

The Relationship Between Coping Mechanisms and Stress Levels in Thesis Writing Among Undergraduate Nursing Students

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Abstract—In conducting a thesis, students may experience stress. Obstacles faced by students while working on a thesis can cause tension or other stress symptoms and ultimately students stop working on a thesis due to feelings of fear, frustration, worry, and doubt. The stress response is a manifestation of a mechanism used by students in stress handling. The purpose of this study was to know the relationship between coping mechanisms and stress levels in thesis writing among undergraduate nursing students. The quantitative method used was a cross-sectional approach. The data analysis used was the Chi-square test with 5% significance. A purposive random sampling was applied and the researchers selected 55 fourth-year nursing students working on a thesis who already met the inclusion criteria. The results of this study showed that there was a relationship between coping mechanisms and stress levels among students ($P\text{-value} = 0.037 < 0.05$).

Keywords: coping mechanisms, stress, students

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a condition experienced by individuals eliciting a response to threats and interfere with the individual's ability to confront them (1). The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2013 mentioned that at least one of four people experiences mental disorder that is considered as a serious problem in the world and belongs to the category of stress (2).

Based on Basic Health Research (Riskesdas, 2018), the prevalence of mental/emotional disorders in Indonesia in 2018 characterized by depression and anxiety symptoms was 9.8% at the age of 15 or over about 14 million people. The data shows that people aged over 15 years old are very vulnerable to stress because they begin to face the transition of adulthood in which new things or problems emerge (3).

The stress reactions of students working on a thesis can be both positive and negative. Stress reactions become positive if students feel enthusiastic to find related references or journals and feel excited or encouraged to work on a thesis (4). On the other hand,

stress reactions can be negative if students delay thesis completion such as being lazy or bored and even they prefer doing enjoyable activities to writing the thesis, and therefore they cannot complete the thesis and cannot graduate promptly (5).

Difficulties in working on a thesis must have been experienced by students. The difficulties include searching the title, searching books or journals, and determining the research method. Students may also feel anxious when having a consultation with the lecturer (6). Those problems can make students feel tension, stress, and even they avoid completing the thesis due to feelings of fear, frustration, confidence, and hesitation (7).

Having stress in thesis writing requires a coping mechanism or a coping strategy. There are many different types of strategy, but all of them are not totally effective. An effective coping strategy is done to cope with stress, especially when emotions cannot be controlled. All these factors result in students' productivity during thesis completion. Many people define it as a mental process of overcoming demands that are perceived as a challenge to the nature of an individual (8). In this case, it is important to deal with internal properties (such as creativity, optimism, patience, intuition, sense of humor, desire, and compassion) and external properties (9).

A thesis completion is one of the prerequisites that determines whether undergraduate students can graduate academically. Besides, it determines the success of students during their education. Therefore, it is necessary to understand and identify the mechanisms as students face situations and use different coping mechanisms that can lower stress in thesis writing.

Based on the problem above, the researchers intend to find out "the relationship between coping mechanisms and stress levels in thesis writing among undergraduate nursing students".

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study was a cross-sectional approach aiming to find out the relationship between coping mechanisms and stress levels in thesis writing

among undergraduate nursing students in Banyumas. The samples were students who were working on a thesis at 2 universities in Banyumas. In this study, 55 students were selected as respondents. The instrument used was a questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Stress Levels

Stress is a condition of disruption of the body due to psychological distress. The term stress indicates the pressure or demands suffered by individuals to adapt or conform to such pressures. The category of stress levels was determined by the respondents' responses. Based on the questionnaire consisting of 14 questions with answer scores, it was found many different types of strategy, but all of them were not effective (0 – 3). The criteria of stress levels are normal (0-14), mild (15 – 18), moderate (19 – 25), severe (26 – 33), and extremely severe (≥ 34).

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents based on Stress Levels (n = 55)

Stress Levels	Frequency (n)	%
Normal	1	1,8
Mild	7	12,7
Moderate	21	38,2
Severe	20	36,4
Extremely severe	6	10,9
Total	55	100

Based on the table above, it can be explained that the majority of respondents are in a moderate stress level (21 respondents) (38.2%). Besides, 20 respondents are in a severe stress level (36.4%), 7 respondents are in a mild stress level (12.7%), 6 respondents are in an extremely severe stress level (10.9%), and 1 respondent is in a normal stress level (1.8%).

2. Coping Mechanisms

The measurement of coping mechanisms used was the COPE Inventory scale. The category of coping mechanisms was determined by the total score of respondents' answers on the questionnaire consisting of 22 statements. The total assessment scores show maladaptive coping mechanisms (0-44) and adaptive coping mechanisms (45-88). Based on coping mechanisms, the distribution of respondents is presented in table 2.

