Undergraduate Economics Students' Opinion about Research Supervisors: The Ghanaian Public University Context

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ABSTRACT
Supervisor-student relationship is crucial for completion of an undergraduate programme since students, as a requirement to complete, are expected to write a project work. The purpose of this study was to find economics students' views about their supervisors. Using a cross-sectional descriptive design, 148 economics major trainee teachers from two faculties in a public university were randomly selected. The study showed that students had opinions that supervisors are guides who must show interest in students' research. Again, students' opinion was that they did not have adequate guidance and mentoring from supervisors and this contributed to their negative perceptions relative to their relationship with supervisors. Also, gender was found to have an association with students' perception about relationship with supervisors. The study advocated for measures to be put in place to mitigate the negative effects of student-supervisor rift which has detrimental effects on student completion rates among students in Ghana.

Key words: research supervisor; undergraduate; economics students; supervisory relationship; supervisor role

INTRODUCTION

Undergraduate students have often had negative perceptions about their relationship with supervisors due to a number of reasons. Among others, they have always harbored suspicions about supervisors desire to frustrate the progress of their project work. Supervisors have therefore been painted in a bad light because of these unsubstantiated perceptions. Some students have had to report supervisors to the Heads of Department or sometimes to the Deans of the school Graduate Studies (SGS) to intervene to find lasting solution to the problems. In the University of Competitive Choice (UCC), the setting of the current study, these incidences never seem to stop. The situation is worrying especially because of its ability to obliterate the cordial relationship which hitherto exists between students and supervisors. In UCC, the SGS in collaboration with other Colleges within universities continue to organise programmes for students and supervisors to sensitize them on the need to play their expected roles to improve graduate completion rates. In most public universities in Ghana, completion rates among graduate students are often low even though the same trend seems to emerge with undergraduates.

Burgeoning literature on graduate and post graduate studies recognises graduate supervision as a process involving complex academic and interpersonal skills (Sahlberg, 2006). In my candid opinion, same applies to undergraduate supervision. These skills include guiding graduate students towards sound proposal preparation and defense, methodological choices, documenting and publishing their research, maintaining both supportive and professional relationships, as well as reflecting on the research process. These can be achieved only when

there is a harmonious relationship between the student and their supervisor. Faculty member involved in supervision of graduate and post graduate research are often required to possess the right interpersonal skills to play the role of a promoter and supervisor (Amehoe, 2013). Without these skills, supervision may suffer many setbacks which may result in unwarranted delays in student completion rates. The supervision process is influenced by many factors, including the social setting, the personalities of the supervisor and the student, the relationship that develops between them, the expertise of the supervisor, and the problems that are varied among students (Abiddin, Ishmael, & Ishmael, 2012). The complexity of the work is heightened when it is a masters' of philosophy or doctoral programme. Egan, Stockley, Brouwer, Tripp and Stechyson, (2009) suggested that effective supervision is related to supervisory style of supervisor and their competence with respect to the student project. In addition, they suggested that the supervisor's personal characteristics such as intellectual capacities and attitudes also play a major role in effective supervision. Supervisory style has to do with level of direction and level of communication between the two (such as highly directive, regular meetings, availability (i.e. making time for students) interest and commitment and explanatory to the student.

These faculty members, after their appointment not only guide and support the candidate, but also play an important role in the assessment of the quality of the final manuscript submitted. Heath (2002) argues that the success of research system heavily depends on the supervisors, who must provide the time, expertise and support to foster candidate's research skills and attitudes, and to ensure the production of a thesis of acceptable standard. Although the frequency of meetings between supervisor and candidate is essential, the quality of these meetings, defined by the relationship between the two, is even more (cf. Li & Seale, 2007). Unfortunately, however, there seems to be more research on the frequency of contact than on its quality (Pearson, 1996) which largely depends on quality of relationship between the student and the supervisor. The literature is awash with documentary research evidence to the effect that the supervisor–student student interpersonal relationship is important for the success of a graduate-project (Golde, 2000; McAlpine & Norton, 2006).

Ives and Rowley (2005) for example reported that good interpersonal working relationships between supervisors and their graduate students were associated with good progress and student satisfaction. Studies of mentoring showed that in particular the psychosocial aspect of mentoring was connected to the protégé's sense of competence, confidence and role effectiveness (Paglis *et al.,* 2006). Denicolo (2004) reports that in the eyes of graduate students positive attributes of supervisors are amongst others reliable, confidence in the student, encouraging, knowledgeable, informative, and sharing. Supervisors should have listening skills, encourage argument and debate, provide continuous feedback and support, be enthusiastic, and show warmth and understanding. Seagram, Gould and Pyke (1998) showed that important positive characteristics of supervisors according to their doctoral students were professional, pleasant, and supportive behaviour.

