

STUDENTS CHALLENGES IN UNDERTAKING UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the challenges faced by students in undergraduate research at the Zimbabwe Open University. While primary data were collected using questionnaires and interviews for students and research supervisors respectively, secondary data were collected through documentary analysis of research projects. The research findings showed that the main factors that influence the students' challenges in undertaking research project work were a combination of student and institution related factors. These provided militated against the successful completion of the research project by students. This study also found out that the main causes of the students' challenges are intertwined with the effects of the challenges on students' progress in research projects. The study recommends that institutions of higher learning should time out those students who have taken longer than stipulated time in the academic regulations to help students take their studies seriously. This measure would force students to complete not just their research projects but also their studies. University departments should also make the presentation of students' research proposals compulsory so that all students start their research projects on time.

Key terms: Research project, Undergraduate student, Self-efficacy, Supervisor, Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

A research project is a compulsory or core course for almost all programmes offered by tertiary institutions globally. A research project is one of the requirements for undergraduate and post graduate students of Zimbabwe's Higher Education institutions. The same is for the Geography and Environmental Studies (GES) Department at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU).

Research projects allow students to become active learners whereby they are producers of their own knowledge rather than consumers of other people's knowledge.

Despite the importance placed upon undergraduate research projects, students face challenges in carrying out their research work (Azila-Gbettor, Mensah and Avorgah, 2015) and this in turn influences completion and success rates, student dropout rates and ultimately the quality of research work produced. Delays in completion are also experienced as students take more time working on their research projects.

While issues relating to undergraduate research work may be the same for all tertiary institutions students, Open and Distance Learning (ODL), institutions by their very nature, pose significant challenges to both the educator and the learner particularly in carrying out research project work. High failure rates and high non-submission rates are an indication that students face challenges in undertaking their studies and their research projects in particular. Most researches on student research work in ODL institutions, however, tend to separate and focus more on individual issues especially students' completion rate. Yet it is possible that most of the individual issues are symptoms of the possible challenges that students face in their research work.

Though much may not be expected from the undergraduate dissertation as compared to Masters and Doctoral levels in terms of generation of new knowledge and additions to knowledge that have already been gained (Rowley, 2000), its originality and quality should not be compromised (Reynolds and Thompson, 2011). As such, challenges that are faced by students in carrying out their research projects at the ZOU GES Department need to be unpacked and addressed. However, most of these studies significantly highlight the perspective of students with little attention to supervisors or institutions whose roles are indispensable in the research project process. This study, therefore, sought to examine the challenges that are faced by ODL undergraduate students in undertaking their research projects.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Undergraduate students in the Geography and Environmental Studies Department (GES) at the ZOU are experiencing challenges in undertaking research projects. Most researches on student

research work in ODL institutions tend to focus more on individual issues like low pass rate, none and/ or late submission of research projects and also on the role and challenges of the research project supervisor yet these issues are an indication that students are facing challenges in undertaking their research projects. Efforts to ease the challenges have tended to target the supervisor yet challenges affecting students when undertaking research projects need a more holistic approach that is, focusing on the system as whole (institution, student and supervisor). This study sought to examine the challenges that are faced by ZOU GES undergraduate students in undertaking their research projects.

3.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study sought to: -

- Determine factors that influence students' challenges in research projects in the GES Department at the ZOU.
- Examine the effects of the challenges on students' progress in research projects at the ZOU.

4.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was informed by Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory. Bandura (1995) defined self-efficacy as the belief that one possesses the capabilities to organise, plan and carry out the courses of action required to manage situations at hand. This probably explains why some students tend not to face difficulties in some courses but in research projects.

