

MISMATCHED EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS IN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS SUPERVISION

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ABSTRACT

Thesis supervision involves both supervisors and supervisees that have different perceptions and expectations. This study aims to explore the perceptions of supervisors and expectations of supervisees. An exploratory case study design was applied in this study. Eleven of 24 supervisors who participated in this study responded to questions about their supervisory given via Google Form. Nine English undergraduate students who are currently working on their undergraduate thesis were involved. A set of questions was distributed to supervisors and semi-structured interview was applied to supervisees. The data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that there are mismatched expectations and perceptions that contribute to the complexity of thesis supervision. The supervisors have a positive perception about their relationship with the supervisees. They recognize their supervisees' needs and have professional relationships with their supervisees. They provide help and guidance, such as providing online links of material to support the supervisee's thesis. Furthermore, they expect their supervisees to have autonomy in learning for their own thesis, have adequate research knowledge and skills, and have good communication skills. However, the supervisees expected that their supervisors recognized each supervisee's characters, needs, and weaknesses. They expect to receive clear and structured instructions to outline their research schedules and activities and to receive oral specific feedback on specific parts of their thesis. This study highlights a need for clarity about the expectations of each party to minimize mismatched expectations.

Keywords: thesis expectations, thesis perceptions, undergraduate thesis supervision

INTRODUCTION

In higher education, undergraduate students are often required to conduct research for their final project or thesis which occurs at the end of their bachelor programs. The goal of this undergraduate research is to facilitate the development of essential research skills that will benefit students in their future academic careers. Since the undergraduate thesis project serves as a significant milestone, representing the culmination of students' studies, it is expected that students take responsibility for managing their thesis projects. When completing the theses, students both learn to write academically and write to learn (Hunker et al., 2014; Jusslin & Widlund, 2024). It is argued that thesis writing allows students to learn to formulate arguments, evaluate evidence, and connect ideas that develop critical thinking skills as

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required for reading academic texts (Jefferies et al., 2018; Liu & Stapleton, 2018; Reffhaug & Lysgaard, 2024).

When students write their research project for their undergraduate thesis, they require to possess research skills and competences: writing a research plan; reviewing related literature; determining the aim and focus of the study; and composing research questions (Alsaleh, 2019; Lee et al., 2020). They must develop these skills and competencies because they have less experience in conducting research (Agricola et al., 2018). As a result, they need support and guidance during thesis supervision based on their needs (Agricola et al., 2020).

Diagnosing students' research skills, defined as the ability to judge students' research skills (Agricola et al., 2018), is important in research supervision (de Kleijn et al., 2014; Khosravi & Ahmad, 2016). The diagnostic research skills include being sensitive to students' differences and supervisors' support based on students' needs and knowledge (Ädel et al., 2023; Marel, et al., 2022; Shanahan et al., 2015; Todd et al., 2006).

The objective of an undergraduate thesis is to evaluate the skills acquired by the students throughout their degree program. Students can achieve this by working independently, taking initiatives and developing required competences (Tuononen & Parpala, 2021). Conversely, Todd (2004) noted that the challenge in the undergraduate thesis lies in offering sufficient support to foster autonomy while acknowledging that many students may not feel entirely prepared for this type of study. For this reason, it is necessary for supervisors to provide resources for students, such guidebooks or websites related to thesis projects.

The most substantial support that students receive originates from their supervisor. A study conducted by Strebel et al. (2019) indicated that supervision significantly influences the outcome of bachelor thesis. Furthermore, a study by Todd et al. (2004) identified that supervisors need to provide academic guidance related to research methods and thesis structure, motivate students to establish tasks and timelines, possess academic expertise in the thesis and aid throughout the thesis process.

Thesis supervision is complex. The complexity comes from numerous factors involved in the thesis supervision, encompassing both supervisors and students as the supervisees. Undergraduate thesis requires students' autonomy, despite students requesting support, resulting in a tension embodied by the supervisor (Strebel et al., 2019).). As a result, there is a potential for a mismatch between the assistance offered by the supervisors and the assistance sought by the supervisees. This situation can affect the nature of relationship that eventually influences the thesis outcome.

Student emotion contributes to thesis completion. Medaille et al. (2022) study with 11 honors students in the USA found that students' prior research experiences, vicarious learning from successful research projects, and motivation from supervisors, peers, and others were important for students' thesis completion. Furthermore, managing physiological and emotional states, and having satisfied relationships with supervisors are significant.

Supervisors, in addition to students, encounter emotional challenges that affect their supervisory relationship. Han et al., (2024) investigates emotional difficulties encountered by research supervisors, particularly in balancing supportive mentorship with the accountability demands of academic institutions. The findings highlighted the importance of strategies to control emotion. Furthermore, the results indicated the need for institutional support to assist supervisors in navigating the emotional challenges effectively.

