

# Mediocre PhD supervision, intellectual property theft, Blackmail, & mockery: An overview of Positive leadership Qualities a supervisor must possess

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## ABSTRACT:

*This study focusses on the essential leadership qualities that Master and Doctoral Supervisor must possess to guide the student in his Project. The study programs requirements of undergraduate degrees, master and doctoral degree require a final project that is also known as a thesis. For a thesis, normally any Quality University provides a main supervisor and co-supervisors in the field of study of the thesis. The assigned supervisors must have the required leadership qualities and competencies to both make the student pass his project and produce quality research. For ethical reasons, no names of any supervisor or student nor any university have been mentioned in this study. This paper provides an overview of the required skills and competencies the supervisor must have as well as consequences of mediocre supervision that leads to unsuccessful projects. A small, limited sample of 20 PhD students were taken as study population. They were required to answer an online Likert Scale Questionnaires. Confidentiality was assured from both sides. The topic of the study was positive and negative aspects of supervision. A sense of responsibility and accountability and expertise, knowledge of subject area was among the key positive leadership qualities whereas neglecting the importance of the task, asking an extra commission for supervision, no co supervisor provided, lack of seriousness and intellectual property theft were some of the negative points*

**KEYWORDS:** Leadership, supervision, responsibility, accountability, subject expertise, extra commission, intellectual property theft

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## I. INTRODUCTION

At tertiary level, any undergraduate degree, master and Doctoral research requires a final project submission. The Project is either as partial fulfillment or the major submission for the award of the degree. A project has a title, the content and at doctoral level, research papers. One key component of a Project is the Supervisor of the student. Quality Universities usually provide a main supervisor and a co-supervisor for the research. Once assigned the supervisors meet regularly with the student until final submission. The supervisor assigned by the university must be of the same expertise as the research area. A collaboration is needed between the supervisors, university and the student. Being given the task of supervision has its load of responsibility and accountability. The Supervisor must have the required leadership qualities to perform the task and not just be paid for taking the job lightly and with no sense of any duty of care for the student's future. Phillips (2000) and Delamont (2004) argued that during the first meetings, the supervisors assess the academic level of the student, whereas the student primarily ensures whether the right chemistry is present. Hockey (1996) stated that the right match of expectations and roles is crucial.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The limitation of the study remains the limited sample size and lack of willingness of participants to respond due to fear of reprisals from universities and stakeholders. Nevertheless, a conclusive result was obtained from the sample of 20 PhD students. The process of collecting data by online questionnaires were kept confidential as well as the identity of the participants and their field of study and the universities where they study. A 5-point Likert Scale was used for the research, whereby 1 implies Strongly Agree and 5 implies Strongly Disagree with the statement.

### III. DISCUSSION

Wichmann-Hansen *et al*(2016) provides a guideline for both supervisor and PhD students to follow.

The points that a supervisor must consider are namely:

- Have you assessed the student’s need for supervision?
- Can you and do you want to be contacted regularly or are you very busy and do not have time for close collaboration?
- Does the student have the necessary initiative?
- Do you need to be involved in all the decisions regarding the project, or do you prefer that the student decides when your help is needed?
- Do you expect to work with the student on a team or are you looking for a student who is prepared to work independently?
- Does the project involve activities beyond normal working hours and is the student able and interested in participating in these?

On the other side the PhD student must take into consideration,

- How much guidance do you think you will need?
- Do you need a supervisor who is present a lot of the time?
- Have you considered whether the supervisor is sufficiently available?
- Are there areas where you will need additional supervision?
- Will you need personal contact and information exchange of ideas?
- Do you prefer little or very specific advice?
- Will you need help with practical matters?
- Are you good at working independently or do you prefer teamwork?
- Are you prepared to work overtime?
- Can you and are you interested in working nights and weekends?
- Are you worried about whether the project can be completed in the prescribed time?(Wichmann-Hansen *et al* , 2016)

