الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلبة الدراسات العليا أثناء كتابهم لرسائل الماجستير وأطروحات الدكتوراه في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعات اليمنية من وجهة نظر المشرفين

Difficulties Faced by Postgraduate Students during Writing MA Theses and PhD Dissertations in the Departments of English - Yemeni Universities from Supervisors' Perspectives

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الملخص:

بحثت هذه الدراسة في الصعوبات والاستراتيجيات المستخدمة في كتابة رسائل الماجستير والدكتوراه في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعات اليمنية. تم جمع البيانات من 100 طالب ماجستير ودكتوراه من خلال استبيان وتحليله باستخدام الإحصاءات الوصفية SPSS. وكشفت النتائج أن طلبة الدراسات العليا اليمنيين يواجهون صعوبات مختلفة تشمل اختيار الزمن المناسب ، واستخدام العبارات الأكاديمية المناسبة ، وكتابة جملة الموضوع لكل فقرة ، واستخدام أدوات متماسكة مثل علامات الحذف ، والإبلاغ عن النتائج النوعية ، وإكمال الكتابة قبل الموعد النهائي. كما أظهرت النتائج أن أسباب هذه الصعوبات تتمثل في قلة القراءة واختيار موضوع الدراسة وصياغة بيان المشكلة. ولمساعدة طلاب الدراسات العليا في التغلب على هذه الصعوبات، أوصى المشرفون باستراتيجيات مختلفة. وشملت الاستراتيجيات الأكثر شيوعاً استراتيجية القراءة، وحضور دورة خاصة لتقديم المقترحات، واستراتيجية الاستشارة. وأوصى الباحث بإعطاء الأولوية للقراءة لتحسين إتقان الكتابة، واختيار موضوع بحث يمكن التحكم فيه، وتناول الموضوع من وجهات نظر مختلفة لتجنب التكرار، وطلب المشورة من الخبراء والأقران أثناء كتابة الأطروحة، وصياغة بيان مشكلة واضح وموجز للمقترحات، وأخذ دورات متخصصة لتحسين مهارة الكتابة وتعلم كيفية كتابة المقترحات البحثية، والبدء في عملية الكتابة من خلال القراءة وجمع الأفكار والتوسع فيها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصعوبات ، الاستراتيجيات ، كتابة رسائل الماجستير و الدكتوراه.

Abstract:

This study investigated the difficulties used in writing theses and dissertations in the departments of English at Yemeni universities. Data was collected from 100 MA and Ph.D. students through a questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS descriptive statistics. The results revealed that Yemeni postgraduate students face various difficulties, including selecting the appropriate tense, utilizing proper academic phrases, writing an effective topic sentence for each paragraph, employing cohesive devices such as ellipses, reporting qualitative results, and completing writing the thesis od dissertation before the deadline . The results also showed that the reasons for these difficulties attributed to the lack of reading, selecting a suitable study topic, and formulating a clear problem statement . To help postgraduate students overcome these difficulties, supervisors recommended various strategies. The most commonly suggested strategies included implementing a reading strategy, attending a specialized course for developing research proposals, and seeking guidance through a consulting strategy. The researcher recommended prioritizing reading to improve writing proficiency, selecting a manageable research topic, approaching the topic from different perspectives to avoid repetition, seeking guidance from experts and peers during thesis writing, formulating a clear, preparing research problem statement in their proposals, participating in specialized courses to learn how to write research proposals, and initiating the writing process by engaging in reading, brainstorming ideas, and elaborating upon them.

Keywords: Difficulties - strategies - writing theses and dissertations.

1. Introduction

The global recognition of the importance of utilizing scientific knowledge for progress and survival has led to intense competition among nations in this field. Kirkpatrick et. al. (2002, p. 331) emphasized that no nation can afford to ignore the use of scientific knowledge in production, consumption, and improving the

human condition. As a result, countries focus on effectively utilizing social resources, particularly higher education, which plays a crucial role in fostering academic communities, evaluating industries' futures, and addressing social challenges. Al-Kandari (2016) furthermore said that higher education programs enable postgraduate students to secure well-paying jobs, develop critical thinking skills, and contribute to problem-solving through scientific research.

Parija and Kate (2018) emphasized the importance of scientific research, including theses and dissertations, as it allows postgraduate students to collect, record, analyze data, and obtain final results. Hurley (2003) regarded scientific research as a significant human endeavor, while Al-Shayeb (2009) highlighted its role in empowering researchers in terms of thinking and behavior. Consequently, many countries prioritize scientific research and provide comprehensive support to researchers. Given the aforementioned significance of scientific research, its importance cannot be underestimated in society.

Yemeni universities primarily focus on teaching postgraduate students, but they often neglect the challenges faced by students when writing theses and dissertations. Consequently, many postgraduate students from various fields struggle with academic writing, which ultimately affects the overall quality of research and society. This research specifically targets postgraduate students who have completed their theses and dissertations at the English departments in Yemeni universities. To deal with this problem, it is crucial to involve the expertise and perspectives of postgraduate students, supervisors, and examiners collectively to find a solution that aligns with the objectives of the current study.

2. Statement of the Problem

Postgraduate students often face significant difficulties when writing their theses and dissertations at the English departments in Yemeni universities. These difficulties arise from various factors, such as the lack of sufficient resources and research materials, limited access to current academic journals and

publications, and a shortage of guidance and supervision from experienced faculty members. Additionally, the language barrier presents a significant obstacle for Yemeni students, as English may not be their first language. This linguistic difficulty often results in problems with grammar, syntax, and overall coherence in their written work. Furthermore, the absence of standardized writing guidelines and clear expectations further complicates the writing process for these postgraduate students. This concept was highlighted in the studies of Alyan (2022), Aldabbus and Almansouri (2022), Sitompul and Anditasari (2022). Consequently, these difficulties can hinder the progress and success of students in effectively completing their theses and dissertations. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the difficulties faced by Yemeni postgraduate students and propose appropriate solutions to overcome them.

