

Students' difficulties on writing undergraduate thesis at Islamic university

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ABSTRACT

Until now, there are still students who do not graduate on time. This study aims to determine the difficulties of students in writing undergraduate thesis in the English Tadris Study Program, UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. Researcher used case study designs and 31 questions interviews as research instruments. This research was conducted at the English Education Study Program, UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. The subjects in this study were 5 female and 5 male who were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on several criteria. In this study, the researcher found that there were some difficulties for students in writing their thesis. These difficulties include: difficulties regarding basic knowledge of thesis; Psychological; Economic; Socio-Cultural; The consultation process with the advisor; and Technological. Besides that, researchers also found other results, which are students' difficulties in lacking basic English knowledge and skills, academic requirements files, study programs and faculty academic services.

Keywords: difficulties; Islamic university writing; students' difficulties; undergraduate thesis; writing

INTRODUCTION

In scientific writing, there are several types, that as research articles, term papers, dissertations, thesis, and so on which are certainly no strangers to students. Scientific writing is no stranger to the public, especially students. The results of scientific works have been continuously viewed from various fields such as education, business, technology, health, science and so on which can be used as information and even references for readers. Scientific work is usually written by students, lecturers and teachers as supporting supporters. In line with this, Sumardi, Pratama & Putri (2022) stated that it is important for lecturers and teachers to publish articles to support their careers because they are required to publish articles regularly, especially in international journals. One of the mandatory requirements at universities to get a degree for students is the final assignment, which is writing a thesis. In line with this, Irwandi & Arisanti (2019) state that students who have taken thesis courses, have to write a thesis as a requirement to obtain a bachelor's degree in university.

According to Irwandi & Arisanti (2015) states that the maximum time for writing a thesis is no more than one year. In line with this, Agwil, Fransiska & Hidayati (2020) mention that for Undergraduate (S1) programs students graduate on time if they can complete four years of study and are categorized as not graduating on time if they complete more than four years of study. However, many students do not graduate on time for several reasons.

In fact, there are still students who cannot finish it on time, because for most students, writing a thesis is not an easy job. It takes a lot of time and consumes emotions, energy, and thinking in the process. Other problems that are often experienced by students include difficulty finding thesis titles, related literature, and finding references related to the ideas being researched (Irwandi & Arisanti, 2019). This is caused by the lack of interest and motivation of students in completing their thesis and the lack of interest in matters related to literacy.

In line with this, based on data obtained from Central Connecticut State University in March 2016 in research entitled "World's Most Literate Nations Ranked" shows that Indonesia is ranked 60 out of 61 countries in literacy interest. This is reinforced by literacy data obtained by the OECD in 2018 which shows that Indonesia has an average score of 371 and is ranked at the bottom. These two things show that Indonesia has a low literacy rate. It is explained that reading, thinking and then writing are the essence of literacy (Warsihna, 2016). This is related to the topic of discussion in this study, namely the lack of student interest in literacy, such as not reading books or having difficulty finding related references which cause students to have difficulty writing a thesis.

Besides that, there are other problems for students in the process of writing their thesis that is matters related to the advisor. In the process of writing a thesis, each student is guided to complete the thesis by their advisor. Harjum (2020) states that maintaining good communication with the advisor is an important thing to do in thesis writing. However, some students have problems arranging meeting times with advisors. Another problem is communication with the advisor. Some students feel uncomfortable in discussing with the advisor, students are afraid of discussing with the advisor, differences of opinion with the advisor, students are less active in discussing with the advisor, and other problems.

Based on the background above, this research is still important to do because previous research only discussed students' difficulties in terms of basic knowledge of students in writing their thesis, difficulties in consulting with advisors, economic factors, and difficulties from a psychological and socio-cultural factor. In this research, the researcher want to add one indicator, which is an indicator of technological factors. In addition, the topic of this research is still limited to the scope of the English Education Study Program at UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. Based on these reasons, researcher are very interested in researching the same topic and decided to do research entitled "Students' Difficulties on Writing Undergraduate Thesis at Islamic University". This study aims to determine the difficulties of students in writing undergraduate thesis in the English Tadris Study Program, UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi.

