

CONSTRAINTS TO SUPERVISION OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH FOR QUALITY OUTPUT BY BUSINESS EDUCATORS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN THE SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study determined the Constraints to Supervision of Postgraduate Research for Quality Output by Business Educators in Public Universities in South-East, Nigeria. The specific objectives considered Supervisors-related and Students-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output by Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria. Population for the study was 78 Business Educators across the public universities in South-East Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted, using a questionnaire design with a 4-point Likert scale to elicit responses from the focus population. The standard deviation was used to determine the homogeneity or otherwise of the opinions of the respondents. The t-test was used to test the null hypotheses. Analysis was carried out using statistical packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The result revealed that supervisors-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research have a significant effect on quality output by Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria [t-stat=7.319, $p<0.001$]. Students-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research have a significant effect on the quality of output by Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria [t-stat=16.200, $p<0.001$]. The study concluded that improving postgraduate research quality in Business Education in public universities in South-East Nigeria requires a dual-focus approach: addressing supervisor-side bottlenecks while simultaneously strengthening student preparedness, responsibility, and research competence. The study recommended that University management and relevant regulatory bodies should set and enforce realistic supervision loads per supervisor, while students should be equipped with necessary skills for research procedures.

Keywords: Constraints, Postgraduate, Quality, Research, Supervision

1. INTRODUCTION

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Postgraduate research supervision sits at the heart of knowledge production in universities. It is the point where institutional research ambitions meet the everyday realities of mentoring novice researchers into confident scholars who can design rigorous studies, analyse evidence, and contribute meaningfully to theory, policy, and practice. In professional disciplines such as Business Education where scholarship is expected to connect pedagogy, workplace competencies, entrepreneurship, and economic development, effective postgraduate supervision is especially critical. This is because supervision shapes not only the quality of dissertations and theses, but also the research culture, publication habits, ethical orientation, and career readiness of emerging academics and practitioners (Lee, 2018; Wisker, 2020). In Nigerian public universities, however, the pursuit of quality postgraduate research output often occurs under conditions that complicate the supervisory role. These conditions are particularly visible in the Southeast geopolitical zone, where public universities face familiar national pressures—funding gaps, infrastructural strain, staff workload as well as local dynamics such as high student demand, uneven digital access, and fluctuating academic calendars.

Supervision is more than administrative oversight of a dissertation. Contemporary scholarship increasingly frames supervision as a structured teaching-and-learning relationship, shaped by pedagogical choices, interpersonal dynamics, institutional policies, research ethics, and resources (Boud & Lee, 2013; Bastalich, 2017). Quality supervision, in this sense, involves regular and intellectually substantive engagement, timely feedback, methodological guidance, support for academic writing, ethical compliance, and a deliberate effort to socialize students into scholarly communities through seminars, conferences, and publication pathways (Wisker, 2020). Where these elements are weak or inconsistent, postgraduate students may struggle with topic selection, research design, data quality, analysis, and the production of defensible, original findings. The consequence is often prolonged completion time, increased attrition, lower-quality theses, and fewer publishable outputs—outcomes that affect university rankings, accreditation credibility, and the broader capacity of the higher education system to drive innovation and development.

The issue of quality output is especially salient in Nigeria's contemporary higher education landscape. As a result, universities are under pressure to demonstrate research productivity through publications, grants, and postgraduate completions. Also, many institutions operate within tight fiscal environments that constrain laboratories, libraries, digital databases, and the availability of research funding for both staff and students. At the national level, debates about the adequacy of university funding and working conditions remain active, as reflected in recurring policy conversations and industrial actions that disrupt academic schedules and reduce the predictability necessary for sustained supervision (World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). These disruptions do not merely delay calendars; they fragment supervision continuity, weaken momentum in research projects, and can erode the mentor–mentee relationship that requires regular interaction to thrive. In Business Education specifically, postgraduate research often requires access to schools, colleges, enterprises, and government training agencies for data collection, as well as competence in educational measurement, curriculum studies, business skills training, and increasingly, digital learning technologies. This interdisciplinary demand can be difficult to support where supervisors

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carry heavy teaching loads, supervise large numbers of students, and simultaneously face institutional expectations for publication and administrative service. Supervision capacity is further tested when students enter postgraduate programmes with uneven preparation in research methods, academic writing, or quantitative and qualitative analysis gaps that supervision must often compensate for, particularly where structured research training seminars are inconsistent or under-resourced (Bastalich, 2017; Wisker, 2020). In such situations, even committed supervisors may struggle to deliver the intensity of mentorship required to produce high-quality theses within expected timeframes.

