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Reconceptualizing Doctoral Supervision: A Hybrid Lee–Gurr Analysis of Supervisors' Perspectives, Practices, and Pedagogy

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Abstract

This study explores supervisors' lived experiences of doctoral supervision in universities across Sindh, Pakistan. A qualitative phenomenological design was adopted, and the data were gathered using semi-structured interviews with eight doctoral supervisors (3 female & 5 male) working in public and private universities. The theoretical basis of the study is a hybrid approach that consists of a multidimensional (Lee, 2008), and a developmental model (Gurr, 2001), which allows examining the nature and development of supervisory practices. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyze data. The findings show that doctoral supervision is carried out as a hybrid and context sensitive practice in three interconnected areas: supervisors' perspective, practice, and pedagogy. Supervisors view themselves as not only supervising research but also providing ethical mentorship, academic socialization and fostering research student autonomy. Practically, they use context-specific approaches like multilingual mediation (Sindhi, Urdu and English), collaborative supervision and facilitation with reference to institutional and publication requirements. Pedagogically, they view supervision as dialogic feedback, trust-building, and the gradual transfer of responsibility to students. These practices align with theoretical foundation and indicate movement in the functional, enculturation, critical thinking and emancipation as well as in the developmental stages of facilitative supervision. The study contributes to research supervision by proposing a contextually grounded hybrid Lee-Gurr model that reflects the multidimensional and dynamic essence of supervision in multilingual and Global South settings. It underscores the necessity of institutionalizing supervision as a pedagogically rich and relationship practice, and suggests implications of supervisor training and policy change in Pakistani higher education.

Introduction

Doctoral supervision has become a more complicated, multidimensional, and relational practice that goes beyond the control of research progress to include pedagogical, epistemic, and developmental aspects. The world has witnessed an enormous transformation in higher education due to neoliberal policies, performativity, and international ranking systems that have stressed research productivity, timeliness, and measurability of outputs (Barnett, 2000; Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007; Grant, 2005; Bearman et al., 2024). In this landscape, doctoral supervision has been viewed as operational and managerial process that emphasizes efficiency over intellectual processes. However, this small-scale focus runs the risk of missing the shaping power of supervision in the construction of scholarly identity, critical thought, and involvement in disciplinary communities (Manathunga, 2007; Lee, 2008; Anttila et al., 2024). This has resulted in an expanding literature that proposes a reconceptualization of supervision as a context-specific and pedagogical practice.

These international perspectives on supervisory practices (Canagararajah, 2002; Lillis & Curry, 2010; Curry & Lillis, 2004; Wisker, 2012; Halse & Malfroy, 2010; Haley et al., 2025) have certain meanings in the Pakistani higher education environment. In the last 20 years, there has been rapid growth in the number of doctorate programs in Pakistan due to policy changes and a greater focus on research output, in terms of publication in internationally indexed journals. Although these changes have helped enrich the culture of research, they have brought about more challenges for institutional demands on supervisors and students whereby productivity has been prioritized at the expense of pedagogy (Batool & Qureshi, 2007). Meanwhile, most doctoral students come to programs with minimal exposure to academic research practices, critical inquiry, and academic writing and require increased supervisory guidance in academic socialization (Wisker, 2012; Manathunga, 2007; Aga, 2026; Deuchar, 2008). In addition, the multilingual aspect of Pakistan further complicates doctoral supervision. The students often think and speak their local languages, including Sindhi and Urdu, but have to produce research in English, which makes it challenging to express their complex ideas and participate in disciplinary discourse. This language barrier highlights the importance of supervisors as mediators of language and knowledge between the local epistemologies, and global academic norms

(Canagararajah, 2002; García, 2009). Despite these challenges, there remains limited empirical research that systematically examines how supervisors in Pakistani universities conceptualize and enact their roles, particularly in relation to their perspectives, practices, and pedagogical approaches.

To address this gap, this study examines the lived experiences of supervisors in public and private universities in Sindh, Pakistan. Based on a qualitative phenomenological design, this study explores role of supervisors (perspectives), its enactment in practice (practices), and its contribution to student learning and development (pedagogy). A hybrid theoretical framework of Lee (2008) and Gurr (2001) was used to theoretically support this study and allow a thorough exploration of doctoral supervision as well as its development. The positioning of supervisory experiences in this integrated framework provides a more fine-tuned and contextually oriented insight into the phenomenon of doctoral supervision, and answers the call to reconsider the multilingual and Global South higher education doctoral pedagogy.