Research also shows that students are unsure about their thesis and supervision. Henttonen (2021) investigation with 93 nursing students in Sweden context found that the students were uncertain about their own capabilities and motivation for the thesis. The study expected students to improve three major's competences to complete their thesis: gaining professional knowledge and competency, planning and organizing the work; and taking stock of personal resources.

Students perceived that supervisors do not provide sufficient guidance. Study by Quinto (2022) with 40 students in Philippine context using interviews during pandemic found three major students' challenges in thesis writing. These were unclear suggestions, financial issues,

and insufficient guidance. They were confused with the suggestions given as these suggestions differed from what they received during consultations.

Students' lack of mastery of research methodology contribute to thesis difficulties. Research by Reguent et al. (2018) with 12 supervisors in University of Barcelona were interviewed about their perceptions of students' methodological competencies of Final Year Project. They found that the supervisors viewed themselves as supporters for their supervisees and as facilitators of the process.

Research has revealed that students have a variety of expectations of their supervisors. They anticipate that their supervisors will outline their time management, provide reading materials (Filippou et al. 2017; Roberts & Seaman, 2018) and give constructive feedback (Chugh et al. 2021). A review by Bearman et al. (2024) about feedback revealed that feedback practices could be in the form of talk (face to face talk), text (supervisors' textual feedback), and formal progress report. The feedback is developed by the relationship between the supervisors and their supervisees. However, supervisees are also anticipated to be open, committed, and dedicated to their thesis project (Wisker, 2018).

Being independent of the thesis project is also expected in the supervisory relationship. An investigation by de Kleijn et al. (2014) found that supervisees have less awareness of working independently on their thesis projects leading to misconception during supervision process. This suggests that expectations and agreement should be informed in advance. The supervision process influences the supervisory relationship that affect the quality of the thesis project (Ismail et al., 2011; Roberts & Seaman, 2018).

Teklesellassie (2019) explores the dynamics and challenges of thesis supervision in the context of Ethiopian higher education. The study reveals that while supervisors focus significantly on helping students with research methodology and correcting technical issues, they often neglect to support students in developing theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, many students reported that they had infrequent feedback and weak supervisory relationships, highlighting a disconnect between students' expectations and supervisors' perceptions, necessitating improved communication and a balanced supervisory approach.

Previous studies demonstrate that many features affect the effectiveness of thesis supervision. An autoethnography study by Daramola (2021) concluded that the quality of motivation, intellectual investments of the supervisees the supervisors, and the nature of the relationship between the supervisees and the supervisors affect the effectiveness of the thesis supervision.

There is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of thesis supervision including expectations and challenges of students in the thesis supervision. However, limited research investigates perceptions of the supervisors in thesis supervision and expectations towards their students or supervisees. This study attempts to explore supervisors perception about themselves in the thesis supervision including their expectations towards their students or supervisees, and the supervisees expectations. Three research questions are formulated to guide this study: 1) What do supervisors perceive themselves in supervising undergraduate theses? 2) What are the key elements of effective thesis supervision from supervisors' perspectives? 3) What are the expectations of the supervisees in theses supervision?

METHODS

This study employs an exploratory case study design to facilitate understanding of a phenomenon from the viewpoints of individuals actively engaged in a particular context (Stake, 2010). The design is suitable for this study as it facilitates new insight into students' voices on research supervision through an inductive approach.

The participants in this study were nine English students who worked on their undergraduate theses and 11 supervisors. A purposive sampling technique with criteria such as those who had worked on the thesis for more than three months, received feedback from their supervisors, and who were voluntarily involved in interviews, was applied in this study to

determine the students as the participants. Further, for the supervisors, eleven of 24 supervisors who participated in this study responded to questions about their supervisory given via google form. They, aged 40-50, have experienced more than 10 years in thesis supervision.

Semi-structure interviews and a set of questions were used to gather data. Semi structure interviews were applied to supervisees to capture their expectations in the supervision process. The interviews were conducted face- to-face for eight participants and one was via Zoom meeting, each for ten minutes. The interview questions were in English, but the responses were both in English and Bahasa Indonesia.

A set of questions adapted from the work of Ahn & Fox (2016) was distributed to capture the nuanced perspectives of thesis supervisors regarding their roles and experiences in undergraduate thesis supervision. The questions consisted of 30 questions with a Likert scale of 1-6 (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree) and 11 open questions. The questions with the Likert scale focused on four factors: building a positive relationship with the supervisees, recognizing individual student needs, being attentive to the daily tasks, and building a personal relationship with the supervisees. Meanwhile, the open questions emphasized supervising abilities and effective supervisors.

The researchers followed the guidelines of research ethics to achieve participants confidentiality. The participants, both the supervisees and supervisors, were informed about the aim of the study, their required participation, and their rights. All participants provided informed consent to participate in the research. The transcripts and recordings from the interviews, and the responses of a set of questions were confidentially and carefully documented.

