Postgraduate Research Supervision: Exploring the Lived Experience of Pakistani Postgraduate Students

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Thesis writing carries a pivotal place in accomplishment of the postgraduate degree. Research supervision for post-graduation has been a subject of social sciences across societies, demanding critical analysis of the student-centered paradigm shift in the higher education. The aim of this paper is to unpack issues of how a postgraduate student could define a postgraduate research supervision based on his/her lived experience. Furthermore, this also aims to unearth and explore 'good' and 'bad' supervision practices experienced in the context of the Pakistani Higher Education Institutions (HEI) from postgraduate students' perspective. To understand the situation in Pakistan, this study employed qualitative methodology and used a sample of 40 postgraduate students (including 20 MS/M. Phil and 20 Ph.D) via a purposive sampling technique. The study was restricted to social sciences' students in two public sector universities in Islamabad. Using an interview guide, students' responses were recorded in a series of face to face in-depth interviews. Michel Foucault's theories were used as a theoretical framework to explore the question: How do postgraduate supervisees experience their relationship with their supervisors and how interpersonal and institutional power dynamics implicated in these relationships. The overall conclusion that surfaced from the study's findings is that the existing practices of postgraduate supervision lack mentoring ethics and practices to cater to the needs and expectations of postgraduate students.[1]

Keywords: postgraduate supervision, research quality, student-centered paradigm, power-relationship.

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Contribution of Authors:
1. Johar Ali provided the intellectual input and corrected the manuscript. He was responsible for correspondence during the paper submission and proofreading. He has handled the revisions and re-submission of revised manuscripts upto the acceptance of the manuscripts.
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Higher education in Pakistan has been a matter of concern since its independence in 1947. There were only two universities in the country at the time of its independence (Siddiqui, 2019) which increased to 195 in the year 2019 (Higher Education Commission, 2019). The quantitative expansion of such degree awarding institutions led to some serious questions of quality teaching and research (Siddiqui, 2019; Ullah, 2016). One of the serious issues is the provision of quality supervision to postgraduate students. The training of postgraduate students as researchers who are capable of independent and pragmatic research in their respective fields depends on quality supervision (Siddle, 2001). The academics at the global level have been, in addition to classroom teaching and other aspects of higher education, continuously debating quality of the postgraduate research supervision and factors influencing them (see Chireshe, 2017; Lee, 2009; Bernard & Goodyear, 1992; Loganbill & Hardy, 1983).

In Pakistan, however, trends of debating the status and quality of postgraduate research supervision has received very little attention (see Ullah, 2016). There has been very little research undertaken in Pakistan which critically produces an account of supervision practices from supervisees' perspective. In recent years, nevertheless, the rise in number of postgraduate students in universities have drawn the attention of academics in Pakistan. Siddiqui has argued that the majority of the universities in Pakistan enrolled Ph. D students "into their ill-prepared programmed with insufficient library and supervision facilities...The result is that a large number of Ph. D scholars, after finishing their coursework, are not given proper guidance and are left in the wilderness" (Siddiqui, 2019: 8). Accordingly, this study was undertaken in Pakistan to analytically document lived experiences of the postgraduate research students registered in the universities and to understand the actual status of supervision. Furthermore, it was recognized that importance needs to be given to the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee. This paper, thus, critically examine the issue: what supervisors do and what a supervisee considers to be effective or ineffective supervision. To undertake this study, the paper presents data from qualitative interviews with 40 postgraduate students registered in two public sector universities of Pakistan. Before presenting data, we deem it important to introduce reader(s) first with concept and prevailing system of higher education in Pakistan. This preliminary presentation will provide information on how the higher education sector evolved and what particular objectives had been established.

