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CHALLENGES OF STUDENTS UNDER CO-SUPERVISORS

AT THE DEPARTMENT OF A UNIVERSITY IN GHANA

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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Patrick Kobina Mara Arthur, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have been identified and dully acknowledge, is entirely my own original work and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature………………………………….

Date………………………………………….

SUPERVISORS' DECLARATION

We, hereby, declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba

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Date………………………………………….

NAME OF CO-SUPERVISOR: Judith Bampo (PhD.)

Signature………………………………….

Date………………………………………….

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Lydia Mara Arthur (Mrs.).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GLOSSARY

CoS	Co-supervision
DAG	Documentary Analysis Guide
DM	Department of Management
D.Ed.	Doctor of Education
EDSS	Exponential Discriminative Snowball Sampling
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGDG	Focus Group Discussion Guide
HOD	Head of Department
HPCSA	Health Professionals Council of South Africa
M.Phil.	Master of Philosophy
NDP	National Development Plan
PCoSC	Postgraduate Co-supervision Coordination
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
PS	Principal Supervision
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
RIASEC	Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising
SCoSE	Students' Co-supervision Experiences
SGS	School of Graduate Studies
SGSB	School of Graduate Studies Board
SsIG	Semi Structured Interview Guide
UCC	University of Cape Coast
DUG	Department of a University in Ghana
UNECEF	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNO	Department of a University in Ghana
USBC	United States Bureau of Census

ABSTRACT

Despite the numerous studies conducted on supervision, there is a lack of qualitative investigations focused on understanding the intricacies of the co-supervisory relationship experienced by M.Phil. students at the department of a university in Ghana. Therefore, this study aimed to critically examine the challenges faced by students under two supervisors and explore how these obstacles hinder the success of postgraduate research students. Employing a phenomenological research design, the study focuses on M.Phil. students and utilizes focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews as data collection tools. The sample consists of 27 participants, including 24 past M.Phil. students who completed their theses between 2011/2012 and 2016/2017 academic sessions, as well as three supervisors with at least five years of co-supervisory experience in the department. The findings revealed that students have a diminished desire for co-supervision due to a lack of proper mentorship and the controversies surrounding it. Communication breakdowns, power dynamics among supervisors, delayed feedback, conflicting advice, blurred lines of responsibility, low commitment levels from both supervisors and students, intellectual disagreements among supervisors (particularly regarding methodology in chapter three), and difficulties in data analysis and report writing in chapter four were among the major factors contributing to negative co-supervisory experiences reported by the participating students. To address these issues, students propose the implementation of innovative methods for coordinating co-supervision within the department. They also emphasise the importance of students' commitment to their work and the development of effective strategies for managing any differences that may arise between them and their supervisors. In light of these findings, the study recommends that the School of Graduate Studies urgently establish measures to improve the co-supervisory experience for M.Phil. students.
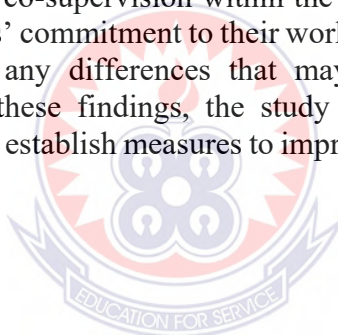
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The literature is replete with reasons why many students pursue postgraduate education. This phenomenon has, invariably, increased enrolment in various higher institutions the world over. Etejere (2006) and Ekpoh (2016) identify economic motivation and high demand for some specialized skills by the public and private sectors, lack of immediate employment after first degree, the desire to acquire higher degree or to achieve individual academic goals and to achieve personal independence as some of the reasons accounting for the pursuit of postgraduate education in many parts of the world. Therefore, it is an achievement of a lifetime when one successfully obtains a postgraduate degree (Krauss & Ismail, 2010). According these authors, it can be a disappointing moment when a student fails to reach the goal of getting a postgraduate degree. Lovitts (2001, p. 6) describes the experience as "gut-wrenching," "horrible," "disappointing," and indeed, for some people the option of suicide is much better than to live with the dishonour of programmes.

A number of studies have focused on the challenges related to potentially inhabiting the success of postgraduate research students. Such studies have revealed that many postgraduate students drop out or fail to complete their studies on time (Naim & Dhanapal 2015; Bitzer, 2011; Herman 2011; Wadesango & Machingambi 2011; Dell 2010; Albertyn, Kapp & Bitzer 2008; Stack 2008; Abiddin 2007; Lessing & Schulze 2003). According to scholars, this situation is attributable to several factors, including inexperienced or overburdened supervisors, inadequate preparation of candidates, poor planning and management, methodological difficulties, personal problems outside of research, insufficient financial support for students, poor relationship between students

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and supervisors, and overall ineffective infrastructural support for postgraduate studies (Bitzer, 2011). Mapasela and Wilkinson (2005) and Calma (2007) found that the kind of supervision students receive is by far the most important of these factors. According to Frisch and Larson (2000), effective supervision of research students is acknowledged as a crucial factor in the student's successful completion of postgraduate study.

Many scholars have attributed different definitions to postgraduate education; according to Ekpoh (2016), postgraduate education is the higher level of education which is provided after bachelor's degree. It is formal and comprises structured programmes. It exists in three levels: Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate, Master's Degree, Doctor of Education (DEd) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD.) Degrees.

The provision of postgraduate education takes the form of course work or a combination of course work and thesis writing. These postgraduate programmes are either organized on full-time or part-time basis. In some postgraduate programmes, students take courses to satisfy coursework requirements before embarking on research and thesis writing.

Research and thesis writing are critical components of postgraduate studies. Globally, postgraduate students are required to provide work with their supervisors on their theses or dissertation. The main duty of the supervisor is to guide students by checking every facet of their work and also make inputs and comments where necessary. The appointment and allocation of supervisors is mainly done by the universities, although some universities allow for some flexibility, granting students the opportunity to choose their supervisors.

The allocation of research or thesis supervisor(s) is primarily done based on the supervision policy of the universities. There is an assumption that traditional single type of supervision is basically the general rule of the thumb in all universities globally. For

some reasons, however, other universities opt for other models of supervision as opposed to traditional single supervision. For example, university in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia use co-supervision as practical avenue to train novice supervisors.
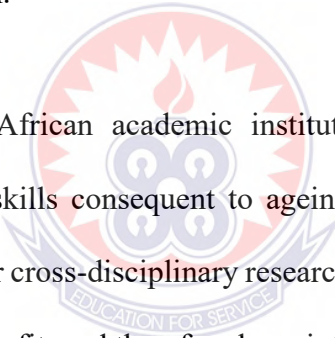
The increasing demand for doctoral education has made co-supervision commonplace in postgraduate circles in the UK. Co-supervision, which is sometimes known as joint or dual supervision, is used to support 33-70% of all South African Ph.D. candidates within the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), South Africa, due to diminishing supervisory skills, the growing need for supervisors, and the influx of postgraduate students. These are some of the reasons why co-supervision is practiced (Paul, Olson, & Gul, 2014).

In addition, Brown and Atkins, as early as 1988, highlighted "too few meetings with students, no interest in student's research topic, too little practical help given, too little direction, failure to return work promptly, absence from department, lack of research experience, and lack of relevant skills and knowledge" (p. 140) and eventually "inadequate or negligent supervision" (p. 123) as some common problems associated with single supervision and therefore, recommended multiple supervisors as an alternative medium to deal with the difficulties that occasionally characterise a "one-to- one supervisory" meeting.

In the department of a university in Ghana, allocation of single or co-supervisor(s) is mainly done at the School of Graduate Studies (SGS), which supervises and coordinates all postgraduate programmes at the DUG. The appointment and allocation of supervisors to postgraduates is done through heads of departments (H.O.D).

At the department of a university in Ghana (DUG), students are required to submit their thesis proposal for approval, following which supervisors are assigned to them. After the approval of the topic, appointment letters, mainly addressed to the supervisor(s), are photocopied and issued to students to notify them of their single or co-supervisors.

Co-supervision in the department is referred to as 'collaborative supervision'. Since the inception of the department in 2011, SGS has been allocating co-supervisors to regular postgraduate students offering M. Phil.at the department of a university, Ghana. Until the latter part of the decade, students relied solely on co-supervisors for supervision. The concurrent operation of both single supervision and co-supervision presently means that some students rely on co-supervisors while others have single supervisors for their thesis supervision.
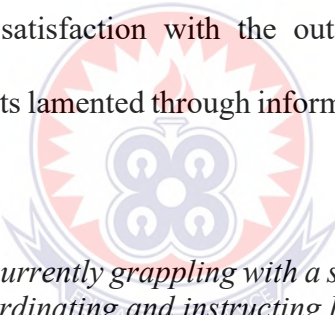
Ironically, while South African academic institutions have cited issues such as diminishing supervisory skills consequent to ageing, growing need for supervisors, together with the desire for cross-disciplinary research which maximizes innovation for future socio-economic benefit, and therefore have introduced co-supervision to oppose the traditional single supervision to benefit qualified supervisory cohorts, to efficiently and effectively cope with the influx of expected postgraduates (Grossman & Crowther, 2015), the Department of a university in Ghana has added traditional single supervision and is therefore trying to do away with their existing co-supervision arrangements. Although the problem of the influx of postgraduate students is synonymous. Meanwhile, scholars and their counterparts in other parts of the same continent have identified single supervision as beset with many problems. Although one-to-one supervision in itself is not a bad idea, it still is unclear why the graduate school added traditional apprentice – type supervision to existing co-supervision in the department.

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Literature has it that co-supervision comes with its inefficiencies. The inefficiencies of co-supervision have been underexplored at the department of a university in Ghana (DUG). This study, therefore, aims to delve into the experiences of past regular students who pursued a Master of Philosophy and undertook their thesis under co-supervisors. It hopes to unearth some of the challenges encountered by students under co-supervisors and their implications for future students in the department.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The department of a university in Ghana (DUG). has been utilizing co-supervisors to oversee students' theses since its establishment. However, despite 68 out of 94 students receiving co-supervision between 2011/2012 and 2016/2017, a significant number of them have expressed dissatisfaction with the outcomes of their supervision. For example, one of the students lamented through informal interactions with the researcher as follow;

> *"The department is currently grappling with a shortage of lecturers, who play a pivotal role in coordinating and instructing both full-time M.Phil. students and part-time M.Ed. students. Moreover, some lecturers are burdened with additional administrative responsibilities. Unfortunately, the department's co-supervision practices have often failed to meet expectations, primarily due to the overwhelming workload and responsibilities assigned to certain lecturers.*
>
> *Regrettably, despite my unwavering dedication and collaborative efforts with my supervisors, I encountered insurmountable obstacles that hindered my progress and prevented me from graduating alongside my peers. It is worth noting that I am not alone in facing these challenges; several of my colleagues are also grappling with similar difficulties."*

This represents one of the many students who may have desired to express similar concerns but likely never had the opportunity. The student's concern piqued the researcher's interest, prompting further investigation into the matter. In order to ascertain the true nature of the issues at hand, the researcher took the initiative to involve both lecturers and students. The responses received from the participants were

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rather disconcerting. It became apparent that the co-supervision approach implemented in the department was causing significant delays in students' ability to complete their theses within the designated timeframe.

While some attribute delays in completing work at DUG to students' alleged lack of diligence, many believe that the supervision practices at the department are to blame. It is widely acknowledged that postgraduate students bring their own set of challenges, which can inevitably hinder their ability and commitment. However, it appears that full-time students face additional obstacles due to inadequate supervision and co-supervision methods, which only serve to exacerbate their responsibilities and distract them from their goals.

Furthermore, Olmos-López and Sunderland (2017) have observed that having two supervisors can pose significant challenges in practice. Nevertheless, there is limited understanding of the specific challenges faced by students under co-supervisors at the department of a university in Ghana (DUG), and how these challenges impact the completion of their project work. This research aims to address this gap in knowledge and provide strategies to enhance supervision.

The primary objective of this study is to identify and analyse the difficulties encountered by postgraduate students who are assigned two supervisors for their thesis writing in the department of a university in Ghana (DUG). By shedding light on these challenges, the study hope to propose effective strategies that can improve the supervision process and ultimately enhance the students' overall experience.

In conclusion, this research is driven by the need to fill the existing knowledge gap regarding the challenges faced by postgraduate students under co-supervision at DUG. By understanding these challenges and offering practical solutions, the study aimed to

contribute to the improvement of supervision practices and support the successful completion of students' project work in the department of Management.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of co-supervision challenges on the completion rate of postgraduate master's students at the department of a university in Ghana as well as explore potential strategies for effectively managing these challenges.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. Delve into the practices of co-supervision at the department of a university in Ghana (DUG),
2. Gather insights from students regarding their experiences with co-supervision at various stages of their research work within the department.
3. Investigate how the challenges associated with co-supervision impact the completion rate of students' research work at the department.
4. Examine potential support systems that could be implemented to enhance the effectiveness of co-supervision within the department.

1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of co-supervision department of a university in Ghana?
2. How do students perceive and experience co-supervision at different stages of their research work in the department?

3. To what extent do the challenges associate with co-supervision impact students' completion rate at the department?

4. What support systems can be implemented to enhance the effectiveness of co-supervision at the department?

1.6 Significance of the Study

One significant aspect of this study is, its aim to bridge the gaps in the existing literature. The researcher envisions that the findings will contribute to the current body of knowledge, thereby expanding the discourse on co-supervision dynamics in academia.

Moreover, the study's findings will serve as a valuable guide for supervisors and students, enabling them to adopt effective strategies to overcome the challenges associated with co-supervision arrangements in postgraduate research departments. By doing so, the controversies surrounding co-supervision in these departments can be minimised, if not completely eliminated. Additionally, this will promote the well-being of both supervisors and students in postgraduate research supervision, regardless of whether they are affiliated with public or private universities.

Furthermore, the study's findings will inform strategic thinking regarding the future of department of a university in Ghana (DUG) and its PhD research training support. Once this study explores the bottlenecks in co-supervision within the department and provides appropriate solutions and recommendations, the department can rely on these findings to formulate policies that will guide co-supervision and prevent future issues.

Ultimately, the findings of this study will serve as a reference point for further research in academia. By addressing the gaps in the literature and offering insights into co-supervision dynamics, this study will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this field.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the challenges associated with co-supervision in the department of a university in Ghana Specifically, the focus was on postgraduate research supervisors and past postgraduate M.Phil. students. The decision to select past M.Phil. students from the DUG was based on their first-hand experiences with their supervisors, which provided them with valuable insights to respond to the research questions.

To ensure a comprehensive collection of data and gather the necessary information for the study, a semi-structured interview guide, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis were employed as research instruments. These instruments were chosen as they allowed participants to freely express themselves without any limitations. By adopting a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, the study aimed to delve into the participants' experiences under co-supervisors.

The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate as it provided participants with the opportunity to share their lived experiences and offer a detailed account of their encounters. This design allowed for a deeper understanding of the challenges faced in co-supervision.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study posed a number of limitations to the researcher. First, the researcher faced difficulties in convincing some of participants to accept participation in the study. Even worse, majority of the informants who accepted to speak to the researcher backed down when the time came for the data to be collected. They feared that they could expose themselves as well as the lecturers they encountered through their interactions with the researcher despite assurances of confidentiality and the anonymity. The reluctance of

the informants was also occasioned by the fact they did not want to speak to matters they claimed could indict them and, as such, worsen their plight for further studies in the same department. However, the researcher overcame the situation through persuasion and persistence. There is a chance that some participants may have exaggerated their experiences due to their negative feelings towards their supervisors, which were actually preconceived notions. This could potentially impact the results of the study.

Despite obtaining consent from the participants and assuring them that their information would be kept confidential and used only for the purpose for which it was collected, some of the participants did not answer all the questions. The researcher finds it difficult to explain this situation. Therefore, the results may not necessarily represent the opinions of all regular teachers.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the research work. Due to the restrictions on social activities, it was challenging to have face-to-face interactions with the participants. As a result, the researcher had to resort to virtual discussions via Zoom. However, this led some participants to respond hastily to the questions due to the fear of running out of their data allowance.

Although the above-mentioned challenges were fervently dealt with by the researcher, there was possibility that the findings could be affected. Due to initial unwillingness of some participants to engage in the exercise, busy schedules and quick responses by some participants, the finding could be compromised, thereby not revealing the realities on the ground.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

"Department of a University in Ghana (DUG)," is pseudonyms used for the department and the university where the study was carried out.

Co-supervision (CoS) in this study is any courteous collaborated activity adopted by two supervisors (principal and co-supervisor) to support or mentor a research student to meet the standards of research (thesis/dissertation) in academia from beginning through to successful completion of their programme in higher institution.

Collaborative supervision is synonymous with co-supervision in this study. At any point in the study where collaborative supervision has been used, the idea is identical to co-supervision.

Single or traditional supervision has been used interchangeably in this study. It refers to a single supervisor offering support or mentoring to a single research student to meet the standards of research (thesis/dissertation) in academia from the beginning through to the successful completion of their program in a higher institution.
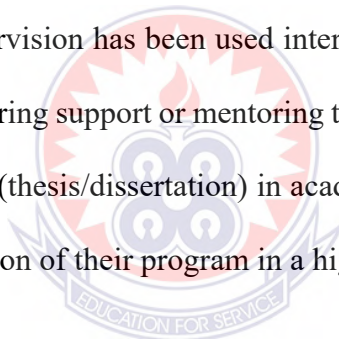
1.10 Organisation of the Study

The study was organised into five chapters, each having sections and subsections. The first chapter, dubbed 'introduction', introduced the report. The second chapter reviewed related literature in two perspectives, namely, theoretical and empirical perspectives. The third chapter, discussed the methodologies in terms of research design, study population sample and sampling techniques, research instrumentation, data collection procedure and data analysis procedure, and ethical considerations. The data collection and discussion were presented in the fourth chapter. At this point, data gathered was presented and analysed, with inferences made with references to the available literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The fifth and final chapter summarises the findings, and it is

the concluding section of the report, constituting a number of recommendations based on the findings. Hence, it is captured as summary, conclusions and recommendation.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

This chapter presents the related literature reviewed on the study. It first takes a look at the theoretical framework, followed by conceptual framework and then a review of key themes raised in the research questions. These comprise: co-supervision in context, benefits/reasons for postgraduate co-supervision practice, postgraduate co-supervision coordination (PCoSC), students' co-supervision experiences (SCoSE) at different stages of postgraduate research, challenges of co-supervision on completion rate of postgraduate programme, supervisor/supervisee needs that could improve co-supervision in postgraduate studies and the summary of the literature.

2.1 Theory Underpinning the Study

This study was underpinned by reflective practice recommended by Schön (1987) as a means of recognising good relationship between a beginner researcher (student) and those of recognisable success (the established research supervisor). According to Schön (1987), reflective practice is a means of enhancing learners' critical and reflective abilities. Schön contends that reflective practice is a method of recognising similarities and differences between that of a novice practitioner of a new craft or technique, and that of a recognisably successful practitioner. To engage in reflection necessitates dialogue to take place. It can be dialogue between actors involved (for example, between supervisors), but also with oneself as a contemplative and self-reflective attribute. This type of dialogue is one that challenges the individual's preconceptions of their world. It creates opportunities for critical reflective learning and from such dialogue new emergent understanding prevails (Brockbank & McGill, 1998, p. 57).

Research supervisory reflective practice requires the supervisor to reflect on one's own practices compared to the practices of others, in order to reveal insightful new perspectives on the problems and inconsistencies that are inherent in supervisory practice. It is from such systematic insights and deep on-going reflective processes that one establishes consistency of supervisory decisions, values, practices and acceptable norms. Consequently, reflective practice is the practice of 'learning from experience' or 'experiential learning'. However, the variables that interplay in any given supervision situation (for example, actors, time, place, discourse and subject matter) would require continuous reflection and (re-)action. Therefore, supervision development must equate with the actualised development of those being supervised. Reflective advancement, as a result, convert into (transformed) practice. Transformed practice will manifest itself in the practices of the supervisor(s) and (imperatively) the supervised. Learning from the experienced (research supervisor), particularly by description and demonstration, will be evidenced in the decrease of research supervision problems and the breaking down of psychological defences (Schön, 1987).

2.2 Conceptual Framework

This section highlights the concept on which this study is premised. It describes how the variable in the study could interplay to appeal to the understating of the readers on how the review of the study was conducted. The concept of the study is premised on the perception that postgraduate research supervision comes with lots of challenges that mostly delay or stall project completion, but these challenges could be lessened to expedite early completion of the project based on the relationship that might exist between the parties (supervisors and the students) involved.

The concept of this study is rooted largely in Brew's four main conceptions and Lee's models of supervision. The link between the two concepts is based on the objectives of the study and the relationship that exist between the variables.

In the work of Lee (2007) she identified the table (2.1) below as "Proposed models of supervision"

Table 2.1 Proposed Models of Supervision

Concept of research supervision held by supervisor	Most prominent activity	Knowledge and skills needed	Possible student reaction
Functional	Rational movement through tasks	Directing, project management	Organised obedience
Enculturation	Gatekeeping	Diagnosis of deficiencies to be remedied. Nurturing	Apprenticeship, role modelling
Critical thinking	Evaluation challenge	Argument (gently) Socratic or constructive controversy	Constant inquiry/fight
Emancipation Feminism	Mentoring supporting student in constructing knowledge	Facilitation analysis and reflection	Personal growth reframing knowledge
Relationship Development Qualities	Supervising according to experience	Emotional intelligence. A range of experiences to draw upon	Emotional intelligence, personal awareness

(Source from Lee, 2007)

The aforementioned concept was adopted and linked to Brew's four main conceptions of research in Table (3) below by Lee (2007).

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Table 2.2: A Links Between Brew's Four Main Conceptions and Lee's Models of Supervision

	Research is interpreted as:	What is in the foreground is:	Possible links to models of supervision
Domino conception	A process of synthesising separate elements so that problems are solved, questions answered or opened up	Sets (lists) of atomistic things: techniques, problems etc. These separate elements are viewed as linking together in a linear fashion	Functional
Layer conception	A process of discovering, uncovering or creating underlying meanings	Data containing ideas together with (linked to) hidden meanings	Critical thinking
Trading conception	A kind of social market place where the exchange of products takes place	Products, end points, publications, grants and social networks. These are linked together in relationships of personal recognition and reward.	Enculturation
Journey conception	A personal journey of discovery, possibly leading to transformation	The personal existential issues and dilemmas. They are linked through an awareness of the career of the researcher and viewed as having been explored for a long time.	Mentoring

Source Brew (2001)

From Table 2.1, Lee tried to link the proposed supervision models espoused by him to that of Brew's four concept. According to Lee (2007), these are not competing concepts, therefore, supervisory teams and co-supervisors could use them to define or clarify their supervision practice. Either of the concept above is intended towards achieving one thing at the end, thus, quality research production towards early and successful completion rate of research. To Lee, the search to identify the qualities of a

good supervisor is not exactly a model in itself, but Wisker et al (2003) argue that emotional intelligence and flexibility play a big part in working with students through to successful thesis project completion. Therefore, poor emotional intelligence, a mismatch in styles (such as when the student is still dependent but the supervision style is one of 'benign neglect') leads unsurprisingly to poor completion rates (Taylor & Beasley, 2005).

According to Pearson and Kayrooz (2004), research supervision is a facilitative process requiring support and challenge. It involves providing educational tasks and activities which include: progressing the candidature, mentoring, coaching the research project and sponsoring student's participation in academic practice. This leaves a question, "how much responsibility should the student or the supervisor take for arriving at the destination?" (Lee, 2007). Lee contends that the conceptions of research supervision (Functional, Enculturation, Critical thinking etc) that supervisors hold affect the way the research student operates. Therefore, research supervisors need to be enabled to uncover the conceptions that they hold and examine them alongside other supervisors.

Approaches to supervision may vary from one university to another, therefore, developing skills in supervision also needs to be tackled in various ways. Tackling supervision inefficiencies requires supervisors to adapt a blend of supervision model framework to enhance their skills for effective supervision. For example, harmonising different concepts of supervision (Functional, Enculturation, Critical thinking, Emancipation, Feminism) may have great tendency to better position the supervisor for a great deal of research supervisory outcomes.

