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## Exploring the Supervisor-Supervisee Communication Gap : The Case of Second-year Master Students of English, University of 8 May 1945-Guelma

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Mounya ABDAOUI \*,  
University of 8 May 1945-Guelma  
(Algeria),

[abdaoui.mounya@univ-guelma.dz](mailto:abdaoui.mounya@univ-guelma.dz)

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\* - Author correspondent.

### *Abstract*

The aim of this research paper is to explore the views of second-year Master Students about the supervisor-supervisee communication gap. Many students of English at the University of 8 May, 1945, Guelma were unable to meet the deadline of their Master Dissertation, which is potentially due to supervisors' late feedback and lack of guidance. To uncover students' opinion about the problem, a structured questionnaire was administered to 89 Master Students. Quantitative data revealed that 55.05% of them did not meet the deadline although 62.33% of the candidates worked in pairs. In addition, 42.85% of the participants perceived writing dissertations as difficult due to lack of supervisor's guidance. Furthermore, 53.48% of the informants testified a problem of late response. Interestingly, 60.67% of the respondents insisted that face-to-face meetings remain necessary in the Digital Age. Consequently, the lack of communication can ultimately lead to delay in dissertation completion.

**Keywords:** Communication; Dissertations; Guidance; Supervisee; Supervisor.

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## INTRODUCTION

The supervision process is facing many challenges in the Department of English, University of 8 May 1945-Guelma since many students were unable to meet the deadline of their Master Dissertation. Furthermore, many teachers have complained about their supervisees' proficiency level since they are struggling to write a high-quality dissertation. Many students still need training about research techniques and academic writing skills although they studied the module of "research methodology" and "advanced reading and writing skills" as well as "online research" and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

What complicated the issue is that most of the supervisors in the department of English are struggling to achieve an effective supervision of Master Students given the fact that they are still supervisees/PhD candidates. They are torn between finishing their Doctoral Research and guiding Master Students in writing their dissertations. Eventually, they are working under stress due to the multi-dimensional role they are playing as teachers, PhD candidates, and supervisors.

Apparently, no studies were conducted in the Algerian context about the problems of Master Dissertations' supervision in Foreign Language Learning either at graduation or at post-graduation levels. However, a semi-structured interview was conducted by Bakhou and Bouhania<sup>1</sup> to explore *thesis writing difficulties* faced by Algerian Master Students in some provinces of Algeria (Adrar, Ourgla, ELoued, Bechar, Oran, Béjaia, Batna, and Blida). Results indicated that the main difficulties in writing Master Dissertations include low academic writing proficiency, lack of supervisor support, and lack of research participants' cooperation. So, the lack of supervisors' support was a prominent problem. Within this scope, the aim of this research is to explore students' opinions about the problem of supervisor-supervisee communication gap as well as the effective role of the supervisor in directing students' research and providing them with constructive feedback and effective guidance in order to avoid delay in dissertation writing. In this respect, this research addresses the following main research question: Do second-year Master students believe that a communication gap exists between the supervisors and their supervisees?

### I. LITERATURE REVIEW

As explained by Abiddin, the teacher-student relationship during the supervision process is based on mutual discussion, interaction, and development of interpersonal skills<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the teacher-as-a-supervisor needs to collaborate with her/his supervisees in order to face obstacles and achieve a well-written academic work. However, not all teachers are able to perform this role effectively. Furthermore, some novice teachers need training to raise their awareness about the role of supervisors in guiding students towards a well-structured academic work.

The process of supervision is not easy since "it requires time, dedication and, more importantly, adequate training to qualify for the role" and "an understanding of educational theories and practical educational techniques including constructive feedback, communication skills"<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, it is necessary to train teachers to become supervisors. Some guidelines about training students to conduct Doctoral Research in Higher Education were proposed by The UK Research Councils' Joint Statement by focusing on "research skills and techniques, research environment,

research management, personal effectiveness, communication skills, networking and team-working, and career management”<sup>4</sup>. This implies that research techniques and communication skills are highly advocated in maintaining effective supervision. Furthermore, a highly independent researcher could be qualified to conduct research efficiently within a motivating research environment where each supervisee should act as a good manager of his/her own research and career. In addition, networking should be highly promoted through online supervisor-supervisee collaboration by using different mediums of online communication.

