Project Writing and Dissertation Supervision: Obligation and Expectations of Project Supervisors, Discussion of Findings, Recommendations, Conclusion and Referencing/Citation

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ABSTRACT

Some of the major challenges of project/dissertation writing of undergraduate students in universities is the presentation of results, discussion of findings and referencing or citation of sources used in the text of their research work. This paper examined the challenges faced by project or undergraduate dissertation supervisors and identified the framework of their obligations and expectations in the process of supervision. However, these challenges have given rise to a lot of poor quality projects or dissertation work by undergraduate students in most universities across the world. Nonetheless, this paper seeks to present a concise context on how to overcome challenges on discussion of research findings, referencing or citation of sources with the examples on the use of different reference styles and a guide on how supervisors should help their undergraduate students produce quality research work.

INTRODUCTION

Project/dissertation/thesis writing is an essential aspect of undergraduate or graduate studies. Therefore, a supervisor is critical in ensuring the quality of undergraduate/graduate degree programs. For example, undergraduate education is highly influenced by the supervision and the quality of feedback between undergraduate/graduate students and their supervisors (Univerity of British Columbia, nd). When undergraduates/graduates work diligently and effectively with their supervisors, they will improve their projects/dissertations and their educational experiences. The significance of the contribution played by the supervisor in supervising the process of design, preparation in addition to the presentation of the end-of-studies project by students is indisputable (José Sá, Santos and Serpa , 2021). A good discussion section includes an analysis of any unexpected findings. The surprising finding should be discussed first, followed by a brief interpretation of why you believe it appeared and, if necessary, its possible significance concerning the comprehensive study. Referencing is an integral portion of academic work (Kumar, 2019). It puts your work in context, demonstrates the breadth and depth of your research, and acknowledges other people's work. It would help if you referenced whenever you use someone else's idea. An essential part of academic integrity is making sure that you avoid plagiarism by correctly acknowledging the work of others.

Obligation and Expectations of Research Supervisors

Academic work is systematic in nature and undergraduate, and graduate students in most cases require supervision to improve the quality of their work. Supervision is a clear term in the

interactive relationship between dissertation supervisors and students (Leila Bazrafkan et al, 2019).Therefore, faculty members appointed to supervise should be there to assist their students at every phase of the student's research work. Faculty members are chosen to supervise the students because competent supervision brings success to the student, and it has ethical, reputational, and economic consequences for the institution (Leila Bazrafkan et al, 2019). Research work starts from designing the topic, through forming methodologies then discussing results, to presentation and possible publication of studies.

Furthermore, the supervisor should support the students with choosing and developing appropriate and practicable research topics (Univerity of British Columbia, nd). A supervisor is chosen to support the student's progress in relations to their research project (Leila Bazrafkan et al, 2019).

The other relevant issue about research is the supervisor's interest in the topic to be researched by the student. Hence, a supervisor should be adequately au fait with the area of study to offer supervision before assenting to supervise.

Students, in most cases, have complained that they found it very challenging to access their supervisors, who sometimes have their busy schedules. However, supervisors should make themselves accessible to their students for consultation and feedback on their academic research work. Therefore, the regularity of the students meeting their supervisors will differ based on the students' discipline, phase of work, nature of the research, students' abilities to do their work independently, etc.

On the other hand, supervisors should give feedback in a timely and detailed way to work provided by the student, with helpful recommendations for improvement and continuation (Univerity of British Columbia, nd). Also, as a supervisor, you should always arrange for continuing supervision of the students when you are absent from duty for long periods, e.g., a month or over. One of the significant challenges faced by students undertaking research is access to institutions or research materials. As a result, when and where appropriate, help the student access institutions or research materials that will support their work.

It will not be in students' interest to prolong their research or project work; thus, the supervisor should motivate the students to complete their work on record time. It is always appropriate for supervisors to give credits or acknowledgments in situations of joint authorship with the students' contributions in presentations and published materials. Finally, supervisors should assist the students in conforming to any updates that need to be done to the project/dissertation after the defense.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION
Writing a Research Discussion and Findings
In most cases, writing the discussion of findings for most scholars or undergraduate and graduate students seems to be very challenging. The Discussion is an important part of a dissertation. In the discussion section, one needs to discuss scientifically and logically to defend, support, then explain the answers to your research questions (Faryadi, 2019). However, the research or academic work results are critical in providing a direction for policy

recommendations and a summary of the research's contextual and general idea. Therefore, it is always advisable for the researcher or students to restate the results obtained from the data analysis presented contextually. Please note that it is advisable to emphasize the positives of the findings but at the same time not exaggerate them, as the results part of the research should only comprise of findings of the study. It is important to note that research findings are exaggerated in most published academic works. It can be upheld that most research findings are fabricated (Ioannidis, 2005). It also advisable not to try to interpret the findings; merely state what the study discovered objectively (Faryadi, 2019).

What are Findings in a Research?

Researchers should never forget that research findings have a relationship with research results obtained from data analysis. Findings of the research are defined as any relationship accomplishing proper statistical significance (Ioannidis, 2005). However, research findings are the critical effects of research work and are what the research suggested, discovered, or shown. The findings of the research are the absolute outcomes instead of recommendations or conclusions obtained from the study.

How to Present Findings and Recommendations in a Research?

The presentation of findings is one of the critical aspects of research, and it is always advisable for the researcher to identify their audience before the study. The fact is, researchers should always tailor the presentation of their findings to the audience highlighted in a contextual form. Knowledge interpreters need to determine the main messages for diverse target audiences and to model these in language and knowledge interpretation products that are easily adapted by diverse audiences (Eccles, Lavis, Hill and Squires, 2012).

