CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the background of the research, which describes the topic and why the researcher became interested in the case, the limitations of the research, the research questions, and the significance of the research.

1.1 Background of the Research

Undergraduate students must fulfill some criteria to obtain a bachelor's degree at the university level. They are required to take studies at a university within their chosen field. Then, students are mandated to complete the courses in their study program, following the number of semester credit systems (SKS) set by each university. In Indonesia, undergraduate programs generally have a study load of 144 credits. The number of credits is taken within eight semesters. In addition to completing the number of credits, undergraduate students must write a thesis aligned with their major. A thesis is a final research paper that must be completed and become one of the requirements to obtain a bachelor's degree and written by undergraduate students at universities (Prihandoko et al., 2022).

The thesis proves that students implement the theories they have learned into research. According to Roberts (2017), undergraduate studies aim to improve undergraduate education's quality and provide greater integration with graduate and research programs. They can write a thesis based on an interesting topic from their studied subjects. Hunter et al. (2007) stated that undergraduate research can allow students to hone their research abilities and professional identities and lead to the cognitive and personal growth associated with self-authorship. In this case, universities provide opportunities for undergraduate students. They will be trained

in their ability to conduct research and solve problems so that the results help develop knowledge for various parties.

On the other hand, an undergraduate thesis is a form of academic writing that generally becomes their first research project, so there are limitations to students' knowledge and experience. Furthermore, Kiriakos and Tienari (2018) stated that academic writing is challenging to master because the stages require the writer's intellectual activities and writing skills, such as brainstorming ideas for what to write, planning, sketching conceptual frameworks, writing drafts, correcting, and revising. Therefore, besides having excellent and consistent writing skills, undergraduate students also need an expert to guide them.

To overcome this, the university provides a policy to help final-semester students during their thesis writing process, known as thesis supervision. A lecturer carries out thesis supervision as a supervisor with more knowledge and experience in a particular field. This is supported by Djatmika et al. (2021) statement that students require guidance from experienced supervisors who are skilled in various supervisory styles and methods. This means that the supervisor has responsibility for the student and the quality of the thesis that will be completed. Rangkuti et al. (2013) mention several supervisor responsibilities: first, providing constructive direction in technical aspects of writing, content, and methods; second, the supervisor is obliged to check and provide direction to each student's work; third, developing all students' abilities in the process of working on their thesis, therefore supervisors have the right to provide suggestions to improve the quality of students' thesis.

However, from the student's point of view, this responsibility can be interpreted as the supervisor's expectations that they must meet. Prihandoko et al. (2022) stated that full control and unclear intervention from lecturers could cause students' negative perceptions of thesis supervision. According to Palmer et al. (2015), the mentoring process of undergraduate research is complicated because it involves understanding the interactions between supervisors and students as well as communication, collaboration, and disagreement. This indicates that various factors, such as the students' intelligence, diligence, social support system, and many more, influence the success of their thesis research (Fhonna, 2020). However, supervisors are unsure about how extensive and detailed this support should be, and, as a result, they have trouble tailoring their support to student's abilities and needs (Vehviläinen & Löfström, 2014).

On the other hand, lecturers also have a lot of work that must be controlled and completed simultaneously. This is supported by Djatmika et al. (2021), who stated that one reason for the poor quality of student theses is that supervisors are too busy to supervise them. Because of this reason, the schedule for supervision meetings between students and supervisors must be optimized to achieve the best results. Moreover, while supervisors might benefit from interactions with students, supervisors can also experience stress when little progress is made, sever personal and professional relationships, communication is lost, and when their students move on or leave (Wisker & Robinson, 2016). Furthermore, this is supported by a conversation between the researcher and her supervisor. While guiding the writing of his undergraduate thesis students, the supervisor said he

faced several challenges. One of the challenges is the low academic writing skills of students.

The following is some research regarding supervisors in the supervisory process. The first research, "The Role of The Supervisor in The Supervisory Process," conducted by Lessing (2011) at the University of South Africa, aimed to determine the role of supervisors in the postgraduate supervisory process from the supervisor's perception. The second research is by Rangkuti et al. (2013). This research aimed to obtain an overview of the obstacles' lecturers face in the thesis supervision process. The third research was by Can et al. (2016), involving 1069 supervisors who guided the dissertation writing process of medical doctoral students in Germany. This study aims to identify the causes of the failure of medical dissertation projects and the persistent dropout rate in Germany from a supervisor's perspective.

There are several research gaps found in previous studies. First, the two studies above examine the problems of supervisors in guiding postgraduate or doctoral students. There is scarce existing research from the perspective of undergraduate thesis supervisors. Second, two previous studies examined participants from outside Indonesia. Related research that examines participants in Indonesia is rarely found. For the last, one of the previous studies examined undergraduate thesis supervisors in Indonesia using a descriptive survey, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. To fill the research gap, the researcher applied a qualitative method. Moreover, the researcher examined the challenges experienced by undergraduate thesis supervisors at one university in

Jambi and the strategies they used to overcome them. One of the reasons is that no research has been conducted on this problem in Jambi.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the challenges experienced by supervisors during thesis supervision?

2. How do supervisors overcome the supervision challenges?

1.3 Purposes of the Research

1. To explain the challenges experienced by supervisors during thesis supervision.

2. To explain the supervisors' strategies to overcome supervision challenges.

1.4 Limitation of the Research

There are some limitations in this research. Firstly, the participants in this research are only lecturers with a degree in English scope who have or are currently being thesis supervisors for their supervisee EFL learners who have completed the seminar proposal stage. Secondly, this research only focused on thesis supervisory relationships at one university in Jambi in 2023.

1.5 Significant of the Research

1. For Lecturers

The findings of this research are useful in determining the challenges supervisors encountered during thesis supervision and how they overcame these challenges. This information can help lecturers prepare and improve ongoing or future thesis supervision.

2. For Students

This research can provide students with new insights into thesis supervision. Students can gain insights into the supervisor's challenges and perceptions of the supervisory relationship, thereby enabling them to better prepare for the thesis supervision process.

3. For Researchers

This research can be used as a reference to help future researchers interested in exploring the supervisory relationship, particularly focusing on the supervisor's perspective.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1. Thesis Supervision

Supervision is a program that includes processes, procedures, and conditions designed to advance individual or group work effectiveness (Ndubusi, 2021). In the scope of thesis supervision, this means that the ongoing process aims to achieve a target for completing the undergraduate student's thesis.

2. Supervisor

A supervisor is an expert, in this case, a lecturer, who is trusted and assigned to monitor and guide students in preparing their thesis from the beginning to the end of the writing process.

3. Challenge

A challenge is a difficult situation or problem that hinders achieving a goal, so completing it requires more effort than usual. The researcher focuses on supervisors' challenges during thesis supervision.

Challenges for thesis supervision mean obstacles supervisors encounter during the thesis supervision process.

4. Strategy

A strategy is a plan that contains steps and tactics prepared to achieve certain goals. In this research, the strategy is for supervisors during thesis supervision. Thesis supervision strategies are plans that will be and have been created and implemented to overcome challenges that arise during the thesis supervision process, aiming to ensure that the supervision process runs effectively.