According to Schunks (2012) students may believe that a positive outcome will result from certain actions but also believe that they lack the competence to produce those actions. When relating these beliefs (outcome expectations and efficacy expectations) to the challenges and effects of the challenges on students' progress in research projects; a student may have the belief that meeting with the supervisor regularly will help him achieve the intended goals and also meet the deadlines in research projects but that same student may not be able to effectively perform that required behaviour (meeting with the supervisor on a regular basis) due to various challenges on the part of the student. In general, high-ability students feel more efficacious about learning compared with low-ability students; In other words, it is possible for a high ability student to have low efficacy in a particular situation for example when undertaking research project work. Students who feel efficacious about learning generally expend greater effort and persist longer than students who doubt their capabilities, especially when they encounter

difficulties (Schunks, 2012). Distinguishing between self-efficacy and ability also helps to explain why those students who are cognitively privileged may face difficulties when undertaking the research project.

It is important to recognise that self-efficacy does not only apply to students but to teachers as well (Schunks, 2012). Schunks further defines instructional self-efficacy as personal beliefs about one's capabilities to help students learn. Instructional self-efficacy therefore influences teachers' activities, effort, and persistence with students; teachers with low self-efficacy may avoid planning activities they believe exceed their capabilities, not persist with students having difficulties, expend little effort to find materials, and not reteach content in ways students might understand better (Schunks, 2012). Teachers with higher self-efficacy are more apt to develop challenging activities, help students succeed, and persevere with students who have problems learning. These motivational effects on teachers enhance student achievement as teachers with higher self-efficacy also show stronger commitment to their work and address students' needs. In terms of the undergraduate research project, supervisor self-efficacy is therefore a significant predictor of student achievement.

Bandura (1994) identifies the main sources of self-efficacy to be mastery experiences of the student, social modelling, social persuasion and states of physiology. From Bandura's sources of self-efficacy, we can therefore deduce that the supervisor can be a role model and can also be a mentor for the student (social persuasion).

The physiological state of an individual is an important source of self-efficacy and as such the "fourth way of modifying self-beliefs of efficacy is to reduce people's stress reactions and alter their negative emotional proclivities and misinterpretations of their physical states" (Bandura 1994:3). Strong emotional reactions to a task provide cues about the anticipated success or failure of the outcome (Pajares, 2002) and as Pearce (2005) notes, it is therefore possible that some students may be scared of the research project. Papanastasiou and Zembylas (2008) also aver that students may suffer from anxiety during the research project. Fear, anxiety and negative thoughts can lower the self-efficacy of a person and one way of raising self-efficacy beliefs is to improve physical and emotional well-being and reduce negative emotional states (Pajares, 2002). Since people live in "psychic environments that are primarily of their own making" (Bandura, 1997,) the research project supervisor can create an environment that creates anxiety and fear or can help lift the student's self-efficacy by creating an environment where the student feels

confident about the task to be accomplished. In the same way student's work or home environment can also influence efficacy levels when it comes to the successful completion of the research project thus it is important for the student to be able to manage his or her work and home environment if the research project is to be successfully completed.

Thus, we can note that the sources of efficacy apply to both the student and the teacher or lecturer who is also the research project supervisor. All these sources of self-efficacy may be influenced by the institutional environment from which both the student and the supervisor operate from. Self-efficacy therefore has an influence on the achievement and motivation of both the student and the supervisor (Bandura, 1994 and Schunk, 2012).

5.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Factors influencing undergraduate student challenges in research

Undergraduate research is a challenging environment for both the student and the supervisor (Magwa, Makuvaro and Ngara, 2015) and is influenced by student-related, institution-related and supervisor related factors (Azila-Gbettor, Mensah and Avorgah, 2015). Tindo (1993) divides the factors that affect ODL students into intrinsic (institutional-related) and extrinsic (student-related).

5.1.1 Institution-related factors

Undergraduate research is influenced by institutional factors such as lack of quality faculty, financial support, infrastructure as well as poor governance (Yizengaw, 2008). Universities have however used the large enrolments to generate funds for the institutions (Biggs and Tang 2007) and have also resorted to admitting less qualified students (Mohamedbhai, 2008). Higher education has therefore ceased to be elitist in nature and so the quality of students that many higher education institutions enrol has changed over time. The environment under which most institutions operate thus provides a cocktail of challenges for both students and lecturers during the research project course.