Supervisory teams and co-supervisors come together from different background and may hold different perspectives or may hold different concept on supervision. The

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assumption is that when the parties involved in the supervisory team, including the student, resolve to operate on common ground to prosecute the supervisory agenda, then there is the assurance of producing quality research for early completion for supervisee to progress for graduation and exit. "The process of supervision occurs within the relationship established between the supervisor(s) and supervisee. It is important to keep in mind that both the supervisor and supervisee contribute to the relationship and have responsibilities within the process" (Kanburi, 2008, p.24). Setting/agreeing to the ground rules, meeting time lines, feedback on early writing, managing differences, monitoring progress, effective communication coupled with commitment on the part of all parties involved to play their roles effectively, set the ground or the fulcrum on which co-supervisory team or co-supervisors and the student revolve to sustain good relationship which will eventually produce quality research for early completion and graduation.
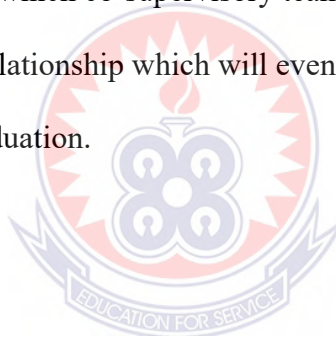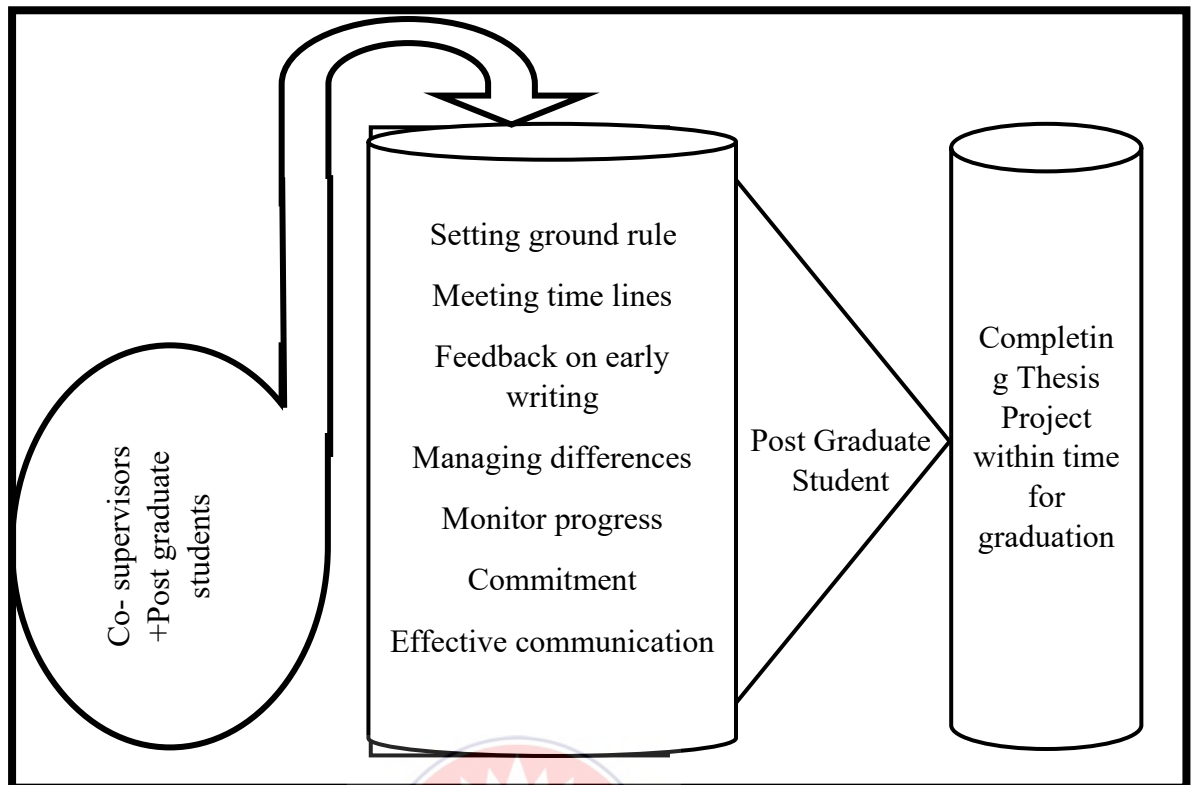
Source: Summaries from the review (Author 2022).
Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework

2.3 Co-Supervision in Context

Whereas Delamont, Atkinson and Parry (2004) as well as Bitzer and Albertyn (2011) have written extensively on the approaches ranging from the traditional single - supervision to the group or team supervision and their advantages, this study shares the empirical evidence on practices of co-supervision. Different authors have defined co-supervision in various ways. For example, Burgess, Pole and Hockey (1994) and Manathunga (2011) define co-supervision as a model of supervision that involves two or more academics in supervising a higher degree student through the process of research work. On the other hand, Paul, Olson, and Gul (2014) define co-supervision as an absolute shared responsibility among two supervisors from admission to programme completion in directing a postgraduate learner including selection of committee members or examiners. From the above definition, unlike traditional

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supervision, co-supervision involves two or more supervisors sharing common responsibilities to supervise a student's work from the beginning to the end. This type of supervision Watts (2010) describes as team supervision.

In literature, co-supervision is also described as joint or dual supervision. Nevertheless, when the term co-supervision is used in some of the literature, it often refers to the interaction of the entire group of individuals who guide the postgraduate student during their programme (Paul et.al, 2014). This is in the contexts of United Kingdom and Australian. In North America, the group is known as Postgraduate Supervisory Committee (PSC). It appears most of the global higher institutions are now adopting co-supervision approach due to some of the benefits and reasons discussed below.

2.4 Benefits/Reason for Postgraduate Co-supervision Practice

In their study "co-supervision in postgraduate training: Ensuring the right hand knows what the left hand is doing", Grossman and Crowther (2015) pointed out "; expert advice", "load sharing" "local vs distant", "safety net", "a university regulatory", "the training of novice", "pragmatism", "financial incentives", "policing", "minder", and "rescue" as eleven circumstances relating to co-supervision in the Faculty of Health Sciences in South Africa. These circumstances, this paper considers as both benefits and reasons for co-supervision practice.

There are other authors who share the view that the emerging growth of postgraduate education toward the interdisciplinary knowledge to meet the twenty-first century economy (Manathunga, Lant, & Mellick, 2006) and the assumption that a single supervisor might not have all experiences and the know-how to nurture multifaceted postgraduate work (Watts, 2010) has heighted co-supervision as against the traditional single supervision in most of the higher institutions in the globe. Brown and Atkins as

far back as 1988, pointed out negligent or "inadequate supervision" (p. 123) as some of the challenges relating to postgraduate higher programme supervision. They distinctively pointed out shortcomings of single/solo supervisors as: "too several meetings with students, no interest in students, no interest in subject, not enough practical help provided, not enough path, failing to go back to perform faster, absence from division, insufficient investigation knowledge, and lack of skills that are relevant as well as knowledge" (p. 140) as disapproval to buttress the earlier point to suggest that co-supervision is the way to go.

Co-supervision is used to train novice supervisors in the United Kingdom (UK) Higher Education. In addition, a document published in 2011for Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (an independent body entrusted with monitoring, and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education) indicator 10 states that each student should have "Team supervisor". The 'team' according to the document, provides treasured development opportunities for staff, and positions them to become competent supervisors. Guerin, Green and Bastalich (2011), describe such arrangement as a 'pyramid structure'. According to them, relying on two or more supervisors makes it possible for one to have more expertise and/or experience.

Similarly, co-supervisory model is also used mainly to assist beginning academics to develop their supervisory skills in Canada. In South Africa, the National Development Plan (NDP): Vision for 2030 and the Health Professionals Council of (HPCSA) have recommended co-supervision model to overcome the scarcity of supervisors to maximise the benefit of research for socio- economic development of the nation due to the irresistible growth of postgraduate students, and the backlog in research training and supervision. This has prompted South African Institutions to support about 33-70%

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of Ph.D. candidates with joint or dual supervision (ASSAf, 2010) as cited in Grossman and Crowther (2015). These countries and institution which have resorted to the use of co- supervision model, as a policy, might have weighed the benefits of co-supervision against the single traditional supervision before taking a stance to adopt co-supervision into their educational policies.

In addition to the benefits of co-supervision, Grossman and Crowther 2015 and Pole (1998) have all labelled co-supervision as 'safety net', although Olmos-López and Sunderland (2017) described it as 'deficit model.' All these researchers agree that there is more to 'safety net' because it has potential benefit to both co-supervisors and supervisees in the sense that it is a medium of learning to all parties involved in the team, an assertion that Lahenius and Ikävalko's (2012) positively evaluated as *complementary* and *diversified* models of supervision.

There is a degree to the extent to which co-supervisors complement one another. It is complementary in the sense that it is an asset that increases the repertoire of skills and knowledge available to students. Some students aver that the in-depth experience and knowledge of the supervisory team safeguard them always to have unfettered access to someone with experience in supporting research students through to "successful completion of their programme" (p.7) and that the supervisory team, also ensure that research students receive sufficient support and guidance to facilitate their success (Olmos-López & Sunderland, 2017 p. 7).

Again, on joint or co-supervision', Bourner and Hughes (1991) identified four benefits: "greater expertise", a "second opinion", "avoiding dependency", and "insurance". Moses, (1984) and Watts (2010) equally agree with "insurance" as it has also been described by Delamont, Atkison, and Parry (2004, p. 84) as "intellectual bereavement",

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meaning that should any unexpected consequences of imminent supervisor retirement, sabbatical or relocation or even in the event of death of a supervisor, the student will still have other supervisors to rely on. Watts (2010) states that "team supervision clearly protects students from the traumatic upheaval caused by the loss/withdrawal of a supervisor who is the only supervisor on the project and, given the duration of the doctoral project, this benefit should not be underestimated" (p. 339).

Another important reasons for which co-supervision is practiced are the additional five advantages (Paul, et. al, 2014 p.31) discovered in their studies. They are "the academic relay team", "dealing with language issues", "expanded network", "dealing with interpersonal issues", and "motivation for supervisors". In their findings, they reported "academic relay team" as one of the main advantages. Contributing to the merits of the "academic relay team", Holloway (1995), Ives and Rowley (2005) could not disagree with them but rather alluded to "academic relay team" in the context of supervisors taking leave. In the view of Olmos-López and Sunderland (2017), they consider "academic relay team" to be broader.

From the discussion above, it appears that the use of co-supervision has vast advantages but these advantages may differ from place to place and can better be experienced when the parties involved adhere to the politics surrounding it. Paul and co added that co-supervision is better experienced if two experienced practitioners in academia choose to work out their expertise, knowledge, and practicable working relationship, it is possible to add to the expertise of the parties and is likely to aid in the completion rate of the student work as compared to the 'regular traditional' supervision (Ives & Rowley, 2005).

The advantage of the co-supervisory "academic relay team" is also present in other aspects of student supervision. For instance, co-supervisors can alternate primary responsibility in assisting students to apply for research funds, present findings at conferences, and prepare manuscripts. Post graduate supervision also involves numerous requests for reference letters, progress reports, post-doctoral applications, and eventually, references for future employment. Again, such requests may become very time consuming and may be required at inopportune times. Co-supervision alleviates some of the pressures by determining who in the partnership has more time to respond to the immediate request in a timely fashion.

Co-supervision can be particularly advantageous when "dealing with language issues", such as when the language of instruction is not the first language of the student. Such situations may require significant supervisory time and guidance, especially in the writing phase of a programme. In co-supervision, this responsibility is shared. Furthermore, in practice, the student receives extensive feedback from two supervisors as compared to single or traditional supervision.

Co-supervision brings added expertise and knowledge to the supervisory process. Beyond the content and methodological expertise that is multiplied in co-supervision, the combined backgrounds of each supervisor bring a range of experience to the student's supervisory team. For example, Supervisor A may have significant expertise regarding the research ethics review process, Supervisor B may also bring extensive expertise regarding postgraduate educational processes. Again, there are times that both supervisors may be sharing common substantive and methodological areas of interest, or each of the supervisor brings non-shared areas of expertise but need to combine forces and support the student.

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Finally, in a typical single supervisory situation, when the supervisor is overloaded with their own responsibilities, delays often occur for the postgraduate student. This is avoided in a co-supervisory model. Co-supervisors relieve each other when need arises. For example, in such situations, one of the co-supervisors can take greater responsibility in terms of providing feedback or holding the mantle. However, Olmos-López and Sunderland, (2017) find this practice to be successful only when co-supervisors remain in contact and continue to share in all decision making. This shared decision making is achieved by phone, e-mail, or face-to-face discussions between co-supervisors even when one of them is taking the lead in the current student activities (Wats, 2010).

2.5 Postgraduate Co-Supervision Coordination and Its Nature

The selection of academics to constitute a supervisory team do not follow any formula. According to literature, it rather takes a different form, that is, formally or informal. To make it more formal, some institutions prescribe clearly how co-supervision should be constituted. Qualified academics between three and five (typically of the American system) are appointed as a committee or panel members to see the supervision of one postgraduate student work. The expertise of the committee members is carefully taken into consideration depending on the kind of research to be studied. The expertise could be sourced from outside the university or within the university but could be from different faculties or departments. Phillips and Pugh (1987) and Pole (1998) stated in their studies that co-supervision is frequently endorsed when a student's topic crosses disciplinary boundaries or when the higher institution has instituted a supervisor training structure and a beginner supervisor is paired with an experienced supervisor (Bourner & Hughes, 1991; Phillips and Pugh, 1987). The constitution of committee members is largely informed by the contributions each member on the panel is likely to offer. In Ives and Rowley's (2005) study of PhD students' *progress and outcomes* in

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an Australian University, they concluded that 'there should be two active supervisors as part of the formal supervisory team'. The University of Cape Coast's model of supervision paints scenarios as how Type A (Team Supervision) model should be constituted. It is captured in a hand book as follows:

> *In scenario (A), more than one member of academic or research staff is named at approval stage as being responsible for the guidance of the research project of a research student (i.e., the student has 2 or more co-supervisors). A co-supervisor may be external to UCC (e.g., in another university, industry or a research organization). Co-supervisors may also provide specialist advice and ensure continuity of supervision when one supervisor is absent from the University. This type of supervisory team may involve two or more staff members, from the same or different academic units and each member of the supervisory ... progress and examination. (p.1).*

The workload and the roles of the supervisor and co-supervisor are also given attention by some universities standing orders. For example, supervision at University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in South Africa, Senate Standing Orders on Higher Degrees describe the supervisor and co-supervisor workload as follows:

> *"The Supervisor' is the person who is principally responsible for the supervision of the student and is responsible for 50% or more of the supervision. 'The Co-supervisor' is the person who is responsible for more than 10% and 50% or less of the supervision of the student".*

In the Department of a university in Ghana both principal and co-supervisors share equally workload (50% 50%). This is different at the University of Cape Coast where workload is left to the principal and co-supervisors to negotiate. There, the frequency of meetings, distribution of tasks etc are all agreed by members of the supervisory team at the outset with the student. Elsewhere, some graduate schools enforce co-supervision, but at the Faculty of Health Sciences at Wits, in South Africa, co-supervision is voluntary. Other institutions may have the policy governing co-supervision in theory, but the reality is that the rules set may not be adhered to. Paul

et.al (2015) describe extensively how co-supervisors should engage students in the co-supervision process. The most vital in all is for the co-supervisors and the student to reach one-to-one agreement on responsibilities about who is doing what (Phillips & Pugh 2000).

The approaches to co-supervision coordination may differ from university to university. The common approach is by formally appointing two or more academics to take full responsibility for the postgraduate student's studies till he or she completes. It is also common that in all teams constituting co-supervision in all the universities, one is charged with the duty as principal/main supervisor. Lane, Rebecca, Henderson, Deborah, Price, Robin, Hill and Geof (2007) stated that co-supervision is characterized by or having authority vested equally among colleagues due to university protocols relating to supervision. Therefore, one supervisor needs to take up responsibility for overall co-ordination of the student research work. That supervisor is called the principal/main supervisor and all other supervisor(s) are called co/associate supervisors.

Ostensibly, once the leadership has been apportioned to the team, then the onus lies on the leader to ensure that they coordinate the frequency of meetings and task distribution to ensure the supervision achieves its aim. Depending on institutional policy governing co-supervision, the decision to appoint a co-supervisor is usually made by the principal supervisor in consultation with the university's policy. However, some universities provide flexibility for postgraduate students to initiate the process themselves (Lahenius and Ikävalko, 2012). The formalities in appointing co-supervisors may not have specific time frame. It could be at the proposal level or as the stages of the research unfold and it has been clear that the work may require another proficiency.

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In co-supervision in postgraduate training, Grossman & Crowther (2015) described how informal supervision of postgraduates occurs. They said informal supervision is a form of agreement used to complement the formal supervisory coordination. Ives and Rowley resolved that it is as a way of satisfying all the *students'* research needs. With this, Wingfield (2012) on the other hand describe it as a way of supplementing the *supervisors'* needs by using the potential, either official or otherwise of co-workers, postdoctoral students and senior postgraduate students, to support in the training of other postgraduates as seen in Grossman and Crowther (2015). This idea is authorised in section 11 of the University of Edinburgh's 'Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students' which reads:

> *In many research programmes other staff members will be involved in an informal advisory capacity, especially if specialised equipment is to be used. It is the duty of the principal supervisor to ensure that these informal advisors are prepared both to undertake this work and to take responsibility for matters of instruction and safety.*

Besides, Delamont, Atkinson, and Parry (2004) have observed the possibility of relationships between supervisors which may adversely impact on student's experience, both positively or negatively, on postgraduate undertaking. Although the scholars' description which leads to the use of the informal supervisors is not out of place, nonetheless, there may be all other reasons as described. Hence Ives & Rowley (2005); Watts (2010), Wingfield (2012) proposed additional reasons for students to have supplementing *supervisors 'informally or* consult third parties who are experienced to come in should it happen that the relationship breaks down in the team.

The issue of co-supervision coordination in postgraduate training has drawn attention to the fact that an informal supervisor is not obligated to meet deadlines or take responsibility for completing the research. He might not also be credited for the success of the student and never receives recognition from either the Faculty or Graduate School

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Office for their submission made to the work but the student might acknowledge him or her for contributing to the completion of the project. This is evident in the story of one supervisor who was chosen informally by a student in the practice to theory by Spooner-Lane, Rebecca, Henderson, Deborah, Price, Robin, Hill, and Geof (2007);

> *My first doctoral student initiated the co-supervision himself. I had known this student through my Philosophy Café work in which I had been helping people understand the nature of Practitioner Investigation. One of my clients at the Philosophy Café asked me if I would supervise him. He had been given a supervisor in his university faculty but the supervisor was unfamiliar with living action research – his nominated methodology. He had hunted through the faculty unsuccessfully and finally gained approval from the faculty for me to act as an associate supervisor on the basis that I was contracted to undertake other work related to higher degree research supervision at the same university. The principal supervisor, the student and I met initially, but from then on, I met the student alone on a regular basis. As the student approached completion there was another meeting to look at the final draft of his thesis. The principal supervisor and I spoke occasionally on the phone and as there were never any discussion about my services being compensated it appeared to me that I was doing this work gratis. During my time as an associate supervisor, I met each month with the student and read all of the drafts of his work. In theory I was advising on the methodology, however as time went by my understanding of the topic grew and I found that I was also providing feedback on the content-related issues. There was no formal discussion between the principal supervisor and myself about the division of labour and I knew that the student only met with the principal supervisor sporadically and often when a milestone report was due. In many ways I felt I was acting as a principal supervisor in all but name. Upon completion of the thesis, the student received feedback from the examiners that was very favourable. There were few corrections to be made. I particularly encouraged the student to keep focused because there was an agenda at the university to address the fall off in student interest following the receipt of feedback from the examiners. The student finished in under the specified time. When the student was writing the citation for his graduation the principal supervisor was encouraging him to mention in the citation that the thesis had been passed by one examiner with no changes. I expressed my discomfort about such a statement as I felt that it was misappropriating the student's success for the supervisor's own agenda. The faculty office vetoed the citation so the issue was no longer an issue. When the student graduated the principal supervisor took the entire credit for the success. At no time was there acknowledgement from either the faculty or the Office of Research to acknowledge the work that I had done and the form signing off for the student indicated that the principal supervisor had done 100% of the supervision. I chose not to challenge this as there had been no formal discussions about the dividing of workload, and I was not part of the faculty* (Geof's story p. 6).

2.6 Students' Co-supervision Experiences (SCoSE) at Different Stages of Postgraduate Research

Naturally, supervision of any type engages two or more parties. This presupposes that all forms of supervision are accomplished through a reliable relationship built between the supervisors and the student. Due to multiplicity of task involved in the different stages of supervision, the supervisory relationship between the student and supervisor(s) changes from time to time, thus from beginning to the completion of the project work. When this change occurs, the supervision demands from students also alter to help them to accomplish certain tasks at various stages of the research. (Saleem and Mehmood, 2018). Changes usually come with difficulties and frustrations. The frustrations that arise in the relationship between students and supervisor(s) can create a lot of difficulties in the research journey of postgraduate students. Pole (1998) alluded that those difficulties in joint supervision is caused by different personalities of supervisors, or distance in status between supervisors and students. Watts (2010) agrees with this and puts it this way; depending on people involved in the co-supervisory team, and how well the hierarchy will relate well in the model. This affirms the point that relationships built with people of different personalities and status have their dire consequences if not handled well. Literature has it that as a result of bad relationship, many postgraduate students have recorded bad experiences in relation to the postgraduate research.

Students were asked to share their experiences in the different research stages at postgraduate level studies and on joint supervision in Pakistan and Finland respectively. In Pakistan, students' experiences were sought in the following stages: developing synopsis, collecting data/performing experiment: writing thesis, writing and evaluation/thesis submission under the six aspects of the supervision namely; project

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management, intellectual support, pertinent research skills, interpersonal communication skills, supportive skills and workload management. The findings of the study reveal that generally, students' experiences are better with their supervisors at stage 2 as compared to the other stages of research. The study conducted in Finland rather captured the interview into three themes: complementary supervision practice, substitutive supervision practice and diversified supervision practice and sought the experiences of the students.

The complementary supervision practice here refers to a situation in which both the additional supervisor and the principal supervisor actively participate in supervision. Substitutive supervision practice had one principal supervisor and an additional supervisor, and the other diversified supervision practice on the other hand included more than one additional supervisor during the thesis process. For example, one student had five named supervisors: one principal supervisor and four additional supervisors.

In the first practice, the students reported that the additional supervisor guided the writing process, but regular meetings where the manuscripts were reviewed included the principal supervisor in the whole process. Even though the principal supervisor had disagreement with them, but for the presence of additional supervisor, they were able to calm down issues.

Students reported in the second practice that the principal supervisor was not actively involved with supervision of the doctoral student's thesis work due to administrative work. And the second supervisor was not also performing and for that matter another supervisor was recommended to be added to the team. In the third instance, although students had many supervisors, students went ahead to recruit supervisors themselves and sought help from them.

The experiences reported in the studies is obviously an indication of some kind of frustration students go through in their research journey. Supervision has been described by Frischer and Larsson (2000), Golde (2005); Vilkinas (2008), as an effective research tool which the students admit to be a vital factor in the successful completion of a postgraduate degree. When students' expectations are not met in the process of the supervision, especially co-supervision, students find excuses to shift pole although some of the problems might have emanated from their side.

2.7 Challenges of Co-supervision on Postgraduate Thesis Completion Rate

The problems that students face in completing their research work have largely been attributed to research supervision. The timely completion and graduation of programmes have become increasingly vital policy issues for many universities and governments (Murphy & Welch, 1993). According to Hebel (1999), the effectiveness of an institution is determined by the graduation rate. World Bank in 2004 defined students' completion rate as the ratio of the total number of students successfully completing in the last year of their programme in a given year to the total number of students of official graduation in the population. Students and the university suffer increases in hidden costs when programmes are not completed on time, therefore, there is a need for good utilisation of research activities properly to complete a master's programme on time (Eyangu, Bagire, & Kibrai, 2014).

