

Student perceptions of stress in writing a thesis at UIN Sunan Ampel: a phenomenological study

Mohammad Fabyan Faiz¹

¹Departement of Usuluddin and Philosophy, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received : Mar 29, 2024

Revised : Apr 30, 2024

Accepted : Jun 25, 2024

Keywords:

Academic Stress;
Students;
Thesis Preparation;
Ablution;
Hydrotherapy;
Coping;
Mental Wellbeing;

ABSTRACT

Final year students often face major challenges in the form of academic stress, especially when writing their thesis. Various emotional and mental pressures arise due to factors such as confusion in determining the direction of research, difficulty in managing time, and heavy academic demands. This study focuses on the experiences of students at UIN Sunan Ampel, a campus with a religious culture, where a spiritual approach is considered relevant as a strategy to overcome stress. This study aims to understand the causes of stress, its impacts, and the strategies used by students to overcome it, with special attention to ablution as a form of hydrotherapy that has the potential to relieve academic anxiety. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study involved six final year students who were selected purposively. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis methods. The results showed that academic stress was caused by internal factors, such as fear of failure and confusion in connecting ideas, as well as external factors, such as social pressure and poor communication with supervisors. The impacts include anxiety, sleep disturbances, and decreased productivity. To overcome this, students use various strategies, such as carrying out religious activities (prayer and dhikr), managing time, seeking entertainment, and relying on social support. Ablution was also found to have a calming effect that helped students reduce stress. This study highlights the important role of spirituality and social support in helping students cope with academic stress. As a recommendation, campuses are advised to provide faith-based programs that support students' mental well-being.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Mohammad Fabyan Faiz
Departemen of Usuluddin and Philosophy, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel
Jl. Ahmad Yani No.117, Jemur Wonosari, Kec. Wonocolo, Surabaya, Jawa Timur 60237
Email: FabianFais15@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Students are the next generation who act as agents of change to create a better life in the future (Indria et al., 2019). However, they also often face various challenges, both in academic, social, and personal aspects. One of the biggest challenges faced by students during their studies is writing a thesis. A thesis is not only a graduation requirement, but also a symbol of academic achievement and a test of students' ability to apply the knowledge they have learned independently.

Although it is an important part of the educational journey, the thesis writing process is often a source of significant academic stress (Djoar & Anggarani, 2024). The pressure to produce quality

scientific work, coupled with time demands and expectations from various parties, often makes students feel burdened. Therefore, it is important to understand these challenges and find strategies that can help them go through this process better.

Stress is a person's natural response, both physically and emotionally, when faced with environmental changes that require adjustment. Although stress is a natural part of life, if it lasts too much or for a long time, it can have a negative impact on physical and mental health, such as fatigue, anxiety, and depression. Stress can also appear in various aspects of life, including work, family, and education (Selfiana et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important to recognize the sources of stress and take appropriate steps to minimize its impact. In the long term, the ability to manage stress well contributes to individual well-being.

In the world of education, one form of stress that is often experienced by students is academic stress. This stress can be defined as mental pressure that arises due to feelings of frustration related to concerns about academic failure or even awareness of the possibility of failure. This is often caused by various factors, such as high expectations from parents, teachers, peers, and family members, pressure to excel, workload from lecturers, and challenging education and exam systems (Amalia & Nashori, 2021). Academic stress can be even more severe if the individual feels they have no control over the situation, thus worsening the pressure felt. Support from the surrounding environment is needed to help individuals deal with this pressure.

When someone experiences academic stress, the responses that appear can be divided into four categories, namely physiological, behavioral, cognitive, and affective. Final year students, for example, often face great pressure related to the demands of their thesis and the worries that accompany it. If these difficulties are not resolved, they can feel frustrated, think about negative things continuously, and be filled with prolonged anxiety. As a result, sleep patterns become irregular, which ultimately worsens their ability to complete assignments (Jannah, 2022). This condition shows the importance of effective stress management strategies so that students can face academic challenges better. In this case, preventive and curative interventions need to be prioritized to support student well-being. A study shows that final year students who are working on their thesis have a higher risk of experiencing stress symptoms than students at other levels of education. This can be proven from the results of Putri's (2015) study which showed that all samples of students studied experienced academic stress in the moderate to very high category. There were no students in this study who did not experience academic stress, 13% experienced very high stress, 58% experienced high academic stress, and 29% experienced moderate academic stress. These demands are thought to be stressors for students (Indria et al., 2019).