The Southeast of Nigeria comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States hosts several public universities with active postgraduate programmes and a growing demand for advanced degrees. While the region has a strong tradition of educational aspiration, its public universities often contend with limited infrastructure expansion relative to enrolment growth, creating crowded learning environments and overstretched academic staff. The expansion of postgraduate enrolment without a commensurate increase in qualified academic staff can lead to unfavourable supervisor–student ratios, reduced time for individualized mentorship, and reliance on quick, surface-level feedback rather than deep scholarly engagement (Lee, 2018). These pressures can be intensified by weak institutional monitoring mechanisms for supervision quality such as irregular progress reviews, inconsistent departmental research seminars, or unclear timelines and expectations for dissertation milestones.

Constraints to effective supervision may be conceptualized at multiple levels. At the **institutional level**, constraints commonly include inadequate research funding, weak library and e-library subscriptions, limited access to current journals, insufficient office and meeting spaces, unstable electricity and internet connectivity, and bureaucratic delays in ethics approvals and administrative clearances for fieldwork. Such challenges are not unique to Nigeria, but they are often more pronounced in low- and middle-income contexts where higher education systems face competing national priorities (UNESCO, 2023). At the **supervisor level**, constraints may include heavy workload from teaching and administrative duties, high supervision burdens, limited opportunities for professional development in advanced research methods or supervision pedagogy, and pressures to publish that compete with time for mentorship (Boud & Lee, 2013; Lee, 2018). At the **student level**, constraints can involve financial hardship, limited access to research tools and software, inadequate research skills, employment commitments for part-time students, and anxiety or low confidence in academic writing factors that can slow progress and complicate the supervisory process (Wisker, 2020). At the system level, recurring disruptions in academic calendars, policy inconsistency, and uneven postgraduate governance frameworks can reduce the effectiveness of even well-designed departmental processes.

Understanding these constraints matters because postgraduate supervision directly influences the credibility and utility of research outputs. “Quality output” in postgraduate Business Education research is reflected in originality and relevance of the research problem; methodological rigor; ethical compliance; coherence and clarity of academic writing; valid and reliable findings; and the potential for dissemination through peer-reviewed publications, policy briefs, or practice-oriented

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innovations in teaching and workforce preparation (Bastalich, 2017; Wisker, 2020). When supervision is constrained, the risk increases that students will produce weak conceptual frameworks, poorly justified methods, unreliable instruments, superficial analyses, and conclusions that add little to knowledge or practice. In the worst cases, inadequate supervision environments may also heighten vulnerability to academic misconduct, including plagiarism or data fabrication, particularly where institutional integrity systems and mentoring are weak (UNESCO, 2023).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Postgraduate research supervision is a core quality-assurance process through which universities develop competent researchers, uphold academic standards, and produce theses and dissertations that can translate into publishable and practice-relevant knowledge. In Business Education where research is expected to strengthen teaching effectiveness, entrepreneurship education, skill acquisition, and workforce readiness supervision is particularly important for ensuring methodological rigor, relevance to industry and educational practice, and adherence to research ethics. Yet in many public universities in Southeast Nigeria, concerns persist about delayed completion rates, uneven thesis quality, weak research designs and analyses, limited innovation in research topics, and poor conversion of postgraduate projects into journal articles and other credible outputs. These concerns suggest that the supervisory process may be constrained in ways that directly affect the quality of postgraduate research output produced under Business Educators. Supervision in the region often occurs within an environment of systemic and institutional limitations. Business Educators may be required to supervise large numbers of postgraduate students while simultaneously handling heavy teaching loads, administrative responsibilities, accreditation demands, and pressure to publish. In such circumstances, sustained mentoring, timely feedback, and consistent monitoring of progress key ingredients of quality supervision—can become difficult to maintain. Compounding this are infrastructural deficits common in public universities, such as inadequate office/consultation space, unstable electricity, limited internet connectivity, and insufficient access to up-to-date journals, e-libraries, statistical software, and research support services. These conditions can weaken the research process from proposal development through data collection, analysis, and final write-up, thereby increasing the likelihood of superficial literature reviews, poorly validated instruments, weak data handling, and conclusions that add limited value to knowledge or practice.