Cullen *et al* (1994); Hall *et al* (1997); McCormack, (1994); McMichael and Garry, (1994); Parry and Hayden, (1994) studied the supervisor-student relationship and argued that it is composed of three main components namely;

- (i) expertise in the research area
- (ii) support for the student
- (iii) supervisor commitment and critics

According to Zhao *et al* (2007) a good supervision and satisfactory relationship between students and advisors are essential components of successful doctoral training. Kam (1997) , Lovitts (2001) and Golde (2000) stated that a constructive supervision is associated with beneficial outcomes for students, including a positive work environment, successful departmental socialization and timely completion of the degree. Girves & Wemmerus (1988) found that the qualities of a good supervision include also supportiveness, high levels of communication, accessibility, frequent informal interactions, helping students in a timely manner , and treating the student as a junior colleague.

### IV. FINDINGS

From available literature, a series of findings were obtained of the desired leadership characteristics of a supervisor. The negative aspects and problems encountered were also found from research in the field.

*No. Positive Leadership qualities a Supervisor must possess Negative problems encountered with their supervisors*

1	Knowledge and expertise of field of research	Supervisor not of same expertise as their research
2	Support	No co-supervisor
3	Understanding	Supervisor too busy with other work
4	Responsibility	Supervisor too greedy and asking an extra commission
5	Accountability	Supervisor taking student’s work and publishing as their own, intellectual property theft (police case)
6	Interest and enthusiasm	Poor feedback

7	Interest in student's career	Lack of commitment and interest, money minded supervision
8	Duty of care	Tensions during meetings
9	Good communication	Poor communications
10	Constructive feedback	Disrespect for the work of student
11	Provide regular feedback	Personality clashes, mismatch
12	Honesty and integrity	
13	Collaboration	
14	Motivated by research rather than money	

Table1: showing Both positive and negative qualities of a supervisor

These findings were used in the questionnaire design. The sample of study was required to rate these positive and negative points according to their experience. The results were chartered as follow.

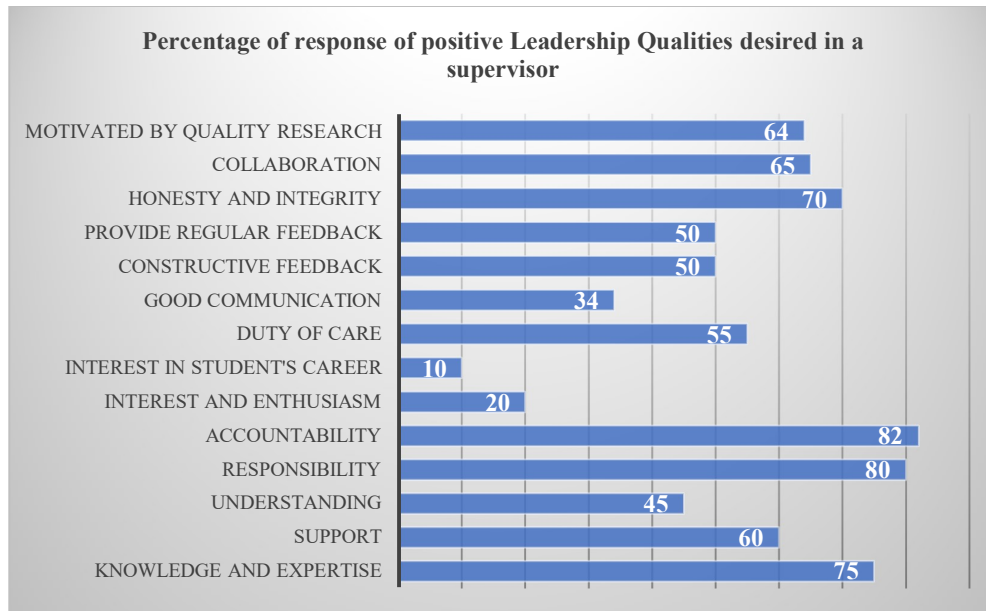


Fig 1: Bar Chart showing Result of percentage of desired leadership qualities in their supervisors