3. Objectives of the Study
The study attempts to:
1. investigate the difficulties faced by postgraduate students in writing theses and dissertations in the Departments of English, Sana'a and Aden Universities.
2. find out the reasons behind the difficulties in writing MA theses and Ph.D dissertations at the Departments of English?
3. identify the strategies that can be used by postgraduate students to overcome the difficulties in writing theses and dissertations.

4. Questions of the study
The study aims to answer the following questions:
1. What are the difficulties faced by postgraduate students in writing theses and dissertations in the Departments of English, Sana'a and Aden Universities?
2. What are the reasons behind the difficulties in writing MA theses and Ph.D dissertations at the Departments of English?
3. What are the strategies that can be used by postgraduate students to overcome the difficulties in writing theses and dissertations?

5. Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to:

1. **Time limitation**: The study was carried out on the supervisors who were involved in the postgraduate programs in the Departments of English at the University of Sana'a and the University of Aden, Yemen in the academic year 2018–2022.

2. **Place limitation**: The study was applied and carried out at the postgraduate programs in the Departments of English at the University of Sana'a and the University of Aden, Yemen.

3. **Topical limitations**: The study was carried out to highlight the difficulties faced by these students from their supervisors' perspectives in writing theses and dissertations which included difficulties related to linguistic, technical and organizational difficulties.

6. Significance of the Study

This study is significant in the sense that it:

1. may help in improving the academic writing of theses and dissertations by Yemeni postgraduate students in postgraduate programs.

2. Provides insight into the difficulties faced by these students in their academic writing.

3. May offer beneficial suggestions to improve their writing skills and reduce the problems of the shortage of supervisors compared to postgraduates, thus improving the process of supervision between supervisors and postgraduate students.

4. Contributes to the improvement of the postgraduate programs and provide useful data for specialized officials in the field of higher education in Yemen to make appropriate decisions.

7. Definitions of Terms

1. The term "difficulties" refers to problems that require great effort and determination to solve (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2009). In this study, it refers to the various obstacles encountered by Yemeni postgraduate students, particularly in relation to their writing of MA theses or Ph.D. dissertations. These difficulties have a negative impact on the overall quality of research conducted by these students.

2. In the present study, the term "dissertation" refers to an extensive and comprehensive piece of writing that is undertaken as part of a university degree, particularly at a higher level such as a Ph.D. (Macmillan English Dictionary, 2007).

3. In this study, the term "thesis" refers to an extensive and formal written document that explores a specific subject matter, typically undertaken by postgraduate students pursuing a higher degree, such as an MA. The definition provided by the Macmillan English Dictionary (2007) aligns with the understanding of the thesis in this study.

8. Literature Review

The main focus in this section is on the discussion of the literature related to the difficulties faced by postgraduate students while writing their theses and dissertations. It is divided into two sub-sections. The first one deals with the theoretical literature that addresses linguistic, technical, and organizational difficulties that affect the writing process. The second one examines the previous studies carried out in the same area.

8.1. Theoretical Literature Review

Academic writing can be a challenging task for postgraduate students, particularly when writing theses and dissertations. Alharbi (2017) identified several significant difficulties that postgraduate students encounter in higher education, including coherence, cohesion, arguments, plagiarism, citation, referencing, and lexis. To address these difficulties, Björk et al. (2003) suggested that cooperating and providing the necessary support and guidance among academic staff can help postgraduate students overcome the challenges of academic writing and produce high-quality work.

8.2 Difficulties in Writing Theses and Dissertations

Postgraduate students face various difficulties in writing their theses and dissertations, including linguistic, technical, and organizational difficulties. Therefore, the process of writing a thesis or dissertation is demanding for the majority of postgraduate students at different stages of the writing process (Furseth & Everett, 2013). Foskett and Foskett (2006, p.143) stated that "for most postgraduate students, the idea of writing a thesis or dissertation is quite daunting. It will be the longest writing task they have done, and many will feel nervous about how they will cope with it." To address these difficulties, writers need to identify the purpose of their writing and the intended audience that will evaluate their work. Bailey (2017) emphasized the importance of writers explicitly stating their motivations for writing. She (2017,p.5) asserted that the primary reasons for writing should be well-defined.

8.2.1 Linguistic Difficulties

The ability of postgraduate students to effectively communicate their research findings and ideas can be hindered by linguistic difficulties. According to Hanauer and Englander (2013), ESL scientists identified structural linguistic difficulties in English as a significant cause of writing difficulties. These difficulties not only affect the quality of writing but also impact overall academic performance. Wier (1988), as cited in Al-Buainain (2009, p. 312), identified nine common writing challenges faced by students, including grammatical errors, a lack of grammatical variety, inappropriate vocabulary usage, and poor punctuation. To overcome these language barriers, Graustein (2014) suggested that students present their research to their research group and seek suggestions and corrections.

8.2.1.1 Grammatical Difficulties

Grammar is crucial in English, as it organizes words and constructs sentences. Aggarwal (2001) classifies grammar into word and sentence levels. Studying grammar is essential for students to improve their speaking, reading, and writing skills. Postgraduate students need a strong understanding of grammar for their theses and dissertations. Bryne (1988) identified three challenges in writing: linguistic, physiological, and cognitive difficulties. Linguistic difficulties include grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. Physiological difficulties refer to struggles in the writing process. Cognitive difficulties emphasize following formal instructions like spelling and grammar (Pratiwi, 2012). Natasya (2019) conducted a study on writing difficulties and suggested strategies to overcome grammatical challenges. The study found that students struggled with constructing grammatically correct sentences, using passive voice, and selecting the appropriate tense. Rahman et al. (2009) (as cited in Hidri, 2018) highlighted difficulties faced by postgraduate students in their theses, including sentence structure, incomplete sentences, incorrect punctuation, and a lack of cohesive devices. These students often used present simple tense with past simple active or passive voice and included technical vocabulary.

