



A Thin Line between Education and Certification: A Battle of PhD Supervision in South African Universities

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to critically review and demystify the postgraduate research supervision in South African universities. There is unnecessary discrimination among scholars concerning the certification of lecturers in South African universities. Some lecturers are not recognized as academically fit to supervise doctoral students even when there is evidence that they have the capacity to supervise doctoral research. While there is a lack of recognition of some lecturers with regard to doctoral research supervision, others support this lack of recognition with the argument that it is not fair for doctoral research to be supervised by a lecturer who is still a doctoral candidate. However, this paper argued that it is irrational to think that all lecturers with no PhD completely lack knowledge about academic research. This becomes more irrational if the lecturer in question has some published research works and has shown the skill through conference presentations. Against this backdrop using analytic theory, this study sought to challenge the status quo of how doctoral research is perceived in universities. This study utilized a conceptual desktop form of qualitative research and all sources used are adequately acknowledged. At the core of this paper, the researcher sought to appeal for co-supervision as recognition of those lecturers who are still pursuing their PhDs but already show the capacity to contribute to doctoral research supervision. In its entirety, this desktop conceptual research study found that the lack of recognition in South African universities is a neglect of upcoming researchers and it is recommended that lecturers who are upcoming researchers be involved in postgraduate/ doctoral research supervision. This study's contribution is to motivate collaboration in doctoral supervision and mentorship for lecturers who are upcoming scholars in South African universities.

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Publication History

Received: 6th November, 2023

Accepted: 19th February, 2024

Published online:

8th March, 2024

Keywords: *Doctoral Research, Lack of Lecturer's Recognition, Universities Irrationality, Academic Experience*

INTRODUCTION

Academic research among the three pillars of a university's service is one of the distinguishing factors that set aside universities from other kinds of organizations.¹ According to Basu, the university as an institution is expected to mark its existence with three functions, which are; (a) teaching and learning, (b) research and supervision, and (c) community engagement.² This is in line with Flotman's argument that a university is an academic field or space where scholars exercise their intellectual prowess which gravely manifests in the form

¹ N. Navichadra, "Importance of Research," *IJMER* 7, no. 2 (2018).

² Mayurakshi Basu, "Importance of Research in Education," *Available at SSRN 3703560*, 2020.

of research production.³ The problem in South African universities is the unnecessary discrimination among scholars concerning their certification. With regard to research supervision, all lecturers who have not yet graduated with doctoral degrees (PhDs) are excommunicated or left out without any apparent reason. This begs the question of why it seems certification is considered more important and powerful than knowledge and educational skills. Walker argues that certification as a doctor or professor in South African universities most of the time is what puts weight in whatever one may say or bring forth.⁴ This paper argues that his words make more sense when one looks at what is actually happening in South African universities with regard to the supervision of doctoral students. Academic staff with PhDs or doctoral degrees end up being overloaded with the supervision of all doctoral students in the university because they do not even engage in the process of co-supervising with fellow lecturers who are still pursuing their PhDs.⁵

This paper argues that discriminating against lecturers who are not yet PhD holders is irrational because they are also involved in research. Oparah adds by arguing that even in their job description contracts with the university, research productivity and research supervision are specifically mentioned as requirements.⁶ It is also unfair to be only considering PhD holders when it comes to doctoral supervision while all lecturers are subject to research and publication to uplift the status of the university. If all lecturers have produced published research works and have shown research skills in terms of their articulation during representation in conferences, then their lack of recognition in their universities' quality research structures is alarming. According to Makoni, the university waits for lecturers to graduate with doctoral degrees before they can be exposed to doctoral supervision to merge with quality standards.⁷ This argument is faulty as the claim brought by Chantal Gould in Rusyad when she said "the number of degrees the man has symbolizes the amount and depth of wisdom that he has" which is a pure falsehood because a degree sometimes is a mere certification.⁸ This article hereby argues that the defense of this academic ostracism is based on such erroneous and irrational assumptions which have never been proven at any time in the history of mankind. Mhlahlo also argues that this line of thinking is erroneous if not totally irrational because it implies that only PhD holders produce quality research while non-PhD holders cannot produce quality research.⁹ In its argument here, the article holds that lecturers engage in research and even have published works which serve as evidence that quality research is happening.

