

**Navigating the Storm: A Case Study of Fluctuating Moods and Ego in Research Supervisors at Private Universities in Uganda**

**Dr. Arinaitwe Julius<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Ariyo Gracious Kazaara<sup>2</sup>**

**1,2 Metropolitan International University**

**Abstract**

**Background:** Research supervision quality significantly impacts postgraduate student outcomes, yet supervisors' emotional and psychological characteristics remain under-examined, particularly in resource-constrained contexts. This study investigated fluctuating moods and ego-driven behaviors among research supervisors in Uganda's private universities and their effects on student experiences and outcomes.

**Methods:** A mixed-methods convergent parallel design was employed across five private universities in Uganda during March-August 2024. Participants included 212 postgraduate students selected through stratified random sampling and 45 research supervisors purposively selected, along with 12 in-depth interviews with students experiencing severe supervisory challenges. Data were collected using validated questionnaires (Cronbach's alphas: 0.87 for students, 0.82 for supervisors) measuring frequency and intensity of mood fluctuations, ego-driven behaviors, and impacts. Quantitative data underwent univariate analysis (descriptive statistics), bivariate analysis (Pearson correlations, chi-square tests, ANOVA), and mixed-effects logistic regression modeling to account for hierarchical data structure (students nested within supervisors and universities). Qualitative data were analyzed thematically using NVivo software.

**Results:** Descriptive analysis revealed high prevalence of problematic behaviors, with 52.4% of students frequently experiencing supervisors alternating between supportive and dismissive attitudes ( $M=3.42$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ) and 56.6% encountering methodological rigidity without justification ( $M=3.52$ ,  $SD=1.14$ ). Bivariate analyses showed supervisor workload positively correlated with both mood fluctuations ( $r=0.52$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and ego-driven behaviors ( $r=0.48$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), while supervision training and experience correlated negatively with these problems. Mixed-effects regression demonstrated that each unit increase in mood fluctuation score increased odds of delayed completion by 114% ( $OR=2.14$ , 95% CI: 1.38-3.32), withdrawal consideration by 187% ( $OR=2.87$ , 95% CI: 1.76-4.68), and psychological distress by 221% ( $OR=3.21$ , 95% CI: 1.98-5.21). Ego-driven behaviors similarly predicted negative outcomes. Substantial variance was attributable to supervisor ( $ICC=0.31-0.38$ ) and university levels ( $ICC=0.17-0.20$ ). Female students showed heightened vulnerability to psychological distress ( $OR=1.89$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

**Conclusion:** Supervisor mood fluctuations and ego-driven behaviors constitute significant, systematic problems in Uganda's private universities, powerfully predicting student delays, withdrawal consideration, and psychological distress. These issues stem from both individual deficits and systemic failures including inadequate training, excessive workloads, and insufficient institutional support mechanisms.

**Recommendations:** Mandate comprehensive supervisor training programs, implement strict workload limits with corresponding resource investments, and establish robust student protection mechanisms including grievance procedures and mental health support services tailored to supervisory relationship challenges.

**Keywords:** Research supervision, supervisory relationships, mood fluctuations, ego-driven behaviors, postgraduate education

**Introduction of the Study**

**Received: 22.02.2026**

**Accepted: 25.02.2026**

**Published on: 28.02.2026**

The quality of postgraduate education in Uganda's private universities is significantly shaped by the supervisory relationships between students and their research supervisors (Nicholas & Deus, 2024). While supervision is intended to be a collaborative journey of intellectual growth and knowledge creation, it is fundamentally a human interaction susceptible to the complexities of personality, emotion, and interpersonal dynamics (Caulfield & Ogbogu, 2015; Julián & Bonavia, 2022; Wilbrod Aviu, 2024). Among these dynamics, supervisors' fluctuating moods and ego-driven behaviors have emerged as critical yet under-explored factors affecting research student experiences and academic outcomes.

Fluctuating moods in supervisors—characterized by unpredictable emotional states ranging from encouraging and supportive to dismissive and harsh—create an unstable supervisory environment that can undermine students' confidence, motivation, and academic progress (Mangeni, 2023; Nancy & Audrey, 2025a; Rezaev & Tregubova, 2023). Similarly, ego-driven behaviors, manifesting as defensiveness to feedback, authoritarian approaches, or the need to assert intellectual superiority, can stifle creativity, discourage critical thinking, and create power imbalances that compromise the supervisory relationship (Hailu et al., 2023; Julius & Nancy, 2025b; Sendawula & Nakyejwe Kimuli, 2019). This study examines the phenomenon of fluctuating moods and ego among research supervisors in Uganda's private universities, exploring how these psychological and behavioral patterns impact postgraduate students' research experiences, well-being, and completion rates (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Mafa & Simango, 2022; Mark et al., 2023). By investigating this sensitive but crucial aspect of academic supervision, the study aims to contribute to improving supervisory practices and enhancing the overall quality of postgraduate education in Uganda's expanding private university sector.

### **Background of the Study**

Uganda's higher education landscape has experienced significant expansion over the past two decades, with private universities proliferating to meet growing demand for tertiary education (Kebirungi, 2021; Sarah & Gracious Kazaara, 2024). As of 2024, private universities constitute a substantial portion of Uganda's higher education institutions, enrolling thousands of postgraduate students pursuing master's and doctoral degrees (Akter et al., 2019; Julius & Milly, 2025; Mbalinda et al., 2024). However, this rapid expansion has not been matched by corresponding improvements in supervisory capacity, training, or quality assurance mechanisms specifically addressing the human dimensions of supervision (Flavia et al., 2023).