Student-related constraints also interact with these institutional issues to further complicate supervision outcomes. Many postgraduate students juggle employment and family responsibilities, face financial constraints that limit their ability to fund fieldwork and data analysis, and may enter programmes with gaps in research methods, academic writing, or digital research skills. When such gaps are not addressed through structured research training, seminars, and consistent supervisory guidance, students may depend excessively on recycled topics, outdated sources, or uncritical use of methods, which undermines originality and quality. In addition, where departmental and university-level quality assurance mechanisms such as clear supervision workload policies, progress-tracking systems, structured postgraduate seminars, and enforceable

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timelines are weak or inconsistently implemented, supervision becomes uneven and outcomes vary widely across departments and institutions.

Although supervision challenges in Nigerian universities are widely acknowledged, there remains limited context-specific evidence on the precise constraints that hinder Business Educators' supervision of postgraduate research for quality output in public universities in Southeast Nigeria, and how these constraints jointly shape research outcomes. Without such evidence, interventions aimed at improving postgraduate research quality may remain generic, poorly targeted, and ineffective. The problem, therefore, is the persistence of supervisory constraints stemming from institutional, supervisor-related, student-related, and governance factors that undermine effective supervision and compromise the quality of postgraduate research output in Business Education in public universities across Southeast Nigeria.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to determine the Constraints to Supervision of Postgraduate Research for Quality Output by Business Educators in Public Universities in South-East, Nigeria. The specific purposes were to determine;

- i. Supervisors-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output by Business Educators in public universities in South- East Nigeria.
- ii. Students-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output by Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria.

4. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- i. Supervisors-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research have no significant effect on quality output by Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria.
- ii. Students-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research have no significant effect on the quality of output by Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria.

5. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Postgraduate Supervision

The supervision of postgraduate research is an essential academic activity that has a direct impact on the quality, originality, and completion of a thesis or dissertation. According to Alam, Alam and Rasul (2023), the supervision process requires both the student and the supervisor to consciously engage each other within the spirit of professionalism, respect, collegiality and open mindedness. The supervision of postgraduate research in public universities in South-East Nigeria, by business educators, is a crucial activity that has a central position in ensuring that research is of high quality in terms of research design, methodology, ethics, and originality. National Universities Commission (NUC, 2021), highlights that the challenge of staffing and the rising number of students in Nigerian universities put pressure on the lecturers, which in turn impacts the quality of research supervision. The lecturers' workload, administrative, and community service commitments also restrict their availability for quality supervision. Institutional and bureaucratic issues also limit the supervisory process. Delays in approval of proposals, ethical clearance, external review, and administrative issues may impede the progress of research. Institutional

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Theory proposes that the performance of institutions is influenced by their governance structures and regulatory frameworks; lack of coordination in institutions may thus impede supervisory processes and completion of research.

Another limiting factor is the lack of preparedness of students in research. Some postgraduate students may lack sufficient knowledge in research methodology, writing, and critical thinking. This may increase the supervisory load and delay the research process. According to Shulman (2005), supervision of research students' needs both subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, underlining the significance of mentoring skills in supervising research students.

6. POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

Postgraduate research can be defined as advanced academic research carried out at the master's and doctoral levels with the aim of creating new knowledge, confirming existing theories, solving problems, and contributing to policy and professional practices. Postgraduate research can be characterized as a systematic process that entails the identification of a research problem, review of the relevant literature, use of the appropriate research methods, data collection and analysis, as well as the presentation of the research findings in the form of a thesis or dissertation. According to National Universities Commission (NUC, 2021), postgraduate programme of universities in Nigeria are expected to produce high-level manpower with analytical and research skills and professional competence to make meaningful contributions to academia, industries, and policy circles. In particular, for postgraduate research to be considered for the doctoral degree, it must be characterized by originality and contribution to knowledge.

However, according to Shulman (2005) in Gohar and Quota (2021), it should be noted that advanced research training entails mentorship that combines disciplinary knowledge with research pedagogy to promote intellectual maturity and competence. In Nigeria, for instance, support interventions by relevant agencies like the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) are geared towards improving research capacity through grants, training of academic staff, and infrastructural development.

The quality of postgraduate research is usually gauged by its originality, methodological soundness, compliance with ethics, publication record, and its relevance to the wider community. In recent times, universities are encouraging postgraduate students to publish research articles in peer-reviewed journals prior to graduation to improve research visibility and enhance global ranking.

Quality Output

Quality output is the measure of the extent to which the product, service, or academic work is able to achieve the desired goals, objectives, and expectations of the stakeholders in terms of the established standards. In the context of postgraduate research, quality output is the production of research that is original, methodologically sound, ethically conducted, and socially relevant. In the context of the academic environment, the quality output is assessed in terms of the following factors: the research is original, rigorous, valid, reliable, clear, and makes an important contribution to theory or practice.

