

## THE ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE AND PREFERENCE FOR ONLINE AND OFFLINE THESIS SUPERVISION

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**Abstract.** *Today, the choice of doing learning activities including thesis supervision has been offered in online and offline modes. Both have stories, obstacles, and efforts. The objective of this research is to attain an overview of the experience and preference of post graduate students in thesis supervision carried out in online and offline modes. The research involved 50 students who were taking a thesis course (KI003/6 SKS) in Masters Programs of Post Graduate Schools at Lancang Kuning University. Data was collected by questionnaire and interview to obtain in-depth information related to students' experience and preference in doing thesis consultation. The study used quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques to obtain the tendency and percentages of students' experience and preference and obtained the pattern of guidance desired by the students as well. It is expected to become future recommendation for the activities of the thesis guidance process. The study found that Postgraduate students prefer to choose online supervision (58.8%) rather than offline (41.2%), the most preference media used was zoom (70%) as compared to social media platform such as WhatsApp (20%), and email (10%), students have good understanding (50%) although it was done online. Several students' problems were found during conducted thesis supervision. It needs a number of efforts to be considered to reach the success of doing thesis supervision. In short, Postgraduate School Universitas Lancang Kuning needs to deliberate policies for supervisors and students effectively both for online and offline mode for thesis supervision.*

**Keyword:** *Experience; Preference; Online; Offline; Thesis Supervision*

### INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology (ICT) today is growing very rapidly. The use of ICT provides the facilities obtained by the use of such information technology facilities, so that their use can be seen in all aspects of today's life such as the health, social, economic, political, religious, and including the field of education. Especially in the field of education, adaptation is needed in the model of learning activities. This has been seen as a very drastic change since the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, today's society has become accustomed to the online learning portion with its various learning technologies. At the university level, the use of ICT has proved to be very necessary for administrative activities or data management with an information system to improve the quality of service to the educational process. In keeping with this, the government has also supported the change by issuing a policy of online upgrading for some of the colleges that organize online learning.

This indicates that the use of ICTs and various innovations in learning/curricular activities have taken on an important and important role, without exception also in end-to-end guidance activities (Sarhadee & Naeem; 2022). The guidance of a thesis is an educational process that requires the responsibility and role of various parties to ensure the quality of the educational procedure itself. Currently, the use of ICT has been widely used in several universities for the guidance of the thesis/dissertation process, i.e. through an online guidance. Several online tutoring-related studies have been conducted (Putra, dkk; 2015; Damayanti & Cahyono; 2015, Jabeen, et al; 2020; Sarhadee & Naeem; 2022) and found that some problems are often the cause of obstacles and delays of students in

the process of completion of a thesis/disertation, such as the lack of maximum standard procedures in the administration of registration (form of tutorship) that are not well organized. Besides, it was also found that the problem of miscommunication between lecturers and students is sometimes caused by different distances and schedules, so that the mentoring process is abandoned. It is a problem that often occurs in a mentoring process that is not done face-to-face.

In addition, some previous research results also that the occupation of lecturers and students also turned out to be a factor inhibiting the completion of the thesis. (Damayanti & Cahyono; 2015; Jabeen, et al; 2020). This means that the use of technology becomes one of the options or alternatives for both lecturers and students to continue to implement the mentoring process as part of the educational process. In connection with this online thesis guidance system, this problem is also obviously experienced by postgraduate students of Yellow Plan University. The author has conducted brief interviews with head of department and several students who are completing thesis. From the results of the short interview, some information was obtained that requires a process to be improved. So as to online thesis guidance can facilitate the communication of tutor/lecturer with students without having to restrict space and time. This is because the completion of the thesis is one of the requirements for graduation of students in the Postgraduate program (Masters Degree) in Lancang Kuning University.

Based on above, previous research on online and face-to-face learning experiences has been done. However, related to the experience of the supervision process and the completion of thesis as the final requirement has not been carried out massively for the university level. Thus, it is necessary to carry out an analysis of the experience mapping and corresponding preferences desired by the faculty and students of the Postgraduate students in thesis consultation/supervision. The information of the experiences and preferences is the basis for its future policy to offer a solution through an online thesis guidance system (web-based with usability testing) that can help facilitate the lecturers and students from the proposal submission to the final process of supervision.