5.1.2 Supervisor-related factors

Challenges in undergraduate research supervision arise in providing adequate support to nurture autonomy while recognising that many students may be unprepared for independent learning (Todd, Bannister and Clegg, 2004). Thus both student and institution factors influence the

challenges supervisors face in undergraduate research supervision and this eventually impacts on the student's progress. Supervisors also possess varying research exposures and experiences but to ensure the success of research projects, the quality of supervisions should be given attention (Yeoh and Doan, 2012). A good supervisor should, thus, have a good track record as a scholar, experience in supervisory practices, interest in the research topic, time for supervision and treat the student as a peer and an equal Mouton (2001) as cited in Azila-Gbettor, Mensah and Avorgah, (2015). Research project demands a lot from students intellectually in terms of defining a research problem, selecting a topic, preparing a clear and precise research proposal, time management, good verbal and written communication skills, (Bogdan and Bilken, 1992) Such demands may influence students' self-efficacy and progress as Pearce (2005) notes that some students are scared of carrying out research and that anxiety often affects the students in applying the concepts in practice (Papanastasiou and Zembylas, 2008). These issues are not only rooted in the students' intellectual capabilities but they are also related to institutional issues as in most cases students are rarely prepared earlier on for the research project (Healey, Lannin, Stibb and Derounian, 2013). Student's individual characteristics such as socio-economic status, past performance and personality traits also influence final research project completion (Dupont, Galand and Nils, 2014). These student characteristics tend to influence access to computers and the technical competence required to access and use ICTs necessary for the successful completion of the research project (Musingafi, et al, 2015).

5.1.4 Student-supervisor relationship

Student-supervisor relationship is an important component of the research project because it affects students' progress in research project (Azila-Gbettor, Mensah and Avorgah, 2015). The student-supervisor relationship may hence determine whether research project goals are achieved or not thus it is important for the supervisor to find ways and plans of managing the relationship. and differences in student-supervisor perceptions of the overall experience have an effect on students' progress in research project work. Thus differences in student and supervisor expectations indicate a clash of student and supervisor interests, experiences and challenges. The student and supervisor expectations need to be communicated so that unrealistic expectations are not set to the detriment of student progress.

5.2 Effects of the challenges on student progress

5.2.1 Non completion and non-submission of research projects

Challenges that students face in undergraduate research may lead to non-completion of the research project and studies. Completion of research projects is influenced by many factors though Kangai and Mapolisa (2012) and Hussain (2011) tend to blame poor supervisory for non-completion and non-submission of research. Chabaya, Chiome, and Chabaya (2009) acknowledged that the institution, supervisor and students all contribute to lack of progress in research projects and consequently non-submission of the research project reports. Studies by Kangai and Mapolisa (2012) and also by Chabaya, Chiome and Chabaya (2009) indicated that the quality of the research product as a result of poor supervision processes was one of the challenges facing the ZOU Department of Education. While quality research supervision is necessary if quality student research output is to be obtained, it is not the only ingredient required particularly in ODL undergraduate research as other non-supervisor related challenges lead to poor quality students' research projects. It is therefore in the interest of universities to address the challenges that are faced by undergraduate students in carrying out research projects so as to improve the quality of the research output and also improve their images. Hussain 2011), but challenges that are faced by students during the research project are a possible contribution. Jones (2009) in Chakuchichi (2009) defines student retention as “the act of retaining or keeping students on the programme until its natural conclusion or they have achieved their academic goals.” ODL students are typically adults who have multiple responsibilities and therefore face many challenges including lack of time (Zinyama and Ndudzo, 2015) especially during the research project. The multiple responsibilities and challenges contribute to the withdrawal of students from studies and hence low student retention. Crosling, Heagney and Thomas (2009) and also Chakuchichi (2009) posit that low student retention has financial implications for students, and for society and the economy as well as reputational implications for higher education institutions. Addressing the challenges that are faced by students in carrying out research work is one way in which institutions can protect their image

5.2.4 Student performance or success

Student success and retention are two closely related and essential components in higher education institutions globally (Zinyama and Ndudzo, 2015). While Letseka and Karel (2015) were referring to ODL pass rates in general, it is possible that due to the numerous challenges students face, pass rates in undergraduate research projects are low also. Subotzky (2003) in Letseka and Karel (2015) aver that students' success rates are an important indicator of the efficiency of the higher education system but few studies focus on students pass rates in research projects. While there is a link between academic intelligence and performance, Nordin et al (2012) aver that the link may be just a simple assumption because there are other contributing factors which can significantly influence a student's academic performance especially in the research project course.