Theoretical Framework

The rationale of choosing a hybrid of the dynamic model of the 'rickety bridge' proposed by Gurr (2001) and the supervisory styles used by Lee (2008) complement this research. The model by Gurr (2001) reflects the developmental process of doctoral students, as supervision should change, as students become more and more autonomous. This interactional fit is directly related to our research interest in supervisory practices, wherein the individual views of supervisors are not fixed but need to be adjusted to meet the evolving needs of students. The typology of supervisory practices offered by Lee (2008), functional, enculturation, emancipation, critical thinking, and relationship development, in turn, fit well into the pedagogical decision-making of the supervisors. Combined, this integrated framework enables us to deconstruct the relationship between the views of the supervisors (their ideas about research and role identity) into practices (feedback, style, competences) and are reflected on pedagogy (how they approach the learning and development of their students).

An important theoretical gap that this study attempts to fill is the lack of holistic framework that embodies both the conceptual breadth and the dynamics of development of doctoral supervision, especially in multilingual and Global South settings like Pakistan. Lee (2008) offers a multidimensional model, according to which supervision can be divided into functional, enculturation, critical thinking, and emancipation, but her model is mostly descriptive and does not consider how the role of supervision changes over time or according to the needs of students. On the other hand, Gurr (2001) provides developmental model where supervision changes with various levels of student growth, but lacks pedagogical and epistemic specificity to describe the complexity of supervisory practices. The literature has generally approached these frameworks separately, either by emphasizing the supervisory functions (Lee, 2008) or by highlighting the relational and developmental fit (Gurr, 2001), without making much attempt to integrate them into an analytical prism (Wisker, 2012; Grant, 2005).

Table 1 presents a hybrid model for the current research.

Table 1
Hybrid Lee–Gurr Framework for Research Supervision

Analytical Dimensions	**Lee (2008) Categories/ What supervision entails**	**Gurr (2001) Developmental Alignment- How it works/evolves**	**Application in the current research**
Perspectives Supervisor's beliefs/ orientations	Functional- Enculturation- Critical thinking- Emancipation	Directive/ Supportive/ Collegial relationship	Supervisors view their roles as ethical mentors, institutional guides, and facilitators of student independence while balancing supervisory authority and care.
Practices What supervisors do	Publication/ Academic writing/ Institutional norms/ Independent work	Monitoring/ Feedback/ student led research	Multilingual mediation (Sindhi/Urdu/English), collaborative supervision, navigating policies, supporting publication demands
Pedagogy How learning is facilitated	Academic socialization/ Dialogic engagement/Student voice	Teaching/ Coaching/ scaffolding	Dialogic feedback, trust-building, fostering autonomy, developing scholarly voice under institutional constraints

The hybrid model greatly unites perspectives, practice, and pedagogy sensitive to the institutional and cultural contexts. The lens of developmental of Gurr (2001) ensure supervisory practices are interpreted as adaptive and responsive, whereas the typology created by Lee (2008) employs that the diversity of the pedagogical strategies adopted by supervisors is recognized. An integrated model approach allows us to illustrate that supervisors' perspectives influence practices, practices are the embodiment of pedagogy, and pedagogy is the manifestation of the development of students and institutional pressures. This synthesis fits perfectly with research objectives which aim to develop dialogic, ethical, and context-sensitive supervision in Pakistan, and place the local practices into the framework of global discussions of doctoral education. The study fills this gap by using a hybrid Lee-Gurr framework (see Table 1). This synthesis provides a more holistic and contextually sensitive theoretical perspective that can be used to describe the fluid, negotiated, and contextual specificity of doctoral supervision in Pakistan. By doing so, the research helps to extend current theory of supervision beyond western-centric and monolithic conceptions to a more unified and globally applicable conceptualization. This study addresses the following research question:

RQ1: How do doctoral supervisors reconceptualize their roles in terms of perspectives, practices and pedagogy at Pakistani universities?

