Exploring Research Students' Experiences related to Supervisory Support: A Cross-Case Analysis

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Abstract

The main purpose of this qualitative case study was to develop an understanding of the perspectives of research students on supervisory support. This study employed the interpretive case study methodology, and the criterion sampling technique was used to select participants. Eleven research students of the Department of History and Pakistan Studies who were currently enrolled at MPhil level and who had experienced the supervisory support for at least 3-6 months participated in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand the perspectives of the participants. All research students provided rich descriptions about supervisory support approaches. They all reported that their supervisors provided support related to directing, research planning, attaining resources, and project management. Most of the research students reported that their supervisors made efforts to introduce them to the disciplinary community, that is, provided the material for the research study and motivated them to participate in conferences, seminars, and workshops. Few research students gave negative responses to it by saying that their supervisors never talked about participation in any conferences or seminars. All eleven participants provided strong perspectives about the critical thinking approach. They stated that their supervisors helped them critically evaluate research literature related to their topics. Some students did not see the emancipation approach as an ideal. Some students' categorized their experiences as non-friendly and harsh. From the perspectives of research students, it can be inferred that

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every supervisor used five approaches of supervisory support with an unequal emphasis on each approach. Moreover, the supervisors were more inclined towards helping research students in project management and coaching but less in developing skills related to evaluation, argument analysis and emotional intelligence.

Keywords: Research students, Supervisory support, Cross-case analysis, Perspectives, Qualitative research

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Introduction

In Pakistan, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has been working hard to encourage and support a world-class research culture in universities, particularly in the area of Social Sciences. For research degree students, the development of a world-class research culture entails effective supervisory support available to them from their supervisors since research students' training requires a conducive environment for timely completion of research degrees. A research supervisor plays an important role in developing such an environment. In addition, supervisory support ensures that research students successfully overcome numerous difficulties, which they may face when they pass through the key stages in their research journey. Supervisory support for research students mainly focuses on developing helpful ways for students to stay focused on the research work. In general, proficiency and expertise of supervisors remain an important factor in the research journey of research students. Hence, a supervisor is a key person who guides and supervises research students, ensuring successful completion of their research work in time.

Many studies have provided evidence that research students' frustration and dissatisfaction with various aspects of supervisory support influence the progress and development of positive relationships among research students and supervisors (Satariyan, Getenet, Gube, & Muhammad, 2015). Many studies show that the quality of supervisory support and relationship are key components of students' research.

In recent years, supervisory support has been a "burning topic" for research students and for international research literature as well. However, with the exceptions of few studies (Ali, Ullah, & Sanauddin, 2019; Hammad, Ahmed, & Zahoor, 2018; Saleem & Mahmood, 2017; Saleem & Mehmood, 2018), there seems a dearth of research studies related to supervisory support in the Pakistani context. This study was designed to fill this gap. This study explored research students' perceptions and experiences related to the nature of supervisory support which they received from their supervisors during the research work.

Conceptual Framework

Numerous frameworks on supervisory support of research students have determined long lists of approved functions for supervisors. For example, Anne Lee, in her various publications (2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013), has proposed a framework for analyzing effective supervision practices. According to this framework, five main approaches to effective supervision are identified. The functional approach takes project management as the main issue. The functional approach is closely linked with research and project management, in which students complete their research work according to the timeline set by the supervisor. In the enculturation approach, research students are encouraged to become a member of the discipline community. Enculturation is closely associated with the actions of supervisors in introducing students to the disciplinary community. In the critical thinking approach, research students are motivated to questioning and analyzing their work. Critical thinking refers to the supervisor's support and student testing by systemically evaluating their work. The emancipation approach demands that research students are encouraged for the question-developing skill for a research study, whereas it requires encouraging research students to become independent. In the emancipation approach, supervision is based on coaching and mentoring students in academic practices. Supervisors mostly develop students' abilities so that they can conduct research work independently. The relationship development approach is closely linked with the care of students provided in supervision. Supervisors create emotionally intelligent and friendly relations with students during supervisory support in order to provide a conducive environment for research students to conduct research studies confidently (Lee, 2008).