Technology is evolving and has touched all aspects of life including education. This development was felt once, especially after the world was hit by the COVID-19 virus pandemic that began in 2020. Since then, many changes or adaptations in the field of education, such as the learning process, have been done online at almost all levels of education. It all happens because of circumstances that make face-to-face learning impossible to implement. At the university level, the change is not only in the scope of learning but also in the process of guiding the completion of final tasks such as a thesis. (Sarhadee & Naeem; 2022). In fact, in some universities, final exams and graduation are conducted online as a last resort to ensuring the implementation and educational process continues. As a result, different perceptions of students and lecturers about the experience of both types of learning have emerged. It even became an opinion debate about which learning is better and which is more flexible.

In a university, a thesis is a scientific work obtained from a survey conducted by a student. A dissertation or thesis is also one of the requirements of academic education both at the first level (S1) and at the second level. (S2). It is also implemented in various universities where students gain a variety of experience in the process of mentoring the completion of their thesis both online and face-to-face. Online mentoring is meant to be mentoring given by the mentoring team as an alternative or extra time in addition to direct mentoring. Different problems that students often encounter in the process of completing the writing of a thesis are difficulty writing because it is not a habit, difficulty finding supporting literature, inability to adjust to the scheduled guidance system that is usually due to such robust timing, difficulties in setting up a tutoring schedule, and conflict with the tutor lecturer. (Ismiati & Febriantika; 2020). Some previous studies have also noted that the most common internal constraints encountered by students (40%) include low motivation, anxiety about meeting with a

tutor, inability to adapt, and low writing ability, while 60% are external constraints that include difficulty finding a tutor, limited tutoring time, tutor's busy time, the emergence of different perceptions, supporting facilities, the authenticity of the manuscript, reliable digital reference sources or references referred to in the thesis/thesis. (Nurkamto, dkk:2022; Fitriani & Agustina: 2022; Schlissel; 2023). This phenomenon was also felt in the thesis mentoring activities of Yellow Swan University Graduate School students who conduct thesis tutoring online and offline.

Some of the barriers that often arise, as well as the impact on student behavior and thesis tutoring lecturers are seen and felt directly by students. In addition to some of these obstacles, there are also some supportive factors, such as the role of the tutor lecturer in providing and determining research topics, measures, instruments, procedures, stages of completion of the report, up to the stage of preparation of the thesis examination. It is consistent with the research that has been done and proves that this problem is also experienced by students including tutoring lecturers. The results of the above research show that online counselling is an option because it provides solutions to these problems. Here are some benefits of online tutoring according to Karhadde & Naeem (2022) that first, online tutorship can provide a more practical and efficient learning alternative for educators. Second, increasing the interest of students in writing scientific works due to the numerous resources and applications of technology for writing scientific papers. Third, educators can instill positive values that information technology can be very useful in the daily life of human beings, one of which is in the process of learning teaching activities in all educational units.

Refer to dictionary terms, guidance is understood as a guide-guidance that indicates the direction of the way, directs, guides, leads, regulates, guiding, and advises. In a system of higher education institutions, guidance can be understood as an effort given by a mentor to help students to develop themselves optimally. Supervision is an interactive, collaborative endeavour with the potential to determine the successful outcome of a student's learning in higher education. (Zhang, O & Hyland, K; 2021). Today, the term guidance has been understood as part of teaching with all its functions and responsibilities. This means that the tutoring lecturer and student tutor have their respective duties and roles to create interactions that build and produce an evolution of the learning process and outcome as proposed by Firth and Martens (2008):