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The National Universities Commission (NUC, 2021) highlights that the quality output of postgraduate research in Nigerian universities is expected to demonstrate high standards of scholarship, intellect, and the application of the principles of ethics in the conduct of research at the postgraduate level. For the purpose of the doctoral level, the quality output is expected to make an important and original contribution to knowledge.

The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund, 2022) highlights the importance of quality enhancement in research funding, academic staff development, and infrastructural support. The quality assurance activities in universities include assessing the effectiveness of academic supervision, research design, and academic integrity. Quality in research is greatly influenced by academic supervision, availability of facilities in conducting research, funding support, workload management, and policies.

Business Educators in Public Universities

Business educators are academically and professionally qualified individuals trained in various business-related areas of study, such as accounting, marketing, management, entrepreneurship, and office technology. In Nigerian universities, business educators are located in Faculties of Education and Management Sciences, and are expected to have both subject and pedagogical knowledge. According to Ezeabii (2017), business educators are usually exposed to various innovative and entrepreneurial skills needed for performance in the business world either for job occupations or for self-employment.

According to the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2021), academic staff in postgraduate programme should be research competent, should have the capacity to supervise postgraduate students, and should have publications in academic journals to maintain academic standards. Therefore, the role of the business educator is that of an intellectual mentor who guides students in the completion of theses and dissertations.

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), investing in education and professional development improves productivity and increases performance. Therefore, in this study, research competence and experience, as well as professional development of business educators are crucial in determining the quality of research output among postgraduate research students. Jay Barney's (1991) Resource-Based View theory posits that for an organization to have a sustained competitive advantage; it must utilize its resources in a manner that is valuable and scarce. Experienced research supervisors and research culture are strategic resources in a university setting.

Public Universities

Public universities are institutions of higher learning that are financed and controlled mainly by the government, either at the national or state level. In Nigeria, the role of the public university is to offer affordable quality education, conduct research, and contribute to the development of the nation. It is different from the private university in terms of governance, finance, enrolment, and control. In addition, the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) argues that the performance of public universities is reliant on the optimal use of resources such as qualified academic staff, research grants, laboratory equipment, and information technology. Universities that allocate their resources better are more likely to produce quality postgraduate research outputs.

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In Southeast Nigeria, the role of public universities in the development of human capital in business and management fields has been impressive. This is because, organizations like the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund, 2022) are supporting the development of human capital through the provision of research grants, staff training, and infrastructure development. Public Universities may be examined under the lens of Institutional Theory. The Institutional Theory argues that organizational behaviour is affected by regulations, policies, and societal demands (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Constraints to supervision of postgraduate research

Postgraduate programme involves a lot of research work; thus, a number of factors have been identified to affect supervision of research studies at this level, thereby contributing to poor quality output. Constraints to supervision are those factors that compel the stakeholders in postgraduate supervision not to play their parts well for quality research output. The stakeholders to the supervisory function are the supervisors, students (supervisee) and the institution (universities administration). However, these factors tend to reduce the result of postgraduate supervision, impeding the management and guidance of postgraduate research in Business Education. However, many public universities in Nigeria suffer from underfunding, which affects access to current scholarly materials and modern research facilities.

The World Bank (2020) indicates that a lack of investment in tertiary institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa is a barrier to research productivity and innovation. This is because, without proper investment, supervisors and students carry out research in a poor environment, which affects research quality. According to Nwachukwu and Nwosu (2021), the lack of research facilities is one of the factors that reduce the productivity of academics in Nigerian public universities. An increase in the number of postgraduate students, without an equivalent rise in the number of qualified academic staff, means that the available supervisors have an overload of students to supervise, thereby reducing the quality of the student-supervisor relationship. Ives and Rowley (2005) established that manageable supervision loads have a positive effect on the completion of doctoral studies.

Supervisors'-related constraints

Supervisor-related constraints can be considered one of the major factors affecting the quality of postgraduate research output in Business Education programmes offered in public universities in Southeast Nigeria. To be an effective supervisor, one needs to possess subject-matter competence, methodological competence, mentoring competence, as well as professional commitment. However, there are a number of supervisor-related challenges that affect the achievement of quality research output.

Poor relationship between the supervisor and the students will also affect the supervision. Productive supervision is based on respect, communication, and feedback. According to Mainhard et al. (2009), the interpersonal factor of supervision is crucial because it impacts the quality of the research. In the case where the supervisor uses authoritarian practices, the students will be discouraged, leading to frustration.