However, it is important to note that academic stress does not only depend on external demands. Individual perceptions of the situation, ability to manage stress, and social support also play a significant role in determining stress levels. In this context, understanding students' perceptions of academic stress is important, because these perceptions will influence how students respond to and cope with the pressures they face. Based on the background above, it can be seen that the problems faced by students when writing their thesis can cause academic stress. Therefore, the researcher will conduct a study on "Student Perceptions of Stress in Writing a Thesis at UIN Sunan Ampel: A Phenomenological Study".

2. METHOD

The method used in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative research is a research method used to understand social phenomena or human behavior from different perspectives. This study aims to explain, analyze, and understand the meaning contained in the social, cultural, and individual contexts. Qualitative research usually focuses on qualitative aspects rather than quantitative aspects. That means this study does not attempt to measure or calculate data numerically, but rather focuses on interpretation, description, and in-depth understanding of the research subject. The method used in this study is the descriptive method (Adil et al., 2023).

Descriptive research is a type of research that aims to describe in detail various phenomena that occur, both those originating from nature and those made by humans. The phenomena in question can include forms, activities, characteristics, changes, relationships, similarities, and differences between one phenomenon and another (Rusandi & Rusli, 2021). This research focuses on collecting accurate data to provide an in-depth understanding of a particular situation. With this

approach, researchers can identify patterns or trends that may emerge in the phenomena being studied.

In general, descriptive research aims to describe and understand various aspects of a situation, such as the relationship between variables, opinions that develop in society, to the impact or consequences of an event (Rusandi & Rusli, 2021). This research does not seek a cause-and-effect relationship, but only seeks to provide a factual and systematic picture. Thus, descriptive research is often used to explore new problems or strengthen existing knowledge. The results of this study are also often the basis for further research development or appropriate decision making.

The population in this study were all UIN Sunan Ampel students who were in the process of writing their thesis. These students have direct experience related to the stress that arises during the thesis writing process, so that it is in accordance with the focus of this study. The sample selected in this study used the purposive sampling technique, the purposive sampling technique is a sampling technique based on certain criteria (Hapsyah et al., 2023). The criteria for samples that are suitable for this study are: Final year UIN Sunan Ampel students who are in the process of writing their thesis; Willing to be a participant and provide in-depth information through interviews; Able to explain their experiences related to the stress they experienced during the thesis writing process clearly.

The number of samples used was limited to 6 people because the qualitative approach focuses more on data depth than quantity. This number was chosen to ensure that the data obtained was rich enough to be analyzed according to the descriptive phenomenological approach used in this study. In this study, the data collection technique was carried out through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a type of in-depth interview designed to dig up information more deeply and openly. This technique allows researchers to explore informants' answers in more detail, providing space for informants to express their views more freely. With this approach, the interview is not only limited to the questions that have been prepared, but can also develop according to the responses given by the informant.

This method is very useful for gaining a richer understanding of the topic being studied. Semi-structured interviews also provide flexibility for researchers to adjust questions to be relevant to the context of the conversation, so that the information obtained is more in-depth and accurate. In addition, this technique helps build a better relationship between researchers and informants, creating a comfortable atmosphere for sharing experiences or views. The interview guide includes main questions such as: What do you feel when writing a thesis?; What factors influence your stress level?; How do you manage stress that arises during the thesis writing process?

In this study, data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. Thematic analysis is a method used to identify patterns or themes that emerge from data that has been collected by researchers. This technique allows researchers to explore information in depth, providing a more structured understanding of the data obtained (Rozali, 2022). With thematic analysis, complex data can be organized into main themes that are relevant to the focus of the research, making it easier to interpret and present the results.

This method is very effective for research that requires detailed and in-depth analysis of data, especially in qualitative research. In addition, thematic analysis provides flexibility for researchers to capture the hidden meaning in the data and relate it to the research objectives. The results of this analysis can provide new, in-depth insights, help explain the phenomena being studied, and strengthen the validity of the research through findings supported by concrete data.

The process begins by carefully rereading the interview transcripts to understand the content and context of each story told by the participants. After that, a re-evaluation method is carried out to ensure that all relevant data is well represented. The results of this analysis are then presented in the form of a descriptive narrative supplemented with direct quotes from the interview. This approach allows the data to be understood not only as a collection of facts, but also to describe the emotional experiences and meanings felt by students during the thesis writing process.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Academic Stress

According to Desmita (2010), academic stress is stress that arises due to academic pressure or what is known as academic stressors. This pressure comes from various aspects of the learning process,

such as demands to move up a class, length of study time, cheating habits, lots of assignments, pressure to get good grades, and concerns regarding the choice of major or career. In addition, anxiety about exams and difficulty managing stress are also part of this pressure (Barseli et al., 2017). This shows that academic pressure is not only academic, but also involves emotional and social aspects that influence each other.

