Factors Affecting Students' difficulties in writing skripsi

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Academic writing is one of the most interesting and important topics for students to learn, especially for student who want to graduate because the final assignment requires students to master academic writing (Thaiss, 2006) to write a final paper or *skripsi*. As *skripsi* is mandatory for Indonesian undergraduate students, the problem of writing *skripsi* also occurs in a private university in Yogyakarta. Some students from the English department have not obtained their bachelor's degree because they have not finished the final assignment that is writing *skripsi*.

**Purpose:** This research investigated deeper about the internal factors and external factors affecting students' difficulties in writing *skripsi*.

**Method** The methodology of this research used descriptive qualitative. Three participants were chosen by the criteria.

**Results:** The results showed that internal factors that face students in writing *skripsi* include psychological factor (motivation from them self). And the External factors are peer support, Process of consultation, environment neighborhood, job or career and Facility.

*Keywords:* undergraduate thesis writing, *skripsi* writing, internal factors, external factors

### Introduction

Undergraduate students in Indonesia have been dealing with their final assignment before graduation for a long time. This final assignment, which is called *skripsi*, can be demanding for some students. Some undergraduate students do not graduate on time because they cannot finish their final assignment (Felder, 2005). According to Suyadi (2011), *skripsi* is a scientific research which has been arranged systematically based on norms, ethics and scientific ways. A skripsi is written by college students in their final year as a requirement to gain an academic degree. For a college student, writing *skripsi* should not be difficult because the ways to write one has been taught since the first semester. In truth, the college students in their final years have some challenges that they need to face during writing their *skripsi*.

Motivation is important for a student in writing *skripsi*. According to Astuti (2013), one of the factors that influence *skripsi* writing is motivation. Students need motivation in writing skripsi (Reeve, 2013). According to Djaali (2007), motivation is a psychological condition and psyche contained within someone that pushes them to perform certain activities; achieve something or achieve a goal. The role of motivation in writing *skripsi* is to encourage students to write and finish their skripsi. Based on the statements by those experts, we can see that motivation is very important for college students to complete the final task of writing a *skripsi*. This is because with proper motivation, students can do

some activities with confidence. Students can get this motivation from themselves and other people.

However, motivation is not the only difficulty faced by students that affect their skripsi or undergraduate thesis. According to Syah (1997) the difficulties of students are influenced by several factors: internal factors, which are factors derived from students themselves; and external factors, which are factors that come from the environment surrounding the students. Some examples of internal factors are goal setting, listening, writing strategy, confidence, flexibility, a positive disposition, discipline, adaptability, resiliency, humor, collaboration and interpersonal skills (Dominguez, 2006). Meanwhile, there are three external factors that influence skripsi finishing

process, namely advisor motivation, family support, and supervisor/institutional consideration (Dominguez, 2006).

As *skripsi* is mandatory for Indonesian undergraduate students, the problems of writing skripsi also occur in a private university in Yogyakarta. According to the researcher's experience at one private university in Yogyakarta, there is an issue related to the writing skripsi. Specifically, some students from batch 2011-2014 of the English department have not obtained their bachelor's degree yet because they have not finished the final assignment, which is writing their *skripsi*. The researcher also belongs to a group of students who have not graduated yet because of some challenges and difficulties the author faces in writing

#### skripsi.

According to the researcher's personal experience and several informal interviews or conversations with researcher's classmates who have not finished their skripsi, there are three main challenges that they face them. The first is unsupportive neighborhood. The second challenge is career. Most of the college students in this group have already started their professional or semi-professional career to help their economic condition. The last challenge is also related to their career Some of the researcher's friend who already has a job assumed that there is no purpose in finishing the undergraduate study. According to one of the students, they

believed that because they already have a job, a degree is no longer important because they assumed that the point of studying is to get a job, which they already got.