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In many Nigerian public universities, the academic staff have the responsibility of lecturing, researching, serving the community, and supervising postgraduates. Ogunyemi and Aina (2019) noted that the burden of the academic staff's workload impacts the research output, hence the quality of supervision. Also, Assakran (2016) observed that the academic supervisors are constrained by many obstacles to the role of the academic supervisor, such as heavy teaching loads, administrative duties, lack of experience and lack of commitment to office hours. Abulsoud (2020) further confirmed lack of incentive, in addition to heavy teaching and administrative loads as supervisor-related challenges to quality educational research. Too many students to supervise makes it difficult to offer quality supervision because the supervisor will not be able to offer quality mentoring. Lack of expertise (inexperience), according to Mutula in Oparinde (2021) is also another essential factor. Of course, one cannot give what he/she does not have. Supervisory relationship involves input and output.

Student-related constraints

Student-related constraints imply the challenges posed by the postgraduate students that affect the effective supervision of the students, thereby affecting the quality of the research output generated by the students. Student-related constraints have a significant impact on the pace, depth, and quality of the research output generated by the students in Business Education in public universities in Southeast Nigeria. Most postgraduate students lack proper background knowledge in research methodology, statistics, and writing skills in their master's and doctoral courses. Lack of proper background knowledge makes it hard for students to conceptualize research issues, use proper research methodologies, and understand the meaning of the data they collect. Advanced critical thinking skills, as well as proper research methodology, are required in the conduct of research at the doctoral level (Grant, 2003; Boikhutso et al., 2013).

Also, Shaban (2017) pointed out that one obstacle to poor postgraduate supervision is the researcher's tendency to carry out the study as fast as possible regardless of quality. This is because many postgraduate students are self-sponsored, and this affects their ability to raise funds for data collection, transportation, and printing, as well as accessing research databases for their research. Olorunfoba and Ajayi (2020) note that financial constraints are a factor that impacts postgraduate research completion rates in Nigeria. This is because of a lack of funds, which may limit sample sizes, research designs, and time to complete research.

7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is mainly based on Systems Theory developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, which states that an organization is a system consisting of interrelated components working together to achieve a common objective. A university as a system of education is comprised of supervisors, postgraduate students, policies, funding structure, and research facilities acting as interrelated components. Thus, the effectiveness of postgraduate research supervision is the result of the proper functioning of the above components. Bertalanffy (1968) states, when one of the components of the system, such as funding, the workload of the supervisor, or the student's preparation, malfunctions, the result is reflected in the overall output of the system, in this case, the quality of the postgraduate research in public universities in Southeast Nigeria. Systems Theory

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is the framework that provides an overall view of the impact of the constraints, such as the supervisor's, the institutional, and the student-related constraints, on the quality of the postgraduate research in the above universities.

The study is also informed by the Human Capital Theory, as presented by Theodore Schultz, later developed by Gary Becker. The theory asserts that investments in education, training, and skill development improve productivity and performance. In the context of postgraduate research supervision, the skills of the supervisor in research methodology, mentoring, and ICT skills represent the most important forms of human capital. Students' past research training and preparation also shape the quality of research they produce. Inadequate investments in research infrastructure, training, and ICT capabilities erode the quality of research supervision. Human Capital Theory explains the constraints in postgraduate research supervision, resulting from insufficient training, lack of professional development, and institutional support (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964).

Moreover, this study also utilizes Social Exchange Theory, which was developed by Homans, who focused on relationships characterized by mutual benefit and obligations. The relationship between postgraduate students and their supervisors is an exchange relationship, where supervisors offer academic guidance, mentorship, and feedback, and students show commitment, responsiveness, and cognitive engagement. When one of the parties feels that there is a lack of balance, such as when supervisors delay feedback to students and students are not serious about their research, this impacts the relationship, hence negatively impacting research progress and quality. This theory is significant in understanding interpersonal and motivational constraints in supervision relationships (Homans, 1958).

8. METHODS

This study adopts descriptive survey research design, using questionnaire to elicit responses from the focus population. Descriptive survey design method was chosen over other methods considering the nature of the data and the design's ability to obtain measurable data from a broad population, standardize the responses, and facilitate the quantitative analysis. Also, according to Anjali (2017), descriptive survey research design uses questionnaire and other forms of data collection methods to source information from the target respondents. The research design is therefore, justified since the study aims to explore the constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output by business educators in public universities in south-east, Nigeria

The study population was seventy-eight (78) Business Educators in public (state and federal) universities offering Business Education in South-East. The population was determined based on the field survey conducted by the researcher. The number was manageable and as such, there was no sampling.