Rohmatillah and Kholifah (2021) explain that academic stress comes from various teaching and learning activities or other things related to learning activities. This stress is often triggered by academic pressure that comes from assignments, exams, and expectations, as well as peer pressure that amplifies the burden felt by the individual. Thus, academic stress includes internal and external pressures that have the potential to disrupt the emotional balance of students or students.

According to Davidson (2001), sources of academic stress include certain situations, such as monotonous routines, noise, excessive workload, unrealistic expectations, lack of control, and confusing rules. In addition, pressure can also come from tight assignment deadlines, conflicting demands, and feelings of being unappreciated or missing opportunities (Aristawati et al., 2020). These factors not only cause physical stress but also affect the individual's mental condition, causing deeper feelings of stress.

Harjuna and Magistarina (2021) added that academic stress is a student's response to various academic demands, such as assignments, exams, and social pressures that are perceived as threats. This stress often triggers feelings of anxiety, worry, and discomfort that ultimately interfere with their academic achievement. This condition shows that academic stress not only affects performance but also the psychological well-being of students, which requires more attention in the education system.

Wulansuci et al. (2022) stated that academic stress usually occurs in a school or campus environment, where academic and social pressures are the triggers. This situation makes individuals have to struggle to manage stress so that it does not have a negative impact on their mental and physical health. Therefore, support is needed from the environment, be it family, friends, or educational institutions, to help individuals cope with this stress more effectively. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that based on various views, academic stress is pressure or burden experienced by individuals, especially students, which originates from learning activities, academic demands, and social interactions in the educational environment.

This stress can be triggered by various factors, such as pressure to meet expectations, many assignments, uncertainty of rules, and tight deadlines. The impact can give rise to feelings of anxiety, worry, and discomfort that have the potential to affect an individual's academic achievement and psychological well-being.

3.1.2 Impact of Stress

In the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), a student is defined as someone who is studying at a university (Hapsyah et al., 2023). Students are an important asset for educational institutions because their contribution is not only to the continuity of the teaching and learning process, but also to the reputation of the campus. One indicator of the success of an educational institution is the rate of timely student graduation, which is an important element in assessing campus accreditation (Hakim et al., 2019). Therefore, adequate support from the campus is needed to help students achieve their study targets.

According to Sarwono (1978), students are individuals who are officially registered as participants in higher education with an age range generally between 18 and 30 years (Hapsyah et al., 2023). Students are in a transition phase towards adulthood, where they face various challenges in the academic, social, and personal fields. Thus, students are not just ordinary students, but also agents of change who are expected to be able to make a positive contribution to society.

From this explanation, it can be concluded that students are individuals who are undergoing higher education as defined by the KBBI. Moreover, students have a strategic role in creating a better future, both for themselves and their surroundings. Therefore, creating a supportive learning environment is a shared responsibility between students and educational institutions.

Based on interviews with students regarding stress in the thesis writing process, several main findings were found that can be categorized into factors causing stress, the impacts caused, and strategies used by students to overcome the stress.

1. Factors Causing Stress

Students define stress in thesis writing as confusion and uncertainty in determining the direction of research, as well as fear of failure. Difficulty in connecting ideas and lack of knowledge are also factors that trigger stress. In addition, poor time management, pressure from the social environment, and difficulty communicating with supervisors also contribute to increasing students' stress levels. Most students feel unsure about the direction of their research, especially when faced with criticism or comments from supervisors that are considered less constructive or not in accordance with their expectations.

2. Impact of Stress

The impacts caused by stress in the thesis writing process are very diverse. Psychological impacts such as anxiety and mental tension are the main complaints. Many students feel anxious about the progress of their thesis, which leads to sleep disorders, such as difficulty sleeping or restless sleep. Other physical impacts include excessive fatigue and body tension due to high mental pressure. The impact on productivity is also very significant, where students find it difficult to stay focused and productive in completing their thesis. Some students even said that they felt hampered in continuing their work because of a deep sense of confusion.

3. Stress Management Strategies

To cope with stress, students use various strategies. One common strategy is to do religious activities such as praying and dhikr, which are considered to be able to calm the mind and provide inner peace. In addition, some students also do physical activities or seek entertainment such as watching concerts or playing games to relieve stress. On the other hand, many students realize the importance of better time management, such as making to-do lists to make it easier to manage tasks and targets. Social support from friends and other people who have experience is also recognized as an important factor in reducing stress, because talking to others who are facing similar things provides a sense of mutual understanding and reduces feelings of isolation.