At this point, the researcher found an interesting finding. Students who cannot finish their *skripsi* on time include not only the students who are facing difficulties in writing *skripsi*, but also students who found that working a paid job is better than writing *skripsi*. Therefore, the researcher assumed that some students might not face any difficulties in the first time since they already have no interest or motivation to write the *skripsi*.

The factors that the researcher found during small talks, related to the literature review, are indeed external factors that interfere in writing *skripsi*. At this point, the researcher is interested in finding the difficulties in writing *skripsi* for undergraduate students. In other words, the researcher wants to find the internal and external factors that give students difficulties in writing their *skripsi*.

#### **Research Methodology**

The aim of this research is to get information about factors that give students difficulties in writing skripsi. This study used qualitative research. According to Creswell (2012), a qualitative approach is an approach to build a statement of knowledge based on constructive perspectives (for example, meanings derived from individual experience, social and historical values, with the aim of building a particular theory or pattern of knowledge). Therefore, this design is selected because the researcher is interested in exploring specifically the individuals' perspectives about the difficulties in

#### writing skripsi.

This research was conducted on 5-10 November 2018. This research was conducted at English Language Education Department at a private university in Yogyakarta. The reason why the researcher chose English Language Education Department as research setting to conduct the data is because of several factors. First, the researcher is a student of the university. Therefore, researching their own university means the researcher understands very well the culture of the university. This helped ease the data collection and data interpretation process. Second, through this research, the researcher could contribute to the university, especially the department. Thus, for future *skripsi* writing, the institution could maximize its assistance to the students by being aware of the factors affecting *skripsi* writing. Third, the researcher selected the university because of effectiveness of time and accessibility.

The researcher used purposive sampling to determine the participants of this research. According to Creswell (2012), purposive sampling will be the most fitting method for the researcher to understand the phenomena and to answer the research question. Purposive sampling means the researcher will take the participants of this research based on certain criteria (Creswell, 2012). The criteria are set by the researcher based on the research questions and the literature review.

This research used the interview method to find out information about the factors affecting students' difficulties in writing *skripsi*. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) said that the interview is a flexible tool for data collection. Interviews allow the participant to convey their opinion toward the situations based on their point of view.

Open ended question is applied in this research to elicit the participants' responses during the interview. Creswell (2012) stated that an open-ended question allows the participant to express their experiences without any constraints. In addition, the researcher used Indonesian language during the interview process to make both the researcher and the participants understand clearly. The researcher recorded all of the participants' responses from the beginning till the end of the interview.

The researcher used interview as

instrument for gathering the data. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), interview is useful for qualitative research for gathering facts, accessing beliefs, identifying feeling and motives, commenting on some standards, exploring behavior and eliciting reasons and explanation. The researcher used in one-on-one interview to give the participants privacy, so that the participants can comfortably share opinions and ideas. The researcher used audio recording and took a notes to write down some important keywords based on respondents' answers. The recording was done to help the researcher transcribe the interview.

In practice, there were several steps in collecting the data. First, the researcher makes question for the interview based on literature review. Second, the researcher recruited participants by direct invitation or phone invitation to be participants in this research. The researcher offered an explanation about the aims of the research so that the participants can provide adequate information before they decide whether they want to participate in this research or not. The participants who agreed to join this research made an agreement with the researcher about the schedule of interview. In order to ensure anonymity, the researcher changed participants' names into pseudonyms, the first participant is Ana, the second is Dini, and the third is Dani.

After the interview, the researcher conducted data analysis. The data analysis began with transcribing the recording into text. After that, the

researcher conducted open coding and member checking. Member checking was established in order to make sure the validity of the data gathered. According to Harper & Cole (2012), For the next step the researcher performed open coding. Open coding can be showed on a line by line, phrase by phrase, sentence by sentence, and paragraph by paragraph (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Open coding shows the transcript of the interview from the beginning until the end of interview. In this case, the researcher analyzed the data in order to comprehend and gather the data to answer the two research questions then tried to conclude the data.

