

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the background of the study, research problem, purpose of the research, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, and definition of key terms.

A. Background of The Study

A thesis as a final assignment is one of the important academic requirements for undergraduate students in Indonesia. A thesis is not only a formal assignment, but also an indicator of a student's ability to integrate the theory and practice they have learned during their studies. According to Kusuma, a thesis reflects academic skills and is proof of a student's intellectual achievements in their field. This task requires students to demonstrate critical thinking, analytical skills, and scientific independence. Thus, writing a thesis serves as a measure of students' readiness to enter the professional world. Therefore, a thesis is often seen as the pinnacle of an academic journey full of challenges.¹

However, in reality, many final-year students feel burdened when faced with writing a thesis. Academic stress arises due to high demands, methodological complexity, and the limited time available to students. Maharani (2021) reveals that laziness, loss of inspiration, and procrastination often become obstacles that exacerbate the situation. This

¹ Kusuma, H. (2021). Perspektif skripsi sebagai cerminan kompetensi mahasiswa. *Journal of Education*, 10(3), 210–219.

pressure often reduces motivation to study and disrupts students' mental health. Thus, this phenomenon has become a serious issue that needs academic attention.²

At the most micro level, students in the English Education program in their final semester often experience intense anxiety when entering the thesis writing phase. This anxiety does not arise as a single phenomenon, but rather as a result of complex interactions between academic demands, academic English language skills, and the pressure to complete studies on time. Students often feel that they are not competent enough to express scientific ideas in writing using a foreign language.

This situation is exacerbated by the obligation to present research data systematically and in accordance with academic rules. Administrative pressures and expectations of timely graduation further increase students' psychological burden. This condition is in line with Kurniawati's findings, which highlight the high level of anxiety among EFL students regarding thesis writing as they approach graduation.

Anxiety about thesis writing among EFL students has relatively unique characteristics compared to other academic contexts. Students often report fear of making linguistic errors that could affect their academic assessment. In addition, difficulty in organizing scientific ideas logically is

² Maharani, A. (2021). Dampak beban akademik terhadap motivasi mahasiswa akhir. *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, 7(1), 45–56.

a major obstacle in the writing process. Fear of criticism from supervisors and examiners also reinforces the anxiety felt. The accumulation of these factors has an impact on decreased academic productivity and an increased tendency to procrastinate. These findings are reinforced by Subekti, who shows that thesis writing anxiety significantly hinders the progress of English Education students.³

Social support is a general term that covers various forms of support that a person receives from their environment. This support can come from family, friends, or academic figures such as lecturers or advisors. This support can take the form of emotional support, practical assistance, or the providing of information and guidance.

Within this context, peer support is a more specific type of social support. Peer support refers to support provided by peers, which are individuals who are in a similar position, age, or academic situation, such as fellow students. Because they have similar experiences and challenges, support from peers is often felt to be closer and easier to understand.

Meanwhile, support from family and lecturers is also included in social support, but cannot be categorized as peer support. Family support usually takes the form of emotional encouragement, understanding, and practical assistance in daily life. Support from lecturers or advisors is provided in the form of academic guidance, direction, and feedback, which

³ Subekti, A. S., & Kawengian, G. E. (2023). Thesis writing anxiety among Indonesian pre-service teachers of English: A survey study. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, 11(1), 148-162.

is professional in nature and does not involve an equal relationship like that between peers.

In facing these pressures, students not only rely on individual strategies, but also seek sources of social support. One of the most common mechanisms in student experiences is peer support because it is the most accessible and relatable form of support for students.. This support includes informal discussions, exchange of drafts, and joint proofreading. Interaction with peers also provides moral encouragement that helps students persevere through the long writing process. The presence of friends who are experiencing similar difficulties creates a sense of community and emotional validation. Pravita notes that peer support is a significant coping strategy in reducing anxiety and increasing student motivation.⁴

The phenomenon of seeking peer support cannot be separated from changes in the social context of campuses after the pandemic. Restrictions on face-to-face interactions have shifted students' communication patterns to the digital space. Informal discussion and support groups now often take place through online platforms such as WhatsApp or Google Meet. This change affects how students build emotional closeness and share academic burdens. On the one hand, access to support has become more flexible, but on the other hand, the quality of interpersonal closeness may decline. This

⁴ Pravita, A. R., & Kuswandono, P. (2022). Writing anxiety and academic procrastination on undergraduate thesis writing: The role of self-regulation. *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)*, 9(1), 1-25.

new dynamic confirms that peer support now takes place in a different social configuration compared to the pre-pandemic period.⁵

At the individual level, thesis writing anxiety has a real impact on students' psychological well-being. Students report prolonged stress that affects their concentration and emotional stability. Sleep disturbances are a common complaint due to thoughts that are constantly focused on the thesis. This condition often leads to academic procrastination. This delay actually prolongs the duration of study and reinforces existing anxiety. Kawengian emphasizes that thesis writing anxiety directly contributes to a decline in the mental health of English Education students according to Kawengian.