Higher Education in Pakistan: The Study Context
Education reform in general and higher education reform in particular had always been on the government of Pakistan agenda since 1947 (see Siddiqui, 2016). The up-gradation of University Grant Commission (UGC) to Higher Education Commission (HEC) in 2002 was one of the series of reforms in education sector. The up-gradation of UGC to HEC opened up a new era in the higher education of Pakistan. Higher Education Commission enjoys powers under the 2002 Act to initiate all kinds of steps guaranteeing quality education/research and realization of the concept of knowledge economy in true sense. It, hence, under the 2002 Act revolutionized the higher education sector in Pakistan that not only led to tremendous increase in the number of universities but also achieved a remarkable position in research productivity. Since its establishment in 2002, it embarked upon a systematic process of implementing five-year plans for promotion of the higher education reform (see HEC Medium Term Development Frameworks MTDFs). It held, besides other aims, quality teaching and research as its priority agenda. It made significant efforts to address the three key challenges, i.e., (a) quality assurance (b) increased access and (c) relevance of higher education to the country's needs. To achieve the goals of quality of higher education in Pakistan and its equitable access, Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) as well as Offices of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) were also established in universities to encourage and commercialize research. Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) is a mandatory requirement of

HEC and, hence, most of the public sector universities in particular and private sector universities in general in Pakistan have established such offices. In addition to other functions, ORICs aimed to develop universities into comprehensive research universities with a special focus on promoting research and innovation for national development. Keeping in view the growing importance of higher education for national development and knowledge based economy, special emphasis was and has been made on addressing the Research and Development.

One of the key areas revolutionized by HEC was the initiation of Research and Development Programme. Research and Development Programme/Section launched several research initiatives such as Research Grant Programme, Research Publication and Presentation Programme, Research Linkages, Partnerships and Collaborations as well as Research Innovation and Commercialization. In addition, the HEC embarked upon dozens of important steps and policy measures (i.e., supervision policy and classroom evaluation etc.) to prepare well equipped graduates, who could effectively contribute to socio-economic development of Pakistan. An important policy of HEC regarding research supervision is the restriction on supervisors to limit the number of students to a maximum of 12 students (i.e. 05 Ph.D. and 07 MS/M. Phil) at the same time. This limit was fixed to ensure that supervisors have enough time to provide 'quality supervision' to their supervisees. To ensure the quality of research in the country, HEC initiated different streams of higher education to enable the faculty to receive training of 'supervision' in developed universities of the world and further transfer it to research students in Pakistan. In addition, HEC engaged and compelled faculty members/research scholars to engage in research projects and publish the findings in HEC approved national and/or international journals. To make sure that postgraduate scholars conduct good research of publishable quality, HEC also made it compulsory for PhD students to publish at least one research article in HEC recognized journals. HEC's struggle and stress for achieving the goal of quality research, we believe, banks on the 'quality of supervision'.

One of the key functions of any university is to educate and equip postgraduate students with research skills (Siddle, 2001).

Literature Review and Theoretical Underpinning

Quality supervision is essential for enabling postgraduate students to make an original contribution in their respective fields. The relationship between supervisor and supervisee, supervisory style, and communication between supervisor and supervisee are the areas discussed and debated (Hemer, 2012). Sidhu *et al.*, (2013) argue that supervisor should help the supervisee in acquiring appropriate research skills and competence. Clear and open communication between supervisor and supervisee is considered essential for effective and productive postgraduate supervision (see Moses, 1992). According to Kandlbinder and Peseta (2001), good relationship and regular meetings between supervisor and supervisee are key elements of effective supervision process. Supervisors should make the supervision an intellectually stimulating experience for the supervisees (Copeland, Dean, & Wladkowski, 2011). Supervisors are required to be aware of the "impact that their response and critique has on the student" (Halse, 2011: 09). This cursory review of the literature shows that a number of critical areas in postgraduate supervision need to be studied and debated to ensure quality supervision to postgraduate students.

Of course, we are cognizant that the discourse of 'quality supervision' is very subjective and relative. Nevertheless, the existing scholarship on the notion of 'quality supervision' stresses upon some common prerequisites and requirements for effective research supervision and students-supervisors relationships. 'Quality supervision', for example, requires regular meetings between supervisees and supervisors, devotion of quality time to supervisees, keen interest in supervisees'

research project(s), demonstrating supportive and encouraging attitude, accepting and correcting students' errors, appreciating students' ideas, and directing them towards the completion of their research work(s) (see Grant, Hackney & Edgar, 2014; Wisker, 2005; Schamess, 2006). The supervision practices may either be power-centred or facilitation-centred (Armitage, 2007; Rau, 2008). Power dynamics between teacher and students /supervisor and supervisee are well researched and debated aspect of academic culture. A considerable number of studies (i.e., Copeland, Dean, & Wladkowski, 2011) have concluded that teaching-learning and supervision processes are filled with power-knowledge relationship. The concept of knowledge-power is used here in the same sense it is used by Michel Foucault.

