

**Novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South
African university**

by

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Declaration of originality

I, Lesiba, John Radebe (student number 10674633), hereby declare that the thesis entitled: "Novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university", for the degree "Philosophiae Doctor" at the University of Pretoria, has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that this is my own work in design and execution and that all material from published sources contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

Signed at the University of Pretoria.

Signature 

Date...12 November 2023

Ethical Clearance Certificate



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- Compliance with approved research protocol,
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- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
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- Data storage requirements.

Ethics Statement

The ethical standards listed above were adhered to in this dissertation. The ethical considerations upheld in the study are discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate novice supervisors' experiences of supervision at a South African university. My research was based on the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971), and throughout this thesis, I aimed to demonstrate that novice supervisors were social beings and, therefore, learned the behaviour of postgraduate supervision from other postgraduate supervisors, past or current. The study engaged a qualitative approach based on a single case study. Eighteen novice supervisors from one university in South Africa were interviewed. These novice supervisor participants illuminated their views, experiences and beliefs regarding their journey as novice supervisors. I presented and interpreted qualitative data of the experiences they had of their work as postgraduate supervisors. The findings revealed that novice supervisors relied on the supervision received for their highest qualification acquired or still studying for, to supervise postgraduate students. Novice supervisors also viewed postgraduate supervision as a vital support structure for postgraduate students who needed support from the institution. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the university had a support system to support novice supervisors, although it was ineffective. Novice supervisors also encountered student-orientated and institutional-based challenges as postgraduate supervisors, and strategies to overcome these were outlined. The findings in this study were applied to Bandura's Social Learning Theory concerning the four modelling processes of attention, retention, reproduction and motivation. The study findings were in sync with the four modelling processes of this social learning theory. Bandura's Social Learning Theory suggested that new behaviour patterns could be acquired through direct experiences or by observing the behavior of others. Therefore, novice supervisors observed and replicated postgraduate supervision behaviour from other postgraduate supervisors through the modelling processes.

Keywords: Bandura's Social Learning Theory, novice supervisor, postgraduate supervision, South African university, modelling processes

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother, Sara Radebe.

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I want to praise the Almighty God, my protector and my refuge. All praises to Him, for He was there from the beginning to the end. His mercy made it possible for me to get to this point.

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My heartfelt gratefulness to the novice postgraduate supervisors who participated in my study and the University of Pretoria Postgraduate Bursary for paying my tuition fees.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
nGAP	New Generation of Academics Programme
NDP	National Development Plan
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SLT	Social Learning Theory

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The South African government prioritised developing the country's economy through knowledge production. This aim was aligned with Vision 2030, as presented in the National Development Plan (NDP) according to Republic of South Africa [RSA], (2012). Public universities are expected to produce new knowledge, assess it, and find new ways to apply it as described by Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], (2016) to achieve this aim. Because doctoral graduates could contribute greatly to a country's knowledge base posits Zewotir *et al.*, (2015), South African universities are under pressure to increase the number of doctoral graduates from the current 1800 to 6000 per year by the year 2030 according to RSA, (2012). To accelerate the throughput rate of doctoral candidates, the South African Department of Science and Technology implemented a ten-year plan to promote research innovation by funding South African universities. The financing system was designed to encourage research and instructional outcomes. It was also significantly weighted toward awarding PhD-granting universities. Consequently, the registration and throughput of PhD applicants have become a critical concern for all South African higher education institutions as put by Zewotir *et al.*, (2015).

The South African policies may seem to emphasise doctoral studies more. However, the reality is that a master's degree is a prerequisite for a doctoral degree. For this reason, in this study, I focused on the supervision of postgraduate studies regardless of whether it's a Master's or doctoral degree. Furthermore, this study gave great consideration to those pursuing the throughput, none other than the postgraduate supervisors.

1.2 Background of the study

At several South African universities, lecturers are considered competent to supervise postgraduate students just by holding a PhD as described by Habib and Morrow, (2005). Meanwhile, research shows that novice postgraduate supervisors experienced a “practice shock” because they are overwhelmed by academic work as put by Öztürk and Yildirim, (2013). According to Mustafa and Yildirim (2013), this could be because the transition from postgraduate studies to professional practice was often unsettling because there is no gradual induction into the role of postgraduate supervision.

Moreover, universities place comparable expectations on both experienced and novice postgraduate supervisors, despite the fact that novice postgraduate supervisors lack the skills of an experienced postgraduate supervisor posits Mustafa and Yildirim, (2013). For instance, unlike experienced supervisors, novice postgraduate supervisors are worried about being taken seriously by students and felt unprepared for supervising postgraduate students as put by Amundsen and McAlpine, (2009). In their research, Remmik *et al.* (2011) also indicated that novice postgraduate supervisors needed support from experienced academics in exploring approaches to postgraduate supervision, facing challenges and adapting pedagogies posits Turner, (2015). In other words, novice postgraduate supervisors must create new, innovative ways to teach and supervise postgraduate students. However, the 2019 report by the Ministerial Task Team deployed by the DHET alluded to the fact that there was a lack of support for novice postgraduate supervisors entering academia as described by DHET, (2019). This absence of assistance may arise from a belief that inexperienced postgraduate supervisors should either excel in teaching or resign, as shown by the "swim or sink" mentality according to Foote, (2010). The primary basis for the "swim or sink" ideology was the fact that inexperienced postgraduate supervisors were chosen to teach at the university level; they should be able to resolve their issues through "self-help" models, determining what was required of them and do it well according to Ssempebwa *et al.*, (2016).

Research evidence attests that experienced colleagues seem to be overwhelmed by their duties, while novice postgraduate supervisors were expected to be self-sufficient according to Matthews *et al.*, (2012). This reality reminded us that South African universities were experiencing understaffing for reasons such as retiring seasoned academics and academia not appealing to new graduates for different reasons posits Sutton *et al.*, (2017; Thomas *et al.*, 2015). These reasons included high teaching workloads for new staff according to Gale, (2011) and Pienaar & Bester, (2006) and establishing and maintaining focus on priorities such as teaching and family obligations as put by Debowski, (2013). As a result, teaching obligations often divert attention away from research and postgraduate supervision as advocated by McKay and Monk, (2017).

Internationally, the term novice postgraduate supervisor was used to indicate that the supervisor had at least five years of postgraduate supervision experience according to Vajoczky, (2011 and Vereijken *et al.*, (2017). As a result, as soon as a doctoral students got the academic job at a university, they realized that academic practice was not only about

research as their doctorate had prepared them. They discovered the need to fulfil multiple roles, including teaching, postgraduate supervision, contributing to faculty work, applying for funding and interacting with society according to Flick, (2016). Some studies referred to newly-appointed academics as novice lecturers or early career researchers, but in this study, the term novice postgraduate supervisor was used to refer to an academic with five years or less in academia with postgraduate supervision as one of their roles. Furthermore, the novice postgraduate supervisor was a supervisor who had supervised three or fewer postgraduate students to completion. I substantiated this assertion in my literature review. Therefore, the study aimed to investigate how novice postgraduate supervisors experience postgraduate supervision at a South African university, bearing in mind the throughput demands by the State, pressure from their institutions and the multiple tasks they face.

Considering the effective role of qualitative research in clarifying ambiguous and unknown aspects, I chose the Social Learning Theory (SLT) to frame my study posits Bandura, (1971). According to Bandura (1971), novice supervisors are social beings who learn from others from the past and present. Since novice supervisors targeted in this research study had no experience whatsoever in postgraduate supervision, they would rely on what they observed and learned from when they were supervised themselves. Nabavi (2012: 5) concurs that the “social learning theory is a learning process and social behavior which proposes that people can learn new information and behaviors by observing other people.”

1.3 Research problem

I am the one that was just pushed into the auditorium and told ‘go and do it’. I had no experience and had to draw everything from my prior learning experience as a PhD student. I could have used guidance gained from my teaching experience such as how to build up a lecture, how to engage students more, how to initiate discussion. I missed this kind of support greatly (Social Sciences candidate in Remmik et al., 2011).

The above scenario is similar to those of many beginner academics in our universities today. Researchers agree that novice supervisors face academic challenges with zeal, energy and the belief that "we can make a difference in our particular field" (McKay & Monk, 2017), only to

discover that the academic culture is peculiar, excessively controlled, and suppressive, which hinders the production of free, socially important and critical academic work as put by Hill, (2012). Furthermore, the journey from being a doctoral student to a novice supervisor is a time of naivety, confusion and optimism **as advocated by** McAlpine and Ackerlind, (2010) and Monk & McKay, (2017).

On the other hand, the National Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has set goals to produce more masters and doctoral graduates in order to improve the country's economic competitiveness. For instance, the Minister of higher education and training Dr Blade Nzimande's speech at the 2019 Doctoral Conference Graduate Gala Dinner (Government of South Africa, 2019) emphasized the need for universities to increase their research capacity. The Minister recommended universities to be guided by the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, which posits that by 2030, over 25 percent of university enrolments in South Africa should be at postgraduate level. Furthermore, it is the goal of the NDP to increase the number of PhD graduates to more than 100 doctoral graduates per million annually by 2030. **This initiative does not address the dilemma the master or doctorate graduate encounter when faced with the task of postgraduate supervision. It only compounds the problem because more graduates would be produced who would still face inexperience with regard to postgraduate supervision.**

Still on the issue above, the White Paper for Post School Education and Training (2013), revealed that despite the improvement of postgraduate enrolment over the past years, research output specifically for Master's and Doctoral programmes remains low. Hence, there is an urgent need to increase the throughput of both the Master's and the PhD programmes in South Africa according to Botha, (2018). In order to promote postgraduate throughput, Dr Blade Nzimande recommended expanding the funding for postgraduate studies in all areas through a variety of innovations. To address the critical challenge of funding and promote postgraduate throughput, in 2021, the National Research Foundation (NRF) also introduced the DSI-NRF Postgraduate Student Funding Policy wherein postgraduate funding allocations are underpinned by the principles of equity of opportunity, representation, prioritisation, and enhanced access, success and throughput according to NRF, (2021). The average progression (the percentage of graduates moving from one qualification level to the next) and completion rates for postgraduate qualifications are as follows posits NRF, (2021):

- a) Bachelors to Honours – 28%; completion 3 years as against regulation time of 1 year.
- b) Honours to Masters – 26%; completion 5 years as against regulation time of 2 years.
- c) Masters to Doctorates – 16%; completion 7 years as against regulation time of 3 years.

According to the Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics according to Department of Higher Education and Training, (2019), some universities in South Africa are characterised by a scarcity of research expertise, inexperienced supervisors, and supervisors working in fields that differed from their specialisations which frustrates preparedness of postgraduate students in the country. The impact of the lower rate of growth in academic staff and the increase in staff-to-student ratios on quality is also cause for concern frustrating supervision and throughput as described by Cullen, Calitz and Kanyutu, (2020). Indeed, it could be argued that although there has been limited improvement in throughput rates, as discussed above, and while there are factors external to higher education, which in part contribute to low throughput rates, the mismatch between enrolment growth and staff growth is a significant factor. Academic staff growth is a necessary but not sufficient factor to ensure quality. It has to be complemented by academic staff having the requisite qualifications to discharge their teaching and research roles.

The government's programs above are well-intended but research shows that the initiatives do not address the problem my study puts forward that inexperience on the side of novice supervisors hinders their ability to adequately discharge supervisory duties. Badat (2010) argues with regard to supervisory capacity:

“It cannot be assumed that academics with doctorates will be accomplished supervisors of doctoral students. Attention has to be given to equipping academics to supervise effectively through formal development programmes, mentoring, and experience in co-supervising alongside experienced supervisors. More effective supervision could contribute to improving current poor postgraduate throughput and graduation rates”

What the above quote implies is that a doctorate initiated in the research context is insufficient to prepare novice supervisors for diverse responsibilities in their supervision

journey according to Flick, (2016). However, a doctoral degree is increasingly a required qualification for university entry as an academic in South Africa. Sinclair *et al.* (2014) and Stubb *et al.* (2014) concurred that a doctorate is viewed as a minimum requirement and a stepping stone for ascending the heights of the academic career. In addition, it is seen as an integral part of becoming a researcher and a postgraduate supervisor because the ability to supervise, conduct, publish, and fund research are critical skills in today's university setting as put by Boyce *et al.*, (2019). Therefore, novice supervisors need support by their universities to able to adequately perform their duties as first time postgraduate student supervisors. We must bear in mind that the postgraduate student will be greatly impacted by the lack of supervision skills on the side of the novice supervisor.

Workloads, ambiguous work assignments, poor feedback, and a lack of support may all contribute to early career status and position uncertainty posits Tynan & Garbett, (2007). The growing pressure of postgraduate throughput has led to an emphasis on research supervision as put by Vereijken *et al.*, (2017). The purpose of postgraduate supervision is, therefore, to steer, support and guide students with insight through the process of conducting a postgraduate study as advocated by Frick *et al.*, (2016) and Sambrook *et al.*, (2008). As a result, novice supervisors are often expected to supervise like experienced supervisors, thereby having a multiplicity of roles like being a student and a teacher in this role as well as a researcher according to Smith and Sela, (2005). This expectation goes further as beginning supervisors commonly receive the most difficult supervising assignments (i.e. supervising Doctoral and Master's students), including completion of students within a record period posits (Yalcinkaya, 2002). As a result, many novice supervisors struggle and leave the field according to Wonacott, (2002). Literature shows the dilemma novice supervisors find themselves in however, it does not show formal programs universities provide to alleviate those dilemmas. Literature also show support systems universities have to support supervisors however no specific programs are there for novice supervisors. Hence, I sought to understand the novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision and expose mechanisms or specific programs to support them in this research.

1.4 Study objectives

To realize this aim, the study had the following objectives: To

- a) Discover the novice supervisors' understanding of postgraduate supervision.

- b) Explore how the novice supervisor navigate the commencement of their supervisory roles.
- c) Find out the support systems the university provides for novice supervisors to perform their supervisory roles.
- d) Investigate the challenges they experienced and identify the strategies they employed to overcome their challenges.

1.5 Rationale for the study

I registered for my Master's degree in a South African university in 2017. I was fortunate to be under the supervision of a novice supervisor with hardly one year in academia. I cannot deny that my challenges delayed my study progress because I was a full-time employee and a part-time student. However, from my observation, I could notice that my supervisor was overwhelmed by the work. For instance, I would hear that she was teaching on a Saturday, and I would sometimes be met with an auto-relay telling me that she was out for a conference. Although I successfully defended my proposal within my first year of registration, it took me three full years to complete the degree that was supposed to be completed in two years. I could assume that my supervisor's inexperience in postgraduate supervision hindered the progress of my studies. That experience expedited my desire to want to understand what novice postgraduate supervisors experience during these beginning years of their career development.

Postgraduate supervision is richly described in the literature according to Anderson *et al.*, (2008); Harwood and Petric, (2017); Maxwell and Smyth, (2011) and Wichmann-Hansen *et al.*, (2015). However, little is known about how novice supervisors in a South African university navigate this lonely yet demanding experience. While other studies had been conducted on this phenomenon, this topic is far from being exhausted as a research area, specifically regarding the views of novice supervisors on their role as postgraduate supervisors. McKay and Monk (2017) concentrated on how novice supervisors navigate their way through early academic life in universities, while Ssempebwa *et al.* (2016) emphasized on major influences on the teaching practice of novice supervisors. Some focused on supervision's contribution to attaining a doctorate posits Albertyn *et al.*, (2016); Brailford, (2010) and Devos *et al.*, (2016), throughput aimed at timely completions through supervision (Carter & Kumar, 2017), and the research supervision elements that were shown to enhance student learning include being sensitive to students' needs and maintaining strong supervisor-student connections (de Kleijn *et al.*, 2014; Mainhard *et al.*, 2009).

While Vereijken et al.'s (2017) research emphasized the promotion of student learning in student research projects during the novice supervisor's interaction with students, it did not attend to the core issues experienced by novice supervisors in the daily execution of their duties in South African universities. Furthermore, other studies explored research pedagogy, suggesting that the supervisor's awareness of the alternative options for practice influenced their research supervision practices according to Bruce and Stoodley, (2013). Few studies attended to the South African context of novice supervisors who had to make their mark in this cutthroat job of being a postgraduate supervisor. With this study, I aimed to contribute to that gap.

Internationally, many studies relied on quantitative research surveys to elicit data regarding the experiences of novice supervisors on supervision according to Boyce *et al.*, (2019); Cox, (2013); Gale, (2011); Byrnes *et al.*, (2012) and Bitzer *et al.*, (2014). My experience was that surveys and questionnaires, in particular, were impersonal though not entirely inadequate for collecting information. It was difficult to ask the "how" and "why" questions on every aspect of the questionnaire. Furthermore, in Malaysia those studies that deviated from surveys used semi-structured interviews according to Krauss and Ismael, (2010) and Sidhu *et al.*, (2013). From China, Wang and Byram (2019) also explored novice supervisors' experiences of supervision. This phenomenon of novice supervisors' experiences of supervision was widely subscribed across the world including in Australia as put by Heath, (2002); Lee and McKenzie, (2011); McKay and Monk, (2017), Portugal: Devos *et al.*, (2016), the United Kingdom: McAlpine and McKinson, (2012), Estonia: Remmik *et al.*, (2011) and Canada: Acker and Monk, (2017) but do not reflect the South African context of novice supervisors' experiences of supervision at a university.

Some studies focused on novice supervisors' perceptions of their roles and engagement in activities to develop their teaching and research posits Kelly, Bitzer *et al.*, (2014); McKay and Monk, (2017) and Peseta *et al.*, (2017). Other researchers concentrated on novice supervisors' learning in their academic communities as described by Bosanquet *et al.*, (2017); Cox, (2013) and Remmik *et al.*, (2011). Although these studies were relevant, they did not address novice supervisors' experiences and supervisory roles in a research-intensive university. These experiences must be ventilated so that support can be given for the novice supervisors' development as put by Moosa, (2020). Ssempebwa *et al.*'s (2016) study

conducted partly in a South African university focused on major influences the novice supervisors experience on their teaching practice and the mechanisms these academics learn to teach. Data was elicited through questionnaires and interviews from novice supervisors, deans and principals, while this study gave its attention to the novice supervisors themselves since they were experiencing postgraduate supervision at a South African university.

1.6 Research purpose

The study focused on novice supervisors and their experiences of postgraduate supervision. As a result, it was important to continue the conversations that examined their experiences where solutions and effective supports were explored as advocated by McKay & Monk, (2017). Therefore, this study's purpose was divided into the aim and objectives as presented below.

1.7 Research questions

1.7.1 Main research question

What are novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university?

1.7.2 Research sub-questions

- a) What do the novice supervisors understand by the concept of a postgraduate supervisor and supervision?
- b) How do the novice supervisors navigate their supervisory roles?
- c) What support systems does the university provide for novice supervisors to perform their supervision roles?
- d) What challenges do novice supervisors experience and which strategies do they employ to overcome their challenges while executing their supervisory roles?

1.8 Preliminary literature review

The focus of the literature review for this study is the critical analysis of available and relevant studies on postgraduate supervision globally including in South Africa. I did this as it relates to the research questions and the theoretical framework upon which the study hinges. Literally, postgraduate students' success depends heavily on the supervisors, for they must provide the expertise, time and support to foster in the candidate the skills and attitudes of research and to ensure the production of a thesis and/or dissertation is of acceptable

standards according to Heath, (2002). In this section, I reviewed and presented relevant literature on the phenomenon under investigation. This section consists of five sub-sections. In the first sub-section, I presented and discussed what the concept of novice supervisor entails as described by different scholars. I discussed what scholars across the globe attest to the concept of postgraduate studies in the second sub-section, while the third sub-section is responsible for the discussion on supervision in general as described by scholars. Postgraduate supervision, as practiced around the globe, is discussed in the fourth sub-section, and the experiences of novice supervisors of postgraduate supervision are in the fifth sub-section. The framework that underpins this study is also presented and discussed in this chapter.

1.8.1 How postgraduate studies are viewed

The Cambridge dictionary defines postgraduate studies as learning and studying for academic, professional degrees or other qualifications for which an undergraduate or bachelor's degree is generally required. In North America, all first degrees are referred to as undergraduate degrees, but in countries like South Africa, the United Kingdom and Australia, first degrees are referred to as bachelor's degrees.

In South Africa, postgraduate studies refer to honours, masters and doctorate studies posited Mouton, (2007); Frick *et al.*, (2016) and Albertyn *et al.*, (2016). The structure of most doctoral programs in the United States of America differs from the South African model because most doctoral programs follow after four to five years of undergraduate studies with no intermediate honours or master's program as described by Mouton, (2007). However, most countries like the United Kingdom and Australia follow the same model as South Africa as put by Heath *et al.*, (2015) and Olmoz-Lopez *et al.*, (2016).

Worldwide changes such as transitions in modes of learning according to Pearson, (2005) and Taylor & Beasley, (2003) have influenced postgraduate studies in higher educational institutions (HEIs) posits Albertyn *et al.*, (2008). Furthermore, traditional forms of learning have evolved into the current demand for graduates who can perform and contribute to the knowledge economy characteristic of the globalized era according to McAlpine & Norton, (2006). Some of the changes come from the governments themselves. Like other educational institutions globally, South Africa is focusing on enhancing the number of postgraduate students who achieve success as advocated by Manyike, (2017). Given that the South African government's allocation of funds for postgraduate study in universities is contingent upon the

rate at which postgraduate students complete their studies, supervisors faced an additional responsibility to discover innovative methods for efficiently and effectively mentoring postgraduate students. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has established targets to increase the number of individuals obtaining Master's and doctorate degrees to achieve this objective and enhance the nation's economic competitiveness as put by DHET, (2012).

With throughput being the driver of government funding, researchers argue that postgraduate studies in South Africa are more concerned with efficiency than effectiveness and quality posits Lessing and Schulze, (2002) and Mouton, (2007). The reason for the lack of quality is the government's endeavor to have universities engage in rapid transformation processes with an increasing postgraduate student body from disadvantaged backgrounds according to Lessing and Schulze, (2002). Within this context, however, universities are still expected to produce quality Master's and doctoral graduates while grappling with increased numbers of students with limited experience in library facilities and independent research work as advocated by Mouton, (2007). Around the world, notably, universities are becoming more accountable to governments for the production and quality of their postgraduate research outputs as put by Harland and Scaife, (2010) and Scott *et al.*, (2004) because most of the funding is from these governments themselves.

One other problem experienced in the postgraduate studies arena is that of attrition. Problems with non-completion of postgraduate studies are well-documented worldwide as described by Golde, (2005); Manyike, (2017) and Rodwell & Neumann, (2005). There are various reasons for the non-completion of postgraduate studies including student and institutional factors according to Lessing & Schulze, (2002) and Manatunga, (2005). Taylor and Beasley (2005) reported that only 50% of doctoral students complete their studies, and few do so in the specified timeframe. According to Armstrong (2004), the rate of unsuccessful completion of dissertations in the Social Sciences in the United Kingdom ranges from 40% to 50%. According to the National Centre for Education Statistics (2000) and Smallwood (2004), half of the students who begin postgraduate study programmes in North America fail to complete them. Notably, one-third of all attrition occurs during the first year of postgraduate studies as put by Golde, (2005).

South Africa produces less than 15% of master's and doctoral degrees a year compared to the United States of America, which produces 288 doctoral students a year, and the United

Kingdom, which produces 395 students a year (Manyike, 2017). According to the National Development Plan as put by RSA, (2012), South African institutions are now obligated to generate knowledge to shift South Africa's economy from one that relies on natural resources to one that is centered on knowledge. The DHET provides cash as an incentive to support the government's pursuit of this aim according to DHET, (2012). This study focused on novice supervision experiences for honours, Master's and Doctoral studies since they are postgraduate studies with specialized research programs.

1.8.2 How supervision and postgraduate supervision are viewed

The word “supervision” has connotations of hierarchy, discipline and oversight of work as advocated by Lee, (2009). Kandlebender and Peseta (2001) stress three elements of supervision: a) a co-learning relationship between a supervisor and student, b) establishing clear goals, and c) managing the supervisory process. The similarity is that it is a relationship between a supervisor and a student looking at these definitions and descriptions of supervision. This is further echoed by Barnes and Austin (2009) when they state that the doctoral supervisor is considered to be “one of the most critical persons whom a doctoral student develops a relationship with during the doctoral degree program”. Effective advisors help their advisees succeed by providing encouragement and praise, transmitting scientific knowledge and socializing the student into the discipline according to Lyons *et al.*, (1990).

As a discipline, research supervision is “a two-way interactional process that requires both the student and the supervisor to consciously engage each other within the spirit of professionalism, respect, collegiality and open-mindedness” posits Alam *et al.*, (2013, p. 875). The connection quality between the supervisor and the student largely determines the success or failure of a postgraduate student's research effort. Postgraduate supervision in education is crucial as it enables HEIs to develop their research capacities and improve their academic standing and financial profitability as put by Alam *et al.*, (2013). Nevertheless, Alam *et al.* (2013) emphasize that the achievement and quality of postgraduate education are mostly contingent upon the proficient and productive guidance of postgraduate students. According to Rademeyer and Jacklin (2013), the effective completion of a dissertation or thesis depends equally on the talents of the student and the supervisor. However, there are many postgraduate students “failing to complete their studies within the stipulated time frame or giving up their studies completely due to problems related to inadequate supervision, research support and research environment” as advocated by Alam *et al.*, (2013, p. 876).

Postgraduate supervision has been widely researched across the globe as a discipline. Every country worldwide researches postgraduate supervision in the context of the problems experienced in that country concerning the discipline. In Asia, postgraduate students' views on the supervisory role of supervisors are explored according to Ismail *et al.*, (2013); Sidhu *et al.*, (2013) and Soong *et al.*, (2015). In contrast, European researchers are interested in matters ranging from the role of doctoral supervision in early career academics as put by Frick *et al.*, (2016), postgraduate supervision role in completion and non-completion of doctoral studies according to Devos *et al.*, (2018), how doctoral students experience supervision as advocated by Gonzalez-Ocampo *et al.*, (2018). In the United States of America, issues researched are, among others, doctoral students' views of their dissertations according to Boyce *et al.*, (2019), the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee as put by Goldman & Goodboy, (2017), doctoral students views of their doctoral mentors posits Mansson and Myers, (2012).

In South Africa, much research has been undertaken on postgraduate supervision. In collaboration with a Swedish university, South African researchers researched how doctoral education prepares doctoral candidates for an academic career according to Frick *et al.*, (2016). Albertyn *et al.* (2016), based at the University of Stellenbosch, researched student and supervisor perspectives on supervision. Extensive research is done on postgraduate supervision in South Africa, but not much has been done that explored novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision in a South African university, hence my interest in this phenomenon.

1.8.3 Who are novice postgraduate supervisors?

In various settings, novice supervisors are called “early-career academics”, “junior researchers” or “emerging researchers” according to McKay and Monk, (2017). Novice postgraduate supervisors are also called “neophytes” posits Hemming and Kay, (2010) or “apprentices” as put by Laudel and Gläser, (2008). Furthermore, Matross Helms (2010) uses the term “generation X faculty,” and there is a general agreement that age does not necessarily mean an early career, while descriptors “young” and “new” are no longer commonly used as described by Price *et al.*, (2015). Commonly used criteria for evaluation include the duration since the completion of a PhD, the length of employment at a university, and indicators of research productivity as advocated by Bosanquet *et al.*, (2017). According to Anderson *et al.* (2008), the “typical academic career” or “usual entry to academe” involves

an exceptional undergraduate student who successfully obtains a PhD and is then granted a stable academic position.

Getting to the specifics, a "novice supervisor" refers to someone who has completed their PhD less than five years ago. This description is often used in the context of competitive research funding, as stated by Bazeley *et al.* (1996). Bazeley *et al.* (1996) further describe a novice supervisor as an early career academic with less than five years of "uninterrupted, stable research development". However, Sutherland *et al.* (2013) describe a novice supervisor as a supervisor with less than seven years of first permanent academic appointment. For this study, I used the term novice supervisor because it represents their role, which includes research, teaching and service. As I mentioned and explained later in the subsequent paragraphs, in this research, a novice supervisor is viewed as someone with one to three years of post-doctoral experience and/or having been appointed in their first academic position. I presented my argument on why I see it this way from the South African context. However, according to McKay and Monk (2017), a novice postgraduate supervisor refers to an academic who has just obtained their Philosophy of Education (PhD) or a comparable certification less than five years ago. In addition, Bosanquet *et al.* (2017) assert that rookie supervisors are characterized by their research proficiency during the first five to seven years after obtaining their PhD.

Novice supervisors often start their teaching career without training according to Remmik *et al.*, (2011), and they consider themselves experts in their discipline posits Lee *et al.*, (2005). Entry-level supervisors embark on their academic careers with eagerness, fervor, and aspirations to have a significant impact in their respective domains as stated by McKay and Monk, (2017). Nevertheless, Manatunga and Goozee (2007) emphasize that achieving expertise is a challenging and complex process. Many nations are worried that when academics retire, there won't be enough new supervisors to replace the ageing workforce as put by Hugo, (2008) and Hugo & Morriss, (2010). The first stages of academic careers profoundly influence the development of inexperienced supervisors' comprehension of education and instruction, their convictions, and their professional identities as academics in higher education according to Remmik *et al.*, (2011).

In trying to explain the language context of this study (i.e. the use of the term novice supervisor), I will briefly mention what novice supervisors are referred to in other parts of the continent. As I mentioned in my introduction, some studies refer to novice supervisors in

different terms. McKay and Monk (2012) refer to the novice supervisor as an early career academic whose triad of academic roles includes teaching, research and service. In the United Kingdom, novice supervisors are referred to as early career academics as stated by McAlpine and Ackerlink, (2010) whose journey as an early career academic is a time of naivety, confusion and optimism. Based in Estonia, Remmik *et al.* (2011) refer to experiences of early career academics as having a great influence on the development of university lecturers. On the other hand, the Canadian researchers Acker and Hacque (2017) are concerned about the contemporary performance measures early career academics are susceptible to in the workplace. Finally, working in partnership with researchers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in South Africa, Ssempebwa *et al.* (2016) from Makerere University in Uganda explored the expectations of early career academics in Africa.

For this study, I referred to early career academics as novice supervisors because, in South Africa, one needs to have completed a master's degree to teach at a university. Moreover, novice supervisors are not necessarily trained teachers given any systematized teaching induction programs before they are employed at universities posits Ssempebwa *et al.*, (2016). International studies refer to novice supervisors as being within five to seven years of obtaining a PhD and/or being appointed to their first academic job as stated by Bazeky *et al.*, (1996) and Bosanquet *et al.*, (2017). I find this definition too wide, and it does not fit the South African context. For example, my supervisor has only four years in academia but has successfully supervised five Master's and two PhD students to completion. Therefore, she can no longer be regarded as a novice supervisor. Based on this evidence and for this study, a novice supervisor is an academic who has not successfully supervised a postgraduate student to completion.

