of many supervisors that there is no single suitable supervision style that can be applicable in all situations (Burns & Badiali, 2016). As such, a supervisor has the responsibility of choosing at every time, a certain supervision style, depending on the nature of the student, the nature of the study, the mode of study and the stage of the research process (Selemani, Chawinga & Dube, 2018).

Supervisors also experience the challenge of supervising students who cannot work independently (van Rensburg et al., 2012). The ultimate success of postgraduate

supervision, especially PhD supervision, is to develop a sense of agency by guiding the student to be independent (Naidoo & Mthembu, 2015). An achievement that every supervisor celebrates is managing to develop and empower the postgraduate student to take ownership of his or her projects and work as an independent scholar (Wairungu & Maina, 2021). However, supervisors sometimes find themselves working with students who are unable develop their own projects (van Rensburg et al., 2012). These are problematic students who put no effort to learn from their supervisors. Many supervisors go through the trouble of spoon-feeding this category of students who cannot initiate their own ideas or generate new knowledge independently in the research process. This bothers the supervisor even more if the student is a doctoral candidate who is generally expected to be knowledgeable and should work with minimal guidance from the supervisor (Marchan, Delgado, & Stefos, 2017). The supervision process is expected to develop the postgraduate student to be independent.

Supervisors expect that during the mentorship process, students should develop the capacity to become independent researchers and experts in their chosen fields (van Rensburg et al., 2012). A fruitful supervision is where the supervisor trains, natures and empowers postgraduate students to enable them develop self-efficacy; to be students who have confidence in themselves and can do research on their own (Wairungu & Maina, 2021). There are students who take an active role in the research process to develop their own ideas and their own sense of direction within their research (van Rensburg et al., 2012). However, many supervisors agree that the most problematic students to work with are those who expect to be spoon-fed and are unable to develop their own projects (Litalien, 2015). These are students who have characteristics like lack of initiative, confidence and self-reliance; they will always

look upon their supervisors in every aspect of the research process (van Rensburg et al., 2012). Supervisors appreciate students who are willing to learn and take a bold step of working independently (Wairungu & Maina, 2021; Litalien, 2015).

Another common experience among supervisors is working with students with poor writing skills (Wallace & Wray, 2021). It is generally expected that a postgraduate student should have competent writing and language skills (Dietz, Jansen & Wadee, 2006). However, not all students have the necessary skills to write their research despite pursuing a postgraduate degree (Kamler & Thomson, 2014). Many supervisors have to bear with postgraduate students with poor writing skills and they end up becoming language editors for their students (Wallace & Wray, 2021). Such students with poor writing skills curtail the supervisor's contribution to effective supervision (Wang & Li, 2011). On several occasions, supervisors are often distracted from focusing on important research skills; and instead, they are forced to concentrate on training their students the necessary writing skills to enable them write their theses (Dietz, et al., 2006). Even though supervision is challenging, it becomes even more difficult for the supervisor when students join postgraduate degree with limited or poor writing skills (Wallace & Wray, 2021). A student with competent writing skills makes the work of the supervisor easier and enjoyable; unfortunately, there are not many students with such skills (Kamler & Thomson, 2014).

Supervisors also sometimes find themselves supervising students who are not committed to their research work (Kamler & Thomson, 2014). Most postgraduate students have a lot of other responsibilities which are not related to the research work (Wairungu & Maina, 2021). They are over commitment with outside interests like employment (Celik, 2013). This is seems to be the most serious shortcoming of

postgraduate students' study progress (Wairungu & Maina, 2021). It does not bear any fruits to supervise a Postgraduate student who is not focus to the study since the student is not ready for the guidance (Bacwayo et al., 2017). For a successful research degree completion the postgraduate student needs to be self-directed, dedicated and focused during the entire course of study (Wallace & Wray, 2021). The supervisor becomes frustrated when working with a student whose focus and commitment is with different activities other than the research at hand (Bacwayo et al., 2017).

Non commitment of students also goes with laziness that discourages supervisors (Naidoo & Mthembu, 2015). Many supervisors admit that it is difficult to supervise a student who is lazy and lacks focus (Wang &Li, 2011). A student who is lazy derails the effort of the supervisor; even with the guidance of a strong supervisor, a lazy student would still ignore the best expertise and fail to implement the guidance given (Naidoo & Mthembu, 2015). Lazy students with unsteady work habits make the work of their supervisors difficult (Dietz, et al., 2006). It is extremely challenging for supervisors to deal with students who fail to do their work even after they have been given the required guidance (Wang &Li, 2011). Supervisors end up getting demotivated when supervising such lazy students who cannot drive their project and hence expect results without putting any effort to their work (Dietz, et al., 2006).

According to Celik (2013) supervisors expect their students to be hardworking and self-motivated. Lack of self-motivation derails the student's effort to work towards the goal even with the guidance of a strong supervisor (Wang &Li, 2011). Such a student would ignore the most important organisational skills that are required of a hardworking student, which include; setting goals, managing time and paying attention to details (Dietz, et al., 2006). Supervisors like to work with students who

are enthusiastic and organised; these are key ingredients to effective supervision and productive research (Celik, 2013). Unfortunately, some supervisors find themselves with students who have no ability to work consistently and instead expect results without effort (Celik, 2013). It is difficult for supervisors to deal with students who fail to do their work and hence not progress steadily (Wang &Li, 2011). Supervisors expect students to understand that they must drive their project as the supervisor guides (Wang &Li, 2011). Hardworking students with steady and dedicated work habits make the work of their supervisors' easier (Dietz, et al., 2006).

Some students rarely communicate with their supervisors during the supervision process (Frick et al., 2014). Supervisors appreciate the importance of communication with their students and seek to provide them with valuable feedback and advice (Dimitro, 2016). However, supervisors have described experiences with students who rarely communicate; they want to work with little supervision, or shy away from criticism hence avoid communication and feedback from their supervisors (Frick et al., 2014). Such students isolate themselves and refuse to discuss or interact with their supervisors, and thus, rarely communicate to their supervisors (Celik, 2013). Supervisors expect their students to maintain constant communication with them at all stages of the research process (Lee, 2009). A good communication happens when the student and the supervisor develop a good relationship during the Postgraduate study (Kamler & Thomson, 2014). Lack of communication hampers the supervision process and the students' quality of work (Dimitro, 2006).

Despite the challenging experiences that supervisors go through, many supervisors agree that supervising postgraduate students is an enjoyable experience (Hamid et al., 2021). Midwifing a student's career to the highest level is not only an achievement

but a fulfilling experience to the supervisor. Supervisors describe the experience of seeing a student grow into an independent researcher as satisfying (Hamid et al., 2021). Even though the achievement is for the student, the supervisor takes credit for mentoring the student to the level of independence. Supervisors working with committed and enthusiastic students enjoy the supervision process (Ngulube, 2021). It is encouraging when supervisors work with students who are eager to learn and explore new areas in research (Radloff, 2010). Most often in a successful supervision process, it is common to find supervisors establishing friendship with the students as well as intellectual companionship.

Supervision has its rewarding experiences for supervisors (Malfroy, 2005).Regular interaction with different students affords the supervisor an opportunity to grow by expanding his or her experiences in the field of research. The student's research problem is a chance for the supervisor to explore new ideas with the student and get new knowledge (Malfroy, 2005). Supervisors also not only oversee students in their specific areas of specialisation, but also co-supervise with colleagues in different departments or faculties; this allows them to widen their knowledge in different fields of research (Halse, 2011; Radloff, 2010). Carrying out joint research with postgraduate students is also an avenue that many supervisors describe as rewarding experience. Supervisors admit that collaboration with their students is an experience that has enable many to explore more in the scholarly world (Lessing & Schulze, 2003). Such experiences include writing joint articles, seeking research funds for different projects and co-presentations in research conferences (Malfroy, 2005).

Co-supervision is a great experience to many supervisors. Some supervisors describe positive experience in co-supervision while others have discouraging experiences

(Grossman & Crowther, 2015). Many supervisors express co-supervision experiences as a learning opportunity that has enabled them to learn from colleagues who are more experienced in the research field (Ngulube, 2019). Co-supervision opens the door for continuous development of the supervisor when co-supervising with different colleagues at different time and with different students (Ngulube, 2019). It provides a convergence of several minds and creates a greater potential for knowledge sharing (Ngulube, 2019). Other supervisors praise co-supervision because of the sharing of tasks while co-supervising a student (Ukwoma & Ngulube, 2020). For supervisors who can work in harmony, co-supervision provides them a chance to share the workload equally (Ngulube, 2019). Mutual sharing of tasks and responsibilities in co-supervision makes the work of supervisors easier and lighter as compared to the supervisor-apprentice one-to-one mode of supervision (Grossman & Crowther, 2015).

Despite the aforementioned positive experiences in co-supervisors, other supervisors have described unpleasant experiences. Harmonious working relationship is not always the case among supervisors in co-supervision (Ukwoma & Ngulube, 2020). Disagreement between supervisors is a common experience in co-supervision. Some supervisors cannot agree on some issues and they end up giving conflicting advice or feedback to students (Ukwoma & Ngulube, 2020). In some cases, there are interpersonal differences which relate to power differentials among supervisors that affect their working relationship in co-supervision (Olmos-Lopez & Sunderland, 2017). There is also the problem of commitment of supervisors, some supervisors are lazy and less committed, they leave the all workload to their colleagues (Kumar & Wald, 2022).Others cannot sit and share the tasks and one could just relax thinking the other will do (Kumar & Wald, 2022). Unclear roles and responsibilities in co-supervision is an experience that many supervisors have

encountered (Ukwoma & Ngulube, 2020). Some supervisors become less effective in co-supervision due to ambiguity of roles, even the most experience become inefficient when there is no mutual agreement on how to work (Kumar & Wald, 2022).

2.7 Postgraduate Students Experiences of Thesis Supervision Practices

Postgraduate students have different experiences encountered with their supervisors and the whole supervision process. This section explores literature on experiences of postgraduate students in the supervision process.

Sverdlik, McAlpine & Hubbard (2018) argue that confusion and uncertainty are common experiences among postgraduate students in the supervision process. Many postgraduate students admit that they feel confused and uncertain on what to do and how to handle their work during certain stages in their research process (Kosgei et al., 2019). Despite the direction and guidance given by the supervisors, some students seem to get lost all together in the entire process of writing their research. According to Syomwene (2021) many students join their graduate studies when they are not prepared for the enormous task associated with pursuing a PhD or a Masters study. They tend to get confuse when they get more into the project and the workload becomes heavier (Sverdlik et al., 2018).

In spite of the feelings of confusion and uncertainty, many students have described being engaged in an inspiring supervision with their supervisors. In several studies with postgraduate students (schulze, 2012, Rugut 2017, McClure, 2005) the participants expressed their views on how their supervisors inspired them to progress and complete their studies. They described how their supervisors showed interest in their research projects and supported them to progress well. A friendly and inspiring working relationship with the supervisor is an expectation of every student (Matheka

et al., 2020b). Students expect their supervisors to be friendly and be able to inspire them to progress and complete their studies (Matheka et al., 2020b). They look at their supervisors to give them encouragement, energy and motivation to work (Wallace & Wray, 2021). Most students struggle in their postgraduate studies and they expect their supervisors to be friendly, open and supportive (Celik, 2013).

According to Orellana et al. (2016) it appears that if the supervisor takes the responsibility of guiding and also inspiring the student, it gives more energy to the student to work smartly in the research project. Pyhältö, Vekkaila and Keskinen (2015) argue that when both the student and the supervisor have a common interest in the research topic, it promotes an exchange of ideas resulting in a generally supportive and inspiring research environment. Successful supervision requires the supervisor to motivate the student throughout the study period (Khanna & Den otter, 2013). There are supervisors who work closely with their students to nurture them in the research field (Khanna & Den otter, 2013). A supervisor who is friendly and inspiring creates an opportunity for a peaceful working relationship with the student, which enhances the learning process (Schulze, 2012, Rugut, 2017)

Other students have described experiences of working with thorough supervisors who engage them fully in every activity. There are supervisors who are detail in the way they supervise their students. In a study by Ali et al. (2016) students talk of supervisors who expose them to different research forums by ensuring that they attend several research workshops physically or virtually. These supervisors ensure that their students are always engaged in activities that develop their intellectual capacities in research. In another study by (Cadman, 2010) students recognized the efforts of their supervisors who closely follow them up in their studies; by providing deadlines of doing work, ensuring that they read variety materials in their field and staying focused

to their work. They reported that their supervisors gave them feedback on time and provided constructive comments which gave them direction on how to improve their work. Others noted that, even though their supervisors were too busy they always created time to meet with them and discuss their work (Ali et al., 2016). Other students have expressed their experiences of supervisors engaging them in join publications in order to train them on how to write scholarly work for publication (Friedrick-Nel & Mackinnon, 2014).

Even though some postgraduate students experience inspiring and supportive supervision, other students experience harshness and discouragement from their supervisors (Moris, 2011). Students often complaint of harsh criticism from their supervisors, which makes them feel demotivated and discouraged (Morris, 2011). The relationship between the student and the supervisor can be characterised by discontent if not well managed, this may frustrate the student to discontinue the studies (Detsky & Baerlocher, 2007). Many students admit that their supervisors offer little assistance, but at the same time criticize them negatively even when they have done their best without the supervisor's contribution by Krauss and Ismi (2010).

Some students have described feeling miserable and uncertain with the criticisms from their supervisors (Yarwood-Ross & Haigh, 2014). Even though the supervisor could be doing it in a positive way to improve the work of the student, it can also dishearten the student (Yarwood-Ross & Haigh, 2014). Students expect their supervisors to read their work carefully and provide a constructive feedback (Kosgei et al., 2019). They look onto their supervisors to provide guidance on how to structure their work and make it better (Garner, 2012). They also presume that their supervisors should critique their work if it seems to go off course, seem misguided, become too

adventurous, vague, becomes wider in scope and generally when things seem to go wrong (Phillips & Johnson, 2022).

The supervisor's critique is important to make the student think critically and also to provide more ideas to the students work (Grossman & Crowther, 2015). However, the critique may not be received well by the student when he/she feels unfairly criticized (Grossman & Crowther, 2015. it is more frustrating and confusing to the student when the supervisor critics the work harshly and without providing an alternative way of improving the work to make it better (Khanna & Den Otter, 2013). It is important for supervisors to be sensitive while critiquing students work. Students also should consider the criticisms by their supervisors as compliments to improve their work (Sverdlik et al., 2018).

Working with busy supervisors who have no time for the student is also an experience that has been described by many students in postgraduate studies (Wang & Byram 2019). Students expect to have regular contact with their supervisors (Crowhurst & Cornish, 2020). However, several studies (Nita, 2015, McClure, 2005, Smallwood, 2004) show that many postgraduate students complaint of inconsistent or sporadic contact with their supervisors. Smallwood (2004) argues that some supervisors seem to consider students they supervise as an afterthought where students are tolerated rather than given priority. Other supervisors have little or no interest in the students' work and they tend to give a higher priority and interest to their own research work compared to the students' research projects (McClure, 2005). It is also possible that supervisors could be overwhelmed by other responsibilities like teaching, administration, or many students to supervise. This deprives them of the time they would have spent with the students they supervise (Crowhurst & Cornish, 2020). Some universities do not have established formal requirement for regular meetings

between students and supervisors, as such, the supervisor only meets the student at the time of his/her choice when available (Wang & Byram 2019). This is an experience that discourages students in their research journey and causes delayed completion of postgraduate studies.

According to Galt (2013) students expect their supervisors to be available when needed. The student and the supervisor need to mutually plan regular supervision sessions (Friedrick-Nel & Mackinnon, 2014). It is important to meet in every session which has been planned, but sometimes the supervisor is absent because of their busy schedules with other commitments within or outside the university (Mbogo et al., 2020). Friedrick-Nel and Mackinnon (2014) suggests that if the supervisor plans to be away from the university for a longer period of time, he or she should inform the student to avoid leaving the student stranded and unattended. Apart from the planned face to face meetings that students want to have with their supervisors, they also expect that they should be able to reach their supervisors through emails or phone calls for consultation at any time (Galt, 2013). In order to be able to plan meetings and maintain constant communication, the student and the supervisor need to discuss their availability and communication issues right at the start of the research project; this develops the student and supervisors rapport from the beginning (Mbogo et al., 2020). Lack of close engagement between the student and the supervisor couple with unmet student expectations may cause conflict between the student and the supervisor (Mohammadi, 2020). There are experiences of disagreements between the student and the supervisor (Nita, 2015). Postgraduate supervision is an arduous and complex process that conflicts can easily arise if not well managed (Hardy, 2014). There are many instances when students experience discontent in the supervision process. Students depend on their supervisors, not only to provide academic guidance, but also

to provide some pastoral care. Nonetheless, there are supervisors who are involved in bullying their students instead of assisting them. Some students have described their relationship with their supervisors as a frustrating experience (Krauss & Ismi, 2010). A study by Moris (2011) revealed that some supervisors talk to their students in a demeaning way, reject their work with negative comments and even treat them in a commanding and dictatorial way where the student have no say in the all process of research. Due to power dynamics the student is always disadvantaged by virtue of his/her position. In some cases, students have been forced to change their supervisors due to frequent disagreements with their supervisors (Grevholm et al., 2005)

Apart from experiences of disagreement between the student and the supervisor, there are also cases when students experience disagreement among supervisors themselves in co-supervision (Olmos-López and Sunderland, 2017). There are instances when a student is given contradicting guidance by supervisors in a co-supervision. Some students being supervised by two or more supervisors have described experiences of supervisors disagreeing on how some work should be done (Grossman & Crowther, 2015). Supervisors can have widely differing opinions on how some specific issues in research should be done; this could be in terms of framing or reframing the topic, methodology, analysis or general presentation of the work. In some cases the disagreement could be about power dynamics between the supervisors (Olmos-López and Sunderland, 2017). Such disagreement impacts negatively on the progress of the student. It is therefore necessary for supervisors to enable a harmonious working environment for the student (Ungadi et al, 2015). Supervisors need to be aware of students concerns; this enables them to become more mindful of their interaction with the students and hence work in harmony for the success of the student (Ungadi et al, 2015).

There are also experiences of overdependence on the supervisor in the research process. Some students admit that they rely on their supervisors in absolutely everything in their learning process (Naidoo & Mthembu (2015). Even though it is the role of the supervisor to guide and give direction to the student, it is advisable for the student to learn how to work independently without necessarily asking the supervisor everything. In a study by Rugut (2017) students confess that depending on the supervisor in entirely everything is frustrating since supervisors are not always available for consultation. This is mostly common among students who do not have a strong base of research skills; especially those who have not gone through course work or research workshops to broaden their knowledge and enhance their research skills (Blome, Hellström, Kovács, Zetterberg, Åkesson, 2011). It is difficult for such students to progress in the absence of the supervisor. They wait for their supervisors to provide direction on specific tasks to be undertaken at every stage of the research process (Blome et al, 2011)

2.8 Capacity Building of Supervisors for Thesis Supervision in Universities

This sectors explores literature on capacity building of supervisors to develop their knowledge and skills in supervision process

One of the most important factors contributing to the thesis and research quality is the process of developing expertise in supervisors' research supervision. According to Calma (2014) there is an urgent need to put more attention on preparedness of postgraduate supervisors in universities. This can be done by ensuring that there are properly laid down mechanisms in universities that focus on improving the supervision skills of academics (Calma, 2014).

Developing the profession of supervisors is paramount in order to help them succeed in their demanding task, especially supervising postgraduate students (Guerin et al., 2017). However, many universities have not prioritised capacity building of supervisors. Little has been reported on how universities, especially in developing nations, support their research supervisors to sharpen their skills, particularly on programs related to postgraduate supervision (Guerin et al., 2017). This is evidence that many universities give little attention to capacity building of supervisors (Guerin et al., 2017).

According to Bacwayo, Nampala and Oteyo (2017*)* universities should address the increasingly complex roles and skills required of supervisors by putting in place the strategies that can provide different levels of support for supervisors. Every supervisor wants to enhance his or her skills within a particular framework, for example, becoming more able at developing critical thinking or effective at supporting a research student (Bacwayo et al., 2017). Some of the approaches which may be appropriate in enhancing supervisor skills are peer learning and support, mentoring and specialised seminars and conferences targeting supervision topics (Calma, 2014). Developing skills in supervision needs to be tackled in various ways and to form part of ongoing process for supervisor development in universities.

2.8.1 The need for capacity building of supervisors in postgraduate supervision

The basic requirement for an academic to be appointed to supervise a student in many universities in the world is that, supervisors must hold particular advanced degree qualification (Guerin et al., 2017). For Postgraduate supervision, at least a PhD is usually required for one to be a supervisor in most universities (Guerin et al., 2017). However, postgraduate student supervision is much more than holding an advanced

degree qualification (Blose, Msiza & Chioraro, 2021).). In conducting supervision, a range of managerial skills, interpersonal and cultural competencies is required (Calma, 2014). Therefore, many universities today are increasingly recognising the need to attend to formal supervisor preparation and development beyond the basic qualification requirement of the institution (Blose, Msiza & Chioraro, 2021).

In the current changing complexity of supervision in higher education, there is a need for even experienced supervisors to update their skills and enriched their experiences (Blose, Msiza & Chioraro, 2021). The Postgraduate research supervision today occurs within a rapidly changing environment, that even the experienced supervisors also need formal supervision training (Bogelund, 2015). This is necessary in enabling supervisors to cope with the current trends in Postgraduate supervision arising from internationalization, diverse student expectations and societal demands (Hamid et al., 2021)

The drastically changing nature of postgraduate research occasioned by the moving nature of knowledge has had a considerable impact on supervision and supervision practices (Hamid et al., 2021). This has resulted to a fast change in the nature of postgraduate supervision. Academic supervision today is subject to scrutiny by different bodies including employers and funding bodies (Bogelund, 2015). A consequence of this is the decreasing relevance of supervisors' own supervisory experiences for supervision in the twenty first century university, and hence the need for supervisors to develop new supervisory practices (Blose, Msiza & Chioraro, 2021). Supervisors, even the most experienced, need to refresh, and some universities in developed nations have established regular mandatory training for supervisors of all experience levels (Blose, Msiza & Chioraro, 2021).

Supervising postgraduate students has become more challenging (Guerin et al., 2017). Professional development of supervisors is inevitable given that research supervision is dynamic (Syomwene, 2021; Wisker & Robinson, 2016). Many universities today have introduced supervisor training programs in an effort to ensure quality postgraduate supervision and research training (Guerin et al., 2017). Most of the programs are particularly focused on supervision of postgraduate students, which is deemed to be the most challenging form of training (Lee, 2011). The training of supervisors in universities has been prompted by the increasingly complex research environment and the supervisor's own experience is insufficient to guide postgraduate research (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2011). Universities have therefore introduced training programs to develop supervisors' capacity in order to address supervision shortfalls (Guerin et al., 2017). The programs are mostly guided by government policies regarding research training and the need to build national research capacity in universities (Dimitro, 2016). Studies have shown that such supervisor training programs have a positive long-term effect on the supervisory practices of academics (McCulloch & Loeser, 2016). Sensitized

According to Chikte and Chabillal (2016), there should be a formal, consistent and ongoing capacity building workshops and seminars on supervision that are carried out in universities to strengthened the supervision skills of supervisors. Formal training workshops provide opportunities for supervisors to interact and learnt from each other by sharing their experiences (Bogelund, 2015). They are also avenues of learning new ideas, knowledge and skill of supervision. Chikte and Chabillal (2016) point out that supervisory training and support plays a key role in strengthening the supervision skills of supervisors, and hence improving the quality of postgraduate supervision.

Supervisors require training on different approaches of supervision in order to enable them supervise effectively with varied styles (Lee & Murray, 2015). Turner (2015) argues that each time a student moves to a higher level of progress in his or her research, the supervisor needs to bring in more advanced and creative supervision approach and skills. It is advisable for research students to see the research journey as professional development and as such, they should be ready to work with their supervisors. Lee and Murray (2015) states that a supervisor who only supervises with a strict structure is said to be a weak supervisor. Throughout the process of conducting the research, the supervisor should be able to stimulate students towards thinking creatively for self-development of the student (Lee & Murray, 2015). If the supervisor is to supervise successfully, there must be regular training on different supervision approaches that shapes the skills of supervisors to meet the dynamic and changing landscape of Postgraduate supervision (Turner, 2015).

Postgraduate supervision is a complex process that involves political pressures, adherence to policy, evolving pedagogical structures and prolonged supervisor-student relationships (Hadingham, 2010). An effective supervisor must be knowledgeable and have skills in the field of research conducted by students. According to Manathunga (2007) supervisors need to have a wide knowledge related to the field of study conducted by students or a strong background in research and publication in field. Debra, Tamara and Kim (2021) agree with this statement and state that to supervise well, supervisors need regular training and refresher courses to be able to reflect, analyze knowledge and techniques or methods of research.

Supervisor development today should focus on pedagogy of supervision (Guerin & Green, 2013). In the past, supervisor training programs have concentrated on the

aspect of compliance to administrative policies of research supervision (Guerin & Green, 2013). Manathunga, Peseta and McCormack (2010) emphasises that supervisor training should focus on supervision pedagogy that builds upon the supervisors' prior knowledge and understandings. According to Emilsson and Johnsson (2007) reflective practice as well as the emotional and interpersonal elements of research supervision should not be ignored; instead they should be placed as key concerns in supervisor training.

2.8.2 Mentoring novice supervisors for Postgraduate supervision

When new supervisors are appointed to supervise postgraduate students in universities, there is a common assumption that they know what is expected of them (Sefotho, 2018). Maguire & Delahunt (2017) points out that new supervisors experience several challenges when supervising postgraduate students for the first time. These supervisors rely on the supervision skills and experiences arising from what they observed from their supervisors during their studies as masters and postgraduate students (Bastalish, 2017; Lee, 2008; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). As a result, novice supervisors often repeat the supervision approaches that they experienced while they were students (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).Such skills cannot enable them to supervise Postgraduate students in the best way required for quality research (Sefotho, 2018). There is therefore a need to offer support through training and mentoring (Bastalish, 2017; Yazdani & Shokooh, 2018)

Co-supervision is one paramount way of mentoring novice supervisors (Bazrafkan, Yousefy, Amini & Yamani, 2019). Through co-supervision new supervisors get the opportunity to work hand in hand with veteran supervisors who can help them learn and gain the necessary skills (Lee & Murray, 2015). According to Frick and Glosoff

(2014) co-supervision is one vital way of developing the supervisory skills of novice supervisors. It is an influential way because the novice supervisors gain self-efficacy through observation, interaction, actual practice and support from the principal supervisor who is much experienced in the field of supervision (Frick & Glosoff, 2014)

Lived experiences of long serving supervisors provide a rich reservoir for training novice supervisors (Lee & Murray, 2015). Many supervisors admit that learning from colleagues is a very important aspect of gaining skills to become a postgraduate supervisor. Some studies on co-supervision, like a study by Bazrafkan et al. (2019) shows how participants describe the much they gain from co-supervision; one participant said ''*a lot of the stuff I have learned about supervision has come from co-supervising with more experienced colleagues'* (Bazrafkan, 2019 p.8). Manathunga (2007) argues that for better training of new supervisors, it is important to involve the novice supervisor from the start of the research process in joint supervisory consultations with the postgraduate student. The novice supervisor should be given an opportunity to play an active role in developing the topic, designing the research and giving feedback of written drafts submitted by the student (Manathunga, 2007). The supervisor should also participate in the final process of examination of the thesis (Bazrafkan et al., 2019).

Apart from co-supervision, new supervisors can also be equipped for their role through training by completing a course (Debra, Tamara & Kim, 2021; Abdullah & Evans, 2012). Some universities, especially in developed countries offer research supervision courses to their novice supervisors (Frick & Glosoff, 2014). McCallin and Nayar (2012) argue that formal training of supervisors is important because it

prevents or at least reduce the frustrations that novice supervisors go through as they make an effort on a trial-and-error to supervise research students. Such courses are meant to build the competencies of novice supervisors; it covers different topics on writing and evaluation of a thesis to the supervision skills required of a postgraduate supervisor (Abdullah & Evans, 2012). Frick & Glosoff (2014) asserts that the focus of induction courses should be on pedagogy of supervision and not administrative approaches.

Supervision training helps the novice supervisor to explore the different approaches to supervision and adapt to the supervision pedagogies (Turner 2015). Adequate support can enable novice supervisors to develop their skills gradually beginning from what they learn from their personal supervision experiences as students (Amundsen & McAlpine 2009). Universities should consider prioritizing the training and mentoring of novice supervisors before being appointed as principal supervisor to a Postgraduate student (Frick & Glosoff, 2014). The training should focus on supervisor development initiatives that enable the novice supervisor to develop skills that are necessary for guiding Postgraduate students (Syomwene, 2021).