Perhaps, it is worth stating that even the assumption that PhD holders only produce quality research is not objectively true. In fact, Fulgence argues that not all academic doctors and professors are clear in their academic articulation when presenting their research at conferences that have been held around the world.¹⁰ It is against that backdrop that this paper hereby argues that the non-involvement of non-PhD holders in doctoral research supervision is merely irrational academic discrimination and deserves condemnation with disdain. This attitude of valuing certification even beyond knowledge and evidential skills is a complete lack of recognizing and promoting the growth of all people as one group. As Pride argues, it takes the whole village to raise a child, hence, these university academics should see an opportunity to groom and grow with their colleagues who are not yet holders of doctoral degrees.¹¹ Wahida seems to agree with this view when he argues that "recognition of a talent and a skill in other people, and well as helping them to best, is one of the paramount qualities of a good teacher."¹² Instead of ostracizing colleagues who do not have doctoral degrees, there should be a way to include them and welcome their contributions to quality research production within the university.

³ Aden P Flotman, "Academic Research Supervision: The Unconscious Role Identity of a PhD Student," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 35, no. 6 (2021): 83–100.

⁴ A Walker, "Africa, A Continent of Success and Challenges for PhD Students," <https://Phdstudies.Com/Article/Africa-a-Continent-of-Success-and-Challenges-for-Phd-Students/> (Keystone PhD Studies, 2018).

⁵ Walker, "Africa, A Continent of Success and Challenges for PhD Students"; Y.R. Gumede, "What Is the Real Value of a Doctoral Degree?," <https://Mg.Co.Za/Article/2019-06-27-What-Is-the-Real-Value-of-a-Doctoral-Degree/> (Mail & Guardian, 2019); Benard Ungadi Akala, "Challenges in Doctoral Supervision in South African Universities," *Open Science Journal* 6, no. 2 (2021).

⁶ C. Oparah, "How to Become a Lecturer in South Africa," <http://Www.Eafinder.Com/How-to-Become-a-Lecturer-in-South-Africa/> (Career Guidance Blog, 2021).

⁷ Patricia Lindelwa Makoni, "Novice Doctoral Supervision in South Africa: An Autoethnographic Approach," *Makoni, PL (2022). Novice Doctoral Supervision in South Africa: An Autoethnographic Approach. International Journal of Higher Education* 11, no. 2 (2021): 135–42.

⁸ D. Rusyad, *The Nature of Wisdom. Flourish Wisdom through Education: The Teachers and Learners' Companion Book* (ebQaries Books, Mali, 2020).

⁹ A Mhlahlo, "Reflecting on Supervision Experiences: Honours Students' Research Projects in Development Studies at the Nelson Mandela University," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 34, no. 2 (2020): 164–76.

¹⁰ Katherine Fulgence Swai, "A Theoretical Perspective on How Doctoral Supervisors Develop Supervision Skills," *International Journal of Doctoral Studies* 14 (2019): 721–39, <https://doi.org/10.28945/4446>.

¹¹ Toni Pride, *It Takes A Village To Raise A Child*. (Maitland, Florida: Xulon Press, 2020).

¹² Wahidah Wahidah, "Teachers' roles on Talent Development of High School Students in Langsa," *Jurnal Ilmiah Didaktika: Media Ilmiah Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 22, no. 1 (2021): 1–13.

The main objective of this study is to dismantle the mystery associated with postgraduate research supervision in South African universities. The deep mystery is that academics seem to think that graduating with a doctoral degree and obtaining the title of “Dr” gives one the capability to supervise postgraduate research while those lecturers with no PhD have no capability to supervise postgraduate research. This mystery makes lecturers with no PhD to be ignored and not be supported through mentoring or coaching towards creating their ability to supervise postgraduate research. The article argues this point because as things are, it is more like the South African universities subject scholars to retrogression, back to the start with quality supervision after being certified with PhDs.

