

Surviving Amid the Pandemic: The Roles of Social Supports in Coping with Academic Stress among Thesis-Writing Students during the Pandemic

Bertahan di Tengah Pandemi: Peran Dukungan Sosial dalam Mengatasi Stres Akademik pada Mahasiswa yang Sedang Menyusun Skripsi

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Abstract

The shift from face-to-face to remote learning due to the COVID-19 Pandemic has triggered academic stress in students, including those completing their thesis writing. The research aims to investigate the role of social support in alleviating the academic stress of students completing their thesis during the COVID-19 pandemic. It involved 100 respondents (40 males and 60 females), who were selected using quota sampling techniques. The research employed a correlational quantitative design. Academic stress was measured using an Academic Stress Scale, while social support was measured using a Social Support Scale. Furthermore, regression analysis was employed to investigate the relationship between social support and academic stress. The findings showed a negative correlation between social support and stress ($F = 97.9, p < .001$). Meanwhile, social support made an effective contribution by 50% ($R^2 = 0.500$). The research also found that family and information support become stronger predictors of academic stress. Additionally, male and female students share similar potential to experience academic stress. The implications of these findings highlight the need to strengthen social support, particularly from family and through access to adequate information, in order to reduce academic stress among students working on their theses. Higher education institutions are also encouraged to develop academic mentoring programs and counseling services that focus on enhancing social support from academic advisors, peers, and the broader campus support system.

Keywords: Academic Stress, COVID-19 Pandemic, Social Support, Student, Thesis

Abstrak

Perubahan pembelajaran dari tatap muka menjadi pembelajaran jarak jauh akibat pandemic Covid-19 memicu stres akademik pada mahasiswa, termasuk pada mahasiswa yang sedang mengerjakan skripsi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui peran dukungan sosial terhadap stres akademik pada mahasiswa yang sedang mengerjakan skripsi selama pandemic Covid-19. Penelitian ini melibatkan 100 responden (40 laki-laki dan 60 perempuan) yang diambil melalui teknik quota sampling. Penelitian menggunakan desain kuantitatif korelasional. Stres akademik diukur menggunakan Skala Stres Akademik sementara persepsi dukungan sosial diukur menggunakan Skala Dukungan Sosial. Peneliti menggunakan analisis regresi untuk menguji korelasi antara dukungan sosial dan stres akademik. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat hubungan negatif antara dukungan sosial dengan stres ($F = 97.9, p < .001$). Dukungan sosial memberikan sumbangan efektif sebesar 50% ($R^2 = 0.500$). Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa dukungan sosial keluarga dan dukungan informasi menjadi prediktor yang lebih kuat terhadap stres akademik. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa laki-laki dan perempuan memiliki potensi yang sama mengalami stres akademik. Implikasi dari temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa perlunya penguatan dukungan sosial, khususnya dari keluarga dan akses terhadap informasi yang memadai untuk menurunkan stres akademik pada mahasiswa yang sedang mengerjakan skripsi. Perguruan tinggi juga disarankan untuk mengembangkan program pendampingan akademik dan layanan konseling yang berfokus pada peningkatan dukungan sosial dari dosen, teman sebaya dan sistem layanan kampus secara umum.

Kata Kunci : Stres Akademik, Dukungan Sosial, Mahasiswa, Skripsi, Pandemic Covid-19

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Received 10/01/2026

Revised 22/06/2026

Accepted 27/07/2026



INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had the consequence of social distancing in almost all aspects of life, one of which is the educational sector. Remote learning, also known as online learning, is one of the learning modifications implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through online learning, students are expected to develop flexibility and adaptability. The learning process was typically conducted through video conferences (Google Meet or Zoom Meet), chat, or phone calls (via WhatsApp group calls or Google Classroom) (Dewi, 2020). However, this abrupt transition also introduced new academic challenges that affected students' learning experiences and psychological well-being.

The sudden shift to online learning caused several issues. Studies conducted in Indonesia have consistently reported that online learning increased academic stress among university students (Ardiarna & Kusumawati, 2020; Lubis et al., 2021; Oktariani et al., 2021; Syahril, Sitti Riadil Janna, 2021). Similar findings have also been reported internationally, indicating that university students experienced elevated levels of stress, anxiety, psychological distress, and reduced learning motivation during the COVID-19 pandemic due to campus closures, social isolation, and changes in learning methods (Aristovnik et al., 2020; Browning et al., 2021; Son et al., 2020).

