

Comparative Analysis of Postgraduate Students' Thesis Supervision in Oyo State Nigeria

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Abstract

A close look at situations in universities in Nigeria suggests that the majority of postgraduate students do not complete their programmes by the deadline, despite having completed coursework requirements for the programmes. Some even abandon their thesis and go on leave for reasons best known to them. This study did a comparative analysis of postgraduate students' thesis supervision in universities in Oyo State. The descriptive survey research design was adopted; the population included all postgraduate students in both public and private universities in Oyo State. A self-developed instrument tagged 'Postgraduate Thesis Supervision Questionnaire' (PTSQ) was used to source data for the study. According to the findings, there is a significant interaction between the university supervisors and supervisee. In a similar vein, the results showed that the supervision of postgraduate students theses in university, in Oyo state varied significantly according to the type of university (Private universities with mean = 2.73, Std. = 0.856, $p < 0.05$) and public universities postgraduate students thesis supervision at (mean = 3.07, Std. = 1.196, $p < 0.05$). It was concluded that there was a significant difference in thesis supervision among postgraduate students in universities in Oyo State. The study recommended among others, that efforts should be made by the government and university administrators to minimize the academic and administrative workload of postgraduate students' thesis supervisors to ensure they dedicate more time to thesis supervision.

Keywords: Postgraduate students, Supervision of Thesis, Oyo State

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I. Introduction

Postgraduate education or studies are stages of higher education obtained after completing one's initial degree at a university. Postgraduate education in Nigeria includes the following degrees: Postgraduate Diploma (PGD), Master (MSc, MBA, MEd, and MA), MPhil, MPhil/Phd, and PhD. All of these postgraduate degrees require students to complete projects, dissertations, or theses. Producing a good project, dissertation, or thesis involves supervision by an academic at a university who is expected to have extensive knowledge in the field of study in which the candidate is interested. It may not be out of place to assume that the success of a project, dissertation, and or thesis writing is based on the supervisor's effectiveness, efficiency, and encouragement.

In addition to the supervisor's skill and the student's commitment, effective supervision also depends on the relationship types that occur at the centre of the supervisory process. (Howells, Stafford, Guijt, & Breadmore, 2017). Regardless of the subject, theoretical foundation, or viewpoint, a postgraduate student's thesis supervision aims to develop the practitioner's knowledge and competence. Students attending university have high hopes of achieving a goal, such as a higher degree and the opportunities that this will provide for future professions. Stakeholders want to see evidence of the results of higher education degrees in terms of the leadership and management abilities that graduates will bring back to the environment, as well as their educational aptitude, research knowledge, and ability to use evidence-based practice. Jeyaraj (2020). As a result, if the goals of postgraduate education at Nigerian universities are to be met, the issue of supervision requires special attention.

In Nigeria, an increasing number of graduates are returning to universities for postgraduate study, affecting the supervisor-student ratio, thus impacting student support and supervision. This is a global

phenomenon and one theorist claims that it signifies a shift in higher education access from a few elites to a mass system. This has generated a lot of issues including low supervisor-supervisee relationships. Again, a detailed examination of postgraduate education in private universities indicates that it has become the norm for students to complete their studies on time, which may be related to many factors among which are: low-student lecturer ratio, availability of needed facilities, quality control system and so on. Surprisingly, a comprehensive review of the literature revealed a scarcity of research on the reported issue.