This study aims to advocate the sharing of knowledge and experiences from those who are established in postgraduate research to those who are novices in the field. At the same time, this will develop the research capacity of those who are upcoming researchers and supervisors, because this bears reference to the matter of recognition and development of upcoming researchers in South African universities. If this collaborative work happens in South African universities, there will be substantial growth in academia because upcoming researchers will feel more welcomed and recognized than being left out.

Albeit tersely, this paper calls for the recognition of all university scholars, knowledge, and skills, other than only recognizing certificates without any rational or valid reason. In other words, PhD holders should fully work with the rest of the lecturers in the university at all levels in a manner that recognizes the skills and knowledge that all scholars have. The focus of this study is on young/ upcoming researchers who serve as lecturers in South African universities because they are the ones who suffer a lack of recognition concerning doctoral research supervision. Therefore, the themes that this paper bases its argument on are; (a) Postgraduate/doctoral supervision in South African universities, (b) Issues with only involving senior lecturers in PhD supervision while excluding other lecturers, (c) Interpretation of excluding some lecturers in PhD supervision as neglect of upcoming researchers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is committed to the analytical school of thought. Analytical philosophy emphasizes clarity and argument, which is often achieved through logical and linguistic analysis.¹³ Gottlob Frege is considered the father of analytical philosophy, a tradition that emphasizes clarity of argument through the logical use of language in presenting thoughts.¹⁴ Within this framework, Bertrand Russell found a space to argue for logicism and logical atomism.¹⁵ According to Soames, Logicism and logical atomism refer to the practice of breaking the argument into basic propositions to understand its coherence as a whole.¹⁶ Similarly, Barry Hallen and John O Sodipo argue for the analytical breakdown of issues into simpler and logical thoughts through the use of logic in simple ordinary language.¹⁷ Soames seems to hold a view that philosophical problems arise from a misunderstanding of language and that all necessary truths are a priori, analytic, and true in virtue of the meaning of words depending upon how the world is.¹⁸ Analytic theory helps in producing philosophy that is not ideologically motivated but thought that is analytic and reflective.¹⁹ Under Wittgenstein’s inspiration, to embed his analysis in logical positivism as a development of this tradition.²⁰ Logical positivism holds that there are no specific philosophical truths and that the object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts.²¹ Carnap and other scholars contributed to this tradition by rejecting the doctrines of their predecessors of constructing artificial language to resolve philosophical problems.²² They argued that the Vienna Circle was erroneous because the “quest for systemic theories of language worked as a misleading intrusion of scientific methods into philosophy.”²³

¹³ C. McGinn, *The Making of a Philosopher: My Journey through Twentieth-Century Philosophy* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002).

¹⁴ G Frege, “Begriffsschrift. Grundgesetze Der Arithmetik” (London: Stanford, 1906), plato.stanford.edu/entries/frege/#BasFerLogPreCal.

¹⁵ S. Soames, *The Dawn of Analysis: Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century*, vol.1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

¹⁶ Soames, *The Dawn of Analysis: Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century*.

¹⁷ B Hallen and J. O Sodipo, *Knowledge, Belief, and Witchcraft: Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy* (California: Stanford University Press, 1997).

¹⁸ Soames, *The Dawn of Analysis: Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century*.

¹⁹ B Hallen, “Contextualism in Philosophy: Knowledge, Meaning, and Truth,” in *Analytic Philosophy*, ed. G. Preyer and G. Peter (Goethe University Frankfurt. Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁰ L. Wittgenstein, *Mind Association*, vol. 61 (JSTOR, 1937), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2252298>.

²¹ Soames, *The Dawn of Analysis: Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century*.

²² R. Carnap, *Logical syntax of language* (London. Routledge).

²³ Glock J. H., *What Is Analytic Philosophy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 44.