The key idea in Michel Foucault's discussion about the relationship between power and knowledge is the idea that "power is to be found throughout society in a complex network of micro-power, with corresponding resistance" (Paechter, Preedy, Scott & Soler, 2001: 3). Power, in this sense, rather than being vested in a few people and institutions, is believed as existing everywhere, as inhering in the multiple and complex relations between people, groups, institutions and even spaces in a given society. Power, in this formulation, means relations, a more-or-less organized, hierarchical, and coordinated cluster of relationship (Foucault, 1980: 198). Foucauldian approach to power undermine modernist /traditional liberal view of power relations and of the relationship between knowledge and power (see Blacker, 1998). Drawing on Foucault's conception of power it can be argued that all social interactions involves multiple power relations, and postgraduate supervision is no exception. An insight from Foucault's work enable us to explore some of the power dynamics in the postgraduate supervision.

In a traditional approach, supervision is a teaching and learning relationship between a knowledgeable and experienced supervisor and a less experienced supervisee. The supervisor is responsible for teaching research skills and overseeing the supervisee' work. This approach to supervision places supervisor and supervisee in a hierarchical relationship in which supervisor is positioned as an expert who teaches research skills and guides supervisee about the best and right way to accomplish his/her research project (Ganzer, 2007). This preference of hierarchical approach to supervision over the collaborative approach denies and discourages multiple possibilities of supervision practices and supervisory relationship. This approach to supervision has "important ethical implications for the explicit and implicit role of power inherent in the practice of supervision" (Copeland, Dean, & Wladkowski, 2011:28). The supervisors' authoritative stance on their way and approach as the right way to complete research projects converts supervisees into "docile bodies" whose capacities and abilities for originality and creativity are seriously damaged (see Atkins, 2002; Quarto, 2003). When supervision is carried out in a hierarchical structure, the freedom and space open to supervisees are limited. Supervisee functions as a passive recipient of knowledge and received wisdom without his/her independent agency. In a hierarchical and power-centred supervisory relationship, the notion of independent thinking and learning become alien for students. The point to be stressed here is that the issues faced by supervisees and supervisors are very complex and need contextual qualitative and quantitative assessments. This study is an attempt to qualitatively examine whether the current supervision practices in Pakistani universities are power-centred or facilitator-centred and meet the standards to realize HEC's goal of introducing quality research culture and attain knowledge-based economy. The reason to answer this question is important because of the considerable investment of HEC, since its establishment, to encourage research culture in the Pakistani universities and to acquire research quality through standardized students' supervision.

Method

This study examined the relationships among supervisees and supervisors in two public sector universities (hereafter, referred to as University A and University B) from January 2018 to December 2018. Both universities are located in Islamabad - the Federal Capital of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. To carry out this study, researchers employed qualitative methodology and relevant instruments/tools of data collection. The decision of employing such methodology and instruments were made in line with requirements of the research standards that require objectivity and reliability. After determining such prerequisites, researchers took a sample of 40 postgraduate supervisees purposively (20 MS/ M. Phil and 20 Ph.D), representing all disciplines in the social sciences. It is important to mention here that only those supervisees were included in the study who had submitted their theses and were waiting for final viva voce examination i.e., the public defense. Supervisees who had submitted their theses were selected as potential respondents with reasons, i.e., a) they had gone through supervision experience, b) we thought that they had little fear and threat to their degrees at this stage as compared to those who are currently under supervision.

The research instruments used in data collection process was interview guide. The interview guide comprised of two sections. Section A consisted of some closed ended questions i.e., gender of the supervisee, gender of supervisor, and frequency of the supervisory meetings while section B explored supervisory practices from supervisees' perspectives. We know that a close examination of supervisory relationship along the axis of gender is an important area. However, in this research understanding the gender differences in supervision was not the focus. The focus here was understanding supervisees' lived experience of the supervisory relationship. Supervisees' lived experiences were recorded in a series of in-depth interviews. The data from the interviews were first transcribed into meaningful text, and, thereafter the transcriptions were taken back to respondents for the verification, modification and acknowledgment to make sure that their perspectives and point of views have been correctly recorded, understood, and interpreted. Thematic analysis technique was used for analysis of collected data. Data were reviewed numerous times to familiarize ourselves with categories and themes that were unpacked. Recurring ideas and responses were also developed into meaningful themes to address the concerns of the study. The results discussed below are derived from the collective similarities and differences of views received from respondents.