In this study, these approaches are examined through the perspectives of the research students. Generally, research students can understand supervisory support practices of supervisors well, and there are numerous aspects of supervision that can be a focus of a research study. However, by using Lee's (2008) framework, this study has been able to focus on five different types of supervisory support that students can

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expect through supervisors. The framework is outlined below (See Figure 1):

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                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │  Critical    │
                    │  thinking    │
                    │(Evaluation and│
                    │  argument    │
                    │  analysis)   │
                    └──────────────┘
   ┌──────────────┐                  ┌──────────────┐
   │Enculturation │                  │ Emancipation │
   │(Gatekeeping  │                  │ (Mentoring and│
   │ and coaching)│                  │ facilitation)│
   └──────────────┘                  └──────────────┘
┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
│  Functional  │    │  Supervisory │   │ Relationship │
│  (Project    │ →  │   Support    │ ← │ development  │
│ management)  │    │              │   │ (Emmotional  │
└──────────────┘    └──────────────┘   │ intelligence)│
                                       └──────────────┘
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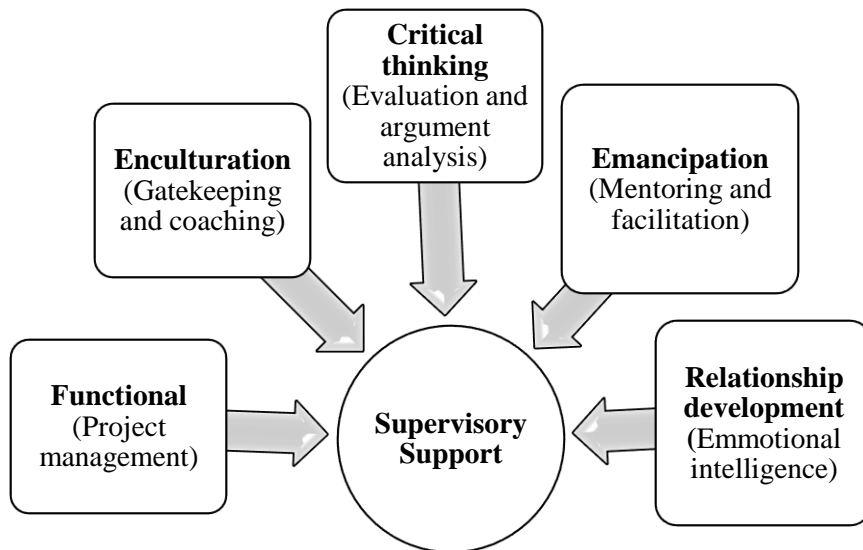
Figure 1: Lee's (2008) Supervisory Support Framework

The functional approach is one that is closely related to the professional role in the academic world. In this approach, students complete their research work according to the timeline given by the supervisor or the department. The functional approach is related to the rational model, which has a concern with the issues of development because it is closely associated with research and project management. According to this approach to supervision, the main task of the supervisor is directing and project management (Lee, 2008). All supervisors have rational experience about the research processes like research students are introduced with new colleagues, familiarized with rules and agreements during research processes, informed about interviewing processes, provided all information about project and time management for preparing research work.

The enculturation approach to supervision is concerned with introducing research students to the disciplinary community. In this approach of supervision, a good supervisor behaves as a family doctor for research students. The supervisor plays a gatekeeper role and introduces research

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students with some research expertise and many other learning resources like research networks. This approach ensures that it is the responsibility of the supervisor to choose an early stage gate for research students (Lee, 2008).

The critical thinking approach to supervision is concerned with providing research on students' skills necessary for systemically evaluating their research work. Usually, critical thinking is at the heart of research supervision. Critical thinking is defined differently in literature, but all definitions share a single core idea that arguments of a human being needs of evaluation if they are valuable of respect. Hence, the focus of the critical thinking approach is on the cultivation of the set of skills that help a reader and listener effectively evaluate the reasoning of speakers and writers (Kamler & Thomson, 2014; Lee, 2007).

