

The Relationship Between Peer Social Support and Anxiety in Final Year Students Who Are Writing Their Thesis

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Jurnal Keperawatan Komprehensif
(Comprehensive Nursing Journal)

Volume 11 (3), 470-475
<https://doi.org/10.33755/jkk.v11i3>

Article info

Received : June 04, 2025
Revised : July 12, 2025
Accepted : July 15, 2025
Published : July 31, 2025

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Citation

Yani, F. S. F., Nurmansyah, A., Bola, I. N., Imelisa, R., Wisnusakti, K., & Fazrianti, R. P. (2025). The relationship between peer social support and anxiety in final year students who are writing their thesis. *Jurnal Keperawatan Komprehensif (Comprehensive Nursing Journal)*, 11(3), 469–474.

Website

<https://journal.stikep-pnnijabar.ac.id/jkk>

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p-ISSN : [2354 8428](#)
e-ISSN: [2598 8727](#)

Abstract

Background: The demands of completing a final project, coupled with an individual's lack of preparedness, can give rise to psychological problems such as anxiety, stress, and depression. Factors influencing anxiety include social support, trust, and modeling. Among these, peer social support plays a particularly significant role in the academic environment.

Objective : This study aimed to examine the relationship between peer social support and anxiety among final-year students preparing their undergraduate thesis in the Nursing Study Program.

Methods: This study employed a quantitative research design with a cross-

sectional approach. A total of 110 final-year students were selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires: the Hamilton Rating Scale for Anxiety (HRS-A) to measure anxiety levels and the Peer Social Support Scale to assess peer social support. Data were analyzed using univariate and bivariate techniques, with the chi-square test applied to determine the relationship between variables.

Results: The results of the study showed that out of 110 respondents, 10 (9.1%) had panic anxiety, 30 (27.3%) were severe, 20 (18.2%) were mild, and 24 (21.8%) had no anxiety. Peers were found to be 28 (25.5%) low, 53 (48.2%) moderate, and 29 (26.4%) high. The results of the relationship analysis obtained a P value of 0.0001 ($\alpha < 0.05$), which shows that there is a relationship between peer social support and anxiety.

Conclusion: Based on the results of research and discussion regarding the Relationship between Peer Social Support and Anxiety in final-year students Who Are Writing Their Thesis in the Nursing Study Program (S-1), Faculty of Health Science and Technology, Jenderal Achmad Yani University.

Keywords: Anxiety, Cross-sectional, Peer Social Support, Students, Thesis

INTRODUCTION

Writing a thesis is a critical milestone in higher education, especially for final-year students transitioning from academic life to professional careers or further academic pursuits (1). According to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 22, one of the main challenges in obtaining a bachelor's degree is the completion of a thesis. A thesis holds a critical role in higher education as it serves as a scientific assignment that must be undertaken by all students as a prerequisite for graduation. In the *Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI)*, a thesis is defined as a scientific work that demonstrates a student's ability to apply theoretical knowledge in addressing a particular problem. The obligation to complete a thesis is rooted in the responsibility of higher education institutions to provide education beyond the secondary level, grounded in Indonesian national culture and scientific principles, in line with the objectives of National Education (2).

According to recent studies, final-year students frequently encounter various challenges in completing their thesis. These challenges include difficulties in adhering to academic writing standards, transforming ideas into appropriate scientific language, ineffective time management, and limited access to supervisors due to scheduling constraints. Additionally, the insufficient availability of reference materials in university libraries and students' active participation in extracurricular or organizational activities further contribute to delays in thesis completion (3). This stage demands extensive time, energy, and intellectual effort, often placing students under significant psychological pressure, including stress, anxiety, and reduced academic motivation, which can ultimately impair students' mental health and academic performance (1). Anxiety is one of the most common psychological pressures (1).

Anxiety in final-year students may stem from various factors, including high academic expectations, fear of failure, poor time management skills, and uncertainty about post-graduation life. The solitary nature of thesis writing, which students spend prolonged periods working independently, can exacerbate these stressors (4). According to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (2019), approximately 6 million young adults experience moderate to severe levels of anxiety. The

primary contributing factors to this condition include internal factors such as difficulties in adaptation and academic ability, as well as external factors like environmental and socio-economic challenges. This situation has serious implications, as evidenced by several reported cases of student suicides that were preceded by anxiety disorders progressing to severe depression (5,6).