A typical example is that students are charged extension fees, while university's resources like libraries and research supervisors become overused due to the backlog of students who must be cleared to be able to graduate (Makerere University Higher Degrees joining instructions, 2004; Tetty, 2010 cited in Eyangu, Bagire, & Kibrai, 2014 p. 2). A study conducted at Makerere University Business School in Uganda revealed

that the completion rate of master's programmes was very low as a result of delay in returning the research comments both by external examiners and the Graduate and Research Centre office.

Basically, frustrations co-supervision challenges pose to postgraduate students' completion rate during research work, may not be largely different from traditional (solo/single) supervision. The issues surrounding co-supervision have widely been explored by various authors in literature. For example, Bartlett and Mercer (2000), Watts (2010) and Manathunga (2011) have raised issues such as power play, contradictory advice, neglect of responsibility, lack/additional positive communication as potential challenges associated with co-supervision. A study conducted by Phillips and Pugh, 2000) also pointed out an intellectual and personal disagreement in the co-supervision team as clear demonstration of power struggling which leads to confused state of mind of students. These scholars have sought to unearth the complexities, operations of power, and hidden constructions inherent in supervision relationships (Grant, 2003; 2001; Green & Lee, 1995; Lee & Williams, 1999). Grant's (2008; 2003) work in particular demonstrates just how complex the operations of power within supervision pedagogy are.

Grant (2003) maps out four complex, interwoven layers of relations that operate within supervision. The first layer constructs supervision between a supervisor and a student as an 'institutionally prescribed relationship with stable [supervisor and student] positions (Grant, 2003, p. 178). This is the layer acknowledged in policy documents and in studies of supervision drawing on a liberal paradigm. Grant (2003) argues that the second layer of supervision is the pedagogical power relation that circulate between the supervisor, the student and the thesis or knowledge along the lines proposed by Lusted (1986).

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The third layer of relations includes the 'diverse social positions' adopted by the supervisor and student, producing complicated and changeable interactions (Grant, 2003, p. 182). Finally, the fourth layer is the inexplicable yet powerful operation of supervisors' and students' 'conscious and unconscious knowing and desires' (Grant, 2003, p. 185). Grant (2008; 2003) demonstrates how much potential there is in supervision for supervisors and students to misunderstand each other or talk past each other.

Clearly, co-supervision cannot be said that it comes with no challenges. These challenges may be enormous depending on the type of co-supervision model practiced. Manathunga and Goozee 2007) describe 'coaching' or 'mentoring' thus, a model where experienced supervisor work with a beginner supervisor who, although having expertise in the subject or method, has not acted as a supervisor previously. This, according to Phillips and Pugh (2000), have advantages over a model of supervisors of equal status.

Inconsequential issues such as division of labour (who is doing what) and the venue for supervision (where supervision takes place), have all been described in literature as potential threats that delay the progress of the co-supervision (Watts, 2010). Supervision has been charaterised as comprehensive set of pool made of intellectual, methodological and pastoral component which its essentials can change during the progress of the research work. Realizing that supervision pedagogy and research teaching is a complex skill worthy of professionalization, Firth and Martens (2008) highlighted the need for real supervisory practice for an appropriate adjustment between emotional and senses. This, in effect, will avoid some of the challenges that affect completion rate with co-supervision practice. Paul et. al (2014) in co-supervision of doctoral students, identified and warned that unless issues of inequitable workload

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recognition, no official acknowledgement of informal supervisory activities and co-supervision implications on staff promotion are addressed, the full potential of co-supervision will remain unfulfilled.

Some universities discount the merit of co-supervision due to the threats that come with it. For example, in QUT Faculty of Law, despite the law school policy encouraging co-supervision, a very experienced professor in 2013 revealed that co-supervision has largely failed in improving supervision. However, in many cases, the actual practice still maintains the traditional supervision rather than co-supervisory approach (Colbran, 2003*).* Although this study cannot substantiate currently the stance of the university concerning co-supervision, the underlining problems alluded to have been captured in Phillips and Pugh, (2005) as: 'unproductive games' (between supervisors, between supervisee and supervisors) thus students playing one supervisor off against the other. According to Phillips and Pugh (2000) the probability of students seeing all their supervisors at the same time is considerably less than that of seeing them separately. To them, students may be faced with conflicting advice in those circumstances therefore giving rise to frustration and uncertainty (Watts, 2010).

Frustration or lack of communication at the beginning of the supervision journey raised by Ismail, Majid and Ismail (2013), extra dimension of communication is required on co-supervision, including discussion and planning between the co-supervisors, the co-supervisors' provision of oral and written feedback, including to draft chapters, students' perceived needed support being articulated to both co-supervisors, and all three making arrangements to meet and to allocate work are another pool of problems worth attention. Again, disintegration of supervisor responsibility and the risk of a lack of a broad research perspective warned by Olmos-López and Sunderland (2017) are all additional mitigating issues that hinder the smooth implementation of co-supervision

and eventually affect the research completion rate. The externalities of these problems are that it becomes difficult for one person to carry the overall view of the project for the fear that when there is a problem the goal post may be shifted.

When a student is allocated supervisors of equal status who have additional responsibility, there is a possibility that there could be fragmentation of responsibilities. When supervisors relinquish their supervision responsibilities, students fall on friends and others supervisors to supervise them and such arrangement contribute to the delay in completion rate. Paul et.al (2018) describe such arrangement as informal supervision. Additionally, they said such informal supervisors do not have any responsibility to meeting deadlines, theirs is to offer a helping hand, therefore feedback on students' work can be done at their own pace, and no one will hold them accountable for poor quality or delays in completion of work. The other face of the challenge is that informal supervisor would also like to be acknowledged for their contribution towards the completion of the project to enrich their curriculum vitae (CV). Therefore, when all credit is given to official supervisors who did little to contributing to the completion of the project, those who toiled for the completion of the work will also feel they have been used and damped.

Delays in giving feedback, constant missing of agreed deadline and late submission of work do not support planning. They rather throw schedules overboard. This also kills exuberant expectations and makes it difficult in balancing a range of teaching, research and management demands, disruption in given full attention and unpreparedness prior to the meeting. Such constraints exacerbate the tension and differences amongst the supervision team and at the long run prolong the completion and graduation of the student.

The frustrations a students go through at the early stages of the project affect the quality of drafting of the various chapters from the beginning of the work to the final delivery of the work if not well handled. Though studies are yet to establish the differences in challenges of co-supervision and traditional single supervision and how it impacts on the postgraduate completion rate of research, it has been established in literature that when co-supervision is managed well, its merits are enormous. Downplaying challenges that surround co- supervision practices could immensely disrupt the progression of the student's thesis project. It is a factor that could place more risk on co-supervision teams for either presentation of project which is of less standard or completely missing the target of completion rate for the student to join the next graduation. Though there may be other contributing factors on the part of the student which might derail the completion rate of project, mostly, the above constraint cannot be underestimated.
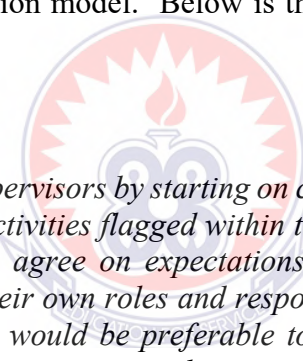
2.8 Supervisor/ Supervisee Needs for improving Co-supervision in Postgraduate Studies.

In literature, more emphases have been laid on the need to manage supervisory tension. In managing tensions and contradictions, Watts (2010) acknowledges that relationships between students and supervisors as mainly helpful in academic business relationships but these relationships between the student and supervisor, supervisor and supervisor can break down. On the other hand, Grant and Graham (1999) describe the supervisory relationship as an academic power relation where both supervisor and student are capable of acting to change the relationship dynamic. John Holland's Theory of Career Choice maintains the notion that most people fit into one of six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional (RIASEC). As a

consequence, dealing with these personality types may definitely come with some difficulties.

The reality is that working with human beings from different backgrounds require lots of patience. Indeed, co-supervision involves separate individuals teaming up as a unit to work to achieve a 'common goal for common purpose'. Naturally, these individuals will come to the table with different emotions, perspectives and life styles. Students, therefore, have the responsibility to co-manage themselves and their supervisors in face of the tensions that may arise. Rugg and Petre (2004) argue that postgraduate supervision is a relationship not a service and that interactions between supervisors and their students, as well as between supervisors in the team, need to be managed. Guerin et al. (2011) and Watts (2010) both advice students to 'manage' their co-supervisors by getting agreement on their different areas of responsibility. This, according to them, will ensure that both supervisors are kept involved with the progress of the research and will enable the pedagogical process in spite of some supervisors' unwillingness to adapt to the needs of students (Grant &Graham, 1999). In as much as Krauss and Ismail support the assertion that students can empower themselves to be better co-managers of the supervisory relationship, the finding of their studies revealed that in some instances it may be less realistic as not all relationships and undoubtedly not all supervisors are indeed "manageable" by students. This is also supported by Grant and Graham in reference to their experience in conducting university-based programmes on reconstructing supervision for both academic staff and students, where the authors cite supervisor resistance to attending the programme as a barrier to changes in their supervision approach. Irrespective of the constraint, the most important thing is how best these difficulties can be managed well to achieve the goal of the group.

Again, co-supervision needs to be coordinated well to bring all team players on board. In the study Co-Supervision in Postgraduate Training: Ensuring the Right Hand Knows what the Left Hand is Doing, Grossman and Crowther presented a table on pages 4 and 5 of the articles published in 2015. Data in Table box1 show what co-supervisors should clarify in advance and box 2 explains how mentoring of novice supervisors training and support should be. The position taken by these researchers clearly brings to the fore, how co- supervision should be coordinated and has been adapted by this study. This paper concedes that the strategies mentioned in the boxes may not proffer solutions to all the problems associated with co-supervision. Therefore, parties involved in co-supervision need to find strategies to manage the challenges that may arise during the practice of the co-supervision model. Below is the summary of what co-supervision should clarify in advance:

To involve all co-supervisors by starting on common ground with periodic, built-in reviewing activities flagged within the programme on an ongoing basis. They need to agree on expectations of the research project, the postgraduate and their own roles and responsibilities, as well as those of the postgraduate. It would be preferable to include the postgraduate in some or all of the co-supervisory discussions, but that can be determined by the circumstance. Ongoing progress is reliant on keeping co-supervisory relationships open and transparent, regularly reviewing the postgraduate's advancement; meeting administrative requirements; monitoring project development and fulfilling co-supervisory roles. All these require an enabling environment, the right frame of mind and a constructive attitude towards diversity, flexibility, willingness to learn and recognition that if things go wrong, it is the postgraduate who suffers.

A poor understanding of the range of tasks expected, without explicit discussion of the scope of each, can impact negatively on the nature of the relationship between co-supervisors and theirs with the postgraduate. No matter which reason forms the basis for co-supervision, it is imperative that a memorandum of understanding be drawn up between co-supervisors as a matter of course, just as the student-supervisor 'contract' is utilised in many tertiary academic institutions. Such a document is increasingly appropriate in an academic climate where universities must demonstrate to the tax-payer accountability, quality assurance and quantifiable training outcomes which are likely to facilitate successful postgraduate student completion. (p. 4-8)

Similarly, Lahenius and Ikävalko (2012) concluded that co-supervision in the engineering disciplines would benefit from specific rules and responsibilities. It is worthy to mention that no matter what measures one will put in place to coordinate co-supervision, disagreement cannot be discounted. According to Watts (2010), "disagreements may occur when supervision takes place without the presence of the whole team" (*p. 338)* but she references a model that could be used to settle the disagreement. Thus setting 'agreed ground rule' whereby the consent of the absent supervisors could be taken to support feedback given to the student at supervision. This implies that the difficulties that exist in the co-supervision practices, can be dealt with provided the parties involved agree to disagree. Although from Watts's experience, disagreements between supervisors according to her can "provide opportunity for deeper critical reflection" and it is a way of provoking the student's opinions as well as empowering them to question and prove their knowledge, she was quick to warn the 'way' in which differences are shared. She describes differences shared as 'competitive turn' which is likely to leave the student unsettled. When disagreements are not handled well, it well surely leaves no chance for the student to see supervisors separately.

2.9 Summary of Literature Review

Styles of postgraduate student supervision differ widely from university to university. It appears that the university's policy on supervision determine the models for supervision. Currently it seems more universities prefer co-supervision due to its academic benefits as compared to the normal traditional supervision. For example, the number of postgraduate students the academics manage, existing research supervision, teaching, and then management obligations cannot be overlooked when it comes to the decision to choose a supervision model. Co-supervision brings on board some shared responsibility for the student (Malfroy, 2005). This review has focused on co-

supervision, explained the process and components of co-supervision, and identified the benefits as well as challenges associated with this model. It important to note that co-supervision gives some level of assurances to students, thus, in absence of one supervisor, the other supervisor(s) takes charge. Again, co-supervision gives room for novice supervisors to be trained by experienced supervisors. The purpose of this discussion is to encourage other academics as well as graduate students to consider co-supervision while recognizing the crucial elements and challenges of this model. Among the assumptions underlying the way of utilizing co-supervision is the fact that ideally, students must be monitored by a single person. This paper contends that co-supervision could be higher than a rite of passage for brand new academics. In fact, when co-supervision is handled well, it improves the adventure of supervision for students and faculty and also could increase successful completion rate of postgraduate programmes more frequently than when there's just a single supervisor (Ives &Rowley, 2005). In the situation where co-supervision team stick to similar methodological process, think about their combined written content, put in their commitments and experiences and do it collectively it is possible that a lot more students can complete the postgraduate programme on time to increase completion rate in the universities.

This chapter primarily focuses on reviewing related literature for the study. The next chapter will discuss the methodological choices made specifically for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the methodology used for the study. According to Twumasi (2001), methodology refers to an accurate and meaningful research method that is linked to how the entire study was conducted, including any flexibilities introduced during fieldwork, and the justification for each methodological procedure (Kumar, 1999). The methodology choices discussed in this study include research design, population, sample size, sampling procedures, data collection methods, and statistical analysis.

Methodological choices made for the study were critical because they determined the accuracy, reliability, and validity of the study's findings. The methodology outlined the procedures used to collect and analyse data, and it provided a framework for interpreting the results. The appropriate methodological choices made ensured strict adherence of ethical considerations that were anchored in trustworthy results, which ultimately led to a rigorous and transparent study.

3.1 Research Paradigm

In every research endeavour, a key objective is to expand the boundaries of knowledge (Creswell, 2005). This can be achieved by ensuring that the methods employed align with a theoretical framework and philosophical arguments (Kusi, 2008, p.77). The choices made in methodology are influenced by the researcher's philosophical standpoint and fundamental assumptions about social reality, the nature of knowledge, and human nature (Sikes, 2004).

The present study is grounded in the interpretivism paradigm, which is informed by the philosophical notion that the world we perceive is a product of our own minds, and reality is better understood through our preconceptions and beliefs (William, 2005). In other words, human activities cannot be observed from an external reality. Instead, social constructions such as language (including text and symbols), consciousness, and shared meanings are utilized to access and comprehend reality. This contradicts the positivist assumption that researchers can detach themselves from the research process or the interpretation of research findings.

Interpretive research recognises that findings, experiences, and viewpoints are all valuable sources of data (Verma & Mallick, 1999). Interpretivism emphasizes that social reality is perceived and interpreted by individuals based on their ideological positions. Therefore, knowledge is personally experienced rather than acquired or imposed from external sources. Interpretivists assume that reality is not objectively determined, but rather socially constructed. The underlying belief is that by situating individuals within their social contexts, the study can gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions they hold regarding their own activities. Recognizing the uniqueness of each situation is crucial in comprehending and interpreting the meanings constructed.

Interpretivism places great importance on valuing what people say, do, and feel, as well as how they make meaning of the phenomena being studied. It foregrounds the significance of individuals' perspectives and experiences in research. By adopting an interpretive approach, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of human behaviour and the social world.

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3.2 Qualitative Research Approach

The qualitative research approach delves into social or human problems by constructing a comprehensive and holistic understanding. Rather than relying on numerical data, this method analyses words and provides detailed insights into the perspectives of participants in their natural environments (Creswell cited in Kusi, 2008). When studying a phenomenon, qualitative methods are the most relevant and effective.

Shank (2002) defines the qualitative approach as a systematic and empirical inquiry into meaning. This methodology aims to achieve depth rather than breadth, which is often overlooked by quantitative approaches. Quantitative methods fail to acknowledge individuals' ability to interpret their experiences, create their own meanings, and act upon them (Burns, 2000). Therefore, a qualitative and interpretive research strategy was chosen to obtain illustrative empirical evidence of the experiences of students who were co-supervised.

In this study, the qualitative approach was deemed the most suitable method to address the research question. The focus was on gaining an understanding of the experiences of postgraduate students who found themselves in a co-supervision process. The information gathered in a qualitative study reflects the experiences, feelings, and judgments of individuals involved in the investigation of a research problem or issue, whether as subjects or observers (Verma & Mallick, as cited in Kusi, 2008).

Kincheoloe argues that human experience is shaped by specific contexts and cannot be fully understood if removed from those contexts. Therefore, qualitative research strives to be as naturalistic as possible, ensuring that the research takes place within the normal, everyday context (Kincheoloe, 1991).

3.3 Research Design

The study employed a phenomenological design to investigate the phenomenon at hand. Phenomenology is a well-known qualitative research design in the field of education (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2010; Ponce, 2014). It serves as a philosophical foundation for qualitative research approaches (Lucca & Rivera, 2013), focusing on the shared experiences within a specific group. The term "phenomenology" was first used by philosopher Immanuel Kant in his renowned work, Critique of Pure Reason (Parodi, 2008). Derived from Greek, the term encompasses the meaning of "apparition or manifestation." It is also defined as the philosophy or "school that explains being consciousness based on the analysis of observable phenomena" (Litchman as cited in Padilla-Díaz, 2015, p. 2).

The primary objective of this approach is to provide a comprehensive description of the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Typically, interviews are conducted with individuals who possess first-hand knowledge of the event, situation, or experience being studied under this design. These interviews aim to address two broad questions (Moustakas, 1994): What have you personally experienced in relation to the phenomenon? And what contextual factors or situations have consistently influenced your experiences of the phenomenon? (Creswell, 2013).

With its roots in philosophy, psychology, and education, phenomenology strives to extract the purest and most unbiased data. In some interpretations of this approach, researchers employ bracketing to document their personal experiences with the subject, thus removing themselves from the research process. Therefore, this study relied on phenomenology as a suitable design to explore students' experiences with co-supervision and determine the support system that could enhance co-supervision among lecturers in the department.

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The design facilitated the utilization of various techniques to gather data from both supervisors and students within their natural context, which was a specific geographical area. This approach was adopted to ensure the study's goals and objectives were achieved. It is crucial to acknowledge that the participants' experiences in qualitative studies are heavily influenced by their context, and comprehending them becomes impossible if detached from that context (Kincheoloe, 1991). Among the five approaches outlined by Creswell, the researcher was confident that the phenomenological design closely corresponded to the study's objectives.

3.4 The Setting of the Study

The University was established in September, 1992 as a University College under Law 322. On 14th May, 2004 the University Act, Act 672 was enacted to upgrade the status of the University college to the status of a full University.

The Department is under the Faculty of Educational Studies in the in a univeristy in Ghana. The Department is among five departments in the Faculty of Educational Studies. It was established in the year 2011 and commenced it operations in the 2011/12 academic year. It is the only department in the university which does not run undergraduate programmes in the faculty. Until the 2019/20 academic year when doctor (Ph.D.) degree programmes were introduced, the department had enrolled postgraduate programmes such as Master of Education (MEd) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil) on regular and sandwich basis respectively.

3.5 Population of the Study

Population for the study included a total number of 94 M.Phil. students who were enrolled from 2011/12 – 2016/17 academic year and 8 lecturers totalling 102 in DUG. Population in research refers to the aggregate or totality of objects or individuals regarding which inferences are to be made in a sampling study (Anab,2018).

3.6 Sampling Size

A total number of 27 participants were sampled to participate in the study. These comprise 24 M.Phil. students who had completed their study between 2011/12–2016/17 academic year and 3 lecturers who had engaged in co-supervision and had been in the department for not less than five years.

A sample is a subset of a frame where elements are selected based on a randomised process with a known probability of selection (UNECE, 2000). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), a sample size can be determined in two ways: either by the researcher exercising prudence and ensuring that the sample represents the wider features of the population or by using a table which forms a mathematical formula. The study employed qualitative approach, therefore, there is a need to select a sample that would enable the phenomenon under study to be explored for a better understanding. Again, Creswell (2005) contends that selecting a large number of interviewees will result in "superficial perspective, the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individuals or sites" (p. 207). The aforementioned reasons informed the researcher's decision to engage 27 participants in the study.

3.7 Sampling Technique

According to the United States Bureau of Census (1998), the sampling technique refers to the specific process used to select entities for the sample. For this study, snowball sampling techniques were used to select participants. Specifically, the Exponential Discriminative Snowball Sampling (EDSS) method was used to select M.Phil. students who were under co-supervisors from the 2011/12-year group to the 2016/2017-year group, totalling 24 students to participate in the study. Exponential Discriminative Snowball Sampling is one type of snowball sampling, which is a sociometric sampling method also known as network, chain referral, or reputation sampling method. The snowball method not only required less time but also provided the researcher with an opportunity to communicate better with the samples, as they were linked to the first sample, and the first sample is linked to the researcher (Polit-O'Hara & Beck, 2006).

All 24 participants in the study had completed their program, so snowball sampling was used to collect data from unknown participants through someone known to the researcher. The researcher obtained contacts of some past M.Phil. students from the administrator of DUG and contacted them via telephone. These participants were then asked to provide the contact information of other participants who could provide relevant information about the study area. This process was repeated until the researcher had 24 key participants. The remaining participants, who were mostly lecturers, were purposively selected to participate in the study. The hand-picking technique allowed the researcher to engage three lecturers who were believed to be information-rich and could provide information suitable for the study's purpose.

The participants were selected based on specific criteria. The eligibility standards for the study were four: (a) the participants had to be a full-time M.Phil. student; (b) they

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had to belong to any of the year groups from 2011/12 to 2016/17 at DUG. It was assumed that they had established relationships with their supervisors and would be able to provide in-depth data. Nevertheless, a small number of three participants, consisting of three lecturers from DUG, were also selected in addition to the participants mentioned earlier. Again, the views of the lecturers were sought to triangulate the data from the students; (c) the lecturer should have been part of the department for not less than five years at the time of the study and should have participated in co-supervision in the department; and (d) the overall sample had to include those having both positive and negative experiences with supervisors. This final criterion reflected a maximum-variation approach, which is used to "document diverse variations and identify important common patterns" (Creswell, 2013, p. 119).

3.7.1 Snowball Sampling

According to the literature, snowball sampling is a useful technique when the "population of interest is not easily reachable" (Naderifar, Goli, & Ghaljaie, 2017, p. 1) and "compiling a list of the population poses difficulties for the researcher" (Anieting & Mosugu, 2017, p. 34). Snowball sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that allows a researcher to purposefully recruit participants for data collection in qualitative research. Typically, snowball sampling begins with people who are known or familiar to the researcher. The process for obtaining the sample is gradual, and the selection of samples is influenced by time. Sampling usually continues until data saturation is reached.

The sampling technique is commonly used in "hidden populations that are difficult for researchers to access, or in cases where a sampling frame is hard to establish, and it is assumed that cases are affiliated through links that can be exploited to locate other participants based on existing ones" (Anieting & Mosugu, 2017, p. 34). Literature

shows that the snowballing method is controlled and allows the researcher to be deeply involved in initiating and developing the sample while ensuring that the chain of referrals remains relevant to the study (Anieting & Mosugu, 2017, p. 35).