2.8.3 Establishing formal supervision training framework in universities

While the need for support, development and training of supervisors is very important, it has not been done in a regular and formal way especially in universities in sub-Saharan Africa (Daramola, 2021). However, some universities in Africa have carried out the capacity building of supervisors in an informal manner, the results of which have aided in informing the development of supervision frameworks used in the universities (Daramola, 2021). A number of universities in sub-Saharan Africa have not traditionally had laid down formal structures for training supervisors in

supervision of Postgraduate students (Lemmer, 2016). The emerging international best practices in leading universities in developed countries involves establishing formal structures that guide the development of supervisory skills among supervisors (Lemmer, 2016). New and inexperienced supervisors are required to go through some form of training in order to be allowed to supervise Postgraduate students, and at the same time, the experienced supervisors have regular trainings to polish and improve their supervision skills (Calma, 2014)

There is need to ensure that a formal framework for supervisor support and development is established in every university (Masek & Alias, 2020). A well-developed supervisor training framework, that is visible and functional, works well in producing effective supervisors (Woo et al., 2015). It is important for universities to embed the framework within the policies governing Postgraduate research in the institution (van Schalkwyk, Murdoch-Eaton & Tekian, 2016). There are different frameworks that can be developed in a university and supervisors may have different opinions about each framework and its unique characteristics (Masek & Alias, 2020). It therefore means that different universities may choose to implement supervisor training in diverse, but equally effective, ways (van Schalkwyk et al, 2016). The most important issue is to develop a supervision training framework that meets the needs of supervisors and students in the university (van Schalkwyk et al, 2016). Such framework should be clearly recognised as a university policy that guides Postgraduate supervision (Woo et al., 2015).

Designing a supervision training framework for a particular institution should take into account several issues (Qureshi & Vazir, 2016; Masek & Alias, 2020). Such factors include the diversity of supervisors' previous experiences, essential skills for

supervision, supervisor and student needs and the required resources among other requirements (Qureshi & Vazir, 2016). Since different individual universities have unique challenges, opportunities and resources, it is important for every university to conduct a review of their existing resources for supervision development (Qureshi & Vazir, 2016).The purpose of undertaking the review is to design a framework that works well within the strategic and operational constraints of the university. It also helps in identifying the strengths and weaknesses with the available resources, as well as how to source further resources that supervisors may require to meet new demands and challenges (Woo et al., 2015; Qureshi & Vazir, 2016).

2.9 Strengthening Postgraduate Supervision in Universities

Postgraduate students and supervisors have different experiences and perceptions on how supervision could improve in universities. This section focuses on existing literature on perceptions of postgraduate students' and supervisors on how postgraduate supervision could be enhanced in higher education

According to Frick et al., (2014) supervision could be enhanced by creating a courteous and frequent communication between the student and the supervisor. Poor communication and lack of interaction are known contributing factors to the breakdown of supervision relationships (Frick et al., 2014). A complaint that is common to most postgraduate students is erratic and infrequent communication with the supervisor (Phillips & Johnson, 2022). Supervision is a two-way interactional process (Alam, Alam & Rasul, 2013) and it therefore requires both the supervisor and the student to willfully and consistently engage each other in an open-minded and professional way throughout the study period (Phillips & Johnson, 2022). Frequent communication opens a space for dialogue and discussion between the student and the supervisor; this leads to a mutual agreement on issues being discussed like deadlines

for submitting work by the student and when to expect the feedback from the supervisor (Frick et al., 2014). Open communication enables the student and the supervisor to understand each other and address any difficulties that may occur during the research study (Hardy, 2014).

Enhancing the knowledge and skills of supervisors is also key in supervision. According to Blose et al., (2021) Shaping the knowledge and skills of supervisors is inherently important in enhancing supervision in higher education (Blose et al., 2014). As already steady in the earlier sections, thesis supervision is dynamic and it undergoes continues transformation. Supervisors, both new and experienced in the field, should continuously enrich and polish their supervision knowledge and skills (Al Kiyumi & Hammad, 2020). There should also be support from universities; every university should strive to invest in supportive strategies within departments and faculties to ensure that supervisors' knowledge and skills are enhanced to be at par with the current supervision practices and standards globally (Blose et al., 2021). In the absence of such support structures the supervision process and the quality of research and output could be compromised.

The support structures that are essential in enhancing the knowledge and skills of supervisors could include training of supervision (Guerin et al., 2017). The aim of the training is to enhance professional development of supervisors in supervision practices. There is also need for regular engagement to keep abreast with new developments in research (Igumbor et al, 2022). As already discusses in the previous section, supervision workshops and skill development programs for supervisors have proved to be beneficial in enhancing supervision and improving the quality of research (Abdullah and Evans 2012). Similarly, the more experienced supervisors in an institution are important resources that need to be tapped to mentor novice

supervisors (Amundsen & McAlpine 2009). Supervisors and students can also form research support teams to build research communities of practice to enhance the sharing of knowledge and skills (Al Kiyumi & Hammad, 2020).

Matching of the student and the supervisor is another essential factor in enabling effective postgraduate supervision (Orellana, Darder, Pérez & Salinas, 2016). Many a times in some institutions, the process is top-down where the student is allocated a supervisor, and sometimes their interests do not match (Orellana et al., 2016). Factors such as the expertise of the supervisor, the research topic of the student and the interpersonal working relationship should be of priority in matching the student and the supervisor (Orellana et al., 2016). Students should be offered the opportunity to select supervisors based on common interests and expertise (Deuchar 2008). The matching process should be open and adaptable to ensure compatibility that meets the needs of both the student and supervisor (Deuchar 2008). The supervisors should have an interest in the topic presented by the postgraduate student or the student should have an interest in the research programme of the supervisor (Orellana et al., 2016).

Another factor which is important in enhancing supervision is for the student and the supervisor to continuously negotiate in the supervision process. According to Phillips & Johnson (2022) negotiating the student-supervisor relationship is paramount for the success of any supervision process. Both the supervisor and the student should be open to negotiation during the research process. The negotiation process provides an open space for the student and the supervisor to dialogue and reach consensus on any supervision arrangements (Ives & Rowley 2005). However, according to Watt and Chiappetta (2011) whatever has been negotiated and agreed should not be taken as final with no further room for change. There should always be an option to renegotiate when there is need for change (Hardy, 2014). For effective supervision

negotiation should be a continuous process in which the supervisor and the student agree on how to work at every stage of the research project (Gurr, 2005). Ives and Rowley (2005) argue that absence of negotiation in the supervision process may lead to misunderstanding and hence negatively affecting the student-supervisor relationship and the quality of supervision.

Power dynamics between the student and the supervisor should also be checked in the supervision process (Ahmadi, Shamsi & Mohammadi, 2020). Negotiations between the student and the supervisor can be challenging because of power difference (Watt & Chiappetta, 2011). The power dynamic between the student and the supervisor is perceived to be unequal (Brill et al., 2014). The supervisor is always seen to be in a superior position and there is a possibility of not considering the students' opinion (Ahmadi et al., 2020). However, for successful supervision the supervisor should always enabled a mutual negotiation process where both the student and the supervisor have an equal opportunity to contribute to the negotiation process (Hardy, 2014). Openness, flexibility and lack of power play during negotiation could establish the basis for ongoing communication and allows a better understanding and a fruitful working relationship between the student and the supervisor (Watt & Chiappetta; Petersen, 2007). Manathunga (2007) argues that in a successful supervision process supervisors gain power by empowering their students.

Unequal power relationships in postgraduate supervision make students feel uncomfortable (Elliot & Kobayashi, 2019) and affect the student-supervisor relationship (Houston 2015). The student should not be rendered powerless by the supervisor. Instead, a spirit of adventurism in the student should be cultivated by being inspired through the research process and maintaining the joy for research within a culture that supports intellectual freedom (Petrie, et al. 2015).

Genuine care must be shown toward the students by the supervisor for a positive and productive relationship to be maintained (Hodza 2007).Supervisors should not be domineering but instead allow their students the opportunity to express their views without reservation or fear; by doing so, the students are empowered and their voices are also considered in the supervision process (Grossman & Crowther, 2015)

Managing conflict between the student and the supervisor is another critical factor in enabling effective supervision in higher education (Elliot & Kobayashi, 2019). Incompatibility of the student-supervisor match often occurs in supervision causing conflict (Orellana et al., 2016). The student and the supervisor have different personalities, opinions, ideologies and beliefs and it is therefore expected that differences can arise during the study period (Orellana et al., 2016). Such differences affect the nature of the supervisory relationship negatively. It is therefore necessary to have a way of managing the differences between the student and the supervisor (Elliot & Kobayashi, 2019). The usual expectation is that the student and the supervisor should have a harmonious working relationship for successful supervision (Phillips and Johnson, 2022). However, in case of feelings of dissatisfaction that can cause conflict, both the student and the supervisor should be willing and ready to negotiate to reach a consensus (Krauss & Ismi, 2010). It is therefore necessary to have a properly managed engagement between the student and the supervisor (Grossman & Crowther, 2015).

Creating an efficient administrative support for supervisors plays a big role in improving supervision in universities (Naidoo & Mthembu, 2015). Supervision is a demanding task that necessitates extra effort from the supervisor and the student. Supervisors are usually overburden by heavy tasks that includes teaching, research and administrative duties (Askew, et al. 2016) These tasks reduce the supervisors'

concentration from the students' work to other responsibilities; it also limits the time spent by the student and the supervisor (Ismail, et al. 2011). Often in many universities, especially in Kenya, there is little support given to the supervisor to ensure effective supervision (Askew, et al. 2016). In most cases, there is also no specific time allocated for the supervisor to meet with students. It is therefore necessary for university management to create a well-organized administrative support for supervisors. Universities should have well documented and clear guidelines that provide support mechanisms for supervisors to ensure effective supervision (Shafig et al., 2020). It is also important that the support mechanisms should be informed by the experiences of supervisors and postgraduate students (Shafig et al., 2020). This ensures that the specific needs of supervisors and students are captured in the support process. Administrative support should also include quality control processes as well as ways of fast-tracking student-supervisor engagement and progress Firth and Martens (2008).

2.10 Research Gap

The literature reviewed in this chapter addresses several aspects of postgraduate supervision locally and globally. However, there are only a few studies reporting on the nature of thesis supervision in the Kenyan context. Little is therefore known on how thesis supervision looks like in Kenyan universities and how it can be strengthened to achieve effective thesis supervision in universities. While the views of postgraduate students and supervisors could play a big role in providing an insight on how postgraduate supervision could be strengthened in Kenyan universities, there are only a few studies in the literature reviewed above that have captured the voices of postgraduate students and supervisors in Kenyan universities and how their perceptions could inform policy making. This study intends to fill this gap by drawing

on the voices of postgraduate students and supervisors in the Kenyan context in order to get into the insights of their perceptions of postgraduate supervision in Kenya. This provides an understanding of how postgraduate supervision looks like in the context of Kenyan universities and consequently help to establish how thesis supervision could be natured and strengthened to meet the objectives of higher education in Kenya, of which, one is to produce highly trained and independent scholars who can contribute to the country's development.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter explored literature on several areas beginning with higher education in Kenya and the trends of postgraduate supervision globally and regionally. It also outlined the literature on supervision related factors in the context of Kenyan universities and the supervision strategies in postgraduate supervision. The chapter also discussed the experiences of supervisors and students on thesis supervision and capacity building of supervisors in universities. The perceptions of students and supervisors on how postgraduate supervision could be strengthened was also been explored. Finally, the chapter provides a research gap drawn from the literature. The following chapter explains the research design and methodology used in the study

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and methodology of the study. It outlines the research approach, the paradigm and the research design taken in the study, as well as providing the reasons for the choice and suitability of each in the study. In addition, the chapter discusses the data generation methods as well as the procedures followed in generating the data. Equally important, the chapter describes the sampling procedure and data analysis. It also elaborates how trustworthiness and ethical consideration was ensured.

3.1 Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach. Since this study was explorative in nature as it seeks to explore the perceptions of students and supervisors on thesis supervision in Kenya, it was appropriate to use a qualitative approach. Qualitative research explores the lived experiences of humans as they engage with their daily activities in their natural settings (Yin, 2015). Looking at the objectives of the study, a qualitative approach was suitable in generating data of intense depth to answer the research questions. Qualitative approach enables the researcher to understand the complexities of the phenomenon, as many possible truths are generated by participants which they draw out of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2014). It also invites the participants to speak in their own voices and acknowledges the changing nature of human experience (Reavey & Johnson, 2012).With this approach; it was possible for the researcher to get deep into the voices of the participants who provided multiple realities of issues as they narrate their perceptions of thesis supervision in Kenyan universities. One of the weaknesses of qualitative research is that it can easily

be influenced by the biases of the researcher. Since the researcher must be present in the process of generating the data, there is a possibility that the participants' responses could be influenced by his or her presence (Creswell, 2014). To cushion this, the researcher took extra caution to remain objective during the entire period of data generation.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Paradigms are sets of beliefs or views which researchers consider to be critical tenets meant to guide their studies (Taylor & Medina, 2013). Every research is situated in a certain paradigm (Willis, 2007). This study was situated in the social constructivist paradigm. Research paradigms have developed overtime, with the positivist paradigm being the oldest established scientific paradigm. Social constructivist paradigm is considered to be a relatively new paradigm (Taylor & Medina, 2013). The focus of the positivist paradigm is on a singular objective truth, while the paradigms which have recently been developed recognizes that multiple realisms exist (Taylor & Medina, 2013; Willis, 2007). The fundamental belief of the constructivist framework is that reality is socially constructed and that multiple experiences and conceptions of reality can be apprehended (Taylor & Medina, 2013). Considering the research question which explored the perspectives of students and supervisors, it was appropriate for this study to be positioned in the social constructivist paradigm.

3.3 Research Design

A research design is the structure of research (Akhtar, 2016). It is a blueprint that guides the researcher through data generation, analysis and data translation (Akhtar, 2016). This study adopted a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is a qualitative research design that focuses on the study of an individual's lived

experiences. According to Creswell (2013) a phenomenological study explores what people experienced and focuses on their experience of a phenomenon. The fundamental goal of this design is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). It is concerned with the study of experiences from the perspective of the individual, and helps to understand the meaning of people's lived experience (Maxwell, 2013). The data generated from experiences of individuals is read and reread to identify common phrases that are used to generate themes to be discussed to make meaning of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). Through this process the researcher may construct the universal meaning of the event, situation or experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon (Maxwell, 2013).

This study was suited to this design as it was aimed at exploring the experiences of students and supervisors on thesis supervision process in Kenyan public universities. The study described the nature of postgraduate supervision in Kenyan universities from the voices of postgraduate students and supervisors. This was explored with the aim that understanding the students' and supervisors' perspectives provided a picture of how postgraduate supervision could be natured and developed for effective research supervision in Kenyan universities.

3.4 Study Area

This study was carried out in three public universities in Kenya; one in western Kenya, one in the northern part of the rift valley and another in the southern rift valley region. The three universities were purposely and conveniently selected. These are well-established universities providing postgraduate education with a strong academic staff to supervise postgraduate students, both masters and doctoral. One of the unique

characteristic of the three universities is that they have a rich history of offering higher education in Kenya for over 50 years. All the three are among the first ten institution of higher learning in Kenya. They all developed through from being training institutes to constituent colleges of universities and finally as fully fledged universities chartered between 20th and 21st century. However, it is important to note that despite the unique characteristics of the three universities, they still face equal challenges in postgraduate supervision like other universities in Kenya. The problem of inadequate supervision which this study addressed is not unique to the three universities, but a challenge across all public universities in Kenya. The selection of the three universities was therefore done conveniently and the participants participated on their own individual level sharing their personal experiences on thesis supervision. Postgraduate education in public universities in Kenya consists of coursework and thesis writing; Students attend classes in coursework and sit for examinations at the end of the coursework on designed units depending on their faculties and departments. In the thesis writing stage a student works with two or more supervisors who guide the candidate through the research process. Even though postgraduate supervision in public universities in Kenya still faces a number of challenges, the quality of training and supervision of students has been improving over time. This can be attributed to the establishment of quality assurance standards in universities. The commission for university education (CUE) is a corporate body established in Kenya to regulate and ensure quality of university education in Kenya. CUE sets standards and guidelines for universities in Kenya. In regard to postgraduate education, CUE has developed guidelines for supervision of postgraduate students. Universities also have their own regulations, policies and procedures that guide thesis supervision process. Furthermore, public universities have established directorate of

quality assurance department which monitors and evaluates the teaching processes and academic programs, and provides guidance on quality related matters. However, despite these efforts by CUE and individual universities, there are still several supervision shortfalls in public universities in Kenya, and effective supervision is yet to be achieved. There is need to enhance supervision practices in universities. The perspectives of postgraduate students and supervisors in this study identified areas of concern and possible solution for enhancing thesis supervision in universities in Kenya.

3.5 Target Population

A target population refers to those who were expected to participate directly in contributing to the study. In this study, the participants were academic supervisors and postgraduate students (Masters and Doctorate) in public universities in Kenya. The next section discusses the sampling techniques, sample size and the procedures involved in getting the participants who took part in the study.

3.6 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

In this study purposive sampling and convenient sampling was used to select the participants. Purposive sampling also called deliberate sampling is a non-random method of selecting participants based on the purpose and the objectives of the study (Etikan & Alkassim, 2016). It is a subjective sampling method because the researcher has the opportunity to rely on his or her own judgment in choosing the participants (Dolores, 2007). The participants to be selected should have the information that is needed by the researcher in the study (Etikan & Alkassim, 2016). The participants also must portray certain characteristics desired by the researcher (Dolores, 2007). Convenient sampling is a method of selecting participants based on the convenient proximity and accessibility to the researcher (Etikan & Alkassim, 2016). It is also

called availability sampling since the researcher relies on the participants who are conveniently available to participate in the study (Etikan & Alkassim, 2016).

This study targeted postgraduate students and supervisors in school of education in public universities. Three public universities were conveniently and purposely selected from three counties, one from each county. These are counties and universities which could easily be reached by the researcher. To avoid bias and conflict of interest, Moi University, which is the institution of the researcher, was not part of the selected universities for this study. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants (postgraduate students and supervisors) with the required characteristics. Every participant had to meet the inclusion criterion that was set, as elaborated in the following paragraphs. Convenient sampling was used to select the participants who could easily be reached within the three selected universities and were willing to avail themselves to take part in the study.

Qualitative studies normally involve smaller numbers of participants operating in particular environments (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Several researchers recommend a sample size of between 10-50 participants as sufficient for qualitative research depending on the research question and type of research (Clarke & Braun, 2013, Creswell 2018; Fugard & Potts, 2014). Data gathering could also be done until there is data saturation, that is, when there is no more new information from the participants and the data is sufficient to answer the research question (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Studies show that in homogenous population the data saturation occurs between 5 to 10 participants while for a more diverse population data saturation could be reached between 10 to 30 participants (Tuffour, 2017; Sutton & Austin, 2015) .Therefore, a sample of 30 participants was deemed sufficient for this study. This was drawn from

the three selected public universities and consisted of six students from each university (three doctoral and three Masters) and four supervisors, also from each university (making a total of 18 students and 12 supervisors)

In order to reach the participants, the researcher sought the assistance of postgraduate coordinators, chair of departments and administrators in the school of education in the three universities. Through the deans of school of education, the postgraduate coordinators and school administrators were requested to provide a list of names and contacts of full time lecturers who are supervisors in the school. This also included a list of postgraduate students, both Masters and doctoral, with the contact information (Mobile numbers and emails) of those who had completed their class work and were progressing in their thesis writing. With this information the researcher was able to contact the participants.

The researcher made phone calls and wrote messages to several potential participants to explain the study and requested them to participate. With the help of school administrators, the researcher first contacted the students who were on full time mode of study or working in the university with the expectation that they were within the university and could easily be reached. Supervisors were also contacted and invited to participate. Among the potential participants, both students and supervisors, who were contacted by the researcher, there are those who accepted willingly to participate in the study, while others declined due to their own reasons. The researcher considered those who responded first and positively for participation in each university; that is, the first three Masters students to respond positively, the first three doctoral students and the first four supervisors to respond positively in each of the three selected universities.

Meetings were arranged with potential participants who responded positively. Others were within the university while others were away from the university. Some meetings therefore were online while others were face to face. The researcher was able to attain the required number of participants for this study, that is, 18 students and 12 supervisors. However, the researcher was open and ready to increase the number of participants in case there was still some new information to be gained after already generating the data from the 30 participants. Nevertheless, data was already saturated after the sessions of generating data from the 30 participants.

To be included in the sample, a participant had to portray certain characteristics. For a student, he /she should; (i) be a postgraduate student, Masters or doctoral (ii) be a student in any of the selected universities (iii) must have completed coursework and working on thesis writing (iv) be a student in the school/faculty of education (v) be willing to share his/her experiences of supervision and (vi) be male or female. For academic supervisors, they had to; (i) be a full time supervisor in the selected university (ii) be a supervisor in the school/faculty of education (iii) must be supervising both doctoral and Masters students in the faculty (iv) be willing to share his/her supervision experience (v) be male or female.

3.7 Data Gathering Methods

These are approaches used in research to obtain data in the field (Creswell, 2014). The following qualitative data gathering tools were used in this study, namely;

(i)   Unstructured individual interview

(ii)   Drawing

(iii)   Focus group discussion

3.7.1 Unstructured Individual Interview

An interview can be defined as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest. It is a dialogue that offers an opportunity for the researcher to elicit information from participants in order to understand their experiences (Yin, 2015). The interview can be face to face or through a phone call. For successful data generation through the interview, the researcher should make every effort to establish rapport and create a warm; friendly and a close relationship that will make the participant feel free to disclose all the information (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007).

The advantage of unstructured interview is that the researcher takes control of the line of conversation and has the opportunity to seek clarification in case of any unclear information (Creswell, 2013). It is a flexible tool that provides in-depth information about a phenomenon (Sharma, 2010). The participants give their interpretation of the phenomenon under study and how they regard situations from their own perspectives (Yin, 2015). The researcher is able to read and interpret the verbal and non-verbal cues during the conversation an act accordingly to ensure that the participant feels free and comfortable during the interview

Use of interviews also has its own limitations. The participants may give certain opinions to please the researcher. This leads to faults in the findings. It is also time consuming and requires skills to facilitate (Yin, 2015). Similarly, interviews are sources of bias as the researcher may ask leading questions so as to get information he/she wants and not participants' authentic views. To overcome this challenges the researcher need to be skillful to ensure that the participants give their factual information without undue influence. It is also important for the researcher to listen

attentively, pause and probe where necessary to clarify what the participant is saying (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007).

The researcher chose this method because interviews are major sources of qualitative data for understanding a phenomenon under study (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007). It is suitable for generating data that would provide a deep understanding of the phenomenon from different perspectives.

3.7.2 Using the Interview in the Field

In this study, Individual interviews were used with supervisors to generate data for the first research question; *what are the experiences of supervisors on thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya?,* the third research question; *what are the supervisors' perspectives on the capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya?,* and the fourth research question; *What are the perspectives of students and supervisors on how thesis supervision could be enhanced for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in Kenya?*

There were a total of twelve (12) interviews; four supervisors were interviewed individually in each of the three selected public universities. The interview was one-on-one between the researcher and the supervisor. Each interview lasted between twenty five (25) to thirty five (35) minutes. The researcher sought consent from the participants to record the interview, and therefore, each interview was recorded using an audio recorder. For the success of the interview, the researcher made every effort to establish a rapport with the participants. The researcher took into consideration the skills suggested by Clough & Nutbrown (2007), which include; listening attentively, pausing and probing where necessary and encouraging the interviewee to be free to

respond. Some interviews were done face to face while others were done through mobile call with the participants who were willing to participate but were not available for face to face meeting. The face to face interviews were carried out in venues that were agreed with the participants.

3.7.3 Drawing

Drawing is a research tool in which participants represent their ideas in form of drawings (Mitchell, Theron, Smith, & Stuart, 2011). The data collected is in form of drawings and captions that provide meaning to the drawing made (Mitchell, Theron, Smith, & Stuart, 2011). The participants are engaged in making drawings then writing a caption (De Lange, 2011). The caption is a brief explanation of the drawing that is made below the drawing (De Lange, 2011). The participants are then given an opportunity to explain the meaning of their drawings orally (Stuart, 2007). Active participation in drawing enables participants to make a reflection and explore conscious and unconscious experiences (Mitchell et al., 2011; Guillemin, 2004). According to Mitchell, De Lange, & Moletsane (2011) drawing is a perceptive and powerful research tool used to explore how people make sense of their world.

The advantage of drawing is that it gives the participants the opportunity to bring out the aspects of knowledge and experiences which could be hard to express in words (Stuart, 2007). Such experiences could remain hidden and the researcher may not get access to (Mitchell, Theron, Smith, & Stuart, 2011). Drawings also have the potential of bringing out deep and rich data from the participants (Stuart, 2007). Similarly, it offers a powerful way of communication, which words on their own, often cannot (UNICEF, 2012). Drawing also is simple as it requires only a pencil/pen and a piece of paper (De Lange, 2011). However, the disadvantage of drawing is that some people

are not good in drawing and may hesitate to use this method to express their ideas. To circumvent this limitation, the researcher explained to the participants that the meaning attached to the drawing is more important than the artistic nature of the drawing.

3.7.3.1 Using the Drawing in the Field

In this study, drawing was used to generate data for research question two- *What are the experiences of postgraduate students on thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya.* The participants, masters and doctoral students, were engaged in making drawings of their experiences in thesis supervision process. The researcher explained to each participant that there is no poor or wrong drawing, but the most important is the meaning attached to it by use of a caption and oral explanation. This was to encourage the participants not to worry about the aesthetics of their drawing. Twelve (12) participants participated in this study, four postgraduate students from each of the three universities (two PhD and two Masters). The researcher had a session with each of the 12 individual participants separately. Twelve sessions were therefore held to generate the data using drawing as a tool.

The following prompt was provided to each participant:

- *Draw a picture that represent your experiences of thesis supervision process as a student*

Drawing and writing as well as drawing and talking was utilised to obtain responses from the participants. Each participant was given 15 minutes to draw and to write a caption, and thereafter given 5 minutes to talk about the drawing. First, each participant had to begin by drawing, and secondly, the participant had to write a caption of what the drawing means. The caption explains the meaning embedded in

the drawing. After the written explanations in form of a caption, the participants were also asked to provide an oral explanation of what the drawing represents. The researcher used a 'speaking back' approach which encourages reflection on the part of the participants who made the drawings (Mitchell & De Lange, 2013). According to Mitchell and De Lange (2013) the most appropriate people to interrogate images are those who produce them. The speaking back approach provides an opportunity to the participants to make meaning of their drawings (Mitchell & De Lange, 2013). Every participant therefore provided the meaning of his/her own drawing, in writing and talking, to avoid any misinterpretation by the researcher. The drawings made by the participants were scanned and the accompanied explanations typed in Microsoft Word.

3.7.4 Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion is an interview style designed for a small group of people who are called together to discuss an issue or a topic in order to generate data (Wong, 2008). The participants are selected based on the fact that they have something in common in relation to the topic, hence, their interpretations of the topic would be both deep and contextual (Greeff, 2011). Focus groups provide a means for assessing intentionally created conversations about research topics or problems. In the focus group discussion, the participants convey their understanding of the phenomenon and so large amount of data could be generated within a short period of time (Wong, 2008). Using this approach, the researcher strives to learn through discussion about conscious, semiconscious and unconscious psychological and sociocultural characteristics and processes in a group. Focus group discussion enables people to express their feelings and their thinking about an issue in a relaxed atmosphere (Creswell, 2014).

Focus group discussions have the advantage that participants freely contribute their ideas in a non-threatening environment. It also allows the researcher to get access to the substantive content of verbally expressed views, opinions, experiences and attitudes of participants (Greef, 2011). Additionally, the meanings and answers arising during focus group interviews are socially constructed rather than individually created. It also provides access to both actual and existentially meaningful or relevant interactional experiences (Creswell, 2014)

In light of the foregoing, the researcher found focus group discussion an ideal method of data generation for this study. However, despite the numerous strengths that focus group interviews carry, it also has some limitation, in that, members may not express their honest and personal opinions about the topic at hand (Wong, 2008). To buffer this limitation, the researcher ought to create a non-judgmental atmosphere where participants contributed their opinions freely in the discussions. Another limitation is that, in a focus group discussion, there can be irrelevant discussion and disagreements which divert the discussion from the main focus (Creswell, 2014). Such focus groups can be very difficult to control and manage (Wong, 2008), and in such a situation the moderator need to be firm and focused.

