Investigating Factors Impacting Timely Feedback Provision in Postgraduate Thesis Supervision: An Exploration of Supervisory Practices

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Despite the emphasis on supervisory timely feedback practices in postgraduate students' thesis writing, our understanding of timely feedback may only be comprehensive when investigating the factors influencing it. Therefore, the present study, conducted at Majmaah University in Saudi Arabia, explores the factors that influence timely feedback on the progress of the postgraduate thesis and how supervisors perceive the importance of providing timely feedback. A qualitative approach was adopted to address the study's aims through semi-structured interviews. The study used thematic analysis to analyse the qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured supervisor interviews. The study's sample included (N = 4) supervisors (2 male and 2 female supervisors) supervising postgraduate students as part of an M.A. in Applied Linguistics program at Majmaah University. The findings revealed that eight factors affect the provision of timely feedback: teaching and administrative workload, procrastination, student-related factors, communication barriers, supervisors' personal factors, perfectionism, lack of expertise in providing feedback, and lack of interest in students' research topics. Furthermore, supervisors emphasized the importance of timely feedback in improving postgraduate theses. They believe it is crucial for students' development, shaping the quality of theses, and supporting student growth. This study offers significant pedagogical implications for supervisors and provides essential recommendations for future research. The exploration of these factors contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in thesis supervision and feedback provision.

Keywords: postgraduate thesis, supervisory feedback, timely feedback, thesis, students

INTRODUCTION

Providing timely feedback during thesis supervision is vital for ensuring the successful completion of theses and overall student satisfaction. Several factors, such as content, processes, and expectations of both supervisees and supervisors (Azkah et al., 2016;

Bahtilla, 2024; Bastola, 2020; Bastola & Hu, 2020), influence how effective and prompt feedback can be. It is crucial to deliver quality feedback that covers aspects like content organization, linguistic accuracy, and appropriateness to supervise theses effectively (Al harbi & Troudi, 2020; Azkah et al., 2016; Chugh et al., 2012; Saeed et al., 2021). On the contrary, inadequate quality and delayed feedback pose challenges that can impede thesis progress (Aspland et al.,1999; Azkah et al., 2016). Supervisors should be aware of potential resistance to critical feedback and address it by viewing supervision as a meeting point for fostering a collaborative approach (Vehviläinen, 2009).

Supervisory feedback plays a role in improving supervisees' and supervisors' learning and teaching abilities. Processes, content, and expectations can influence the quality of feedback (Chugh et al., 2021). Further, when giving feedback on research proposals, focusing on elements like content organization, language accuracy, and appropriateness is essential. This process is shaped by how students think about the task, reflect on their thinking processes, and respond emotionally, ultimately leading to revisions (Saeed et al. 2021; Mucundanyi & Tamany, 2022). Moreover, implementing feedback techniques and communication strategies can also boost reading skills in English as a Foreign Language thesis writing among international students (Azman et al., 2014). However, supervisory feedback on master theses can vary widely depending on the field. Often needs to meet students' expectations. This underscores the importance of enhancing feedback practices for outcomes (Bastola & Hu, 2020).

Late feedback in overseeing theses is often caused by workloads, dissertation quality, lack of active involvement, late submissions, differing research interests, and insufficient acknowledgment (Bahtilla, 2022). Postgraduate students highly value the feedback provided in written form by their supervisors; however, concerns arise due to the quality of the feedback and its untimely delivery (Azkah et al., 2016). Nevertheless, there needs to be more research examining how postgraduate students perceive the feedback given by their supervisors and how it influences the development of their theses. Furthermore, limited existing literature explores supervisors' perspectives on overseeing research through their techniques and communication strategies, students' expectations regarding research supervision, and their responses to the supervisory approach (Azman et al., 2014).

Crafting a research proposal and composing a master's thesis presents hurdles for students, particularly those using a second language or non-native speakers. Challenges arise when conveying thoughts due to language skills, leading to feelings of anxiety and dissatisfaction (Sadeghi & Khajepasha 2015). Timely supervisory feedback is crucial as students often eagerly anticipate their feedback. The waiting period can be frustrating as it hinders the ability to produce meaningful writing (Azkah et al., 2016; Bahtilla, 2024; Carter & Kumar, 2017). While previous studies provide insights into delivering feedback on students' theses, there need to be more comprehensive analyses that mainly focus on the factors influencing timely feedback in postgraduate thesis supervision from supervisors' perspectives. This gap emphasizes the need for research examining how supervisors comprehend and address the problems of delivering timely feedback during thesis supervision. Consequently, this has an implication on the performance of postgraduate students and addresses the feedback provided in written form by their

supervisors; however, concerns arise due to the quality of the feedback quality and lateness in submission. Therefore, in-depth analyses that specifically explore the factors affecting the provision of timely feedback in thesis supervision are necessary. This research aims to bridge this gap by shedding light on how supervisors perceive the factors influencing timely feedback in thesis supervision. In institutions, supervisors face pressure to ensure the timely completion of theses, sometimes prioritizing speed over nurturing researchers with comprehensive academic skills (Carter & Kumar 2017). The current research explores the factors that impact timely feedback on the progress of the postgraduate thesis. It also investigates how supervisors perceive the importance of providing Timely feedback and its effects on thesis development. The following research questions guide the study.

RQ1. What salient factors influence timely feedback on the advancement of postgraduate theses?