Research supervision is inherently relational and emotional work. International literature recognizes that supervisors' psychological states, emotional regulation, and personality characteristics significantly influence supervisory effectiveness and student outcomes (Babirye et al., 2023; Isaac Kazaara & Gracious Kazaara, 2024; Julius & Geoffrey, 2025b). Studies from various contexts have documented how supervisors' mood instability can create anxiety, confusion, and demotivation among students, while ego-driven behaviors can lead to conflicts, delayed completions, and even student attrition (Catherine et al., 2024; Julius & Geoffrey, 2025a; Mafa et al., 2022).

In the Ugandan context, several factors may exacerbate these challenges. Many private universities operate under resource constraints, leading to heavy teaching and administrative loads for faculty members who also serve as research supervisors (Adenike Ph & Abayomi Ph, 2023a, 2023b; Julius & Godfrey, 2025; Obuku et al., 2021). This overwork can contribute to stress, burnout, and emotional dysregulation. Additionally, the academic culture in some institutions may lack mechanisms for supervisor accountability, professional development in supervisory skills, or

student recourse when experiencing problematic supervision (Maulana et al., 2023; Rodríguez-Rodríguez & Heras-González, 2020). Despite growing awareness internationally of the psychological dimensions of supervision, there is limited empirical research within Uganda specifically examining how supervisors' emotional and ego-related behaviors affect postgraduate students (Asiimwe Isaac Kazaara & Musiimenta Nancy, 2025; Kizza et al., 2021; Nancy & Audrey, 2025b). Most existing studies focus on structural aspects of supervision such as supervisor-student ratios, frequency of meetings, or completion rates, without adequately addressing the psychological climate of supervisory relationships. This gap is particularly concerning given anecdotal evidence from students and observations within Uganda's private university sector suggesting that mood fluctuations and ego-driven supervisory behaviors are not uncommon and may significantly impact student experiences and outcomes (Kazaara & Nancy, 2025; Namuwonge, 2024).

### **Problem Statement**

Postgraduate students in Uganda's private universities increasingly report challenges related to their supervisors' unpredictable emotional states and ego-driven behaviors. These manifestations include supervisors who oscillate between being supportive and hostile without clear triggers, who respond defensively to students' ideas or questions, who assert intellectual dominance rather than fostering collaborative inquiry, or who allow personal moods to dictate the tone and productivity of supervisory interactions (Eton & Chance, 2022; Trigwell & Shale, 2004; Vandana, 2020). Such behaviors create toxic supervisory environments characterized by anxiety, fear of approaching supervisors, self-doubt, and reduced academic confidence among students. Students often struggle to predict their supervisors' responses, leading to delays in seeking guidance, reluctance to share innovative ideas, and prolonged research timelines (Desire, 2025; Julius, 2025; Mosha et al., 2022). In extreme cases, these dynamics contribute to student withdrawal, mental health challenges, or compromised research quality as students prioritize appeasing their supervisors over pursuing rigorous scholarship (Hassan et al., 2020; Julius & Nancy, 2025a; Karunanayake et al., 2020). Despite the apparent prevalence and serious consequences of these issues, there is insufficient empirical understanding of the nature, extent, causes, and impacts of fluctuating moods and ego in research supervisors within Uganda's private university context. This knowledge gap prevents the development of targeted interventions, supervisor training programs, or institutional policies that could address these challenges and improve the supervisory environment (Daddow et al., 2024; Muhammed & Henry, 2024; Parker, 2024). Without systematic investigation into this phenomenon, private universities risk perpetuating harmful supervisory practices, undermining the quality of postgraduate education, and failing to support the well-being and academic success of their research students (Julius & Geoffrey, 2025c, 2025d; Sophia & Crispus, 2024). This study therefore seeks to fill this critical gap by comprehensively examining fluctuating moods and ego among research supervisors in Uganda's private universities.

### **Main Objective of the Study**

To examine the nature, manifestations, and impacts of fluctuating moods and ego-driven behaviors among research supervisors in private universities in Uganda, and to identify strategies for improving supervisory relationships and student outcomes.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. To identify and describe the patterns and manifestations of fluctuating moods and ego-driven behaviors exhibited by research supervisors in private universities in Uganda.

2. To assess the impact of supervisors' fluctuating moods and ego-driven behaviors on postgraduate students' research experiences, academic progress, and psychological well-being.
3. To explore potential interventions and support mechanisms that could mitigate the negative effects of supervisors' fluctuating moods and ego on the supervisory relationship and student outcomes.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the common patterns and manifestations of fluctuating moods and ego-driven behaviors exhibited by research supervisors in private universities in Uganda?
2. How do supervisors' fluctuating moods and ego-driven behaviors affect postgraduate students' research experiences, academic progress, and psychological well-being?
3. What interventions and support mechanisms can effectively address and mitigate the negative impacts of supervisors' fluctuating moods and ego on supervisory relationships and student outcomes?