Research Methodology

The research employs a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences and meaning-making processes of doctoral supervisors. This approach is especially appropriate in the context of the research aimed at unveiling how people interpret and perform their roles in complicated institutional and cultural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Van Manen, 2016). When it comes to supervision in the doctoral level, the views are not just abstract opinions but profound practices, which are influenced by epistemological orientations, institutional structures, and negotiation of relationships (Bills, 2004; Lee, 2008). So, the phenomenological design enables the researchers to focus on lived experiences of supervisors, which allows to capture the depth of supervisory practices and pedagogues, urging researchers to shift attention away from managerial discourses and towards seeing supervision as a knowledge production process and identity formation (Halse, 2011; Bastalich, 2017). The phenomenological approach is justified in that it allows the study to capture the nature of supervisory experience how supervisors feel, act and negotiate their roles. This approach places the views of supervisors in their practices and pedagogical decisions,

therefore this methodology fits into the conceptual framework and helps to promote dialogic, ethical, and situation-specific supervision in Pakistan.

Purposive Sampling

A purposive sampling method was used to select 8 doctoral supervisors of different universities in Sindh (see Table 2). In a phenomenological study, a purposive sampling is suitable (Patton, 2022), because it guarantees the selection of respondents who are directly interested in the phenomenon being investigated (Patton, 2015). Doctoral supervisors were chosen to have a representation of the diversity of disciplines, institutional differences (public and private universities), and different supervisor experience. This heterogeneity increases the possibility of representation of variation in perspectives and practices, and does not lose a large sample size to thoroughly investigate the data qualitatively. The participants were doctoral supervisors in different departments at various universities across Sindh province, Pakistan (see Table 2). Although the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) has established guidelines of supervising MPhil and PhD students, some supervisors supervise students but not through formal HEC approval. This is a wider institutional process in which the role of supervision is determined not just by the formal process of accreditation, but also by departmental requirements, workload allocations and staffing requirements.

Table 2 shows information about supervisors who narrated their experiences of supervision in their areas of research interest. The table includes their pseudonyms, designation, discipline, supervision experience and affiliated institute.

Table 2
Participants' Details

Pseudonyms	Designation	Discipline	Years of supervision	Supervised candidates	Enrolled Candidates	HEC approved	University
Jamshed	Assistant professor	English Literature	7	2	3	Yes	Karachi University
Ali	Associate professor	English Linguistics	9	3	4	No	Sindh University
Sobia	Lecturer	Education	8	1	3	No	Hamdard University
Wahid	Lecturer	Arts and Humanities	10	2	2	No	Iqra University
Aisha	Assistant professor	Education	12	4	2	Yes	Sindh University
Amina	Professor	English Linguistics	11	3	3	Yes	Sindh University
Hasan	Professor	English Linguistics	13	5	3	No	Sindh University
Muneer	Professor	English Literature	15	8	5	No	Sindh University

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data aligned with phenomenological inquiry because the approach enables participants to describe their lived experiences using their own words and also allow the researcher to explore emerging themes (Seidman, 2006). Interviews address the conceptions of research by supervisors, supervisory practices (feedback, style adaptation, competences), and pedagogical orientations. The interviews were 60–90

minutes long, audio-taped with consent and transcribed word-to-word. Transcripts were supplemented with field notes, which involved the contextual observations and reflexive insights.

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyze the data based on both inductive and deductive coding. Inductive coding was used to discover themes naturally through the accounts of the supervisors whereas deductive coding was based on the dynamic rackety bridge model proposed by Gurr (2001) as well as on the line of supervisory approaches as suggested by Lee (2008). This hybrid approach guarantees that the results are based on both lived experiences of the participants and that they also fit into the theoretical frameworks. It was interpreted and discussed in the ways in which the views of supervisor influence practices and pedagogy, and contextual mediators as institutional pressures (Bayanbayeva, 2026) and stages of student development (Gurr, 2001).

Findings and Analysis

Supervisors' perspectives about supervision showcase how they think and supervise in their context. Most supervisors see it as moral and ethical responsibility while supervising. They demonstrate that they are actively engaged in the supervision process. In the narratives, the use of 'I' refers to supervisors who share their experiences. This study explores innovative perspectives, practices, and pedagogies. Supervisory views indicate emerging themes, such as ethical–relational pedagogy, multilingual supervision, institutional mediation, collective responsibility, and dialogic feedback.

Table 3 presents perspectives of supervisor who view supervision through their lived experiences of supervising research supervisees in their area of interest.