RQ2. What are the supervisors' perceptions of the significance of timely feedback provision and its implications for thesis progress?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the Social Constructivism Theory (SCT), a known framework that emphasizes knowledge creation (Vygotsky, 1978). It highlights the process of feedback exchange between mentors and mentees. Through discussions, negotiations, and shared understanding, mentors can provide feedback to support mentees' progress and thesis development (Rabbani et al., 2023). Previous studies have extensively utilized social constructivism as their framework (Rust et al., 2005; Rabbani et al., 2023; Thurlings & Diggelen, 2021; Thurlings et al., 2013). SCT emphasizes learners' active involvement in producing knowledge (Azhari et al., 2020; Mahfoodh, 2017; Thurlings & Diggelen, 2021; Thurlings et al., 2013).

In the realm of thesis supervision, the concept of SCT plays a role in providing feedback. According to this perspective, feedback is seen as a two-way process of negotiating meaning. SCT connects with feedback by involving mentees in engaging with both their work and the feedback they receive (Saeed & Alharbi 2022). Feedback is viewed as a dialogue where information and interactions flow bidirectionally between teachers and students as well as among students themselves (Carless, 2020; Ajjawi et al., 2021; Saeed & Al Qunayeer, 2020). Supervisors are crucial in guiding students' construction of knowledge and comprehension during thesis supervision. Supervisors frequently pose inquiries to empower students and enhance their comprehension. They do so by adjusting their approach to meet students' individual needs, positively influencing their perception of their agency (Agricola et al., 2020).

The Key Concepts of Supervisory Feedback

Supervisory feedback plays a vital role in supervising research within education. It enables both postgraduate students to gauge their standing and consider the necessary steps to advance their understanding of research-related subjects and academic writing.

(AbuSaaleek, & Alenizi, 2023; Bahtilla, 2024; Carter & Kumar, 2017; Xu, 2017; Xu & Hu, 2020; Saeed et al., 2021). Furthermore, supervisory feedback refers to the exchange of information and ideas between research supervisors and supervisees with the aim of enhancing students' research abilities (Bahtilla & Oben, 2022; Bastola, 2020; Gorup & Laufer, 2020; Winstone et al., 2016).

Feedback is an influential tool for enhancing learning (Andersson & Weurlander 2019; Thurlings & Van Diggelen, 2021), and it has been extensively researched across fields and contexts (Bastola & Hu, 2020). Feedback typically comprises a judgmental and a suggestion element that guides the writer toward achieving specific literacy objectives. Additionally, there is the concept of feedforward, which offers advice without criticizing the work. Instead, it focuses on driving the author towards further growth (Kumar & Stracke, 2007).

Timely feedback in the supervision of a thesis is crucial for fostering friendly and supportive relationships with students, particularly in cases where an ideal supervisor-student dynamic cannot be achieved (Kleijn et al., 2014; Kumar & Stracke, 2007). According to Bahtilla (2024), timely feedback refers to the information supervisors give supervisees regarding their thesis, allowing them to successfully engage with it within the specific stage of the thesis writing process. Moreover, Bahtilla (2024) has defined late feedback as when supervisees receive feedback on their thesis from their supervisors when there is insufficient time to incorporate it effectively or when they have already progressed to a stage in their writing where the feedback may no longer be applicable. Many investigations emphasize the significance of timely and substantial feedback. According to Price et al. (2011), late feedback may not benefit supervisees, and providing feedback is only necessary if supervisees can use it. Building on this, as reported in a study by Carter and Kumar (2017), feedback can discourage supervisees, so supervisors may be reluctant to provide thorough feedback. Supervisors who doubt their supervisees' desire to participate in the feedback process actively are reluctant to invest time and effort in providing feedback (Ali et al., 2015). Effective supervisory feedback strategies have a good impact on supervisees' and supervisors' learning and teaching abilities, with problems in feedback influenced by content, processes, and expectations (Chugh, 2021). On the other hand, Negative supervisory experiences in postgraduate research supervisees are influenced by communication breakdown, poor feedback, supervisor availability, and ethical considerations (Cekiso et al., 2019).

Research on the Importance of Research Supervision

Supervising postgraduate master's theses is a little-recognized component of academic practice (Macfadyen et al., 2020). Research supervision is crucial in helping supervisees develop research skills and complete their degrees within the expected timeframe (Bahtilla & Oben, 2022; Doyle et al., 2018). During postgraduate studies, supervisees are typically expected to possess a significant level of research skills in order to become autonomous researchers. Consequently, they are anticipated to enhance their research skills by observing and imitating other supervisees and supervisors (Manathunga & Goozee, 2007). Moreover, research supervision is crucial in higher education, especially postgraduate and doctorate programs. It is also the backbone of the entire academic

structure (Bastola, 2020; Bastola & Hu, 2020; Bahtilla, 2024; Bahtilla & Oben, 2022; Carter & Kumar, 2017; Susilo, 2022).

Supervision as teaching is essential for promoting the supervisor's development, imparting academic expertise, upholding academic standards, promoting learning to research, and enabling supervisee development (Bruce & Stoodley, 2013). Additionally, supervisors play a crucial role in shaping supervisees' perceptions of supervisory feedback. Their assessment significantly impacts graduate supervisees' research and writing skills. However, supervisees are not the sole influencers of such engagement, as other factors can also play a role. The way supervisors and supervisees perceive supervisory feedback can lead to misconceptions, discourage supervisee involvement, and reduce learning opportunities (Bastola, 2022).

Research on the Factors Influencing Timely Feedback

Research recognizes the importance of timely and effective feedback in postgraduate thesis supervision. This feedback is crucial for completing theses and overall supervisee satisfaction. It also helps improve postgraduates' research skills, especially in academic writing (Mlundi, 2024). Nevertheless, research needs to sufficiently examine the issues that hinder the provision of timely feedback during supervision. Late supervisor feedback might impede the progress of thesis writing and restrict the development of research abilities during supervision. Several prior studies have examined the factors that impede research supervisors from providing timely feedback (Dawson, 2019; Bahtilla, 2024; Rabbani et al., 2023). Workloads, dissertation quality, lack of active involvement, late submissions, differing research interests, and insufficient acknowledgment often cause late feedback in overseeing theses (Bahtilla, 2024).