Statement of the Problem
Several problems have accounted for the seeming increase bitter relationship that often exists between graduate students and their supervisors in Ghanaian public universities. Some literature has attempted to attribute low completion rates among graduate students to incompatible relationship between students and supervisors (Lube, Worrel, & Klopper, 2005; McCulloch, 2007 in Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011). Indeed, performance of graduate students in respect of completion of their projects has moved from bad to worse as worldwide the completion rate of students ranges from poor to abysmal (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011). Research suggests that about 50% of students who begin post graduate studies (a PhD)

abandon the programme (Golde & Dore, 2001; McAlpine & Norton, 2006) due to several problems that students face. It has been argued with little evidential value that supervisors create a number of problems that cause post graduate students' studies to derail. A number of studies have cited supervisor-supervisee relationship as the biggest problem (Holligan, 2005; Abiddin & West, 2007; Abiddin, Ishmael & Ishmael, 2012). Sometimes, there are serious imbalances in the power relationship between supervisors and students which delay project completion.

Abiddin and West (2007) in a study on supervision practices for foreign graduate research students concentrated on practices of foreign graduate students. Abiddin, Ishmael and Ishmael (2012) in a similar study however focused on effective supervisory approach in postgraduate research studies. All these studies were conducted outside Ghana thereby creating a geographical gap as the subject relates to Ghana. In a recent study in Ghana, Azure (2016), attempted to investigate students' perspective of effective supervision of graduate programmes in Ghana without surveying their perceptions about how they view the relationship between them and the supervisors using the descriptive design. The methodological gaps in his study motivated me to conduct this study, using a more robust design (the cross-sectional descriptive design to unravel the issues bothering on students' perceptions about their relationship with supervisors in Ghana.

Purpose of the Study
The aim of this study was to examine graduate students' perceptions about their relationship with supervisors in Ghana. In particular, the study may seek to achieve the following objectives:
    a. To describe graduate students' views about their research supervisors' role.
    b. To examine the perceptions of undergraduate students as regards their relationship with supervisors.
    c. To find whether difference in gender accounts for graduate students' good or bad perceptions they have about their relationship with supervisors.

Research Questions/Hypothesis
Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study.
    1. What are undergraduate students' views about their research supervisors' role in UCC?
    2. What perceptions do undergraduate economics students have as regards their relationship with supervisors in UCC?
    3. H_0: Students' perceptions (good = 1 or bad = 0) regarding their relationship with supervisors is not explained by gender.

H_1: Students' perceptions (good = 1 or bad = 0) regarding their relationship with supervisors is explained by gender.

Significance of the Study
Why would a study of this kind be important? An exclusive character of this study is that it focuses on the graduate student perceptions regarding their relationship with supervisors in detail. Its outcomes foster understanding of students' expectations of supervisors by appreciating and managing supervisors' expectations of themselves. The study is also significant because it provides scientific bases for deriving an ideal supervisor-student supervision framework necessary to improve the practice undergraduate research supervision in Ghana thus ensuring excellent research scholarship culture. It provides hands-on information to managers of undergraduate studies in Ghana on the need to tailor their activities to reflect students' perceptions regarding their relationships with supervisors to

foster a harmonious working relationship (Azure, 2016). This study provides insight into the roles of undergraduate students so that they complement the efforts of their supervisors to their mutual benefit. These may result in cultivation of quality research culture among graduate students in Ghana. Finally, since undergraduate students are supposed to conduct cutting-edge research, it is critical that their institutions through research supervisors provide students with 21st century supervisory services to take care of their diverse needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Jesson, Lazey and Matheson (2011) literature review as a written product varies in format depending on the purpose of the review. In this study, a variety of sources such as peer review journal articles, books and internet searches were consulted during the literature review process. The interpersonal view describes and analyzes supervision relative to the rapport between the supervisor and the student (Mainhard, van der Rijst, van Tartwijk & Wubbels, 2009). Two elements are central to this perspective: the communicative systems approach and a model to describe the relationship aspect of supervisor behaviour. To describe the relationship-aspect of the supervisor behaviour, a model developed by Wubbels *et al.* (2006) was used to analyze supervisor behaviour in this case: the model of interpersonal supervisor behaviour. An important aspect of this model is that the dimensions map a degree of behaviour. A behaviour that a supervisor displays has a degree of influence and proximity on student. The higher the degree of influence the higher the behaviour is displayed. For the eight sectors this means that the closer a behaviour is to the center of the model, the lower is the intensity of the behaviour (Mainhard, van der Rijst, van Tartwijk, & Wubbels, 2009).

CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL REVIEWS

The literature on graduate supervision abounds with evidence pointing out that supervisors are expected to be aware of their roles and to help students understand theirs and help them to overcome possible shortcomings to them manage their research in a timely manner. A good supervisor is required to be welcoming, open, and aware of the standard of work expected of their student (Ali, Watson & Dhingra, 2016). Expectations of an effective supervisor have been reported previously (Abiddin & West, 2007b; Sambrook, Stewart & Roberts, 2008; Wisker, 2007, 2012) just as it has been documented by the SGS guidelines for presentation of thesis (UCC, SGS, 2016). It was interesting to find that in a recent study by Ali *et al.*'s (2016), supervisor's and students' views about postgraduate supervision were very similar.

In the UCC Guidelines (2016), the supervisor, "is to provide guidance to the student mainly on the technical aspects of research" (p. 7). The technical aspects were defined to include the research design elements, structure and organisation of the report. The document also demands that co-supervisors generally "provide experience to strengthen methodology (statistics) and or specialised knowledge, and to take charge if the principal supervisor is absent for continuity" (UCC SGS, 2016, p. 7). According to Petersen (2007), quality supervision a key determinant of student completion rates in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The student-supervisor relationship is an important determinant of quality of supervision. A number of studies in the literature discussed students' level of satisfaction with their PGR supervision experiences, quality of supervision (Tahir, Ghani, Atek & Manaf, 2012; Zuber-Skerritt & Ryan, 1994), and students' and supervisors' beliefs about supervision (Murphy *et al.* 2007).

Evidence suggests that vague directives from supervisors often increase student problems in the supervisory relationship (Abiddin, Ismail, & Is-mail. 2011; Tahir *et al.* 2012; Talebloo & Baki, 2013) And a positive perception of students about the role of their supervisors is crucial in building a healthy and productive supervisory relationship (Thompson, Kirkman, Watson, &

Stewart, 2005) which guarantees successful completion. Most studies related to the students' perceptions suggest that the supervisor must be an active, competent, knowledgeable researcher who is able to analyze and enhance his or her research students' research practices as a result of personal reflection and development (Abiddin & West, 2007a). For Frischer and Larsson (2000) and Phillips and Pugh (2000), the person so chosen should be credited with high-quality published articles. They must as well have made copious contribution to research in their field of specialisation. An effective supervisor, according to Yeatman (1995) should ideally also have a track record of successfully supervising a large number of PhD students.

In a recent study by Ali, Watson and Dhingra (2016) on 'postgraduate research students' and their supervisors' attitudes towards supervision' found that students saw 'show of interest in the student's research', 'provision of critical feedback on their written work in good time, and encouraging the student to present their work at seminars and conferences, as some of the important roles they perceived and expected supervisors to play. The least important expectations of the student that the supervisor should 'ensure that the student has conducted training needs analysis to identify their personal and professional skill requirements', 'continually motivate the student', and 'be accessible outside appointment times when the student needs help' (p. 233). The supervisor is also expected to have counselling skills (Abiddin, 2007a). The person should be ready avail themselves to students when they need help, and should have the ability to give constructive feedback to students (Sambrook, *et al.*, 2008; Talebloo & Baki, 2013; Wisker, 2007, 2012). In addition, they expect supervisors to provide regular, timely, and constructive feedback on their written work and overall progress in the programme (Abiddin *et al.*, 2011; Tahir *et al.*, 2012; Talebloo & Baki, 2013). Supervisor's leadership style is also an important consideration as it can influence the outcome of graduate student supervision. Much of the evidence related to students' expectations of their supervisors comes from reflective, or theoretical and scholarly papers.

Research Supervisor Role

The role of the supervisor has been outlined in the SGS guidelines for the presentation of research projects. Basically, the supervisor is to provide guidance to the student mainly on several aspects of the research. He/she must show interest in the students' research, provide guides/advises to students on topic selection to meet student career objectives, and their long term interests. The supervisor must provide critical feedback on student written work in good time and encourage student to present their work at seminars/conferences if need be (Mainhard *et al.*, 2009). He or she must be friendly and approachable and must encourage the student to work independently. They must be knowledgeable about the standards expected and also ensure that the student is aware of the short-comings of their work and progress (Mainhard *et al.*, 2009).