Table 3
Supervisory Perspectives

Sr No.	Supervisors' narratives	Pseudonyms
1	To me, supervision is not only the progress of the research, I am also concerned with the moral and ethical development of my research students.	Sobia
2	I frequently alternate between Sindhi, Urdu and English in meetings. It assists research students to understand ideas, yet I do not compromise on the quality of their writing to international standards.	Jamshed
3	The stress to write in indexed journals is overwhelming. At the same time, I fear students do not meet deadlines and lose the credibility.	Aisha
4	I see supervision as collaboration, I engage co-supervisors and even senior PhD students to establish a friendly atmosphere in which research students can best learn.	Hasan
5	Research students usually enter with little experience of academic culture. I take time to educate them on the importance of thinking as opposed to taking orders. To me, their critical growth is more significant than their completion of the research.	Ali
6	In research supervision, it is important to understand that feedback we provide should empower students, as I believe. I encourage them to answer my comments to make it a dialogue and not a monologue.	Wahid
7	To me, supervision is a mutual journey that can go with consensus. I learn while supervising.	Hasan
8	I see it rewarding as well as daunting task. Some researchers struggle with their ideas and get stuck in between. Surprisingly, sometimes, I fail to address their confusion or the reason of ambiguity.	Amina
9	I always see supervision very sensitive, but more ethical. It takes time, needs patience and patience.	Aisha

The perception of supervision as involved in moral and ethical development goes beyond the functional model of Lee (2008) to enculturation and emancipation. As demonstrated in the narrative, supervisors view supervision as ethical development of the supervisee (see Table 3). This is reminiscent of the developmental perspective in which supervision is a matter of cultivation of professional identity and integrity in the long term. It is as well consistent with greater literature that positions doctoral education as identity formation (Grant, 2005) in which power, care and responsibility overlap (Gurr, 2001).

The interplay between the functional and enculturation can be explained by the multilingual practice of switching between the Sindhi, Urdu and the English languages and remaining faithful to the international standards in writing. The emphasis on international academic standards is indicative of the functional demands and multilingual mediation that promotes accessibility and comprehension. This is also indicative of emancipation since it validates the linguistic repertoires of students. In the view of Gurr (2001), a responsive supervision is evidenced through such practice. It is also well-founded by the research on academic literacies (e.g., Lea & Street, 1998), and their perspective on writing as a socially situated practice but not a neutral one (see Table 3, statement 2).

The question of pressure to publish in international indexed journals illustrates the tension where the completion, output and adherence must meet deadline and degree requirements. This pressure threatens critical thinking and emancipation in which intellectual inquisitiveness and creativity must flourish. It is viewed through the lens of existing research as a stressor in the balance between task-related objectives and relational and developmental facets of the

supervision. This issue is replicated in the critiques of the neoliberal academia (Lee, 2008; Gurr, 2001; Barnett, 2000), where performativity may limit meaningful inquiry.

The notion that I learn as I supervise (see Table 3 & statement 7) throws down a challenge to the more traditional hierarchical model of supervision and is highly consistent with the emancipation where knowledge is co-constructed as opposed to transmitted (Lee, 2008). The supervisor is not placed as the only authority but rather as a co-learner who is in a reflexive practice. Here, supervision is viewed as dynamic and interactive, which develops alongside the student and the supervisor. This reciprocity is also highlighted by Wisker (2012) who describes supervision as a transformative learning relationship between both parties. The fact that the process of supervision is rewarding and daunting describes the emotional two-sidedness of the process. This points to the conflict in the framework of Lee (2008) between functional needs (progress, completion, output), and critical/emancipatory needs (deep learning, originality). The realization that students have difficulty with ideas and that I cannot respond to them all the time adds a critical aspect of vulnerability and boundaries of supervisory expertise. This, in the terminology of Gurr (2001), is non-linear supervision where failures, doubts, and pushing the envelope are involved. It is also congruent with Grant (2005), who points to the complexities of supervision, which are affective and power-laden.

The description of supervision as sensitive and ethical role demanding time, attention, patience and energy supports its correspondence with the models of enculturation and emancipation. In this case, supervision is not diminished into monitoring research activities but is perceived as being based on moral pedagogical practice. This is also consistent with the focus on sustained engagement and relational commitment by Gurr (2001). The ethical aspect is especially pronounced, resonating with the literature on the issues of care, responsibility and construction of academic identities (Barnett, 2000). The fact that supervision is about a balance between authority and support of student autonomy is a direct reflection of the critical thinking and emancipation models of Lee. The supervisor will be required to lead, but not control, and give room to creativity. This depicts movement between the directive and facilitative supervision based on the level of development of the student. This balancing act also happens to be the focus of studies on supervisory relationships (Gurr,2001; Wisker, 2012; Aga, 2026), where dialogic and negotiated engagement is particularly significant. The narratives by supervisors indicate that they view supervision as ethical-moral and relational. They believe in supervisee' intellectual development (see Table 3). In the research process, they share they encourage research students to develop critical skills, grow independent, and work in research friendly environment. These closely align with theories of (Lee 2008; Gurr, 2001; Bahtilla & Huang, 2025).

