

Stress Coping Strategies in Preparing Thesis for Final Year Students of the Guidance and Counseling Study

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Received: Oktober 14, 2024; Accepted: November 24, 2024; Published: November 30, 2024

ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine and identify stress coping strategies in writing a thesis in final year students of the Guidance and Counseling Study Program at Veteran Bangun Nusantara University. The condition of students in the millennial generation today is a challenge in completing their studies. The obstacles faced by students during the thesis writing process include various psychological disorders, including anxiety, stress, panic, fear, depression, confusion, and frustration. The most inhibiting thing in facing the final semester is overthinking, which triggers excessive stress. Stress is normal and is part of human life. However, too much stress can interfere with a person's personal function, because everyone's endurance is different. This type of research is qualitative descriptive method. The data collection techniques used are interviews and observations. The subjects in this study were final year BK students from the Class of 2018, 2019 and 2020. The results showed that final year students predominantly used emotion focused coping strategies with five forms of coping, namely distancing, accepting responsibility, positive reappraisal, self-control, and escape avoidance. Final year students of BK study program of Veteran Bangun Nusantara University face pressure in completing their thesis in ways that aim to manage emotions and feelings of stress, not directly solving the problem itself. The conclusion of this study is that stress coping strategies included in the Emotion Focused Coping category are used by students facing difficulties in completing their thesis in ways that aim to manage emotions and feelings of stress, not directly solving the problem itself.

Keywords: *thesis preparation, emotion focused coping, final year students, Copying Stress*



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INTRODUCTION

Students are students at the higher education level who have an important role in future change. An important part of education is the role of students as agents of change. This means that as the young generation of the Indonesian nation, students must receive sufficient education to broaden their horizons so that they can bring change to the nation (Jannah & Sulianti, 2021). Students have many tasks

that they must complete while they study, one of which is completing a thesis as a requirement for obtaining a bachelor's degree. During the process of working on a thesis, many challenges arise, which if students are not able to overcome well, will cause pressure which can cause stress and make them feel uncomfortable (Amin, 2019).

Students who have reached the final stage will face a final academic obligation known as a thesis. Students can be declared graduated after preparing a final assignment which is then presented to get academic grades and achieve a degree. As expressed by (Lesmana, 2023) a thesis is proof of academic ability in conducting research on cases or phenomena that arise and are then researched using relevant theories and will then be analyzed to obtain results from the research. So it is very important for students to immediately complete their thesis as part of the academic education requirements at university.

Students respond to completing their thesis differently, there are students who look enthusiastic and often lose interest and stop or are delayed for several semesters. The process of supervising a thesis between students and their supervisor sometimes creates an anxious situation because they do not understand and do not master the steps in the research that will be carried out. Anxiety can arise when we face something that is considered important, enter a new situation and are anxious about the lecturer's response to student work results. One of the anxieties that students often face is when taking part in the supervision process and thesis exams (Hidayati et al., 2021).

The current condition of students in the millennial generation is a challenge in completing their studies. The problem of participants in the education sector is a very serious matter to discuss, because education lasts a lifetime. In line with that, education has recently undergone many changes following developments in science and technology. These changes bring many changes in students' increasingly modern way of thinking (Yuliana et al., 2023).

In preparing a thesis, students receive guidance from a supervisor during the writing process, who helps them in directing their research (Ghani et al., 2023). During the thesis preparation process, it is not uncommon for students to be faced with various problems or obstacles. (Ahmad et al., 2021) say that students often feel that writing their thesis is a big burden in their lives because they have to look for titles that have never been used by other students before. Not only that, if the title they submitted is rejected, they need to look for a new title to submit again. According to students' perceptions, the process of completing a thesis is also considered to require significant financial expenditure, in addition to various other problems faced, which overall can hinder their progress and graduation in college.