The data was analyzed thematically. The analysis of the data began with familiarization with the data. The researchers read and re-read through all the interview transcripts from students and supervisors' responses multiple times. This was intended to gain a deep understanding of the content and context of the data. Writing down initial impressions and ideas was also completed during this stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This stage was followed by generating initial codes by identifying and labelling phrases, sentences or segments of the data that are relevant to participants' experiences in thesis supervision. Once a comprehensive list of codes, grouping the codes into potential themes began. After identifying potential themes, reviewing them to ensure they accurately represent the data was conducted. This step involved refining the themes by combining, splitting, or discarding them as necessary. Once the themes were finalized, defining and naming them were the following stage. This involved clearly describing what each theme was about, what aspects of the data it captured, and how it related to the overall research questions.

Member checking and triangulation were utilized to enhance trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking entailed presenting the preliminary findings to select participants to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. Triangulation was accomplished by analyzing the findings from the student interviews and supervisors' responses to discern consistency or discrepancies between the two perspectives. By employing these, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive and trustworthy account of the supervision process from the perspectives of both students and supervisors, contributing valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on effective thesis supervision in higher education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Supervisors perceived themselves in thesis supervision

The responses of the questionnaire of the supervisors that have six levels of Likert scale of 1-6 (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Tend to disagree, Tend to agree, Agree, and Strongly agree) are classified into four ones to ease the findings' presentation. The four classifications are Disagree, Tend to disagree, Tend to agree, and Agree. The findings from questionnaires are presented in the figures regarding the four factors: Building a positive relationship with the

supervisees, Recognizing individual student needs, Being attentive to the daily tasks, and Building a personal relationship with the supervisees.

The supervisors' responses regarding building a positive relationship with the supervisees (in a research setting) consist of nine statements. Generally, the findings demonstrated that the supervisors have positive perception about their relationship with the supervisees. This is important during thesis supervision because their supervisees need their support and guidance (Agricola et al., 2020) particularly in the research project (Agricola et al., 2018). This is in line with the study by Strebel et al. (2019) that supervision has a strong influence on the outcome of bachelor thesis.

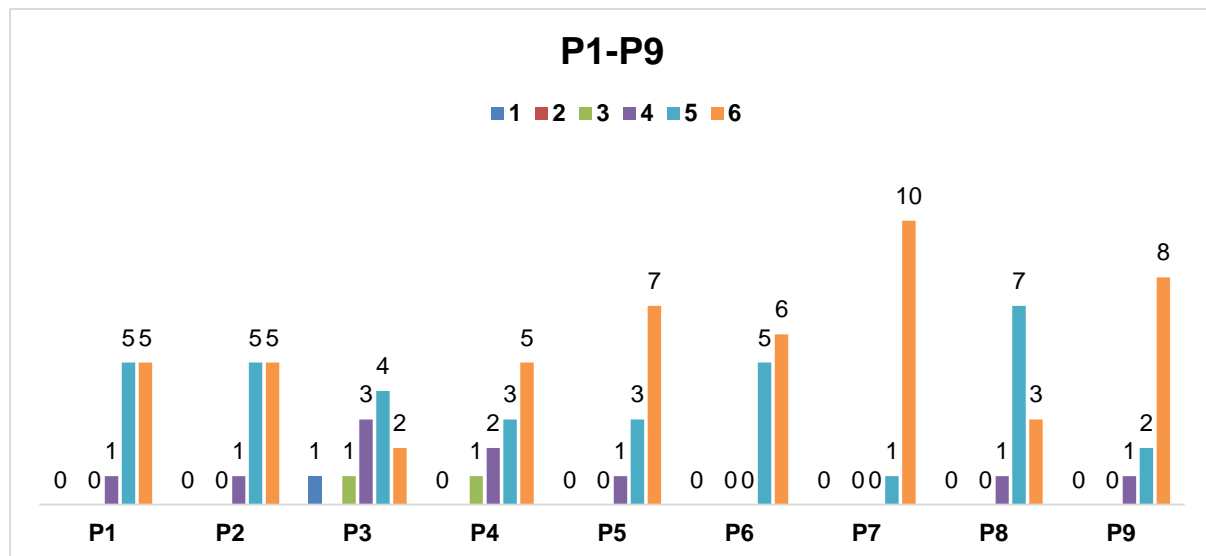


Figure 1. Building a positive relationship with the supervisees (in a research setting)

The supervisors built a positive relationship with their supervisees as their responses indicated that they all mostly agree with the statements that they support their supervisees (P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P8., and P9). The supervisors are comfortable admitting when their supervisees identify their shortcomings; accepting if suggestions from supervisees are better than theirs; they are supportive and encouraging; open to new ideas/suggestions/recommendations from supervisees; respect supervisees; take an active interest in supervisees' concerns; and concern the importance of creating an environment where supervisees can ask questions without feeling embarrassed or being judged.

