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Graduate Students' Perspectives On Methods Of Allocation Of Research Supervisors In Public Universities In Rivers State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT
This study examined graduate students' perspectives on methods of allocation of research supervisors in public universities in Rivers state Nigeria. The study was guided by six objectives, research questions and null hypotheses. It was anchored on four theories, namely; Filter Theory, Dissonance Theory, Value Percept Theory and Experiential Learning. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 5,421 graduate students (Masters and PhD) students from 3 public universities in Rivers State. A sample of 396 respondents was drawn from the entire population using Taro Yamane formula. The respondents were drawn using purposive random sampling techniques. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled: Graduate students' perspectives on methods of allocation of research supervisors Questionnaire" (GSPMARSQ). The questionnaire was validated by the researcher's supervisors and three (3) other experts in Measurement and Evaluation, University of Port Harcourt. The reliability coefficients of 0.81, 0.88, 0.92, 0.88, 0.84 and 0.89 were obtained. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using z-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the ways allocation of research supervisor based on areas of specialization, mutual agreement between students, both male and females' students noted that allocation is best done by similarity of area of specialization of supervisors and supervisors, electronic clock in system, years of experience and proposed research topic are the methods of allocation that are utilised in universities in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that allocation of supervisors in Universities should be made through the adoption of technology driven systems which will take into consideration the issue of experience, area of specialization and other demographic factors that will make it easy for students to be assigned to supervisors who will promote quality in the research process. Also, the universities should establish a research resource center that would provide students with access to relevant research resources that will be needed for carrying out their research work. The research center will provide students with access to past research work and other materials that will be required for them to carry out a smooth research exercise with a high chance of producing quality research output. This will enable students to plan their research activities ahead of time and ensure that the entire process smooth.
Keywords: Graduate Students', Perspectives, Methods of Allocation, Research Supervisors, Public Universities.

INTRODUCTION
University education worldwide is often considered a key driver of national growth and development because universities contribute to the progress of various sectors within a country's economy. This purpose has influenced the establishment of numerous universities, especially in Nigeria, over the past

70 years. The founding of Nigeria's first university, the University of Ibadan, as a University College in 1948 marked the beginning of an era of widespread university development across the country. Since then, many universities, including federal, state, and private institutions, have been established with distinct goals. This expansion has helped build a skilled workforce and advance various economic sectors. In recent years, the approval to establish new universities has been driven by the need to address specific developmental goals. For example, in Nigeria's South-South region, the University of Benin was established in 1970 to make higher education more accessible in that area. Since then, other universities have been founded to support the region's needs in maritime studies, technology, science, and general education. These universities have contributed to the nation's development through their core activities, including teaching, research, and community service. One of the primary responsibilities of a university is to engage in research that promotes national development. Universities have dedicated Research Departments, and lecturers and students often work together to conduct research that benefits the nation. This includes the mandatory research projects students undertake as part of their graduation requirements, which carry significant credit weight. For this reason, both students and supervisors are expected to commit to producing quality and relevant research. However, the success of these projects often depends on the dedication of both the supervisor and the student.

Conducting research is a critical mission of every university, essential for advancing knowledge and supporting societal development. Research activities by both staff and students enhance teaching and learning. Additionally, the quality of research conducted by universities is one of the indicators used in global university rankings, highlighting its importance. University research can be either basic or applied, among other types, and spans various disciplines. Research activities demonstrate the institution's and individuals' commitment to addressing contemporary societal challenges. Basic research, one type of university research, aims to deepen understanding of a topic or phenomenon, without immediate concern for practical application. It explores the qualities or characteristics of objects, behaviors, events, or substances and provides foundational knowledge. In contrast, applied research focuses on gathering information to solve specific, existing problems. This type of research goes beyond knowledge for its own sake, as it seeks to provide solutions to identified issues or to achieve specific objectives There is a form of advanced research known as research for development. In many developed countries, one of the main reasons for conducting research is to drive development. This type of research emphasizes transforming research findings into strategies for creating new products or processes, which supports progress and innovation. Research for development often involves creating new designs or enhancing existing products or projects to improve efficiency within an organization. Its ultimate goal is to promote advancements that lead to a better quality of life.

