ACADEMIC STRESS SCALE ON FINAL YEAR ENGLISH STUDENTS WHEN WRITING THESIS DURING PANDEMIC COVID-19 AT UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH BENGKULU

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Abstract

inal year students are prone to stress, especially academic stress in thesis writing. This study aimed to find out the academic stress scale of final year English students at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu (UMB) English Language Education Study Program in writing a thesis during the Covid-19 pandemic and to determine the most dominant academic stress scale among final year students at the English Language Education Study Program UMB in writing a thesis during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this study, researchers used descriptive quantitative research method to obtain data. The subjects of this study were even semester English students at UMB who were working on their thesis. The sample of this research was 57 students of the UMB English Education Study Program who were doing their thesis writing and guidance. The instruments used in this study were a Google form questionnaire and an interview guide. Questionnaire was used to obtain data about students' academic stress levels. There are two findings from this study, namely: (1) there are three academic stress scales for final year English students writing their thesis during a pandemic at UMB, namely; low stress scale (9.21%), moderate stress scale (32.46%), and high stress scale (58.33%); and (2) The most dominant academic stress scale for final year English students in writing their thesis during the Covid-19 pandemic was a high stress level. For final year students, they can reduce stress levels to avoid adverse effects on their mental and physical health such as asking for help from close friends or family to always support them during thesis writing.

Keywords: academic stress scale; writing thesis; final year english students

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui skala stres akademik mahasiswa tingkat akhir Bahasa Inggris di Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris UMB dalam menulis skripsi di masa pandemi Covid-19 dan untuk mengetahui skala stres akademik yang paling dominan di kalangan mahasiswa tingkat akhir di Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Prodi Pendidikan UMB dalam penulisan skripsi di masa pandemi Covid-19. Peneliti menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif kuantitatif untuk memperoleh data. Subyek penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa bahasa Inggris semester genap Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu yang sedang mengerjakan skripsi. Sampel penelitian ini adalah 57 mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris UMB yang sedang mengerjakan skripsi dan bimbingan. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kuesioner Google form dan pedoman wawancara. Kuesioner digunakan untuk memperoleh data tentang tingkat stres akademik siswa. Ada dua temuan dari penelitian ini, yaitu: (1) ada tiga skala stres akademik untuk mahasiswa bahasa Inggris tingkat akhir yang menulis tesis mereka selama pandemi di UMB, yaitu; skala stres rendah (9,21%), skala stres sedang (32,46%), dan skala stres tinggi (58,33%); dan (2) Skala stres akademik mahasiswa tingkat akhir bahasa Inggris yang paling dominan dalam menulis skripsi selama pandemi Covid-19 adalah tingkat stres yang tinggi.

Bagi mahasiswa tingkat akhir dapat mengurangi tingkat stres untuk menghindari dampak buruk bagi kesehatan mental dan fisik mereka seperti meminta bantuan teman dekat atau keluarga untuk selalu mendukung mereka selama penulisan skripsi.

Kata Kunci: skala stres akademik; menulis tesis; siswa bahasa inggris tahun terakhir

INTRODUCTION

Final year students, especially semester 7, according to the curriculum of the Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu (UMB) English Education Study Program, have started to write a thesis. Writing a thesis is one of the mandatory requirements that must be met by students in order to graduate from an English education study program and then get a Bachelor's degree. Furthermore, thesis writing at UMB has a credit score of 4. During the process of writing and completing the thesis, the thesis supervisor is appointed by the study program to provide guidance in thesis writing. The appointment of this supervisor is intended so that students can complete their thesis on time.

Hylan, as cited in (Hapsari et al., 2020), proposed that academic writing is a means of constructing one's identity by expressing ideas. In addition to conveying disciplinary knowledge, the act of writing also reveals the author's identity. Hylan further suggested that specific choices in the structure of a text reflect certain principles that contribute to our sense of self. Various functional taxonomies have been developed to categorize the use of first person singular and plural pronouns in academic writing. According to Hyland and Tang and John in (MacIntyre, 2019) suggested that writers can establish a connection with their readers by using first person pronouns. The level of personal involvement that authors can express through the use of such pronouns varies throughout different sections of an article. Students often perceive academic writing as requiring objectivity, leading them to believe that personal involvement through writing is discouraged.