METHODS

This study uses a case study design. According to Creswell (2013) a case study is a model that focuses on a "bounded system" exploration of one special case or some specific cases in detail by extracting in-depth data. In line with this, Yin (2003) states that a case study is an inquiry that investigates phenomena in a real-life context. This research will be conducted at the English Education Study Program of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. The subjects of this research were 10 students of the English Education Study Program UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. The selection of research subjects used purposive sampling. The purpose of sampling, followed by the criteria: (1) Active student of the English education study program at UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi; (2) Currently in the process of writing a thesis or have completed writing a thesis (3) The student's thesis has been disseminated.

In this study, the researcher used primary data research sources. In this case, the researcher collects data from interviews. The interview indicators were English Education students at UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi who were in the process of writing their thesis. The researcher used interviews as data collection techniques. In this study, researcher used a type of structured interview with a total of 31 questions. This is supported by Yin (2003) explained that the interview is one of the instruments in the qualitative research method case study design. Creswell (2013) further explained that the interview is one of the centers of all qualitative research traditions so it requires additional attention from researcher. This research, reseachers use technique of data analysis based theory of Miles & Huberman (1994) state that in qualitative research, including data reduction, data display and conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Basic knowledge of undergraduate thesis main component

Every student has different academic abilities. For final semester students, of course, the basic knowledge of thesis writing is the foundation to complete the thesis as one of the requirements for graduating from university. In this case, the researcher tries to find out what difficulties students experience in writing a thesis related to basic knowledge of the thesis. Based on the interview results, the researcher found differences in the difficulties experienced by each student. Researcher have eight questions related to basic knowledge of the thesis.

Based on the interview, the researcher found there are several difficulties on writing thesis. The first difficulty is the difficulty in finding the topic of the problem according to the title of the thesis. Based on the results of the interviews, the researcher found that some students had difficulty finding the topic of the problem related to the thesis title because they were confused and did not comply with the advisor's request. This is in line with the research by Sariyanto, Supardi & Husin (2015) in whose research results showed that there were students who had difficulty finding problem topics that matched the problem topics of their thesis.

The second difficulty is the difficulty in compiling the research background. Based on the results of the study, the researcher found that there were several difficulties including difficulties in finding a grand theory, difficulty finding the urgency of the research, the guidance process regarding the background which was quite long, and the lack of material to support the background. This is in line with research conducted by Harjum (2020) and Asisa (2021) in the results of their research which found that students had difficulties in compiling research backgrounds.

The third difficulty is the difficulty of getting referrals. The researcher found that there were difficulties in obtaining references related to the thesis title including difficulty in obtaining references that matched the thesis title, difficulty in finding the latest references, difficulty in finding references in research articles and books and difficulties in accessing locked journal articles. This is in line with the research of Sariyanto, Supardi & Husin (2015) which shows that in his research it states that students have difficulty finding references in writing a thesis.

The fourth difficulty is the difficulty in developing ideas in writing a thesis. Researchers found that there were difficulties in developing ideas in writing thesis including difficulties in finding supporting theories related to ideas, not in line with the advisor's requests, developing ideas depending on mood and not knowing the meaning of words or sentences. This shows that there are still many students who still have difficulty developing ideas in writing their thesis. This is in line with research conducted by Swarni (2016) which states that there are difficulties for students, namely a lack of ideas in writing thesis.

The fifth difficulty is the difficulty in determining the population and research sample. In this study the researchers found that there were difficulties in determining the population and research sample, namely the difference between the first advisor and the second advisor who did not agree about the population and research sample. This is in line with research conducted by Swarni (2016) in whose research results showed that there were difficulties in determining the size of the study sample. It was continued by Harjum (2020) who found that there were difficulties in determining the sample and research population.

The sixth difficulty is the difficulty in determining data collection techniques and research instruments. Researchers found difficulties regarding data collection techniques and research instruments including determining research designs that were not appropriate with the research title and difficulties in determining questions related to interviews as research instruments. This is in line with research conducted by Sariyanto, Supardi & Husin (2015) which shows that in writing thesis students have difficulty determining data collection techniques and research instruments.

