

The Supervisory Relationship and Contextual Stressors

Dr. Ilham EL MAJDOUBI

Literary and Cultural Studies· Hassan II University (UH2C), Faculty of Arts and Humanities (FLSHM), Morocco



ABSTRACT: The effectiveness of supervision throughout the student writing process depends on several key factors: regular academic meetings, transparent expectations, progress documentation, and the cultivation of an inclusive research environment. To effectively address unconscious biases and inequities within the supervisory relationship, a gender-responsive approach is crucial. Implementing gender-sensitive supervision strategies is essential for mitigating the negative effects of gender-based interaction patterns on supervisees, which, in turn, enhances the overall quality of research. By fostering a more equitable supervisory environment, these strategies contribute to improved outcomes and a more supportive research process.

KEYWORDS: Gender-responsive approach, Gender-sensitive supervision, Unconscious bias, Emotional intelligence, Resonance, Countertransference

The process of thesis writing can be likened to the completion of a marathon, requiring sustained effort and time over an extended period. A common misconception is that greater effort always yields superior results. Indeed, maintaining a consistent pace is of paramount importance for long-term productivity. It is crucial for the well-being of both supervisors and supervisees that they maintain regular work patterns and a balanced work-life schedule. The adage states that one should work smarter, not harder.

The integration of gender-based and psychological approaches into the supervisory process can enhance its overall effectiveness. Gender-sensitive supervision addresses unconscious biases and inequities, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment. Concurrently, an integrative approach to psychological elements, such as resonance and countertransference, highlights the significance of emotionally intelligent supervision.

A consideration of resonance and countertransference serves to underscore the significance of an integrative approach to supervision. While the supervisor is not as directly involved as the supervisee, their role in the psychological aspects of supervision is of great consequence, exemplifying the tenets of emotionally intelligent supervision. The dual role of the supervisor as both participant and observer can, on occasion, result in the emergence of resonant echoes within a "third space," which requires careful management.

In order to establish a clear framework for this paper, it is first necessary to define the term "supervision." Subsequently, an analysis of the supervision process will be conducted, taking into account the potential influence of major variables such as cross-cultural and ideological differences. Moreover, guidelines for a productive exchange between supervisors and supervisees will be presented. In conclusion, this paper will examine the similarities between academic supervision, the concept of resonance as applied in systemic therapy, and the notions of transference, countertransference, and projective identification in psychoanalysis.

The term "supervision" is derived from the Latin word "supervision," which is composed of the prefix "super-" and the root "visio". The prefix "super-" denotes a state of being above or over, while the root "visio" signifies the act of seeing or observation. The term "supervision" is defined in this context as the act of overseeing, monitoring, and providing guidance to others with whom one is in a position of authority, in order to ensure the effective and lawful fulfillment of their duties.

This process is undertaken with the objective of ensuring that the activities in question are conducted in accordance with the established plan and within the designated timeframe. The term "supervision" is defined as an intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior member(s) of that same profession. In essence, supervision entails the direction of assigned academic tasks in accordance with the standards established for this purpose. The supervisory relationship is, therefore, evaluative in nature.

Supervision can be defined as a process of mutual agreement regarding goals and tasks, as well as a dedicated time for discussion and active listening. Fundamentally, it is a human connection that entails the sharing, caring, and trust inherent in such a relationship. We will now examine the supervisory bond in greater detail and propose strategies for fostering communication in the

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appropriate context of academic research. It is evident that the formation of effective research groups is contingent upon the nurturing of mental health and well-being.

In recent times, scholars have initiated a rethinking of the concept of supervision in light of relational, more-than-human ontological perspectives. It can be concluded that the supervisory relationship, like any other relationship, must be based on mutual respect and trust-building. As a fundamental tenet, trust is pivotal to both knowledge creation and team collaboration.

In reflecting on the research relationship I have built with my students over the past decade, it becomes evident that a balanced relationship is a key factor in fostering high-performing groups. The dynamics of supervision serve as the foundation for successful team synergy within the academic realm. Such relationships can generate enduring connections that persist beyond the conclusion of a research project.

Historically, the relationship between masters and disciples was characterized by a formal and distant demeanor. In the contemporary research milieu, where intense competition exists between research institutes and universities, there is a pressing need for enhanced collaboration between professors and students to enhance team productivity. Notwithstanding the students' comprehensive access to online resources, the professor continues to serve as an indispensable conduit for the dissemination of knowledge. As an expert in his field, he provides reliable facilitation of the research process, offering supervisees ample opportunities for growth.

A significant number of supervisors have indicated that the lengthy nature of doctoral studies can place students at an elevated risk for experiencing heightened stress levels. A number of studies have demonstrated that the incidence of divorce among doctoral students is relatively high. Similarly, a considerable proportion of researchers cease their participation in doctoral programs. As there is seldom a single cause of stress, it is probable that dropout is the result of a complex interplay of economic, social, physical, and emotional factors.