The analytic framework in this research work helps in acquiring a deeper or adequate understanding of the research problem prior to forwarding the researchers' views. Since it is the framework that guides the methodology, it also helps to critically apply analysis that cannot be accusable of any bias. This theoretical framework enables a researcher to be reflective and at the same time be within guards of rationality while being critical of his or her thoughts. With the guidance of logical positivism, the researchers have been able to deal with dogmas and ideological speculations around the issue of social cohesion and violence while operating as a neutral being in the battle between parties against and parties for current barriers to social cohesion. As Soames argues logical positivism holds that there are no absolute philosophical truths, but the object of philosophy is to clarify thoughts, this has helped to simplify thoughts.²⁴ This paper uses ordinary language to produce critical thoughts while at the same time analyzing the common thoughts that currently exist in the world. The use of ordinary language is because this work deals with real issues that involve real human beings in the world other than some metaphysical fantasies. The analytic framework is adequately relevant when dealing with sensitive issues like this one of academic discrimination and lack of recognition of some colleagues while they are capable because many people talk about these issues in the emotional realm and do not rationalize them. Therefore, this paper adopts this theoretical framework in an attempt to do differently as Mhlahlo argues that is not of a potent scholar to emotionally weep in corridors without addressing the problems that humanity faces.²⁵

METHODOLOGY

This was a desktop qualitative research and the nature of this study made use of already available literature in the public domain like books, published articles, newspaper articles, published videos, and many sources of information available in public spaces. Since this type of research does not involve primary data, there were no people or organizations that were directly approached except the literature available in public spaces. It was therefore the responsibility of the authors to ensure that all sources used in this study are adequately acknowledged. In this study, 50 journal articles and 2 newspaper articles were initially sampled. 30 out of those 50 articles were later dropped out due to the fact that they are not relevant to this study and 20 remained due to their relevance to this study as they address issues with research supervision in South African higher institutions. The 2 newspaper articles were chosen on the basis that they provide some useful information with regard to supervision issues within South African universities. All the sources used in this study have been interpreted using three layers of interpretation; (a) Textual interpretation, whereby the text is taken literally as it reads, (b) Contextual interpretation, whereby any case is interpreted with a careful reference to context, and lastly (c) Substantive interpretation, whereby the author focuses on the substance and message that the narrative conveys and its relevance to both space and time.

FINDINGS

- Research in some South African universities is mystified as a type of superior work that some academics cannot do because they have not obtained doctoral degrees yet.
- Research supervision of postgraduates is seen as a task that should be solely done by lecturers who have doctoral degrees, and that extends to mean that lecturers who are still pursuing their PhDs must not be involved even if they have published research works.
- Co-supervision which will include upcoming researchers seems to be lacking in some South African universities and this somewhat hinders the growth of upcoming researchers who serve as lecturers in those universities while overburdening professors with postgraduate supervision.

Analysis

Academic Elitism

Among all other things, universities have always been viewed as the places that produce critical thoughts/ ideas that will arouse a deeper insight into how to understand and enhance life. Over different epochs, universities as institutions of higher learning have been marking their presence through research production.²⁶ Research in itself can be explained as the search for deeper truths about the issues that humanity has faced and dealt with

²⁴ Soames, *The Dawn of Analysis: Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century* .

²⁵ Mhlahlo, "Reflecting on Supervision Experiences: Honours Students' Research Projects in Development Studies at the Nelson Mandela University."

²⁶ Paul Netalisile Malunda, Juliet Atwebembeire, and Proscovia Namubiru Ssentamu, "Research Supervision as an Antecedent to Graduate Student Progression in the Public Higher Institutions of Learning in Uganda," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 20, no. 5 (May 30, 2021): 73–95, <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.20.5.5>.

over the ages.²⁷ It is against that backdrop that Ferreira-Meyers argues that since universities are institutions of higher learning, it is mandatory for academics to always market their university by producing quality research.²⁸ According to scholars like Bengsten and McAlpine, research is a distinguishing feature or function of the university among the other two functions, which are; (i) Teaching and learning, and (ii) Community engagement.²⁹ Within the university there are two ways in which research happens; (a) academics conduct research to publish in the form of journal articles, books, and so on for their personal development, and (b) post-graduate students as upcoming academics do research under the supervision of lecturers who are practical academics within the university. As things are, academics have different rankings in accordance with both qualifications and experience in academia. There are general lecturers, academic doctors, and professors in the academic staff component of the university. It is noteworthy to argue that all these academics are expected to productively engage in all three functions of the university, including research. This paper argues that research is one factor that strictly defines an academic besides all other things because it even manifests the distinct character of academics in the university. However, there seems to be a very thin line between certification and education or knowledge when it comes to recognition in South African universities.