The success of thesis writing by students is influenced by many things, one of which is the health factor. At present, the world is being hit by a very feared epidemic. The disease outbreak even became a pandemic. The pandemic outbreak originated in Wuhan, China. The pandemic outbreak is the Covid-19 pandemic. Millions of people have died due to this covid-19 outbreak. The world has been made to suffer because of this pandemic. All aspects of life have been devastated by this epidemic. Conditions that are all normal become abnormal. This abnormal condition certainly disrupts the learning process in Indonesia, especially students who experience academic stress. For example according to (Azani et al., 2022) who said that students experienced symptoms of academic stress during the learning period during

the Covid-19 pandemic, namely: (1) became bored and bored because of the pile of assignments given by the teacher who students must complete it at home because learning is done online; (2) the demand must have and master the technology and applications; and (3) they don't understand how the final exam will be carried out.

Then, at the tertiary level where various problems arise when students are writing their thesis. Especially now, the world is still hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. This condition also occurred in Bengkulu Province, including at UMB which was also affected by this pandemic. Furthermore, the problem of completing student thesis even makes students become stressed. Based on a preliminary study conducted by researchers on eighth semester students as the final year at the UMB English Study Program where researchers conducted interviews with 18 students to ask what feelings and problems they experienced while writing their thesis. From this interview, preliminary data was found that in fact many students experienced academic stress when writing their thesis in the era of the co-19 pandemic. The level of academic stress experienced varies from low, medium, to high levels. But most of them are at a high academic level, namely as many as 12 people, who are at a moderate level of academic stress, namely 4 people, and only 2 students who are at a low level of academic stress.

Furthermore, in general there are several factors that cause academic stress experienced and acknowledged by these students, namely *first*, lecturers who did not want to be met in person. They wanted to do guidance only online through technology applications from home (WFH); *Second*, it is the difficulty in collecting research data; *Third*, lecturers who always crossed out revisions that have been made, think they are still wrong and did not understand what is being suggested, so it is difficult to get recommendations for the thesis trial; *Fourth*, the lecturer asked to look for some suggested literature; *Fifth*, the lecturers were busy and only asked the student under his guidance to put the thesis on his desk or entrust it to someone at home. Here, students were just waiting for a response from the lecturer which tends to be slow; and at last, lecturers who did not understand the health conditions, academic abilities, psychology, and economics of students' parents.

Some experts convey several opinions about the causes of academic stress experienced by students. According to Lei (2020) in (Azani et al., 2022) said that academic stress is an environmental factor, including distance from the school location, class conditions, teacher facilities and teaching methods used, as well as the curriculum implemented by the school. Next, stress occurs when a person is faced with an event or situation that threatens their physical or psychological health. Hartono (2012) in (Nur'Alimah, 2022). According to Akram & Kahn in (Dwi et al., 2020) students experience stress from

various sources, including academic, social, family, and health-related issues. She suggests that academic stress specifically refers to stress caused by educational activities. (Ningsih et al., 2020) explain that academic stress is a form of psychological stress that arises from academic difficulties, which can lead to mental and physical health issues. It is a type of stress that is associated with learning activities, resulting in tension related to educational factors. Academic stress can have negative impacts on students' emotions and behavior, causing them to experience various disturbances in their mental and physical well-being.

According to Mu'tadi (2002) in (Susanti et al., 2021) stated that the difficulties felt by students during the Covid-19 period in writing their thesis developed into negative feelings which could eventually lead to tension, worry, stress, low self-esteem, frustration, and loss. motivation which can eventually cause students to postpone the preparation of their thesis, some even decide not to finish their thesis for some time. Furthermore, (Syahril -Janna, Sitti Riadil., 2021) stated that there are several factors that cause student academic stress. There are cost factors (difficulty paying tuition/UKT and demands to return scholarships), study conditions (difficulties consulting with supervisors/promoters and not being able to find references in the library), and personal problems (conflicts with friends or partners and uncomfortable boarding/house conditions). Then, the education system also plays an enabling role which further leads to increased levels of stress experienced by students (Awing & Agolla, 2008) in (Reddy et al., 2018). Other researchers stated that more than half of the 4,800 doctoral students and researchers experienced challenges in data analysis and writing, while three quarters experienced a negative impact on collecting data (Byrom, 2020) in (Fraenza & Palermo-Kielb, 2022).