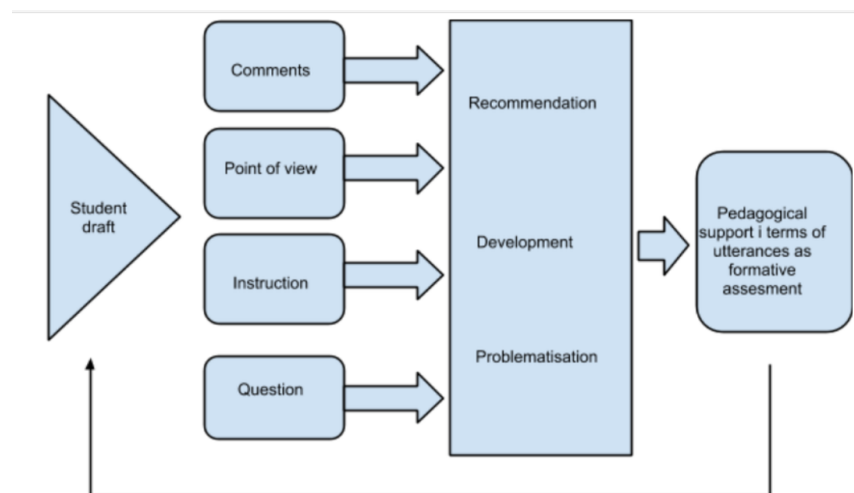


Figure 1.1. Guidance process

The term synchronous is also meant to refer to the digital media used to assist the guidance process. The term online has many names such as cyber media, digital media, virtual media, e-media, network media, and new media (Justin & Hilli; 2023) which defines that the use of such online media is a combination of use of several components of devices such as hardware, software, and global network. Thus, in the context of this research, online mentoring is a media service through the Internet whose services are focused on meeting the needs of online consulting services to students in addition to the guidance provided on the platform. Examples: services provided by email, chat, instant messaging, telephone/mobile phone, or video conferencing (zoom, gmeet, Webex). Asynchronous or face-to-face guidance is defined as conventional guidance given by a tutor to his tutor students on a regular basis. The tutoring lecturer with his powers as a tutor is responsible for providing insights for the creation of integrated collaboration in the supervision of learning. According to Zhang, O & Hyland, K (2021), there are several patterns of interaction formed by the mentoring process between the lecturer and his mentoring students as seen in the following table:

Mode of interaction	Features of advice-giving	Student engagement	Supervisor's role
<b>Power-over</b> (Extracts 1 & 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predominantly authoritative</li> <li>• Explicitly directing, modelling, and/or elaborating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passive</li> <li>• Little intervention (e.g. acknowledging)</li> </ul>	Gatekeeper, teacher
<b>Power-gaining</b> (Extracts 3 & 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authoritative input to specific questions</li> <li>• Offering contextual cues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intervening</li> <li>• Inviting advice</li> <li>• Co-constructing direction of talk and learning</li> </ul>	Instructor, negotiator, collaborator
<b>Power-maintaining</b> (Extracts 5 & 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authoritative input supporting the student's writing decisions</li> <li>• Confirming, scaffolding, orienting, questioning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiating, justifying, and/or clarifying</li> <li>• Self-assured stance making</li> </ul>	Advisor and facilitator

Figure1.2. Patterns of guidance interaction

The table above shows the patterns of interaction formed from the collaborative process between the supervisor lecturer and the student tutor in person. From some previous research results, it is concluded that there are still obstacles faced by both parties in the mentoring process, so some recent research topics try to offer online mentoring as an attempt to perfect face-to-face mentoring (offline). Thus, this research focuses on the preferences and experiences of student thesis guidance both online and offline at Post Graduate School Universitas Lancang Kuning accordingly the pattern of guidance that best suits today's technological developments is inevitable.

## METHODS

The study employs descriptive research design to produces descriptive data, personal speech, and subsequently this method produces description data with a systematic, factual and accurate picture of the facts, nature, and relationships between the phenomena being investigated. 50 students of Masters Degree Program Post Graduate School Universitas Lancang Kuning were involved in this study. Open ended and closed ended Questionnaires and interview were distributed to collect data of

the study. Quantitative data is analyzed to obtain a percentage of respondent choices of answers from several indicators and sub-indicators of the online and offline guidance of the thesis in terms of the guidance system, the media, the level of understanding and obstacles, the implementation of guidance, and efforts to overcome difficulties. Then, the data collected through the interview was analyzed using the model below. From the analysis it was obtained the tendency of the pattern of guidance desired by the students as a future recommendation for the activities of the thesis guidance process. The steps in this study follow the Miles and Huberman (1992) analysis model that includes data reduction, data presentation, conclusion withdrawal/verification.

