

Dissertation Writing amid Covid-19: Challenges, Consequences, and Responses**Slimane Boukhentache****bkt.slimane@gmail.com****Department of English, Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel (Algeria)****Receipt date: 17/11/2020; Acceptance date: 09/12/2020; Publishing Date: 31/08/2021**

Abstract. The Coronavirus disease has challenged and affected teachers, students, and researchers worldwide. This study reports the problems and impacts that the English language Master students experienced in writing their dissertations (at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel) amid Coronavirus pandemic and describes how they coped. A questionnaire was administered to 12 supervisors and 33 Master candidates. The Results indicate that the students faced problems like the decline in mental health and deficiency in telecommunication means, which resulted, for instance, in the tardiness of assignment completion and lower quality end-products. However, the students, teachers, and administration employed successful coping strategies and the students discovered new research techniques such as Google Form questionnaires. Consequently, this study suggests a better preparation of the Algerian students, teachers, and universities to remote education through information and communication technologies and online skill-training.

Keywords. Coronavirus; Covid-19; dissertation writing; online research; supervision.

Résumé. L'épidémie à coronavirus a affecté et mit à défi les étudiants, les enseignants et les chercheurs du monde entier. Les étudiants de Master de langue anglaise ont, de fait, subi des impacts et difficultés dans la rédaction de leurs mémoires à l'Université Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia de Jijel. Selon un questionnaire soumis à 12 encadreurs et 33 étudiants de Master, il en résulte que face à ces difficultés, les étudiants ont été confrontés à des problèmes tels que le déclin de leurs santé morales, mais aussi un manque de moyens de télécommunication. Ceci à par conséquence, entraîné du retard dans l'aboutissement de leurs projets de mémoire et une qualité relative de leur travail. Pour pallier ces manquements, les étudiants, les enseignants et l'administration ont eu recours à des stratégies efficaces de substitution. Ainsi, les étudiants ont découvert des outils de recherche tels que Google Form, qui leur suggèrent, enseignant et université compris, le développement de enseignants à distance via les technologies de l'information et de communication et grâce à aux compétences du web.

Mots clés. Coronavirus; Covid-19 ; rédaction de mémoire ; recherche en ligne ; encadrement.

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1. Introduction

The world has known an unprecedented and ongoing period of health crisis triggered by the vast spread of the novel Coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19). The latter is a viral disease that is mainly transmitted between people, causing mild and sometimes severe and fatal health conditions. The epidemic (later, pandemic) was first publicly reported in December 2019 in Wuhan town, China. It has gradually swept over China and all over the world in varying degree, triggering serious consequences at all walks of life including restrictions on travel, shopping, leisure, schooling, and work.

Beyond that, this widespread disease has brought about the fear of infection and death, and people throughout the world have experienced moments of anxiety and despair in an uncertain future. The consequences of this highly infectious viral disease are still unknown. As an indication, at the time of writing this article, the World Health Organization (2020) reported 45,942,902 confirmed cases and 1,192,644 deaths.

In most countries of the world, schools were shut down at the outbreak of the epidemic from fear of vast-scale infections. Governments and educational authorities flipped from traditional classroom courses to online teaching/learning that has been nurtured earlier as a potential alternative to face-to-face education. However, in many developing countries, the shift in the teaching mode has quickly displayed these countries' limited capacities to ensure distant schooling for all learners in terms of technological equipments and learning tools (UNICEF, 2020). Besides, apart from the technological and pedagogical limitations of distant courses, the fear of an uncertain future and the looming infection of the fatal viral disease have equally affected the mental state and productivity of learners.

This study reports the experience of dissertation writing of Algerian English language Master students amid Covid-19 pandemic. It focuses on the challenges and the consequences that this anxiety-laden period of distant supervision has had on the dissertation students as well as the coping strategies employed by the students, teachers, and administration to complete this mammoth task acceptably.

1.1. Background of the Study

Covid-19 pandemic has affected the life of scholars. Researchers have had difficulties in carrying out their projects because of work limitations and the shutdown of schools and universities (Korbel & Stegle, 2020). For example, many research projects require in-person laboratory experiments; however, with the work restrictions, it is sometimes impossible to fulfill such tasks as it happened during the alarming rise in Covid-19 cases last March and April. During this period that had been marked by a frightening upsurge in Covid-19 mortalities, governments took more radical measures to stop the pandemic from spreading.