Other factors impacting timely feedback provision in postgraduate theses comprise supervisees' poor self-regulation (Carless et al., 2011) and failure to interpret and integrate feedback (Sadler, 2010; Ali et al., 2015). The absence of supervisees' responses to teachers' feedback compromises the quality of learning. Therefore, supervisees' engagement in addressing teachers' feedback holds equal significance to the role of the teacher (Dawson, 2019; Rabbani et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2020). Supervisors struggled to give supervisees timely feedback, and supervisees felt less supported. Supervision is questionable if supervisors cannot spend time giving feedback (Carter and Kumar, 2017). However, Sometimes, supervisors may have to supervise a number of supervisees, as reported in a study (Bastola, 2022; Susilo, 2022).

An analysis of the literature conducted by Abiddin et al. (2009) on supervising graduate supervisees reveals no single formula for the relationship between supervisors and supervisees. This relationship depends on the specific qualities of the individuals involved, the variations in how knowledge is advanced across different disciplines, and the diverse learning tasks that supervisees face due to the requirements of their field.

Additionally, supervisees connected their supervisors' seeming lack of enthusiasm or dedication to their work with a failure to encourage or monitor their progress. These findings indicate that some supervisors should prioritize their supervisees' publication of papers and attendance at conferences (Bahtilla & Oben, 2022). In their study, Gill and

Bernard (2008) observed that some supervisors unintentionally offend supervisees when providing feedback, leading to feelings of frustration and inferiority. Supervisors should deliver comments and feedback professionally and respectfully to avoid causing supervisees to feel offended, frustrated, or inferior (Bahtilla & Oben, 2022).

Postgraduate students frequently procrastinate while studying, harming their mental well-being (Liu et al., 2020). Procrastination can negatively affect academic performance (Stead et al., 2010), which manifests in learning (Zhang et al., 2010) and is a prevalent behavior observed among college students (Ziegler and Opdenakker, 2018; Li et al., 2019),

Students' active engagement with feedback is a critical factor that can make supervisors feel more responsible and involved. When supervisees demonstrate enthusiasm and diligence in comprehending and applying feedback, it motivates supervisors to allocate additional time and effort to reviewing supervisees' work, thereby diminishing the possibility of late feedback (Ali et al., 2015; Bastola, 2022; Ruegg, 2015). Previous research (Ali et al., 2015; Carter & Kumar, 2017; Ridgway, 2017) Prior studies (Ali et al., 2015; Carter & Kumar, 2017; Ridgway, 2017) have shown that supervisors face significant obstacles in research supervision, with time demand being a prominent barrier. Supervisors must allocate a substantial amount of time to addressing language-related concerns, mainly due to supervisees' poor ability in English (Carter and Kumar, 2017; Ridgway, 2017). Ali et al. (2015) found that supervisees are more inclined to consider and respond to feedback when it is both comprehensive and timely provided. In a study conducted by Chireshe (2012), postgraduate students encounter difficulties such as supervisors' busy academic schedules, making it difficult for them to be effective in their roles, insufficient feedback, conflicting feedback with previous ones, poor communication, and limited knowledge and expertise in the field of study. In addition, inadequate communication between a supervisor and a supervisee has been found to have a detrimental impact on the advancement of postgraduate studies (Yousefi et al., 2017).

According to Manathunga (2005), having or not having supervisory experience can potentially contribute to difficulties in supervising. The risk of encountering challenges is heightened when a supervisee faces personal issues, experiences problems in their supervision relationship, encounters project management challenges, and struggles to receive support from the academic research community. Experienced supervisors, on the other hand, can identify warning signs and intervene to offer suitable instruction and assistance. Previous studies (Green, 1997; D'Andrea, 2002; Rahman et al., 2019) reported that perfectionism, high dependence demands, unrealistic expectations, loss of motivation, and procrastination have been identified as personal qualities that significantly impact the completion of a dissertation. In a study by Waheed et al. (2021), supervisors' attitudes toward their supervisees significantly impacted the success of their research. It was shown that when supervisees were encouraged to exhibit positive conduct, they were more motivated to pursue their research and reported higher satisfaction. Conversely, their unfavorable conduct decreased their performance and impacted their mental well-being and stability.

METHOD

Research Design

The study used a qualitative method to investigate the salient factors influencing timely feedback on the advancement of postgraduate theses, specifically the supervisors' perceptions of the significance of timely feedback provision and its implications for thesis progress. This method is suitable because it enables the researcher to get insights about the issue directly from actively engaged individuals (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 2010). This active engagement of the participants added a dynamic element to our research process.

Participants

The current study included four supervisors who were purposely selected from the Applied Linguistics program at Majmaah University, two males and two females. The selection of participants was based on a number of reasons: their long experience in supervising postgraduate students' theses, involvement in academic research, and active participation and roles in postgraduate programs at the university. Selection from such a group was an important criterion, as this would be a group with insight into challenges and best practices concerning the process of thesis supervision.

The rationale for the selection of such informants lies in the fact that they hold a privileged position within the academic structure, given the large number of postgraduate students under their supervision, as well as their influence on the formulation of policies and practices for supervision within the department. Their insights are invaluable and become useful in comprehending certain institutional and personal fact. The inclusion of both male and female supervisors enhances the study's diversity, ensuring a broad representation of perspectives and making the research more comprehensive and inclusive. The selection of the informants was done by a systematic process involving consultations with the department's coordinators in addition to reviewing academic contributions relevant to each supervisor's field as well as supervisory experience. Participants will be solicited based on competence and standing within the academic community as effective supervisors. The process ensures that the informants not only have credibility but also signify the best standards of supervisory practices. This would make their views particularly useful to this study.