1.8.4 Novice supervisor support at universities

Graduates of Masters and Doctoral qualification were appointed by universities worldwide regardless of whether they had teaching experience according to Remmik *et al.*, (2011). That is, one only needed a Masters or a Doctoral degree to teach at a university. Apart from lecturer duties which have been extensively demonstrated earlier, lecturers had to dispense postgraduate supervision to their students. It is a well-researched postulation that novice supervisors' inexperience as lecturers and also as postgraduate supervisors warrants support from universities that employs them as put by Ssempebwa, (2016).

A supervisor was tasked to assist the postgraduate students' development in terms of the research project according to Harwood and Petric, (2018). Therefore, a novice supervisor had to have the expertise to be able to guide and capacitate the postgraduate student to successfully complete the Masters or Doctorate qualification registered for. Furthermore, successful postgraduate supervision has moral, reputational and financial outcomes for the institution as put by Bazrafkan *et al*, (2019). Novice supervisors were expected to train postgraduate students to gain competence in areas such as specialist skills, generalist skills, self-reliant skills and group/team skills according to Light *et al*, 2009). Retrospectively, universities expected novice supervisors to be versed in these skills in order to adequately supervise their postgraduate students.

However, research abilities were not considered as one of the priorities in the employment of academic staff as detailed by Haghdoost *et al*, (2013). The reason for this posture was that newly appointed faculty members were often involved in teaching, administration tasks, and that inhibited them from attaining expertise in other aspects such as research supervision as put by Haghdoost *et al*, 2013). Malekafzali *et al* (2004) further asserts that novice postgraduate supervisors have weaknesses such as the inability to define the problem, analyzing data, interpreting results, publishing scientific articles. In addition, it was difficult for a novice supervisor to adapt supervision to the postgraduate student's characteristics or traits according to Kandiko and Kinchin, (2012) in comparison to experienced doctoral supervisors. This was caused by mainly that novice supervisors lacked coherent and compiled training programs which can enhance their research supervision capabilities. Samari *et al* (2014) asserts that research quality can be enhanced by developing expertise in the novice postgraduate supervisors' research supervision. In addition, Schon (1983) states that adequate support can enable novice supervisors to deliberately use and learn from their personal learning experiences.

1.8.5 Mentoring as a mechanism to support novice supervisors

Experienced supervisors contribute to postgraduate student's learning by being responsive to the student's needs and maintaining healthy student-supervisor relationship as put by de Klein *et al*, (2014). Experienced supervisors act as mentors for novice postgraduate supervisors in universities with the aim to strengthen their professional role as stated by Lingren, 92006). Kirk and Lipscombe (2019) singles out emotional support as required to for novice postgraduate supervisors to navigate their new roles. Furthermore, Chen *et al* (2016)

viewed emotional responses such as feelings of vulnerability as common among novice postgraduate supervisors. Openness to self-doubt enables learning and also being open to multiple perspectives by a mentor is beneficial to developing professional competency as detailed by Kerdeman, (2015). According to Murray and Male (2005), novice postgraduate supervisor uncertainties and vulnerability are amplified by lack of research skills and experience. Cotteral (2015) concurs and adds that lack of academic research experience contributes to anxiety and uncertainty regarding joining the scholarly conversation. Novice postgraduate supervisors in return seek acceptance and recognition from experienced supervisors in the quest for academic and research identity (Kirk & Lipscombe, 2019).

Mentorship helps to grow and normalize a novice postgraduate supervisors into the profession as put by Boswell *et al*, (2001) and also develop researcher identity. According to Zerzan *et al* (2009), the experienced postgraduate supervisor as mentor and the novice postgraduate supervisor as mentee is interactional and interdependent with both parties required to contribute to the effectiveness of the partnership. Additionally, the role of the mentor significantly impacts on success of the mentor relationship through support and expert guidance according to Zerzan *et al*, (2009). Furthermore, the mentee's uncertainty and emotions are necessary for developing self-understanding and the mentor must facilitate self-questioning for mentees as novice postgraduate supervisors.

According to Hobson *et al* (2009), learning from colleagues is also essential to learn teaching skills and furthermore, the most effective way of supporting novice postgraduate supervisors is mentoring. This is mainly because it helps to reduce feelings of isolation, increases confidence, self-esteem, professional growth, improves self-reflection and problem solving qualities as detailed by Marable and Raimondi, (2007). Mentoring also provides emotional and psychological support and enables novice supervisors to put difficult experiences into perspective and therefore increases morale and job satisfaction posits Hobson *et al*, (2009).

1.8.6 Novice supervisors' self-support initiatives

Novice postgraduate supervisors recognize the precarious academia dilemma they are in as a result of inexperience. As a result, novice supervisors mitigate their postgraduate supervision challenges through collaboration and co-authorship opportunities within the research context as put by Chen *et al*, (2016). Additionally, collaboration through dialogue with experienced postgraduate supervisors significantly develop positive supervision outlook (Kamler & Thompson, 2014). According to Reedy and Taylor-Dunlop (2015), modelling of academic

writing, co-researching and co-supervision facilitates recognition of novice supervisors by others. Furthermore, publishing with experienced researchers is beneficial to novice postgraduate supervisor development.

However, there are institutional factors that hinder progress of novice postgraduate supervisors. They are factors such as limited support in developing supervision skills and experiences as stated by Gallagher *et al*, (2011) and also lack of collaborative work environments as detailed by Harrison and McKeon, (2008). In addition, these hindrances by institutions make it difficult for novice supervisors to develop positive efficacy to postgraduate supervision as put by Murphy *et al*, (2014). Furthermore, novice postgraduate supervisors experience heavy workloads, vague work assignments, insufficient feedback and lack of support by institutions as stated by Murphy *et al*, (2014).

1.8.7 University initiatives of support to novice supervisors

According to Gibbs and Coffey (2004), novice supervisors learn postgraduate supervision skills at university through pedagogical training courses, mentoring as well as informal learning opportunities (e.g. teaching experiences, practice, relationships with colleagues). These pedagogical courses have a positive impact on novice supervisors' comprehension about postgraduate supervision. There is a need for provision of non-traditional forms of support of novice postgraduate supervisors worldwide as described by Ssempebwa *et al*, (2016). For this reason, higher education institutions are offering induction programs for novice supervisors. Foote (2010) reports that many US colleges and universities have teaching and learning centers that offer workshops and seminars on issues of teaching and learning. Additionally, in the UK, nearly all universities have postgraduate courses certificate courses that are compulsory for novice supervisors as put by Teferra, (2016). In South Africa, DHET and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal delivers a university education induction program. In Uganda, Faculty of Education at the University of Uganda, induction seminars are offered to induct novice postgraduate supervisors as stated by Teffera, (2016).

1.8.8 Experiences of novice postgraduate supervisors

The literature extensively discusses the placement of inexperienced supervisors in the academic field as a whole, and specifically in teaching at the university level. This topic has been explored by several authors, including Austin (2010), Austin *et al*. (2007), Peluchette and Jeanquart (2000), and Sandretto *et al*. (2002). McDonald and Star (2006) states that inexperienced managers see the workplace as a constantly changing environment with

unclear objectives and a difficult-to-achieve endpoint, where rivalry is widespread. Novice postgraduate supervisors use sense-making processes to comprehend signals pertaining to needs such as research productivity. They make choices and judgments in specific areas of negotiation on how different parts of their job contribute to desired objectives posits Acker and Hacque, (2017).

In addition, the supervision of rookie supervisors is mostly impacted by their own independent study of supervision and the teaching methods used by their supervisors. This is because novice postgraduate supervisors do not get formal training or structured supervision programs as put by Ssempebwa *et al.*, (2016). In their study, Ssempebwa *et al.* (2016) documented the difficulties that inexperienced postgraduate supervisors have when it comes to preparing for teaching and educating students. They specifically expressed a need for guidance and training in teaching methodologies via mentorship and workshops.

Remmik *et al.* (2011) found that the events in the early years of academic careers significantly impacted the formation of university academics' understanding of learning and teaching, their values, and their professional identities as academics. It is well-documented internationally that novice supervisors experience cooperation, support, loneliness, and isolation as detailed by Ackerlind, (2005); Barret and Brown, (2009) and Walker *et al.*, (2006). Novice postgraduate supervisors may encounter feelings of uneasiness due to their early-career status, unclear job assignments, inadequate feedback, and a lack of support according to Tynan and Garbett, (2007). However, Remmik *et al.* (2011) found that in Estonia, inexperienced postgraduate supervisors endeavor to align themselves with other lecturers as their professional cohort and conform to established views and attitudes. In addition, Remmik *et al.* (2011) observed a dearth of cooperation among faculty members both in teaching and research. In addition to the experiences encountered by inexperienced postgraduate supervisors, the following paragraph also addresses the obstacles that arise.

1.8.1.1 Challenges novice supervisors experience around the world

In Australia, McKay and Monk (2017) report that novice supervisors found their workloads very demanding and struggled to manage workloads. This is attributed to the complexity of academic work. McAlpine and Ackerlind (2010) concurred when they reported that academics experienced frustration due to a lack of clarity regarding their roles. Ssempebwa *et al.* (2016) found that after conducting research in South Africa and Uganda, most novice postgraduate supervisors admitted to lacking teaching skills before joining the university.

However, they expressed confidence in their ability to supervise postgraduate research. However, as stated by Lovitts (2007), it is believed that novice postgraduate supervisors have developed pedagogical abilities via the hidden part of their educational curriculum during their time as students. Novice postgraduate supervisors may face irritation from a lack of understanding about their responsibilities, mostly due to their lack of previous supervisory experience. Ssempebwa *et al.* (2016) also concur with other researchers that most novice supervisors do not feel supported by their universities. Sutherland *et al.* (2013) performed a study on rookie supervisors at eight New Zealand institutions and discovered that possessing a PhD degree was positively correlated with academic achievement among these supervisors.

While this phenomenon appears to be extensively investigated, I still believe that there is room for further research; hence I sought Sutherland *et al.* (2013) performed study on rookie supervisors at eight New Zealand institutions and discovered that possessing a PhD degree was positively correlated with academic achievement among these supervisors to explore the experiences of novice postgraduates at a South African university. This study targeted a postgraduate supervision model for novice supervision as the end product.

1.8.1.2 Overcoming postgraduate supervision challenges

Assessing the capabilities of postgraduate students and supervisors in successfully completing their PhD studies or fulfilling their duties is a challenge (Havenga & Sengane, 2018). Supervisors and postgraduate students want to achieve self-efficacy, which refers to their confidence in their ability to complete different research tasks successfully, even when faced with difficulties as stated by Kareshki and Bahmanabadi, (2013).

Challenges in postgraduate studies and particularly supervision are well documented as stated by Herman, (2011). These challenges cover a wide spectrum of the supervision field, including organizational factors as put by Mouton, (2001), quality of postgraduate supervision according to Lessing and Schulze, (2002), concerns about efficiency and throughput as stated by Manyike, (2017) and attrition of postgraduate students from their studies according to Herman, (2011). However, these are not all the problems in the postgraduate supervision field.

Research indicates that postgraduate students are adversely affected in their studies by a dearth of organizational elements, such as an unfavorable working environment, personality clashes with supervisors, and a scarcity of available supervisors as stated by Allan and Dory,

(2001) and Haynes *et al.*, (2008). According to Allan and Dory (2001), postgraduate students face obstacles in finishing their studies due to supervisors who are either busy or disinterested, a lack of flexibility in the program, and inadequate instruction in research and dissertation writing. The absence of financial backing from the organization has also been identified as a significant obstacle to the successful completion of postgraduate study as described by Allan & Dory, (2001) and Haynes *et al.*, (2008).

With regard to the quality of postgraduate supervision, the supervisor-student connection plays a crucial role in ensuring the effective completion of postgraduate studies as put by Ives and Rowley, (2005). Furthermore, impediments to supervision include inaccessibility, inadequate feedback, failure to follow appointments, and instances of sexual harassment according to Grant and Graham, (1995). The accessibility of the supervisor to assist postgraduate students with study design, data analysis, and the creation of publishable research articles is crucial throughout the supervision process (Ezebilo, 2012).

Efficiency can be referred to as “the optimization of resources to enhance the quality of research” as detailed by Mutula, (2009). Efficiency can be the production of quality postgraduate students in relation to the national development agenda coupled with throughput in supervision as put by Mutula, (2009). However, postgraduate students may lack the confidence to conduct research and be skeptical that practice and effort will ensure success according to Salehi and Ashiyan, (2016), which can derail a supervisor’s endeavor to lead a postgraduate student to completion. As a result, the throughput so envisaged by the university and government is not reached.

Factors contributing to the attrition of postgraduate students from their studies include personal restraints such as limited time, financial limitations, familial obligations, and a lack of support system (Herman, 2011). Furthermore, physical and psychological elements hinder the effective attainment of postgraduate study (Allan & Dory, 2001). These include the incapacity to harmonize personal life and relationships with the requirements of postgraduate study (Kearns *et al.*, 2008). Few South African supervisors are satisfied with their supervisors and experience a lack of supervisory support due to the supervisors’ workload and poor feedback concerning research work (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011).

However, most students at Queensland University in Australia expressed satisfaction with supervisors as put by Heath, (2002). Wisker and Robinson (2012) studied the impact of

supervisor loss, supervisor absence, and students' experiences in the United Kingdom. According to Wisker and Robinson (2012), it is necessary to have a harmonious combination of formality and informality in monitoring to foster both personal and institutional confidence. Menges and Exum (1983) in the United States of America found that overt discrimination may block the progress of women and minority groups. Berg and Ferber (1983) believe that men are more likely than women to succeed in completing postgraduate studies. Barriers for minority groups are racism, denial of sources of support, and lack of information and other resources according to Thomas and Alderfer, (1989). As Amato (1992) puts it, women experience an unfriendly environment. Through this study, I would like to unearth novice supervisors' challenges concerning their supervisory roles at a South African university.

1.9 Theoretical underpinnings

The preceding sections detailed the background through literature regarding who novice supervisors are and their role in postgraduate supervision at a South African university. Postgraduate studies and supervision as disciplines were also defined. In the following sections, I explained the lens or theory through which I explored the novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university.

1.9.1 Social Learning Theory

This study is based on the Social Learning Theory (SLT) founded by Bandura (1971). The SLT is a theory of learning processes and social behavior which proposes that “people can learn new information and behaviors by watching other people” as described by Nabavi, (2012). According to Bandura (1971), novice supervisors are social beings who learn from other supervisors from the past and current. Novice supervisors experienced supervision from their postgraduate studies and have first-hand experiences of how they were supervised. This means that novice supervisors learned supervision from their interaction with their supervisors in a social context as put by Razieh, (2012).

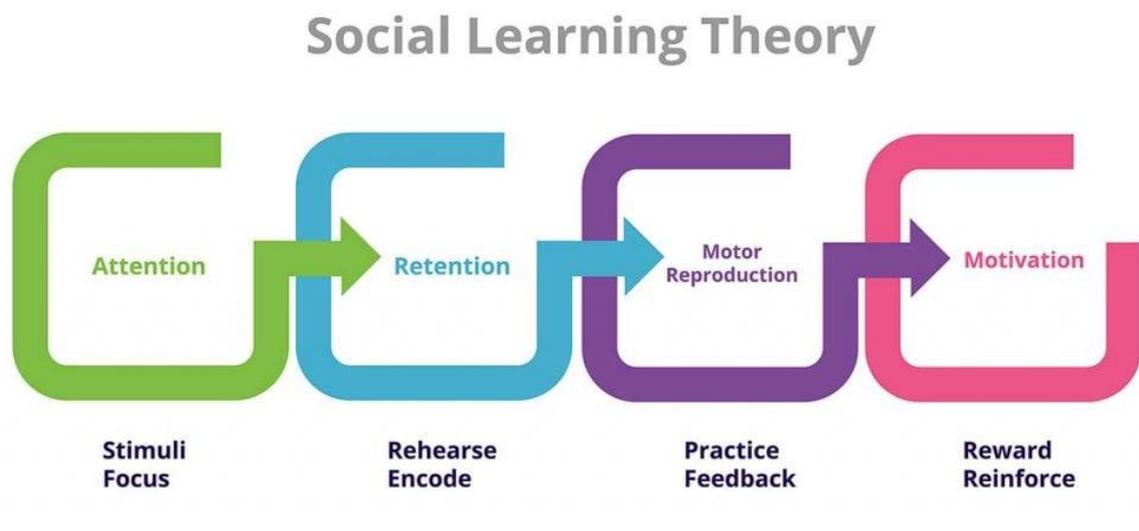
Moreover, they still learn supervision from colleagues in their present jobs as lecturers. This is supported by the fact that novice supervisors are academics who have completed their master's or doctoral studies and have been appointed to their first academic position within the last one to five years according to McKay and Monk, (2017). In addition, novice supervisors have no actual supervising experience and are not necessarily trained teachers

posits Ssempebwa *et al.*, (2016). As a result, novice supervisors’ draw supervising knowledge from the time they were supervised and apply the lessons learnt in their current supervising role as a postgraduate supervisor. Based on the above discussion, according to the SLT, novice supervisors acquire supervision behavior from observing other supervisors (Johnson *et al.*, 2014).

1.9.2 Bandura Modelling process

Figure 1.1 below illustrates the above discussions about the Social Learning Theory as developed by Bandura in 1977.

Figure 1.1: Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977)



Source: Bandura, 1977

According to Bandura, novice postgraduate supervisors observed the supervision styles and approach of their postgraduate supervisors either directly or indirectly through their supervision processes. As a result, they learnt that actions that are rewarded are more likely to be imitated, while those that are punished are avoided. Hence I saw the model suitable for this study.

1.10 Research methodology and methods

In conducting this study, three elements were crucial to the whole process. These include the research paradigm, approach, and methods posits Creswell, (2014). In essence, to engage in this study, I considered the philosophical worldviews and supposition upon which I based this

study (research paradigm), the research approach that correlated to this worldview, and the specific method (procedures) that I used to convert the approach into practice as put by Creswell, (2014, p. 5).

1.10.1 Research paradigm

The term "paradigm" originates from the Greek word that signifies a pattern (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). A paradigm is a fundamental belief system or worldview that served as a guiding framework for conducting investigations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Bunniss and Kelly (2010) assert that paradigms include the collective attitudes and practices of research communities, serving as regulatory frameworks for investigation within certain fields. Put simply, it is our method of comprehending and examining the actuality of the world. Hence, the paradigm significantly impacts all decisions undertaken throughout the study process as put by Kivunja and Kuyini, (2017).

This research used the constructivist paradigm, sometimes referred to as the "naturalistic" and "interpretive paradigm" according to Guba and Lincoln, (1989) and Merriam & Tisdell, (2015). The constructivist paradigm asserts that research methodology should investigate cognitive processes, meaning-making, and sense-making activities as advocated by Lincoln and Guba, (2016). This approach is commonly used in qualitative research, such as the case study method that involves techniques like interviews, which my study utilised. Moreover, I posited that the experiences of inexperienced supervisors in overseeing postgraduate supervision may be transformed into knowledge via the process of interpreting and reflecting upon them as detailed by Soraya *et al.*, (2017). Soraya *et al.* (2017) agree that although encounters with several rookie supervisors are crucial for comprehending their supervisory experiences, my own thoughts and judgments also had an influence. This pertains to my perception of the universe and understanding of how knowledge is produced within the constructivist paradigm.

1.10.2 Research approach

This study used a qualitative research methodology. A qualitative research technique involves exploring and comprehending the significance that people or groups attribute to a social or human situation according to Creswell, (2014). Put simply, qualitative research seeks to uncover the significance of an event or experience for the individuals involved as put by Soraya *et al.*, (2019). As Creswell puts it. Moreover, as a qualitative researcher, I focused on discerning how inexperienced supervisors articulate their experiences in supervising

postgraduate students, shape their supervisory environments, and assign significance to their encounters as stated by Merriam and Tisdell, (2015).

Using a qualitative research approach in this study enabled me to use words such as data, data collection and analysis in all sorts of ways as put by Braun & Clarke, (2013). As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain, a qualitative research approach allowed me to (a) understand the experiences that novice postgraduate supervisors have during their supervision journey, (b) act as the research instrument, (c) analyse data inductively, and (d) produce rich data from multiple sources such as field notes and interviews.

To address the research question: “What are novice supervisors’ experiences of postgraduate supervision in a South African university?” the study used the qualitative research methodology since it allowed a thorough investigation of the intricacies of phenomena, allowing me specifically to examine how inexperienced postgraduate supervisors interpret and understand their supervisory experiences as put by Griffin, (2004) and Willig, (2001). Furthermore, the qualitative research approach contributed to the sparse line of research addressing novice supervisors’ experiences of postgraduate supervision in a South African university as described by Devos *et al.*, (2016). According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), “qualitative inquiry allowed me to ask different kinds of questions than its quantitative counterpart”. Saldana (2011) calls it “a method for the study of natural social life”, while Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) refer to it as “a method used to understand something about social reality”.

The qualitative research process enabled me to develop a “complex, holistic picture, report detailed views of novice supervisors and conduct the study in their natural setting being at their university” as stated by Creswell, (2014). The qualitative research technique also allowed me to get a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental rationales, viewpoints, and incentives behind the novice supervisors' comprehension and implementation of supervision with postgraduate students and the factors that contribute to the formation of their views posits Bechuke & Debeila, (2012) and Maree, (2010). A qualitative research approach also helped me acquire insight and understand the experiences of novice supervisors of supervision at a South African university. As pointed out by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research enabled me to “get closer to the data to understand participants’ point of view and to obtain social knowledge”.

As Creswell (2017) puts it, “a qualitative research approach involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach”. A qualitative approach in my study was beneficial, as described by Denzin (2009), by becoming “an in-depth inquiry to study experiences of novice supervisors of supervision in their setting” according to Denzin, (2009). In addition, Denzin (2009) highlights that by using the qualitative methodology enabled me to comprehend and analyze the phenomena by focusing on the meanings and interpretations generated by inexperienced postgraduate supervisors. A qualitative methodology enabled me to comprehensively comprehend the circumstance and the significance attributed to inexperienced supervisors participating in the research according to Fleming, (2004).

Additionally, it allowed me to get insight into the profound convictions and emotions of inexperienced supervisors at a university focused on research. It further enabled me to serve as the primary research tool as stated by Soraya *et al.*, (2019). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), I was responsible for collecting data, analyzing, interpreting and reporting the findings. By using the interpretative and naturalistic method, I investigated the intricate aspects of supervision experiences among rookie supervisors in a research-intensive institution in South Africa as put by Leedy and Ormrod, (2001). Furthermore, I understood the experiences of novice postgraduate supervisors of supervising postgraduate students in a university from the participants’ point of view. In other words, the novice postgraduate supervisors “narrated their experiences more effectively and more efficiently when asked to do so in their own words during interviews” (Henning *et al.*, 2004).

1.10.3 Research design

Kazdin (1998) defines a research design as the comprehensive and logical technique used to combine the many components of a study effectively. As stated by Kazdin (1998), the goal of the research problem was to guarantee that I adequately tackled the issue at hand by providing a plan for collecting, measuring, and analyzing data. I used a case study methodology in my investigation.

According to Maree (2010), “a case study is a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events, which aim to describe and explain the experiences of the novice postgraduate supervisors of supervision in a South African university”. Creswell (2009) describes a case study as “a rich, thick description of the experiences of novice postgraduate supervisors under study”. Therefore, a case study research approach provided me with a comprehensive, holistic understanding of how novice supervisors in this study related to and understood their

supervision of postgraduate students in a university as far as their experiences were concerned. Furthermore, a case study enabled me to ask the “how” and “why” questions.

Conducting a case study enabled me to analyze the ideas and perspectives of all participants who were beginner supervisors as put by Creswell and Creswell, (2017). Consequently, this created the opportunity to strengthen marginalized socioeconomic groups, such as the inexperienced supervisors in this research posits Maree, (2000). The case study was valuable to me as a researcher because it provided insight into the holistic experience of rookie supervisors during supervision, as expressed in their own words. Additionally, it facilitated the formulation of open-ended questions (Maree, 2010).

Using a case study was appropriate for this research as it prioritized the depth and quality of information that could be derived from a limited number of participants rather than focusing on large sample size (Bechuke & Debeila, 2012). One drawback of a case study is its reliance on a single research, which limits its ability to draw generalizable conclusions (Maree, 2010). Nevertheless, my intention was not to make broad generalizations based on the results of this research. Instead, I aimed to investigate the specific experiences of rookie supervisors who were part of the sample within the context of university supervision in South Africa.

1.10.4 Sampling procedure

According to Johnson and Christensen (2008), “sampling is a process aimed at the selection of a group of participants for the study”. Convenient purposive sampling was primarily used in this study as stated by Marais and Meier, (2010). Since I could not involve every novice supervisor in every university in South Africa, a purposive sampling strategy allowed me to deliberately select novice supervisors from universities who would illuminate their supervision experiences according to Punch, (2004). Barbie (2010) cautions researchers against using purposive sampling due to the potential lack of comprehensive understanding of participant selection, which may result in the selection of inappropriate individuals or the introduction of bias. To address this limitation, I targeted novice supervisors who had a minimum of a master’s degree and were within one to three years of postgraduate supervision. One only needs a master’s degree in South Africa to teach at a university. The shorter the time the novice supervisors experienced postgraduate supervision, the richer the information according to Eshetu, (2019).

1.10.5 Study site

For convenience and accessibility as put by Cohen *et al.*, (2011), the sample included twenty purposefully selected novice postgraduate supervisors from five faculties at the University of Pretoria. The participants were novice postgraduate supervisors who had just started supervising or had been supervising for the past one to three years but had not assisted any students to the completion of their studies. The participants were selected from different faculties as Mouton (2001) recommended. This sampling method was appropriate for analyzing qualitative data because it allowed me to intentionally choose participants with varying characteristics, such as different academic disciplines, to ensure diversity.

1.10.6 Study participants

Eighteen purposefully selected novice postgraduate supervisors were involved. For this research, novice supervisors are those postgraduate supervisors who have not yet successfully supervised students to completion as stated by Bazeky *et al.*, (1996). As I indicated previously, novice supervisors in honours, masters and doctoral programs from different faculties were included in this study. Early career in academia is typically defined in terms of research capabilities in the five to seven years of having completed a PhD according to Bosanquet *et al.*, (2017). I find this too broad and inappropriate for South Africa, where academics with master's degrees are postgraduate supervisors.

Additionally, the sample size may seem too small, and it therefore implies limited external validity as described by Frick *et al.*, (2016). Nevertheless, this research is not intended for simplistic generalization, but rather to provide a more profound understanding of the experiences that novice supervisors encounter over their postgraduate supervising journey. Furthermore, a group of eighteen inexperienced supervisors is considered sufficient. A qualitative research framework often emphasizes the sufficiency of the sample rather than its absolute size, since the objective is not to extrapolate the results to a larger population. According to Farger and Dooley (2012), the sufficiency of sampling is often justified by the attainment of a saturation point, which qualitative researchers consider to be a reliable measure to ensure the data quality.

1.10.7 Data collection strategies

The study included interviews to gather data to explore the supervisory experiences of inexperienced supervisors thoroughly, enabling direct input from them and providing an opportunity for them to expand upon their responses as stated by Sutherland, (2017). The

interviews were conducted to collect comprehensive data on all identified topics and get insights that would aid in finding assistance for the rookie supervisors, in line with the ultimate goal (Albertyn *et al.*, 2016). In normal times, semi-structured face-to-face interviews would be used to investigate the experiences of novice postgraduate supervisors of supervising postgraduate students according to Frick *et al.*, (2016).

However, the global COVID-19 pandemic era introduced the concept of electronically conducting interviews using technology. By using this interview mode, I aimed to minimize physical contact among individuals to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that the research was completed in case we had a hard lockdown. Participants were provided with a link through which the interviews were conducted. Therefore, semi-structured interviews through an electronic link allowed me the flexibility to probe potentially interesting aspects, which yielded in-depth data not possible through a questionnaire as stated by Fourie, (2018).

In addition, I could also investigate other factors influencing specific reactions, which was crucial considering the investigative character of this work (Fourie, 2018). I developed a structured interview guide based on the instructions provided by Blanchet and Gotman (2010). Initially, I presented the participants with a brief overview of the research and its ethical issues, such as their right to withdraw from the study at any point. Furthermore, I elucidated the interview objective, as Devos *et al.* (2016) outlined.

1.10.8 Data analysis

I used semi-structured interviews with the novice supervisors of postgraduate students as a data collection instrument. Due to my extensive involvement in the data-gathering process, I was in a more advantageous position to analyze and interpret the data. This was done using qualitative content analysis according to Henning *et al.*, 2004 and Rossouw, (2003). Every interview was transcribed, classified, and analyzed using the interview schedule employed during the interviews. After reading each of the fifteen interview transcripts, the data was coded and grouped into thematic categories. The data was analyzed based on the holistic-content perspective focusing on the integral content of the interview as put by Lieblich *et al.*, (1998), the smaller excerpts describing the novice supervisors' experiences of supervision. The next step involved thematic coding (Flick, 2016), partly shaped by the interview questions. After consolidating the information into themes, I interpreted the data and made conclusions.

However, data collection and analysis in grounded theory progress in tandem according to Timonen *et al.*, (2018). This means that I could sample and analyze concurrently to develop theory inductively and in a grounded manner as put by Timonen *et al.*, (2018), which is not always possible. As concepts emerge, I applied theoretical sampling to confirm or refute claims made during interviews to formulate an informed theory about the study as stated by Timonen *et al.*, (2018).

1.10.9 Trustworthiness

According to Mertler (2006), “trustworthiness refers to the accuracy and believability of data”. Niewenhuis (2001) further states that “trustworthiness can be used as a criterion against which data analysis, findings and conclusions could be assessed as they occurred in the study”. According to Lincoln and Guba (2000), “the aim of establishing trustworthiness is to ensure that research findings are useful and can be taken into account”. After listening to the accounts of inexperienced supervisors, I ensured that each story was reliable, had detailed information, and met the requirements of being consistent and verifiable. This was accomplished via a collaborative effort between the inexperienced postgraduate supervisors and myself to create a shared narrative understanding as put by Nthontho, (2013).