The closure of universities and schools in April 2020 in 175 countries caused widespread disruption to the academic life of pupils, students, teachers, and researchers (World Bank Group Education, 2020). More developed countries (e.g., the United States and France) continued teaching/learning through remote technological means, some developing countries (like Algeria) strived to initiate remote teaching modes through the internet and television, and some other countries (such as in Eastern and Southern Africa) simply ended up teaching/learning. According to UNICEF (2020), "at least 463 million students around the

globe remain cut off from education, mainly due to a lack of remote learning policies or lack of equipment needed for learning at home” (para. 1). In the absence of face-to-face instruction, only the countries that were technologically equipped with means such as cell phones, computers, televisions and applications managed to continue the academic activities.

Nevertheless, distant learning triggered by Covid-19 has revealed challenging obstacles to both students and institutions even in more developed countries. Teaching institutions lack adequate resources and students face personal and academic challenges (World Bank Group Education, 2020). Universities and schools need sophisticated technological means to guarantee distant and blended teaching; and students and pupils encounter difficulties in enrolling in online education. For example, Orendain and Djalante (2020) reported that students in Japan had not only issues with internet connection during consultations with their dissertation advisors, but also many other challenges such as home as a non-working environment, decline of mental and emotional health, and impeded productivity.

Algeria started quarantining Covid-19 known cases on the 18th of March 2020. Since then, restrictions in different facets of life have started and lockdowns ensued. Being ranked at the top list of African countries importation risks and having a poor health system (Tadesse, Gebremeskel, Asefa, Abay, Demoz, 2020), Algeria has prompted to close its frontiers and forbid public gatherings including the immediate closure of universities and schools.

The Algerian universities have employed online access to written courses that have been supplied by the teachers, and supervision of research projects have equally been carried out online even after the partial reopening of the university in June. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research announced as early as February 29th, 2020, the possibility of moving from face-to-face to online teaching starting from the 15th of March, 2020, in case of the widespread of Covid-19 pandemic (Mami & Deramchiya, 2020). Accordingly, heads of regional conferences and university rectors were instructed to prepare a platform (namely, MOODELE platform) to guarantee the continuity of the academic year, and teachers were invited to adhere to this initiative and remain in constant touch with their students (Boukhedoui & Benachour, 2020). Since March 2020, the universities had been completely shut down and online learning supposedly substituted for traditional classroom instruction. A partial reopening of the universities was decided in June, but the full reopening under the preventive protocols of Covid-19 was possible only in September of the same year.

Of the 97 articles on Covid-19 published in the Algerian Scientific Journal Platform (ASJP) at the time of writing this article, no paper dealt with the experience of dissertation writing amid the Covid-19 crisis. Nevertheless, some related studies tackled some aspects of the current topic. For example, Boukhedoui and Benachouri (2020) analysed of the official measures taken by the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research to sustain online teaching/learning. Another interesting study was done by Bensalem (2020) on the influence of social media Covid-19 rumors on the students’ productivity. Further interesting studies (i.e., Mazouzhi, Hadjela, Malaoui, & Lassoued, 2020; Mami & Deramchiya, 2020) equally discussed the realities of remote leaning in the Algerian universities.

1.2. Research Question and Assumptions

The current study focuses on English foreign language (EFL) students’ dissertation writing experiences amid Covid-19 pandemic (March to November 2020) at Mohamed

Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel. More specifically, it asks the following research question: What are the hurdles and effects of Covid-19 crisis on EFL Master students process of dissertation writing and what coping strategies used by teachers, students, and administration to avert anxiety and ensure academic productivity?

The study contends that the Master students at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University met serious challenges such as distant supervision, research tool implementation, and their safety. It, by the same token, assumes that the Covid-19 affected their mental health and academic productivity.

1.3. Importance of the Study

This inquiry is significant in many ways. First, it documents the unique experience of dissertation writing under Covid-19 pandemic. Second, it seeks to unravel the challenges and impacts of this unusual situation on the graduating students to sensitize educational authorities and teachers about them in the view of averting them in the future and ensuring a better preparation for such eventualities in this unstable world. Third, it looks critically and strategically at this period to learn from the experiences of students, teachers, and educational authorities mainly about researching in unusual situations.