Table 4 presents supervisors' narratives of practice and also demonstrate supervision as a contextually adaptive, dialogic, and relational practice. The narratives from supervisors seem dynamic and fluid in their ability to perform several roles such as mentor, facilitator, and cultural mediator.

Table 4
Supervisory Practices

Sr No.	Supervisors' narratives	Pseudonyms
1	I see supervision as teamwork. I involve co-supervisors and even senior PhD students to create a supportive environment.	Sobia
2	Students usually enter with little experience on academic culture, I take a bit of time teaching them to think rather than to obey.	Amina
3	My teaching philosophy is that feedback must be student-empowering, and this is why I advise students to answer my comments in order to make it more of a conversation, not a speech.	Muneer
4	I attempt to foster trust and openness among my students, thus they are able to express their problems.	Wahid
6	I sometimes change languages or assist students in translating ideas in meetings.	Ali
7	I lead students through policies and publication mandates of the university.	Hasan

The concept of supervision as teamwork, where the supervisor is co-supervised with senior PhD students, is very compatible with the model of enculturation as described by Lee (2008). Knowledge and academic practice are conceptualized as socially constructed and a doctoral student is initiated into the community instead of being tutored. This also spills to the emancipation because distributed supervision can decrease hierarchical authority and form collective possession of learning. This, according to Gurr (2001), is an example of a collaborative and networked paradigm of supervision, where knowledge is disseminated, and the learner enjoys the views of more than one opinion. This echoes the communities-of-practice theory (Wenger, 1998), in which the learning is achieved by being part of a scholarly community. This also reminds the idea of Akerlind and McAlpine (2017) that supervision is also co-learning and sharing insights collaboratively.

The focus on feedback being not a monologue (see Table 4) but a dialogue is an obvious reflection of the emancipation model introduced by Lee (2008). A research student is placed as an active knowledge builder and critically engages on feedback instead of passively receiving it. Such dialogic method also shows the critical thinking, as it promotes the reflexivity and intellectual agency. Through the lens of hybrid framework (see Table 1), this is interpreted as a negotiated supervisory relationship where learning is achieved through interaction. Dialogic pedagogy (Bakhtin, 2010) supports this view, viewing meaning as created co-operatively in dialogue. The point to establish trust and openness, the relational aspect of supervision is emphasized. This is a statement of the significance of interpersonal dynamics in maintaining successful supervision. It is also consistent with the doctoral supervision research based on affect and emotional support (Grant, 2005) in which supervision is viewed as intellectual and emotional work.

The practice of guiding students on the basis of the university policies and publication requirements is functional because in this case the supervisor makes sure that the institutional demands are fulfilled, i.e., the work is completed in time, the rules are followed, and the publication is achieved. This is the task aspect of supervision (Lee, 2008; Gurr, 2001). But in situations where the students are not familiar with academic systems, this role involves more than administration, it is more of an institutional mediation, where students are assisted to negotiate complicated academic systems. This resonates with doctoral pedagogy research (Wisker, 2012; Antilla et al., 2024; Bengtsen & McAlpine, 2022) that emphasizes the importance of supervisor in bringing tacit academic expectations to light. In general, these views confirm that supervision is a balancing process that takes the form of a dynamic process between structure and flexibility, authority and collaboration, global standards and local realities.

Table 5 shows the narratives of supervisors about their pedagogy. Their pedagogy is research student-centric where they educate students to rely on themselves, and move from dependent to independent researchers in their field of interest.