6.0 METHODS

In order to triangulate the data, this case study employed the mixed methods approach, which tended to lean more towards the qualitative approach. Census sampling was used to gather from all the fourth year second semester students in the GES Department who were registered for the research project course in the Harare/Chitungwiza ZOU Regional Campus. The documents that were analysed in this study were the unpublished ZOU GES research project guidelines and also five students' research project drafts. Qualitative data were analysed using themes permeating the study while quantitative data were analysed through tabulation, graphical displays, data disaggregation and descriptive statistics (mean, mode and median). To gain more insight into the results, a Chi-Square Test was conducted to test whether there was a difference in the capacity to undertake the research project to its completion research between male and female students.

7.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents, interprets and discusses the findings of this study of the challenges facing undergraduate students at the ZOU GES Department in carrying out research project work.

7.1 Demographic characteristics of the participants

7.1.1 Gender of the participants

Table 7.1: Distribution of participants by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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Male	19	66
Female	10	34
Total	29	100

Less than half of the participants were female while 66% were males as shown in Table 7.1. This gender imbalance of fourth year students may be a result of the gender imbalance occurring on enrolment or it may also mean that the female students face more challenges and ultimately drop out. Though a study by Zinyama and Ndudzo (2015) at one of ZOU's regional campuses indicated that there was a decrease in male enrolment and increase in female enrolment and that more men than women were dropping out, the findings of this study were different. The gender distribution of the participants was necessary for this study so as to ascertain whether gender has an influence on the challenges that are faced by the students in undertaking research project work.

7.1.2 Distribution of the participants by age

The age of the participants ranged from 21 to 50 years. There were no students aged above fifty. The results are shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Distribution of the participants by age

Age Group	Frequency
20 years or below	0
21-30years	9
31-40 years	13
41-50years	7
51-60years	0
61years or above	0
Total	29

The age distribution of the participants show that the students were more mature adults and this is a characteristic feature of most ODL institutions globally. The characteristic feature of ODL students or institutions show that ODL students have multiple roles and this, in turn, influence the challenges that they face in carrying out research projects. These findings agree with Zinyama and Ndudzo (2015) who observed that ODL students are characteristically adults who not only shoulder

family responsibilities but are also part-time or full-time jobholders and as such lack of time and poor time management among other factors tend to influence students' ability not only to complete research projects but to finish their studies.

7.3 Students' capacity to undertake the research project

Students were also required to provide their views on their capacity to undertake the research project work. The findings are shown in Figure 7.1.