Results and Discussion

The above account referred to how this study was carried out while following discusses the primary data obtained from supervisees' vis-à-vis secondary data for deriving results. It first explains the mixed nature of overall responses, trends of the data that depreciate the supervision and reasons causing it and, in the last, the insignificant number of respondents that justify and appreciate the supervisors in supervising their research scholars.

Mixed Bag of Bad and Good Supervision Practices: Bad Weighs Heavier than Good

Most of the research participants described their supervisors as 'unresponsive'-not responding to email or written submitted work; 'very busy' - not giving time to their supervisees due to their teaching, administrative and other engagements, and 'ghosts'- occasionally available and rarely responding to emails or texts. Supervisors were having no or little comprehension of the needs/ problems of their supervisees and their research projects. The majority of the respondents expressed concerns over uncooperative, disrespectful and casual attitude of their supervisors while only a quarter of the sample supervisees were satisfied with research guidance and training they received from their supervisors. They spoke very high of their supervisors and appreciated their supervisors' support and respect for them. However, generally, supervisees' experience with their

supervisors was found 'bad'. Thus, how such participants defined their 'bad' experiences with their supervisors are discussed and juxtaposed with secondary data below for inferring conclusions.

Unresponsive supervisors

Over a quarter of the selected supervisees termed access to their supervisors as 'very rare'. They reported that neither their supervisors nor the departments provided them with any proper meeting schedule. One of the participants, who graduated in fall 2018, stated that:

> *"I rarely met my supervisor. My supervisor never responded to my emails. He occasionally replied to text message(s). He mostly remained unaware of my research progress. It was my final draft that he studied in two hours and asked me "revise it". He did not give me any proper guidance as how to improve my thesis draft. At the time of final viva voce examination, he scolded me in front of examiners and faculty members. I accept that my work is weak but it was his fault. He failed to give me proper guidance and skills which were important for producing "standard quality research work".*

This is a vivid case of misuse and abuse of power in supervisory relationship. Another participant, while explaining his 'bad' experience and the unresponsive attitude of his/her supervisor, narrated that "my supervisor did not give any meeting schedule. He did not give me any proper guidance as how to improve my thesis draft. He disliked whenever I visited his office without an appointment". Of course, in this case respondent's grievance that his supervisor avoided any meeting without prior appointment looks unjustified because the supervisor might have been holding pre-scheduled meetings. However, on the other hand, his failure and inability to provide him any plan and program for meetings as well as unresponsive attitude in not responding to his request reflects his (supervisor) irresponsible and uncooperative behavior affecting the quality of the research manuscript.

This was not only the experiences and concerns of the respondents rather other supervisees of the same supervisors held almost similar statements. For example a supervisee, working with the same supervisor, not only reinforced concerns of the earlier fellow supervisee but also further stated that "I don't know what should I tell you and how should I explain my experience regarding my supervisor. Nonetheless, I occasionally met with my supervisor … most of the time we did not meet on agreed upon time". These occasionally and casually available supervisors, identified as 'ghost supervisors' (Chamberlain, 2016), we believe, adversely affects the quality of research work and skills required to be developed among supervisees for carrying out independent research. In short, the argument we hold and stress here is that effective learning experience depends on the regularity of meetings between supervisors and supervisees, guidance, encouraging attitude of supervisors and friendly mentoring relationship (see Chireshe, 2017; Grant, Hackney & Edgar, 2014).