In the emancipation approach, supervision is based on coaching and mentoring students in academic practices. Supervisors generally develop research students' abilities in their research work so that they can work independently. A non-judgmental advisor is usually seen in the supervision process. Mentoring of research students is ensured, which assumes that self-experience and self-discovery are crucial factors of learning. The main objectives are knowledge experiences and the development of sound research abilities helping research students to develop their skills to the level that they can work independently.

The relationship development approach to supervision is closely linked with the care of research students. Supervisors create emotionally intelligent and friendly relations with research students during supervisory support. Relationship development, emotional intelligence, and flexibility play an important role in the successful working of research students. This supervisory support approach demands the interpersonal relationship of both parties, supervisor and research students, and argues that it is helpful for developing the expertise of research students. Supervisory support and relationship with research students mainly focus on developing helpful ways for students and stay focused on the research work. A supervisor is advised to modify his or her practice of supervision over time as the student progresses in his or her research journey.

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Aim, Objectives and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the perspectives of research students on supervisory support. More specifically, the purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of research students of History and Pakistan Studies Department about their experiences related to the supervisory support they received in the department. This study was guided by the following main research question:

1. What are the perspectives of research students on supervisory support in the Department of History and Pakistan Studies at the University of Gujrat?

In order to align sub-questions with Lee's (2008) framework, this main question was divided into the following sub-questions:

1. What are the perspectives of research students on the functional approach to supervisory support in the Department of History and Pakistan Studies?
2. What are the perspectives of research students on the enculturation approach to supervisory support in the Department of History and Pakistan Studies?
3. What are the perspectives of research students on the critical thinking approach to supervisory support in the Department of History and Pakistan Studies?
4. What are the perspectives of research students on the emancipation approach to supervisory support in the Department of History and Pakistan Studies?
5. What are the perspectives of research students on the relationship development approach to supervisory support in the Department of History and Pakistan Studies?

Methodology

This study employed interpretive case study methodology (Yin, 2018), qualitative research that assists us in understanding the actual meaning of a social phenomenon with very small disruption in natural settings (Merriam, 1988, 2009). A case study in the naturalistic setting, also called an interpretive case study since it tries to find ways of

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understanding people interpret their experiences in the world (Andrade, 2009). This research study required insight into a problem (how supervisors provide supervisory support to research students) at a particular department. Hence, this was also an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995, 2013). This case study is richly descriptive in nature since, in this research study, participants had the opportunity to describe in detail the perceptions and experiences of supervisory supports in the research study during interviews. In addition, this case study mainly focused on understanding and situation of involved participants (what are the perceptions and experiences related to supervisory support?); therefore, it was a procedure rather than an outcome, which required discovery rather than verification. Moreover, the study was bounded, in that it was fixed and limited to the participants of the Department History and Pakistan Studies with the experience of 3-6 months of supervisory support.

This research study was conducted in the *Department of History and Pakistan Studies* at the University of Gujrat. This university is situated nearly 12 kilometers from the Gujrat city. Hafiz Hayat campus is also the main campus of the university. This university aims to promote knowledge culture with the vision of "A world-class university." This university focuses on academic subjects and research work, but research is a top priority (UOG Prospectus, 2016). The department promotes research culture for conducting quality research studies. It is committed to exploring different areas of research in the subjects of History and Pakistan Studies. The department tries to ensure the high quality of teaching and learning with research activities and provides valuable services to the community. The vital aim of the department is to generate truthful, intellectual, talented, and responsible citizens who can serve the nation and bring positive change in the society for future prosperity and success (UOG Prospectus, 2016). The aim of this research study was to develop an understanding of research students' perceptions and experiences related to the nature of supervisory support which they received from their supervisors in this department during the research work.