This condition is supported by the low interest in literacy of students' scientific work. (Maulana & Susanti, 2020) states that in survey research conducted by the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2004 from 175 countries, Singapore's education level was in 25th place and Malaysia was in 58th place. Meanwhile, Indonesia's education level is ranked 111th out of 175 countries. Meanwhile, Indonesia's human quality is much lower than Brunei (33), Thailand (76), and the Philippines (83), even lower than "underdeveloped" countries such as Kyrgyzstan (110), Equatorial Guinea (109), and Algeria (108). In addition, the quality of Indonesian higher education is still lagging behind compared to neighboring countries. If you look at the 2006 Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) survey, Indonesian tertiary institutions are only in the 250th row represented by the University of Indonesia, this quality is below the achievements of the National University of Malaysia (UKM) which is ranked 185th. Then in 2007 according to the THES survey of 3000 universities in the world, ITB only succeeded in ranking 927th and at the same time became the best tertiary institution in Indonesia.

A similar incident also occurred in upper secondary education units. In (Respati et al., 2020), nowadays very few students are interested or like reading books. So this has an impact on reducing students' knowledge of something. This is also the case in class students can normally complete their final thesis assignment smoothly and graduate within 8 semesters. However, it is not uncommon for students to delay writing their thesis, some even decide not to complete it because of various obstacles they face. Based on academic data from the Information Systems Services Bureau (BPSI) at Veteran Bangun Nusantara University as of January 29 2024, the total number of BK study program students who have not completed their thesis can be seen from the following table:

Table 1.1 Data on Students Who Are Completing Their Thesis

Entry Year	2018	2019	2020
Total	18 students	12 students	11 students

Obstacles faced by students during the process of writing a thesis include various psychological disorders, including anxiety, stress, panic, fear, depression, confusion and frustration (Susilo, 2019). Furthermore, based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers with final year students of the BK study program on Monday, January 22 2024, the results showed that the thing that caused the most pressure or stress in the final semester was compiling the final thesis assignment. They are afraid that the title and proposal will not be accepted, are afraid of facing their supervisor, are anxious because they feel left behind by other friends, and often feel confused during the thesis preparation process. They stated that when in a stressful situation, physical symptoms often appear, such as dizziness. (Edmawati et al., 2024), Psychosomatics is a form of various physical illnesses caused by psychological conflict and chronic anxieties. Psychosomatics is a psychological disorder that can cause physical complaints. Psychosomatics is a physical disorder caused by psychological and social factors.

The biggest thing in facing the final semester based on interviews with final year BK students is overthinking. Some of these things can become obstacles in preparing their thesis. One of the pressures or stress they feel is related to preparing their thesis. Stress in writing a thesis can have a negative impact and harm individuals if it is not handled properly. The stress phenomenon that had a bad impact was a student with the initials AA (22 years old) at the North Toraja Private University who ended his life by hanging himself at home. It is suspected that the victim committed suicide due to stress. The victim told his family that he was having difficulty completing his thesis (News.detik.com, 2022)

Stress is normal and part of human life. However, too much stress can interfere with a person's personal functioning, because each person's endurance is different. The stress of completing a thesis is one of the most common examples of stress (Mutya et al., 2023). Research conducted by Indarwati in 2018 regarding the description of stress of final year students in preparing their theses at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, UIN Alauddin Makassar, showed the results that 54 of the total students who wrote their theses for the Class of 2013 were found to have mild physical symptoms, 88.9% of whom had symptoms such as shortness of breath, excessive sweating, unstable heartbeat. As many as 85.2% of students experience mild psychological symptoms with symptoms such as anxiety, irritability due to trivial things, feeling sad and depressed, panicking easily, fear and restlessness. Then students experienced behavioral symptoms at a mild level, as many as 92.6% of people with symptoms such as finding it difficult

to relax, being unable to be patient when experiencing delays and losing interest and initiative in doing things. Where, the most prominent overall source of stress in this research is the aspect of frustration or symptoms of psychological stress. In psychology, stress is defined as mental tension and feelings of pressure. Low stress levels can be considered good, beneficial, and even healthy. However, high levels of stress can cause biological, psychological and social problems, and can even pose significant danger to a person (Hidayati et al., 2021).

Stress does not always have a negative connotation, but stress can be a positive thing and increase productivity if managed well. Negative impacts will arise if someone cannot control their stress. Based on the response produced, stress is divided into two, namely eustress and distress (Fitri et al., 2023). Eustress is a positive response to stress while distress is a negative response to stress. The negative consequences resulting from distress are quite numerous, stating that high levels of distress, especially in students, affect anxiety and depression, suicidal thoughts, poor lifestyle, disturbed sleep patterns, headaches, and feelings of helplessness (Musabiq & Karimah, 2018).

