

EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ONLINE UNDERGRADUATE THESIS SUPERVISION PROCESS

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Abstract: The purpose of the study to know how student perceptions of the online thesis supervision process for students majoring in English Education at the University of Islam Malang. To achieve the above objectives, researchers conducted a type of qualitative descriptive research. Data collection procedures were carried out using questionnaires and interviews. To obtain student perception questionnaire data, the questionnaire was given to all students online using Google Forms. After the participants filled out all the questionnaires, the researcher interviewed four selected students with two interviews and the duration of the interview was 30 minutes with the aim of exploring their perceptions of online thesis supervision. In the data analysis section, the researcher analyzed the data results using quantitative and qualitative techniques. For quantitative data, the researcher used a student perception questionnaire from Mushoriwa (2014). Student perceptions consist of two types of expressions, namely positive and negative. Periodic handling of qualitative data is carried out based on the comprehensive analysis method by Miles and Huberman (1994). It contains three parallel streams: data reduction, data display, and conclusion. In this study, students' perceptions of online thesis guidance said that students' perceptions were more dominant towards positive perceptions such as supervisors providing useful input and helping students in advancing their thesis so that they were able to complete it faster and be more focused when compiling a thesis. Things that need to be considered as suggestions are how in the future to add samples in data collection such as adding lecturers as participants so that it is clearer from student perceptions and lecturers' perceptions.

Key words: EFL Students', Online Thesis Supervision, Perceptions, Undergraduate

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 now makes almost all final semester students working on the thesis feel apprehensive because initially thesis supervision is done face-to-face, but currently, final semester students have to follow online thesis supervision. This makes the final semester students' thesis a little hampered because they cannot do field research, the campus is closed so that the final semester students have difficulty finding important information, cannot

gather and discuss with colleagues, the direction that is carried out continuously online is not ideal in conditions rampant covid-19. According to Kuhfeld (2020), the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic does not only occur in schools but also affects almost all campuses throughout Indonesia which causes almost all final semester students who are working on their thesis to be nervous because initially thesis supervision is carried out face-to-face, but now final semester students must follow online thesis supervision.

In the previous study conducted by Jaldemark (2014), his research refers to online supervision. Online supervision relies mostly on written correspondence and electronic drafts, while physical and social hints, visual communication, and draft messages are used in offline supervision. The analysis indicates that the consistency of the utterances of managers embraces the disparity between comments, points of view, orders, and questions being applied. "The students are required to perform academic work by engaging in such activity that they cannot accomplish individually," and also do "more in the intellectual realm than he is capable of doing independently," as Vygotsky (1987) put it. In their analysis of master learners, Dysthe et al. (2006) found similar findings. The blending in their case included supervisory classes of supervisors and their students, self-organized student groups without supervisors, and individual control between the supervisor and her or his student.

From the two previous studies above, the first from Jaldemark (2014), only explored how online supervision: a theory of supervisors' strategic communicative influence on student dissertations. Furthermore, the previous study did not explore how students' perceptions of the online thesis supervision process for students who are majoring in English Education. Meanwhile, the second previous study from Dysthe et al. (2006) found that supervisory courses of supervisors and their students, self-organized student groups without supervisors, and individual control between the supervisor and her or his student were all examples of blending in their situation that there was less possibility of such disagreements,

in addition to the diminished importance of personal chemistry between students and supervisor. In this scenario, during Covid-19, the researcher decided to elaborate on the students' perceptions of the online undergraduate thesis supervision process for students majoring in English Education at University of Islam Malang.

METHOD

In terms of the procedures and patterns adopted, this study is included the type of descriptive qualitative research designs. The participants in this study were final semester students of the Department of English Education at University of Islam Malang, who were carrying out an online thesis supervision process during the Covid-19 pandemic. 133 respondents were the research targets, but only 40 students filled out the questionnaire in the 2020/2021 academic year. After that, the researcher chose four students who have finished online thesis supervision and have conducted thesis exams to be participants in the interview. In addition, the four participants represent those who have positive and negative perceptions towards online thesis supervision. In this research, the researcher used a questionnaire with a Likert scale type and interview guide to collect information about the students' perceptions. The questionnaire used in this research is adapted from Mushoriwa (2014), consists of 40 questions. Meanwhile, the researcher only takes 36 questions from the whole questionnaire that had been translated into Indonesian to avoid misunderstanding and ambiguity. The instrument will measure the students' perceptions in the online thesis supervision; this scale provides five responses, "Strongly Agree (SA)", "Agree (A)", "Undecided (U)", "Disagree (D)", and "Strongly Disagree (SD)". Before the main questionnaire, the researcher included research purposes, participants' background information (name, sex, age, information about whether they have had a thesis exam or not, and WhatsApp number), and instructions on how

to answer the questionnaire in the Google form. Interviews are used as data collection techniques. The researcher will conduct in-depth interviews with four students who have completed thesis supervision and have conducted the thesis exam. The focus of the interview consisted of five questions about students' perceptions, the process, the challenges, the media used, and the students' preferences of online or offline thesis supervision.