Mathis and Bronstein argue that it would be difficult to trust a lecturer who does not have a PhD to supervise doctoral research because there is no evidence of his/ her experience with postgraduate research.³⁰ Then in that case it would seem that there is an assumption that postgraduate research needs something greatly specific and deeper than ordinary research which professors do not mention. This study argues that professors have to mentor young lecturers who do not have doctoral degrees, and part of mentoring must include postgraduate research supervision. In fact, it is miraculous that there is a belief that once someone graduates with a doctoral degree, then he/she automatically gets some kind of enlightenment that he/ she did not have in the few moments before graduating. It is of course understandable that universities want to produce quality research, and the object of this paper is not to curtail the fulfilment of that desire. However, considering non-PhD holders as not fit to supervise at a particular level seems to be coming from the lack of recognition of upcoming researchers by the university professors. According to Lee, one factor that should come with long academic experience must be wisdom, and that includes recognition of talents that people have.³¹ Mathis and Bronstein seem to corroborate this view when they argue that mentoring the upcoming scholars demands their involvement in research and makes them feel confident in doing any academic work.³² Nonetheless, in South African universities there seems to be a cloud of experienced scholars who lack interest in mentoring and grooming young lecturers in this area of research supervision. The issue of the production of quality research output can be managed by the university systems that are put in place for quality assurance and research ethics while at the same time, all lecturers are involved. This lack of recognition meted against lecturers who do not have doctoral degrees seems to imply that people must not have confidence in research until they graduate with PhDs, and that should not be happening.

Well, perhaps the question might be why for some people it takes longer to obtain doctoral degrees while being lecturers and productive in research as well as publishing.³³ As a response to that concern, this paper calls attention to the fact that there are a lot of hindering factors like funding, having much workload, personal complications, and so on. However, all those issues do not justify the lack of recognition meted out to the upcoming researchers in South African universities currently. In fact, Qureshi argues that a teacher who does not do his job for his/ her students will never have confidence in them, and this paper also argues that professors who do not mentor their inexperienced colleagues are bound to lack confidence in them.³⁴ This study actually reveals that there is a problem with the lack of professorial mentorship in South African universities. Scholars like Zaheer and Munir argue that senior academics enjoy the glory of being the big names and suffer the desire

²⁷ Inger Fabris-Rotelli et al., "Development of an Early Career Academic Supervisor in Statistics-A Discussion towards a Guiding Rubric," *ORiON* 38, no. 1 (2022): 29–51.

²⁸ Karen Ferreira-Meyers, "The Need for Revision of Selected Aspects of Online Master's and Doctoral Student Supervision," *Perspectives in Education* 40, no. 1 (March 4, 2022): 288–305, <https://doi.org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v40.i1.17>.

²⁹ Søren Smedegaard Bengtson and Lynn McAlpine, "A Novel Perspective on Doctoral Supervision: Interaction of Time, Academic Work, Institutional Policies, and Lifecourse," *Learning and Teaching* 15, no. 1 (2022): 21–45.

³⁰ Kaitlyn A Mathis and Judith L Bronstein, "Our Current Understanding of Commensalism," *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics* 51 (2020): 167–89.

³¹ Anne M Lee, "Developing Effective Supervisors: Concepts of Research Supervision," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 21, no. 4 (2007): 680–93.

³² Mathis and Bronstein, "Our Current Understanding of Commensalism."

³³ Jesus A. Romo and Carol A. Kumamoto, "On Commensalism of Candida," *Journal of Fungi* 6, no. 1 (January 17, 2020): 16, <https://doi.org/10.3390/jof6010016>.