Table 5
Supervisory Pedagogy

Sr No.	Supervisors' narratives	Pseudonyms
1	In the beginning, as a supervisor, I am very direct and straightforward. I view research a shift from dependence to active participation.	Sobia
2	There is a language barrier. There are students who think in Sindhi and have to write in English. I help them to find a way to translate ideas without losing their meaning.	Muneer
3	Students usually have no experience with academic culture. I use time to educate students on how to work as researcher, think objectively, not merely to do what they are told.	Amina
4	I attempt to establish trust and accessibility with my students, therefore, they feel free to discuss their problems.	Aisha
5	Occasionally I assist students in identifying the correct words in English to convey complicated concepts in their native tongues.	Ali
6	I encourage students to challenge academic conventions and form their own academic identities.	Hasan
7	As I see my students progressing in research, I do not provide direct answers because I see my role as a mentor less a supervisor.	Wahid

The directive approach of the supervisor at the initial level is very functional in nature (Lee, 2008) and much focus is given to organizational of tasks, adherence to research traditions and control of the flow. But it would be a mistake to minimize this to being supervision of tasks. In a more detailed analysis, it becomes apparent that this authoritative method has its roots in enculturation, where the supervisor initiates the students into the practice of discipline, research design, and writing in accordance with academic standards. This is consistent with the thesis that doctoral supervision is basically a process of scholastic socialization and especially to students who come in with little experience of research culture (Wisker, 2012). In a developmental view, Gurr (2001) considers this stage as directive in which high measures of direction are required because students are dependent. But what analytically matters in this case is the gradual loss of control, which signifies the shift to the guiding phase (see Table 5, statement 7). This transition is not only procedural but also pedagogical and it means the shift towards collective epistemic accountability as students start to participate in knowledge production, not necessarily as those who follow the instructions.

The issue of language being a barrier, especially when students believe that they have to write in English, but think in Sindhi, underscores the role of the supervisor as the linguistic/epistemic intermediary. In the model of Lee (2008), this overlaps with functional (generating acceptable academic texts), enculturation (acquiring the discourse of discipline), and emancipation (the importance of linguistic resources of students). Gurr (2001) explains this as adaptive scaffolding, in which the supervisors adjust their support to the needs of students. Academic literacies (Lea & Street, 1998) and translanguaging views (Garcia, 2009) are strong proponents of this practice as they focus on meaning-making in more than one language, as opposed to adhering to monolingual standards. It also echoes the worries expressed by Canagararajah (2002) of how local knowledge is being negotiated in the global English-dominated academia. The role of helping research students to identify the appropriate words in English in order to convey

intricate concepts in their mother languages demonstrates the mediation of the supervisor in the area of epistemic and linguistic translation.

An effort to establish trust and openness in advance prefigures the relational and affective aspect of supervision. Although Lee implicitly provides this in enculturation and emancipation, this is more explicitly dealt with in relational approaches to supervision. According to Gurr (2001), task and relationship orientations are to be balanced in order to achieve effective supervision. Trust allows the student to share challenges, intellectual risks, and be more involved. This is in line with studies on the emotional aspects of supervision (Grant, 2005) and with the larger concept of pedagogical responsibility in which care and intellectual challenge are inescapable (Lee, 2008; Shulman, 1987; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Motivating students to challenge academic conventions and create their own academic identities is one of the core dimensions of Lee's theory (2008). In this case, supervision is not about conformity but transformation- helping students to emerge as independent and critical scholars. This can also be related to the critical thinking model, where doubting assumptions that are accepted is of primary importance. This is the subsequent steps of supervision in the framework of Gurr (2001), and the student shifts to autonomy and intellectual leadership. Critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) supports this view strongly, and considers education as the process of empowerment and critical consciousness and Barnett's (2000) concept of critical being. Importantly, these views show that the supervision cannot be reduced to the technical guidance but it is maneuvering through language, power, identity, and institutional expectations (Houston et al., 2006; Haley et al., 2025).

The last statement (see Table 5) indicates a radical change in pedagogy where instruction is replaced by facilitation which is very much in line with the critical thinking and emancipation dimensions. The approach of supervisor from answering to asking questions indicates a shift towards promoting epistemic agency, in which students are guided to develop, justify, and revise their own arguments. This is in tandem with the perception that doctoral education should develop not just in knowledge production but also intellectual autonomy and academic selfness (Barnett, 2000; Bahtilla & Huang, 2025). In the framework of Gurr (2001), it can be identified as the enabling and mentoring stages, during the relationship between supervisors and students becomes more dialogic and less hierarchical. The fact that the supervisee is viewed as a colleague and co-author show signs of collegiality and collaboration, known to be the primary characteristic of effective doctoral supervision (Grant, 2005; Deuchar, 2008). This is a re-distribution of power so that the authority is not centralized any more but is negotiated in the process of interaction.