Online learning affects students' physics, emotions, behavior, and thinking, leading to academic stress (Octasya & Munawaroh, 2021). A number of studies suggest that academic stress is related to the academic challenges during online learning, such as internet network disruption, limited internet quota, less focus on listening to the teachers, burdening tasks, difficulties in understanding the materials, and pressure to learn independently (Ardiarna & Kusumawati, 2020; Argaheni, 2020; Zami, 2021). Challenges in online learning result in feeling stressed (Lubis et al., 2021), decreasing learning motivation, and depression (Octasya & Munawaroh, 2021).

Similarly, students completing their thesis writing encounter obstacles. During online learning, they had limited access to references, less effective sessions with their supervisor, and difficulties in finding ideas and research data (Septyari et al., 2022). Additionally, Alimah & Khoirunnisa, (2021) note that social distancing and limited interaction with other students during the pandemic heightened their concerns about the progress of their thesis. Furthermore, their family, which expects them to complete their studies, adds to their pressure. These challenges resulted in anxiety, decreased motivation, excessive worry, and various physical complaints, such as headaches and sleep disturbances (Alimah & Khoirunnisa, 2021; Azizah & Satwika, 2021a; Susanti et al., 2021).

The challenges are in line with the previous findings about students' academic stress while completing the thesis during online learning (Alimah & Khoirunnisa, 2021; Azizah & Satwika, 2021b; Septyari et al., 2022; Susanti et al., 2021; Syahril, Sitti Riadil Janna, 2021). Similarly, several students of the preliminary study reported that they felt anxious about

completing their thesis. They faced limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic, including difficulties in understanding their supervisor's feedback and in contacting them. They were demotivated and drowned in overthinking. They felt burdened by both family demands and their own self-expectations. Physical responses, such as headache and dizziness, were common among these students.

Stress is defined as an imbalanced condition between individuals' abilities and the demands received from their interaction with other people (Sarafino & Smith, 2012). Stress is caused by the demands from the environment and the individuals themselves, which exceed their abilities (Sarafino & Smith, 2012). Many factors cause stress. One of them is academic stress, known as such (Desmita, 2009).

According to Busari (2014), academic stress is a stressful condition experienced by individuals due to academic demands beyond their abilities. Academic stress appeared as a result of individuals' perception and assessment of academic stressors (Govaerts & Grégoire, 2004). Academic stressors can take various forms, including task completion, classroom competition, curriculum demands, pressure, and expectations from others. The condition encompasses adaptation to online learning, limited access to learning resources, interaction, and independent learning requirements.

Furthermore, Busari (2014) explains that individuals' reactions to a stressor can be emotional, cognitive, physical, and behavioral. Cognitive reactions can manifest as reduced focus, poor performance, decreased memory, and excessive overthinking. Emotional responses include anxiety, uneasiness, temper, deep sorrow, depression, and less confidence. Physical reactions include dizziness, decreased appetite, sleep disorders, digestive disorders, increased sweating, cold sweats, paleness, increased heartbeats, redness in the face, trembling, and stiffness. Meanwhile, behavioral reactions include blaming others, delaying tasks, developing indifference, seeking others' mistakes, and engaging in exaggerated pleasures.

Students completing their thesis, on the one hand, are faced with the requirements to finish their studies immediately (Alimah & Khoirunnisa, 2021). On the other hand, a number of students found difficulties in accessing learning resources (Septyari et al., 2022) and in understanding the supervisor's feedback. Social distancing during thesis completion also limited their interaction with peers, preventing them from engaging in discussions and gaining support for completing their thesis (Alimah & Khoirunnisa, 2021).

Several studies suggest that social support is one of the factors influencing academic stress. Individuals gaining higher social support show lower academic stress levels (Marhamah & Hamzah, 2017; Wilks & Spivey, 2010). Other research reveals similar findings by investigating specifically the parents' support (Ernawati & Rusmawati, 2015), family support (Wistarini & Marheni, 2019), and peer support to prevent students from academic stress (Firnanda & Ibrahim, 2020).