Additionally, it has been observed that international students are significantly more susceptible to depression than their domestic counterparts. In the context of time-pressured research, the question of whether one will complete one's thesis on time becomes a significant source of concern for the overburdened student.

The supervisory relationship encompasses both pedagogical and psychotherapeutic elements. In addition to generating new knowledge, the supervisor plays a crucial role in addressing the mental health and well-being needs of anxious students. With experience, the supervising professor develops the capacity to proactively identify the sources of stress and reactively mitigate its impact by facilitating effective communication.

Mental health issues for researchers are typically regarded as taboo, and the erroneous assumption that depression is a sign of weakness further complicates the situation. It is worth noting that some students have been forthcoming about their experiences with therapy during the course of their research, demonstrating a commitment to managing their mental health as a priority and a life skill.

The act of verbal communication facilitates the transfer of information and the establishment of interpersonal connections. When a supervisor meets with a supervisee or a group of supervisees, a connection is established between all members of the system. The identity, perspective, and lived experience of supervisees are inextricably linked.

Supervisors are perceived based on their history and experience. Similarly, supervisors may feel compelled to be candid about their personal experiences. Supervision, therefore, requires the active participation of both supervisors and supervisees, who engage in the verbal expression of ideas and thoughts that are primarily professional in nature, with occasional references to personal experiences. This process facilitates the establishment of emotional resonance.

As long as words are engaged, unconscious identifications are involved, which necessitates an examination of the psychoanalytic concepts of transference and countertransference. Similarly, in the context of a psychotherapist-patient relationship, countertransference can be defined as the supervisor's conscious or unconscious reactions to the supervisee.

Such responses frequently appear to be appropriate at the time of their occurrence. It is incumbent upon the supervisor to be cognizant of this transfer of facts and experiences. It is essential that the supervisor be mindful of the distinction between the practices of supervision and the nuances of human interactions.

Furthermore, the supervisor is required to process disclosures made by supervisees as they occur. In certain instances, it may be preferable for the supervisor to refrain from disputing or challenging beliefs in order to foster trust and facilitate the growth and development of the supervisory relationship.

Despite the desirability of objectivity, subjectivity is an inherent aspect of supervision. The supervisor is an integral part of the system under observation. In principle, it is incumbent upon them to maintain appropriate boundaries in their relationships with supervisees. Nevertheless, self-awareness does not necessarily ensure benevolent neutrality.

It is possible for supervisors to exceed the boundaries of content, time, space, and confidentiality. It is understandable that one might experience feelings of irritation, anger, or frustration in such unpredictable moments. In instances where resonances impede optimal functioning, supervisors must evaluate their role within the system and determine the relevance of these experiences to the supervisory relationship.

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This being said, the supervisor must be attentive to the possible resonances that the transference is likely to induce and be prepared to wisely intervene in the act of supervision, especially since he or she knows that the doctoral process is an enormous intellectual and emotional undertaking that involves a profound self-questioning and inner transformation.

For example, in a supervision session, the supervisee provided a positive evaluation of my empathic responsiveness. I was taken aback, as I had assumed that I had long since altered my perspective. At the time, I considered it my responsibility to prevent students from making poor decisions. In the present era, I adhere to a more liberal tenet that upholds their prerogative to exercise free will and to derive insight from their missteps.

In a subsequent session, another supervisee recounted a detrimental psychological experience with a narcissistic partner. Given my strong feelings on the matter, my indignation became apparent, prompting me to revisit this excessive attitude. These and other challenging scenarios prompted me to augment my coping abilities. Consequently, I initiated a discourse on the subject of resonance and countertransference within the context of the supervision process. I am of the opinion that this topic necessitates a reflective and experiential integrative approach.

In a systemic context, the stress of one or two elements can have an impact on other members of the unit or team. The question thus arises as to the extent to which supervisors are equipped to empower their students and, conversely, students are equipped to build resilience through self-management strategies. Moreover, it is pertinent to inquire as to whether stress transfer occurs between the student and the supervisor.

The establishment of clear boundaries regarding the content and scope of responsibilities and roles has been demonstrated to have a significant impact on the reduction of stressors, allowing for the provision of timely support. In addressing stressors, it is essential for supervisors to recognize the significance of student perceptions, as well as their reactions, in the stress response. It is therefore incumbent upon supervisors to relativize, rather than deny, supervisees' anguish and suffering, as doing so may erode sensitivity and compromise trust.

This leads to the question of how supervision of research projects by supervisors with different cultural backgrounds affects the workings of the supervisory relationship. To what extent do cultural specifics impact the supervisory relationship? The phenomenon of cross-cultural supervision gives rise to a number of issues pertaining to social adaptation in a novel context.

A significant number of Moroccans pursue their studies abroad, and a similar phenomenon can be observed among foreign students who choose to study in Morocco. In light of the aforementioned considerations, it is evident that there are two distinct cases to be examined, contingent on whether the supervision in question occurs within the geographical confines of Morocco or in an overseas setting. The present study will focus on the supervisory style that is generally followed in our country.