The seventh difficulty is the difficulty in determining data analysis techniques and analyzing research results. The researcher found that there were students' difficulties in data analysis techniques and analyzing research results. This explained that students had difficulty analyzing research results even though they used a quantitative data analysis tool, namely SPSS. This is in line with research

conducted by Harjum (2020); Asisa (2021) and Sariyanto, Supardi & Husin (2015) which state that students have difficulty determining data analysis techniques and analyzing the results of research data.

The last difficulty is the difficulty to describe the results of research data. In this research, the researcher found that there were students' difficulties in describing the results of the research data, which included a lack of developing ideas and a lack of basic English. This is in line with Swarni (2016) which states that students have difficulty describing research results in their thesis.

Based on this discussion, it can be concluded that in thesis writing there are difficulties in basic knowledge of thesis writing. This is supported by Irwandi & Arisanti (2016) stating that in writing thesis students have difficulty determining the thesis title, do not understand the organization of the thesis, have problems finding the right theory with thesis discussion, and have problems determining which methodology fits the title his research.

Psychological difficulties

Motivation

Motivation is something that makes a person excited and do their best to achieve a certain goal. For final semester students at each university, writing a thesis is the biggest challenge for students because as a requirement to graduate it is not easy because it requires strength, enthusiasm and strong motivation. Based on the results of interviews with participants, the researcher found that:

Table 1. Motivation Difficulties

Participant	Motivation in writing thesis				Self
	Parents	Graduate quickly	Enthusiasm in writing	Quickly return to the province of origin	
S01	✓	✓			
S02	✓	✓			
S03	✓				✓
S04		✓	✓		
S05		✓			
S06	✓	✓			
S07	✓	✓			
S08				✓	
S09		✓			
S10					✓

This shows that each participant has motivation in writing a thesis. The researcher found that the biggest motivation for students in writing their thesis was to quickly graduate from university. Then the motivation of students in writing the thesis is to make their parents proud and not be a burden on the family. The other motivation is self-motivated. And a quite unique motivation for students in completing their thesis is being motivated to leave Jambi and return to their home province. This explains that each student has his own motivation in writing a thesis.

This is in accordance with Rizalo (2022) which states that by having high motivation the challenges faced when writing a thesis can be easily carried out. Followed by Lestari (2020) states that good intrinsic motivation possessed by students makes them fixated on starting to write a thesis, but external motivation means that the people around them are not the best at writing thesis.

In this research, the researcher found that the motivation of students in writing their thesis was their parents and the desire to graduate from university quickly. In addition, there are students who are motivated by themselves. This is in line with research conducted by Rizalo (Rizalo, 2022) that there are some students who are self-motivated in writing their thesis.

Self esteem

Self-esteem is one of the other difficulties in writing a thesis on psychological difficulties. Self-Esteem is a form of self-assessment that is usually associated with self-esteem. This can explain whether students respect themselves and are confident or not in writing their thesis. Based on the results of interviews with participants, the researcher found that:

S07 : *Not confident, for fear that many will be lacking, afraid of not being suitable and afraid of not being perfect. Writing this thesis is enough to make me depressed (S07)*

Participant S07 stated that he was not confident with the results of his thesis writing. This was explained that in the interview, participant had a fear that later in writing there would be many flaws, mistakes and the writing of the thesis was not perfect. This is what makes Participant become depressed in the process of writing his thesis.

The researcher found that almost all students were confident with their writing results. Besides that, there was one student who stated that he was not confident with the results of his thesis writing because he was afraid it would not be perfect. This is supported by Sariyanto, Supardi & Husin (2015) which states that there are difficulties with self-esteem, namely a lack of self-confidence in students in writing theses. Moreover, the researcher also found students who dared to convey their arguments about the importance of writing a thesis or not.