The study showed that PhD students would desire that their supervisors have predominant leadership qualities such as

- 1) Honesty and integrity
- 2) Accountability
- 3) Responsibility
- 4) Knowledge and expertise in their field of research
- 5) Collaboration

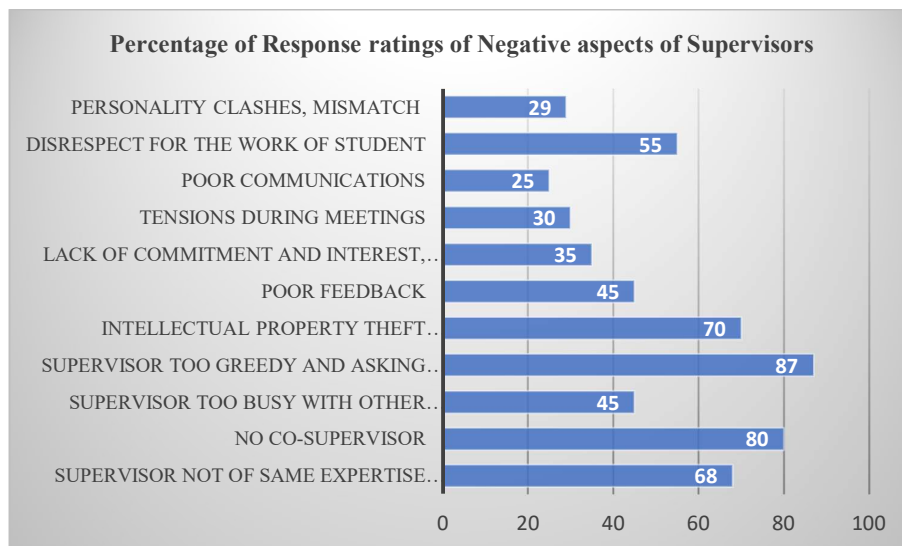


Fig 2: Bar Chart showing Percentage of Response ratings of negative aspects of Supervisors

The study revealed that, PhD students encountered problems such as.

- 1) Supervisor being too Greedy and asking for an extra commission during their supervision that even led to blackmail in certain cases where the supervisor asked money otherwise failure.
- 2) No second supervisors, no Co-Supervisors were provided
- 3) Some intellectual property theft was also noted. Supervisors taking the work of students and presenting as their own
- 4) Supervisor not of the same Expertise as their field of research. The question will always be how someone from another subject area can rate the work of another subject area, without bias.
- 5) Disrespect for the work of the student. Mocking the work of your own PhD student is not very ethical.

## V. CONCLUSION

As conclusion it can be deduced that even though the sample size was limited due to the sensitivity of the topic and fear of reprisals the research was highly conclusive. It was found that the desired leadership qualities that a PhD supervisor must possess are Honesty and integrity, Accountability, Responsibility, Knowledge and expertise in their field of research and Collaboration whereas the encountered problems that PhD students claim to have suffered are Supervisor being too Greedy and asking for an extra commission during their supervision, blackmail, mockery of their work, No second supervisors, no Co-Supervisors were provided, Some intellectual property theft was also noted. Supervisors taking the work of students and presenting as their own, Supervisor not of the same Expertise as their field of research and Disrespect for the work of the student.

It can also be argued that the University providing the PhD Course has a part of responsibility in such cases whereby the supervision has been mediocre. They take the money and have to be accountable.

Competent authorities can take sanction such as prohibition to enroll further students and certain courses could be imposed to redress such problems in quality tertiary studies. In certain cases whereby it is proven that the student were allowed to continue to pay for the full course while the supervisor in background were proven to be mediocre, can even ban for life such institutions and supervisors. They can no more use their titles of PhD, Doctor and accredited tertiary institutions.

Students also must take care that they do not enroll themselves in unrecognized, unprofessional and greedy institutions that could steal their money and ruin their life and careers. PhD students should also take into account that the same PhD research cannot be produced to a different university and never to stop learning.

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