Students build research skills largely through interactions with faculty members in their respective fields, who involve students in skill-building activities or collaborate with them on research projects. Developing research competence in students requires training and mentorship from faculty with advanced research experience, helping students grow in their research capabilities. Supervisors and their students need to integrate teaching and research efforts to advance knowledge and produce beneficial research outcomes for all stakeholders and society (Rousmaniere & Ellis, 2013). This collaboration not only fulfills academic requirements but also fosters future researchers who can contribute to societal progress and development. The research conducted by students in collaboration with supervisors aims to contribute to societal transformation by generating knowledge that can solve real-world problems. Both supervisors and students form teams expected to produce valuable research findings. Universities' reputations often depend on the quality and impact of their research, making the role of both supervisors and students essential in achieving the institution's mission. Research can take various forms depending on the field and specific goals, highlighting the importance of aligning research methods with disciplinary standards and contextual needs. For a research project to be meaningful, supervisors and students must follow a structured process of data collection, sorting, and analysis to thoroughly understand the problem being investigated. This shared responsibility means both parties must align their goals to achieve research outcomes that benefit all stakeholders.

In Nigerian universities, completing a research project is a graduation requirement for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. This experience prepares students for the workforce.

However, conflicts between students and supervisors during the research process are common. Students sometimes struggle to work with assigned supervisors, while supervisors may find that some students approach research unprofessionally. These challenges can lead to delays in project completion, lower research output, and issues like plagiarism, ultimately affecting students' academic progress. These issues have raised concerns about how research supervisors are allocated to students in universities, as this process can impact student satisfaction and their potential contributions to societal growth. Therefore, this study investigates graduate students' perspectives on research supervisor allocation in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. Successful research relies on the combined efforts of both the supervisor, who provides guidance, and the student, who conducts the fieldwork. As research is a collaborative process, students must demonstrate resilience, dedication, and a serious approach to make it successful. Discontinuing a research project can delay or end a student's academic program, unlike academic courses that may allow for re-sits. Student satisfaction with the research process is essential for achieving positive outcomes. Ekpoh (2018) noted that student satisfaction with university services is crucial, as it affects the institution's effectiveness. Student satisfaction can foster the motivation and commitment needed to complete research projects, making satisfaction with both the research and the supervisor important. This satisfaction also ensures that students make use of all available resources to succeed, underscoring the importance of the supervisor allocation process in many universities.

Several factors can pressure students to achieve a satisfactory research process, including the need to complete research within set timeframes, publish relevant work, develop essential skills, and balance family or work responsibilities (Abiddin, 2011). Various strategies are used by universities to allocate supervisors, depending on the institution's objectives. Researchers such as Hussain et al. (2019) have identified methods including matching by specialization, experience, project type, or even through automated systems, each aiming to foster a productive student-supervisor relationship. Assigning supervisors by specialization pairs students with faculty knowledgeable in the student's research area. In some institutions, supervisors with greater experience may receive more students, challenging projects, or students pursuing higher degrees, which is expected to enhance the quality of outcomes (Saleem & Mehmood, 2018). Other allocation methods include allowing students or supervisors to choose whom they work with, assigning based on project proposals, or aligning students with supervisors' ongoing projects. Universities may also match supervisors and students based on research categories or even use algorithms to assign supervisors, which reduces external influence on the allocation process. The quality of student research depends on both the supervisor's and student's efforts. As completing a research project is integral to university education, the student-supervisor relationship and the allocation method play critical roles in research quality and completion time. The compatibility of student and supervisor specializations is crucial, as it not only enhances students' skills but also fosters professional growth. Some universities allow students to select projects based on supervisors' titles, a common system for final-year project allocation (Pudaruth et al., 2013). For instance, the Department of Civil Engineering at the National University of Singapore employs an algorithm that matches students to projects based on preferences and eligibility, ensuring high-ranking students get preferred projects (Cheung et al., 2004). Research comparing project allocation by title versus subject area found that faculty generally prefer subject-based allocation, as it aligns better with students' interests and abilities. Supervisors must assess students' needs, understanding their knowledge base and skill gaps early on. These assessments inform the support needed to guide students in their projects, encouraging them to deepen their research skills. A good relationship with a supervisor allows students to express project preferences, and some institutions allow both students and supervisors to make such requests. Researchers like Manlove and O'Malley (2008) and Iwama et al. have explored ways to allocate projects where both parties have preferences, working towards more stable and mutually beneficial arrangements