Ineffective handling of stress can result in maladaptive behavior, such as deviant actions that have the potential to harm both oneself and others. Therefore, as a factor that determines efforts to adjust to stressful situations (stressful life events), strategies for managing stress or coping with stress need to be implemented. "Coping stress" is a term used to describe a person's efforts to reduce or eliminate tension when in a stressful situation (Syafitri & Khoirunnisa, 2023).

According to Lazarus (Syafitri & Khoirunnisa, 2023) Coping is an approach to dealing with problems that arise in a person's life. States that coping is an effort to overcome difficult situations, take steps to resolve problems, and attempt to control or reduce the level of stress experienced. Lazarus and Folkman (Maryam, 2017) divide coping into two categories, namely, problem focused coping, where an individual tries to do something constructive regarding stressful situations that endanger, threaten or challenge them. When someone faces disturbances, threats, or challenging situations that can change, they usually make problem focused coping efforts (Tri Semaraputri & Rustika, 2018). Types of problem focused coping consist of planful problem solving, confrontive coping, and seeking social support. Next, which focuses on emotions (emotion focused coping). When someone feels they cannot change a stressful situation and can only accept the situation because their resources are not enough to overcome the situation, they tend to carry out coping behavior that is centered on emotions (Maryam, 2017). This type of emotion focused coping consists of distancing, self-control, accepting responsibility, positive reappraisal, and escape avoidance (Setyawan, 2021).

Meanwhile, Stuart & Sundeen (Mutya et al., 2023) classify coping strategies into two types, namely coping that focuses on solving problems and coping that focuses on regulating emotions. Problem-centered coping mechanisms include: confrontation, isolation, and compromise; which includes emotion-centered coping mechanisms: denial, rationalization, compensation, repression, sublimation, identification, regression, projection, conversion, and displacement.

Based on this background, it can be identified that there are several problems including pressure that cause students to experience stress in preparing their thesis. Where, pressure or stress can have a bad impact and endanger individuals. Due to the pressure faced by students, coping needs to be done to reduce the negative impact of existing stress. Therefore, researchers conducted research with the title "Stress Coping Strategies in Preparing Theses for Final Year Students of the BK Study Program at Veteran Bangun Nusantara University".

METHODS

This type of research is qualitative with descriptive methods. According to Sugiyono qualitative research method is an approach used to study the condition of objects naturally, where the researcher functions as the main instrument (Utami, 2021). Descriptive research is a research approach where researchers explore events or phenomena in the lives of individuals or groups, inviting one or several individuals to share stories about their lives. The data obtained was then expressed again by the researcher through a chronological description (Mekarisce, 2020).

The subjects in this research consisted of nine students from the BK study program at Veteran Bangun Nusantara University, each consisting of three students from the class of 2018, three students from the class of 2019, and three students from the class of 2020. The sampling used was simple random sampling. (Saleh, 2017)

Data collection methods in this research used interviews and observation. According to Sugiyono (Beno, 2022). interview techniques are used as a data collection method when researchers want to conduct a preliminary study to identify problems that need to be researched. To support interview data, researchers also use observation which involves direct observation of research subjects. In the context of observing a subject, the use of the five senses is used, including sight, hearing, smell, and if necessary, taste and touch (Kojongian et al., 2022). Interviews and observations were used to explore data on stress coping strategies used by BK students in preparing their thesis.

The data analysis technique was carried out using the Miles & Huberman model (Nur & Mugj, 2021), which includes data reduction, selecting the main things, focusing on the important things, and looking for themes and data patterns. Next is the data display (Data Presentation), where the data in this research is presented in tabular form. Lastly, verification (drawing conclusions). Data validity was carried out by triangulation. According to Sugiyono (Sawitri & Wideasavitri, 2021), data triangulation technique is a method of collecting information that involves combining data from various existing sources. Triangulation can also be interpreted as an effort to verify data by utilizing various sources, techniques and different time periods (Mutya et al., 2023). In this research, the validity of the data uses triangulation methods and techniques. Where, technical triangulation is carried out by verifying data from the same source, even though using different techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Stress Coping Strategies for Guidance and Counseling Univet Bantara Students