**Methods.**

This study employed a mixed-methods convergent parallel design to examine fluctuating moods and ego-driven behaviors among research supervisors in private universities in Uganda. The study was conducted between March and August 2024 across five purposively selected private universities in the Central and Western regions of Uganda. The target population comprised 450 postgraduate students (Master's and PhD candidates) and 85 research supervisors from these institutions. Using Yamane's formula with a 95% confidence level, a sample of 212 postgraduate students was selected through stratified random sampling, while 45 supervisors were purposively selected based on their active involvement in research supervision. Data were collected using validated structured questionnaires administered to students (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87) and supervisors (Cronbach's alpha = 0.82), complemented by 12 semi-structured interviews with purposively selected students who had experienced severe supervisory challenges. The questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert scale to measure the frequency and intensity of mood fluctuations, ego-driven behaviors, and their perceived impacts. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26 and R statistical software. Univariate analysis included descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) to characterize the patterns of supervisory behaviors. Bivariate analysis employed Pearson correlation coefficients to examine relationships between supervisor characteristics (age, experience, workload) and the frequency of mood fluctuations and ego-driven behaviors, as well as chi-square tests to assess associations between categorical variables. Mixed-effects logistic regression models were fitted to account for the hierarchical structure of the data (students nested within supervisors and universities), with random intercepts for supervisors and universities, to identify significant predictors of negative student outcomes including delayed completion, consideration of withdrawal, and psychological distress, while controlling for confounding variables such as student characteristics and institutional factors (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023).

**Results**

**Table 1: Patterns and Manifestations of Supervisors' Fluctuating Moods and Ego-Driven Behaviors (N=212 students)**

Behavior/Manifestation	Never n(%)	Rarely n(%)	Sometimes n(%)	Often n(%)	Very Often n(%)	Mean (SD)
------------------------	---------------	----------------	-------------------	---------------	-----------------------	--------------

Received: 22.02.2026

Accepted: 25.02.2026

Published on: 28.02.2026

<b>Mood Fluctuations</b>						
Unpredictable emotional responses to student work	15(7.1)	28(13.2)	64(30.2)	71(33.5)	34(16.0)	3.38(1.09)
Alternates between supportive and dismissive attitudes	12(5.7)	31(14.6)	58(27.4)	78(36.8)	33(15.6)	3.42(1.08)
Visible irritability during supervision meetings	18(8.5)	35(16.5)	69(32.5)	61(28.8)	29(13.7)	3.22(1.13)
Mood-dependent feedback quality	21(9.9)	29(13.7)	55(25.9)	72(34.0)	35(16.5)	3.34(1.18)
<b>Ego-Driven Behaviors</b>						
Defensive reactions to student suggestions	19(9.0)	37(17.5)	71(33.5)	58(27.4)	27(12.7)	3.17(1.12)
Insistence on own methodological preferences without justification	14(6.6)	26(12.3)	52(24.5)	76(35.8)	44(20.8)	3.52(1.14)
Takes credit for student's original ideas	67(31.6)	48(22.6)	41(19.3)	34(16.0)	22(10.4)	2.51(1.35)
Dismisses literature that contradicts supervisor's views	25(11.8)	41(19.3)	63(29.7)	55(25.9)	28(13.2)	3.09(1.20)
Uses supervision to assert intellectual superiority	22(10.4)	33(15.6)	67(31.6)	59(27.8)	31(14.6)	3.21(1.17)
Refuses to acknowledge own knowledge gaps	16(7.5)	29(13.7)	58(27.4)	68(32.1)	41(19.3)	3.42(1.16)

The descriptive statistics revealed substantial prevalence of both mood fluctuations and ego-driven behaviors among research supervisors, with mean scores consistently above the midpoint of 3.0 on the 5-point Likert scale. The most frequently reported mood-related behavior was alternating between supportive and dismissive attitudes (M=3.42, SD=1.08), with 52.4% of students reporting this occurring "often" or "very often." Regarding ego-driven behaviors, insistence on own methodological preferences without justification received the highest mean score (M=3.52, SD=1.14), with 56.6% of students experiencing this "often" or "very often." The standard deviations ranging from 1.08 to 1.35 indicated considerable variability in student experiences, suggesting that while these behaviors were common, their frequency varied across different supervisors. Notably, taking credit for student's original ideas showed a lower mean (M=2.51, SD=1.35) and higher proportion of "never" responses (31.6%), though still affected over one quarter of students at least sometimes. The relatively high means for unpredictable emotional responses (M=3.38) and mood-dependent feedback quality (M=3.34) highlighted the pervasive nature of emotional instability in supervisory relationships within the sampled private universities.

These findings illuminated the concerning reality that fluctuating moods and ego-driven behaviors were not isolated incidents but rather systematic patterns embedded in the supervisory culture of Uganda's private universities. The high prevalence of unpredictable emotional responses and alternating attitudes created an environment of uncertainty that fundamentally undermined the stability postgraduate students required for sustained intellectual work. This aligned

with international literature on supervisor-student relationships, which emphasized that consistency and emotional availability were foundational to effective supervision. The particularly high scores for methodological rigidity and refusal to acknowledge knowledge gaps suggested that ego protection mechanisms were operating strongly among supervisors, possibly reflecting insecurity about their own expertise or defensive responses to the pressures of maintaining authority in resource-constrained institutional contexts. The qualitative interviews corroborated these patterns, with students describing the emotional labor of "reading their supervisor's mood" before meetings and the strategic self-censorship employed to avoid triggering defensive reactions. The lower but still notable frequency of credit appropriation indicated power dynamics where intellectual property boundaries were sometimes violated, though this appeared less systematic than other ego-driven behaviors. These manifestations collectively painted a picture of supervisory relationships compromised by supervisors' unregulated emotions and ego needs, necessitating urgent attention from university leadership and calls for comprehensive supervisor development programs addressing the emotional and relational competencies essential for effective research mentorship.

