

Facing the Pressure: The Dynamics of Anxiety Among Final-Year Students Working on Their Theses

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ABSTRACT

Anxiety among final-year students in thesis writing often becomes a major barrier to completing their studies, triggered by various internal and external factors such as academic pressure, family expectations, and technical issues. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of anxiety among students, focusing on the causes, symptoms, impacts, and solutions applied to manage this anxiety. Using a qualitative approach, the research collected data through in-depth interviews with four students who experienced anxiety during the thesis process. The findings show that student anxiety is caused by factors such as academic pressure, high family expectations, as well as physical and psychological disturbances such as sleep disorders, muscle tension, and feelings of restlessness. As a solution, students applied time management, sought social support, and engaged in physical activities to alleviate their anxiety. These findings have important implications for universities to provide more systematic psychological support to improve student well-being.

ABSTRAK

Kecemasan pada mahasiswa tingkat akhir dalam pengerjaan skripsi sering menjadi hambatan besar dalam penyelesaian studi, dipicu oleh berbagai faktor internal dan eksternal seperti tekanan akademik, ekspektasi keluarga, dan masalah teknis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dinamika kecemasan mahasiswa, dengan fokus pada faktor penyebab, gejala, dampak, dan solusi yang diterapkan untuk mengatasi kecemasan tersebut. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara mendalam dengan empat mahasiswa yang mengalami kecemasan selama proses pengerjaan skripsi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kecemasan mahasiswa disebabkan oleh faktor-faktor seperti tekanan akademik dan ekspektasi yang tinggi dari keluarga, serta gangguan fisik dan psikologis seperti gangguan tidur, ketegangan otot, dan perasaan gelisah. Sebagai solusi, mahasiswa menerapkan manajemen waktu, mencari dukungan sosial, dan melakukan kegiatan fisik untuk meredakan kecemasan. Temuan ini memiliki implikasi penting bagi perguruan tinggi untuk menyediakan dukungan psikologis yang lebih sistematis guna meningkatkan kesejahteraan mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci

Kecemasan, Skripsi, Penyebab Kecemasan, Coping, Dukungan Sosial

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BACKGROUND

College is the pinnacle of formal education where students must prepare themselves to face real life and the world of work in the future (D. A. M. Sari & Rahayu, 2022). Final year students must complete a thesis or final project as the main requirement to graduate and earn a bachelor's degree (Widiantoro et al., 2019a). The process of working on this thesis includes various steps, such as finding a research topic, choosing a research sample, and dealing with time and reference limitations. The thesis is a final project of students in the undergraduate program, prepared based on careful and systematic research and made with the guidance of two supervisors. Universities with undergraduate programs usually allow students to complete a thesis to obtain a degree (O'Connor & Sanchez, 2022).

Based on data obtained from the Student Academic Directorate of the University of Muhammadiyah Riau through a research permit dated April 24, 2024, it was concluded that the number of applicants at the campus in 2019 was recorded as many as 2,173 new students. Then, as many as 2,128 students took thesis courses in the 2023/2024 period. However, out of 2,128 students, only 847 students will graduate in June 2024. This shows that there are great challenges in completing the thesis. Relatively low completion rates may be due to several factors, such as difficulty in the research process, sub-optimal guidance, or personal problems among students.

Based on thesis research Nguyen and Zhou (2023) it is often a challenge for students to complete individual final projects. One of the reasons is because students are required to take individual time just to complete their thesis thoroughly (Gomez & Mitchell, 2021). However, many students consider the thesis as a big challenge and full of pressure, tension, and requires a lot of commitment and time. One of the factors that hinders student theses is anxiety (Wahyuni, 2022a).

Anxiety often arises due to uncertainty during the research process, deadline pressures and expectations for quality work. That anxiety is usually caused by the fear of not getting enough data, difficulty finding relevant literature, concerns about the assessment of the supervisor and the pressure to complete on time. Anxiety is an unpleasant experience and is related to worries or tensions expressed in the form of fear and emotions. It is caused by the perception that threats or frustrations threaten the well-being or balance of a particular person or social group (King & Reynolds, 2020).

Anxiety is an emotional experience that is often experienced, in which a person feels lost or lacks confidence for no apparent reason (N. R. Hidayat et al., 2023). It can appear as a reaction to pressures or challenges faced in daily life and affect how a person responds to demanding situations (Smith & Brown, 2023). Anxiety is a change in physiological, emotional, and cognitive responses to ongoing and unexpected threats. Overall, anxiety can be seen as a

reaction to situations, guesses, and challenges that each individual faces (A. Taylor & Rogers, 2023).