In light of the above, this study focuses on the comparative study of postgraduate students' thesis supervision in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the researcher's observations, it appears that the majority of postgraduate students do not complete the program by the deadline, despite having completed the coursework requirements for the program. Some postgraduate students similarly abandon their thesis and go on leave for reasons known to the students. Poor supervision and mentorship, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) incessant strike, students unrest and discontent, among other things, appear to be among the perceived difficulties, delaying postgraduate students' completion periods at Nigerian universities. An in-depth analysis of the conditions at institutions in Nigeria, especially those managed by the government, reveals that something is seriously wrong; as it was found that a sizeable portion of postgraduate student spends longer than necessary on their postgraduate programmes (Tajudeen, 2014). It should be noted that a PhD is anticipated to be completed in six semesters, a Master degree in three semesters and a PGD in two semesters. On the contrary, many PhD students have been observed to spend more than three years on a three-year degree programme in Nigeria. This has sometimes deterred prospective postgraduate students, while those who can afford to study overseas may wind up enrolling in institutions outside the nation, where you can round off as and when due. This has a detrimental impact on national development since it might lead to a brain drain and reduce national GDP. Prior to this era, postgraduates in Nigeria were viewed as a model for most postgraduate programs at universities throughout Africa and Asia, and they were able to contribute significantly to the country's progress. As a result, postgraduate supervision and mentorship at Nigerian universities must be prioritized. Furthermore, a detailed examination of postgraduate education in private colleges indicates that it has become the norm for students to complete their studies on time. Scholars claimed that this may be related to the large amount of money spent by these students, although other factors were also given. Surprisingly, a comprehensive review of the literature revealed a dearth of research on the reported issue. Furthermore, this study on the comparative analysis of postgraduate student thesis supervision and mentoring at public and private universities in Oyo State, Nigeria, has not been fully explored. This study aims to fill this highlighted gap while also contributing to the current literature on the subject.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of interpersonal relationships between supervisors and supervisees in universities in Oyo State, Nigeria?
2. What are the identified barriers to completing the postgraduate programme as and when due among graduate students in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

H₀1: There will be no significant school-type difference in the supervision of postgraduate students in universities in Oyo State, Nigeria

II. Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. This research design was considered appropriate because the study involved the collection of data to objectively describe existing phenomena, without any manipulation or randomization. In addition, the research design allowed the researcher to obtain a true picture of the present condition of the particular phenomena under study.

A postgraduate student was eligible to participate in the study if he or she is PhD, MPhil PhD or MPhil student that gained admission in 2019, Master students that gained admission in 2020 or PGD students that gained in 2021 in universities in Oyo State, Nigeria. We consider this category eligible because the majority were at the thesis writing stage of their study. A total sampled number of 967 (60%) out of 1611 eligible populations were randomly selected. A purposive sampling technique was used for the study. 780 (80%) copies of the instrument were retrieved. Slovin's formula $N/(1 + Ne^2)$ was used to determine the sample size in each of the sampled universities after which simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents based on the sample size in each university. Note that the Universities were selected based on year of establishment and

experience in running Postgraduate Studies. Thus the oldest public and private Universities were selected in Oyo State.

A self-developed instrument titled 'Postgraduate thesis Supervision Questionnaire' (PSTQ) was developed for this study. The PSTQ was divided into three (3) sections: A, B and C. Section A contains the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as type of university, age range and gender. Section B contains items on the level of relationship between supervisor and supervisees such as, supervision sessions are/were held according to schedule, supervisor's comments on my work helps / helped me to improve my drafts, supervisor explains / explained to me the relevant methods to carry out my research and supervisor organized and managed supervision efficiently and so on.

Section C contains items to determine barriers in conducting successful research among postgraduate students in Nigerian Universities such as poor access to research materials, insufficient time due to other work, conflicting supervisor and student interest and so on.

Data collected from the field were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. This includes descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean, percentages and standard deviation used to answer research questions and inferential statistics of t-test analysis used to test the formulated hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. All results were presented in tables.

III. Results

Presentations of Answers to Research Questions

RQ1: What is the level of interpersonal relationship between supervisors and supervisees in universities in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Level of Interpersonal Relationship between Supervisors and Supervisees in Universities in Oyo State, Nigeria

S/N	My:	Always	Seldom	Rarely	Never	Mean	Std	Remark
1	supervision sessions are/were held according to schedule	525 (67.3%)	90 (11.5%)	165 (21.2%)	00	3.46	0.820	High
2	supervisor's comments on my work helps/helped me to improve my drafts	510 (65.4%)	30 (3.8%)	75 (9.6%)	165 (21.2%)	3.13	1.257	High
3	supervisor explains/explained me the relevant methods to carry out my research.	255 (32.7%)	150 (19.2%)	210 (26.9%)	165 (21.2%)	2.63	1.145	Moderate
4	supervisor is/was unable to attend his/her supervisees due to other academic/administrative responsibilities	240 (30.8%)	120 (15.4%)	165 (21.2%)	255 (32.7%)	2.44	1.232	Low
5	supervisor helps/helped me to fix technical problems in my research	330 (42.3%)	75 (9.6%)	90 (11.5%)	285 (36.5%)	2.58	1.350	Moderate
6	Supervisor is knowledgeable and could communicate theoretical concepts clearly	540 (69.2%)	00	75 (9.6%)	165 (21.2%)	3.17	1.268	High
7	Supervision sessions were well structured and goal driven	420 (53.8%)	195 (25.0%)	75 (9.6%)	90 (11.5%)	3.21	1.026	High
8	Supervisor organized and managed supervision efficiently	510 (65.5%)	30 (3.8%)	75 (9.6%)	165 (21.2%)	3.13	1.257	High
9	Supervision method were varied to match supervision objectives	420 (53.8%)	120 (15.4%)	150 (19.2%)	90 (11.5%)	3.12	1.087	High
10	Supervision objectives were negotiated and clearly articulated	585 (75.0%)	00	105 (13.5%)	90 (11.5%)	3.38	1.095	High
11	Supervisor was understanding and open to sharing of ideas	510 (65.4%)		240 (30.8%)	30 (3.8%)	3.27	1.022	High
Weighted Mean						3.04		High