According to the literature, the snowball technique has three types: Linear Snowball Sampling, Exponential Discriminative, and Exponential Non-Descriptive Snowball Sampling. Linear Snowball Sampling involves recruiting a single participant who then recruits a second participant, and the process continues until the end of the sampling. In Exponential Non-Discriminative Snowball Sampling, every recruited participant is allowed to recruit another participant who is also allowed to participate in the research. In contrast, in Exponential Discriminative Snowball Sampling, not every recruited participant is allowed to recruit another participant, resulting in a discriminating chain (Explorable.com, 2010).

The researcher largely employed the idea of Discriminative Snowball Sampling for participant selection to prevent embarrassing and erroneous results. The purpose of the study was also taken into consideration, as allowing every recruited participant to participate may result in gathering biased data. Some students may use this medium to inject wrong information out of hatred, which could affect the focus of the study even if they did not have difficulties in their research process.

3.8 Methods for Data Collection

Prior to collecting any data, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Department of a university in Ghana, which allowed him to obtain consent from all participants. To obtain consent, the researcher contacted each participant through a telephone conversation and arranged a date for discussion. Two days before the

scheduled discussion, the researcher called each participant again to remind them of the arrangements.

The study primarily used data from 24 M.Phil. students who completed their studies between the academic years 2011/12-2016/17, the department's library, and three lecturers who had at least three years of experience in co-supervision. The researcher employed semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis, and focus group discussions (FGD) to collect the data. To ensure accuracy and reliability, the researcher followed the principles of triangulation by using multiple data sources and methods, as recommended by Bowen (2009) and Yin (1994).

Using multiple sources to collect data allowed the researcher to triangulate the information, which leads to a convergence of evidence that enhances credibility, according to Eisner (1991). Patton (1990) suggests that triangulation is an effective way for researchers to avoid criticism that their study's findings are biased due to using a single method, source, or investigator. By corroborating findings across different data sets, the researcher minimized potential bias by examining information collected through various methods.

3.9 Instruments for Data Collection

Three instruments were used to draw data from different sources for the study. This was made possible through the use of self-made instruments namely: Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG), Semi Structured Interview Guide (SsIG), and Documentary Analysis Guide (DAG).

3.9.1 Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG)

Focus group interviews are commonly employed to investigate topics that lack sufficient information. In this study, focus group discussions were used to engage with participants who had established relationships with their supervisors and possessed knowledge, skills, and experiences relevant to the study (Eliot & Associates, 2005; Gibbs, 1997). This approach allowed the researcher to obtain detailed data on the participants' opinions, experiences, and perspectives regarding the topic being investigated. The Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG) instrument consisted of three parts: an introduction, ground rules, and questions with probes.

The introduction part of the instrument sought the participants consent and assured them of confidentiality for participating in the study. The ground rules were explicitly outlined in the instrument to guide and remind participants of acceptable behaviour during the discussion. The questions with probes were an integral part of the instrument, with each question consisting of four main items and at least two probes each. The probes provided an opportunity for a broader discussion on the topic, offering a wider perspective and different opinions on how research supervision should be carried out in academia.

This instrument was used because it offered the researcher an opportunity to gather in-depth information from participants while saving time and reducing costs associated with individual face-to-face interviews, which required more movement (Nagle & Williams, 2014). Additionally, the instrument encouraged group dynamics, as each individual tried to express their deepest knowledge about the topic under study, ensuring that they provided the best answers to contribute to the discussion.

3.9.2 Documentary Analysis Guide (DAG)

Documentary analysis used in this study firstly, it allowed the researcher to examine students' final theses submitted. Secondly, DAG helped the researchers to identify patterns and trends that were apparent in the focus group discuss data that need feather interrogations. Again, DAG was used to validate data gathered from the focus group discussion or provide additional evidence to support or refute findings.

The first section of the guide offered a framework of questions the researcher used to analyse documents. The second section covered how the analysis was made coherent and the third section details additional things that were consider specifically for independence of the research project to avoid bias in the analysis. The instrument when used offers a wide range of information to support the study.

3.9.3 A Semi structured Interview Guide (SsIG)

The Semi-structured Interview Guide (SsIG) was another instrument used by the researcher to elicited data for the study. The instrument contained items which were mainly based on the objectives set for the study. The instruments were in two folds. The guide contains information for the participant, questions to guide the interview and the concluding part of the interview. The first part of the instrument comes with instruction which gives vital information to the interviewee. The second part contains items for the interview. The items were made of three (3) main questions with at least one prompt under each. This was purposely used by the researcher to interview students who participated in a focus group discussion in the study but have other things to say. Similarly, the second guide was also designed to interview supervisors who were recruited to participate in the study. The design had similar features as the first guide but this time, the items in the second guide were slightly modified to fit the purpose of interviewing the supervisors. The items on both guides were enough for the participant

to give detailed information about the topic under study. The instrument was most appropriate for collecting data as it allowed participants to express themselves, making room for the discovery of complex issues (Denscombe, 2008). The methods employed were suitable to explore the depth of the issues under scrutiny. Also, the guide was flexible and offered participants the opportunity to express their views freely while giving the interviewer the freedom to divert from the questions in the interview guide where the need arouses for further clarifications to be sought (Kusi, 2012).

3. 10 Trustworthiness Criteria for the Qualitative Instruments

The trustworthiness criteria were used to determine the quality of the findings of this study. Gall et al (2007) argue that "qualitative researchers generally reserve selection of the criteria for determining the soundness of their research to themselves depending on the topics, methods, audiences and performers of the research" (p.473). Punch (2005) posits that both qualitative and quantitative studies are usually examined for their rigidity through internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity. According to Guba (1992) 'trustworthiness criteria' is appropriate for judging the quality of a study located in an interpretive paradigm. The elements of this criteria included in this study were credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability. These were applied alongside other strategies to ensure the quality of this particular study.

3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility of the data was ensured through the use of manifold methods. The first strategy adopted to ensure the credibility was triangulation (Cohen et al, 1994; Scaife, 2004; Silverman, 2005; Gall et al, 2007). This involves 'the use of two or more methods of data collection in a study of some aspect of human behaviour' (Cohen et al, 2000:11).

Employing this strategy gave advantage to the researchers to offset the limitations associated with using one method to collect data (Creswell, 2013; Punch, 2005) and to determine the veracity of information gathered (Bush, 2002). Apart from triangulation, another strategy employed to achieve credibility of this study was peer examination (Merriam et al, 2002; Gall et al, 2007). Regarding this strategy, a colleague on a Master of Philosophy at the same university was given the tentative findings to review and comment on them in relation to the raw data.

3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability of findings, a feature of qualitative research, is equivalent to generalisability of findings in quantitative study (Merriam et al, 2002). As indicated earlier, the proponents of phenomenology, which is an example of qualitative research design, argue that its findings are very difficult to generalize since it mostly focuses on one instance or a few instances (Verma & Mallick, 1999; Denscombe, 2003; Punch, 2005). However, in recent times, streams efforts are being made to apply the findings of such a study widely. Denscombe (2003) argues that the ability to generalise the findings depends on how similar the other settings are to the setting of the study. Although the phenomenon studied might be similar to others in other universities, the researcher's aim was not to generalise the findings of the study; it was rather to enhance an understanding of the problem at that Department. However, if readers find sufficient similarities between their contexts and the context of the study, then it is reasonable for them to transfer the findings to their individual contexts.

3.10.3 Dependability

The findings of this study were assured to be dependable. Dependability or consistency of qualitative research findings corresponds to reliability of findings in quantitative research (Merriam et al, 2002). Dependability of findings in this study was ensured by asking clear questions that generated the preferred responses during the data collection. The data was then triangulated for effective result. Being an insider researcher embedded with prejudices; pre-occupied knowledge and values; biases and convictions which could impact subjectivity during the data collection and the findings of the study, the researcher vehemently endeavoured to reduction of biases to ensure the that findings meanings were not changed. The results should be accepted as the subjective knowledge of the researcher and can be traced back to the raw data of the research. They are not merely a product of the observer's worldview, disciplinary assumptions, theoretical proclivities and research interests' (Charmaz, 1995). This was achieved by using an audit trail, which provided a means of ensuring that constructions could be seen to have emerged directly from the data, thereby confirming the research findings and grounding them in the evidence or raw data.

Again, dependability was also ensured through peer examination; explanation of researcher's position (Schwandt and Halpin, 1988; Merriam et al, 2002); and reporting of research process and findings transparently.

3.10.4 Confirmability

Conformability refers to the accuracy of the data and the reflexivity of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Ensuring confirmability is crucial to maintain the trustworthiness and objectivity of a study.

Shenton, (2004) defined confirmability as the extent to which the research findings are supported by the collected data and the interpretations made by the researcher.

The study maintained a detailed and comprehensive audit trail that documented all stages of the research process. This included recording decisions, data collection procedures, analysis techniques, and interpretation of the data by coming up with themes and sub-themes. Also, the researcher ensured that the findings of the study were guaranteed to be grounded in the raw data gathered from the field and devoid of preconceived notions and ideas. The audit trail allowed for transparency and verification of the research process by external reviewers or auditors.

The study also engaged in peer debriefing by seeking input and feedback from colleagues or experts in the field. The research design, data collection procedures, and preliminary findings were shown to gather different viewpoints and interpretations. This process provided an external perspective and helped identify potential biases or alternative interpretations. Research findings were shared with participants to validate and verify the accuracy and interpretation of their data. This collaborative approach allowed participants to provide feedback and ensure that their perspectives were accurately represented in the findings. The research process and findings were shared with supervisors and other knowledgeable colleagues in the field for their expert reviews. Their objective assessment and feedback helped to validate the confirmability of the study.

3.11 Positionality (Pseudo-insider Researcher)

It is imperative that researchers declare their stands especially for those applying qualitative methodology to make their research trustworthy (Unluer, 2012). According to Unluer, researchers who undertake qualitative studies take on a diversity of member roles when they are in the research setting. The researcher, being a student in the setting, considered himself an insider. This gave him advantage to have a greater understanding

of the culture being studied; not altering the flow of social interaction unnaturally but have the benefit of an established intimacy which promotes both the telling and the judging of truth Bonner and Tolhurst (2002).

Furthermore, insider-researchers generally know the politics of the institution, not only the formal hierarchy but also how it "really works". They know how to best approach people. In general, they have a great deal of knowledge, which takes an outsider a long time to acquire (Smyth & Holian, 2008). In as much as there are various advantages of being an insider-researcher, there are also problems associated with being an insider. For example, greater familiarity and prior knowledge about the research process could lead to a loss of objectivity, wrong assumptions and prejudices (DeLyser, 2001; Hewitt-Taylor, 2002).

As educational research involves diverse players, it cannot do away with human beings and their behaviour, each of whom brings to the research process a variety of perspectives, including the researcher's own view. Insider-researchers may also be confronted with dual roles and they often struggle to centre their insider role (students, teacher, lecturer, etc.) and the researcher role (Delyser, 2001; Gerrish, 1997). This dualism is often referred to as the 'positionality' of the researcher (Herod, 1999). Mahar and Tetreault (1994) define 'positionality' as the 'knower's specific position in any context as defined by race, gender, class, and other socially significant dimensions.' In relation to interviewing, positionality refers 'to the personal, physical or social characteristics of the interviewer (class, gender, nationality, age, etc.)' (Mahar and Tetreault, 1999 quoted in St. Louis and Barton, 2002).

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According to Kusi (2012), the researcher's positionality could influence the research process, particularly data collection and analysis. In order for the researcher to conduct credible insider research, the researcher must acquaint himself with explicit awareness of the possible effects of perceived biases on data collection and analysis, respect the ethical issues related to the anonymity of the organization and individual participants and consider and address the issues about the influencing researcher's insider role on coercion, compliance and access to privileged information, at each and every stage of the research (Smyth & Holian, 2008).

As a student researcher, studying Educational Administration and Management, my topic sought to explore experiences of students under co-supervisors in the DM. Since the setting was the researcher's study area, he collected the data as an insider. Although, the researcher was an insider, he did not have much contact with the participants, especially the key participants, because they were ahead of him. He did not know them personally, but his interactions with them through telephone conversations made some of them have a sense that he was one of them even though they had already completed their programmes and left the department.

He, therefore, carried the research from within in the sense that was on site, yet professionally as he was not an integral part of the DUG. Again, he was only a student who did not have any administrative role, power, authority or affection with any lecturer or staff member which could affect the data collection process negatively (Smyth & Holian, 2008). As a student insider, his knowledge about formal and informal power structure, and obtaining permission to conduct the research, to interview, and to get access to records, and documents easily facilitated the research process (Coghlan, 2003; Herrmann, 1989; Rouney, 2005; Tedlock, 2000).

3.12 Pre-Test of Instruments

In determining the ability of participants' understanding and responses to questions in the instruments as intended, a pre-test of the questions was done. This was carried out by administering the instruments (focus group discussion guide and interview guide) to participants outside the sample who possessed similar qualities as those sampled. The sub sections below summarise how each of the instruments were pre-tested.

3.12.1 Pre-Test of Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG)

The Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG) was piloted on 10 colleagues who had offered MPhil programmes at University of Cape Coast and were supervised by co-supervisors. The choice for the pre-test exercise was influenced by two factors. Firstly, it was thought that piloting the guide in the study setting could influence the researcher to pre-determined responses from participants. Secondly, the researcher had a professional relationship with many of colleagues selected for the pilot exercise and that made it easier to contact them to critically comment on the instruments. After, engaging them on zoom discussion, the researcher also gave them an opportunity to comment on the appropriateness of the discussion guide, length of time taken to complete the discussion, the ordering of the guide and how the questions were posed. The responses helped to clarify and shape some of the questions in the guide.

3.12.2 Pre- Test of Interview Schedule Guide

Cohen and Manion (1994 p. 282) argue that 'misconceptions on the part of the interviewer of what the participants is saying and misunderstandings on the part of the participants of what is being asked could lead to biases when using interviews to collect data. Informed by this argument, the interview schedule was piloted to ascertain possible problems that may arise during the interview. Before pre-texting the interview schedule, the researcher gave the guide to his two supervisors to examine and comment

on them. Their comments were useful in modifying some of the questions. The interview schedule was pre-test on five of the colleagues who earlier took part in the focus group piloting. The pre-test exercise was intended to check the clarity of the questions; the length of time taken to respond to the schedule; the extent to which the information provided could be kept confidential; and the measures taken to maintain their anonymity during the study (Opie, 2004). No changes were made in the schedule after the pre-test exercise.

3.13 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure was carried out in three folds. The first was a focus group discussion carried out virtually via Zoom. Second was documentary analysis and last was interview of students from whom the researcher needed further clarification and for the lecturers who were sampled for the study. The figure 3.1 below shows the summaries of how the data collected took place. The detain has been discussed just below the diagram.
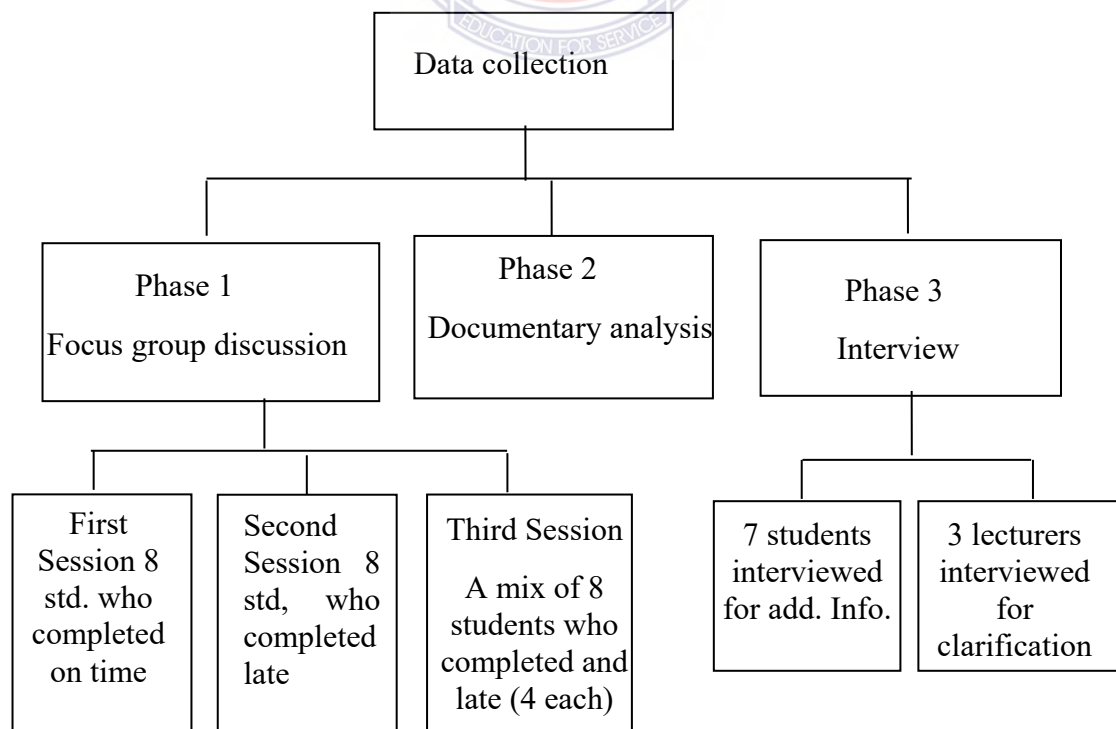
Source: Summaries from the data collection procedure (Author 2022)
Figure 3.1 Data Collection Procedure Plan

In the first phase of the data collection, three phases of focus group discussion were conducted virtually (Zoom). The first phase of the discussion was made of eight (8) students who had completed their studies within the time frame of the programme. The second section involved another eight (8) other students who were not able to complete their programmes within the recommended time frame but completed later. The final phase of the focus group discussion involved a mix of eight (8) students made up of four (4) students who completed their projects within the scheduled time frame and four (4) students who could not complete their project within the scheduled time.

During the discussion, the participants were assured of their confidentiality on information they were going to provide for the study. The participants were also asked to contribute to set ground rules for the discussion. The participants were then made aware that the discussions were recorded for easy transcription after which all documents will be destroyed. The discussion continued after all participants had verbally and fully consented and were willing to provide all information to the best of their knowledge. In turns, each participant was given equal opportunity to express their opinion on each of the question posed by the researcher. A session lasted 45 minutes. This discussion was enough to allow all the participants to elaborate their point as they wanted. All discussions were recorded via Zoom while the discussion was on-going.

The second phase of the data procedure was documentary analysis. Before documentary analysis took place;

1. the researcher created a list of texts to explore (the list of past students and their research project topics for easy identification) for the sake of anonymity and confidentiality, the listed documents were coded in the presentation of the data.

2. Consider the guideline as to how the text was to be accessed with attention to the research objectives.

3. The researcher applied the same principle on guideline set to access text to all documents retrieved on the participants to address biases.

4. In order to ensure credibility in the analysis of the documents, the researcher did not request the copies of the participants' project work from the participant, rather, all documents were properly acquired and handpicked by the researcher from the shelves of the DUG library, the Graduate School Library and main library of the university. All these were done in line with O'Leary (2014), outlined processes for document analysis and all textual analysis.

The documentary analysis, methodologically, enabled the researcher to draw data from different sources for triangulation to provide 'a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility' (Eisner, 1991, p. 110). According to Patton (1990), triangulation helps the researcher guard against the accusation that a study's findings are simply an artefact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's bias. Not all but also, corroborating findings across data sets reduced the impact of potential bias by examining information collected through different methods. Therefore, the study was justified beyond any doubt for the inclusion of documentary analysis method to draw data to address the issue under study.

The third phase and final phase of the data collection procedure was a semi structured interview schedule. Semi structured method was employed to further explore the issues that emerged that from the focus group discussion. The semi structured interview tools were used to interview 10 participants among whom 3 of them were lecturers and rest of the seven (7) were students who were recruited purposefully from the participants who had already participated in the focus group from whom the researcher needed

further information. From the discussion, the researcher realised that there were some issues that some of the participants wanted to share one-on-one. This afforded the researcher another opportunity to use semi structured interview to offer interviewees a platform to express their view on issues in detail. It also allowed the interviewees to seek clarification on issues during the interview process.

The same method was also employed to seek the view of the lectures on the topic. This time around the instruments used to interview past students were different from the one used for the lecturers.   The interviews were also conducted and recorded via Zoom. Each session lasted 30 minutes. The semi structured interview helps to generate a massive amount of relevant data. Both focus group discussion and the interview were moderated by the researcher. This self-moderation strategy provided the researcher the opportunity to clarify issues that the participants raised about the instrument. Also, the instrument used encouraged most of the participant to respond to the items.

3.14 Data Analysis Procedure

Circumstances that give information or expressions of fact to the observer is referred to as data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Krueger and Neuman (2006) posit that, data or information is what a researcher gathers cautiously according to guidelines which can be qualitatively expressed as words, pictures or objects or expressed as numbers in quantitatively. In analysing data, Yin (1993) agrees that an operation on closely related number is performed with the intention of precising the data collected and arranging them in a way that they will answer the research questions. Informed by this argument, both raw data collected through the focus group discussion and interview schedule were carefully organised and prepared for analysis. The data analyses procedure started with the listening of the recorded tape carefully. All the focus group comments and the interview responses were transcribed using google transcribe application. The data was

then cleaned to avoid grammatical and typographical errors. Based on the source of information, data were sorted and arranged into different types. The group transcripts were critically looked at and read carefully. This was followed by reviewing memos produced by the researcher and research assistants' team during the data collection. The memos contain reflections on the process of data collection or insights into the research problem. The review made it possible for the researcher to identify the main ideas which occur repeatedly. This afforded the researcher the general sense of information received and the opportunity to reflect on the overall meanings. This brought to bear the general ideas participants were saying and the tone of the ideas. Question by question, all comments and the responses from both data were rearranged together for answers. For each question, notes were taken from main ideas that occur in the answers through critical thinking, recurring main ideas, patterns, regularities and themes as well as conclusions were generated.

Through open coding followed by axial and selective coding, all themes were coded to generate a description for participants. Themes were described and related to participants and quotations were added where necessary. All of the open codes were first examined to find whether individual codes could be linked into higher conceptual categories. Once these categories were developed, they were examined for their differences and similarities between different sources where data were drawn during the data process. This was done for "triangulation" or "cross-validation" purposes. The data was then read and reread and discarded for like phrases and themes, grouped to form clusters of meanings (Creswell, 2013). Through the process, the researcher constructs the universal meaning of the event, situation or experience and arrives at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon.

Lastly, an interpretation of the finding was made. This was done by making meaning of the findings through the comparison of findings with the literature review. The analyses ended with the confirmation of existing literature as well as a divergence from same. The findings and result were presented, discussed and reported in Chapter 4.

3.15 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are indispensable in every phase in the research process, that is, from early stages through to its final completion and even dissemination of findings. It is said that ethical apprehension in the field is unavoidable when the work implicates others, whether they are colleagues, participants, assistants, or people in positions of authority (Perecman & Curran, 2006). Indeed, many researchers have affirmed the important of ethical issues are when conducting a study. For example, Bryman, (2004), Cozby (2007), Cohen et al (2007) posit that for research to gain meaning, ethical issues should be a matter of concern at all levels. According to Neuman (2007), ethical issues explain what is not lawful to do, or what a moral research procedure involves. In order to comply with ethical issues, respect to the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of participants, the objectives and significance of this study were meticulously explained to participants to make them feel safe and protected. The researcher also obtained consent, written or verbal from participants and assured them of anonymity and confidentiality. As part of the process of obtaining consent, participants were made to exercise their right to voluntary participation. They were informed about freedom to participate or decline participation.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2006), ethical standards demand that researchers do not put participants in a circumstance where they might be at risk or harm as a result of their participation. Informed by this argument, the researcher agreed built consensus with all participants to host both focus group discussion and the face-to-face interview

virtual due to the Covid 19 pandemic. This was to avoid discomfort or fear of contracting Covid 19 by meeting the researcher and research assistants in their homes. Besides, participants were also made to understand that the results of the data collected were purely for academic purposes, therefore, questions that were asked were not meant to elicit responses that will reveal the personal identity, residential addresses, as well as places of work (schools they teach).