8.2.1.2. Vocabulary Difficulties

Academic vocabulary carries complete lexical meanings and helps explain complex processes. However, postgraduate students often face difficulties with vocabulary, excessive grammatical errors, and difficulties in paraphrasing and expressing ideas effectively. Vocabulary is a persistent challenge in language learning, with a growing interest in second language vocabulary research among academics. Hirsh (2012) observed that over the past 20 years, there has been a steady increase in academics focusing on vocabulary as a focus for their research, reflecting the increasing number of higher-degree students focusing on vocabulary in their studies. Studies by Lusta (2012) and Asyiah (2017) found a correlation between students' vocabulary learning strategies and their mastery of vocabulary. These findings highlight the need for effective teaching methods, curriculum, and learning environments to help students effectively use language in academic writing.

8.2.1.3. Coherence Difficulties

Oshima and Hogue (2007) explained that academic writing in English differs from other languages in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and idea organization. EFL and ESL students should improve their study skills in academic writing. Coherence is considered an important aspect of academic writing as it establishes the connection between words, phrases, and paragraphs. According to Chin et al. (2013), coherence is an essential characteristic of good writing, as it allows readers to easily understand the writer's thoughts. However, Johns and Tabiri (2020) argued that coherence in written text is a complex concept that involves various features related to the reader and the text itself. As a result, readers may struggle to follow the main ideas and intended meaning. To address this issue, Oshima and Hogue (2007, p. 79) identified three main methods for achieving paragraph coherence, which can be beneficial for postgraduate students.

1. Use nouns and pronouns consistently throughout a paragraph.
2. Use transition signals to show relationships among ideas.
3. Put your ideas into some kind of logical order, such as logical division of ideas.

8.2.1.4 Cohesion Difficulties

The importance of cohesion in academic writing has been extensively studied by researchers due to its important role in language usage. Cohesion is recognized as relevant in academic writing because it helps maintain a smooth flow of discourse. Scholars emphasize the need for comprehensive education on producing cohesive texts for ESL/EFL students to ensure coherence and unity of information. Hinkel (2003, p.279) stated that "cohesion refers to the connectivity of ideas in discourse and sentences to one another in text, thus creating the flow of information in a unified way". Sowton and Hewings (2012) argued that cohesion is essential for establishing connections within the text. Ting (2003) further emphasized the indispensability of cohesion in text formation. Hinkel (2003) highlighted that different studies have identified cohesion as a significant characteristic of academic writing. Therefore, L2 learners require focused

instruction and additional attention in producing cohesive texts (Byrd & Reid, 1998; Carrell, 1982; Hinkel, 2001a, 2002a; Ostler, 1987; Reid, 1993). Ahmed (2010) clarified that cohesion has been extensively researched, revealing difficulties faced by students in this area. Consequently, scholars from various disciplines have investigated the specific elements of cohesion that students commonly struggle with.

8.2.2 Technical Difficulties

Postgraduate students often encounter various technical difficulties when writing their theses or dissertations. These difficulties include difficulties in writing the abstract, finding literature gaps, and collecting data. Such difficulties can greatly influence the overall quality of the written work for postgraduate students. Consequently, a more comprehensive discussion of these issues follows below.

8.2.2.1 Difficulties in Writing Abstract

Writing an abstract is an important step in the thesis or dissertation writing process, as it provides a concise and clear summary of the text's content. The abstract should reflect the overall structure of the thesis or dissertation and include all primary components. According to Gerver (2013), an abstract is a summary of the research that gives readers an idea of what to expect from the study and briefly describes the main points. However, postgraduate students often struggle with writing abstracts for their theses and dissertations. This is because the abstract is typically written towards the end of the writing process and requires a deep understanding of academic writing conventions and the structure of each section of the study. According to Male (2018), students face difficulties in writing a thesis abstract due to their lack of knowledge in these areas. The lack of familiarity with abstract writing criteria can be a significant obstacle for researchers. To overcome this, researchers can effectively write a smooth and coherent abstract for their theses and dissertations by following established guidelines. Therefore, Winkler and Metherell (2011) suggested outlining the study beforehand, as this can make the process of

writing the abstract in coherent paragraphs relatively easier.

8.2.2.2. Difficulties in Finding Literature Gaps

Postgraduate students often face difficulties identifying gaps in the literature to support their thesis or dissertation topics. Blair (2016) emphasized the importance of defining "finding the gap", but acknowledged that it is not always easy as gaps may not be immediately apparent. The literature review, however, serves as a tool to determine what is known and what is unknown. Nevertheless, Kearney (2017) highlighted that students often struggle to distinguish between the known and unknown, making it challenging to search for relevant information. Therefore, students must consider where they can find relevant information to overcome this difficulty. To overcome this challenge, students often rely on current literature to identify gaps and justify the need for their proposed research. Miles (2017) observed that researchers have historically faced difficulties in understanding the concept of identifying research gaps, as there were no established frameworks for this purpose. He further noted that even doctoral researchers still find it challenging to identify and describe gaps in their studies. Therefore, it is crucial for students to utilize current literature to identify gaps and demonstrate the significance of their research, as this can help them justify their research topics and contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

8.2.2.3. Difficulties in Collecting Data

Collecting data for theses or dissertations can be a challenging task for researchers. The difficulties faced can vary depending on the chosen data collection method and can be particularly problematic for doctoral students conducting dissertation studies, as stated by Rimando et al. (2015). These challenges include participant reluctance, finding suitable participants, and convincing them to complete questionnaires. However, the most difficult aspect is the lack of experience in conducting interviews. Hurrel (2005) emphasized the

importance of researchers being aware of these difficulties and identifying barriers or challenges to ensure consistent data collection. It is crucial to develop strategies to improve the data collection process. Additionally, Mack (2005) highlighted the necessity of obtaining individual informed consent when engaging in activities that require more than casual interaction with a person, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups.