According to Angie, there are 4 aspects of anxiety, including affective aspects which include individual feelings when experiencing anxiety such as feeling offended, nervous, anxious, disappointed and impatient (Yusra et al., 2021). Then the physiological aspect that includes the physical signs that appear when a person experiences anxiety, such as difficulty breathing, chest pain, rapid breathing, increased heart rate, cold sweats, trembling and so on (M. M. Ompusunggu, 2022). Then the cognitive aspects that include thoughts and perceptions related to anxiety, such as the fear of the inability to solve a problem, the fear of receiving negative comments, difficulties in focus and concentration, and difficulties in reasoning about things (Martinez & Park, 2022). The next aspect is the behavioral aspect that includes a person's responses or behaviors that generally appear when a person experiences anxiety, such as avoiding situations that cause anxiety, seeking refuge, being silent, talking a lot or fixated and difficulty speaking (O'Connor & Sanchez, 2022).

Taylor and Rogers (2023) mentions 4 main factors that affect anxiety in individuals. These factors include environmental factors around the individual which are included in stressful situations, social pressures and life experiences that can trigger or worsen anxiety (L. Nguyen & Zhou, 2023). Behavioral factors such as actions or behaviors learned to certain situations, can affect anxiety levels. Biological factors such as genetic factors, brain chemistry, and nervous system function also play an important role in such anxiety (Gomez & Mitchell, 2021). Emotional and cognitive factors such as uncontrolled emotions and negative thought patterns, such as excessive thinking about scary or threatening situations, can trigger or exacerbate anxiety (King & Reynolds, 2020).

Johnson and Williams (2021) states that anxiety symptoms can vary in physical, psychic and social terms. Humans generally feel anxiety in the form of subjective disturbing emotions, behaviors such as looking worried, restless, and physiological responses such as increased heart rate. Students who face final assignments also often experience some of these symptoms (Martinez & Park, 2022). One of the consequences of anxiety in students who are writing a thesis is the difficulty in completing the thesis according to the expected schedule, so that individuals cannot graduate on time in 4 years of lectures. Views of tasks that require ability more often give rise to a fear of failure and incompetence (A. Taylor & Rogers, 2023). This is the basis for the appearance of anxiety, which leads to a tendency to avoid feelings of anxiety by procrastinating work. As a result, anxiety increases because tasks are not completed in time (Davis & Thomas, 2021).

College students need methods to overcome the various challenges they face, so that individuals can avoid stress and anxiety. It is important for students to develop

strategies to be able to go through difficult times in research lectures more calmly and confidently.

The researcher is interested in researching this because it aims to analyze the dynamics of anxiety in final year students in completing their thesis to develop effective anxiety management strategies. The benefits of the research are to add practical insights and recommendations for universities to improve support and policies that help students overcome anxiety, improve graduation rates, and individual emotional well-being. Based on this exposure, the researcher will research on the anxiety dynamics of final year students in working on their thesis.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

The method used in this study is a qualitative method. According to Istighfari, qualitative research is a type of research whose discovery procedure does not use statistics or quantitative measurements. Qualitative research examines individual lives, stories, behaviors, and organizational functions, social movements, and mutual interactions (Istighfari et al., 2023)

Research Subject

This research was carried out at the University of Muhammadiyah Riau with the target of final year students who are taking thesis courses from the class of 2018 to 2020. This study uses a *purposive sampling* strategy to select final year students who experience anxiety while working on their thesis.

Purposive sampling is a sampling method that is carried out by deliberately determining certain criteria or conducting special selection (M. E. Tenggana et al., 2020).

The criteria are:

Table 1. Subject Demographics

Demographic Categories	Description
University	University of Muhammadiyah Riau
Courses	Final year students who are taking thesis courses
Academic Forces	2018 - 2020
Gender	Male/Female
Thesis Status	Have not yet carried out a proposal seminar
Age Range	20-25 years

Purposive sampling was chosen in this study because researchers wanted to focus on specific groups of individuals who met specific criteria, so this method is well suited for researching targeted populations. In this case, the researcher

is interested in studying final year students at the University of Muhammadiyah Riau who are taking a thesis course and experiencing anxiety during the thesis writing process. Purposive sampling allows for deliberate selection of participants based on predetermined criteria, so that the sample taken represents the individuals who can provide the most relevant insights for the research question, which is difficult to achieve using random sampling. This method allows researchers to focus on a more specific and homogeneous group (final year students who experience thesis-related anxiety), which is crucial for obtaining in-depth qualitative data. The sample size is estimated to range from 10 to 20 participants, which is determined by data saturation, i.e. when no new themes or insights emerge during data collection.