Table 2 Distribution of Respondents based on Coping Mechanisms (N = 55)

Variable	Frequency (n)	%
Adaptive	29	52,7
Maladaptive	26	47,3

Based on table 2, it can be explained that the majority of respondents having adaptive coping mechanisms are 29 respondents (52.7%), while 26 respondents have maladaptive coping mechanisms (47.3%).

3. Cross Tabulation

Table 3. The Relationship between Coping Mechanisms and Stress Levels among Nursing Students (n = 55)

		Mekanisme Koping				Total		p	Correlation
		Tinggi		Maladptif		F	%		
		F	%	F	%				
Stress	Normal	0	0	1	100,0	1	100,0	0,037	0,571
	Ringan	2	28,6	5	71,4	7	100,0		
	Sedang	4	19,0	17	81,0	21	100,0		
	Berat	9	45,0	11	55,0	20	100,0		
	Sangat Berat	5	83,3	1	16,7	6	100,0		
Total		20	36,4	35	63,6	55	100,0		

Based on the test results using the chi-square, it was obtained $p = 0.07$ and $= 0.571$. It can be concluded that there was a strong positive relationship between coping mechanisms and stress levels among nursing students. Based on the tabulation results, it showed higher stress levels affecting the incidence of maladaptive coping mechanisms.

Discussion

The results showed that the stress levels of students were moderate. The results showed 7 respondents (12.7%) with mild stress level, 21 respondents (38.2%) with moderate stress level, 20 respondents (36.4%) with severe stress level, and 6 respondents (10.9%) with extremely severe stress level.

Stress, non-specific response of the body to any demand, is a universal phenomenon that occurs in everyday life (10). Stress can not be avoided and is a response experienced by everyone to any demand (11). When a person confronts the stressor, he will deal with the stress and will try to reduce stress. That is called as a coping strategy (1).

The distribution of respondents by gender showed the majority of respondents were females (19 respondents) (34.5%) of 36 respondents (65.5%). The results of this study showed that women tend to become anxious easily and they are sensitive easily to something related to their inability than men (4). On the other hand, men tend to be more active and curious about anything (12). It is also aligned with the opinion of psychiatrists from the University of Nebraska College of Medicine Subhash C Bhatia MD. It is described that the criteria of stress levels are the same when associated with gender. However, women tend to be guilty, be anxious, have a decreased

appetite, have sleep disorders, and have eating disorders (5).

The stress experienced by students can have both short-term and long-term impacts. The short-term impact shows that students can experience psychological factors such as anxiety, sadness, fear, and despair because stress behaviors make students tremble, stutter, and aggressive to others (13). The long-term impacts in the academic activities of students can be in the form of physical responses such as decreased endurance, depression, mental fatigue, and the use of cigarettes or liquor in reducing their stress (8). If the stress experienced by students lasts too long, it will give a very bad impact on the students in achieving academic goals. The research results of Dena 2014 indicating that stress continuing for a long period of time will affect emotional intelligence that can disrupt their activities (14). Stress that lasts longer and repeatedly affects the brain, skin, hair and nails (15). Therefore, students need to use appropriate coping strategies to reduce stress levels (14).

Each individual has a different coping mechanism to face stressful situations. The mechanism itself is a response that is performed by individuals when there is a negative condition or something that can cause the stressor. A coping mechanism is also described as an individual way of resolving problems, addressing changes as well as in cognitive-threatening or behavioral threats (16). According to Nasir and Muhith 2011, coping is effective when the mechanisms can assist individuals intolerance, accept stressful conditions, and do not tolerate pressures that cannot be controlled by individuals.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that students experience maladaptive coping mechanisms affecting their stress levels while working on a thesis. The results of this study showed that respondents experienced a moderate stress level and thus, there was a relationship between stress levels and coping mechanisms in thesis writing among nursing students.

SUGGESTION

1. For the University

The results of this study can be a consideration for education. The focus is on the maladaptive coping mechanisms that will influence the thesis progress of students. Thus, it is suggested to guide students not only for their academic skills but also for their internal problems while working on a thesis by giving supporting problem-solving.

2. For students

The results of this study can also be an additional knowledge for students to use coping mechanisms. In this case, students should prepare themselves well before writing their thesis, become open-minded, and

increase knowledge related to the use of adaptive coping mechanisms while working on a thesis.

3. For further study

Other researchers should add other factors affecting students' coping mechanisms such as psychological factors, motivation, health conditions, and therapeutic delivery that can reduce student stress while working on a thesis.

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