Discussion

The views of supervisors indicate that doctoral supervision is much beyond procedures and it turns out to be relational, and contextual practice. This closely aligns with research studies by Aga (2026), Liu et al. (2026), and McAlpine (2013). Instead of adopting a single pedagogical orientation, the supervisory practices flow freely through all of the dimensions outlined by Lee (2008) functional, enculturation, critical thinking and emancipation) and also in terms of the developmental and adaptive character of the supervision as theorized by Gurr (2001). One of the emerging themes is ethical and moral stand of supervision. This corroborates with insights shared by Haley et al. (2025) that supervisors should have, such as relational sensitivity and ethical direction in research supervision. The fact that supervisors feel responsibility towards the moral and ethical development of students is an indication of the transition between the technical training and the creation of scholarly identity. This concurs with enculturation model (Lee, 2008) in which students are initiated into the values and norms of academic communities, but this extends into emancipation, in which students are urged to form their own intellectual identities. This type of positioning echoes Grant (2005) when he states that supervision is not only cognitive but also affective and ethical, and includes care, responsibility and power. In the same vein, Barnett (2000) theorizes higher education as a question of promoting

critical being, implying that the process of supervision should promote reflexivity and ethical awareness as opposed to merely producing research (Houston et al., 2006; Engeström, 2001).

Supervision is a site of linguistic and epistemic mediation as the multilingual realities that supervisors describe (students are Sindhi or Urdu speakers who are required to write in English) underscore this point. In this case, the functional model (which guarantees that academic writing is acceptable) by Lee (2008) intersects with enculturation (initiation into the disciplinary discourse) and emancipation (appreciation of linguistic repertoires of students). The efforts of supervisors to assist students in the translation of ideas without losing the meaning are evidence of what Gurr (2001) calls adaptive scaffolding, in which the supervisory strategies are scaffolded upon the needs of students in terms of development and context. This is consistent with both academic literacies perspective (Lea & Street, 1998), which considers writing as a socially constructed practice and not a neutral skill and also with the focus of Hyland (2004) on disciplinary discourse as a primary means of constructing knowledge. Moreover, the concept of translanguaging, as presented by Garcia (2009) can be an effective way to see how the meaning can be negotiated across the linguistic borders and break the monolingualism standards of academic writing. Here supervisors are seen as mediators of local cognitive worlds and global expectations of academic writing, which can be likened to the criticism of the geopolitics of academic writing (Canagararajah, 2002).

In the study, supervisors realized that students are usually deprived of the so-called academic culture, and they need to be taught how to think critically that contributes to the depth of pedagogical aspect of supervision globally. This also echoes ideas of Bengtsen and McAlpine (2022) who placed supervision in the context of time, academic work, institutional policies, and life course trajectories, as dynamic and context-sensitive. This research shows that Pakistani students have little or no academic exposure (see Table 4 & Table 5). This reminds of research by Liu et al. (2026) who emphasized that supervisee should adjust with supervisory practices for development. This lack of research exposure indicates critical thinking and enculturation models of Lee (2008), which entail supervising students through inducting them into epistemological practices like argumentation, critique and reflexivity. In the view of Gurr (2001), it is a developmental process of dependence to autonomy, which is facilitated by scaffolding. Wisker (2012) also stresses that effective supervision is to make implicit academic expectations explicit, especially when dealing with students who have underprepared academic backgrounds. This underscores structural inequalities to academic culture, which makes supervision compensatory pedagogy. The supervisory practices and pedagogy impact supervision practices, and this study shows that supervisors encourage and educated students with no academic insights or orientation. This recalls Kiley and Mullins (2005) who show that conceptions about research by the supervisor positively impact their pedagogical options influencing how doctoral students are initiated into disciplinary communities.

The emancipation model of Lee (2008) is evident in the dialogic nature of the feedback, where supervisors make students respond and participate. This is also in line with the critical thinking model because students are urged to challenge, contemplate and narrow down their thoughts. This idea is reflected in the concept of negotiated supervision put forward by Gurr (2001), in which learning occurs through interaction instead of being instructed. This dialogic method echoes what Freire (1970) wrote about the banking view of education, and his support of dialogical pedagogy, where students are given an active role in knowledge. Feedback is not a one-way flow of power but the place of co-construction of knowledge. This connects with research conducted by Bearman et al. (2024), Zhang (2023), and Zhang (2026) who demonstrated feedback orientations and focused on constructive, dialogic feedback that can reduce adverse consequences of performance-oriented cultures. The notion of communities of practice by Wenger (1998) further substantiates this perception by placing learning as a part of social and collaborative process (Deuchar, 2008).