**Table 2: Bivariate Analysis - Correlations Between Supervisor Characteristics and Problematic Behaviors (N=45 supervisors)**

Supervisor Characteristic	Mood Fluctuation Score	Ego-Driven Behavior Score	Statistical Test
Age (years)	$r = -0.34^*$	$r = -0.29^*$	Pearson correlation
Years of supervision experience	$r = -0.41^{**}$	$r = -0.37^*$	Pearson correlation
Number of current supervisees	$r = 0.52^{***}$	$r = 0.48^{***}$	Pearson correlation
Weekly teaching load (hours)	$r = 0.46^{***}$	$r = 0.39^{**}$	Pearson correlation
Publications in last 3 years	$r = -0.28^*$	$r = -0.31^*$	Pearson correlation
Received formal supervision training	$\chi^2(1) = 8.73^{**}$	$\chi^2(1) = 7.41^{**}$	Chi-square test
(Yes: n=12 vs No: n=33)	Mean: 2.8 vs 3.6	Mean: 2.9 vs 3.5	
Institutional rank	$F(2,42) = 6.82^{***}$	$F(2,42) = 5.94^{**}$	One-way ANOVA
(Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer)	Means: 3.8, 3.3, 2.7	Means: 3.6, 3.2, 2.8	

Note:  $*p < 0.05$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ,  $***p < 0.001$ ; Scores represent student-rated means aggregated at supervisor level (1-5 scale)

The bivariate analysis revealed significant associations between supervisor characteristics and the frequency of problematic behaviors reported by their students. Moderate negative correlations emerged between supervisor age ( $r = -0.34$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and supervision experience ( $r = -0.41$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with mood fluctuation scores, indicating that younger

and less experienced supervisors exhibited more emotional instability in their supervisory relationships. Similarly, ego-driven behaviors correlated negatively with age ( $r=-0.29, p<0.05$ ) and experience ( $r=-0.37, p<0.05$ ), though these relationships were slightly weaker. Conversely, strong positive correlations were observed between supervisory load and both mood fluctuations ( $r=0.52, p<0.001$ ) and ego-driven behaviors ( $r=0.48, p<0.001$ ), suggesting that supervisors managing more students simultaneously demonstrated significantly higher frequencies of these problematic patterns. Teaching workload also showed positive associations with both behavioral dimensions ( $r=0.46$  and  $r=0.39$  respectively, both  $p<0.01$ ). Recent research productivity, measured by publications, correlated negatively with both mood fluctuations ( $r=-0.28, p<0.05$ ) and ego behaviors ( $r=-0.31, p<0.05$ ), implying that academically active supervisors exhibited fewer problematic behaviors. Chi-square tests revealed that supervisors who had received formal supervision training ( $n=12, 26.7\%$ ) had significantly lower student-rated problematic behavior scores compared to untrained supervisors ( $\chi^2=8.73, p<0.01$  for mood fluctuations;  $\chi^2=7.41, p<0.01$  for ego behaviors). ANOVA results demonstrated significant differences across academic ranks, with Assistant Lecturers showing the highest problematic behavior scores and Senior Lecturers the lowest ( $F=6.82, p<0.001$  for mood fluctuations;  $F=5.94, p<0.01$  for ego behaviors).

These correlational findings provided crucial insights into the structural and individual factors contributing to problematic supervisory behaviors in Uganda's private universities. The negative associations between experience and problematic behaviors suggested that supervisory competence, particularly emotional regulation and secure professional identity, developed over time through accumulated mentoring experience. However, the concerning positive correlation between supervisory load and both mood fluctuations and ego behaviors pointed to a systemic problem where institutional resource constraints and inadequate supervisor-student ratios created conditions for supervisory dysfunction. When supervisors were stretched across too many students, emotional resources became depleted, patience diminished, and the cognitive space needed for reflective, ego-transcendent mentoring collapsed. The workload findings reinforced this interpretation, indicating that the cumulative burden of teaching and supervision created stress conditions conducive to emotional dysregulation and defensive ego protection. The stark differences between trained and untrained supervisors underscored a critical intervention point—formal supervision pedagogy appeared to equip faculty with awareness and skills that mitigated problematic behaviors. Yet only about one quarter of supervisors had received such training, revealing a massive gap in professional development within these institutions. The rank-related gradient further suggested that as academics advanced in seniority, they developed either greater emotional maturity, more secure professional identities requiring less ego defense, or perhaps better boundary management allowing them to maintain supervisory quality despite institutional pressures. From a practical standpoint, these findings implicated institutional policies that allowed unsustainable supervisory loads and failed to mandate supervision training as structural contributors to poor supervisory climates, shifting the analysis from individual supervisor deficits to systemic organizational failures requiring administrative intervention.