2. Methods and Tools

This section presents and defends the methodology applied to investigate the challenges, consequences, and responses of EFL Master students in writing their dissertations amid Covid-19 at the Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University.

2.1. Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 33 Master dissertation students (out of 120) and 12 of their supervisors (out of 25) from the department of English language at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University. The choice of the sample was done randomly through sending the questionnaires to the students' and teachers' academic emails. The teachers were more responsive than the student; as a matter of fact that, some of the students' emails (previously used for dissertation contacts) were out of use.

2.2. Teacher and Student Questionnaires

The teacher questionnaire and the student questionnaire were close-ended and almost identical, except in few questions that varied according to their professional roles. Both questionnaires included the following parts: general information, challenges that the students met in implementing their studies, the consequences of Covid-19 situation on the students' completion of the research projects, and the coping strategies that the students, teachers, and administration employed to surmount the limitation of the period.

2.3. Procedures of Questionnaires Administration

The questionnaires were implemented during the last week of October and the first week of November, 2020. This process intervened when most students were presenting their work and only a few groups were lagging behind the deadline. The informants (i.e., the students and teachers) were given 15 days to fill out the online questionnaires. In order to avoid duplicate responses, the respondents were asked to download their emails into the Google form and response checker was later used to spot double answers of the invitees (Sue & Ritter, 2012).

2.4. Data Analysis Procedures

The Google form charts were exploited to identify the patterns and trends of the data that stemmed from the teacher and the student questionnaires. This Google web-based survey software provided by default mode the respondents' answers in a form of charts, and these charts displayed the frequency distribution of each element (Sue & Ritter, 2012). Then, this data was presented in a form of tables for a more general visibility of the broad patterns of the findings. The questionnaire qualitative data was scarce and it was easily presented in a form of topics.

Although this study generated qualitative data from some open-ended questions of the questionnaires, the overall design of the study is quantitative since the qualitative data was equally interpreted statistically. As Nunan (1992) argued, qualitative data could be quantified and presented in numerals; and this mixing strategy is typically used to calculate the frequency of occurrences of specific categories (Creswell & Clark, 2006).

2.5. Limitations

Given that this study was conducted in the field of social sciences, it does not give a comprehensive representation of dissertation writing under Covid-19 conditions in other fields like technological and biological departments in which the students need continual access to laboratories to conduct their research. Moreover, during the hot spot of the pandemic, Jijel seemed less affected than many other districts in Algeria. For example, students at the district of Blida, in which the epidemic broke out and in which the restrictions were tougher, must have met more severe challenges. However, since the English language students' Master research projects equally need fieldwork and since Jijel town and University were affected by Covid-19 crisis and lockdown, this study gives a glimpse of the major challenges and consequences that the students experienced while writing their dissertations.

3. Results and Discussions

The results of this study are next presented and discussed around the general research question. The major findings of the teachers' and learners' questionnaires are summed up in tables.

3.1. Challenges of Dissertation Writing amid Covid-19 Crisis

The results from the teacher and the student questionnaires indicate that the students experienced difficulties in implementing their dissertation among the Covid-19 crisis (See Tables 1).

Table (1): Supervisors' and Students' Reported Dissertation Challenges

Challenges	Frequency	
	Teachers	Students
Lack of face-to-face supervision from March to May	100 %	87.9 %
Lack of face-to-face supervision from June to August	83.3 %	90.9 %
Difficulty of access to university after reopening in June	25 %	86.2 %
Field-orientation of the dissertations research topics	58.62 %	30.3 %
Shutdown of the university libraries	66.7 %	68.8 %
Absence of face-to-face encounters for the implementation of the research tools	58.3 %	71.9 %
Unreachable informants through telecommunication	58.3 %	65.6 %

Issue of receptivity of distant feedback	83.3 %
Irregular telecommunication contacts	66.7 %
Lack of technological means (e.g., computers)	33.3. %
Teacher limited access to the internet	8.3 %
Teacher average internet access	33.3 %
Cultural issues in telecommunication (e.g., male and female chat)	16.7 %
Irregular communication contacts	66.7 %
Inexistence of supervisor's feedback	16.7 %
Scarcity of the supervisor's feedback	33.3 %
Imprecise (vagueness) of supervisor's feedback	36.7 %
Lack of face-to-face encounters with dissertation partner during the lockdown	76.7 %
Getting help from others during the lockdown	37.5 %
Access to online documentation	34.4 %
Lateness in getting back responses	3.1 %

