

A Survey of the Roles of Supervisors of Students' Research in Kogi State College of Education: Ankpa, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined the “Roles of Supervisors of Students’ Research in Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa.” The study sought answers to three research questions as follows: What is the mean rating of students about the role of research supervisors? What is the difference between the mean rating of students about the male and female research supervisors? What differences exist between the mean ratings of male and female students about the role of research supervisors? In addition, the study tested one null hypothesis. Two hundred and thirty nine (239) final year students of the college were randomly sampled for the study, that is, those admitted into the college in 2011/2012 academic session. The instrument for data collection was an eighteen item questionnaire designed by the researcher and validated by three lecturers in the department of psychology in the college. The instrument was administered personally by the researcher and collected the very day of administration. This therefore, ensured 100 percent returned rate. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistical tools. The results of the study included that supervisors of students’ research in KSCOE, Ankpa, are knowledgeable about research, do not demand material gifts, money and sex from their supervisees but that they are harsh and not friendly with the supervisees and again that they do not direct supervisees to where they could locate materials that could help them for the work. These lapses therefore, provided the basis for the recommendations that were put forward.

Keywords: Roles; Supervisors; Students/supervisees; Research; College of Education

I. Introduction

Students in Colleges of Education (COE) in Nigeria are required among others, to earn at least 56 credits to qualify for graduation. This includes 36 credits in the General Education courses, 6 credits in Teaching Practice (TP) and 14 credits in General Studies Education (GSE) (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2002). The status of the education courses to be offered is basically two namely: compulsory and elective. The elective courses are optional and students have choices but the compulsory courses are not.

Research which is otherwise known as project is coded Education 323 and is one of the compulsory subjects or courses that all students in the college must have to offer to be able to graduate. This course is carried out mostly as field work and students are expected on completion to present formal reports oftentimes bounded and are made to defend this work before a Research Committee set up by the college.

The students are permitted to carry out this research either in education or in any of the students’ major teaching subject areas. Regardless of where the research is carried out, the score is to be recorded in education as part of the compulsory 36 credits a student is to earn in education (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2002). The students are expected to carry out this research under the close supervision of qualified academic staff of the department or those in education.

These supervisors are expected to guide their supervisees and moderate their topics and works. They are to provide instructions that will eliminate or reduce barriers to students' efforts in this regard as is with the learning of other subjects (Millis, undated). The relationships between the supervisor and the supervisee matter a great deal for the successful execution of the research or project. For instance, Lewis (undated) noted that social/emotional support within consistent long-term school relationships could significantly improve performance. Lewis therefore, expected that teachers (supervisors) should work to establish an environment that encourages respect for the individual student voice. But the presence of effective communication skills is not a reality in most schools (Bamburg, 1994). According to Bamburg, evidence abound that low teacher expectations for students can negatively affect student performance.

There are advantages enunciated by Echter (2002) in teachers having personal relationships with their students. To Echter, it makes the students feel accepted, and to also feel safe, safe to talk, safe to fail and also that they feel understood. Does this relationship that promote learning by recognizing and encouraging individual's worth actually exist between student researchers and their supervisors in Kogi State College of Education (KSCOE), Ankpa?

Close interactions with students as subject teachers and as their supervisors revealed that students fear Education 323 (research/project) more than they feared any other teaching subjects that they offer in the college (Omede & Odiba, 2003). This fear may not be far from the attitude of some supervisors that are bent on making the exercise bitter and uphill for the supervisees by unnecessarily delaying their works and sometimes use the opportunity to exploit them. This fear oftentimes had made many students to contract their projects to a more superior hands, or replicate verbatim projects previously carried out by other students in the college or other related sister colleges.

What this means is that these students have lost the skills and enthusiasm for research. But could this fear be theoretical or real? Does it stem from factors resident in the students or the supervisors or both? It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the role of project supervisors particularly those of Kogi State College of Education (KSCOE), Ankpa.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles of supervisors of students' research in KSCOE, Ankpa. Specifically, the study analyzed the:

1. Mean ratings of students about the roles of research supervisors in KSCOE, Ankpa
2. Differences between the mean ratings of students about the roles of male and female research supervisors
3. Differences between the mean ratings of male and female students about the roles of research supervisors

Research Question

The study was guided by three main questions thus:

1. What is the mean rating of students about the role of research supervisors?
2. What is the difference between the mean rating of students about the male and female research supervisors?
3. What differences exist between the mean ratings of male and female students about the role of research supervisors?