Previous research in the field of supervision focused more on Postgraduate/Doctoral Research rather than Undergraduate/Master Research. Dillon and Mallot<sup>5</sup> conducted an experimental study in which 35 Master Students and 5 PhD students of Psychology from the University of Western Michigan (USA) were enrolled. They compared the Behavioural and the Standard Systems. Findings indicated similar performance by both PhD and MA supervisees. However, Behavioural-system students finished their thesis earlier than Standard-system students.

Murphy et al.<sup>6</sup> conducted an interview in an Engineering Faculty (Singapore) about PhD Supervision to specify the role of the supervisor: two main roles were indicated: first, research direction and responsibility (controlling beliefs) versus guidance (guiding beliefs); second, either focus on the tasks (task-focused beliefs) or focus on the development of the supervisees (person-focused beliefs). Eventually, four useful orientations to supervision were distinguished: first, controlling and task-focused; second, controlling and person-focused; third, guiding and task-focused; fourth, guiding and person-focused. Murphy et al. concluded that supervision is considered as *a form of teaching* between supervisors and their supervisees. Moreover, Maphalala and Mpopfu<sup>7</sup> examined supervision of Doctoral Research in distance learning at the University of South Africa (Unisa). They found that 69% of postgraduate students agreed that supervisors’ guidance was useful.

Concerning Master Dissertations’ Supervision, Dysthe<sup>8</sup> investigated the shortcomings of individual supervision and stressed the importance of collective supervision. In this respect, Dysthe et al.<sup>9</sup> provided a new collective supervision model including three features: First, supervision groups encompassing two to three supervisors and their Master’s students. Second, student colloquia in which the same students work together without their supervisors. Third, individual supervision. The aim behind their model was raising students’ academic writing proficiency and facilitating research conduct as well as time organization to meet the deadline. Simultaneously, Anderson et al.<sup>10</sup> conducted an interview with 13 supervisors and 15 supervisees, in addition to a survey with 91 Master Students in the University of Edinburgh (UK) to explore both supervisors and Master Students’ views about the process of supervision and the supervisory relationship. They concluded that supervisors’ commitments and actions include mainly helping students select a topic in which they are highly interested as well as monitoring and guiding the supervision process. Anderson et al. also argued that the role of the supervisees is to be responsible for what they write and for the advancement of the writing process, and by ensuring “commitment”<sup>11</sup> and following supervisor’s directions. Furthermore, Abdallah et al. conducted a 45-minute interview with Gunnar Lindstedt who is an experienced supervisor. The interviewee indicated that two important elements constitute the supervision process, namely form and content. The former is related

to time-management and communication while the latter is based on directing students about how to deal with problems. They concluded that the supervisor should provide students with ongoing support “giving him the most possible autonomy without letting him stand alone”<sup>12</sup>.

Wichmann-Hansen et al.<sup>13</sup> studied the challenges encountered by supervisors in the Collective Academic Supervision Model applied in a Master Programme in Guidance and Counselling at Aarhus University (Denmark). Three main challenges were pointed out by them: First, equal participation by students in the group. Second, answering students’ inquiries and raising their involvement. Third, promoting students’ analytical skills. Among the other problems investigated by researchers in relation to Master Supervision, Dysthe et al. mentioned “overdependence on the supervisor” and “lack of ownership and mismatch of personalities”<sup>14</sup>. Thus, students should act independently from the teacher by designing their own research agenda under the control of the supervisor so that they could promote their autonomy in research by moving from teacher-guidance to self-guidance.

Based on their self-study, Gravis and Pendergast discussed the importance of the *relational supervision* approach where supervision is “based on an advisory role, quality control role, supportive role and guiding role”<sup>15</sup>. For them, this type of supervision is better than *traditional* supervision that views the supervisor as the expert and the student as the apprentice. Within the new role of the teacher in the learner-centred approach, the supervisor should act as a facilitator, an organizer, and a monitor who guides students towards effective planning, design of research tools, and division of chapters especially when students have a low English proficiency that may prevent them from getting a good insight into the topic. However, facilitation does not imply doing the work for students. It rather denotes directing them towards good design of the academic work. Undoubtedly, the role of the supervisor is helping students “relate theory to practice”<sup>16</sup>. Rensburg et al.<sup>17</sup> stressed the importance of providing students with academic support, emotional support, writing support, assessment, and feedback. They also highlighted the necessity of supervisor-student communication in which constructive and written feedback play central roles.