3.7.4.1 Using the Focus Group in the Field

The focus group discussion was used with postgraduate students to generate the data for the last research question- *What are the perspectives of students and supervisors on how thesis supervision could be enhanced for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in Kenya.* This was used to obtain responses from students only (supervisor responses for this research question was obtained through individual interview, as already discussed). Six postgraduate students participated in the focus group, two from each of the three universities (one masters and one PhD). Snowball

sampling was used to identify the participants who come from the three universities but live in the same region and could easily be facilitated by the researcher to attend the focus group. The participants converge in one venue which was organised by the researcher; and was convenient for all the six participants from the three selected universities. The participants consisted of postgraduate students who had completed their class work and were working on their thesis. It is also important to note that the six participants did not include those who participated in the drawing.

The researcher took the responsibility of moderating the discussion using the skills explained above to ensure that all participants made their contributions freely and to ensure that the discussion was flexible but focused on the topic. As a moderator, the researcher remained firm and keen, but also friendly, in directing the discussion to the main focus and avoiding any derailment. The discussion was recorded using an audio recorder after seeking consent earlier from the participants. The recordings were later transcribed and analysed.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data generated in this study was analysed thematically. This is discussed in this section as follows:

3.8.1 Thematic Analysis

This is a method of identifying patterns (themes) within data (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017) .Coding is an important process in thematic analysis. The coding process begins with familiarization of the data by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is done by reading the transcripts as many times as possible to understand the data and the meaning attached in relation to research questions of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the familiarization and understanding of the data, initial codes

are generated by putting some texts in brackets and writing a word (unit of meaning) in the margins which represents the texts in the bracket (Jayadi & Zarea, 2016). The units of meaning are grouped into codes and categories which are then used to generate the themes that are presented and discussed as findings of the study (Nowell et al., 2017).

The advantage of thematic analysis is that it allows the themes to be drawn directly from the data (Creswell, 2014). This make the findings tangible and concrete (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Thematic analysis also provides a rich description of phenomena from the generated data (Creswell, 2014). The method is not based on a specific theory and therefore, it is flexible and enables a wide range of analytical options (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The flexibility however, is also a weakness as it makes the work of the researcher difficult in choosing the aspects of data to concentrate on (Creswell, 2014). This weakness can be overcome by the researcher concentrating on the aspects of data that answers the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.8.2 The Data Analysis Procedure

The data generated from the tools described above was in the form of audio recordings, drawings and captions. The data was first prepared for analysis by transcribing the audio recordings from interviews with supervisors and from the focus group with students. The drawings from students were also scanned and inserted into a Microsoft word document. The captions written by the participants were typed below each drawing. After preparing and organising the data, the researcher had four sets of data relating to each of the four research questions ready to be analysed thematically.

The researcher utilised the six steps of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Creswell (2014) to analyse the data generated from the tools discussed above. The six steps are (i) immersion in the data (ii) generating codes (iii) searching for categories and themes (iv) reviewing themes (v) defining and naming themes and (vi) presenting themes (see figure 3.1)

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Immersion in the data          │
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│           Generating codes          │
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│    Searching for categories and themes   │
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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│          Reviewing themes        │
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│     Defining and naming themes   │
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│      Presenting themes    │
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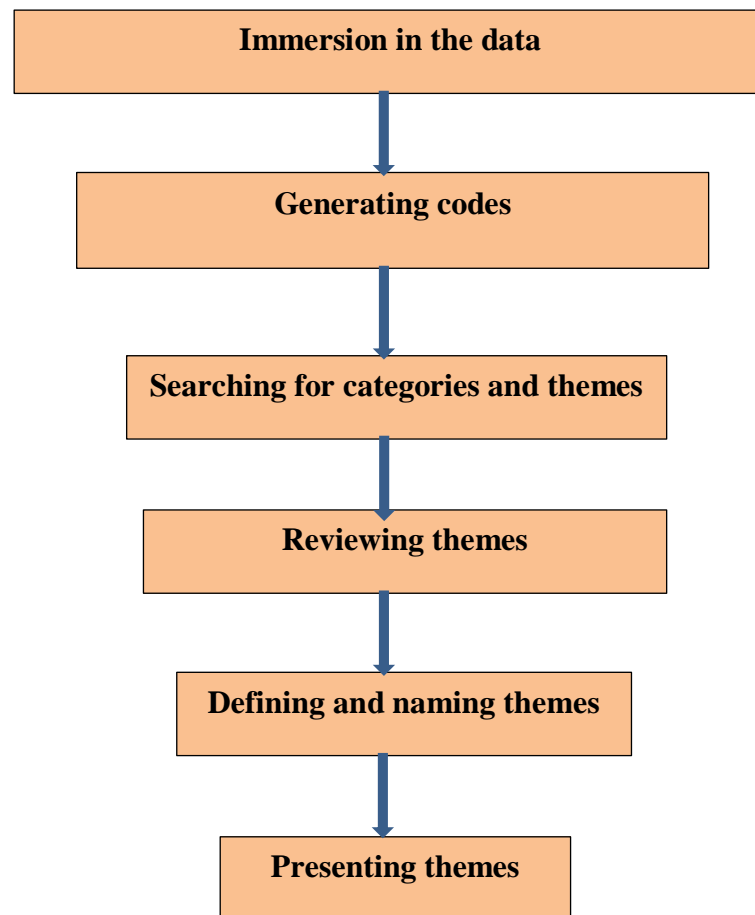
Figure 3.1 Steps followed during data analysis- thematic analysis
(Braun &Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2014)

The six steps are each elaborated, showing what was done by the researcher in each step to analyse the generated data in this study;

3.8.2.1 Step 1 Immersion in the data

The researcher took time to immerse himself into the data. This was done by listening to the audio recordings several times, as well as, severally reading the captions written by the participants below the drawings. The audio recordings, from the interviews with supervisors and focus group with students, were played several times, until the researcher felt to have understood the breadth and depth of the data content in search for meanings and patterns. During this data immersion, the researcher started writing down notes of some data patterns which emerged. The data was also transcribed and the researcher took time reading and re-reading the transcripts, to get a thorough understanding of the participants' views. The researcher did the active reading and at the same time jotting down key ideas that emerged from the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) active reading should be done simultaneously with note taking.

3.8.2.2 Step 2 Generating codes

After the familiarization with the data, which developed a deeper understanding of the data, the researcher generated the initial codes. This was done by reading again and searching for key words and phrases that represent the units of meaning (key words). The units of meaning where written down on the margins of the transcripts. This represented the initial emerging patterns of data (Schurink, Fouche, & De Vos, 2011). Coding was done in an inductive way by reducing and grouping the units of meaning into descriptive words or category names (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher ensured that the generated codes linked to sub-research questions of the study. A list of codes was generated and written in a large piece of paper for easy analysis. While naming the codes, the researcher used both descriptive labeling and semantic labeling. According to Braun and Clark (2006) semantic labeling is derived from the data directly and the codes captures direct words used by the participants, while

descriptive labeling are researcher derived codes, they are created by the researcher based on his/her deeper analysis of the transcript.

3.8.2.3 Step 3 Search for categories and themes

The researcher put similar codes together to form categories. Each of the categories identified represented a key idea. Similar categories were identified and how they related to each other. The researcher then identified probable themes. This was done by grouping and organizing the categories with related concepts and clustering into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Creswell (2014) a theme is an idea that captures something significant that answers the research question. There are generally no hard and fast rules about what makes a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These original themes together with their corresponding categories, codes and data extracts were gathered and put together to help in reviewing the themes in the next step

3.8.2.4 Step 4: Reviewing the themes

In this step of thematic analysis, the researcher critically reviewed all original themes generated in step 3 above to ensure that they formed a coherent pattern in answering each of the research questions. This was done by looking at the relationships, similarities, contrasts, links and differences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this review, the researcher refined the themes by merging some themes, especially those which could not stand due to insufficient data to support. Other themes where broken down into categories while others were reviewed or discarded due to lack of coherence. An audit trail for each theme was also done to ensure that every theme is supported by relevant data that can be tracked. In some cases re-coding was done to review some themes that had not reflected the entire related data

3.8.2.5 Phase 5: Defining and Naming themes

In this step, the researcher took time to refine the themes more. This was ensure that all the themes collectively together with the whole set of data was coherent and responds to the main and the sub-research questions (Schurink et al., 2011). Each theme was checked to ensure that it was fitting into the overall narrative. After constant revision of the themes in reference to the data, the researcher finally defined the content and scope of each theme with final names for purposes of reporting in the next step (Creswell, 2014)

3.8.2.6 Step 6 Presenting themes

This was the final step of the thematic analysis process which was done in this study. The role of the researcher here was to make a coherent and concise report. The presentation of themes was done in chapter 4, the next chapter. Each theme and category was described with evidence drawn from the data in form of extracts or quotations

3.9 Summary of the Data Generation Tools, Participants and Analysis Technique

Table 3.2 shows a summary of how the data was generated for each research question, the participants involved and how the data was analysed

Table 3.1: Summary of the methods, participants and analysis technique for each research question

	Research question	Data gathering method	Participants	Analysis technique
1.	What are the experiences of supervisors on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities?	Interview	Supervisors	Thematic
2.	What are the experiences of postgraduate students on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities?	Drawing	Masters and doctoral students	Thematic
3.	What are the supervisors perspectives on the capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in Kenya	Interview	Supervisors	Thematic
4.	What are the perspectives of students and supervisors on how thesis supervision could be strengthened for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in Kenya?	Focus group discussion (Students) Interviews (supervisors)	Masters and doctoral students & Supervisors	Thematic

3.10 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is used to validate the findings of a qualitative research (Pitney, 2004). For qualitative research studies to be of any repute, they are to withstand the rigor of trustworthiness (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Burke & Christensen, 2012). Just like the concepts of validity and reliability used by positivists to validate quantitative research, there are four major concepts of trustworthiness used to validate a qualitative research; these are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The researcher used the four concepts to ensure trustworthiness in this study in the following ways;

3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility is the accuracy or authenticity of the findings (Anney, 2014). It refers to whether the researcher captured what he or she intended to capture or learned in the research (Schurink, Fouche & De Vos, 2014). The most important concern here is how others can know that the reported findings are genuine (Anney, 2014). In order to ensure the authenticity and the accuracy of the findings for this study, the researcher used appropriate data generation tools. The unstructured individual interview, drawing and focus group discussion were considered appropriate tools for generating data in this study. During the interview and the engagement in drawing and focus group discussion, the researcher used probing questions to seek clarification for the purpose of credibility. The researcher also confirmed the accuracy of the data generated by using member checks. Lastly, the researcher has provided a thick and rich description by explaining the context of the study, the participants and the derived themes vividly and logically. The main purpose of doing so is to allow the reader to "visualize" the setting, thus making the account credible for the reader (Creswell & Miller, 2010). While discussing the results, the researcher also used verbatim (direct quotation) which could help the reader to understand the participant's mind.

3.10.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which the data generated and the findings would be similar and the variations tracked or explained if the study was replicated (Schurink et al., 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It is the qualitative parallel to reliability as advocated by the positivists in quantitative research (Ary et al., 2010). Dependability means that if the same conditions, and applying the same design and participants were to prevail again in a repeat of the qualitative research study,

comparable results ought to ensue (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). However, Korstjens and Moser (2018) noted that the phenomena investigated in qualitative research, are not static phenomena. It therefore brings a challenge in that the findings are normally tied to the contextual and cultural settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

In this study, dependability was ensured by providing a detailed description of the procedures of data generation; this will enable the reader to develop a thorough understanding of the methods used and their effectiveness. It also enables future researchers to repeat the work even though not necessarily to gain the same results. Secondly, a coding agreement was used; this was done by selecting some verbatim transcripts and coding them separately, then having the same verbatim transcripts also coded separately by my peers and the results compared with what I had already done for accuracy of the coding.

3.10.3 Confirmability

Confirmability means that the findings are a true representation of the participants' views and not the researcher's ideas (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In as much as there are some biases and subjectivity in qualitative research, it is the responsibility of the researcher to remain aware of the biases and to purposefully minimize and ensure that the findings emerge from the data generated and not his or her own preconceived notions and predispositions (Creswell & Miller, 2010).

For purpose of confirmability in this study, an audit-trail was used. The data generated has been kept in a well organised and retrievable form to make it easy for any interested reader to trace the data and the process of how the findings were developed. Ary et al., (2010) argues that an audit trail is the main strategy for demonstrating confirmability as it allows any reader to follow the course of the study

step by step. Member check was also used. The researcher shared the data and the interpretations with some participants to verify the accuracy of the descriptions and interpretations based on the data generated. Member checking guarantees the accuracy of the findings (Shenton, 2004).

3.10.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the researcher's findings can be generalised or applied to other similar contexts (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010). It is the degree to which the findings of a research can be transferred beyond the boundaries of that study (Shenton, 2004). This is referred to as external validity in quantitative research where researchers are concerned with generalizing the findings to a wider population (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). However, with qualitative research, this is not the case, because the research normally involves smaller numbers of participants operating in particular environments (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this study therefore, the researcher has provided rich and detail descriptive information to the readers so that they can make judgments and comparisons about similarity to determine whether the findings apply to their own situations or context. In order to apply qualitative findings to other context, there must be "goodness of fit" (Ary et al., 2010, p. 501), this means that two contexts must be similar.

3.11 Maintaining Research Ethics

Ethics in research implies conforming to the required code of conduct while carrying out the research (Creswell, 2014). Ethical consideration allows the researcher to protect the participants, develop trust with them and ensure integrity of the study (Babbie, 2010). It is the obligation of the researcher to bear the responsibility of being honest and accurate in doing and reporting the research study (Babbie, 2010;

Creswell, 2014). The researcher should also take all possible precautions to guard the rights, needs, values and desires of the participants (Creswell, 2014). Struwig and Stead (2001) and the American Education Research Association (AERA) (2011) outlines several issues to be observed during a qualitative study, this include: clearly explaining the research objectives to the participants verbally or in writing; ensuring an informed consent and the confidentiality of the participants and data; obtaining research permission from research boards and academic institutions; protection of participants from harm and explaining to them their rights during the research process.

In order to address the ethical issues in this study, the researcher first sought the approval from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) as well as from the School of postgraduate Studies, Moi University. The study objectives and the purpose of the study were clearly explained to the participants. The participants were allowed to consent voluntarily without coercion. The role and the rights of the participants were also made clear including their right to withdraw from the study at any stage if need be. The researcher ensured that there was honest and transparent communication with the participants throughout the study. To ensure privacy and confidentiality of the information and participants, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. Finally, while writing this thesis, the researcher paid close attention on issues of plagiarism by ensuring that the work of other scholars was acknowledged.

3.12 Chapter Summary

The summary of the chapter is presented in table 3.2

Table 3.2: Summary of research design and methodology

	Chapter sections	Position of study
i.	Research approach	Qualitative
ii.	Research paradigm	Social constructivist
iii.	Research design	Phenomenology
iv.	Study area	Public universities in Kenya
v.	Target population	Postgraduate students and academic supervisors
vi.	Sampling techniques	Purposive and convenient sampling
vii.	Data gathering tools	Unstructured individual interview, Drawing and Focus group discussion
viii.	Data analysis	Thematic
ix.	Trustworthiness	Use of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability
x.	Maintaining ethics	Privacy and confidentiality, anonymity, approval, consent, objectivity, honest

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND

DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of postgraduate students and supervisors on thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya. Four research questions were formulated to guide the study. This chapter presents the findings for each of the four research questions.

4.2 Findings and Discussion

This section discusses the finding of all the four research questions. A summary of the findings is first provided in a table at the beginning for every research question, followed by the discussions. The findings were generated from the data and the discussion recontextualise within the existing related literature.

4.2.1 Supervisor Experiences of Thesis Supervision Practices

The first research question sought to find out the experiences of supervisors in the process of supervising postgraduate students in their universities. The research question was stated as follows: *What are the experiences of supervisors on thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya?* Twelve supervisors where interviewed; four from each of the three universities. The participants, who are the supervisors, expressed their experiences which have been summarized in three themes, which include their experiences with the students they supervise (theme 1), the experiences related to the university administration and supervision process (theme 2) and the experiences related to themselves as supervisors (See table 4.1)

Table 4.1: Summary of the findings addressing the first research question

Theme		Categories
1. Student related experiences	i.	Dependent students
	ii.	Absentee students
	iii.	Poor writing language
	iv.	Non-committed students
	v.	Integrity of work
2. Administrative related experiences	i.	Lack of motivation
	ii.	Heavy workload
	iii.	Supervision not considered part of supervisors' workload
	iv.	Inactive supervision policies
3. Supervisor related experiences	i.	Carrying students blame
	ii.	Supervision dynamicity
	iii.	The ease and burden of co-supervision
	iv.	Supervisors' own limitation

4.2.1.1 Theme 1: Student Related Experiences

These are experiences that supervisors encounter with their students during the supervision process. The participants described their experiences which have been discussed in five categories, which include: (i) dependent students, (ii) Absentee students, (iii) poor writing language, (iv) Non committed students, and (v) integrity of work (see table 2.2).

Table 4.2: Theme 1 and its categories

Theme 1		Categories
Student related experiences	i.	Dependent students
	ii.	Absentee students
	iii.	Poor writing language
	iv.	Non-committed students
	v.	Integrity of work

4.2.1.1.1 Dependent students

Dependents refer to relying on another person to do something for you or to support you in a certain way. In this instance, it refers to postgraduate students who rely entirely on their supervisors in order to progress in their research work. The supervisors expressed their views on how students depend so much on them without making an effort to do things on their own. This is evident in the following quotations: `

> *"Students come with the mentality that the supervisor should provide everything and they forget their responsibility…" (Pop)*
>
> *"Students are not ready to go an extra mile and find out how to do things…they wait for the supervisor in everything" (Winny)*
>
> *"Students fail to take charge of their studies and expect the supervisor to do entirely everything" (Timan)*
>
> *"There are only a few students who can work independently with little guidance from the supervisor…many expect you to even do a paragraph after another for them...they cannot write on their own…" (Pop)*

The participants seem to express their experiences of supervising students who cannot work on their own. Marchan, Delgado and Stefos (2017) agree with the participants' references in this study. They argue that there are students who wait to be spoon-fed. They cannot initiate their own ideas or create new knowledge independently in the research process (Marchan et al., 2017). This can be a more frustrating experience to the supervisor, especially if the student is a doctoral candidate who is generally expected to work independently with minimal guidance (van Rensburg et al., 2012). However, Najarkolai et al (2015) believes that supervisors can influence how students work depending on the supervision approaches they use. Supervisors should embrace the approaches that are student-centered with the aim of teaching the research student to work independently (Najarkolai et al., 2015). Student-centered approaches can be

more demanding but it safes the supervisor the frustrations of working with dependent students who cannot stand on their own (Najarkolai et al., 2015). Apart from the experiences of working with dependent students, supervisors also find themselves supervising non-committed students as described in the next category.

4.2.1.1.2 Non-committed students

Research projects require commitment where the student is fully dedicated to the research work. However, students sometimes lose focus and fail to commit themselves to their research projects. Participants in this study described their experiences of supervising non-committed students. Some supervisors who were interviewed portrayed situations where postgraduate students fail to prioritise and focus on their studies and hence give little attention to their work as can be seen from the following responses;

> "*Supervision can be very frustrating, you sometimes have students who are not committed and you end up doing nothing for a all year with such students…imagine a all year" (Winny)*

> "*You can get a student who is very lazy, you tell him or her to do something and he takes ages to do" (Nick)*

> "*Students delaying to graduate on time is mainly their own make, you can supervise a student who shows no seriousness at all." (Jean)*

> "*There are many students who are just jokers, they put no effort in their work and they stay for years in the system with no progress." (Timan)*

The above responses define experiences of supervisors working with students who are not focus in their work. Naidoo and Mthembu (2015) found that there are students who focus on other activities more than their research work. This is common among students who are on employment in different sectors and they are unable to balance their daily work and their research work (Naidoo and Mthembu, 2015). Such students put little effort on their work hence making the work of the supervisor more difficult.

The participants in this study described that these students do not meet the deadlines set, or even sometimes, they fail to do the work assigned to them by the supervisor (Marchan et al., 2017). It is frustrating to the supervisor because these students do not take charge of their projects and they expect the supervisor to always remind them what to do and when to do it (Marchan et al., 2017). Students who are not committed in their research work may sometimes end up disappearing for years without any communication with their supervisors; this is elaborated in the next category.

4.2.1.1.3 Absentee students

Absentee students in this study refer to students who are not consistent in their study and they sometimes take a break from their studies even for years. Once a student begins working with a supervisor it is expected that they both maintain regular contact and meetings as they work on the research project. However, this is not always the case; the participants in this study described the experiences of working with students who disappear during the process of their studies without any communication with their supervisors. This was evident when the participants responded as follows:

> *"There are some students you give them some corrections and you never hear from them again, you don't know if they got stuck or they stopped pursuing the program" (George)*

> *"You begin with a student well, you do a few things then they disappear… others would come back when you have even forgotten their names and what their study was about" (Victoria)*

> *"You can have a list of fifteen students you are supervising but only five are active in their studies…" (Sharon)*

> *"When you have students working on full time employment, they are not even available for guidance, they are just in the list of students you supervise but you don't see them… "(William)*

From the quotations above it is evident that supervisors go through experiences of being supervisors to absentee students. Research students ought to take responsibility of their research work, but on the contrary, some students concentrate on other

activities during their study period and they forget about their research work (Wairungu & Maina, 2021). Several studies show that many postgraduate candidates disappear in the course of their supervision (Mbogo et al., 2020; Wairungu & Maina, 2021). It is a challenge to supervisors as one participant pointed above that a supervisor could have a list of fifteen students and only five are active in their studies. According to Bacwayo, Nampala and Oteyo (2017) students disappear because research work is too demanding and requires much commitment of energy and a lot time and concentration. Although some students who disappear from the program would come back to continue with their studies as stated by one participants above, many others would discontinue their studies completely (Mbogo et al., 2020). The next category describes the experience of supervisors on how students write their work.

4.2.1.1.4 Poor writing language

One of the very important skills that a research student should have is the writing skills. Poor writing language in this case refers to the work that has not been written in a scholarly way in terms of language use and grammar. The participants in this study outlined their experiences of supervising students with poor writing language. Some of what the participants said during the interview is quoted below:

> *"Students' present work with lots of grammatical errors, they make no effort to learn a scholarly writing…" (Mercy)*

> *"One biggest challenge in supervision is how students write and present their work, sometimes you are forced to concentrate on correcting the language and teaching the student how to write instead of concentrating on other research skills"(Pop)*

> *"Some students are very poor in language…In some cases you have to refer the student to someone who can assist in language because the work is poorly written" (Lyn)*

It is clear from the quotations that supervisors have a heavy task while guiding their students to write their work in a scholarly way. One of the key responsibilities of a research student is to learn the fundamental techniques of writing a research paper (Jones, 2013). However, according Abdulkareem (2013) the experiences described by the participants above are common because students do not make an effort to learn the writing skills. Many students would struggle with the academic writing throughout their study period (Bacwayo et al., 2017). From the quotations above, it seems that some supervisors would take up the task of correcting the poorly written work while others would refer the student to someone who can assist in language and academic writing. According to Abdulkareem, (2013) there should be forums where students are taught about academic writing and guided on how to do a scholarly writing to produce quality work and reduce the supervisors' burden. Apart from poor writing skills, supervisors encounter dishonest issues with students, this is the focus of the next category.

4.2.1.1.5 Integrity of work

Integrity is being honest in whatever one does. Postgraduate students are required to be honest in their work. Despite this requirement, some students may present work which they did not do themselves. This is evident from the following quotations;

> *"Students submit work which you can easily tell that it is not their own work… it is copy and paste from somewhere… they copy other peoples work and add a few words to appear different and original" (Simon)*

> *"A student can sent you some work which is well done but when you ask something about the work, they have no idea, this tells you that it is work done by someone else on hire" (Victoria)*

> *"Some students give money to supervisors so that the supervisor compromises their work or the supervisor does some work for the student. I have seen students who attempt to lead me to this direction but I say No." (Timan)*

From the quotations above it appears that supervisors go through the experiences of working with dishonest students. Students should conduct their research in a moral way and engage in the right practices during the research process (Nkiko & Osinulu, 2016). Some students are not honest and they plagiarise other people's work and present as their own (Nkiko & Osinulu, 2016). Lack of honesty on the part of the student creates a strained relationship between the student and the supervisor and may negatively affect the progress of the research student (Radloff, 2010). A study by Selemani, Chawinga and Dube (2018) found that some students are lazy and cannot concentrate to create knowledge on their own. Some stick on the thesis of others and would reproduce with some changes and claim ownership (Selemani et al., 2018). Plagiarism and other dishonest activities among research students not only frustrate the supervisors, but also lower the quality and integrity of research in universities (Nkiko & Osinulu, 2016).

Having discussed the experiences of supervisors during the interaction with their students in this first theme, the next theme will outlined the experiences of supervisors that are related to administration of supervision in universities.

4.2.1.2 Theme 2: Administrative Related Experiences

These are experiences that supervisors encounter with the administration during the supervision process. It could be within the department, faculty or university management. The theme consist of four categories which are: (i) Lack of motivation (ii) Heavy workload (iii) supervision not considered as part of supervisor workload and (iv) Inactive supervision policies (See table 4.3)

Table 4.3: Theme 2 and its categories

Theme 2	Categories	
Administrative related experiences	i.	Lack of motivation
	ii.	Heavy workload
	iii.	Supervision not considered part of supervisor workload
	iv.	Inactive supervision policies

The theme and its categories are discussed as follows:

4.2.1.2.1 Lack of motivation

Motivation is the drive to achieve something. When supervisors are motivated they develop a strong desire to succeed in the supervision process, and they work towards achieving the set goals. Participants expressed their experiences of demotivation in the supervision process. This is evident from the following responses:

> *"The payment for supervising a student in my university is too little…it is not worth the problems you encounter with the students… even that little token is sometimes delayed…" (George)*

> *"You see…we supervise our students in the corridors of the university, there are no offices for lecturers and I am expected to meet students for consultations…how now...mmh…this is discouraging" (Jean)*

> *"Supervisors are poorly paid, there is no reward for the work done, the package they are giving supervisors is peanuts, this is demoralising" (William)*

> *"… the university does not appreciate efforts of hardworking supervisors… there should be some incentives for supervisors who do exemplary work" (George)*

The responses of the participants above describe discouraging experiences that supervisors encounter in the supervision process. The issues raised by the participants in the responses above were similarly raised in a study by Ekundayo and Ayodele (2019) in Nigerian Universities. As seen from the responses above, supervisors get demoralized when the payment for their work is low. Sriekaningsih and Setyadi

(2015) argue that motivation plays a key role on the performance of lecturers in universities. Supervisors should therefore be well remunerated; their pay package should be reasonable to motivate them to do quality work (Ekundayo & Ayodele, 2019). It is also important to create a favourable working environment which includes provision of physical facilities that promote service delivery (Ekundayo & Ayodele, 2019). Supervisors are responsible for mentoring postgraduate students to be independent researchers (Meilani, Tan, Murwani, Bernarto & Sudibjo, 2021). Hence low morale and demotivation leads to poor performance, which may negatively influence the students' progress (Ekundayo & Ayodele, 2019). Heavy workload may even demotivate supervisors more; this is discussed in the next category

4.2.1.2.2 Heavy workload

Heavy workload in the context of this study refers to excessive duties that supervisors have to do in universities. The participants described their experiences of having competing responsibilities which include teaching, supervising students, doing research, marking student scripts and administrative duties. This is evident from the following responses:

> *"But now you have a senior professor, I teach three courses, I have postgraduate students to mentor, I am supposed to do research, I am supposed to attract research funds… you see you are overloading this old man…" (Pop)*

> *"Supervisors have a heavy task, they have to teach and also supervise…you have so many students to supervise and you have to attend your classes, at the same time some of us have administrative duties" (Sharon)*

> *"Talking about staff turnover, the lecturers are very few and the few are overloaded and overworked" (Jean)*

> *"We have so many students in the faculty of education… work is heavy, teaching and marking the work, and this takes away the time to concentrate with the student" (Nick)*

The quotations above describe the experiences of overburdened supervisors. It shows the big workload that supervisors carry in universities. According to Ronguno et al., (2016) most public universities in sub-Saharan Africa are generally understaffed. Some of the staff members are not qualified to supervise research students (Barasa & Omulando, 2018). As noted by one of the participants above the few senior lecturers are overloaded with many students to supervise as well as teaching. Apart from teaching and supervising, lecturers also have to do their own research and publications (Ronguno et al., 2016). Kimani (2014) argues that the quality of supervision becomes compromised when the supervisor is overloaded with many students to supervise, teaching and administrative work. The next category outlines the supervisors' views that supervision is not considered part of their workload.