Social support is defined as a form of comfort, awareness, help, and respect gained from other people (Sarafino & Smith, 2011). Social support can be obtained from people with whom one has meaningful relationships, such as significant others, family, friends, teachers, and lecturers. In the present study, social support is defined as family, peers, and the thesis supervisor. Sarafino & Smith (2011) propose that social support can be categorized into four types: emotional, esteem, instrumental, and informational. Emotional support includes warmth, love, attention, trust, and sympathy. Esteem is a form of support that includes positive judgment and motivation for others. Instrumental support is provided directly, including material assistance and direct help with task completion. Meanwhile, informational support includes knowledge, information, suggestions, criticism, and feedback.

However, most previous studies have focused on university students in general or examined only general source of social support. Limited attention has been given to students completing their undergraduate thesis during the COVID-19 pandemic, a context characterized by prolonged independent work, restricted face-to-face interaction, online supervision, and uncertainty regarding research progress. Consequently, the relationship between perceived social support and academic stress among thesis-writing students in this unique learning context remains insufficiently understood.

Investigating this relationship is important because identifying the protective role of social support may provide empirical evidence for universities in developing interventions that strengthen students' support systems during thesis completion. The findings may also assist supervisors, families, and peers in providing more effective emotional, informational, and instrumental support to reduce academic stress, promote students' psychological well-being, and facilitate timely graduation.

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the relationship between perceived social support and academic stress among undergraduate students completing their thesis during online learning in the COVID-19 pandemic. It is hypothesized that perceived social support is negatively associated with academic stress, such that students who perceive higher levels of social support will report lower levels of academic stress.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research employed a correlational quantitative design to investigate the relationship between social support and academic stress.

Population and Sample

The target population comprised 6,295 undergraduate students at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta across eight faculties, based on data provided by the University's Academic Bureau (2021). The study involved 100 undergraduate students selected using a quota sampling technique, with the distribution of participants across faculties presented in Table 1. The sample size was

determined based on the feasibility of recruiting participants who met the study's inclusion criteria during the data collection period. Although no formal sample size calculation was conducted, the sample was considered adequate for examining the relationship between social support and academic stress among undergraduate students who were completing their thesis. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the context of the study population rather than generalized to the entire student population.

To minimize sampling bias, participant quotas were proportionally distributed across the eight faculties to ensure representation from different academic backgrounds and to avoid overrepresentation of students from a single faculty. In addition, all participants were required to meet the same inclusion criteria: (1) being active undergraduate students at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, (2) currently completing their undergraduate thesis, and (3) having worked on their thesis for at least six months. While quota sampling enhanced the diversity of participants, the use of a non-probability sampling technique may still limit the generalizability of the findings.

Research Instruments

The data were collected using a Likert scale, consisting of the Academic Stress and Social Support Scales. The former was arranged based on the academic stress aspects proposed by Busari (2014), which consist of cognitive, affective, physiological, and behavioral aspects. The higher the score, the higher the academic stress, and vice versa. There were two types of questions in the instruments: favorable and unfavorable. The instrument used the Likert scale with four options: very unlikely, unlikely, likely, and very likely. The scale was tested on 31 respondents. The scale consists of 21 items and has a Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.901. The sample items of the scale are: 1) "*Saat sedang mengerjakan skripsi, saya mudah hilang fokus* [When writing the thesis, I often lost my focus]", 2) "*Saya mampu mengelola tekanan selama mengerjakan skripsi* [I can manage stress when completing the thesis]".

Meanwhile, social support was measured using the Social Support Scale, which is arranged based on the aspects of social support by Sarafino and Smith (2011) and comprises informational, instrumental, emotional, and esteem support. The scale also measured the social support gained from parents, peers, and a supervisor. The higher the score, the higher the social support, and vice versa. There were two types of attitude in the instruments: favorable and unfavorable. The instruments used the Likert scale with four options: very unlikely, unlikely, likely, and very likely. The scale was tested on 31 respondents. It consists of 31 items and has a Cronbach's Alpha reliability score of 0.942. The sample items are: 1) "*Keluarga saya menghargai setiap progress skripsi yang saya kerjakan* [My family value every progress I made with the thesis]", and 2) "*Dosen pembimbing skripsi memberikan saran dan masukan kepada saya* [My supervisor gives me suggestions and feedback]".

Research Procedures

The data were collected by conducting an online survey using a Google Form. The distribution was conducted by sending broadcast messages containing a link to potential respondents, inviting them to complete the survey. The broadcast message was distributed via social media.