Another important role that should be played by supervisors is raising supervisees’ awareness about “digital ethics”<sup>18</sup>. They must direct their supervisees’ attention towards academic honesty and plagiarism avoidance. Within this scope, using automatic detection of plagiarism, as explained by Abdaoui,<sup>19</sup> could be very influential in enhancing the role of the teacher as an assessor of students’ research. Furthermore, supervisors are evaluators and feedback providers. Online feedback could be used to gain time and effort during the process of supervision. Apparently, some supervisors are not playing an effective role vis-à-vis providing students with assessment and feedback. This idea is supported by Ismail who argued that:

*“[A]lthough it is recommended that educational supervisors should have an understanding of educational theories and practical educational techniques including constructive feedback, communication skills and dealing with difficulties, regrettably this is not the case”<sup>20</sup>*

A supervisor-supervisee communication gap appears to persist despite the availability of various mediums of communications in the Digital Age. Problems of non-response or late response from the supervisor could affect students’ emotional status and make them feel confused, irritated, and lost. This could result in lack of guidance and delay in writing the dissertation especially when hand-written feedback

is lacking. Communication with the supervisor is highly influential because supervision process is based on *constructive feedback* which is not an easy task to accomplish as explained by Dowe “to criticise someone else’s work, even constructively, is difficult”<sup>21</sup>. According to Rensburg et al., constructive feedback is related to “to strategies for improvement and using appropriate language in a collaborative rather than a lecturing style”<sup>22</sup>. Thus, collaboration is the principal objective behind feedback.

Supervisors could also play the role of counsellors. In psychology, counselling is viewed as “a therapeutic experience for otherwise reasonably healthy persons faced with problems”<sup>23</sup>. The *Division of Counselling Psychology* defined counselling as “an active, collaborative relationship which can both facilitate the exploration of underlying issues and can empower people to confront change”<sup>24</sup>. In the same line, the supervisor should collaborate with his/her supervisees to uncover new things and get accustomed to new learning situations through research and dissertation writing. Nonetheless, the counsellor, as advised by Rao,<sup>25</sup> needs training to be able to provide help to others. The same for a supervisor whose intellectual support is not enough because s/he needs to be trained especially when s/he supervises students’ dissertations for the first time.

Being a supervisor is not an easy task to accomplish due to the unavailability of clear guidelines about what a supervisor must do. Learning through experience or learning through doing has characterized supervisors’ career especially in the case of PhD Supervision which is described by Halse as “a process of ‘becoming a supervisor’”<sup>26</sup>. Consequently, the role of the supervisors is multi-dimensional; they should maintain a strong relationship with their supervisees based mainly on communication. Although there are different tools of communication in the digital era, some students still witness a lack of communication with their supervisors, which is really a problematic issue.

Cornelius and Nicol encouraged “flexibility”<sup>27</sup> by supporting supervisees in online environments through distance and blended learning. Seemingly, some supervisors may feel anxious and disengaged towards the process of supervision because of some problems like “lack of experience” and “lack of clarity”<sup>28</sup> about what to do exactly as a supervisor, in addition to students’ low academic writing proficiency.

Rubin et al. is defined communication as “a process by which people arrive at shared meanings through the interchange of messages”<sup>29</sup>. This denotes that no exchange of information results in a communication gap between the two sides. Thus, communication between students and teachers is highly advocated to enhance learning and supervision. Petty explained that “the phenomenologist and symbolic interactionist approaches to the analysis of teacher-pupil relationships provide persuasive reasons for believing that pupils’ achievements may be related directly to their ability to communicate with their teachers”<sup>30</sup>. This implies that writing a good dissertation is related directly to effective communication with the supervisor whose support during the process of supervision is very important. Therefore, students and their supervisors should avoid what Masek labelled “communication breakdown”<sup>31</sup> since it can lead to the delay of graduation or drop-out. This indicates that the only way to receive support from supervisors is to maintain a strong relationship with them based on interaction, collaboration, and communication.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### II.1. Context and Sample of the Study

Second-year Master Students at the department of English, 8 May 1945 University (Guelma) are struggling to finish their dissertations on time. Many candidates were complaining about the communication barriers between supervisors and their supervisees. Hence, a survey was made to explore second-year Master students' opinions about the existence of a communication gap between teachers-as-supervisors and students by the end of the academic year 2019-2020 (October). Eighty-nine (89) participants, aged between 23 and 27 years responded to the online questionnaire which was administered using Google Forms because of the spread of the Corona virus.