1.10.9.1 Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (2000), credibility is “the result of an evaluation that intend to determine whether the research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants’ original data”. Throughout this investigation, I used a range of measures to guarantee the trustworthiness of the findings. Initially, I provided transparency in the documentation and implementation of the research procedures, as stipulated by Lincoln and Guba (2000), by consistently adhering to the assumptions and traditions of the research paradigm. Furthermore, I discovered approaches in the existing body of research on research methodology, such as aligning the chosen research methods with the adopted research paradigms and engaging in prolonged interaction with the participants to explore the phenomena of interest. This involved utilizing audiotaping and recording field notes. Furthermore, I gathered data for four weeks, which facilitated the development of a positive relationship with the inexperienced postgraduate supervisors and fostered their confidence in me. Clandinin and Connelly (2006) state that providing an environment that promotes comfort and encourages individuals to express their perspectives freely is crucial. This choice enhanced the authenticity of the narratives and the

understanding of these experiences.

1.10.9.2 *Thick description*

I adhered to the stipulations Clandinin and Connelly (2006) set out, which included creating field texts, drafting memos, and sharing intermediate research texts with participants. This was done to guarantee that my data encompassed comprehensive and detailed accounts of the experiences of the novice supervisors. I made careful not to exclude any relevant information to provide comprehensive coverage of the rookie supervisors' experiences. This move further enhanced the transparency aspect that I previously discussed. Following the guidance from the literature, I ensured that I used detailed and comprehensive descriptions, using the participants' own words wherever feasible and allowing them to articulate their experiences. Verifying the narratives used in the research and guaranteeing the genuineness of the data utilized was essential. By gathering sufficient verifiable data, I could generate detailed and contextually rich accounts of the experiences of rookie supervisors in supervising postgraduate students. These descriptions are substantial enough to be considered credible and reliable.

1.10.9.3 *Conformability*

Lincoln and Guba (2000) describe conformability as “the measure of how well the research findings are supported by the data collected”. The data I gathered included the real-life encounters of the inexperienced supervisors who took part in this research and their convictions, ideas, and views at that particular moment. To maintain neutrality, I consciously tried to get a more profound comprehension and accurate interpretation of the phenomena being investigated by asking inquiries at different points during the interviews. Following the interviews, I initiated conversations with the participants by allowing them to accept, amend, or reject my interpretation of the interview data. This procedure served as a means of verifying the accuracy and genuineness of my presentation on the experiences of the rookie supervisors who took part.

1.10.9.4 *Auditing*

Schwandt (2007) describes auditing as “a procedure where a third-party examiner systematically reviews the audit trail maintained by the researcher”. The supervisor conducted an audit of the raw data to verify its correctness and validity. The whole of the data records, including the audio recordings, the list of participants' profiles, and the field notes I

produced throughout the research, were included in this procedure. In addition, I sent the transcriptions to the participants and requested them to make any required corrections to accurately portray the material and their perspectives as stated by Mertler, (2006).

1.10.9.5 *Ethics considerations*

The research and data collection were authorised by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. All the committee's regulations and recommendations were followed. Written permission was obtained from the university structures about where I would be conducting my research. I sent all the participants in my study written invitations to participate in the study. I provided the participants with information describing the objective of my research, the anticipated requirements, the voluntary nature of participation, and the protocols ensuring confidentiality. I regarded the issues of anonymity and secrecy as of utmost significance, given that the particulars of the inexperienced supervisors at their universities would be closely examined in the study as stated by Nthontho, (2013). Meticulous attention was paid to protect the identity of the participants and the confidentiality of their statements according to Nthontho, (2013) through strategies like fictionalizing to ensure confidentiality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006).

1.10.9.6 *Limitations of the study*

This study had a small sample size (twenty novice supervisors). Only one university was targeted in this study, and that became a limitation. Novice postgraduate supervisors alone were engaged in this study, excluding postgraduate students under their supervision. The leadership or management of specific faculties would also have add value to the study. Their exclusion is, therefore, one of the limitations.

1.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the background to this study, the purpose of the study, and the research problem that assisted me to develop the primary and secondary research questions. I also presented the rationale for the study, research questions, literature review and the theoretical framework that I engaged to explore supervision experiences of the novice supervisors at a South African university. I further unpacked the research methods that I followed to collect the data that I needed to gain an understanding of novice postgraduate supervisors' experiences. The summary of the chapters that are included in my study report are detailed at the end of this chapter.

In the next chapters, I looked at relevant literature pertaining to the topic under discussion: Novice postgraduate supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university. I started by defining the novice postgraduate supervisor in the context of this study. I then delved into postgraduate studies as defined by researchers from different parts of the world and according to this study. I continued by explaining the concept of supervision, particularly postgraduate supervision, as practiced in universities worldwide, including South Africa. Furthermore, the experiences of postgraduate supervisors and particularly novice postgraduate supervisors are brought to the fore. These experiences included the challenges and how novice supervisors overcome these challenges. I also explain the theoretical lens through which I researched the experiences of novice postgraduate supervisors of postgraduate supervision at a South African university. The methodology used to explore this phenomenon is also discussed in detail.

1.12 Chapter outline

Chapter 1 – Introduction and background

Chapter 1 **gives** an overview of the entire study. It **presents** the background to this study, the purpose of the study, research problem that **helps** to develop the main research question and supporting questions. It **includes** the rationale for the study, research questions and the literature review and theoretical framework I **engages** to explore the experiences of novice supervisors as they **supervises** postgraduate students. This chapter also **unpacks** the research methods I **follow** to understand how they navigate the challenges and complexities inherent in the postgraduate supervision process at a university. The limitations of this study and summary of the chapters that **are** included in my study report are detailed at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 2 – Novice supervisors supervising postgraduate students

In this chapter, I **review** and **engage** with the international, continental and local literature on postgraduate supervision as well as how practitioners who in this study **are** novice supervisors. In doing so, I **unpack** what postgraduate studies at a university entails. I also **discuss** the concepts of supervision and postgraduate supervision. I further **discuss** what research **describes** as novice supervisors, their experiences, including challenges, and the strategies they **utilize** to overcome such challenges as well as the theoretical framework that **underpins** this study.

Chapter 3 – Research design and methods

In this chapter, I **present** the qualitative approach I **utilize** to understand the experiences, views and beliefs of participants about supervision of postgraduate students. In doing this, I **explicate** the research paradigm, research design and research methods that were relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. I also **outline** the strategies I adopted to ensure trustworthiness and comply with ethical considerations in this study. I **conclude** this chapter by presenting Bandura's Social Learning Theory of 1971, which **is** the theoretical framework I used to **investigate** novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision.

Chapter 4 – Data presentation, analysis and interpretation research findings

I **present** the analysis of the experiences, views and beliefs that **are** expressed by the participants during the semi-structured interviews in this chapter. This analysis **starts** with the coding of participants' responses to establish differences and similarities that I **identify** from the codes. I **identify** and **group** the patterns that **relates** to categories and **develop** themes that **assists** me in answering the research questions.

Chapter 5 – Discussions of findings, conclusions and recommendations

I **discuss** the findings of this study in this chapter. In this chapter, I also **present** the conclusions that I **reach** about the experiences of novice supervisors while supervising postgraduate students. I further **discuss** the contribution of this study to the body of knowledge, the implications of the findings, and recommendations for the future research.

In the next chapter, I review the literature on the experiences of novice supervisors on their journey as postgraduate supervisors.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of related literature

2.1 Introduction

My aim with this study was to investigate novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university. In the previous chapter, I outlined my research study's background, research problem and rationale. In this chapter, I look into literature that clarifies who the novice supervisors were and the context in which they played a role in university academic discourse.

The success of postgraduate students is strongly dependent on their supervisors, who must give the competence, time, and support to cultivate research skills and attitudes in the candidate and ensure the completion of an acceptable thesis according to Fragouli, (2021); Manyike, (2017) and Sandretto *et al.*, (2002). Universities worldwide are concerned about postgraduate supervision (Wood & Louw, 2018). Hence, in this chapter, I aim to review and present relevant literature on the phenomenon under investigation. The chapter consists of six sections. In the first sub-section, I present and discuss what postgraduate studies at a university entails. I unpack the concepts of supervision and postgraduate supervision in the second sub-section. In sub-sections three, four and five, I further discuss what research describes as novice supervisors, their experiences, including challenges, and the strategies they utilize to overcome such challenges. In sub-section six, I discuss the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

2.2 Postgraduate studies at a university

The Cambridge Dictionary defines postgraduate studies as learning and studying for academic, professional degrees or other qualifications for which an undergraduate or bachelor's degree is generally required. In North America, all first degrees are referred to as undergraduate degrees, but in contrast, countries like South Africa, the United Kingdom and Australia refer to first degrees as bachelor's degrees.

In European countries such as Italy, Spain and Germany, postgraduate studies that are offered are Master's and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programs. This is according to paragraph 3.1.1.1 of the Bologna Process Implementation Report as stated by European Higher Education Area, (2018). As in the European countries, Master's and PhD programs in

American countries such as the USA, Canada and Mexico are regarded as postgraduate studies according to American Council on Education, (2019:9). The structure of most doctoral programs in the United States of America is quite different from the South African model because most doctoral programs follow after 4 to 5 years of undergraduate studies with no intermediate honours or master's program according to Mouton, (2007). Most countries like the United Kingdom and Australia, however, follow the same model as South Africa posits Heath *et al.*, (2015); Olmoz-Lopez *et al.*, (2016). European, American, African and South African universities give students a chance to submit theses at the end of their programs and these institutions use certain criteria to select students for postgraduate programs. It is noticeable that the selection of postgraduate students by universities is handled differently by various countries and I discuss such differences in the next subsection.

African countries such as Senegal, Nigeria and Tunisia also refer to Master's and PhD programs as postgraduate studies as advocated by African Higher Education Summit, (2015:10). Whereas in South Africa, postgraduate studies refer to Honours, Master's and Doctoral studies (Albertyn *et al.*, 2016; Frick *et al.*, 2016; Mouton, 2007). That is, unlike European and African countries, in South Africa, universities like the University Cape Town (UCT), the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) and University of Pretoria (UP) refer to honours, master's and PhD programs as postgraduate studies as described by UCT, (2020); UKZN, (2020) and UP, (2020). Master's programs in these universities are two-fold, namely master's programs by coursework or by research according to UCT, (2020) and UKZN, (2020). Master's programs by coursework are postgraduate studies that require students to write an examination and submit a mini-dissertation at the end of the program as described by Shan, Ayers & Kiley, (2020). Master's' programs by research are similar to PhD programs, as both require students to submit dissertations/theses at the end of the programs as put by Shan, (2023).

In terms of throughput rate, South Africa produce less than 15% of Master's and doctoral degrees a year compared to the United States of America, which produce 288 doctoral students a year, and the United Kingdom, which produced 395 students a year posits Manyike, (2017). According to the NDP according to RSA, (2012), South African institutions must ensure the generation of knowledge to shift South Africa's economy from reliance on resources to reliance on knowledge. The pursuit of this government goal was incentivized with funding from the DHET and through the nGAP program as stated by DHET, (2015). In

this study, I, therefore, focused on the novice supervisors' experiences of BEd Honours, Master's and Doctoral research programs.

Worldwide changes such as transitions in learning modes (Pearson & Kayrooz, 2005; Taylor & Beasley, 2003). have influenced the postgraduate studies in HEIs according to Albertyn *et al.*, (2008), Moreover, conventional education methods have transformed to meet the present need for individuals who possess the skills and abilities to excel and make valuable contributions in the knowledge-based economy that defines the period of globalization as stated by McAlpine and Norton, (2006). Some of the changes came from the governments themselves. South Africa, like educational institutions globally, is making a focused effort to enhance the number of postgraduate students who achieve success (Manyike, 2017). Because the South African government funds postgraduate study in institutions based on the postgraduate throughput rate, supervisors are pressured to find innovative methods to guide postgraduate students swiftly and efficiently. The National DHET aimed to generate more master's and doctorate graduates to strengthen the country's economic competitiveness according to DHET, (2012).

With throughput being the driver of government funding, researchers argued that postgraduate studies in South Africa were more concerned with efficiency than effectiveness and quality according to Lessing & Schulze, (2002) and Mouton, (2007). The reason for the lack of quality was the government's endeavors to have universities engage in rapid transformation processes with an increasing postgraduate student body from disadvantaged backgrounds according to Lessing and Schulze, (2002). Within this context, however, universities were still expected to produce quality Master's and Doctoral graduates while grappling with increased numbers of students with limited experience in library facilities and independent research work as put by Mouton, (2007). Around the world, notably, universities were becoming more accountable to governments for the production and quality of their postgraduate research outputs posits Harland & Scaife, (2010) and Scott *et al.*, (2004) because most of the funding was from these governments themselves.

One other problem experienced in the postgraduate study arenas arena was attrition. Problems with non-completion of postgraduate studies are well-documented worldwide as described by Golde, (2010); Manyike, (2017) and Rodwell & Neumann, (2005). There were various reasons for the non-completion of postgraduate studies, including student and institutional factors according to Lessing & Schulze, (2002) and Manatunga, (2005). In their

study, Taylor *et al.* (2005) found that a mere 50% of PhD candidates successfully finish their studies, and only a small number manage to do so within the designated time limit. According to Armstrong (2004), the failure rate for completing dissertations in Social Sciences in the United Kingdom was between 40% and 50%. According to the National Centre for Education Statistics in 2000, half of the students who start postgraduate study programs in North America do not complete them. Significantly, 33% of attrition occurs during the first year of postgraduate courses posits Golde, (2005). It is therefore against this backdrop that I found it necessary to investigate how novice supervisors experience their postgraduate supervision role.

2.3 Supervision and postgraduate supervision

Having discussed what postgraduate studies at a university entails, it would be imperative to explore the literature on what supervision and postgraduate supervision are. Supervision refers to supervising someone or something as described by Cambridge dictionary, (2008). Furthermore, supervision also has synonyms like administration, management, overseeing, guidance and direction, which are characteristic of postgraduate supervision according to Benmore, (2016) and Collins, (2015). Globally, in the workplace, supervision implied one-on-one and prompt guidance provided to employees, as well as instructing, monitoring, and controlling them when they performed any task or job to ensure they were working following the organization's plans and policies in a timely manner as described by Onuma, (2016). Simply put, supervision aims to ensure that the employees work efficiently and effectively to satisfactorily accomplish the tasks assigned to them by the supervisor as put by Thakral, (2015). Furthermore, supervision included concepts such as the element of directing, facilities control, effective utilization of resources, maintenance of discipline, provision of feedback, improving of communication, providing motivation and maintaining unity in the workplace as stated by Mohanty, (2008) and Panigrahi, (2013) which was also true of the aspect of postgraduate supervision in universities according to Alam *et al.*, (2013).

This study was an integral part of the training process for the students, embedded in that context and supported by one-on-one meetings and feedback posits Remmik *et al.*, (2011). According to some academics as put by Panigrahi, (2013) and Thakral, (2015), supervision in education is about monitoring, superintending, directing, and encouraging the actions of others to improve them. Furthermore, supervision might be used in academic and administrative settings according to Mohanty, (2008). The term "supervision" connotes

hierarchy, discipline, and work monitoring as stated by Lee, (2009). Kandlebender and Peseta (2001) stress three elements of supervision: a) a co-learning relationship between a supervisor and student, b) establishing clear goals, and c) managing the supervisory process. The similarity was that it was a relationship between a supervisor and a student looking at these definitions and descriptions of supervision.

The above viewpoint was further echoed by Barnes and Austin (2009) when they stated that the doctoral supervisor was “one of the most critical persons whom a doctoral student will develop a relationship with during the doctoral degree program”. Effective supervisors "encouraged and praised their supervisees, transmitted scientific knowledge, and socializing the student into the discipline" according to Lyons *et al.*, (1990). Furthermore, supervisors were required to seek students' feeling of agency within a project while maintaining strong student-supervisor connections, which might result in an indirect yet powerful method of steering as put by Turner, (2015). A postgraduate supervisor must possess the knowledge and skills to guide students effectively in converting raw materials into finished products while ensuring the smooth progress of their studies and research as advocated by Masuku, (2021).

As a discipline, research supervision may be characterized as a two-way interactional process in which the student and the supervisor must intentionally engage each other professionally, respectfully, and open-mindedly as colleagues as stated by Alam *et al.*, (2013). Thesis writing carries a pivotal place in the accomplishment of the postgraduate degree, and a good supervisor is critical to this process posits Ali *et al.*, (2019). The success or failure of a postgraduate student's research effort hinges on the supervisor-student relationship posits Ali *et al.*, (2019); Makoni, (2021); Manyike, (2017) and Masuku, (2021). However, Alam *et al.* (2013) also pointed out that the success and quality of postgraduate education heavily relied on competent and efficient postgraduate student supervision. Due to issues connected to poor supervision, many postgraduate students failed to finish their studies within the specified term or dropped out entirely according to Alam *et al.*, (2013).

Postgraduate supervision in education is crucial because it enables educational institutions to develop their research capacities and improve their academic standing, which may lead to financial benefits according to Alam *et al.*, (2013). Postgraduate supervision, according to Makoni (2021), is seen as the mentoring of postgraduate students in their goal to do independent, high-quality research, achieve an appropriate degree, and become recognized topic specialists in their respective professions. Other important activities performed by

supervisors were tuition, community participation, academic citizenship, academic leadership, and their own specialized research as stated by Akala, (2021). They argued that the student-supervisor connection was crucial to completing the trip successfully as put by Alferman *et al.*, (2021). Postgraduate supervision has been widely researched across the globe as a discipline. Every country worldwide researches postgraduate supervision in the context of the problems experienced in that country concerning discipline. In Asia, postgraduate students' views on the supervisory role of supervisors were explored posits Sidhu *et al.*, (2013); Soong *et al.*, 2015).

In contrast, European researchers were interested in matters ranging from the role of doctoral supervision in early career academics according to Frick *et al.*, (2016) and a postgraduate supervision role in the completion and non-completion of doctoral studies as advocated by Devos *et al.*, (2016) on how doctoral students experienced supervision as stated by Gonzalez-Ocampo & Castello, (2018). In the United States of America, issues researched were, among others, doctoral students' views of their dissertations according to Boyce *et al.*, (2019), the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee posits Goldman and Goodboy, (2017), and doctoral students' views of their doctoral mentors as stated by Mansson and Myers, (2012). Based at Wollongong University in Australia, Kirk and Lipscombe (2019) contended that postgraduate supervision involved collaboration and interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee as collegial equals. According to Abdullah and Evans (2012), it is mandatory for postgraduate supervisors in the United States and Australia to have prior experience as associate or co-supervisors and to have successfully guided students to the end of their studies. Co-supervision enabled novice supervisors to collaborate closely with experienced supervisors in order to acquire and master the necessary skills and knowledge as advocated by Lee and Murray, (2015). According to Ali *et al.* (2019), one of the issues experienced by Higher Education in Pakistan was the provision of quality postgraduate supervision.

Internationally, Atkins and Brown (1988) identified key roles of a postgraduate supervisor. A postgraduate supervisor was a director who assisted with identifying and fine-tuning a postgraduate student's research topic. The student relied heavily on the supervisor's guidance to tap resources, networks and expertise while also assisting with technical problems. We should also note that a postgraduate student enrolled on a master's program knows nothing about academic writing or research. Consequently, the supervisor serves as an instructor who

introduces the student to diverse research approaches and research databases. Furthermore, the supervisor is responsible for guiding the student in composing a research proposal.

However, the supervisor is also the student's critic who would give honest, timely and constructive feedback while allowing the student to undergo the master's or doctoral journey independently. Even though supervision was not the only role played by supervisors in a university setting, another role was to remain committed to the student's research projects and to support the students when they encountered personal problems during the journey. In other words, the supervisor oversees the project from inception till completion while advising the students on pitfalls that may derail their research projects.

In South Africa, much research had been undertaken on postgraduate supervision. In collaboration with a Swedish university, South African researchers investigated how doctoral education supervision prepared doctoral candidates for an academic career as stated by Frick *et al.*, (2016). Albertyn *et al.* (2016), based at the University of Stellenbosch, researched student and supervisor perspectives on supervision. Extensive research was undertaken on postgraduate supervision in South Africa, but much had not been done that explored novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at South African universities, hence my interest in this phenomenon.

Effective postgraduate supervision was a concern at universities worldwide as put by Manyike, (2017), especially with the transformational university education the South African government had introduced (Lessing & Schulze, 2002). Many young PhD academics had to supervise doctoral candidates just after completing their studies according to Turner, (2015), which was a concern that this research study wanted to illuminate, especially the novice supervisors' experiences of supervision. These academics generally lacked the expertise to generate high-quality PhD graduates mainly because of their inexperience and the lack of a structured transition system inside the university to provide them with direction, support, and mentoring as stated by Makoni, (2021). In reality, universities are pressured by their governments to increase the throughput of postgraduates posits Manyike, (2017) even though novice and experienced supervisors face many postgraduates to supervise and guide to completion as put by Lessing and Schulze, (2002).

In addition, both inexperienced and experienced supervisors had to generate high-caliber graduates in a shorter timeframe than previously believed feasible according to Lessing and

Schulze, (2002) and Manyike, (2017). Effective quality supervision necessitates frequent meetings between supervisors and supervisees, dedicated allocation of time to supervisees, a genuine interest in supervisees' research projects, displaying a supportive and encouraging demeanour, acknowledging and rectifying students' mistakes, valuing students' ideas, and guiding them towards the successful completion of their research endeavours (Grant & Bitzer, 2014; Schamess, 2006 and Wisker, 2012). After all, postgraduate supervision was most often perceived as a one-to-one relationship between an expert and a novice researcher, so the expert must instill proper qualities in the researcher being supervised as described by Wood and Louw, (2018).

According to Chiappetta-Swanson and Watt (2011), supervisory experience refers to the interaction between a knowledgeable individual in a particular field who guides a postgraduate student in completing a thesis that adheres to specified academic and disciplinary standards. Hence my interest in finding out how novice supervisors acquire knowledge, skills and confidence in their supervisory roles, and how they navigate the challenges and complexities inherent in the postgraduate supervision process. The next section details the meanings attached to the concept of novice supervisors and how they are viewed across the world.

2.4 Who are novice supervisors?

Novice supervisors are seen as early-career academics, junior researchers or emerging researchers, depending on the contexts according to McKay and Monk, (2017). In addition, **they** are referred to using various descriptors, including “neophytes” as stated by Hemmings and Kay, (2010) and “apprentices” as put by Laudel and Gläser, (2008). Furthermore, Matross Helms (2010) used the term “generation X faculty.” In contrast, there was general agreement that age was an insufficient indication of an early career, while descriptors “young” and “new” were losing favor as advocated by Price *et al.*, (2015). In contrast, the nGAP program in South African universities advocated employing young academics to combat the attrition of ageing academia as described by DHET, (2015). The number of years after completing a PhD, the duration of employment at a university, and indicators of research productivity were among various factors often used posits Bosanquet *et al.*, (2017). According to Anderson et al. (2008), the "typical academic career" or "usual entry to academe" involves an exceptional undergraduate student who successfully obtains a PhD and then receives a stable academic position.

Getting to the specifics, the definition of a novice supervisor as someone with less than five years post-PhD completion is widely and frequently used for competitive research findings as advocated by Bazeley *et al.*, 1996). Bazeley *et al.* (1996) further described a novice supervisor as an early career academic with less than five years of “uninterrupted, stable research development”. In a different view, Sutherland *et al.* (2013) described novice supervisors as being supervisors with less than seven years since their first permanent academic appointment. For this study, I used the term novice supervisor because it represented their role, which included research, teaching and service. As I mentioned and explained in the subsequent paragraphs, in this research, a novice supervisor is someone with one to three years of post-doctoral experience who has since been appointed in their first academic position. I presented my argument as to why I saw it that way.

Novice supervisors often started their teaching career without training as put by Remmik *et al.*, (2011), and considered themselves experts in their discipline according to Leë *et al.*, (2005). Novice supervisors entered the academic life with enthusiasm, energy and hope to make a difference in their field according to McKay and Monk, 2017. That notion was contradicted by Manatunga and Goozee (2007) when they pointed out that becoming an expert was by no means easy or straightforward. There was a concern in many countries that the ageing workforce would not be sufficiently replaced by novice supervisors coming up the ranks as many academics retired as put by Hugo, 2008; and Hugo & Morris, 2010. Perhaps the most illuminating program to clarify who novice supervisors were in South African universities was the nGAP program introduced by DHET, 2015. This program has been introduced to cover attrition rates of university academics over and above retirement. Under this program, young, capable scholars were recruited as new academics and underwent a recruitment program for six years. These academics were employed permanently from the onset and experienced reduced workloads in the first three years but would get a full load from the fourth year onwards. They were then assigned supervising duties and thus became novice supervisors.

The first stages of academic careers profoundly influence the development of inexperienced supervisors' comprehension of education and instruction, their convictions, and their professional identities as academics in higher education according to Remmik *et al.*, 2011. According to Kirk and Lipscombe (2019), novice supervisors were characterized as self-doubting and suspicious of being evaluative; they tended to be highly supportive and/or

didactic, concrete, structured, and task-orientated. Their lack of experience caused them to be concerned about being seen as credible by students and feeling ill-equipped to navigate work situations that lacked clear instructions for most job tasks, such as supervising postgraduate students as **advocated by Amundsen and McAlpine, 2009**.

In the United Kingdom, novice supervisors were referred to as early career academics **according to McAlpine and Ackerlind, (2010)** whose journey as an early career academic was a time of naivety, confusion and optimism. Based in Estonia, Remmik *et al.* (2011) referred to experiences of early career academics as having a great influence on the development of university lecturers. On the other hand, the Canadian researchers Acker and Haque (2017) were concerned about the contemporary performance measures early career academics were susceptible to in the workplace. Finally, working in partnership with researchers at the UKZN in South Africa, Ssempebwa *et al.* (2016) from Makerere University in Uganda explored the expectations of early career academics in Africa.

Nonetheless, I referred to early career academics as novice supervisors for this study because the term was used extensively in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Netherlands, African countries, and South Africa. Novice supervisor as a term, however, does not diminish other terms such as early career academics, junior academics or emerging researchers. It was also interesting to note that in South Africa, you only needed to have completed a master's degree to teach at a university. Moreover, novice supervisors were neither trained teachers nor were they given any systematized teaching induction program before being employed at universities **according to Ssempebwa *et al.* (2016)**. Contrary to this view, the nGAP program introduced in South African universities in 2015 offered gradual induction of novice supervisors in academia. According to international research, novice supervisors are often those who have acquired a PhD within the last five to seven years and/or have been assigned to their first academic employment. These findings were reported by Bazeky *et al.* (1996) and Bosanquet *et al.* (2017).

Informed by the above discussion, for this study, a novice supervisor is an academic who has successfully supervised three or fewer postgraduate students to completion. The following section shows the experiences of novice supervisors as they executed their supervisory roles in academia.

2.5 Novice supervisor support at the universities

Graduates of Masters and Doctoral qualification were appointed by universities worldwide regardless of whether they had teaching experience [according to Remmik *et al*, \(2011\)](#). That is, one only needed a Masters or a Doctoral degree to teach at a university. Apart from lecturer duties which have been extensively demonstrated earlier, lecturers had to dispense postgraduate supervision to their students. It is a well-researched postulation that novice postgraduate supervisors' inexperience as lecturers and also as postgraduate supervisors warrants support from universities that employ them [as put by Ssempebwa, \(2016\)](#).

A supervisor was tasked to assist the postgraduate students' development in terms of the research project [according to Harwood & Petric, \(2018\)](#). Therefore, a novice postgraduate supervisor had to have the expertise to be able to guide and capacitate the postgraduate student to successfully complete the Masters or Doctorate qualification registered for. Furthermore, successful postgraduate supervision has moral, reputational and financial outcomes for the institution [as advocated by Bazrafkan *et al*, \(2019\)](#). Novice postgraduate supervisors are expected to train postgraduate students to gain competence in areas such as specialist skills, generalist skills, self-reliant skills and group/team skills [according to Light *et al*, \(2009\)](#). Retrospectively, universities expect novice postgraduate supervisors to be versed in these skills in order to adequately supervise their postgraduate students.

However, research abilities are not considered as one of the priorities in the employment of academic staff [according to Haghdoost *et al*, \(2013\)](#). The reason for this posture is that newly appointed faculty members are often involved in teaching, administration tasks, and that inhibited them from attaining expertise in other aspects such as research supervision [as put by Haghdoost *et al*, \(2013\)](#). Malekafzali *et al* (2004) further asserts that novice postgraduate supervisors have weaknesses such as the inability to define the problem, analyzing data, interpreting results, publishing scientific articles.

In addition, it is said to be difficult for a novice postgraduate supervisor to adapt supervision to the postgraduate student's characteristics or traits [according to Kandiko and Kinchin, \(2012\)](#) in comparison to experienced doctoral supervisors. This was caused by mainly that novice postgraduate supervisors lacked coherent and compiled training programs which can enhance their research supervision capabilities. Samari *et al* (2014) asserts that research quality can be enhanced by developing expertise in the novice postgraduate supervisors'

research supervision. Moreover, Schon (1983) states that adequate support can enable novice postgraduate supervisors to deliberately use and learn from their personal learning experiences hence the suggested support initiatives discussed below.

2.5.1 Mentoring as a mechanism to support novice supervisors

Experienced supervisors contribute to postgraduate student's learning by being responsive to the student's needs and maintaining healthy student-supervisor relationship (de Klein et al, 2014). Experienced supervisors act as mentors for novice supervisors in universities with the aim to strengthen their professional role according to Lingren, (2006). Kirk & Lipscombe (2019) singles out emotional support as required to for novice supervisors to navigate their new roles. Furthermore, Chen *et al* (2016) viewed emotional responses such as feelings of vulnerability as common among novice supervisors. Openness to self-doubt enables learning and also being open to multiple perspectives by a mentor is beneficial to developing professional competency (Kerdeman, 2015). According to Murray and Male (2005), novice supervisor uncertainties and vulnerability are amplified by lack of research skills and experience. Cotteral (2015) concurs and adds that lack of academic research experience contributes to anxiety and uncertainty regarding joining the scholarly conversation. Novice supervisors in return seek acceptance and recognition from experienced supervisors in the quest for academic and research identity (Kirk & Lipscombe, 2019).

Mentorship helps to grow and normalize a novice supervisors into the profession as put by Boswell *et al*, (2001) and also develop researcher identity. According to Zerzan *et al* (2009), the experienced postgraduate supervisor as mentor and the novice supervisor as mentee is interactional and interdependent with both parties required to contribute to the effectiveness of the partnership. Additionally, the role of the mentor significantly impacts on success of the mentor relationship through support and expert guidance as put by Zerzan *et al*, (2009). Furthermore, the mentee's uncertainty and emotions are necessary for developing self-understanding and the mentor must facilitate self-questioning for mentees as novice supervisors.