The disinterest of supervisors in supervision and, similarly, investing poorly in future career of the supervisees was reported by most of the participants in this study. They asserted that their supervisors held no interest in their research work. It was revealed that some supervisors approved whatever was produced and submitted by the supervisees. One of the participants, when asked about his experience with his/her supervisor, shared that "his supervisor did not bother to check his/her work and approved the whole text as submitted for review". Another M. Phil graduate also endorsed this version by adding that his/her supervisor approved what s/he submitted for reading and did not change a single word or punctuation in the draft. Another Ph.D. scholar, expressed his/her 'bad' experience with his/her supervisor in saying the following:

"My supervisor did not provide written comments on my research work. I always expected him to come up with some good review and criticism … but all my efforts were in vain as my supervisor did not bother even to check a single word in my research work".

This situation was almost invariably reflected by most of the participants in their responses. They, who held the supervision below the generalized standards, considered supervisors and their style of supervision responsible for compromising quality of the research and development of research expertise. A supervisee in this respect asserted that "my supervisor was so careless that he always got my work checked from one of his senior Ph.D. scholars". Similarly, another MS supervisee while explaining his/her supervisor's style and behavior stated that "my supervisor checked only the analysis section of my thesis. He did not bother to check other chapters of my thesis". The same was also endorsed by another supervisee who stated that a Ph.D. thesis does not mean only 'analysis. It has many other important chapters and sections such as 'literature review' and 'theoretical framework'. However, it is disappointing that "my supervisor only checked my analysis". Another participant lamented over the poor quality of supervision and asserted that: "my supervisor did not provide written comments on my research progress. S/he just gave me verbal suggestions". All these responses suggest that a majority of the supervisors do not do justice with thesis supervision and, likewise, compromise the philosophy of the quality researching. They just pass on verbal comments and causally remarks in their supervisees' work. We believe that such casual attitude and unfair practices on the part of the supervisors negatively affect the 'quality of research' that requires proper guidance, corrections and direction (see Grant, Hackney & Edgar, 2014). Supervisors are required to guide and train supervisees so that they become skilled and independent researchers in future (Goodwin et. al., 2002). The nub of discussion here is that good supervision and effective supervisory relationship among the supervisors and supervisees are essential components of successful postgraduate training program (Gill & Bernard, 2008; Sally, 2008; Zhao, Golde & McCormick, 2007).

Supervisors have too much on their plate

In addition to the unresponsive attitude of supervisors, their (supervisors') busy work schedule in office was also targeted and claimed by participants responsible for the poor supervision. Most of the supervisees held that their supervisors were too busy and, hence, could not spare time for them. One of the study participants said that "he often had to wait for hours outside his supervisor's office to discuss and vet his research work. Most often he received some verbal guidance while accompanying him [supervisor] to car parking". Similarly, another Ph.D. scholar, while commenting upon the same issue, narrated that "her supervisor always remained busy in meetings. S/he used to keep her on waiting for hours". Most of the supervisees revealed that they failed to get any proper time of their supervisors to get critical insight into their work and produce quality research. A Ph.D. scholars, while sharing his experiences of MS supervision, asserted that "my supervisor used to call me for supervisory meeting. When I reached as per scheduled time, the supervisor was either late or busy in something else". Another participant while narrating his/her experience with supervisor asserted that "my supervisor was head of Department and always remained busy in different meetings. S/he could not meet me regularly. S/he never met me on the given time as per program". Similarly, a Ph.D. scholar, who was also a visiting faculty member, stated that his supervisor did not give him proper time. S/he further said that s/he always communicated him date and time for meeting but rarely turned up. Sometimes he used to keep me on waiting for 3-4 hours. One day I waited 4 hours to see him". The same situation was reported by most of the other supervisees as well. They explained that most of the supervisors were extremely busy and, therefore, unable to give proper time to their students. They further said that a Ph.D. scholars requires proper time and guidance to ensure original contribution to the existing knowledge. The same was also

supported by a Ph.D scholar who stated that "we used to wait for our supervisor for hours and when s/he gave us time it was not more than 30-35 minutes to the whole group". This reflects that supervisees failed to get proper time because supervisors "had too much on their plate" (Sidhu et. al., 2013:138). Therefore, we can argue here that busy schedule of the supervisors compromising quality research is a reflection of lack of commitment and non-professionalism in academics. Hence, supervisors must communicate proper timings for meetings, whenever feasible and required by the supervisees, not only for quality work but also for timely completion of the research projects. Such careless attitude of supervisors not only affect, as referred above, the timely completion and quality of research project(s) but also lead to creating poor quality or, in other words, incapable graduates in market (Kimani, 2014).