Data Collection Techniques

The techniques used in data collection in this study are interview, observation, and documentation techniques. In this study, the data collection techniques used were interviews, observations, and documentation. The interviews allowed researchers to collect detailed answers from participants in a face-to-face setting, using a semi-structured format for flexibility. Observation involves non-participant observation, in which researchers record relevant events without engaging in activities, using anecdotal records. Documentation collects existing written, visual, or recorded material to provide additional context. These three methods together offer a comprehensive approach to understanding the participants' experiences and the phenomena being studied. Click or tap here to enter text.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted by the researcher on four subjects, including subject Z, subject F, subject N and subject FH. So the researcher obtained information related to the dynamics of anxiety which included factors, symptoms, consequences and solutions to anxiety of final year students in working on their thesis.

Causes of Student Anxiety

The anxiety experienced by students is often influenced by various interrelated factors. Internal factors such as insecurity, feelings of failure, or fear of the future can be major triggers of anxiety. Students who feel unprepared or lack confidence in completing their thesis often feel burdened with high expectations from themselves, their families, or friends. Academic pressure to complete assignments on time and achieve the expected academic standards can increase the level of stress that individuals feel.

In addition to internal factors, external factors also play a big role in causing anxiety. One of the external factors that students often face is the expectations that come from family and friends. The pressure to meet parental expectations, such as graduating on time or earning a degree

with a laude predicate, can add to the psychological burden on students. In addition, interaction with friends who are more advanced in their thesis work or have completed individual studies can exacerbate students' feelings of anxiety who feel left behind. This is evidenced by the results of the interview as follows:

"I felt anxious because my laptop was broken and had to wait for funds to buy a new one. The pressure from more advanced friends, parents, and scholarships also added to the burden on my mind." (Subject Z, Male/22 years old)

"My involvement in campus organizations, especially as student president, made it difficult for me to complete my thesis on time. The pressure from my family who kept asking when I would graduate also added to the burden." (Subject F, Male/24 years old)

Student anxiety is mainly triggered by academic pressure, personal problems, and high social expectations, as well as practical constraints such as device breakdowns and lack of guidance.

Anxiety Symptoms

The symptoms of anxiety experienced by students can often be recognized through physical, psychological, and behavioral changes. Physically, college students who experience anxiety often feel sleep disturbances, such as insomnia or poor sleep, which leads to fatigue. Rapid heart rate, muscle tension, and frequent feeling dizzy or nauseous are also common physical symptoms. This condition is caused by the body's response to high mental stress, which indicates that the body is under stress. These physical symptoms not only interfere with the student's comfort, but also hinder the individual's ability to concentrate on academic tasks. This is evidenced by the following interview excerpts:

"I felt an increased heart rate, tense muscles, and sleep disturbances. I feel restless and stressed." (Subject Z, Male/22 years old)

"I felt restless and my breathing was irregular during the guidance, sometimes shaking and breaking out in cold sweats." (FH Subject, Female/23 years old)

Symptoms of college anxiety involve not only physical, but also psychological and behavioral disorders. Sleep disturbances, excessive anxiety, and changes in social behavior are manifestations of high anxiety.

Impact of Anxiety

Prolonged anxiety can lead to decreased academic productivity and feelings of isolation from the social environment. Students may have difficulty completing their thesis on time, lose the opportunity to graduate on time, and experience a decrease in motivation and confidence. This is evidenced by the results of the interview as follows:

"I lost the opportunity to graduate laude, my productivity decreased because time wasn't used effectively." (Subject F, Male/24 years old)

"I feel left behind compared to my friends. My productivity is down, and I feel depressed seeing more advanced friends." (FH Subject, Female/23 years old).

The impact of anxiety on students is significant, especially in decreased academic productivity, delays in completing thesis, and feelings of social isolation, which further worsen the individual's mental state.

Strategies to Overcome Anxiety

College students often try a variety of coping strategies to cope with individual anxiety, including better time management, seeking social support from friends or family, and engaging in fun activities such as sports or personal hobbies. Managing time in a more structured way can help individuals reduce their sense of urgency and provide space to focus on academic work. Additionally, interacting with people who can provide emotional support is also an effective way to reduce mental burden, giving individuals a sense of acceptance and understanding. Physical activities such as jogging or exercising are also known to relieve stress and improve mood, providing an opportunity for students to refresh their minds.

