

Post-COVID-19 Era: Navigating Challenges In Online Thesis Guidance For Academic Enrichment

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Abstract.

The integration of information technology (IT) in higher education has significantly enhanced academic performance, with a focus on information systems, electronic thesis management, and legal responsibilities outlined in Higher Education Law No. 12 of 2012. This study explores the challenges and opportunities arising from the transition to online thesis guidance, prompted by the post-COVID-19 era, within the Information Systems Program at Multimedia Nusantara University. Utilizing a qualitative case study approach and thematic analysis, the research uncovers challenges in clarity of instructions, guidance note management, and dynamics of relationships with academic mentors, examiners, and the thesis defense committee. As students navigate the intricate landscape of online thesis guidance, the study emphasizes the importance of transparent communication and adaptability. In conclusion, while IT integration enriches academic quality, challenges identified in online thesis guidance serve as guideposts for institutions to refine strategies and enhance communication. This research provides valuable insights for educational institutions, ensuring a seamless and enriching academic experience for students in the evolving landscape of higher education, particularly in the context of online thesis guidance.

Keywords: *Information technology (IT), Higher education, Online thesis guidance, and Academic performance.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of information technology in education, particularly within higher education, has been shown to significantly enhance the effectiveness and quality of academic performance [1]. Information systems play a crucial role in higher education, facilitating the management of academic activities and library data [2]. These systems contribute to improving service quality in educational institutions [3]. One specific application of information technology is the electronic management of student theses, as highlighted by Yesputra and Marpaung [3]. In accordance with Higher Education Law No. 12 of 2012, universities are entrusted with the responsibilities of education, research, and societal contribution [4]. Research, in the form of a thesis, is considered a student's responsibility in diploma and bachelor's programs [5]–[7]. The guidance provided during the thesis-writing process, involving interactions between students and advisors, holds paramount importance. Advisors bear the responsibility for upholding the academic integrity and quality of the thesis [6], [8]–[10]. However, the effective management of information during thesis guidance encounters challenges. These challenges arise from the substantial number of students per advisor and the limited availability of information pertaining to student status and guidance records [5], [11]. This prompts a critical exploration into the identification challenges faced in pursuing online thesis guidance.

II. METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach using a case study strategy to address the research questions. The choice of qualitative research methodology is driven by the aim of understanding the meaning or phenomenon under investigation [12], [13]. The focus of this study is the transition to online thesis writing activities through e-Learning platforms, particularly within the Information Systems Program at Multimedia Nusantara University. This transition is prompted by the post-COVID-19 era. The objective of this study is to explore the challenges and opportunities of engaging in online thesis writing from the perspective of students in the Information Systems Program. The case study method is selected for its ability to provide in-depth

insights into the phenomenon within the real-life context [14]. The research context encompasses the process of online thesis writing in the Information Systems Program at Universitas Multimedia Nusantara, facilitated through online methods such as Zoom or Google Meet. Data collection is conducted through the use of qualitative survey instruments with open-ended questions.

The survey questions are designed to delve into the challenges and opportunities of online thesis writing, referring to the identified challenges and opportunities through a systematic literature review. The open-ended nature of the questions allows respondents the freedom to express their views in their own words [15], [16]. In this research context, open-ended questions provide an opportunity for students to articulate their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of online thesis writing. Data analysis is carried out through thematic analysis, aiming to identify themes or patterns emerging from the collected data, including interview transcripts, observations, documents, or information found on websites [14]. Thematic analysis is employed to gain a deep understanding of the themes related to the challenges and opportunities of online thesis writing from the perspective of Information Systems Program students. The coding process involves labeling, grouping, and extracting meaning from data segments, leading to the generation of concepts, ideas, or themes present in the data [12], [14].