Second, the researcher did axial coding. The researcher groups together each item of statement that has the same category into one interpretation. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), the purpose of axial coding is to reassemble data that were fractured during open coding. In axial coding, there are four processes: (a) relating sub-categories to a category, (b) comparing categories with the collected data, (c) expanding of the categories by detailing their properties and (d) exploring variations in the phenomena (Brown, Stevenson, Troiano & Schneider, 2002). This step helped the researcher to do the next step of coding. The third step was selective coding.

According to Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2011), selective coding is called as main "story line" or the simplest coding. The researcher tried to conclude all the data results into each category selectively. Selective coding is a process to identify all of categories which has transcripts to make the data valid. The last step was reporting the data by explaining it in the form of paragraphs and giving some references to the statement for the participants to make data more valid in finding and discussion.

# Internal Factors Affecting Students' in Writing *Skripsi*

There are three internal factors affecting students' difficulties in writing *skripsi*. According to Dwihandini et.al (2013), some internal factors are; psychological factors, socio-cultural factors and linguistic factors. Based on the collected data the internal factors in this research is psychological factor only.

**Psychological factors.** This research finding revealed that psychological factor is one of the problems faced by

students in writing *skripsi*. All three participants stated that they lack motivation in writing *skripsi*, so the students did not write their *skripsi*. The first participant said that "Sometimes I try to write skripsi but it never worked becouse I did not have motivation in writing" (Ana). In line with the answer, the third participant said that "I did not have motivation in writing skripsi" (Dani). The second participant added "I cannot focus in writing *skripsi* because I have other activities so I am lazy to do writing skripsi, and that I do not have motivation to graduate faster" (Dina).

According to Suriyanto, Supardi and Husin (2015), psychological factor is divided into three indicators, namely motivation, self-esteem, and anxiety. The finding was collected based on the interview answers that had been provided by all participants on their opinion about factors affecting students' difficulties in writing *skripsi*. Based on the findings of this research, psychological factor is one of the problems faced by students in writing *skripsi*. According to Wong, L.C.J. (2010), students have goals that will motivate them to finish skripsi writing. The majority of their answers said that they encounter psychological factors in writing *skripsi*.

# External Factors Affecting Students in Writing *Skripsi*

External factors are the factors that come from outside of the will of the students. There are many external factors according to the conceptual framework such as: Family support, Peer support, Process of consultation, Environment, and Job/career. Interestingly, not all external factors mentioned in the literature are found in the interviews. In addition, there are some other factors which are not mentioned in the conceptual framework but appears in the interview.

**Peer support.** The interviews found that the lack of peer support can be a factor that make students face difficulties in *skripsi* writing. All three participants believe that their peers are actually supportive. For example, Ana said "my friends are very kind and supportive. Sometimes they send me personal message which reminds me to finish my skripsi". In addition, Dani says, "My friends often invite me and other friends to watch a skripsi seminar or defense. They want me to see how the *skripsi* really is, how to make *skripsi* proposal, something like that". This means peer

support is an external factor which can positively affect *skripsi* writing. Ana and Dani indicate positive support given by their friends in the form of showing message and information regarding finishing *skripsi*.

On the other hand, peer support can also mean negative influence if the support given is not for the sake of skripsi writing. For example, Dani said regarding her other friends, "some of my friends only say to write *skripsi* without any concrete direction or help. This is, for me, not motivational. Instead, that makes me tired of them". Based on the expression in the interview, it seems that the participant was grumpy to her friends. Therefore, it can be concluded that peer also can impact the students negatively if the support is not accepted by the participant. Also, Dini tells more

about some of her other friends. She said, "Some of my close friends are taking about the *skripsi*, but they look like they never think to write their *skripsi* and never had discussion about *skripsi*, they do not seem to be burdened with it. So, I am just like that". Based on this interview results, the influence of peers is very crucial. The interview with Dini reveals that friends or peers can either influence the students of *skripsi* writing positively or negatively.