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), anxiety is defined as an emotional state that emerges in stress response, characterized by feelings of tension, persistent worry, and associated physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, and other physiological responses (5). Factors influencing anxiety include social support, trust, and observational learning through modeling (7,8). Taylor found that social support plays a significant role in reducing anxiety. Furthermore, social support has been shown to influence levels of depression during periods of stress, with sources of support including peers, family, partners, parents, and the broader community. Among these, peer social support holds particular importance during the academic period, as it provides students with emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance critical for managing academic stressors (9).

However, social support, particularly from peers, has been identified as a critical protective factor against anxiety and other negative psychological outcomes (10). Peer social support refers to emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance provided by fellow students in a shared academic context. It includes sharing experiences, offering encouragement, and providing practical help such as reviewing thesis drafts or sharing study strategies. Such support has been shown to buffer stress and promote resilience by fostering a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of isolation (11).

This study is anchored in the Stress-Buffering Hypothesis Cohen & Wills, 1985 in Painton-Haas (10) and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997) in Mujahidah (12) proposing that peer social support moderates the relationship between academic stress and anxiety. Specifically, emotional reassurance, shared strategies, and empathetic connections within peer groups enhance students' coping capacity and psychological resilience, thereby reducing anxiety levels during thesis writing.

METHODS

Study Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. The population consisted of 152 final-year students in the Nursing Study Program, Faculty of Health Sciences and Technology, Jenderal Achmad Yani University, who were in the process of writing their thesis. Using Slovin's formula, the sample size was determined to be 110 respondents, selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different strata of the population.

Data Collection

Data were collected using standardized questionnaires: the Hamilton Rating Scale for Anxiety (HRS-A) to measure anxiety levels and the Peer Social Support Scale to assess peer social support. Both instruments have been widely validated in previous studies with strong psychometric properties (13,14). The Hamilton Rating Scale for Anxiety (HRS-A) Indonesian version consists of 14 items with a reliability coefficient of 0,752, each defining a set of symptoms used to measure psychological and somatic anxiety. The peer social support scale consists of 30 valid items with a reliability coefficient of 0.926. This scale was adapted from the instrument developed by Rohmah, which encompasses aspects of informational support, instrumental support, emotional support, and appraisal support (13). The Peer Social Support Scale was originally categorized into three

levels: low, moderate, and high support. However, for data entry and analysis purposes, the researchers combined the low and moderate categories into a single group, resulting in two categories: low-to-moderate support and high support. This recategorization was undertaken to enhance the clarity and robustness of the statistical analysis and to facilitate readers' understanding of the differences in anxiety levels between students with lower and higher peer social support.

Data Analysis

Data analysis included univariate and bivariate analyses. The chi-square test was applied to examine the association between peer social support and anxiety levels. Ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee (KEPK), Faculty of Health Sciences and Technology, Jenderal Achmad Yani University, Cimahi. The study protocol was reviewed and approved under approval number 028/KEPK/FITKes-Unjani/V/2024. All participants provided informed consent before participation.

RESULTS

The results of the data research are displayed in the form of a frequency distribution table and interpreted in each result regarding the Relationship Between Peer Social Support and Anxiety in Final Year Students Who Are Writing Their Thesis in the Nursing Study Program (S-1) Faculty of Health Sciences and Technology, Jenderal Achmad Yani University.

Table 1. Description of Anxiety in Final Year Students of the Nursing Science Study Program (S-1) at Jenderal Achmad Yani University (n=110)

Anxiety	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
None	24	21,8
Mild	26	23,6
Moderate	20	18,2
Severe	30	27,3
Panic	10	9,1
	110	100,0

Based on Table 1, the results obtained from 110 respondents showed that 30 respondents (27.3%) experienced severe anxiety.

Table 2. Description of Social Support in Final Year Students of the Nursing Study Program (S-1) at Jenderal Achmad Yani University, Cimahi (n=110)

Peer Social Support	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Mild + Modere	81	73,6
Severe	29	26,4
	110	100,0

Based on Table 2, the results obtained from 110 respondents showed that 53 respondents (48.2%) experienced moderate peer social support.