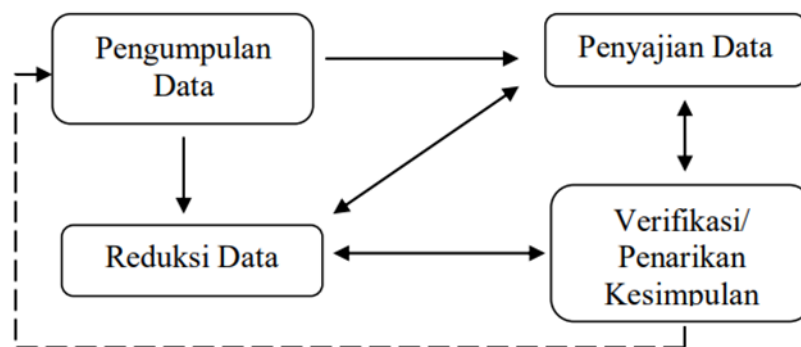


Figure 1.3. Interactive Data Analysis Model

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

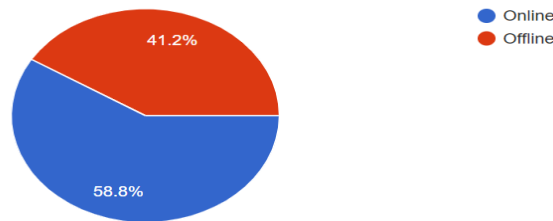
As a result of the impact of COVID-19, learning process requires the implementation of learning guidance to carry out online method as the ultimate option of learning. It then continued even though it had entered the post-pandemic. Based on students' the online and offline experience conducted for the thesis supervision at post graduate School Lancang Kuning University, it was found online mode was dominant as students' preferences. A comparative analysis survey was conducted to obtain the experience and preferences in doing thesis supervision for online and offline.

### A. Quantitative Data Results

Data was collected by distributing questionnaire to some students in Masters Program enrolled thesis course for the year 2022/2023. The following is a survey of respondents who were distributed through google forms from 14 October to 18 November 2023.

#### The most preferred mentoring system of students in the thesis supervision process

The first item is the most preferred guidance system of students in the thesis supervision process. Respondents were given a choice about the thesis guidance system they liked most between online and offline.



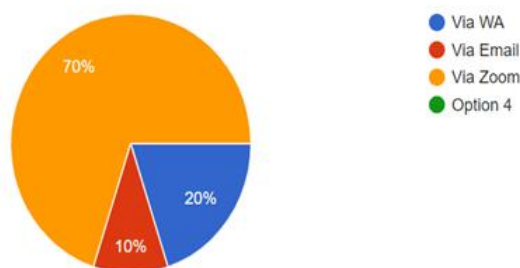
**Graph 1. Students' Preference in thesis supervision**

The results, as shown in the graph of 58.8% of postgraduate students at Lancang Kuning University preferred the online thesis supervision system. This is in line with the results that showed that 41.2% of respondents preferred offline thesis guidance systems. Students are more likely to choose the tutoring of the thesis done online, because of the work, being a long walk away from campus, and less frequency to meet the lecturers. This finding differs from some previous research that stated that students in India are more likely to choose offline tutoring (Chakraborty, et al., 2021).

### **The media used in thesis supervision**

Media used by students and lecturers in the thesis guidance process, i.e. zoom, email, WhatsApp and more others. Almost 70% of students used zoom media to communicate with the thesis supervisor. 20% used WhatsApp media to communicate during the thesis tutoring process as much as 10% used email media during the thesis supervision. The results can be seen in Graph 2.

Students are more likely to use the WhatsApp media to communicate with the supervisor before using the zoom media. It aims to provide a broader picture of human behavior in promoting photos, videos, audio, documents, and so on. WhatsApp is used as a connection medium to send zoom links, timing, and send files. Students prefer to do supervision using zoom media because they can share files (share screen), can face-to-face, can see the results of errors and revisions directly rounded by the lecturer so it's easier to revisit. The findings are in line with research that states that some online platforms are preferred by students because they can communicate more intensively (Kimtama, dkk., 2021; Jusslin, S and Hilli, C., 2024).

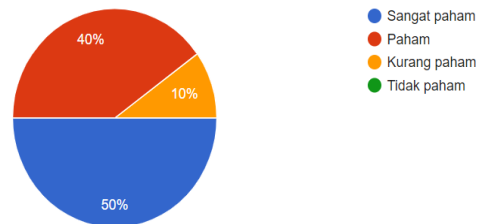


**Graph 2. Media used for thesis supervision**

### **Students' level of understanding and problems in thesis supervision process**

The level of understanding of the student's online supervision process is reviewed from a number of indicators of questions asked through the items of students' understanding on the process of supervision. First, as much as 50% is well understood by the revision described by the lecturer by

using zoom media, supervision is described in detail, shows the error location and is marked to be revised, and the results of supervision is like offline supervision. A total of 40% of students understand the improvement addressed by the supervisor, because in the documents sent back there is a note on every error at the time of supervision and some explain using voice note so that students immediately understand the errors placement and which should be corrected by the students. The same findings show that while writing scientific papers is done online, it is very helpful (Herlinawati, dkk., 2021). Around 10% of students do not understand because they feel confused (ambiguous) with the results of the revision are done through a message, so students find it difficult to understand the revisions to be done. However, overall, 90% of students can do revision/improvement because they can understand the message given. It is also in line with previous research where online counselling can be performed to the maximum even though it is done online (Kimtama, dkk., 2021; Jusslin, S and Hilli, C., 2024). The search results can be seen from graph 3 below.