8.2.3. Organizational Difficulties

The writing abilities of postgraduate students can be extremely affected by the various writing difficulties they face while writing their theses or dissertations. This section focuses on examining the extra difficulties encountered by these students, particularly those related to planning and time management. These specific difficulties differ from the ones discussed earlier in this study. Moreover, this section provides a detailed analysis of the different factors that contribute to the writing difficulties experienced by postgraduate students.

8.2.3.1 Difficulties in Planning

Planning can be a major difficulty for postgraduate students when writing their thesis or dissertation. According to Thondhlana et al. (2011), poor planning and time management can have a significant impact on a researcher's motivation and interest in completing tasks within the allotted timeframe. Therefore, it is crucial for postgraduate students to recognize and address these planning difficulties to successfully complete their studies and meet the research requirements for the dissertation degree. Dwihandini et al. (2013) further emphasized the importance of planning in thesis writing, as it is considered one of the most challenging aspects of the writing process. Neglecting to prioritize this aspect can lead to students abandoning their writing before the deadline, which can have effects on their academic progress.

8.2.3.2 Difficulties in Time Management

Time management is a crucial skill that postgraduate students must possess to effectively organize their work and meet

deadlines for their theses or dissertations. However, difficulties in time management can lead to disappointment and fear of failure among postgraduate students, as highlighted by Mehrzad (2021) and Parija and Kate (2018). Atkins and Brown (1988) observed that postgraduate students often face difficulties with time management, especially during data collection. Felix and Smith (2019) emphasized the importance of professional coordination, efficient organization, and time management skills for successful data collection. Parija and Kate (2018) suggested essential procedures for postgraduate students to ensure their theses or dissertations are completed before the submission deadline, including understanding the submission deadline, allocating sufficient time to each section, and working diligently toward completion. Therefore, these difficulties lead some postgraduate students to commit unintentional plagiarism to complete their writing on time and end up relying on plagiarized ideas. Mack (2017) explained that difficulties with time management can lead postgraduate students to rush to finish their tasks at the last minute, causing them to miss deadlines.

8.3. Previous Studies

This sub - section presents the previous studies that are relevant to the main objective of the current study, which is to investigate the difficulties faced by postgraduate students in writing theses and dissertations.

In a recent study, Alyan (2022) investigated the difficulties faced by Palestinian English as a foreign language (EFL) master's students when writing their theses. The study utilized a qualitative case study approach and gathered data through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The participants consisted of eighteen MA students and ten supervisors from the Department of English at the Islamic University of Gaza. The study revealed several key findings, including the challenges of selecting a suitable research topic, limited training in research and methodology, deficiencies in linguistic and academic writing skills, inadequate feedback from supervisors and course instructors, and a lack of resources

and online digital materials. To address these challenges and empower MA students, the study provided recommendations and suggested areas for further research.

The study of Aldabbus and Almansouri (2022) investigated the challenges that university students encounter in academic writing and the possible reasons behind those challenges. The study employed a quantitative approach and involved the participation of 10 graduate and 26 undergraduate students studying English at the Faculty of Education, University of Benghazi. Data for the study was collected through the use of a questionnaire. The results indicated that both graduate and undergraduate students encountered issues in academic writing, such as selecting appropriate academic vocabulary, struggling with thesis statement development, organizing ideas, and constructing coherent paragraphs. These difficulties were primarily influenced by a lack of resources, followed by low proficiency in the English language and limited opportunities for writing practice. The researchers hope that the findings of this study will be valuable for English language instructors and curriculum designers in addressing the writing challenges faced by English students.

Sitompul and Anditasari (2022) studied the challenges faced by master's students in research writing at universities in Malang. They focused on three dimensions: research skills in the introduction, research method, and finding and discussion parts. A quantitative approach was employed, and data was collected through a questionnaire from 39 master's students majoring in English Language Education. The findings showed difficulties in selecting research topics, formulating research problems, selecting appropriate research methods, determining samples, designing instruments, processing data, sorting data results, and drawing conclusions with research implications. Despite previous research education, master's students still faced difficulties. Further studies are recommended to investigate students' difficulties and factors in research in linguistics more intensively.

El-Freihat (2021) investigated the challenges faced by Jordanian university

students when writing their theses. The study examined variations in these challenges based on factors such as gender, qualifications, mental status, career status, and type of university. A survey descriptive design was used, with a questionnaire administered to 438 master's degree students. The findings showed that students face moderate challenges when writing their theses, with significant differences based on gender, specialization, marital status, and career status. However, no significant differences were found based on the type of university. The study recommended improving infrastructure and incorporating design courses into master's programs. Future research should explore the challenges from the perspective of supervisors.

Ma (2021) conducted a study on "the nature of the writing challenges experienced by EAL doctoral students". The study used qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews, to explore these challenges. The sample included 27 EAL doctoral students from various disciplines. The findings revealed linguistic and socio-cultural challenges, with some participants noting that even native speakers struggle with academic writing. Linguistic challenges included reliance on translation and differences in rhetorical styles between languages. The study has implications for language support services and training programs for supervisors of doctoral students and provides recommendations for students, supervisors, and academic literacy professionals.