4.2.1.2.3 Supervision not considered part of supervisors' workload

Supervision is a pedagogy that involves teaching and active engagement between the student and the supervisor. It is a heavy task that requires the supervisors' availability and dedication. However, the responses of the supervisors who participated in this study painted a picture suggesting that universities in Kenya do not consider supervision as work that should be included in the supervisors' workload. This evident from the following responses;

> *"If you have 15 students you are supervising and you have three units to teach, the university will consider the three units as your workload and not the time you spend guiding the 15 students.."* (Simon)

> *"...you are teaching 200 or 300 students, you have to mark and you have to supervise also but the university management boards don't consider the supervision to be work, yet this is more work..."* (Winny)

> *"...the university only considers the administrative and the teaching units to be workload but do not see supervision as workload... I*

> *think the workload should be redefined by the commission for*
> *university education" (Simon)*

The quotations above allude to a disappointing experience by supervisors. It is a form of complaint that their efforts of supervising the students is not considered to be work and is not included as part of their workload. Firth and Martens (2008) pointed out that supervision is a specialised form of teaching where the supervisor is allocated specific roles and responsibilities. Consequently, it is a heavy responsibility on the part of the supervisor that requires commitment. From the participants it appears that the work of supervision is more demanding to supervisors than other responsibilities yet it is not factored-in when considering the supervisors' workload. According to Shafig et al. (2020) supervision is an evolving activity and universities need to look at supervision in a different perspective from the traditional view. There is need to professionalise supervision for achievement of quality research (Shafig et al., 2020); this enables supervision to be considered as an important pedagogical responsibility on the part of the supervisor (Firth & Martens, 2008). The next category discusses inactive supervision policies in universities.

4.2.1.2.4 Inactive supervision policies

Supervision policies refer to the written down guidelines, procedures and regulations that guide the process of postgraduate supervision in universities. The participants in this study expressed their views that pointed out to supervision policies that are not adhered to in the universities. They admit that there are laid down guidelines and regulations that could enhance their supervision work, but unfortunately, these policies have not been put to practice as seen in the following quotations:

> *"We always complain in meetings about the things we go through in*
> *supervision that are discouraging… but when you see…you will*
> *realise that there are clear guidelines and regulations that are*
> *ignored…. no one is referring to these guidelines" (Lyn)*

> *"The university has policies like; the number of students that a supervisor should have…mmh, progress reports that should be written and other laid down structures that are not followed. If such could be implemented it could really work things out for us…" (Timan)*

> *"We have supervision policies to guide us and make our work better as supervisors but they are there only on paper and no one adheres to…" (Victoria)*

The quotations above show the presence of supervision policies that are not adhered to in the universities. It describes the experiences of supervisors who are operating outside the laid down structures of supervision in universities. According to Daramola (2021) many African universities have properly laid down supervision policies but the application of the policies is yet to be achieved. The responses of the participants above suggest that the application of the laid down policies could positively influence the supervisors' experience and improve the supervision process in universities. Supervision policies are principals of action adopted by universities to guide the supervision processes and should always be used as a roadmap for all supervision activities in departments and faculties (Bacwayo et al., 2017).

Apart from the experiences that supervisors encounter with their students and the administration, they also go through experiences that relate to themselves and the supervision process. This is the focus of the next theme.

4.2.1.3 Theme 3: Supervisor Related Experiences

These are experiences that are directly related to the supervisor in his or her daily work of interacting with the students, the administration and the content of research. The theme consist of four categories which are: (i) carrying students' blame (ii) Supervision dynamicity (iii) The ease and burden of co-supervision and (iv) supervisors' own limitation (See table 4.4)

Table 4.4: Theme 3 and its categories

Theme 3	Categories
Supervisor related experiences	i. Carrying students blame
	ii. Supervision dynamicity
	iii. The ease and burden of co-supervision
	iv. Supervisors' own Limitation

The theme and its categories are discussed as follows:

4.2.1.3.1 Carrying students' blame

The participants who were interviewed in this study recounted their experiences where students blame the supervisors for all shortcomings in the supervision process. They narrate that students do not own their mistakes, but instead, blame the supervisors even when they have not done their part of responsibility. The participants described that they always carry the burden of student blame in the supervision process. This is evident from the following quotations:

> *"We carry heavy burdens of blame as we supervise. Students usually blame the supervisor for every failure, few students will admit their shortcomings but many will blame the supervisor" (William)*

> *"On many occasions you critique the students' work or you insist something and they feel like you are pulling them down……they disappear …and they go blaming you always…ooh that bad supervisor…I would have graduated…such like things…" (Mercy)*

> *"When you ask students the reason for taking too long to complete their studies, they will tell you it is the supervisor, but many students don't put any effort in their work…"(Winny)*

The responses above describe what supervisors go through with their students. It shows the complex issues of supervision that supervisors have to deal with while working with their research students. Turner (2015) argues that even though some comments from supervisors may not go well with the research student, it is important for the student to see the research journey as professional development and as such, they should be ready to work closely with their supervisors for their success. It is clear

from the quotations that some students feel that they are being pull down when corrected by their supervisors. However, De Boone (2014) argues that even though the research work belongs to the student the supervisor is the gatekeeper of the process and is the one who ensures that the student produces quality work. According to Chikte and Chabillal (2016) the work of the supervisor is a challenging task and supervisors should be reinforced through regular in-service trainings and creation of forums for sharing supervision experiences. This is important because supervision is dynamic as discussed in the next category.

4.2.1.3.2 Supervision dynamicity

Supervision dynamicity means that supervision is not static and keeps on changing with time. Supervisors who participated in this study were clear in their responses about the changing nature of supervision. They narrated their experiences of how supervision has become dynamic and has been changing over time. This can be seen from the following quotations:

> *"You go to international conferences or even attend some of these webinars and you get surprised, supervision is so dynamic, something pops in every other time and you cannot be rigid with your old methods and ways of doing research…"(Pop)*

> *"Supervisors are now being compel to embrace technology and new ways of research supervision…which they did not use previously, thus they are learning on the job"(Victoria)*

> *"You cannot compare the kind of supervision that is required now with the way we supervise students ten years ago, a lot as change and we are struggling to catch up….(Nick)*

> *You see we are not living in a static world, every day we have new innovations and supervision is not exempted…" (William)*

It is clear from the quotations above that supervision is dynamic and supervisors are experiencing changes every other time on the nature of supervision. Existing literature agrees with the responses of the participants that the nature of postgraduate

supervision is drastically changing (Hamid et al., 2021; Masek & Alias, 2020; Grossman & Crowther, 2015). As stated earlier in this study, the nature of postgraduate supervision is currently dictated by internationalization, the moving nature of knowledge and the demands of employers and funding bodies (Hamid et al., 2021). Supervision practices are now determined by continuity and change (Hamid et al., 2021). Many institution of higher learning are currently trying to embrace vibrant supervision practices for achievement of quality academic research (Woo et al., 2015). One of the relatively new supervision practices is co-supervision, which is the focus of the next category

4.2.1.3.3 The ease and burden of co-supervision

Co-supervision is a practice of supervision where two or more supervisors work together in supervising one student (Grossman & Crowther, 2015). The supervisors work as a team in overseeing the research work of the student. Supervisors who participated in this study described different experiences of co-supervision. Some participants praised co-supervision while others described it as a burden. This is evident from the following quotations;

> *"This work is not easy, especially when you have other responsibilities like me, but I like when I have someone cooperative to work with, you share ideas when you are co-supervising and you can shape the work of the student very well without much effort"(George)*

> *"Co-supervision has helped us reduce the pressure of supervising students, the other supervisor could be good in something like methodology and you are good in something else, you complement each other…" (Sharon)*

> *"We sometimes work with colleagues who are lazy. Some supervisors ride on the shoulders of their colleagues. They wait for you to read and make comments, then they just make follow up comments or just endorse and take credit for the work he or she has not done" (Mercy)*

> *"....you work with a student without the contribution of your co-supervisor....then he comes late and demeans what you have done by introducing a lot of things which he had not brought at the beginning..." (Nick))*

The quotations above provide mixed experiences of supervisors in co-supervision. Co-supervision is mean to improve the quality of supervision (Paul, Olson & Gul, 2014). As stated by one of the participants above, supervisors in a co-supervision have the advantage of working as a team and complementing each other (Grossman & Crowther, 2015). Olmos-López and Sunderland (2017) agree with the participants' view and points out that co-supervision gives an opportunity to supervisors to offer a blend of ideas and shape the students work to produce quality research. However, it appears from the experiences of the participants above that co-supervision can also be a burden. Some supervisors can be lazy or uncooperative and may not take their part of responsibility in co-supervision. They take advantage of other supervisors and "ride on the shoulders of their colleagues". Even though literature is not clear on the weaknesses of co-supervision, Grossman and Crowther (2015) argue that disagreements can arise between the supervisors in co-supervision. While the responses of the participants in this study do not point to a disagreement, it is clear that they perceive co-supervision as a burden. Laziness and non-cooperation point to supervisors' individual limitations, which is discussed in the next category.

4.2.1.3.4 Supervisors' own limitation

This refers to the individual limitations of supervisors as shared by the participants. The participants in this study, who are supervisors in universities, described their experiences while interacting with their students and the research work. The supervisors own up to their limitations as evident by the following quotations:

"Sometimes we don't treat the students' work as it should be, we prioritise other activities and the students' work may take even months before you read and give feedback" (Victoria)

"You can be busy and the student needs a feedback, you are forced to just go through the work quickly and give some comments. The risk here is that you can disapprove good work or approve shorty work for not taking time to read keenly" (Simon)

"The commitment to students' work…mmh I can say is very little, may be because as a lecturer you have a lot of work apart from supervising the students" (Jean)

From the responses above the supervisors describe the experiences of their weaknesses. The supervisors own up to their limitations in the process of supervision. The issues raised by the supervisors is being busy, prioritizing other activities and lack of commitment to supervising students. Postgraduate supervision is an arduous task that requires supervisors' commitment. Nonetheless, some supervisors are lazy and less committed; they leave the all workload to their colleagues (Kumar & Wald, 2022). Some students work with busy supervisors who rarely have time to guide them (Calma, 2014). As stated earlier in the literature section of this study, some students complain of irregular contact with their supervisors (Moris, 2011), while others have to wait for a long period of time before receiving feedback from their supervisors (Ngulube, 2019). There should be laid down mechanisms in universities that could assist in motivating supervisors to be more committed to the students work (Calma, 2014).

4.2.2 Postgraduate Student Experiences of Thesis Supervision Practices

The second aim of this study was to explore the experiences of postgraduate students on thesis supervision process in universities in Kenya. *The second research question was: What are the experiences of postgraduate students on thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya?* The data on the experiences of the participants was generated using drawing as a data generation tool. As discussed

earlier in the previous chapter, the participants were given a prompt. They expressed their experiences in form of drawings which are presented in this section. Eighteen students participated in this study; but only twelve participated in making the drawings; four students from each of the three universities.

The twelve drawings and the captions associated with each drawing are first presented in this section (see next page). All the names indicated are pseudonyms and are not real names of the participants. Thereafter, the findings and discussion in response to the question are presented. It is also important to note that the captions written by the participants have been typed without making any corrections on the spellings, punctuations and tenses.
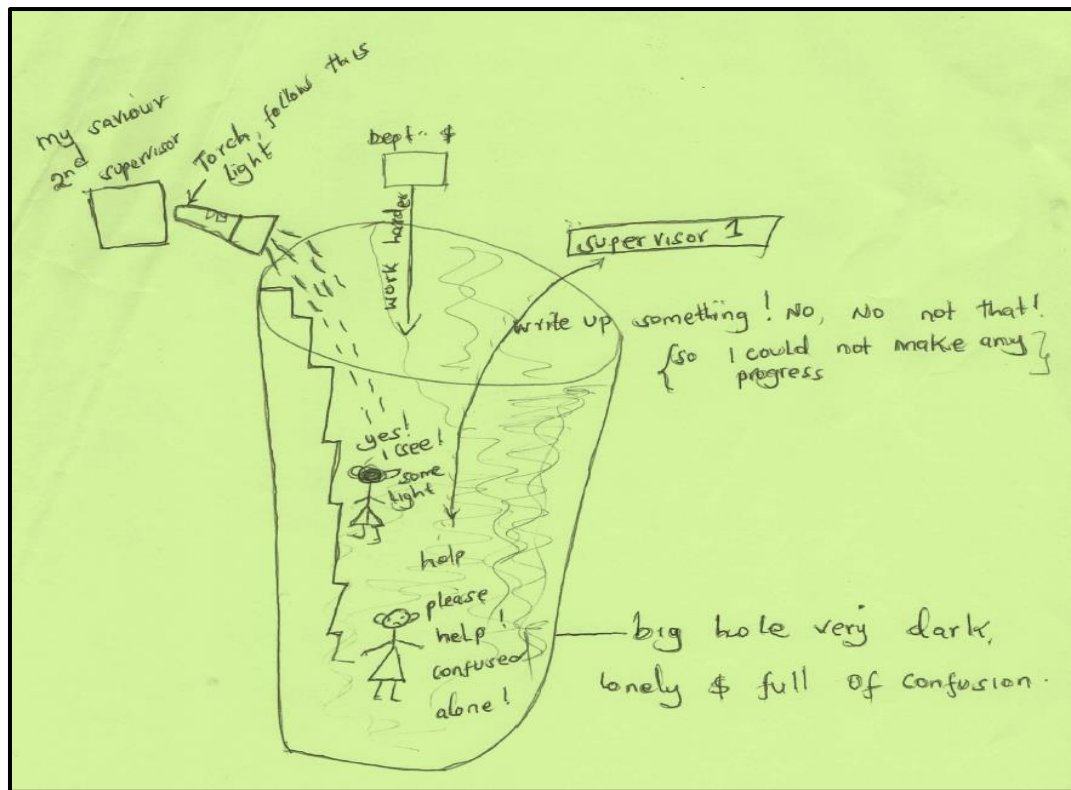
Figure 4.1: Drawing by Hilda

The drawing represents my experience with two supervisors. My first supervisor was not supportive, she would always say to me "write something", but when I write something and share with her, she would say "No no no…you have done nothing …you need to read more" and she would not tell me what to do or how to write the way she wanted me to write. I felt lonely and more confused because she could not give me the direction. I have drawn a big hole to describe this experience; I was like in a deep and dark hole without help. I could work for long hours, sometimes almost the whole night trying to write something that would please her. Towards my proposal defense I would sent her work but she could not give feedback or make any communication to me, I send her several emails but she could not reply. In the last minute she just signed the document without reading. I made a formal request to change the supervisor after the defense. I was given another supervisor and this was the turning point. I have now made so much progress with the guidance and encouragement of my new supervisor. He came with a touch to light my way out of the dark hole as can be seen in my drawing.

Figure 4.2: Drawing by Joy

The drawing show two trees, one is almost dry with just a few leaves and another with fruits. The two trees show that my supervision experience has been fruitful. I can admit that I knew very little about research when I started my Masters; I was like this tree with no leaves or fruits. But the mentorship of my supervisor has improved my knowledge so far in research. The fruitful tree show the much we have accomplished with my supervisor. All the branches in this tree contain fruits to mean that I am well nurtured by my supervisor in all areas of research and I now know how to write scholarly work. The fruits show a fruitful supervision that has led to several achievements in my work. I am happy that she treats me like her daughter. My supervisor is more of a mother to me than a supervisor; she encourages me always to stay focus to my work. I feel comfortable working with her and I can call her every time I need to talk to her. We communicate almost daily through whatsapp or email. Whenever I sent my work to her, the response is quick because she tells me to do the work in small pieces and sent to her only a few pages for easy response. This is making my work easier and fruitful.
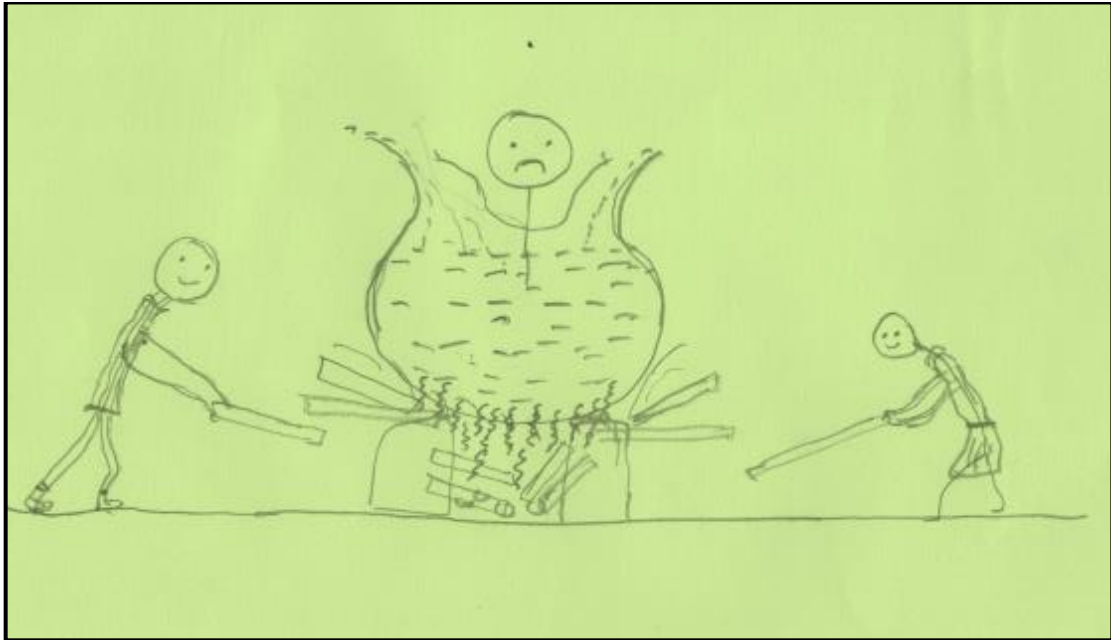
Figure 4.3: Drawing by Tom

I am like being boiled and my supervisors are adding more firewood for me to burn more. The research process is too demanding but my supervisors always insist that the work is mine and I must work smartly to produce a good thesis. They press me too much to generate new knowledge. In everything I do, their question is always "what is new? What makes your work different from others? You must come up with something new. It is like I am burning in a boiling pot. The worst is when I get feedback from them and it is all about the things I have done wrong and how bad my work is. No one points out the positive things and I think this is not fair. Sometimes I get totally discouraged because of their comments and I would just read and take a break for some weeks or months to gather the courage to do it again. We have had several online meetings and they ask me tough questions. They demand that I read as many articles as possible to shape my work. At times my supervisors ask me difficult questions until I see myself as an empty slate with nothing in my head. My supervision journey has been tough all along. I have just realised that I need patience and resilience to work well with my supervisors.
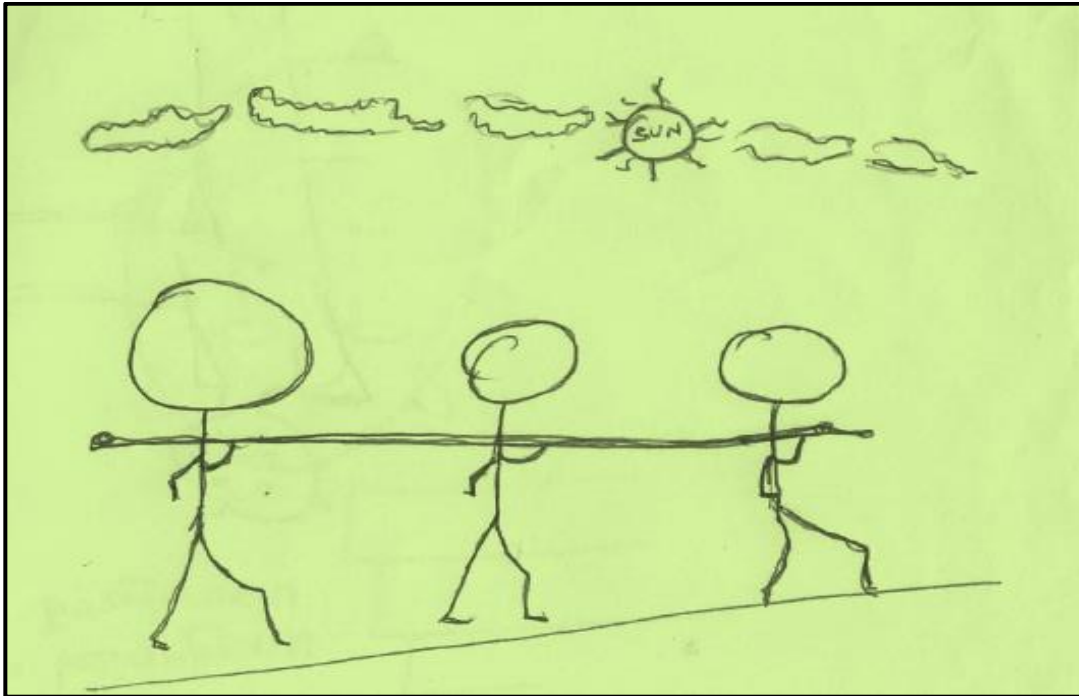
Figure 4.4: Drawing by Nick

I see my PhD journey as a heavy task. It is like carrying a heavy load that you must persevere to the end or it wears you out to drop on the way. But my supervisors have been strong pillars in my journey. We have carried the heavy task together. The drawing shows three people carrying a load together. I am in the middle of my two supervisors and together we are moving well. The two supervisors have been reliable in this journey. They guide me on how to write every chapter of my work. I appreciate the many things I have learned from them, I am able to do the things I could not do before and get only a few corrections from them. They are always there to guide and show me the way whenever I need assistance. They put a lot of energies in my work and this motivates me to work harder. We have developed a strong bond of relationship with them.
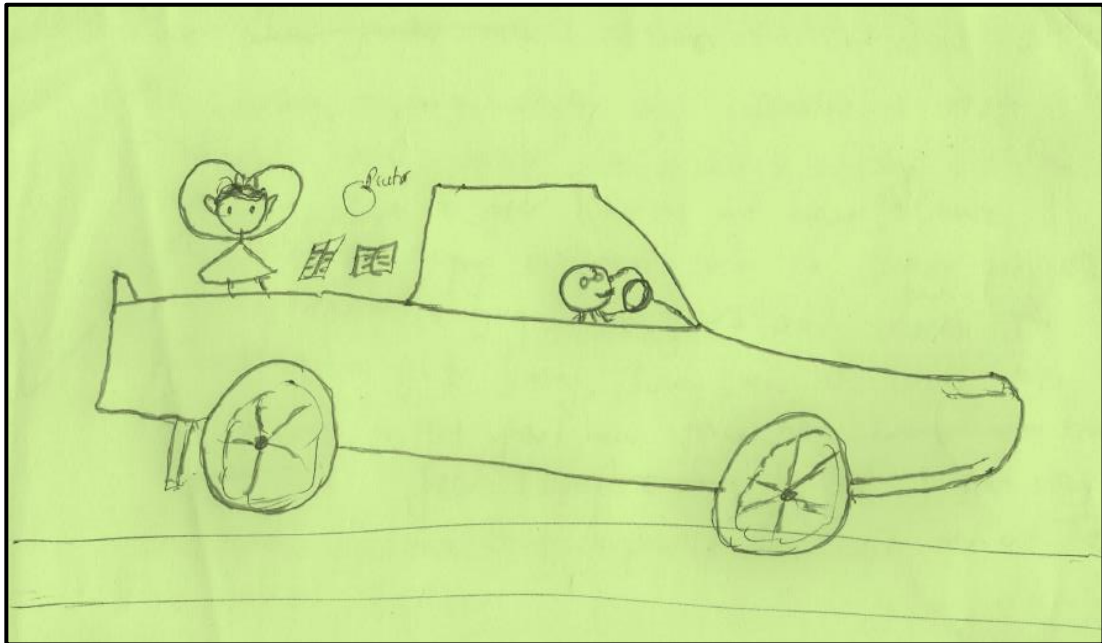
Figure 4.5: Drawing by Sydney

I can represent my supervision experience with this car being driven and carrying somebody at the back. My supervisor is the driver and I am the one at the back of the car being carried. I have drawn this because my supervisor dominates in everything. The way I see him is that he is in charge of the steering wheel and controls everything without listening to me, he dismisses my opinions. He is the one who chooses to take me to any direction and I have no room to say no. He chooses the speed at which we can go and I cannot say anything, even when he engages the breaks and stops for some time I have to obey and wait till he engages the forward gear. He is the person you cannot tell to give you feedback within a certain time or propose how something should be done; he will not listen to you. I wish he could put me in front of the car so that I can be a co-driver with his guidance. But here I am just a passenger being carried at the back. In every discussion I cannot convince him to buy my idea and I only have to say yes to him in everything. I appreciate that he is an expert but also I am frustrated that I have to do everything his way without an opportunity to design my own work.
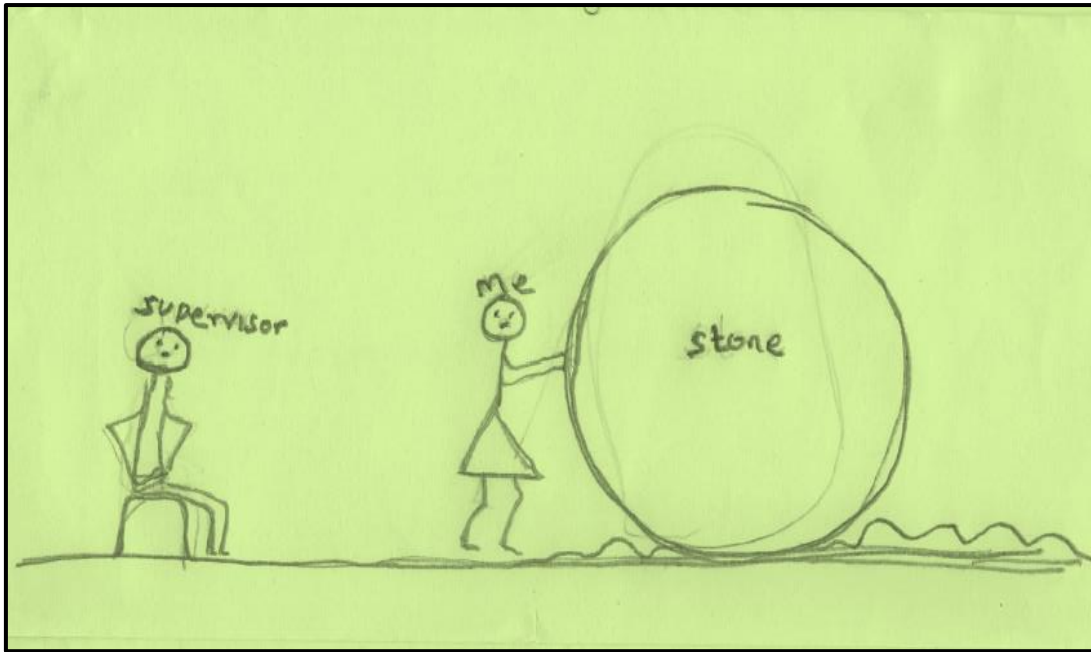
Figure 4.6: Drawing by Gloria