As seen in Table 1, the biggest challenge of remote research project supervision is the lack of face-to-face supervision and consultation. The teachers stated that they provided no face-to-face supervision during the university shutdown (March-May). This result is in good agreement with the students' responses, as a matter of fact, 87.9 % of the surveyed students reported no in-person supervision between the period of March and May. Understandably, the Algerian universities were shutdown and, as presented in Table 2, 84.8 % of the students indicated that their supervisors were geographically distant from them.

Table (2): General Information about the Students

Females	Partnered students	Remote supervisors
84.8 %	90.9%	84.8 %

After the partial reopening of the Algerian universities in June, the students did not get sufficient face-to-face supervision. As Table 1 indicates, 90.9 % of the English language graduates held in the questionnaire that they did not benefit from in-person consultations with their supervisors during the period of June-August. Similarly, 83.3 % of the supervisors reported that they did not provide face-to-face guidance during this period.

Likewise, the majority of the students (86.2 %) said in the questionnaire that they could not join the University in June. One student explained in the questionnaire, "I live in Akbou, Bejaia [a neighbouring town of Jijel], and it is very hard to get to Jijel" (square brackets added). Two other students said that there were lack of public transportation and the fear of infection.

Moreover, as seen from Table 1, the large majority of the teacher-participants (83.3%) ranked receptivity of feedback as the most problematic issue in remote supervision; and this finding is further supported by the student-participants who complained about the imprecise and vague nature of the dissertation adviser's feedback. Furthermore, remote supervision has unraveled other impediments such as cultural issues, lack of technological means, and irregular contacts.

With regard to cultural issues, all the male respondents to the teacher questionnaire (and none of the female respondents-see their percentages in Table 3) spotlighted the limitations of male and female private chat even for research purpose. Understandably, as the sample of this

study indicates (with 84.8 % of females) and as it is the case in all the Algerian universities, most of the Master EFL students are females. Consequently, male teachers usually find it problematic to conform socially and religiously to the norms of male and female chat, especially in supervision matters in which they have to work individually and constantly with female students.

Table (3): General Information about the Supervisors

Gender		Number of supervised groups		
Males	Females	1	2	4
25 %	75 %	1	8	3

Another problem that the students encountered was working collaboratively with their dissertation partners. It is worth noting, as noted in Table 2, that 90.9% of the surveyed Master degree candidates had a thesis partner and 76.7 % were unable to meet personally during the confinement (refer to Table 1).

Apart from the collaboration-related work of dissertations, the Master students met the impediment of fieldwork, as indicated in Table 1. About one third of the supervisees (30.3 %) reported that their work is field-oriented and a more significant number (58.62 %) of this option is scored by their teachers. The noteworthy disparity in the teacher and the student responses could be explained by the fact that the teachers know better the meaning of field-oriented topics as opposed to desktop topics. This drawback of fieldwork-orientation of topics was equally raised by Column's (2020) study that reported PhD students' difficulties in generating research data from fieldwork.

As concerns documentation, 68.8 % of the sampled-students regretted the shutdown of the University library, 37.5 % were unhappy with their inability to get help from other people, and 34.4 % complained about the lack of internet access to some websites (see Table 1). Even if the students have good internet access, they cannot afford access to relevant databases and some papers are impossible to get for free.

With regard to the administration of the research tools amid the tough confinement (March-June), 79.9 % of the students lamented in the survey the lack of face-to-face meetings and 65.6 % reported the inaccessibility of informants through telecommunication (see Table1). Moreover, one student claimed that they had to wait for a long time to get responses from their respondents. In line with these results, the teachers equally underscored the absence of face-to-face encounters and the inaccessibility of the informants through telecommunication means (58.3%), but they focused more on the shutdown of the research site with a percentage of 66.7 %.