3.2 Discussion

Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that stress in writing a thesis is not only caused by internal factors such as confusion in the direction of research or fear of failure, but also by external factors such as pressure from lecturers, social environment, and other personal problems (eg, pressure from family or financial problems). The uncertainty factor in determining the direction of research and the difficulty in connecting different ideas often worsen the stress felt by students.

This phenomenon is in accordance with the theory of stress which states that stress can arise when individuals feel unable to cope with existing demands, both from within themselves and from outside. This is in accordance with the explanation of the research conducted by Urip Pratama et al. which explains that students are very susceptible to stress due to the many burdens and final assignments, such as working on scientific papers or theses so that academic stress arises in final semester students, there are two factors that can cause academic stress, internal factors with academic stress in final semester students, because final semester students feel burdened with assignments given by lecturers, as well as field practice both in hospitals and in villages and also at the same time as working on theses or scientific papers, lack of student coping, difficulty finding solutions or consulting with people who can be trusted regarding stress, causing academic stress in final semester students.

Meanwhile, from external factors with academic stress in final semester students, it is known that final semester students who are working on theses or scientific papers, lack of social support for students such as friends not supporting them in working on their final assignments, difficulty meeting lecturers for final assignment guidance, and the many expenses for tuition fees, and also the many college assignments, causing final semester students to experience academic stress (Pratama et al., 2023).

Psychological impacts such as anxiety and sleep disturbances experienced by students also reflect the great mental pressure in facing heavy academic tasks. This can have implications for their physical health and productivity, leading to a decrease in the quality of their thesis work. In this case, stress can affect academic performance, because students may feel unproductive or hampered in completing their assignments.

This is in accordance with what is explained in the research conducted by Julia Jasmine. The results of the study showed that the impact of academic stress is very large. There are many cases of students who are depressed, even to the point of committing suicide. Academic stress has a

negative impact on students' mental health. Academic stress can cause various physical, emotional, and cognitive symptoms. Thus, it is hoped that the problem of academic stress can be overcome properly (Jasmine, 2024). However, the various strategies used by students to cope with stress show their efforts to find balance in academic and personal life.

Religious activities such as prayer, dhikr, and prayer have been shown to be effective in providing inner peace, which is in line with the finding that spiritual practices can serve as a source of psychological support in dealing with stress. In addition, social support from friends, as well as openness to share experiences with others who experience similar stress, serve as important coping mechanisms in the thesis completion process. This is in accordance with what is explained in the research conducted by Arthur Fiqih and Vivi Ratnawati. In practice, final year students can combine these two strategies as a coping plan, thereby helping students develop a more holistic understanding of academic stress and gain the skills needed to deal with it effectively (Fiqih & Ratnawati, 2023).

Overall, although students face various pressures, they show resilience by using various coping strategies to reduce the impact of stress. Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to provide better support, both in the form of more constructive academic guidance and in creating an environment that supports students' mental well-being, such as providing counseling services or discussion groups that help students manage stress.

4. CONCLUSION

The stress experienced by students in the process of writing a thesis is mainly influenced by confusion in determining the direction of research, uncertainty about the quality of ideas, and fear of failure. External factors, such as pressure from supervisors, the social environment, and personal problems (including financial problems and family demands), also contribute greatly to the level of stress felt by students. The impact of this stress includes psychological disorders, such as anxiety, as well as physical disorders such as difficulty sleeping and fatigue. In addition, stress also has an impact on student productivity which decreases, hindering progress in writing a thesis.

However, students use various strategies to overcome the stress they experience. Religious activities, such as prayer and dhikr, have been proven effective in providing inner peace and relieving stress. In addition, social support from friends, sharing experiences with fellow students, and doing fun activities, such as watching concerts or playing games, also help reduce anxiety. In addition, better time management and making to-do lists are important strategies in reducing the burden of piling assignments. Despite facing various challenges, students try to manage stress by finding a balance between work, rest, and social support.

Overall, although stress is an inevitable part of the thesis writing process, students show resilience and efforts to deal with it with various effective coping mechanisms. Support from the academic and social environment is essential to help students manage stress and improve their mental well-being during the thesis writing process.