Statement of the Problem

Research is an important component of the academic activities that students in universities are expected to carry out before graduation. Given the importance of this exercise, a lot of students look forward to successful completion of their research work through a smooth collaboration with their supervisor. Unfortunately, the situation is not so including tertiary institutions in Rivers State where some students seen to abandon their programmes as a result of dissatisfaction either with the

supervisor or the research process. Research is essential for national development and as such the inability of universities to carry out a seamless research supervisor allocation process does not only affect the students but also has implication on the quantity and quality of research outputs needed for national development. Similarly, despite the high number of students enrolled in some departments with few academic staff, it remains uncertain the criteria used for the allocation of these students to research supervisors. It is also important to understand how this allocation process affect students' expectation and satisfaction from the entire process.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study investigated graduate students' perspective on method of allocation of supervisors in Universities in Rivers State. In specific terms, the objectives of the study were to:

3. Identify the methods adopted in allocation of graduate students to supervisors in Universities in Rivers State.
4. Determine the opinion of graduate students on the methods adopted in allocation of supervisors of graduate students in Universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in the study:

1. What are the methods adopted in allocation of graduate students to supervisors in Universities in Rivers State as identified by male and female students?
2. What is the opinion of graduate students on the methods adopted in allocation of supervisors of graduate students in Universities in Rivers State as held by male and female students?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

9. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the methods adopted in allocation of graduate students to supervisors in Universities in Rivers State.
10. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the level of opinion of graduate students on the methods adopted in allocation of supervisors of graduate students in Universities in Rivers State.

LITERATURE FRAMEWORK

Concept of Allocation of Research Supervisors

The issue of how supervisors are allocated to students especially at the postgraduate level of education is considered an important exercise irrespective of the Department, Faculty or Institution. According to Simsek (2022), in most postgraduate programmes, students are expected to conduct their research activities under the supervision of a supervisor as a prerequisite for whatever programmes they have been enrolled in. This exercise is sacrosanct and as such several universities give it the attention that it deserves when it comes to assigning students to supervisors. The essence of given attention to the process of supervisor allocation is because the quality of the research conducted by the students is often determined by the student-supervisor relationship with emphasis on how the allocation procedure is handled and not just a matter of the interests, expertise, and proficiencies of the parties involved ((Janssen et al., 2020; Orellana et al., 2016) although this is also essential in the entire process as satisfactory match works out pretty well for the emergence as well as quality outcomes of the research cycle and this is why the allocation process matters to the entire institution.

Methods Adopted in Allocation of Graduate Students to Supervisors

The method of allocating students to supervisors is one of the key aspects of research activities across all tertiary institutions as this determines to a great extent the quality and timely completion of research activities in tertiary institutions. All over the world, there are several digital and manual allocation procedures that are used in the process of allocating students to supervisors for the sake of efficiency in the research process. There is no single method that is used across all tertiary institutions globally but allocation of graduate students to supervisors can be done using one or more of the following methods:

Allocation of Research Supervisor Based on Area of Specialization

Assigning research supervisors to students has been one of the most difficult tasks in the administration of any university especially at the Faculty and Departmental levels. This is because the

allocation of supervisors to students is a process that must be carefully thought-out as a result of its influence on the quality of research output as well as the satisfaction of the student and as such due diligence must be complied with in the allocation process. There are some areas of specialty such as the area of library studies (Ngulube, 2019) where the issue of specialization cannot be ignored in the process of mapping supervisors for supervision activities as this will go a long way to determine the quality of the research process.