3.2. Consequences of Covid-19 Lockdown on Dissertation Writing

As can be seen in Table 4, the first consequence of Covid-19 pandemic on EFL Master dissertation writing at the Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel is the tardiness in the completion of this graduating research project. After the reopening of the University in June, the students were optionally invited to submit their work, but none of the candidates managed to present his/her work during this initial deadline.

Table (4): Teachers' and Students' Reported Effects of Covid-19 on Dissertation Writing

Consequences	Frequency	
	Teachers	Students
Lateness in the completion of the work	35.49 %	15.2 %
Carrying out the biggest part of work between September-October	41.7 %	69.7 %
Carrying out the biggest part of the work between June and August	66.7 %	24.2 %
Late face-to-face supervision (September-October)	83.3 %	90.9 %
Face-to-face supervision in June and during summer holidays	16.7 %	9.1 %
Decline in students' productivity at the outbreak of the pandemic	51.62 %	42.4 %
Unfavorable emotional state of teachers and students	100 %	100 %
Anxiety amid Covid-19 outbreak	41.7 %	24.2 %
Negative spirals amid Covid-19 outbreak	25 %	27.3 %
Panic amid Covid-19 outbreak	16.7 %	18.2 %
Substituting a research tool for another	72.7 %	35.5 %
Discarding (a) research tool(s)	54.5 %	64.5 %
Unhappiness with the new topics	50 %	71.4 %
Unhappiness with the quality of the dissertation	75 %	48.5 %
Learning new skills with regard to research in unusual settings	75 %	54.5 %
Closed-doors dissertation defenses demotivating for the students to do a better job	20 %	9.7 %
Closed doors dissertation defenses demotivating for the teachers to work hard with their supervisees	20 %	
Closed-doors dissertation defenses less academically beneficial	30 %	
Closed-doors dissertation defenses more academically beneficial	50 %	
Closed-doors dissertation defenses less stressful		51.6%
Lack of enthusiasm in closed-doors dissertation defenses		19.4%

The majority of the students (69.7 %) who took part in the survey and 41.7 % of the surveyed teachers considered the period of September-October as the least blocking period in their dissertation execution pathway (see Table 4); this positively correlates with the full return of face-to-face supervision in September. Consequently, only a small number of groups managed to meet the second submission deadline in October (the first was in June); others presented their work after an additional extension of one week in November.

The second consequence of the pandemic on the students' dissertation writing is the low productivity of the students because of Covid-19 anxieties. As noted in Table 4, the supervisors indicated that more than half (51.62 %) of their supervisees did not continually work on their dissertations during the outbreak of the crisis (March-May). This is equally supported by 42.4 % of the students who held that they produced little/nothing during the Covid-19 upsurge in mortality rates (Table 4). The students noted that they experienced negative spirals (27.3%), anxiety (24.2 %), and panic (18.2 %); and almost the same feelings were experienced by their teachers (refer to Table 4). These results substantiate Orendain and Djalante's (June, 2020) findings that indicated that Covid-19 crisis affected the productivity of the graduates who felt uncertain whether they will ever return again to their universities.

The third major consequence of the plague on dissertation implementation is the discard or change of research tools because of the confinement. Since the students could not get access to the university or meet informants in-person, only the research designs and tools such questionnaires that could be implemented online were retained (Orendain and Djalante, June, 2020). One teacher noted that he completely changed the nature of the research topics of two groups of his supervisees. The change in the nature of the initial topic is not without consequences for both the supervisors and the supervisees. In point of fact, 75 % and about half of their teachers (as presented in Table 4) expressed their unhappiness with the new topics.

The fourth effect of the widespread of the viral disease on Master students' research projects concerns the quality of the end-product. Almost half of the surveyed students (48.5 %) and, more notably, 75 % of their teachers admitted that isolation during the confinement did not allow the accomplishment of a better study. Accordingly, as Orendain and Djalante's (2020) study pointed out, home is a non-working environment.

When the teachers were asked to account for the reasons behind the regress in the quality of the dissertation, they put forward the following reasons: lack of face-to-face interaction with the teacher, anxiety, lack of coordination between distant dissertation partners, and lack of documentation. One teacher said, "Dissertation writing requires more than just the composition of a group of essays. Students need to be assisted at all levels especially at the psychological level to appease their anxieties".