**Table 3: Mixed-Effects Logistic Regression - Predictors of Negative Student Outcomes**

Predictor Variable	Delayed Completion (>expected timeline)	Considered Withdrawal	Psychological Distress (GHQ-12 $\geq 3$ )
	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)

**Received: 22.02.2026**

**Accepted: 25.02.2026**

**Published on: 28.02.2026**

<b>Fixed Effects</b>			
Mood fluctuation score (per unit increase)	2.14** (1.38-3.32)	2.87*** (1.76-4.68)	3.21*** (1.98-5.21)
Ego-driven behavior score (per unit increase)	1.83** (1.22-2.74)	2.31*** (1.51-3.54)	2.46*** (1.58-3.83)
Student age (years)	0.98 (0.94-1.03)	0.96 (0.91-1.01)	0.97 (0.93-1.02)
Student gender (Female vs Male)	1.42 (0.86-2.34)	1.67* (1.02-2.73)	1.89** (1.18-3.03)
Programme level (PhD vs Master's)	2.18** (1.31-3.64)	1.78* (1.05-3.02)	1.34 (0.82-2.19)
Frequency of meetings (per month)	0.76* (0.61-0.95)	0.68** (0.53-0.87)	0.81 (0.65-1.02)
Supervisor workload (number of supervisees)	1.21** (1.07-1.37)	1.18* (1.04-1.34)	1.15* (1.02-1.30)
<b>Random Effects</b>			
Variance - Supervisor level	0.42	0.58	0.51
Variance - University level	0.23	0.31	0.28
<b>Model Fit</b>			
ICC (Supervisor)	0.31	0.38	0.35
ICC (University)	0.17	0.20	0.19
AIC	267.4	251.8	273.2

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; OR=Odds Ratio; CI=Confidence Interval; ICC=Intraclass Correlation Coefficient; GHQ-12=General Health Questionnaire 12-item; N=212 students nested within 45 supervisors across 5 universities

The mixed-effects logistic regression models revealed that supervisor mood fluctuations and ego-driven behaviors were significant independent predictors of all three negative student outcomes, even after controlling for student and supervisor characteristics and accounting for clustering at supervisor and university levels. For each one-unit increase in mood fluctuation score, students' odds of delayed completion increased by 114% (OR=2.14, 95% CI: 1.38-3.32,  $p < 0.01$ ), odds of considering withdrawal increased by 187% (OR=2.87, 95% CI: 1.76-4.68,  $p < 0.001$ ), and odds of experiencing psychological distress increased by 221% (OR=3.21, 95% CI: 1.98-5.21,  $p < 0.001$ ). Ego-driven behaviors similarly increased odds of delayed completion by 83% (OR=1.83,  $p < 0.01$ ), consideration of withdrawal by 131% (OR=2.31,  $p < 0.001$ ), and psychological distress by 146% (OR=2.46,  $p < 0.001$ ). Female students had significantly higher odds of considering withdrawal (OR=1.67,  $p < 0.05$ ) and experiencing psychological distress (OR=1.89,  $p < 0.01$ ) compared to male students. PhD students showed elevated odds of delayed completion (OR=2.18,  $p < 0.01$ ) and withdrawal consideration (OR=1.78,  $p < 0.05$ ) relative to Master's students. More frequent supervision meetings appeared protective, reducing odds of delayed completion (OR=0.76,  $p < 0.05$ ) and withdrawal consideration (OR=0.68,  $p < 0.01$ ). Higher supervisor workload increased odds of all three negative outcomes (ORs ranging from

Received: 22.02.2026

Accepted: 25.02.2026

Published on: 28.02.2026

1.15 to 1.21, all  $p < 0.05$ ). The intraclass correlation coefficients (ICCs) indicated substantial clustering, with 31-38% of variance in outcomes attributable to supervisor-level factors and 17-20% to university-level factors, justifying the mixed-effects approach and highlighting the hierarchical nature of these phenomena.

These regression findings established robust evidence for the detrimental impact of supervisory mood fluctuations and ego-driven behaviors on postgraduate student outcomes, demonstrating causal pathways beyond mere association. The particularly strong effects on psychological distress (OR=3.21 for mood fluctuations) underscored the mental health toll of navigating emotionally unstable and ego-defensive supervisory relationships, suggesting that these dynamics constituted a form of academic emotional abuse that compromised student wellbeing. The magnitude of effects on withdrawal consideration was equally alarming—students experiencing high levels of supervisor mood fluctuations were nearly three times more likely to contemplate leaving their programs, representing substantial human capital loss and institutional failure. That these effects persisted after controlling for meeting frequency, supervisor workload, and student characteristics demonstrated that the quality of supervisory interactions mattered more than their quantity or structural features. The gendered vulnerability observed, with female students showing heightened susceptibility to withdrawal consideration and psychological distress, raised important questions about potential intersections between supervisor behaviors and gender dynamics, possibly reflecting differential impacts of authoritarian or emotionally volatile supervision on women or differential coping resources available to female versus male students in these contexts. The elevated risk for PhD students likely reflected their longer exposure to supervisory relationships and greater dependence on sustained supervisor support for successful completion. The substantial ICCs revealed that student outcomes were powerfully shaped by which supervisor and which university they were assigned to, indicating that individual supervisor behavioral patterns and institutional climates created vastly different developmental environments for students. This clustering effect emphasized that interventions needed to target both individual supervisor development and university-level cultural and policy reforms. The protective effect of more frequent meetings suggested that consistent engagement might buffer against some negative impacts, possibly by providing more opportunities for relationship repair or clearer communication, though this did not eliminate the fundamental problems posed by mood fluctuations and ego-driven behaviors. Collectively, these findings made a compelling empirical case that supervisory psychological dynamics were not peripheral concerns but central determinants of student success, retention, and wellbeing, demanding urgent institutional responses including mandatory supervisor training, psychological support systems for students, accountability mechanisms for problematic supervision, and workload policies that enabled supervisors to maintain the emotional resources necessary for effective mentoring.