Table 3. Relationship between peer social support and anxiety in final year students of the Nursing Science Study Program (S-1) at Jenderal Achmad Yani University, Cimahi

Social Support	Anxiety										Total		P-Value
	Panic		Severe		Moderate		Mild		None				
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Mild+ Moderate High	8	9.9	27	33	19	23.5	16	19.8	11	13.6	81	100	0.0001
	2	6.9	3	10.3	1	3.4	10	34.5	13	44.8	29	100	
	10	9.1	30	27.3	20	18.2	26	23.6	24	21.8	110	100	

Based on Table 3, the results of the analysis of the relationship between peer social support and anxiety in final-year students who are writing their thesis in the Nursing Science Study Program (S-1) obtained results of 110 showing that out of 81 respondents who have light and moderate peer social support, 27 (33.3%) have severe anxiety, while out of 29 respondents with high social support, 13 (44.8%) have no anxiety. The results of the statistical test obtained a p-value = 0.0001 ($p < 0.05$) so it can be concluded that H_0 is rejected, which means there is a relationship between social support and anxiety in final-year students who are writing their thesis.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study in Table 3 show that the results of the analysis using the chi-square test with a 2x5 table and there is an E value > 5, then $p = 0.0001$ ($p < 0.05$) is obtained. So it can be concluded that H_a is accepted and H_0 is rejected, meaning that there is a significant relationship between peer social support and anxiety in final-year students who are writing their thesis.

This study demonstrated a significant association between peer social support and reduced anxiety among final-year nursing students engaged in thesis writing. These findings align with Cohen's study, which is a well-established connection between social support and stress in shaping health and well-

being. Support obtained from close relationships, such as family and friends, has consistently been shown to alleviate the detrimental effects of stress on health (15). Green (16) observed that emotional support received from peers moderated the relationship between academic stress and mental well-being among university students, further reinforcing the protective role of peer networks.

The conceptual framework highlights peer social support as a moderating variable that alleviates anxiety among students under academic pressure. Emotional reassurance from peers buffers negative emotions, shared strategies improve task management, and empathy fosters a sense of belonging collectively reducing perceived stress and anxiety. These findings support and extend the stress-buffering model Cohen & Wills (1985) within the context of higher education (10).

Peer networks provide a safe space for sharing worries, normalizing stress, and receiving validation. This emotional reassurance strengthens coping capacities. For instance, Green (16) found that students who reported higher emotional support from peers exhibited significantly lower anxiety levels and better mental well-being amid academic stressors. Empathy from peers who have endured similar challenges strengthens emotional regulation through shared lived experience. A study among final-year nursing students in Turkey

demonstrated that those participating in peer education programs had significantly lower anxiety scores compared to controls, likely due to empathetic peer interaction and shared learning (11).

Observing peers sharing effective study techniques or thesis-writing strategies enhances confidence and reduces uncertainty. This aligns with Bandura's self-efficacy theory, where vicarious learning through peers boosts belief in personal academic competence. Pointon-Haas conducted a comprehensive systematic review analyzing 28 peer support interventions in higher education settings. They found that peer mentoring and peer learning programs consistently yield positive effects on anxiety and stress reduction, underscoring their value as mental health resources for students (10). In line with Asensio-Martínez (17) demonstrated that social support mediates the relationship between academic stress (including technostress) and university students' mental health (18). This mediation effect confirms that peer and family support play a critical role in buffering stress-induced anxiety in academic contexts (19,20).

CONCLUSION

This study highlights a significant relationship between peer social support and anxiety among final-year nursing students engaged in thesis writing. Higher levels of peer support were associated with reduced anxiety, underscoring its critical role as a protective factor during periods of heightened academic stress. These findings align with the stress-buffering hypothesis, which posits that social connections can mitigate the adverse effects of stress on mental health.

From a practical perspective, universities should recognize the value of fostering robust peer networks as part of comprehensive student support strategies. Initiatives such as peer mentoring programs, thesis support groups, and structured collaborative activities could enhance emotional resilience and academic performance among students. By integrating these approaches within the educational framework, institutions can promote not only academic success but also psychological well-being during high-stakes academic endeavors.

Future studies are encouraged to consider additional variables such as gender, thesis

progress, and living conditions, which may act as potential confounding factors influencing both peer social support and anxiety levels. Controlling for these variables would enhance the validity of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all individuals and institutions who contributed to the completion of this article.

Funding

No funding in this research

Author contribution

FSFY : Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Review & Editing
AN : Writing – original draft, Review & Editing
IB : Review & Editing
RI : Writing – original draft, Supervision
KW : Writing – original draft, Methodology
RPF : Writing – original draft

Conflict of interest

None of the writers discloses conflict or interest.

Data availability

Contact the corresponding author (AN), to obtain the data used to support the study's conclusions. The statistics are not accessible to the public because they include information that might put research participants' privacy at risk.

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