"I decided to focus on my thesis and immediately registered for a proposal seminar. I spend less time with friends and more solitude." (Subject F, Male/24 years old)

"I try to distract myself by watching K-pop and dramas as a form of healing, as well as walking alone while enjoying ice cream and working on my thesis." (Subject N, Female/22 years old)

The strategies students implement to cope with anxiety vary, including time management, seeking social support, and engaging in fun activities. While some strategies are quite helpful, there are times when individuals are not fully effective in coping with the academic pressures experienced by students.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study, several factors that cause anxiety were identified, including technology problems such as laptop damage that hindered thesis work, involvement in non-academic activities such as Bujang Dara Riau activities and campus organizations that break focus, as well as social pressure from friends, parents, and scholarships. Then, the lack of guidance from lecturers and support from parents also worsens the situation, while personal issues such as strained relationships with family and household responsibilities add to the complexity.

In line with what is explained by Davis and Thomas (2021) that anxiety factor includes the individual's

surrounding environment and social pressures. Then behavioral factors caused by anxiety-triggering situations, then biological factors such as genetic or physical, as well as cognitive and emotional factors that include feelings of uncontrol and thoughts that lead to negativity.

Anxiety symptoms experienced by Brown and Kim (2020) students based on the data of this study include physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, tense muscles, sleep disturbances, disturbed diet, and the appearance of acne (R. Taylor & Lee, 2022). Psychologically, individuals feel restless, worried, depressed, and experience (Johnson & Williams, 2021). This is usually experienced when you are going to give guidance with a supervisor or when remembering an approaching deadline. Behaviors that indicate anxiety include avoiding meetings with lecturers, talking about thesis, reducing time gathering with friends (Smith & Brown, 2023).

These symptoms are also explained in the study, that the symptoms of anxiety felt by students in working on their thesis are physical symptoms which include anxiety, dizziness, excessive memory and difficulty breathing (Yusra et al., 2021). Meanwhile, cognitive symptoms include negative thoughts and fear of failure (Yusfina, 2016). As well as emotional symptoms felt by students include feelings of tension, fear, irritability and worry and even lack of confidence (Widiantoro et al., 2019b).

This anxiety has a significant impact on various aspects of student life, including academic setbacks due to delayed thesis, and the loss of opportunities to graduate *laude* due to increased semesters of lectures, as well as decreased productivity due to time not being used effectively (Wakhyudin & Putri, 2020). Socially, individuals feel less confident and depressed seeing the progress of their friends, and tend to avoid meeting people who have high expectations of individuals (Wahyuni, 2022b).

This impact is also explained in the study on the impact of anxiety during thesis work which is due to Hidayat et al. (2023) negative experiences of behavior, such as fear of failure, difficulty in accepting oneself when the thesis has not been completed on time. Students try various solutions to overcome anxiety (M. Tenggara et al., 2020). Individuals try to manage their time by creating a schedule, focusing on completing the thesis after the organization's activities are completed, and reducing time gathering with friends (Syamsudin, 2015). Support from family, especially talking to parents for emotional support, is also important for maintaining the student's mental health. Efforts to maintain physical health that individuals do by exercising and eating regularly, as well as maintaining mental health by remaining optimistic and confident (Firnando & Suhesty, 2024).

In line with research Saraswati et al. (2021) right solution to overcome anxiety in working on a thesis is to make a list of goals to be achieved, identify obstacles and negative thoughts, and change the perspective of failure as a learning process. In addition, students must also learn to manage time well, as well as do things that they like and have

fun to reduce anxiety while working on their thesis (Nugraha, 2020).

The anxiety experienced by final year students in working on their thesis is often the result of pressure that comes from various internal and external factors that are interconnected (Safitri, 2018). Internally, college students often feel anxious due to insecurity and worries about an individual's future. Individuals feel pressured to meet the high expectations that individuals set for themselves, such as completing a thesis with the best results or graduating on time (Rahmat & Amal, 2020). Fear of failure and feelings of not being prepared to face academic challenges often trigger deep anxiety (M. Ompusunggu, 2022). In addition, students who feel not competent enough or not ready to complete their thesis tend to feel burdened with tasks that individuals consider very important. In this case, the fear of failure can have a great effect on an individual's mental health (Nugraha, 2020).

External factors such as expectations that come from family and friends also exacerbate the anxiety experienced by students. Many college students feel pressure to meet the expectations of parents who want individuals to graduate on time or earn a *laude* predicate (N. Istighfari et al., 2023). This kind of pressure often adds to the psychological burden that already exists, making students feel like they have to pursue very high goals (Hidayat et al., 2023). In addition, social interaction with friends who are more advanced in working on their thesis or even who have completed their studies can increase students' feelings of anxiety who feel left behind (P. Nguyen & Kim, 2024). Individuals often feel that individuals have to catch up on this lag in a short period of time, which in turn increases the individual's anxiety (Twohig & Crosby, 2010).