Source, Fieldsurvey, 2022

Key: (AL) Always (4Points), (SE) Seldom (3points), (R) Rarely (2points), N (Never) (1point)

*****Threshold: mean value of > 3.00 (High), 2.5-2.99(Moderate), < 2.50(Low)**

Presented in table 1 is the level of interpersonal relationship between supervisors and supervisees in Universities in Oyo State Nigeria. The table revealed that 525 (67.3%) of the respondents always had their supervisions session according to schedule, 90 (11.5%) of the respondents, seldom had their supervision session according to schedule, 165 (21.2%) of the respondents rarely had supervision session according to schedule while none (0%) of the respondent reporting that they never had supervision session according to schedule.

The table further revealed that 510 (65.4%) of the respondents were helped by the supervisor's comments to improve their draft works, 30 (3.8%) were seldom helped by the supervisions comments on their

draft works, 75 (9.6%) were rarely helped, while 165 (21.2%) of the respondents were never helped by their supervisors comments on their draft work.

The table also revealed that 255 (32.7%) of the respondents always had their supervisor explained to them the relevant methods to carry out their research, 150 (19.2%) seldom, 210 (26.9%) rarely while 165 (21.2%) never had their supervisor explained to them methods to carry out their research.

Further, the table showed that 240 (30.8%) always had their supervisor unable to attend to them due to other academic /administrative responsibility, 120 (15.4%) seldom, 165 (21.2%) rarely while 255 (32.7%) never.

From the table, 330 (42.3%) had their supervisor help them fixed technical problems in their research, 75 (9.6%) seldom, 90 (11.5%) rarely and 285 (36.5%) never.

Furthermore, 540 (69.2%) respondents had knowledgeable supervisor who communicated theoretical concepts clearly always, none (0%) seldom, 75 (9.6%) rarely and 165 (21.2%) never.

In addition from the table, 420 (53.8%) of the respondents always had supervision session well structured and goal driven, 195 (25.0%) seldom, 75 (9.6%) rarely and 165 (21.2%) never had it.

Also, 510 (65.5%) of the respondents had organized supervisor, who managed supervision efficiently, while 30 (3.8%) seldom, 75 (9.6%) rarely and 165 (21.2%) never. Further, 420 (53.8%) had supervision method varied to match supervision objectives always, 120 (15.4%) seldom, 150 (19.2%) rarely and 90 (11.5%) never had it. The table also showed that 585 (75.0%) always, none seldom, 105 (13.5%) rarely and 90 (11.5%) never had their supervision objectives negotiated and clearly articulated. Finally, table 4.5 revealed that 510 (65.4%) always, none seldom, 240 (30.8%) rarely and 30 (3.8%) never had their supervisors understanding and open to sharing of ideas. The results further gave a weighted mean of (3.04), indicating a high level of interpersonal contact between supervisors and supervisees at universities in Oyo State, Nigeria.