The second factor is recognizing individual student needs and personalizing the supervising approach. The responses reveal that the supervisors perceive that they recognize their supervisees' needs and personalize the supervising approach as presented in Figure 2.

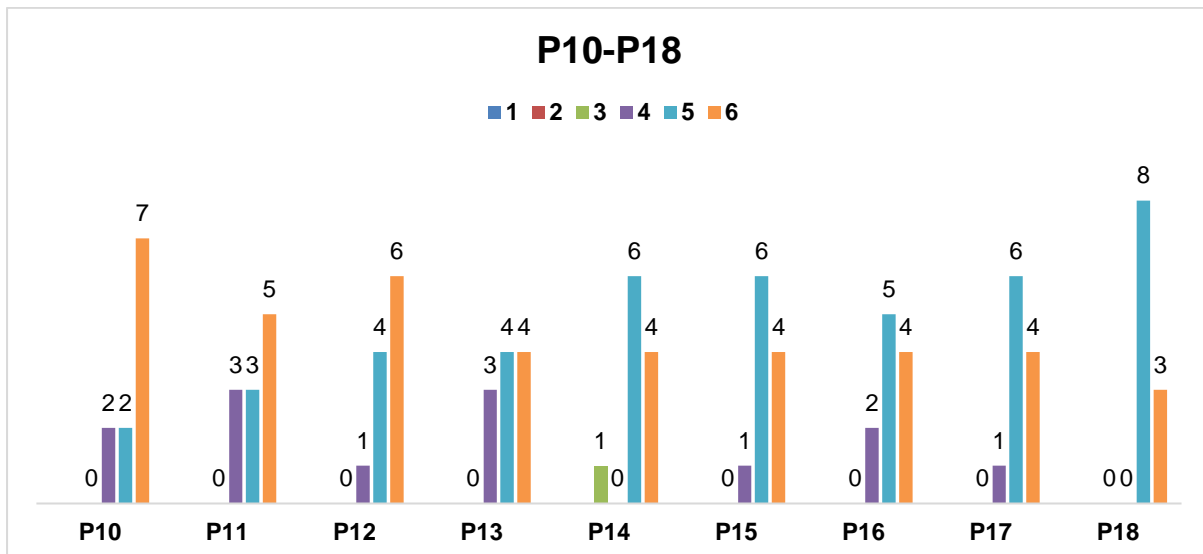


Figure 2. Recognizing individual student needs and personalizing the supervising approach

Most supervisors agreed that identifying a student's strengths and weaknesses as a researcher was important; the way the supervisors communicated depends on the level of knowledge a supervisee has; a supervisor should identify what a student knows (or does not know) on the planned research topic in the early stage of the supervisee project; to know a student's previous research experience; to guide and assist of a supervisee' project in the first few weeks; to know how supervisee acquires and processes new knowledge; to identify sets of research abilities that a student possesses; to help a supervisee improve the research skills that the student is weak in; to identify a supervisee's goals in a project and helping him/her achieve the goals (P10-P18). This aligns with existing literature indicating that supervisors must be sensitive to the diverse needs of students. The level and extent of supervisor support should be tailored to individual student's requirements, as the nature of the necessary support varies among students (Ädel et al., 2023; Marel, et al., 2022; Shanahan et al., 2015; Todd et al., 2006).

The next factor is being attentive to the daily tasks performed by the supervisees. The responses of the supervisors were varied from disagree, tend to disagree, tend to agree, and agree.