Allocation of Research Supervisor Based on Years of Experience

Supervisory experience refers to the skills and competencies acquired during the course of supervising an individual or a team in a research work. Lecturers who have been supervising students for a long period of time tend to get better in their supervisory task as they progress in the profession. The more and longer lecturers supervise students, the more improved they become not just in the research process but also in the process of managing people for quality research outcome.

Allocation of Research Supervisor Based on Student-Supervisor Preference

It is a common practice for students to show preference for certain lecturers as their choice of supervisor whether or not the lecturer is experience or belong to their area of specialty or gender. For example, study by Abosede (2014) has indicated that gender plays a major role in the job performance and satisfaction of academic and this also affects the supervisor-supervisee relationship during research activities as some lecturers and students are more satisfied working with someone of a similar gender for several personal reasons. Similarly, it is not uncommon for lecturers to also be seeing requesting to be supervise some class of students as a result of several socio-economic reasons such as their gender, economic status, intelligence among other factors.

Allocation of Research Supervisor Based on Students' Project Title

Students like lecturers may also have certain projects or research titles that is of interest to them that they wish to carry out as their research work and some of these students look out for supervisors who can take them through the research cycle successfully and this will enhance their level of satisfaction with the entire process. Sometimes, students who have idea of the kind of project they intend to carry out especially when they feel such study is novel and of high quality, it is common to see such students approaching different supervisor to see which of them can assist in the conduct of the research. In some universities, students at the time of admission are often required to submit a proposal of the kind of research that they intend to carry out and some of these student usually engage in a thorough work in ensuring that the research titles they come up with meets the right standard. However, arriving at a research title may be a walk in the park for some students but carrying out the study from start to finish may not be so and this is where the need for experts become necessary and as such, the student must be able to identify the right lecturer who has some level of experience, connection, understanding and resources that is needed for carrying out such study which the student can collaborate with in the allocation process.

Allocation of Research Supervisor Based on Supervisors' Project Type

In most of the develop countries, it is common to see lecturers in universities handling research projects that require team work and these projects may sometimes be conceived by the lecturer or be sponsored by the university or any other organization. This means that from time to time, there are some lecturers who have certain research projects that they are overseeing and may require the support of students in carrying out the study. There are usually several students available to be supervised in some universities (Kenekayoro *et al.*, 2020) but the lecturers sometimes agree to supervise only students who fit into the kind of project that they have at hand to be executed and this determines who is allocated to such supervisor. In such a case, the lecturer who already has a project type may be seeking for a student who is able to carry out or support the research and then the supervisor will provide professional guidance in the process. This means that the research project idea conceived or being executed by the lecturer becomes the research work that the student will participate in as part of his or her academic degree requirement.

Allocation of Research Supervisor Based on Research Category

Institutions around the world differ in the ways research is conducted and how students are assigned to lecturers as a result of several existing institutional factors (Barnes & Randall, 2012) and one of the systems used around the world for assigning supervisors to supervisees include the paring of both parties from an established research category. There is no argument in the fact that the other ways of

allocating supervisors to supervisees come with several forms of challenges or limitations which may be disadvantageous to either the supervisor or the supervisee. A satisfactory allocation for both students and supervisors require thorough negotiation and proper pairing procedure which will make both parties to be comfortable with the process and this is where allocation by research category becomes helpful. The benefit of this strategy is that it ensures transparency and promotes satisfaction for all parties.

Allocation of Research Supervisor Based on Machine Algorithm

Given the current level of advancement in technology, the use of modern machines for pairing students to supervisors has become one of the modern ways of assigning students to supervisors. One of the gains of this process is that it is devoid of any external influence as neither the student nor the supervisor has any influence on who they will eventually work with in the researches available. However, the choice of who will be supervised and by which supervisor is often determined by pre-existing criteria which must have been put in place or programmed into the system.