Research Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was formulated and tested at .05 level of significance

HO: The mean responses of both the male and female students will not differ significantly on a test that examines the roles of research supervisors

II. Method

This study was a survey intended to examine the roles of project supervisors. The subject for the study consisted of 1520 final year Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) students of KSCOE, Ankpa. These set of students were admitted into the college in 2011/2012 academic sessions. Out of this population, 239 were sampled for the study through stratified random sampling procedure.

The instrument that was used to collect data was designed by the researcher. The instrument was titled "Instrument Examining Supervisors' Roles (IESR)". IESR was a five-point likert questionnaire divided into two sections- A & B with a total of 18 question items on the roles and expectations of supervisors by their supervisees. The validation of the instrument was done by three academic staff members from the department of Educational Psychology of the college. The test of reliability was carried out using 80 NCE 3 students of a sister College of Education within the same town-Alkhima College of Education. The scores were correlated using split-half method and $r = 0.88$ was obtained for the instrument.

The administration of the instrument was done personally by the researcher. The sampled subjects were collected into a large hall and the instruments were administered on them. The return rate was 100% as the completed instruments were collected immediately.

Analyzes of the collected data was done using mean, standard deviations and t-test statistical tools. The mean and standard deviations analyzed the research questions while t-test was used for the null hypothesis raised. Since it was a five- point rating scale instrument of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, the acceptance score for each item was 3.0 and above. Any mean score below 3.0 was considered not quiet influential and so seen as negative.

III. Results

Data analyzes in this study were done in line with the research questions raised and the null hypothesis formulated.

Research question 1: What is the mean rating of students about the role of research supervisors?

The answer to this question is shown on table 1.

Table 1: Students' mean ratings about research supervisors in KSCOE, Ankpa

S/N	Items	Total scores	Pop.	- X	SD
1	My supervisor corrects my errors harshly	717	239	3.00	1.03
2	Criticizes me without showing me the correct thing to do	656	239	2.74	0.95
3	Delays my work for a long time on his/her table	738	239	3.08	1.09
4	I may not finish the work before the end of 2 nd semester because of how he/she delays me	676	239	2.82	1.13
5	My supervisor is not friendly at all	657	239	2.74	1.05
6	I am afraid each time I approach him/her for my file	723	239	3.02	1.11
7	I visit other lecturers to explain some of his/her comments to me	696	239	2.91	1.06
8	Doesn't assist me with relevant materials	743	239	3.10	1.21
9	My supervisor looks for gifts (money, material, sex) from me	682	239	2.85	1.10

10	He/she is deliberately frustrating me	660	239	2.75	1.08
11	I am lucky, my supervisor does the writing of the project for me at a price	626	239	2.61	0.98
12	My supervisor wants to type the finished work for me at a price	637	239	2.66	1.00
13	My supervisor is not knowledgeable in research	581	239	2.42	0.85
14	I did not learn any new thing in research from my supervisor	642	239	2.68	0.94
	Total	9434		39.38	14.58
	Grand Mean			2.81	1.04

Source: Survey, Q1-14, N=239

Table one is the ratings of respondents/supervisees on the activities of their supervisors in Research coded Education 323. The respondents' ratings on items 1, 3, 6, and 8 ranges between 3.00 and 3.10 and they are indictment on the supervisors. The respondents accepted that their supervisors do not correct them politely and that they delay their works for long in their offices. Items 6 and 8 equally reported that supervisees are afraid of their supervisors because they are not friendly and that they do not assist them with relevant materials for their works (research). Their reactions to the remaining ten items were negative with ratings that range between 2.42 and 2.96. The respondents rejected that their supervisors criticize them without showing them what they are to do ($X=2.74$), may not finish the work before the college dead line ($X=2.82$). The respondents also rejected that they visited other lecturers for explanations because of the uncompromising attitude of their supervisors ($X=2.85$) and that their supervisors do not look for gifts or sex from them ($X=2.85$).

The grand mean of 2.81 shows that the respondents have rejected most negative expressions about the practices or roles of lecturers that supervise students doing the research in Kogi State College of Education (KSCOE), Ankpa.

Research question2: What is the difference between the mean rating of students about the male and female research supervisors?