This selected group of informants is highly qualified to provide meaningful insights into the factors that affect providing timely feedback during thesis supervision and will, therefore, contribute significantly to the research.

Table 1
Profile of the participating supervisors

Pseudonyms	Gender	Nationality
S1	Male	Sudanese
S2	Male	Jordanian
S3	Female	Saudi
S4	Female	Egyptian

Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used as the only form of data collection for the second semester of 2023–2024. This was done by conducting semi-structured interviews with MA supervisors. The interviews explored the information on supervisors' perceptions of the salient factors that influenced timely feedback on the advancement of the theses, particularly the perceived relevance of timely feedback provision by the supervisors and the implication this had on thesis progress.

Semi-structured interviews, therefore, were adopted for the flexibility and depth they allow in this study, as expressed by Bryman, 2016, and Creswell, 2012. This approach allows the researcher to explore participants' perspectives in detail while maintaining a structured framework for comparability across interviews. Semi-structured interviews are thus appropriate for collecting rich, qualitative data on complex and nuanced topics, such as those influencing timely feedback in thesis supervision. This method allows participants to express themselves freely and elaborate on their specific problems, with richer details than one might get by using more limited interview structure formats (Kvale, 2007). Given that the research is of an exploratory nature, semi-structured interviews would be particularly suitable to explore in-depth the hidden motives and personal experiences that influence supervising styles (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The researchers interviewed each supervisor at their leisure for as long as necessary, varying based on the amount of information provided by each participant. The researcher used a smartphone to document important information. Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to analyze data collected. It is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns of themes within the data. The analysis followed six key steps: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of the transcripts, (2) generating initial codes to identify features of the data relevant to the research questions, (3) searching for themes by collating codes into potential themes, (4) reviewing themes to ensure they accurately represent the data set, (5) defining and naming themes to clearly present their significance, and (6) producing the final report that integrates these themes into a coherent narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was chosen because it gives a flexible and accessible approach to analyzing qualitative data, allowing for a detailed exploration of the participants' perspective and experiences.

FINDINGS

The current study's findings are presented according to two primary themes: factors affecting the provision of timely feedback and supervisors' perspectives on the impact of timely feedback on postgraduate thesis development. The selection of the four supervisors was instrumental in the sense that it captured data on thesis supervision from a wide range of perspectives: their distinctive position, varied academic background, and different teaching and supervisory loads allow the complete understanding of factors impinging on timely feedback. It was a non-random selection of the informants, but rather strategic, so as to ensure voices for capturing the reflections of institutional constraints and personal ways of doing supervision that will make the study robust and relevant to similar academic contexts. Moreover, the

thematic analysis revealed several sub-themes under these categories, which are supported by direct quotes from the supervisors to provide a deeper understanding of the issues discussed.

Factors Affecting the Provision of Timely Feedback

The interviews revealed eight key factors that impact timely feedback. All participants agreed that there are many factors affecting the provision of timely feedback namely, teaching and administrative workload, procrastination, students related factors, communication barriers, supervisors' personal factors, perfectionism, lack of expertise in providing feedback, and lack of interest in students' research topics.

Teaching and Administrative Loads

All supervisors pointed out that heavy workload seriously affects their timely feedback for students. S1 expressed a sense of frustration, stating, "*Supervisors often have multiple responsibilities, including teaching, conducting research, and administrative tasks. Due to an intense workload, supervisors may struggle to allocate sufficient time to provide comments on postgraduate theses promptly."* This is part of a larger challenge, the struggle to balance multiple academic responsibilities, leaving little time for thoughtful and substantive feedback.

S2 echoed this concern, pointing out that supervisors often guide multiple theses simultaneously, and this would impose severe time constraints: "*Managing several theses at once, especially during peak periods, can severely hinder our ability to provide the kind of detailed feedback that would really benefit students."* This will outline the systemic problem of overloaded academic staff, impacting not only the quality of feedback but also the general supervision experience for students

,S3 added further depth of this issue saying, "S*upervisors who are responsible for evaluating and supervising many theses within a short period, like at the end of an academic semester, often experience an overwhelming workload. This makes it difficult to provide timely feedback to all students within the given timeframe.*" Aside from highlighting the problem of workload distribution, it also shows how the present academic structure is not helpful for supervision.

These would seem to indicate that a re-think of the policies of the institution and distribution of workload are required. Supervisors are therefore in a self-perpetuating cycle where the volume of their responsibilities is compromising their capacity for providing students with proper support. This issue points towards systemic changes which could enable supervisors to engage more deeply with the students' work and provide them with timely and constructive feedback, as their academic development requires. The recurring theme throughout the interviews from an "overwhelming workload" shows that this is not an isolated problem but a major structural challenge that needs to be addressed in order to improve the quality of postgraduate supervision.

Procrastination

Procrastination can substantially impact the timely delivery of feedback in the supervisor- supervisee interaction. The absence of supervisors' enthusiasm toward students' research ideas raises the probability of procrastination in assessing and offering criticism. This delay can adversely impact students' advancement, leading to dissatisfaction, failure to meet deadlines, and potentially affecting the caliber of their research. The following are excerpts of the procrastination that supervisors perceive.