RQ2: What are the identified barriers to completing postgraduate thesis as and when due among graduate students in Oyo State, Nigeria

Table 2: Barriers to Completing Postgraduate Thesis as and when due among Graduate Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

S/N	Items	Very True of Me	True of Me	Not Very True of Me	Not True of Me	Mean	Std.	Remark
1	Inadequate funding	105 (13.5%)	330 (42.3%)	165 (21.2%)	180 (23.1%)	2.46	0.990	Moderate
2	Poor access to research materials	00	435 (55.8%)	165 (21.2%)	180 (23.1%)	2.33	0.826	Moderate
3	Lack of incentives	00	315 (40.4%)	465 (59.6%)	00	2.40	0.491	Moderate
4	University bureaucracy	00	180 (23.1%)	510 (65.4%)	90 (11.5%)	2.12	0.577	Moderate
5	Lack of interdisciplinary collaborations	75 (9.6%)	165 (21.2%)	285 (36.5%)	255 (32.7%)	2.08	0.958	Moderate
6	Poor perceived value for research	75 (9.6%)	255 (32.7%)	195 (25.0%)	255 (32.7%)	2.19	1.001	Moderate
7	Insufficient time due to other work	00	360 (46.2%)	165 (21.2%)	255 (32.7%)	2.13	0.878	Moderate
8	Conflicting supervisor interest	00	285 (36.5%)	240 (30.8%)	255 (32.7%)	2.04	0.832	Moderate
9	Conflicting student interest	00	195 (25.0%)	240 (30.8%)	345 (44.2%)	1.81	0.810	Low
10	Insufficient time due to family responsibilities	90 (11.5%)	150 (19.2%)	195 (25.0%)	345 (44.2%)	1.98	1.047	Low

Source, Fieldsurvey, 2022

Key: (VT) Very True (4Points), (True) True (3points), (NVT) Not Very True (2points), (NT) (Not True) (1point)

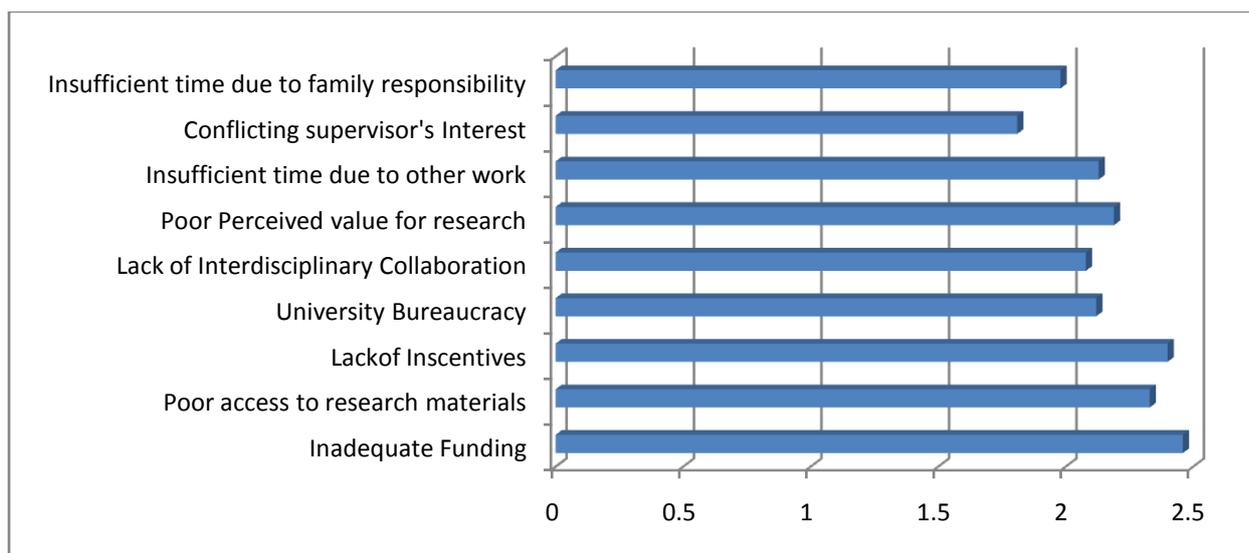
***Threshold: mean value of > 3.00 (High), 2.5-2.99(Moderate), < 2.50(Low)

Table 2 contain analysis of responses on items to determine barrier to completion the postgraduate programme as and when due among graduate students in Oyo State, Nigeria.

From the table, 105 (13.5%) responded very true of me to inadequate funding, 330 (42.3%) True of me, 165 (21.2%) Not very true, 180 (23.1%) Not true of me. Also, none of the respondents had poor access to research materials as barrier very true of me, while 435 (55.8%) True of me, 165 (21.2%) not very true of me and 180 (23.1%) Not true of me. The table also revealed none of the respondents had lack of incentives very true of me, as barrier to complete their program as and when due, while 315 (40.4%) true of me, 465 (59.6%) Not very true of me and none responded not true of me. From the table, none of the respondents had University

bureaucracy very true of me as barrier, 180 (23.1%) true of me, 510 (65.4%) Not very true of me and 90 (11.5%) not true of me.