My PhD is a big stone to be rolled and I need my supervisor to assist me roll the stone. In the drawing my supervisor is sited watching me rolling the stone alone. This is my experience because my supervisor is not ready to assist me. He tells me that a PhD student should make his own work. For me, this is a big stone to be rolled and it is too heavy for me to roll alone without the assistance of my supervisor. I fear asking my supervisor anything because whenever I ask, the answer is "how did you get to the PhD without knowing this". I just have to write according to my understanding and send to him. He is not available to sit with me and discuss my work. He cannot pick my call and when he picks he declines our appointment. My other supervisor is not available to assist me also. She waits until my main supervisor makes his comments then she can chip in some few comments. I have to struggle alone by seeking help from my fellow students.
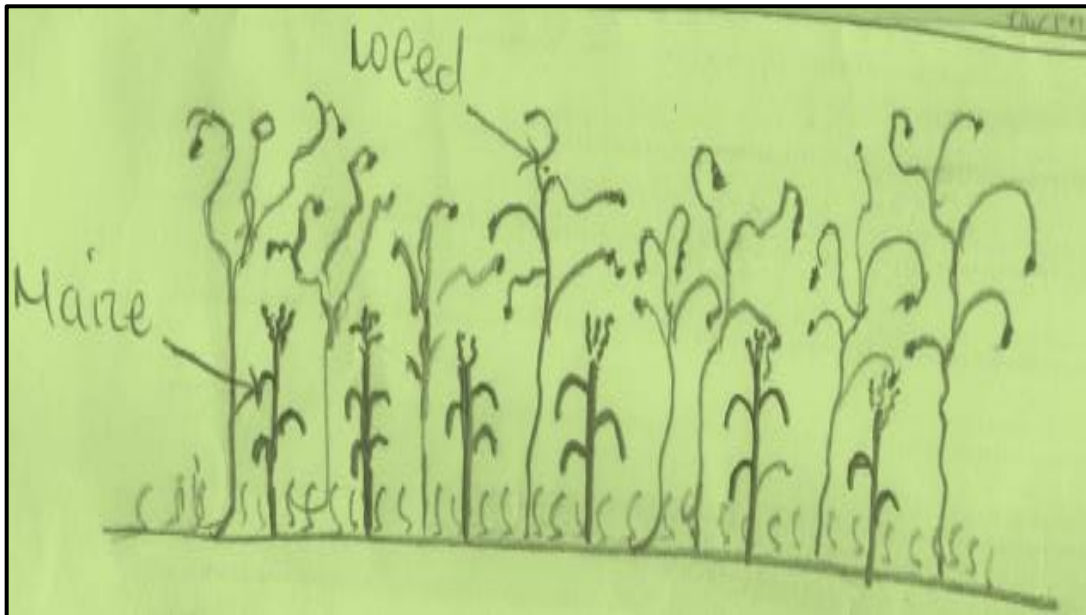
Figure 4.7: Drawing by James

I have drawn a maize plantation with maize that is already choked up with weeds. This plantation describes my supervision experience. I am like a maize farm planted with goods seeds and forgotten till the weeds overtake the crop. My supervisor is not there for me, he always says he has a lot of work and meeting with him is the most difficult thing. He is a friendly supervisor but he is too busy. Even reaching him through the phone is difficult. I collected my data long ago and I need his assistance on how to go with my analysis but I can't get hold of him. I have stagnated here for so long and I am not making any progress. My supervisor says he will meet me when he gets time. I wonder why he schedules time for everything else and forgets about me. The department is not also doing any follow up on our progress. I pity myself because I am like a burden to my supervisor. I am in a difficult situation and not sure of my future with my research
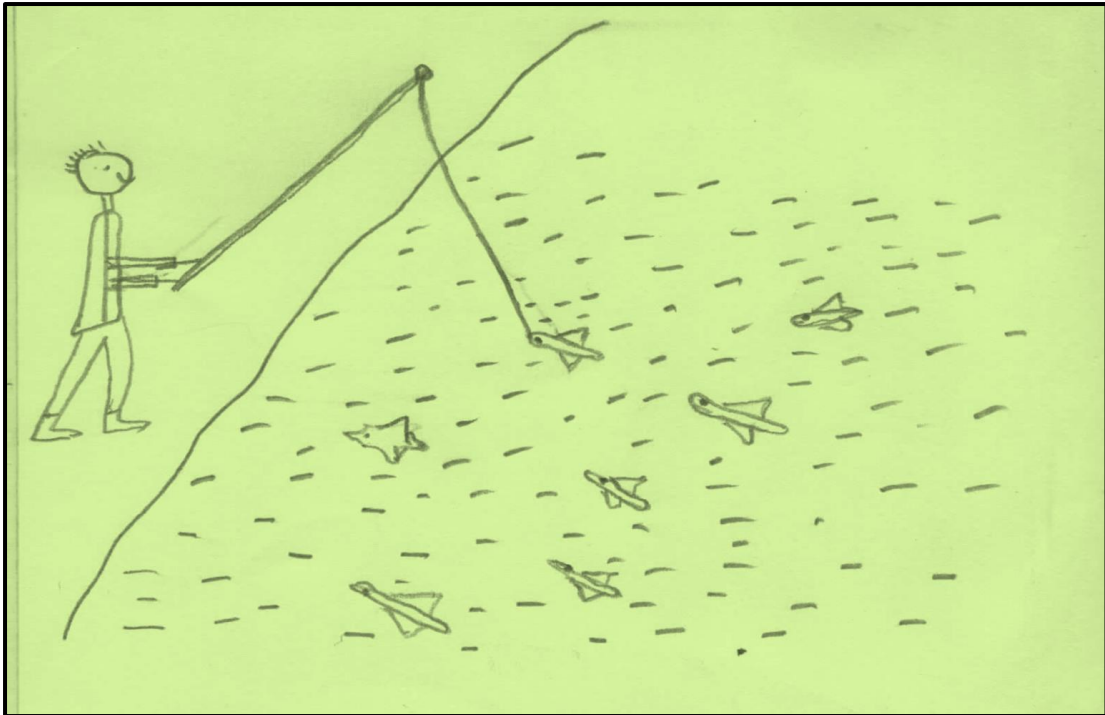
Figure 4.8: Drawing by Thomas

The drawing shows a fisherman who has been trained how to fish and can fish well. I have gone through an experience of thorough training in my supervision. My supervisor has trained me very well in my research work and I compare him with a trainer who trains such a fisherman until he can fish well. My supervisor is very thorough in his work. He checks every sentence of my work and gives a detailed guidance on what I should do. He is a very good mentor and I have to be keen to every comment because he gets very much annoyed when I make mistakes. I fear him but I like his guidance. There are so many things that I did not know how to go about in research, but I am lucky I got a strong support from my supervisor, he has taken his time to guide me. I can comfortably do a lot of things alone now by just following his steps. I am like a good fisherman who has been well trained because I can do a lot without necessarily waiting for my supervisor. He will only check and refine it after every step. My supervisor has become my good friend, I can reach him anytime and we can meet anywhere like a hotel. I work with a lot of pressure because of his strict deadlines but I cannot complain because this is helping me to finish my work.
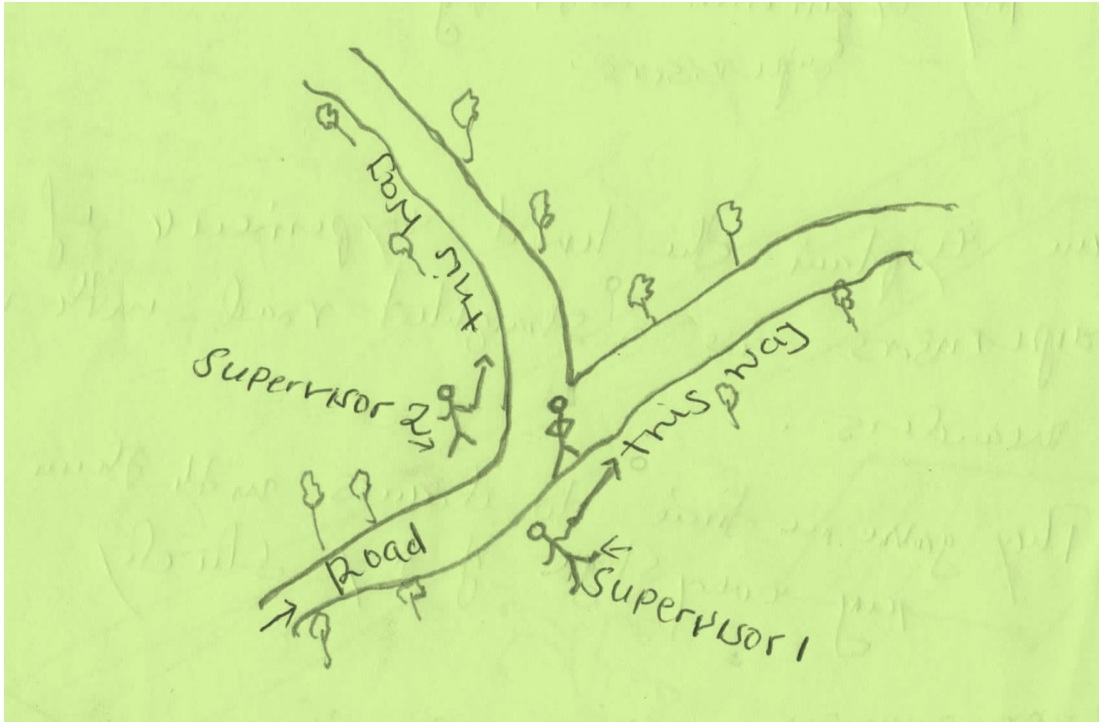
Figure 4.9: Drawing by Periz

In this drawing I am standing at the cross-road, mixed-up and unable to make a decision on which route to follow. The drawing shows supervisor one pointing a certain direction and supervisor two pointing a different direction. My two supervisors cannot agree and this has been my worst experience in my studies. I think that their thinking is different or they have some personal differences. There are many instances when they cannot agree on how something should be done. In most cases their comments on my work are conflicting. Each one gives a different opinion on how I should do the work. Sometimes one gives me a go-ahead and another is proposing some changes. This leaves me confused and stuck. We have never had a common meeting with my supervisors because of their different schedules. It is also difficult reaching them because they are always busy. I also think that they are less concern with my work and I have to struggle most of the time without their help.
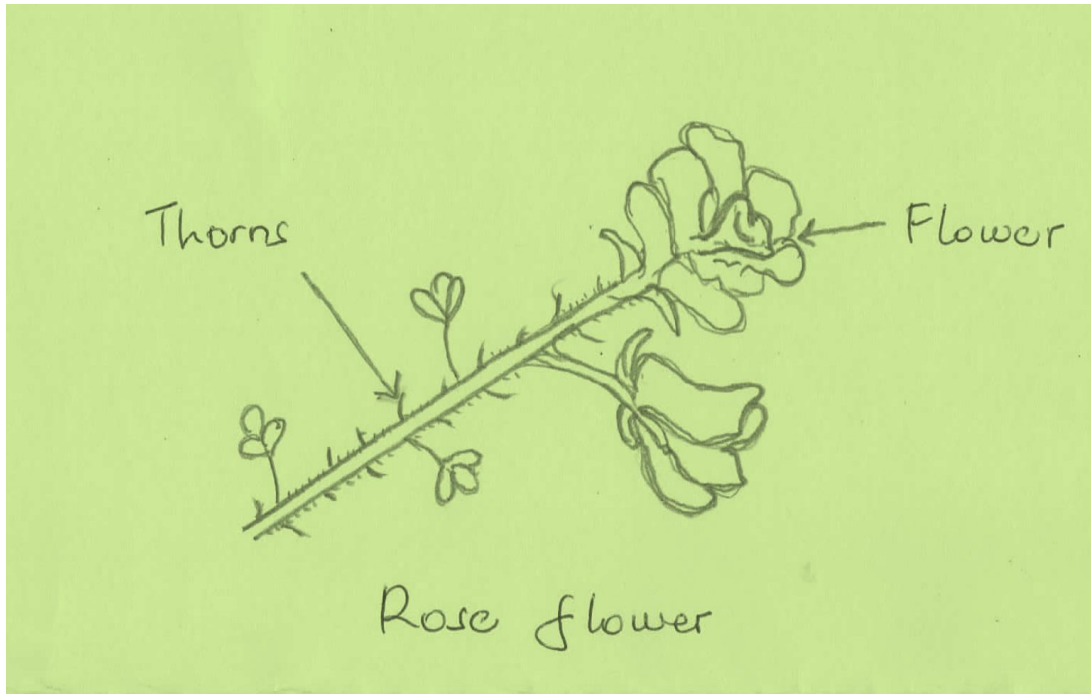
Figure 4.10: Drawing by Sylvia

This is a rose flower. The rose flower has both beautiful flowers and sharp thorns. My experience of supervision is like this rose flower. I have gone through the thorns and beauty of supervision. The thorns represent the tough situations working with my supervisor. In some occasions I feel that my supervisor is pinning me down and insisting on her way when I would like to do it differently. She can also set strict deadlines for me which may not be practically realistic. I have to spent sleepless nights in order to meet the deadline and avoid offending her. My supervisor can also direct me to do something but after spending sleepless nights doing it for weeks or months, she says "this is not working, let us try something else" this is demoralizing. On the other hand, there is the rosy part of my experience, my supervisor always encourages me to work hard and complete my studies on time. Without the support of my supervisor I would not be where I am now. She has been following me closely to keep me on track. She makes my work easy, I can call her anytime and she will respond, sometimes we can chat through whatsapp and my problem is solve. She also inspires me to bring creative ideas into my work to make it different from others; this is the beautiful part of my supervision
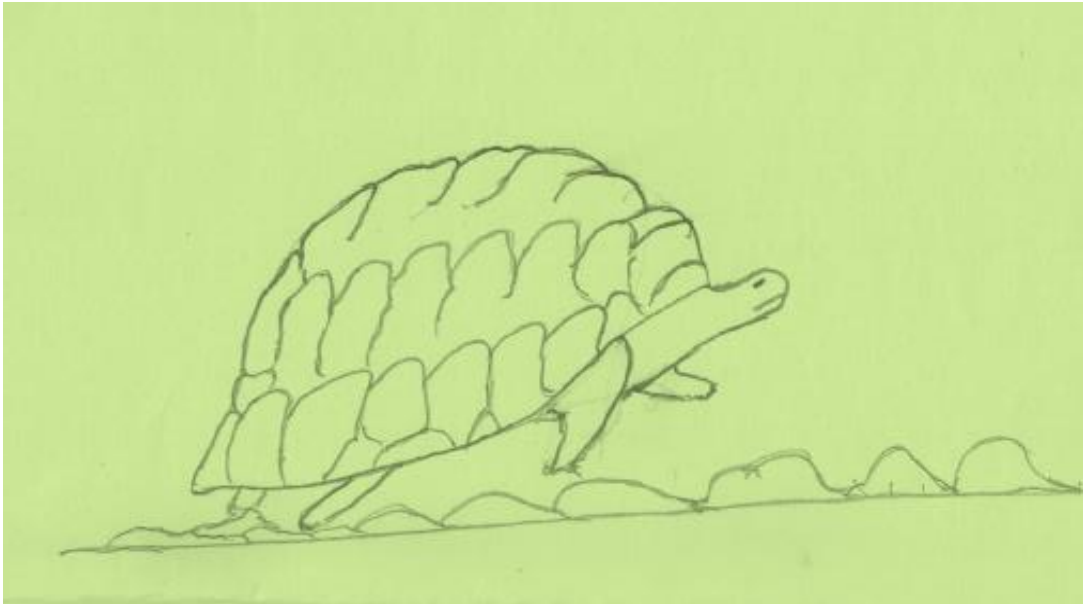
Figure 4.11: Drawing by Jerry

The experience of my supervision is that every step has been very slow. I have drawn a tortoise to represent this experience. A tortoise is a slow animal and this represents my supervision experience. I am very much behind, almost three years past my expected year of graduation. My supervisor does not like work done through online like meeting online. I have to wait for him to get time so that we can meet face to face. When I send my work through mail he insists that I must send a hard copy also to him. I have to print and drop a hard copy to an office he directs me and sometimes it gets lost in some offices because he does not have his own office. Feedback is also a problem, I have to call him several times to remind him of my work. It can take several months before I get any feedback. Sometimes he reads my work after a long time and even changes the things that he had proposed earlier. When we meet he cannot listen to me to explain what I have done, he can cross every page of my work with his pen taking me back to the beginning. Personally I also have too much work as a teacher and this has slowed me in doing my work. Sometimes I can be busy for two months without getting time for my studies. It is difficult balancing work and studies, May be I would have graduated if I had a study leave.
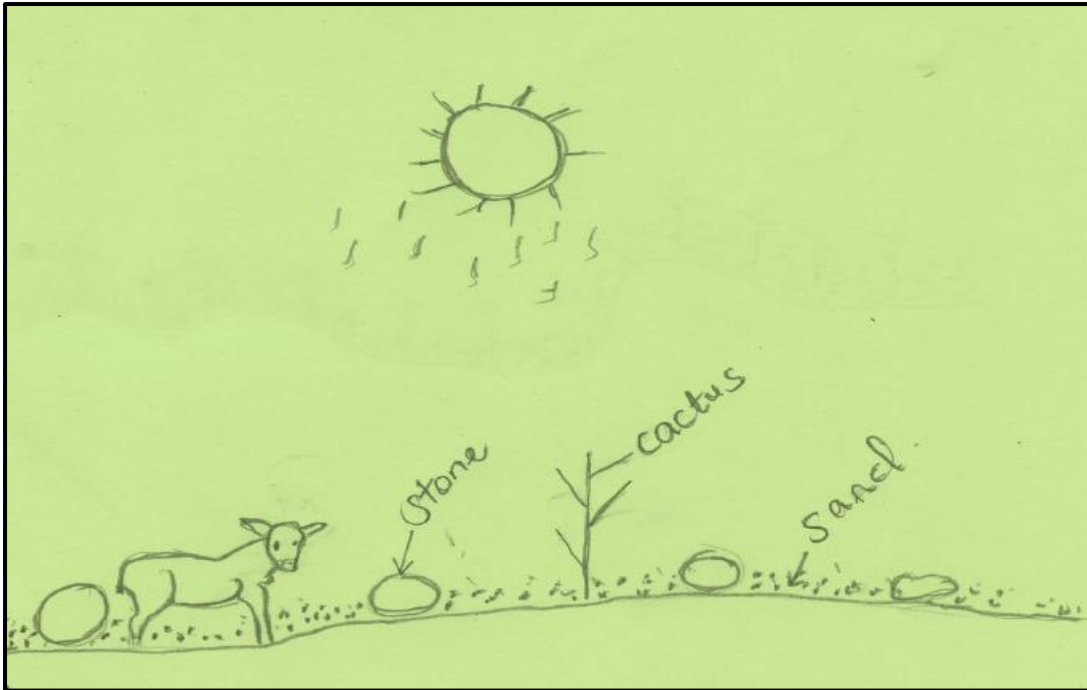
Figure 4.12: Drawing by Mark

I have drawn a lonely sheep in a desert where there is no food, water or shade to shelter. This is how I see my PhD supervision experience. I am like the lonely sheep in the desert because I cannot reach my supervisor for assistance even when I need the most. I am not sure if she has too much work or she does not like my area of research. She keeps telling me to do something and when we meet we will discuss. Unfortunately that meeting never happens. When I insist to meet her, she says "you are not the only student I am supervising". When she sends me feedback on the work I submitted to her, I can tell that she has not read my work. She only makes one or two general comments on my document and sends it back. The all process is like being in a desert where there is no shelter or food. My supervisor has left me to be a wanderer in a desert; I do not know the direction or where to get help.

From the participants experiences as described by the drawings and the captions above two themes were generated through thematic analysis. The themes and their sub-themes are shown in table 4.5

Table 4.5: Summary of the findings addressing the second research question

Theme	Categories	
1. Productive experiences	i.	In-depth mentorship
	ii.	Open-door supervision
	iii.	Supervisor as a strong pillar
	iv.	Inspiring relationship
	v.	Owning the process
2. Unproductive experiences	i.	Feeling neglected
	ii.	Busy supervisor
	iii.	Negative critique
	iv.	Non-accommodative supervision
	v.	Slow supervision process

4.2.2.1 Theme 1: Productive Experiences

Productive experiences refer to the experiences that promote effective supervision and steady student progress. The aim of postgraduate supervision is to mentor the student to be an independent researcher and produce quality research work. This theme therefore addresses the experiences of postgraduate students that seem to encourage a fruitful supervision process and a positive working relationship between the student and the supervisor.

This theme consists of five categories, which are: (i) In-depth mentorship, (ii) Open-door supervision, (iii) Inspiring relationship, (iv) Supervisor as a strong pillar and (v) Owning the process (see table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Theme 1 and its categories

Theme 1	Categories	
Productive experiences	i.	In-depth mentorship
	ii.	Open-door supervision
	iii.	Supervisor as a strong pillar
	iv.	Inspiring relationship
	v.	Owning the process

4.2.2.1.1 In-depth mentorship

A mentor is someone who can provide guidance, advice and the required direction and counsel to others. In-depth mentorship in this study refers to the exceptional support and advice that supervisors give to their students during the supervision process. Postgraduate students who participated in this study shared their experiences of remarkable mentorship from their supervisors. This is evident from the following responses;

> *"He checks every sentence of my work and gives detail guidance on what I should do, he is a very good mentor and I have to be keen to every comment" (Thomas)*

> *"I was like this tree with no leaves but the mentorship of my supervisor has improved my knowledge in research" (Joy)*

> *"I have gone through an experience of thorough training in my supervision, my supervisor has train me very well in my research work" (Thomas)*

> *"The two supervisors have been reliable in this journey… they guide me on how to write every chapter of my work" (Nick)*

The quotations above draw an image of a constructive supervision process. The students are describing fruitful experiences with their supervisors. According to Abdulkareem (2013) students struggle with academic writing and they expect their supervisors to guide them on how to do it. From the experiences described above it appears that students are satisfied with the guidance of their supervisors. Many supervisors spent time with their students to share the Knowledge and expertness in

the field of research; this gives a clear direction to the students who are new in the research field (Schneijderberg, 2021). Supervisors who create time to provide mentorship succeed by developing their student to be independent and hence working on their own (Schneijderberg, 2021). The student responses above describe their experiences with supervisors who provide thorough training and mentorship. These are students who have been mentored to achieve the necessary competencies in research and are happy with the supervision process.

4.2.2.1.2 Open-door supervision

Open door supervision is used in this context to mean the kind of supervision where the supervisor gives the student the freedom to reach him or her at any time for guidance. The supervisor reduces the barriers of formality and is always available to guide the student. The supervisor allows the student to make a visit anytime to the office or meet at any venue; response to the student calls or messages; and is friendly to the student. This is evident from the following responses of the participants;

> *"She makes my work easy, I can call her any time and she will respond, sometimes we can chat through whatsapp and my problem is solve" (Sylvia)*

> *"My supervisor has become my good friend, I can reach him anytime and we can meet anywhere like a hotel" (Thomas)*
> *"I feel comfortable working with my supervisor and I can go to her office anytime and have a talk…." (Joy)*

> *"My supervisors are always there to guide and show me the way whenever I need their assistance…" (Nick)*

The quotation above gives a picture of students who have a free engagement with their supervisors and less restrictions. Supervisors who work in an open-door style develop a strong relationship with their students (Yende, 2021). The open-door supervision promotes positive student experiences and enhances learning in different ways. First, the student is motivated to learn, hence raising the level of dedication to

the research work (Yende, 2021). Secondly, the student receives prompt guidance, as the participants said in the responses above, the engagement between the student and the supervisor seems to be frequent and consistent. Currie (2019) argues that regular interaction between the student and the supervisor is a recipe for successful supervision as it provides a supportive environment for student to succeed.

4.2.2.1.3 Supervisor as a strong pillar

The views of the participants suggested that their supervisors gave them the support they needed to progress in their work. They viewed their research work as a heavy and demanding task which they could not manage without a strong support from their supervisors. This is evident from the following responses;

> *"I see my PhD journey as a heavy task. It is like carrying a heavy load ....but my supervisors have been strong pillars in my journey, we have carried the heavy task together" (Nick)*

> *"There are so many things that I did not know how to go about in research, but I am lucky I got a strong support from my supervisor; he has taken his time to guide" (Thomas)*

> *"Without the support of my supervisor I would not be where I am now. She has been following me closely to keep me on track" (Sylvia)*

> *"They teach me how to write every chapter of my work and I appreciate the many things I have learned from them" (Nick)*

The quotations above describe the students' positive experiences with their supervisors. Some supervisors have a strong supportive personality (Calderwood, 2022). They show interest in the students' work and they go an extra mile in supporting their students (Calderwood, 2022). Even though successful completion of research depends on the commitment of the student, it appears from the responses above that the strength of the student also depends on the support of the supervisor. Yende (2021) noted that the supervisor plays a key role in overseeing the students' research project. It is clear from the responses that students appreciate their

supervisors for working closely with them, helping them to carry the heavy task of research and guiding them, especially on the areas of their difficulties. Supervisor support is paramount to the student success (Yende (2021).

4.2.2.1.4 Inspiring relationship

Relationship in this context refers to the student-supervisor relationship in the supervision process. An inspiring relationship is where the supervisor encourages and motivates the student to work more smartly in the research work. The postgraduate students who participated in this study describe working with supervisors who inspired them as seen by the following quotation:

> *"I am happy that she treats me like her daughter…my supervisor is more of a mother to me than a supervisor; she encourages me always to stay focus to my work and I feel comfortable working with her" (Joy)*

> *"I have now made so much progress with the guidance and encouragement of my new supervisor…he came with a touch to light my way out of the dark hole.." (Hilda)*

> *"My supervisor inspires me to bring creative ideas into my work to make it different from others, this the beautiful part of my supervision" (Sylvia)*

> *"They put a lot of energies in my work and this motivates me to work hard…we have develop a strong bond of relationship with them" (Nick)*

The responses above describe the experiences of students who are motivated in their research journey. According to Delgado and Stefos (2017) students who work with positive minds have the potential of completing their work on time. The responses above describe an effective student-supervisor relationship which is vital in any supervision process. Yende (2021) argues that successful supervision requires an effective student-supervisor relationship. The participants here describe how their supervisors inspire them to work hard and be creative in the research process. Supervisors who inspire their students create a strong bond of relationship and hence

enabling the student to work in a friendly environment (Naidoo & Mthembu, 2015). This is a helpful working relationship where students feel uplifted and motivated to work extra hard to complete their studies (Naidoo & Mthembu, 2015)

4.2.2.1.5 Owning the process

This refers to the state where the postgraduate student has gained the knowledge and skills of working independently as a driver of his own work. The responses of the participants in this study described a fruitful engagement with their supervisors that equipped them with the skills to own the process of research and work independently. This can be seen from the following quotations;

> *"I am like a good fisherman who has been well trained because I can do a lot without necessarily waiting for my supervisor" (Thomas)*

> *"I appreciate the many things I have learned from them, I am able to do the things I could not do before and get only a few corrections from them" (Nick)*

> *"All the branches in this tree contain fruits to mean that I am well nurtured by my supervisor in all areas of research and I now know how to write scholarly work" (Joy)*

The quotations above allude to experiences of students who have been well trained with knowledge and skills to own the process and work independently. The aim of postgraduate supervision is to train the research student to be an independent scholar (Ali et al., 2016). Some supervisors not only provide the academic guidance, but also, go an extra mile to ensure that their students gain the necessary skills that enable them to work independently and own the process (Ali et al., 2016).It is clear from the responses above that participants describe the experiences of owning the research process and driving their own work with little guidance from their supervisors. According to Daramola (2021) research students, especially PhD candidates should be

trained to work independently. PhD candidates should be the drivers of their own study and not the supervisors (Cekiso et al., 2019)

4.2.2.2 Theme 2: Unproductive Experiences

This refers to experiences that could negatively affect the research progress of the student. Despite the positive experiences described above in the previous theme, some participants narrated a less supportive working relationship with their supervisors. There are instances where students go through detrimental experiences, or the engagement between the student and the supervisor is minimal.

This theme addresses the undesirable experiences that postgraduate students encounter in their supervision journey. Five categories where generated out of this theme as follows : (i) Feeling neglected (ii) Busy supervisor (iii) Negative critique, (iv) Non-accommodative supervision, and (v) Slow supervision process (see table 4.7).

Table 4.7: Theme 2 and its Categories

Theme	Categories	
Unproductive experiences	i.	Feeling neglected
	ii.	Busy supervisors
	iii.	Negative critique
	iv.	Non-accommodative supervision
	v.	Slow supervision process

4.2.2.2.1 Feeling neglected

Postgraduate students expect their supervisors to show interest in their work and to be available for guidance. Nevertheless, there are instances when students feel abandoned by their supervisors. The participants expressed their experiences of feeling neglected by their supervisors. This is evident from the following quotations;

> *"She would not tell me what to do …I felt lonely and more confused… I have drawn a big hole to describe this experience; I was like in a deep and dark hole without help"* (Hilda)

> *"I think that they are less concern with my work and I have to struggle most of the time alone without their help"* (Periz)

> *"I am like a lonely sheep in a desert because I cannot reach my supervisor for assistance even when I need them the most"* (Mark)

> *"My PhD is a big stone to be rolled and I need my supervisor to assist me roll the stone. In the drawing my supervisor is sited watching me rolling the stone alone"* (Gloria)

It is clear from the responses above that students can feel lonely and neglected by their supervisors. The participants here describe being lonely during the supervision journey. A study by Janta, Lugosi and Brown (2014) found that research students experience feelings of loneliness when their supervisors are not close to them. Students are novice researchers and they expect their supervisors to provide a step by step guidance of their research work (Janta et al., 2014). The experiences from the quotations above show that students are sometimes forgotten by their supervisors and they are left to struggle without the supervisors help in the research process. They describe being lonely and confused because their supervisors are less concern. Students prefer working with supervisors who show interest in their work and are available for consultation (Yarwood-Ross & Haigh, 2014). This is the focus of the next sub-theme.

