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INTERACTIONS OF STUDENT AND SUPERVISOR IN SKRIPSI RESEARCH: UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES IN PERSPECTIVES AND EXPECTATION

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Abstract

Skripsi is a term used to describe a scientific research paper written by undergraduate students as a mandatory requirement to complete their study at a higher education institution in Indonesia. The process of producing a skripsi is complex and demanding. One of the most important and profound issues in skripsi is student's interaction with skripsi supervisor. Even though the role of supervisor is important in assisting students' skripsi process, there seems to be issues regarding their interaction with students. The purpose of this study is to understand interactions of students and supervisors in skripsi and its challenges and to find out their perspectives and expectations while working on it. The author distributed online survey and conducted in-depth interview to twenty students and faculty members of UIN Ar-Raniry, Indonesia. The findings showed that there are prominent issues found in skripsi process and the conduct of it. The response also indicated that complex procedure, limitation of time, and different expectation lead to issues related to students' interactions with their supervisors. Based on the findings, this paper emphasizes on the necessity for mutual understanding to improve the

skripsi process and suggests for additional way (online assistance) to increase communication and interactions between students and supervisors.

Keywords

Research, *Skripsi*, Interaction, Supervisor

1. Introduction

Teaching-learning processes are undergoing a paradigm shift (Huba & Freed, 2000). Focus of instruction is now on education programs that promote competency and performance with student-oriented learning being applied in recent years (Buttar, 2016). Students become active participants in a class with lecturer as facilitator and guide. Research activities, are one of problem-based activities that many students experience early on since their undergraduate study. Research experience, as Madan and Teitge (2013) explained, allows undergraduate students “to better understand published works, learn to balance collaborative and individual work, determine an area of interest, and jump start their careers as researchers.”

Skripsi is a term used in Indonesia to describe a scientific and research paper written by undergraduate students as a mandatory requirement to complete their study at a higher education institution in Indonesia (Poerwadarminta, 2002). Although *skripsi* project evokes students’ understanding of how scientific writing and research procedures work, it can also impact negatively on students. The fact that *skripsi* decides their future of 4-year learning becomes such a burden that impacts not only students themselves, but other stakeholders such as faculty members and students’ parents.

The complexity and difficulty of *skripsi* writing procedure prompt concerning issues. According to Darmono and Hasan (2005), the issues faced by students during *skripsi* writing might include: finding literature, limited budget, lack of scientific writing skills, self-management issue, and problems with *skripsi* supervisor. January (2009) added that there are internal and external issues that hinder students’ *skripsi* writing process. Internal issues such as students’ laziness, lack of motivation, fear of meeting supervisor, and difficulty to coordinate with supervisor and external issues like problems with supervisors, limited resources and reference, and lack of knowledge and information on research methodology play big parts in complicating students’ *skripsi* process. The many challenges faced by students gradually causing

stress, low self-esteem, frustration and loss of motivation. This leads to some students keep delaying their *skripsi* and ultimately drop out of university (Slamet, 2003).

“The success of research projects largely depends on the interaction between students and supervisors.” (Moskvicheva, 2015). In Indonesia, students cannot go on working on their *skripsi* without their supervisors. After successfully revising their proposals, each student will be assigned with one supervisor or co-supervisors. Students will work collaboratively with their supervisors for each stage of *skripsi* in to produce their best *skripsi*.

The process of producing *skripsi* is supposedly easy because throughout their *skripsi* process supervisors will lead and guide students. Supervisor are responsible to give constructive feedback from writing technique to content and method aspects in *skripsi*. They are also obliged to check and guide student’s work step by step and help students to grow as professional. At the same time, supervisors are given rights to advise and approve of change and revision towards student’s work. Likewise, students are obliged to follow supervisors’ instructions and revise their works accordingly. Consequently, students also have rights for meaningful discussion, guidance, and approval to take their *skripsi* to the next level.