In 2021, a study conducted by ul Haq and Shahzad aimed to explore the interests of postgraduate students in Library and Information Science (LIS) and the challenges they face while planning and writing their thesis. The study utilized a quantitative research method and collected data through a questionnaire from a sample of 71 postgraduate students. The findings revealed that the postgraduate students faced several challenges, including a demanding work schedule, family responsibilities, language barriers, and a lack of critical thinking skills. The study recommends that stakeholders in the Pakistani context collaborate with students, supervisors, and institutions to overcome these challenges and

ensure the production of high-quality and timely theses in LIS.

Asia and UzmaShahzadi (2021) conducted a study to explore the academic and social challenges that researchers faced during their research work in higher education. The researchers employed a qualitative research approach and utilized a convenient sampling technique to collect data from 50 M. Phil and Ph.D. students at Bahauddin Zakariya University in Multan, Pakistan. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed and administered to the participants. The researchers manually managed and analyzed the data using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the most prevalent challenges were related to access to learning resources, poor academic writing, interaction with supervisors, and data collection. These challenges were equally experienced by both male and female students, albeit with minor variations.

Bakhou and Bouhania (2020) conducted a qualitative inquiry to investigate the difficulties encountered by Algerian EFL master students in thesis writing. The study focused on both students' and supervisors' perceptions of the challenges, with a particular emphasis on non-linguistic factors. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires from a sample of 30 master students and six supervisors, using purposeful sampling. Findings showed that there were difficulties regarding sociocultural factors and linguistic limitations. Linguistic challenges included a lack of academic writing skills and knowledge about thesis writing. Sociocultural difficulties involved a lack of support from supervisors and family, limited cooperation among the research sample, and inadequate academic preparation. The study suggests pedagogical implications for stakeholders and offers recommendations for future researchers.

9. Methodology and Procedures of the Study

The study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It provided a detailed description of the population, sample, and instruments used in collecting the data. Additionally, it discussed the development of study instruments, focusing on their validity

and reliability. Moreover, the study explained the statistical techniques that were employed to analyze the data obtained from these instruments. To investigate the difficulties faced by postgraduate students in writing their theses and dissertations, a questionnaire and interviews were used to identify the reasons for these difficulties and the strategies used to overcome them.

9.1. Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of the supervisors who were involved in the English department's higher education program at Sana'a University and Aden University from 2018 to 2022.

9.1.1 Sample of the Study

The study included a total of 26 participants from Sana'a University and Aden University. The participants were selected using purposive sampling procedures, considering a total of 28 individuals. It is important to note that the selection process was nonrandom, as the participants were an existing and accessible sample.

9.2 Instruments of the Study

To answer the study questions, a close ended questionnaire was distributed to 21 supervisors. The purpose was to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the difficulties faced by postgraduate students while writing their theses and dissertations.

9.2.1. Questionnaire

The final version of the questionnaire consisted of six domains. The first domain specifically dealt with the grammatical difficulties which included three related items. The second domain covered vocabulary difficulties and included five corresponding items. The third domain addressed coherence difficulties and included seven corresponding items. The fourth domain focused on cohesion difficulties and included four corresponding items. The fifth domain explored difficulties related to students and included fourteen corresponding items. Lastly, the final domain contained three items that addressed organizational difficulties. The collected data was analyzed using numerical values and percentages, and the findings were presented in well-organized tables.

9.2.1.1. Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

The initial version of the questionnaire was validated by eight experts (validators) to determine the items' relevance and suitability concerning the research topic and questions. Based on the feedback received from the experts, certain items were modified.

The reliability of the questionnaire items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The internal reliability of the "writing difficulties" questionnaire items showed an overall alpha coefficient of 0.850, which is considered adequate. Therefore, the participant responses were deemed acceptable, indicating high reliability for all 36 items.

9.2.2 Interview

To achieve the objectives of the study, five supervisors were interviewed as part of the study. The interviews consisted of seven questions that focused on difficulties and strategies in writing theses and dissertations. The results were then presented in the form of a table.

Before the interview, the researcher submitted the interview questions to the same experts (validators) on the questionnaire. The researcher then modified the questions based on their feedback and suggestions. Following this, the researcher interviewed supervisors.

9.2.3. Data Analysis

The data was collected by conducting a questionnaire that had closed-ended response choices. It was then analyzed using numerical methods. The statistical software SPSS was utilized to process the data, employing techniques such as frequencies, percentages, standard deviations, and means. As a result, the data were presented quantitatively. The responses of the five supervisors were analyzed to gather further insights. The findings from the questionnaire were supported by the responses obtained from these five interviewees.

10. Findings and Discussion

The researcher analyzes the perspectives of supervisors on the difficulties faced by postgraduate students when writing their theses and dissertations. The results of the questionnaire are presented in terms of frequencies, percentages, standard deviations, and means as follows:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Supervisors' Perspectives Related to Grammatical Difficulties

Grammatical Difficulties					
Items	Mean	Std. deviation	%	Direction	Rank
1.Constructing grammatically correct sentences.	3.81	1.123	76.2	Agree	2
2.Constructing passive sentences.	3.62	.973	72.4	Agree	3
3.Selecting the appropriate tense.	3.95	1.071	79.0	Agree	1
Total	**3.79**	**0.662**	**75.8**	**Agree**	

Notes: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N=Neither; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Based on the results shown in Table (1), the item "Selecting the appropriate tense" was ranked first by the supervisors, with the highest percentage of (79.0%). This indicates that most supervisors agree that this item is the most challenging for postgraduate students when writing their theses or dissertations. Additionally, "Constructing passive sentences" ranked third for the participants, with the lowest percentage of (72.4%).

