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PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN A DISSERTATION WRITING AMONG UNDERGRADUATE QUANTITY SURVEYING STUDENTS IN UITM

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Abstract:

Dissertation writing can be considered the toughest task among undergraduates. Plus, the challenges that they have to face exist throughout their academic writing journey. The objectives of this research are to identify the challenges in writing a dissertation and to determine the implications that arise caused by the challenges among undergraduate Quantity Surveying students. A total of 175 students from 5th and 6th-semester were participated in the study. The quantitative research design was being adopted to collect data by using a questionnaire that consists of both close-ended and Likert Scale questions. All of the data collected were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25. The method used is descriptive statistics of frequency, tables, and percentages. Then, rank cases also being implemented to transform the data into data ranking. The results of the study revealed that access to resources, the bad relationship between undergraduates and supervisor, plagiarism, poor time management, lack of understanding in Literature Review writing, low proficiency in English language, graduates having no interest in the research topic, and insufficient knowledge on referencing and citation become challenges for the most of undergraduates. However, limited access to resources showed the greatest percentage compared to other challenges. The study recommended that further study be carried out with undergraduate students from different universities regarding the other challenges, implications, and adoption of problem-solving.

Keywords: *Challenges, Dissertation Writing, Quantity Surveying Undergraduates*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

An undergraduate dissertation is essential to be completed in the final year degree program at most universities, in which the topic is chosen based on a student's interest. Besides, dissertation plays an important role to the undergraduate students, in which it provides a learning experience that incorporates all the knowledge acquired by the students in the program and grant them to develop and demonstrate interpersonal skills, logic, and presentation (Daly and Scott, 2011). Generally, the undergraduate dissertation structure comprises five-chapter which are Introduction, Research Methodology, Literature Review, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion. Other than that, writing in a dissertation is different compared to other academic writing because it supposed to be organized in a way specified by the common standard which accurately and sufficiently consider the nature of the research study (Maznun, Monsefi and Nimehchisalem, 2017; Bitchener, 2010).

1.1 Problem Statement

To complete the journey of degree, a dissertation plays a significant role in undergraduate education and most of the universities consider them as an essential contribution to their studies. The undergraduates must conduct a research project based on their scope of interest. Also, performing a dissertation will provide a learning experience that grants them to explore the gap in research studies. Furthermore, a dissertation is very valuable to undergraduates because it enables them to develop and demonstrate interpersonal skills, presentation, logic, critical and others that would be illustrated in writing (Daly and Scott, 2011). According to the previous study, writing a dissertation is a tedious and meticulous process but it requires the undergraduates to obey all the regulations and rules that had been stipulated to ease their academic writing journey (Masic, 2013).

A review from the previous study revealed that academic stress among Quantity Surveying undergraduates of Kaduna State University of Nigeria was existed and worrying (AdaPaaul; Jatau and Zaki, 2019). The academic stress includes final year undergraduates, especially for those who are in the process of dissertation writing. On the other hand, most of the undergraduate students have no clear intention and clarity in writing their dissertation due to the undetermined interests in what they are choosing. This is because of their thoughts that the project will develop and proceed as they started, even there is no clear view of what they are currently doing (Qasem, 2019). Besides, many undergraduates did not begin to learn how to approach this task until they were in the process of writing the report due to an inadequate understanding of the elements in dissertation writing. Moreover, Jomaa and Bidin, (2017) supported that due to their low level of knowledge and lack of familiarity with their research, they were unable to place themselves in their dissertation writing.

Therefore, the undergraduates will have faced difficulty during developing their dissertation writing due to the inadequate data and lack of understanding to support their findings. Thus, Bocar, (2018) had stated, that the dissertation writing may become flawed due to insufficient effort especially when the research subject is too complicated and complex.

1.2 Research Aim

This study attempts to determine the challenges in writing a dissertation among undergraduate Quantity Surveying students.

1.3 Research objectives

- i. To identify the challenges in writing a dissertation among undergraduate Quantity Surveying students.
- ii. To determine the implications caused by the challenges in writing a dissertation among undergraduate Quantity Surveying students.

1.4 Research questions

- i. What are the challenges in writing a dissertation among undergraduate Quantity Surveying students?
- ii. What are the implications caused by the challenges in writing a dissertation undergraduate Quantity Surveying student?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Challenges in Writing A Dissertation

Peiris, Barbutiu, and Hansson (2018) in their studies stated that undergraduate students have difficulty in finding the relevant sources and information and they also seem to have inadequate knowledge of the subject. Abiddin and Ismail, (2011) stated that supervisor that have different research interest from the undergraduate become one of the challenges for them in writing a dissertation. Mohamed *et al.*, (2018) stated, plagiarism is deemed to be serious academic misconduct that contains the element of dishonesty, fraud, and cheating. In other words, the undergraduate students are attempting to take someone else ideas and concepts without giving proper acknowledgment to the actual owner. Matin and Khan, (2017) agreed that efficient time management in writing a dissertation is necessary and failure to do this, it will become a major problem in the dissertation writing process. Then, writing a Literature Review is a challenging task among undergraduate students in their dissertation writing (Shehu Mohammed and Ahmed, 2019). Low proficiency in English arises due to the weak English background that students have which explains their difficulty and inability of expressing ideas (Gurel, 2011). Problems in having no interest of research topic happened because many undergraduates immediately select their research topic based on their interests (Dong, 2019). And, undergraduate students have faced a problem on how to cite and obtain appropriate references and tools in their research writing (Qasem, 2019).