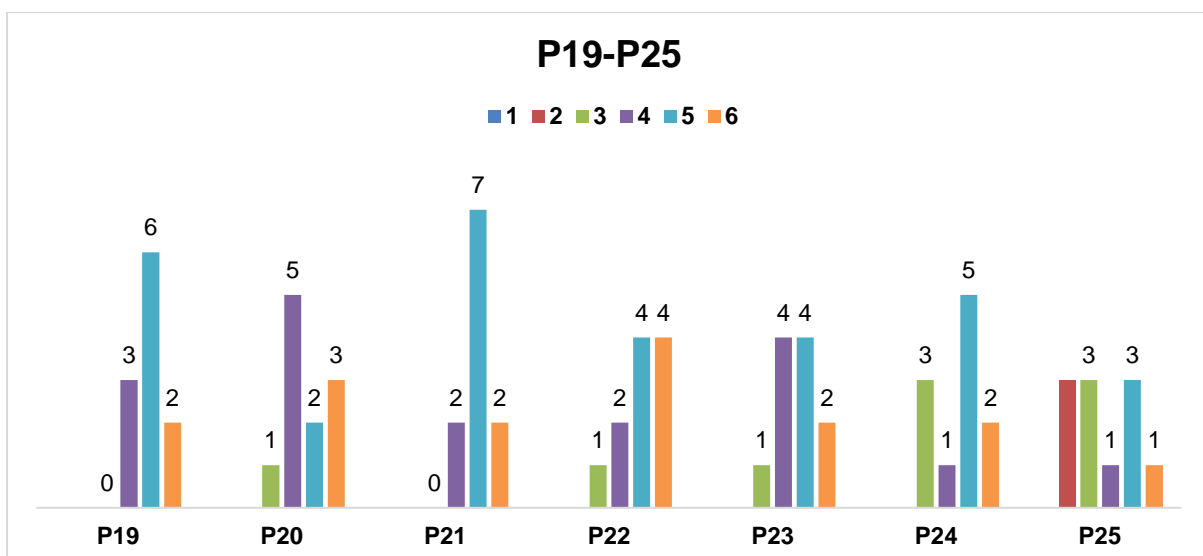


Figure 3. Factor 3: Being attentive to the daily tasks performed by the supervisees

The supervisors tend to agree with the statement 19 (P19) and 21 (P21) that a supervisor needs to be aware of the tasks/activities that a supervisee is undertaking each day and a supervisor should check with supervisees at least once a month to make sure everything is okay. Meanwhile, the supervisors perceived similar responses for other four statements (P20, P22, P23, and P24: I tell supervisees what to do; communicate with supervisees at least once a month (e.g., by email, face-to-face, or phone call); often ask supervisees whether he/she is doing things correctly; and I like to create a project schedule that lists tasks that need to be completed by supervisees). This indicated that the supervisors have encouraged and motivated their supervisees in thesis supervision. This is strongly relevant with previous studies by Todd et al. (2004) that supervisors need to guide, motivate, communicate, and help their supervisees. Moreover, a study by Reguent et al. (2018) with 12 supervisors in University of Barcelona found that they perceived themselves that they supported and facilitated their supervisees by offering personal and professional guidance.

The last factor is building a personal relationship with the supervisees (outside a research setting). Generally, the responses of the supervisors about building a personal relationship with the supervisees (outside a research setting) tend to disagree.

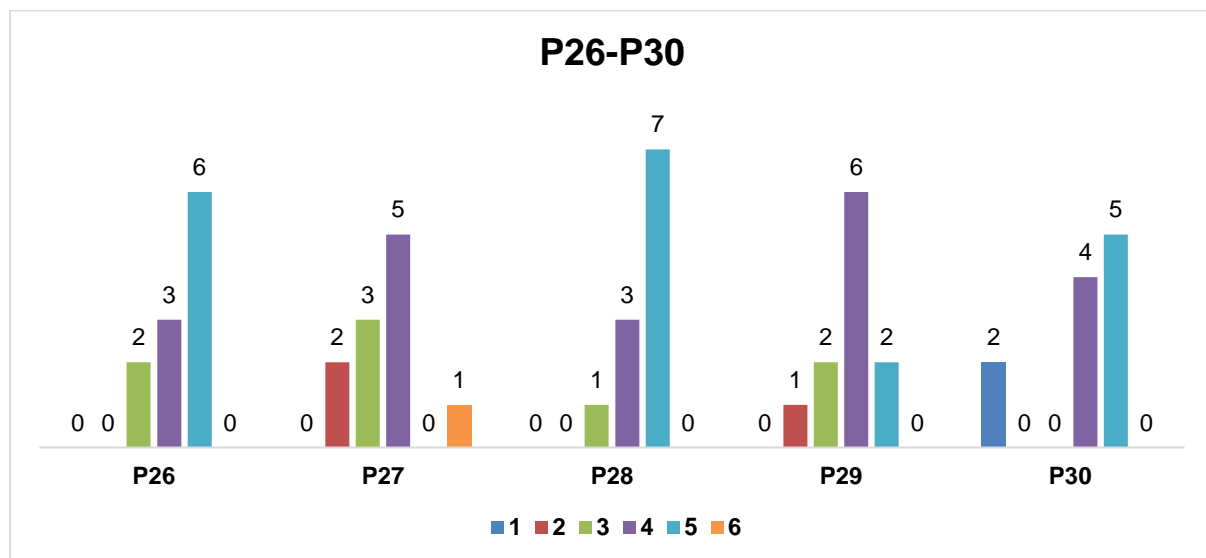


Figure 4. Building a personal relationship with the supervisees (outside a research setting)

The supervisors tend to have professional relations rather than personal relations with their supervisees. They express disagreement with the statements of 27 and 29 regarding meeting supervisees outside the research environment to foster friendship; and they show interest in understanding supervisee's interests beyond the research context. Two supervisors disagreed with statement 30 that they make efforts to get to know supervisees as persons.