The impact of thesis writing anxiety is not only felt personally, but also has collective implications. High levels of anxiety among final year students can affect the graduation rate of study programs. Academic advisors face an additional burden due to students who experience stagnation in their writing. In addition, delays in graduation have implications for the administrative burden on institutions. In the long term, this condition can affect the image and credibility of study programs. Higher education policy analysis shows that student mental health is an important factor in the effectiveness of study completion based on higher education policy analysis; national research 2020–2024.

⁵ Al Izza, A., & Lailiyah, S. (2024). Literature Review: Factors Affecting Final Year Students'anxiety In Preparing A Thesis In Indonesia. *Journal of Community Mental Health and Public Policy*, 6(2), 114-125.

Conceptually, peer support can be classified into several main dimensions. Emotional support includes empathy, moral reinforcement, and mutual understanding among students. Instrumental support involves technical assistance such as proofreading, sharing templates, or data processing assistance. Meanwhile, informational support relates to providing methodological advice and literature source recommendations. These three dimensions have the potential to function as protective factors against academic anxiety. Laksmiwati emphasizes that the effectiveness of social support depends on how these dimensions are mobilized in an academic context.⁶

Although peer support is theoretically considered helpful, empirical evidence shows mixed results. Several quantitative studies have found a significant negative relationship between social support and students' anxiety levels. However, other studies report weak or even insignificant correlations. These differing results indicate the presence of unidentified mediating or moderating factors. Factors such as relationship quality, interaction intensity, and cultural context are thought to play an important role. Correlational studies conducted between 2022 and 2024 show that peer support is related to students' experiences, but they do not explain how peer support works. This indicates the need for further research on the mechanisms of peer support.

⁶ Laksmiwati, E. D., & Tondok, M. S. (2023). Perceived Social Support, Academic Self-Efficacy, and Anxiety among Final Year Undergraduate Students: A Mediation Analysis. *Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 5(2), 173-183.

The uncertainty of these empirical findings shows the limitations of quantitative approaches in fully understanding this phenomenon. Correlation figures cannot explain how students interpret the support they receive. The interpersonal processes that occur in peer interactions are often reduced to statistical variables. In fact, students' subjective experiences are key in determining the effectiveness of support. This is particularly relevant for English Education students who face specific linguistic challenges. Therefore, a qualitative approach is important to explain the context and meaning of peer support.⁷

In local studies, a number of narrative studies have identified various individual coping strategies used by students. These strategies include self-regulation, time management, and seeking help from friends. However, the focus of research often stops at the individual as a single actor. The social interactions that underlie the practice of “seeking friends” are rarely analyzed in depth. Aspects such as study group structure, role division, and interaction norms have not been widely discussed. Pravita and Kurniawati emphasize that this gap remains wide open in local literature.

The cultural context of Indonesia plays an important role in shaping peer support patterns in higher education settings. Strong collectivist values encourage students to help each other and share academic experiences. On the other hand, family expectations of timely graduation often add to

⁷ Subekti, A. S., & Kawengian, G. E. (2023). Thesis writing anxiety among Indonesian pre-service teachers of English: A survey study. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, 11(1), 148-162.

students' psychological pressure. Hierarchical relationships with lecturers also make some students feel more comfortable sharing their anxieties with peers than with mentors. These conditions make peer support a relatively safe and egalitarian source of support. However, studies specifically examining the influence of cultural values on the effectiveness of peer support are still limited based on Cultural Studies in education 2021–2024.

In addition to emotional aspects, the relationship between peer support and the technical practice of thesis writing also needs to be examined in depth. Students often utilize peers to manage references, select methodologies, and process research data. However, it is unclear which aspect of support is most influential in reducing anxiety. It is possible that emotional and instrumental support complement each other in the writing process. The interaction of these two forms of support can create more stable academic confidence. This gap in analysis is rarely explored qualitatively in local literature.⁸

From a methodological perspective, the dominance of quantitative research leaves limitations in understanding the psychosocial processes of students. Surveys and psychological scales are capable of measuring general levels of anxiety and social support. However, these approaches do not capture students' personal narratives and subjective interpretations. The meaning of peer support is highly dependent on the experience and context

⁸ Laksmiwati, E. D., & Tondok, M. S. (2023). Perceived Social Support, Academic Self-Efficacy, and Anxiety among Final Year Undergraduate Students: A Mediation Analysis. *Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 5(2), 173-183.

of the interaction. Therefore, a qualitative approach is relevant for exploring students' life experiences in depth. Previous studies have confirmed that phenomenology is effective for revealing the subjective meaning of social support in an academic context based on correlational studies 2022–2024.