### II.2. Research Method and Tools

The current study was conducted through the quantitative approach by administering a structured questionnaire to 89 second-year Master students. The questionnaire is chosen as a research tool because it is a reliable tool of data collection in the process of teaching and learning, as argued by Richard and Lockhart<sup>32</sup>. It consists of nineteen (19) questions distributed over three sections (*See Appendix A*). The first section (*two questions*) includes general information about the sample. It explored Masters' Students' age and the way of writing the dissertation (individually or in pairs). The second section (*eight questions*) investigated topic selection and writing the dissertations. It aims mainly at collecting data about topic selection, dissertations' writing difficulties, and meeting the deadline. The third section (*nine questions*) surveys the views of the supervisees about the supervisor's role and their attitudes towards their supervisors.

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative data from the structured questionnaire indicated that the population's age ranges from 23 to 27 years. More importantly, 37.66% of the participants declared that they are writing their Master Dissertation individually while 62.33% of them are working in pairs. Pair work in writing Master Dissertations in the department of English, 8 May 1945 University (Guelma) is due to the considerable lack of supervisors and the growing number of second-year Master Students.

Specifying a good topic for the dissertation is related to problem identification. Within this scope, originality is highly appreciated in selecting topics. So, whose role is it to select a topic? Is it the supervisor's job since s/he is more experienced or the candidates' task? Concerning responses to this question, *Table 1* shows that the majority of informants (77.52%) are convinced that topic selection is neither the responsibility of the supervisor nor the supervisee alone. 20.22% of them argued that topic choice should be done by students. Whereas, 2.35% of the respondents declared that it is teachers' responsibility to select a topic. Consequently, students should be given the opportunity to choose topics in which they are interested so that they could feel more motivated and engaged. Then, supervisors should direct their choice and approve their topic. Thus, topic selection should be based on mutual discussion and collaboration.

Table 1.

*Supervisors' versus Supervisees' Topic Selection*

| Options   | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Students' choice of the topic                   | 18        | 20.22%     |
| Teachers' choice of the topic                   | 2         | 2.35%      |
| Both (based on mutual discussion/collaboration) | 69        | 77.52%     |
| Total   | 89        | 100%       |

Additionally, more than two-thirds of the population (65,16%) argued that what attracts them to a specific topic is originality; 31.46% opted for availability of sources as the cause behind topic selection. The rest of the population (3.37%) argued that easiness of the topic could lie behind theme selection. Furthermore, participants were asked about whether it is difficult to write the dissertation or not. As shown in *Table 2*, the majority of the informants viewed dissertation writing as difficult. While, 29.21% of the informants considered dissertation writing as easy. Concerning the causes behind the difficulties in dissertation writing, the majority of participants (71.42%) asserted that they faced difficulties due to the lack of sources. Choosing original topics may sometimes lead to unavailability of sources. Interestingly, 42.85% of the respondents considered the lack of supervisor's guidance and collaboration as the reason behind difficulties in writing the dissertation. Consequently, supervisors should have clear instructions about effective supervision and supervisors' role. 19.04% of the participants admitted that writing the dissertation is difficult due to their low academic writing proficiency. As a result, students' academic writing must be enhanced before having access to the Master's Programme, either independently or through formal instruction.

Table 2.