**Graph 3. Students' Understanding and Problems**

The quality of the thesis supervision is reviewed from the students' barriers when online guidance from the availability of the tutoring lecturer's time in guiding the students. The results of the questionnaire showed that the supervisor provided enough time for guidance. Occasionally, the supervision is adapted to the availability of lecturers' time carried out through platform media zoom or google meet used. It adjusts to the lecturer's free time so as not to interfere with the activity or the rest of the supervisor. The results also show that students find it difficult to contact the tutoring lecturer, which affects the level of student satisfaction in the mentoring process. It was also that some students did not get a response from the supervisor despite having contacted a few days earlier. Besides, it is also that other obstacles such as internet interruption and reason of work. In contrast, students mention that supervisor still provides time for guidance in the thesis even though done in online mode. The supervisors are committed to guiding students even online. This is inconsistent with previous research that mentioned that online tutoring has a negative value due to the time availability of the tutor (Jannati, Oviyanti, dan Hamandia; 2021).

## **B. Qualitative Data Results**

The study also collected qualitative data from interviews with several students who had already conducted a thesis supervision. Several questions were asked to obtain the information needed to answer the research question. Here are some indicators of the questions asked, namely:

### **1). Description of thesis supervision process (Online)**

Based on the results of the written interview, the researchers obtained information portrayed the course of online thesis supervision. There were several alternate times of supervision done via WhatsApp and email. This is due to the limited time of mentoring both the student himself and the supervisor, such as family matters, work, and other matters. However, all of these constraints can be overcome by conducting guidance through zoom means that even if implemented online, the guidance process can be implemented well. This finding is consistent with Amani, Myeya, Mhewa (2022) that



some obstacles influence the completion of a student's thesis but should be able to overcome in another alternative way.

Here are the results of interviews with some of the research subjects:

"I changed alternatives to guidance several times, either through WA or email, but finally found the right way, that is, face-to-face and described as offline is mellaui zoom app" - M1)

*("Saya beberapa kali berganti alternatif untuk bimbingan, baik melalui WA atau email, namun akhirnya menemukan cara yang tepat, yaitu bertatap muka dan dijelaskan seperti offline yaitu mellaui aplikasi zoom"-M1)*

"Too much drama because of having a small child, fortunately the tutoring lecturer was very understanding, before doing the tutorship thesis I chatted first dospem "I when I have time, after finding a suitable time then I put my child to sleep. Because there's no midwife for me and S2's mate's husband either, and the husband often has tasks out so it's kind of difficult to mentor offline"-M2)

*("Terlalu banyak drama karena memiliki anak kecil, untungnya dosen pembimbing sangat pengertian, sebelum melakukan bimbingan thesis saya chat dulu dospem "Saya kapan punya waktu, setelah menemukan waktu yang cocok maka saya menidurkan anak saya. Karena tidak ada pengasuh saya dan suami sesama S2 juga, dan suami sering ada tugas keluar jadi agak kesulitan untuk bimbingan secara offline"-M2)*

"When I'm worried I can't guide you offline because of an uncertain job, thankfully dospem has sent me an e-mail, to revise, and thankfully I understand the correction given by my dospeme"-M3)

*"Sempat khawatir karena tidak bisa bimbingan offline karena bekerja yang tidak menentu, syukurnya dospem menyaraankan agar kirim via email, agar direvisi, dan alhamdulillah saya faham dengan koreksi yang diberikan oleh dospem saya"-M3)*

"Because my lecturers rarely go to campus, so the lecturers suggested for online tutoring by creating groups in WA, so it's time for the lecturer to decide"-M4)

*"Karena dosen saya jarang ke kampus, jadi dosen menyarankan untuk bimbingan online dengan membuat group di WA, jadi waktunya dosen yang menentukan"-M4)*

"If you want guidance you have to be extra patient, because waiting for a response from the dospem sometimes have to wait for my review results up to a week"-(M5)

*"Kalau mau bimbingan harus ekstra sabar, karen menunggu balasan dari dospem terkadang harus menunggu hasil revisi saya sampai 1 minggu"-M5)*

Although online tutoring can be implemented and gain effective results, the problems faced by students such as above should be an attention, as suggested by Grant, Hackey, and Edgar (2014) that the thesis guidance process needs to undertake a policy analysis to then become the norm of an institution or institution that regulates how a thesis or dissertation is completed. In other words, educational institutions in this case is Post Graduate School Universitas Lancang Kuning should conduct a study and analysis of the students' thesis completion process. It then can be organized into policy generally can be applied to the tutors and students.