The results indicate the supervisors' identification of "Selecting the appropriate tense" as the primary concern and their generally positive perspective on the challenges faced by postgraduate students in their thesis or dissertation writing. These findings offer valuable guidance for supervisors in providing targeted support to address these challenges and enhance the writing skills of their postgraduate students.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Supervisors' Perspectives Related to Vocabulary Difficulties

Vocabulary Difficulties					
Items	Mean	SD	%	Direction	Rank
4. Finding a suitable vocabulary.	3.38	1.322	67.6	Neither	5
5. Utilizing proper academic vocabulary	3.67	.913	73.4	Agree	2
6. Utilizing proper academic phrases.	3.76	.889	75.2	Agree	1
7. Choosing accurate antonyms.	3.62	1.024	72.4	Agree	3
8. Choosing accurate synonyms.	3.43	.926	68.6	Agree	4
Total	**3.57**	**0.444**	**71.4**	**Agree**	

Table 2 presents the highest mean score and was awarded first place in the table for the item "Utilizing proper academic phrases," with a percentage of (75.2%). This item was considered the most challenging from the supervisors' perspective. One possible reason for this difficulty could be that Yemeni postgraduate students may view English as a subject rather than a language, resulting in limited opportunities to practice their English speaking and writing skills. The item "Utilizing proper academic vocabulary" ranked second,

with a percentage of (73.4%). On the other hand, the item "Finding a suitable vocabulary" was perceived as the least difficult by the participants, with the lowest percentage of (67.6%). These results suggest that postgraduate students may lack sufficient usage of academic vocabulary, which could lead to a lack of an academic tone in their work. Overall, the supervisors' perspectives were highly agreeable, indicating their realization of the difficulties faced by students in this area.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Supervisors' Perspectives Related to Coherence Difficulties

Coherence Difficulties					
Items	Mean	Std. deviation	%	Direction	Rank
9. Writing the topic sentence of each paragraph.	4.14	1.062	82.8	Agree	1
10. Maintaining the focus on one main idea in each.	4.05	1.024	81.0	Agree	3
11. Writing supporting sentences for each main idea.	3.90	1.136	78.0	Agree	5
12. Writing a conclusion sentence for each paragraph.	4.10	.768	82.0	Agree	2
13. Linking each paragraph's introduction to its conclusion.	3.95	.973	79.0	Agree	4
14. Linking ideas within sentences in each paragraph.	3.67	.966	73.4	Agree	7
15. Linking ideas within paragraphs.	3.71	1.146	74.2	Agree	6
Total	**3.93**	**0.393**	**78.6**	**Agree**	

The results in Table 3 indicate that the item "writing the topic sentence of each paragraph" was the most difficult item, with a percentage of (82.8%). This aspect was perceived as a difficult one from supervisors' perspectives. Additionally, "writing a conclusion sentence for each paragraph" was also identified as challenging, with a percentage of (82.0)%. The third most difficult item was "maintaining the focus on one main idea in each paragraph," with approximately (81%) of participants finding it difficult. On the other hand, "linking each paragraph's introduction to its conclusion" was considered the least difficult item. However, it still presented a high level of difficulty, with (73.4%) of participants facing it. The supervisors' agreement with the findings suggests that the difficulty levels were relatively high.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Supervisors' Perspectives Related to Cohesion Difficulties

Cohesion Difficulties					
Items	Mean	Std. deviation	%	Direction	Rank
16. Using cohesive devices such as references.	3.81	1.078	76.2	Agree	3
17. Using cohesive devices such as substitutions.	4.00	.707	80.0	Agree	2
18. Using cohesive devices such as ellipses.	4.05	.921	81.0	Agree	1
19. Using transitional expressions such as 'however',etc.	3.76	1.091	75.2	Agree	4
Total	**3.90**	**0.503**	**78.0**	**Agree**	

In Table 4, it is evident that the item "Using cohesive devices such as ellipses" had the highest mean score with a percentage of (81.0%). This indicates that it was the most difficult item for the participants. Similarly, supervisors also reported difficulty with the item "Using cohesive devices such as substitutions," with approximately (80.0%) of them finding it difficult. On the other hand, the item "Using transitional expressions such as 'however', etc." showed less significance compared to the other items, with a mean percentage of (75.2%). The overall direction for these items was "agree" and the scales used were "high." These results suggest that the majority of postgraduate students have limited experience with academic writing tasks, as indicated by the statistics. It appears that they often rely on imitating or copying models provided by other researchers, which can lead to the repetition of mistakes due to a lack of prior understanding of the topic. Additionally, their lack of reading habits may contribute to their limited awareness of different topics.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Supervisors' Perspectives Related to Technical Difficulties

Technical Difficulties					
Items	Mean	Std. deviation	%	Direction	Rank

20. Writing a precise abstract.	3.76	1.513	75.2	Agree	4
21. Stating the gap in my study	3.86	.910	77.2	Agree	2
22. Collecting data	3.48	1.401	69.6	Neither	8
23. Reporting qualitative findings	4.00	.894	80.0	Agree	1
24. Writing an 'introduction'.	3.67	1.278	73.4	Agree	5
25. Writing the statement of the problem.	3.62	1.161	72.4	Agree	6
26. Writing the significance of the study.	3.14	1.459	62.8	Neither	14
27. Writing the objectives of the study.	3.33	1.426	66.6	Neither	11
28. Writing the 'method section'	3.29	1.146	65.8	Neither	12
29. Writing a 'discussion section'	3.81	.981	76.2	Agree	3
30. Writing suitable conclusions.	3.52	1.470	70.4	Agree	7
31. Writing suitable 'recommendations'.	3.38	1.431	67.6	Neither	10
32. Writing the in-text reference citation.	3. 43	1.399	68.6	Agree	9
33. Writing the reference list.	3.24	1.480	64.8	Neither	13
Total	**3.54**	**0.601**	**70.8**	**Agree**	