³⁴ Rashida Qureshi and Neelofar Vazir, "Pedagogy of Research Supervision Pedagogy: A Constructivist Model," *Research in Pedagogy* 6, no. 2 (2016): 95–110.

to remain the elite without any aspiration to rise together with their colleagues.³⁵ In as much as it is a desirable situation that all university lecturers have doctoral qualifications, the reality is that South African universities, like any other universities in the world, do employ lecturers who are still pursuing their doctoral degrees. It is an additional factor that there seems to be a need for those lecturers to gain experience in academic research supervision so that being a graduated and certified PhD holder would reasonably have a proper meaning. A proper meaning in the sense that it would not only be proving that one can do supervised research but he/she can also supervise the postgraduate academic research. If this postgraduate supervision issue is understood in this manner, it would not only encourage the upcoming researchers but would also annul the created mystery that graduation comes with some sort of divine spark or special enlightenment.

Demystification of Research Supervision

The use of an analytic theoretical framework in this study helps in demystifying the issue of academic research supervision as it now has been marred with a mirage of elitism in South African universities. According to Madondo supervising a student in academic research needs someone who can guide with experience on how academic matters are articulated, and not someone with mysterious powers.³⁶ That is why sometimes scholars supervise doctoral candidates with whom they both engage in the process of learning and discovering things within that particular discipline.³⁷ It then seems that with the inclusion of junior academics or ordinary lecturers in postgraduate research supervision, students would also benefit. According to Maistry sometimes there are even difficulties that students encounter with being supervised only by senior academics. Maistry argues that sometimes senior academics have their identities linked to a particular style of research which then makes them demand that their students align with or follow.³⁸ Of course, one would argue that supervisors must follow some styles that seem familiar to them as experienced academics in the field, but that kind of attitude is hereby declared questionable because it hinders the overflow of ideas and different styles that might have been of benefit to the student. In other encounters, Everitt adds that being supervised by only senior academics brings a challenge as they are commonly preoccupied with a lot of other things.³⁹ It is at that very point that this paper argues that the senior academics will be much of service in the university research production if they co-supervise with the junior academics. This will yield special benefits because the student will have someone to work with at least most of the time, without feeling abandoned or forced to fit into someone's identity. In fact, the students will feel free to present their and defend the style in which they want to present their research if they have space with someone who is not super qualified to always overrule other ideas.

According to Romo and Kumamoto, there is a subconscious psychological aspect of an inferiority complex that haunts students when they work with senior academics.⁴⁰ As some come from backgrounds where an older or experienced person is always deemed right, it then becomes difficult to voice their views as they come in their research if they sense that the professor might be opposed to them.⁴¹ Bradley corroborates this view as he argues that students will not feel confident enough to oppose the ideas that come with the professor who happens to be the immediate sole authority over that research study, and that creates unnecessary limitations at times. Therefore, if one takes Bradley's argument quite deeply, it implies that besides junior academics benefitting from postgraduate supervision, students have something to benefit from as well.⁴² It is at this point where Akers argues that with the collapse of all mysteries and myths linked with academic research supervision, a lot of benefits will accrue and mark a huge progress in academic research.⁴³ In other words, this paper argues that different ways that seem to promise a commensualistic symbiosis in academic research must be explored

³⁵ Muhammad Zaheer and Saba Munir, "Research Supervision in Distance Learning: Issues and Challenges," *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal* 15, no. 1 (2020): 131–43.

³⁶ M C Madondo, "Postgraduate Research Supervision Pedagogic Methods: A Critical Review for South Africa," in *18th European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies*, 2019, 192.

³⁷ Joanne Hart et al., "Research Supervisors' Views of Barriers and Enablers for Research Projects Undertaken by Medical Students; a Mixed Methods Evaluation of a Post-Graduate Medical Degree Research Project Program," *BMC Medical Education* 22, no. 1 (2022): 1–12.

³⁸ Suriamurthee Maistry, "Working with and through Neoliberalism: Envisioning Research Supervision as a Pedagogy of Care in a Context of Privileged Irresponsibility," *Education as Change* 26, no. 1 (2022): 1–19.

³⁹ Julia Everitt, "How Involved Should Doctoral Supervisors Be in the Literature Search and Literature Review Writing?," *Teaching in Higher Education* 28, no. 4 (2023): 894–901.

⁴⁰ Romo and Kumamoto, "On Commensalism of Candida."