Lazarus and Folkman (Maryam, 2017) describe 2 forms of coping strategies, namely problem focused coping and emotion focused coping. According to (Maryam, 2017), if someone feels they cannot change stressful circumstances and can only accept the situation because their resources are not enough to overcome the situation, they tend to engage in emotion-centered coping behavior. This is in accordance with the statement of the respondent (KHJL) who stated that:

"I'm the type who prefers to do my hobbies first, things I don't like rather than doing tasks that stress me out. So, if you force it, it won't work that way, it will actually add to your stress, Sis. Usually, when I'm stressed, I choose to play music (keyboard). If not, sleep more, because the burden feels like it's gone for a while, Sis. Or not, snack like that."

Based on the interview, the respondent stated that the respondent did not have sufficient resources to overcome the pressure due to the thesis. So, respondents need to divert their attention to other things to overcome the stress they face.

Based on previous research conducted by (Ghani et al., 2023), it shows that on average students use emotional focused coping strategies to overcome their problems. This shows that students who are working on their thesis can reduce the stress they experience by seeking emotional and social support, or engaging in activities such as sports or playing games, where these activities can divert their attention from the pressure they are experiencing. Examples of emotion focused coping behavior that emerged among respondents based on interview results are in line with the results of previous research (Maryam, 2017), such as playing games, hanging out with friends, doing hobby activities listening to music, climbing, watching comedy entertainment, or refreshing by cycling around the house.

Stuart & Sundeen's theory (Makbul et al., 2021), explains that one of the coping mechanisms that focuses on emotions is rationalization, where individuals use reasons that are rational and acceptable to others to hide their shortcomings. In this study, all respondents, either explicitly or implicitly, stated that they needed to lift their mood before returning to their academic responsibilities. If you are forced to do it, the results will not be effective (Maulana & Susanti, 2020). All respondents showed efforts to manage emotions that arose due to the pressure of completing their thesis. They look for ways to reduce stress and improve their emotional well-being, even though the stressful situation persists. (Setyawan, 2021)

Forms of Coping Stress for Guidance and Counseling Univet Bantara students

a) Distancing

According to Lazarus and Folkman (Maryam, 2017), the emotion focused coping strategy in the form of distancing is the response of individuals who try to avoid involvement or are not directly involved in the problems they face. The results of interviews with all respondents showed conformity with the concept of the emotion focused coping strategy in the form of distancing. Based on the results of interviews and observations, all respondents used hobbies or enjoyable activities as a way to temporarily distance themselves from the thesis pressure they were facing. In this case, this fun activity functions as a diversion from the pressure of the thesis. Even though they were not directly involved in completing the thesis at that time, they still realized that this responsibility had to be completed. Once they feel fresher and ready, they return to focusing on their work with better energy and concentration.

b) Accepting Responsibility

According to Lazarus and Folkman (Maryam, 2017) accepting responsibility is an effort to recognize one's own role in dealing with problems and trying to place everything correctly as it should be. The results of interviews with all respondents showed conformity with the concept of the emotion focused coping strategy in the form of accepting responsibility. The respondent has a diligent attitude in preparing his thesis, which is shown by the lecturer's habit of carrying out revisions. Most respondents stated that they should revise as soon as possible, after guidance with the lecturer, and that the revision process should be carried out in stages. All respondents realized that completing their thesis was their personal responsibility as students, and that this was part of their academic obligations that they had to complete.

c) Positive Reappraisal

According to Lazarus and Folkman (Maryam, 2017) the emotion focused coping strategy is a form of positive reappraisal, where individuals create positive meaning by focusing on personal growth and involving spiritual aspects. Interview results that were relevant to this concept were shown by all respondents. This coping strategy involves an individual's efforts to create positive meaning from a challenging or stressful situation. In this case, the challenging situation is the preparation of the thesis. The results of interviews and observations show that the majority of respondents think that writing a thesis is something that can improve writing skills and compiling research. Others view that every difficulty faced in preparing a thesis is a learning process. Part of positive reappraisal here is creating positive meaning, focusing on personal growth, and involving spiritual aspects.