Data collection will be conducted in July 2021 as a part of the online thesis supervision of the English Department. In the section on analyzing data, the researcher analyzed the results of the data using quantitative and qualitative techniques. For the quantitative data, the researcher used the student's perceptions questionnaire from Mushoriwa (2014). Students' perceptions consist of two types of expressions that are positive and negative. The positive statement scale ranges from 1 to 5 with answers from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Printing a Likert scale requires the following:

Table 3.1: Scoring the Likert Scale adapted from Mushoriwa (2014).

Statement	Scoring				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Positive	5	4	3	2	1
Negative	1	2	3	4	5

Table 3.1 shows that, like with other Likert scale analysis techniques, items are categorized into positive and negative categories initially. Positive statements were given a score ranging from 5 to 1 for Strongly Agree, while negative statements were given a score ranging from 1 to 5 for Strongly Disagree. The item scores for each responder are then added together to get a total score. Because there are thirty-six (36) Likert-type items on the questionnaire, there is a maximum potential score of 180 (5x36) and a minimum necessary score of 36 (1x36). A score over the mean maximum potential score ($180/2 = 90$) is regarded as positive, while a score below the mean maximum possible score ($180/2 = 90$) is deemed

negative. The neutral point (90) was not included for the reason of analysis in arranges to make the results directional (Fishbein, 1975).

Qualitative data handling is regularly based on comprehensive analysis methods by Miles and Huberman (1994). It contains three streams of parallel movement: data reduction, data display, and conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to facilitate the understanding of the answers of 40 respondents, the researcher computed the results of 36 questionnaires and divided them into positive and negative statements. The following is an overview of the summary of the students' responses in positive and negative statements based on the description in Figure 4.3 below.

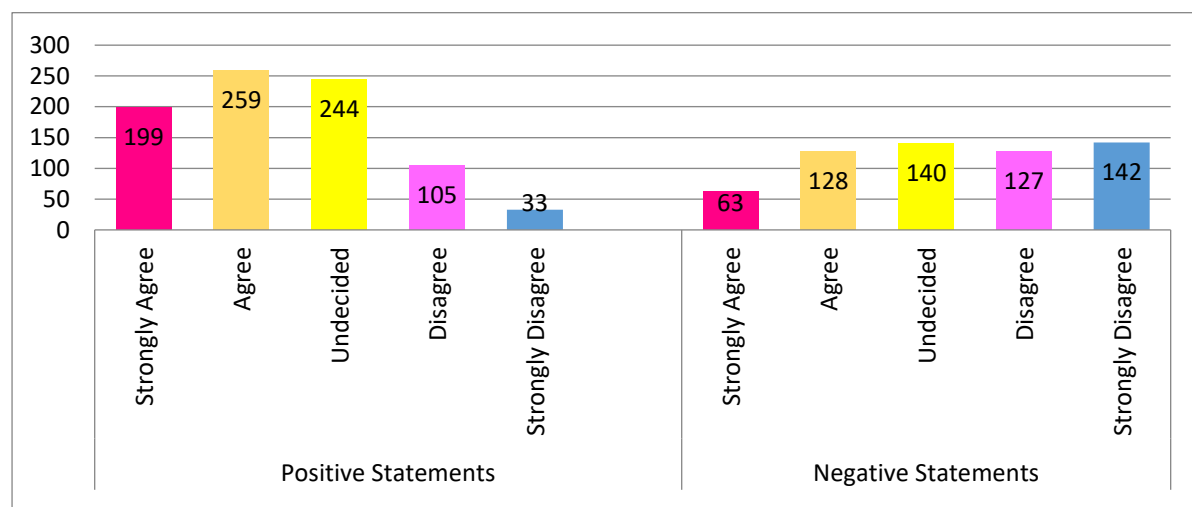


Figure 4.3 The summary of students' responses in positive and negative statements

From the summary, the researcher found positive statements scores: strongly agree (199); agree (259); undecided (244); disagree (105); strongly disagree (33). Therefore, it can be concluded from affirmative statements that the highest score is “agree” with a score rate of 259, while the lowest score is “strongly disagree” with 33 scores. Further the negative statement scores; strongly agree (63); agree (128); undecided (140); disagree (127); strongly

disagree (142). Therefore, a negative statement has the highest score of “strongly disagree” with 142 scores and “strongly agree” has the lowest with 63 scores.