The supervisor-supervisee relationship is largely discipline-specific, with variations depending on the specific field of study. Therefore, any attempt at generalization is inherently flawed. Nevertheless, upon further examination of this subject, it can be tentatively proposed that Moroccan supervisors tend to adopt an authoritative leadership style, maintaining a supervisory hierarchy. Similarly, Moroccan supervisees tend to view their supervisors as authority figures and perceive the supervisory relationship—at least in the humanities and potentially in the social sciences—as primarily teacher-student and task-oriented.

The supervisory relationship is typified by a high degree of collaboration between the supervisor and the student, which is analogous to that observed in an apprenticeship. As the doctoral journey nears its culmination, the role of the supervisor typically undergoes a transition from one of active empathic guidance to a more distant supervisory role. The instructor initially confirms that the candidate has attained the requisite expertise in their field before granting them autonomy to pursue their research project, which they are ultimately expected to defend publicly before a specialized panel of jury members.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that there is a shift towards a more student-centric approach to supervision within the Moroccan academic context. With regard to interpersonal communication, Moroccan supervisors evince a profound commitment to addressing their supervisees' concerns pertaining to the evolution of supervisory practices. They demonstrate a willingness to provide both intellectual and logistical support to their students.

The supervisor and the student may share a common cultural background, with nuances that are more subtle and nuanced. In particular, differences in political or religious views may have a significant impact on the supervisee's perception of the supervisor. Consequently, these differences should neither be taken for granted nor ignored. It is incumbent upon supervisors to delineate their model of supervision, their communication style, and to establish mutually clear expectations with their supervisees in order to obviate any risky ambiguity.

The influence of gender on supervisory relationships is a topic worthy of further investigation, particularly in societies such as ours where there are disparate expectations for men and women. Based on my individual and group research experiences, it can be posited that gender markers influence both the style and outcome of supervision. In accordance with the cultural legacy of our patriarchal society, it is a relatively common occurrence for men to be supervised by women. The question thus arises as to how the dynamics of supervision are affected when the gender norm is reversed, with a woman assuming the role of supervisor over a man.

There are multiple models of supervision. It is crucial to acknowledge that the gendered attitudes of both supervisors and supervisees should not be overlooked. Supervisors may facilitate discussions with supervisees regarding the evolving social

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construct of masculinity and femininity in our society, while also integrating the growing representation of women in Moroccan academia.

The subsequent emergence of female role models gives rise to a paradigm shift in the educational landscape. It is incumbent upon supervisors to identify instances wherein expectations and actions may be constrained within the supervision process. It is incumbent upon them to provide counter-stereotyping techniques for the purpose of deconstructing explicit and implicit biases in the workplace. Furthermore, it is imperative that supervisors regularly reassess their supervisory principles and practices.

To circumvent supervisory issues that may emerge at any stage of the student writing process, it is imperative that supervisees meet with their students on a regular basis, establish transparent and attainable expectations, document progress through progress reports, and foster an inclusive research environment.

The implementation of a gender-responsive approach enables the challenging of unconscious gender-based assumptions, thereby facilitating the more effective addressing of the inequities that affect the supervisory relationship. It is of the utmost importance to provide gender-sensitive supervision in order to mitigate the adverse effects of gender-based interaction patterns on supervisees and thereby enhance the quality of research.

The process of writing a thesis can be likened to that of running a marathon, in that both require a significant investment of time and effort. It is a fallacy to assume that greater effort will necessarily result in superior outcomes. It is essential for researchers to maintain a consistent pace that enables them to sustain a high level of effort over an extended duration. Regular work enables supervisors to achieve high productivity with minimal time and energy expenditure. Furthermore, a good work-life balance contributes to their mental and physical health.

My reflection on the issue of resonance and countertransference, based on my experience and that of my colleagues, has only served to reinforce my interest in this integrative approach, which I intend to pursue further in my supervision sessions. Based on my experience, it can be stated that the supervisor is actively involved in the psychological process of supervision, although to a lesser degree than the supervisee.

Consequently, the supervisor strives to exemplify the principles of emotionally intelligent supervision. The supervisor is both a part of and an observer of the system under consideration. However, there are occasions when he finds himself replaying the rules of the system. This phenomenon occurs particularly when the supervisor elicits a resonant echo in the relationship that is considered a third space.

In conclusion, it is incumbent upon the supervisor to be aware of the potential manifestations of transference, which may present as fantasies, thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. It is incumbent upon the supervisor to be willing to question the occurrence and relevance of such phenomena in the context of the co-evolutionary process of supervision. The capacity to identify these phenomena constitutes a pivotal element within the supervisory process. The effective utilization of these phenomena and their appropriate implementation within the supervisory context are indicative of both professional and personal advancement.

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