According to Hobson *et al* (2009), learning from colleagues is also essential to learn teaching skills and furthermore, the most effective way of supporting novice supervisors is mentoring. This is mainly because it helps to reduce feelings of isolation, increases confidence, self-esteem, professional growth, improves self-reflection and problem solving qualities according to Marable and Raimondi, (2007). Mentoring also provides emotional and psychological support and enables novice supervisors to put difficult experiences into perspective and therefore increases morale and job satisfaction (Hobson et al, 2009).

2.5.2. Novice supervisors' self-support initiatives

Novice supervisors recognize the precarious academia dilemma they are in as a result of inexperience. As a result, novice supervisors mitigate their postgraduate supervision challenges through collaboration and co-authorship opportunities within the research context according to Chen *et al*, (2016). Additionally, collaboration through dialogue with experienced supervisors significantly develop positive supervision outlook (Kamler & Thompson, 2014). According to Reedy and Taylor-Dunlop (2015), modelling of academic writing, co-researching and co-supervision facilitates recognition of novice supervisors by others. Furthermore, publishing with experienced researchers is beneficial to novice supervisor development.

However, there are institutional factors that hinder support of novice supervisors. They are factors such as limited support in developing supervision skills and experiences according to Gallagher *et al*, (2011) and also lack of collaborative work environments as put by Harrison and McKeon, (2008). In addition, these hindrances by institutions make it difficult for novice supervisors to develop positive efficacy to postgraduate supervision according to Murphy *et al*, (2014). Furthermore, novice supervisors experience heavy workloads, vague work assignments, insufficient feedback and lack of support by institutions as put by Murphy *et al*, (2014).

2.5.3. University initiatives of support to novice supervisors

According to Gibbs and Coffey (2004), novice supervisors learn postgraduate supervision skills at university through pedagogical training courses, mentoring as well as informal learning opportunities (e.g. teaching experiences, practice, relationships with colleagues). These pedagogical courses have a positive impact on novice supervisors' comprehension about postgraduate supervision. There is a need for provision of non-traditional forms of

support of novice supervisors worldwide **as said by Ssempebwa *et al.*, (2016).** For this reason, higher education institutions are offering induction programs for novice supervisors. Foote (2010) reports that many US colleges and universities have teaching and learning centres that offer workshops and seminars on issues of teaching and learning. Additionally, in the UK, nearly all universities have postgraduate courses certificate courses that are compulsory for novice postgraduate supervisors (Teferra, 2016). In South Africa, DHET and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal delivers a university education induction program. In Uganda, Faculty of Education at the University of Uganda, induction seminars are offered to induct novice supervisors **according to Teffer, (2016).**

2.6 Experiences of novice postgraduate supervisors

The literature extensively discusses the placement of inexperienced supervisors in the academic field, especially in teaching at the university level. This topic has been explored by various authors, including Austin (2010), Austin *et al.*, Sorcinelly and Daniels (2007), Peluchette and Jeanquart (2000), Sandretto *et al.* (2002) and Kane *et al.* (2004). McDonald and Star (2006) found that inexperienced managers saw the workplace as a dynamic environment with constantly changing objectives and an uncertain endpoint characterised by high competitiveness. Inexperienced supervisors employ sense-making processes to interpret signals related to requirements such as research productivity. They make choices and decisions in specific contexts to determine how different aspects of their work contribute to desired outcomes **(Acker & Hacque, 2017).** Furthermore, their supervision was influenced primarily by “self-help” reading on supervision and the pedagogy of their supervisors because novice supervisors were not trained supervisors, nor were they given any systematic supervision program **as put by Ssempebwa *et al.*, (2016).** Ssempebwa *et al.* (2016) also reported challenges novice supervisors faced in teaching preparations, student education, requested mentoring and workshops in teaching methods.

Remmik *et al.* (2011) found that the events in the early years of academic careers significantly impacted the formation of university academics' understanding of learning and teaching, their values, and their professional identities as academics. Internationally, it is well acknowledged that inexperienced supervisors often encounter collaboration, support, loneliness, and isolation, as shown by studies conducted by Ackerlind (2005), Barret and Brown (2009), and Walker *et al.* (2008). Garbett (2007) found that inexperienced supervisors often faced feelings of uneasiness due to their early-career status, unclear job tasks,

inadequate feedback, and a lack of support. Nevertheless, Remmik *et al.* (2011) discovered that inexperienced supervisors tried to align themselves with other educators in their professional cohort and conform to established ideologies and attitudes in Estonia. In addition, Remmik *et al.* (2011) observed a dearth of cooperation among faculty members in teaching and research. In addition to the experiences of inexperienced supervisors, there were also difficulties, as outlined in the following paragraph.

2.7 Challenges novice supervisors' experience

In Australia, McKay and Monk (2017) reported that novice supervisors found their workloads very demanding and struggled to manage workloads. This challenge was attributed to the complexity of academic work. According to McAlpine and Ackerlind (2010), academics faced dissatisfaction because they were unsure about their jobs. Having completed their research in South Africa and Uganda, Ssempebwa *et al.* (2016) reported that most novice supervisors indicated that they had no competence in teaching before joining the university; however, they were positive about their preparedness to supervise postgraduate research. Nonetheless, according to Lovitts (2007), novice supervisors were expected to have acquired pedagogical skills through the hidden component of their curriculum while they were students. In other words, novice supervisors experienced frustration due to a lack of clarity about their role because they didn't have prior supervisory experience. Ssempebwa *et al.* (2016) also concurred with other researchers that most novice supervisors do not feel supported by their universities. In research conducted on novice supervisors in eight New Zealand universities, Sutherland *et al.* (2013) found that having a doctoral degree was positively associated with academic success for novice supervisors.

While this phenomenon appeared to be extensively investigated, I still believed that there was room for further research; hence, I sought to explore the experiences of novice postgraduates at a South African university. The study aimed to develop a postgraduate supervision model for novice supervisors as the end product. The next section details how novice supervisors overcome postgraduate supervision challenges.

2.8 Novice supervisors overcoming postgraduate supervision challenges

The word "challenge" pertains to the assessment of the capabilities of postgraduate students and supervisors to excel in their respective postgraduate studies or professions (Havenga & Sengane, 2018). While experiencing challenges, supervisors and postgraduate students alike strive for self-efficacy, which is the confidence they have in their abilities to accomplish various research activities as advocated by Kareshki and Bahmanabadi, (2013).

Challenges in postgraduate studies and particularly supervision are well documented (Herman, 2011). These challenges cover a broad spectrum of the supervision field, including organisational factors (Mouton, 2001), quality of postgraduate supervision (Lessing & Schulze, 2002), concerns about efficiency and throughput (Manyike, 2017) and attrition of postgraduate students from their studies (Herman, 2010). However, these were not the only problems in the postgraduate supervision field.

From postgraduate students' perspective, research showed that organizational factors like poor working conditions, personality conflicts with supervisors, and limited availability of supervisors negatively impact their studies according to Allan and Dory, (2001); Haynes *et al.*, 2008). As Allan and Dory (2001) put it, busy or uninterested supervisors lack flexibility regarding the program. Insufficient training or a lack of training on conducting research or writing a dissertation hampers postgraduate students' progress in completing their studies. A lack of organizational financial support has also been cited as a major barrier to completing postgraduate studies (Allan & Dory, 2001; Haynes, 2008).

Concerning the quality of postgraduate supervision, the relationship between the supervisor and student is important for successfully completing postgraduate studies as advocated by Ives and Rowley, (2005). Inaccessibility of supervisors, provision of poor feedback, not keeping appointments and sexual harassment act as barriers to supervision according to Grant and Graham, (1995). The supervisor's availability to help with the study's design, data analysis and writing of publishable research papers is paramount to postgraduate students during supervision as put by Ezebilo, (2012).

Efficiency could be referred to as the optimization of resources to enhance the quality of research according to Mutula, (2009). Coupled to throughput in supervision, efficiency could be seen as the production of quality postgraduate students in relation to the national development agenda as put by Mutula, (2009). However, postgraduate students could be

unsure of their ability to conduct research and do not believe that practise and effort lead to success according to Salehi and Ashiyan, (2012), which could derail the supervisor's endeavor to lead a postgraduate student to completion. As a result, the throughput envisaged by the university and government would not be reached.

The reasons for the attrition of postgraduate students from their studies could be personal factors such as time and financial constraints, family responsibilities and the absence of a support system according to Herman, (2011). In addition, physical and psychological factors are also barriers to successful completion of postgraduate studies as put by Allan and Dory, (2001). These include the inability to balance personal lives and relationships with the demands of postgraduate studies as advocated by Kearns *et al.*, (2008).

In South Africa, only a small number of students express contentment with their supervisors, whereas the main difficulties include insufficient help from supervisors, supervisors' excessive workload, and inadequate comments regarding research endeavors (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011). However, most students at Queensland University in Australia expressed satisfaction with their supervisors as put by Heath, (2002). Wisker and Robinson (2012) studied the impact of supervisor loss, supervisor absence, and students' experiences in the United Kingdom. According to Wisker and Robinson (2012), it was necessary to maintain a harmonious combination of formality and informality in monitoring and establishing trust at both personal and institutional levels. In the United States of America, Menges and Exum (1983) discovered that explicit discrimination may impede the advancement of women and minority groups. Berg (2001) provided evidence indicating a greater number of males achieved the completion of postgraduate courses compared to women. The obstacles faced by minority groups included racism, deprivation of access to support systems, knowledge, and other essential resources (Thomas & Alderfer, 1989). According to Amato (1992), women encountered an inhospitable atmosphere.

Through this study, I hoped to unearth novice supervisors' experiences concerning their supervisory roles at a South African university. Most studies focused on the doctorate supervision of postgraduate students and how novice supervisors could become good supervisors. In addition, in South Africa, as opposed to most countries, an academic could be employed with a master's degree, and I wanted to explore the experiences of these academics who also became novice supervisors. Furthermore, in literature, novice supervisors were often defined as academics with less than seven years since the completion of their doctorate

degrees and working at universities. This definition is too wide for the South African context, where an academic could accumulate an impressive body of work within a short period of time. In South Africa, a novice supervisor could be defined as an academic with three or fewer years of experience working as an academic and who supervised not more than two postgraduate students to completion. Against this backdrop, I wanted to illuminate the experiences of novice supervisors supervising postgraduate students at a South African university.

In the next section, I show the theoretical framework that I used to explore novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

The preceding sections detailed the background through literature regarding who novice supervisors were and their role in postgraduate supervision at a South African university. Postgraduate studies and supervision as disciplines were also defined. In the following sections, I explain the lens or theory through which I explored the novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university.

2.9.1 Social Learning Theory

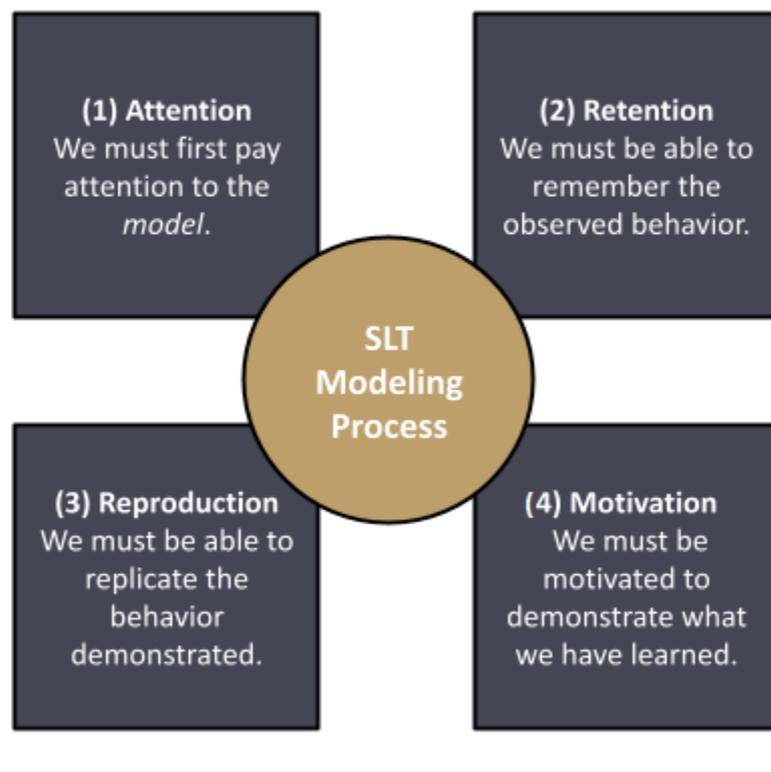
This study was based on the SLT founded by Bandura (1971). The SLT suggests that people may learn new behaviours via observing and imitating others **as put by Nabavi, (2012)**. According to Bandura (1971), novice supervisors are social beings who learned from other supervisors in the past and present. Novice supervisors experienced supervision from their postgraduate studies and had first-hand experiences of how they were supervised. This experience meant that novice supervisors learned supervision from interacting with supervisors in a social context **as advocated by Razieh, (2012)**. Moreover, they still learned supervision from colleagues in their present jobs as lecturers. This viewpoint was supported by the fact that novice supervisors were academics who had completed their master's or doctoral studies and were appointed to their first academic position less than five years ago **(McKay & Monk, 2017)**. In addition, novice supervisors had no supervisory experience and were not necessarily trained teachers **as put by Ssempebwa et al., (2016)**. As a result, novice supervisors drew supervising knowledge from the time they were supervised and applied the lessons learnt in their current supervising role as postgraduate supervisors. Based on the

above discussions, according to SLT, novice supervisors acquired supervisory behavior from observing other supervisors (Johnson *et al.*, 2014).

2.9.2 Bandura's Modelling Process

Bandura (1971) stressed that inner forces propelled behavior in the form of needs, drives and impulses, and there were four conditions of the SLT modelling process. These conditions of the modelling process were: (a) attention (b) retention (c) reproduction (d) motivation. They are represented in order of succession in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 0.1 Albert Bandura's modelling process



Source: Bandura (1971)

Behaviour could be shaped by rewarding or punishing consequences, and for meaningful observation to occur, the four Bandura modelling processes must occur. Bandura's SLT suggested that observation and modelling played a primary role in how and why novice supervisors learnt supervision from others. Observational learning was a process where

novice supervisors learned by watching postgraduate supervision from others around them (Bandura, 1971). The novice supervisor watched, memorised, and practised the observed postgraduate supervisory behaviour in their own work. As a result, the novice supervisor was modelled and shaped by the postgraduate supervision observed as put by Bandura, (1971).

However, as in observational learning, identificatory learning also occurs without an induced set or intent to learn the specific behaviors or activities. Identificatory learning occurs mainly with children who identify with the model, who is mainly the parent and then mimics the behavior displayed by the parent. As opposed to observational learning of postgraduate supervisory behavior by novice supervisors, the child in identificatory learning just imitates the parent's behavior without knowing the implications of the behavior learned according to Bandura, (1971). As I have mentioned before, the novice supervisors' needs, drive, and impulses propelled them to observe postgraduate supervision to acquire the knowledge, and put it into practice in their own roles as postgraduate supervisors, and these elements were absent in identificatory learning. However, observation also included observing negative things about an aspect according to Bandura, (1971). In this situation, the novice supervisor discarded negative behavior and internalized the positive behavior from the environment. In addition, the four Bandura modelling processes took place to cement the knowledge observed. In the following sections, I unpack each modelling process in relation to how novice supervisors experience postgraduate supervision at a South African university.

2.9.2.1 Attention

To learn by example, one needs to pay attention to the behavior being observed as put by Bandura, 1971). Bandura (1971) added that one of the component functions of learning by example was, therefore, concerned with attention processes. Novice supervisors had an opportunity to observe postgraduate supervision as students, and currently, they still have an opportunity to observe peers and experienced colleagues regarding postgraduate supervision. Paying attention is fundamental to meaningful observation because the novice needs to apply lessons learnt in their role as postgraduate supervisors. Bandura (1971) posited that most learning phenomena may be seen and learned indirectly via observing other individuals' behavior and the consequences that come from it. Furthermore, it is important for inexperienced supervisors to prioritize their own postgraduate supervision and the supervision occurring in their immediate environment (Razieh, 2012).

As postgraduate students, the novice supervisors foresaw themselves as postgraduate supervisors and learned accordingly by paying attention when they were supervised. This conduct occurs because for individuals to be convinced to imitate behavior, the process is dictated by the attention that must be applied (McLeod, 2016). According to Johnson et al., (2014), while paying attention, novice supervisors (currently and previously as postgraduate students) looked for specific behavior from their supervisors or mentors, which they acquired and used when there was a need to supervise. As postgraduate students, novice supervisors paid attention to supervisors who cared about their goals, needs and interests and currently imitated these behaviors in their supervision of postgraduate students (Whitaker & Moses, 1994).

2.9.2.2 Retention

Bandura (1971) maintained that a person could not be much influenced by observation of a model's behaviour if they have no memory of it. Retention means the ability of the novice supervisor to recall what was observed when the opportunity to supervise arises according to Johnson et al., (2014). Novice supervisors must be able to recall behaviour observed to put it into practice with their postgraduate students. Normally, postgraduate students were supervised from their master's onwards through to their doctorate degrees, so observed behaviour from the supervisor needed to be reinforced to be imitated later as put by McLeod, (2016). Imitation was achieved through rehearsal by the novice supervisors when they got their own postgraduate students to supervise because it ensured retention of lessons learnt (Razieh, 2012).

As a postgraduate student, novice supervisors retained behavior from their supervisors, which was beneficial to their completion of their degree. This beneficial behavior retained from the supervisor may include, among others, helping postgraduate students to formulate a research proposal, formulate research questions, be perceptive of students' difficulties in their work and write their reports (Lessing & Schulze, 2002). In addition, the novice supervisor retained the responsibilities of a supervisor, namely, making sure the topic presents a problem, and ensuring students had a clear understanding of the problem and helping students to use correct methods to research the problem as put by Lessing and Schulze, (2002).

2.9.2.3 Reproduction

Bandura (1971) posited that overt acts are governed by symbolic representations. In addition, to accomplish behavioral replication, inexperienced supervisors must assemble a predetermined set of reactions in accordance with the modeled patterns. That is, novice supervisors observed supervisors during their master's or doctorate studies and put those observed experiences into practice in their supervision of their own students. Reproduction was the ability of novice supervisors to supervise postgraduate students according to Bandura's model **as put by McLeod, (2016)**. Razieh (2012) affirmed this when maintaining that reproduction calls for the novice supervisor to replicate the supervision action, and replicating could be a problem for someone unprepared to develop mentally.

Bandura (1971) argued that man's heightened cognitive ability significantly shaped the impact of his experiences and influenced the trajectory of his future actions. This meant that novice supervisors had the capacity to be insightful of supervision as they were being supervised during their master's and doctoral studies and had the foresight to apply lessons learned in their supervision roles. The novice must be allowed to reproduce the behavior of supervision **according to Johnson et al., (2014)**. Through their day-to-day activities of supervision, novice supervisors prepared future generations of scholars and graduates with transferable skills (subject-specific and generic) besides knowledge **according to Fragnouli, (2021)**.

2.9.2.4 Motivation

Bandura (1971) proposed that a large portion of learning phenomena might be seen and acquired indirectly via the observation of other persons' conduct and the resulting consequences. Moreover, novice supervisors must give precedence to their own postgraduate supervision and the supervision in their local surroundings **according to Razieh, (2012)**. The novice supervisor must be enthusiastic, driven and have the desire to accept the supervision experience so they can apply it in their work. According to Razieh (2012), novice supervisors must desire to demonstrate what they have learned from their supervisors when they were postgraduate students and from their university's mentorship programs. This meant that the novice supervisor must value the supervision observed or the rewards that the supervision of postgraduate students presented. That is, novice supervisors are expected to see reinforcement of the supervision performed (Johnson et al., 2014).

Bandura (1971) however suggested that the provision of positive incentives resulted in the quick transformation of previously unexpressed observational learning into action. In other words, if the novice supervisors did not feel the reinforcement of their supervision was important enough, they would not want to supervise anymore (McLeod, 2016). More than likely, competent, dedicated and accessible supervision would be imitated in the novice supervisors' postgraduate supervising role as (Lessing & Schulze, 2002). This behavior might likely result in the postgraduate students' satisfaction and timeous completion of postgraduate degrees. For novice supervisors, reinforcement would make them keep imitating the behavior observed from their mentors and peers.

Based on the discussions above, I used the Social Learning Theory which was observatory in nature, to explore novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university.

2.10 Conclusion

The literature review shows the meaning attached to postgraduate studies in South Africa and worldwide. It also shows that postgraduate studies are essential for the advancement of a country economically, which is why governments sponsor universities. Supervision and postgraduate supervision are interrelated, except that postgraduate supervision is specific and has more depth than general supervision. The literature also provides a wide range of views on who novice supervisors are worldwide. I find that the definitions from across the globe are not context-specific for South African universities where a novice supervisor could be considered widely experienced in seven years. I also look into the experiences of novice supervisors in universities. Terms such as insecure, in the deep end, and unsupported are widely used to describe their situation in academia. Novice supervisors also experience challenges in their roles as postgraduate supervisors, which are outlined. However, novice supervisors also use strategies to overcome these challenges in academia. My theoretical framework details how I intend to investigate the main research question: What are the experiences of novice supervisors of postgraduate supervision at a university in South Africa?

The literature review and the theoretical framework greatly influence my additional research questions:

- a) What do novice supervisors understand by the concept of novice supervisor?
- b) How do novice supervisors navigate the commencement of their supervisory roles?

- c) What support systems does the university provide for novice supervisors to perform their supervisory roles?
- d) What challenges do novice supervisors experience and how do they overcome these challenges while executing their supervisory roles?

The following chapter details the methodology I employed to investigate the main research question and sub-questions listed above.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

With this study, I aimed to illuminate the **experiences of novice supervisors in supervision at a university in South African**. In this chapter, I outline the methodology I followed to investigate **this phenomenon**. This chapter comprises thirteen sections that deal with different aspects of the research study's methodology.

In the first section, I present and discuss the research paradigm, while I showed the research approach in the second section. In the third and fourth sections, I outline the research design and the sampling procedure. In the fifth section, I describe the study site and detail the composition of the study participants in the sixth section. I outline this study's data collection strategies and analysis in the seventh and eighth sections. In the ninth and tenth sections, I explain this study's trustworthiness and credibility, respectively. The last four sections outline the thick description, conformability, auditing, and ethics considerations.

3.2 Research paradigm

The term paradigm was derived from the Greek meaning pattern **according to Kivunja and Kuyini, (2017)**. A “research paradigm” encompasses a variety of philosophical postulations, including ontological, epistemological, and methodological viewpoints. These assumptions form the core of a scholar's worldview, structure their thought process, and guide their behavior **according to Creswell and Creswell, (2018); Maree, (2016); Jonker and Pennink, (2010)**. In the context of this study, it could be defined as the basic belief system or worldview that guided me as I investigated the novice supervisors' experiences of the supervision of postgraduate students.

In this study, I employed the constructivist paradigm, also known as a naturalistic **as put by Guba and Lincoln, (1989)** and interpretive paradigm **(Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015)**. By setting this study within a constructivist methodological paradigm, I based myself on the assumption that, since there are different ways different people describe occurrences, social reality is exemplified by a variety of perspectives, which results in varied viewpoints on such occurrences **(Maree, 2016)**. Based on this assumption, I generated knowledge on my subject of study through the participants' subjective meaning of their experiences **according to Navarro Sada and Maldonado, (2007)**. What informed my choice of

this paradigm was that, through the study, I intended to generate and analyze the participants' diverse perspectives and interpretations on navigating the postgraduate supervision at a university.

The constructivist paradigm regulated the inquiry into the experiences of novice supervisors, and with this paradigm, I utilized a methodology that explored the minds of novice supervisor participants. Furthermore, I made meaning and sense of statements according to Lincoln and Guba, (2016), as is often practiced in qualitative research as put by Creswell, (2014). Since this study was a case study approach, I used data collection techniques such as interviews. Furthermore, I constructed the experiences of novice supervisors of post-graduate supervision into knowledge through interpretations and reflections as advocated by Soraya *et al.*, (2017). Nevertheless, although the research found that engaging with various inexperienced supervisors was crucial for comprehending their supervisory encounters, individual viewpoints and assessments also exerted influence. This approach related to how I perceived the world and viewed knowledge construction within the constructivist paradigm. Although various research approaches, such as qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods, are available, for this study I opted to utilize a qualitative research approach.

3.3 Ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions

According to Crotty, (1998, p. 10), ontology is the study of being because it addresses the question of “what is out there to know about”. Qualitative researchers have to assume that participants they investigate are human beings with different views, interpretations and meanings according to Grix (2002: 1). In a similar manner, novice postgraduate supervisors in this study differed in their understanding of the concept of postgraduate supervision. Using the case study as a research design, the current study focussed on views, thoughts, opinions, and experiences of the concerned novice postgraduate supervisors.

Accordingly, the ontological assumption of this study was that novice postgraduate supervisors have different experiences on how they supervised postgraduate students as advocated by Flick, (2018). For this purpose, I made an assumption that their supervisory experiences could be understood from the participants' experiences, views and beliefs (Noble & Heale, 2019). My epistemological stance was the belief that only novice postgraduate supervisors could actually reveal postgraduate supervisory practices in their daily supervisory roles according to Gibbs, (2018). Regarding this, I performed the study based on the

assumption that the interpretivist paradigm would provide guidance for me to create knowledge about the phenomenon from the “lived and felt experiences” of the participants according to Porter & Robinson, (2011). I reported the findings of this study in an interpretive manner as put by Hackley, (2019). Notably, I produced findings that are the reflection of the experiences, views and beliefs of the participants in this study as advocated by Merriam and Grenier, (2019).

Epistemology is concerned with the nature and forms of knowledge according to Cohen *et al.*, (2007: 7). Crotty (2003: 8) adds that epistemology is ‘concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kind of knowledge is possible and how we can ensure that it is both adequate and legitimate’. The Epistemological stance used in this study is interpretive which maintains that the view of knowledge and therefore all meaningful reality as such is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. Thus, meaning is not discovered, but constructed and as such novice postgraduate supervisors constructed and shared their understanding and experience of the phenomenon under study.

The reasons why the interpretive paradigm was used for this study are as follow: First, I wanted to find an answer to the question “What is the supervision experience of novice postgraduate supervisors in a South African university? Second, the construction of meaning is transmitted within an essentially social context shown in the interviews conducted. Finally, interpretivists view that there is no true or valid interpretation hence novice postgraduate supervisors could differ in their submissions. Methodology is therefore “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of the methods to the desired outcomes” according to Crotty, (2003: 3).

3.4 Research approach

My study progressed from the fundamental theoretical postulations I discussed in section 3.2 to my research approach, which included participant selection, the data gathering methods and the data analysis approach as advocated by Maree, (2016). I have therefore decided to use a qualitative research approach owing to its interpretative and realistic nature, allowing participants to express their takes and opinions and perceptions in depth regarding issues and events according to Yin, (2011). Through the qualitative research approach, I interpreted,

explored and understood the meaning novice supervisors ascribe to their supervision of postgraduate students as put by Creswell, (2014). In other words, qualitative research revealed the meaning of the experiences of novice supervisors of their supervision experiences through interviews according to Soraya *et al.*, (2019). The study focused on the description of postgraduate supervision experiences by novice supervisors, the construction of their supervision worlds, and the significance they assigned to these encounters (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The use of a qualitative research methodology in this study allowed the utilization of the statements of inexperienced supervisors as empirical evidence, which were gathered and examined via diverse methods (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In addition, the utilization of the qualitative research approach enabled me to (a) comprehend the experiences of novice supervisors throughout their supervision process, (b) serve as the research instrument, (c) analyze data in a deductive manner, and (d) generate comprehensive data from various sources such as field notes and interviews.

To address the research question: “What are novice supervisors’ experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university?” I used this approach because it allowed an in-depth examination of the complexity of novice supervisors’ supervision experiences. The qualitative research approach helped me explore how novice supervisors make sense of their supervisory experiences according to Griffin, (2004) and Willig, (2001). Moreover, the qualitative research approach contributed to the sparse line of research addressing novice supervisors’ experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university. The qualitative inquiry allowed me to ask different kinds of questions compared to using the quantitative counterpart.

Using the qualitative research procedure allowed me to construct a comprehensive and all-encompassing representation, document the intricate perspectives of inexperienced supervisors, and carry out the investigation in their authentic environment according to Creswell, (2009). This study technique enables a comprehensive understanding of the underlying rationales, viewpoints, and incentives regarding how inexperienced supervisors comprehend and implement supervision with postgraduate students and the factors influencing their perspectives as advocated by Bechuke and Debeila, (2012); Maree, (2010). Utilizing a qualitative research technique gave me valuable understanding and insight into the experiences of inexperienced supervisors of supervision at a university in South Africa.

Furthermore, using the qualitative research methodology allowed me to get a deeper understanding of the data, comprehend the participants' perspectives, and acquire social knowledge by conducting interviews.

In addition, the qualitative method facilitated my comprehension and interpretation of the phenomena by examining the meanings and understandings established by rookie supervisors. The technique gave me a detailed comprehension of the circumstances and significance of novice supervisors, as seen by the novice supervisors who participated in the research as put by Fleming, (2004). It also allowed me to get insight into inexperienced supervisors' profound convictions and emotions. It enabled me to understand inexperienced supervisors' deep convictions and emotions and serve as the primary research tool. I was tasked with gathering data, analyzing, interpreting the results, and presenting the findings. Using the interpretative and naturalistic method, I could investigate the intricate aspects of rookie supervisors' experiences and provide answers to relevant concerns (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Moreover, within the scope of this research, the participants' perspectives provide an understanding of the new supervisors' supervision experiences. Put simply, the inexperienced supervisors could communicate their experiences more successfully and with more efficiency when I instructed them to do so using their own language during the interviews as advocated by Henning *et al.*, (2004).

3.5 Challenges in employing the qualitative research approach

Although the employment of the qualitative research approach allowed for conducting a successful study, it was not without challenges. Due to the subjective nature of this qualitative study, it is difficult to guarantee the trustworthiness of its findings according to Ahmed and Ilyas, (2017), partly because it was difficult for the study to be completely devoid of personal feelings and emotions, and it was even harder to quantify the beliefs, assumptions and values of novice postgraduate supervisors. Consequently, to ensure that the results of the study were trustworthy it was necessary to apply triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, as well as explicitly explaining the purpose of the study to participants and urge participants to take part in the study in good faith and do an audit trail.

Another challenge encountered with employing the qualitative approach for this study was that it was difficult to plan and conduct the exploration as advocated by Ahmed and Ilyas,

(2017). Qualitative studies in general do not follow a fixed structure or shape and are therefore relatively difficult to plan and execute. Moreover, it was hard to accurately present and interpret findings of this study since descriptions were used as opposed to using numbers which could have been easy to make sense of according to Daniel, 2016; Ahmed & Ilyas, (2017). Factors that could have heavily compromised the findings included poor research design selection, vague statement of the research problem, poor development of objectives and research questions would have been heavily compromised or if the theoretical framework did not resonate with the study. Through thorough supervision and peer reviews, the sound design of this study enabled me to conduct it effectively.

