

Exploring Students' Anxiety in Writing Thesis Proposal

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the anxiety experienced by students during the thesis proposal writing process, focusing on the factors that influence the level of anxiety and the strategies used by students to overcome it. This study uses a qualitative approach with a narrative inquiry method to explore students' personal experiences in depth. Data were collected through observation and in-depth interviews with the participants from two final semester students in the English Education Study Program, Al Washliyah University, Medan. The results of the study indicate that the anxiety experienced by students in writing thesis proposals is triggered by various internal and external factors. Although students try various strategies to reduce anxiety, such as dividing tasks into small parts, consulting with lecturers, and using relaxation techniques, anxiety remains a major obstacle in the thesis proposal writing process. This study provides important insights into the importance of more empathetic and systematic guidance, as well as adequate support to improve students' mental well-being during the thesis writing process.

Keywords: Anxiety, Writing, Thesis Proposal

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman kecemasan yang dialami oleh mahasiswa selama proses penulisan proposal skripsi, dengan focus pada faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi tingkat kecemasan serta strategi yang digunakan mahasiswa untuk mengatasinya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode narrative inquiry untuk menggali pengalaman pribadi mahasiswa secara mendalam. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan wawancara mendalam dengan dua mahasiswa semester akhir di program studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Al Washliyah Medan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kecemasan yang dialami oleh mahasiswa dalam menulis proposal skripsi dipicu oleh berbagai faktor internal dan eksternal. Meskipun mahasiswa mencoba berbagai strategi untuk mengurangi kecemasan, seperti membagi tugas menjadi bagian-bagian kecil, berkonsultasi dengan dosen, dan menggunakan teknik relaksasi, kecemasan tetap menjadi hambatan utama dalam proses penulisan proposal skripsi. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan penting tentang pentingnya bimbingan yang lebih empatik dan sistematis, serta dukungan yang memadai untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan mental mahasiswa selama proses penulisan skripsi.

Kata Kunci: Anxiety, Writing, Thesis Proposal

A. Introduction

Thesis writing is an essential academic task that every undergraduate student must undertake to fulfill the requirements for obtaining a degree. It trains students to think critically and scientifically about phenomena within their field of study and contributes to their academic development. According to Mansnur in Husni and Anggun (2020), a thesis is a form of scientific writing created based on thorough research, whether from library sources, field studies, or experimental results. It is a systematic and logical process that reflects the principles of academic writing, requiring students to combine their theoretical knowledge with practical applications. For undergraduate students, thesis writing involves the preparation of a proposal that includes several structured chapters: an introduction, a theoretical framework or conceptual review, research methods, and a bibliography. These elements form the foundation of a thesis, which is designed to address specific problems within the student's chosen discipline.

The process of preparing and writing a thesis is both rigorous and demanding. Students typically begin this stage after meeting several prerequisites, such as completing a certain number of academic credits, achieving a minimum GPA, and obtaining approval from academic advisors. Once eligible, students are guided by supervisors to formulate research proposals that reflect their academic interests. However, despite this structured guidance, thesis writing remains a significant challenge. Students often face difficulties in formulating research questions, designing methodologies, and integrating their knowledge into coherent arguments. They must also adhere to strict academic writing standards, which demand clarity, precision, and logical flow. The entire process—from proposal writing to research execution and final thesis defense—can span one to two semesters and requires considerable effort, focus, and perseverance.

These challenges frequently lead to anxiety among students, as they grapple with

the pressures of academic performance and time constraints. Anxiety is often fueled by internal factors such as lack of confidence, fear of failure, and procrastination. External factors, including complex administrative requirements, difficulty in scheduling meetings with supervisors, and limited access to research resources, further exacerbate these challenges. Many students report feeling overwhelmed by the volume of work, the need for repeated revisions, and uncertainty about whether their research will meet academic standards.

These issues can result in various symptoms of anxiety, ranging from mild stress and restlessness to severe physical and emotional exhaustion. For some students, anxiety manifests as headaches, sleep disturbances, and even fainting, as noted in studies like those by Khoirunnisa (2020) and Wakhyudin and Putri (2020). In addition, external pressures, such as parental expectations to graduate quickly, often intensify feelings of frustration and hopelessness.

Research shows that anxiety related to thesis writing is a widespread issue, affecting students' ability to focus, manage time effectively, and produce quality work. For example, many students struggle with finding appropriate research topics, obtaining supervisor approval, and addressing feedback constructively. Others experience anxiety about meeting academic standards or balancing academic responsibilities with personal and social obligations. Such difficulties are not only academically taxing but can also impact students' overall well-being, leading to long-term consequences for their mental health.