Anxiety symptoms experienced by college students can be seen in various physical, psychological, and behavioral aspects (Zou et al., 2025). Physically, anxiety often causes sleep disorders, which can be insomnia or intermittent sleep (Cynthia et al., 2024). Students who experience anxiety often feel tired from poor sleep and often stay awake at night (Rachmawati, 2019). Students who feel anxious often overthink unfinished assignments or approaching deadlines, which worsens the individual's psychological state. Fear of failure and uncertainty about the future often dominate the mind of individuals (Kamila, 2020).

Anxiety symptoms can also affect student behavior. Behavioral changes that are often seen are avoiding talking about the thesis or avoiding social interaction with friends or lecturers (Kusumastuti, 2020). Students who experience anxiety often withdraw from the individual's social environment because they feel incapable of meeting expectations or feel embarrassed by the individual's slow progress (Wakhyudin & Putri, 2020). Individuals may also avoid meetings with the supervisor out of fear or a sense of not being competent enough to discuss the individual's thesis (Nida, 2014). In some cases, students also tend to escape pressure by distracting individuals, such as playing

games or doing other activities unrelated to the thesis (LAOP Center, 2025).

The impact of prolonged anxiety on college students is significant, especially in terms of decreased academic productivity and individual mental health (Fachrozie et al., 2017). Students who are constantly plagued by anxiety will find it difficult to focus on individual academic tasks (Aristawati et al., 2020a). The thesis work process that should have run smoothly is hampered because students feel pressured and find it difficult to start or continue their individual work (Aristawati et al., 2020b). The impact of this decrease in productivity can be huge, considering that thesis work is a very important task for graduation (Devina, 2020). High anxiety can also cause students to feel unable to complete an individual thesis within a predetermined deadline, which increases feelings of stress and inadequacy. In addition, anxiety can lead to a decrease in motivation and confidence, which further worsens the psychological state of the individual (Azyz et al., 2019).

In addition to the academic impact, anxiety experienced by students can also lead to feelings of social isolation (Sugiarti, 2023). College students who experience anxiety often withdraw from social interactions with individual friends or family because they feel embarrassed or not good enough (Dwi et al., 2022). Individuals feel pressured to see their friends who are more advanced in their thesis work or who have completed individual assignments. Feelings of inferiority and comparison of oneself to more successful friends can cause college students to feel more isolated and lonely (Tajuddin & Haenidar, 2019). This further worsens the individual's mental state, which makes the individual feel incapable of overcoming the challenges that the individual faces (Firnando & Suhesty, 2024).

These findings show that final year students' anxiety in working on their thesis is influenced by various factors and has a wide impact on individual lives. Proper support and guidance is essential to help individuals overcome anxiety and complete their thesis effectively.

The term anxiety is explained a lot in the Quran and is mentioned in 12 verses. 6 of them are found in Surah Al-Baqarah. One of them is stated in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 38:

فَلَمَّا أَهْبَطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا ۖ فَلَمَّا يَأْتِيَكَمْ مِّنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Meaning: "We said: 'Come down from Paradise! Then if My guidance comes to you, then whoever follows My guidance, there will be no concern for the individual, and no individual will be sad.'"

Allah SWT speaks of an anxiety called the word *Khauf* (noun) and about sorrow called the word *Huzn* (verb). These terms often appear in the verses of the Quran to describe the emotional state of man and how individuals can deal with it through faith and piety to Allah SWT. (Ulfi Putra Sany, 2022)

The verses of the Quran that are used to calm the heart from anxiety are explained in the Quran, surah Al-Fath verse 4. The verse reads:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَرْدَأُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ جُنُودُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

Meaning: "He is the One who has sent down peace into the hearts of the believers to increase faith over the individual faith (that already exists). And to Allah belong the armies of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise."

This verse teaches that with faith and confidence in Allah, one's heart can find peace. Allah sends down tranquility into the hearts of believers so that individuals can face all the trials and challenges of life more calmly and strongly.

CONCLUSION

The anxiety of final year students in thesis work is influenced by internal factors, such as self-confidence, and external factors, such as social pressure and technical problems, such as device breakdowns and time management. The impact includes decreased academic productivity, delayed completion of thesis, and social isolation. College students use coping strategies such as time management, social support, and physical activity, although their effectiveness varies. The study suggests that further research explores more psychological support that can help reduce anxiety, and provides important implications for colleges to provide better emotional support to improve student well-being and graduation.

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