Another challenge that the qualitative approach presented is that participants were in control of the data collected because of the open-ended nature of the interview questions (Ahmed & Ilyas, 2017). The qualitative study naturally depended on detailed answers from novice postgraduate supervisors, so it became difficult to collect data when they were reluctant to share specific information. To avert this problem, their trust was gained through spending more time in the field in order to build a close, trusting research relationship with them so that they could be liberal with their answers according to Daniel, (2016). The ethical principles and guidelines of the study was explained, such as assuring the participants that their privacy and anonymity by allotting pseudonyms to them would be guaranteed; the right to participate in the study willingly and to withdraw from the study at any time, objective reporting of the results of the study; as well as explicitly explaining the objective purpose of the study.

As Ahmed and Ilyas (2017) caution that personal experiences and knowledge could influence qualitative studies, it was possible that I overlooked or did not notice important issues that could have been important to the study. Moreover, it was difficult to disconnect the study from my prior self-constructed meaning and understanding of the novice postgraduate supervisors' (Daniel, 2016). As much as I distanced myself from the study, I had my own beliefs and assumptions before going into the field and these threatened to influence the kind of data that I collected and how I made sense of it. The declaration of my neutrality in the study clarified the fact that I based the study's findings and results purely on the data collected.

Another challenge that I encountered while employing the qualitative approach was the confinement of the results of the study to the context of the study according to Daniel, (2016).

The subjective nature of the study means that the study's findings cannot explain similar phenomena in different contexts. However, I soundly planned and executed study to a point where the results of the study could be referenced when trying to solve problems or understand related phenomena in other settings. In the next section, the case study design employed for the study is discussed.

3.6 Research design

The research design that I chose to integrate the different components of the study coherently and logically directed the research strategy of this study posits Kazdin, (1998). The purpose thereby was to ensure that I effectively addressed the research problem as it was the main reason for the data collection, measurement and analysis according to Kazdin, (1998). I chose a case study design for this research study which involved the techniques I employed to carry out the study as put by Creswell, (2014). This design was deemed suitable for the study as it involves creating a comprehensive account of the research subject using various data collection methods to gather perspectives from individuals associated with the situation as advocated by Hamilton, (2011) and Yin, (2011).

This case study systematically investigated a specific event or series of occurrences. The purpose was to describe and provide an explanation for the experiences of rookie supervisors of supervision at a university in South Africa. The case study enabled novice supervisors to provide rich, thick descriptions of their experiences as postgraduate students' supervisors according to Maree, (2010). Case study research, therefore, provided me with a comprehensive, holistic understanding of how novice supervisors in this study relate to and understand their supervision of postgraduate students at a university as far as their experiences are concerned. Furthermore, a case study helped me to ask the "how" and "why" questions.

The use of a case study facilitated a comprehensive investigation from many angles, including the viewpoints and outlooks of all participants who were beginner supervisors as put by Creswell and Creswell, (2017). Consequently, this created an opportunity to strengthen marginalized socioeconomic groups, such as the inexperienced supervisors examined in this research according to Mare, (2000). The case study was valuable to me as a researcher because it provided insight into the overall experience of rookie supervisors during supervision, as expressed in their own words. The selection of a case study was advantageous

for this study as it enabled me to concentrate on an ample number of participants and the high-quality information that can be derived from them (Maree, 2010).

The downside of using a case study in this research study was that it depended on a single study with a small sample and could not make a generalizable finding according to Maree, (2010). However, with this study, I did not intend to generalize the findings but to explore the sampled novice supervisors' experiences of supervision at a South African university.

3.7 Challenges encountered with the case study design

A number of shortcomings of using the case study design emerged during the research process. The findings of study could not be generalized, owing to the small number of participants, the subjective nature of novice postgraduate supervisors' answers, and the varying contexts from setting to setting according to Hodkinson & Hodkinson, (2001) and Teegavarapu *et al.*, (2008). This means that although the results of this investigation could be helpful in understanding similar phenomena elsewhere, it could not be concluded that novice postgraduate supervisors in this particular South African university have the similar experiences of supervision of students. As indicated in the research approach part, I went around this challenge by carefully planning and executing the study.

Another challenge encountered with the employment of the case study design was that due to the large volumes of data that generated in texts and images, data analysis became difficult (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). During data collection everything that the novice postgraduate supervisors said when answering were recorded. Rich as the data collected may have been, it was overwhelming and it made analysis challenging. To get around this challenge, I allocated ample time for data analysis. Teegavarapu *et al.* (2008) posit that a case study usually lacks rigor due to the absence of strict systematic guidelines to follow, and because of this, there was a possibility of challenges in the reporting of results. Similarly, as Willis (2014) suggests, the case study is a “freeform research where anything goes” which meant that there were no strict prescriptions to direct my study. To lessen the gravity of this challenge open-ended questions were prepared beforehand providing a framework that guided the collection of data so that the process was fairly systematic and not too liberal.

The other challenge that I experienced with the use of the case study research design was the long time it took to collect data and to analyze it (Teegavarapu *et al.*, 2008). I spent some weeks interviewing the novice postgraduate supervisors and this was not only exhausting but

costly as well. According to Teegavarapu *et al.* (2008) and Willis (2014) a case study tends to be biased in the sense that researchers can exert their worldviews onto participants, and as a result the findings are hardly dependable or replicable. When I was in the field conducting the study, it was possible for me to record what I was interested in or what made sense to me and leave out details that could have been more valuable in understanding the phenomenon. I made a statement of disclaimer regarding my position as the researcher in the study to dispel any possibility of bias and untrustworthiness.

3.8 Sampling procedure

Sampling is a process to select a research site and participants that represent the population believed to have rich data about the phenomenon according to Mayan, (2016). Pitard (2019) views sampling as the procedure of selecting a research site. I believed the sample had participants that would provide me with rich data about the experiences of the novice supervisors regarding to postgraduate supervision. A sampling technique is designed to systematically choose a cohort of individuals to include in a research project. Based on these definitions, I adopted a convenient purposive sampling technique to select a research site and participants in this study posits Creswell & Poth, (2016). In this study, I used purposive sampling as described by Marais and Meier (2010).

Due to the impracticality of including all rookie supervisors from every institution in South Africa, I used a purposive sample technique to pick eighteen novice supervisors from a single university intentionally. These supervisors provided valuable insights into their experiences with postgraduate supervision. Nevertheless, Babbie (2012) cautions researchers against the use of purposive sampling due to the potential lack of comprehensive understanding in selecting suitable participants for the study, which might result in the inclusion of inappropriate individuals or the introduction of bias. I targeted novice supervisors with a minimum of a Master's degree and between one and three years of postgraduate supervision to address this limitation. One only needs a master's degree in South Africa to teach at a university. The shorter the time the novice supervisors experienced postgraduate supervision, the richer the information posits Eshetu, (2019). A major drawback of purposive sampling is its limitation in producing a sample representing a significant population (Joseph & Russell, 2012). This limitation may hamper the generalization of the study findings to subjects outside those involved in the research as advocated by Creswell, (2014). However, this method is

suitable to the transferability construct, enabling readers to relate their situations to certain aspects of the study as put by Maree, (2016).

3.9 Study site

The study sites selected for this research concerned suitable locations as advocated by McMillan and Schumacher, (2014), namely the South African university. This university was conveniently accessible to me since I was a PhD student at the same institution (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). In other words, I purposively selected this university with the intent to find out how the novice supervisors experience postgraduate supervision. Having provided the rationale for purposively selecting one university as a research site, I must mention that this institution had five faculties. All these faculties could be included in this study. However, it was not necessary to include all of them since this was a qualitative study. The qualitative research was therefore not complicated by a large number of faculties that would have led to a large number of participants that would have produced massive amounts of data according to Merriam and Grenier, (2019). The main concern of qualitative research is to produce sufficient important data from the participants (Flick, (2018)). In this study, qualitative research was aimed at producing in-depth data to provide a clear understanding of how novice supervisors approach postgraduate supervision according to Guest *et al.*, (2013). Consequently, I approached those novice supervisors who expressed interest in participating in this study including the one at which I was an “insider”. I believed that these participants would be willing to share their experiences, views and beliefs about their experiences of postgraduate supervision as put by Guest *et al.*, (2013).

3.10 Data collection strategies

In this study, I used semi-structured interviews for data gathering to drill down into novice supervisors' supervision experiences, to hear directly from them and to allow them to elaborate on their responses (Sutherland, (2017)). These one-on-one interviews aimed to gather the perceptions, opinions and experiences of novice supervisors regarding postgraduate supervision. The advantage of this interview format was that it allowed me to probe further into the participants' responses to my pre-selected interview questions to obtain more detailed information as advocated by Maree, (2016). Secondly, open-ended questions enabled me to obtain information I did not anticipate according to Guest *et al.*, (2013). Moreover, through my questions and comments, I could steer the interview to garner the type of data that answered my research questions as put by Willig, (2008).

The interviews were conducted to collect comprehensive data on all identified topics and get valuable insights that would aid in assisting novice supervisors, following the study goals according to Albertyn *et al.*, (2016). In normal times, I could have used face-to-face interviews to investigate the experiences of novice supervisors of supervision posits Frick *et al.*, (2016). However, the global COVID-19 pandemic era introduced the concept of virtual conducting of interviews using technology. This mode of interviews aimed to minimise physical contact among individuals to combat the spread of COVID-19 and ensure that the research was completed in the case of a hard lockdown.

I furnished participants with a hyperlink via which the interviews were performed. Hence, using semi-structured virtual interviews allowed me to explore potentially intriguing facets, resulting in comprehensive data that cannot be obtained via in-person interactions (Fourie, 2018). In addition, I was able to investigate other factors that contributed to specific answers, which was crucial considering the exploratory character of this work (Fourie, 2018). I prepared an interview procedure following the principles outlined by Blanchet and Gotman (2010). Initially, I presented the participants with a brief overview of the research and its ethical issues, such as the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any point. Furthermore, I explained the interviews' objectives clearly to the inexperienced supervisors. Subsequently, I requested their approval to participate by signing the consent form.

However, one of the primary limitations of using semi-structured individual interviews as a research instrument is the potential for the interview to deviate from the main topic as advocated by Maree, (2016). I was very conscious of that possibility. Therefore, I cautiously led the participants back to the interview focus when it occurred. In addition, the interviewees may be unwilling to answer the interview questions or be scared of giving a wrong answer. As a result, they might be hesitant to supply certain information. They might also be uncomfortable with the researcher's questions as put by Neuman, (2007). I navigated this challenge by simplifying the interview questions to get the responses I desired from the participants. I discuss the features of the interviews below.

Another challenges that I encountered while conducting semi-structured interviews was that the sessions were lengthy and therefore exhausting, with lesser personal control over the interview process according to Adams, (2010). The fact that questions were of an emerging nature meant long sessions of questions and answers. The other challenge was the likelihood that some of the novice postgraduate supervisors could find it hard to trust a stranger so they

would not be comfortable to speak freely about certain issues (Adams, 2010). It was also possible that some of the participants could deliberately filter some of their responses in order to paint a certain picture, and, equally, researchers may want to prove a certain point by unconsciously crafting the interview questions in a subjective manner (Creswell, 2012).

To avert the above challenges as posed by semi-structured interviews, I had to plan carefully before going into the field. I allotted three months for interviews and the literature review so that I had ample time for interview sessions and the reviewed literature. To establish trusting research relationship with participants, before interview sessions began, I explained the purpose and importance of the study, the rights of the participants to take part in the study and to withdraw from it at any point, their right to answer or not to answer certain questions; the ethical consideration of privacy and confidentiality, as well as my obligation as the researcher to protect them from harm. I believe that once I made them understand what the study was about and about their rights and responsibilities, as well as my rights and responsibilities and they felt protected and therefore were able to speak freely.

3.11 Interview procedure

I employed an interview guide technique for conducting the interviews, which involved pre-selecting the interview topics. In line with this, I chose the order in which I asked the questions and the way in which I phrased the questions according to McMillan and Schumacher, (2014). First, this approach allowed me to formulate interview questions that had the potential to answer my research questions and fitted the theoretical framework. Secondly, the approach encouraged engagement between me and the participants. The engagement further created a relaxed atmosphere, enabling the participants to respond to my questions effectively. Thirdly, the approach allowed me to manage the sequence of the interview questions.

To ensure comprehensive data analysis, I recorded the interview sessions using an electronic device posits Guest et al., (2013). The electronic recordings of the interviews provided a thorough and precise reflection of the interview session, contributing to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study as described by McMillan and Schumacher, (2014). In addition, I ensured that I fully informed the participants about the recording process, which not only helped to put them at ease during the interview sessions but also ensured that I adhered to ethical considerations posits Guest *et al.*, (2013). Furthermore, I took notes during the

interviews, as this assisted in rephrasing questions, capturing unspoken communication and probing for further information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

3.12 Data analysis

According to Creswell (2014), data analysis is the process of understanding the data generated during semi-structured interviews. Maree (2016:110) describes data analysis as a process followed to “summarise all the information collected during the data collection process and group it under most frequently occurred words and phrases, subjects or patterns”. Miles and colleagues (2018) further describe data analysis as a process systematically utilised to organise interviews transcripts and field notes to understand what participants in this study expressed about their postgraduate supervision experienced (Huberman & Miles 2019).

I obtained the study data by conducting virtual semi-structured interviews with the inexperienced supervisors of postgraduate students. By actively participating in the data-gathering process, I gained a deeper understanding of the data, which allowed me to analyse and interpret it more effectively. My ultimate goal during data analysis was to comprehend the information collected (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, I aimed to summarise the interview data by identifying the common expressions, phrases, words and themes that would assist me in interpreting the emerging insights from the data (Maree, 2016). Finally, I carefully organised the raw data by coding, categorising and interpreting them in order to understand how novice supervisors experienced postgraduate supervision.

The above approach aligns with the qualitative thematic analysis method described by Rossouw (2003) and Henning *et al.* (2004). I meticulously transcribed and coded every interview; after that, I thoroughly analysed each transcription with the assistance of the interview schedule I used. Upon reviewing all eighteen interview transcripts, I analysed the material and organised it into thematic groups. I conducted a comprehensive analysis of the data using a holistic-content approach. Specifically, I focused on the essential content of the interview, which consisted of short excerpts describing novice supervisors' experiences during supervision according to Lieblich *et al.*, (1998). The subsequent stage included theme coding according to Flick, (2016), which was somewhat influenced by the interview questions. Following the consolidation of the material into thematic categories, I proceeded to analyse the data and draw conclusions.

3.13 Trustworthiness

The term "trustworthiness" pertains to the precision and credibility of the research data presented in this study. Within the framework of this research, I used trustworthiness as a standard by which I evaluated the data analysis, results, and conclusions as they arose posits Niewenhuis, (2001). By establishing credibility, I ensured the usefulness and consideration of the study results. After receiving accounts from inexperienced supervisors, I took measures to ensure the credibility of each story. This included providing detailed descriptions and ensuring that the narratives met the requirements of conformability and auditability. I collaborated with inexperienced supervisors to establish a shared understanding of the narrative's significance to accomplish this according to Nthontho, (2013).

3.13.1 Credibility

Credibility is the outcome of an assessment to determine if the study results accurately reflect a reliable conceptual interpretation of the data obtained from the participants' original data as advocated by Lincoln and Guba, (2000). In this investigation, I used a range of tactics to guarantee the trustworthiness of the findings. Initially, I ensured complete openness and clarity in recording and using the study techniques outlined by Lincoln and Guba (2000). To clarify, I continuously adhered to the assumptions and traditions of the study and paradigm. Furthermore, I discovered approaches outlined in the existing literature on research techniques, including aligning the research paradigms with the chosen research methodologies. I facilitated prolonged engagement with the participants to explore the phenomena of interest, including audiotaping and field note-taking for documentation. Furthermore, I gathered data for seven weeks, since this facilitated the establishment of a positive relationship with the inexperienced supervisors and fostered their confidence in me (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). By dedicating more time to the inexperienced supervisors, we enhanced their sense of ease and confidence. The ability to express their opinions freely allowed them to enhance the reliability of the narratives and the understanding of these personal encounters (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006).

3.13.2 Thick description

I met the necessary criteria for creating field texts, drafting memos, and sharing intermediate research texts with participants. This was done to guarantee that my data accurately recorded detailed accounts of the novice supervisors' experiences, as described by Clandinin and Connelly (2006). To provide comprehensive coverage of the rookie supervisors' experiences,

I carefully did not exclude any relevant information. Furthermore, this step contributed to enhancing the transparency element that was previously discussed. Following the guidance from scholarly sources, I ensured the use of detailed and comprehensive descriptions, as well as the use of participants' own language wherever feasible. This approach aimed to allow them to articulate their experiences effectively (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). This technique was essential to authenticate the narratives used in the research and guarantee the genuineness of the data utilized. By examining the specific details and circumstances surrounding the supervision of postgraduate students by rookie supervisors, I gathered sufficient evidence to provide detailed and reliable descriptions. These descriptions were substantial enough to be considered credible and trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

3.13.3 Conformability

Conformability refers to the extent to which the study conclusions align with the data obtained as advocated by Lincoln and Guba, (2000). The data I gathered included the real-life encounters of the inexperienced supervisors who took part in this research, together with their beliefs, ideas, and perceptions throughout that period. To maintain impartiality, I consciously tried to comprehend thoroughly and acquire reliable interpretations of the phenomena being studied by asking inquiries at different points during the interviews as put by Lincoln and Guba, (2000). Following the interviews, I initiated conversations with the participants by offering them the opportunity to accept, amend, or reject my interpretation of the interview data. This member checking served as a means to verify the accuracy and genuineness of my presentation on the experiences of the rookie supervisors who took part, as stated by Lincoln and Guba (2000).

3.13.4 Auditing

Auditing is a process in which an independent third-party auditor thoroughly examines the audit trail that is kept by the researcher as stated by Schwandt, (2007). The supervisor audited the raw data to verify its correctness and validity. This procedure included all the data records, including the audio recordings, the list of participants, their profiles, and the field notes I generated during the project. In addition, I sent the transcriptions to the participants and requested them to make any required corrections to guarantee an accurate representation of the material and their perspectives as described by Mertler, (2006).

3.13.5 Ethical Considerations

I acquired authorisation from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria to conduct the research and gather data. I adhered to all the regulations and criteria set out by the committee. The university facilities where I did my study also granted formal authorization. I sent written invitations to all the participants in my research, urging their participation. The participants were provided with information on the objective of my research, the anticipated requirements, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality procedures. The concerns of anonymity and secrecy were deemed crucial due to the scrutiny placed on the details of the novice supervisors at their universities in the study conducted by Nthontho (2013). Meticulous precautions were used posits Nthontho, (2013) to guarantee the identity of the participants and the confidentiality of their statements. This approach included using fictionalization techniques to guarantee secrecy.

According to Orb *et al.* (2001) and Creswell (2012) participants can withdraw from taking part in a study at any point of the research process and that the decision ought to be respected. I informed the sampled novice postgraduate supervisors that it was their prerogative to take part in the study or withdraw from it at any stage, and that I would respect their choice to participate or not to participate.

Furthermore, Creswell (2012) posits that researchers should assign pseudonyms to participants when analyzing and reporting data and should not share confidential information with third parties. I did not reveal the identities of the novice postgraduate supervisors that participated in the study to the readers through allotting pseudonyms to the participants. I accorded confidentiality to the sensitive information and answers to questions that participants shared. Orb *et al.* (2001) also suggest that researchers have a moral obligation of ensuring that their studies do not cause physical or psychological harm to participants. I explained the benefits of conducting the study to the participants which was that they would be taking a distinct opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge on postgraduate supervision policy implementation. By concealing their real identities, I protected the novice postgraduate supervisors and their schools from any potential harm.

Although my sample was small, my report contained no personally identifying information, including but not limited to names, physical addresses, email addresses, phone numbers and/or ID numbers. So, I did not collect this information during my virtual or face-to-face interviews.

3.14 Limitations of the Study

This study had a small sample size of eighteen novice supervisors. Only one university was targeted in this study and that became a limitation. Only novice postgraduate supervisors were engaged in this study, excluding postgraduate students under their supervision. The leadership or management of specific faculties would also add value to the study. Their exclusion was, therefore, one of the limitations.

3.15 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodology applied in the pursuit of data regarding the research question, “What are the experiences of novice supervisors of supervision at a South African university?” I examined various aspects to satisfy the approaches stipulated in conjunction with the main approach being the qualitative approach. In the next chapter, I outline the data presentation, interpretation and conclusions.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study aimed to investigate novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university. I used the qualitative research approach, using open-ended interviews to collect data to achieve this aim. In chapter three of this study, I have outlined the research methodology I used to collect data from novice supervisors. In this chapter, I present and interpret the participants' data and draw conclusions. I have structured this chapter into five sections. I set out the participants' details in the first section while I outline the research questions and data collection instruments that I used to answer the main research question in the second section. In the third section, I present and analyse the data based on the themes I created from the six research questions and draw and present conclusions. Before I present the participants' profiles, I found it imperative to give my personal declarations as the researcher in this study.

4.2 Profile of the study site

This study took place at one of the largest and the most prestigious universities in South Africa. This university is renowned for its commitment to academic excellence, research and community engagement. The university was established in 1908 and it offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs across various fields of study including humanities, natural and agricultural sciences, engineering, education, health sciences, law and economic and management sciences and theology. As a result, the university comprises several faculties, and schools each specializing in specific disciplines and areas of research. The university has a diverse and vibrant student population across the world with different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. It fosters a support and inclusive learning environment that encourages critical thinking, creativity and innovation. The university aims to develop well-rounded graduates who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to make a positive impact in their respective fields and society as a whole.

The academic staff of the university that participated in this study consists of highly established and renowned professors, emerging researchers and experts who are actively engaged in cutting-edge research, scholarship and postgraduate supervision. As a result, the university is recognized for its research output and it has established numerous research

centers and institutes that focus on a wide range of disciplines and trans-disciplinary studies. It also collaborates with local, continental and international institutions to promote knowledge exchange and collaboration.

The university features modern facilities, including well-equipped lecture halls, research centers, laboratories, libraries, sports facilities and students' residences. In addition to its academic pursuits, the university is committed to community engagement and social responsibility. That is, it actively promotes outreach programs, community service initiatives, and partnerships with local communities and organizations to address challenges and contribute to sustainable development. All-in-all, the university is recognized as a leading institution of higher learning in South Africa and the African continent. It strives to provide a world-class education, conduct impactful research and produce graduates who are well prepared to contribute meaningfully to society. It is therefore important to understand how novice supervisors experience postgraduate supervision at this university.

4.3 Participants' profiles

The study involved eighteen novice supervisors from one university in South Africa. The participants were novice supervisors from various faculties who had just started supervising or had been supervising for at least one to three years. Below, I outline the profiles of each and every participant in this study. In doing so, I use the synonyms participant One to participant eighteen for ethics purposes.

Participant One (P1): A black South African female between 30 and 40 years of age and a doctoral degree holder. She has served the university for four years with three postgraduate students supervised to completion. At the time of participation in this study, he was supervising two masters and one doctorate student.

Participant Two (P2): He was a black South African female between 30 and 40 years of age and a Doctoral degree holder and served a South African university for five years with three postgraduate students supervised to completion. He was supervising two masters and one doctorate student at the time of participation in this study.

Participant Three (P3): This participant was a black South African female between the age of 30 and 40 years and a masters degree holder. She had been serving the university for one

year with one postgraduate student under her co-supervision. She had one masters student at the time of participation in this study.

Participant Four (P4): The participant was a black South African male between 30-40 years of age and a PhD holder with two years of supervision experience. He was actively supervising two postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. He had two masters students to supervise at the time of participation in this study.

Participants five (P5): He was a white South African male between 50 and 60 years of age and a masters degree holder with three years of supervision experience and he was supervising two postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. He had two masters students to supervise during the time of participation in this study.

Participant six (P6): A white South African female between 30 and 40 years of age and a PhD holder with four years of supervision experience actively supervising three postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. She was supervising two masters students and one doctorate student at the time of participation in this study.

Participant seven (P7): She was a white South African female between 40 and 50 years of age and a PhD holder with five years of supervision experience. She was actively supervising three postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. She had two PhD students and one masters students under her supervision during the time of participation in this study.

Participant eight (P8): She was a black international female between 30 and 40 years of age and a PhD holder with one year of supervision experience and she was supervising one postgraduate student at the time of the interviews. She had one masters student under her supervision when she participated in this study.

Participant nine (P9): He was a black South African male between 30 and 40 years of age and a PhD holder with five years of supervision experience and he was supervising three postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. He had two masters students and one Doctorate student during his participation in this study.

Participant ten (P10): She was a black South African female between 30 and 40 years of age and a Master's degree holder with three years of supervision experience and she was supervising two postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. She had two masters students under her supervision.

Participant eleven (P11): She was a black South African female between 30 and 40 years of age and a PhD holder with four years of supervision experience and she was supervising three postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. There was one masters and one doctorate student under her supervision at the time of participation in this study.

Participant twelve (P12): She was a black South African female between 30 and 40 years of age and a PhD holder with four years of supervision experience and she was supervising three postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. There were two masters students and one doctorate student under her supervision at the time of participation in this study.

Participant thirteen (P13): He was a black South African male between 50 and 60 years of age and a PhD holder with two years of supervision experience and he was supervising two postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. He had two masters students under his supervision when he participated in this study.

Participant fourteen (P14): He was a black South African male between 40 and 50 years of age and a PhD holder with three years of supervision experience and she was supervising two postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. He had two masters students and one doctorate student to supervise during participation in this study.

Participant fifteen (P15): She was a black South African female between 30 and 40 years of age and a masters degree holder with one yeas of supervision experience and she was supervising one postgraduate student at the time of the interviews. She had one masters student to supervise during her participation in this study.

Participant sixteen (P16): She was a black South African female between 30 and 40 years of age and a PhD holder with two years of supervision experience and she was supervising two postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. She had two masters students to supervise during her participation in this study.

Participant seventeen (P17): She was a black South African female between 30 and 40 years of age and a PhD holder with two years of supervision experience and she was supervising two postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. During her participation in this study, she had two masters students to supervise.

Participant eighteen (P18): He was a black South African male between 40 and 50 years of age and a PhD holder with three years of supervision experience and she was supervising two

postgraduate students at the time of the interviews. He had one masters and one PhD student to supervise during his participation in this study.

In Table 4.1 below, I present the participants' profiles based on their qualifications, race, and gender, the number of postgraduates they were supervising at the time of the research and age range. These characteristics are crucial for me as I interpret the data and make conclusions about participants' experiences of postgraduate supervision.

Table 0.1: Participants' profiles

Participant code	Participant Qualification	Race	Gender	Age	Participant Supervision Experience (years)	Number of Students Supervised to Date
P1	PhD	B	F	30-40	4	3
P2	PhD	B	F	30-40	5	3
P3	Masters	B	F	30-40	1	1
P4	PhD	B	M	30-40	2	2
P5	Masters	W	M	50-60	3	2
P6	PhD	W	F	30-40	5	3
P7	PhD	W	F	40-50	4	3
P8	PhD	B	F	30-40	1	1
P9	PhD	B	M	30-40	5	3
P10	Masters	B	F	30-40	3	2
P11	PhD	B	F	30-40	4	3

Participant code	Participant Qualification	Race	Gender	Age	Participant Supervision Experience (years)	Number of Students Supervised to Date
P12	PhD	B	F	30-40	4	3
P13	PhD	B	M	50-60	2	2
P14	PhD	B	M	40-50	3	2
P15	Masters	B	F	30-40	1	1
P16	PhD	B	F	30-40	2	2
P17	PhD	B	F	30-40	2	2
P18	PhD	B	M	40-50	3	2

Note 1: The participants were all South Africans except for Participant 8, who hails from an international destination.

4.4 Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

In this section, I present the data based on the themes that I derived from the five research sub-questions, namely: a) novice supervisors' understanding of the concept of postgraduate supervision, b) how the novice supervisors navigate the commencement of their supervisory roles, c) the support systems the university provides for novice supervisors to perform their supervisory roles, d) challenges novice supervisors faced while executing their supervisory roles, and e) strategies used by novice supervisors while executing their supervisory roles. Verbatim transcription of data occurred initially, and data was then code 1.1 Data collection process

Guided by the literature that relates to data collection instruments that are in line with the constructivism research paradigm and a case study research design, I decided to adopt semi-structured virtual interviews. I used semi-structured virtual interviews to collect data from novice postgraduate supervisors because of the COVID-19 pandemic situation in South Africa, 2020. I used one of the many platforms to connect and interview my participants

which was Google Meet. Google Meet was a popular platform among social media users to interact with people especially during the time of the pandemic since I could also see on the phone or laptop screen who I was interacting with. I lived and worked in Polokwane, Limpopo while my participants were based in Pretoria and Johannesburg.

The hard lockdown at the time made Google Meet a suitable platform to safely conduct my semi-structured virtual interviews. It was imperative to adhere to the government and health department's recommendations to with regard to safety measures for COVID 19. So adhering to the precautionary measures kept my participants and myself safe from any risks regarding COVID 19. Semi-structured virtual interviews allowed me to frame the themes I wished to explore to obtain answers to questions about novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision posits Guest et al., (2013). I was also able to establish a positive rapport between myself and postgraduate novice supervisors that participated in this study (Hennink & Kaiser, 2020).

Nonetheless, these semi-structured virtual interviews allowed me the flexibility to probe potentially interesting aspects, which yielded in-depth data not possible through a questionnaire as described by Hennink and Kaiser, (2020) and Fourie, (2018). The open-ended questions made the exploratory nature of the interviews possible and gave the participants the freedom to express themselves as put by Fourie, (2018). I designed the interview questions around the research questions listed again below for ease of reference.

The study's primary research question was: "What are the novice postgraduate supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university?"

The secondary research questions were as follows:

- a) What do the novice postgraduate supervisors understand by the concept of postgraduate supervisor and supervision?
- b) How did novice postgraduate supervisors navigate their supervisory roles?
- c) What support systems does the university provide for novice postgraduate supervisors to perform their supervisor roles?
- d) What challenges do novice postgraduate supervisors experience and how do they overcome the challenges while executing supervisory roles?