4.2.2.2.2 Busy supervisors

Apart from feeling neglected as described in the previous sub-theme, the participants also narrated experiences of working with busy supervisors. As noted above, one of the reasons students feel neglected is because their supervisors are busy and unavailable. The participants narrated how they could not reach their supervisors for help during the research process. This is evident from the following quotations;

> *"My supervisor says he will meet me when he gets time… I wonder why he schedules time for everything else and forgets about me" (James)*

> *"He is a friendly supervisor but he is too busy. Even reaching him through the phone is difficult… I need his assistance… but I can't get hold of him" (James)*

> *"My supervisor is not there for me, he always says he has a lot of work and meeting with him is the most difficult thing" (Mark)*

> *"She keeps telling me to do something and when we meet we will discuss. Unfortunately that meeting never happens. When I insist to meet her, she says "you are not the only student I am supervising" (Mark)*

The quotations above allude to frustrated students who need assistance from their supervisors and they cannot reach them. According to Wang and Byram (2019) some supervisors put their students as an afterthought. They prioritise other activities and only see their students when they have a free time. From the responses above, students seem to blame the supervisors for being busy with other activities and abandoning them. Several studies show that students work with busy supervisors who have no time for them (Wang & Byram 2019; Currie, 2019; Yarwood-Ross & Haigh, 2014). As stated earlier in this study, many postgraduate students complaint of inconsistent and sporadic contact with their supervisors (Wang & Byram 2019). This compromises the quality of supervision and the quality of research work being produced by the student who has not been well mentored (Currie, 2019).

4.2.2.2.3 Negative critique

A supervisor is responsible for mentoring and guiding the research student. It is expected that the supervisor critiques the student's work or ideas in a way that promotes the students learning and understanding. However, some criticism may not go well with the students, especially, when the critique is negative. Participants in this

study narrated experiences of discouraging comments and negative critique from their supervisors. This can be seen from the following quotations;

> *"The worst is when I got feedback from them and it is all about the things I have done wrong and how bad my work is...no one points out the positive things...I get totally discouraged because of their comments" (Tom)*

> *"Sometimes also I get very discouraging comments from my supervisor but I have to accept that she is an expert in the field" (Gloria)*

> *"She would always say to me "write something", but when I write something and share with her, she would say "No no no...you have done nothing ...you need to read more" (Hilda)*

> *"I fear asking my supervisor anything because whenever I ask, the answer is "how did you get to the PhD without knowing this"(Gloria)*

The quotations above outline experiences of students who seem discouraged by the comments and criticism of their supervisors. According to De Lange and Chikoko (2011) the supervisor is an advisor who is expected to mentor the student. The supervisor should ordinarily provide support by critiquing the student's work and offering advice and consultation (De Lange & Chikoko (2011). However, some criticism or comments from the supervisor could be undesirable and may demoralize the student instead of giving a direction (Yarwood-Ross & Haigh, 2014). In the responses above participants talk of supervisors who only point the wrongs in their work with no positive comments. Students see the supervisor as a knowledgeable expert in research and therefore expect them to advice and also encourage them in the research journey (Yarwood-Ross & Haigh, 2014)

4.2.2.2.4 Non-accommodative supervision

The process of supervision involves the student and the supervisor or supervisors in co-supervision. Mutual understanding is always important in promoting the progress of the student. All the parties are expected to contribute to the development of the

research project. However, some responses of participants in this study seem to suggest that some supervisors insist on their own way without accommodating the opinions of their students or their co-supervisors. This can be seen from the following quotations

> "…he is in charge of the steering wheel and controls everything without listening to me, he dismisses my opinions…he is the kind of person you cannot propose how something should be done" (Sydney)

> "My two supervisors cannot agree and this has been my worst experience in my studies…in most cases their comments on my work are conflicting" (Periz)

> I cannot convince him to buy my idea and I only have to say yes to him in everything. I appreciate that he is an expert but also I am frustrated that I have to do everything his way" (Sydney)

> "The thorns represent the tough situations working with my supervisor. In some occasions I feel that my supervisor is pinning me down and insisting on her way when I would like to do it differently" (Sylvia)

> "When we meet he cannot listen to me to explain what I have done, he can cross every page of my work with his pen taking me back to the beginning" (Jerry)

The responses of the participants above describe a rigid supervision process where opinions of others are not accommodated. According to Phillips and Johnson (2022) research process should be conversational and both the student and the supervisors must contribute to the development of the research project. Elliot and Kobayashi (2019) argue that power rests on the supervisor and there can be instances when supervisors insist on their own way without accommodating the students' opinion. However, even though the supervisor is an expert in research, the supervisors' opinion should not always prevail over that of the student (Phillips & Johnson, 2022). The above responses describe disappointed students who have no opportunity to contribute to their own work. Students should be active participants who play a bigger role in shaping their projects (Elliot and Kobayashi, 2019).

The supervisor is always seen to be in a superior position and there is a possibility of not considering the students' opinion (Morris, 2011). Even though the power between the student and the supervisor is unequal the student should not be rendered powerless (Martin, 2014). For successful supervision, the supervisor should always enabled a mutual negotiation process where both the student and the supervisor have an equal opportunity to contribute to the development of the research project (Phillips & Johnson, 2022) .A study by Backhouse et al. (2015) show that supervision is a complex process and even supervisors themselves may not agree on some issues

4.2.2.2.5 Slow supervision process

Student projects have expected time of completion. Some students could manage to complete their work and graduate within the anticipated time. Other students meet obstacles on the way that may hinder their timely completion and graduation. Participants in this study narrated the experiences that slowed down their research progress. This can be seen from the following quotations;

> *"The experience of my supervision is that every step has been very slow. I have drawn a tortoise to represent this experience… My supervisor does not like work done through online… I have to wait for him to get time so that we can meet face to face" (Jerry)*

> *"He chooses the speed at which we can go and I cannot say anything, even when he engages the breaks and stops for some time I have to obey…" (Sydney)*

> *"She keeps telling me to do something and when we meet we will discuss, unfortunately that meeting never happens" (Mark)*

> *"I would send her work but she could not give feedback or make any communication to me, I send her several emails but she could not reply…" (Hilda)*

It is clear from the responses that students complain of a slow supervision process which hinders their progress. As stated earlier in this study, supervision is a two-way interactional process which requires both the supervisor and the student to willfully

and consistently engage each (Jones, 2013). However, it appears from the participants responses above that the engagement between the student and the supervisor was not significant enough to promote students' progress. The participants describe their supervision as very slow, since they cannot meet with their supervisors. It is also emerging that supervisors decide the speed of the students' progress; the student cannot proceed without an okay from the supervisor, and sometimes there is no communication or feedback from the supervisor for a long time. Students expect to complete their studies within the expected time, but only a few manage to meet this expectation (Delgado & Stefos, 2017). According to Wang and Byram (2019) supervisors who supervise many students and have administrative and teaching responsibilities may not meet the needs each student on time, and hence their students could take a longer time to complete their studies.

4.2.3 Supervisors' Perspectives on Capacity Building Opportunities Available for Thesis Supervision

The third research question sought to explore the perspectives of supervisors on capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in universities in Kenya. The research question was stated as follows: *What are the supervisors' perspectives on the capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya?* Twelve supervisors were also interviewed; four from each of the three universities. The supervisors pointed several views on capacity building. They perceived the available capacity building opportunities in three ways; first as enriching opportunities (theme 1). Secondly, they recounted that capacity building has enhance their professional development and competency (theme 2). Finally, they saw it as a practice which has not been prioritised in universities in Kenya (theme 3). These findings are summarised in table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Summary of the findings addressing research question three

Theme	Categories
1. Enriching opportunities	i. Seminars and workshops
	ii. Co-supervision
	iii. Partnerships and collaboration
2. Supervisor development	i. Enhanced supervisor knowledge and skills
	ii. Informed supervisor
	iii. Professional growth
3. Non-prioritized practice	i. Unstructured training
	ii. Paucity of training

The findings are discussed in following section

4.2.3.1 Theme 1. Enriching Opportunities

Enriching opportunities in this context refers to the capacity building practices that enhance and improve the quality of thesis supervision in universities. This theme addresses the first perception of supervisors on capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in universities in Kenya. The participants described different available capacity building opportunities in their universities which they perceived as enriching opportunities in the supervision process. These include (i) Seminars and workshops (ii) Co-supervision and (iii) Partnership and collaboration (see table 4.9)

Table 4.9: Theme 1 and its categories

Theme 1	Categories
Enriching opportunities	i. Seminars and workshops
	ii. Co-supervision
	iii. Partnership and collaboration

4.2.3.1.1 Seminars and workshops

The context here refers to academic seminars and workshops. These are academic forums that are organised for supervisors. The forums are organised around specific topics, which in this case are topics on thesis supervision. The participants highlighted participating in different seminars and workshops that benefited them. This is evident from the following quotations

> *"We sometimes have seminars or workshops which are organised as interventions to support supervisors and we benefit from this so much" (William)*

> *"Initially you could use the knowledge of how you were supervised to supervise your student, but now with seminars that come once in while in the university we get new knowledge and ideas" (Pop)*

> *"We have departmental workshops on issues of supervision and this puts supervisors in a department on the same level, no one is left behind" (Mercy)*

It appears from the quotations above that supervisors consider seminars and workshops as enriching capacity building opportunities. According to Uellendahl and Tenenbaum (2015) seminars and workshops are important learning forums for supervisors. There is need for supervisors to shape their skills for better supervision, and as such, universities should avail more learning opportunities to develop the supervisors (Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015). The responses of the participants above indicate that supervisors benefit with new knowledge and ideas through the seminars and workshops. A study by Guerin, Walker, Aitchison, Mattarozzi, Chatterjee and James (2017) show that training and development programs for supervisors in universities is mostly organised in form of seminars and workshops. Some universities have regular workshops for supervisors which could be within a fortnight or a month (Guerin et al., 2015). Apart from workshops and seminars, participants also described co-supervision as another enriching available capacity building opportunity in their universities; this is the focus of the next category.

4.2.3.1.2 Co-supervision

As stated earlier in the previous section, co-supervision involves two or more supervisors overseeing a students' research project. Participants in this study perceived co-supervision as a capacity building opportunity that also enhances their skills in supervision. This is evident from the following quotations:

> "….at least you can build up your skills from your colleagues when you are supervising the same student together. You can have several students and you are supervising with different people who are good in different areas" (Jean)

> "No one supervises a student alone, we supervisors as two and this is not benefiting the student alone, we also learn from each" (Nick)

> "My learning point has been in co-supervision… you see this is what we do every day…I have learned a lot from my seniors" (Sharon)

From the quotations above it is clear that supervisors view co-supervision as an avenue for developing themselves as colleagues. Supervisors share their expertise with each other in a co-supervision (Olmos-López & Sunderland, 2017). As one participant said above, it is not only the student who benefit from co-supervision, but also, they learn from each other. According to Olmos-López and Sunderland (2017) a novice supervisor can best be oriented into research supervision through co-supervising with a senior academic who has a wealth of experience in supervision. Co-supervision is seen as on-job training as it enables supervisors to learn from each other during the actual practice of supervising the student (Paul, Olso & Gul, 2014). Even though differences of opinion can arise in a co-supervision, the participants here seem to appreciate the exchange of knowledge and ideas while co-supervising a student. They also highlighted the importance of collaboration and partnerships as discussed in the next category.

4.2.3.1.3 Collaboration and partnership

In the context of this study collaborations and partnerships refers to joint ventures by universities in areas of interest in academic research. In this case, universities work mutually through specific academic or research projects. The main aim is sharing expertise and increasing productivity and efficiency in universities. Participants viewed collaboration and partnerships as a learning opportunity in research supervision. This can be seen from the following quotations:

> *"In our faculty we work with other institutions including outside Kenya and when you see their way of supervision, it is somehow different from ours; we have managed to borrow a number of things to improve ours" (Simon)*

> *"Collaboration and partnership is also something I can say has helped us, we do joint research on some topics and you get to learn new things in research…" (Winny))*

> *"We network with many universities and this is very important, we share much about supervision and its challenges on different sessions" (Simon)*

The above responses describe the value of collaborations and partnerships to supervisors. Their views indicate that this is an enriching opportunity that also enhances their skills of supervision. A study by Perkmann and Salter (2012) found that collaborations and partnerships gives universities access to more resources and expertise. It enables universities to diversify their research areas and explore new research opportunities. Supervisors in collaborating universities share knowledge and experiences that boost their skills and expertise in supervision (Eddy, 2010). This confirms the participants responses above where they admit that collaborations and partnerships has given them the opportunity to carry out joint research as well as sharing and borrowing best practices from each other. Collaborations increase the competence of supervisors and enhance the quality of research and supervision (Perkmann & Salter, 2012).

4.2.3.2 Theme 2: Supervisor Development

In this study, supervisor development refers to an effort to improve the skills and competencies of supervisors to enable them deliver their mandate effectively. Supervisors who participated in this study pointed out that capacity building opportunities has enhanced their knowledge and skills in supervision and kept them informed (See table 4.10).

Table 4.10: Theme 2 and its categories

Theme 2	Categories
Supervisor Development	i. Enhanced supervisor knowledge and skills
	ii. Informed supervisor
	iii. Professional growth

4.2.3.2.1 Enhanced supervisor knowledge and skills

This refers to development of the supervisors' expertise through opportunities that advances the know-how and effectiveness of the supervisor. Participants described their perceptions suggesting that capacity building opportunities has enabled them to develop their skills in supervision. This is evident from the following quotations;

> *"As a supervisor you gain new skills and you are able to supervise better, in these forums there is always that one thing you will pick that will make you a better supervisor" (Lyn)*

> *"It is very important as it makes supervisors get rich in content, learning is a continuous process, you cannot say you have supervised for long, you always need to shape your skills when you get such opportunities" (George)*

> *"You become well equipped and your competence and even confidence is nurtured through capacity building" (Timan)*

It is clear from the quotations that supervisors view any opportunity for capacity building as a chance to develop their knowledge and skills. Professional competences of supervisors can be well developed by creating opportunities that enable them to

gain new ideas in form of skills and content (Suhaemi & Aedi, 2015). According to Kassan, Fellner, Jones, Palandra and Wilson (2015) universities should address the increasingly complex roles and skills required of supervisors by putting in place the strategies that can provide different levels of support for supervisors. It is seen from the responses above that supervisors yearn to shape their skills in order to supervise better. They perceive that capacity building opportunities would nurture their competence as well as their confidence in supervision. Research supervisors should therefore be supported to sharpen their skills in supervision (Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015). The participants also perceived that the available capacity building opportunities keeps them informed on matters of supervision; this is outlined in the next category.

4.2.3.2.2 Informed supervisor

Getting informed means being updated with the current happenings. The participants viewed capacity building has an opportunity to keep them up-to-date on current developments in postgraduate supervision. They perceive it has a sensitization program to make them catch up with global contemporary issues on postgraduate supervision. This can be seen from the following quotations;

> *"As a supervisor now we need to be well informed than ever before…with the contemporary student we have today... those workshops are very important to keep us updated" (Mercy)*

> *"...yes...my view is that it is helping us catch up with new developments in supervision, otherwise, we may lag behind" (Victoria)*

> *"The capacity building opportunities we are talking about....to me is like a sensitization program on what is new…we cannot continue with the things in the old school of thought at this time when the world is changing so fast" (Timan)*

The responses of the participants above describe how supervisors perceive capacity building opportunities. It is clear that they see it as a way of keeping them informed

and up-to-date with new developments in supervision. This is in agreement with a study by Guerin et al. (2017) where they argue that the postgraduate research supervision today occurs within a rapidly changing environment, that even the experienced supervisors need formal supervision training. The participants seem to appreciate that the world is changing so fast and the contemporary student could be more informed. Therefore, supervisors should always be updated with current trends in supervision (Blose et al., 2021). According to Al-Kiyumi and Hammad (2020) there is need for regular capacity building in universities, not only to enrich supervisors with knowledge and skills, but also to keep them informed on current trends of supervision. Capacity building also develops the professional growth of supervisors as explained in the next category.

4.2.3.2.3 Professional growth

Professional growth in this context refers to the career advancement of supervisors. The participants in this study perceived that capacity building opportunities brings both short term and long term improvement in their careers. They narrated that the opportunities enable them build their skills and experiences for career progression that involves promotions and other greater responsibilities. This is evident from the following quotations:

> *"This is something good, you get the skills to supervise and to write good papers and you can attract research funds, such things opens doors for promotions quickly" (Nick)*

> *"Capacity building puts you in a position to supervise students successfully and this is a plus in your professional growth, it adds up to your CV (curriculum vitae)" (Lyn)*

> *"You cannot grow as a lecturer without capacity building; we need this opportunities because this is where you build your experiences, in some trainings you get certificates that will take you places" (Victoria)*

The quotations above show that supervisors view capacity building in their universities as opportunities for their professional growth. A study by Guerin et al. (2017) agrees with this perception; they argue that capacity building of supervisors does not only make the supervisor effective in supervision, but also, develops them professionally to handle more responsibilities in the field of research and academia. From the responses above, supervisors talk of building their CV (Curriculum Vitae) and getting promotions. One of them said "…*you get certificates that will take you places*"; which is an informal statement to mean getting better things, which could be promotions or better opportunities in other sectors. According to Akuegwu and Nwi-ue (2013) a well-trained supervisor is able to apply the new skills and experiences to handle more responsibilities in their level and in leadership positions.

4.2.3.3 Theme 3: Non-Prioritized Practice

It emerged from the participants that capacity building of supervisors in universities in Kenya has not been given the priority that it deserves. The participants pointed out that universities are yet to understand the significance of supervisor training in equipping supervisors for effective supervision. They narrated that capacity building of supervisors is a practice which is done in unstructured way, and in some institutions it is rarely done (see table 4.11)

Table 4.11: Theme 3 and its categories

Theme 3	Categories
Non-prioritized practice	i. Unstructured training
	ii. Paucity of training

4.2.3.3.1 Unstructured training

This refers to the kind of supervisor training in universities where there is no formal organisation and clear guidelines. It emerged from the participants that capacity building for supervisors is not well organised in universities. The available opportunities appeared to be irregular without a definite structure on when and how it should be done. This is evident from the following quotations

> *"There is no organised way of carrying out capacity building for supervisors in our university; each faculty have their own way but still it is not that organised"* (Winny)

> *"Mostly it is done when sponsored, like by the DAAD, otherwise it is not something that is always planned regularly"* (Simon)

> *"Capacity building is a good thing, but for us it is on-and-off, sometimes it is done, and sometimes it is just forgotten"* (Sharon)

The participants seem to describe a situation where there is no clarity in universities on how capacity building for supervisors should be done. Daramola (2021) argues that development and training of supervisors has not been done in a regular and formal way especially in universities in sub-Saharan Africa. This is confirmed by the responses of the participants above, who talked about the training being on-and-off, not organised, or only done when sponsored. According to McCallin and Nayar (2012) formal training of supervisors is a significant process that should be done continually in institutions. Supervisors should be equipped for their role through organised and regular training on various issues of supervision (Daramola, 2021). Unfortunately, a number of universities in sub-Saharan Africa have not developed formal structures for training of supervisor (Lemmer, 2016)

Apart from unstructured training for supervisors, participants also described situations where capacity building of supervisors is missing or rarely done in universities. This is the focus of the next category

4.2.3.3.2 Paucity of practice

In the context of this study, paucity of practice refers to the absence or rareness of capacity building in universities. The participants described situations in their universities where there is no capacity building for supervisors. Others say that it is a rare practice that is not usually done in their institutions. This can be seen from the following quotations:

> *"Mmmh…in my university capacity building for supervisors is a missing link; it is just done once in a blue moon, there is no emphasis on it" (George)*

> *"On capacity building No!... everyone on his own as a supervisor, we have never had a chance for capacity building in our department but some departments do it once in a while" (Victoria)*

> *Definitely capacity building should do more to improve on supervision, but unfortunately it is not done in our institution, may be once a year, I have not seen the seriousness of it myself (Simon)*

The responses appear to be a complaint by supervisors that capacity building has not been prioritised in their institutions. Masek and Alias (2020) claim that with the increasing complex research environment and dynamics in supervision, universities should consider emphasizing on supervisors training. However, it is clear from the participants' responses above that capacity building of supervisors in some institutions is not done, or is rarely done .According to Lemmer (2016) there is need to establish structures that guide the development of supervisory skills among supervisors in institutions of higher learning. Participants in this study seem to criticize their institutions for understating the importance of capacity building for supervisors. As stated earlier in the previous theme, supervisors can only enhance their knowledge and skills of supervision through training (Suhaemi & Aedi, 2015). This can be done through available capacity building opportunities in universities.

4.2.4 Perspectives of Students and Supervisors on How Thesis Supervision can be Strengthened

The aim of the fourth research question was to explore the perspectives of students and supervisors on how postgraduate supervision can be enhanced for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in Kenya. The research question was stated as follows: *What are the perspectives of students and supervisors on how postgraduate supervision can be enhanced for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in Kenya?* Data was generated using focus group discussion with students and interviews with supervisors. The students and supervisors from the three selected public universities gave their views on how postgraduate supervision can be improved. Four themes where generated from the data, these include; (i) developing the supervisor (ii) empowering the student (iii) Constructive student-supervisor relationship and (iv) supervision support structures (see table 4.12)

Table 4.12: Summary of the findings addressing research question 4

Theme		Categories
1. Supervisor support Mechanisms	i.	Frequent in-service training
	ii.	Supervisor motivation
	iii.	Reasonable workload
2. Empowering the student	i.	Developing student agency
	ii.	Comprehensive research program
3. Constructive student-supervisor relationship	i.	Negotiating the relationship
	ii.	Constant communication
	iii.	Amicable conflict resolution
4. Supervision support structures	i.	Building online infrastructure
	ii.	Office spaces for supervisors
	iii.	Improving and adhering to supervision policies
	iv.	Professionalising supervision

4.2.4.1 Theme 1: Supervisor Support Mechanisms

This refers to the efforts by universities to reinforce the work of supervisors with the aim of improving supervision. The participants highlighted several views on how supervision can be enhanced in universities through supporting the supervisor. This include; (i) Frequent in-service training (ii) Supervisor motivation and (iv) Reasonable workload (see figure 4.13)

Table 4.13: Theme 1 and its categories

Theme 1		Categories
Supervisor support mechanism	i.	Frequent in-service training
	ii.	Supervisor motivation
	iii.	Reasonable workload

4.2.4.1.1 Frequent in-service training

In-service training in this context refers to supervisor development effort to enhance their knowledge and skills. Participants in this study had the perception that supervision can be improved by investing on supervisor development through frequent in-service training. This is evident from the following quotations:

> *"Universities should invest on their supervisors; capacity building of supervisors should be a continuous thing, this will do a lot in improving supervision" (Mercy)*

> *"Our supervisors are too superficial you don't feel that real guidance you expected from your professor, I think they need some refresher courses to make them do better" (Jacob)*

> *"In-service training for staff on current research methods is key to every supervisor if supervision process is to be improved… as a supervisor you need to be conversant with new research methods…" (Nick)*

> *"For us to succeed in supervision we should encourage supervisors to attend as many workshops and conferences as possible. This is where they will expand their knowledge and skills and you can be sure that students will be mentored well" (Sharon)*

From the quotations above, it comes out clear that the participants belief on frequent training of supervisors as a way of enhancing supervision. According to Uellendahl and Tenenbaum (2015) supervision today has become a complex activity and supervisor training cannot be avoided. For a supervisor to supervise well there is need for regular training and refresher courses on research and supervision (Debra et al., 2021). An effective supervisor must be well equipped with research skills and a wide knowledge in the field of research conducted by the student (Debra et al., 2021). It is clear from the responses above that even students expect their supervisors to sharpen their skills in order to provide in-depth guidance and not to be superficial. There should be consistent and ongoing capacity building workshops and seminars in universities to strengthen the supervision skills of supervisors (Chikte & Chabillal, 2016). Frequent in-service training nurtures the supervisors' expertise in supervision (Chikte & Chabillal, 2016).

4.2.4.1.2 Supervisor motivation

Supervisor motivation refers to any endeavors in universities that are centered towards inspiring the supervisors to work in a better and favorable way. The views of the participants suggest that effective supervision could be achieved by motivating the supervisor. Motivated supervisor could do well in providing quality supervision. They pointed out that supervisors could be motivated through rewarding outstanding supervisors, improving remuneration and sponsoring them to conferences. This can be seen from the following responses:

> *"There should be incentives to reward outstanding supervisors, I am talking of those who supervise students to completion every year and at the same time making publications in prestigious journals" (Victoria)*

>*"For me, to improve supervision, first, the supervisor should be well remunerated, this a motivation, the package they are giving supervisors now is peanuts"* (Simon)

>*"Supervision should be taken seriously, universities should sponsor supervisors to conferences and other forums, this is good for them and it is a motivation…"* (Pop)

>*"A demotivated supervisor will not have the morale to read the students work and give feedback on time; even if he does it might not be anything beneficial to the student"* (Simon)

The view of the participants from the responses above is that supervision can be improved by motivating the supervisor. Sriekaningsih and Setyadi (2015) argue that motivation has a significant effect on the performance of lecturers in universities. Motivation creates a positive work environment and improves efficiency of academics. It fosters creative and critical thinking in the research process (Sriekaningsih & Setyadi, 2015). Supervisors who are motivated are more engaged in the research process and are likely to meet individual goals and that of the institution (Meilani, Tan, Murwani and Sudibjo, 2021). Like the responses of the participants above, Meilani et al., (2021) contend that universities should use motivation to inspire faculty members to work well with their students.

Ekundayo and Ayodele (2019) argue that supervisors could be motivated by increasing their pay package; promoting them when due; rewarding those with exemplary performance and providing a conducive working environment. A constructive working relationship with students can be developed with a motivated supervisor; this is vital for successful supervision and production of quality research work (Mulder, Segalas Coral, Kordas, Nikiforovich & Pereverza, 2015). As one participant said above, it is difficult for a demotivated supervisor to make a meaningful and fruitful relationship with students.

4.2.4.1.3 Reasonable workload

As stated earlier in this chapter, supervisors raised their views of heavy workload which include teaching assigned courses, supervising and administrative work. The participants, however, had the perception that supervisors can work better when assigned reasonable workload. It should be noted that both supervisors and students who participated in this study where of the view that supervision can be enhanced when supervisors have a reasonable workload. This is evident from the following quotation:

> *"We are overloaded and the university should employ more lecturers to teach and supervise, may be this way we can improve supervision because you have time to concentrate with your students"(Timan)*

> *"If you want to improve supervision, you must first deal with the problem of workload; a supervisor can only be resourceful if he is not overworked" (Jean)*

> *"... I think they supervise many students; you have to chase them up and down before you get a minute with them. If we have enough lecturers' at least a supervisor will focus on you" (Rose)*

From the responses above participants maintain that supervision can be enhanced when supervisors are not overworked. Successful supervision requires that supervisors have time to provide technical advice and mentorship to their students (Barasa & Omulando, 2018). However, as noted from the responses above, supervisors confess of being overworked and have no time to concentrate with their students. It is interesting to note from the responses above that students also complaint that they cannot get hold of their supervisors because of the heavy load that make them busy .This mirrors a study by Ronguno et al. (2016) which observed that although students attempt to meet their supervisors regularly, their efforts in most cases end up in vain. It is also emphasised by Kimani (2014) who found that supervisors who are overworked have no time for their students. This indicates a

disengaged supervision that can rarely bear any fruits. According to Masek and Alias (2020) supervision becomes a rewarding experience when supervisors have reasonable workload and time to guide their students.

4.2.4.2 Theme 2: Empowering the Student

In the context of research supervision, empowering the student refers to giving students the ability to contribute significantly in the research process. Participants had the view that research supervision can be improved by empowering the student. Their views suggested that students can be empowered through some ways, which include; (i) developing student agency and (ii) comprehensive research program (see table 4.14)

Table 4.14: Theme 2 and its categories

Theme 2	Categories	
Empowering the student	i.	Developing student agency
	ii.	Comprehensive research program

4.2.4.2.1 Developing student-agency

This refers to a practice in supervision where students are empowered to actively participate in the research process in shaping their work. The participants noted that supervision becomes more engaging and meaningful when students are empowered to participate actively and make decisions concerning their work. This can be seen from the following responses;

> *"I would like the kind of supervision where my hands are not tied, and not were the supervisor decides everything, this is my work and I should have a say" (Samson)*

> *"The student should have the opportunity to control the research, not me as a supervisor, mine is to guide, if we empower the student this way we will do better in supervision" (Lyn)*

> *"We have sidelined the student and micro-manage the process, we should come out of this and train a hands-on student who carries the work and decides the best way to do it" (William)*

The participants' responses above suggest that supervision could be improved by developing student-agency. When student agency is established in universities, students are able to take an active role in the research process (Crowhurst & Cornish, 2020). It creates an engaging supervision process where students have the ability to contribute significantly to the development of their own work. McAlpine and Amundsen (2009) argue that students and their supervisors should always negotiate on how they will work. The negotiation process gives the student the power of a co-decision maker with his/her supervisor in the research process (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2009).