Figure 4.3 also reveals that one of the issue areas for many participants was the supervisor's remarks, which were occasionally perplexing but did not prohibit participants from selecting research methodologies. Designing the instrument to be used to collect data, opposing supervisor comments, difficulties in validating research instruments, and experiencing difficulties in testing the instrument's reliability were all areas that participants found to be difficult; however, some participants did not find it difficult to guide their thesis with their supervisor.

A previous interview session was done by the researcher to corroborate the results of the questionnaire data survey. The researcher conducted a question-and-answer session with final semester English Department students at the University of Islam Malang to locate individuals' interest in the online thesis supervision procedure. The researcher chose four students from the questionnaire who had finished the thesis exam as respondents, after which the researcher asked questions one by one and answered individually by the resource persons. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the findings of interviews with students regarding their perspectives of the online thesis supervision procedure explain the experience of the online thesis supervision process.

This is followed by a general interview guide that uses 5 questions composed of 7 questions written by Mushoriwa (2014). The results of interviews on students' perceptions of online thesis supervision illustrate a picture of the participants' online thesis supervision experiences (See Appendix 4).

From the results of interviews, the researcher found a common perception among 4 participants who expressed their perceptions about online thesis supervision. The first

participant (P1), the second participant (P2), the third participant (P3), and the fourth participant (P4) revealed that they have positive and negative perceptions of online thesis supervision; the positive things are that they do not need to pay printing fees; they are more flexible so that students can send thesis files at any time without the need to arrange a time with their supervisor get fewer revisions, fast approval from superiors, and prevent the transmission of Covid-19 at this time. While the negative things are feedback/feedback from the supervisor took a long time and the comments from the supervisor were sometimes poorly understood by the students. As the following participants have said:

“The first one must have negative as well as positive sessions. The negative session, eeehhh, sometimes what I often experience, sometimes the lecturer replies, it takes a long time for us to get a response to our thesis, it takes months, 3 months or even 4 months what I have experienced so the lecturer's response took a long time so that the thesis work what are we called. . . if it is said to be delayed or not on time. For the positive session . . . The good thing is that we were guided even though it took us a long time to get approval from the supervisor quickly. So, like the process of working on a thesis, it's actually a matter of approval or not, in my opinion, it's fast when we guide online.”(P2)

“The plus is that online supervision is faster and more flexible, so we can send feedback or revision at any time. While we also minimize . . expenses such as paper printouts and all kinds. Only from the negative side, in my opinion, I am more connected when spoken to directly. That's all because there's been a lot of miscommunication so eeehhh. . . It's a different kind of catch. So the advantage is that online, there are fewer revisions. So maybe the lecturer has other things to do and he has limited time so he only has . . . aaaa revise broadly so. Only if the revision is very detailed offline, we can include it, we can also be scolded, while online we can avoid being scolded.” (P4)

In addition, the online thesis supervision process is by submitting the title and then waiting until it is approved, followed by chapters 1,2, & 3 after being approved, followed by chapters 4 & 5 to the conclusion. Working on the thesis is not too difficult, it's just that the response from the old supervisor made the thesis work a little hampered. From the data, open-ended questions reflect the personal nature of the research process and the essence of the mentoring process. The second participant (P2) and the fourth participant (P4) shared their opinions on their perception of online thesis supervision during the interview:

“For the process of running the online thesis supervision itself, what I experienced starting from the submission of the title, I immediately submitted it directly with the outline of my thesis. The process of depositing the title with its approval is fast. So, after I collected the title and outline it was immediately approved and eeehhh, recommended for chapter 1 to chapter 3. But, after eeehhh I got approval from chapter 1 to chapter 3, then my supervisor suggested ummm to do the next chapter 4 to 5. So if it's complicated, it's not complicated like the process is simple but time-consuming, that's what my superiors responded, both supervisor 1 and supervisor 2.” (P2)

“The process, of course, is that we must first consult the title after the title is approved, then we will collect chapters 1,2,3. Then after chapter 3 is finished we can move on to chapters 4 and 5. For a consultation, Alhamdulillah, because I got a supervisor who was quite fast, so I got feedback very quickly. At least 3 days to get feedback. however, when supervisor 1 has been consulting to the end but I'm still stuck in supervisor 2 eeehhh because supervisor 2's feedback is taking too long..” (P4)

The researcher asked what media they used during the online thesis supervision process, they all answered that the supervisor asked students to send thesis files via email, WhatsApp, or the Zoom application to discuss revisions. In addition, the researcher asked the participants to choose between online or offline thesis supervision. P3 and P4 said they prefer online thesis supervision because it saves time without the need to meet in person; easier because they can send the thesis file via WhatsApp or email anytime and anywhere. While P2 said they prefer offline because offline supervision can ask the supervisor directly what is unclear or not understood. As stated by the second participant (P2), the third participant (P3), and the fourth participant (P4) below.