*Master Students' Perceptions of Dissertation Writing as Easy or Difficult*

| Options   | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Easy      | 63        | 29.21%     |
| Difficult | 26        | 70.78%     |
| Total     | 89        | 100%       |

Concerning the aspects that students focused on when writing their dissertation, research methodology was ranked first with 65.16% of responses. Paraphrasing was in the second rank (61.79%). The practical part was listed third (51.68%). The fourth rank was allocated to vocabulary (34.83%); while grammar was ranked fifth (24.71%). This indicates that students give more importance to research methodology and design because they are aware of its useful contribution to the achievement of a well-structured dissertation. They further noticed the utility of the practical part which reflects the students' original contribution to the field of research. Students also considered paraphrasing as very interesting, they know that academic dishonesty threatens their career as a student as well as their professional career in the future. Some of them appreciated the use of suitable vocabulary that shows a good lexical competence in English. Consequently, grammar was ranked in the last position although many grammatical errors are often spotted in students' dissertation writing.

As displayed in *Table 3* below, students' opinions about the most difficult aspect in writing dissertations were collected. Participants provided different viewpoints about that. No general consensus was made by the informants about a specific aspect. 38.2% of the respondents argued that the theoretical part is the most difficult feature in writing the dissertation. This may be due to the fact that it takes a long time to collect and review the literature as well as paraphrase the statements of authors and write the references' list. Besides, 21.34% of them maintained that paraphrasing is the most difficult factor in writing the dissertation. Students are struggling to re-word others' words and statements. This may be due to many reasons such as lack of reading comprehension, lack of vocabulary, lack of academic writing proficiency...etc. Moreover, 20.22% of the population concurred that the practical part is the most difficult aspect of dissertations' writing. This implies that research is not an easy process, it needs a well-qualified student who is able to design research tools and conduct empirical research. 19.1% of the informants viewed writing styles (APA/MLA) as the most difficult aspect of Master Dissertations' writing. Not all the students use them easily when making both in-text citation and bibliography citation. 1.12% of the participants admitted that vocabulary is the most difficult feature in writing dissertations. None opted for grammar as the most difficult part in writing dissertations. This denotes that the informants did not face problems with grammatical competence, which is not the case when we check students' writing that is full of grammatical errors.

Table 3.

*Students' Opinions about the Most Difficult Aspect in Writing Dissertations*

| Options                 | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| The theoretical part    | 34        | 38.2%      |
| The practical part      | 18        | 20.22%     |
| Writing style (APA/MLA) | 17        | 19.1%      |
| Paraphrasing            | 19        | 21.34%     |
| Grammar                 | 0         | 0%         |
| Vocabulary              | 1         | 1.12%      |
| Total                   | 89        | 100%       |

More than half of the informants (55.05%) confessed that they were unable to meet the deadline (mid-June); they finished their dissertation in September although 32.65% of them started writing the theoretical part in February while 26.53% of them started writing their dissertation in March. This confirms the fact that one Academic Semestre (four months and half: from February to mid-June) is not enough for conducting research and writing the dissertation. 36.73% of the population confessed that they started their dissertations in April, which shows that they were very late. Although 2.04% of the respondents started in December and the same percentage (2.04%) in January, they did not finish on time.

A supervisor is expected to help her/his supervisees meet the deadline and write both the theoretical and practical part proficiently. S/he must guide the candidates during the process of Master Dissertation writing by moving gradually from research proposal design and writing to the fulfillment of a well-structured dissertation. As displayed in *Table 4*, the most effective three qualities of a supervisor



as indicated by the informants are: corrector (73.03%), feedback provider (71.91%), and guide (65.16%). Besides, 29.21% of the respondents claimed that other qualities of the supervisor include “director” while 13.48% of the informants acknowledged the quality of being “a facilitator” and “a monitor” especially within the learner-centred curriculum. Opting for “corrector” as the first quality of the supervisor reflects students’ lack of autonomy and reliance on the teacher. Master’s candidates not only affirmed that the first quality of the supervisor is corrector but 55.05% of them preferred non-automatic correction. In other words, they announced that the traditional way of correction by using colours to highlight errors in *Word Processing* is better than automatic correction.

Table 4.