The Fifth, but positive, effect of the pandemic on the Master students' process of research is the acquisition of new skills in regard to data collection in unusual settings. More than half of the surveyed students (54.5 %) claimed that they did learn new skills of data collection in unusual settings. Of the students who answered with 'yes' to this inquiry (question 21), nearly an average (9/17) elaborated on the topic. Mostly, they reported learning how to design online questionnaires. In the following excerpts, the students explained the gains of the new experience.

I didn't know about Google Forms before, it was so useful at collecting the data.

The online questionnaires are much better than the written version, because I was able to do my statistics in a more rapid and easy manner.

The teachers' answers to the same question (21) are in harmony with the students' responses. The vast majority of the teachers (75 %) noted the students' acquisition of the design and implementation of online questionnaires and one teacher eloquently elaborated on other skills as follows.

They learned to rely more on electronic materials, use software, use internet for academic purposes, overcome fear of discussing and communicating online over educational matters and promoting autonomous learning.

The last impact of Covid-19 on the students' dissertation assignment examined in this study is the behind closed-doors dissertation defense. As an indication, no teacher considered closed-doors dissertation presentations the same as open-doors and the majority were divided on whether they are more academically beneficial (refer to Table 4). Contrarily, 51.6 % of the surveyed students considered behind closed-doors dissertation presentations as advantageous since they are less stressful.

3.3. Strategies Employed to Cope with the Effects of Covid-19 on Dissertation Writing

The students, teachers, and administration (at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel) employed a set of strategies to avert the limitations of the Covid-19 anxieties and restrictive measures on dissertation writing. As the Master candidates were isolated in their homes and as 90.9 % (refer to Table 2) of these students had a thesis partner, they used social media, telephone calls, and emails to work collaboratively. As presented in Table 5 and Table 6, both the teachers and the students favored the use of the internet and telephone to work collaboratively.

Table (5): Students' Reported Dissertation Coping Strategies amid Covid-19

Coping strategies	Frequency
Communicating via social media (e.g., Facebook, Messenger, Skype)	59.09 %
Communicating via telephone	18.18 %
Communicating via emails	18.18 %
Data collection through internet means	87.9 %
Data collection through telephone	15.2 %
Bonding with the family to alleviate the stress of the lockdown	72.7 %
Sports alleviates the stress of the lockdown	36.4 %
Healthy diet alleviate the stress of the lockdown	9.1 %
Learning new things alleviate the stress of the lockdown	9.09 %
Playing alleviate the stress of the lockdown	9.1 %
Praying alleviate the stress of the lockdown	6.06%

Table (6): Supervisors' Reported Dissertation Coping Strategies

Coping strategies	Frequency
Internet as a means of communication with the supervisees	100 %
Telephone as a means of communication with the supervisees	75 %
Data collection by means of the internet	100 %
Data collection by means of the telephone	8.3 %
Teacher help of supervisees with online documentation	66.7 %
Teacher help of supervisees with data collection	33.3 %
Teacher help of supervisees with online research skills	58.3 %

With regard to data collection amid the pandemic, the teachers and the students indicated that the internet and, to a lesser extent, the telephone, were the most useful channels. The overwhelming majority (87.9%) of the students used the internet means such as the Facebook page of the department, their Facebook groups, and emails (especially the teachers' emails) to gather data and only 15.2 % said they used the telephone. Indeed, social media and emails are more practical for posting and distributing questionnaires and getting written answers.

As concerns the mental health of the Master candidates during the lockdown, the students revealed that they used a set of strategies to ward off the crippling stress and anxiety. The top coping strategies that the students used were bonding with family (72.7 %), sports (36.4 %), and playing and healthy diet (9.1). Given the highly-social nature of the Algerian society, the students resorted to family social gatherings to escape the stress and rumors of Covid-19, as Bensalem (2020) noted, aired through social media.

As far as the teacher help of the students to accomplish the research work amid the lockdown, firstly, they allowed both internet (100%) and telephone communication (75%) with their students. Secondly, 66.7% of them claimed supplying their supervisees with documentation. One supervisor said that he downloaded for the students documents from the web site he is subscribed in. Thirdly, 33.3 % of the Master supervisors stated that they assisted their candidates to collect data online. The teachers, on the whole, explained that they posted the students' questionnaires on the official Facebook page of the department or emailed their colleagues to answer their students' questionnaires.