2.2 The Implications Caused by The Challenges

According to Peiris, Barbutiu, and Hansson (2018) stated in their studies that a restriction on access to resources among undergraduate students would prevent them from making progress in writing their dissertation. Abiddin and Ismail, (2011) further stated, lack of interaction between students and their supervisors will cause them to prolong their studies and they will have problems completing their dissertation. Mohamed *et al.* (2018) stated in their previous study that plagiarism among undergraduates has brought a bad image and destroyed the reputation to the institution. Furthermore, due to poor time management undergraduates can be easily distracted and end up procrastinating their research studies (Miqdadi and Elmousel, 2014); (Mohamed and Mohamed, 2018). It has been clear that Literature Review needs to be critically reviewed, but if the undergraduates are unable to write properly, their Literature Review would be not sound critical but only just be descriptive (Shehu Mohammed and Ahmed, 2019). Almatarneh, Rashid and Yunus, (2018) agreed that low proficiency in the English language that arises among undergraduates will lead to procrastination which will cause the delay of submission for their dissertation writing. Dong (2019), stated the undergraduates will not be able to improve and prove their capability in research projects due to having no interest in research topics.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

As for this research, the target population consists of Quantity Surveying undergraduates in UiTM Seri Iskandar Perak and UiTM Shah Alam Selangor. Probability sampling technique was being used where the sampling had been focused only on Quantity Surveying undergraduates who are in the 5th and 6th semesters at UiTM Seri Iskandar Perak and UiTM Shah Alam Selangor. So, among all of the respondents, each undergraduate has an equal chance to be chosen. Thus, simple random sampling was being applied to this study. The population for this research comprises of Quantity Surveying undergraduates in UiTM Seri Iskandar Perak and UiTM Shah Alam Selangor. Then, it had been narrowed to focus on undergraduates who are currently in the 5th and 6th semesters only. So, the questionnaires were distributed randomly to 5th and 6th-semester undergraduates as a small sample.

After the data collection stage is complete, an analysis would be conducted on the data to give the outcomes for this research. This is important to know whether the research has achieved its objectives or not. Moreover, the purpose of Data Analysis is to extract useful information from the questionnaire and taking the decision based upon the data analysis by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS latest version 25.0).

4.0 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The total population for 5th and 6th semester undergraduates in both campuses comprise of 320 undergraduates. But, by using Krejcie and Morgan's table, the sample determined is only about 175 undergraduates that need to be participated in this study.

4.1 The Challenges in Writing A Dissertation

Table 1 shows that "Limited access to resources" were being positioned in the first rank with a mean rank of (85.000). "Poor time management" being ranked as the second in data ranking with a mean rank of (84.500). The third rank is "Lack of understanding in Literature Review Writing" with a mean rank of 82.500. Furthermore, the following ranks are "Plagiarism" (mean rank=82.000), "The bad relationship between undergraduate and supervisor" (mean rank=81.000), "Insufficient knowledge on referencing and citations" (mean rank=80.500), "Graduates are not interested in their research topic" (mean rank=79.000) and "Low proficiency in the English language" (mean rank=78.500). Concerning to that, it can be noted that the most challenging matters in writing a dissertation is a limited access to resources.

4.2 The Implications Caused by The Challenges in Writing A Dissertation

The other items considered in this study are the consequences or implications that might arise caused by the challenges in writing a dissertation. Table 2 shows the result revealed a bigger representative of the undergraduates had agreed that the stated implications or consequences on limited access to resources may arise during the dissertation writing journey for each of the challenges. However, limited access to resources will make undergraduates to delay in completion of dissertation writing showing the majority of agreement above all. Therefore, this explained that access to resources is vital to the undergraduates to support their research studies based on their subject interests.

Table 1: Data Ranking for Challenges in Writing A Dissertation Among Quantity Surveying Undergraduates in UiTM

Variables	Mean Rank	Rank
1. Limited access to resources	85.000	1
2. The bad relationship between undergraduate and supervisor	81.000	5
3. Plagiarism	82.000	4
4. Poor time management	84.500	2
5. Lack of understanding in Literature Review Writing	82.500	3
6. Low proficiency in the English Language	78.500	8
7. Undergraduates are not interested in them research topic	79.000	7
8. Insufficient knowledge of referencing and Citations	80.500	6

Table 2: Data Ranking for Implication Arise from Limited Access to Resources

Variables	Challenge: Limited Access to Various Resources	
	Mean Rank	Rank
1. Limited access to resources would prevent undergraduates from making progress in dissertation writing	115.500	1
2. Undergraduates urge to allocate additional time to search for reliable data due to restriction on access	112.000	4
3. Untrustworthy resources will give negative impact to undergraduates	113.500	2
4. Limited access to resources will make undergraduates less motivated to proceed with their dissertation writing	113.500	3
5. Limited access to resources will make undergraduates to delay in completion of dissertation writing	111.500	5

5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, analysis of the survey data obtained in the study revealed that limited access to resources, the bad relationship between undergraduates and supervisor, plagiarism, poor time management, lack of understanding in Literature Review writing, low proficiency in the English language, undergraduates having no interest in their research topic, and insufficient knowledge of referencing and citation has become a constraint for the undergraduates in dissertation writing. However, limited access to resources showed the greatest percentage compared to other challenges. Concerning that, it can be noted that the most challenging matter in writing a dissertation is a limited access to resources. After all, these findings cannot be generalized to other university students. Further research is recommended to be conducted with undergraduates' students from other universities to see if there are any similarities with the challenges in writing a dissertation.

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