Unfortunately, complex procedure, limitation of time and different expectation and mindset lead to issues related to students’ interactions with their *skripsi* supervisors. According to January (2009), external factors regarding students’ interaction with their *skripsi* supervisors predominantly affect students’ *skripsi* progress. The issues are as shown below:

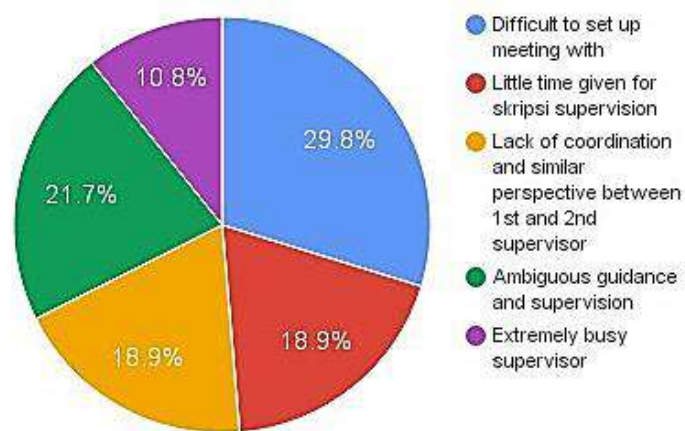


Figure 1: Issues with Supervisor

Based on the background of problems, the author composed research questions for this study as follow:

- What are students' and supervisors' perspectives on their interactions in *skripsi*?
- What kind of expectation yielded from both students and supervisors during *skripsi* process?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Skripsi

Skripsi refers to scientific paper mandatory for students in Indonesia. All 4-year undergraduate students are obligated to take *skripsi* course as the course is prerequisite for students to get their Bachelor's degree. There are several underlying reasons why students write *skripsi*: (1) To encourage students to undergo research phase independently and experience skills set useful for real world job; (2) to encourage students to understand, practice, and analyze issues scientifically and present it professionally and (3) to escalate students' knowledge and information on the issues that interest them. The process of producing *skripsi* provides abundant learning opportunities for students through its practice in solving problem scientifically by conducting research, analyzing data and drawing conclusion as well as writing it down as scientific paper.

In Indonesia, *skripsi* is used as indication for students' understanding towards their mastery on topics of their choice. Generally, *skripsi* process emphasizes on individual learning that is different from other courses in classes. While writing *skripsi*, students are accompanied by one or two supervisors who are also active faculty members at university. Supervisors will be helping students from the start of their *skripsi* until final defense. The time to finish *skripsi* is varied. Usually, it takes about 6 months to one year for students to finish their *skripsi*. However, there are also cases where students extend their *skripsi* for as long as 3,5 years (Satria, 2012).

Process of *skripsi* writing in common consists of research and writing procedure such as determining idea, writing literature review, conducting research, analyzing and interpreting data, and writing conclusion and recommendation. In details, the process of producing a *skripsi* might be varied. The subtle and significant variation on *skripsi* writing depends among different program in university (Diansyah, 2014). *Skripsi* process can be varied based on nature of

research, types of research, and regulation as well as instruction of writing from specific program.

Below is a diagram showing common procedure of writing *skripsi*:

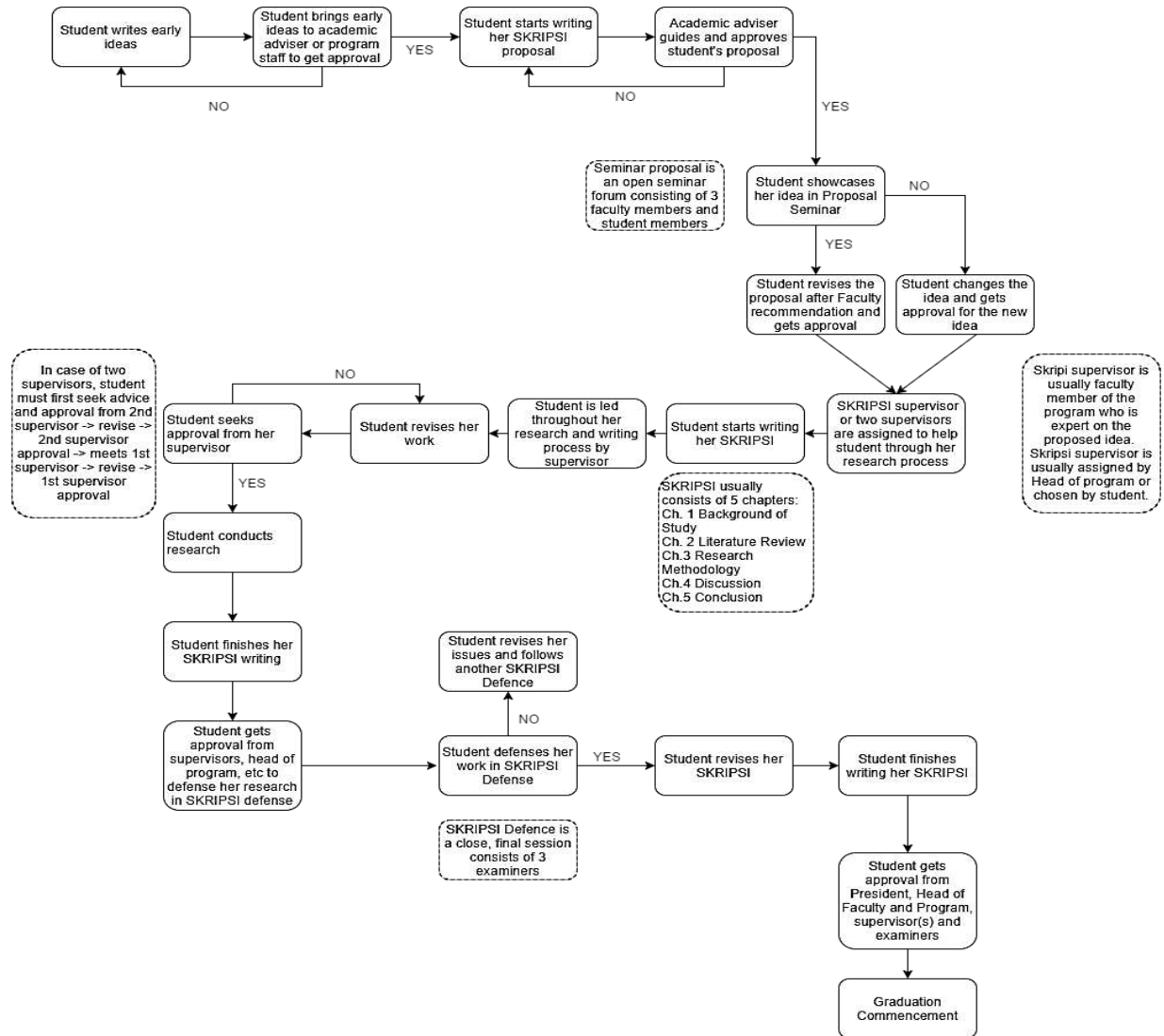


Figure 2: Skripsi Procedure

2.2 Collaborative Learning and Problem Based Learning in Skripsi

Collaborative learning and cooperative approach in education setting has successfully reformed teaching strategies and are highly recognized and accepted by major scholar (Shuhui, 2016).

Similarly, an ideal practice of *skripsi* sees student as individual learner as a part of learning community. Initially, students as a newcomer learn to become members of academic community through legitimate peripheral participation. They learn with scaffolding from more expertise person (supervisor). As the students keep learning by observing, interacting with supervisors and other subject expert, students move to the center of community and gradually take full participation within the process and finally become legitimate members of community (Wang & Yang, 2012).

Therefore, supervisors and other members of community (including peers and experts) play important role in escalating students' understanding and mastery in problem based learning such as *skripsi*, and helping students to grow as professional. "The importance of collaboration between supervisors and students in helping students fully participate in the research community and develop academic literacy competence". (Wang & Yang, 2012, p.325)

Skripsi also closely related problem based learning. The approach tends to require access to variety of information sources with student-centered learning settings based on information access and inquiry. Its learning environments centered on problem-centered and inquiry-based activities, authentic settings and examples; and teachers as coaches and mentors. (Buttar, 2016)

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Context and Participants

The study was conducted at Islamic University of Ar-Raniry in Indonesia. UIN Ar-Raniry is one of higher education institution that commences *skripsi* as pre-requisite course for graduation. The university consists of undergraduate and graduate programs.

Participants for this study are research students and supervisors. The sample of this study was selected using purposive sampling. The characteristics of sampling are: (1) Students who are currently working on their *skripsi* project; (2) Supervisors who are current faculty actively supervising students' *skripsi*; and (3) Individuals (students and supervisors) who were present when the study took place. From the characteristics set above, the participants chosen for this study were ten *skripsi* students and ten *skripsi* supervisors.