Sarafino and Smith in (Losari, 2020) The different aspects of academic stress can be divided into two categories: biology and psychosocial (which includes cognitive, emotional, and social behavior). The first category, biological stress, refers to the physical response that occurs in the body (including the sympathetic nervous system and endocrine system) as a result of stress, which can cause physiological reactions like headaches, increased heart rate, and trembling legs. The second category, psychosocial stress, has three subcategories. The first subcategory, cognitive psychosocial stress, refers to an individual's cognitive reaction to stress, which can include difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, feelings of uselessness, confusion, desperation, negative thinking, decreased achievement, a lack of enjoyment in life, and difficulty making decisions. The second subcategory, emotional psychosocial stress, refers to an individual's emotional reaction to stress, which can include fear and discomfort (both psychologically and physically) and can even trigger feelings of sadness or depression. Finally, the third

subcategory, behavioral psychosocial stress, refers to changes in an individual's behavior when interacting with others and their social environment. This can include becoming more selective about who they spend time with and where they go, becoming less sociable, being hostile toward their environment, and lacking empathy for others' circumstances.

Based on the introduction above, the researchers were interested in seeing the scale of academic stress experienced by students in writing their thesis because it turns out that students' problems are also different and the ways to solve them are also different so that the scale is also different and it is not yet known what dominant scale students experience when writing their thesis.

METHODS

This study used descriptive quantitative method. The subjects of this study were students of the UMB English Education Study Program in their final semester who were working on their thesis. Since the population is less than 100 students, the researchers took the entire population as the sample for this study so that the sample for this study was 57 students. The instruments employed in this study were questionnaires and interview guides. Questionnaires were used to obtain data about students' academic stress levels. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items. In addition, an interview guide was used to confirm the results of the questionnaire.

Data collection techniques were carried out by following the following stages, namely: (1). Researchers provided a questionnaire using a Google form that would ask for students' responses; (2). The researchers distributed the Google form questionnaire link to 57 research subjects for them to fill out; (3). The researchers prepared an interview guide which contained several questions for interviews; (4). Researchers conducted interviews using the interview guide earlier. The stress scale consisted of 20 items arranged in a Likert type format. The Likert scale was used to measure student's academic stress levels, namely *low, medium, and high*. After the required data was collected, then the data was analyzed using statistical data analysis, namely *SPSS*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

RESULTS

The following will present 2 results of data findings from the Google Form questionnaire which was distributed to research subjects and from the results of interviews.

1. The result of analysis data of questionnaire can be seen in the following table:

Table 1.

No	Statement	Stress Scale					
		Low		Medium		High	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	My feelings whenapproaching the deadlinewhen working on a thesis	8	14,04%	20	35,09%	29	50,88%
2.	What I feel when I ask theguidance schedule to the supervisor	21	36,84%	23	40,35%	13	22,81%
3.	I will experience stress if there is a conflict with the supervisor.	3	5,26%	15	26,32%	39	68,42%
4.	I feel when the thesis thatI am working on does not show maximum results.	2	3,51%	13	22,81%	42	73,68%
5.	The absence of good interaction with thesupervisor made meexperience tension in working on the thesis.	5	8,77%	14	24,56%	38	66,67%
6.	My feelings when the thesis has many revisions	1	1,75%	26	45,61%	30	52,63%
7.	What I feel when I am procrastinating and lazy to do thesis revision.	6	10,53%	18	31,58%	33	57,89%
8.	I will feel stressed when Ido not immediately find a solution in dealing with obstacles while working on thesis	1	1,75%	12	21,05%	44	77,19%
9.	I feel anxious when I can'tcontrol my emotionsduring thesis guidance.	5	8,77%	30	52,63%	22	38,60%
10	I feel uneasy when literature is hard to find.	3	5,26%	15	26,32%	39	68,42%
11	I experience stress whenthe supervisor is difficultto find	2	3,51%	14	24,56%	41	71,93%
12	I'm worried if my friendsget ACC ahead of me	13	22,81%	24	42,11%	20	35,09%
13	My feelings when the revision of the thesis continues to grow	4	7,02%	20	35,09%	33	57,89%
14	I get stressed when my parents ask me about mythesis	3	5,26%	18	31,58%	36	63,16%
15	The cost of the proposal seminar and thesis trial stresses me out	6	10,53%	27	47,37%	24	42,11%
16	My feeling when thesupervisor is busy and doesn't want to be found	4	7,02%	15	26,32%	38	66,67%
17	I feel stressed when the graduation registrationdeadline is getting closer	2	3,51%	5	8,77%	50	87,72%
18	I'm afraid when I can't answer questions from supervisors andexaminers	6	10,53%	20	35,09%	31	54,39%
19	I feel stressed when a sudden proposal seminar without preparation	1	1,75%	20	35,09%	36	63,16%
20	I feel stressed when asked " when do you graduate?" by people around me	9	15,79%	21	36,84%	27	47,37%