S1 highlighted that procrastination is a critical problem that can substantially influence the ability to receive timely feedback from supervisors. Feedback from the supervisor or the supervisee is crucial for the student's academic progress. He further noted that "*Procrastin*ati*on can potentially discourage postgraduate students while writing their thesis."* This implies that the moment supervisors delay giving feedback, it may discourage and make students lose steam and enthusiasm for their research. This can be a snowball effect on further delays and a decline in work quality.

S2 added another dimension when he elaborated that procrastination was typically related to a lack of clarity or training,

> Procrastination can be caused by many factors like lack of clarity or training as in If supervisors are not clear about what constitutes effective feedback or lack training in providing constructive feedback, they may procrastinate in exploring and implementing better feedback practices.

This resonates with the fact that procrastination is sometimes not a matter of time management, but even about a lack of confidence or uncertainty in correctly guiding the student. Those supervisors who remain uncertain as to how to give constructive criticism tend to take time with the process and inadvertently affect the progress of the student.

S3 also supported this point by stating that "prioritization of other responsibilities can lead to procrastination, supervisors may prioritize other responsibilities, such as research, administrative tasks, or teaching, over improving feedback practices, leading to procrastination in addressing this aspect." This remark indicates the problem of multirole performance of academics. When the supervisors are busy with other job demands, making feedback may be shifted to a lower priority and this may involve delays that are costly in terms of the student's opportunity to review and improve their work in good time.

S4 provided a personal insight into the issue, acknowledging,

> Procrastination has been a personal challenge for me when it comes to timely feedback on postgraduate theses. I tend to underestimate the time required for reviewing and providing detailed feedback, and as a result, it often gets pushed back in my schedule. I recognize that procrastination is a weakness of mine when it comes to feedback on postgraduate theses. I tend to get caught up in other tasks and projects, and unfortunately, providing feedback sometimes gets postponed until the last minute.

This is quite an honest admission of the human factor in procrastination whereby even seasoned supervisors fall foul of poor time management. In fact, S4 points out personal causes, such as underestimation of time required for good review, as a probable cause leading to delayed feedback. This candid confession to realism underlines further the need for better management strategies and institutional support so as to enable supervisors to balance their manifold responsibilities effectively. It also suggests that procrastination is one common struggle, other than a vice, which can be easily mitigated by self-awareness and strategic planning.

These visions generally highlight that feedback procrastination is not solely a matter of personal time management but depends on workload, clarity of expectations, and personal habits. Remedies have to be both institutional -reducing loads of supervisors- and individual - managing time and responsibilities more effectively.

Student-Related Factors

The lack of response from students to supervisor comments and feedback can indeed be considered a factor that hinders supervisors from providing timely feedback. When students are not actively open to their supervisors' input, this delays the feedback cycle and affects the quality of guidance provided, which might lead to breakdowns in communication and, finally, harm students' academic progress. The following quotes illustrate various student-related challenges that supervisors encounter.

 S2 highlighted the frustration caused by the lack of student response,

> I understand that students may have busy schedules, but when there is no response to my feedback, it slows down the feedback process. I may need additional clarification or further elaboration on certain points, and without their input, I am unable to proceed promptly with providing subsequent feedback.

This reveals a common issue where students' delayed or absent responses can stall the feedback loop, creating a bottleneck in the supervision process. The need for a two-way interaction is critical here, as timely feedback from supervisors is contingent on timely engagement from students.

4) S4 gave a concrete example of how students' actions can affect the feedback process: "*One factor that hinders the timely provision of feedback is when students submit their work close to the deadline. It leaves me with limited time to thoroughly review and provide meaningful feedback within the desired timeframe.*"

This comment underscores the problem of supervisors having to deal with students who procrastinate until they reach a deadline. Such practices put supervisors under undue pressure to race through feedback that may not be as good or helpful as it could be. It also points toward students not fully appreciating how important it is to leave enough time to review and revise.

S3 noted a related issue, saying, "*Some students don't actively seek feedback or clarification on their work, which can hinder the timely feedback process. Without their proactive engagement and willingness to address questions or concerns, it becomes*

challenging to provide timely and targeted feedback." This reflects a passive reception of feedback by some students. Unless students are proactive, supervisors may find it challenging to provide feedback that caters to specific needs, which then leads to providing generic comments that might not help very much.

These observations tend to support the belief that effective thesis supervision is a matter of supervision but also requires active participation by the student. A lack of engagement by the student causes a bottleneck for supervisors, unable to move further without further feedback, and deadlines are missed. This points to a clearer need to communicate expectations and time scales, along with strategies to be more proactive in engaging students. Supervisors may wish to consider establishing formal deadlines for student feedback responses and to discuss feedback processes during regular meetings to ensure that both supervisor and student have aligned expectations.

Overall, the student-related factors identified by the supervisors underscore the importance of a collaborative approach to the feedback process. By fostering an environment where students feel encouraged to engage actively and seek clarification, supervisors can enhance the effectiveness of their feedback and contribute more meaningfully to the development of their students' research skills.

Communication Barriers

There is a need for effective communication between supervisors and postgraduate students for timely feedback exchange. However, challenges like schedules or limited availability can hinder the exchange of feedback. These may also result in delays, misinterpretation, and lack of clarity of feedback, which in turn may impinge adversely on the quality of the students' thesis development. These complex dynamics are illuminated in the supervisors' reflections below. The following are excerpts of the communication barriers that supervisors perceive. One supervisor, S2, emphasized the importance of establishing clear communication channels: "*Establishing communication channels and engaging in discussions with students is essential for ensuring a mutual understanding and timely sharing of feedback on thesis-related issues.*" This highlights the fact that unless regular and frank communications take place, there may well be a disconnection between supervisor expectations and student progress. Communication in this context is much more than information exchange; it includes the development of mutual understanding about the feedback process, which is key to effective supervision. Another supervisor, S4, pointed out that the logistic difficulties, like conflicting schedules, prevent timely communication: "*Both students and supervisor s struggle to find suitable meeting times to discuss comments or address concerns.*" This underlines the practical problems of coordinating meetings, especially when the supervisors have many responsibilities and the students have diversified schedules. Such logistical barriers can result in long periods between the receipt of feedback and revisions, leading to delays in writing theses. This would mean that flexibility in strategies of communication might help overcome such problems, such as holding virtual meetings or scheduling office hours.