3.2 Research Method

To collect the data, questionnaire and in-depth interview were facilitated. The author first distributed the questionnaire directly and online to students and supervisors. The questionnaire

consists of close-ended questions. The purpose of the questionnaire is to find out students' and supervisors' general perspective on *skripsi*, its challenges, and future expectation.

The interview was conducted for six days from April 2nd to April 8th 2017. There was a total of 10 students and 10 supervisors who were interviewed. The interview took about 30 – 50 minutes for each participant.

4. Findings

4.1 Skripsi Process

The author asked students to recall the process of their *skripsi* writing. As students claimed the process of *skripsi* starting with students work to find the ideas they are interested in. Usually, students will start thinking of ideas when they were enrolled in research class. "I had ideas from early class, but the ideas always change", said Lynda. Once they had definite idea, students start writing a proposal under a guidance from their academic advisor. Yoka said, "we will meet our advisor over time to discuss ideas for *skripsi*. We have to get their approval first before registering for proposal seminar as our advisor later will be one of our supervisors." Yunita added, "I got my idea rejected thrice." Once students' proposals were approved, they will be assigned two supervisors. As mentioned before, the projected time and regulation for *skripsi* supervising depend on program and supervisors' approval. Students can work on their *skripsi* from as early as six months to 3,5 years. Lynda revealed that she has been working for two years now.

For supervisors, their role to supervise students on their *skripsi* started when they receive letter of appointment from university. There is no specific rule as to how they supervise their students, it all depends on their policy during the *skripsi* writing.

To find out students' perspective on difficulty of each *skripsi* phase, the author distributed questionnaire and asked students to rank the difficulty level of each stage. The description is as follow:

Table 1: *Students' Rank of Most Difficult Skripsi Phase*

Difficulty Level	<i>Skripsi Phase</i>
1	Getting started with <i>skripsi</i> (finding idea, making outline, organizing thoughts)
2	Managing personal habits (managing time, getting started on assignment, planning, stress management, etc)
3	Academic skills (avoiding plagiarism, citing, quoting, etc)
4	Finding scholarly reference/ academic research
5	Conducting research (methods, technique, instrument)
6	Reading and writing theories
7	Analyze the data using correct tools and interpret results
8	Writing scientifically (grammar, diction)

As shown on the table above, most students selected “getting started with *skripsi*” as the most difficult phase (6) followed by “managing personal habit” (3), and “academic skills” (1). Murida explained that as a novice learner who has little experience in doing research, getting started on writing major scientific paper can be too overwhelmed. Another difficult phase in *skripsi* is managing their time and self-discipline. Umay responded, “it is very important for me to set an alarm for next deadline because I don’t have good time management.” Another student added, “when I’m away from *skripsi* to do other activities, I tend to forget to work on it. I do write on post-it, but I still forget. I guess I need someone to remind me to do it.”

Supervisors were also asked to rank difficulties of each phase in *skripsi* based on their students’ capabilities. The result is as follow:

Table 2: *Supervisors' Rank of Most Difficult Skripsi Phase for Students*

Difficulty Level	<i>Skripsi Phase</i>
1	Managing personal habits (managing time, getting started on assignment, planning, stress management, etc)
2	Getting started with <i>skripsi</i> (finding idea, making outline, organizing thoughts)
3	Conducting research (methods, technique, instrument)
Difficulty Level	<i>Skripsi Phase</i>

4	Academic skills (avoiding plagiarism, citing, quoting, etc)
5	Finding scholarly reference/ academic research
6	Writing scientifically (grammar, diction)
7	Reading and writing theories
8	Analyze the data using correct tools and interpret results

It can be seen from the table that supervisors regard students' personal habits (4) as the most difficult phase in *skripsi*. They also perceived starting point (3) and research related activities such as conducting research (2), attaining proper academic skills (1) as other difficult phases. As Risda explained, "I find different kind of students. There are students who come on time each week. Those students usually have no trouble in writing their *skripsi*. But, there are also students who don't come to see me. They usually come and rush me when it's near the graduation phase," said Risda. Andriansyah added, "Sometimes, I have students who rarely meet me. Even when they meet me, they have nothing to discuss with me. Their time and self-management is concerning."