Criterion sampling (Patton, 2015) was used to select participants. Students of the Department of History and

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Pakistan Studies who were currently enrolled at MPhil level and who had experienced supervisory support for at least 3-6 months were target participants for the study. The researchers used the following criteria to determine the eligibility of the participants for this case study: The participant was a research student of the Department of History and Pakistan Studies and had experienced supervisory support for at least 3 to 6 months. List of names, telephone numbers, and Email address was received from the Office of Head of the Department. All students were invited to participate in this study via telephonic and other communication. Eleven students fulfilling the criteria were selected from the above-mentioned department for this study.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the participants (Longhurst, 2003; Lune & Berg, 2017). 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted at the mutually agreed time and place with willing participants. Pilot testing was a preliminary step of the data collection procedure. All interview questions followed a rule: General to more specific. Initially, questions were aimed to identify how the functional approach applied to supervisory support. After this, questions turned to how enculturation (gatekeeping and coaching), critical thinking (evaluation and argument analysis), emancipation (mentoring and facilitation), relationship development (emotional intelligence) approaches were applied in supervisory support. After the open-ended semi-structured interviews were complete, for more additional knowledge, the researcher probed the participants related to the supervisory support. All interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the interviewee, and written notes were taken with the permission of the interviewee (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003).

During semi-structured interviews, each participant of the interview was provided with a context for the interview by a short briefing before the interview, which informed him/her about the research purpose. All questions were used modified and updated according to the research students. For more clarification, open-ended questions were asked to each participant and to continue the conversion. At the end and during the semi-structured interviews, probing was helpful for

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the participants to recall the interview content and perceptions of supervisory support.

In the semi-structured interview, the first researcher provided the context to the participants of the study by briefing and a debriefing after the interview. The researcher introduced participants by defining the situation for the subject briefly, informed the actual purpose of the interview from the participant, and also briefed the participants about the use of the tape-recorder and the importance of written notes. In addition, the researcher allowed the participants to ask questions if they had any, or if they required any kind of information about the topic before the interview. The first few minutes were crucial. Before the interview, the participants did not talk freely, and they seemed to feel hesitation in expressing their views. However, good relationships were established by listening attentively and by showing interest and respect for what the subject said about supervisory support. As a result, the participant started to feel comfortable and clearly expressed their views about what the researcher wanted to know.

After each interview, debriefing followed up (Kvale, 1996). Some interview participants were feeling anxiety and stress because they were opened about the experience of supervision. However, they were assured that data would be used only for research purposes. In addition, a debriefing was continued after the tape-recorder turned off. In the end, the researcher once again informed the subject of the study about the purpose and design of the interview in this qualitative case study.

After data collection, all interviews were transcribed and translated from Urdu recordings to English language transcripts. All interview transcripts were analyzed through qualitative content analysis, which is "a method for systemically describing the meaning of qualitative data" (Schreier, 2012, p. 1). For analysis, the researchers used manual procedures to code data and to identify themes. In this analysis process, Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) Framework was deployed, which identifies 4 stages an investigator may use for data analysis and interpretation of data. First is data collection, where the researcher collects data, the second step is summarization and condensation, where the

researcher develops a summary form of data, the third step is data display, where the researcher displays relevant themes of data in the table, and the final stage of data analysis is conclusion and verifying where the researcher verifies final results of a qualitative case study. In this study, these steps were rigorously taken to draw cross-case themes and conclusions from the collected data (Saldaña, 2011, 2013; Saldaña & Omasta, 2017).

Results
Functional Approach

This section presents the cross-case analysis of research students' perspectives on the first dimension of Lee's (2008) supervision framework, that is, a functional approach. The functional approach is related to the rational model, which has a concern with the development of skills. In this supervision approach, the main task of the supervisor is directing and project management.

All the research students stated that their supervisors guided them in different ways. No one reported that their supervisors did nothing in this regard. Most supervisors guided related to chapter writing, data collection procedures, topic selection, and synopsis writing, gave instructions for formatting bibliography, how to use primary resources, how to develop the connection of one chapter with another chapter and also provided links and soft materials, suggestions to enhance learning, methodology. Very few research students mentioned that their supervisors worked towards positive attitudes toward the research process and motivated them to be enthusiastic about the whole research process.