Anxiety

The difficulty of students in writing their thesis is excessive anxiety. Asisa (2021) explain that usually anxiety is caused by environmental influences or genetic factors. Based on the results of this interview, it can be seen that there are many students' fears and also other things that are considered as difficulties in writing a thesis from a psychological perspective. The biggest fear of students is fear of being wrong and not in accordance with the wishes of the advisor, afraid of not understanding, afraid of not being on target, fear of stress due to excessive anxiety, fear of writing an imperfect thesis, fear of processing research data incorrectly, and during the guidance process anxiety and fear of having many revisions. Besides that, the researcher also found that there were students who had doubts in communicating with their advisors, found it difficult to allocate time, lost enthusiasm, became confused, had a feeling of laziness and found it difficult to fight laziness.

Based on the findings from the interview results, the researcher found that there were some students' anxiety in writing thesis. such fear is fear of being wrong and not in accordance with the wishes of the advisor, afraid of not understanding, afraid of not being on target, fear of stress due to excessive anxiety, fear of writing an imperfect thesis, fear of processing research data incorrectly, and during the guidance process anxiety and fear of having many revisions. This is supported by Rizalo (2022) who mentions the fear of students in writing a thesis is not being able to complete the thesis because they feel they do not have good writing skills.

Besides that, the researcher also found that there were students who had doubts in communicating with their advisors, found it difficult to allocate time, lost enthusiasm, became confused, had a feeling of laziness and found it difficult to fight laziness. This is supported by Asisa (2020) which states that students' biggest fear is fear of students in the guidance process because they are afraid of making mistakes in writing their thesis.

Economic difficulties

The next difficulty experienced by students in writing their thesis is an indicator of economic difficulties. There are some students who work while studying. In line with this, researcher want to know whether these students have financial difficulties and have difficulty dividing their time between work and writing thesis. The researcher asked three questions to the participants:

Table 2. Economic Difficulties

No	Interview questions	S01	S02	S03	S04	S05	S06	S07	S08	S09	S10
13	Do you find it difficult to allocate time to write your thesis because you have other activities besides writing thesis?	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓
14	Do you prioritize other activities over writing thesis?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Do you have financial difficulties to complete your thesis needs?	✓	✓				✓		✓		✓

Based on the results of the interviews, the researcher found that there were economic difficulties for the students. The first is difficulty dividing time between writing thesis and doing other work caused by some students studying while working. However, students still prioritize writing thesis. Then the next economic difficulties are financial difficulties to complete the thesis needs. Participants explained that the most spending was on printing revised theses and expenses for equipment for the Munaqasa. This is supported by Sariyanto, Supardi & Husin (2015) which states that there are economic difficulties for students in writing thesis, namely the division of time between work and writing thesis.

Socio-cultural difficulties

Humans are social creatures which means they cannot live without the help of other humans. Basically, humans always rely on the help of other people to survive in the world in everyday life. In line with this, writing a thesis will be much faster and make researcher excited to write a thesis if given positive support. In this case the researcher wants to try to find out whether all participants get positive support in writing their thesis. This the researcher asked in three questions that were asked as questions in interviews with participants:

Table 3. Socio-Cultural Difficulties

No	Interview questions	S01	S02	S03	S04	S05	S06	S07	S08	S09	S10
22	Do your family and friends support you in writing your thesis?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Based on this, it can be seen that almost all participants received support from their family and friends which increased their motivation in writing their thesis. This was explained by participant in her interview stating that this support made her fast in writing her thesis. Besides that, participant mentioned that they did not get support in writing their thesis from their classmates on campus because they rarely communicated. In contrast, one participant mentioned that he received support from his closest friends in writing his thesis, but did not receive support from his parents but only received pressure. This turned out to be different from research conducted by Asisa (2021) in whose research results showed that all parents of students supported students in writing theses.

As for the findings from this research, the researcher found that in society the people who contributed the most to the participants in writing their thesis were the staff where their research took place, mate, lecturers, parents, and friends. Moreover, researchers also found that no one contributed to the thesis writing of several students. This is not in line with the research conducted by Asisa (2021), whose research results show that there are several parties who contribute to writing student thesis.

The last discussion about socio-cultural is about people who are usually invited to discuss the difficulties in writing thesis. Researchers found that usually friends, relatives, advisors, and seniors.