The participation was voluntary and anonymous. At the beginning of the scale, respondents were asked to complete the demographic data, including student registration number (NIM), gender, and faculty. The data was continued with the questions regarding social support and academic stress.

The respondents were given a brief description and informed consent at the beginning of the form. They were informed about 1) the researcher's identity, research background, objectives, procedures, and estimated survey completion; 2) the benefits of participating in the survey and data confidentiality guarantee, and 3) an explanation that the respondents can withdraw from the participation at any time.

The respondents who agreed to participate in the survey continued to complete the demographic data, while those who disagreed could leave the survey at any time. At the end of the survey, the respondents were asked to click the "Submit" button to ensure that their responses were recorded. The survey took approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using JAMOV, which includes assumption tests for normality and linearity, as well as hypothesis testing with linear regression tests.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

The research involved 100 respondents. The demographic data of the respondents were presented in Table 1. The linear regression test was carried out after the research model fulfilled the assumption test requirements. The requirements must be normally and linearly distributed.

Table 1. Respondents' Demographic Data (N= 100)

Characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Male	40	40%
Female	60	60%
Faculty		
Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences	12	12%
Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business	12	12%
Faculty of Dakwah and Communication	12	12%
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities	12	12%
Faculty of Shariah and Law	13	13%
Faculty of Science and Technology	9	9%
Faculty of Tarbiyah and Education	19	19%
Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thoughts	11	11%
Cohort		
2016	2	2%
2017	25	25%
2018	68	68%
2019	5	5%

Table 1 indicates that the respondents were predominantly female students, comprising 60 people (60%), while the male respondents numbered 40 (40%). The respondents represented eight faculties, distributed as follows. Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences 12%, Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business 12%, Faculty of Dakwah and Communication 12%, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities 12%, Faculty of Shariah and Law 13%, Faculty of Science and Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thoughts 11%. The respondents were students completing their undergraduate theses from the 2016 to 2019 cohorts. The majority were from the 2018 cohort (68%), followed by the 2017 cohort (25%), the 2019 cohort (5%), and the 2016 cohort (2%).

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Academic Stress and Social Support

Category	Score	F	(%)	Mean	SD
Academic Stress					
High	$63 \leq X$	34	34%	52.5	10.5
Moderate	$42 \leq X < 63$	49	49%		
Low	$X < 42$	17	17%		
Social Support					
High	$93 \leq X$	27	27%	77.5	15.5
Moderate	$62 \leq X < 93$	51	51%		
Low	$X < 62$	22	22%		

The general description of academic stress and social support for respondents is presented in Table 2. Respondents with high academic stress were 34%, while the low category was 17%. In other words, the majority of respondents are in the moderate category, which is 49%. However, the percentage of respondents in the high category is significant. In the social support variable, the majority of respondents are in the moderate category (51%), while the high category is 27% followed by the low category (22%).

Assumption testing

Prior to the regression analysis, the assumptions of normality and linearity were examined. The normality of the residuals was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results showed that the unstandardized residuals did not significantly deviate from a normal distribution ($D = .045$, $Z = .450$, $p = .200$), indicating that the normality assumption was satisfied. Linearity was assessed based on the deviation from linearity. The results showed that the deviation from linearity was not statistically significant, $F(54, 44) = 1.093$, $p = .384$, indicating that the relationship between social support and academic stress did not significantly deviate from a linear pattern. Thus, the assumptions of normality and linearity required for the regression analysis were satisfied.

Hypothesis testing

Table 3. Regression Analysis of the Correlation between Social Support and Academic Stress

	β	B (SE)	95% CI	p
Intercept		91.478	[84.185, 98.771]	
Social support	-.707*	-.446	[-0.534, -0.358]	<.001

Note: $R^2 = 0.500$, $F = 97.9$, $*p < .001$

As shown in Table 3, the regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 98) = 97.90$, $p < .001$, and explained 50.0% of the variance in academic stress ($R^2 = .500$). Social support significantly and negatively predicted academic stress, $B = -0.446$, $\beta = -.707$, 95% CI [-0.534, -0.358], $p < .001$. This finding indicates that higher levels of social support were associated with lower levels of academic stress. Specifically, each one-unit increase in social support was associated with a 0.446-point decrease in academic stress.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis of Sources and Forms of Social Support Predicting Academic Stress

	β	t	p
Sources of social support			
Family support	-.583	-2.481	.015
Peer support	-.011	-0.054	.957
Supervisor support	-.133	-0.892	.375
Form of social support			
Emotional support	-.216	-1.437	.154
Esteem Support	.050	.279	.781
Instrumental support	-.072	-.387	.699
Informational support	-.516	-3.135	.002

Note. β = standardized regression coefficient. Sources of social support model: $R^2 = .508$, $F(3, 96) = 33.082$, $p < .001$. Forms of social support model: $R^2 = .523$, $F(4, 95) = 26.013$, $p < .001$.