I divided the interview session into three segments. Firstly, I welcomed each participant and thanked them for their participation. Then, I introduced myself and the purpose of the interview session. Next, I explained the interview procedure as spelt out in the invitation letter they had earlier received to ensure that the ethical principle of informed consent was met. The consent form was signed before the commencement of the interviews (see Annexure D on page 189). I then paused to check whether they had understood my explanation. Once I had established that the participant and I were on the same page, I started with broad and less structured questions to ease the participant into the interview. I used the interview guide technique, whereby interview topics are pre-selected, but I decided on the order and phrasing of the questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Then, as the interaction picked up, I proceeded to ask more structured questions that covered topics pertinent to the study. Finally, in the last segment, I summarised salient points from the interaction and verified my understanding. I recorded the interview sessions electronically supplementing the recordings with field notes. For ethical considerations, I briefed the participants adequately about the recording procedure so that they could relax during the interview sessions according to Guest *et al.*, (2013). I followed interview procedure according to the six stages in line with Braun and Clarke (2012). The six stages are: familiarisation with data; generation of initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes and producing a report. Sub-headings were crafted from the themes during data analysis when I reported on the final research findings.

I presented and analysed participants' responses, and as a result, sub-themes emerged, which I presented under the main themes. I categorised the novice supervisors' responses according to the sub-questions established in Chapter 1. While generating and analysing replies, I discovered some aspects of the responses that may be considered sub-themes that arose from the data. In addition, I used sub-headings to categorize the discovered sub-themes that were subsequently presented. Finally, I categorised sub-themes according to the various stages of Bandura's Social Learning Theory modelling procedures.

4.4.1 Novice supervisors' understanding of the concept of postgraduate supervision

Novice supervisors' understanding of the concept of postgraduate supervision is very critical to their effective supervisory responsibilities because their understanding of the concept would determine their level of efficiency in postgraduate supervision.

The novice supervisors in this study expressed interpersonal relations with the students as one concept of postgraduate supervision they understood. P11 put it this way, “*Postgraduate supervision is about having personal relationships with the students at a certain level. This personal relationship involves listening to them and calling them, when necessary*”. P1 reiterated, “*Postgraduate supervision involves understanding your students*”. P8 buttressed that “*postgraduate supervision is about motivating your students in every way*”. P4 captured the supervisors’ interpersonal relations with the students as collaborative this way: “*Postgraduate supervision is [a] collaboration between the supervisor and the student*”.

Moreover, the novice supervisors highlighted guidance to students at different levels as another crucial concept of postgraduate supervision. P11 explained: “*Postgraduate supervision is about helping, guiding, and supporting the students to identify their research area*”. P1 explained: “*Postgraduate supervision is about guiding the students to find direction for their subject of study*”. P8 buttressed, “*Postgraduate supervision is about supporting student in their work through guidance and leadership*”. P9 concurred that, “*Postgraduate supervision is the supervisors given guidance to students the best way they can*”. P3 agreed, “*Postgraduate supervision is guiding and supporting the students. One way by which we do this is by supporting them in terms of shaping their proposals*”. According to P18, “*The supervisor’s role is to guide and support the students by providing expert advice on their research*”. In describing supervisors’ guiding role, P2 sees them as coaches, he captured it this way, “*A supervisor coaches the students on how to write and analyse*”.

Allowing students to work independently is another concept of postgraduate supervision discussed by the novice supervisors. According to P14, “*Postgraduate supervision is about ‘allowing the students to do things on their own’*”. P11 re-iterated, “*I do not impose my ideas on the students, but I guide them to find the research area of their interest through which they grow their research skills*”. P4 buttressed, “*Postgraduate supervision is to give the student room to explore the thesis*”. P7 was of the opinion that the concept of postgraduate supervision involves “*Moulding the student to be resourceful and a well-rounded academic who is independent and critical. At master’s, I guide and shape my students, but at PhD, I pave the way for an independent study*”. According to P17, “*I allow the students to lead, and I just give my input to what they put together*”. P2 concurred, “*I allow the student to be the driving force of the thesis*”. P4 stressed that “*Postgraduate supervision is to give the student room to explore the thesis*”.

Additionally, the novice supervisors understanding of undergraduate supervision was expressed as engagement with students' work. P1 described the concept this way: *"Supervisors must see, connect with, and understand their students' perspective of the work"*. P5 shared a similar thought when he said, *"Postgraduate supervision entails the supervisor sitting down with the students and discuss their work with them and brainstorm any challenges they might have encountered"*.

Furthermore, determination to see the students through the finishing line is another understanding of postgraduate supervision expressed by the novice supervisors. P12 put it this way: *"A supervisor must provide support for the student academically and mentally with the aim of seeing them through their studies"*. P9 concurred, *"Supervisors must guide their students from the problem statement to proposal. The aim is to make sure they are in the right direction till completion"*. According to P18, *"The supervisor should guide the students to complete their studies by providing expert advice on the research"*. P8 agreed, *"A supervisor should assist and encourage their students to complete their studies"*.

The novice supervisors further understood the concept of postgraduate supervision as an art of developing the students as researchers: P4 put it this way, *"Postgraduate supervision is about given advice and direction to the student to become competent researchers"*. P7 remarked in agreement, *"Postgraduate supervision involves moulding the students to be resourceful and well-rounded academic[s] who are independent and critical"*. P13 concurred, *"Postgraduate supervision is to guide, train, and support students to be researchers. It is also about helping students to conceptualize a research program and getting them to transit from literal thinking to abstract thinking"*. P11 remarked in agreement that, *"postgraduate supervision is about supporting and encouraging students to grow their research skills"*. P4 concurred that *"post-graduate supervision is to give advice and direction to the students to become competent researchers"*.

Finally, communication between the supervisor and the student is another understanding of the concept of postgraduate supervision highlighted by novice supervisors. P3 put it this way, *"Postgraduate supervision is proper communication and consultation with the students."* P9 agreed, *"Postgraduate supervision is about a good communication channel between the supervisor and the student"*. Additionally, the novice postgraduate supervisors highlighted feedback as part of the communication structure between the supervisor and the student. For instance, P1 remarked that *"Prompt feedback from the supervisor to the students is crucial in*

postgraduate supervision”. P12 remarked in agreement, “*Postgraduate supervision involves the supervisor giving timeous feedback to the student*”.

The above narratives of the novice postgraduate supervisors on their understanding of postgraduate supervision revealed that they see supervisors as a support structure to the postgraduate students they supervise through the following: a) the guidance the supervisors give to students, which includes coaching student on the art of research skills, guiding students in finding directions for their research, giving support in shaping their proposal, offering professional advice on students’ research area; b) the interpersonal relationship the supervisors have with the students for the enhancement of their research work, c) the professional engagement the supervisors have with students over their research work, d) supervisors walking the research journey with the students from inception to the finishing line, and e) an effective and functional structure around the supervision process, which includes a good communication channel between the supervisor and the student and timeous feedback from the supervisor to the students.

Additionally, there is a reflection of participants’ qualifications on their understanding of post-graduate supervision. For instance, the narratives of participants with master’s qualifications were more basic than those with PhD qualifications who supplied a more intricate understanding. For example, the narratives about the concept of postgraduate supervision as an art of developing the students as researchers were given by participants 4, 7, 11, and 13, who are all novice PhD supervisors. The experience of novice PhD supervisors when they were students might be responsible for this factor. Therefore, the novice PhD supervisors are likely to be more effective in their supervisory roles than their master’s counterparts because of their better understanding of postgraduate supervision. On the other hand, the age of the participants did not influence their understanding of the concept of postgraduate supervision because both basic and intricate responses cut across the age range of the participants. The same applies to nationality, race, and gender.

Moreover, the age factor played a major role in the narratives of interpersonal relations as a concept of postgraduate supervision. For instance, all the participants who expressed interpersonal relations as a concept of postgraduate supervision are aged 30 – 40. They were participants 1, 4, 8, and 11. This factor implies that younger postgraduate supervisors tend to be softer in their relational approach towards their students, which makes them likely to be more approachable and thereby boost the students’ confidence.

Novice supervisors across the age, qualification and experience spectrum also viewed postgraduate supervision as preparing the student to be an independent researcher. They viewed postgraduate supervision as a mechanism to equip the postgraduate student to explore the thesis on their own and to be critical. They were in favour of allowing the student to be the driving force behind the study and not imposing on the student. This view among most novice participants is important because in essence, the masters and doctoral qualifications prepare a postgraduate student to be an independent researcher and academic. This implied that the university would produce independent, critical and versatile thinkers who could produce quality body of knowledge that would advance the research capabilities of the university.

P1 and P9, who both had PhD degrees, understood postgraduate supervision as understanding the postgraduate students' perspective of the work to be supervised. That is, there must be compatibility of the supervisor to the work to be supervised. This intricate understanding of postgraduate supervision has been mentioned earlier and shows the difference between a masters qualified novice supervisor and a PhD qualified novice supervisor. That implied that **the supervisors** must understand and know the topic that **they were** going to supervise by sitting down with the student and getting the student's perspective. That takes us back to the issue of the importance of communication in supervision stressed by the novice supervisors. The implication of this notion is that no postgraduate student would have their time wasted by a supervisor who was not compatible to the work under supervision.

In the following section, I discuss, analyse, and interpret novice postgraduate supervisors' responses to the issue of how they navigate their supervisory roles at the commencement of their supervisory assignment.

4.4.2 Novice supervisors' navigation of their supervisory roles

In this section, I detail how novice supervisors navigated the commencement of their supervisory roles as postgraduate supervisors.

The novice supervisors expressed how they relied on their experience as postgraduate students to navigate the commencement of their supervisory assignment. P8 expressed: *"I did not have any tool that guided me on how to supervise. I drew from my experiences as a postgraduate student to supervise"*. Other novice supervisors shared the same sentiment: *"I drew from my experiences as a student"* (P12). *"I supervise my students using my*

experiences during my time as a student” (P14). “My experiences as a student help me be a better supervisor” (P1). “I have no other source of reference to supervise except my own experiences since I am expected to supervise immediately after being appointed as a postgraduate supervisor” (P4). “I have no recourse but to rely on my supervision experiences as masters and doctoral student to supervise” (P7). “There’s no other way I can supervise but draw from experiences during masters and PhD” (P15). “From the beginning, I knew that supervision can’t be taught but has to be acquired through own experiences” (P3). “You hit the ground running. You only have experiences (as postgraduate student) to help you” (P11). “I’m still using the experience of being supervised because I haven’t gone to any training. I learn as I go, and I have to remember what my supervisor said when I was dealing with maybe a problem statement” (P15).

Similar to what transpired above, P9, highlighted his postgraduate supervisor's positive influence on him, an experience he used to navigate the commencement of his supervisory assignment. He put it this way: *“My supervisor for PhD guided me well, and I do the same to my students (P9).”* P13 shared the same sentiment, *“My supervisor was a visionary. He exposed me to top researchers, and I try to do that in my supervision as well” (P13).* Conversely, P1 relayed his negative experience with her supervisor: *“I did not get along with my supervisor. He did not read my work and wasted my time. My supervisor made me work without regular feedback and there was no interaction or any communication. Now I find I am trying to correct what I went through with the students I am supervising” (P1).* P12 concurred: *“I did not have a good relationship with my supervisor. I did not get timeous and constructive feedback from her. Now I make it a priority to give my students timeous and constructive feedback” (P12).*

Moreover, the novice supervisors used the scholarly values they have imbibed as yardsticks for their students in their supervisory roles. P6 expressed: *“I hold my postgraduate students to the same positive values I had acquired as a postgraduate student.”* P9 added, *“I expect my students to acquire values like dedication, focus, grasp of scholarly concepts and also graduate as rounded scholars.”* Additionally, novice supervisors expressed uncertainty about their supervisory ability. P2 expressed it this way: *“I think it's a figure it out as you go type of thing.”* P5 concurred, *“I’m not really sure if I am doing the right thing, but I use my postgraduate experience to supervise my students”.*

The above narratives of the novice supervisors regarding their experiences in navigating the commencement of their supervisory assignments revealed that they relied majorly on their experience with their supervisors as postgraduate students. Novice supervisors expressed their reliance on the wealth of experiences they amassed as master's and PhD students to carry out their duties as postgraduate supervisors. The reliance on the postgraduate supervisory experience was a common factor among the participants that cut across their age, gender, qualification, nationality, and years of supervision experience. These postgraduate years of supervision experiences, good or bad, greatly influenced their development as novice supervisors. The implication of this reliance on their previous supervisors' mode of supervision is that, as much as the experience is a good entry point for them, it might constrain the cultivation of their authentic supervisory style. Additionally, reliance on their supervisors' supervisory style has pros and cons, meaning that both defective and efficient styles from the supervisors would be perpetuated. However, those who had negative experiences made it a goal not to repeat the same with their students but rather improve on the errors of their supervisors.

Furthermore, the novice supervisors' narratives of their experiences in navigating the commencement of their supervisory assignments revealed that they incorporated certain positive values they acquired during their postgraduate studies into their supervisory roles. This approach is a step in the right direction because it enhances a good supervisory culture. Moreover, the novice supervisors' narratives revealed the uncertainty of their supervisory capability at the commencement of their supervisory careers. This uncertainty implies a trial-by-error supervisory approach that could negatively impact their students and research. This shortcoming reveals the need for an effective induction programme for novice supervisors.

The next section details the support the university offers novice supervisors regarding their roles as supervisors.

4.4.3 The university support system for novice supervisors

The novice supervisors provided extensive details of different programmes and systems established by the university to enhance their supervisory capacity. P12 encapsulated it this way, *“Although I didn't have formal training as a supervisor, I have the support I needed to execute my supervision roles effectively”*. P13 added in agreement, *“I am exposed to a variety of interventions to capacitate myself in my role as a postgraduate supervisor”*. I

present the details of those programmes and systems below as articulated by the novice supervisors and their perspectives of the programmes and systems.

The university provided nGAP, a programme aimed at replenishing ageing academia. The programme resorts under the DHET within the Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework (SSAUF). According to P14, "*Young academics are recruited from masters to doctorate degree in order to be lecturers. They were then given mentors who trained them to be lecturers and later postgraduate supervisors*". He explained further, "*Recruits go through a six-year program where three years was used for development and the other three was for induction into the university as a permanent employee*" (P14). P11 added: "*nGAP lecturers get mentors when they are supervising*".

Workshops, writing retreats, and supervision courses are other support programmes the university provides for empowering novice supervisors. P9 put it this way: "*The University supports and empowers us through writing retreats and workshops on supervision*". Other novice supervisors buttressed this assertion, "*Courses and training are offered on supervision*" (P2). "*There are orientation cohorts and retreats available to novices*" (P15). "*We have seminars, workshops and writing retreats to help us*" (P4). "*We have workshops which help a lot and also writing retreats*" (P12). "*There is voluntary in-service training for novice supervisors*" (P7). "*There are panel discussions on supervision and also workshops that are set up for novice supervisors*" (P7). "*There are also early development courses for new supervisors as well as training for novice supervisors*" (P16). "*The university provides training in the form of retreats, workshops for novice supervisors*" (P8). "*We get writing retreats. We use the knowledge gained from the writing retreats in our supervision roles*" (P12).

However, P5 expressed reservations about the writing retreats, "*We have the writers' retreats, but they don't help. Structured supervision training that gives you A-Z of supervising would be better than the writing retreat.*" In the same vein, P2 revealed one flaw of the voluntary in-service training for novice supervisors: "*There are voluntary courses offered for novice supervisors, but I never attended*". P10 took it further, "*They organise workshops on supervision. We also learn by co-supervision. The intention was for the (senior) co-supervisor to mentor the new supervisor but it doesn't happen like that.*"

Apart from the scheduled programmes discussed above, the university put systems in place to support novice supervisors. One of such systems is mentorship. P3 explained, *"We have mentors like professors or senior researchers to support novice supervisors in terms of supervision"*. Other novice supervisors reiterated the same point, *"The department seniors or HODs are the starting point if you experience problems in supervision"* (P1). *"There are seniors who are in charge and help us in the event of difficulties related to supervision"* (P11). *"You can go to your immediate superior for help or to your co-supervisor"* (P6). *"The university provides mentorship for novice postgraduate supervisors"* (P8). *"There are platforms in the form of immediate seniors as mentors to help novice supervisors with supervision problems"* (P9). *"There are senior colleagues who serve as mentors I can learn from"* (P17). However, P7 is of the opinion that, *"The mentoring process is ineffective because it is ad hoc. There is no evaluation program to determine whether it is achieving its goal"*.

Moreover, co-supervision is another system the university puts in place as support system for novice supervisors. P2 remarked, *"When you start supervising, you are assigned a co-supervisor"*. P18 added, *"The intention was for the co-supervisor to mentor the novice supervisor"*. P17, however, cautioned, *"We have mentors and co-supervisors but to tell the honest truth, you are like thrown into the deep end"*.

Additionally, the university offered professional development platforms to novice postgraduate supervisors; P6 explained, *"The University is very much aware of the need for professional development for supervisors; therefore, there is a professional development system where you indicate where you need support"*.

The above narratives of the novice supervisors on the support systems the university created for them revealed that the university provided different programmes and established various support platforms for them. These support systems include scheduled programmes like workshops, writing retreats, and courses on supervision. The support platforms include mentorship, co-supervision, and professional development opportunities. The university's array of support programmes and systems to support novice supervisors indicates goodwill on the part of the university to create a seamless rite of passage for novice supervisors.

The novice supervisors' narratives on the support systems the university created for them further revealed that they have diverse perspectives on the support systems provided. For

instance, most of the participants just highlighted the different support systems provided by the university. Some, however, acknowledged the effectiveness of the systems; for example, P12, a PhD holder with four years of supervisory experience, expressed that although she didn't have formal training as a supervisor, she got the support she needed to execute her supervisory roles effectively through the university support system for novice supervisors.

A few participants, however, expressed their reservations regarding some of the support programmes. For instance, P17 expressed dissatisfaction with the ineffectiveness of co-supervision; he referred to it as being thrown into the deep end. P7 raised a similar opinion regarding mentorship because it is ad hoc with an evaluation system to determine whether it is achieving its goal. The narrative of the effectiveness of the university support systems by the novice supervisor indicates a functional support system that should be maintained for the successful induction of novice supervisors into academia. However, the dissenting voices from the novice supervisors indicate the need for the university to look into its support structures for novice supervisors and upgrade the system where needed. The following sections dwell on the challenges experienced by novice supervisors and the strategies to overcome them.

4.4.4 Novice supervisors' challenges and strategies used to overcome them

The following sections detail the challenges novice supervisors experienced and the strategies they employed to overcome them.

4.4.4.1 Challenges experienced

Despite different programmes provided and systems established by the university to enhance novice supervisors' supervisory capacity, they still face myriad challenges. The participants cited the challenge of workload. P17 commented: *"The workload is overwhelming"*. P13 concurred, *"The institutional demands on us are enormous"*. P16 added, *"The workload is heavy and impacts on supervision negatively"*. *Students also don't want to work hard on their studies...they are uncommitted"*. P7 added, *"They keep overloading us with work though they support us. It's a struggle in all academia"*. P6 also lamented, *"The workload is too much, I am not coping"*. P9 concurred, *"My work is so much that I don't know if I am giving my students the best of me. My work makes it impossible to pay attention to other aspects of my work"*.

The other challenge the novice supervisors faced was student-orientated challenges. These challenges include student apathy. P8 elaborated, *“Students don’t meet deadlines and some are stuck because of personal problems and so there is no progress”*. P4 added, *“Some students just don’t do their work. They don’t take pride in their work. They also don’t follow advice and take longer to complete their studies. The workload is also a problem.”* P14 concurred, *“Some students have a problem meeting deadlines and they let personal issues interfere with their work”*. P7 agreed on the issue of students’ attitude towards work, *“Some students don’t pull their weight and have bad academic writing”*.” P15 added, *“There are students who registered but don’t care to do anything with regard to their research program. They are not redeemable. Then there are those that do not communicate”*. P12 expressed, *“There are students who do not communicate their problems, but just disappear for months on end with no work done. Students don’t submit work on time and there’s bad writing. I sit down with them and show them how to do it”*. P16 concurred, *“I have students who just don’t care about their work and not working hard.”*

Poor literary writing skills are another student-based challenge cited by the participants: P13 expressed, *“Apart from institution demands on us, some challenges are from the students. They do not do their work...do not respond to the comments. They basically do not take pride in what they are doing and do shoddy work”*. P1 clarified, *“Some can’t do a literature review or present a proper proposal. There are students who don’t read and some quit because they have no time for their studies...they cannot balance personal life and studies”*. P10 lamented, *“Students use bad writing which is not academic. What’s worse is that they are just quiet where they are and ignoring my input.”* P4 concurred, *“Some students can’t conceptualize their research programme”*. P3 also lamented, *“I have students who can’t write in academic language and they make grammatical mistakes. Most of them have no research knowledge”*. *They do not prioritise their work. They have many excuses for not doing work especially that they are working and so on. They just don’t pull their weight”*.

P18 expanded on the problem, *“Some students don’t take orders. They also don’t read what they have written meaning wrong grammar. They return unattended comments”*. P2 put it into perspective, *“some students are uncommitted...they drop out of the program. They can’t do proper analysis. It’s students who just want the degree not the work”*. P11 concludes, *“Bad academic writing is the worst among my students. Analysing is impossible but we are getting there”*.

Additionally, the participants highlighted the challenges with the university orientation programme for novice postgraduate supervisors. P5 said, *"I need support because I am not sure of what I am doing. ... The fact that I have a master's and doctorate degrees, the university sort of assumes that I can supervise"*. He suggested, *"There should be formal training (to supervise), it can give me confidence. I sometimes feel I'm in the deep end and I am not giving my students the best because I am not sure if I am even doing the right thing"*.

The above narratives revealed novice supervisors' challenges as they navigate their postgraduate supervision roles. The challenges were both student-oriented challenges and institutional-based challenges. Student-orientated challenges include apathy and poor academic writing skills. Most novice supervisors seemed to experience student apathy when it came to their work. That experience was prevalent among all demographics among the novice supervisors. Novice supervisors with more supervision years and those with less supervision years encountered postgraduate students that lack interest in the work regarding the qualification they were registered for. At closer scrutiny, it was noticeable that the novice supervisors have more Master's students than doctorate students. Masters students were understandably new to the research and postgraduate arena in general. They were still learning the ropes and acclimatising to the independent work as a researcher. They had not yet grasped concepts and still struggle to put their work into perspective. Many register for a masters qualification while having not done research as to what it entails. The implication of this finding was that the novice supervisor had the added duty to educate the Masters student what they had registered for and teach them all the tools necessary for them to succeed in their studies. On the other hand, novice supervisors were also struggling to find their footing in the demanding academia.

Another pertinent issue prevalent among postgraduate students especially Masters students was the matter of academic writing which the novice supervisors lament about. It is a given fact that the Masters qualification is the pathway to learning about research and academic writing. The implication of this finding was that the novice supervisors were the initial point of contact which the Masters student experiences when it came to learning of concepts, research and report writing. It was therefore the responsibility of the novice supervisors to sit the students down and teach them academic writing.

Lack of communication and lack of commitment were other issues which the novice supervisors experienced with the postgraduate students they were supervising. Being able to

communicate with the student is one of the duties of a supervisor novice or not. The first point of communication is the Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U.). Lack of commitment usually stems from lack of clear goals that need to be attained and the process how they need to be attained. The M.O.U stipulates the role of the student and the role of the supervisor in the study to be supervised. This finding of lack of communication and commitment among postgraduate students and the supervisor implies that there was a disconnection regarding the M.O.U and the parties involved (supervisor and student).

At the same time, institutional-based challenges were defective support programmes and the overwhelming workload of novice postgraduate supervisors. Regarding the defective support programme, although in the previous discourse, the participants acknowledged an impressive university support structure, the major challenges were those programmes that were ad hoc and not properly coordinated, which caused them not to yield the maximum results for which they have been designed. An example of a defective support programme would be the senior co-supervisor not adequately mentoring the novice supervisor in order to supervise properly. The senior supervisor abandons the novice supervisor with the student and the novice supervisor has to rely on prior knowledge as a postgraduate student to supervise. The implication of this challenge revealed that the university worked on the assumption that they have provided effective support tools for novice postgraduate supervisors whereas they should be providing ongoing support for the novice supervisor. Be that as it may be, they failed with the evaluation procedure to assess the effectiveness of those tools to see if they are yielding the desired outcomes.

A major problem impeding the novice postgraduate supervisor from supervising postgraduate students adequately was the issue of the workload for lecturers. Internationally, Brown and Atkins (1988) identified eleven key roles of a postgraduate supervisor. A postgraduate supervisor is- a) A director that assists with identification and fine tuning of research topic. b) A facilitator who provides guidance to tap resources, networks and subject expertise. c) An advisor to provide guidance and assistance with technical problems. d) A teacher to expose the student to various research methodologies and research data bases. e) A guide to hold the student's hand through the process of writing a research proposal. f) A critic who gives honest, timeous and constructive feedback. g) A freedom giver that is flexible enough to allow the student to the doctoral journey independently. h) A supporter who remains committed to the research project. I) A friend who extends an ear to listen and shoulder to cry

on for matters that affect the student's well-being. j) A manager that oversees the research project from inception to completion. k) An examiner who provides the student with access to vital materials on pitfalls to avoid during the research process.

The following responsibilities were in addition to lecturer's duties as an employee of the university. Lecturer responsibilities were among others: To a) publish research articles in accredited journals, b) teach undergraduate students as per post level, c) serve in committees of the department or faculty he/she belongs, d) perform community engagements, e) perform administration tasks regarding his/her work, f) mark assessments, g) read and critique colleagues' work, h) co-ordinate modules, i) moderate work of the department, and j) to organise funding for research projects.

The implication of this finding regarding novice postgraduate supervisor workload meant that the postgraduate student would suffer the negative consequences of the novice supervisor not being able to adequately discharge of his/her role as a supervisor. This issue was not only a novice postgraduate supervisors' issue but it affected all postgraduate supervisors in academia.

The following section deals with how novice supervisors overcome their supervisory challenges.

4.4.4.2 Strategies to overcome supervisory challenges

The novice supervisors acknowledged the support structure the university puts in place to assist them in dealing with student-based challenges. For instance, P9 explained, "*There are processes involved in reporting troublesome students*". P12 concurred, "*There are processes involved when dealing with students' issues; our superiors get involved*". P6 also agreed, "*Management encourages us to report incidents on students that are beyond us*".

Personal relations with students is another strategy highlighted as how novice supervisors deal with student-based issues. For instance, P13 remarked, "*Students have different needs; therefore, I try to be human to my students by trying to understand where they come from and how I can be of help to them. Being humane in supervision has a psychological impact on a student*". P11 agrees, "*Some are experiencing problems be it personal or work. I encourage them to shout if they want to talk about that. It can affect our work*".

Time management is the strategy novice supervisors presented as a way they handle the workload challenge. P7 commented, *“Work-overload is a struggle in all academia, but you need to adapt and manage your time”*. P8 concurred, *“My workload disturbs my time to supervise but I manage to find time”*. P15 commented, *“The workload is heavy and impacts supervision, but I keep a diary and manage my time”*. P2 concurs, *“Time management is the only thing that keeps me afloat in my work”*. P3 takes it further, *“Plan your time but you can also report workload problems to the research supervisor”*. P10 comments on time management, *“Other duties affect my time as a supervisor. I have to manage my time well”*. P14 is straight forward regarding time, *“Create time and manage time. It’s the only way to make it”*. P16 concurs, *“We are faced with a lot of work so I have to manage my time”*. For P17 time management was of essence, *“It affects my supervision time. I always have supervision backlog. I prioritise work and manage my time”*.

With regard to assisting students academically P1 said, *“My supervisor assumed I know what to do. With my students I show them how to do things. I would send a short video on how to search for articles. P4 added, “I am very patient with my students. I give them time and it’s my job to support them”*. P5 commented, *“I had a situation where my supervisor did not understand my topic so now I try very much to get what the student want to do”*. P18 added, *“I read my students’ work. I do not tell a student not to do a topic they are passionate with”*.

The above narratives revealed that the university had an impressive structure in place to assist novice supervisors in dealing with student-based challenges. Novice postgraduate supervisors relied on processes that the university had in place to deal with problematic students or conflicts in general. That could be in the form of disciplinary procedures or the use of contractual obligations (e.g. M.O.U.) between the university and the students to keep the order. Novice supervisors who brought the strategy to overcome challenges are P6, P9, and P12. They had a minimum of four years’ experience as supervisors among them. It was significant to notice that experienced novice supervisors resorted to administration policies to adequately supervise postgraduate students. It also meant that problematic postgraduate students were prevalent in the university. This finding was significant in the sense that novice supervisors were protected by university policies in cases where the student was in dereliction of duties or lacking cooperation in matters of interest for the university. The reactivity of the university in assisting the novice supervisors in addressing student-based challenges must have motivated the novice supervisors and enhanced effective supervision.

Equally important were novice postgraduate supervisors who adopted personal relations with the challenging students or students who experienced difficulties in the course of their studies. One of the duties of a supervisor was to lend an ear and a shoulder to cry on for the postgraduate student. Novice postgraduate supervisors offer personal support to the students by being understanding, compassionate and offer moral support when needed. Postgraduate students are human and experience personal difficulties that can impede their successful completion of their postgraduate studies. A good supervisor would go an extra mile to emotionally support the student and help him/her through the difficulties while keeping the studies on course. The implication of that finding was that students would not succumb to personal issues but would get the support they needed from their supervisors to pull them through to successful completion of their studies.

The narratives further indicated time management as a strategy the novice supervisors adopted to handle heavy workload challenges. This strategy was adopted by all novice supervisors across all demographics. With all their duties as lecturers and added burden of supervision, novice supervisors used time management as a tool to adequately supervise their students. This finding was significant mainly because time management would allow novice supervisors to allocate time for their students' research which was very crucial for production of a quality thesis. It helps the novice supervisors to be organised and keeps them in charge of their work as lecturers and as supervisors.

Apart from the emotional moral support novice postgraduate supervisors provide for students as a way to mitigate problems in their work, they offer academic support to their students. One would say it was an obvious duty of the novice supervisor to offer academic support. However, some novice postgraduate supervisors experienced inadequate supervision as postgraduate students where among others: a) they did not sign the M.O.U with the supervisor; b) the supervisor was not compatible to their topic specialty and c) did not get timeous feedback from the supervisor. They offered the academic support because they do not want to repeat what happened to them with their students. This finding was of great significance since it was in line with the theoretical framework that I employed in this study. Some novice postgraduate supervisors experienced bad postgraduate supervision but discarded the bad supervision and replace it with positive supervision with their current students.

In the next section, I present the summary of the findings in sync with the study's theoretical framework, Bandura's Social Learning Theory.

4.5 Summary of the findings

In this section, I present the summary of the findings in relation to the theoretical framework –Bandura's SLT. The SLT is a theory of learning processes and social behaviour which proposes that new behaviours can be acquired by observing and imitating others according to Nabavi, (2012). This study's findings revealed that the participants (novice supervisors) used the wealth of experience they garnered from their supervisors during their postgraduate studies in their supervisory roles. In sync with the SLT, these novice supervisors acquire supervision behaviour from observing their postgraduate supervisors posits Johnson *et al.*, (2014).