Of course, the problem of incapable graduates cannot be altogether associated with supervisor(s) because other factors relating to the standards of respective institutions, supervisees own interest and some other macro and micro level dynamics also determine it (Dann, 2008; Ellis, 2006; Nelson, Barnes, Evans, & Triggiano, 2008; Orellana et al., 2016). Nonetheless, the researchers have already clarified it above that it is focused on understanding perspectives of supervisees regarding 'good' and 'bad' supervision practices. Therefore, any researcher if interested can undertake a holistic study wherein all such macro and micro level factors can be addressed in detail.

This study, while focusing on supervision-related problems, found that lack of intellectual discussion between supervisors and supervisees, lack of supervisor(s)' genuine interest in supervisees' research work and reluctance of supervisor(s) to transfer his/her knowledge and research skills to the supervisees were among key factors responsible for creating poor quality graduates. Several of our study participants explained that their supervisors did not transfer their knowledge and research skills to them in true spirit. One of the supervisees in this context stated that "whenever, I tried to learn research skills, especially data analysis, I felt disappointed. My supervisor neither encouraged me nor taught me the relevant skills". Another participant, who also held almost the same opinion, stated that "my supervisor, who also taught us 'research methodology' course in one of the semesters, did not properly train us in research conduction". In addition, some supervisees even complained that their supervisors lacked the relevant knowledge and research skills. They further believed that their supervisors were altogether ignorant of ABC of research and, therefore, expecting them to teach research is like "expecting an illiterate person to read Bible". Similarly, three supervisees invariably asserted that "they learnt nothing from their supervisors. Whatever they know, they learnt it from their senior university fellows and other teachers within and outside the university".

Contrary to that, only few (5 of 40 respondents were moderately satisfied with research skills and knowledge they acquired from supervisors. A supervisee, who had submitted his Ph.D. thesis and was waiting for viva voce, told in this regard that "his supervisor taught him research skills and good theoretical knowledge". The same was also supported by another respondent (MS degree graduate) by stating that "my supervisor taught me basic research skills. S/he taught me how to collect data, analyze data, and write a thesis from the available data. `` This all highlights that a considerable number of supervisors do not take interest in supervision particularly due to their busy schedule. They therefore left supervisees at the mercy of God. This state of affairs, in result, damage both the quality of research produced and the intent of supervisees to learn quality research skills (McCulloch et al., 2016; Sidhua, et al., 2013).

Hierarchical supervisory relationship

Besides the unresponsive attitude and busy schedule of supervisors that negatively impacts the supervision process, the nature of the relationship between the supervisors and supervisees was also found biased, imbalanced and disrespectful for the supervisees. 'Supervisory relationship' that occupies a central place in debates and discussions carried out by contemporary academia regarding the quality of research in universities is considered an important tool in transforming 'bad' research into 'good' research (see Susan, 2012: 827). In other words, good relationship between a student and supervisor is a key to effective and good learning experience for research students (Black (1994). In this study the majority of the participants held 'supervisory relationship' as authoritative and disrespectful. They opined that their supervisors treated them like subordinates and powerless students and not as junior fellow researchers. One of the Ph.D. scholars in this respect stated that *"my supervisor always treated me as subordinate and powerless subject and never provided me any opportunity to express myself".* This was supported by another respondent who said that "I always felt powerless, helpless and speechless supervisee under his/her supervision … I do not know why s/he did so with me". This version was not only the individual statements of the participants regarding their own supervisors rather some held it for every supervisor. As for example, a respondent, while explaining such relationships, emphatically stated that "all supervisors treat their students as subordinate and powerless learners … they think they know everything".

Almost similar to this statement, there was another explanation by an MS graduate who said that *"my supervisor always treated me like an undergraduate student. He always advised me to follow him without any argument…. Once when I tried to argue he stopped me and shouted at me and said, 'don't argue'"*. These are just a few of the several responses that we referred to here to argue that this kind of supervisory relationship deprive supervisees from developing critical thinking: to question the existing body of knowledge and develop a quality relationship with their supervisors as academic community (see Orellana et al., 2016). Supervisees are constructed as docile bodies and passive recipients of knowledge.