The multiple regression model examining sources of social support was statistically significant, $F(3, 96) = 33.082$, $p < .001$, explaining 50.8% of the variance in academic stress ($R^2 = .508$). Among the three sources of social support, family support was the only significant unique predictor of academic stress ($\beta = -.583$, $t = -2.481$, $p = .015$). Higher family support was associated with lower academic stress after controlling for peer and supervisor support. In contrast, peer support ($\beta = -.011$, $t = -0.054$, $p = .957$) and supervisor support ($\beta = -.133$, $t = -0.892$, $p = .375$) did not make significant unique contributions to the model.

The multiple regression model examining forms of social support was also statistically significant, $F(4, 95) = 26.013$, $p < .001$, explaining 52.3% of the variance in academic stress ($R^2 = .523$). Among the four forms of social support, informational support was the only significant unique predictor of academic stress ($\beta = -.516$, $t = -3.135$, $p = .002$), indicating that higher informational support was associated with lower academic stress after controlling for emotional, esteem, and instrumental support. Emotional support ($\beta = -.216$, $t = -1.437$, $p = .154$), esteem support ($\beta = .050$, $t = .279$, $p = .781$), and instrumental support ($\beta = -.072$, $t = -.387$, $p = .699$) were not significant unique predictors.

Table 5. Differences in Academic Stress Across Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristic	n	M	SD
Gender*			
Male	40	53.2	13.1
Female	60	57.5	12.6
Faculty**			
Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences	12	54.25	9.18
Faculty of Dakwah and Communication	12	55.83	15.51
Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business	12	57.67	12.54
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities	12	50.92	14.79
Faculty of Science and Technology	9	59.67	10.52
Faculty of Shariah and Law	13	55.00	11.87
Faculty of Tarbiyah and Education	19	58.16	13.19
Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thoughts	11	54.45	15.86
Cohort***			
2016	2	59.00	22.63
2017	25	53.92	10.96
2018	68	56.04	13.35
2019	5	60.60	15.79

Note: M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

*Gender differences were examined using an independent-samples t test, $t(98) = -1.66$, $p = .101$, Cohen's $d = -.338$.

** Differences across faculties were examined using a one-way ANOVA, $F(7, 92) = 0.516$, $p = .821$, $\eta^2 = .038$. Tukey HSD post hoc comparisons indicated no significant pairwise differences between faculties (all $ps > .05$).

*** Differences across cohorts were examined using a one-way ANOVA, $F(3, 96) = 0.447$, $p = .720$, $\eta^2 = .014$. Tukey HSD post hoc comparisons indicated no significant pairwise differences between cohorts (all $ps > .05$).

As shown in Table 5, no statistically significant differences in academic stress were found across the demographic characteristics examined. Male students ($M = 53.20$, $SD = 13.10$) reported lower academic stress than female students ($M = 57.50$, $SD = 12.60$). However, this difference was not statistically significant, $t(98) = -1.66$, $p = .101$, Cohen's $d = -.338$. Academic stress also did not differ significantly across faculties, $F(7, 92) = 0.516$, $p = .821$, $\eta^2 = .038$. Tukey HSD post hoc comparisons further indicated that none of the pairwise differences between faculties were statistically significant (all $ps > .05$). Similarly, no significant differences in academic stress were found across cohorts, $F(3, 96) = 0.447$, $p = .720$, $\eta^2 = .014$, and Tukey HSD post hoc comparisons showed no significant pairwise differences between cohorts (all $ps > .05$). Overall, these findings indicate that academic stress did not significantly vary according to gender, faculty, or cohort in the present sample.