They must ensure that the student's research is manageable in the time available. They must give the student information about appropriate meetings, conferences and training opportunities and provide guidance to the student mainly on technical aspects of the research (UCC SGS, 2016, p. 8). The supervisor must provide guidance on sources of literature that the student may consult. He or she must draw students' attention to the strengths and weaknesses in their approach to the task. The supervisor must provide guidance and verify corrections the student is expected to make after the examination of the project work, dissertation, or thesis (including viva where applicable) and must be willing to "prepare periodic reports to the SGS on student's progress" (UCC SGS, 2016, p. 8). He or she should refuse to allow submission of sub-standard work for examination, regardless of the circumstances.

Gender Differences in Student Perceptions

Some studies have shown differences between men and women in diverse facets of life (Sullivan & Buttner, 1992). In terms of cognitive ability or academic performance, differences in their preparations for class and their learning styles (Gallos, 1995a) account for intrinsic psychological differences in attitude towards formal learning activities (Gilligan, 1982). According to Theda and Alesha (2006), women tend to believe that they perform less well in class, learn less than they actually do, and feel less confident than men in their abilities to succeed at related future endeavors. Gender role stereotypes often picture women as more communal and concerned with the welfare of others than men, and men as more assertive and controlling than women (Eagly, 1987). Such differences provide a foundation for understanding how gender contributes to differences in perceptions as well. Gallos (1995b) argues that women and men do not have parallel experiences. These diversities often result in different perceptions Wismath and Zhong (2014). The mixed findings in the literature warrant an attempt to ascertain if indeed significant differences exist in perceptions of graduate students as regards relationship with supervisors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current study is situated within the positivist or the functionalist world view which assumes that social world is composed of familiar empirical facts that exist separate from the research and reflects the attempt to apply models and methods of the natural sciences in the study of human behaviour (Asante, Mike, Yin, 2008, p. 74). A positivist quantitative design was used in this study. The reason for the adoption of this philosophy was that it allowed the investigator to explain the phenomena of graduate students' perception through collection of numerical data which were amenable to mathematical analysis (Mujis, 2011, p. 1). In line with this, a cross-sectional descriptive design was used as the strategy to allow for a snapshot description of the phenomenon. A survey method was therefore used to generate appropriate data through distribution of questionnaires to graduate students in the University of Competitive Choice in the first semester for the 2016/2017 academic year.

Population

Kumar (2011, p. 398) defines target population as, 'the bigger group, such as families living in an area, about whom an investigator wants to find something about'. The population for the study comprised final year undergraduate economics regular students in the University of Competitive Choice for the 2016/2017 academic year comprising Bed Social Science and Bed. Psychology students comprising 331(60.6%) males and 133 (39.4%) females. In all, there were 564 graduate students for the 2016/2017 academic year pursuing various programmes in economics in the two faculties within the college. These students, most of who are pre-service teachers, were currently faced with the challenge of writing their project works.

Sampling Technique

Sampling, according to Thompson (2012, p. 1), consists of selecting some part of a population to observe that one may estimate something about the whole population. In the present study, the simple random technique was used (Babbie, 2013). In this study, the data base from the SGS of the University of Competitive Choice was used as the sampling frame. Mobile contacts of the final respondents were accessed through data I obtained from the departments and they were reached via telephone. The sample size was set at n = 140 representing 24.8% of elements within the population. A 50:50 proportionate stratified random sampling based on gender was used to pick samples for participation in the study (i.e. 70: 70).

Instruments

An instrument was prepared from two literature sources: the thesis guideline from the SGS, UCC and the work of Ali *et al.* (2016). The value of a questionnaire is that it tends to be more reliable because it embraces anonymity, encourages greater honesty, more economical in time and monetary terms relative to other methods for data collection. The questionnaire used in the study comprised three sections. Section A comprised three items which generated demographic data on students (gender, programme, and faculty). Section B comprised 20 items that focused on students' perceptions about graduate supervisor roles. A five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree = 4 to strongly disagree = 0 was used to measure these. In section C, consisted of 16 items, 15 of which was connected to issues bordering on supervisor-student relationships with one requesting them to describe their perceived relationship with supervisors (either they felt the perceived relationship was good or was bad). Closed-ended questions were preferred because of their efficiency and time economy for respondents. The items in section C were measured on a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree = 4 to strongly disagree = 0 and good = 1 or bad = 0.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures that which it claims to measure (Nelson, Silverman, & Thomas, 2011, p. 193). Steps were taken in this study to ensure that content, construct, convergent, and discriminent validities were achieved. Maree (2010, p. 215) defines reliability as the extent to which a measuring instrument is repeatable and consistent. To ascertain this internal consistency, a pilot testing was conducted in a sister university.