It is clear from the responses that students would like to participate actively in their work and at the same time supervisors would not like to control the process. Empowered students are eager and able to expand their knowledge and learn new skills (Rigler Jr, Anastasia, Amin & Throne, 2021). Student agency plays a key role in supervision especially to doctoral students who are being mentored to be independent researchers (Crowhurst & Cornish, 2020). By developing student agency, supervisors also gain power by mentoring independent students (Rigler Jr. et al., 2021)

4.2.4.2.2 Comprehensive research program

This refers to engaging the postgraduate student with a wide-range of activities that fosters their competency in research. Participants aired their perceptions that supervision becomes successful when the student is well nurtured. This is evident from the following quotations:

> *"To make our supervision right, we should engage our students fully in workshops and seminars which carry various topics in thesis writing; this should be regular and compulsory for all postgraduate students" (Winny)*

"Supervision can have a different face if all of us are ready to employ different methods to make the student understand what research is, for me, apart from what I do, I also use my own students to mentor those who are new and it works well"(Pop)

"There are so many things that are ignored in supervision; they assume you know and you don't know. There should be a serious way of making students understand research, even if it means frequent mentorship or training sessions for us to understand this thing…" (Alex)

The participant responses above show the need for comprehensive research program to improve supervision. A study by Holley and Caldwell (2012) reveals that successful student mentoring programs should be in-depth and more engaging. The responses of the participants above suggest that it is not enough for the student to work only with this/her supervisors, but also, there is need to engage the student with other learning opportunities like workshops, seminars and peer mentoring. An all-inclusive program with several scholarly forums aids supervision by equipping students with research skills; thus making the work of the supervisor easier (Holley & Caldwell, 2012). Students get up-to-date research techniques that make learning and research more interesting (Brill, Balcanoff, Land, Gogarty & Turner, 2014). According to Lee and Murray (2015) seminars and workshops help postgraduate students develop as independent researchers. It also addresses common problems that students face like scholarly writing and plagiarism (Lee & Murray, 2015). It is interesting noting the student response above who said "*they assume you know and you don't know"* this means that student's research needs have not been made in the supervision process. Students need to be fully oriented and developed in the field of research through intensive supervision support programs (Lee & Murray, 2015)

4.2.4.3 Theme 3: Constructive Student-Supervisor Relationship

This refers to a cordial relationship between the student and the supervisor which promotes the progress of the student. Participants in this study expressed their views

that supervision can be enhanced by developing a constructive student-supervisor relationship. This concurs with several studies (Hamid, Abd Rahman & Hamidin, 2021, Nita, 2015, Gill & Burnard, 2008) which argue that one best recipe for successful supervision is building a constructive student-supervisor relationship. According to the participants, relationship could be developed through; (i) negotiating the relationship (ii) continuous communication and (iii) amicable conflict resolution (see table 4.15)

Table 4.15: Theme 3 and its categories

Theme 3		Categories
Constructive student-supervisor relationship	i.	Negotiating the relationship
	ii.	Constant communication
	iii.	Amicable conflict resolution

4.2.4.3.1 Negotiating the relationship

The participants were of the view that the quality of supervision could be made better when the student-supervisor relationship is negotiated. This means that the student and the supervisor exchange views, opinions and ideas during the research process. The participants talked of a negotiated relationship through listening to each other, open discussion and contribution by both the student and the supervisor. This evident from the following quotations:

> *"It is important to sit with your student every other time and let them tell you all their ideas, then you can pick from there and give a direction, this is how supervision should be…" (George)*

> *"....research becomes interesting when you have a supervisor who listens to you and you are able to talk and agree on some things" (Stelah)*

> *"There should be a discussion forum in any step of supervision, by doing this you move with your student together…not just throwing things to the student" (Victoria)*

> *"We need our supervisors to be friendly and understanding, this gives room to discuss anything openly in a friendly way" (Samson)*

The responses of participants above suggest that supervision could be enhanced by negotiating the student supervisor relationship. According to Hardy (2014) the student and the supervisor should always negotiate their relationship. Both should be flexible in the negotiation process and a better opinion should always be considered regardless of whether the opinion came from the student or the supervisor (Hardy, 2014). Supervision becomes fruitful when the student and the supervisor have an equal opportunity to contribute in the research process (Phillips & Johnson, 2022). Even though the power of the supervisor and the student is not equally constructed, the supervisor should not dominate in the relationship (Frick, Albertyn, Scott-Webber, Branch, Bartholomew & Nygaard, 2014). A negotiated relationship prevents feelings of dissatisfaction in the relationship (Frick et al., 2014). The quotations above describe the student and supervisors' need for a negotiated relationship in the research process. Negotiation should therefore be a continuous process where the student and the supervisor negotiates and re-negotiates to agree on how to work at every stage of the research project (Hardy, 2014)

4.2.4.3.2 Constant communication

Supervision is a two-way interaction process where the student and the supervisor should engage each other continually through constant communication. The views of the participants reveal that supervision could be enhanced through constant communication between the student and the supervisor. This can be seen from the following responses:

> *"The success of supervision is in communication, there should be a flowing and smooth communication between the student and the supervisor"*

> *"Social media is also making supervision better now, this should always be used, it has really assisted us students, you just whatsapp*

your supervisor and he can answer wherever he is and you get the guidance you need, sometimes instantly" (Hellen)

"For any supervision to bear fruits, the student and the supervisor should always communicate, by emails, phone calls, and face to face meetings or whatever way…this is very important" (Mercy)

"We need to improve on communication, in many cases the communication is after some months, the student is silent…the supervisor is silent" (Timan)

It is clear from the participants' responses above that communication is central in enhancing the supervision process. The quality of the supervisory communication is essential for the success of the supervision process and consequently the success of the student (Brill, Balcanoff, and Gogarty & Turner 2014). According to a favourable supervision atmosphere is where there is continuous communication between the student and the supervisor. This improves the level of engagement and commitment to the research project (Hamid et al., 2021). The students' response above that social media is an important tool of communication signifies that communication between the student and the supervisor should not always be formal. A non-structured communication allows the student an opportunity to communicate with the supervisor at any time on issues relating to the research project (Frick et al., 2014). As can be seen also from the quotations above the supervisor and the student can communicate at any time during the research process using emails, phone calls or face to face meetings. Every communication between the student and the supervisor involves some form of negotiation on the research project (Brill et al., 2014).

4.2.4.3.3 Amicable conflict resolution

Conflict resolution in the context of this study refers to resolving conflict that may arise in the supervision process between the student and the supervisor, or even between supervisors. The views of the participants implied that conflict can arise in the student-supervisor relationship, and as such, the responses suggested that there

should be mechanisms to resolve conflict in an amicable way. This can be seen from the following quotations;

> *"The other thing about improving supervision is having clear procedures for resolving conflict, I am not saying there is always conflict, but it happens"* (Simon)

> *"What makes most of us delay is when you cannot work well with your supervisor, the university should, may be, have better ways to solve such problems"* (Rose)

> *"...also, sometimes you disagree with your student; we should foresee this in any supervision and create ways of resolving disagreements when they arise"* (Simon)

> *"The faculty should have something like a committee where you report your problems when you have issues, this will be good for students"* (Alex)

It is clear from the responses that conflict can occur in the supervision process. Ahmadi, Shamsi and Mohammadi (2020) argue that conflict in a student-supervisor relationship is something expected because the student and the supervisor are people with different personalities and they therefore have different ideas, opinions and beliefs. It is interesting to note from the participants views above that there should be clear procedures for resolving conflict. Ahmadi et al., (2020) equally propose that there should be ways of managing conflict between the student and the supervisor to avoid any issues that may escalate to hindering the student's progress. There should be a negotiated way of managing any conflict that may arise in the supervision process (Hardy, 2014). Conflict leads to frustration between the student and the supervisor and negatively affects the supervision process (Brill et al., 2014). It is therefore important to develop cordial ways of resolving conflict between the student and the supervisor in order to achieve a productive relationship and a successful supervision process (Ahmadi et al., (2020).

4.2.4.4 Theme 4: Supervision Support Structures

This refers to the laid down physical and non-physical infrastructure build in universities to aid the supervision process. It emerged from the participants' views that supervision could be enhanced by building the required support structures that make the supervision process convenient, efficient and beneficial, this include; (i) Building online infrastructure (ii) Office spaces for supervisors and (iii) improving and strengthening supervision policies and (iv) Professionalising supervision (see table 4.16).

Table 4.16: Theme 4 and its categories

Theme 1		Categories
Supervision support structures	i.	Building online infrastructure
	ii.	Office spaces for supervisors
	iii.	Improving and adhering to supervision policies
	iv.	Professionalising supervision

4.2.4.4.1 Building online infrastructure

Building online infrastructure in the context of this study refers to development of facilities that enable use of online services to support supervision process. The views of the participants seem to advocate that technology plays a key role in enhancing supervision, and universities should invest in building online infrastructure in order to improve supervision; This evident from the following responses:

> *"We need to improve access to learning resources for students and supervisors, Universities should subscribe to e-journals for accessibility of research resources" (Sharon)*

> *"It is time we embrace technology, we should be up to date with the current technologies that support research work and makes the work of the supervisor and the student easy" (Nick)*

> *"Things like reliable Wi-Fi in a university should be well established, this supports research work and supervision" (Sharon)*

> *"Technology is key in research, at the moment the universities need to embrace technology and invest in it, we should be having frequent virtual seminars for students and supervisors" (George)*

The responses of the participant above suggest that supervision could be improved by investing on technology. According to Cekisto et al., (2019) supervising postgraduate students in African universities is a challenging process that encompasses several issues from that of individual students and supervisors to available infrastructural support. One of the most important infrastructural support structures for supervision is building online infrastructure as suggested by the participants from the responses above. With the moving nature of knowledge and research becoming vibrant, there is need for universities to expand their resource base for research (Maor, Ensor & Fraser, 2016). The availability of online e-resources like e-journals and e- books has however provided equal opportunity to universities to get access to variety of research resources (Maor & Currie, 2017). The response of the participants above connotes a need to improve access to learning resources for students and supervisors. It is therefore prudent for universities to invest on online resources, mainly subscribing to e-journals and e-books (Maor et al., 2016). Universities should also establish reliable internet connection that can assist in accessing the resources and holding virtual meetings and seminars for students and supervisors (Maor & Currie, 2017).

4.2.4.4.2 Office spaces for supervisors

One of the supervision support structures that came out from the participants in this study, both students and supervisors, is office spaces for supervisors. The participants underscored the need for office spaces for supervisors to enhance supervision in universities. This evident from the following quotations;

> *"We need working spaces for consultation with students, furnished with computers and other assisting gadgets; this is putting value to supervision"* (George)

> *"There should be offices where you are sure you can get your supervisor there and you can visit anytime you need help"* (Stelah)

> *"Universities should provide offices to supervisors, this thing of meeting your supervisor in hotels hapana (No)… imagine as a lady meeting your supervisor who is a man in a hotel..."* (Hellen)

> *"There is a lot that need to be improve in supervision, some of us we serve our students in the corridors of the university or in our homes, there are no offices"* (Jean)

It is clear from the participants' responses above that supervision could be improved by providing office spaces to supervisors .Research project is a demanding task that requires regular consultation between the student and the supervisor (Ahmad et al., 2020). It is therefore necessary for every supervisor to have a working space where they can meet their students for consultation (Ekundayo & Ayodele, 2019). As stated earlier in this section, a fruitful supervision process is where there is a continuous communication between the student and the supervisor (Hamid et al., 2021). Students therefore need specific places where they can meet their supervisor anytime they need help.

It is also clear from the participants' responses above that whereas supervisors make effort to meet their students in places like hotels; some students are uncomfortable meeting their supervisors in such places. Equally supervisors are also uncomfortable serving their students in the corridors. A study by Ekundayo and Ayodele (2019) revealed that on creating there should be a favourable working environment for lecturers in universities. According to Altbach and Salmi (2011) academic excellence in universities encompasses several issues that include physical infrastructure. Even though the physical infrastructure is not well developed in universities in Africa (Cekisto et al., 2019), the responses of the participants'' above suggest that

supervisors should be provided with suitable working spaces for serving their students.

4.2.4.4.3 Improving and adhering to supervision policies

The role of supervision policies is to guide the activities carried out in the supervision process; this include how students are supervised and examined, timelines,. The view of the participants in this study is that, there is need to improve some supervision policies, but at the same time adhere to existing policies. This can be seen from the following quotations';

> *"Re-examining supervision procedures and the entire framework of how we supervise is another thing that needs to be done to factor in contemporary issues in supervision" (Pop)*

> *"There should be some strictness in adhering to policies; there are many good policies, but this is only on paper not in practice" (Lyn))*

> *"We should relook on how to examine the students' thesis, It should be done by department; many people from different disciplines sitting in a defense may mislead the student…" (George)*

> *"Some practices are not right, like interfaculty supervision is counterproductive; a student should be supervised by a supervisor who understands that field well" (Timan)*

The responses above show that there is need to improve and strengthen supervision policies in order to enhance supervision. In many universities in Africa governmental and institutional policies guiding postgraduate supervision is yet to be well developed (Turhan & Karadag, 2019). The responses of the participants above indicate that there are laid down policies that are not adhered to in universities. Similarly, Turhan and Karadag (2019) noted that each university has its own supervision policies in Africa, but the application of these policies to attain effective supervision is yet to be achieved. Some universities lack proper supervision policies and guidelines on thesis supervision (Ngulube, 2021). The participants' responses above also suggest that

some supervision guidelines and procedures need to be improved to enhance supervision. Grant, Hackney and Edgar (2014) argue that supervision policies change over time due to dynamics of knowledge and supervision. There is therefore a need to adopt progressive policies that meet the needs of postgraduate students at any given time (Hackney & Edgar, 2014)

4.2.4.4.4 Professionalising supervision

The views of the participants suggest that there is need to professionalise the work of supervision. This refers to developing supervision as a professional activity with specific standards and requirements that will enhance the supervision process. This can be seen from the following quotations:

> *"The issues of capacity building we are talking about will not be taken seriously by our universities unless we professionalise supervision so that there is thorough training of supervisors" (Winny)*

> *"The commission for university education should lead in the effort to improve supervision, they should redesign it as a professional activity" (William)*

> *"We need to professionalise supervision in our universities, at the moment lecturers do not see supervision as priority in their work" (Nick)*

The responses of the participants above show that there is need to professionalise supervision. According to Torka (2016) supervision of graduate students could be enhanced by professionalising supervision. Higher education has currently become competitive and postgraduate supervision is highly scrutinized for quality mentoring of young researchers (Olmos-López & Sunderland, 2017). The responses of the participants above bear a resemblance to Torka's (2016) study who argues that there is an increasing need to clearly articulate and define the work of postgraduate supervision. Professionalisation of supervision provides an opportunity to supervisors

to be engaged in formal training and continuous in-service training (Torka, 2016). This is necessary in growing the professional competence of supervisors through developing their knowledge and skills in supervision; hence improving the supervision practice. In the contemporary university, the work of supervision needs to be professionalized; there should be define standards and requirements for the supervision practice (Halse &Malfroy, 2010).

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study and the discussion of the findings. It was presented in sections that are logically arranged in order of the research questions. The chapter provided what students and supervisors experienced in the thesis supervision process, as well as the views of supervisors on capacity building opportunities in universities. It also presented the voices of students and supervisors on what they perceived could contribute to successful thesis supervision in universities in Kenya. The findings relating to each research question were first provided, and then recontextualise within the existing literature. In the discussions, the researcher compared the findings of the study with the existing literature, and identified areas of convergence and divergence. The next chapter presents a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter provides a summary of the research findings discussed in chapter four, conclusions and the recommendations for policy and practice. It also presents the contribution to knowledge, in filling the gap on how thesis supervision could be enhanced in Kenyan universities from the perspectives of students and supervisors. The aim of the study was to explore and generate knowledge to enable a better understanding of thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya. The exploration took place in the context of Kenyan universities; three public universities were selected for this study. The study was located in the field of teaching and learning in higher education curriculum, particularly in thesis supervision in universities.

The main research question was formulated as follows:

What are the perspectives of students and supervisors on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya?

To facilitate a deep exploration of this broad question, four secondary research questions were formulated as follows; (i) what are the experiences of supervisors on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities? (ii) What are the experiences of postgraduate students on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities? (iii) What are the supervisors' perspectives on the capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in universities in Kenya? and (iv) What are the perspectives of students and supervisors on how postgraduate supervision can be enhanced for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in Kenya?

In response to the four research questions, the study utilised a qualitative approach located within an interpretivist paradigm and positioned as a phenomenological study. Thirty conveniently and purposively selected participants contributed to the study. The participants were eighteen postgraduate students (six from each university), nine Doctoral and nine Master of philosophy students, together with twelve (12) supervisors (four from each university). Individual semi-structured interviews, drawing and focus group discussion were used to generate the data with the participants. The data was analysed thematically following the steps outlined by Braun and Clark (2006). Vygotsky's social cultural development theory was used to make meaning of the findings.

5.2 Summary of the Study Findings

A summary of the study findings is presented based on the objectives of the study as below:

5.2.1 Supervisors' experiences of thesis supervision practices

From the data which was analysed thematically, three themes were generated in response to the first research question: *What are the experiences of supervisors on thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in universities?* These are; student related experiences, administrative related experiences and supervisor related experiences. It was clear that supervisors experience several challenges with their students during the supervision process. Sometimes they supervise students who cannot work for themselves, but rely entirely on their supervisors in order to progress in their research work. The findings showed that some students are non-committed and they only wait to be spoon-fed without putting any effort. This makes the work of the supervisor more difficult. Other students disappear for years without any communication with their supervisors. It appeared frustrating to supervisors working

with students who are not consistent in their studies. Supervisors also expressed the experiences of supervising students with poor writing language and those who are not honest in their work. Some students cannot write their work in a scholarly way while others present work which they did not do themselves.

Apart from experiences with the students they supervise, it also emerged that supervisors encounter varied experiences with the administration during the supervision process. Supervisors have to cope with lack motivation which includes poor payment, lack of offices for consultation with their students and lack of appreciation for those who do exemplary work. There are also experiences of heavy workload, where supervisors complaint of being overworked to supervise many students and at the same time teaching, doing research and administrative work. Supervisors also expressed a disappointment that the work of supervising and mentoring a research student is not considered as part of workload to the supervisor; universities only consider teaching and administrative duties as workload, but not the supervision work. There are also presences of supervision policies that are not adhered to in the universities.

It is also important to note that the study revealed the experiences that are directly related to the supervisor in his or her daily work of interacting with the students, the administration and the content of research. Supervisors recounted experiences carrying students blame for any failure in the supervision process, even when the shortcoming or failure arose from the side of the student. Supervisors also narrated experiences of how supervision has become dynamic and has been changing over time hence requiring them to regularly update their knowledge and skills. Experiences of co-supervision was also revealed, other supervisors appreciating co-supervision, while others had the experiences of some supervisors using co-supervision to ride on

the shoulders of their colleagues. However, supervisors also admitted their own limitations which could hinder effective supervision of students.

5.2.2 Postgraduate students' experiences of thesis supervision practices

From the data collected, two themes were generated using thematic analysis in response to the second research question: *What are the experiences of postgraduate students on thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in universities?* These are productive experiences and unproductive experiences. Looking at the productive experiences, students were happy about their research process, they experienced in-depth mentorship where their supervisors gave them exceptional support through; regular advice, thorough coaching and constructive criticism. Students experienced an open-door supervision, in which the supervisors reduced the barriers of formality and gave the students the freedom to seek guidance from them at any time by visiting their offices or making phone calls when they need help. They experienced the research work as a heavy task, but viewed their supervisors as strong pillars who supported them in carrying the load of research through intense guidance. There were also experiences of inspiring relationship were students felt encouraged and motivated by their supervisors, this made them to progress well, as they were more enthused to focus on the study. The experiences of owning the process were well articulated, students appreciated what they learned from their supervisors and they could do a lot without necessarily waiting for their supervisors.

However, unproductive experiences were also revealed from the findings. Students experienced feelings of neglect, loneliness and confusion; their supervisors were not available for guidance; they were less concern and they put them as an afterthought. Even though others did not feel neglected, they had experiences of working with busy supervisors, who could not be reached for consultations. Experiences of negative

critique were also evident; students received discouraging comments from their supervisors that demoralized them in the research process. Some students felt that their supervisors were non-accommodative and did not listen to them or give them an opportunity to express their ideas or contribute to their own work. Students saw their supervisors as being in a superior position and could not insist on their opinions. In some cases students experienced conflicting comments from supervisors who are co-supervising but cannot agree on some issues. There were also experiences of slow supervision process occasioned by delayed feedback, lack of communication, and the supervisor not providing room for any negotiation with the student.

5.2.3 Supervisors' perspectives on capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in universities in Kenya

From the data collected, three themes were generated using thematic analysis in response to the third research question, which was framed as: *What are the supervisors' perspectives on the capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in universities in Kenya?* These are, (i) Enriching opportunities (ii) Supervisor development and (iii) Non-prioritized practice. Supervisors viewed the available capacity building opportunities in universities as enriching opportunities that enable them to enhance their skills and knowledge in supervision. It was revealed that the available capacity building opportunities for supervisors in Kenyan universities included seminars and workshops; co-supervision; collaborations and partnership. The findings revealed that there were academic forums that where organised on specific topics of postgraduate supervision as interventions to the supervisors. The participants appreciated such forums, as it helped them expand their knowledge and skills. Co-supervision was also seen by the participants as another capacity building opportunity that enabled them to learn from their colleagues who are more

experienced in the field, or could be good in some areas; it also enable sharing of ideas to enrich one's knowledge. There were also collaborations and partnerships which the participants referred as significant avenues for learning from colleagues in other universities within or outside Kenya.

It was also revealed in this study that supervisors view capacity building as a way of developing themselves to be better supervisors by enhancing their knowledge and skills in supervision. They view capacity building as an opportunity that nurtures them to get rich in content, equip and advance their skills, and be competent and confident in their work of supervision. Supervisors also perceived that capacity building keeps them informed in the field of supervision. They view postgraduate supervision as dynamic and therefore, they need to regularly get updated on new developments in supervision. Capacity building seems to provide that opportunity to keep them informed on new issues in supervision. It is also an opportunity for professional growth. Supervisors narrated that capacity building enable them build their skills and experiences for career progression that involves promotions and other greater responsibilities.

Even though the supervisors viewed capacity building as an enriching opportunity to develop themselves, they also viewed it as a rare opportunity that is not prioritised in their universities. The findings revealed that universities in Kenya are yet to understand the significance of supervisor training in equipping supervisors for effective supervision. The available capacity building opportunities for supervisors in universities appeared to be irregular without a definite structure on when and how it should be done. The supervisors' views showed that there were no formal structures for training of supervisors in universities. It was also revealed that in some universities capacity building is missing. The participants described situations in their

universities where there is no capacity building for supervisors or it was a rare practice that is not usually done.

5.2.4 Perspectives of students and supervisors on how thesis supervision can be strengthened

From the data which was analysed thematically, four themes were generated in response to the fourth research question: *What are the perspectives of students and supervisors on how postgraduate supervision can be enhanced for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in Kenya?* These are (i) Supervisor support mechanisms (ii) Empowering the student (iii) Constructive student-supervisor relationship and (iv) Supervision support structures. The perspectives of students and supervisors revealed that for successful thesis supervision, supervisor need to be supported in order perform their duties effectively. They suggest that universities should invest on frequent in-service training of supervisors to shape their skills and widen their knowledge of supervision. Supervisors also should be allocated reasonable workload to enable them work efficiently. The participants had the perception that supervisors can work better when assigned reasonable workload. They viewed that supervisors who are not overworked have time to provide technical advice and mentorship to their students. Motivation of supervisors was also evident from the findings of this study. The views suggested that supervisors could be motivated through rewarding outstanding supervisors, improving remuneration and sponsoring them to conferences. The participants hold that supervisors who are motivated would provide quality guidance to students.

The findings also revealed that supervision could be enhanced by empowering the student. The participants perceived that students should be enabled to contribute significantly to the research process. They advocate for developing student agency

where students are empowered to actively participate in the research process in shaping their work. The findings also suggest a comprehensive research process for students; this involves engaging postgraduate students with a wide-range of activities that fosters their competency in research. The participants' views suggest that the supervisor's guidance becomes fruitful when engaging with competent and active students. This creates a successful supervision process where students are able to learn and develop in the research process.

This study also revealed that a constructive student-supervisor relationship is essential in enhancing postgraduate supervision. From the participants' perspectives, such a relationship could be achieved through negotiating the relationship, constant communication and amicable conflict resolution. The supervisor should provide room to negotiate every step of the supervision process with the student. The findings showed that a positive relationship is developed when the student and the supervisor are ready to listen to each other in a regular open discussion. This involves a constant and continuous communication, which could be by emails, phone calls, social media or face to face meetings. The participants were also clear conflict can arise in the relationship, and whenever any conflict arises between the student and the supervisor, it should be managed in cordial and amicable way; for this can affect the supervision process negatively

It is also clear from the findings that supervision support structures should be developed in universities to enhance postgraduate supervision. The structures suggested by the participants in this study include building online infrastructure, which involves investing on technology by subscribing to e-journals and installing reliable Wi-Fi to support students and supervisors in the research work. Secondly, the participants suggested that universities should prioritise building office spaces for

supervisors to create room for consultation with their students. The study revealed that a working space for supervisors improves the supervision process compared to supervisors serving students in corridors, their homes or hotels. It also revealed that some supervision policies in universities are dormant and should be adhered to, while others need to be re-examined and improved in order to strengthened supervision of postgraduate students. Lastly, it was clear from the findings that supervision should be professionalised in universities in Kenya in order to improve supervision. This means demarcating the work of postgraduate supervision to involve formal training and well defined standards and requirements for the supervision practice in universities

5.3 Conclusions

This section provides conclusions based on the findings of the study. They reflect the implications of the findings of this study; and are presented systematically according to the research questions of the study.

5.3.1 Supervisors' experiences of thesis supervision practices

From the findings on the experiences of supervisors on thesis supervision, the following conclusions were made:

i. Students can be hindrance to their own progress in the research supervision process when they are not focus and committed to the research work. Others also have poor research skills that make the work of supervisors more challenging.

ii. The thesis supervision process seems ineffective when supervisors are demotivated and overworked with heavy workload of supervising many

students and at the same time carrying other responsibilities like teaching, marking and administrative duties.

iii. Postgraduate supervision is becoming more dynamic and supervisors are encountering experiences of both challenges and opportunities in the modern supervision practices.

5.3.2 Postgraduate students' experiences of thesis supervision practices

From the study findings related to student experiences, the following conclusions were drawn:

i. In-depth mentorship of students that involves strong supervisor support and inspiring relationship between the student and the supervisor seem to enhance the thesis supervision process. Students who experience support and strong mentorship from their supervisors are able to develop and own the research process.

ii. The research process and student progress is hindered when students encounter harsh and unfriendly experiences with their supervisors. This is when students experience negative critique from their supervisors; feel neglected where supervisors are busy and unavailable and when there is power play and the students ideas are not accommodated

5.3.3 Supervisors' perspectives on capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in universities in Kenya

From the study findings on the perspectives of supervisors on capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in universities in Kenya, the following conclusions were drawn:

   i. Capacity building of supervisors plays a vital role of enhancing the knowledge and skills of supervisors, keeping the supervisor informed on contemporary supervision issues and enabling them to grow professionally. Supervisors perceive the available opportunities as enriching occasions for their development.

   ii. Even though supervisors play a key role of mentoring the postgraduate student during the thesis supervision process, it was revealed that universities do not support their work in an optimal way. Universities have not prioritised capacity building to develop their supervisors for effective thesis supervision. The available capacity building opportunities are unstructured and not well organised, while in some universities it is a rare practice done occasionally or not done at all.

5.3.4 Perspectives of students and supervisors on how thesis supervision can be strengthened

From the study findings on the perspectives of students and supervisors on how postgraduate supervision can be strengthened in universities in Kenya, the following conclusions were drawn;

   i. Thesis supervision process could be strengthened by developing in-depth and more engaging mentoring programs for postgraduate students in universities.

   ii. Supervisors need to be reinforced by developing their knowledge and skills in order to strengthened their supervision expertise

   iii. A positive relationship between the student and the supervisor promotes successful research supervision process

   iv. Physical and online supervision support structures are necessary in providing a working environment that enables successful supervision process.