Another supervisor, S3, added another layer to the issue by addressing the perceived power imbalances, *"Students might hesitate to seek help or ask questions due to perceived power imbalances or lack of confidence."* that realization gives that the obstacles in the communication are not merely logistic but also psychic. That the students might be apprehensive or embarrassed to ask their supervisors questions, refrained from asking for clarification at a point when they might have needed it. Sometimes this leads to misunderstandings, or they miss an opportunity to hone their work according to the feedback given. The supervisors shouldn't make the students feel that way so that they can very well ask whatever doubts they have and discuss their research.

Additionally, she noted how these communication issues can lead to misinterpretations of feedback: *"Supervisors should encourage students to seek clarification and create opportunities for dialogue to ensure understanding of feedback."* It suggests that there is always a misinterpretation while working on the feedback if discussion does not take place; hence, revisions may go completely against the expectations of the supervisor. That therefore calls for the supervisors to make their students ask questions and not to create one-way traffic of information.

These reflections reveal how communications barriers in the supervisory process work at both pragmatic levels of difficulties in scheduling, as well as deeper relational dynamics. It is, therefore, in the interest of these institutions to assess whether structured communication plans, regular check-ins, and feedback timelines exist that will help supervisors and students stay on the same page in the supervisory relationship. Moreover, the training for supervisors on how to employ effective communication techniques may help them to establish an open and approachable environment where students can contribute to the feedback process.

Supervisors' Personal Factors

The personal aspects of supervisors can impact their availability and competence in providing timely feedback on postgraduate theses. Supervisors and students can effectively handle circumstances and find mutually acceptable solutions to personal challenges by fostering flexibility, understanding, and open communication. This approach also ensures timely feedback and encourages adaptability. Here are some key considerations that supervisors encounter:

Supervisor S2 noted, *"Despite my efforts to stick to a feedback schedule, unforeseen events can lead to delays."* Similarly, S3 highlighted that balancing work responsibilities is challenging: *"Juggling work responsibilities can be challenging. Unforeseen circumstances or sudden emergencies often shift my attention, making it difficult for me to provide feedback. Despite my efforts, these personal factors sometimes interfere with the feedback process."* These quotes indicate that unexpected personal and professional demands can disrupt the feedback timeline, despite supervisors' best intentions. Overall, these personal challenges put into relief the need for flexibility and understanding generally in the supervisory relationship, since such academic and personal duties can change suddenly.

Perfectionism

Perfectionism or maintaining high standards as a supervisor may cause delays in giving feedback to students. While this striving for perfection has its positive features for quality feedback, at times it has some negative consequences on its timeliness. Here are some supervisors' insights into how perfectionism affects their feedback process.

Here are some examples of perfectionism that supervisors notice. One supervisor, S4, explained, *"Being a supervisor who sets standards, I dedicate time to review and refine feedback for accuracy and quality carefully. Though focusing on details is crucial, it can sometimes slow down the process of delivering student feedback."* Such attention to detail suggests that this is a very ambitious and interested attempt to make the feedback constructive and specific, hence giving students clear guidelines on how they can improve their work. However, such an approach could be counterproductive regarding speed since supervisors might take too much time to craft comments in search of perfection to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretations. The emphasis on delivering flawless feedback reflects a high level of responsibility towards the students' academic growth but also highlights the challenge of balancing quality with efficiency.

Lack of Expertise in Providing Timely Feedback

Supervisors may not always be in a position to provide feedback, whether because they lack certain expertise in some areas of the thesis topic or lack the necessary training in feedback delivery. Such situations may occur when they take extra time to grasp the contents or seek extra guidance so that the feedback given will be accurate and constructive.

One supervisor, S3, mentioned that,

> Sometimes, supervisors might not have all the knowledge needed for subfields or new topics covered in postgraduate theses. In some cases, it's essential to reach out to other co-supervisors or colleagues for more accurate feedback; this approach could cause delays in delivering feedback.

As is common in academia, supervisors often have to review areas outside immediate expertise; although this assures the student of well-informed and reliable comments, it often delays the process while coordination and consultation are sought from colleagues. This reflects the complexity found sometimes when supervising various topics and the continuous professional development that would be needed to create the competencies for supervisors dealing with a wide range of topics.

Lack of Interest in Students' Research Topics

Adequate supervision relies on aligning research interests between supervisors and students, encouraging a shared enthusiasm and dedication toward the research topic. However, one challenge can arise when supervisors are less interested in the research topics chosen by their students. This lack of interest can affect the feedback process, potentially causing delays and affecting the guidance provided to students.

One supervisor, S3, said,

> When there is a misalignment in research interests between the student's thesis topic and my areas of expertise or interest, it can impact my motivation and engagement. Therefore, this might lead to delays in offering feedback as I find sustaining enthusiasm for the topic challenging.

This explains that the supervisors cannot put the same level of commitment and timeliness when working on topics that are not their main areas of interest. The intrinsic motivation is lacking here, which can reduce the response rate and detail in feedback, since supervisors cannot engage themselves intimately with unfamiliar subjects.