4.2 Students' Perspective on Issues in their Interactions with Supervisor

The author conducted in-depth interview with students. The interview was employed to find out students' perspective on issues in *skripsi*, their interactions with supervisors, and their expectation for future enhanced *skripsi* process.

On being asked about issues that they find during *skripsi* writing, many students mentioned time management issue, difficulty to discuss with supervisor, and lack of available resources. Annisah explained, "writing *skripsi* is very difficult as we go on. There are bound to be problems in every stage of *skripsi*. My friend, for example, she has to wait hours for her supervisor to get her approval. Another friend has to give up her topic and choose another topic because of lack of related references. As for me, I have problem in writing scientifically. I lack understanding of writing academically and tend to have a lot of revisions." The author also asked them about whether there is a shared collaboration they do during *skripsi* process. Students responded positively to the topic as they believed that peer learning is useful as students can exchange ideas and motivate each other. Yoka explained, "I often get together with my friends in library. For me, learning together with friends is very helpful and motivating. We can exchange

ideas, talk about various topics, and if we have the same supervisor, we also exchange experience on how to talk and approach our supervisor”. Murida added, “talking with friends really helping to boost my motivation. When I know how far they progress with their *skripsi*, I am motivated to work on mine too.” Lynda also responded, “I have been working on my *skripsi* for two years now. I have work and other activities that often make me overlook my *skripsi*. My friends have always been the ones to remind me to finish my *skripsi*. They have been great motivator and pillar when I needed to. So, for me, having the support of friends is really important.”

On the issues of interaction with their supervisor, students addressed lack of communication and meeting with supervisors, difficulties to set up meeting with supervisors and below expected time allowance during meeting. “My supervisor provides once a week meeting with her supervisee. Although I have a set 30-minute meeting, it is not sufficient. The time spent only with my supervisor correcting my work, and I have no chance to discuss nor ask questions,” said Lynda. “I meet my supervisor once a week. But, when he is out of town, I am not able to progress with my *skripsi* as I cannot meet him. It demotivates me when I am not able to get approval on time,” explained Vonna. Ihsan further added that his interaction with supervisor has been supporting and helpful. However, Ihsan stated that it was very hard for him to meet his supervisor as his supervisor was always busy. “I get discouraged when I can’t see him”, said Ihsan.

When the author asked about the role of supervisor to students, all students agree that their supervisors play very critical role for the success of their *skripsi* writing. Vonna firmly said, “supervisor’s role is very important as student cannot succeed in their *skripsi* writing without supervisor’s approval. More than anything, I would say that supervisor plays very critical figure in motivating and helping students to cope with their research.” Mirna added, “most of the time, I will come to my supervisor to discuss and plan on next step of my *skripsi*. Supervisors help me to understand parts of research and writing that I have yet to grasp. But, most importantly, having supervisor’s help encourage me to work on my *skripsi*. Their presence itself is a help.”

Aside from the issues mentioned above, students also addressed their feeling of intimidated and worried when they must meet their supervisors face to face. Yoka claimed, “on most of our meeting, I just listened to what my supervisor say. I tend to not talk back and talk as

little as possible.” The author further asked for details from him. “I am afraid if I make a wrong remark and assumption. I don’t want to hurt my supervisor’s feeling”, he claimed. Likewise, six other students also mentioned that the relationship they share with supervisor are emotionally exhausting as they are afraid to talk back and have argument with their supervisors. Yuni provided long answer, explained “Sometimes, meeting with supervisor face to face can be very vexing and frustrating. There are supervisors who let the emotion get the better of them. Some other unknowingly abandon their students, they let them wait for hours without any replies and confirmation. I know some friends who have to wait for their supervisors outside of their office because their supervisors do not respond to neither their call nor messages.”

4.3 Supervisors’ Perspective on Issues in their Interactions with Students

The interview with supervisors was conducted to find out their perspective on issues of interaction with students and expectation they have during *skripsi* process. Most supervisors applauded *skripsi* writing as it helps students to become active participants, critical thinker, and problem-solver. However, some supervisors agreed that the regulation in *skripsi* writing is inflexible and too complex for students as novice learner. “The complex nature of *skripsi* is confusing for novice researcher like our students. I believe that some students do feel overwhelmed with having to work on scientific research as complicated as *skripsi*,” said Habib.