The answer to this question is on table 2

Table 2: Respondents' ratings about male and female supervisors

S/N	Items	Total	N	- X	SD
15	Male supervisors are more thorough than the female supervisors	709	239	2.96	1.23
16	Male supervisors demand gifts from their supervisees more than the female supervisors	694	239	2.90	1.22
17	Male supervisors are more approachable than the female supervisors	818	239	3.42	1.28
18	I prefer male project supervisors to female project supervisors	809	239	3.38	1.32
	Total	3030		12.66	5.05
	Grand mean			3.17	1.26

Source: Survey Q15-18, N=239

Table 2 shows that out of the four (4) items that sought information about the roles of male and female supervisors comparatively, two (2) items-16 and 17-with mean ratings of ($X=2.96$ and $X=2.90$) respectively were rejected. The remaining two (2) items-18 and 19-were rated positive and accepted. The respondents rejected that

male supervisors are more thorough than the female supervisors and also that male supervisors do not demand gifts from their supervisees more than the female supervisors. The respondents however accepted that the male supervisors are more approachable than the female supervisors and that they preferred male supervisors to female supervisors.

Research question 3: What differences exist between the mean ratings of male and female students about the role of project supervisors? The answer to this question is reflected on table 3.

Table 3: Mean ratings of male and female students about the roles of research supervisors

S/N	Items	Male Respondents			Female Respondents		
		- X	Pop	SD	- X	Pop	SD
1	My supervisor corrects my errors harshly	2.95	121	1.05	3.04	118	1.01
2	Criticizes me without showing me the correct thing to do	2.57	121	0.91	2.91	118	0.96
3	Delays my work for a long time on his/her table	3.09	121	1.10	3.08	118	1.08
4	I may not finish the work before the end of 2 nd semester because of how he/she delays me	2.76	121	1.12	2.89	118	1.14
5	My supervisor is not friendly at all	2.76	121	1.01	2.76	118	1.08
6	I am afraid each time I approach him/her for my file	2.95	121	1.10	3.09	118	1.11
7	I visit other lecturers to explain some of his/her comments to me	2.99	121	1.07	2.83	118	1.04
8	Doesn't assist me with relevant materials	3.10	121	1.22	3.11	118	1.19
9	My supervisor looks for gifts (money, material, sex) from me	2.78	121	1.13	2.93	118	1.06
10	He/she is deliberately frustrating me	2.66	121	1.00	2.85	118	1.15
11	I am lucky, my supervisor does the writing of the project for me at a price	2.54	121	0.93	2.69	118	1.02
12	My supervisor wants to type the finished work for me at a price	2.56	121	0.92	2.77	118	1.08
13	My supervisor is not knowledgeable in research	2.35	121	0.76	2.50	118	0.94
14	I did not learn any new thing in research from my supervisor	2.72	121	0.92	2.64	118	0.95
15	Male supervisors are more thorough than the female supervisors	3.07	121	1.28	2.85	118	1.18
16	Male supervisors demand gifts from their supervisees more than the female supervisors	2.89	121	1.25	2.91	118	1.19
17	Male supervisors are more approachable than the female supervisors	3.46	121	1.31	3.38	118	1.24

18	I prefer male project supervisors to female project supervisors	3.50	121	1.33	3.26	118	1.31
		51.70		19.41	52.49		19.73
		2.87		1.08	2.92		1.10

Source: Survey Q1-18, N=239

Table 3 reveals analyzes of male and female respondents. From the table, the male respondents had mean scores of 3.00 and above in five (5) items namely, 3, 8, 15, 17 and 18. For the female respondents' scores of 3.00 and above were in six (6) items, 1, 3, 6, 8, 17 and 18. Similarly, while the male respondents rated supervisors below 3.00 in thirteen (13) items, the female respondents' rated them on twelve (12) items. The items of common agreements between these two categories of respondents are Fifteen (15) out of eighteen (18). Items of differences were just three (3) 1, 6 and 15. Items one and six that were rejected by the male respondents were accepted by their female counterparts. Conversely, while the male respondents accepted item 15 (X=3.07) the female respondents rejected it (X=2.85).