Collection of data was done using a 20-item structured questionnaire developed by the researchers based on the reviewed related literature. The validation of the instrument was done using three experts in the Business and Entrepreneurship Education Department and the Measurement and Evaluation unit of the Mathematics and Computer Education Department of Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Afterwards, their corrections and suggestions were used to

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prepare the final instrument used for the study. The Instrument was trial tested using 20 Business Educators in South-South Nigeria who were not in the area of the study. The reliability coefficient yielded 0.73 using the Cronbach Alpha method.

The Administration of the questionnaire was carried out using seven research assistants. Out of 78 copies of the instrument distributed, 68 copies were returned, giving 87.18% return rate. Weighted means and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions. Decisions on the research questions were made using the lower and upper limits of the mean on a 4-point response scale. The standard deviation was used to determine the homogeneity or otherwise of the opinions of the respondents. The t-test was used to test the null hypotheses. Analysis was carried out using statistical packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The significant value (at 2- tail) was compared with .05 level of significance at the appropriate degree of freedom.

9. RESULTS

Data collected were analysed, while a summary of the results was presented in tables below according to the research questions that guided the study. Accompanying the independent samples t-test results, assessing the level of agreement/disagreement among the federal and state Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria was equally presented in the table.

Research Question 1

What are the supervisors–related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output by Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Response Scores of State and Federal Universities Business Educators on the supervisors-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output in public universities in South-East Nigeria

Items	Responses						Decision
	State (N=28)		Federal (N=40)		Overall		
	\bar{X}_1	SD_1	\bar{X}_2	SD_2	\bar{X}_c	SD_c	
Supervisors’-related constraints to postgraduate research supervision for quality output by Business Educators include:							
Lack of full-time supervision due to heavy teaching loads and administration duties	2.82	0.67	2.75	0.63	2.78	0.64	Agree
Lack of Supervisory experience and scientific skills	3.00	0.61	2.95	0.68	2.97	0.65	Agree
Lack of commitment to office hours preventing students from having face to face contacts for clarifications	3.36	0.62	3.38	0.67	3.37	0.64	Agree
Not having meaningful and functional relationship with students	2.86	0.76	2.80	0.76	2.82	0.75	Agree
Lack of mentorship to undertake postgraduate supervision	3.04	0.74	3.18	0.68	3.12	0.70	Agree

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Supervisors supervising different research areas from their area of specialization leading to lack of research expertise	3.32	0.61	3.40	0.59	3.37	0.60	Agree
Non-provision of timeless, constructive and effective feedback on research student's work.	3.46	0.51	3.33	0.83	3.38	0.71	Agree
Inability to monitor the progress of students' research work	3.29	0.60	3.18	0.71	3.22	0.67	Agree
Non-provision of satisfactory and accurate guidance and advice to students	2.86	0.71	2.75	0.78	2.79	0.74	Agree
Inability to help students interact with others working in the field of research	3.07	0.72	2.83	0.64	2.93	0.68	Agree
Cluster Mean & SD	3.11	0.66	3.06	0.70	3.08	0.68	Agree

Note: \bar{X} = Mean; SD=Standard Deviation;

Mean difference = .54643; t-stat = .689; p-value = .493

Data presented in table 1 shows both the state, federal and cluster average responses of Business Educators regarding supervisors'-related constraints to postgraduate research supervision for quality output in public universities in the area. The item-by-item pooled mean scores of the items which ranges from 2.78 to 3.38 indicates that the outlined items are the supervisors'- related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output in public universities in South-East Nigeria. The overall cluster mean score of 3.08 with a low standard deviation of 0.68 indicates the respondents' submission to the items and similarity of both state and federal Business Educators views. Also, the t-statistic estimate of 0.689 and corresponding probability value of 0.493 is greater than 0.05; hence, there is no significant difference in the ratings of the Business Educators at state and federal level. In other words, the respondents (Business Educators from State and Federal public universities) have similar opinions to the items.

Hypothesis 1: *Supervisors-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research have no significant effect on quality output by Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria.*

Table 2: Summary of 1-sample t-test result of mean response scores of Business Educators on the supervisors'-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output in Public Universities in South-East Nigeria.