Bandura's SLT suggests that a new pattern of behaviour can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behaviour of others. Observation and modelling play a primary role in this process. In other words, contextually, the novice supervisors observed and modelled their postgraduate supervisors' supervision style.

The SLT from Bandura (1971) is from the global north or western perspective but can be applied in the Global South because human learning behaviour is global. Humans are social beings globally, and this theory can be applied to their learning behaviour no matter where they exist.

The study's findings are in sync with Bandura's Theory's four stages of the modelling process. For the novice supervisor to observe and replicate supervision behaviour acquired during observation, Bandura's (1971) modelling process must occur. The modelling process consists of four steps, which I conceptualised below in relation to the study's findings.

4.5.1 Attention

This stage is about paying attention to the observed behaviour (the model). The novice supervisors in this study all attested that they garnered a wealth of experience from their postgraduate supervisors. This acquired experience is a result of their observation of their supervisors' supervision style, which enabled them to acquire large integrated units of behaviour as they paid attention to the postgraduate supervision they went through (Bandura, 1971).

During their time as postgraduate students, they observed among others the following from their postgraduate supervisors: a) the supervisor's expertise on their study topic, b) how to master academic writing, c) how to put together a quality research proposal, d) how to defend their research proposal, e) how to navigate the administration processes for ethics approval, f) how to conceptualise their research, g) how to manage deadlines while maintaining quality work. It is through such experience where they h) learned intricate skills like the use of technology to advance the research, i) values like commitment, dedication, sacrifice and time management and j) how to navigate their academic and research roles.

4.5.2 Retention

According to Bandura (1971), a person cannot be much influenced by observation of a model's behaviour if he has no memory of it. Retention means the ability of the novice supervisor to recall what was observed when the opportunity arose as put by Johnson *et al.*, (2014). Novice postgraduate supervisors must be able to recall their supervisors' supervisory behaviour they observed to put it into practice with their own postgraduate students. This study's finding revealed that novice supervisors did not just experience the supervision style of their postgraduate supervisors; they also recalled and shared those experiences. When novice supervisors got the opportunity to supervise postgraduate students, they had to recall their postgraduate supervision experience as described by Johnson *et al.*, (2014).

Now that the postgraduate student was appointed as a lecturer and has added responsibility to supervise postgraduate students, he/she must recall the lessons learnt during their time as postgraduate students. The reason is because there is no formal training to be a supervisor at a university. The novice supervisor must recall the following: How to: a) Be in charge and understand a postgraduate student's research topic. b) Guide a student to write a research proposal. c) Teach a student to write academically. d) Support the student when they experience personal crisis. e) Guide the student to defend the proposal. f) Assist the student acquire the ethics approval. g) Academically support the student to successfully complete their research. h) Instill values like commitment, dedication and time management. I) Provide timeous feedback to the student.

4.5.3 Motivation

According to Bandura (1965), "When positive incentives are provided, observational learning which previously remained unexpressed is promptly translated into action". Additionally, "A

person can acquire, retain and possess the capabilities for skilful execution of modelled behaviour, but learning may rarely be activated into overt performance if it is negatively sanctioned or otherwise unfavourably received” according to Bandura, (1965). In other words, there is the need for the observer to be sufficiently motivated for them to implement the modelled behaviour enthusiastically. The findings of this study revealed that novice supervisors appreciated the supervision models they acquired from their postgraduate supervisors, which motivated them to apply the models in their supervision roles ardently. Conversely, those who had negative experiences chose to reverse the experience with their students.

Negative postgraduate supervision experienced by novice postgraduate supervisors includes among others: A lack of: a) Academic support from the supervisor. b) Timely feedback from the supervisor. c) Moral support when the student experiences personal difficulties. d) Understanding of the student’s research topic.

This motivation process doesn’t fit into how novice supervisors experienced postgraduate supervision because when they were observers, they were not motivated to use their model’s experience until they got to the field and realised they needed the experience. Thus, there was no motivation for them to use their experience; they only used it as a matter of necessity.

Not all the findings in this study fit into the four stages of Bandura’s SLT because Bandura’s SLT was used to determine the impact of novice supervisors’ experience in postgraduate studies on their current supervisory roles. In other words, Bandura’s theory was not used to assess the impact of the challenges the novice supervisors faced while executing their supervisory roles and the strategies they employed to address the challenges. The reason is that they were never exposed to the challenges their supervisors (model) faced while supervising them; therefore, there is no way they would have observed and modelled the challenges their supervisors faced and the strategy they employed in addressing those challenges.

4.5.4 Reproduction

According to Bandura (1971), symbolic representations guide overt actions. In other words, for the observer to achieve behavioural reproduction of what he acquired from the model, he must put together a given set of responses according to the modelled patterns posits Bandura, (1971). Contextually, this means the novice supervisors (as observers) should be able to

replicate the supervision behaviour they acquired from their postgraduate supervisors (the models). The study findings revealed that the novice supervisors could replicate positive postgraduate supervision values they acquired from their postgraduate supervisors in sync with the “reproduction process” of Bandura’s theory.

The novice postgraduate supervisors would replicate the following positive postgraduate supervision values they had acquired from their supervision experiences with their postgraduate supervisors: a) Dedication to student’s research. b) Understanding what the student needs to achieve with the research. c) Providing timeous feedback to the student. d) Morally supporting the student when experiencing difficulties. e) Academically supporting the student’s work. f) Support the student to successfully defend the proposal. Support the student to complete the research and to write a research report.

In the next section I present a new model for the induction of novice supervisors into the supervision of postgraduate students patterned after Bandura’s SLT.

4.6 Gradual novice supervisor supervision model

Based on the above conceptualisation of Bandura’s SLT with the study’s findings, I developed a model which universities can use to support novice supervisors. The rationale for developing the model is as follows: The study findings revealed that novice supervisors used the experience they garnered from their supervisors during their postgraduate studies to navigate their supervisory roles. The study also revealed how the university support system helped novice supervisors play their supervisory roles. However, both cases were hoc and not structured. So, it is difficult to ascertain how the approaches impacted the novice supervisors in discharging their supervisory roles. Therefore, there is a need for a model that presents a structured approach to the induction of novice supervisors into their supervisory roles. Additionally, the study further revealed that novice supervisors were not well prepared for their supervisory roles before they were ‘thrown into the deep end’ of supervision, as P7 puts it. Hence, there is a need for a model that practically deals with a seamless integration of novice supervisors into postgraduate supervision. I term the model the: “Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model”. I present the details of the model below, while I present the summary and the contribution of the model to postgraduate supervision in Chapter 5.

Table 0.2: Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model

Modelling process	Novice supervisor orientation process
Attention	Experienced supervisors as model (mentors). University support programmes as a supplement to the modelling.
Retention	Novice supervisor supervises a postgraduate student under the tutelage of his mentor/model.
Motivation	Before reproduction, there must be motivation. The university motivates novice supervisors with reduced academic and supervision workload.
Reproduction	Novice supervisors are fully equipped to handle the full supervision responsibility and become reliable models to their students, reproducing the academia workforce.

Table 4.2 below illustrates the “Gradual novice supervisor supervision Model”, as I discussed above.

4.7 Discussions of findings of the study

Firstly, this study revealed that novice postgraduate supervisors, in their perception of postgraduate supervision, see supervisors as a support structure for postgraduate students at different levels, for instance, through the guidance they give to students. P5 puts it this way: *“Postgraduate supervision entails the supervisor sitting down with the students and discuss their work with them and brainstorm any challenges they might have encountered”*. This perception is in line with Manyike (2017) and Sandretto et al. (2002), who asserted that the supervisors provided expertise, time and support to foster the postgraduate students’ skills and positive attitudes toward research and to ensure the production of a thesis of acceptable standards.

The study also found that students benefited from interpersonal relationships from younger novice supervisors. According to P11, *“Postgraduate supervision is about having personal relationships with the students at a certain level. This personal relationship involves listening to them and calling them, when necessary”*. This perception agrees with Makoni’s (2021) assertion that a personal relationship between the supervisor and the postgraduate students was the key factor in the success and failure of the postgraduate students’ research work. Furthermore, at a professional engagement level, P11 put it this way: *“Postgraduate supervision is about helping, guiding, and supporting the students to identify their research*

area". In relation to this perception, Alam et al. (2013) asserted that many postgraduate students did not finish their studies within the allocated timeframe or dropped out of their studies completely due to problems related to inadequate supervision.

Secondly, the study's findings revealed that novice supervisors relied heavily on their supervision experience during their postgraduate studies to carry out their duties as postgraduate supervisors in navigating the commencement of their supervisory responsibilities. According to P8, *"I did not have any tool that guided me on how to supervise. I drew from my experiences as a postgraduate student to supervise"*. This perception is in line with McKay and Monk (2017), who state that a novice supervisor is an academic who has completed a PhD and secured an appointment at a university and, therefore, has no experience in postgraduate supervision. In addition, the novice supervisors' experiences in navigating the commencement of their supervisory assignments revealed that they incorporated certain positive values they acquired during their postgraduate studies into their supervisory roles. P13 expressed the sentiment this way, *"My supervisor was a visionary. He exposed me to top researchers and I try to do that in my supervision as well"*.

Conversely, some participants had negative supervision experiences; however, they made it a goal not to repeat the same with their students but rather improve on the errors of their supervisors. According to P11, *"I did not have a good relationship with my supervisor. I did not get timeous and constructive feedback from her. Now I make it a priority to give my learner timeous and constructive feedback"*. These experiences align with Ssempebwa et al. (2016), who asserted that the pedagogy of their supervisors influenced novice supervisors during their time as postgraduate students since they were not trained as supervisors, nor were they given any systematic supervision.

Additionally, the novice supervisors' experiences in navigating the commencement of their supervisory assignments revealed the uncertainty of their supervisory capability at the outset of their supervisory career. This uncertainty implies a trial-by-error supervisory approach that could impact both their students and research negatively. P2 and P5, respectively, put it this way: *"I think it's a figure it out as you go type of thing"* (P2). *"I need support because I am not sure of what I am doing."*, *"The fact that I have a master's and doctorate degree, the university sort of assumes that I can supervise"* (P5). According to Ssempebwa (2016), novice postgraduate supervisors experienced challenges in preparation for teaching and

postgraduate students' education and requested guidance regarding monitoring and teaching methods.

Novice postgraduate supervisors with a Doctorate qualification had a better understanding of postgraduate supervision than those that had a Master's qualification. They understood postgraduate supervision to be an art of developing postgraduate students as researchers. P7 remarked, "Postgraduate supervision involves moulding the students to be resourceful and well-rounded academic[s] who are independent and critical". P13 concurred, "Postgraduate supervision is to guide, train, and support students to be researchers. It is also about helping students to conceptualize a research program and getting them to transit from literal thinking to abstract thinking". P11 remarked in agreement that, "postgraduate supervision is about supporting and encouraging students to grow their research skills". This was in accordance to Sutherland et al, (2013) who asserts that having a doctoral degree was positively associated with brilliance for novice postgraduate supervisors.

This study also revealed that novice supervisors understood that postgraduate supervision meant that a supervisor must be compatible to the student's research topic. P1 described the concept this way: "Supervisors must see, connect with, and understand their students' perspective of the work". The finding is in line with one of the functions of a postgraduate supervisor which is to value and understand the postgraduate student's ideas (Grant & Bitzer, 2014).

Furthermore, the study findings revealed that the university provided an impressive support system for the induction of novice postgraduate supervisors into the art of supervision. P12 and P9, respectively, put it this way: "*Although I didn't have formal training as a supervisor, I have the support I needed to execute my supervision roles effectively*" (P12). "*The university supports and empowers us through writing retreats and workshops on supervision*" (9). The university support system is in sync with Remmik et al. (2011), who documented that novice supervisors experienced cooperation and support from their universities internationally. There are, however, opposing opinions of the participants on the university support system. For example, P12, a PhD holder with four years of supervisory experience, expressed that, although she didn't have formal training as a supervisor, she got the support she needed to execute her supervision roles effectively through the university support system for novice postgraduate supervisors.

On the other hand, P17 expressed dissatisfaction with the ineffectiveness of co-supervision; he referred to it as being thrown into the deep end. P7 raised a similar opinion regarding mentorship because it is ad hoc with no checks and balances to determine whether it is achieving its goal. These two opinions are in sync with Ssempebwa et al. (2016), who reported that most novice postgraduate supervisors do not feel supported by their universities.

The study findings also revealed challenges the novice postgraduate supervisors faced as they discharged their supervisory duties. The challenges were both student-orientated challenges, including apathy and poor academic writing skills, and institutional-based challenges, such as a defective support programme and the overwhelming workload saddled on the novice postgraduate supervisor. P4 expressed student-orientated challenges this way, *"Some students just don't do their work. They don't take pride in their work"*. In addition, P16 expressed institutional challenge this way, *"The workload is heavy and impacts on supervision negatively"*. According to Salehi and Achian (2012), some students were unsure of their ability to conduct research and did not believe that practice and effort lead to success. Furthermore, according to Wadesango and Machingambi (2011), challenges like lack of supervisor support and heavy supervisor workload negatively impacted postgraduate supervision.

Lastly, the novice postgraduate supervisors discussed the strategies they and the university employed to address the challenges. Participants acknowledged the support structure the university puts in place to assist them in dealing with student-based challenges. P9 explained: *"There are processes when dealing with students' issues, our superiors get involved"*. They further expressed strategies they employed to address the institutional-based challenges. P7 commented, *"Work overload is a struggle in all academiainvolved in reporting troublesome students"*. And P12 concurred, *"There are processes involved, but you need to adapt and manage your time"*. These problem-solving approaches align with Remmik et al.'s (2011) assertion that novice postgraduate supervisors tried to identify themselves with other lecturers in their professional group and adapt to prevailing beliefs and attitudes to discharge their supervisory roles adequately.

4.8 Conclusions

Throughout this chapter, I discussed the experiences of novice supervisors at a South African university and also an analysis of those experiences. Novice supervisors in this research

varied in demographics like nationality, age, qualifications, years of supervision experience and number of students they were supervising at the time of the research. The different demographics influenced how they viewed postgraduate supervision. Novice supervisors with a PhD had more intricate understanding of postgraduate supervision than those with a Masters qualification. Furthermore, younger novice supervisors easily developed interpersonal relationships with their students in order to boost their confidence while the older novice supervisors did not. The experienced novice supervisors were also aware of university processes that they could use with difficult students while the less experienced novice supervisors did not use those avenues.

Novice supervisors' understanding of postgraduate supervision showed that they viewed it as a support structure for the postgraduate students. It was where they would give their students some academic, emotional and compassionate support they needed to complete their studies. They further viewed postgraduate supervision as a tool to develop the students into independent researchers and academics. Moreover, they understood that the supervisor must be compatible to the student's research topic.

Novice supervisors in this study navigated their supervisory roles by relying solely on their experiences of postgraduate supervision as students. That is, they used their experiences of postgraduate supervision as masters and doctorate students to supervise their students. They however, incorporated positive postgraduate supervision they acquired as postgraduate students into their supervision and discarded the negative supervision they had experienced. However, novice supervisors were uncertain of their capabilities as supervisors at the commencement of their supervision careers.

The university offered a support system for the novice supervisors through programs and support platforms. The programs included: a) workshops b) writing retreats and c) courses on supervision. Furthermore, the support platforms were: a) mentorship b) co-supervision and professional development opportunities. Novice supervisors had different perspectives regarding the support programs and platforms offered by the university. Some were positive about programs and platforms while others had reservations regarding them. Those with reservations viewed them as ineffective and argued that a formal qualification on postgraduate supervision would be adequate to help them mitigate their challenges on supervision. Hence they alluded that they never received any supervisory training to equip them with postgraduate supervisory skills.

Novice postgraduate supervisors experienced challenges as I had alluded earlier. Their challenges were student orientated and also institution orientated. Students, especially Master's students: a) lacked skills in academic writing; b) were apathetic towards their studies; c) lacked communication skills; and d) lacked commitment towards their studies. Retrospectively, there were institution based challenges that they experienced including among others: a) defective support programs; and b) the overwhelming workload.

There were strategies that the novice postgraduate supervisors employed to overcome the challenges I have mentioned. They used processes provided by the university to deal with problematic students. They developed inter-personal relations with struggling students to help them through their problems. They further offered students' academic support they needed in order to assist them to complete their studies successfully. They also developed time management skills in order to manage their overwhelming workload as supervisors and as lecturers.

The findings above were contextualised to Bandura's Social Learning Theory. In the context of this study, novice postgraduate supervisors are social beings that learn by observing other novice supervisors around them past or current. My findings were in line with Bandura's Social Learning Theory although I did not use it to assess the impact of the challenges faced by novice supervisors while executing their supervisory roles. I also did not use it on the strategies they employed to overcome their supervision challenges. The reason is that novice postgraduate supervisors in this study were not exposed to the challenges their supervisors or models faced while supervising them.

Finally, I discussed a model I developed from the study's findings. The model deals with the fear novice supervisors had that they were "thrown into the deep end" without support regarding supervision. The model is a structured way to induct and integrate novice postgraduate supervisors into their supervisory roles. In the next chapter, I summarised all the chapters contained in this study and present a summary of the findings and the new model I developed. I also discussed the limitations of the study. Finally, I made recommendations based on the study's findings and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The aim of my study was to investigate novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university, as shown in the previous chapters. In chapter four, I presented the analysis of the data I gathered on the experience of novice postgraduate supervisors as they played their postgraduate supervisory roles. In this chapter, I summarise all the chapters in this study and present the summary of the research findings. Secondly, I encapsulate the new model that emerged from the findings in this study. Additionally, I discuss the study's contribution to integrating novice supervisors into postgraduate supervision and the study's limitations. Finally, I make recommendations based on the study's findings and suggestions for future studies.

5.2 Summary of the Study

Chapter one details the background of my study around the main research question: "What are novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university?" To unearth data on the main research question, I used five sub-questions listed below;

- a) What do the novice postgraduate supervisors understand by the concepts of a postgraduate supervision?
- b) How do the novice postgraduate supervisors navigate their supervisory roles?
- c) What support systems does the university provide for novice postgraduate supervisors to perform their supervision roles?
- d) What challenges do novice postgraduate supervisors experience and how did they overcome these challenges while executing their supervisory roles?

Furthermore, I discuss my study's research problem which is the dilemma novice supervisors' encounter in the discharge of their supervisory duties. The purpose of my study is to understand the experiences of novice postgraduate supervisors with regard to their supervision of postgraduate students. In addition, the aim of my study is to investigate novice postgraduate supervisors' experiences of supervision at a South African university. The objectives of my study are in line with my research sub-questions;

- a) To discover the novice postgraduate supervisors' understanding of the concepts of postgraduate supervisor and supervision
- b) To explore how the novice postgraduate supervisors navigated their supervisory roles
- c) To find out the support systems the university provided for novice postgraduate supervisors to perform their supervisory roles
- d) To investigate the challenges experienced by novice postgraduate supervisors while executing their supervisory roles
- e) To identify the mechanisms novice postgraduate supervisors used to overcome challenges they experience while executing their supervisory roles

Chapter two shows the literature and the theory that map the research study. The literature broadly outline the novice supervisors in the context of this study. Novice postgraduate supervisors are defined as academics who have completed their PhD or similar qualification within the last five years and their place in postgraduate supervision was outlined. Postgraduate supervision as a discipline is defined as a co-learning relationship between a supervisor and a postgraduate student, and its complexities concerning novice postgraduate supervisors are outlined. The following concepts are clarified; postgraduate studies at a university, supervision and postgraduate supervision, who novice postgraduate supervisors were, experiences of novice postgraduate supervisors, challenges novice postgraduate supervisors experience and how novice postgraduate supervisors overcame postgraduate supervision challenges. Furthermore, their connection to how they play a role in the novice postgraduate supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision is made. The Social Learning Theory (SLT) championed by Bandura (1971) is explained as learning processes and social behaviour which proposes that new behaviours can be acquired by observing and imitating others. The theory is interrogated in relation to how it influences novice postgraduate supervisors' ability to supervise postgraduate students.

The research methodology and methods are detailed in **chapter three**. I use the constructivist paradigm which is also known as the naturalistic paradigm. As a worldview or a basic belief system, the constructivist paradigm guides me in my quest to investigate novice postgraduate supervisors' experiences when supervising postgraduate students. It allows me to use a case study as a research design to conduct my study. A case study helps me to systematically interrogate concepts, processes and challenges involved regarding novice postgraduate

supervisors' experiences of supervision at a South African university. Qualitative virtual research interviews are used to solicit responses to the research question and sub-questions. I purposefully sample eighteen participants who helps to unearth data that illuminates the research question and build this research study.

Chapter four is an analysis and presentation of findings obtained through the following research question: “What are the experiences of novice postgraduate supervisors of postgraduate supervision at a South African university?” This question is vital because it helps unearth responses that addresses the purpose of my study, which is to explore how novice supervisors perceive postgraduate supervision as part of their duties as lecturers at their university. Through the Social Learning Theory, I prove that novice postgraduate supervisors are social beings who learned postgraduate supervision from people around them, past and present.

In the following section, I summarise my findings from analysed data in chapter four from the participants' responses to the interview questions.

5.3 The findings of the study

In this section, I present the findings from the data that enabled me to answer the primary research question (“What are the experiences of novice postgraduate supervisors’ of postgraduate supervision at a South African university?”) and its sub-questions. This section is of utmost importance as it generates responses from novice postgraduate supervisors in accordance with the purpose of the study, which was to “explore how novice postgraduate supervisors experience postgraduate supervision at a South African university”.

The main findings that emerged from the analysis of the participants' responses to questions put to them are presented below.

- a) The novice postgraduate supervisors described the concept of postgraduate supervision in their own way. According to them, postgraduate supervision is a supervisor's support system to the students through i) the guidance the supervisors give to the students, ii) the interpersonal relationship they have with the students for the enhancement of their research work, iii) the professional engagement the supervisors have with their students, iv) supervisors walking the research journey with the students from inception to the finishing line, and v) an effective and functional

structure around the supervision process, which includes good communication channels between the supervisor and the student, and timeous feedback from the supervisor to the students. Novice postgraduate supervisors with a doctorate qualification had a better and more intricate understanding of postgraduate supervision than those with a masters qualification. This showed the value and function of a PhD as compared to a master's qualification.

- b) Younger novice postgraduate supervisors developed inter-personal relationships with their students in order to support them when they were experiencing personal crisis that could derail their studies. Younger novice postgraduate supervisors therefore boosted the students' confidence to better cope with the demands of their studies and help them to also successfully complete their studies. Novice postgraduate supervisors in this study understood that to supervise successfully they had to be compatible to the topic that was to be supervised. That is, the supervisor needed to have the expertise to guide the student in the topic they have chosen to research.
- c) The novice postgraduate supervisors relied mostly on the wealth of experience they amassed from their supervisors during their postgraduate studies to carry out their duties as postgraduate supervisors. However, the experiences they have acquired were two-fold: positive supervision experiences and negative supervision experiences. That is, they either experienced good postgraduate supervision or bad postgraduate supervision. The novice postgraduate supervisors incorporated certain positive values they acquired during their postgraduate supervision experience into their supervisory role, while they improved on the negative ones.
- d) Novice postgraduate supervisors were uncertain of their supervision capabilities at the commencement of their supervision careers. They had insecurities mainly because there was no formal training to be a supervisor at their university. The university had an impressive induction support system created for novice postgraduate supervisors. The university provided programs and support platforms as initiatives that support novice postgraduate supervisors towards their meaningful supervision of postgraduate students. The programs were in the form of workshops, writing retreats and courses on supervision. The support platforms were in the form of mentorships, co-supervision and professional development opportunities.

- e) Novice postgraduate supervisors in this study had contrasting perspectives with regard to the programs and the support platforms. Some had reservations on their effectiveness while others viewed them as helpful. Those that had reservations pointed out that the support was informal, voluntary and therefore, they did not yield the maximum results they were designed for.
- f) The challenges the novice supervisors encountered in carrying out their supervisory assignments were student-orientated and institution orientated challenges. One of student challenges was apathy where students were not interested in the progress of their studies. Additionally, students' work was characterises by poor academic writing skills. Students also lacked communication skills when they experienced personal problems which affected their studies. There was also immense lack of commitment among students with regard to their studies where they just disappeared or quit.

The institution-based challenges were defective support programs and an overwhelming workload saddled on the novice supervisors. There were support programs but they were ineffective in mitigating challenges that the students experienced with regard to postgraduate supervision. Novice postgraduate supervisors experienced huge workloads as lecturers and supervisors. This problem was not restricted to only novice postgraduate supervisors but all lecturers at the university.

- g) The challenges the novice postgraduate supervisors encountered in carrying out their supervisory assignment are student-orientated challenges, which are students' apathy and poor academic writing skills, and institutional-based challenges, which are defective support programmes and an overwhelming workload saddled on the novice postgraduate supervisors.
- h) The university has an impressive structure to assist novice postgraduate supervisors in dealing with student-based challenges. There were processes the novice postgraduate supervisor could use if they experienced problems with a postgraduate student. Novice postgraduate supervisors also used inter-personal relations with students to assist them when they experienced personal crisis and used that as a support structure in order for them to complete their studies. In order to help students, novice postgraduate supervisors offered academic support to help them successfully

complete their studies. At the same time, novice postgraduate supervisors in this study adopted a time management strategy to handle heavy workload challenges.

In the previous chapter, I used the above findings to contextualise Bandura's SLT (1971) on novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision. In addition, I presented the rationale for developing a model patterned after Bandura's SLT for the seamless integration of novice postgraduate supervisors into postgraduate supervision. I also discussed the model's details extensively. I present the summary of the "Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model" below.

5.4 Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model

The Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model is the gradual induction of novice postgraduate supervisors into postgraduate supervision. It was developed from the research findings in chapter four which showed that novice postgraduate supervisors were facing serious odds against them in their work as supervisors of postgraduate students. There are factors which helped to develop the Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model and they are discussed below:

- a) A Masters or Doctorate qualification does not prepare an academic for postgraduate supervision. On the contrary, it prepares the student to be an efficient, capable, independent and self-reliant academic and researcher. The work as an academic in a university follows later and that were the Masters and Doctoral graduate realises that they were not prepared for the duties the university demands of them one of which is postgraduate supervision.
- b) Not all Master's and Doctorate graduates were trained teachers. It is a well research fact that some novice postgraduate supervisors often start their careers as lecturers without having been teachers before. This was encouraged by the university in their endeavour to replace aging academia with young academics. An example of this endeavour will be the nGAP program introduced in the university by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).
- c) Postgraduate supervision as a discipline requires to be learned. It is complex and connotes hierarchy, discipline and work monitoring. Postgraduate supervision also has three elements: i) co-learning relationship between a supervisor and a student ii)

establishing clear goals iii) managing supervisory processes. It involves transforming raw material (student's research idea) into a final product (Masters or Doctoral report).

- d) Postgraduate students were not guinea pigs on which inexperienced lecturers could practice postgraduate supervision. All students register for a postgraduate qualification hoping to receive the best tutelage possible. Being in the hands of inexperienced, untrained and incapable novice supervisors could derail their dreams of successfully completing their qualifications.
- e) Since there was no formal qualification for supervision, the model could help to bridge the gap into learning postgraduate supervision. It could help novice postgraduate supervisors practice quality supervision. Their gradual inception into postgraduate supervision could build their confidence, knowledge and capabilities to deliver quality postgraduate supervision.

In addition, the Gradual Novice Supervisor Model is in contrast to the radical university induction program that is unstructured and strenuous to the novice postgraduate supervisors. The current university induction programme is a pressurised model P11 described as “hitting the ground running”. The literature shows that the reason for that was that universities were pressured by their governments to increase the throughput of postgraduate students (Manyike, 2017). While South Africa would benefit from a steady throughput of Masters and Doctorate graduates from our universities, the expectations which universities put on novice postgraduate supervisors were not sustainable. This assertion is attested by the experiences novice postgraduate supervisors have of supervision in literature. Novice postgraduate supervisors feel insecure in their capabilities to supervise as advocated by Remmik *et al*, (2011), isolated because of lack of support (Ackerlind, 2005), have feelings of uneasiness due to early career status as put by Barret *et al*, (2009).

Furthermore, novice postgraduate supervisors had to struggle with a demanding postgraduate supervision workload according to McKay & Monk, (2017) while they were still adjusting to their jobs as lecturers. According to Lovitts (2007), the reasoning behind expecting novice postgraduate supervisors to supervise immediately after appointment was that they were expected to have acquired pedagogical skills while they were masters or doctoral students. This assertion is accurate, however the difficulty was that postgraduate students do not

acquire their masters and doctorate degrees to prepare them to be postgraduate supervisors. As a result, there should be a seamless transition period as shown in my supervision model that would adequately prepare a lecturer to take on his/her duties as a postgraduate student supervisor. Moreover, novice postgraduate supervisors were expected to graduate masters and doctoral students in record time (master's two years and doctoral three years) like experienced postgraduate supervisors (Lessing & Schultz, 2002).

The Gradual Novice Supervision Model could help capacitate novice postgraduate supervisors to perform their supervision duties with confidence because it provides adequate support before a novice postgraduate supervisor can supervise on his/her own. The model also has the interest of the postgraduate student who should receive the best postgraduate supervision possible.