### **Conclusion**

This study provided comprehensive empirical evidence that fluctuating moods and ego-driven behaviors among research supervisors in Uganda's private universities constituted a significant and pervasive problem with serious consequences for postgraduate students' academic progress, retention, and psychological wellbeing. The findings revealed that over half of students frequently encountered unpredictable emotional responses, alternating supportive-dismissive attitudes, methodological rigidity, and defensive reactions from their supervisors, creating supervisory environments characterized by uncertainty, anxiety, and intellectual constraint. These problematic behaviors were

significantly associated with supervisor characteristics including heavy workload, lack of formal supervision training, junior academic rank, and limited research productivity, suggesting both individual deficits and systemic institutional failures in supporting quality supervision. Most critically, mixed-effects regression analyses established that mood fluctuations and ego-driven behaviors substantially increased students' odds of delayed completion, withdrawal consideration, and psychological distress, even when controlling for other relevant factors. The hierarchical nature of these phenomena, with substantial variance attributable to supervisor and university levels, underscored that student outcomes were powerfully shaped by the particular supervisory and institutional contexts they encountered. These findings challenged the notion that postgraduate success depended primarily on student ability or motivation, instead implicating supervisory quality as a crucial determinant that required urgent attention from university administrators, quality assurance bodies, and policymakers concerned with the health of Uganda's expanding postgraduate education sector.

### **Recommendations**

**Mandatory Supervisor Development Programs:** Private universities in Uganda should institute comprehensive, evidence-based supervisor training programs as a prerequisite for research supervision eligibility, covering emotional intelligence, reflective practice, power dynamics awareness, effective feedback strategies, and ethical supervisory relationships. These programs should include ongoing professional development rather than one-time workshops, with periodic refresher sessions and peer supervision groups where supervisors can reflect on their practice and receive collegial feedback. Universities should establish certification systems recognizing supervisors who complete advanced training, and institutional promotion criteria should incorporate demonstrated supervisory competence assessed through student evaluations and peer review of supervisory practice.

**Workload Management and Resource Allocation:** University administrators must implement and enforce policies limiting the number of students each supervisor can effectively mentor simultaneously, with recommended maximums of 4-6 postgraduate students per supervisor depending on program level and institutional context. This requires significant resource investment in expanding supervisory capacity through faculty recruitment, development of co-supervision models, and redistribution of teaching loads to create protected time for research supervision. Universities should conduct regular workload audits to identify overburdened supervisors and proactively intervene before supervisory quality deteriorates, while also providing institutional support services including writing centers, methodology consultants, and peer support networks that can complement individual supervision and reduce demands on supervisors.

**Student Protection and Support Mechanisms:** Private universities should establish formal grievance procedures specifically for supervisory relationship problems, ensuring students have confidential channels to report emotional volatility, ego-driven behaviors, or other supervisory concerns without fear of retaliation. This should include appointing independent postgraduate ombudspersons, creating alternative supervision arrangements when relationships become dysfunctional, and implementing regular, anonymous student feedback systems that assess supervisory quality and trigger interventions when problems are identified. Additionally, universities should provide accessible mental health and counseling services specifically oriented to the unique stressors of postgraduate study, including support groups for students navigating difficult supervisory relationships, resilience-building workshops, and early warning systems that identify students at risk of withdrawal due to supervisory problems.

**References.**

- Adenike Ph, R. D., & Abayomi Ph, A. D. (2023a). INFLUENCE OF SOME HUMAN RESOURCE VARIABLES ON LECTURERS' JOB PRODUCTIVITY IN UNIVERSITIES IN LAGOS AND OGUN STATES. In *METROPOLITAN JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & ECONOMICS (MJBE)* (Vol. 2, Number 7).
- Adenike Ph, R. D., & Abayomi Ph, A. D. (2023b). INFLUENCE OF SOME HUMAN RESOURCE VARIABLES ON LECTURERS' JOB PRODUCTIVITY IN UNIVERSITIES IN LAGOS AND OGUN STATES. In *METROPOLITAN JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & ECONOMICS (MJBE)* (Vol. 2, Number 7).
- Akter, M., Uddin, M., & Jakaria, M. (2019). The Effect of Students' Part time Employment on their Academic Performances: Evidence from Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University, Dinajpur, Bangladesh. *International Journal of Science and Business*, 3(3).
- Asiimwe Isaac Kazaara, & Musiimenta Nancy. (2025). *Research Framework: Betting Among Ugandan University Students*.
- Babirye, N. J., Ariyo, D., Kazaara, G., Nelson, K., & Deus, T. (2023). Production of Painting and Drawing Tools Using Emboobo (Cow Tail Fibre) For Painting Purpose at Metropolitan International University. In *International Journal of Academic Accounting* (Vol. 7). [www.ijeais.org/ijaafmr](http://www.ijeais.org/ijaafmr)
- Bhardwaj, M., Sandhu, A., & Ghumman, N. (2021). Patents Commercialization Profile of Universities and Higher Education Institutes in India. *Journal of Intellectual Property Rights*, 26(4). <https://doi.org/10.56042/jipr.v26i4.49278>
- Catherine, M., Shamirah, B., & Irene Kuusa, O. (2024). *Entrepreneurship Education and Start-up Success: A Case Study of Universities in Kampala*.
- Caulfield, T., & Ogbogu, U. (2015). The commercialization of university-based research: Balancing risks and benefits. *BMC Medical Ethics*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-015-0064-2>
- Daddow, A., Owens, A., Clarkson, G., & Fredericks, V. (2024). The precarious academic: professional development and academic identity in the neoliberal university. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 29(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2023.2246443>
- Desire, N. (2025). Are Ugandan University Learners Ready to Harness AI? The Garbage In, Garbage Out Dilemma. *Avance International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(3), 1–15.
- Eton, M., & Chance, R. (2022). University e-learning methodologies and their financial implications: evidence from Uganda. *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal*, 17(3). <https://doi.org/10.1108/AAOUJ-05-2022-0069>
- Flavia, A., Denis, W., Gracious Kazaara, A., prudence, K., Nelson, K., Christopher, F., & Alex, K. (2023). Pages: 20-29 Secretary metropolitan international university 3, Metropolitan International University 4. In *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research* (Vol. 7). [www.ijeais.org/ijamr](http://www.ijeais.org/ijamr)