Another supervisor, S4, stated that,

> When students opt for research topics vastly different from my areas of interest, it becomes challenging to stay motivated and engaged enough to provide timely feedback. The lack of interest in students' topics can result in late in providing feedback.

This sentiment brings into relief how important it is that the research interests align, in view of a productive and supportive supervisory relationship. When supervisors are not intellectually invested in a topic, they may deprioritize providing feedback, which can leave students feeling unsupported and hinder them from making great progress academically. This misalignment may lead to superficial engagement with the work that the student produces, further diminishing the quality and effectiveness of the feedback provided.

Supervisors' Perspectives on the Impact of Timely Feedback on Postgraduate Thesis Development

Supervisors have different perspectives on giving timely feedback to improve postgraduate theses by drawing from their own experiences. They understand how crucial it is to provide guidance and corrections to enhance students' research as it significantly contributes to their development. Further, supervisors recognize that prompt feedback plays a role in shaping the quality of theses by quickly addressing any issues and contributing to a comprehensive outcome.

Supervisors view timely feedback to support student growth and build positive relationships based on trust and shared goals. They also acknowledge its role in helping students overcome challenges and stay focused on their pursuits, allowing them to adjust throughout their academic journey. Furthermore, supervisors value how timely feedback encourages student involvement and presents their dedication to advancing progress.

The first supervisor, S1, mentioned that *"providing timely feedback is crucial for helping postgraduate students enhance their theses."* This statement reflects the supervisor's belief that timely intervention can significantly influence the trajectory of a student's research. By offering timely suggestions and corrections, supervisors can help students refine their work, ensuring that it meets academic standards and contributes meaningfully to their field.

Also, S1 added that *"Timely feedback allows us to offer students feedback and suggestions to help them refine their theses and make enhancements."* This means active leadership through supervisors who apply timely feedback as a tool of guidance for students in improving their methodology of research, argumentation, and overall structure of the thesis.

Moreover, S1 emphasizes that *"offering timely feedback not only enhances the thesis quality but also fosters students' growth and development."* This underlines the fact that timely feedback is not only a means of increasing the immediate quality of the thesis but also for developing in students their skills and confidence as researchers. This is one process that lays the foundation for future academic and professional success since students are taught to be critical about their own work, assessing and refining it according to constructive input.

Another supervisor, S3, underscored the value of prompt feedback, stating, *"Timely feedback is essential in shaping the caliber of postgraduate theses; it ensures that students can promptly identify and rectify any research deficiencies."* It is also pointed out that timely feedback allows the students to identify gaps or weaknesses in their research on time, which is crucial for maintaining the overall coherence and stringency of the thesis.

S3 added that *"by addressing feedback, comments, and remarks, students can significantly enhance their thesis clarity and overall quality of their works."* This reflects an awareness that detailed and timely feedback does not only correct errors but encourages students to reflect on their work critically, hence Polish and better-argued theses.

Finally, S4 emphasized that *"The significance of timely feedback demonstrates supervisors' dedication to student success by providing the students prompt feedback and comments and guidance supporting their progress throughout their research journey."* This quote also shows that on-time feedback is one of the ways to reflect supervisors' care towards their students' academic voyages and is based on mutual support and trust. It underpins the notion that timely feedback is not error-correcting but a method of being an active and engaging mentor, which in turn would provide incentives for students to excel in research.

DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the examination of factors influencing timely feedback on the progress of the postgraduate thesis and how supervisors perceive the importance of providing timely feedback. Through an analysis of the semi-structured interviews, the researchers pinpointed eight critical factors that impact the provision of timely feedback: teaching and administrative workload, procrastination, student-related factors, communication barriers, supervisors' personal factors, perfectionism, lack of expertise in providing feedback, and lack of interest in students' research topics. Furthermore, supervisors emphasized the importance of timely feedback in improving postgraduate theses. They stressed its crucial role in fostering students' development, shaping the quality of theses, and supporting student growth. Supervisors also acknowledged the

value of feedback in helping students overcome challenges, stay focused, and demonstrate dedication to progress.

These factors are aligned with previous research (Bahtilla, 2022; 2024; Bastola, 2020; Bastola & Hu, 2021; Carter & Kumar, 2017). These studies concluded that workloads often cause late feedback when overseeing theses. The supervision journey requires time and effort to provide detailed and timely feedback because supervisors are constantly engaged with teaching, administrative responsibilities, and other duties (Bahtilla, 2024; Bastola & Hu, 2021). In a study (Bastola & Hu, 2021), supervisors stated they could not give detailed feedback because they had a significant workload of supervising tasks.

The findings related to student-related factors such as procrastination, student engagement, and communication barriers, are consistent with previous studies (Bahtilla, 2024; Dawson, 2019; Liu et al., 2020; Li et al., 2019; Bastola, 2022; Rabbani et al., 2023). According to Li et al. (2019) and Liu et al. (2020), procrastination is prevalent among college students, and postgraduate students frequently procrastinate, which can negatively affect academic performance.

Students' engagement with teachers' comments is necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the learning process (Dawson, 2019; Rabbani et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2020). Previous studies highlighted that sometimes, students need to engage with the feedback received from their supervisors. In addition, a lack of engagement with supervisory feedback frustrates and discourages supervisors (Ali et al., 2015; Bahtilla, 2024; Bastola, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020). When postgraduate students do not engage with supervisory feedback and ignore it, they repeat the same feedback (Ali et al., 2015; Bastola, 2020; Carter & Kumar, 2017). Further, the supervisors' inadequate communication is in line with the previous studies, which report that there needs to be more communication between supervisors and supervisees during the supervision (Bastola, 2020; Cekiso et al., 2019; Yousefi et al., 2017). The issue of contradictory feedback results in a lack of interest and engagement in the student's research work (Bahtilla, 2024; Yousefi et al., 2017).