Moreover, efforts of supervisors to motivate students to deviate academic norms and create their own academic identities point to a vision of doctoral education transformation in Pakistan. This is clearly in line with the

emancipation model of Lee (2008) where the focus is not only to replicate the prevailing systems of knowledge but to critically interact and possibly reform them. This also translates into the later phases of the supervision when a research student gets independence and starts to produce original knowledge (Gurr, 2001). This view is supported by the idea of critical being presented by Barnett (2000) and the focus on conscientization presented by Freire (1970), which situates education as an intellectual and social change. In doctoral supervision, the shift coincides with the developmental pattern of directive to mentoring relationships where the epistemically controlling power of supervisors is gradually devolved, as students gain increasing epistemic agency (Gurr, 2001; Grant, 2005; McAlpine, 2013). Significantly, the results show that this dynamic process is not linear and consistent, supervisors tend to shift back and forth between the roles, responding to the needs of students, pressures of institutions, and linguistic challenges, especially in the multilingual settings where the knowledge has to be mediated across languages (Hyland, 2004; Canagarajah, 2002). In this way, supervision arises as a hybrid, flexible practice that is simultaneously about the management of academic demands, development of intellectual autonomy and bargaining power and language within the larger frameworks of higher education (Barnett, 2000).

The current study indicated innovative supervisory perspectives, practices and pedagogy sharing strong insights into supervisory practices in higher education institutes, Pakistan. The results echo some global perspectives by Jackson et al. (2022) who focused on generative and productive pedagogy in supervision, whereas Ives and Rowley (2005) informed the role in the selection of supervisor matters. Likewise, Wright, Murray, and Geale (2007) revealed that supervision is not a practice of a person, dyadic relationships to the systemic accountability. In the light of existing literature and findings of this research, it is demonstrated that doctoral supervision is not something that is fixed or uniform but a dynamic process that involves pedagogical options, relational negotiations, institutional structures, and epistemological orientations- needs to be approached dialogically, ethically, and context-sensitively to promote both student success and the growth of the supervisor.

Conclusion

The study has explored that doctoral supervision in Pakistani universities is a context-dependent, adaptive and multifaceted practice that goes beyond technical advice to include relational, pedagogical and institutional aspects. By examining perspective, practices and pedagogy of supervisors, the findings indicate that supervision is not limited to one orientation but is a process that moves continuously from ‘publish or perish culture’ to mentoring and co-working. More importantly, the study demonstrates that supervisors shift their strategies according to the developmental needs of students and contextual limitations. In higher education settings, supervisors play a central role of a mediator (of language, academic culture, and institutional expectations) in a multilingual, resource-constrained environment. They adopt supervisory activities that enhance enculturation of students into the academic discourse as well as promote critical thinking and independence. Nevertheless, institutional pressures tend to influence and constrain these attempts, especially through the focus on publications in internationally recognized journals and adherence to regulatory systems. The research indicates that the doctoral supervision in Pakistan is viewed as hybrid and negotiated practice which must balance functional needs with developmental and pedagogical objectives. It reminds us the necessity of institutional acknowledgement of the complexity of supervisory work and demands formal support systems, such as professional development of supervisors and policies that recognize the relational and pedagogical aspects of supervision. The study makes a theoretically sound and situation-sensitive contribution to the literature on doctoral education in the Global South by placing supervision in the context of the multidimensional framework.

Declarations

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Author Contributions

All authors have equally contributed to this research. Author 1: Conceptualization, Methodology, Literature review, Author 2: Theoretical framework, writing, Author 3: Data collection, and data analysis 4: Reviewing & Editing

Ethics Declaration

We declare that prior to conducting this research, we adhered to institutional and ethical requirements of the university of Sindh. We also confirm that we complied with the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report and the Declaration of Helsinki (2013).

Ethical approval

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Data Availability

The data supporting this study are not publicly available due to confidentiality and privacy considerations of the participants.

We confirm the originality of this manuscript and declare that this work has not been submitted to any journal for publication. We acknowledge and cite all sources appropriately in this study. The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical research standards, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Competing Interest:

We have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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