Nevertheless, peer support is an external factor that affects students in writing their *skripsi*, either in a positive or negative direction. The findings from Ana and Dani confirm what Aslinati and Mintarti (2017) said, that friendship which gives positive influence will result to motivation among the persons or students while negative friendship will give bad influence and become an obstacle in writing *skripsi*. Therefore, peer support in *skripsi* writing is needed as it also contributes to students' academic achievement (Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014).

**Process of Consultation.** The *skripsi* advisors' roles are very important in the success of the students especially in their *skripsi* writing. However, the results of this interviews show that the situation and feedback of the advisors also become an external factor which affects students' *skripsi* writing.

The first is situation of the advisor, that is, the condition or activities of the advisor which cannot be anticipated so the advisor could not supervise the students regularly. For example, advisors are being assigned to outside of city for meeting, studies, or other activities assigned by the university. Dani said that his advisor is very busy. He said, "My advisor is very busy so he has difficulties to allocate time for *skripsi* advisory". From the excerpt above, according to (Suriyanto, Supardi and Husin, (2015), availibility of time for discussing an important thing from the advisor because the advisor really affects the skripsi advisory and can give difficulties for students to finish the skripsi.

In addition to the situation of the advisor, the quality of the feedback given by the advisor in students' *skripsi* writing also affect the students' motivation in writing the *skripsi*. Ana argued that her advisor's feedback was unclear. She said, "My advisor, in my opinion, gives less detailed feedback to my *skripsi*. Therefore, I do not really know which part or section to improve". Dani also added, "I do not understand clearly the feedback from lecturers because it is given by email, not face to face.".

The findings confirmed a statement by Brown (2001), who said that giving feedback in the process of writing is important to improve students' writing quality. In addition, the importance of giving feedback on students writing is equal to the importance of doing revisions and/or editing in the writing process. Therefore, it is very important for the teacher or advisor to give clear feedback and allocate time to help students in writing their *skripsi*.

**Environment.** Environment means the condition of the place in which the students are living. Environment can actually be positive or negative external

factors. Ana said, "Most of us who have not finished (writing *skripsi*) are busy with organizations outside the campus. We enjoy being in that organization". In addition, Dini said, "I join a volunteering activity and I am active in some organizations". Based on the interviews, it can be concluded that joining organization that works for positive deeds may sometimes affect the students in writing *skripsi*. As said by Ana, students enjoy the organization more and their *skripsi* is abandoned.

In addition, environment is related to peer support. An environment in which the friends of the students are not supportive can also be a negative influence to the students. Dini says,"In my organization, some of my close friends are taking the *skripsi* and they never think to do their *skripsi* or never

discuss about *skripsi*, so they do not seem to be burdened with it. So, I am just like that". The findings show that most students who have not finished their *skripsi* live in an environment, organization, or neighborhood which does not encourage them in completing *skripsi* writing. Therefore, to live in an environment which is supportive is very necessary especially for students who are in their final year.

The findings above confirmed what Hanik (2015) found, that external factors include family, school, and society environment as factors that influence students' achievement in assignments. Specifically, society environment includes geographic situation of the society, unfriendly neighborhood, and organization activities in the society impact students learning process which results in student achievement (Hanik, 2015). Ahmadi and Suprivono (2004) further suggested that children who are involve with friends who are not in school will be lazy to learn. This is because the way of life of children who attend school is different from children who are not in school. Then, the neighborhood and activities in the community also influence students' learning. Too much organization work will also cause the students' learning process to be abandoned and cause students to experience learning difficulties (Ahmadi & Supriyono, 2004).