The findings regarding the supervisors' personal factors, perfectionism, lack of expertise in providing feedback, and lack of interest in students' research topics are in line with the previous studies (Abiddin et al., 2009; Bahtilla, 2024; Bahtilla & Oben, 2022; Bastola, 2020; Yousefi et al., 2017). Previous studies reported that students are assigned to supervisors who lack enthusiasm or passion for the student's topic of study (Abiddin et al., 2009; Bahtilla, 2024; Bahtilla and Oben, 2021). In other studies (see Abiddin et al., 2009; Bahtilla and Oben, 2021), supervisors who lack interest or dedication during the supervising process neglect to monitor students' progress, resulting in a higher probability of late feedback and when a supervisor's research interests diverge from the students', they are less likely to be interested or involved in the supervision process.

Regarding the lack of expertise in providing feedback, Manathunga (2005) indicates that a lack of supervisory experience can hinder supervision, especially when students face personal issues, supervision issues, project management challenges, or a lack of

support from the academic community. Furthermore, Rahman et al. (2019) asserted that perfectionism contributes to procrastination in the context of thesis writing. Unfortunately, no currently available assessment explicitly assesses perfectionism in thesis writing.

In answering the second research question on the supervisors' perceptions of the significance of timely feedback provision and its implications for thesis progress, this study illustrated that supervisors have different perspectives on giving timely feedback to improve postgraduate theses and recognize that prompt feedback plays a role in shaping the quality of theses.

This finding supports the findings of other previous studies (Waheed et al. 2021; Bastola, 2022; Bastola & Hu, 2021; Carter & Kumar, 2017; Dawson, 2019), indicating that, in general, a marked difference in supervisors' and the supervisees' perceptions. In a study by Bastola (2022), The observed differences are considered in terms of student engagement, the participants' research experience, and factors that contribute to the perceived challenges in supervisory feedback. Supervisory feedback on the postgraduate thesis can be achieved if supervisory attitudes and behavior are positively changed (Dawson et al., 2019). Further, Ali et al. (2016) state that the supervisor should deliver timely and constructive feedback and help the student manage time effectively. Students and supervisors believe a supervisor should help the students where limitations and learning needs are identified. A study by Waheed et al. (2021) reveals that supervisors' attitudes significantly influence research success. Positive conduct boosts motivation and satisfaction, while unfavorable conduct decreases performance and affects mental well-being.

This study is grounded in Social Constructivism Theory (SCT), which is particularly relevant in the context of mentor-mentee feedback, where mentors play a crucial role in helping mentees improve their theses through discussions, collaborations, and shared understanding (Rabbani et al., 2023). In thesis supervision, SCT sees feedback as a two-way process, meaning negotiation, and engages mentees in their feedback (Saeed & Alharbi, 2022). During thesis supervision, supervisors help students learn and understand to empower and improve students' understanding.

Previous studies (AbuSaaleek & Alenizi, 2023; Bahtilla, 2024; Chugh, 2021; Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Saeed et al., 2021) propose practical strategies for enhancing thesis supervision feedback, which are crucial for the improvement of academic research. These strategies include expressive and methodical feedback, ICT and mixed supervision models, group and peer feedback, dialogic and culturally sensitive practices, adopting a feedback approach incorporating referential, directive, and expressive styles, and cultivating supervisor-student solid relations. Supervisors should be aware of potential resistance to critical feedback and address it by viewing supervision as a meeting point for fostering a collaborative approach (Vehviläinen, 2009).

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

The study's findings indicate that timely feedback in thesis supervision is essential for completing theses and overall student satisfaction. Additionally, supervisors should prioritize providing timely feedback to support students and allowing them to successfully engage with it at each stage of the thesis writing process. Late supervisor feedback might impede the progress of thesis writing and restrict the development of research abilities during supervision.

To conclude, these findings guide supervisors in identifying various factors that influence timely feedback on the progress of the postgraduate thesis. Given the significance of excellent and effective feedback formulation in postgraduates' academic writing, it is crucial to carefully craft feedback that actively and critically involves postgraduates in their writing process. Supervisors should also contemplate strategies to encourage students' engagement with feedback and adopt an approach to feedback incorporating referential, directive, and expressive styles. Concerning the pedagogical implications, supervisors must provide the supervisees with timely, clear, and specific feedback to enhance their engagement because the inadequate quality and delayed feedback pose challenges that impede thesis progress. Further, supervisors should motivate their supervisees to react to feedback and seek clarifications, justification, and negotiations. Supervisors must avoid too general and vague feedback. Communication between supervisors and supervisees is necessary to construct supervisees' knowledge and enhance their thesis writing.

Despite the study's contribution to previous research on factors impacting timely feedback provision in the context of postgraduate thesis supervision, several limitations need to be addressed for future research. First, the findings on the factors that impact timely feedback on the progress of the postgraduate thesis and how supervisors perceive its importance are based on four supervisors' interviews, and there might be a need for more in-depth data. Therefore, future research should include a more representative sample to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Another noteworthy limitation is that the study was limited to exploring the factors that impact timely feedback from the perspective of four supervisors, two males and two females, who currently supervise students in the Applied Linguistics program. Therefore, future research should use interviews with EFL supervisees to provide exciting insights into the factors that impact timely feedback practices and how it influences their thesis writing journey. This study is limited to a qualitative approach. Thus, further work should include a quantitative approach to get more participants and a mixed-methods approach to gain an engaging understanding of the issue under investigation.

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