Table 2. The Dominant Scale of Stress in Thesis Writing

No	Scale of Stress	Mean	
		F	%
1	Low	5	9,21%
2	Medium	19	32,46%
3	High	33	58,33%
	Total	57	100%

Table above showed that there were three scales of academic stress on final year of English Students in writing thesis on pandemic era at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, namely; *low scale of stress* (9,21%), *medium scale of stress* (32,46%), and *high scale of stress* (58,33%). To the dominant scale admitted by the students, we also can see in the following chart. From the result of each statement analysis, it can be concluded that mostly the students answered that they got *high scale of stress* while writing thesis.
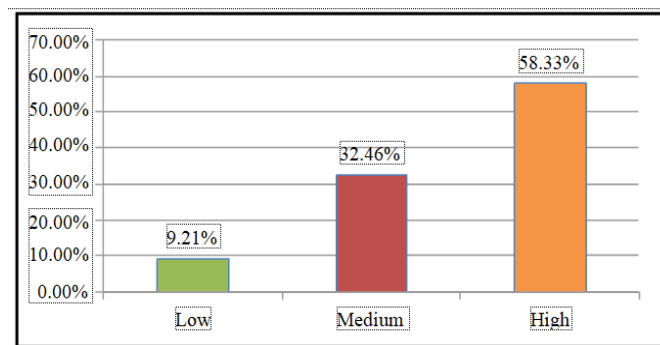

Chart 1. The Scale of Stress

Chart 1 showed that *high level of stress* as the dominant scale of stress experienced by final year English study program students of UMB with percentage 58,33%. Then, there were 32,46% of students experienced *medium scale of stress* and there were 9,21% of them got *low scale of stress* while writing thesis. It can be concluded that the most dominant scale of academic stress on final year of English Students in writing thesis on pandemic era at UMB was high level of stress.

2. The data analysis of interview result

Similar to questionnaire result, the data analysis of interview result also found that mostly the students got *high* scale of stress while writing thesis, especially when they got confused to revise the revision from the supervisor. Another problem which made the students frustrated while writing thesis was *the supervisor who is so busy to meet*. Student 3 said that she got confused while waiting the Supervisor to meet him/her. Another student answered that he got stress because his parents 58 always asked him when he can finish the thesis writing. To conclude, the interview result also showed that the students got *high* scale of stress while writing thesis with some reasons which made them confused and frustrated.

DISCUSSIONS

The objectives of this research were to find out the scale of academic stress on final year English Students in writing thesis on pandemic era and to find out the most dominant scale of academic stress on final year English Students in writing thesis on pandemic era at UMB. There were two findings of this research; *first*, there were three scales of academic stress on final year of English Students in writing thesis on pandemic era at UMB, namely; *low scale of stress* (9,21%), *medium scale of stress* (32,46%), and high scale of stress (58,33%). *Second*, the most dominant scale of academic stress on final year of English Students in writing thesis on pandemic era at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu was *high level of stress*.

According to the results of the interview, students' stress is influenced by both biological and psychological factors. (Sarafino and Smith) in (Syahril -Janna, Sitti Riadil., 2021) have categorized the components of academic stress into two categories: biology and psychosocial, which is further divided into cognitive, emotional, and social behavior. Biological stress is characterized by the body's response to stress through physiological reactions such as headaches, increased heart rate, and trembling legs, which are caused by the sympathetic nervous system and endocrine system. Cognitive psychosocial stress refers to an individual's cognitive reaction to stress, which can lead to difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, feelings of uselessness, confusion, desperation, negative thinking, decreased achievement, a lack of enjoyment in life, and difficulty making decisions. Emotional psychosocial stress is characterized by an individual's emotional response to stress, which can include psychological and physical discomfort, fear, and can even trigger feelings of sadness or depression. Finally, the fourth category, behavioral psychosocial stress, refers to changes in an individual's behavior when interacting with others and their social environment. This can include becoming more selective about who they spend time with and where they go, becoming less sociable, being hostile toward their environment, and lacking empathy for others' circumstances.