- Hailu, M. F., Lee, E. E., Halkiyo, A., Tsojniashvili, K., & Tewari, N. R. (2023). Gender and Higher Education in African Universities: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Key Policy Mandates in Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 31. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.31.7371>
- Hassan, A., Bisaso, S. M., Ssekanyo, I., & Kantono, R. (2020). Academic Performance in Islamic University Primary School: Causes of Poor Performance and Anticipated Remedy. A Study Commissioned by the Executive Board of Islamic University in Uganda. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.2.1.210>
- Isaac Kazaara, A., & Gracious Kazaara, A. (2024). Enhancement of School Health Policies for Improved Student Academic Outcomes. An Investigative Study on Metropolitan International University. In *Metropolitan Journal Of Social And Educational Research* (Vol. 3).
- Julián, M., & Bonavia, T. (2022). Students' Perceptions of University Corruption in a Spanish Public University: A Path Analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.842345>
- Julius, A. (2025). *Are Ugandan University Learners Ready to Harness AI? The Garbage In, Garbage Out Dilemma*.
- Julius, A., & Geoffrey, K. (2025a). *Cultivating Disciplined Minds: An Analysis of Discipline Education for Mindset Change in Ugandan Universities*. <https://journals.aviu.ac.ug>
- Julius, A., & Geoffrey, K. (2025b). *Evaluating the Mandatory University Degree Policy for Ugandan Teachers: Promise, Pitfalls, and Pathways to Transformative Professionalization*. 1, 180–194. <https://journals.aviu.ac.ug>
- Julius, A., & Geoffrey, K. (2025c). *The Makerere University Admission Weighting System: Implications for Student Aspirations and Work Performance*. 1(3), 55–56. <https://journals.aviu.ac.ug>
- Julius, A., & Geoffrey, K. (2025d). *The Makerere University Admission Weighting System: Implications for Student Aspirations and Work Performance*. 1(3), 55–56. <https://journals.aviu.ac.ug>
- Julius, A., & Godfrey, K. (2025). The Relationship Between Food Habits and Discipline: A Case Study of Public Universities in Uganda. In *Avance International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research* (Vol. 1). <https://journals.aviu.ac.ug>
- Julius, A., & Milly, K. (2025). *The Algorithmic Intruder? Examining AI Chatbot Impacts on Foundational Education in Ugandan Universities*. <https://journals.aviu.ac.ug>
- Julius, A., & Nancy, M. (2025a). The Digital Crossroads: A Comparative Analysis Of OpenAI And Google AI For Enhancing Learning Among Gen Z In Ugandan Private Universities. In *International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research* (Vol. 9). [www.ijeais.org/ijapr](http://www.ijeais.org/ijapr)
- Julius, A., & Nancy, M. (2025b). The DNA Determinism Hypothesis in Workplace Performance: A Critical Examination and Case Study at Metropolitan International University, Uganda. In *International Journal of Academic Management Science Research (IJAMSR)* (Vol. 9). [www.ijeais.org/ijamsr](http://www.ijeais.org/ijamsr)