Another relevant contemporary issue is the changing patterns of peer support in hybrid learning environments. The combination of online and offline interactions creates variations in the support experiences among students. Some students feel a decrease in emotional closeness due to virtual interactions. However, other students appreciate the flexibility and ease of access to online support. These differences indicate that the effectiveness of peer support is not universal. Contextual factors such as communication preferences and interaction intensity are important variables.⁹

From an institutional perspective, understanding peer support has strategic implications for higher education management. Study programs can utilize research findings to design more responsive mentoring interventions. Peer support is positioned as a complement, not a replacement, to the role of academic advisors. Facilitating writing circles or peer-review workshops can strengthen the academic ecosystem. These evidence-based interventions have the potential to improve student well-being. Implementational studies show that collaborative approaches are

⁹ Repper, J., & Carter, T. (2011). A review of the literature on peer support in mental health services. *Journal of mental health*, 20(4), 392-411.

effective when tailored to students' actual practices based on policy implications, implementation studies.

Cross-faculty research shows that anxiety levels and forms of social support vary across disciplines. Students in health, education, and humanities face different academic pressures. Therefore, generalizing findings across populations must be done with caution. English Education students have unique characteristics related to linguistic competence. Dependence on English academic writing skills increases the potential for anxiety. Focusing research on this population is important to produce contextual findings.¹⁰

There have been many studies on peer support, but most of them are still focused on quantitative and correlational approaches. As a result, there is still a lack of qualitative research using a phenomenological approach that deeply explores the subjective meaning of peer support in the context of student thesis writing, especially among English Education (TBI) students. Therefore, this study is necessary to understand how peer support is experienced and interpreted by students during the thesis writing process. Thus, the study was able to capture aspects that were not accessible by quantitative approaches.¹¹

¹⁰ Subekti, A. S., & Kawengian, G. E. (2023). Thesis writing anxiety among Indonesian pre-service teachers of English: A survey study. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, 11(1), 148-162.

¹¹ Kurniawati, A., & Atmojo, A. E. P. (2022). EFL thesis writing anxiety: Causes, effects, and coping strategies. *EnJourMe (English Journal of Merdeka): Culture, Language, and Teaching of English*, 7(2), 137-151.

B. Research Question

Based on the background of the study above, the problem that can be analyzed in this research can be formulated as follows:

1. What are the roles of peer support as experienced by English education students in managing thesis writing anxiety?
2. How does peer support contribute to managing thesis writing anxiety among English Education students?

C. The Purpose of The Study

Based on the question of research, this study explores the roles of peer support as experienced by English education students in managing thesis writing anxiety.

D. The Significance of The Study

The study is created to help all students interested in the study. However, it is also specially designed to:

1. Students

This study expected to help English Education students understand the role of peer support in managing thesis writing anxiety and encourage them to rely on peer support as a coping strategy during the thesis writing process.

2. For the English Education Program

This study may provide insights into students' academic and emotional challenges during thesis writing. The findings can be used as a consideration in developing supportive academic practices, such as peer discussion groups or mentoring programs, to assist students in completing their thesis more effectively.

3. Future Researchers

This study can serve as a reference for future researchers interested in researching peer support, academic anxiety, or related topics in the context of higher education.

E. Scope and Limitation of The Study

This study was conducted among final-year students at Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah State Islamic University Tulungagung, specifically students in the English Education Study Program who were writing their undergraduate theses. The scope of this study was limited to exploring students' experiences and perceptions of peer support in managing thesis writing anxiety in the context of academic writing in English.

The limitations of this study were its focus on a specific institution, study program, and group of participants. Because data were collected only from English Education students at UIN SATU Tulungagung, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to students from other departments or universities. Therefore, the results of this study reflect the specific context and experiences of the participants involved.

F. Definition of Key Terms

The researcher needs to recognize the role of peer support in managing students' writing anxiety among the English Education students at the State Islamic University of Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. Consequently, as a way to recognize this text, the researchers would like to make clear definitions and terms:

1. Peer Support

Peer support refers to the assistance, encouragement, and understanding provided by fellow students who have similar academic status and experience, especially in supporting each other during the thesis writing process.

2. Thesis Writing Anxiety

Thesis writing anxiety refers to feelings of anxiety, fear, tension, and lack of confidence experienced by students when writing their undergraduate thesis, especially in relation to academic writing requirements, guidance, and pressure to complete the thesis.

3. English Education Students

English Education students are undergraduate students enrolled in the Department of English Education, with an academic focus on the learning and use of English as a foreign language, especially for academic and educational purposes.