*The Most Effective Three Qualities of a Supervisor*

| Options           | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Director          | 26        | 29.21%     |
| Facilitator       | 12        | 13.48%     |
| Feedback provider | 64        | 71.91%     |
| Corrector         | 65        | 73.03%     |
| Guide             | 58        | 65.16%     |
| Monitor           | 12        | 13.48%     |

As supervisor-supervisee communication is very important, 85.39% of the participants were convinced that the Internet is supposed to facilitate communication with the supervisor through different mediums of communication. The most used medium as indicated by them is emails (88.15%). Phone calls were ranked in the second position (42.1%). Then, Facebook Messenger represents the third tool of communication (35.52%). Supervisors rarely used mobile messages to contact their supervisees (7.89%), the same for Skype (1.31%) and WhatsApp (1.31%) as well as Facebook Messages (1.31%). On the contrary, 14.6% of the respondents were against the fact that the Internet has made communication with the supervisor easier; this is due to many reasons as explained by them. The first reason is the problem of late response as chosen by 53.84% of the informants. The second reason is the problem of non-response that was selected by 38.46% of the population. The third cause behind that is the ambiguity of some instructions and guidelines offered through emails as uncovered by 23.07% of the candidates. Furthermore, 15.38% of the participants claimed that all these factors are responsible for the difficulties of communication through the Net.

Despite the fact that 85.39% of Master Students ensured that the Internet facilitated communication with the supervisor, 55.05% of the students did not meet the deadlines. Therefore, informants were asked about what they usually do in case of non- or late response from the supervisor to handle the problem of communication gap and avoid delay. As shown in *Table 5*, more than half of the population (58.42%) felt helpless when they received late (or non-) response from the supervisor. In other words, they have no solution in this situation. 38.2% of the informants declared that they asked for clarifications/guidance from their peers. Hereby, these students appreciate peers’ collaboration as an effective way to get help in moments of need in order not to waste time waiting for the late answers from the supervisor. 26.96% of

the respondents opted for seeking guidance from other teachers whenever their supervisor neglected their urgent messages or emails. In the same line, 60.67% of the respondents asserted that supervision meetings (face-to-face) remain necessary in the age of technology; however, 30.33% of them claimed that face-to-face meetings are sometimes necessary. 8.98% of the informants argued that there is no need for face-to-face meetings in the Internet Age since online/electronic feedback is enough.

Table 5.

*Students' Solutions in Case of Late or Non-response*

| Options  | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| I just wait (nothing to do)                            | 52        | 58.42%     |
| I ask for clarifications/ guidance from my peers       | 34        | 38.20%     |
| I ask for clarifications/ guidance from other teachers | 24        | 26.96%     |

Effective supervision is highly advocated in Foreign Language Learning. To reach high-quality dissertations, supervisors should play several roles. *Table 6* below indicates the most essential roles of supervisors as seen by students. The majority of the participants (85.39%) are aware of the essential role of the supervisor as *a guide* who should always listen to supervisees' inquiries and provide them with advice, valuable comments, and constructive feedback. Moreover, 65.16% of the informants argued that the supervisor has to direct supervisees towards effective information retrieval and citation techniques. In addition, 43.82% of the respondents indicated that fixing deadlines for each chapter is among the essential roles of supervisors since it could help students organize their time and avoid delay. Besides, 33.7% of the participants argued that providing supervisees with references is among the roles of the supervisor. 30.33% of the participants declared that informing them about ethical issues and codes is a principal role that must be played by supervisors. Eventually, 5.61% of the population suggested other roles as follows:

- Providing feedback as soon as possible.
- Taking responsibility for supervisor's wrong recommendations in oral defense especially when s/he asks students to change something that was correct in the beginning.
- Maintaining a good friendly relationship (relational supervision).
- Being a hard worker and showing interest in the topic.

Table 6.

*The Most Essential Roles of Supervisors*

| Options  | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Informing supervisees about ethical issues/codes                           | 27        | 30.33%     |
| Directing supervisees towards effective information retrieval and citation | 58        | 65.16%     |
| Fixing deadlines for each chapter  | 39        | 43.82%     |
| Providing continuous guidance  | 76        | 85.39%     |
| Providing supervisees with references                                      | 30        | 33.7%      |
| Other  | 5         | 5.61%      |

As a result, students are aware of the importance of immediate feedback, hard work, and respect in relational supervision. They underestimate supervisors' wrong guidelines and misleading directions (due perhaps to lack of experience) especially when s/he does not assume responsibility in the viva.