To ensure professionalism in the implementation of the research process, the researcher apprised himself with adequate methodological principles that enabled him to systematically and orderly execute the study with accurate and reliable findings. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), research ethics relates to questions about how to formulate and clarify a research topic, design a research and gain access, collect data, process and store data, analyse data and write up research findings in a moral and responsible way.

Informed by this argument, the researcher followed suitable methodological procedures to avoid biases in the selection of samples and reporting the findings of the study. This informed the researcher to present findings of the study not as he thought they should be. There was also frantic effort to ensure correct reporting approach; by this the researcher did not attempt to change or slant primary data to suit his interest. The data were also presented in a way that avoided any direct or indirect possible adverse effects on the participants.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participants were not tagged with their responses. Information shared by participants were not communicated to a third party and audio/video recordings were kept under a password. The researcher ensured that scientific integrity was espoused through honest conduct and reporting of data.

3.16 Summary

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the research design, including the research process, methodological choices, and direction of the study. It also discusses approaches to data analysis, trustworthiness of the collected data, and ethical issues related to the study. In Chapter 4, the responses of research participants to the focus group discussion and interview schedule will be presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of demographics of participants and presentation of findings as they emerged from the data. It deals with the findings on experiences of students under co- supervisors at the department of a university in Ghana. Semi structured interview and focus group discussion as well as documentary evidence were employed to gather data from twenty-seven (27) participants comprising twenty-four (24) past M.Phil. students drawn from (2011-2017) year groups and three (3) lecturers. This chapter also includes emerging themes from the responses of the participants.

4.2 Demographic of Participants

The demographic of the participants' gender, age and the educational background have been presented in the tables below.

Table 4.1 Demographic of Participants' Gender

SRN	Gender	Number of Participants
1	Male	19
2	Female	8
Total		27

Source: Field Data (Author,2022)

Table 4.1 shows the demographic data of participants' gender. Nineteen (19) of the participants were male and eight (8) were female, totalling twenty-seven (27) participants.

Table 4.2 Demographic of Participants' Age

Gender	Age			
	30-40	41-50	51-60+	Total
Male	8	8	3	19
Female	3	4	1	8

Source: Field Data (Author,2022)

Table 5 shows that eight (8) of the males were between the 30-40 age, eight (8) were between 41 and 50 and 3 were between 51-60+ age. Three (3) of the females were between 30-40, between the ages of 41-50 were four (4) female and between the ages of 51- 60, one (1) female. In total, fifteen (15) participants were between the age of 30-40, eleven (11) ranged from the ages of 41-50 and from the ages of 51-60+ were four (4) participants.

Table 4.3 Demographic of Participants' Educational background

Gender	Academic Qualification			
	M.Phil.	Doctor	Professor	Total
Male	17	1	1	19
Female	7		1	8

Source: Field Data (Author,2022)

Table 6 shows that seventeen (17) male participants hold M.Phil., then one (1) doctor and one (1) professor in the male category. In the female category, seven (7) participants hold M.Phil. and one (1) female professor. Over all twenty-seven (27) participants were with M. Phil qualification, with one (1) doctor and two (2) professors.

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4.3 Major themes

The following section presents the results according to the themes focused on in the study, namely: nature of the supervision, expertise of the supervisors, busy schedules of the supervisors, building consensus to supervise, feedback related issues, power relations, consultation of shadow supervisors, quality assurance, managing supervisors, commitment to work, choosing researchable topics and lack of poor communication. These themes have been discussed under research question as sub themes in an attempt to find answers under each research question posed to guide the study.

4.4 Research question 1:   What is the nature of co-supervision at the Department of a university in Ghana?

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic, these research questions were formulated. The first question aims to explore the nature of co-supervision within the Department of a university in Ghana. The question also sought to find out the kind of engagement, arrangement and commitment level of parties involved in the co-supervision mode of practice at DUG. The practice of co-supervision usually differs from one place to another. By examining the dynamics and characteristics of this collaborative approach, the researcher sought to better comprehend its role and significance within the department. The responses to this question have been reported in detail under the sub theme.

4.4.1 Co-supervision Practice at Department of a university in Ghana

In an attempt to answer the first question "how co-supervision is practiced at DUG", three sub themes emerged namely; why co-supervision is practiced at DUG? How beneficial was the co-supervision model in the department? And how co-supervision is practiced at the department? As to why co-supervision is practiced, the data derived from the participants indicated that one person is not an embodiment of knowledge,

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therefore, when two supervisors come together to supervise students work, it helps the supervisors to bring their expertise to enrich the work of the students. Again, co-supervision in the department is seen to be an avenue for students to learn from the two supervisors. This is what one of the participants said:

> *Co-supervision is a good idea. All lecturers have expertise in their areas of study so when a student is doing studies that cut across various fields, co-supervision helps a lot. Apart from that, it's also an opportunity for the students to learn from the great experience of the two lecturers who have been assigned to you as a student. [Interview data participant # 1]*

The above comments affirm the fact that students appreciate why co-supervision is practiced at the department. The data gathered also revealed that both co-supervision and single supervision model were practiced at the Department of a university in Ghana (DUG). Nevertheless, some students were not sure as to why the department allocates two supervisors to some students and to others, single supervisors. This is evident in the following response;

> *"Personally, I don't have an idea why some of the students were given single supervisor while others were double" [Focus discussion data, participant # 18].*

Meanwhile, the lecturers indicated that, "allocation of supervisor largely depends on the types of projects carried by students" [Interview data participant # 3]. None of the students interviewed could clearly state the criteria used by the department to pair the supervisors to supervise students' project work. Literature makes it abundantly clear that, the selection of academics to constitute a supervisory team do not follow any formula, rather, it takes a different form. Phillips and Pugh (1987) and Pole (1998) noted that co-supervision is frequently endorsed when a student's topic crosses disciplinary boundaries or when the higher institution has instituted a supervisor training structure and a beginner supervisor is paired with an experienced supervisor

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(Bourner & Hughes, 1991; Phillips and Pugh, 1987). The expertise of the committee members is carefully taken into consideration depending on the kind of research to be studied. The expertise could be sourced from outside the university or within the university but could be from different faculty or department although Ives and Rowley's (2005) concluded that there should be active supervisors as part of the formal supervisory team. Data revealed that students were not in the know as how the department went about it. Although some of the students shared concern that the profile of supervisors concerning their supervision track record should have been revealed to them to accept or reject the supervisors offered to them by the department or graduate school. In essence, students believe that they should be given the opportunity to make input in the selection of the supervisors. This statement was echoed by one of the participants thus;

> *"Currently, supervisors are imposed on us as graduate students but I think it should not be so". [interview data, participant# 5*

The interview data highlighted that the idea behind principal and co-supervision was good but students have yet to take advantage of it. Rather they have underutilised the concept of the practice and over blotted the problems that surround the practice in the department, forgetting that every good thing comes with a bad side as well. This is evident in the excerpt below:

> *...it is students' attitude that make the practice bad. There are other students who have passed through the same practice in the department. I believe you students have not seen the good side of co-supervision but you always look at the bad side. Everything has it good side too. Look, students in the department are underutilising the practice. Advice your colleagues to make good use of the practice because if it is well managed by you students, it is a good thing.   [Interview data, participant # 1]*

> *I think the idea for using co-supervision to supervise students' projects works was good. Just that sometime the parties involved have some hitches here and there for I think is normal with human institutions. I think such differences could be manged if the those involved fine means to manage such impasses.*

Students who had the opportunity to be supervised by two supervisors described the practice as largely as principal and co-supervision model which usually involves two supervisors.

> *"I was privileged to have two supervisors supervise my work. Principal supervisor who happened to be HOD and co-supervisor who was doing PhD" [Focus discussion data, participant # 3]*

> *"I was fortunate to have principal supervisor whose has specialised in 'quanty' and co-supervisor who has expertise in 'quali', I was doing mixed method so that helped me a lot". [Focus discussion data, participant # 18]*

> *"I was informed through the letter from the department that I have two supervisors, 'A' and 'B'. Supervisor 'A' as my principal supervisor and supervisor 'B' as co-supervisor. So, I called them and started going to them" [Focus discussion data, participant # 14]*

Some benefits were attributed to the co-supervision practice at the department by the participants. Students who were under co-supervisor say;

> *"It benefited them a lot although the practice came with lots of challenges" [Focus discussion data, participant # 14 and # 5].*

> *Students reported that getting*

> *"Different, views from different supervisors and gaining knowledge from different expertise were some of the common benefits they gained" [interview data, participant #4].*

With regard to how the co-supervision was practiced in the department, the data revealed that depending on the team involved in the supervision, almost all the lecturers had their style. As to whether there was a common rule guiding the practice, participants indicated that they were not privy to such guidelines.

> *"…I have not come across such guidelines concerning co-supervision… Maybe the university has it…." [interview data, participant #6].*

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> *"There is nothing like guidelines am aware of. A guide line specifically documented for co-supervision I doubt else some of us will not through. If indeed such document exist then it is possible the supervisor doesn't stick to its dictates". [Focus discussion data, participant # 10].*

It was also noted from the data gathered that the idea behind principal and co-supervision has been misconstrued by both supervisors and the students. This was a result of the fact that some supervisors have the notion that they are at the helm of affairs and that they have much responsibility to dictate the line of the project to be supervised, once he/she has been appointed as the principal supervisor. Again, the findings revealed that some students sometimes ignore the co-supervisor's comments and strictly went ahead with the instructions of principal supervisors only. Some of the supervisors were not happy with how some of the students' managed issues while they were under supervision.

> *"I can give you an instance. I told some students to effect some changes in their work but they didn't do it. I insisted but they ignored me and went ahead with the principal supervisor and later had problems with me. Clearly the changes were also legitimate". [Interview data, participant # 2]*

From the data gathered, it revealed that supervisors were only appointed with titles "principal or co-supervisor" without necessarily defining their roles or workload. The University of Cape Coast's model of supervision, paints scenarios as to how Type A (Team Supervision) model should be constituted. It is captured in its handbook as follows:

> *In scenario (A), more than one member of academic or research staff is named at approval stage as being responsible for the guidance of the research project of a research student (i.e., the student has 2 or more co-supervisors). A co-supervisor may be external to UCC (e.g., in another university, industry or a research organization). Co-supervisors may also provide specialist advice and ensure continuity of supervision when one supervisor is absent from the University. This type of supervisory team may involve two or more staff members, from the same or different academic units and each member of the supervisory…progress and examination. (p.1). [Documentary evidence data #1]*

In the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in South Africa, Senate Standing Orders on Higher Degrees describe the supervisor and co-supervisor workload as follows:

> *The Supervisor' is the person who is principally responsible for the supervision of the student and is responsible for 50% or more of the supervision. 'The Co-supervisor' is the person who is responsible for more than 10% and 50% or less of the supervision of the student. [Documentary evidence data #2]*

This, the students say, they have not come across such arrangement in the department as well as in the university at large. This was evident in the copies of letters that appointed the supervisors which was re-echoed by one of the participants in the excerpt below.

> *The letter appointing supervisors only gives them titles without necessary defining the role principal or co-supervisors should play during the supervision. I have not come across any document defining the role of principal and co-supervisors so far in the department. It will be good to clearly define the role of principal or co-supervisor in the appointment of supervisors so that they may be held accountable to the task assigned to them. [Interview data, participant # 6]*

Literature has it that it is a common approach for co-supervision practice, by formally appointing two or more academics to take full responsibility for the postgraduate student's studies till they complete. It is also common that in all teams constituting co-supervision in all the universities, one is charged with the duty as principal/main supervisor. Lane, Rebecca, Henderson, Deborah, Price, Robin, Hill and Geof (2007) stated that co-supervision is characterized by or having authority vested equally among colleagues due to university protocols relating to supervision. Therefore, one supervisor needs to take up responsibility for overall co-ordination of the student research work. That supervisor is called the principal/main supervisor and all other supervisor(s) are called co/associate supervisors. Ostensibly, once the leadership has been apportioned

to the team, the onus lies on the leader to make sure that he/she coordinates frequency of meetings and distribution of tasks to make sure the supervision achieves its aim.

4.5 Research question 2: What are students' experiences on co-supervision at different stages of their research work?

The researcher sought to pose the above question to ascertain the level of engagement supervisors had with their students at various stages of the research process, from the start of chapter one through to the final presentation of the project work. The report has been presented below.

The data gathered revealed that students enjoyed the involvement of the supervisor at the early stages of the project work. According to them the supervisors gave them feedback on time and offered many suggestions to fine-tune the chapter one of their study. Students explained that the chapter one usually follows pattern, therefore, doing the chapter one was not difficult. To them, it was still the early stages to meet their supervisors, so the enthusiasm on the part of both students and supervisors was at its brim to account for early feedback. The students further stated that at the beginning of the project, they were committed because they saw the whole project to be easy and simple, so the eagerness was strong to keep interest in completing the project on time. One of the participants said that;

> *At the beginning of the project, I was very much enthused to complete the work. The zeal was there for me to complete on time and submit for graduation. In fact, the zeal in me pushed me to call my supervisors to find out whether I could come for my chapter one for correction to be made for the next chapter. I want to believe that the kind of call I was placing on the supervisor pushed them to give the feedback early. [focus discussion data, participant # 7]*

The above extract is an indication that the student enjoyed the supervisor's involvement based on the effort and commitment put in by the student themselves.

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The data gathered further revealed that on the second stage of students' work, little effort was put by their supervisors. Some of them said that;

> *I was supposed to look for theories and concepts to support my work, but I had some difficulties. Though, I managed to choose to finally arrived at chosen what it seems to me was good. Anytime I went to my supervisors he will only tell me your theory does not match with your work. He'll only talk at length without necessarily suggesting any theory and will ask you to look for a new theory to support the work. [focus discussion data, participant # 6]*

The students complained that most of them did not find the chapter two easy at all with their supervisors. The impression created by the students suggested that it was few of the supervisors who took their time to suggest literature to support their work. However, students say the little effort offered by supervisors compelled them to work hard, and this has made them strong researchers. This is borne out in the extract below;

> *"From the beginning of my work, I thought my supervisor would give me all the needed support to complete my work. It was later I realised both supervisors were busy persons: I sat up and read more literature about my work. I think it was worth it. Today I am a proud researcher". [interview data, participant # 3]*

Again, students complained about the disagreement among the supervisors on methodology in chapter three. The disagreement, according to the students, contributed to the delay in their work. Whereas supervisor A is saying '*A*', supervisor B disagrees.

During the project, some students were confused by the back-and-forth among their supervisors. According to some students, the 'academic differences' among the supervisors motivated them to read more about the debated topics. For some students, these differences were an opportunity to learn, while others sought ideas from their colleagues or other lecturers in different departments. Here are some quotes from two students:

> *"... when I realised that the matter was becoming hot between them, I resorted to asking a lecturer-friend who offered me advice that*

> *hardly will my supervisor agree to do. It is normal in academia so I*
> *should read more....*" *[focus discussion data, participant # 5 and #6]*

The fact that some students took advantage of the 'academic differences' among the supervisors is evidence that these differences allowed them to read more literature on their work. However, the students described the delay in feedback on chapter 3 of their project work as unfortunate. During discussions, they speculated about the reasons for this delay. To investigate further, the researcher asked the supervisors to explain what caused the delay. One of the supervisors provided an explanation:";

> *It is not intentional to delay the students, rather, students write*
> *with lots of mistakes. They usually do not take their time to*
> *read through their work. When it happens like that, the*
> *reading throws us off. There are many works to be done;*
> *therefore, we will like to concentrate on students who commit*
> *to doing their work with correction free because reading*
> *through a script while correcting mistakes on every line is*
> *boring. [interview data, participant #*

When some of the students asked what the supervisors have said, they admitted that supervisors committed a lot of time pointing their omissions and correcting typographical errors in their work before presenting to them.

4.5.1 Expertise of Supervisors

At this point, students shared their views that co-supervisors brought their expertise to bear to support their work. Students who relied on pragmatism approaches for instance, reported enormously on the extent to which the expertise of the two supervisors brought to support them as they worked on their projects. Expertise of supervisors on areas such as specialist subject knowledge, administrative, bureaucratic or procedural knowhow were all displayed admirably to support the students. Participants concurred that when two supervisors wholeheartedly team up to bring their expertise to bear, challenges that emanate woefully from project writing and supervision are merrily resolved to support early completion of students' work.

Additionally, the focus discussion group data revealed that there were some supervisors who had specialisation in qualitative studies or quantitative studies. As a way of appreciating or recognising the expertise of their colleagues, knowledge was shared among them in a way that anytime any of the two supervisors fell short of explanation to any parts of their work which do not relate to the area of their expertise, they never relented, rather they were candid to refer students to see their colleagues who have expertise on the field.

> *I was fortunate to have a principal supervisor who has specialised in quantitative and co-supervisor who has expertise in qualitative. I was doing mixed method so that helped me a lot but at point in time, I realised that anything which related to quantitative with my work, the qualitative specialist will quickly refer me to the quantitative specialist although I expected him to do it by himself. But l realise later that was way of cooperating to supervise [Focus discussion data, participant # 3]*

4.5.2 Consulting Shadow Supervisors

The data gathered indicated that students consulted shadow supervisors to seek extra help, even though they were assigned two supervisors. Shadow supervisors were informal supervisors that the students recruited for themselves. Those shadow supervisors were professors who had some time to spare, senior lecturers the students knew, or their colleagues. The reasons assigned by the students to reinforce their actions were that sometimes they needed neutral opinions to settle the academic differences that emanated from the views of the two supervisors. The help sought from the informal supervisors gave them comfort, hope, and motivation to carry on with their work when the differences between the main supervisors seemed to unsettle them.

The data further revealed that some of the lecturers could not make time to suggest appropriate literature to support students' work. Those who received such help counted it as a privilege accorded to them by their supervisor. Even in such instances, some of

the students reported that they needed further clarifications on the recommended literature from their main supervisors, but their busy schedules denied them the opportunity to satisfy their curiosity. Hence, they chose to consult the informal supervisor to provide them with guidance. Some of the students engaged in the exercise claimed that without the shadow supervisors, they could not have completed their work as expected of them. All twenty-four past students engaged in the focus discussion and interview mentioned that they received help from either shadow supervisors or their colleague students and that they benefited a lot from the knowledge shared by the shadow supervisors in addition to their main supervisors. This is evident in the following quotations from the students:

> *I was finding it difficult to analyse my data but the principal supervisor was not looking at my work at all. So, I consulted a shadow supervisor and he told me that you're using 'panel data' and so you need to do econometric analysis but all along I had not heard about econometric analysis so...it took the shadow supervisor to help me out. So, it is good to consult shadow supervisors. [Focus discussion data, participant # 18]*

> *The strategy I used to complete my work was I consulted shadow supervisors because my work was heavily quantitative. So, I had two shadow supervisors, one, from Mathematics and other from Human Rights. So, before my supervisors will give me feedback, they had already read my work and given me feedback. [Focus discussion data, participant # 3]*

> *The shadow supervisors I consulted were more dedicated to me than my officially appointed co-supervisors although they also held higher positions in other departments and universities. They always dedicated their precious time to read through my work [Focus discussion data, participant # 12]*

> *As for me when I got to know that there was delay on the part of my supervisors, to give feedback, I resorted to shadow supervisors. Again, I read several works related to my study. I admitted that the work is for me and no one will do it for me, so I have to do all by myself after all, the supervisors were only there to offer me a helping hand. [Focus discussion data, participant # 8]*

The above excerpts proves that students rely heavily on shadow supervisors to complete their work although they had two supervisors at their disposal.

From the discussion, students felt that even the combined knowledge of the two supervisors was not enough to support them complete their work without the help of shadow supervisors. Therefore, participants agreed that project work may require a team of supervisors to combine their expertise to support the student to complete the work.

4.6 Research question 3: How do the challenges posed by co-supervision affect student's completion rate at department?

The researcher wanted to unearth how co-supervision challenges outlined by the participants above affect students' completion rate at DUG. The data gathered after probing into what challenges associated with co-supervision has been outlined in the figure 4.1 below.
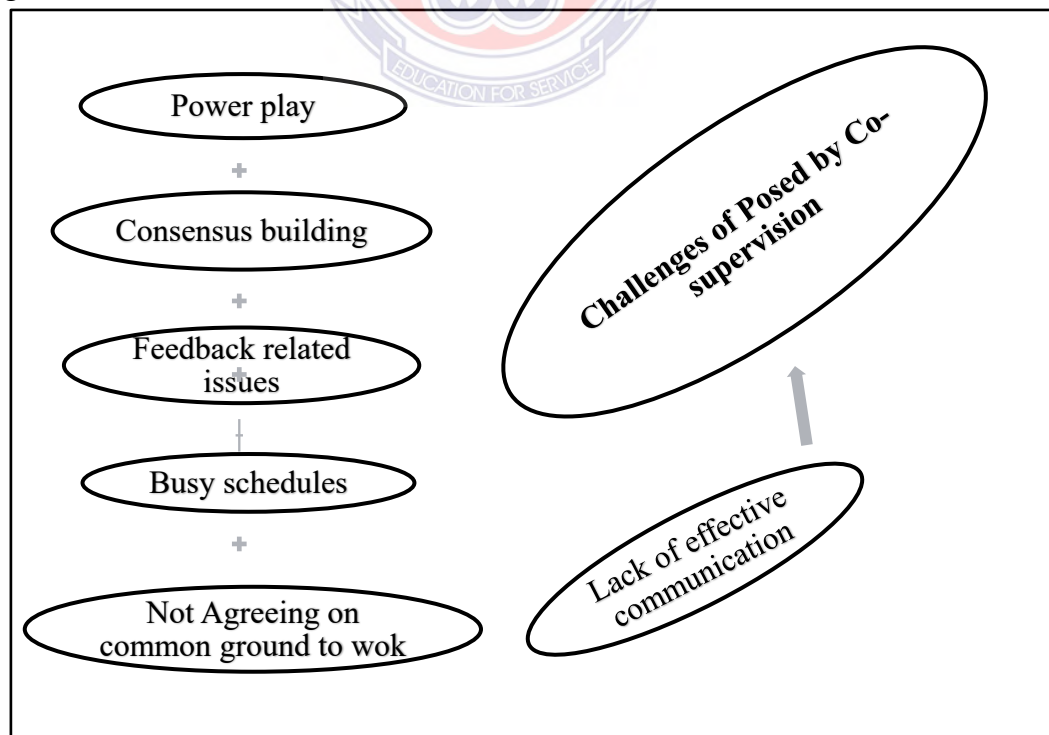
Source: Field Data (Author,2022)

Fig.4.1 The Challenges Posed by Co-supervision

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4.6.1 Not Agreeing on Common Ground to Work

According to the data, the majority of supervisors were unable to meet with students to discuss their work as a team or agree on common ground. This was the case from the beginning of the project supervision until the end of the final work. Students expressed their desire for their supervisors to meet with them, but the opportunity never arose as expected. They felt that their co-supervisors could have done better than what they experienced. Almost all participants claimed that they never had the opportunity to meet both of their supervisors and agree on terms from the start of their work until the end. One student claimed to have met with the supervisors by chance and put it this way:

> *I was fortunate to meet my supervisor to agree on common terms.*
>
> ***RS****: How were you able to do that?*
>
> ***PStd:*** *"I happened to be on my way to see my co-supervisor when my principal supervisor coincidentally walked into his office. I took the opportunity to discuss with them how we could complete my work, and we all agreed that one supervisor would focus on the literature aspect while the other would take responsibility for reviewing data and other areas. It felt like supernatural intervention. This was discussed by participant #2 in relation to the data focus."*

The frequency of meetings and distribution of tasks are agreed upon by the members of the supervisory team and the student at the outset to contribute to the early completion of the student's work. The findings of the study disclosed that if supervisors were unable to meet or agree with their students from the beginning of the project, it exacerbates the likelihood of not completing their work on time. The excerpt below provides the source for what the students lamented about.

> *"I was expecting both of my supervisors to meet with me and agree on common terms to work on my project, but we never had the chance to meet." This was discussed in the focus group data Participant #19 stated*

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Participant #12 recounted, "I appealed to my co-supervisor multiple times to meet with my principal supervisor, but they said they didn't have time for such a meeting. I don't know why. I believe it was because they were the head of department and didn't want to." This was also discussed in the focus group data.