During the interview, research students were asked how they felt about the level of expertise of supervisors. The majority of the research students stated that their supervisors had a high level of expertise for supervisory support. Every research student responded differently about the domain of expertise. Very few research students stated that their supervisors had a moderate level of expertise. For example, a research student reported, "My supervisor is in the process of getting a Ph.D. degree. So, I would say my supervisor has a moderate level of expertise because, during my research study,

my supervisor is also learning with me most things" (Participant IX).

Analysis of the responses given by the research students on the question related to the help given in the processes of supervision revealed some interesting facts. Majority of the research students that their supervisors helped them in the research study differently. For example, a research student highlighted, "My supervisor is very supportive because, during my research, my supervisor helps me in every difficulty and tries to give me a good solution of the problem" (Participant I). Some research students responded that their supervisors helped them more than their expectations and wishes. However, very few students stated that supervisors were not helpful. For example, a research student stated:

> It's my first experience with research work.
> Before this, I did not know about research work.
> My supervisor just gives me a guideline, not
> help. It is not enough. My supervisor does not
> guide me according to my research needs.

Findings of the analysis on this question, "What does usually happen in your supervisory meetings," revealed that supervisors usually discussed different things about the specific research topic. The majority of the research students stated that supervisors mostly discussed specific research topics, outlines, data collection procedures, data analysis, formatting, footnotes, and so on.

Enculturation Approach

This section presents the results and analysis of data related to research students' perspectives on the second dimension of supervision, that is, enculturation.

The majority of the research students stated that their supervisors provided materials for the research study. When research students were asked how their supervisors provided material for the research study, the research students reported differently. For example, a research student stated, "In the very beginning, my supervisor gave me, I think, three theses and some hard material related to my research study" (Participant I). Another research student stated, "My supervisor provided

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me a thesis model in hard and soft form and advised me to read the material for my research study" (participant III). Similarly, one research student stated that "My supervisor gives me hard and soft material related to my research study. For example, in the last meeting, he gave me a copy of a book and asked me to read it and use some text in my thesis" (Participant IV). A very few research students reported their supervisors did not provide materials for the research study. For instance, a research student reported, "NO! My supervisor just tells me about the name of the books and orders me to read and add material in the research study" (Participant VI).

During interviews, research students were asked how active their supervisors were in their research areas. The majority stated that their supervisors were active researchers and wrote journal articles in national and international journals. A research student reported, "My supervisor has many publications in her area of research" (Participant IV). On this question, another research student stated that:

> My supervisor mostly works on cultural issues. My supervisor has more than enough publications in his research area because, after a master's degree, my supervisor spent 15 to 16 years in this field. My supervisor has also written Pakistan Studies textbooks for children. (Participant II)

However, some research students considered publications as a personal matter of supervisors, and they did not see it had any relevance with how they provided supervisory support to them. They seemed to defend their supervisors for not being active researchers. For example, a research student stated:

> It is the personal matter of my supervisor what he does for his research… To be honest, my supervisor is also a student of a Ph.D. in History, and his topic of research is voting behavior in different casts. So, he has no publications. I am ok with this. (Participant III)

The majority of the research students replied that their supervisors not only participated in conferences but also

encouraged their supervisees to participate in conferences. For instance, a research student described, "During my research study, my supervisor and our head of department as well-motivated us for research-related conferences and seminars. And the head of the department made it compulsory to attend conferences" (Participant I). Another research student reported, "In our university, I attended three conferences, and I have attended many conferences outside the university" (Participant II). Some research students highlighted the lack of research conferences at the university. For instance, a research student described:

> My supervisor convinced me to attend workshops. Like in the library, there was one workshop, so he convinced me to join this as a participant. I didn't attend any conference for paper presentation. Mostly research workshops are conducted at our university. (Participant XI)

Most research students were aware of their supervisors' work and their research articles, but they had no idea about the exact number of publications of their supervisors. One research student stated that "more than enough publications of my supervisor in his research area, but I have no idea about exact all publications" (Participant X). Another stated that "there were unlimited publications and articles of my supervisor on War on Terror (Participant V). Yet another research student stated, "My supervisor has no publication because now he is in the process of getting a Ph.D. degree. So, my supervisor has no time for more research and publications" (Participant IX).