⁴¹ Yu Liu et al., "Analysis of the Causes of Inferiority Feelings Based on Social Media Data with Word2Vec," *Scientific Reports* 12, no. 1 (March 25, 2022): 5218, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-09075-2>.

⁴² Rachel Bradley, "Exploring the Inferiority Model in Adlerian Psychotherapy," 2022.

⁴³ Akers A.S., "What to Know about an Inferiority Complex.," <https://www.Medicalnews Today.Com/Articles/Inferioritycomplex>, 2022.

rather than merely sticking to the less beneficial traditional methods.⁴⁴ Commensualism is defined by Puspitasari et. al., as a symbiotic relationship whereby two organisms benefit from each other with no harm being incurred by any of them.⁴⁵ Hence the biological concept of commensualism applies here in this argument about supervision being made to be beneficial to both the academics and students at the same time through recognition of junior or ordinary academics in research supervision. The way research supervision is done currently, universities want to have confidence in the research supervision offered within their respective disciplines, but they do not worry about the confidence of students while conducting that research.⁴⁶ At the core of this whole analysis, this paper forwards a plea that postgraduate research in South African universities must be demystified, all academics be recognized, and students be fairly given a chance to experience working with different supervisors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that more research must be done about how management and senior academics can be conscientious of this neglected problem. There must be more workshops held on this topic of postgraduate and PhD supervision in South African universities. The benefits accrued from supervising postgraduates and PhD students must be shared across all lecturers in any university rather than being reserved for the elite. The management in different South African universities must create clear guidelines on how to supervise postgraduate and PhD students, and the inclusion of upcoming scholars in those guidelines must be emphasized. Senior academics must embrace the grooming of their fellow junior colleagues in postgraduate supervision and thus turn the university into a thorough academic and career development. Workshops must be held in different South African universities to demystify research and make all academics be involved in postgraduate supervision including PhD supervision. There might be very good researchers in a university who do not have PhDs yet, but to help them get their PhD degrees quickly, their researched papers on a particular subject could be put together into a thesis form - introduction to the papers; presentation of selected papers; conclusion. Once they can defend it, they could be awarded PhD degrees. This might be a way of solving the problem.

CONCLUSION

This study has reviewed the issue of lack of recognition of some academic personnel in South African universities. Within this study, it has been analytically revealed that postgraduate research supervision in South African universities is traditionally reserved for PhD holders in exclusion of general lecturers. The ills that come with this common practice in South African universities have been discussed throughout the length of this study. All in all, this paper is optimistic that if all lecturers get involved in doctoral research supervision no one will feel unrecognized or downright ignored. These above recommendations may lead to unravelling the belief that PhD graduation comes with special power from above or at least this study may serve as the basis for justification of this traditional practice in South African universities. The purpose here is that there is some academic elitism that has taken over in South African universities whereby some academically successful colleagues tend to exclude the general colleagues who are still pursuing their doctoral degrees with regard to supervision. Perhaps, one may take this argument further to say that some colleagues get limited at what they would produce academically due to this lack of recognition while they would have been hugely contributing if they were allowed a chance by involvement in doctoral research supervision.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

Both authors have considered the issue of conflicting interests and have made sure that there is no conflict of interest in this study. There is no conflict of interest among the researchers and between the researchers and the funders.

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⁴⁴ Sherry Glied, Raphael Wittenberg, and Avi Israeli, "Research in Government and Academia: The Case of Health Policy," *Israel Journal of Health Policy Research* 7, no. 1 (2018): 1–8.

⁴⁵ Nurmaini Puspitasari, Wuryansari Muharini Kusumawinahyu, and Trisilowati Trisilowati, "Dynamic Analysis of the Symbiotic Model of Commensalism and Parasitism with Harvesting in Commensal Populations," *JTAM (Jurnal Teori Dan Aplikasi Matematika)* 5, no. 1 (2021): 193–204.

⁴⁶ Orsolya Kálmán et al., "Review of Benefits and Challenges of Co-supervision in Doctoral Education," *European Journal of Education* 57, no. 3 (2022): 452–68.

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