However, in an interview conducted by the researcher to one of the participants who mentioned that in discussing the difficulties in writing thesis, they usually discussed it with friends, seniors or just themselves. This proves that there are student difficulties in socio-cultural.

Process of consultation difficulties

Important things that students need to do, especially students who are in the process of writing their thesis to get ease in completing their thesis, is to establish a good communication relationship with their advisor. In this research, the researcher wanted to know the student's difficulties in terms of the consultation process with the advisor. Researcher have six questions related to the consultation process with the advisor:

Table 4. Process Consultation Difficulties

No	Interview questions	S01	S02	S03	S04	S05	S06	S07	S08	S09	S10
16	Do you have difficulties in dealing with differences in perception with the advisor?				✓		✓		✓		
17	Do you have difficulties caused by an advisor who is difficult to find and contacted?		✓		✓		✓		✓		
18	Do you have a fear of contacting your advisor?	✓						✓		✓	
19	Do you have difficulty communicating and discussing with the advisor?	✓		✓	✓						
20	Did you get positive suggestions and support from your advisor in writing your thesis?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Do you always follow the suggestions of your advisor regarding thesis writing?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

In this research, researcher found several difficulties experienced by students in the process of consulting their thesis with advisors in writing. The first difficulty is the difficulty in dealing with differences in perceptions between the first advisor and the second advisor in determining the important points of the thesis. This difference in perception occurs because the thoughts of each advisor are different. The purpose of each advisors to give this opinion is certainly influential for students in writing their thesis for the better. However, with these differences of opinion students must be wise to respond because it is for the sake of smooth writing. Sari (2017) argues that everyone has different opinions, but these differences should not make a person's morals bad.

The second difficulty is the advisor who is difficult to find or contact because the advisor is busy. This is supported by the results of Asisa (2020) which found that students had difficulties meeting their advisors because they were busy. Then research was conducted by Lestari (2020) which stated that students had difficulty contacting advisors due to the busy schedule of advisors and many students who had to be mentored.

The third difficulty is fear for students who want to contact the lecturer because they are afraid of disturbing the advisor's time and fear of misunderstandings caused by the reading tone of text messages. In addition, researcher also found that students had difficulty communicating and discussing with advisors. This is caused by several difficulties. The first is the difficulty in conveying aspirations related to ideas in thesis writing due to limited guidance space through text messages.

Second, students experience confusion with the use of language in communication. This is in line with Asisa (2021) which states that there are difficulties in discussion and communication with advisors.

The role of the advisors in thesis writing is very important for the smooth running of students in writing thesis. Usually advisors provide input and support to students about thesis writing. Based on the interview results, the researcher found that all students received positive suggestion and support from their advisors in writing their thesis. The advice and support made students enthusiastic in writing their thesis. This is in accordance with Harjum (2020) which shows that students get support and positive suggestions from advisors in writing their thesis. Based on these findings, all students followed the suggestion of their advisors in writing their thesis, but there were some students who added their ideas to their thesis which required permission and guidance from the advisor.

Technological difficulties

According to Aprillia (2022) states that students can take advantage of Information Technology as a device by connecting it to the internet network and also using several learning media. In line with this, Hikam, Trimadona & Rozal (2022) state that in learning systems, technology can be said to be good enough to continue to use. Technology can be a useful tool in writing skills that generally facilitates expression, creativity and encourages students to write more often. However, some challenges occur in the application of technology in writing skills. In this research, researcher tried to find students' difficulties in using technology in writing their thesis. Starting from the use of technological media and programs or applications in writing thesis. There were seven questions in the interview related to difficulties in using technology in writing thesis.