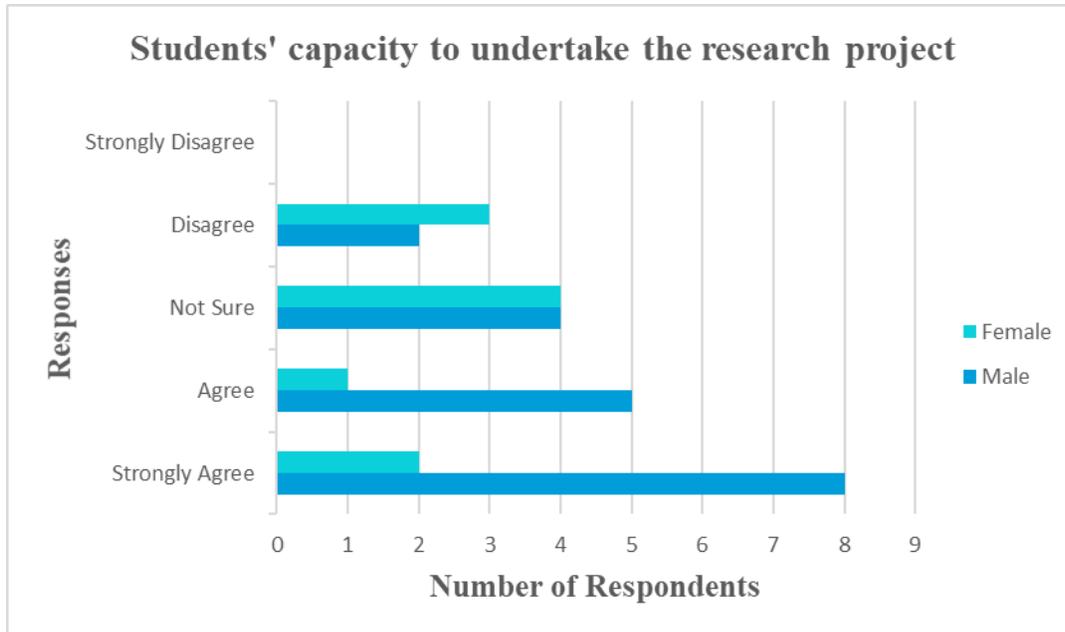


Figure 7.1: Students' capacity to undertake the Research Project

Though more than 50% of the students indicated that they had the capacity to undertake the research project to its completion as shown by agree and strongly agree in Figure 7.1, research project supervisors during interviews lamented over the quality of students that ZOU was currently enrolling.

One research project supervisor had this to say:

While in the early years of its inception ZOU managed to recruit students who were capable, the current enrolments have seen a decrease in the quality of students.

In other words, the research project supervisor was saying that the students have no intellectual capacity to carry out a research project successfully. This can be attributed to what Teferra and Altbach (2004), called the hallmark of higher education (massification) as alluded to earlier on. To

test whether there is a difference in the capacity to undertake the project to its completion research between male and female students a Chi-Square Test was conducted as shown in Figure 7.3.

$= \frac{19 \times 10}{29} = 6.56$
$= \frac{19 \times 6}{29} = 3.93$
$= \frac{19 \times 8}{29} = 5.24$
$= \frac{19 \times 5}{29} = 3.27$
$= \frac{19 \times 0}{29} = 0$
$= \frac{10 \times 10}{29} = 3.45$
$= \frac{10 \times 6}{29} = 2.06$
$= \frac{10 \times 8}{29} = 2.76$
$= \frac{10 \times 5}{29} = 1.72$
$= \frac{10 \times 0}{29} = 0$
$= 28.99$

Figure 7.2: Chi-square Test on the Capacity to Undertake the Project to its Completion

Research between Male and Female students

But

$x_{0.05} (2-1 \times 5-1) = 4$ degrees of freedom and the critical value is 9.5.

Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the capacity to complete the research project between male students and female students. Therefore, the gender imbalance of the GES fourth year students reflected in Table 7.1 is an indication that other factors apart from the challenges that are faced by the students during the research project process are influencing the male-female ratio of students.

7.3.1 Students' reasons for being able to undertake the research project

Table 7.3: Students' reasons for being able to undertake the research project

Age Group	Frequency
Adequate time for research	13
Adequate financial and other resources (for example laptop and internet)	11
Good supervision	9

On being asked the reasons why they thought they could complete the research project on time the grouped responses shown in Table 7.3 were obtained from the students. The responses of those students who indicated that they did not have the capacity to undertake the research project on time gave a glimpse of the challenges that the students face in doing undergraduate research project work.

Findings shown in Table 7.3 also show that students are aware that without good supervision, time and financial resources, undertaking and completing the research project task may be difficult. Thirteen (13) students indicated that they had adequate time hence they were able to carry out the research project. Though no student said anything about the ZOU GES project guidelines, this study found the guide to be comprehensive and adequate for both the students and the supervisor. The study however, noted that some sections needed to be improved especially on the statement of the problem so that students are clear of what they are to do on that section.