When talking about the way they supervise their students, almost all supervisors use face to face method. “I have my own method of supervising. At the very beginning, I told my students that they can come to see me on Tuesday. Before Tuesday, I’d expect them to hand in their printouts, so I can read them and I ask them to send me message when they will meet me on Tuesday. I won’t respond back and my students are supposed to know and come to see me on the set time. That’s how I usually set meeting,” said Nasriyah. Similar method of communication was also used by two other supervisors, Rida and Habib. “I will provide thirty minutes for each student to discuss their *skripsi*, with prior appointment.”

However, supervisors found that some students’ lack of understanding and self-discipline to be a critical issue in *skripsi* writing. “There are students who come on time each week. Those students usually have no trouble in writing their *skripsi*. But, there are also students who don’t come to see me. They usually come and rush me when it’s near the graduation phase,” said Rida. Nur added that there were indeed difficulties in maintaining to keep track and supervising

different *skripsi* students at the same time, especially with such diverse students' characters. She has had many occurrences where students disappeared and didn't give any update on their progress at all.

As similar occurrences also happened to other supervisors, the author asked what they usually do to overcome such incidents. Syamsul explained, "If my students don't come for consecutive weeks, I usually call them and ask what happened. If I don't have their numbers, I ask their friends to send my message. Many of them come to me by the end of semester asking for chance to finish writing their *skripsi* early. They would say various reasons for that, be it marriage, financial problem and parents. So, most of the time, my emotions get the better of me." Interestingly, more than half of supervisors admitted that similar cycles often happen.

Another important issue claimed by supervisors is students' reluctance to communicate and to be active in seeking out help from other members of community, including supervisor. "It is more often than not that I have students who are afraid to talk and ask questions. There is a lack of proper communication with some students. I will not know what their problems are unless they speak up", said Saiful. Similarly, Rahmat also mentioned students' lack of perseverance and effort to collaborate with others to be critical issue in *skripsi*. "I see the need for students to be active and look for more resources out there. That can come from their peers, expert, and academic resources. I find some students do that and some don't.

All supervisors believed that having frequent communication is very important. Good interaction between supervisors and students will lead to less misunderstanding, stronger bond, and more collaboration. "I see that some of my students are afraid to ask and they are inclined to voice their opinion. I would encourage them to talk to me, but maybe they're just feel intimidated by my presence," explained Salami.

4.4 Expectation from Each Other during Skripsi

The author asked students to mention what kind of expectation students expect from their supervisors during *skripsi* writing. The author summarized students' response by calculating amount of utterances of such expectation in percentage as follow:

Table 3: Students' Expectation from their Supervisor

Types of Support	Percentage
Motivating students during <i>skripsi</i> process	100 %
Constant feedback on writing	100 %
Providing assistance for reference and literature resources	70 %
Guidance and consultation on research method and techniques	90 %
Assisting in analyzing and interpreting data	30 %
Evaluating the work in accordance to the regulation	10 %
Watching timeline for research stages	30 %
Orienting on obtaining research knowledge and skills	90 %
Recommending various useful software and tools for research	70 %
Advising students to seek help from other sources	30 %

It can be seen from the table above that students expect supervisors to encourage and motivate them (100%) during the process. Students seek encouragement in form of verbal support, approval, and constant feedback (100%) on their *skripsi*. On another note, students also expect their supervisors to guide them primarily on research related tasks and reference/ theories. During interview, students agree that they would like to have more frequent meeting and advise from their supervisors (10), collaborate with other students (7), help to look for more resources and references (7), and assistance to keep track on their progress.

Meanwhile, supervisors were asked the same questions during the interview. They mentioned students' motivation and eagerness to work on their *skripsi* (9), students' effort and perseverance to understand necessary research knowledge and skills (6), increased discipline and time management (6), and students' understanding to look for other resources.

4. Discussion

All students agreed that supervisors are one of important figures in their success of their academic achievement. As claimed by Moskvicheva et.al (2015), students believe that supervisors' support is one of the biggest factors in motivating student's research project. At every stage of *skripsi*, students expect critical feedback, explanation on research methodology

and practices, assistance in data analysis and interpretation, etc (p 577). However, both students and supervisors find issues related to their interactions during *skripsi* process.