Participant #21 stated, "The moment I received a letter from the department stating that I had co-supervisors, the first thing that came to mind was to find a way to meet with them and discuss the way forward. However, that opportunity never arose until I completed my project and graduated. I believe something needs to be done about this." This was discussed in the focus group data.

"I don't understand why two supervisors can't even have a meeting, even if it's virtual, with their student to agree on common terms to work. It seems like a simple solution." [Focus discussion data, participant # 6]

"I was fortunate to have received enough information from one of my cousins who had completed a program at the university. We discussed my topic and supervisors, and he informed me that my two supervisors would never agree on issues. He said it could be issues related to methodology, meetings, or other ideological issues in academia. So, I was guided before I started my work." [Focus discussion data, participant # 8]

In literature, Paul et al. (2015) extensively describe how co-supervisors should engage students in the co-supervision process. Although the approaches to co-supervision coordination may differ from university to university, the most vital aspect is for the co-supervisors and the student to reach a one-to-one agreement on responsibilities and who is doing what (Phillips & Pugh, 2000).

4.6.2 Consensus Building

Regarding building consensus as co-supervisors to supervise a project, participants indicated that their supervisors hardly agreed. They pointed out that some supervisors were not compatible, especially when it came to holding academic discussions regarding project supervision. Students claimed that supervisors had different views on methodological approaches, data analysis procedures, and other aspects of their

supervision. According to them, some of the differences in academic discussion made it difficult to think straight. Some students indicated that the differences among the supervisors helped them read more literature to calm their state of confusion, while others claimed that the inability of the supervisors to settle their differences unsettled their minds, and it took them some days to recover from their state of confusion. The following extracts demonstrate the disagreement and incompatibility of the co-supervisors.

"One thing I never liked about my supervisors was that both of them never seemed to agree on anything I presented to them. On one occasion, supervisor 'A' would approve the work, but supervisor 'B' would criticize it and ask me to rewrite or remove the whole portion that the other supervisor had approved." [Focus discussion data, participant # 1]

"...they never agreed on anything. When it came to a point where I didn't know what to do, I decided to consult a shadow supervisor. The shadow supervisor told me that my supervisors would never agree, so I needed to find a way to manage them..." [Focus discussion data, participant # 3]

It came to a point where, when he/she asked me whether I had seen supervisor 'A', I responded by saying I hadn't seen him/her. This was because when I said yes, the next question that followed would be about his/her comments, and my answer would either lead to the cancellation of my work or no comment at all. This continued for some time, and I was confused. They never seemed to agree on anything, and I think they are not compatible when it comes to academic work. [Focus discussion data, participant # 13]
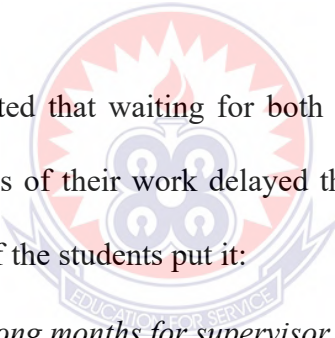
4.6.3 Feedback Related Issues

The study findings relating to feedback uncovered untimely and inconsistent feedback on the part of some supervisors. According to the participants, sometimes it took months before they received feedback on their submitted work. Some students reported having to call their supervisors several times before receiving feedback on their submitted work. What even worsened the situation was the inconsistent feedback given

on the same piece of work after they had waited for months. According to the students, the delay in feedback did not help them stick to their plan, which led to missing timelines set for project completion, eventually affecting and delaying their thesis completion.

Besides, the discussion also revealed that some supervisors gave different feedback on the same piece of work that required corrections. Others complained about work returned to them with no clear guidance on how to deal with the corrections or sometimes with only a few words underlined. From the discussion, students mentioned that when they receive inconsistent, insufficient, and unclear feedback, it makes them spend more time on a particular chapter, which also contributed to the delay in thesis completion.

Some students also reported that waiting for both supervisors to merge their comments for the progress of their work delayed them from completing their work. This is how some of the students put it:

> *I have to wait for long months for supervisor 'A' for his/her comment on my work before I could continue. Co-supervisor B has given me feedback about two weeks ago but still I have to wait till I get his/her comments painfully, this delayed feedback comes with unclear guidance and a few words underlined. This contributed a lot to delays towards the completion of my work. [Focus discussion data, participant # 20]*

> *The co-supervisor always wanted to wait to see the comments of the principal supervisor before passing comments. Surprisingly, the principal supervisor, for one reason or another, always delayed giving feedback on time. [Focus discussion data, participant # 11]*

> *My work was delayed by my supervisor. In fact, I can confidently put all the blame on them, especially the senior one. Sometimes I had to call them several times. The worst aspect of the whole matter was that they kept postponing our meeting days. Today, you call them and suggest tomorrow, but tomorrow they will call and bring up different issues. [interview data, participant # 13]*

The comment above demonstrates that students were not enthusiastic about matters relating to feedback on their projects. The inconsistent and insufficient feedback experienced by students at various stages of their work, as described by students as 'worse,' could throw students into a state of confusion. Supervisors should appraise students' work on time and give the necessary comments on their work promptly to progress in their project work. Unfortunately, the account of the students' experiences encountered in their project work supervision under two supervisors concerning feedback is rather the opposite. Students expressed dissatisfaction with the supervisors' inability to frequently give them feedback on time.

4.6.4 Busy Schedules

The students commented that the busy schedules of the supervisors affected the effectiveness of the supervision. Supervisors who were performing additional responsibilities hardly made enough time to meet the full demand of their responsibility regarding the supervision of students' project work. Students reported that the schedules of supervisors took some of them out of campus. Principal supervisors who travelled out of campus needed to be waited for because co-supervisors could not assess a student's work alone. As a result, some students could not complete their work on time.

> *"My principal supervisor held an administrative position in the university, and my co-supervisor was the HOD. They were both busy and kept postponing our meeting time. This made me ineffective sometimes." [Focus discussion data, participant # 1]*

> *"I think in co-supervision, one should stand in for the other. But if both have busy schedules like my supervisors, then it will be as good as having a single supervisor with busy schedules." [Focus discussion data, participant # 3]*

> *"My principal supervisor was always busy, so most of the work was done by the co-supervisor." [Focus discussion data, participant #16]*

4.6.5 Power Play

Another issue that came to light during the discussion was power play. The comments of participants reflected that power play played a major role in the delay of students' projects under co-supervision in the department. The power play in the department was likened to a 'father and son' relationship, especially when the principal was a senior lecturer and the co-supervisor was a junior lecturer. The power struggle was also described as a political ground where supervisors used to delay students' work. As part of exhibiting their powers, supervisors unduly delayed some students by constantly referring them to inconsequential issues that could have been overlooked for the progress of the project. The following excerpt reveals the situation:

> *"Sometimes, my co-supervisor will always ask what does XYZ say because he/she knows very well that no matter what he/she says the XYZ will have the final say". [Focus discussion data, participant # 29]*

> *"My principal supervisor always wanted his way to be followed meanwhile he/she will not have the time to discuss anything the co-supervisor will bring on board". [Focus discussion data, participant # 16]*

> *"My principal supervisor was HOD and the co-supervisor was doing further studies at the same time, so any comment passed by him/her, which I would and I suggest to the principal supervisor, he /she passed a comment like how can a son teach a father what to do". [Focus discussion data, participant # 17]*

The power struggle in the department was also reported as a ground for supervisors to score cheap political points, especially when a student was found to relate closely to a rival lecturer. The embittered students claimed that, as a result of such unhealthy struggles among supervisors, it took them time before completing their work.

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4.6.6 Lack of Effective Communication

The findings derived from the discussions and interview data paint a concerning picture of the communication process between supervisors and students. Communication, which is a vital tool for facilitating timely completion of work, was reported by students to be lacking in effectiveness. According to the supervisors involved in the study, some students would call them at odd hours, making it difficult for them to respond. One supervisor expressed frustration, stating,

> *"Students should be aware of proper etiquette and refrain from calling at inappropriate times. Such untimely calls disrupt and distract"* (interview data, participant #3).

On the other hand, students complained that there were instances when supervisors failed to return their calls, messages, or emails. Effective communication should be a two-way street, with both parties taking initiative. In cases where students are unresponsive, supervisors bear the responsibility of investigating the reasons behind their lack of engagement. Poor communication only exacerbates the rate of incomplete student work. Students reported that some supervisors' failure to respond to their attempts at communication and inability to schedule regular discussions resulted in missed deadlines and hindered their ability to complete their projects on time.

Furthermore, students claimed that due to effective communication, they wasted valuable time and financial resources throughout the project process.

The following excerpts highlight the detrimental negative consequences of impact of effective communication between students and their supervisors:

> *It was difficult to contact my supervisors. Sometimes, you would call their phone, but it would be out of reach. There were days I called, but there was no response, and they would never return your call, especially the principal supervisor. You would travel from Tamale to campus, but you would meet their absence, meanwhile, they want all your work to be*

presented in the form of hard copies to them. They don't accept soft copies in any form. So, you can just imagine... [Focus discussion data, participant #5]

...some of our supervisors were very unsupportive. They knew we were not resident students but you will call to book an appointment with them, you go there and meet their absence. I will call to inform him/her of my presence but the only excuse will be, I'm not available so can we make it next time. [Focus discussion data, participant # 10]

My principal supervisor will ask me to come to his/her office at 7:00am. You'll be there at 7: 00am as scheduled but meet his absence. At times, you wait till 12:00 midday. Any attempt to call to remind him/her of our scheduled whiles waiting, sometimes proved futile, his/her phone would out of reach. After a long waiting, if you are fortunate, he/she arrives, the meeting would be brief and finally ask you to come another day with no apologies. His/her demeanour tell that he/she care less about your work. I counted many occasions such incidents occurred. It was heart breaking, though… [Focus discussion data, participant # 1]

I also encountered similar problems with my principal supervisor. As for me, he/she will ask me to come to his/her office at a certain time but you will meet his/her absence. You will call his/her phone, he/she will take a long time before he/she will answer and reschedule a day or time with you. So, the strategy I used was when he asked me to come at 8:00 am I will be there 7 am and I will meet him/her. [Focus discussion data, participant # 7]

"My problem with my supervisors was that if you don't call them, they will never mind you". [Focus discussion data, participant # 19]

It is evident that there were communication issues between both supervisors and students. These communication problems within project supervision can exacerbate tensions, frustration, and disappointment. Consequently, this may lead to a lack of motivation among students and supervisors, resulting in project delays or even complete stagnation.

4.7 Research question 4: What are the support systems that could be put in place for more meaningful co-supervision at the department?

The fourth research question investigates the possible support systems that can be established to enhance more meaningful co-supervision within the department. In an effort to address the question, "What support systems could be implemented to promote more meaningful co-supervision within the department?", the challenges encountered during the research process are outlined in Figure 4.2 below.
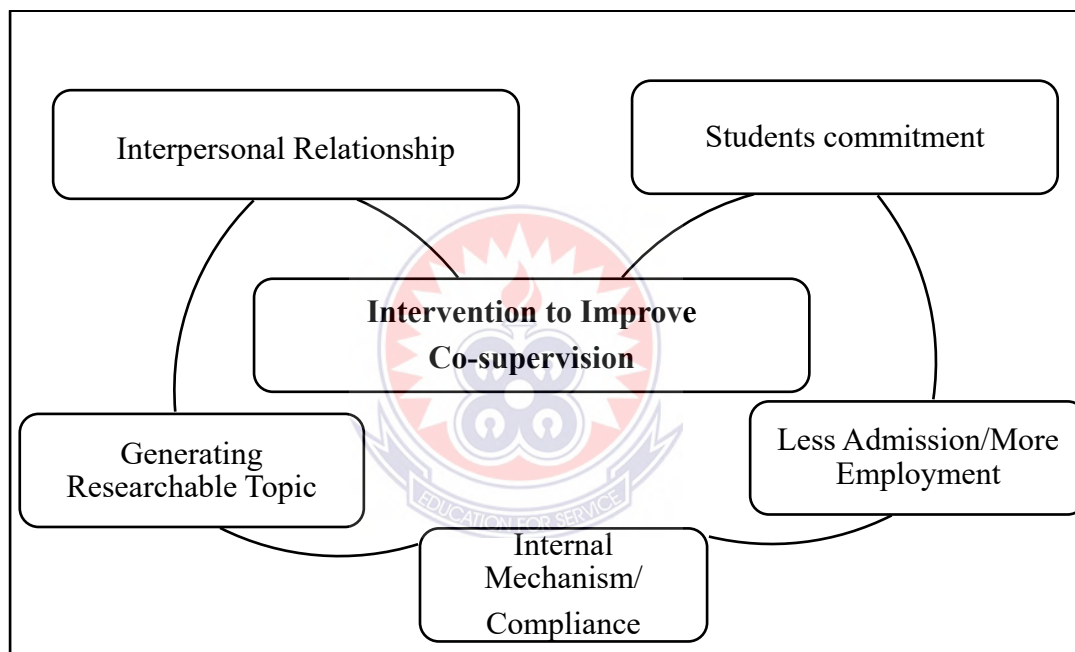
Source: Field Data (Author,2022)
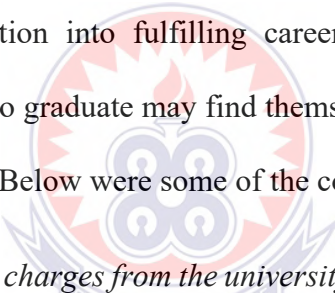
Fig. 4.2 Intervention to Improve Co-supervision

4.7.1 Student's Commitment

The discussion highlights the crucial role of a student's commitment in successfully completing their project, regardless of whether they are under single or co-supervision. This realization, shared by all students involved in the discussion and interview, emphasizes that the supervisor's efforts alone are insufficient if the students themselves

do not take ownership of their work and go the extra mile to accomplish it. It is imperative for students to make a conscious effort to complete their work ahead of schedule.

The gathered data reveals that due to insufficient commitment from students, they often fall behind schedule. Consequently, only 33.33% of students in the department of a university in Ghana manage to complete their projects on time and graduate within two years. Commitment, as defined by Buchanan (as cited in Salancik, 1977, p.2), encompasses organizational identification, job involvement, and organizational loyalty. When students demonstrate commitment and adhere to their schedules, they significantly increase their chances of obtaining a degree, minimize their debt burden, and expedite their transition into fulfilling careers upon graduation. Conversely, students who take longer to graduate may find themselves burdened by mounting debt and missed opportunities. Below were some of the comments shared:

> *I tried to avoid extra charges from the university by putting in all my effort to complete my work. Although my supervisors were there to guide me on my project, my reliance on them was limited. What helped me most was my own commitment to the work I was determined to do. The sad thing is that if you don't commit your effort to completing you work, you end up paying extra charges to the university. [Focus discussion data, participant # 10].*

> *"I can't think of any other means to complete my work as a student than commitment and hard work. You got to read more about your work. When you do that, about 70% of your work is done." [Focus discussion data, participant # 15]*

> *Though co-supervision in the department comes with its own challenges, I must also admit the fact that some of us as students need to step up our game. I must say we were not serious. My supervisor told me that some of my colleagues, ever since they submitted chapter 1 for vetting, have never returned for feedback. I was surprised though because I was working on the last chapter of my project. I believe it is the attitude of some of our colleagues that motivates some supervisors to mistakenly pay less attention to our thesis. I just can't imagine your supervisor painstakingly reading your work and you delay coming for feedback. I am not surprised*

they give less attention to us as students. [Focus discussion data, participant # 24]

By taking ownership of their work, adhering to schedules, and going above and beyond, students can enhance their prospects for a timely graduation and a seamless transition into the professional world.

Staying off campus after completing coursework has been identified as a significant factor contributing to students' lack of commitment towards their project work. According to the data, approximately 99.5% of students involved in this study were also employed while pursuing their programs at DUG. Many of them had to travel long distances to reach the campus for their studies. However, a small group of dedicated students who devoted six (6) or more credit hours to their projects managed to complete them on time and graduate within two years.

Consequently, all participants in the study agreed that students must demonstrate commitment and proactivity in their studies to complement the supervisors' efforts in ensuring timely completion of their work. The following are some comments shared by the students:

> *It is crucial for us to prioritize our studies and allocate sufficient time to our projects. This will not only benefit us but also ease the burden on our supervisors. Being proactive and taking ownership of our work is essential. We should actively seek guidance and support from our supervisors to ensure smooth progress. Staying on campus allows for better focus and access to resources. It helps in maintaining a disciplined routine and fosters a sense of belonging within the academic community. [Focus discussion data, participant # 8].*

The study highlights the detrimental impact of staying off campus on students' commitment towards their project work. It emphasizes the importance of students taking responsibility for their studies and actively engaging with their supervisors to ensure timely completion. By adopting a proactive approach and making use of

available resources, students can enhance their academic journey and achieve successful outcomes. Below were some of the comments shared:

> *To me, all the parties involved in the project work should be committed, thus both supervisors and that of the students. Look, I admit that much of this commitment should come on the part of the student but our supervisors also need to be committed on their delivery of their services to the students they supervise. [Focus discussion data, participant # 3]*
> *I think, as students, what we need to understand is that supervisors have accomplished their dreams and they are now living it. Therefore, if you also want to be like them, then you need to take your own destiny into your hands and work hard to complete your work. [Focus discussion data, participant # 22]*

Some supervisors indicated that students need to be aware that, in addition to their supervisory responsibilities, they also lecture. Some supervisors hold administrative positions, which often consume all of their time. Therefore, it is crucial for students to seize the opportunity and strive to present error-free projects.

According to the lecturers involved in this study, students frequently fail to thoroughly review their work before presenting it to their supervisors. In many cases, students expect their supervisors to correct their mistakes and provide detailed guidance. However, it is the students' responsibility to carefully review their work multiple times before submitting it for evaluation and guidance. Demonstrating commitment to their work entails putting forth maximum effort and striving for quality in their presentations to capture the attention and interest of their supervisors. This, in turn, will motivate supervisors to provide the necessary support for their work to progress through the system. All students participating engaged in the study acknowledged the importance of committing to their work in order to successfully complete their projects. Despite encountering challenges with co-supervision, some students commend their supervisors for their unwavering dedication to the completion of their work.

4.7.2 Interpersonal Relationship

The data collected under the aforementioned theme revealed that students expressed dissatisfaction with the rapport they shared with their supervisors. In their complaints, students provided diverse descriptions to illustrate the nature of their relationships with certain supervisors. According to the students, while some supervisors were easily approachable, others proved to be quite challenging to engage with. Additionally, there were confrontational individuals who seemed relentless in addressing even the most trivial matters. Among these supervisors, some displayed a quick-tempered disposition, readily rebuking students for the slightest errors. A few students shared their experiences, stating:

> *I have to control myself one day other than that I would have had some exchange of words with my co-supervisor. He went to extent of proposing to me. After I had rejected his proposal, he become apprehensive on little matters that do not relate to my project. He found the effrontery to insult me on inconsequential issues. I consider that unprofessional. [Focus discussion data, participant # 22]*

> *Hmm, my bossy supervisor wouldn't return your call after you have called his/her line several time with no answer. I can't actually explain why he/she does that. Even worse, his/her demeanour alone will deter you from asking question that concerns your work. I am also the shy type so, I wouldn't want to be embarrassed in any form because I couldn't with little provocation he/she shout on you. It was a worrying issue for me, so, I decided to complain to some of friends and I was told that his/her nature… [Focus discussion data, participant # 13]*

To some of the students, they were not deterred by the reactions of some supervisors, rather, they managed to complete their work. A student who had managed what he describes as 'hard to approach supervisors' and have completed his work on time had this to say:

> *It is true; students have to learn to be courteous, as they relate with supervisors no matter what. Some of the supervisors also have their own problems as we do. Therefore, when the relationship becomes unfriendly during our meeting with them, we need to find a means to accommodate them in order to avoid disrupting the relationship*

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that exist among you and rather think of how to maintain and
continue to build on that relationship to complete your thesis.
[Focus discussion data, participant # 2]

Participants expressed the belief that cultivating positive interpersonal relationships between lecturers and students is crucial for fostering harmony and expediting the timely completion of projects. Furthermore, such relationships promote mutual understanding among all parties involved, thereby mitigating any potential obstacles that could impede the early completion of project work. The data collected revealed that due to strained relationships, a significant majority of students in the department who were assigned two supervisors struggled to complete their project work within the designated timeframe.

4.7.3 Generating Researchable Topic

The student's ability to generate a researchable topic plays a pivotal role in ensuring the timely completion of project work. Insights gleaned from the discussions underscored the fundamental importance of the student's aptitude for identifying a researchable topic. According to their perspectives, a researchable topic alone contributes to approximately 30% of the project work and effectively circumvents research supervision challenges. Moreover, researchable topics that boast readily available supporting literature alleviate the researchers' arduous task of sourcing relevant literature from project initiation to its ultimate culmination. Several students shared their valuable insights on this matter:

> *"Students need to frame a research topic that has researchable materials.*
> *In that case you will not suffer. The only thing you need in addition to*
> *escape supervision problems is reading and little direction from your*
> *supervisor". [Focus discussion data, participant # 26]*

The dynamics in research supervision in this 21st century calls for students themselves to be proactive. I cannot envisage a student who has a research topic but cannot have literature to read around. Such students will surely be frustrated. Most supervisors naturally do have enough time to spare, so, if you fail to generate good research topic which the supervisor has interest in, then it will be difficult for the supervisors to recommend literature for your reading even though it is their responsibility to do so, [Focus discussion data, participant # 4]

Students desire their peers to exhibit both creativity and practicality when selecting research topics that are well-supported by existing literature. It is the responsibility of supervisors to assist students in shaping their research topics for approval at the graduate level. Once a topic has been approved, it is expected that the necessary supporting materials will be readily accessible.

The chosen topic should serve as a motivating factor for supervisors to take an active interest in supervising the research. Students rely on their supervisors for guidance and support in navigating their chosen field of study. If students lack the skills to generate researchable topics, it becomes the supervisors' duty to mentor and guide them.

The extensive data collected from discussions revealed that all twenty-four former students involved in the study had successfully obtained approval for their project topics at the graduate level. Furthermore, they had conducted thorough searches to ensure the availability of relevant materials before commencing their project work.

4.7.4 Less Admission/More Employment for Effective Supervision

Under different circumstances regarding admission and employment, students held contrasting opinions. One side of the argument suggested that increasing admission would provide the department with more human resources. These students believed that the department's resources should be allocated towards hiring additional lecturers to assist in supervising the students admitted each academic year. By employing more lecturers, the current supervisors, who are already overwhelmed with administrative

duties and supervisory tasks, would be able to focus more effectively on their responsibilities. This, in turn, would support students in completing their project work promptly, ultimately enhancing the department's reputation in terms of research supervision.

Some students expressed their thoughts on the matter, stating. In light of the aforementioned considerations, it is imperative to address the issue of admission and employment within the department. While there were divergent perspectives among students, it is crucial to explore the potential benefits of increasing admission. By doing so, the department would be able to tap into a larger pool of human resources, thereby facilitating a more efficient and effective learning environment.

To achieve this, it is paramount to allocate the department's resources towards employing additional lecturers. These new hires would serve as valuable support for the existing supervisors, who are currently burdened with administrative responsibilities and supervisory tasks. By relieving them of these duties, the supervisors would be able to dedicate more time and effort to their primary responsibilities, namely guiding and assisting students in completing their project work in a timely manner.

The significance of this approach cannot be overstated, as it would undoubtedly contribute to the department's overall image and reputation in terms of research supervision. By ensuring that students receive the necessary support and guidance, they would be empowered to produce high-quality work, thereby elevating the department's standing within the academic community.

The proposal to increase admission and employ additional lecturers is a viable solution that warrants serious consideration. By implementing this strategy, the department

would be able to optimize its resources, enhance the learning experience for students, and bolster its reputation in research. This is evident in the extract below:

> *"The department should manage these co-supervision problems by employing more lecturers for the work". [Focus discussion data, participant # 9]*

Conversely, the latter viewpoint argues that by reducing the number of admissions, supervisors can effectively support students in meeting their deadlines. This perspective is grounded in the recognition that supervisors face heightened burdens when overseeing a larger student cohort. It is worth noting that these supervisors not only provide guidance but also deliver lectures and may hold administrative roles. Consequently, when the department admits more students without considering the available human resources, it further compounds the issue at hand.