The findings indicate that a greater number of the students had low self-efficacy and as Schunks (2012) notes, self-efficacy can affect effort expenditure, persistence, and learning as students who

feel efficacious about learning generally expend greater effort and persist longer than students who doubt their capabilities, especially when they encounter difficulties (Schunks, 2012).

7.3.2 Research project first registration and submission deadlines

On being asked of their first research project registration period, 68% of the students indicated that they first registered for the research project course during the first semester of 2019. At the ZOU an undergraduate research project is registered for twice and is done in two semesters. These results indicate that a significant number of students (32%) take longer to complete their research projects. Interviews with the research project supervisors also confirmed that students take too long to finish the research project and that some students have taken more than one and half years to accomplish research projects.

When the students were asked whether they were aware of the research project submission deadlines all of them were aware of it and they indicated that the research project was due on the Fourteenth of October 2019. This shows that submission deadlines are communicated well in advance. In addition, the fact that students are aware of the submission deadlines but still fail to meet those deadlines indicate that the students face challenges in carrying out their research projects.

7.3.3 Students' ability to meet the research project submission deadline

When asked whether they could meet the research project submission deadline, the results shown in Figure 7.3 were obtained.

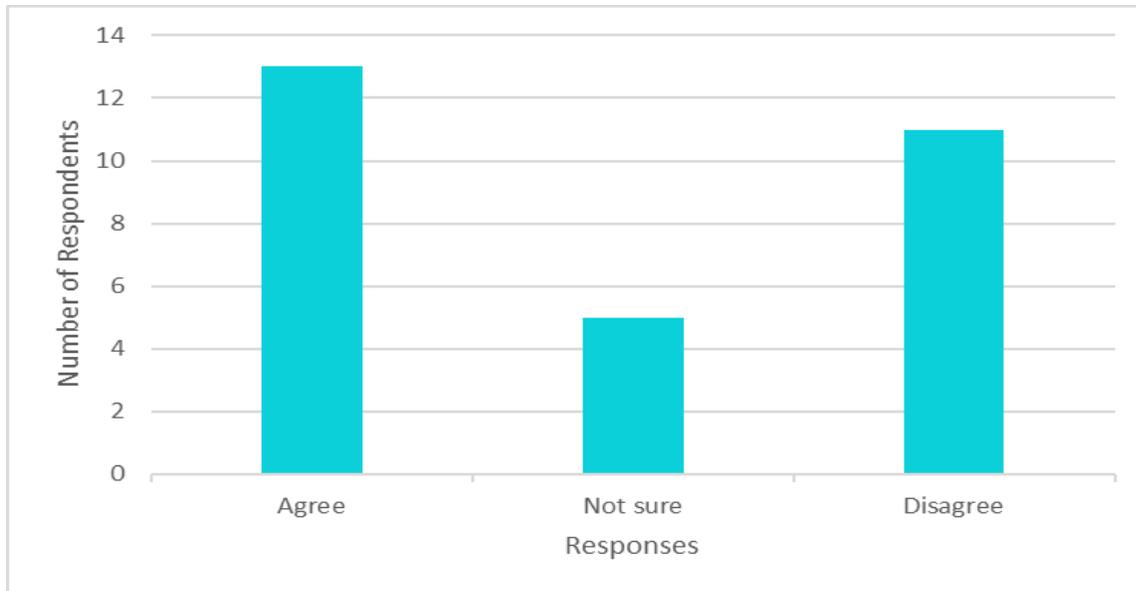


Figure 7.3: Students' ability to meet the research project deadline

Though more than 50% of the students indicated that they had the capacity to successfully undertake the research project 13 students, representing 45% of the students, indicated that they could meet the submission deadline. A greater number of the students (55%) indicated that they were unable or unsure if they could meet the research project submission deadline. And on being asked why they could not meet the submission date their reasons coincided with challenges that the students face in undertaking research project work which are discussed in section 4.6 of this chapter. From these results we can generally deduce that 55% of the students had low self-efficacy or low self-confidence in their ability to organise and accomplish a task (Schunks, 1991) and in this case to accomplish a research project. As Bandura (1994) also notes, the beliefs about one's capabilities are the determinants of how people think, behave and feel and ultimately meet the intended goals.