The pilot testing afforded the researcher opportunity to identify beforehand potential imminent problems potentially could affect validity of the results (Chakrabarti & Lucienne, 2009, p. 114). This early version administration was done to 30 graduate students in the field of education. Results were analysed using SPSS for Cronbach's α reliability coefficient which ranges from 0 to 1,and, in the social sciences, values at or above .7 are deemed desirable (Andrew, McEvoy & Pederson, 2011, p. 202). After the analysis, a Cronbach's α reliability coefficient of .782 was obtained.

Procedure for Data Collection and analysis

Through telephone conversations, the investigator booked appointments with prospective respondents in either their halls or their residences. The questionnaires were distributed after and two days period was given for collection. Two weeks was used for the data collection and the return rate was 87.2% (i.e. 122 respondents completed and returned their questionnaires) despite efforts of the investigator to retrieve the survey instruments. Data was audited, organised, and entered into SPSS version 20.0 for analysis. Analysis was done in two steps: descriptive and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis was conducted to summarize the perceptions of graduate students regarding the supervisory roles of their supervisors. Inferentially, an independent sample t-test was used to examine differences between male and female students' perceptions relative to their relationship with supervisors.

Ethical Issues

Ethics is the branch of philosophy that deals with how one ought to live, with the idea of the good, and with the concepts such as right and wrong ((Pojman, & Fieser, 2009). It is the study of what should be done (Kerridge, Lowe & McPhee, 2005, p. 1). There were a number of ethical issues which were considered and adhered to. Firstly, contacts were made through mobile phones to the respondents and permissions were sought from them before they were given questionnaires to complete. Respondents' right to participate or decline to do so was strictly

complied with. Personal responses of graduate students were not attributed to them since their identities were concealed. I maintained professionalism in the collection and analysis of data(Pojman & Fieser, 2009). Finally, the investigator upheld independent objective interpretation of the survey findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Profile of Respondents
Table 1 portrays the demographic profiles of participants. Approximately 57% of the participants were males and 43% were females. Twenty three (19%) were from the FEF who pursued programmes in educational Psychology (Economics major option) whereas the majority 99(81%) were drawn from FoHSSE. These were students who pursued the Bachelor of Education (Social Sciences Economics Major) programme. It was clear FoHSSE had the highest number of undergraduate students within the college. These were level 400 pre-service economics teachers being prepared to teach senior high school economics. I reckon they have the competences to contribute to the study.

Research Question 1: Undergraduate economics students' views about their Research Supervisors' Role
This section presents descriptive statistics for 20 statements in section B of the questionnaire touching on economics students' views about their research supervisors' supervisory roles via Mean (M) and standard deviations (SD). Respondents stated that they saw the following roles of supervisors as key and therefore expected their supervisors to play them these roles included: 'show an interest in the student's research' (Mean= 3.78; SD = 0.61), 'provide critical feedback on the student's written work in good time' (Mean = 3.85; SD = 0.54) and 'guides/advises student on topic selection to meet student career objectives, in congruence with their long term interests' (Mean = 3.59; SD = 0.74) as the most important roles to be played. The least perceived roles assigned by undergraduate students to their research supervisors involved the fact that the supervisor should 'encourage students to present their work at seminars/conferences' (Mean = 1.56; SD = 0.96), 'encourage students to work independently' (Mean = 1.85; SD = 1.01), and 'provides assistance in orientating the student towards appropriate behaviour in the oral examination' (Mean = 1.86; SD = 0.99).

Research Question 2: Undergraduate economics students' perceptions regarding their relationship with supervisors
Students were asked to either agree or disagree with the statements. This aspect sought to find out undergraduate economics students' perceptions regarding their relationship with supervisors. Table 2 shows the gradate students' perceived relationship with supervisors. On this, 98(80%) disagreed that supervisors always cooperate if they wanted something from them. Students had bad perceptions about supervisors' relationship with them. For instance, a majority of them 77(63%) agreed that their supervisors are quick to criticize them and supervisors appeared unclear in their conversations with them. Again, 110(90%) intimated that supervisors did not agree with them right from the onset in respect of how they interact and exchange information and they also failed 112(92%) to discuss meeting schedules with them (students).