This is evident in the extract below:

> *"I rather think that instead of employing more students they should consider reducing the intake of students to avoid supervision challenges in the department". [Focus discussion data, participant # 29]*

The subject at hand warrants a broader examination that encompasses economic factors. When a university reduces student intake, it inevitably affects the financial gains derived from student enrollment. This, in turn, has a direct impact on the well-being of the lecturers. Moreover, the long-term consequences may manifest in the underutilization of departmental structures and resources. On the contrary, if the university opts to employ additional lecturers and admit a greater number of students, it will undoubtedly incur higher expenditures in staff remuneration. Overall, it is crucial for universities to carefully consider the economic implications of their decisions regarding student enrollment. Striking the right balance between student intake and faculty resources is essential to ensure optimal utilization of departmental infrastructure

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and financial stability. By doing so, universities can create an environment that fosters both academic excellence and financial sustainability.

Those who were unable to support any aspect of the argument speculated that both the department and the university could greatly benefit from the co-supervision model. By fully utilizing the potential of two supervisors engaged in the co-supervision process, they could effectively support students in their work. However, this would require a genuine commitment to implementing support systems that would operationalize the model and effectively mentor students. The excerpt below brings to bear how the students put it;

> *Whether the department employs more lecturers or reduces intake of students, I believe the co-supervision problem will still exist because the practice of co-supervision will still involve two or more supervisors. I see the solution to the problem to be more of encouraging lecturers to be working together. [Focus discussion data, participant # 12]*

The argument expanded to include those who believed that the department should abandon the co-supervision model and instead rely solely on traditional single supervision to oversee students' work. They further argued that their colleagues, who had their projects supervised by a single supervisor, had fewer complaints compared to those who were supervised by two supervisors. The excepts below were some of the comments of the participants.

> *"The department should abound co-supervision and rely on the single supervision to forestall some of the controversies surrounding the co-supervision model." [Focus discussion data, participant # 4]*

> *… the controversies sounding the co-supervision is too much. I was a victim to the model. It was a distasteful encounter which it should not be repeated. I don't want to sound so sentimental here however, my suggestion is that if there is a possibility to do away with co-supervision in the department it should be now.*

> *Or better still the department should look at it again. [interview data, participant # 5]*

Clearly, a number of students expressed their dissatisfaction with the co-supervision model. The fact that some students called for the complete abandonment of this model indicates their lack of enthusiasm towards its results.

4.7.5 Internal Mechanism to Supervise Supervisions (Quality Assurance)

At this juncture, the data revealed that students were expressing their dissatisfaction with the lack of an internal mechanism within the department to oversee the supervision process. Conversely, lecturers refuted the students' claim, asserting that...

> *"There is existing mechanism in the department to check on progress of the students' project work but it is not effectively utilized by both students and lecturers" [interview data, participant #1]*
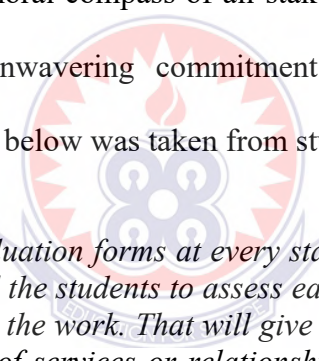
Either the systems in the department have been lowered, or the department has failed to communicate these systems effectively to both lecturers and students, resulting in a lack of awareness regarding departmental expectations for project writing and supervision. The data collected indicates that there are sufficient mechanisms in place within the department to monitor the progress of supervision, but these mechanisms have not been fully utilized, with the exception of imposing additional fees when students fail to complete their work on time.

For example, students were expected to keep a record of their meetings with their supervisors. However, upon further investigation, it was discovered that students did not actively engage with their supervisors by documenting these meetings. Furthermore, progress report forms were readily available at the department to assess the students' work, but both lecturers and students failed to utilize them. Additionally, students were given the opportunity to report any difficulties they encountered by

writing to the department. However, at the time of this study, no such reports had been received.

It is evident that there is a need for improved communication and engagement between the department, lecturers, and students. By effectively conveying the departmental expectations and encouraging active participation in the supervision process, the department can ensure better progress monitoring and support for students.

According to student feedback, it is imperative that the internal mechanisms be presented in a clear and comprehensive manner, ideally before the commencement of the second year in the program. Furthermore, the system must possess the ability to effectively appeal to the moral compass of all stakeholders engaged in project work, thereby ensuring their unwavering commitment to upholding the mechanisms' stipulations. The quotation below was taken from students' discussions.

> *There should be evaluation forms at every stage of students' work for both supervisors and the students to assess each other in terms of how both are coping with the work. That will give room for the department to monitor the kind of services or relationship offered to students as they progress in their studies. [Focus discussion data, participant #22]*

Another participant added

> *Yes, supervision should be a collective responsibility of the whole department. My observation has been that from the beginning until the final stage, it appears that no one monitors the parties involved in the supervision process. In my view, I think there should be a mechanism to compel the parties involved in the supervision to make a conscious effort to complete the project early.*

Students were advocating for the implementation of strict mechanisms within the department. For instance, it is widely known among students that those who fail to complete their projects on time are subjected to additional fees. When students fail to meet project deadlines under any supervisor, all parties involved should be held

accountable. The data collected indicates that a lack of effective supervision mechanisms is a significant factor contributing to project delays within the department. For example, the department failed to impose penalties on students who did not attend departmental seminars. Despite the department's efforts to support students in completing their work on time, many students took advantage of the lenient project supervision rules and procrastinated. The department should have strictly enforced the monitoring mechanisms in place for both supervisors and students.

Further enquiries into the matter under study brought to light that another contributing factor which caused delay in completing the project work was that students and their supervisors were not time bound to present stages of their work. Before thesis/dissertation begins, students write proposals as outlines to guide the study. In the proposal writing, students were expected to estimate and indicate a timeframe for completion of their work. This framework is supposed to be a guide to drive the work from the beginning till the end. Mostly, the time frame indicates when, for instance chapter 1- 5 are expected to be completed. The data gathered indicated that, mostly, the length of time used to complete project work far exceed what has been indicated in the proposals. When students were asked why the vast differences, some of them attributed it to the problems associated to supervision. For example, one of the students said:

> *I have in my proposal that within one month, I should able to draft my chapter 1, submit for vetting and get feedback from my supervisors to continue working. I tried my best to complete my part, but when the work went to my supervisors, the busy schedules and stuff ... It took me about two months before I received feedback for corrections, so you can imagine... [interview data, participant# 2]*

This further indicates that delay in feedback and other related problems that have been discussed in the earlier theme, make it impossible for students to work within the estimated time as stated in their proposals. To probe further, same question was thrown

to the supervisors. They explained that estimated time stated in the proposal were mostly overambitious timelines: they were unrealistic time set by students themselves without consulting their supervisors to agree before the defence of the proposal. They further indicated that students normally write those timelines just to meet the demand of proposal writing. Ideally, if they want it properly done, there should be wider consultation between the supervisors and the students before it can be presented for defence, but in our part of the world, it is different because students usually write time for themselves without considering the schedules of the supervisors.

Again, students sometimes fail to work within the timeframe set for themselves. Supervisors blamed students a being a major cause of the delays and alleged that when they were invited to participate in seminars, few of the them turn up whiles the majority do their own thing. On the same issue, they reveal the fact and the M.Phil. students were all supposed to stay on campus and do six credit hours a day to work on their projects, but dynamics of the economy had changed and, this has forced students to work and school simultaneously. Most of the students were workers who commute from their work directly to lecture halls.

Justifiably, students leave campus after first year of their programme for their homes. "But the question is how many of them can sincerely say that do even four hours on the project while at home?'' [interview discussion data, participant # 3] The excerpt below captured the voice of one of the participants:

> *Students working from house may not be the same as students confined to work at school but students were quick to blame co-supervision for their inabilities to complete the project on time. Naturally, homes have their peculiar challenges. However, one could not have effectively put in all his/her effort to work efficiently to deliver his/her project without any difficulties. (*Interview data, participant # 3)

This adds to the fact that the delays in the project writings could not have been attributed to the project supervision only. Lecturers accused some students for their inability to complete their project on time because they could not commit to working on their work while at home. Admittedly, they outlined the fact that there may be genuine cases where through supervision, some students might have encountered problems with their supervisors and that might have delayed them but students should not hide behind such cases and blame their inability to complete their project on time on evolving systems that the department has positioned to work effectively and efficiently with it.

Additionally, students who were admitted into the department were all expected to occupy higher administrative positions after their graduation and therefore expected to know how important it is to achieve targets when they are set as part of their training. "When the administrators themselves break boundaries and go overboard whereas under training, is it not likely after their training, they might not be transformed with the administrative ethics?" quizzed one of the supervisors. Participants concurred that as an administrative department in the university, it is imperative that stakeholders in the department have set ground rules to monitor supervision to channel a path for the department to follow. This is how the participants put it during the discussion and interview sessions:

> *The department is an administrative arm in the university whose responsibility is to train professionals to use right administrative tools to achieve result. It is, therefore, disturbing that the 'masters' themselves are not leading the way for others to follow. I think what the department needs to do is adhere to its set rules concerning supervision and make sure students do the right things and other department can take it from them. [Focus discussion data, participant # 5]*

> *I believe there are measures in the university but in our department it is liberal. Look at other universities, they'll call for research presentation from time to time. For example, your supervisor will call on you to present say, chapter1 and 2 within one month and the onus is you to work hard to finish without any hesitation. [Focus discussion data, participant # 13]*

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> *I believe the department needs to up its game on monitoring supervisors, especially those involved in co-supervision. I also think there should be a complaint desk where students can lay their grievances when things are not going the way they want. I believe when such mechanisms are put in place things will be a little bit flexible than our time. [Focus discussion data, participant # 28]*

4.8 Other Findings

Other findings which emerged during the data collection which were not necessary co-supervision related issue but potentially affected completion of research project in the department include:

4.8.1 Insufficient Preparation of Students

To most students, carrying out research at the higher level would have been their first time so the skills and ability to gear them on may be little or may not be there at all. Such students need sufficient guidance and supervisory mentorship for them to be well equipped to write their project. Data pointed out that preparation given to students before they go out to undertake project work is insufficient. This makes them struggle to go through their work, especially during the data collection and its analyses. One of the students said;

> *"Although the lecturers at the department are doing their best to equip us, I think they should lay more emphasis on teaching of data collection and its analysis. That is where the problem is..." [Focus discussion data, participant # 22]*

> *"The kind of teaching we receive before we go out to conduct our research is not enough. So, there should be constant seminars to help students to overcome their difficulties in terms of project work". [Focus discussion data, participant #27]*

Students believe that the heart of the thesis and dissertation is the data collection and analysis. The data gathered revealed that students mostly face a lot of problems analysing their data. The students were of the view that the lecturers need to spend more time to take students through techniques in analysing data. Students said they had

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challenges in analysing their data, especially students who opted for quantitative studies. This calls for the department to put stringent measures to address the concerns of the students.

4.8.2 Financial Problems of Students

Finding sources of funding for the postgraduate programme was another issue that emerged during the data collection. Students pointed out that sometimes family financial commitments and other social commitments overburden them, causing them to delay their projects. The findings revealed that when students are overburdened, the progress of their studies becomes self-sabotaging. For instance, one of the students said:

> *I was determined to finish my project on time. When I started, everything was going smoothly until I encountered an incident that made me financially incapacitated. This brought me untold hardship. After that event, I struggled to complete my thesis. The whole thing came to a halt because it reached a point where I could not raise money to pay for my transportation from where I am to follow up on my project work, let alone money to collect data for my work. This made me procrastinate on my work. I remember my supervisors calling me several times to work hard and complete my work. The worst part was after I had gone through difficulties completing my work, paying for the school fees and other penalties charged by the institution as a result of my delay was another problem. The problem, as I have described, almost stalled my whole academic work, especially my master's thesis... [interview data, participant #6]*

The extract above was a real story of one of the students. This could be one of many stories that have not been told. The extract shows that students go through a lot of challenges which were not necessarily supervisory challenges but financial and other family issues that have the potential to stall the project work.

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4.9 Documentary Analysis

Table 4.4 shows data generated from the documentary analysis of the thesis submitted by the students engaged in this study.

SRN	Code	Year of admission	Type of document accessed	Location of the document	Year on which project was submitted	Number of supervisors involved	Remarks
1	*PStd*	2011/12	TSBK	DUG LB	2013	2	On time
2	*PStd*	2011/12	TSBK	DUG LB	2013	2	On time
3	*PStd*	2011/12	TSBK	DUG LB	2013	2	On time
4	*PStd*	2011/12	TSBK	DUG LB	2019	2	Delayed
5	*PStd*	2012/13	TSBK	DUG LB	2014	2	On time
6	*PStd*	2012/13	TSBK	DUG	2014	2	On time
7	*PStd*	2012/13	TSBK	DUG LB	2015	2	Delayed
8	*PStd*	2012/13	TSBK	DUG LB	2015	2	Delayed
9	*PStd*	2013/14	TSBK	DUG LB	2016	2	Delayed
10	*PStd*	2013/14	TSBK	DUG LB	2016	2	Delayed
11	*PStd*	2013/14	TSBK	DUG LB	2017	2	Delayed
12	*PStd*	2013/14	TSBK	DUG LB	2016	2	Delayed
13	*PStd*	2014/15	TSBK	DUG LB	2017	2	Delayed
14	*PStd*	2014/15	TSBK	DUG LB	2017	2	Delayed
15	*PStd*	2014/15	TSBK	DUG LB	2016	2	Delayed
16	*PStd*	2014/15	TSBK	DUG LB	2015	2	Delayed
17	*PStd*	2015/16	TSBK	DUG LB	2017	2	On time
18	*PStd*	2015/16	TSBK	DUG LB	2017	2	On time
19	*PStd*	2015/16	TSBK	DUG LB	2017	2	On time
20	*PStd*	2015/16	TSBK	DUG LB	2017	2	On time
21	*PStd*	2016/17	TSBK	DUG LB	2018	2	On time
22	*PStd*	2016/17	TSBK	DUG LB	2018	2	On time
23	*PStd*	2016/17	TSBK	DUG	2019	2	Delayed
24	*PStd*	2016/17	TSBK	DUG	2019	2	Delayed

Source: Field Data (Author, 2022)

Key: PStd Past Student, TSBK- Thesis submission book, Department of a University in Ghana Library (DUG LB)

From table 4.4 above, there are 8 divisions. They are made of serial numbers, codes representing the name of the participant's thesis, the year in which the participant was admitted, sources from which the document was obtained, location in which the document was obtained, year within which the document was submitted, the number of supervisors involved in the supervision of the document and remarks.

From the table those who submitted their thesis within the stipulated period of the programme have been remarked "on time". Students who failed to submit their thesis within the period of two years have been remarked "delayed". The documentary data above showed that out of 24 theses assessed from the Department of a University in Ghana Library (DUGLB), 11 of them submitted 'on time' representing 45.83%. 13 representing 54.16% delayed in submission. It must be noted that all the 24 theses were supervised by two supervisors. This is another evidence, apart from the verbal data (interview and focus discussion), indicating that there was project delayed in the department.

The concerns expressed during the focus group discussion and interviews were corroborated by the analysis of documentary data. Both the verbal and written evidence consistently pointed to the detrimental effects of the co-supervision model on the students who were meant to benefit from it within the department.

4.10 Discussion of Findings

Based on the data, it is evident that the postgraduate supervision experiences of the participating students were predominantly negative, with only a few instances where students had divergent views. The students reported several issues that contributed to these negative experiences. These issues primarily revolved around the nature of supervision, the expertise of supervisors, the busy schedules of supervisors, the need to establish consensus for supervision, delays in receiving feedback, power dynamics,

consultation with shadow supervisors, administrative problems, commitment to work, choosing a research topic, lack of or poor communication, and difficulties in overcoming co-supervision problems.

The findings regarding the nature of supervision in the department align with existing literature (Lessing & Schulze, 2003; Chireshe, 2012), which also highlighted a lack of mentorship in the supervision process (Lessing & Schulze, 2003). Lessing and Schulze (2003) argued that students are more likely to be satisfied with the supervision process if they receive emotional and moral support from their supervisors. However, the findings of this study revealed that students were less satisfied with the supervision provided by their supervisors. Consequently, this situation could potentially result in students failing to complete their studies within the designated timeframe.

The literature also supports the finding that students require improved communication. For instance, Haksever & Manisali (2000) emphasize that effective communication between supervisors and students is the key element of supervision. They argue that without open and honest communication, it becomes difficult to identify the challenges faced by both the student and the supervisor. However, the results of this study reveal that some supervisors were unfriendly and did not encourage open conversations with their students, which could have a negative impact on their studies.

Similarly, Chiappetta-Swanson's (2011) study demonstrates that the relationship between a graduate student and an academic supervisor is crucial for a successful learning experience. Approximately one-third of the students in this study believed that their supervisors were helpful, committed to their research, and maintained open lines of communication. Nkosi & Nkosi (2011) assert that students with such positive relationships are more likely to succeed in their postgraduate studies. Numerous studies, including those by Kilminster & Jolly (2000), Zhao (2001), Waghid (2006),

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Abdelhafez (2007), and Abiddin (2007), have highlighted the importance of a positive student-supervisor relationship. These authors all agree that a positive relationship is typically associated with favourable outcomes, which was found to be lacking in this study.

Furthermore, Abiddin (2007) argues that good communication between students and their supervisors is the most crucial aspect of supervision. By improving communication between supervisors and students, can enhance the learning experience and promote positive outcomes. This study highlights the need for supervisors to be friendly, approachable, and supportive, fostering an environment that encourages open conversations. Establishing a positive relationship between students and supervisors is essential for academic success and should be prioritized in postgraduate studies.

This study also revealed that students faced challenges regarding feedback from their supervisors. Some of their responses indicated that poor feedback from supervisors was one of the most influential factors in their strained relationships. The most influential factors cited were supervisors not providing timely feedback, offering unconstructive feedback, and giving inconsistent feedback for the same content. Another reason for the strained relationships was the supervisors' delay in providing feedback to students. This lack of attention, guidance, or interest in the development of postgraduate students can lead to demotivation. Calma (2011) argues that supervisors should ensure they provide their students with expertise, time, feedback, support, commitment, and designated working space. However, this study suggests that these elements were lacking. The issue of delayed feedback has also been highlighted by Lessing & Schulze (2003), who noted that students often complained about the delay.

In a similar study, Wadesango & Machingambi (2011) observed that a significant percentage of participants were dissatisfied with their supervisors' feedback on their research work. This finding is also supported by Chireshe (2012), who noted that some supervisors provided delayed feedback, lost students' work, or returned it without comments. This aligns with one of the findings of this study, where students expressed frustration with receiving work back without clear guidance on how to address the corrections or with only a few words underlined. This situation can result in many students failing to complete their degrees within the allotted time or even dropping out.

Despite the fact that supervisors need to lead candidates towards the successful completion of their theses (Calma, 2007), some supervisors in this study were accused of not being available due to busy schedules. However, the outcome of this research aligns with an earlier study by Spear (2000), who found that the most common complaint from research students is irregular contact with supervisors. These supervisors are often preoccupied with teaching or administrative duties, have too many supervisees, or frequently have to be away from the university for conferences or external examinations. Similarly, Lubbe, Worrall & Klopper (2005) noted that senior faculty members are under increasing pressure to teach, publish, and generate income. As a result, students' problems often fall low on the list of priorities for senior academics. In response to these observations, Ismail et al (2011) emphasized the importance of effective supervision in guiding students' research progress. Spear (2000) further advocated for regular, thoughtful supervision and supervisors' availability as critical factors for successful completion of graduate programs. The findings of this study support earlier literature that suggests project supervision is often delayed due to supervisors' busy schedules.

The findings with regards to power play has been discussed in their critique of approaches to team supervision. Delamont, Atkinson, and Parry (2004) highlight how relationships between supervisors can both positively and negatively affect the student's experience of the doctoral undertaking. They point to problems arising where teams are characterised by intellectual and personal divisions. In such circumstances supervisors may use the student in order to score points off each other as part of their own power struggles (Phillips & Pugh 2000) resulting in the student becoming distracted and confused. They suggested that a student in the middle of such supervisor interactions should be advised to consult an independent third party who is usually expected to act confidentially in supporting the student and only referring the matter at the express wish of the student unofficial supervisor because they needed a neutral view to settle issues that emanate as a result of differences between supervisors. This finding is not different from an earlier finding by Phillips and Pugh (2000). The findings of this study pointed out that students often seek help from their other supervisors apart from their scheduled supervisors to enable them complete their work on time. This enabled them to develop strategies to deal with tensions within the team removing the need to directly confront supervisors, being unable to talk through these issues in itself is a possibly highly disruptive act that could profoundly derail the whole project.

With regards to findings on supervisors' expertise, Paul and co posited that co-supervision is better experienced if two experienced practitioners in academia choose to work out their expertise, knowledge, and practicable working relationship. It is possible to add to the expertise of the parties and is likely to aid in the completion rate of the student work. Ives & Rowley, 2005 mentioned such expertise to include: specialist subject knowledge, administrative, bureaucratic or procedural knowhow. However, the findings of this study highlighted how students felt when they realised

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the expertise of their supervisors were at farthest display to aid them enrich their studies. The rich expertise displayed wholeheartedly to support the work of the students by the supervisors was a good ground that should have motivated the student to complete their work.

With regard to student's commitment, Salancik, (1977, p.2) defined commitment as "an additive function related to issues: organizational identification, job involvement, and organizational loyalty." By staying on schedule, students increase their likelihood of getting a degree, limit their debt and accelerate their transition into a rewarding job upon graduation. As it stands, only 45.83 % of students involved in the study were able to submit their project on time. When students take longer time to graduate, they can get weighed down by things like growing debt and missed opportunities. By committing to complete, students can graduate sooner—academically and financially prepared for life after the programme.

In this study, it was also found that students leave campus after the first year of their programme. According to literature, the variable of living on or off campus has not been thoroughly studied. Meanwhile, findings of Bean (1980) suggest that living on campus should lead to improved student persistence. Again, Berger, (1997); St. John, Paulsen & Starkey, (1996) Titus, 2004) have shown this to be true. Among students at two-year institutions, Chen & DesJardins (2008) and Cofer & Somers (2000) both found that residing on campus improves student persistence and Halpin (1990) demonstrated that student persistence decreased as the distance a student commuted to college increased. Lecturers were not happy students stay at their homes and could not complete their project on time but later turn to blame supervisors engaged in co-supervision practice in the department. When students stay outside the campus, they could be faced with challenges (attending funeral, problems of meeting financial

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demands of their relation etc) that render them ineffective to complete their work. Lecturers yearned for their students to stay on campus to spend more time on their work and regularly met their supervisors to support them to complete their work on time.

Overall, the findings revealed that postgraduate students yearned for effective mentorship that would motivate them during their study. It was clear that the non-existence of that mentorship could lead to students' frustration and dropout. Effective communication between students and their supervisors should aid early completion of project work.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This section is the concluding episode of the research report. It summarises the findings presented in the previous chapter (chapter 4). It also incorporates the conclusions of the study and recommendation for the best practice based on the findings.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This section presents a summary of the findings that were arrived at from the data gathered. Based on the research questions, this is presented in ten sub-sections namely; nature of supervision, expertise of supervisors, busy schedules of supervisors, building consensus to supervise, feedback, power relations, consultation of shadow supervisors, quality assurance, managing supervisors, commitment to work, choosing research topic and finally lack of/poor communication.