Table 5 indicates that the degree of "Technical Difficulties" was observed to be in a "high" direction. Based on the supervisors' responses to the item "Reporting qualitative findings," it was found that the participants agreed that postgraduate students face difficulties in this area. This item had the highest mean score of (80.0%) and ranked first among the difficulties encountered. Another difficulty highlighted in the table was related to the item "Stating the gap in my study.", with a mean score of (72.1%). The third difficulty identified was "Writing a discussion section" with a percentage of (76.2%). The item "Writing a precise abstract" was mentioned by (75.2%) of the participants, ranking it fourth. Interestingly, the item. "Writing the significance of the study" received the lowest scores, with a percentage of (62.8%).

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Supervisors' Perspectives Related to Organizational Difficulties

Organizational Difficulties					
Items	Mean	Std. deviation	%	Direction	Rank
34. Outlining the writing process of my study.	3.67	.856	73.4	Agree	2
35. Managing my time writing.	3.24	1.044	64.8	Agree	3
36. Completing the writing before the deadline.	3.76	1.091	75.2	Agree	1
Total	**3.56**	**0.599**	**71.2**	**Agree**	

Upon analyzing the data presented in Table 6, it becomes evident that the highest score in the table was "Completing the writing before the deadline," which had an average score of (75.2%) of the responses from supervisors. Conversely, the item "Managing my time writing" within this dimension was ranked as the lowest, with a percentage of (64.8%). Despite expectations for higher ratings, it is important to note that this particular item tends The supervisors were interviewed to answer the second and third questions of the study. The data collected from the supervisors was to cause the most anxiety among postgraduate students when it comes to writing. The supervisors' feedback indicated a "high" degree of agreement with the direction provided. Supervisors' feedback agrees with the findings. The data highlights strengths and areas for improvement in writing among postgraduate students. Interventions and support strategies can be developed to enhance time management skills and improve the writing experience for students.
analyzed, and the findings are displayed in tables that illustrate the frequency of responses regarding the reasons for difficulties faced by

postgraduate students and the writing strategies used.

Table 7: Descriptive Statisitics of Supervisors' Perspectives on Reasons for Writing Difficulties

Reasons	Main Theme	Sub-theme	N	%
Reasons for Difficulties Faced by Postgraduate Students	Grammatical Reasons	- Tenses	1	20%
		- Punctuation	1	20%
	Vocabulary Reasons	- Use inappropriate vocabulary	2	40%
	Coherence Reasons	- Lack of linking ideas	1	20%
	Cohesion Reasons	- Writing illogical ideas in paragraphs	1	20%
	Technical Reasons	- Choosing a topic of the study	3	60%
		- Formulating statement of the problem	3	60%
		- Formulating questions of the study	2	40%
		- Formulating objectives of the study	2	40%
		- Collecting data	1	20%
		- Analysis data	1	20%
		- Lack of writing abstract	1	20%
	Organizational Reasons	- Lack of reading previous studies	5	100%
		- Lack of effective supervision	2	40%
		- Time management	1	20%
		- References Style	2	40%
	Writing Reasons	- Lack of writing proficiency	1	20%
		- Lack of research skills	1	20%
		Stylistic [formal and informal]-	1	20%
	Others Reasons	- Administrative	1	20%

The data presented in Table 7 gives a detailed summary of the reasons for difficulties faced by postgraduate students when writing their theses or dissertations, as reported by their supervisors in semi-structured interviews. The data indicates that the main reason reported by all participants, comprising (100%) of the sample, is the difficulty of "Lack of reading." This underscores the significance of thorough reading and literature review in the research process, and its impact on the quality of the thesis. Furthermore, the table shows that 60% of supervisors highlighted "Choosing a topic of the study" and "Formulating a statement of the problem" as major difficulties faced by postgraduate students. With three participants emphasizing these aspects, it emphasizes the crucial role of a well-defined research topic and problem statement in guiding the research direction and ensuring clarity in the study. These findings offer valuable insights into the primary challenges postgraduate students face in their thesis writing process.

Table 8 Descriptive Statisitics of Supervisors' Perspectives on Writing Strategies Used

Strategies	Main Theme	Sub-theme	N	%
Strategies Used by Postgraduate Students	Pre-writing Strategies	- Reading strategy	5	100%
		- Planning Strategy	1	20%
		- Attend special course for proposal	3	60%
		- Improving language skills [preparing]	2	40%
	During-writing Strategies	- Consulting strategy	3	60%
		- Data collection Strategy	2	40%
		- Formulating strategy	1	20%
		- Developing Strategy [tools]	2	40%
	Post-writing Strategies	- Revising strategy	2	40%
		- Summary Strategy	1	20%

According to the data presented in Table 8, supervisors recommended different strategies for writing a thesis or dissertation, as indicated by the frequency of responses (n) and the corresponding percentages (%). The most commonly suggested strategy, with (100%) of participants (5), was the "Reading Strategy".

11. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This study aims to investigate the difficulties faced by postgraduate students in the English Departments at Sana'a University and Aden University when writing theses and dissertations. The objective is to find out the reasons for these difficulties and suggest effective strategies to overcome them. This section presents a summary and analysis of the results from the three research questions, as well as recommendations for future research.

11.1. Summary of the Study

The researcher used quantitative method to answer the three questions of the study.