**Job/career.** All participants in this *skripsi* have a job and all of them agreed that job or career impact their *skripsi* writing negatively, especially in time management. For example, Ana says,

"I am working as a teacher and I have classes to teach twice a week. I feel it difficult to have time to focus on skripsi". In addition, Dani in accordance with Ana, says, "I feel it difficult to spare the time. Sometimes I get too tired right after working. It is difficult to divide the time for work and for *skripsi*". Both interviews show that time management is the main problem in writing *skripsi* while they are also having a job. Dini agrees with time management, but in different tone. She said, "When I work, I feel uneasy, maybe lazy to study. I feel uneasy with my friends if I am studying". Dini implied that when in a work place, it is difficult to study because she could not manage the time or focus on skripsi and feel uneasy if she thinks of skripsi or working on her skripsi while at work

place.

This finding shows that having a job can become a negative factor in writing skripsi because students cannot manage the time or divide their concentration on two different things. This confirmed what Tatan (2015) suggested that job or even family can break student concentration which leads to difficulties in writing *skripsi*. In addition, Hidayah (2016) claims that having a job for students may lead to difficulties in organizing the time allocated for studying. Therefore, they tend to ignore the assignments from the university teacher. It can be said that not only negative activities, positive activities such as a job can also delay students' skripsi writing process. Facility. Students need facilities to support their *skripsi* writing. This

includes internet connection, laptop, printers, and a method of transportation. Infrastructure was not specifically addressed in the literature review. However, the finding shows that it is also an external factor in students' *skripsi* writing. In other words, the lack of infrastructure can add difficulties in writing the *skripsi*.

Dani mentioned, "The internet is so slow that I cannot access the literature". Also, Dani added, "my laptop was broken once. During that time, I did not write my *skripsi* at all". Based on the two excerpts, it can be concluded that technical infrastructure such as laptop and internet is important to support the *skripsi* writing. In fact, the two things are now the main prerequisite in writing *skripsi*.

Conclusions

This research investigated deeper about factors affecting students' difficulties in writing *skripsi*. This research has never been conducted before at one private university in Yogyakarta's English education department. A study about this topic is very important to be conducted. This research was designed as descriptive qualitative. In addition, three participants were interviewed to collect the data

This research proposed two research questions about internal and external factors that influence students' difficulties in writing *skripsi*. The objective of this research was defined into two factors: internal factors and external factors. According to Syah (1997), the difficulties of students are influenced by several factors as follows: (1) internal factors derived fromstudents themselves; (2) external factorsthat come from the environment outsidethe students themselves.

In internal factor, there are three points: psychological factors, socio-cultural factors, linguistic factors. And in external factor there are five points: family support, peer support, skripsi advisor, neighborhood environment and job or career. Finally, the data show that the factors affecting student's difficulties in writing skripsi come from various aspects. Regarding internal factors, students did not have motivation to write skripsi and graduate faster (psychological factors). While in the external factors, students need motivation from their friends, like inviting them to seminar proposals. From the skripsi advisor, students need

motivation like giving time and energy to give feedback according to the rule that have been given the university which is 10 days. And the last is job or career. All the participants only focus on what they do in daily lives but they forget about their focus on writing *skripsi*.

#### Recommendations

**Students.** This research exposed the factors that affect the student's difficulties in *skripsi* writing. This research gives recommendations for the students who are in the process of writing *skripsi* to have high motivation, find the right friends, and make positive relationship with the advisor. In addition, the students should be able to manage their time if they want to have another activity besides focusing on writing *skripsi* 

Lecturers. The lecturers and advisors are important aspects for the students to finish their *skripsi*. A positive relationship between the students and the advisor should be built, because the quality of the interaction and personal quality of the advisor are important factors to writing *skripsi*. The lecturers who are as the advisor and the examiner are also suggested to make regular schedule for supervision, spare their time for giving feedback by face to face and the should positive interaction with students.

**Institutions**. This research may help the academic institution to reflect on the undergraduate degree research regulation by improving students and lecturers' skills and provide more class, seminar, training, or facilities related to the writing *skripsi*.

Other Researchers. This research is recommended for other researchers who wants to explore the same topic focusing on the factors that influence students to finish writing *skripsi* in a wider area, with broader participants, or using other methods.

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