It can be argued that the supervisors perceived themselves as professional supervisors as they build a positive relationship with the supervisees in the frame of a research context, they tend to be attentive to their supervisees and have more professional rather than personal relationship with them (Reguent et al., 2018).

Supervisors' support and guidance

Advice for supervisees

Most supervisors provide advice to their supervisees to 1) do readings of references of their thesis project to develop a literature review, 2) develop research activities. Five of them reported that they asked their supervisees to do readings of references for their theses as one reported:

"I initially asked them to search for the reputable references, read them and make outline from the references they summarized, conduct literature review, and read methodology books" (Su-1)

The statement implies that the supervisors instructed their supervisees follow a systematic research process such as finding credible references, reading and summarizing them, creating an organized outline, performing a comprehensive literature review, and consulting methodology books to ensure their research approach and methods. Previous investigations indicate that supervisees are required to write research plans, conduct literature reviews, establish the aim and focus of their study, and to formulate research questions (Alsaleh, 2019; Lee et.al. 2020). Research skills and competencies must be developed during the thesis work (Agricola et al., 2018). Further, they also emphasized the importance of developing research activities:

"Most of the time, I ask my students to get involved in various comprehensive research activities and questioned them, why this, why that and so on, and then, I also encourage them to conduct literature review, formulate hypothesis, design experiments, gather data, analyze and interpret findings, draw conclusions, write reports, deliver oral presentation" (Su-10)

The supervisors also engaged with their supervisees in comprehensive research activities, encouraging critical thinking by asking probing questions. They guided their supervisees through research processes from conducting literature reviews to writing reports and delivering oral presentations to communicate their findings effectively. The supervisors' guidance and instructions in this study are linked with previous investigation by Henttonen (2021) that supervisees are expected to gain professional knowledge and competency, to plan and organize their work, and to take stock of personal resources. Furthermore, not only the support from the supervisors, but also the supervisees are expected to take initiatives, develop required skills and competences, and work independently (Tuononen & Parpala, 2021).

Support for references

Most of them give similar responses that they provided online links of material to support the supervisee's thesis as one reported

"I provide various resources, like access to academic journals, data analysis software, and guides for academic writing, and any other web-hack that help them on their writing. Usually I provide steps to follow, from searching for relevant literature, reading and noting important points" (Su-11)

The supervisors offer multiple resources to assist their supervisees in academic writing, including access to journals, data analysis software, and writing guides. Additionally, they provided practical steps for the research process, such as finding relevant literature and taking notes on key points. This links with the literature suggesting that individual support during supervision should be adapted to the student's level of knowledge and need for assistance (Agricola et al., 2020). The resources and guidelines are designed to help their supervisees effectively navigate and complete their academic writing tasks. However, the supervisors did not really structure research activity in a particular sequence for their supervisees as they indicated in one utterance:

"I expect my students already know from the previous courses that they had. So, I did not teach them in detail how to note taking, highlighting, and paraphrasing. I expect they will have this knowledge before they discuss their research with me. Especially nowadays, there are many tools that can be learnt by students concerning with these issues" (Su-7)

The supervisors hypothesized that the supervisees have prior knowledge of reading strategies such as note-taking, highlighting, and paraphrasing from earlier courses. Therefore, these skills are not taught in detail. They expected the supervisees to possess this knowledge before engaging in research discussions. Additionally, independent academic learning can be completed with the availability of various AI tools. This expectation correlates with research by Henttonen (2021) investigation students need to improve personal and professional knowledge and competency; and to manage their thesis project to complete their theses. They need to have more awareness of working independently rather than relied on their supervisors (de Kleijn et al., 2014). In addition, Wisker (2018) emphasized that supervisees need to be committed and dedicated to complete their thesis.

Assist supervisees

The supervisors believed they facilitated their supervisees acquisition of necessary knowledge and skill development for the completion of each research activity as one reported

“I provide constructive feedback at each stage of their research, whenever they seem confused, and I as well as encourage them to ask questions and discuss the difficulties they face. Additionally, sometimes if it necessary I organize peer review sessions where students can give feedback to each other” (Su-11)

Further, one emphasized *“I ask them to read as many recommended research articles as possible. This will help them broaden their research knowledge” (Su-7)*. The statements showed that the supervisors provided guidance to their supervisees through research by offering constructive feedback, addressing confusion, and fostering open dialogue. Encouraging questions and organizing peer review sessions creates a collaborative learning environment among the supervisees that will enhance the quality of their work. They have assisted their supervisees in the supervision process (Filippou et al. 2017; Roberts & Seaman, 2018).