1. What are the difficulties faced by postgraduate students in writing theses and dissertations at the Departments of English?
2. What are the reasons behind the difficulties in writing MA theses and Ph.D dissertations at the Departments of English?

3.What are the strategies that can be used by postgraduate students to overcome the difficulties in writing theses and dissertations?

To answer the questions of the study, a questionnaire and an interview were used. The findings of the study were obtained through the analysis of the collected data.

11.1.1. Results Related to the Difficulties and Strategies Used in Writing Theses and Dissertations

The results of the questionnaire showed that postgraduate students faced difficulties in writing their theses and dissertations, such as "Selecting the appropriate tense," "Utilizing proper academic phrases," "Writing the topic sentence of each paragraph," "Using cohesive devices such as ellipses," "Reporting qualitative results," and "Completing the writing before the deadline." The interview

The second most recommended strategy was "Attend special course for proposal", with (60%) of participants (3) indicating this strategy. The third strategy, "Consulting Strategy", was recommended by (60%) of participants (3).

results revealed that the reasons for these difficulties were "Lack of reading," "Choosing a topic of the study" and "Formulating a statement of the problem". To overcome these difficulties, supervisors suggested various strategies. The highest percentage was "Reading Strategy", "Attend special course for proposal", and "Consulting Strategy"

12. Conclusions

Through careful examination of the study's results and a thorough discussion, it is evident that several conclusions can be deduced:

1. Postgraduate students encounter various difficulties in writing their theses and dissertations, including selecting appropriate tenses, utilizing academic phrases, writing topic sentences, and using cohesive devices such as ellipses.
2. Lack of reading, choosing a topic of the study, and formulating a statement of the problem are the main reasons for difficulties in writing theses and dissertations according to supervisors.
3. Reading previous studies is the most recommended strategy for overcoming difficulties in writing theses and dissertations according to supervisors.
4. To overcome difficulties in selecting a topic, students should choose a topic that is challenging but not too difficult to handle.
5. Students should avoid repeating previous research by approaching the research topic from different angles and perspectives.
6. To overcome difficulties in formulating problem statements, students need to engage in thorough reading and concentrate on addressing concerns within the context of their research.
7. Seeking guidance from experts and peers throughout the entire thesis-writing process

and attending specialized courses can benefit students.

8. Students should formulate a clear, concise statement of the problem that is focused and specific, yet broad enough to allow for a range of possible solutions to be explored.

9. Students can enhance their academic writing abilities by familiarizing themselves with the essential components of an academic proposal and learning how to formulate research questions and objectives.

10. Students should read relevant materials, gather ideas from various sources, and refine their writing skills to enhance their understanding of their research topic and produce high-quality academic writing.

13. Recommendations

The study suggests the following recommendations based on its results:

1. To tackle difficulties in writing theses and dissertations, students should focus on improving their reading proficiency to gain a comprehensive understanding of their research topic.

2. Allocating sufficient time for reading, which is an essential component in the preparation process of dissertation writing.

3. Since reading is the primary source of knowledge for postgraduate students, it is important to prioritize reading and take advantage of its benefits to ensure their success in academic writing.

4. In choosing an appropriate topic, students should focus on selecting a topic that is challenging but not too difficult to handle. This will help them avoid difficulties in writing a thesis or dissertation.

5. To avoid writing repeat research, students should approach the topic from different angles and perspectives, even if it is on a similar issue as previous research. This approach will help them avoid pitfalls and mistakes made by previous researchers.

7. To improve their writing skills, students need to read widely both within and outside of their field of study. Extensive, wide-ranging reading of high-quality research can help them improve their academic competence, writing skills, and content knowledge.

8. Students need to seek the assistance of experts during the entire thesis-writing process and take the advice of peers who have encountered similar difficulties.

9. To avoid delays in presenting proposals, students need to formulate a clear, concise statement of the problem, which is focused and specific, yet broad enough to allow for a range of possible solutions to be explored.

10. Students should attend specialized courses to learn how to write research proposals and familiarize themselves with the essential components that make up an academic proposal.

11. Students should start by reading relevant materials, gathering ideas from various sources, and expanding upon these ideas for writing.

14 Suggestions for Future Researches

The present study focused on only the difficulties faced by Yemeni postgraduate students and the strategies used to overcome these difficulties. Therefore, future studies can focus on other aspects regarding the difficulties may postgraduate students face in writing theses or dissertations. The researcher suggested considering other opportunities for further research:

1. Conduct a study on the effectiveness of various reading strategies for postgraduate students in improving their academic writing abilities for theses and dissertations.

2. Investigate whether providing students with more guidance and support during the thesis-writing process, such as regular contact with supervisors, can improve their academic performance.

3. Explore how students can find a proper balance between selecting a challenging topic and managing the research process effectively and efficiently.

4. Investigate whether using technology tools, such as academic writing software, can provide students with additional support and assistance when writing theses and dissertations.

5. Examine how institutions can provide more structured courses for students to learn how to formulate clear problem statements and

research questions for their theses and dissertations.

6. Explore whether students can benefit from collaborating and receiving feedback from peers during the writing process of their theses and dissertations.

7. Investigate the reasons behind students' lack of sufficient reading and how institutions can encourage more reading habits and skills for postgraduate students.

8. Examine how institutions can provide more specialized courses on academic writing, including how to use appropriate tenses, academic phrases, and cohesive devices, for postgraduate students to improve their academic writing abilities.

9. Conduct a study on the effectiveness of different strategies for students to overcome writer's block and procrastination during the thesis-writing process.

10. Explore the impact of cultural differences on the difficulties that postgraduate students face when writing theses and dissertations and how these could be addressed through tailored support and guidance.

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