Possible positive ramifications of the application of the Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model are:

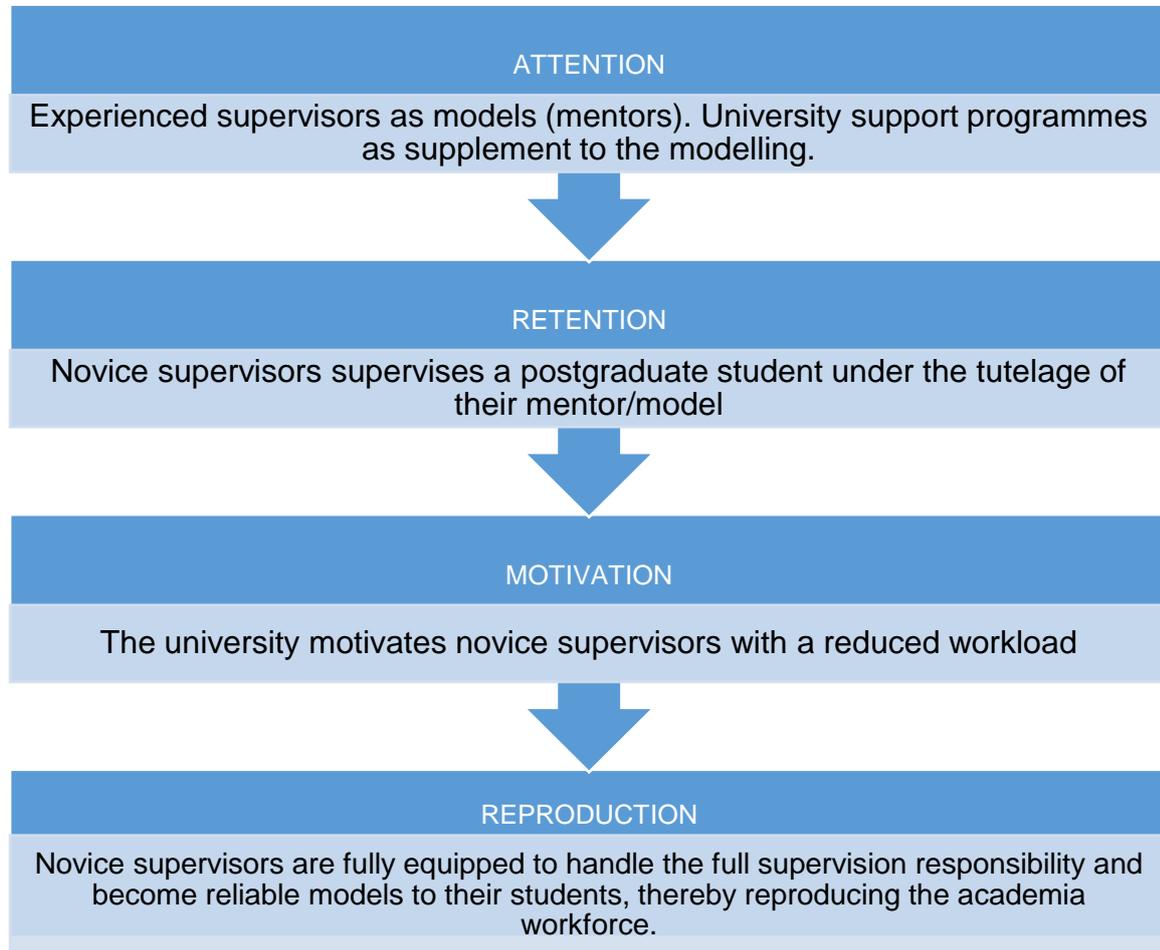
- a) It would ease uncertainty and anxiety among novice postgraduate supervisors of their capability to supervise postgraduate students. The competitive academic environment could be challenging for the novice supervisor and therefore this model could simplify their inception as postgraduate supervisors. Working alongside experienced supervisors initially through mentorship and co-supervision could help build confidence and knowledge among novice postgraduate supervisors.
- b) The university's support platforms of co-supervision, mentorship and ongoing professional development opportunities would be utilised efficiently to benefit novice postgraduate supervisors. Novice postgraduate supervisors in this study pointed out that the support platforms were there but they lacked efficiency. This gradual process could give credibility to these platforms because they would be part of a structured process.
- c) The university support programs of writing retreats, workshops and courses on supervision as tools to guide novice postgraduate supervisors, would benefit novice postgraduate supervisors. There is no doubt that the university is well intentioned with these programs, however, these programs were voluntary. Novice postgraduate supervisors mentioned that they even lacked the time to attend them since they were overwhelmed with work. The Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model as

structured shows step by step how these programs can be incorporated to help novice postgraduate supervisors.

- d) The modelling process would be continuous for the novice postgraduate supervisors enabling them to learn from senior supervisors. According to the theoretical framework of Bandura Social Learning Theory, novice supervisors started learning supervision from their supervisors when they were still postgraduate students by observation. The model is a continuation of that process where novice supervisors would practically learn supervision for the purpose of application of the knowledge observed.
- e) It could mould novice postgraduate supervisors into capable, confident and experienced supervisors. Observation is a powerful mode of learning especially when the model is experienced and capable. Senior supervisors would play a significant role to instil supervision knowledge and skills in novice postgraduate supervisors who would in return dispense quality supervision to their students.

Through the “Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model” in Figure 5.1 below, I present a gradual process that introduces the novice postgraduate supervisors into the art of postgraduate supervision.

Figure 0.1: Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model



The above model is developed from the research findings of this study and it is significantly influenced by the theoretical framework on which this study was based. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1971) postulates that individuals (in this context novice postgraduate supervisors) acquire or learn new behaviours (in this context postgraduate supervision) by imitating or copying others (in this context experienced supervisors). As social beings, novice postgraduate supervisors were inclined to observe and imitate postgraduate supervision from other supervisors around them in the context of this study (Nabavi, 2012). Novice postgraduate supervisors started observing postgraduate supervision from the time they were still students and receiving postgraduate supervision from their supervisors. The experienced supervisors were models which the novice supervisors observed. Currently, in their jobs as novice postgraduate supervisors, they had to recall and apply lessons learnt on postgraduate

supervision on their students. This was because there was no formal training to be a postgraduate supervisor so the only avenue was to use knowledge acquired from the time novice postgraduate supervisors were postgraduate students as put by Ssempebwa *et al*, (2016).

The Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model was based on Bandura's SLT (1971) modelling processes. There were inner forces or impulses, needs and drives that propelled novice postgraduate supervisors to want to learn postgraduate supervision. These impulses were channelled through the four conditions of the modelling process which are a) attention b) retention c) reproduction and d) motivation. During their time as postgraduate students, novice postgraduate supervisors watched and memorised postgraduate supervision practice from their supervisors. At present, they recall and practice what they have learned. My model essentially continues this process of observation, modelling and practice of postgraduate supervision in the novice supervisors' workspace. It is of paramount importance to note that with this observational learning in my model, the novice postgraduate supervisor knows the implications of the behaviour (postgraduate supervision) that they would be learning from their mentors. The implication of their learning postgraduate supervision is practical application of the knowledge on students.

It is important to also mention that through application of Bandura's SLT, findings showed that as students, novice postgraduate supervisors experienced good and bad supervision experiences. This was mainly because observation does not only include good experiences. However, novice postgraduate supervisors revealed that they discarded the negative supervision experiences and replaced them with positive supervision experiences when they supervised their current students. They loathed the idea of putting their students through the negative postgraduate supervision experiences that they have endured. The model would assist in instilling practical and positive postgraduate supervision in novice supervisors through experienced mentors in a structured manner.

The following sub-sections shows how the novice postgraduate supervisors observed other supervisors through the modelling processes and ultimately imitated them when applying postgraduate supervision in the context of the Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model. **The research questions are also linked to the tenets of the SLT to show how it supports the research.**

5.4.1 Attention

Attention means to learn by example and to focus on a behaviour being observed. Not only did novice postgraduate supervisors have an opportunity to observe postgraduate supervision as students but currently they have another opportunity to observe peers and other supervisors or models. The university should present the “models” to the novice postgraduate supervisors at the attention stage. The models would be the senior supervisors or mentors in the department or faculty who would dispense impeccable supervision experiences to the novice postgraduate supervisors. In the context of my research, the novice supervisor would learn the concept of novice supervision by observing the work senior supervisors or co-supervisors were doing. The senior and co-supervisors are there to impart valuable lessons to novices and novice supervisors attested to not being allowed to supervise on their own in their first supervision encounters. As a result their supervision of students would be impacted by the supervision content they observe and learn. The responsibility would be on novice supervisors to pay attention and prioritise their learning of postgraduate supervision. Models were crucial at this stage because novice postgraduate supervisors were not trained teachers and have never supervised before. Their only way to adequately grasp the art of postgraduate supervision was from observing experienced and capable postgraduate supervisors.

These models are the experienced supervisors assigned to assist novice postgraduate supervisors in navigating through the art of supervision. This modelling stage should be a year programme wherein the novice postgraduate supervisors are not “thrown into the deep end”, as expressed by P7. Instead, they are entrusted to experienced supervisors as mentors, who assist them in navigating through the transition into the art of supervision. Novice postgraduate supervisors would not have to “hit the ground running” as expressed by P11. The models would ease the anxiety and insecurities of the novice supervisors since the university environment could be very competitive and intimidating. The support platform of co-supervision is the best tool the university would use for observation by novice supervisors. Co-supervision would also be supplemented by professional development opportunities since the novice supervisors were already under the mentorship of experienced supervisors.

Additionally, the university support programmes for novice supervisors should supplement the mentorship programme, such as writers' retreats, workshops and courses on supervision. Therefore, the novice supervisors are equipped both theoretically through the support programmes and practically through their mentors/models. However, the support programme

should be structured, scheduled, and compulsory for maximum effect, and not ad hoc as it is now. For instance, P1 said he doesn't attend programs and workshops organised by the university because they are not compulsory.

5.4.2 Retention

Retention is the ability to recall what was learned during observation (in this context postgraduate supervision) according to Bandura, (1971). That is, the postgraduate supervision being observed should be of great interest for it to be recalled. The Masters or Doctorate program must be adequately interesting for the postgraduate student pay attention and be able to recall how the supervisor guided him/her to successfully complete their studies. Novice postgraduate supervisors can also retain negative supervision experiences that they have encountered with their supervisors when they were postgraduate students. In the context of my research, the novice supervisors recalled lessons learned during their observation of postgraduate supervision (i.e observing the co-supervisor and other senior supervisors) and used that to navigate the commencement of their supervisory roles. According to novice supervisors the university provided support in the form of co-supervision, writing retreats and workshops among others to support them. As a result, the novice supervisors would use these to navigate their journey as supervisors.

As I have pointed out before, the negative experiences were not put into practice when novice supervisors started supervising in their current roles. The negative experiences were discarded and only positive supervision experiences were used on the students. Positive attributes that the novice postgraduate supervisor reported to have retained from their supervisors are: a) formulation of a research proposal; b) formulation of research questions; c) being perceptive of students' difficulties in their work; and d) writing of a report. The retention stage is a continuation of the attention stage. The novice supervisor is assigned postgraduate student(s) to supervise. However, the supervision is under the tutelage of the mentor. It is a different model of co-supervision. Through this process, the novice supervisors recall the supervisory skills they have been exposed to during the attention stage. The novice postgraduate supervisors apply postgraduate supervision through imitation of their mentors.

5.4.3 Motivation

Motivation denotes that the novice postgraduate supervisors must be enthusiastic, driven and have the desire to learn the postgraduate supervision experience so that they can apply it in their work according to Razieh, (2012). That is, the mentors must make the observation process by novice postgraduate supervisors of postgraduate supervision meaningful and challenging. Novice supervision must be meaningful to an extent that novice supervisors would have the desire to accept the supervision experience so that they can apply it in their work. Furthermore, the novice postgraduate supervisor must value the supervision observed or the rewards that the supervision of postgraduate students presented as put by Bandura, (1971). In the context of my research, the novice would be motivated by the over-all support the university provides firstly through the senior supervisors and co-supervisors who support the knowledge development of the novice supervisor on postgraduate supervision. Secondly, the other support mechanisms earlier mentioned like writing retreats, the library, workshops among others would greatly motivate the novice supervisor to internalize postgraduate supervision knowledge.

As improved from the order of the Bandura modelling process, in the “Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model”, motivation precedes reproduction. The novice postgraduate supervisors, having been equipped with the required skills for effective postgraduate supervision through the attention and retention processes, need to be motivated by the university by being eased into their supervisory roles with reduced academic and supervision workload. This process implies gradually introducing novice supervisors into their roles as supervisors, from single to complex supervision. This approach is said to make supervision less overwhelming for them, motivating them to assume their supervisory role enthusiastically.

5.4.4 Reproduction

Reproduction is putting into practice the behavioural patterns that have been observed, retained and was motivated to observe. The gradual introduction of novice postgraduate supervisors to the art of supervision, from retention to motivation, should have prepared them for their roles as full-fledged supervisors using the experience they garnered during the attention and retention stage. In the context of my research, the novice supervisor would experience challenges and also develop strategies or mechanisms to overcome those challenges. Their most vital challenge would firstly be the lack of experience with regard to the understanding of postgraduate supervision. Secondly, they would experience challenges

with regard to how they navigate their supervision roles. However, with the support system the university provides and the knowledge gathered through observation of postgraduate supervision, they would be able to supervise successfully. Furthermore, they would be fully equipped to handle the full supervision responsibility and become a reliable model to their students, thus reproducing the academia workforce.

In the next section, I compare the study's findings with the literature.

5.6 Contribution of the study

The study has added the following values to the field of postgraduate supervision:

- a) A well-structured support system by the university is essential for a seamless rite of passage for novice supervisors to postgraduate supervision. Currently, the university provides support programs in the form of supervision workshops, writing retreats and courses on supervision. There are also support platforms in the form of mentorships, co-supervision and professional development opportunities. These programs were very essential in the development and nurturing of a novice supervisor. However, they were offered on voluntary basis to novice supervisors who are overwhelmed with work as lecturers and as postgraduate supervisors. Novice supervisors in this study alluded to the fact that they did not find the time attend all these support programs and platforms. As a result, the effectiveness of this essential support was lost.
- b) Supervisors need to be aware that they are models to the students and that there is a ripple effect of their supervisory approach to succeeding generations of supervisors. Some novice supervisors experienced first-hand the effects of negative supervision while they were postgraduate students. Inadequate postgraduate supervision has far-reaching effects on the lives of postgraduate students in the sense that some students quit their studies due to negative supervision. Time can be lost while the student is supervised in a way that is detrimental to the successful completion of their studies. Practicing postgraduate supervision the right way is influential to the postgraduate student under supervision. Retrospectively, inadequate postgraduate supervision will have a lasting effect on a student.
- c) The “Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model” developed from the study's findings could enhance the effective induction of novice supervisors into postgraduate

supervision. Currently, novice supervisors were faced with a “swim or sink” according to Foote, (2012) situation in the university while they had no proper training to supervise postgraduate students. One novice supervisors mentioned that he had to “hit the ground running” in order to adjust to his role as a supervisor. Novice supervisors in general are: a) anxious because of the expectations the university puts on them b) unsure of their supervisory capabilities c) desperate to make it in the competitive academia. My model would gradually induct them to their roles as supervisors and would also build confidence in their capabilities to supervise since they would have been mentored by capable senior supervisors.

5.7 Limitations of the study

At the beginning of this study, I planned to use “a nested sample”, which was a “strategy that facilitates credible comparisons of two or more institutions of the same subgroup, wherein one or more members of the subgroup represent a sub-sample of the full sample” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:238). To achieve this, I intended to include novice supervisors from other two South African universities. The aim was to compare novice postgraduate supervisors’ experiences based on the diverse university contexts for triangulation purposes posits Hennink *et al.*, (2020). However, due to difficulties in obtaining ethics approval from the other two universities, I had no option but to involve only one university.

Secondly, I had planned to have face-to-face contact interviews with participants in order to capture verbal and non-verbal cues. That is, the face to face interviews would enable me to capture additional emotional and behavioural clues, such as discomfort or enthusiasm with interview questions that I could not pick up with virtual interview. Virtual interviews were further a challenge because most of the participants were reluctant to switch on their cameras and I could not force them to do so.

Furthermore, the study was limited to eighteen novice supervisors at one university in South Africa. The one university and the small study sample are a limitation themselves. I only interviewed novice postgraduate supervisors and did not interview any departmental superiors or university management to corroborate the issues raised by novice supervisors. However, my study did not intend to generalise findings but only to illuminate the experiences of novice supervisors of postgraduate supervision at a South African university. Next, the recommendations of this study are detailed.

5.8 Recommendations for the improvement of induction of novice supervisors to postgraduate supervision

As illustrated in Figure 5.1, “Gradual Novice Supervisor Supervision Model” has potential to induce novice postgraduate supervisors into the world of postgraduate supervision. The implication of this model is that universities fulfil their role of ensuring that novice postgraduate supervisors’ experiences of supervising students becomes efficient, effective and productive according to Bernay *et al.*, (2020). In addition, the engagement of novice postgraduate supervisors at the universities must lead to students’ understanding of national and institutional legislation and policies that defend their right to receive information that contribute to their professional development and postgraduate throughput rates (Barnacle & Dall’Alba, 2017).

On the other hand, a lack of mentoring of novice postgraduate supervisors leads to students’ dissatisfaction with decisions that are made in their institutions as advocated by Cornelius & Bell, (2020). This results in student protests that disturb teaching and learning in universities as described by Jooste *et al.*, (2020). I hereby make the following recommendations based on the study’s findings:

- a) There is a need to overhaul the current university induction programme functional support system to successfully induce novice postgraduate supervisors into academia.
- b) I propose the adoption of the “Gradual novice supervisor supervision Model” by the universities.
- c) Universities should introduce a formal course for novice postgraduate supervisors before assigning students to supervise. A lecturer should only be allowed to supervise upon showing proof of course completion.

5.9 Recommendations for future research

My study explored the experiences of novice supervisors of postgraduate supervision in a South African university. However, in exploring this phenomenon, I did not pursue the impact of their novice supervision on their postgraduate students. It would be interesting to know whether their experiences of supervision from their postgraduate studies enable them to provide quality supervision. It would also be of important to explore the immediate superiors' observations of novice supervisors' supervision abilities.

5.10 Final reflection

This study did not only open up my eyes and ears to the experiences of novice postgraduate supervisors in supervising postgraduate students. It also served as a learning experience for me as a postgraduate student aspiring to become an academic and novice postgraduate supervisor for that matter. Through the verbal engagements with the participants, I learned how novice postgraduate school principals deal with day-to-day challenges in implementation and this helped me to interrogate my own implementation of the National Teachers' Code of Professional Conduct and other complementary policies and laws. The findings of the study, the suggested total implementation model as well as the recommendations that the study posts have the potential to improve policy implementation in general and the implementation of the national teachers' code of professional conduct in particular.

5.11 Conclusions: The main contribution of this research

In this chapter, I presented findings from data that enabled me to unravel the primary research question “What are the experiences of novice supervisors of postgraduate supervision at a South African university?” and its five sub-questions. The significance of this chapter was that the main research question and sub-questions generated responses from novice supervisors to fulfil the purpose of this study which was to “explore how novice supervisors experienced postgraduate supervision at a South African university”. The findings were presented in line with the five research sub-questions of this study.

The main findings were outlined in response to sub-questions put to the novice supervisors. In addition, the main findings were in line with the five sub-questions of this study. The findings influenced the creation of the Gradual novice supervisor supervision model. With this model I outlined how novice supervisors could be gradually inducted into postgraduate supervision to ensure their preparedness to supervise postgraduate students and also to ensure their ability to dispense quality postgraduate supervision. Factors which prompted the creation of this model were outlined in detail. In addition, the positive ramifications of the application of the model by the university were shown.

I also outlined how the findings and the Gradual novice supervisor supervision model were in line with Bandura's Social Learning Theory. That is, I outlined how SLT significantly influenced the findings and the model through the four processes of attention, retention,

motivation and reproduction. However, in my study, motivation came before reproduction in contrast to Bandura's succession of the modelling processes.

I compared the study's findings with literature interrogated in this study and the findings were in line with the literature. My study's projected value to the field of postgraduate supervision was also outlined. However, my study had limitations which I pointed out. Furthermore, I outlined recommendations for the improvement of induction of novice supervisors to postgraduate supervision as well as recommendations for future research in closing.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Ethics clearance certificate



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FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Ethics Committee

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER: EDU054/21
DEGREE AND PROJECT	PhD Novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at South African university
INVESTIGATOR	Mr Lesiba John Radebe
DEPARTMENT	Education Management and Policy Studies
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	22 October 2021
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	06 July 2023
CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE:	Prof Funke Omidire
	
	Mr Simon Jiane Prof Maitumeleng A Nthonto

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Annexure B: Request for permission to conduct research at university



P.O BOX 329

Ga-Magongwa

0705

30 September 2021

The Dean
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to conduct research at your university

I, Lesiba Radebe, a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a PhD Education degree, hereby kindly apply for permission to conduct the study titled **“Experiences of novice supervisors in postgraduate supervision at a university in South Africa”** at your university. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the experiences of novice supervisors and their experiences as postgraduate supervisors. In this letter I would like to relate what will happen if such permission is granted. Once you understand what the study is about, such permission may or may not be granted. If you agree, you will be requested to release a signed letter permitting the study to take place at your university.

The following are the anticipated participants in this study:

- **Eighteen** novice supervisors

- Only participants who agreed and signed the informed consent will be legible to participate in this study.

The process of fieldwork will involve:

- Semi-structured interviews where novice supervisors will be requested to share their experiences on how they experience postgraduate supervision at their university.
- If I am granted permission, I anticipate that data collection activities including member checking will last for four months. I estimate the research activities to take at least 45 to 60 minutes and the member checking to last for at least 30 minutes.
- All the research activities will be conducted virtually because of Covid-19 restrictions.
- To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, I will keep the names of the participants and that of the university and contribution to the study anonymous except if it is their wish to be named.
- Participants are free to withdraw their participation at any time should they wish to do so and their decision will not be held against them. In the event participants withdraw from the study, their data will be destroyed or discarded.
- It is unlikely that the participants in this study will be harmed since the interviews will be virtually conducted.
- “My role in this study is that of a researcher, not a counsellor”. However, if a problem does arise, participants can speak to me and I will consult on the issue, and/or refer them to someone who is best able to help. If there is a serious problem about participants' safety, I am required to inform the university psychologist/counsellor and University of Pretoria. I therefore include contact details for the Counsellor and Psychologist and they are available free of charge:

Psychologist: Ms Alexandra Norton, Physical Ed S06, Contact number: 0610051035

Psychologist: Ronel du Toit, Physical Ed S06, Contact number: 0825685793

- Participants will receive no incentives for participating in this study. However, novice supervisors' possible reflection of their experiences of postgraduate supervision at a university should make them feel good about their contribution towards policy reforms. However, I cannot guarantee this.
- Member checking sessions will be conducted to confirm if my understanding and interpretation of the data are consistent with that of the participant. The participants will only have access to their own data and not everyone else's, but my supervisor will have access to all the data.
- The member checking will be done once the data has been transcribed and after the preliminary report has been written.
- We (my supervisor and I) also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysts and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me on the contact details provided below.

Yours sincerely

Researcher: Lesiba Radebe

Student number: 10674633

Sign: _____

Telephone: 0797320541

E-mail: radebelesiba4@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof. Nthontho

Sign: _____

Telephone: 012 420 2499

E-mail: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

Informed Consent Form

I _____, the Dean of

_____ Allow/Do not allow
(delete what is not applicable) Mr Lesiba Radebe to conduct research titled:
“Experiences of novice supervisors in postgraduate supervision at a
university in South Africa” at this university.

I understand that:

Eighteen novice supervisors from different faculties will be interviewed.

The interviews will be conducted virtually at a time that suit the novice supervisors but will not interfere with university activities and teaching time.

The research activities may be tape-recorded for research purposes and these will be stored safely by the University of Pretoria.

Voluntary participation will apply in this research, implying that the participants might withdraw from the research at any time.

Informed consent will apply meaning that research participants must always be fully informed about the research process and purposes and must give consent to their participation in the research.

Safety in participation will apply meaning that the human respondents should not be place at risk or harm of any kind.

Privacy, meaning that the *confidentiality* and *anonymity* of human respondents should always be protected.

Trust, which implies that human respondents will not be subjected to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

The collected data will be used confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data

analysts and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Annexure C: Permission from the institution to conduct research



2022-03-14

Mr L Radebe
Department of Education Management, Law and Policy
Faculty of Education
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Email: radebesiba4@gmail.com

Dear Mr Radebe

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH STUDY

The UP Survey Coordinating Committee has granted approval for the research study titled "Novice supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision at a South African university".

The proposed research study has to strictly adhere to the associated study protocol, as well as the UP Survey Policy and the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education instructions.

Please liaise with the Market Research Office in the Department of Institutional Planning (carlien.nell@up.ac.za) to officially register the study and to finalise the survey regulations, procedures and the fieldwork dates. In order to register the study, the Market Research Office has to receive the formal ethical approval letter from the Faculty of Education.

A final electronic copy of the research outcomes must be submitted to the Survey Coordinating Committee as soon as possible after the completion of the study.

Kind regards



Prof CMA Nicholson
REGISTRAR
CHAIRPERSON: SURVEY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Annexure D: Permission from the dean



Faculty of Education

Dean of Teaching and Learning Preliminary Approval

01 September 2021

Mr LJ Radebe
Department of Education Management and Policy Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria

Dear Mr LJ Radebe

PERMISSION FROM DEAN'S OFFICE FOR RESEARCH PROJECT EDU054/21

The letter serves to confirm that I am supportive of the following Doctoral research project:

NOVICE SUPERVISORS' EXPERIENCES OF POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION AT SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

I have no objection to the research team requesting the staff/students from the Faculty of Education to participate in this research project, **subject to ethics approval by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee.**

Kind regards



Professor CT Schoole
Dean: Teaching and Learning
Faculty of Education

Appendix E: Signed informed consent forms



I, [REDACTED]

(Full names and Surname), agree to participate in the research conducted by Mr Lesiba Radebe at my university. I am aware that the research has got nothing to do with my university and my participation is voluntary. I am also aware that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.

I understand that my daily duties will not be disturbed, and I grant the researcher permission to use some of my off duty hours.

I understand that my identity, that of my university and all that I will say in these research activities will remain anonymous and confidential.

I also understand that I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews.

I am aware that permission for me to take part in this study will be secured from the Limpopo Department of Education.

I grant permission that the research activities may be tape-recorded for research purposes and understand that these will be stored safely by the University of Pretoria.

I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters to this research.

Signed: [REDACTED] Date: 1/08/2022



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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

I, Dr [REDACTED]

(Full names and Sumame), agree to participate in the research conducted by Mr Lesiba Radebe at my university. I am aware that the research has got nothing to do with my university and my participation is voluntary. I am also aware that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.

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I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters to this research.

Signed: [REDACTED]Date: 15/08/2022



Dr. [REDACTED]

(Full names and Surname), agree to participate in the research conducted by Mr Lesiba Radebe at my university. I am aware that the research has got nothing to do with my university and my participation is voluntary. I am also aware that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.

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Signed: [REDACTED]Date: 11/08/2022



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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
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Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

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I grant permission that the research activities may be tape-recorded for research purposes and understand that these will be stored safely by the University of Pretoria.

I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters to this research.

Signed: [REDACTED]Date: 1 August 2022



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Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

I- [REDACTED]

(Full names and Surname), agree to participate in the research conducted by Mr Lesiba Radebe at my university. I am aware that the research has got nothing to do with my university and my participation is voluntary. I am also aware that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.

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I grant permission that the research activities may be tape-recorded for research purposes and understand that these will be stored safely by the University of Pretoria.

I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters to this research.

Signed: [REDACTED]Date: 1/08/2022

Annexure F: Interview schedule for participants

Interview Schedule for Novice Supervisors

Time of interview: _____ Duration: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee _____ Pseudonym:

Male/Female _____

Race: _____

Study title: **Experiences of novice supervisors in postgraduate supervision at a university in South Africa.**

Study purpose: To understand your experience of postgraduate supervision at your university.

Interview procedure: The interview will consist of twenty one questions of which you are not obliged to answer all of them should you feel uncomfortable to do so.

Note: There are neither wrong nor right answers in this interview.

Remember:

1. Everything we share and discuss will be treated as confidential and will not be revealed to a third party. I am interested in your personal understanding and experiences of postgraduate supervision at your university.
2. You are welcome to seek clarity should the need be
3. Everything we share and discuss will be audio recorded.
4. You can stop participating at any time without giving any reason

Are there any questions that you would like to ask for clarification before we start?

Interview questions

The interview will be conducted in two phases: the first phase will be experiences before being a supervisor and the second will be experiences after he/she became a supervisor.

- a) Did you do your highest degree in the institution in which you currently serve?
 - i. If yes, how can you rate the approach of postgraduate supervision from the time you were a student and now when you are an academic? Why the rating that you have provided?
 - ii. If not, how would you rate the approach in your previous institution as compared to the current one? Why the rating that you have provided?
- b) How was your supervisor allocated to you? OR How did you know about your supervisor?
- c) Who initiated the first meeting with your supervisor and what was it about?
- d) If you can, please recall the expectation you had of your supervisor and she/he had of you.
- e) If you can, please recall if you think such expectations were met.
 - i. If yes, after how long? Who pulled the greater weight and why?
 - ii. If no, why not?
- f) If you can, you recall signing any agreement with your supervisor?
 - i. If yes, can you remember its name and the content?
 - ii. If no, what guided your supervision journey?
- g) If you can, please recall if you were free to change the supervisor if you needed to.
 - i. If yes, can you remember the name of the policy that provided for such a move?
 - ii. If no, can you recall what happened to those students that wanted to change supervisors?

Phase two: Experiences of postgraduate supervision as a supervisor

- a) How does your institution approach the postgraduate supervision?

- i. Is there a waiting period for early career academics before they are allocated students to supervise?
 - ii. If yes, how long? Explain the procedure
 - iii. How qualified must one be for him/her to supervise students in any degree?
- b) How were your students allocated to you? OR How did you know about your students?
- c) Are you always satisfied with the students and the number of students allocated to you?
- i. If yes, how many students are allocated to you, in which degrees, and how do you contribute to the decisions made on either the students or the number of students allocated to you?
 - ii. If not, why are you not satisfied and how do you express your dissatisfaction?
- d) What are the expectations of you by the institution in this supervisory journey?
- e) Do you understand your role as the novice postgraduate supervisor?
- i. If yes, how did you find about your role? Is there any guiding tool?
 - ii. If not, how do you perform the role that you do not understand?
- f) What kind of support do you receive from the institution to capacitate and/or empower you in this role?
- i. If any, how many times in a year? Do you find it helpful and in what way?
 - ii. If none, how do you cope with your role without support from your institution?
- g) Besides the postgraduate supervision, which are your other duties as an academic?
- h) How do you find your supervision role from the fact that you have other duties to play as an academic?
- i. Satisfactory: Would you kindly explain?
 - ii. Dissatisfactory: Would you kindly explain?
- i) Would you kindly describe your supervisory relationship with your students?
- j) Can you change the student?
- i. If yes, on what grounds?

- ii. If not, what do you feel about it and what would you recommend?
 - iii. If you don't know, don't you think it is important for you to know and what initiatives do you plan to make?
- k) What are your most joyous moments of your postgraduate supervision journey?
- l) What are your most challenging moments of your postgraduate supervision journey?
- m) Would you kindly share the postgraduate supervision lessons that you have learnt so far?
- n) What would you recommend to the following on the novice postgraduate supervision:
- i. Institution
 - ii. Faculty
 - iii. Department

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your experiences as a novice supervisor at your university?

Concluding remarks

Thank you for taking your time to share with me this important and valuable information.

I kindly request that you avail yourself for further clarity should I need it.

Researcher: Radebe Lesiba

Sign: _____

Supervisor: Prof. Nthontho MA

Sign: _____