Effective supervision

The supervisors identified two major features needed to support undergraduates to conduct research, namely research knowledge and skills, and good communication skills

“The ability to identify every individual student's character, potential as well as shortcomings. But it's not always possible; the time target to finish the research, the number of students to assist, among many other factors that limit the supervisors' support to their supervisees” (Su-9)

It is necessary to understand each student's unique traits, strengths, and weaknesses in academic supervision. This is similar with the suggested literature that supervisors need to be sensitive individual differences of their supervisees including the assistance and guidance they need (Ädel et al., 2023; Marel, et al., 2022; Shanahan et al., 2015; Todd et al., 2006). However, challenges like limited time, research deadlines, and the number of students under supervision often hinder supervisors from providing personalized guidance to every student, affecting the level of individual support they can offer. The number of supervisees adds an emotional burden to supervisors. This extends the complexity of thesis supervision from previous investigations of Han et al., (2024) that institutions need to support the supervision process in this context.

Further, two supervisors did not consider themselves as effective supervisors as one reported that *“It is hard to describe, not sure whether I am categorized as an effective supervisor or not (S8)*. In addition, four reported that they were concerned about humanity as one reported that

“A supervisor should be kind, organized, communicative, patient and student focused. Once, a student was struggling with time management. Then I asked him to make a time plan and try to stick with the goal targeted. Also, I had experience with a student who had interpersonal problems with his family. I provided my time to listen and advise him on some suggestions. I know it does not help much, but at least it minimizes the problem and reminds him to finish his research on time” (Su-4)

The statement indicates some features of an effective supervisor such as kindness, organization, communication, patience, and a student-centered approach. It shows a proactive role in addressing student challenges, such as time management and personal issues, by providing practical solutions and emotional support. While the supervisors acknowledged their limitations in resolving personal problems, they emphasized the importance of encouragement and guidance, fostering a supportive environment that helps students stay focused and motivated to complete their thesis successfully. This supports a previous investigation by Daramola (2021) that motivation, competence, and relationship between supervisors and supervisees impact on the thesis completion.

Students’ expectations during research supervision

The findings indicated three major expectations of the supervisees for their thesis supervision: expected supervisors, expected supervision, and feedback

Expected supervisors

The findings revealed that the supervisees expected specific criteria of supervisors who give advice and suggestions, help in finding journals and books, and understand the condition of their supervisees. Three reported different expectations towards their supervisors such as one said *“I hope that my supervisor will give her best to give advice and suggestion for me” (Ss-1)*, and student 5 explained *“The expectation is like this, the expectation is that I want help from my supervisor saying, “you can download it here” (Ss-5)*. These two statements indicated a preference for supervisors who can help her not only through verbal instruction but also providing concrete examples such as journal or references. He perceived that certain journals or books were inaccessible and some inadequate, leading her to anticipate greater guidance and assistance. In addition, one reported

“I really want to have supervisor who exhibits kindness. Th completion of the thesis is notably stressful, particularly due to the expectations imposed by others. I expect my supervisors to be individuals who understand the mental state of their students” (Ss-7)

It can be seen from the statements that the supervisee expected to have supervisors who understood not only the material of thesis but also the condition of the supervisees (de Kleijn et al., 2014; Khosravi & Ahmad, 2016). She believed that the process of working on a thesis was challenging and that increased support from supervisors, both physically and mentally, would be beneficial for their supervisees. This is important in the supervision as suggested in the literature that supervisors need to be aware not only of things related to the thesis but also supervisees emotion (Medaille et al., 2022; Quinto, 2022; Teklesellassie, 2019). It could be said that each participant had their own expectations towards their supervisors.

Expected supervision

Most supervisees anticipated their supervisors would be responsive, facilitating a smooth and efficient supervision process, with well-arranged time and schedules as reported by one student.

"I hope my supervisor is more responsive, as communication with them can be challenging at times. I am unable to contact them" (Ss-2)

This indicates that her supervisor was difficult to communicate with, resulting in a slower supervision process. This extends previous features need to be considered in the supervision that communication should be initially discussed before the supervision process begins. Others mentioned that the supervision should have been scheduled as one reported:

"So, I expect that I will have a routine consultation which is face to face, in a scheduled timeline for example every week, but it turns out I can't get it" (Ss-4)

The statement expressed a desire for weekly face-to-face consultations but highlighted disappointment due to the unavailability of this routine.