“If asked to choose, I prefer online because . . . let's finish quickly because we can't visit all of the supervisors every day, so online we can keep in touch or communicate. . . by WhatsApp or chat.” (P4)

“If given the choice to choose online or offline thesis supervision, in my opinion, even though yesterday I underwent online thesis supervision I used an online process, maybe I still chose offline thesis supervision, although yesterday I did not experience what offline thesis supervision was like, I still choose offline thesis supervision because it can overcome the time wasted when I was online tutoring yesterday, I think offline supervision can speed up the thesis process, right if offline supervision I can ask as clearly as possible what my lecturer meant when giving feedback, input, or criticism of my thesis, it becomes clearer what it means, how it is done, in more detail, and more valid for specific or important things in this thesis, so I still choose offline thesis supervision rather than online because it's online thesis a the obstacles are very strong and the bad effects are very bad.” (P2)

This study shows that interviews have demonstrated a valuable method for analyzing what happens during online thesis supervision for students. Emphasizing the obstacles that occur during the supervision process faced by students will help lecturers to answer the various needs of students and help them take steps so that negative results do not continue to damage students' willingness to complete their thesis on time.

The finding show the questionnaire on students' perceptions of the online thesis supervision process, it can be concluded that students' perceptions are more dominant towards positive perceptions such as supervisors providing useful feedback and assisting students in making progress on their thesis, enabling them to complete it faster and be more focused when compiling a thesis. Supervisors encourage them to do well, assist them in identifying research subjects, and assist them in making adjustments to their thesis. This is in line with Spear (2000), who stated that supervisors must read students' writings thoroughly and provide constructive criticism. According to Spear (2000), feedback is usually provided on topic selection, research methods, writing style, and grammar. Some students also said that they had a good understanding of research before they started their thesis and already had some ideas to start their research. The supervising lecturer is also open to consulting and deciding which parts of the relevant literature to include in the thesis and students do not find it difficult to identify research subjects.

Based on the results of the interview showed that participants had positive and negative perceptions of online thesis supervision. The positive perception is that students can save costs because they don't need to print out the thesis file, the time is more flexible without the need to make an appointment with a supervisor, fewer revisions than meeting in person, getting approval faster, and can prevent the transmission of Covid-19 which is currently endemic. This is related to the theory based on the results of an analysis from Suparman (2021), who said that students were more enthusiastic about using online thesis

supervision because students and supervisors could communicate via the internet anytime and anywhere, even during the Covid-19 pandemic. While the negative response from the supervisor took a long time and the comments from the supervisor were not understood by the students. In addition, the online thesis supervision process went smoothly, but the problem was the response of the supervisor who took a long time so that the thesis work was a bit hampered. However, the main complaint of students is that the supervisor is too slow in reading thesis drafts and other written materials.

During the online thesis supervision process, the students used several media such as E-mail and WhatsApp to send drafts of their thesis or the Zoom application to discuss revisions. This finding was related to Juita (2020), WhatsApp and E-mail are the two most common ways to communicate with supervisors to achieve a clearer understanding of the consistency of the instruction mechanism during the pandemic. P3 and P4 they prefer online thesis guidance because it saves time without the need to go to campus to meet a supervisor and thesis files can be sent via WhatsApp or E-mail application anytime and anywhere, and can prevent the transmission of Covid19 which is currently endemic. This finding is related to Alchamdani (2020), establishing online thesis supervision can help prevent the spread of Covid-19. Students and lecturers can connect through the program (WhatsApp, zoom, signal, etc.) with the help of the internet network. P2 prefer offline because offline thesis supervisors they can directly ask for comments from supervisors and can convey their findings directly.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion taken from the previous chapter is that the students' perception of the online thesis supervision process has a positive and negative perception. Positive, among others, it does not need to pay printing costs, more flexible because students can send their script files at any time without having to schedule time with their supervisor, and do not transmit Covid-19 at this time. The negative perception is the late feedback from supervisors

in responding to students and explanations of supervisors in draft thesis students who are sometimes misinterpreted by students. All students said the supervisor requests to send the thesis file via email, WhatsApp, or zoom application to discuss adjustments during the online thesis guidance process. So it needs to be noted back so that the supervisor is faster in responding to students and use sentences more clearly in commenting the drafts so that online thesis guidance will become more effective.

SUGGESTIONS

For students who have done online thesis supervision using WhatsApp and E-mail, the slow response from the supervisor is one of the obstacles in the process of completing their thesis. Supervising lecturers are expected to be able to respond and provide feedback quickly during the online thesis supervision process. One of the important things that a supervisor must do is look for other media that can facilitate direct communication (for example, the Zoom application, signals, etc.) to express their opinions to solve the problem of online thesis supervision during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

For further researchers who are interested in researching students' perceptions of thesis supervision, the researchers suggested adding samples in data collection such as adding lecturers as participants and students' thesis scores so that the results are more complete from the perceptions of students and lecturers.

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