The table further revealed that 75 (9.6%) of respondents had lack of interdisciplinary collaboration as barrier very true of me, 165 (21.2%) true of me, 285 (36.5%) not very true of me and 255 (32.7%) not true of me. Also, poor perceived value for research had 75 (9.6%) very true of me of the respondents, 255 (32.7%) true of me, 195 (25.0%) not very true of me and 255 (32.7%) not true of me. In addition from the table, insufficient time due to other work a barrier had none respondent as very true of me, 360 (46.2%) True of me, 165 (21.2%), not very true of me and 255 (32.7%) Not true of me. Similarly from the table, conflicting supervisors interest as barrier to timely completion of graduate program also had no respondent as very true of me, but with 285 (36.5%) of the respondents as true of me, 240 (30.8%) not very true of me and 255 (32.7%) as Not True of me. The table also revealed none respondent as very true of me to conflicting student's interest as barrier in timely completion of program. However 195 (25.0%) had this barrier true of them, 240 (30.8%) Not very true of me and 345 (44.2%) not true of me. Finally, the table showed that 90 (11.5%) of the respondents had insufficient time, due to family responsibility very true of them as barrier to timely completion of their program, with 150 (19.2%) True of me, 195 (25.0%) Not very true of me and 345 (44.2%) not true of me.



Source, Fieldsurvey, 2022

Figure 1: Barriers to Completing the Postgraduate Programs as and when due among Graduate Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

Table 2 and figure 1 presents' barriers to completing postgraduate programs among post graduate students in universities in Oyo State. The result showed that among other barriers considered, inadequate funding with (mean = 2.46) was posed the highest barrier to completing postgraduate thesis among postgraduate students in Oyo State. This was followed by lack of incentives (mean = (2.40), poor access to research materials (mean = 2.33), insufficient time due to other work (mean = 2.13), university bureaucracy (mean = 2.12), lack of inter disciplinary collaboration (mean = 2.08), insufficient time due to family responsibilities (mean =1.98) and conflicting supervisor's interest (mean = 1.81) respectively.

Test of Hypothesis

H₀1: There will be no significant university type difference in supervision of postgraduate students in universities in Oyo State, Nigeria

Table 3: Summary of T-test showing school-type difference in supervision of post graduate students thesis in Oyo State, Nigeria

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Private	42.408	176	.000	2.729	2.60	2.86
Public	63.027	602	.000	3.070	2.97	3.17

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Private	177	2.73	0.856	.064
Public	603	3.07	1.196	.049

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 3 presents a summary of the t-test result demonstrating the mean difference in supervision of graduate students' thesis in public and private universities in Oyo State. The result showed significant difference at ($P < 0.05$). As a result, at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis which states that 'There will be no significant university type difference in supervision of post graduate students' thesis in universities in Oyo State, Nigeria' was rejected. The result also revealed private universities graduate students' thesis supervision at (mean = 2.73, Std. = 0.856, $P < 0.05$) and public universities graduate students mentoring at (mean = 3.07, Std. = 1.196, $P < 0.05$) implying that public universities graduate students' thesis supervision contributes more to the observed differences.

IV. Discussion of Findings

Research question one was raised to determine level of interpersonal contact between supervisors and supervisees at universities in Oyo State, the results showed a high level of interpersonal contact between supervisors and supervisees at universities in Oyo State, Nigeria. This is in line with the submission of a study which found that supervisor-supervisee relationship is the most important factor that contributes towards the completion of a PhD research project, Andriopolou and Prowse (2020). The study also posited that positive supervisees' experiences may be helpful in resolving personal, technical, administrative and employability related issues among postgraduate students. In the same vein, a study described the relationship between the student and supervisor beginning with selecting a research topic, planning the research, identifying and acquiring the necessary resources, managing the project, actively conducting the research, carrying out the literature review, analyzing and interpreting the data, writing the thesis, defending it, and possibly publishing it, emphasizing the dynamic nature of the supervisory relationship, Bazrafkan and Yousefy (2019).

Another related study concluded that the supervisor-supervisee relationship and practices are critical in determining the quality, success, and efficacy of the postgraduate research and that high failure rates for postgraduate studies can be linked to supervisee unhappiness and a bad supervisor-supervisee relationship, Bell and Water (2014). As a result, the supervisor-supervisee relationship may be regarded as one of the most enjoyable elements of academic life for both parties.