Tryasningsih (2020) discovered that senior year students experience high levels of academic stress. Academic stress is a type of mental stress that is associated with academic challenges and difficulties. It is characterized by tension related to educational factors, which can result in various negative impacts on students' mental and physical well-being, including emotional and behavioral disturbances. According to Wong et al in (Reddy et al., 2018) found that academic stress is a prevalent issue faced by students from diverse countries, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds. Phillips et al. (2020) state that

students encounter academic stress due to a range of factors, such as inadequate study habits, a heavy workload, pressure to excel, competition with peers, financial difficulties, fear of failure, and strained relationships with instructors.

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that what causes students to be categorized as getting stress in the High category is caused by internal and external factors. Internal factors such as: *I feel when the thesis that I am working on does not show maximum results, My feelings when the thesis has many revisions, I will feel stressed when I do not immediately find a solution in dealing with obstacles while working on a thesis , and I'm afraid when I can't answer questions from supervisors and examiners*. External factors such as: *My feelings when approaching the deadline when working on a thesis, I will experience stress if there is a conflict with the supervisor, The absence of good interaction with the supervisor made me experience tension in working on the thesis, I feel uneasy when literature is hard to find, I get stressed when my parents ask me about my thesis, My feeling when the supervisor is busy and doesn't want to be found, I feel stressed when the graduation registration deadline is getting closer, and I feel stressed when asked "when did you graduate?" by people around me*. External factors remain the highest cause compared to internal factors. This conclusion is supported by Atkinson in (Susanti et al., 2021) who states that internal and external factors predispose student academic stress in writing theses during a pandemic. Internal factors such as: the inability to express thoughts, ideas, and concepts. While one of the examples of external factors that influence and make students stressed is the demands of parents to immediately complete the thesis

Data-based anxiety levels are also at a high level. The reason is because of the pandemic situation which makes students and lecturers also afraid to interact. The absence of good interaction with the supervisor makes students experience tension in working on their thesis. This statement is also relevant to the opinion of Oktary in (Vrichasti, Y., Safari, I., & Susilawati, 2020), namely students who are working on their thesis experience increased anxiety especially when they are faced with an outbreak of an infectious disease which is not certain when it will end.

Related to internet network facilities (technology), this makes students become stressed in the process of supervising their thesis. This is definitely annoying. They need a good online connection so that interaction and communication from lecturers to students for what messages students have to revise can be understood and worked out properly. The worse the internet network, the more difficult it is for students so that it can cause many difficulties for the next mentoring process. This is in line with the opinion of (Septyari et al., 2022) that students really need facilities in the form of an internet network to participate in the lecture process and final assignment guidance (thesis) which is carried out online. The

more difficult it is to access the network, the higher the level of stress experienced by students. Women are individuals who are very sensitive in dealing with problems, so when women are faced with a pressure it will be easier to feel stressed than men who use more logic in dealing with a problem.

Furthermore, the research findings also confirmed some previous studies result. First, a study by (Hashemi, 2011) entitled "Language Stress And Anxiety Among The English Language Learners". The study's results indicated that language anxiety may stem from a variety of factors, such as learners' self-perception and cognition, challenges in language learning, disparities between the learners' and target language cultures, differences in social status between speakers and interlocutors, and a fear of losing one's sense of identity. Additionally, given the significant role that teachers play in second or foreign language education, it was deemed necessary to explore language teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward teaching and learning a second or foreign language.

Then, a study by (Reddy et al., 2018) entitled "Academic Stress and its Sources among University Students". The results of the study indicated that five categories of stress sources were identified, including personal feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, difficulties in interpersonal relationships with teachers, the teacher-pupil relationship, and inadequate study resources. Additionally, gender differences were analyzed. By comprehending the sources of stress, school psychologists and counselors would be better equipped to design counseling modules and intervention strategies to assist students in reducing their stress levels effectively.

Students who are working on their thesis also have to worry about pressure from the environment, such as family. According to Son et al, (2020) in (Noviana & Khoirunnisa, 2020), explaining that demands from the immediate environment such as from the family actually affect the student who is working on his thesis to become restless. Every now and then the family monitors the progress of the thesis by perhaps asking questions about the process of completing the thesis.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions that researchers can draw related to this research problem are: 1. There are three scales of academic stress in final year English students when writing their thesis during the Covid-19 pandemic at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, namely; *low stress scale* (9.21%), *moderate stress scale* (32.46%), and *high stress scale* (58.33%); and 2. The most dominant academic stress scale for final year English students in writing their thesis about the Covid-19 pandemic era at the Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu is a *high stress level*. Advice that can be given to final year students is to reduce

stress levels so that it does not have a negative impact on mental and physical health. This can be done by asking for help from close friends or family to always support them during thesis writing.

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