## 2). Students' barriers and efforts in online supervision

Offline supervision was also conducted by some postgraduate students at Lancang Kuning University. Similarly to online supervision, there are obviously also various difficulties that students face in conducting tutorship offline. Several students' problems were identified when interacting offline mostly because of difficulties to see the supervisors due to the busy teaching, extra tasks, and so on. While the efforts made by the supervisors and students to overcome the obstacles is to contact first before conducting guidance to make time agreement. It is consistent with the findings of Hansen and Hannson (2017) that common problems identified by students during their interaction with supervisors are too little instructions as well as infrequent and insufficient supervisor feedback.



Here's the results of interviews with some students about the difficulties and efforts they made:

"I've often had trouble meeting with the tutoring lecturer because of his busy work as a full-time lecturer from Monday to Thursday. I usually call in advance to make sure that the timing is appropriate"-M3)

*"Saya sering sekali mengalami kesulitan untuk bertemu dengan dosen pembimbing karena kesibukan beliau sebagai dosen yang mengajar full di hari Senin sampai Kamis. Biasanya saya menghubungi terlebih dahulu untuk memastikan waktu bimbingan yang sesuai"-M3)*

"My supervisors have a position in his faculty... so he is very busy and I have to wait and be patient for the tutoring time"-M4)

*"Dosen pembimbing saya memiliki jabatan di Fakultasnya..jadi beliau sangat sibuk dan saya harus menunggu dan sabar untuk waktu bimbingan"-M4)*

Some of the students who do tutoring offline are the majority who live around the campus. They prefer to do tutoring online for some reasons such as being easier to understand, being able to ask directly when something is not understood, and having an emotional close relationship with the tutor.

"I prefer offline tutoring because I can clarify when there's a note or revision that I don't understand directly ask the tutor. I can also quickly and promptly find a lecturer when suddenly asked for guidance because I live around the campus"-M2)

*"Saya lebih suka bimbingan offline karena bisa langsung klarifikasi apabila ada catatan atau revisi yang tidak saya fahami langsung bertanya ke dosen pembimbing. Saya juga bisa cepat dan segera menjumpai dosen apabila mendadak diminta datang bimbingan karena saya tinggal disekitar kampus"- M2)*

### **3.) Offline Thesis Supervision**

The results of the interviews revealed that the process of conducting a dissertation conducted offline requires a variety of ways to be performed properly. Offline processes can be described based on the interview results as follows:

"Before I ask for supervision, I'll chat my supervisor first. Then, my tutor is the one who decides the place, sometimes if it's outside the campus then the tutor suggests meeting outside because he doesn't come back to the campus anymore. (M2)

*"Sebelum saya bimbingan, saya akan chat dosen terlebih dahulu. Jadi, dosen pembimbing saya yang menentukan tempatnya, terkadang kalau lagi di luar kampus maka dosen pembimbing menyarankan bertemu diluar karena tidak kembali lagi ke kampus"-M2)*

I usually make appointments with the lecturer, then if there's guidance sometimes I have to wait in turn. After our tutoring we talked a lot with the lecturer, so we can add a lot of knowledge"-M4)

*"Biasanya saya membuat janji dengan dosen, kemudian kalau ada bimbingan terkadang saya harus menunggu giliran. Setelah bimbingan kami bercerita banyak dengan dosen, jadi bisa menambah ilmu yang banyak"-M4)*

"Because the tutoring is done together with other students, usually we and other fellow students will tell each other about the results of the supervision and even we revised the feedback together"- M3)

*"Karena bimbingan dilakukan bersama-sama dengan mahasiswa lainnya, biasanya kami sesama mahasiswa bimbingan beliau akan saling bercerita hasil bimbingan dan bahkan kami revisi bersama-sama"-M3)*

From the results of the interviews obtained information that not only students but also lecturers must provide many alternatives/solutions to practice guidance effectively. It should be a consideration when assuming whether guidance can be implemented effectively with less favorable time and place (Grant, Hackey, and Edgar: 2014).

## **CONCLUSION**

Data analysis suggests that both online and offline thesis supervision poses challenges to both students and supervisors. However, there is a need for changes in order for both online and offline thesis supervision to be effective and efficient. The factors that hinder students and supervisors in the process of supervision should not stop them from completing the thesis if it is managed well in form of general policy implemented for all.

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