	Null Hyp.: T-cal. \geq 2.50					
	t-stat.	Degrees of freedom	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Mean Responses	7.319	9	<.001	.57500	.3973	.7527

Source: Extract from SPSS 29.0 Output

The t-stat estimate the effect size of the constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output in the universities. A t-stat. value of 7.319 and associated probability (sig.) value

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less than 0.001 indicates that supervisors-related constraints exert significant effect on quality output of postgraduate researches in public universities in South-East Nigeria. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Research Questions 2

What are the students'-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output by Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria?

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Table 3: Mean Response Scores of State and Federal Universities Business Educators on the students–related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output in public universities in South-East Nigeria

Items	Responses						Decision
	State (N=28)		Federal (N=40)		Overall		
	\bar{X}_1	SD_1	\bar{X}_2	SD_2	\bar{X}_c	SD_c	
Students'-related constraints to postgraduate research supervision for quality output by Business Educators include:							
Students are under pressure to publish research works	3.07	0.72	2.98	0.70	3.01	0.70	Agree
Students lack financial support for research undertakings	3.29	0.71	3.33	0.76	3.31	0.74	Agree
Students lack skills for quality research work	3.25	0.70	3.32	0.62	3.29	0.65	Agree
Students' inability to critically examine contemporary undertakings	3.36	0.56	3.60	0.55	3.50	0.56	Strongly agree
Students' use of faculty research design	3.43	0.69	3.15	0.69	3.26	0.70	Agree
Inaccurate and insufficient data collection by students	3.21	0.79	3.25	0.59	3.24	0.67	Agree
Students battle with emotional and psychological problems, which compound the whole issues	3.21	0.78	3.13	0.76	3.16	0.77	Agree
Lack of understanding and communication with the supervisor	3.32	0.72	3.33	0.62	3.32	0.66	Agree
Lack of motivation and commitment on the part of the students	3.21	0.69	3.03	0.70	3.10	0.69	Agree
Researchers' tendency to carry out the study as fast as possible, regardless of quality	3.29	0.66	2.95	0.93	3.09	0.84	Agree
Cluster Mean & SD	3.26	0.70	3.21	0.69	3.23	0.70	Agree

Note: \bar{X} = Mean; SD=Standard Deviation;

Mean difference = .59286; t-stat = .963; p-value = .339

The result in table 3 indicates that the most critical students'-related constraint to supervision of postgraduate researches as perceived by Business Educators at state and federal universities in South-East Nigeria is the students' inability to critically examine contemporary undertakings (mean score of 3.50). Others follow closely, especially, students lack of understanding and communication with supervisor ($\bar{X}_c=3.32$), students lack financial support for research undertakings ($\bar{X}_c=3.31$), and students lack of skills for quality research work ($\bar{X}_c=3.29$). The

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remaining six constraints have mean scores ranging from 3.01 to 3.26 which affirms that the factors contribute to the quality of postgraduate research output in Business Education across the universities. Also, overall cluster mean rating of 3.23 and a low standard deviation of 0.70 provide insights that the respondents' opinions do not differ remarkably across the state and federal universities. A further proof of no significant difference in the mean scores of the State and Federal universities Business Educators on the students'-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output was shown by the t-test results (t-stat. = 0.963, p=0.339>0.05).

Hypothesis 2: *Students-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research have no significant effect on the quality of output by Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria.*

Table 4: Summary of 1-sample t-test result of mean response scores of Business Educators on the students'-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate research for quality output in Public Universities in South-East Nigeria.

	Null Hyp.: T-cal. \geq 2.50					
	t-stat.	Degrees of freedom	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Mean Responses	16.200	9	<.001	.72800	.6263	.8297

Source: Extract from SPSS 29.0 Output

The result in table 4 shows the 1-sample t-test result, at 0.05 level of significance and n-1 degrees of freedom. As the t-statistic value (t-sta.=16.200) is greater than 2.50, and significant value (sig.) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is upheld. This means that there is a statistically significant effect of the students-related constraints to supervision of postgraduate researches on the quality of output in public universities in South-East Nigeria.

10. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Our finding from hypothesis one shows that supervisors-related constraints significantly affect the quality of output of postgraduate researches in public universities in South-East Nigeria. The descriptive mean response cluster result highlights that the key supervisor-related constraints to postgraduate research supervision in public universities in South-East, Nigeria, includes: Non-provision of timeless, constructive and effective feedback on research student's work (\bar{x} =3.38); Supervisors supervising different research areas from their area of specialization leading to lack of research expertise (\bar{x} =3.37); Lack of commitment to office hours preventing students from having face to face contacts for clarifications (\bar{x} =3.37); Inability to monitor the progress of students' research work (\bar{x} =3.22); and Lack of mentorship to undertake postgraduate supervision (\bar{x} =3.12). Apart from the above-listed major ones, other factors include lack of supervisory experience and scientific skills (\bar{x} =2.97); inability to help students interact with others working in the field of research (\bar{x} =2.93); not having a meaningful and functional relationship with students (\bar{x} =2.82); non-provision of satisfactory and accurate guidance and advice to students (\bar{x} =2.79); and lack of full-time supervision due to heavy teaching loads and administration duties (\bar{x} =2.78).

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All these factors, aggregatively, contribute to poor quality of postgraduate research output in Business Education in the universities in South-East, Nigeria. The findings are in congruent with the findings of Assakran (2016), Ogunyemi and Aina (2019), Abulsaoud (2020), and the affirmation of Mutula in Oparinde (2021) among other studies. It however, suggests the need for the supervisors to possess subject-matter competence, methodological competence, mentoring competence, as well as professional commitment so as to be able to offer quality supervision and mentoring to the students' academic researches.

Secondly, with respect to research hypothesis two, the study established that the leading students-related constraints to quality research output in postgraduate studies in public universities in South-East, Nigeria, include student's inability to critically examine contemporary undertakings ($\bar{x}=3.50$), students lack of skills for quality research work ($\bar{x}=3.39$), students lack of financial support for research undertaking ($\bar{x}=3.31$), students use of faulty research design ($\bar{x}=3.26$), inaccurate and insufficient data collection by students ($\bar{x}=3.24$), and the students being under pressure to publish their research works ($\bar{x}=3.01$). Aggregatively, these constraints were ascertained to exert significant effect on the quality of postgraduate research output in Business Education in public universities in the area. A finding in submission to the work of Grant (2003), Boikhutso et al. (2013), Shaban (2017), and Oloruntoba and Ajayi (2020) which provided empirical evidences that these factors hinder postgraduate research quality as well as completion rates.

11. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study established that constraints to the supervision of postgraduate research significantly shape the quality of research output produced by Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria. The findings clearly indicate that supervisor-related constraints have a statistically significant effect on quality output. This implies that issues such as inadequate supervisory commitment and availability, heavy workload and supervision overload, delayed or inconsistent feedback, limited mentorship support, and gaps in research capacity or methodological guidance can directly weaken the rigour, timeliness, coherence, and overall scholarly standard of postgraduate research. Where supervision is constrained in these ways, postgraduate students are more likely to experience prolonged completion timelines, reduced depth of analysis, weaker alignment between research problems and methods, and poorer presentation of findings—outcomes that ultimately reflect on the quality of Business Education research output in the universities studied.

Similarly, the study revealed that student-related constraints significantly affect the quality of output by Business Educators. This underscores the reality that postgraduate research quality is not determined by supervision alone; it is also strongly influenced by student factors such as limited research skills, low academic writing competence, poor time management, weak commitment to scheduled supervisory engagements, financial pressures, insufficient access to current literature and data, and, in some cases, low motivation or inadequate readiness for independent scholarly work. When these student-related constraints persist, they tend to manifest in superficial literature reviews, methodological errors, weak data analysis, and substandard

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thesis/dissertation writing thereby reducing the overall quality and relevance of research produced within Business Education programmes.

Overall, the conclusion drawn is that improving postgraduate research quality in Business Education in public universities in South-East Nigeria requires a dual-focus approach: addressing supervisor-side bottlenecks while simultaneously strengthening student preparedness, responsibility, and research competence. The significant effects observed in both categories of constraints highlight the need for institutional support systems and policies that enhance supervisors' capacity and accountability, reduce structural pressures that limit effective supervision, and provide students with targeted training and resources that enable them to meet postgraduate research demands.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding that both supervisor-related and student-related constraints significantly affect the quality of postgraduate research output by Business Educators in public universities in South-East Nigeria, the following recommendations are made to improve supervision effectiveness and strengthen research quality:

- i. University management and relevant regulatory bodies should set and enforce realistic supervision loads per supervisor. Departments should allocate supervisees based on supervisors' capacity and area of specialization to reduce supervision overload and improve the depth of guidance offered to postgraduate students.
- ii. Departments should run compulsory postgraduate seminars and hands-on training in proposal writing, literature review development, research design, data analysis, referencing styles, and academic writing. Early skill development will reduce repeated corrections and improve output quality.

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