DISCUSSION

The data analysis shows a significant negative correlation between social support and academic stress of students completing their thesis during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings are in line with previous studies (Marhamah & Hamzah, 2017; Wilks & Spivey, 2010). More

importantly, social support accounted for 50% of the variance in academic stress ($R^2 = .500$), indicating a substantial association between the two variables. Recent studies have continued to demonstrate the relevance of social support in students' experiences of academic stress, including support derived from family and peers (Mukti & Ansyah, 2023; Supriadi et al., 2024; Tari & Nastiti, 2022). Thus, social support may represent an important psychosocial resource associated with students' adjustment to academic demands, although the cross-sectional design of the present study does not permit causal conclusions.

The findings can be explained using Lazarus' Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Baqutayan, 2011), which proposes that individuals cognitively appraise stressful situations as either challenges or threats. Social support functions as an important coping resource that influences this appraisal process. Students who receive adequate emotional, informational, esteem, and instrumental support are more likely to perceive thesis-related challenges as manageable rather than overwhelming. Consequently, they experience lower levels of academic stress because the available support enhances their confidence, problem-solving capacity, and perceived ability to cope with academic demands. From a physiological perspective, social support may also reduce neuroendocrine responses to stress, thereby helping individuals regulate psychological distress more effectively (Baqutayan, 2011). This interpretation remains relevant to recent evidence showing that thesis-writing students experience substantial academic demands associated with research complexity, time management, institutional requirements, and the thesis-completion process (Nurtamami et al., 2023; Pusparini et al., 2025).

Unlike previous studies that generally investigated academic stress among university students, the present study specifically focused on students completing their undergraduate thesis during the COVID-19 pandemic. This context differs from regular academic activities because students were required to conduct relatively independent research while simultaneously coping with restricted access to supervisors, limited academic resources, social distancing, and reduced opportunities for peer interaction. Therefore, social support may have been particularly important during thesis completion, as students depended on guidance, reassurance, and practical assistance from family members, supervisors, and peers. More recent evidence also indicates that thesis writing remains a demanding stage of undergraduate education beyond the pandemic. Pusparini et al., (2025), for example, identified time-management difficulties, complex research procedures, conflicting supervisory expectations, emotional exhaustion, and decreased confidence as important challenges experienced by thesis-writing students. Thus, the present findings may reflect not only the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic but also the inherently demanding nature of thesis completion.

More importantly, the multiple regression analysis provided a more differentiated picture of the sources of

social support. The overall model including family, peer, and supervisor support was statistically significant, $F(3, 96) = 33.082$, $p < .001$, and collectively explained 50.8% of the variance in academic stress ($R^2 = .508$). Within this model, family support was the only source that made a significant unique contribution to academic stress ($\beta = -.583$, $p = .015$), after peer and supervisor support were simultaneously controlled. This finding suggests that family support may represent a particularly salient resource for students completing their theses. The findings were in line with the study by Yaacob et al. (2017), arguing that family is the primary source of social support. Similarly, Mukti and Ansyah (2023) found that higher levels of parental social support were associated with lower academic stress among university students. These findings collectively underscore the importance of family support as a psychosocial resource for students facing academic demands.

Social support from family can take the form of attention, understanding, or direct assistance. Individuals receiving adequate family support can develop a positive self-image, thereby increasing their self-confidence (Ernawati & Rusmawati, 2015). Therefore, they will respond positively to stress and deliver good performance (Wistarini & Marheni, 2019). In the context of thesis completion, family support may therefore help students maintain confidence and perceive thesis-related difficulties as more manageable, particularly during periods of uncertainty and prolonged academic demands.

External sources of support, including peers and supervisors, may also be relevant to students' academic experiences. Hoferichter et al., (2022) proposed that teacher support can contribute to positive self-concepts and supportive learning environments, while positive student-teacher relationships may help sustain motivation and participation. Earlier research also suggested that supportive teacher relationships are associated with more adaptive stress responses (Hughes et al., 2012). However, the present multiple regression analysis showed that peer support and supervisor support did not make significant unique contributions to academic stress after the three sources of support were considered simultaneously. This finding should not be interpreted as evidence that these sources are unimportant; rather, their associations with academic stress may overlap with support provided by other sources.