7.4 Supervisors' Capacity to guide students through the research project

In order to get the students' views on the supervisory ability of the research project supervisors, students were asked to indicate whether their research project supervisors have the capacity to guide them. The findings are shown in Figure 7.4.

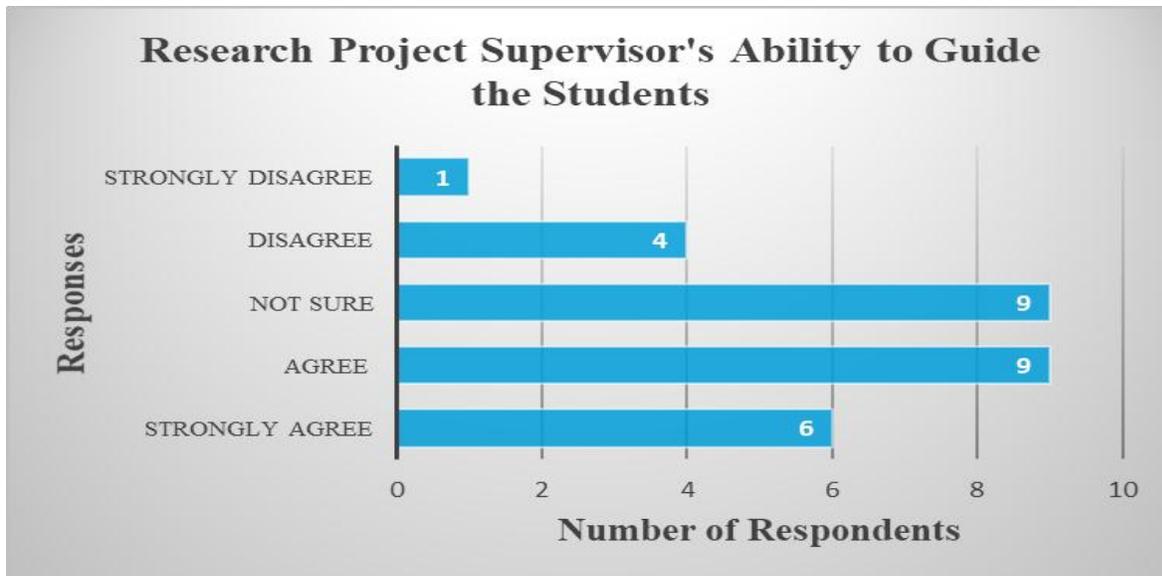


Figure 7.4: Research Project Supervisors' Ability to Guide Students

From the findings we can observe that 15 students constituting 52% indicated that their supervisors had the capacity to guide them through the research projects and 48% thought otherwise. Interviews also indicated that the supervisors were highly self-efficacious. Schunks (2012) noted that instructional self-efficacy is as important as student self-efficacy. The two-part time tutors interviewed however, indicated that they had not received any form of training on research supervision from the GES Department. The capacity of the supervisors to guide students through the research process was also noticed on the written feedback provided in the draft research project. The feedback was clear and constructive.

7.5 Factors influencing students' challenges in research projects

The students indicated the challenges that they face in doing undergraduate research project. The students could list as many challenges as they could on the questionnaire and the responses were grouped into institution-related factors, student-related factors and supervisor-related factors. The findings are shown in Figure 7.5.

Figure 7.5: Factors influencing Students' Challenges in Research Projects

The institution-related factors that the student noted were mainly related to late supervisor allocation and changes. The students also indicated that the supervisors were sometimes too far away from where they stay and transport costs became unbearable for them. Interviews with research project supervisors however, indicated that students usually take long to contact the supervisors or the Regional Programme Coordinator and also that some students after failing to come up with researchable topics on time shunned the student research proposal workshop held by the department. The supervisors also noted that, it is almost impossible for ZOU an ODL institution to have research project supervisors who stay closer to all the students though the GES Department tries by all means to find supervisors who are in proximity to students' workplaces or places of residence. These findings agree with Azila-Gbettor, Mensah and Avorgah (2015) who note that the challenges that are faced by undergraduate students in undertaking research project work can be student-related, institution-related or supervisor-related.