Students find lack of opportunity to discuss with their supervisor, difficulty to set up meeting, and less in-depth discussion as the issues with their supervisors. Furthermore, students also feel emotionally invested to their supervisor. Many students feel worried, afraid, and not confident when facing their supervisor. These issues might emerge from different attitude, culture of communication and students' characteristics. The attitude of always accepting and culture of leveled position between experienced and inexperienced might influence *skripsi* process or academy in general. There is an imbalance practice of communication that is deeply intertwined and influenced by the culture of academic itself. It can be very challenging for students to have constructive, multifaceted two-way discussion because of difference in power dynamic held by supervisor. Having an argument, talking back to, or assuming *skripsi* supervisor as colleagues to share with by using 'less-respectful' demeanor can sometimes be deemed inappropriate or even borderline rude. These eventually might result in depression and self-negation originated by "... difficulties encountered in the academic discourse community..." (Wang & Yang, 2012, p.322)

Consequently, all students expect to hear encouragement from their supervisor. Students also expect to have more time to discuss their *skripsi* with supervisor, and to receive comprehensive counseling on research and scientific writing.

Supervisors believed that the main issues in *skripsi* generated from complex procedure of *skripsi*, lack of communication, and students' performance. Different personality traits influence students' progress and performance in writing *skripsi* (Wang & Yang, 2012, p.335). Different personalities and attitudes toward writing appeared to have a great impact on the progress of their writing. A proactive attitude toward writing and confidence in meeting their supervisors made students more engaged in writing practices and more assertive in seeking help from their supervisors. Students who cannot overcome such challenges becomes overwhelmed with the process. Therefore, it is necessary for students to actively seek out help and resources, manage their schedule and progress, as well as be responsible towards the topic they have chosen.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

This study aims to find out interaction of students and supervisors in *skripsi* and its challenges and to find out their perspectives and expectations while working on the *skripsi*. The findings showed that there are prominent issues found in *skripsi* process and the conduct of it. The response also indicated that complex procedure, limitation of time, and different expectation lead to issues related to students' interactions with their supervisors.

Based on the findings, this paper emphasizes on the necessity for mutual understanding to improve the *skripsi* process and suggests for additional way (online assistance) to increase communication and interactions between students and supervisors.

Awareness is first and foremost the key to success in increased academic achievement. Supervisors need to be aware of their students' potential interest and their level of understanding in research. The supervisor can intermittently gauge interest in research during meetings and at the same time, provide the needed guidance and counseling. On the students' part, they first need to be aware of advising services and hours, they need to know when and where the supervisors are available and be prepared when the time comes to optimize their discussion. Students also need to know that supervisors can provide research connections, in addition to general course/degree advice. And that there are other resources and subject experts that they can talk to aside from their appointed supervisors.

For successful communication in the research project it is necessary for supervisors, first, to understand the needs of students in the specific types of support at different stages of *skripsi* project, and secondly, to evaluate accurately students' research potential. Misinterpretation of students' motivation and interest can lead to inadequate ways of interaction and encouragement of students, overestimation of their abilities can end up with supervisors will not provide students with the necessary level of dependence, and lack of necessary discussion can bring about low-quality implementation of research projects.

Additionally, there is a means of necessary assistance using online media and platform. Current *skripsi* process is conducted face to face. As of now, the process of *skripsi* supervision is mainly done through face to face meeting. This nature limits students' opportunities to seek frequent guidance and assistance from their supervisor. Thus, this paper strongly suggested an

alternative way of communication through additional (online) platform to tackle the limitations of face to face supervision.

5.2 Recommendation

This paper examines perspective and expectation of students and their supervisors on working for *skripsi*. The paper had been conducted in limited amount of time that it could cover small portion of collaborative issue in student-centered pedagogy. The paper managed to cover twenty participants in particular higher education in one area using qualitative method. Therefore, it is strongly recommended for further research to study this issue in bigger and deeper scale by involving bigger number of participants from different institution, conducting cause effect studies, finding scalable potential solution for the aforementioned issue, and employing different research method to find out more relating to the issue of collaborative learning relevancy in higher education.

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