The role of peers, has been supported by previous research. Firnanda & Ibrahim (2020), Hoferichter et al., (2022), and Rizkita, (2020) highlighted the relevance of peer relationships and support to students' academic experiences. Peer support may provide emotional reassurance, esteem support, opportunities to discuss thesis-related difficulties, and practical assistance such as sharing references and possible solutions. More recent evidence also supports this relationship. Tari and Nastiti, (2022) reported a significant relationship between peer social support and academic stress during the COVID-19 pandemic, while Supriadi et al., (2024) similarly found an association between peer support and stress among university students. The

difference between these findings and the present regression results may partly reflect the level of analysis: previous studies commonly examined the association between peer support and stress directly, whereas the present study estimated the unique contribution of peer support after other sources of support were statistically controlled.

The research also examined support provided by thesis supervisors, who interact directly with students throughout thesis completion. Supervisor support can include emotional, esteem, instrumental, and informational assistance. Emotional and esteem support may strengthen students' confidence and positive self-perceptions, while instrumental and informational support can provide practical direction, feedback, and solutions to thesis-related problems. Although supervisor support did not independently predict academic stress in the present multiple regression model, recent research reinforces the broader importance of the supervisory process. Pusparini et al. (2025) identified limited supervisory support and conflicting supervisory expectations among important challenges faced by thesis-writing students. Recent evidence from postgraduate supervision likewise suggests that emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal support from supervisors may contribute to students' well-being and academic resilience (Fitriyah et al., 2026). Accordingly, the nonsignificant coefficient in the present study is better interpreted as an absence of a unique contribution after controlling for other sources of support rather than an absence of relevance.

A particularly important finding emerged when social support was examined according to its form. The overall model including emotional, esteem, instrumental, and informational support was statistically significant, $F(4, 95) = 26.013$, $p < .001$, and collectively explained 52.3% of the variance in academic stress ($R^2 = .523$). Within this model, informational support was the only form that made a significant unique contribution to academic stress ($\beta = -.516$, $p = .002$), after emotional, esteem, and instrumental support were simultaneously controlled. This finding may reflect the distinctive nature of thesis writing, in which students frequently encounter unfamiliar problems related to research design, literature searching, data collection, statistical analysis, academic writing, and administrative procedures. Clear guidance, constructive feedback, relevant references, and concrete suggestions may help reduce uncertainty and strengthen students' ability to address thesis-related problems. During the COVID-19 pandemic, such support may have become particularly important because access to references and direct academic interaction was restricted. This finding is also consistent with recent research emphasizing the importance of structured thesis guidance, clear communication, and supervisory support for students facing thesis-related stress (Pusparini et al., 2025). The nonsignificant coefficients for emotional, esteem, and instrumental support should therefore not be interpreted as indicating that these forms of support are irrelevant. Rather,

informational support accounted for unique variance in academic stress after the shared variance among the different forms of support was statistically controlled.

Academic stress was also a meaningful concern in the present sample, with 34% of respondents classified in the high academic-stress category. This finding reinforces evidence that thesis completion can represent a particularly demanding stage of undergraduate education. Nurtamami et al., (2023) described thesis-writing students as facing substantial academic burdens, while recent qualitative research identified time-management difficulties, complex research procedures, supervisory expectations, emotional exhaustion, and decreased confidence as prominent challenges during thesis completion (Pusparini et al., 2025). Persistent academic stress may interfere with students' psychological well-being and adaptive academic functioning and may contribute to behaviors such as procrastination that can further delay academic progress. Therefore, the relatively high proportion of students experiencing elevated stress underscores the importance of providing appropriate academic and psychological support during thesis completion.

The relatively high proportion of students experiencing academic stress warrants attention because prolonged academic stress may negatively affect students' psychological well-being and academic functioning. Previous studies have linked academic stress with psychological difficulties, including depression (Sudarsani et al., 2021) and suicidal thoughts (Okechukwu et al., 2022). Academic stress may also contribute to procrastination (Adib et al., 2025; Rahayu & Sari, 2023), which may interfere with thesis progress and potentially extend students' study duration. Taken together with more recent evidence concerning the demands experienced by thesis-writing students, these findings underscore the importance of institutional and interpersonal resources that help students manage the final stage of undergraduate study.