Critical Thinking Approach

This section presents the results and analysis of data related to research students' perspectives on the third dimension of supervision, critical thinking.

Research students' perspectives about supervisory support related to feedback on their work revealed that the majority of research students perceived that their supervisors provided feedback according to the nature of work. Feedback was either in written or oral form. Written feedback was usually sent to them via email in the form of comments on` the

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soft copy of the research report in MS word. For example, a research student stated, "Feedback depends on my work if my work deserves excellent than supervisor always appreciates me and sometimes highlights all my mistakes for improving my research study" (Participant VIII). Another research student stated, "It could be partially positive and partially negative because at very first when I send my work to my supervisor, he highlights all my mistakes. After this, I correct all mistakes and again get positive feedback from my supervisor" (Participant I).

All research students believed that after incorporating changes suggested in their feedback, their research work got significantly improved completed. However, they showed their concerns about the frequency of feedback on their work. They wanted to have their supervisors' feedback more often since they believed that it was through this feedback they could move forward in their research work.

During interviews, research students were asked how their supervisors provided them topic related feedback during supervisory support. The majority of the research students stated that topic related feedback was provided to them through discussion in supervisory meetings and though different books. For example, a research student described, "My supervisor helps me through discussion and asks me to listen to this discussion carefully. He also advises me to listen to news channels carefully so that I could extract material for my own research study" (Participant I). Research students responded: "After reading my submitted work, my supervisor helps me in the research topic and provides me different books related to my mistakes in the submitted work. He ensures that I read books and add important things in my research study" (Participant IV).

All research students perceived that the feedback provided by their supervisors help them become more expert in their topic. The majority of the research students appreciated their supervisors' feedback, and they believed that they were in the learning phase, and removing their mistakes highlighted by their supervisors in this learning phase would make them more experts in their areas of study. No one gave any negative response.

Emancipation Approach

This section presents the analysis of research students' perspectives on the fourth dimension of supervision, that is, emancipation.

The majority of the research students stated that their supervisors helped them assistance given by the supervisor in designing their research project. At the beginning of the research study, the supervisor provided them an outline and asked them to follow it until the end of the research study. One student responded: "Chapter writing and formatting of a research study from start to end all things of my research study were designed by my supervisor" (Participant V). However, some research students believed that it was not a supervisor's' duty to design research students; rather, they should only provide general guidelines in designing research studies of their supervisees. Another student stated that,

> It's the researcher's responsibility to work hard. A supervisor just gives guidelines like, as in the very first when my supervisor checked my work, a complete chapter was wrong. My supervisor gave me some instructions to remove mistakes. Similarly, in the research design, he gave me a model for guidelines. (Participant VII)

A very few research students responded their supervisors helped them or provided any assistance in designing their research project. For example, one said, "No, my synopsis was already made by me, and my supervisor just managed me and my research study" (Participant XI).

During interviews, all research students were asked what they got most out of their supervisors' expertise. All research students responded differently to this question. For example, a research student responded, "Of course, I want to copy the style of my supervisor in journal articles writing and want to spend a professional life. He is a role model for me" (Participant I). Another participant stated, "I got more from my supervisor related to the real meaning of research" (Participant VI). Yet another stated, "My supervisor uses polite

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communication style and tries to understand the problem of students and give good directions. This is what I want to copy in my own professional life" (Participant III). One of the research students responded, "One thing is very impressive of my supervisor; he always stay lineate with his students never biased and listens to every student with patience" (Participant V). However, a few research students are desirous of having more attention of their supervisors. For example, a research student mentioned, "I want to get more, my supervisor's feedback and motivation" (Participant IX).