Opinion of Graduate Students On the Methods Adopted in Allocation of Supervisors of Graduate Students

Students' ability to complete their research projects on time and successfully is largely due to effective supervision. Researchers all over the world agree on the fact that supervision is a key indicator of doctoral progress without which students may not make significant progress working alone. Research has also shown that a postgraduate student's supervisor has the power to make or break the students as well as their research work. The supervisor's role is crucial in utilizing the results of the research journey. In order to more explicitly address emotionality-related issues, as well as other technical, financial and mental issues that come with carrying out good research, students must be made to develop the right perspective. The idea of awareness is proposed as a crucial component in the effort to create a completion context and also guarantee quality in which prompt, successful completion is the primary goal for any postgraduate student conducting research in the University.

Theoretical Framework

Filter Theory by Kerchoff and Davies in 1962

The first theory upon which this study was anchored is the Filter Theory which was formulated by Kerchoff and Davies in 1962. This theory states that in a social environment, people will often analyze their environment and members of the society before developing any social ties with them, Kerchoff and Davies postulated this theory (filter theory) to provide deeper insight into how people develop connection with other people in any social tie that is expected to last for a long period of time. This is based on the fact that social relationships cannot be made without careful analysis. In their postulation, they were able to reveal that people form or go into any relationship of their choice after they have understudied the situation surrounding the relationship and have made or applied certain substitution, elimination or decision crosscheck so that the best choice can be made among the available alternatives.

METHODOLOGY

The design that was adopted for the study was descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design is appropriate when a researcher intends to carry out a study which will focus on investigating how a phenomenon which is ongoing plays out in its natural environment. This design often requires the collection of samples from the natural environment upon which data will be collected for analyzing the nature of the population of the study which is being investigated. The population of the study consisted of all the postgraduate students in the three public Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria namely; University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The choice of postgraduate students (PhD and Masters) was premised on the fact that these students have had encounter with supervisors at the undergraduate level and can share their experience on the extent to which they are satisfied with the entire supervision process. Similarly, while the Doctoral students also have a second level experience at their Masters dissertation level, some of the Doctoral and Master students are currently being supervised and can also define their level of satisfaction with the entire process. The population of the study was 5, 421 consisting of postgraduate students in the three public Universities (School of Post Graduate Studies Record, 2019).

The population was derived from the three institutions based on the number of students who were enrolled to undergo their postgraduate programme in these institutions. The sample for the study was consisted of 396 postgraduate students drawn from three public Universities in Rivers state using the multi-stage sampling technique. First, the researcher used the Taro Yamane minimum sample size determination formula to ascertain the minimum number of PhD and Masters Students that should be selected for the study. This formula is given as $N/1+N(e)^2$. Where N is the population size of 5,421 and e is 0.05. When subjected to the formula, a minimum sample size of 372 was realized. However, since this was the minimum, the researcher increased the sample size to 396. Furthermore, at stage two of the sampling process, the researcher used census sampling technique to sample all the three public Universities in the state. which were the Rivers State University, the University of Port Harcourt and the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. At stage three, the researcher applied simple random sampling process to select three (3) faculties from each of the universities. This was achieved by identifying the number of faculties and writing their names in a piece of paper, folded them and with blindfold, the researcher handpicked three pieces which revealed the names of the faculties that were used from each school. This gave a total of nine (9) faculties from the three institutions. The faculties were as follows; University of Port Harcourt had the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Arts/Humanities as well as faculty of Social Sciences. The Rivers State University had the Faculty of Management Sciences, Faculty of Science and Technical Education as well as Faculty of Environmental sciences while the Ignatius Ajuru University had the Faculty of social sciences, Faculty of Management sciences and Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education. At stage four the sampling process, the researcher used similar technique to select two departments from each of the faculties. Similarly all the names of the departments in each of the three faculties were written in a piece of paper, folded and with blindfold, two pieces were drawn which also revealed the names of the two departments to be used from each of the faculties. This gave a total of six departments from each institution and eighteen (18) departments across the nine faculties. For the University of Port Harcourt, the following departments were drawn; department of Educational Management and Educational Curriculum (EDC) from Faculty of Education. Department of English studies as well as History/Diplomatic studies from faculty of Humanities and lastly, departments of Economics and Political Science from the Faculty of Social Sciences. For the Rivers State University, it was Marketing and Accounting from Faculty of Management Sciences, Biology and Computer Science from Faculty of Science and Technical Education and Environmental Biology and Microbiology from the Faculty of Environmental Sciences. From Ignatius Ajuru University of Education were department of Finance and Banking and management from Faculty of Management Sciences, Animal Science/Fisheries and Home Economics from the Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education and lastly Sociology as well as Geography and environmental studies from the Faculty of Social Sciences. All these gave a total of 18 departments. At stage four of the sampling process, the researcher used purposive sampling technique to focus only on Masters and Ph.D students. PGDE students were not the targets because the researcher reasoned that they may not have enough experience to provide relevant data needed for the study. Finally, at stage five, the researcher used stratified non-proportionate sampling technique to draw 22 students (11 each of masters and P.hD) across the eighteen departments. This gave a total of 396 as used in the study