"I believed that with diligence and speed, I could complete the task quickly; however, this was not the case. Regardless of my diligence, I am required to adhere to the supervisor's directives. If I am quick but the lecturer is unable to keep pace due to other commitments, then I too will be late" (Ss-9)

The student anticipated completing her thesis earlier, however, she perceived that the supervision predominantly aligned with the supervisors' preferences. Supervisees expressed varying opinions on the most effective format for the supervision process. This incorporates findings from Quinto's investigation (2022), which indicated that supervisees received inadequate guidance from their supervisors. Most students indicated that offline or face-to-face supervision is the most effective form of supervision as one uttered:

"I think when I have face-to-face meeting, it is really effective for us, because we can record and ask anything that we want to know. The supervisors can provide direct feedback into the written text, and clear information. So, I think that is the best effective process that we need" (Ss-1)

The student found that offline meetings of supervision were effective because he could record, take notes, and have discussions. This might happen as the effect of the online learning during covid-19. Moreover, one informed the effective time for offline meetings for supervision:

"It's also possible that the supervision for concept development or until "research proposal seminar", may need to be conducted offline and scheduled accordingly. It is impossible to make it online. Study programs can make regulations like that" (Ss-4)

The students assert that offline supervision would be preferable until the completion of their proposal seminars, as thorough preparation of the thesis proposal necessitates effective oversight through in-person interactions.

Feedback

The supervisees preferred to have oral and specific feedback focusing on review of literature and methods chapters. Most supervisees confirmed that oral feedback was preferable as one reported:

"I prefer to have oral feedback since it will good for me as I will remember better if I get the feedback orally and directly. When it is written feedback, it is hard to

understand because the handwriting cannot be read. So, I prefer oral feedback”.
(Ss-3)

As the oral feedback was completed in the face-to-face meetings, the supervisees could explain and discuss their thesis that allowed them to express their ideas, and this interaction forced the supervisees to remember the topics discussed. They also underlined that written feedback is hard to understand. This is slightly contradictory with research review by Bearman et al. (2024) that feedback could be in the oral, written, and thesis progress report; and the students in this study preferred oral feedback.

All participants expressed a preference for receiving specific feedback from their supervisors, rather than mere agreement or general comments, as they aimed to minimize the number of revisions required by the examiners as one informed

“I’m uncertain whether I will receive general feedback. I prefer receiving criticism. It is unnecessary to be superficial; if any aspect is odd or unclear, it is preferable to seek specific clarification immediately rather than providing general feedback”
(Ss-4)

The supervisee received general feedback that made her doubtful about her thesis as she was unsure whether her thesis was acceptable or not. She mentioned that it was better for her to be criticized by the supervisors rather than having many revisions. Furthermore, she preferred to have more specific feedback as she reported

“I prefer to receive detailed feedback from my supervisors. I am concerned that if they simply accept my thesis as it is, I may face extensive revisions during the seminar. I have a fear of it” **(Ss-5)**

This suggested that the student feared receiving extensive revision from the examiners if her supervisors failed to provide specific feedback. Most supervisees prefer receiving specific feedback from their supervisors rather than mere agreement without further commentary. This implies that constructive feedback from the supervisors are required (Chugh et al. 2021). Clear feedback and suggestions of the thesis is necessary for the supervisees to minimize more revisions from examiners (Quinto, 2022).

The findings also indicated that supervisees prefer to get supervisor’s feedback in chapter 2 about literature review and chapter 3 of research methodology.

“Actually, my supervisor has consistently provided feedback into chapter 2 of the literature review. Because, as you know that literature review supports our thesis. Careful execution is important and my supervisors typically provide feedback on that part” **(Ss-1)**

The supervisees identified that the feedback in chapter 2 highlights the importance of the literature review supporting the thesis. Additionally, it was noted that feedback was received in chapter 2. Furthermore, one highlighted the importance of feedback on the instruments that would be employed in the thesis as she reported

“Hmmm... I want to have more feedback in chapter 3 of research methodology, like the instruments, why you chose these, how many participants, and research procedures” **(Ss-3)**

One student also reported an amusing situation regarding the differing instructions provided by her supervisor and examiners concerning instruments in qualitative research. Besides those findings, the findings indicated that some participants got feedback in both literature and methodology chapters.

CONCLUSION

This study has indicated that there are many features involved in the thesis supervision. Both supervisors and supervisees have expectations and perceptions contribute to complexity of thesis supervision that have been reviewed in the literature. The supervisors have a positive perception about their relationship with the supervisees. They recognize their supervisees' needs and have professional relationships with their supervisees. They help and guidance such as providing online links of material to support the supervisee's thesis. Furthermore, they expect their supervisees to have autonomy of learning for their own thesis, have adequate research knowledge and skills, and good communication skills. However, the supervisees expected that their supervisors recognize each supervisee' characters, needs, and weaknesses. They expect to receive clear and structured instructions, to outline their research schedules and activities, to receive oral specific feedback on specific part of their thesis. This indicates that both parties perceive themselves that they have done their best role. However, each party has requirements have not been fulfilled yet in their role creating misaligned their expectations and perceptions about thesis supervision. This implies that there is a need for discussion for the issues about thesis supervision facilitated by the institution that should be well-informed in the initial process of the supervision. It is expected that the complexity of supervision of the thesis could be lessened.

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