7.6 Causes of the challenges that students face

On being asked about the possible causes of the challenges that the students face during the research project process the findings indicate that the challenges and the causes of the challenges that students face are strongly intertwined such that it is difficult to separate one from the other. The causes of the challenges were given by students as shown in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4: Causes of Students' Challenges

Cause of Challenges	Frequency
Lack of reading material	17
Economic hardships	14
Pressure at work	11
Unconducive political environments (for data collection)	9
Social/family problems	9
Unemployment	7

From Table 7.4 one can deduce that most causes of the challenges are closely related to the personal or student-related challenges and they are also rooted in the economic conditions prevailing in Zimbabwe. The findings relate to Dupont, Galand and Nils (2014) who point out

that a set of student's individual characteristics including socio-economic status influence student's final dissertation completion. Research project supervisors also revealed that most students lacked the financial capacity to meet the transport costs of meeting with the supervisors and accessing the library or internet.

7.7 Effects of students' challenges on research project work

The findings on the effects of the challenges are shown in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5: Effects of the students' challenges on research project work

Effect of the Challenges	Frequency
Postponement or deferment of studies	17
Slow progress	14
Poor quality research work	11
Insufficient data	9
Failure to complete and submit on time	7

The findings of this study showed that the effects of the challenges that the students face range from lack of progress, poor quality work, failure to complete and submit on time as well as postponement studies. A greater number of the students (17) identified postponement and or deferment of studies as one of the effects of the challenges that the students face when doing the research project. Therefore, while non-completion of research projects may look like a challenge to the ZOU GES Department it is actually a symptom and sign of the challenges that the students face during the research project process. Interviews with the research project supervisors also revealed that students take too long to accomplish and some students have taken more than one and half years to accomplish research projects.

Interviews with the research project supervisors indicated that the GES Department's student retention was very low but they however, attributed the low student retention to the ODL nature of ZOU not to the challenges that the undergraduate students' face in undertaking the research project. Therefore, the fact that 32% of the students indicated (in section 7.3.2) that they had registered for the research project prior to the first semester of 2019 is an indication that the challenges that students face during the research project process is a significant factor in as far as explaining low student retention and also non completion of studies in the GES department.

Non-completion of the research project and also of the programme was also discovered through a review of the student's draft project reports which showed that though some students are supposed to have been timed out, for example those who joined the university as early as 2007 (as indicated by the students' personal identification number) they are still enrolled in the GES Department. The research project supervisors also indicated that students were performing poorly in research projects and they attributed the poor performance mainly to student cognitive skills.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the summary of findings presented in section 5.2 above, it can be concluded that though the main factors that influence the ZOU GES students' challenges in undertaking research project work are mainly student-related factors, they combine with institution related factors thus providing the students with a difficult mix of challenges militating against the successful completion of the research project. The institution related factors are mainly a result of the ODL nature of the institution which tends to separate the lecturer from the students in terms of the physical distance and also prevents the student from accessing the library and internet facilities.

The study also concludes that the main causes of the students' challenges are intertwined with the effects on students' progress in research projects, however, the causes are also rooted in Zimbabwe's poor economic performance which has led to economic challenges on the part of the students.

Generally, the challenges that the students face consequently lead to non-completion and postponement of the research project and also the entire studies as well as poor performance.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings of the research study, the study recommends that the GES Department should make the presentation of students' research proposals compulsory so that all students start the research project on time. The study also recommends that the research methods course be moved from third year first semester to the second semester of third year so that students are start to work on their research proposals earlier.

The GES Department should through its research project supervisors offer more support to the students especially during the research project so that there is constant check on the progress of the students.

The GES Department should offer regular training of supervisors in andragogy, research and supervision skills so that research supervisors are equipped to guide students through the research project process. This will help students take their studies seriously thus forcing them to complete not just their research projects but also their studies.

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