In another development, the recommendations of a study or research are presented after the findings. Recommendations can be either policy or practice-based. Recommendations of a study or research should also be actionable or doable and help the audience of your research work. Most reports comprise not as much helpful, general research recommendation. This means that the probable value of these recommendations is absent (BMJ, 2006). A research recommendation will seldom have a total value in itself (BMJ, 2006).

Conclusion of a Research Paper:

In writing the conclusion of a research paper, start by restating your research topic and the research work and summarize the critical points of the entire study. "Writing the Conclusion in a research is as challenging as writing your Introduction" (Faryadi, 2019). However, the significance of the study results should also be stated before the conclusion of opinions. In writing the the conclusion part of research, it is sometimes suitable to indicate concisely once more the research questions and hypotheses thus the reader can relay it to the discussion of the research findings (Faryadi, 2019). It is also important to mention in the conclusion how the research questions have been answered by explaining the What, Why and How were addressed by the research. You might possibly want to let the readers know the impact of the research in solving problems and the knowledge it has added to existing studies. Where necessary indicate where further studies can be done to improve on existing studies.

REFERENCING/CITATION (TEXT AND REF LIST)

Why and When to Reference?

Many scholars are not quite aware of the answers to the 'why' question to referencing in a research or academic work and are tempted to do academic fraud intentionally or out of ignorance. However, proper referencing or acknowledgment of someone else's work prevents you from plagiarism. Good referencing clarifies to the readership or audience which ideas are the researcher and someone else's. Equally, a very good and detailed referencing demonstrates the understanding of the research topic by the researcher and provides backup confirmation of the researcher's ideas, views, and arguments. Consideration to referencing do not only brand you as a better researcher but improves your character among editors, reviewers and readers (Santini, 2018). In addition, referencing lets, others determine the sources of data or information used in the research.

When you include an idea from somebody else's work in your research, you should refer to the original author to be clear where that idea is obtained. This situation is irrespective of whether directly quoted work has been paraphrased or summarized. Nonetheless, referencing is an essential aspect of good practice in academic writing.

Feedback on Research and Referencing

Most pieces of academic writing need to include references to other sources of information – usually academic literature. If a part of work has issues with referencing or citations, supervisors should often make comments such as:

- "Be ruthless with irrelevant material."
- "Use more information from good sources."
- "Use the correct referencing style required by the university."
- "Read more reference materials beyond the lectures. "

When supervisors receive feedback from their undergraduate or graduate students, it is advisable for them to revisit their work and find out whether all sources used in their research work are relevant, reputable, balanced and used to support their argument or offer a different viewpoints.

Referencing Styles

There are different reference styles in research, but students are advised to use the ones prescribed for them by their respective faculties or schools. Reference styles differ amongst universities and other learning institutions across the globe and depends on the area of specialization. Some faculties or schools in a university might choose to use the American psychological Association (APA 6th Edition) reference style. For example, information obtained from a journal article on the key challenges of social security in Sierra Leone authored by Joseph Davies and published on the 15th January 2020 through ResearchGate Journal should be referenced as, ***Davies, J. (2020, January 15). The Key Challenges of Social Security in Sierra Leone. ResearchGate*.** Researchers or students are also advised to include or reference the page number(s) where the information is taken, issue and volume number plus any other relevant details of the source. Good referencing take account of consideration to details like correct page numbering, spelling of author(s) names and the correctness of pertinent proofs that will be

specified in the paper (Santini, 2018). Below are examples of different reference styles that researchers or students can use based on the requirements of their faculties or schools:

- **MLA:** Davies, Joseph. The Key Challenges of Social Security in Sierra Leone. ResearchGate, 2020.
- **APA:** Davies, J. (2013). The Key Challenges of Social Security in Sierra Leone. ResearchGate.
- **Chicago:** Davies, Joseph. The Key Challenges of Social Security in Sierra Leone. ResearchGate, 2020.
- **Harvard:** Davies, J., 2020. The Key Challenges of Social Security in Sierra Leone. ResearchGate.
- **Vancouver:** Davies J. The Key Challenges of Social Security in Sierra Leone. ResearchGate; 2020 Jan 15.

Reference List and Bibliography
There is a variance between a reference list and bibliography but often times students seem not identify this defense because of the similarities between them. For example, when you take an information from other sources, you will have to give end at the of the research work either a reference list or a bibliography. A reference list is usually a list of the references that have been used in the body of your research work. How it is arranged will be determined by the referencing style of your faculty or school (University of Leeds, nd). Bibliography is basically a list of the sources that have been referred to in a research work and, since it consist of sources, that may not have been refer to in the work, it is normally organized in alphabetical order by surname (TAFE NSW Library Services, 2021).

Simple Guidelines for Appropriate Referencing
In referencing or citation, the most appropriate thing to do is to include into the text of the document relevant references, ensure to read in detail the publications that you reference and make sure to reference in according to the content of the source. Other rules are to reference evidently and not being unbiased, prioritize the references that is included in the text, assess the references in their linguistic framework and know that reference styles or principles differ from one institution to the other.

CONCLUSION
To ensure quality in research project writing and supervision in the university, supervisors should have the required expertise in the subject area, maintain regular supervisory meetings, ensure feedback from students on work in progress, advice on the appropriate or required referencing style, support the students, mediate, and make representation when necessary on behalf of the students.

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University of Leeds. (nd). *UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS*. Retrieved August 13, 2021, from University of Leeds Library: https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1402/referencing/47/referencing_explained/3