In the last question, students were asked about their attitudes towards their supervisors. Ajzen defined attitude as "an individual's disposition to react with a certain degree of favorableness or unfavorableness to an object, behaviour, person, institution, or event"<sup>33</sup>. Attitudes may be affected by the conditions in which students worked to finish their dissertations and the relationship with their supervisor. As shown in *Table 7*, more than two-thirds (67.41%) of the population claimed that they have positive attitudes towards their supervisors while 35.58% of the respondents asserted that their attitudes towards their supervisors are negative. Perhaps, they are within 55.05% of the students who did not meet the deadline because of the lack of communication with their supervisors.

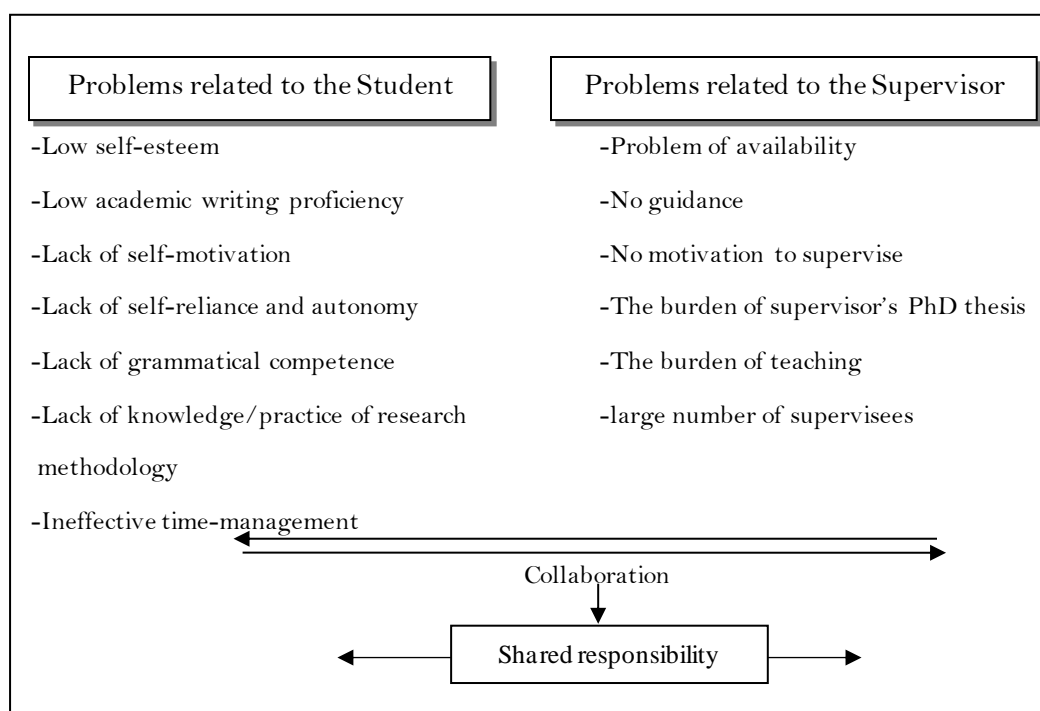
*Table 7.*

*Master's Candidates Attitudes towards their Supervisors*

| Options  | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Positive | 60        | 67.41%     |
| Negative | 29        | 35.58%     |
| Total    | 89        | 100%       |

The following figure summarises the different problems faced by both supervisors and their supervisees in the Department of English, University of 8 May 1945, Guelma. To solve these problems, teacher-learner collaboration and shared responsibility during the supervision process are highly advocate

*Figure 1. Supervision Challenges and Solutions*



## CONCLUSION

Following supervisors' guidelines would help Master's Candidates write a well-structured dissertation and meet the deadline, which is not the case for 55.05% of Master Students although 62.33% of the candidates worked in pairs. More importantly, 70.78% of the respondents pointed out that writing dissertations is difficult. 42.85% of them further considered the lack of guidance as the cause behind this difficulty. Accordingly, lack of communication persists despite accessibility to technology. In this respect, 38.46% of the participants admitted that they suffered from the problem of non-response and 53.48% of them witnessed a problem of late response that could affect candidates' time-management negatively. Interestingly, 60.67% of the respondents insisted that face-to-face meetings remain necessary in the age of technology. As a result, second-year Master Students argued that delay and inability to meet the deadline is due to supervisor-supervisee communication gap.