Analysis of the perspectives given by the research students by asking what their research journey would have been if they had no supervisors' support. On this question, the majority of the research students replied that without supervisory support, research is impossible. They stated that,

> Of course, I feel as I am writing a biography, nobody can help me with my work. Nobody can guide me in my research study. Everyone criticizes my work and highlights my mistakes. So, in this situation, I need a supervisor. Without supervisory support, research is impossible. (Participant I)

> Without supervisory support, we never become good researchers because nobody else can guide us about our topic, and nobody else can give us feedback about our research. Only a supervisor makes us good researchers. (Participant V).

> We have knowledge about research, but we cannot manage our research without supervisory support. (Participant IX)

However, very few research students stated that they did not need any support from supervisors, and they could accomplish the task of completing the research study themselves.

Relationship Development Approach

This section presents the analysis of research students' perspectives on the fifth dimension of supervision, that is, relationship development.

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Findings of the analysis on the question related to the kind of relationship they had with their supervisors revealed that the majority of the research students enjoyed a friendly relationship with supervisors. A research student described, "Friendly, rather more than friendly. My supervisor is also my good friend. It is so because she is my colleague. She always talks politely and in a friendly way" (Participant VI).

However, some research students responded that they were not happy with their relationship with their supervisors. For example, a research student underscored, "I do not have a friendly relationship with him because he is younger in age to me. (Participant I)." Very few research students replied that

> No! You can't say friendly because teachers and supervisors have their own respect. They are not like a friend. Sometimes, when I have not done the assigned task, I am afraid of my supervisor. But during a supervisory meeting, I never feel any kind of fear. Overall, I have a good experience with my supervisor. (Participant I)

A few students were critical to the bossy style of their supervisors. They argued that in order to be successful in completing a research study, it is very important for them to have a friendly and professional relationship with their supervisors.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study was designed to explore research students' perceptions and experiences related to the nature of supervisory support which they received from their supervisors during the research work. Using Lee's (2008) conceptual framework based on five supervision approaches, this study employed interpretive case study methodology, and interview data were collected from 11 research students who were conducting their research studies in the Department of History and Pakistan Studies at the University of Gujrat under the supervision of supervisors affiliated with this department. A cross-case analysis of semi-structured interview data was conducted. Research students' perspectives provided an excellent way to understand the available supervisory support in the department.

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It is evident from the perspectives of research students that every supervisor uses five approaches of supervisory support with an unequal emphasis on each approach. Moreover, the supervisors are more inclined towards helping research students in project management and coaching but less in developing skills related to evaluation, argument analysis, and emotional intelligence. In other words, their emphasis is more on the functional approach to supervision, and they are less inclined to use emancipation, critical thinking, and relationship development approaches to supervision.

It is argued that supervisory support is a very important duty of a supervisor because he or she produces the future researcher and future supervisor. Therefore, a supervisor should do his/her work keeping in view the internationally accepted best practices of supervision, such as outlined in Lee's (2008) framework.

Since research literature suggests that supervision workshops and seminars can have a medium- to long-term impact on participants' understanding and professional practice (Carter, 2016; McCulloch & Loeser, 2016), workshops and seminars related to the supervisory support may be arranged at the department level to make the supervision more effective at the department. In addition, supervisors' knowledge and skills can also be developed by providing literature on supervision. Moreover, supervisors' guidance on discipline-specific expertise is valued by research students (Gube, Getenet, Satariyan, & Muhammad, 2017). The importance of supervisors' expertise is also highlighted in the current study by a research student as:

> A supervisor is a key element of a research study because, without a supervisor, it is impossible. Here the supervisor is like a leader who encourages and motivates us. The supervisor must be an expert in the area of your research. If all these qualities are available in a supervisor, then you successfully complete your research works; otherwise, it is impossible. (Participant VIII)

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It is a qualitative case study, and the sample size of this study was based on the Department of History and Pakistan Studies at the University of Gujrat. Further studies can be conducted to develop an understanding of supervisory support at all social science departments at the University of Gujrat. Further studies may select only one approach of supervision for more understanding and a clear description of one approach uncovering the supervisors' various strategies related to supervision. Apart from this, it is hoped that this research study's rich description related to supervisory support will provide guidance to supervisors related to what research students perceive effective supervisory support.

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