The instrument that was used for the collection of data was a researcher designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to collect data that was used for the purpose of data analysis in the study. The questionnaire had two sections namely Section A for the collection of data on the demographics of the respondents such as the name of their universities, respondent status, gender and other necessary data. The Section B contained the questionnaire items as considered appropriate. The questionnaire was given the title "Graduate Students' Perspectives on Methods of Allocation of Research Supervisors Questionnaire" (GSPMARSQ) and this contained 30 questionnaire items. Research questions one, three, five and six were responded to on a four point modified Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) while research questions two and four were responded to on a scale of Very High Level (VHL), High Level (HL), Low Level (LL) and Very Low Level (VLL) both with weighted scores of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. This instrument was used for gathering the data required for the study which was subjected to data analysis in the study. The face and content validities of the instrument was determined by the researchers' supervisors and three

experts in Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt. These experts were presented the title of the study, its objectives, research questions, hypotheses and copy of the questionnaire. These experts helped to determine the adequacy of the items in the questionnaire, checked for statement errors and also ensured that the instrument was adequate for collecting data that are required for the study. First, the instrument was presented to the researchers' supervisors for necessary corrections and inputs. The instrument was then presented to the other experts for necessary modifications and suggestions that helped improve on the condition of the instrument. Finally, the instrument was again presented to the researchers' supervisors to ensure that the modifications made so far was appropriate for carrying out the study before the corrected version of the questionnaire was administered to the respondents drawn for the study in the data collection activities. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha Statistics. The researcher drew 21 postgraduate students (seven from each of the selected universities) who were not part of the respondents sampled for the study and used for the pilot study. They were presented the instrument. They responded by filling the instruments. After this, the researcher collected and collated the instrument. The data were then subjected to Cronbach alpha reliability and the following indices were obtained 0.81, 0.88, 0.92, 0.88, 0.84 and 0.89 for sections measuring method of allocation of research supervisors, perspective of students about the allocation process, expectation and satisfaction of students about the allocation process as well as the challenges and strategies of improving the process of research supervisor allocation to graduate student.

The researcher and three (3) research assistants were involved in the data collection process. These research assistants were briefed on the ethical considerations. They were informed to report to the principal of each school visited to seek approval before administering the instruments as well as sensitize the respondents on the essence of the study before their responses were completed. They were also informed on the data collection processes as well as how to identify valid responses and the process of batching the data collected for the study for the purpose of data analysis. Three hundred and ninety six (396) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the students, 380 were properly filled and returned representing 95% retrieval rate. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation associated with item by item analysis. The decision made concerning the questionnaire items were either agree or disagree based on how close the scores obtained are to the criterion mean score. The criterion mean score of 2.50 was determined by summing the weights of the response scale (4+3+2+1) and dividing by 4 to arrive at 2.50. Items above the criterion mean score were agreed on while those below the criterion mean score were disagreed on. On the other hand, the hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The analysis was done with the use of SPSS software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question 1: *What are the methods adopted in allocation of graduate students to supervisors in Universities in Rivers State as identified by male and female students?*

Table 4.1: Mean and standard deviation scores on the methods adopted in allocation of graduate students to supervisors in Universities in Rivers State