5.2 Nature of Supervision

The findings of this study revealed that the department of a university in Ghana engages lecturers on both co-supervision and single supervision model for supervisions at the department. The nature of co- supervision practiced at DUG involved only two supervisors. Reasons for practicing co-supervision in the department were that it helped the supervisors to bring their expertise to enrich the work of the students and at the same time creates an avenue for students to learn from the two supervisors. It also emerged that depending on the type of project, some of the works of the students required two or more supervisors to supervise, therefore, the model makes supervision easy in the department. The findings highlighted that the idea behind principal and co-supervision was good but students had not taken advantage of it. Rather, they had

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underutilised the concept of the practice and over blotted the problems that were associated with them in the department. According to the students, co-supervision benefits in the department were enormous, common among them were alluded to by students as; co- supervision improves project work and makes it richer because the ideas, and knowledge were sourced from expertise of different supervisors.

With regard to how the co-supervision was practiced in the department, the findings revealed that depending on the team involved in the supervision, almost all the lecturers had their style because there was no common rule guiding the practice. In addition, it was also gathered from the findings that supervisors were only appointed with titles, "principal or co-supervisor" without necessarily defining their roles or workload, as was done in other universities.

5.3 Not Agreeing on Common Ground to Work

It was evident from the findings supervisors who were allotted to supervise the work of the students could not make time with students to agree on common ground or discuss their work on round table or in common room at the beginning of the project through to the finish of their work. Meanwhile, students wanted their supervisors to meet them to discuss their work as a team to know who is to do what, an opportunity they never had. Frequency of meetings, distribution of tasks etc were all expected to be agreed on by members of the supervisory team at the inception with the students to contribute to early completion of student's work but nothing of sort took place between the supervisors and the students.

According to participants in this study, so long as their supervisors could not meet or agree from the start of their work, it exacerbated the likelihood to not complete their work on time.

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5.3.1 Consensus Building

The findings revealed that supervisors could not build consensus on issues such as methodological approaches, data analysis procedures and other aspects during supervision. The differences among the supervisors made the students share different opinions. Whereas some say the differences among the supervisors afforded them the opportunity to read wider, others say the differences brought them to a state of confusion hence contributing to the delay of the work.

5.3.2 Delay in Feedback

Issues relating to feedback from the findings surfaced strongly. The concerns of students were that supervisors mostly delayed their work through the feedbacks. According to the findings, supervisors failed to pass comments on students' work on time. Delay in feedback largely constituted a tardy of the early completion of the student's project work.
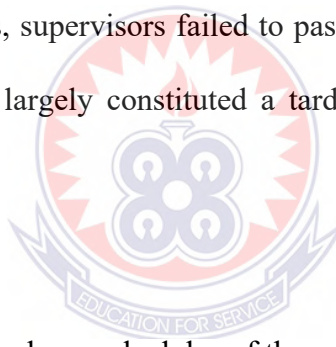
5.3.3 Busy Schedules

The findings relating to the busy schedules of the supervisors highlighted that most of the supervisors could not make enough time for their supervision responsibilities due to additional administrative responsibilities alongside lecturing. This rendered them inefficient to execute the supervisory role effectively as expected of them. The double roles performed by some of the supervisor is likened to a servant serving two masters — the servant would serve one master than the other. This is exactly what the findings revealed— some of the supervisors, especially principal supervisor, whereas performing their additional responsibilities repudiate them to concentrate less on the work of the students. Busy schedules of the supervisors took some out of the country without any proper arrangement with the co- supervisor and the student.

5.3.4 Power Play

With regard to power play, the findings revealed that it was another avenue where some of the supervisors gained ground to unduly delay students' project work under co-supervision arrangement in the department. The power play in the department was likened to a 'father and son' relationship, especially when the principal supervisor was a senior lecturer and the co-supervisor a junior lecturer. The power struggle was revealed as a political ground where supervisors used to score cheap political points especially when they realised the student has a close relationship with their rival lecturers. The findings revealed that some of the students encountered bitter experiences whiles working with their supervisors.

5.3.5 Expertise of Supervisors

The findings revealed that despite the fact that supervisors, at a point in time, agree to disagree, they enthusiastically provided their expertise to support the work of the students. Areas such as specialist subject knowledge, administrative bureaucracy, or procedural know-how were found to be admirably on display to enrich the project work of the students. The findings emphasized that students were satisfied with the contributions offered by their supervisors to enrich their work, although there were some who could not finish on time.

5.3.6 Consulting Shadow Supervisors

Despite two supervisors assigned under co- supervision arrangements, students sought help outside their supervisors when they realised that commitment on the part of the supervisors towards the project work was dwindling. Unfortunately, these informal supervisors were not under any pressure to support students to complete their work on time. The findings showed that students found solace from the shadow supervisors

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mostly at a point in time when they needed further clarifications to satisfy their curiosity and at times when they needed neutral opinions to settle the academics differences that emanated from the views of the two supervisors.

5.3.7 Lack of Effective Communication

From both sides of the divide, that is, supervisors and students, none could harness fully, the communication benefits to aid early completion the of the project work. Whereas supervisors claimed some of the students called them odd hours, students on the other hand complained supervisors did not return their calls, messages or emails. It was not clear from the findings who was to blame for lack of Effective communication. The findings also highlighted that as a result of effective communication, students wasted time and financial resources during the process of their project work.

5.4 Overcoming Co-supervision Challenges (Managing Co-supervision at DUG)

From the findings, it is clear that co-supervision challenges in the department could be resolved if not fully, partially. Student's commitment, interpersonal relationship, generating researchable topic, ability to manage situations, less admission less supervision and strict internal mechanisms to supervise supervisors and supervisees were some of the essential ingredients found from the findings that could aid in the management of co-supervision challenges at DUG.

5.4.1 Student's Commitment

On the part of student commitment, the findings revealed that no matter the mode of supervision (single or co-supervision), student's commitment plays a major role to support the little effort put in by the supervisor to facilitate early completion of student's project work. The findings suggest that student's commitment lubricates the motivational strings of supervisors to assiduously dedicate to the student's work

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assigned them. Therefore, the findings of this study emphasise the importance of students to be proactive and committed to their studies to support the little effort of the supervisors to complete their work on time.

5.4.2 Interpersonal Relationship

Despite the complaints filed by students, the finding revealed that students had no option than to manoeuvre and manage unhealthy relationships encountered during their project supervision. It was obvious that students wanted to climb the academic ladder to a higher level. However, matters or issues that could deteriorate the relationship between supervisee and the supervisor to impeding the early completion of project work needed to be managed. Good interpersonal relationship was seen to be eminent in the project supervision. Bad relationship was found to be an efficient tool that has a dynamic force to delay or terminate project supervision. Most of the stalled projects in the department were attributed to the bad relationships between students and their supervisors. Students who were able to sacrifice their ego and succumb to the dominance of their supervisors were able to complete their project on time despite the difficulties that came with co-supervision.

5.4.3 Generating Researchable Topic

From the findings, it came to light that the foundation for completing research work on time largely lies in the ability of students to generate researchable topics. The findings revealed that ability to generate a researchable topic alone, completes about 30% of the project work and also helps largely, to avoid research supervision problems. Researchable topics readily have supporting literature to back them, hence, eliminates the struggling to look for materials to read. This lessens burden on busy supervisors to look for materials to support the work of their students.

5.4.4 Less Admission/Employment of More Supervisors for Effective Supervision

There was mixed reaction with regards to less admission of students or employment of more supervisors for effective supervision. From the findings, those who supported the concept that the department should admit less students for better supervision did so with the view that effective supervision can take place because the supervisors would have to deal with few students. Ostensibly, supervisors may have to deal with other administrative responsibilities, therefore, it would be superficially better to engage few students to already burdened supervisors for effective and efficient supervision than to admit more students and delay work of students as a result of equally important responsibilities, carried out by the same supervisors. On the other hand, the findings revealed that the efficient use of time, student's commitment, lecturer's dedication and other internal mechanisms put in place at the department could increase the yield in the co-supervision practices in the department irrespective of the number of students admitted and number of lecturers employed, nevertheless, the department could do cost and benefits analysis and appropriately decide what would be beneficial to increase the completion rate in the department.

5.4.5 Internal Mechanism to Supervise Supervisors (Quality Assurance)

The findings under the internal mechanisms revealed there were abundant rules at the department and the university at large. For example, students who failed to complete the project on time pay additional fees in the university. This was common knowledge to all the students interviewed. From the findings, what was lacking was the failure on the part of the authorities in the department to compel students to adhere to the timelines set for project completion. Again, seminars that were organised did not compel students to give account of what they were doing by way of giving timelines for students to present work for monitoring and criticisms. That would have also given the department

an opportunity to interact with students to know how they were coping with their supervisor to limit some of the problems students encountered during the dealings with their supervisors.

5.5 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of postgraduate research students under co-supervision process. The study results pointed out that there were some elements in the co-supervision process which were not supportive to the research students' learning. This is a cause for concern, since those factors play important roles in the student's potential to success. As result of the findings, the researcher came to conclusion that;

There is no policy document to guide co-supervision in the department. Unfortunately, this absence of a policy document created room for supervisors to rely on their own discretionary powers, resulting in controversies surrounding co-supervision. This hindered progress and ultimately led to delays in project completion at the department. As a result, many students were less satisfied with the outcome. However, if students can manage the challenges associated with co-supervision, it can serve a great number of parties.

The study concludes that the process involved in co-supervision in the department lacks proper mentorship. This is due to the fact that lecturers have busy schedules, and supervisors do not properly manage their individual differences. As a result, many students struggle to go through their work, especially during the data analysis stage. If supervisors had acted professionally as expected of them, they could have managed the students in such a way that students would not have felt their absence as much when they had busy schedules. Again, proper coordination between the principal and co-

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supervisor could have solved any problems students encountered in the supervision process, which was not the case as seen in the findings. Nonetheless, commendation goes to supervisors who brought their expertise together and supported students to complete their projects on time.

Again, the study concludes that both parties engaged in the co-supervision model in department of a university in Ghana underutilized information and communications technology. This resulted in some students having to move from their location to campuses just to meet their supervisors for project discussions or having their meetings rescheduled without proper notification. This was particularly challenging for working students who had taken time off from work to pursue their studies and may not have had another opportunity to do so. The power of technology has made things easy and has opened many avenues for online or virtual channels which the parties involved in co-supervision could have accessed to manage and reduce the challenges associated with supervision, which resulted in delaying the completion of students' studies.

The study further concludes that the mechanisms in the department to ensure early completion of the study were not compelling enough and also lacked enforcement. The department and the university at large had compelling mechanism to ensure early project completion but some of them lacked enforcement in the department. For example, students who could not attend academic seminars in department were not melted with any suctions in the department.

Finally, the level of commitment exhibited by students towards their work, their ability to choose a researchable topic for their thesis, and their personal challenges were observed to significantly impact the completion of projects within the department. Despite supervisors' dedicated efforts to assist students in completing their projects, the

lack of reciprocated effort and commitment from students often hinders the timely completion of their work.

5.6 Recommendations

1. Based on the conclusion that there is currently no policy document to provide guidance on co-supervision in the department of a university in Ghana it is strongly recommended that the School of Graduate Studies promptly develop a comprehensive policy document. This document should clearly outline the procedures and expectations for co-supervisors, as controversies surrounding co-supervision have arisen. By establishing well-crafted guidelines, the roles and responsibilities of both principal and co-supervisors can be clearly defined, facilitating effective coordination and alleviating the tensions that have been prevalent in the department.

2. In cases where students lack proper mentorship during the co-supervision process, it is highly recommended that the department hire supervisors who possess the ability to effectively manage their busy schedules and demonstrate a strong commitment to supervising students. The advantages of supervisors dedicating more time to guiding students in their project work are truly significant. For instance, students are more likely to undergo a rigorous process in completing their work when they have supervisors who are available and fully committed to overseeing their theses or dissertations. Conversely, when supervisors' demanding schedules prevent them from being fully present, the quality and coherence of students' work may suffer. This lack of focus on students' work can result in a less cohesive output. To address this issue, it is crucial for the department to prioritise the hiring of supervisors who can

effectively balance their workload and prioritise their responsibilities towards students. By doing so, students will benefit from the guidance and support necessary to excel in their academic endeavours.

3. Based on the underutilisation of technology, the study recommends that parties involved in co-supervision should leverage the power of communication to bridge the gap and make supervision continuous, regardless of where the parties are located. This will improve co-supervision practices in the department. It is further recommended that as part of the communication process, parties should commit to specific times for communication. For instance, parties should respect time and adhere to it. This will be beneficial to both parties in planning and meeting timelines to aid early completion of work.

4. In relation to the enforcement of supervision regulations in the department of a university in Ghana it is strongly recommended that both the department and the university ensure strict adherence to the policies governing dissertation and thesis writing. The continuous relaxation of co-supervision rules would only serve to further delay or impede the completion of projects within the department. To address this issue, it is proposed that regular seminars and workshops be organized, at a minimum frequency of every three months, where postgraduate students are obligated to attend without exception. By implementing these measures effectively and with a positive approach, both parties involved in co-supervision can be held accountable for their work, while also providing transparent information on the progress of students who may be facing challenges. This proactive approach will enable authorities to intervene and offer the necessary support to students who encounter difficulties during the

process of completing their thesis or dissertation. This will facilitate the early completion of projects within the department and the university as a whole.

5. Ultimately, it is crucial to emphasise the importance of students' dedication and proactive approach in order to achieve early completion of projects. Supervisors invest considerable time and resources to support students, but their efforts can only yield fruitful results when met with equal commitment from the students themselves. By prioritizing their responsibilities, selecting appropriate research topics, and seeking guidance when needed, students can ensure a smoother and more efficient project completion process.

5.7 Recommendation for Further Study

This study has identified several limitations that should be addressed in future research. Firstly, it is important to note that the study was conducted solely within the department of a university in Ghana. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies be conducted across various departments within the entire university to gain a comprehensive understanding of how co-supervision practices impact the completion rate of theses and dissertations.

By expanding the scope of research to include postgraduate research students under co-supervisors from different departments, a more holistic view can be obtained. This would enable a better appreciation of the role co-supervision plays in facilitating the successful completion of academic writing across the university.

Conducting such studies would provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of co-supervision practices and their potential benefits for students. Additionally, it would allow for a comparison of experiences and outcomes across different departments, shedding light on any variations or patterns that may exist.

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By addressing these limitations and conducting further research, a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of co-supervision on thesis and dissertation completion rates can be achieved. This knowledge would be invaluable in improving the overall academic experience and success of postgraduate research students at department of a university in Ghana

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT
P. O. Box 25, Winneba, Ghana

UEW/EAM/SAN/06

09th July, 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

We write to introduce Patrick Kobina Mara Arthur a student on the M. Phil. Educational Administration and Management programme of the Department of Educational Administration and Management.

Mr. Mara Arthur is currently working on a research project titled:

"UNDERSTANDING POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA, GHANA, EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS ON CO-SUPERVISION AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT".

Please, give him the necessary assistance and co-operation.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Salome O. Essuman (Prof.)
Head of Department

cc: Dean, School of Graduate Studies

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APPENDIX II

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

DEAM/MPHIL/INTRO-VOL.1/22

Date: 22nd August, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

We write to introduce **Mara Arthur Patrick Kobina** a student pursuing a Master of Philosophy (Educational Administration and Management) Programme at the Department of Educational Administration and Management, University of Education, Winneba.

Mara Arthur Patrick Kobina is currently working on a research project titled:

"CHALLENGES OF STUDENTS UNDER CO-SUPERVISORS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA".

We should be grateful if you could accord her the needed assistance to aid the completion of her research.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Prof Hinneh Kusi
Ag. Head of Department

www.uew.edu.gh

APPENDIX III

DEPARTMENT OF A UNIVERSITY IN GHANA

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF PROJECT: Challenges of Students Under Co-Supervisors at the

Department of a University in Ghana

Name of Researcher**:** Patrick Kobina Mara Arthur.

PLEASE INSECT YOUR INITIAL IN THE BOXES

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above

study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to

withdraw at any time, without giving any reason or legal rights being affected.

3. I am willing for the interview to be recorded.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____ _____/_____/_____ _____

Name of Participant　　　　　Date　　　　　　　　　Signature

_____ _____/_____/_____ _____

Researcher　　　　　　　　Date　　　　　　　　Signature

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET:

Please you are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to take

part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it

will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it

with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like

more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

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What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences encountered by postgraduate students under co - supervisors during research project in the Department of a University in Ghana

Why have I been chosen?

You have been selected because you have established relationship with supervisors and you would be able to provide more in-depth of information.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate or not will not provide any advantage or disadvantage to you. I would, however, greatly appreciate you taking the time to participate in the study.

What will happen to me if I agree to take part?

The interview will involve to explore the experiences encountered by postgraduate students under co supervisors during research project in the Department of a University in Ghana.

You will be asked about your opinion on manner co - supervision is practiced at DUG**,** your experiences on co-supervision at different stages your research work, challenges posed by co-supervision and how it affected your completion rate of research work and strategies that could be put in place to improve co- supervision at DUG**.**

The discussion would be moderated by Patrick Kobina Mara Arthur (the researcher). It is expected that the discussion should take no longer than an hour and will be recorded using a digital recorder. You will be asked to sign a consent form.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is part of a Masters of Philosophy Thesis within the Department of a University in Ghana

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be analysed by the researcher, Patrick Kobina Mara Arthur. When any results and findings of this research project are presented or reported to others inside or outside of the University, your anonymity is guaranteed. Reference to specific people, who you may mention, will also be removed from any quotations that are used.

What if something goes wrong?

We do not expect anything to go wrong but if you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this research, please contact Prof, Dominic Mensah and Dr. Judith Bampo (Mrs.) Lecturers, Department of a University in Ghana Tel: 0542693086/ 0203709279.

Who may I contact for further information?

Patrick Kobina Mara Arthur

pkmaraarthur78@gmail.com

02042521975 / 0205185721
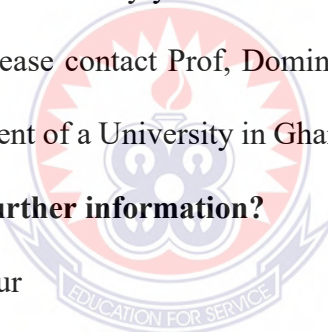
APPENDIX IV

DEPARTMENT OF A UNIVERSITY IN GHANA

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Topic: Topic for Challenges of Students Under Co-Supervisors at the Department of a University in Ghana

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this discussion. This researcher is very interested to hear your valuable opinion on kind of experiences postgraduate students encountered under two supervisors during research project at Department of a

University in Ghana

I welcome all of you for making time for this focus discussion.

My name is ……………………………………………………………………………

Could you also introduce yourselves one after the other by telling your name age, the circuit you supervise, your educational background and year you were offered admission in the department.

The purpose of this study is to find out the kind of experiences postgraduate students encountered under two supervisors during research project at Department of a University in Ghana. The information you give us is completely confidential, and we will not associate your name with anything you say in the focus group.

- *The researcher would like to tape the focus groups so that your thoughts, opinions, and ideas will be captured from the group. No names will be attached to the focus groups and the tapes will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed.*

- *You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time.*

- *I understand how important it is that this information is kept private and confidential.*

- *I will ask participants to respect each other's confidentiality.*

- *If you have any questions now or after you have completed the questionnaire, you can always contact the researcher's phone numbers on 0242521975*

- *Please check the boxes on page 2 and sign to show you agree to participate in this focus group.*

1. **Ground Rules**

   The group to suggest some ground rules (Please any suggested rule to guide the study)

Please let us observe the following rules as we go along with our focus discussion.

- Everyone should participate.

- Information provided in the focus group must be kept confidential.

- Stay with the group and please don't have side conversations.

- We're gathering information but not trying to achieve consensus, therefore we should respect each other's views.

- Focus group will last about one hour

- Feel free to express your views.

Is there are any questions before we get started?

Questions:

Let's start our discussion by talking about the practice of two supervisors supervising one student on their research project in the Department of a University in Ghana

5. Could you please describe how co- supervision operate in DUG?

6. What are some of the positives about the practice?

7. What are some of things that aren't so good about the practice?

1. What are possible challenges students are likely to encounter at various stages of the research projects?

Probes for Discussion

1. How does these challenges impede the completion of the research project?

2. From your experience what critical incident or incidents that is possible to result in conflict among the co- supervisor and students which will eventually affect the supervision to delay project work completion?

3. Apart from co- supervision challenges is there any other factors that likely affect project supervision at DUG?

4. What practical measures would you recommend to manage co-supervision challenges to expedite research supervision in DUG?

Thank you so much for coming and sharing your thoughts and opinions with us. If you have additional information that you did not get to say in the focus group, please feel free to call or WhatsApp the researcher.

APPENDIX V

DEPARTMENT OF A UNIVERSITY IN GHANA

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANT

Topic for Discussion: Topic for Challenges of Students Under Co-Supervisors at the Department of a University in Ghana

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. We wish to seek your view on kind of experiences postgraduate students encountered under two supervisors during research project and how best we can improve upon their supervisory experiences at Department of a University in Ghana. So, there are no right or wrong answers to any of our questions, we are interested in your own experiences.

Participation in this study is voluntary and your decision to participate, or not participate, will not affect you in any way. The interview should take approximately one hour depending on how much information you would like to share. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview because I don't want to miss any of your comments. All responses will be kept confidential. This means that your de-identified interview responses will only be used for academic purposes only and we will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify you as the participants. You may decline to answer any question or stop the interview at any time and for any reason. Are there any questions about what I have just explained? May I turn on the digital recorder?

Before we begin, it would be nice if you could tell me a little bit about yourself.

Which year, were you offered admission in the department?

How many of your friend couldn't graduate with you?

What accounted for their inability to graduate or late graduation?

1. Can you tell me about your understanding of co-supervision practice in the Department of a University in Ghana.

Prompts: How were you, meetings with co-supervisors and what was the outcomes?

How were your co-supervisor providing feedback to your work?

How well did your co- supervisor collaborated to supervise your work and how did it benefit you?

What are the great weaknesses of the co- supervision practise at DUG?

2. Briefly describe as much details as you can some of the experiences encountered at each stage of you research project? Thus, from beginning till the end of your research project.

Prompts: Did the experience in any way impede or expedite your progress in the research completion? If so, how?

Whenever you are confronted with challenges during your research project, what do you do?

3. **Conclusion**

My last two questions. Will you still recommend to the department to rely on co supervisors to supervise student's research project? If yes why? If no why?

Prompts: Which areas do you think co-supervisors at DUG need to improve to expedite early completion of research in the department?

Is there anything else that you would like to comment on about the topic that we haven't discussed today?

APPENDIX VI

DEPARTMENT OF A UNIVERSITY IN GHANA

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS

Topic for Discussion: Topic for Challenges of Students Under Co-Supervisors at the Department of a University in Ghana

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I wish to seek your view on kind of experiences postgraduate students encountered under two supervisors during research project and how best we can improve upon their supervisory experiences at Department of a University in Ghana. So, there are no right or wrong answers to any of our questions, we are interested in your own experiences.

Participation in this study is voluntary and your decision to participate, or not participate, will not affect you in any way. The interview should take approximately one hour depending on how much information you would like to share. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview because I don't want to miss any of your comments. All responses will be kept confidential. This means that your de-identified interview responses will only be used for academic purposes only and we will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify you as the participants. You may decline to answer any question or stop the interview at any time and for any reason. Are there any questions about what I have just explained? May I turn on the digital recorder?

Before we begin, it would be nice if you could tell me a little bit about yourself.

How long have been in this department?

How long have you collaborated with other lectures to supervise postgraduate research in the department?

1. What will you say about co-supervision practice in the Department of Management?

Prompt: What are the major reasons for practicing co-supervision model in the department?

How have been collaborating with the principal or co- supervisor to supervise postgraduate research?

How often do you meet with principal or co- supervisor to discuss the student work?

2. Briefly describe as much details as you can your co- supervision experiences encountered in your supervision duties.

Prompts: What are the possible challenges students have been encountering under co-supervision arrangement?

How does these challenges impede their research project work?

What are the great weaknesses of the co-supervision practices at DUG?

Conclusion

3 My last two questions. In your opinion what measures should be in place in other to manage co-supervision coercions in other to improve supervision to ensure early completion rate of research in the department?

Prompt: Is there anything else you would like to tell me that you haven't mentioned?

Is there anything else that you would like to comment on about the topic that we haven't discussed today? *Thank you very much for your time.*