The first question is about students' difficulties in writing thesis based on the technology difficulties:

Table 5. Technology Media Use in Writing Thesis

Participant	Technology media use in writing thesis		
	Laptop (Borrow)	Laptop (Privately)	Smartphone (Privately)
S01		✓	✓
S02	✓		✓
S03		✓	✓
S04		✓	✓
S05		✓	✓
S06		✓	✓
S07		✓	✓
S08		✓	✓
S09		✓	✓
S10		✓	✓

The second question:

Table 6. Technology Difficulties

No	Interview questions	S01	S02	S03	S04	S05	S06	S07	S08	S09	S10
26	What difficulties did you experience in using a computer to write a thesis?	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓

Based on this, the researcher found some difficulties in using technological media in writing thesis. First, as explained by participant S02 who stated that the use of a laptop as a technological

medium in writing thesis is a borrowed laptop which must be used interchangeably with the owner. The second difficulty was as explained by participant S03 who said that there was a component that no longer worked, that is the keyboard, so it required a separate replacement keyboard and according to S03 it was difficult to carry around. The last difficulty in using technological media is as explained by participants S10, S08, S09 and S01 who stated that the laptop used often has errors, slow and lags.

The fourth question is about students' difficulties in writing thesis based on the technology difficulties:

Table 7. Difficulties of use Program

No	Interview questions	S01	S02	S03	S04	S05	S06	S07	S08	S09	S10
28	What difficulties did you experience in using the program?	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓

Based on the results of the interviews, shows that some of the difficulties students have in using programs or applications in writing their thesis. The first is the SPSS program which according to S02 and S01 is too difficult to enter data, according to S04 it is quite difficult because it is licensed and according to S05 it is difficult to access because not all laptops support SPSS applications. The next difficulty is the Mendeley application error, as experienced by participants S10, S09 and S04. Then in the Google Scholar program, participant S09 stated that several research articles were suitable but were locked and had to be paid for. Then the Z-Library program which has been blocked because it is illegal according to S09. The last one is Turnitin based on the experience of participant S02 who felt that she had paraphrased her thesis and when she checked in Turnitin the percentage of plagiarism was still high.

Based on the interview results, the researcher found that there were participants who only used WIFI, there were those who only used private internet quota and there were also those who used both, namely using WIFI and private internet quota.

Table 8. Technology Difficulties

No	Interview questions	S01	S02	S03	S04	S05	S06	S07	S08	S09	S10
30	Do you have difficulties getting internet access in writing your thesis?						✓		✓		✓
31	Do you have difficulties to get online references related to your thesis?	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	

Then the internet access used in writing thesis is Wi-Fi and Private Internet Quota. The difficulties of each of these internet accesses are Wi-Fi which cannot be used when the power goes out and private internet quota which is wasteful.

Finally, it is difficult to find references online. The researcher found that there were several difficulties related to these online references including research articles that matched the thesis topic but were locked, difficulty getting the latest references, difficulty finding suitable topics of discussion or research that was still limited.

Lack of ability and understanding of English, Requirements for Academic File, Faculty and Study Program

Academic Services

Based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers with participants, researchers found that there were student difficulties in the Lack of ability and understanding of English, requirements for academic files, faculty and study program academic services. This is caused by one of the participants considered that their basic knowledge of English was lacking. This is in line with Rizalo (2022) which states that students' difficulties in writing thesis are due to deficiencies in understanding English.

Besides that, academic requirement files such as academic achievement record (AAR), course selection sheet (CSS), and transcript which are quite difficult to save. Losing the academic requirements file is the student's responsibility, but if it is taken care of again to get this file the student will experience a slightly slow process.

Then, on faculty academic services and study programs that still need re-evaluation. Based on the researcher interview with the participant, the researcher found that there was an attitude that was stalling for time. As explained by one participant who stated that when he wanted to ask for the signature of a lecturer in the English Tadris study program, the participant felt ignored for a month and did not get the lecturer's signature because according to him the advisor was busy. Then in faculty academic services which according to one participant needed evaluation because several times participants experienced delays in obtaining files related to lectures, especially theses.

CONCLUSION

Based on research findings and the results of data analysis, researchers can conclude that students of the English Education program study at UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi have difficulties in writing their thesis. These difficulties include: (1) difficulties regarding basic knowledge of thesis writing; (2) Psychological Difficulties; (3) Economic Difficulties; (4) Socio-Cultural Difficulties; (5) Difficulties regarding the consultation process with the advisor; (6) Technological Difficulties. Besides that, researcher also found other results, that is students' difficulties in lacking basic English knowledge and skills, academic requirements files, study program and faculty academic services.

Conflict of interest statement: This research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationship that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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