Contrary to the preceding explanations and discussions, the study also found some, albeit few supervisees who were entirely satisfied from the supervisory relationships. Six number of such the study participants were quite similar in their experiences and responses. They appreciated their supervisors who treated them as junior colleagues and fellow researchers. One of the respondents while narrating his good experience told that *"my supervisor is an excellent person who always treated me as a junior research fellow. He absolutely groomed me in research process and that is why I have been able to write and publish a research article in a reputed journal"*.

An almost similar response was also received from a Ph.D. scholar who said that his supervisor treated him with respect and always encouraged him to debate and learn. However, overall account highlights that most of the respondents marked their supervisors as possessive and disrespectful and, therefore, the learning process suffered. In other words, it can be safely argued that stubbornness, possessiveness, and authoritarianism on the part of supervisors restrict supervisees to understand and develop quality research skills (Ladany, 2004; Quarto, 2003). Of course, most of the supervisees criticized and claimed the supervisory role of the supervisors as defective, however, still there were few of them who had different and positive views regarding their supervisors and supervision. Though, the number of satisfied supervisees was far less, yet their views are important for understanding the features that mark the supervision 'good' and 'supervisees-oriented' in their eyes.

Supervisees-oriented supervision

The respondents who appreciated and lauded their supervisors were, as referred above, only a quarter of the total. They did not have any problem with their supervisors and their supervision style. One of the Ph.D. scholars, in this respect, told that his supervisor always provided him constructive feedback. He always checked his work very meticulously and provided him written feedback. This was also buttressed by another participant who said that his supervisor always provided him with written and verbal feedback on his submitted research work. Similarly, another Ph.D. supervisee claimed that his/her supervisor always referred good books and research articles for reading and provided constructive feedback. Some of the supervisees were so much impressed and thankful to their supervisors that they said they did not have the words to express that. For example, a Ph.D. scholar said that: "*I don't have the words to appreciate my supervisor but I must [after taking a pause] say today what I am is exclusively due to his teaching and persistent guidance and efforts*". Another supervisee while narrating his pleasant experience with his supervisor held that of course "*my supervisor used to be very busy, nonetheless, he still gave me sufficient time, proper feedback and guidance*". In short, supervisees liked those supervisors who provided them time, critical, constructive and written feedback. Therefore, the question that makes difference between 'good' and 'bad' supervision is the interest of supervisors in scholars' research work. Hence, the poor quality of supervisory relationship and, likewise, unsupportive attitude of supervisors can be responsible, besides other reasons, for the poor quality of research and researching.

Conclusion

This paper on the whole unearthed the determinants that differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' supervision practices in the context of Pakistani Universities. It found that supervisees were normally not satisfied from research supervision and, hence, called it 'bad' due to different reasons such as lack of supervisors' interest in supervisees research work, their poor commitment to the already scheduled meetings and inactiveness in providing timely constructive feedback. While, on the other hand, only few of supervisees appreciated their supervisors for being positive, objective, encouraging and for taking keen interest in providing them with proper time and research skills. It all concludes that the existing supervision practices in Pakistan in the field of social sciences lack professionalism and do not meet the standards required by supervisees for producing quality research work. This situation of 'bad' supervision is not only found in the target area but also observed in other parts of the world (Attwood, 2009; McCormack, 2004; Chiang, 2003; Sigrell, 1999). The overall conclusion of this study is that supervisory practices in Pakistani universities are power-centred, i.e., the supervisee mostly functions as a passive recipient of knowledge and received wisdom without much opportunities to exercise their independent agency. This discourages independent thinking among the research scholars. To improve supervision at postgraduate level and to bring it in line with the concept of knowledge economy, the universities and/or other research institutions - offering postgraduate degree programs – should devise policies that provide effective grounds for the transference of quality research skills and the production of original contribution to knowledge. It is, in the last, important to remind that this study only solicited and analyzed views of supervisees and, therefore, may contain a tilt in deriving conclusion(s). To cover this deficiency, researchers may undertake comparative studies of both supervisees and supervisors and other probable dynamics for deriving concrete and all-inclusive results.

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