5.4 Theoretical Contribution

The seminal work of Vygotsky social cultural development theory (1978) was used to make meaning of the findings. It was utilised to theorize and explain the findings of the study. The researcher also used the key findings of the study in the lens of this theory to develop a conceptual model explaining how thesis supervision could be strengthened in universities in Kenya. Social interaction is an important component in Vygotsky's theory; knowledge is co-constructed through a social interaction between a more knowledgeable and less knowledgeable individual (Lantolf, 2008). It was clear in this study that the postgraduate student is the less knowledgeable in research while the supervisor is the More Knowledgeable One (MKO). The aim of the interaction between the student and the supervisor is to create knowledge. Learning occurred within the social supervision practices in the context of specific universities. The findings revealed that students look up-to their supervisors, as more knowledgeable ones, to guide them in the research process. Where there was a positive social interaction between the student and the supervisor, the student was able to learn more, create knowledge and progress with the assistance of the supervisor. This came clear from the experiences of students where they experienced in-depth mentorship from their supervisors that supported them to learn new skills and progress in their studies.

However, even though learning and knowledge development occurs through social interaction as argued in Vygotsky's theory and confirmed in the findings of this study, the findings also revealed that not all social interactions between the MKO and the learner promoted learning. Vygotsky's theory assumes that all social interactions lead to learning and knowledge development. On the contrary, it was evident in this study that there can be disengaged social interactions which impact negatively on the learning process. There were instances when the mediation process was done in a way

that inhibited learning rather than promoting learning. This occurred when there was strained relationship between the student and the supervisor; and the supervisor seemed to take control of the process making the student inactive and unable to learn. There were experiences of negative critique and non-accommodative supervision. It is my argument therefore that for learning and knowledge development to take place, there must be a positive social interaction between the learner and the instructor. Consequently thesis supervision could be enhanced by developing a positive social interaction between the student and the supervisor (see figure 5.1). The findings revealed that positive social interaction, which in the context of this study appeared as a constructive student-supervisor relationship, promotes the students' learning and development to being an independent researcher (see figure 5.1).

The instructor plays a critical role in Vygotsky's theory. He/she is the more knowledgeable other (MKO) with higher level of knowledge and skills. The theory assumes that the instructor is more knowledgeable and is in a position to mediate the learner to get new skills and knowledge. However, this study reveals that this might not be the case in advanced and dynamic learning environments, unless the instructor is reinforced and equipped with contemporary skills to be able to mediate the learning process. The instructor in the context of this study is the supervisor. From the findings, it is clear that supervision is dynamic and the role of the instructor is challenging and demanding. The study revealed that the scaffolding activities that the supervisor applies in higher education context were more advanced, vibrant and complex as compared to the scaffolding activities suggested by Vygotsky's theory which suits young learners. The experiences of supervisors in this study showed that supervision of postgraduate students is complex and more dynamic; hence, supervisors need to regularly enhance their knowledge and skills. Vygotsky's theory

emphasises the role of the instructor, as a more knowledgeable one, in mediating the learners. However, the theory is silent about how the instructor can be supported to enhance the knowledge and skills to be able to mediate the learners successfully even in dynamic learning environments. From the lens of this theory and the findings of this study, I therefore argue that the learning process in higher education context is more challenging and complex and the instructor (MKO) must be reinforced to be able to guide the learners in the learning process and knowledge creation. I postulate that effective thesis supervision in higher education could be achieved by continually strengthening and sharpening the skills and knowledge of supervisors through regular training (see figure 5.1). This supports the instructor, who is the supervisor, to gain more knowledge and skills for effective mediation and scaffolding in the context of thesis supervision process (see figure 5.1).

Vygotsky argues that for learning to take place, the learner must be an active participant. This was confirmed from the experiences of students and supervisor. Whereas the theory assumes that the learner must be an active participant for learning to take place, this study adds to the theory, that the learner ought to be enabled to be an active participant in the learning process. The findings on the experiences of supervisors with students reveal that when students fail to take an active role in the supervision process, learning could not take place. There were experiences of supervisors working with students who were non-committed, lazy, absentee students or those who disappear in the course of the study and hence they fail to learn and could not progress. On the other hand, the findings also reveal that students contributed actively in learning and knowledge creation in the supervision process when there was in-depth mentoring and comprehensive research program. It is my argument therefore that for a learner to be an active participant in the learning

process, there must be support mechanisms to empower and enable the learner to participate actively in learning and knowledge creation. Postgraduate students should be active participants in the creation of their own knowledge. I posit that thesis supervision could only be strengthened when postgraduate students are empowered and enabled to take an active role in the supervision process in order to participate fully in the learning process and co-construction of knowledge with their supervisors (see figure 5.1). There is need for mechanisms in universities that empowers and keeps students active in the supervision process.

Mediation and scaffolding which are essential tenets of Vygotsky's theory seem to intertwine and overlap in this study. The theory argues that learners require mediation from others before they can learn on their own and therefore teachers use several scaffolding strategies to ensure that learning takes place. The findings of this study underscored the importance of mediation and scaffolding in the supervision process. The findings revealed that students need to be mediated and supported by their supervisors. They describe their dissatisfying experiences of lack of mediation in their relationship with busy supervisors, and being neglected. Where there was lack of mediation and scaffolding, students seem to stagnate and their research process was slowed or hindered. Nonetheless, there was also evidence of use of a number of scaffolding activities which were employed by some supervisors to support the postgraduate students in their learning, this included; frequent sessions with students, sharing materials , research workshops, engaging students with literature and peer leaning. Students viewed such supervisors as strong pillars in their research process. However, the findings also revealed that effective meditation and scaffolding occurs when there are support structures like reliable online infrastructure, office spaces for supervisors and efficient supervision policies. It is my argument therefore that thesis

supervision could be strengthened when there are established supervision support structure in universities (see figure 5.1).

Finally, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is well defined from the findings of this study. Vygotsky argued that the zone of proximal development is the difference between what the learner already know and can achieve independently and what they can learn with the guidance and support of the more knowledgeable others (MKO). The findings revealed that students were mentored by their supervisors to progress from what they already know to learning new skills in the research process .The experiences of students showed that students received the support they needed from their supervisors to enable them learn and develop to their potentials. There were confessions of students who appreciated their supervisors and admitted that they had been well mentored and were able to do a lot by themselves in the research process without necessarily waiting for their supervisors. It was clear that at the ZPD students' experienced in-depth mentorship, open-door supervision, inspiring relationship and owning the process. This is evidence that the students were well mediated to enable them progress from what they already know to exploring new knowledge through supervisors scaffolding.

I hereby postulate that effective thesis supervision could be achieved in this zone of proximal development. This is a learning zone, and in this study, it is the point of interaction between the student and the supervisor during the entire thesis supervision process. It is where the supervisor's effort of mediation and scaffolding could bears fruits of developing the student to be an independent researcher who can work without the supervisors' assistance. However, the study reveals that effective thesis supervision could be achieved when the ZPD is strengthened. The findings of this study and the discussion in this section reveals four essential supportive mechanisms

that this study adds to the zone of proximal development to strengthened the ZPD for achievement of effective thesis supervision. These components include developing the supervisors' knowledge and skills, building supervisor support structures, empowering the student and developing a positive social interaction, that is, a constructive student-supervisor relationship (see figure 5.1).
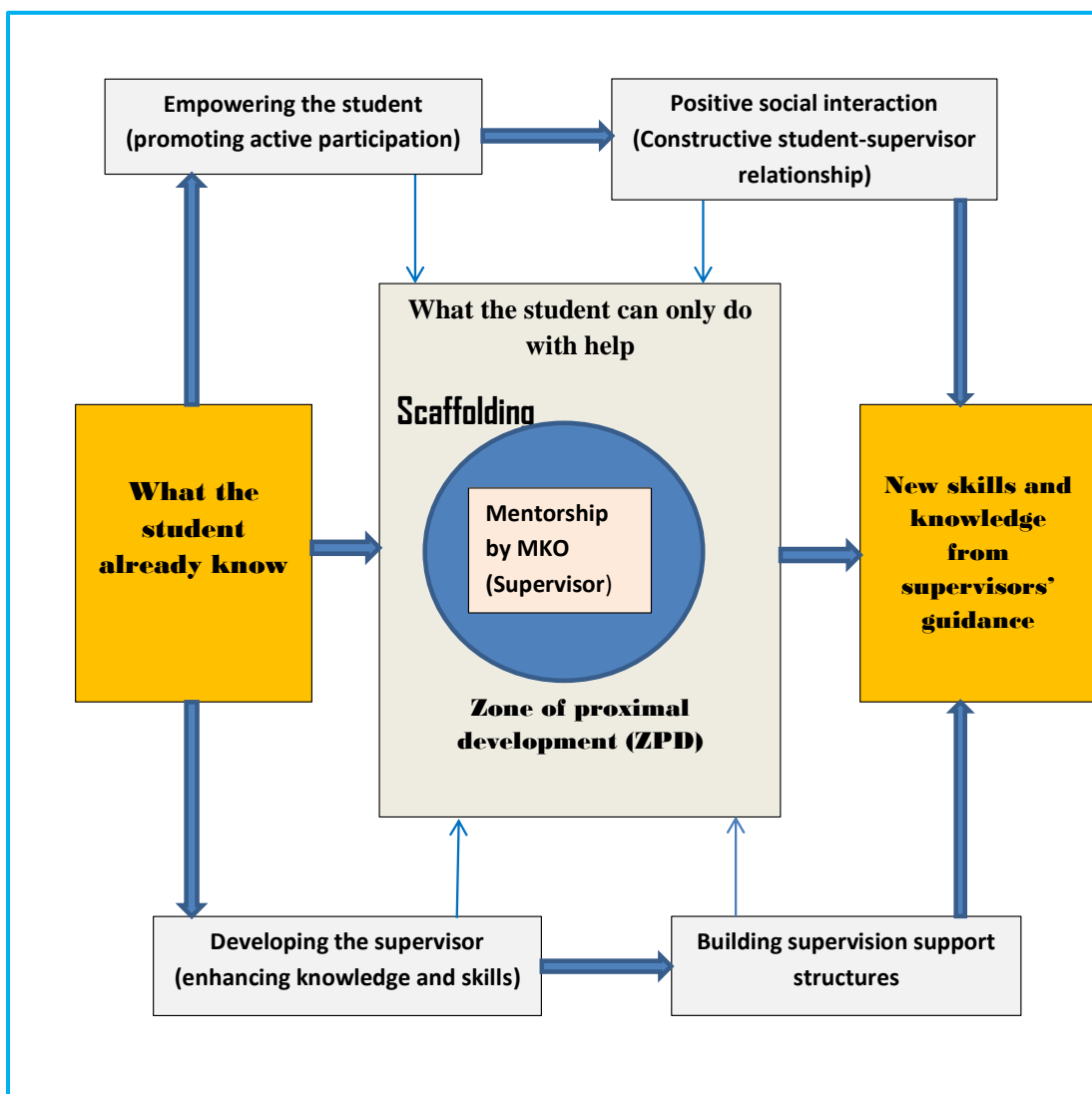
Figure 5.1 Conceptual Model for effective thesis supervision in universities (Developed by the researcher)

The conceptual model above (figure 5.1) was developed by the researcher using Vygotsky's theory and the findings of this study. It describes how thesis supervision

can be strengthened to achieve effective supervision of postgraduate students in universities in Kenya. The model shows that students join postgraduate studies with some knowledge and ideas and what he/she can do (what the student already knows). From this point the student is able to learn and progress to being an independent researcher only with the assistance of the supervisor. Vygotsky refers to this process as the zone of proximal development. As stated earlier, this is a learning zone and the point of interaction between the student and the supervisor during the entire thesis supervision process. During this time, the student, with the help and guidance of the supervisor, is able to learn and develop new skills and knowledge. The supervisor, who is the more knowledgeable (MKO), mentors the student through scaffolding in the research process. The mentorship and scaffolding occurs in the zone of proximal development (ZPD); at this point the student can learn only with the help of the supervisor.

From the findings, the study adds to Vygotsky's theory that the zone of proximal development, which represents the entire process of developing the student to be an independent researcher, should be strengthened through developing the skills and knowledge of the supervisor and building supervision support structures to enable efficient supervision process (*indicated by the blue arrows pointing to the ZPD from the bottom*). With the support, the supervisor will be able to mentor the student through scaffolding (see ZPD). However, the findings also reveal that reinforcing the supervisor and building supervision support structures is not sufficient to enable effective supervision; there is need to empower the student to be an active participant in the research process and to develop a positive social interaction, that is, a constructive student-supervisor relationship *(Indicated by the blue arrows pointing towards ZPD from the top)*. I posit that when all the aforementioned factors are in

play in the zone of proximal development, the thesis supervision process is strengthened, and the interaction between the student and the supervisor becomes fruitful. This enables the student to develop new skills and create new knowledge as an independent researcher.

5.5 Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, from the four research questions, the following key recommendations were made to inform policy and practice in universities in order to strengthened postgraduate supervision for achievement higher education objectives in universities in Kenya.

i. Universities should develop supervision programs that are more interactive and engaging to keep the students on track and monitor their progress. This could minimize the absentee and non-committed students who lose focus and commitment hence frustrating the supervisors' efforts and the supervision the process.

ii. There is need for universities to ensure that supervisors are motivated to work better towards effective supervision. This requires universities to improve remuneration, allocate reasonable workload and provide other incentives and reinforcements that support the supervisors' work. The thesis supervision process becomes ineffective when supervisors are overburden and demotivated

iii. Universities should develop comprehensive and student-centered research programs that support strong mentorship of students. There should be a wide-range of activities like seminars and workshops to foster the students' skills and competency in research. In-depth mentorship of students enhances the

thesis supervision process. Students who experience support and strong mentorship are able to develop and own the research process.

iv. Heads and administrators of faculties and departments in universities should oversee that supervisors prioritise their students and be available for consultations, provide constructive critique and develop a friendly relationship. The supervision process becomes unproductive when students feel neglected, receive negative criticism or encounter harsh and unfriendly experiences from their supervisors.

v. Universities today need to prioritise developing the skills and knowledge of supervisors. Thesis supervision has become more complex and challenging because of the drastically changing nature of knowledge and expertise. There should be formal, consistent and ongoing capacity building workshops and seminars for supervisors in universities to strengthened and modernize the supervision skills of supervisors. Supervisors, both novice and the experienced, need more and frequent opportunities that can sharpen and enrich their supervision skills, especially on current trends of postgraduate supervision.

vi. Universities should put in place physical and online structures that support the postgraduate supervision process. It is necessary for universities to invest on building physical structures like offices for lecturers; and online structures like subscribing to e-journals, that not only support the thesis supervision process, but also learning and research in universities

vii. The student-supervisor relationship plays a significant role in promoting effective thesis supervision process; university faculties and departments should develop supervision programs that encourage a culture of continuous

negotiation between the student and the supervisor to promote harmonious working relationship in the supervision process

5.6 Recommendations for Further Research

The researcher makes the following recommendations for further research:

i. This study utilised a qualitative approach, with the use of semi-structured interview, drawing and focus group discussion as tools for data generation. The study could also be carried out using quantitative approach and quantitative tools.

ii. The study was carried out in public universities in Kenya. It would widen the understanding of thesis supervision in Kenya if the same study is replicated in private universities in the country

iii. The study explored the perspectives of students and supervisors in the school of education in the selected universities. The researcher recommends that the same study could be carried in other schools to provide a deeper understanding of thesis supervision in universities in Kenya

iv. There is need for a comparative study between thesis supervision in universities in Kenya and universities in developed nations; this could help to identify further areas that need to be strengthened for effective thesis supervision in universities in Kenya.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Project Information to Participants

Dear Prof./Dr./Mr./Ms.……………………………...

My name is CORNELIUS KIPLETING RUGUT, PhD student in Moi University - school of education, department of curriculum, instruction and educational media. I am kindly requesting you to participate in my research study

I am conducting a research on the title;

"*Postgraduate students' and supervisors' perspectives on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya*"

Supervised by; (i) Prof. Anne Syomwene Kisilu - Department of curriculum,

instruction and educational media

(ii) Prof. John Changach - Department of educational foundations

The expected participants in this study are academic supervisors and postgraduate students (both doctoral and masters) in school of education in universities in Kenya. Academic supervisors must be full time lecturers in the selected university while students must have completed their coursework and already writing their thesis

I invite you to consider taking part in this study. Your participation will be highly appreciated. The information provided will remain confidential

Aim of the research

The main aim of this research is to explore the perspectives of postgraduate students and supervisors on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in public universities in Kenya

Research questions

i.   What are the experiences of supervisors on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya?

ii. What are the experiences of postgraduate students on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya?

iii. What are the supervisors perspectives on the capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya

iv. What are the perspectives of students and supervisors on how postgraduate supervision can be strengthened for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in Kenya?

➢ *The four research questions will be the Centre of our discussion in my meeting with you.*

Research plans and methods

Academic supervisors will be engaged in oral individual interview that will last for about 30 minutes. Students will take part in making drawings while others will participate in a focus group discussion

Significance of the research project

i. The findings of this study will assist in improving supervision of postgraduate students in universities in Kenya, hence production of quality research and highly trained scholars

ii. It will also enable a better understanding of postgraduate supervision in higher education in universities in Kenya and how the existing supervision challenges can be mitigated

iii. The findings will contribute to the literature in the field of postgraduate studies in education and related disciplines.

Please note that participants will be treated with respect and their privacy will be maintained. No individual will be identified in any report that will be written. Please feel free to ask the researcher to clarify anything that is not clear to you.

The researcher's contact is; Mobile No.0723096513

Email: rugutc@gmail.com

To participate, you will be required to provide a written consent that will include your signature, date and initials to verify that you understand and agree to the information provided to you.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

Cornelius Rugut

Appendix B: Data Collection Protocol

First engagement: Engagement with students - Drawing

Drawing prompt

The following drawing prompt was provided to the participants:

Using the plain piece of paper provided:

(i) Draw a picture that represents your experiences of thesis supervision process as a student

(ii) Please note that there are no good or bad drawing , just draw

(iii) Below your drawing write a brief explanation of what you have drawn, what issues are represented in the drawing and what it means to you

(iv)Prepare to briefly talk about your drawing; the issues represented in your drawing, the caption and what it means to you

Second engagement: Engagement with students - Focus group discussion

Focus group discussion guide

No of participants 6 students

Student Name   University

1…………………………   …………………………….

2………………………….   …………………………….

3………………….............   …………………………….

4………………………….   …………………………….

5………………………….   ..…………………………..

6…………………………..   ……………………………….

The following one guiding question was used in the discussion;

> *What do you think should be done to strengthened supervision of postgraduate students in universities in Kenya?*

The question was the topic and center of discussion with the six participants in the group. Probing and follow up questions were used by the researcher to seek more details, interpretations and clarifications during the discussion.

Third engagement: Engagement with supervisors -Interview

Interview guide

Oral individual unstructured interview was done with supervisors, and therefore there was no list of questions, but one guiding question, which is the center of discussion in the meeting. The engagement had three sessions, and each session had one guiding question that opened the discussion with the participant. Together with the main question in each session, the researcher was keen in listening to what the participant says. From the participants' responses, the researcher was able to ask follow up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, clarifying questions and interpreting questions to elicit more details and clarifications.

Session one

The following one main question was asked in this session:

> *Tell me your experiences of supervising postgraduate students as a supervisor in your institution*

Session 2

The following one main question was asked in this session:

> *What are your thoughts on the capacity building opportunities that are available for thesis supervision in your institution?*

Session 3

The following one main question was asked in this session:

> ➢ *What do you think should be done to strengthened supervision of postgraduate students in universities in Kenya?*

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Appendix C: Individual Informed Consent Form

Institution: Moi University

Researcher: Cornelius Kipleting Rugut

Title of the study: Postgraduate students' and supervisors' perspectives on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a research student from Moi University School of education. I am undertaking a study on the topic mentioned above.

You have been chosen to participate in this study. The purpose of the study is to explore the perspectives of postgraduate students and supervisors on thesis supervision practices in universities in Kenya. I therefore seek your consent to participate in the study. Participation in this research study is voluntary

Supervisors will participate in an oral individual interview while students will participate in focused group discussion and making of drawings. The sessions will be audio recorded for purposes of further analysis by the researcher.

Your privacy, confidentiality and your identity and that of information will be safeguarded. Your identity will not be revealed to anyone as we shall only use synonyms to identify participants. You will benefit by receiving feedback on the findings of this study.

There is no foreseeable risk of harm or discomfort that will arise from your participation in this study. The findings of the study will be used for academic purposes only and protection of identities and information is guaranteed. There will

not be any cost for you to incur as a result of participating in this study. Participation in the research study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any point in the study.

Your signature on this form indicates that you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and agree to participate as a research participant.

SIGNATURES

Participant

Name……………………………Signature………………………Date…………..

Researcher

Name……………………………Signature………………………Date…………..

Appendix D: Bonding Form – Interview

Bonding agreement on participation in the interview and audio recording

You are requested to participate in an oral individual interview. The interview will be recorded for analysis by the researcher. The purpose of the interview is to provide your views and perceptions on the following three research question:

i. *What are the experiences of supervisors on thesis supervision practices in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya?*

ii. *What are the supervisors perspectives on the capacity building opportunities available for thesis supervision in higher education curriculum in universities in Kenya*

iii. *What are the perspectives of supervisors on how postgraduate supervision can be strengthened for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in Kenya?*

You can choose whether to participate or not in the interview or the recording. You can also stop your participation at any time during the process. Your responses will remain anonymous and the researcher will not mention any names in the report.

Kindly note that yours views, perceptions and opinions will be respected as there is no right or wrong perception. We request your honest response during the discussion. The responses made by each participant will be kept confidential.

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above

Sign   Date

…………………………   ……………………………

Appendix E: Bonding Form – Focus Group Discussion

Bonding agreement on participation in the focus group discussion and audio recording

You are requested to participate in a focus group discussion on *perspectives of postgraduate students on how supervision can be strengthened for achievement of higher education objectives in universities in universities in Kenya.* The purpose of the discussion is to provide your views and perceptions on how supervision of postgraduate students can be natured and improved in Kenyan universities. The discussion will be recorded for analysis by the researcher.

You can choose whether to participate or not in the focus group or the recording. You can also stop your participation at any time during the process. Your responses will remain anonymous and the researcher will not mention any names in the report.

Kindly note that there are no right or wrong answers to the focus group questions. Different viewpoints and perceptions will be accepted from every participant. It is advisable to be honest even when your responses are not in agreement with the rest of the participants in the group. In respect for each other, only one individual will be allowed to speak at a time in the group. The responses made by each participant will be kept confidential.

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above
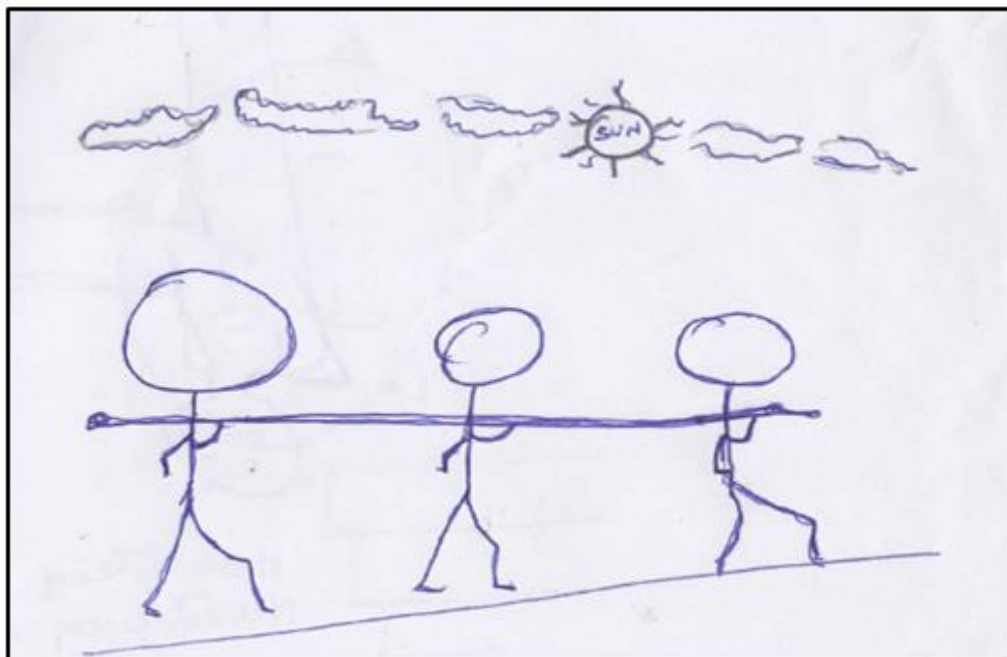
Sign   Date

………………………….   ………………………….

Appendix G: Example of a Coding Process for Drawings

Initial codes are generated by reading, understanding and searching for key words and phrases that represent the units of meaning (key words). The units of meaning are written down on the margins of the transcripts, seen here. This represented the initial emerging patterns of data


Drawing by Nick

I see my PhD journey as a heavy task. It is like carrying a heavy load that you must persevere to the end or it wears you out to drop on the way. But my supervisors have been strong pillars in my journey. We have carried the heavy task together. The drawing shows three people carrying a load together. I am in the middle of my two supervisors and together we are progressing well. The two supervisors have been reliable in this journey. They guide me on how to write every chapter of my work. I appreciate the many things I have learned from them. I am able to do the things I could not do before and get only a few corrections from them. They are always there to guide and show me the way whenever I need assistance. They put a lot of energies in my work and this motivates me to work harder. We have develop a strong bond of relationship with them

Comment [H46]:

Comment [H47]: PhD as Heavy task

Comment [H48]: Heavy load

Comment [H49]: Needs perseverance

Comment [H50]: It wears you out
Easy to drop

Comment [H51]: Supervisors as strong pillars

Comment [H52]: We carry the load with my supervisors
Supervisor assistance

Comment [H53]: Reliable supervisors

Comment [H54]: Appreciating the supervisors

Comment [H55]: Working independently

Comment [H56]: Supervisors always there/available
Quality guidance

Comment [H57]: Supervisor commitment

Comment [H58]: Motivation from supervisor

Comment [H59]: Strong relationship

Appendix H: Research Permit - NACOSTI

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 856356

Date of Issue: 04/May/2022

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Mr.. **CORNELIUS KIPLETING RUGUT** of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research in Uasin-Gishu on the topic: **Postgraduate student supervisor perspectives on thesis supervision for productive research in Kenyan universities** for the period ending : 04/May/2023.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/22/17156**

856356
Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY &
INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document,
Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

Appendix I: Letter of Permission - Moi University
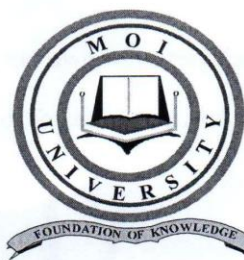
MOI UNIVERSITY
Office of the Dean School of Education

Tel. Eldoret (053) 43001-8/43620	P.O. Box 3900
Fax No. (053) 43047	Eldoret, Kenya

REF: DPCS/4197/20   **DATE**: 12ᵗʰ April, 2022

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
National Council for Science and Technology
Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH PERMIT IN RESPECT OF CORNELIUS KIPLETING RUGUT – DPCS/4197/20

The above named is a 2ⁿᵈ year Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum Studies at Moi University, School of Education, Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Media.

It is required of his PhD studies to conduct a research project and produce a research report. His research topic is entitled:

"Postgraduate   Student   Supervisor   Perspectives   on   Thesis Supervision for Productive Research in Kenyan Universities."

Any assistance given to enable him conduct research successfully will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

13.04.2022

PROF. J. K. CHANG'ACH
DEAN, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Moi University
School Of Education
DEAN
1 3 APR 2022
Sign ....
P.O. Box 3900-30100, ELDORET

(ISO 9001:2015 Certified Institution)

Appendix J: Plagiarism Report

ISO 9001:2019 Certified Institution

EDU 999 THESIS WRITING COURSE

PLAGIARISM AWARENESS CERTIFICATE

This certificate is awarded to

RUGUT CORNELIUS KIPLETING

DPCS/4197/20

In recognition for passing the University's plagiarism

Awareness test for the thesis: **POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' AND SUPERVISORS' PERSPECTIVES ON THESIS SUPERVISION PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA** with a similarity index of 9% and striving to maintain academic integrity.

Awarded by:

Prof. Anne Syomwene Kisilu
CERM-ESA Project Leader   Date: 22/06/2023