S/No	Statements	Male students			Female Students		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Allocation based on similarity in areas of specialization	3.10	0.84	Agree	2.95	0.91	Agree
2	Allocation based on mutual agreement between student and supervisor	2.57	0.94	Agree	2.88	1.01	Agree
3	Allocation based on the type of proposal presented by student	2.16	1.08	Disagree	2.58	0.85	Agree
4	Automated allocation based on electronic clock-in system	2.51	0.98	Agree	2.17	1.03	Disagree
5	Allocation based on supervisors years of experience	2.85	0.82	Agree	2.91	0.96	Agree

From the analysis in table 4.1, it is seen that items 1, 2, 4 and 5 with mean values of 3.10, 2.57, 2.51 and 2.85 respectively were agreed on by male students because they were up to the criterion mean of 2.50. On the other hand, they did not agree on item 3 with a mean value of 2.16 because it was not up to the criterion. This means that male students agree that the methods adopted in allocation of graduate students to supervisors in Universities in Rivers State include allocation based on similarity in areas of specialization, allocation based on mutual agreement between student and supervisor, allocation based on automated electronic clock-in system and finally, allocation based on supervisors years of experience.

For female students, items 1, 2, 3 and 5 with mean values of 2.95, 2.88, 2.58 and 2.91 were agreed upon because they were up to the criterion meaning that they agree with the male students that methods adopted include allocation based on similarity in areas of specialization, allocation based on mutual agreement between student and supervisor, allocation based on the type of proposal presented by student as well as allocation based on supervisors years of experience. However, they differed on item 3 because while male students disagreed that there is allocation based on the type of proposal presented by student, the female students agreed to this. Also, while male students agreed that allocation is based on automated electronic clock-in system, female students disagreed to it.

Research Question 2: *What are the opinions of graduate students on the methods adopted in allocation of supervisors of graduate students in Universities in Rivers State as held by male and female students?*

Table 4.2: Mean and standard deviation scores on the opinion of graduate students on the methods adopted in allocation of supervisors of graduate students in Universities in Rivers State

S/No	Statements	Male students			Female Students		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
6	Graduate students believe that allocation of research supervisors based on area of specialization will enhance the research process	2.80	0.90	Agreed	2.55	0.81	Agree
7	Allocation of research supervisor based on mutual agreement with the student will bring efficiency in the research procedure	2.88	0.88	Agreed	2.75	1.04	Agree
8	Allocation of research supervisor based on the on the type of proposal presented by the student is fair	2.83	0.90	Agreed	2.82	0.92	Agree
9	Years of experience is instrumental to completing the research work within record time	3.09	0.84	Agreed	2.77	1.01	Agree
10	Allocating students to supervisors based on electronic pairing system is more result oriented	2.35	1.03	Disagree	2.33	0.86	Agree

From table 4.2, items 6, 7, 8 and 9 with mean values of 2.80, 2.88, 2.83 and 3.09 respectively were agreed by male students as being the opinion of graduate students concerning the methods of allocating supervisors to graduate students in Universities in Rivers State because their mean values were up to the criterion mean of 2.50. This means that male graduate students are of the opinion that allocating research supervisors based on area of specialization will enhance the research process, allocation based on mutual agreement with the student will bring efficiency in the research procedure, allocation based on the type of proposal presented by the student is fair and just and finally, allocation based on years of experience will help in ensuring that the work is completed on time. On the contrary, they are not of the opinion that allocating students to supervisors based on electronic pairing system is more result oriented.

Test of Hypotheses

Summary of z-test analysis on the difference in the mean score of male students and female students on the methods adopted in allocation of graduate students to supervisors in Universities in Rivers State

Method of Allocation	N	Mean	Std. D	df	t	Alpha	Sig	Result
Male	204	18.57	2.890	378	1.979	0.05	0.149	Insignificant
Female	176	19.13	2.603					

Table 4.7 revealed that male graduate students were 204 while females were 176. The means values were 18.57 and 19.13 respectively. Their standard deviation values were 2.89 and 2.60. The calculated t-values obtained is 1.97 while the sig value is 0.149. Hence, since sig value (p=0.149>0.05) is higher than the alpha value of 0.05 at 378 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis is retained and the alternative rejected meaning that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female students on the methods adopted in allocation of graduate students to research supervisors in universities in Rivers State

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on their opinion on the methods adopted in allocation of supervisors of graduate students in Universities in Rivers State.