The additional demographic analyses showed that academic stress did not significantly differ by gender, faculty, or cohort. No significant gender difference was found, $t(98) = -1.66$, $p = .101$, $d = -0.34$. The absence of a significant gender difference is consistent with Hafifah et al. (2017) who reported that male and female students may experience comparable academic stress because they encounter similar academic demands. Similarly, academic stress did not significantly differ across faculties, $F(7, 92) = 0.52$, $p = .821$, $\eta^2 = .038$, or across cohorts, $F(3, 96) = 0.45$, $p = .720$, $\eta^2 = .014$. Tukey HSD post hoc comparisons further showed no significant pairwise differences between faculties or between cohorts (all $ps > .05$), reinforcing the finding that academic stress was relatively comparable across the demographic and academic groups examined.

One possible explanation is that the central demands of thesis completion, including independent research, academic writing, deadlines, uncertainty, and supervision, were broadly shared by students regardless of gender, faculty, or year of entry. Rather than identifying

particular demographic groups as inherently more vulnerable, the present findings suggest that attention may be better directed toward students' academic demands and available coping resources. Nevertheless, the null differences across faculty and cohort should be interpreted cautiously because the subgroup sizes were unequal and some cohorts contained relatively few participants. Therefore, the absence of significant omnibus and pairwise differences should not be interpreted as definitive evidence that demographic or academic-group differences do not exist in the broader population.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the availability and specific characteristics of social support may be more relevant to academic stress than the demographic characteristics examined in this study. Both full regression models were statistically significant, with the sources-of-support model explaining 50.8% and the forms-of-support model explaining 52.3% of the variance in academic stress. Within these models, family support and informational support emerged as the significant unique predictors, whereas no significant differences in academic stress were observed by gender, faculty, or cohort, including in the post hoc comparisons across faculties and cohorts. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening students' support resources during thesis completion rather than assuming that particular demographic or academic groups necessarily experience greater academic stress.

The findings highlight the importance of social support in academic stress, particularly family and informational support. Families can provide encouragement, realistic expectations, and practical assistance, while universities and thesis supervisors can strengthen support through counseling services, peer-support programs, regular supervision, and clear, timely, and constructive academic guidance. Given the unique contribution of informational support, thesis supervisors and academic units should particularly ensure that students have access to clear and timely information regarding research procedures, thesis requirements, feedback, and academic progress. However, the findings should be interpreted considering several limitations, including the use of self-report measures, quota sampling from a single university, a cross-sectional design, and unequal subgroup sizes in the faculty and cohort analyses. The study also did not account for other potentially relevant factors, such as academic self-efficacy, coping strategies, socioeconomic conditions, quality of thesis supervision, personality characteristics, and access to institutional resources. Future research should therefore employ longitudinal and multi-institutional designs, use probability sampling where feasible, and examine additional individual, academic, and environmental factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of academic stress during thesis completion.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social support is significantly and negatively associated with academic stress among students completing their undergraduate thesis during the COVID-19 pandemic. Higher levels of social support were associated with lower levels of academic stress, highlighting the importance of social support as a psychosocial resource during thesis completion. Among the sources of social support, family support was the only significant unique predictor of academic stress after controlling for peer and supervisor support. Similarly, among the forms of social support, informational support was the only significant unique predictor after controlling for emotional, esteem, and instrumental support. These findings highlight the particular importance of family support and access to relevant information and guidance in helping students manage thesis-related academic demands. Academic stress also did not significantly differ by gender, faculty, or cohort, suggesting that the experience of academic stress was relatively comparable across the demographic groups examined.

Based on these findings, strengthening students' social support systems should be an important component of efforts to address academic stress during thesis completion. Families should be encouraged to provide consistent encouragement, realistic expectations, and practical assistance, while universities should ensure that students have access to clear and timely academic information, counseling services, peer-support programs, and structured thesis-writing communities. Given the significant role of informational support, thesis supervisors and academic units should provide clear guidance, constructive and timely feedback, and accessible information regarding research procedures and thesis requirements. Future research should employ longitudinal and multi-institutional designs, use probability sampling where feasible, and examine additional individual, academic, and environmental factors, including academic self-efficacy, coping strategies, quality of thesis supervision, socioeconomic conditions, and access to institutional resources.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to all students who participated in this study and contributed their time and experiences during the data collection process. The authors also appreciate the support of all parties who assisted in the implementation of this research.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study was conducted in accordance with applicable ethical principles for research involving human participants. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study before providing their consent to participate.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

DATA TRANSPARENCY

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The data are not publicly available to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants.

FUNDING

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the conception and design of the study, data collection and analysis, interpretation of the findings, and preparation of the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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