REFERENCES

- Adil, A., Liana, Y., Mayasari, R., Lamonge, A. S., Ristiyana, R., Saputri, F. R., Irma Jayatmi, Satria, E. B., Permana, A. A., Rohma, M. M., Bani, D. N. C. A. M. D., Bani, G. A., Haslinah, A., & Wijoyo, E. B. (2023). Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif dan Kualitatif: Teori dan Praktik (N. Sulung & R. M. Sahara (eds.); Issue January). GET PRESS INDONESIA.
- Amalia, V. R., & Nashori, F. (2021). Hubungan Antara Religiusitas Dan Efikasi Diri Dengan Stres Akademik Mahasiswa Farmasi. *Psychosophia: Journal of Psychology, Religion, and Humanity*, 3(1), 36–55. <https://doi.org/10.32923/psc.v3i1.1702>
- Aristawati, A. R., Pratitis, N., & Ananta, A. (2020). Kecemasan Akademik Mahasiswa Menjelang Ujian Ditinjau dari Jenis Kelamin. *Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi*, 1(01), 73–80.
- Barseli, M., Ildil, I., & Nikmarijal, N. (2017). Konsep Stres Akademik Siswa. *Jurnal Konseling Dan Pendidikan*, 5(3), 143–148. <https://doi.org/10.29210/119800>
- Djoar, R. K., & Anggarani, A. P. M. (2024). Faktor - Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Stress Akademik Mahasiswa Tingkat Akhir. *Jambura Health and Sport Journal*, 6(1), 52–59. <https://doi.org/10.37311/jhsj.v6i1.24064>
- Fiqih, A., & Ratnawati, V. (2023). Mengurai Stres Akademik Mahasiswa Tingkat Akhir: Faktor Pemicu, Dampak Dan Strategi Pengelolaan Di Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri. *Semdikjar* 6, 755–765.
- Hakim, L. A. R., Rizal, A. A., & Ratnasari, D. (2019). Aplikasi Prediksi Kelulusan Mahasiswa Berbasis K-Nearest Neighbor (K-NN). *JTIM: Jurnal Teknologi Informasi Dan Multimedia*, 1(1), 30–36.

- <https://doi.org/10.35746/jtim.v1i1.11>
- Hapsyah, D. R., Herdi, H., & Hanim, W. (2023). Validitas Dan Reliabilitas Instrumen Stress Akademik. *Jurnal Mahasiswa BK An-Nur : Berbeda, Bermakna, Mulia*, 9(1), 309. <https://doi.org/10.31602/jmbkan.v9i1.10225>
- Harjuna, R. T. B., & Magistarina, E. (2021). Tingkat Stress Akademik Mahasiswa Selama Daring di Masa Pandemi. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 5(3), 10791–10798.
- Indria, I., Siregar, J., & Herawaty, Y. (2019). Hubungan Antara Kesabaran Dan Stres Akademik Pada Mahasiswa Di Pekanbaru. *An – Nafs: Jurnal Fakultas Psikologi*, 13(1), 21–34.
- Jannah, F.-. (2022). Hubungan Kepribadian Hardiness Dengan Stres Akademik Pada Mahasiswa Kedokteran Universitas Malahayati Selama Pandemi Covid 19. *Empati : Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling*, 9(2), 194–205. <https://doi.org/10.26877/empati.v9i2.11584>
- Jasmine, J. (2024). Dampak Stres Akademik Terhadap Kesehatan Mental Pelajar.
- Pratama, U., Amna, N., & Arif, B. (2023). Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Tingkat Stres Akademik Mahasiswa Semester Akhir Di Fakultas Ilmu-Ilmu Kesehatan Universitas Abulyatama. *Jurnal Mahasiswa Ilmu Kesehatan*, 1(3), 257–268.
- Rohmatillah, W., & Kholifah, N. (2021). Stress Akademik antara Laki-laki dan Perempuan Siswa School from Home. *Jurnal Psikologi : Jurnal Ilmiah Fakultas Psikologi Universitas Yudharta Pasuruan*, 8(1), 38–52. <https://doi.org/10.35891/jip.v8i1.2648>
- Rozali, Y. A. (2022). Penggunaan Analisis Konten Dan Analisis Tematik. *Penggunaan Analisis Konten Dan Analisis Tematik Forum Ilmiah*, 19, 68. www.researchgate.net
- Rusandi, & Rusli, M. (2021). Merancang Penelitian Kualitatif Dasar/Deskriptif dan Studi Kasus. *Al-Ubudiyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam*, 2(1), 48–60. <https://doi.org/10.55623/au.v2i1.18>
- Selfiana, V., Ulfadamayanti, N. S., Nurul fadillah, S., & Nuraini. (2023). Pengaruh Stress pada Ibu Hamil. *Journal on Education*, 05(04), 11702–11706. <http://jonedu.org/index.php/joe>
- Wulansuci, G., Hunafa Lestari, R., & Munggaraning Westhisi, S. (2022). Pemahaman Guru Paud Terhadap Stress Akademik Pada Anak Usia Dini. *Golden Age : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(1), 41–48. <https://doi.org/10.29313/ga:jpaud.v6i1.9714>