This study focuses on exploring the anxiety experienced by English Education students at Al Washliyah University of Medan in writing their thesis proposals. The research aims to identify the factors—both internal and external—that contribute to students' anxiety during this process. It also seeks to examine how these factors affect their ability to complete their thesis proposals and how they cope with these challenges. By shedding light on the obstacles faced by students, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the

experiences of final-year students, with the ultimate goal of improving support systems to help them manage their anxiety and complete their academic tasks successfully. The findings of this study are expected to benefit not only students but also educators and institutions, as they strive to create an academic environment that promotes mental well-being alongside academic achievement.

B. Result and Discussion

The study explored the experiences of final-year students at Al Washliyah University, particularly their anxiety in writing thesis proposals. The findings indicated that anxiety stemmed from both internal factors (such as fear of failure, lack of self-confidence, and perfectionism) and external factors (including critical supervisors, pressure from family, and tight academic deadlines). These factors created a persistent emotional and psychological burden on the students.

Through observations, it was noted that students displayed various signs of anxiety, including physical symptoms like sweating, trembling, and rapid heartbeats. Their behavior during writing sessions was characterized by hesitancy, frequent pauses, and repetitive checking of their work, often due to self-doubt and fear of mistakes. Interviews further revealed that students struggled to articulate their ideas and feared criticism from supervisors, which made them feel inadequate and overly cautious.

Social and emotional well-being were also significantly impacted. Anxiety caused students to isolate themselves from social activities and led to feelings of frustration and helplessness. Many students reported difficulty managing their time effectively, often sacrificing sleep or social interactions to meet deadlines, which exacerbated their anxiety and reduced productivity.

These findings are consistent with prior research on academic anxiety, which highlights the multifaceted nature of anxiety in academic writing. Internal challenges, such as self-doubt and perfectionism, align with psychological theories suggesting that students with high expectations of themselves often face heightened anxiety.

Similarly, external pressures, including expectations from supervisors and family, amplify this anxiety by creating a high-stakes environment where students feel constant scrutiny.

The research revealed that students attempted various strategies to manage their anxiety, such as breaking tasks into smaller, manageable parts, consulting with peers and supervisors, and using relaxation techniques like deep breathing. While these methods provided temporary relief, they were not always sufficient to overcome the deeper psychological and emotional challenges. The time pressure and complexity of the tasks often overwhelmed the students, leading to procrastination and reduced output quality.

From a broader perspective, the study underscores the importance of creating a supportive academic environment. Empathetic guidance from supervisors is crucial to helping students feel less intimidated and more confident in their abilities. Institutions could also provide targeted workshops on stress management, effective writing techniques, and time management to equip students with the skills needed to handle these challenges. Additionally, fostering a culture of peer support and open communication can help reduce the isolation that often accompanies academic anxiety.

Overall, the findings emphasize the need for a holistic approach to addressing student anxiety. This includes not only addressing the academic and technical challenges of writing but also providing psychological and emotional support. By doing so, institutions can help students overcome their anxiety and succeed in completing their thesis proposals with greater confidence and efficiency.

C. Conclusion and Suggestion

This study concludes that writing a thesis proposal is a significant source of anxiety for final-year students at Al Washliyah University. The anxiety arises from a combination of internal factors, such as fear of failure, perfectionism, and low self-confidence, and external pressures, including critical supervisors, high academic

standards, family expectations, and tight deadlines. These factors not only hinder students' productivity but also negatively affect their emotional well-being and social interactions.

Physical symptoms like trembling, sweating, and rapid heartbeats, coupled with behavioral signs such as hesitation, over-revision, and procrastination, were frequently observed. Additionally, students often felt isolated, overwhelmed, and unable to balance their academic responsibilities with personal and social life, further exacerbating their anxiety. Despite employing various strategies such as breaking tasks into smaller parts, consulting peers and supervisors, and using relaxation techniques, many students found these efforts insufficient in overcoming the persistent challenges they faced.

To address these issues effectively, students need to adopt structured time management practices, create realistic schedules, and seek emotional support from their social circles. Regular communication with supervisors is essential to clarify doubts, reduce fear of criticism, and ensure that the thesis process becomes less intimidating. Supervisors and lecturers also play a crucial role in alleviating anxiety by providing empathetic and constructive feedback, fostering open and supportive guidance, and avoiding overly harsh critiques that may discourage students. Furthermore, institutions must take a proactive approach in supporting students through organized workshops on academic writing, stress management, and time management, which can equip students with practical skills to handle the demands of thesis writing. Counseling services should be readily available to assist students in managing their emotional struggles and building resilience during challenging times.

By addressing these challenges holistically, students can gain confidence in their abilities, improve their productivity, and navigate the thesis proposal writing process more effectively. At the same time, institutions and supervisors can create a more supportive academic environment, ensuring that students are not only academically successful but also

emotionally prepared to face the demands of higher education. With a comprehensive approach, the barriers to completing thesis proposals can be minimized, allowing students to achieve their goals with reduced anxiety and greater efficiency.

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