A related study also posited that supervision and the level of academic assistance received by Nigeria postgraduate students is inadequate, Ogunode and Abubakar (2021). This has led to poor quality and lack of necessary skills for research⁴. This weakness has frequently been linked to the quality of the interaction between supervisees and supervisors. It is common to encounter postgraduate students who have dropped out of their degrees, citing dissatisfaction, victimization, and other factors. This throws into doubt the two parties' relationship quality². Similarly, a study indicated the overall supervision-related experiences of supervisees who submitted their theses had the lowest mean score values. The mean score in particular, reflect a slightly unfavorable experience with their supervisors, Davis (2019).

Research question two was asked to investigate the barriers to completing postgraduate programs among post graduate students in universities in Oyo State. The result showed that among other barriers considered, inadequate funding posed the highest barrier to completing postgraduate thesis among postgraduate students in Oyo State. This was followed by lack of incentives, poor access to research materials, insufficient time due to other work, university bureaucracy, lack of inter disciplinary collaboration, insufficient time due to family responsibilities and conflicting supervisor's interest respectively. In line with this report, a researcher posits that postgraduate students in Nigerian universities take longer to complete their postgraduate degrees due to difficulties encountered during their thesis work, Abraham, Durosaro et al (2016). Furthermore, the majority of students who enroll in graduate and postgraduate studies are already working. Because of their limited financial resources, they work full-time in addition to their studies¹⁶. According to a similar study, the lack of funding causes them stress. The majority of the time, they are concerned about their university fees. This diverts their attention away from their thesis work. As a result, their thesis work suffers and is delayed, Bacwayo, Nanpula et al (2017).

According to a study, postgraduate students face a variety of challenges when it comes to completing their theses, including financial issues, problems from the supervisor's side in the form of lack of cooperation, problems from the university administration, family-related issues, work-related issues, and other issues related to thesis writing, Kirkland (2018).

Test of hypothesis showed that there was no significant university type difference in supervision of post graduate students' thesis in universities in Oyo State, Nigeria. The result also revealed that public universities graduate students' thesis supervision contributes more to the observed differences. This may not be divorced from the aforementioned suggested reasons.

Supporting this finding, a study discovered that with increased international concern about high attrition, late completions, and poor research outputs in higher education which may be largely attributable to the quality of the supervision relationship, emphasis has shifted to providing quality supervision that can improve student experiences in private universities, Blaney, Kang et al (2020). Because of the diverse and complex nature of the relationship between supervisors and supervisees in public universities, challenges of mismatch are frequently mentioned; thus, the need to balance expectations has been identified in the concern of private universities, Muthana and Alduais (2021).

V. Conclusion

Result of the study indicated a high level of interpersonal contact between supervisors and supervisees in universities in Oyo State, Nigeria. Insufficient time due to family responsibilities, poor perceived value for research, inadequate funding, lack of interdisciplinary collaboration, insufficient time due to other work, conflicting supervisor's interest, poor access to research materials, conflicting student's interest, university bureaucracy and lack of incentives are identified barriers to completing thesis as and when due among graduate students in Oyo State, Nigeria. There was a significant difference between supervision of graduate students' thesis in public and private universities in Oyo State.

VI. Recommendations

In view of the finding of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Efforts should be made by the government and university leaders to minimize the academic and administrative workload of graduate students' thesis supervisors to ensure they dedicate more time to thesis supervision. This can be done by reducing the number of courses and postgraduate students allocated to each of the lecturers.
2. There is a need for supervisors to teach the supervisees relevant research methods and facilitate the acquisition of research and generic skills before engaging in a research exercise.
3. Supervisors should be ready to help supervisees fix technical problems identified in their thesis as well as be ready to help develop their writing skills.
4. The choice of a thesis title should be a collaborative effort between the supervisors and the supervisees.
5. Supervisors are advised to operate open-door policy which will motivate their supervisees to seek help when in need.
6. Government university stakeholders and the society at large should address barriers which could hinder prompt completion of postgraduate thesis in Nigerian Universities. This may be done by appropriating research grant in the national budget and ensuring it is accessible by researchers. Government can also achieve that by implementing findings of research in our universities, this is capable of encouraging researchers to do more.

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