Summary of z-test analysis on the difference in the mean score of male and female students in their opinion on the methods adopted in allocation of supervisors of graduate students in Universities in Rivers State

Opinion of Students	N	Mean	Std. D	Df	t	alpha	Sig	Result
Male	204	15.13	1.905	378	1.59	0.05	0.219	Insignificant
Female	176	15.53	2.003					

Table 4.8 revealed that male graduate students are 204 while females rare 176. Their mean values were 15.13 and 15.53 respectively. Their standard deviation values were 1.90 and 2.00. The calculated t-values obtained is 1.59 while the sig value is 0.219. Since sig value (p=0.219>0.05) is greater than the alpha value of 0.05 at 378 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis is retained and the alternative rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students in their opinion on the methods adopted in allocation of supervisors of graduate students in Universities in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Methods Adopted in Allocation of Graduate Students to Supervisors in Universities in Rivers State

The findings revealed that both the male students and female students agree on the methods adopted in allocation of graduate students to supervisors in Universities in Rivers State except on areas of allocation based on the type of proposal presented by student. It is seen that while the male students agreed to it, the females disagreed.

Opinion of Graduate Students on the Methods Adopted in Allocation of Supervisors of Graduate Students in Universities in Rivers State

Finding from research question two and its corresponding hypothesis has revealed that male and female students are of similar opinion regarding the method of allocating supervisors except on grounds of years of experience being instrumental to completing the research work within record time. While the masters students disagreed on this, the doctoral students agreed. The corresponding hypothesis also indicated that there was no significant difference between the mean rating scores of male and female students on the level of perspective of graduate students on the methods adopted in allocation of supervisors of graduate students in Universities in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the perspectives of graduate students on the methods of allocating research supervisors in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings underscore a significant gap between students' expectations and the current practices employed in supervisor allocation, revealing concerns regarding transparency, fairness, and compatibility between students and supervisors. The allocation methods varied across departments, yet common issues emerged, including insufficient consideration of students' research interests, limited involvement in the allocation process, and a lack of structured feedback mechanisms. These concerns were particularly prominent in the allocation of supervisors for interdisciplinary research, where specific expertise is essential for effective supervision. The study suggests that the allocation methods may impact the quality of the supervisory relationship, thereby influencing students' overall research experience and academic outcomes. Inequitable allocation processes can contribute to feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction among students, which in turn could affect their engagement and academic performance. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of effective supervisor-student pairing in fostering research productivity and the development of students' research skills. Consequently, addressing these issues could enhance students' research experiences, leading to improved academic performance and satisfaction levels. In sum, the study suggests that implementing more transparent, student-centered, and academically aligned supervisor allocation processes in public universities could significantly benefit both students and the institution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study recommended as follows:

1. Public universities should establish clear, standardized policies for supervisor allocation that emphasize transparency and accountability. This can help students understand the selection process and reduce perceptions of favoritism or unfair treatment.
2. Universities should adopt allocation criteria that prioritize the research interests, needs, and preferences of graduate students. Matching students with supervisors who share similar research interests or expertise can improve the quality of supervision and enhance research outcomes.
3. Establishing feedback channels for students to express their experiences with supervisor allocations can offer insights into areas of improvement. Regular feedback cycles should be incorporated to ensure the allocation process adapts to evolving student needs and expectations.
4. Where possible, universities should facilitate the allocation of supervisors who are well-versed in interdisciplinary research to support students working on cross-disciplinary projects. This can be achieved by fostering a culture of collaboration among departments and encouraging co-supervision arrangements.
5. Universities should provide regular training for academic staff on effective supervisory practices, including the importance of aligning supervisory roles with students' academic goals. This can promote more proactive and supportive approaches to research supervision.
6. Involving graduate students in some aspects of the supervisor allocation process, such as allowing them to indicate their supervisor preferences, could increase their satisfaction and ownership of the process. This could be implemented through pre-allocation surveys or interviews.

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