Also, 79(65%) of them were of the view that supervisors appear to anticipate possible misunderstandings between them. Finally, 86(70%) agreed and therefore had perceptions that their research supervisors think they know nothing and therefore did not follow their proposals. From these, it was clear students did not have positive perceptions about their relationship with supervisors. This manifested in their disagreement with certain statements. For instance, 114(93%) disagreed that in students' interactions with supervisors, they made

amorous advances towards them in violation of the university provisions on sexual harassment. Further, 84(69%) disagreed that supervisors appeared not to trust them and therefore disbelieved them. Also, 90(74%) refuted that claim that their supervisors had bad temper which manifested during their discussions.

Finally, 62(51%) disagreed that supervisors were impatient with them. These outcomes are contrary to a recent similar study by Azure (2016) which found among other things, that graduate students had adequate guidance and mentoring from their supervisors on their theses where the mean perceptual values for most items were above 3.50. In that study, supervisors were found to be friendly, open and flexible, knowledgeable and resourceful, encouraged students to plan and work independently (Azure, 2016). On their part, Mainhard *et al.*, (2009) perceived a good supervisor to be the one who provides critical feedback on student written work in good time and encourage student to present their work at seminars/conferences if need be.

Hypothesis: Students' perceptions (either good or or bad) regarding their relationship with supervisors is explained by gender.

A non- directional (two-tailed) hypothesis was tested using a logistic regression where the dependent variable was dichotomized or categorised into good and bad perceptions. It was conducted to investigate correlation between student's perceptions in respect of gender. Here, a Wald statistic and its associated p value (which are part of the logistic regression output) were used to determine whether each independent variable was significantly associated with the dependent variable. Correlation analysis preceded the logistic regression analysis to check for the existence of multicollinearity but none of the dependent variables exceeded 0.70. Table 1 presents the inferential statistical finding on whether gender difference is responsible for good or bad perceptions students have about their relation with supervisors.

Table 1: Logistic Regression Analysis Showing Good or Bad Perceptions of Students about Relationship with their Research Supervisors

		B	SE	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1(a)	Gender	3.495	1.672	4.262	1	.023	32.664
	Constant	-10.706	5.172	4.268	1	.061	.000

a. *Variable(s) entered on step1: Gender*

Gender Logistic regression was performed in order to assess whether gender had a correlation with good or bad perceptions students had about relationship with research supervisors. As can be inferred from Table 2, there was a significant association between gender and economics students' perception (either good or bad) that they had about relationship with their supervisors (OR 32.664, p = 0.023). Specifically, change in gender was associated with a change in student perception about relationship with supervisors. This implies that students' description of a good or bad relationship they perceive to have with their supervisors is explained by their sex or gender status. For instance, a male student may perceive to have good relationship with their supervisor whereas the reverse may be the case for a female student. This finding lays stress on an outcome of a study by Gallos (1995b) which argued that women and men do not have parallel experiences and these differences exist in their dissimilar perceptions. Similarly, a study by Wismath and Zhong (2014) found, that significant gender differences existed in perceptions though no differences were found in confidence and ability among the male and female students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective supervision of undergraduate project work is dependent on the harmonious symbiotic relationship between students and their supervisors. This study concludes that an effective undergraduate supervisor is required to do their best to play key role to ensure that undergraduate economics students finish their research work on time. Students, like their research supervisors, need to acquaint themselves with the doctrines or guidelines documented by their respective SGS for use by supervisors and students. Supervisors also need in order to lead an effective supervision, to get students accustomed to contents of the guide so that they can apply themselves to the rules of research writing. For instance, they would find in the guide that they are required "to provide guidance to the student mainly on the technical aspects of research" (p. 7). This may pave way for quality supervision since one of the most significant issues affecting student completion of programmes was found to be supervisor guidance (Wright, 2003).

In view of the findings, supervisor should be interested in their student's research and also help them identify areas in their research life which improvement. Supervisors owe it a duty to provide constructive and timely counsel to students and help them manage their time effectively. Again, it is incumbent on supervisors to encourage students to work independently and to use opportunities to publicize their work at conferences and seminars as a way of making their scholarly contributions visible. Supervisors and students ought to play their expected roles if universities in Ghana desire to train competent and skilled undergraduate students. it is the view of this paper that supervisors and students alike take practical steps to resolve all forms of conflicts arising from the supervisor-student relationship. When these are done, the desire to mentor competent undergraduate researchers in economics would be a fait accompli.

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