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

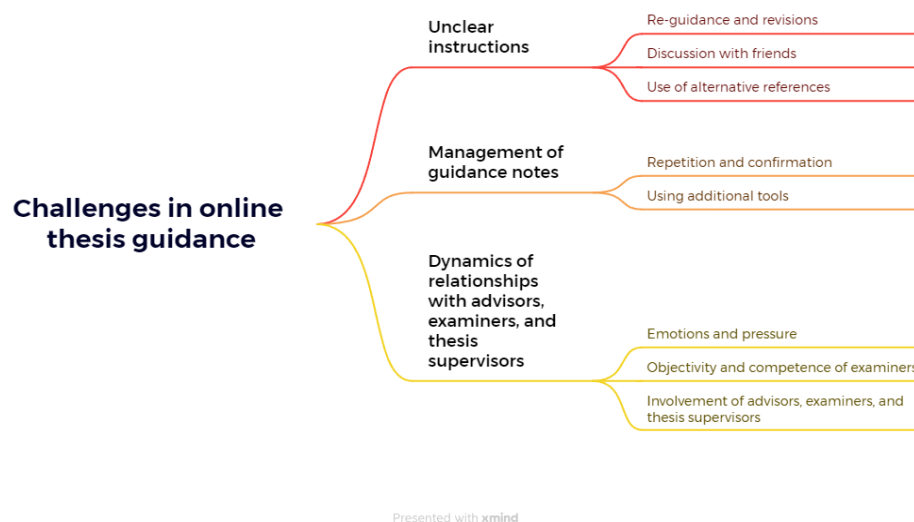


Fig 1. Challenges in online thesis guidance themes

Challenges in online thesis guidance based on the survey coding can be categorized into three main aspects: clarity of instructions, management of guidance notes, and dynamics of relationships with supervisors, examiners, and thesis defense committee members. Firstly, the clarity of instructions poses a significant challenge. Students reported facing confusion due to unclear guidance, often resulting in repeated guidance sessions and revisions. For instance, a participant mentioned, "I had to seek guidance again and revise multiple times, resorting to asking other professors for clarification." Additionally, students highlighted the importance of engaging in discussions with peers to address uncertainties, exemplified by a response stating, "I asked my friends and exchanged information to navigate through the unclear instructions." Secondly, the management of guidance notes emerged as another substantial challenge. Students expressed the need for repetition and confirmation during online guidance, resorting to techniques such as repeating questions, double-confirming instructions, and revisiting recorded sessions for clarity.

One participant mentioned, "I had to ask the same questions again, double-confirm, and listen to the recorded guidance repeatedly." Students also employed additional tools for note-taking, such as audio recording and digital applications, as demonstrated by statements like, "I used audio recording and notes on my phone or laptop, and sometimes a digital notepad." Lastly, the dynamics of relationships with supervisors, examiners, and the thesis defense committee introduced emotional and logistical challenges. Students reported experiencing stress and panic, particularly when deadlines were imminent. A respondent shared, "I

felt panicked because the deadline was approaching rapidly." Objectivity and competency of examiners were also cited as challenges, with students noting instances where examiners demonstrated detailed assessment skills. Regarding the involvement of supervisors and examiners, students faced difficulties in communication and availability. Examples include statements like, "The examiner I encountered was a busy professor, challenging to reach," and "Finding the supervisor was challenging, especially as the thesis was nearing completion, making it hard to contact them and determine their location on the last day of submission." **Fig. 1.** is the result of thematic analysis of respondents' answers.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the infusion of information technology into higher education, as evidenced by studies such as those by Dwiyantri and Frenidiana [1], has undeniably enriched the quality and efficacy of academic performance. Information systems, a cornerstone in this integration, play a pivotal role in managing academic activities and library data, ultimately enhancing service quality within educational institutions [2], [3]. The specific application of electronic thesis management, as highlighted by Yesputra and Marpaung [3], underscores the transformative impact of technology on academic processes. Aligned with the responsibilities outlined in Higher Education Law No. 12 of 2012, universities shoulder the crucial roles of education, research, and societal contribution [4]. Research, embodied in the form of theses, emerges as a fundamental student responsibility in diploma and bachelor's programs [5]–[7]. The guidance provided during the thesis-writing process, facilitating interactions between students and advisors, is of paramount importance. Advisors, as emphasized by Kusuma, Robby, Utami, and Utariani [6], [8]–[10], bear the significant responsibility of upholding academic integrity and ensuring the quality of theses.

However, the journey of online thesis guidance presents its set of challenges. The identified challenges, categorized into clarity of instructions, management of guidance notes, and dynamics of relationships with academic mentors, examiners, and the thesis defense committee, highlight the intricate nature of this educational shift. The struggle for clear instructions, echoed in students seeking repeated guidance sessions and revisions, underscores the importance of transparent communication. The need for repetition and confirmation in managing guidance notes, coupled with the adoption of diverse tools, illustrates the adaptability required in this evolving landscape. Emotional and logistical challenges in relationships with academic mentors, examiners, and the thesis defense committee further underscore the multifaceted nature of these challenges. As higher education continues to evolve, these findings provide valuable insights for educational institutions to address the complexities associated with online thesis guidance. The identified challenges serve as guideposts for refining strategies, enhancing communication channels, and incorporating technological solutions to ensure a seamless and enriching academic experience for students navigating the intricacies of online thesis guidance.

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