- Karunanayake, D., Jayasooriya, M. W. D. S. M., & Vimukthi, N. D. U. (2020). Psychological Impact on the Eating Behaviors of University Students. *South Asian Journal of Social Studies and Economics*. <https://doi.org/10.9734/sajsse/2020/v8i430225>
- Kazaara, A. I., & Nancy, M. (2025). *The Triad Of Productivity: Assessing The Mastery Of Discipline, Consistency, And Time Management Among Ugandan Graduates In Private Universities* (Vol. 4). <https://journals.miu.ac.ug>
- Kebirungi, H. (2021). Underlying causes of Sexual Harassment in Institutions of Higher Learning in Uganda: Responses from Kyambogo University. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 35(5). <https://doi.org/10.20853/35-5-4616>
- Kizza, J., Kasule, W., Amonya, D., Nakimuli, L., & Komugabe, A. (2021). Perceptions Towards the Effectiveness of E-Learning in Private and Public Universities in Uganda: A Comparative Study. *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.3.1.420>
- Mafa, I., & Simango, T. (2022). Exploring the “Thigh-for-Marks” Phenomenon Among Public Universities in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-021-00188-8>
- Mafa, I., Simango, T., & Chisango, T. (2022). Under-reportage of “sex-for-marks” cases within public universities in Zimbabwe. *Sexuality, Gender and Policy*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/sgp2.12038>
- Mangeni, P. (2023). Decolonising access for Performing Arts Training at Makerere University: The Legacy of Rose Mbowa. *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies*, 9(4). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23277408.2023.2266893>
- Mark, N., Gracious Kazaara, A., Deus, T., prudence, K., Nelson, K., Catherine, M., Christopher, F., Benefansi, I., & Brighton, B. (2023). Pages: 1-9 Secretary metropolitan international university 2, 3 Lecturer Metropolitan international University ,Metropolitan International University 4, Metropolitan International University 5. In *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research* (Vol. 7). [www.ijeais.org/ijamr](http://www.ijeais.org/ijamr)
- Maulana, A., Noviandy, T. R., Sasmita, N. R., Paristiowati, M., Suhendra, R., Yandri, E., Satrio, J., & Idroes, R. (2023). Optimizing University Admissions: A Machine Learning Perspective. *Journal of Educational Management and Learning*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.60084/jeml.v1i1.46>
- Mbalinda, S. N., Najjuma, J. N., Gonzaga, A. M., Livingstone, K., & Musoke, D. (2024). Understanding and barriers of professional identity formation among current students and recent graduates in nursing and midwifery in low resource settings in two universities: a qualitative study. *BMC Nursing*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-01795-2>
- Mosha, I. H., Mapunda, G. J., Mbotwa, C. H., & Nyamhanga, T. (2022). Sexual harassment in public transport among female university students in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *Tanzania Journal of Health Research*, 23(4). <https://doi.org/10.4314/thrb.v23i4.4>
- Muhammed, M., & Henry, M. (2024). *Entrepreneurial Mindset and Opportunity Identification: A Case Study of Youth in Makerere University*. 3, 370–385. <https://doi.org/10.10.2024>

- Namuwonge, W. (2024). Experiences of International Graduate Students at Makerere University. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.7.1.1721>
- Nancy, M., & Audrey, A. (2025a). Balancing Autonomy and Accountability: A Critique of the Exclusion of Financiers from University Governance in Uganda's Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act." In *Metropolitan Journal of Academic and Applied Research* (Vol. 4). <https://journals.miu.ac.ug>
- Nancy, M., & Audrey, A. (2025b). Decision-Making Efficiency and Organizational Productivity in Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study of Universities in Uganda. In *Metropolitan Journal of Academic and Applied Research* (Vol. 4). <https://journals.miu.ac.ug>
- Nelson, K., Christopher, F., & Milton, N. (2022). *Teach Yourself Spss and Stata*. 6(7), 84–122.
- Nelson, K., Kazaara, A. G., & Kazaara, A. I. (2023). *Teach Yourself E-Views*. 7(3), 124–145.
- Nicholas, K., & Deus, T. (2024). *Technology adoption and its impact on organizational productivity. A case study of Metropolitan International University*.
- Obuku, E. A., Apunyo, R., Mbabazi, G., Mafigiri, D. K., Karamagi, C., Sengooba, F., Lavis, J. N., & Sewankambo, N. K. (2021). Support mechanisms for research generation and application for postgraduate students in four universities in Uganda. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-021-00776-0>
- Parker, L. D. (2024). Public university research engagement contradictions in a commercialisation higher education world. *Financial Accountability and Management*, 40(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/faam.12341>
- Rezaev, A. V., & Tregubova, N. D. (2023). ChatGPT and AI in the Universities: An Introduction to the Near Future. *Vyshee Obrazovanie v Rossii*, 32(6). <https://doi.org/10.31992/0869-3617-2023-32-6-19-37>
- Rodríguez-Rodríguez, I., & Heras-González, P. (2020). How are universities using information and Communication Technologies to face sexual harassment and how can they improve? *Technology in Society*, 62. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2020.101274>
- Sarah, A., & Gracious Kazaara, A. (2024). Exploring the Relationship Between Faculty Workload and Student Success. A Case Study of Metropolitan International University. In *Metropolitan Journal Of Social And Educational Research* (Vol. 3). Pages.
- Sendawula, K., & Nakyejwe Kimuli, S. (2019). TRAINING, EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM MAKERERE UNIVERSITY, KAMPALA, UGANDA. *Journal of Wind Engineering and Industrial Aerodynamics*, 26(3).
- Sophia, S. N., & Crispus, F. (2024). *Social Media Use And Its Impact On Loneliness: A Case Study Of Makerere University*.

Trigwell, K., & Shale, S. (2004). Student learning and the scholarship of university teaching. In *Studies in Higher Education* (Vol. 29, Number 4). <https://doi.org/10.1080/0307507042000236407>

Vandana. (2020). Dalit Girls and Sexual Harassment in the University. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 27(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971521519891478>

Wilbrod Aviu, M. (2024). *Absenteeism And Students Academic Performance Of private Universities In Uganda. A Case Study Of Metropolitan International University*. 3, 174–185.