First, it creates positive meaning, where the majority of respondents see writing a thesis not only as a task that must be carried out to fulfill graduation requirements, but also as an opportunity for valuable learning. They create positive meaning from the process by seeing it as a step towards personal growth and improving writing and research skills. Second, focus on personal growth. In interviews, several respondents expressed the view that writing a thesis is part of the learning process and personal growth. They see every difficulty they face as an opportunity to develop and improve their academic abilities, such as writing skills and understanding of the research process. Third, it involves spiritual aspects. Although not explicitly mentioned in the interview, a positive attitude and perseverance in facing challenges in writing a thesis can also reflect spiritual aspects.

Research (Edmawati et al., 2024) The activity and participation of training participants creates group dynamics that support self-understanding, helps someone in a state of distress so that they feel calm and supported, and are able to overcome their challenges or problems better. The interview results that are most relevant to the concept of positive reappraisal relating to spiritual aspects can be seen in the answers of respondents (TH) Class of 2020, who stated that whatever they have tried is then surrendered to God.

d) Self-control

Referring to the definition of self-control according to Lazarus and Folkman (Maryam, 2017) which describes an individual's efforts to regulate feelings and behavior. Based on data analysis, researchers found that four out of nine respondents had a form of self-controlled coping. Meanwhile five respondents did not have this form of coping. Respondents have control over social media to avoid distractions from writing their thesis. Respondents also tried to avoid procrastination by using the method that most respondents used, namely building a good mood again. Respondents consciously made efforts to control their feelings and behavior in order to remain focused and productive in completing their thesis.

e) Escape Avoidance

Referring to Lazarus & Folkman's stress coping theory (Maryam, 2017), emotion focused coping in the form of escape avoidance describes imaginative responses and efforts to circumvent or avoid the problem being faced. Based on the results of interviews, researchers found that several things that respondents did with this form of coping tended to lead to negative things. For example, escape avoidance was expressed (Fitri et al., 2023) that people who adopt this coping strategy to overcome problems are seen as having a tendency to avoid and even engage in negative behavior such as sleeping excessively, consuming illegal drugs, and refusing to socialize with other people.

Weiten Lloyd (Wijayanti, 2008) states that negative coping involves several things. First, is giving up (withdrawing) or avoiding reality or situations that cause stress, which can be in the form of apathy, loss of enthusiasm, or feeling helpless, as well as consuming alcoholic drinks or illegal drugs. In this research, respondents (BIS) revealed:

"I found it difficult to write my thesis, because I'm a child who easily gets involved in social interactions that I think are fun, like at home, for example, I often hang out, play games together, hang out with friends, I think that's fun, right? If you get together with friends, you usually drink too. Well, that's usually my escape, sis, when I'm just stressed about my thesis."

Weiten Lloyd also revealed that another example of negative coping is using self-defense mechanisms, in the form of rejecting reality by protecting oneself from unpleasant situations, fantasizing, rationalizing, or overcompensating. As stated by the respondent (TH):

"Yes, Sis, because I'm not comfortable being asked when I'm tutoring, etc. And in my experience, before I met the advisor, I was asked that. Never mind lecturers, even friends don't avoid. Because yes, when we meet them, they often ask about their thesis, but they don't ask about it in a supportive way, instead it's more like comparing it to theirs. So I avoid interactions with my friends as much as possible."

Respondents used a form of escape avoidance by avoiding direct interaction, either with their supervisor or with their friends.

Conclusion

The stress coping strategies used by final year students of the Guidance and Counseling study program at Veteran Bangun Nusantara University are predominantly using coping strategies included in the Emotion Focused Coping category, in accordance with the theory of Lazarus & Folkman. Final year students of the Guidance and Counseling study program at Veteran Bangun Nusantara University face difficulties in completing their thesis in ways that aim to manage emotions and feelings of stress, not directly solving the problem itself. Various methods they use include diverting attention, avoiding exposure to triggers of stress, doing fun or entertaining activities, and seeking social support by meeting friends. Although each individual has a different way of dealing with difficulties, they all generally try to find balance and mental well-being during their academic process. Recommendations for campus policy makers are expected to provide other alternatives in compiling final assignments. Giving assignments to one of the supervisors so that there is no miscommunication between supervisors and minimizing anxiety and stress. Suggestions for subsequent researchers are to expand the research subjects so that the research results can be more credible.

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