Finally, with regard to the coping strategies employed by the administration to assist learners in writing their dissertations amid the Covid-19 crisis, the teachers and the students seem fairly satisfied (refer to Table 7). Both of them agreed that enough time was given to the Master candidates to complete the graduating assignment.

Table (7): Teachers' and Students' Evaluations of the Administration Coping Strategies

Administration coping strategies	Teacher	Student
Sufficiency of extensions given by the administration	91.7 %	97 %
Satisfaction with the administration management of dissertation writing amid Covid-19	83.3 %	93.8 %
Happiness with behind closed-doors dissertation defenses	50 %	54.54 %

Similarly, in connection with the administration agile management of the dissertation completion in these special conditions, the teachers and the students (83.3 % and 93.8 %, respectively) showed their happiness towards this issue. However, as pointed out earlier, the teachers seem to have some concerns with regard the benefits of behind closed-door dissertation defenses while the students liked them more as they are less stressful (refer to Table 4).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In the lights of the results highlighted in data discussion, it could concluded that the Master students at the Department of English Language (Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel) had serious challenges in implementing their graduating dissertations from their homes amid the Covid-19 pandemic. These challenges had severe consequences on the process of the completion of this academic assignment. However, these students learned new skills and the teachers and administration employed troubleshooting strategies to overcome the limitation of the stressful situation and remote learning.

Among the problems that the Master students encountered during the pandemics are lack of face-to-face supervision, receptivity of remote feedback, implementation of fieldwork, inaccessibility of informants through telecommunication, and lack of technological means. Consequently, it is urgent to set a plan for equipping learners with cheaper telecommunication means to enable them to commit to and benefit from remote learning and online expertise.

Additionally, it is more convenient to set a higher education national teaching platform to regulate efficiently and effectively remote learning which appears to be an

imposing reality today. The current recommendations of the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, as they stand, belong to the realm of a passive pedagogy, that is, teaching through written and at best aural materials. Today, we need a sound online pedagogy that would motivate learners to continually work and increase the accountability of the teacher in regard to online instruction.

The immediate impacts of the Covid-19 crisis on dissertation writing can be seen in the tardiness of dissertation completion, the lower quality of the end-products, and decline in the mental health and academic productivity of the students. However, the crisis taught the students to orient their efforts to learning online skills, which they previously downplayed or ignored. Many students were happy to discover that online questionnaires are easily designed, administered, and analyzed.

The consequences of the pandemic on dissertation writing were made less disruptive through the personal initiatives of the teachers and learners in their attempt to navigate their way through. For instance, many teachers monitored their candidates at distance using personal means such the telephone and the internet, provided their students with relevant documentation, trained them to design and administer online questionnaires, suggested changing the research instruments, and assisted the distribution of the candidates' questionnaires.

The administration management of the dissertation writing was positively evaluated by the participants. The teachers and the students were almost all happy with the extensions given for the submission of the assignment. Moreover, the teachers and the learners seemed contented with the administration quick management of the dissertation writing.

Finally, this unique experience of dissertation writing amid the Covid-19 crisis has opened the eyes of the students, teachers, administration, and the Ministry to the importance of urgently integrating online and distance courses to their agenda. All these education stakeholders have to think strategically and critically to keep abreast with the fast changing technological world and unpredictable times.

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Appendix Student and teacher questionnaires

Dear colleagues/students,

This questionnaire aims to investigate the Covid-19 challenges and consequences that the Master English language students (at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel, Algeria) have experienced during the process of dissertation writing. It equally explores the coping strategies that the students, teachers, and administration have employed to overcome the difficulties of the pandemic. Therefore, you are kindly asked to answer the questionnaire for research purposes. Thanks you in advance!