It is highly recommended that the supervisor should look for ways to fill the communication gap that could sometimes result in postponing students' research and writing. Clear instructions about supervisors' roles should also be specified in the department of English so that teachers know what is expected from them as Master Students' Supervisors. Finally, supervisors who are still writing their Doctoral Thesis have to manage their time effectively by allocating enough time to Master Dissertations' Supervision, teaching tasks, examinations' correction, and their own thesis. Without supervisors' support and cooperation, students will struggle to overcome the difficulties they face in writing their dissertations.

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## THE APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Section 1: General Information

1-Age: .....years

2-How have you written your dissertation?

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| In pairs     |  |
| Individually |  |

#### Section 2: Topic Selection and Dissertation Writing

3-Which one is more effective?

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Students' choice of the topic                   |  |
| Teachers' choice of the topic                   |  |
| Both (based on mutual discussion/collaboration) |  |

4-What attracts your attention more to a specific topic? (one option)

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Easiness                |  |
| Originality (new)       |  |
| Availability of sources |  |

5-Do you think that writing the dissertation was?

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Easy      |  |
| Difficult |  |

-If difficult, why?

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Low academic writing proficiency                |  |
| Lack of supervisors' guidance and collaboration |  |
| Lack of sources                                 |  |

6-On which three aspects did you focus more to elaborate your dissertation?

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Research methodology |  |
|----------------------|--|

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| The practical part      |  |
| Grammar                 |  |
| Vocabulary              |  |
| Writing style (APA/MLA) |  |
| Paraphrasing            |  |

7-Which aspect is the most difficult in writing dissertations?

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| The theoretical part    |  |
| The practical part      |  |
| Grammar                 |  |
| Vocabulary              |  |
| Writing style (APA/MLA) |  |
| Paraphrasing            |  |

8-When did you finish your dissertation?

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| June (the deadline)   |  |
| September             |  |
| June of the next year |  |

8a-If you have finished in June, how long did you spend in writing your dissertation?

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| From December to June, 15th |  |
| From January to June, 15th  |  |
| From February to June, 15th |  |
| From March to June, 15th    |  |
| From April to June, 15th    |  |

8b- If you have finished in September, how long did you spend in writing your dissertation?

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| From December to September |  |
| From January to September  |  |
| From February to September |  |
| From March to September    |  |
| From April to September    |  |

### Section 3: Supervisors' Qualities and Roles

9-What are the most effective **three** or **two** qualities of a supervisor?

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Director          |  |
| Facilitator       |  |
| Feedback provider |  |
| Corrector         |  |
| Guide             |  |
| Monitor           |  |

10-Which type of correction do you prefer?

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Automatic correction  |  |
| Non-automatic correction/the traditional one: using colours for highlighting) |  |

11-Has the Internet facilitated communication with the supervisor?

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| Yes |  |
| No  |  |



11a-If yes, which medium of communication do you often use to contact your supervisor?

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| E-mails                               |  |
| Instant messages through Skype        |  |
| Mobile messages                       |  |
| Phone calls                           |  |
| Messenger                             |  |
| Other, would you please specify below |  |

11b-If no, why?

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Problem of non-response                                  |  |
| Problem of late-response                                 |  |
| Some instructions and guidelines in emails are not clear |  |
| All the above  |  |
| Other (s), would you please specify below                |  |

12-If there is non- or late response from your supervisor, what do you do?

|   |  |
|---|--|
| I just wait (nothing to do)                           |  |
| I ask for clarifications/guidance from my peers       |  |
| I ask for clarifications/guidance from other teachers |  |

13-Do you think that “supervision meetings”/face-to-face are necessary in the age of technology?

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Yes       |  |
| Sometimes |  |
| No        |  |

14-What are the most essential roles of good supervisors? (three options)

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Informing students about ethical issues/codes                           |  |
| Directing students towards effective information retrieval and citation |  |
| Fixing deadlines for each chapter                                       |  |
| Providing continuous guidance   |  |
| Providing references  |  |
| Other (s), would you please specify below                               |  |

15-From your experience, how were your attitudes towards your supervisor?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Positive |  |
| Negative |  |

**TO QUOTE THE AUTHOR:**

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