HO: The mean responses of both the male and female students will not differ significantly on a test that examines the roles of research supervisors

The result of the test of significance is shown on table 4

Table 4: T-test analysis of gender on the roles of supervisors of Education 323 (student's project)

Source of variation	Pop	- X	SD	DF	Cal. t	Critical-t
Male	121	2.87	1.08	237	-0.45	1.652
Female	118	2.92	1.10			

P= <0.05, Decision: Not Significant (NS)

IV. Discussions

This study reveals that supervisors do supervision of students' projects commendably. The responses of students rejecting twelve (12) items out of eighteen (18) that are negative expressions about the roles of supervisors lend support to this claim. Their responses show that lecturers of Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa assigned to supervise students' projects, correct them by showing them the correct things to do, do not look for gifts either money, material or sex from the students, allow students to execute the projects themselves and demonstrate to their supervisees that they are knowledgeable in research.

This finding particularly that supervisors do not demand gifts (material, money or sex) from their supervisees is contrary to popular opinion that supervisors make merchandize of the opportunity by exploiting their students/supervisees. The mean of 2.85 on table 1, even though negative does not mean that this practice is non-existent anyway. They exist but the operation is clandestine. Some students give gifts to some supervisors to buy their loyalties, some give as a mark of appreciation after the works are done while some lecturers disgracefully demand that supervisees remunerate them. In whatever form that these gifts exchange hands, they are illicit and don't have the support of the college authority.

In as much as the efforts of supervisors are commendable, the study however revealed that there are aspects that they are found wonton. They correct their supervisees impolitely (X=3.00), delays their files for long before assessment (X=3.08), supervisees are afraid of them (X=3.02) and they don't assist or direct their supervisees to where they could locate relevant materials for the works (X=3.10) (Source: Table 1, items 1, 3, 7 & 8). These findings are in conformity with the observation of Omede and Odiba (2003) that students fear writing of projects more than any other subject in the college. This fear may be due to the unfriendly attitude of some lecturers supervising these students. This fear as Omede and Odiba (2003) noted had driven students to contract out projects to more skillful hands, or adopted finished works of others in another institutions of learning or even the same institutions provided they are not caught. This unfriendly attitude is to be discontinued because according

to Mills (undated), teachers are to provide instructions that will eliminate or reduce barriers to students' efforts. Supervisees needed to be guided and directed to materials that could be of assistance to them for finishing the work in record time.

The relationship between supervisors and supervisees need to be enhanced to promote learning as noted by Echter (2002) and Lewis (undated). When there is a friendly relationship, students will then feel accepted, and to also feel safe, safe to talk, safe to fail and also that they feel understood (Echter, 2002).

The study further revealed that male supervisors are more preferable to female supervisors because they are more approachable (Source: Table 2, Q17 and 18). This, I think agrees with the popular opinion that most female administrators or workers are considered more thorough, more honest, and more difficult because they always insist that correct things be done. This insistence is always opposed by many people that want to cut corners and so would want to avoid them if they had the opportunity. However, the difference in rating of students about the male and female supervisors do not differ significantly (Table 4).

V. Conclusion

The ratings of supervisees of their supervisors in a course called Education 323 in Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa indicated that supervisors are knowledgeable, do not use the opportunity to exploit the students, and don't have the intention to deliberately frustrate the students. Most supervisees were sure that they would complete the research before the stipulated time by the college for oral defense. In as much as the efforts of supervisors are commended in these areas pointed out, there were proves of unfriendliness between them and their supervisees as they corrected their errors harshly, would not direct students to places where they could locate relevant materials and delayed supervisees' files on their tables for long. This unfriendly attitude of teachers/supervisors can hinder effective learning and performance of students and therefore, recommendations are that supervisors:

1. Should be friendlier with their supervisees. When they are harsh at students, it will scare them away and it will hinder them from learning effectively. No matter the pressure of works, teachers are to model behaviors that would encourage students to learn effectively. Any behavior from the teacher that keeps learners at bay could hinder effective learning and so should be guided against. In addition, female supervisors should make themselves more accessible to their supervisees by breaking down the erected imaginary barriers between them and their students/supervisees.

2. Should guide supervisees to where they could get appropriate materials and information that could ease and facilitate the completion of their works. If the supervisor has relevant materials, he/she should not hesitate to assist the supervisees. For fear that the materials could be lost, proper documentation should be made and the student strongly instructed to handle the materials cautiously.

3. Should make time to assess students' files with minimum delay. Students have time frame to commence and finish the work. If supervisors are mindful of this and ensure that the students finish in good time it will be good for the student researchers. A situation where supervisors get serious close to stipulated deadline will put their supervisees under intense pressure and this will not help the students.

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