Question	Teacher	Student
Please indicate your gender. (Male/female)	Q1	Q1
How many Master dissertation groups have you supervised?	Q2	/
How many of your groups had continually worked with you during the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic?	Q3	/
Do you have a thesis partner? (Yes/no)	/	Q2
Is your supervisor geographically distant from where you live? (Yes/no)	/	Q3
What is the type of your/your supervisees' dissertation topic? (Desktop-oriented-could be done home/field-oriented-requires working outside)	Q4	Q4

How many of your supervised groups have so far completed their dissertations/Have you already completed your dissertation? (Yes/no)	Q5	Q5
What has been the most difficult have you experienced from March to the present day? (March-May, June-August, September-October)	/	Q6
If your supervisees got in touch with you during the University shutdown, what kind of contact did you have? (Face-to-face encounters/telephone communication/internet communication)	Q6	/
Has it been easy for you to get to University after Covid-19 reopening? (Yes/no) If no, please explain why.	Q7	Q7
If you have a dissertation partner, were you able to meet in face-to-face during the lockdown? (Yes/no) If no, please explain how did you work together?	/	Q8
How do you rate your internet access for research purposes during the lockdown? (Limited/average/acceptable)	Q8	Q9
In which periods of dissertation writing have you been able to provide/get face-to-face supervision? (March-May/June-August/September-October)	Q9	Q10
In which period of thesis writing have you/your supervisees achieved most of your/the work? (March-May/June-August/September-October)	Q10	Q11
Have you helped your supervisees with documentation? (Yes/no)	Q11	/
If you have met hurdles with regard to documentation during the university lockdown, please specify which one? (Shutdown of University library/problems with internet access/getting help from other people/other)	/	Q12
If you have met hurdles with regard to remote supervision, please specify which ones? (Students' receptivity of feedback/irregular contacts/cultural issues-e.g., male female chat/other)	Q12	/
What are the major problems have you met with regard to remote supervision? (No feedback at all/ scarce feedback/imprecise feedback/other)	/	Q13
If you you/your candidates have met problems with regard to research tool implementation during the university lockdown, please specify which ones? (Absence of face-to-face encounters/Unreachable informants through telecommunication/Shutdown of the research site (e.g., classes) /other)	Q13	Q14
How do you describe (your) (the) rate of work (of your supervisees) amid the upsurge in mortalities-the hot spot of the epidemic, later pandemic? (not anything/little/average/satisfying)	Q14	Q15
What word can you use to describe your feelings during the lockdown? (Loneliness/anxiety/fear/negative spirals-negative thoughts-/panic/despair)	Q15	Q16
Have you assisted your supervisees to collect data online? (Yes/no) If yes, explain how.	Q16	/
If (some/all of your supervised groups) (you) have been obliged to alter the use of the research tools in anyway because of the pandemic, please specify what have (you/they) done? (Discarded (a) research tool(s)/substituted a research tool for another/other)	Q17	Q17
If (any of your supervised groups) (you) have been obliged to change the topic of (your/their) your dissertation in anyway because of the	Q18	Q18

pandemic, are you still happy with the new topic? (Yes/no)		
How have you alleviated the stress brought about by the pandemic during the dissertation writing? (Playing/healthy diet/sports/bonding with family/ other)	/	Q19
How have you (your supervisees) managed to collect the data of (your/their) dissertation? (Through face-to-face encounters in the research site/ by means of the internet/via the telephone)	Q19	Q20
Have you helped you students to collect data in unusual settings? (Yes/no) If yes, please, explain how.	Q20	/
Have you/your students learned something new with regard to data collection in unusual situations (i.e., Covid-19 crisis)? (Yes/no) If yes, please explain.	Q21	Q21
Have you helped your supervisees with the skills of online documentation? (Yes/no) If yes, please explain how.	Q22	/
How do you evaluate the extension granted by the administration with regard to dissertation submission? (Enough/not enough) If not enough, please explain.	Q23	Q22
How do you rate the administration management (organizational quickness) of dissertation writing? (Satisfying/ unsatisfying). If unsatisfying, please explain what could have been done?	Q24	Q23
Do you think that isolation during the pandemic has permitted (you/your students to write a high quality dissertation? (Yes/no) Please explain.	Q25	Q24
How do you find closed-doors dissertation defenses? <i>Teacher:</i> (Less motivating to work harder with your students/ less enthusiastic for the students to achieve a better work/ the same as audience dissertation defense/ Less academically beneficial in the absence of the public emotional punch/ More academically beneficial in the absence of public/ other). <i>Student:</i> (Less enthusiastic in the absence of public/ the same as public defenses/ less stressful/other)	Q26	Q25