



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



The relationship between peer social support and the stress level of midwife students who compile a thesis at Universitas Airlangga

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2024, 21(01), 811–816

Publication history: Received on 27 November 2023; revised on 07 January 2024; accepted on 10 January 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.21.1.0080>

Abstract

Background: Students working on their thesis are susceptible to experiencing stress due to the pressure received from their supervisors, self-imposed demands to graduate quickly, or the fear of running out of study time. One factor to alleviate stress is the presence of support from close individuals to help and boost motivation and confidence in facing the difficulties, especially during the thesis writing process. This research aimed to analyze the relationship between peer social support and the stress levels of midwifery students working on their thesis at Universitas Airlangga.

Methods: This research was conducted using the analytical observational quantitative method with a cross-sectional design. The sampling method used total sampling. The study involved a total of 70 regular 7th-semester midwifery students. The analysis method used the Spearman Rank test.

Results: The research analysis resulted showed a p-value of 0.304. The calculated p-value is $0.304 > \alpha (0.05)$, meaning there was no relationship between peer social support and stress levels.

Conclusion: There was no relationship between peer social support and the stress levels of midwifery students working on their thesis at Universitas Airlangga. The next researchers are advised to investigate factors other than peer social support that can influence stress.

Keywords: Peer Social Support; Final-Year Students; Thesis; Stress

1. Introduction

Universities in Indonesia apply regulations regarding study period limits to maintain the quality of their graduates. The regulation is applied based on the Decree of the Minister of Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 44 of 2015 section 4 article 16 paragraph 1 letter d, concerning the period and learning load of educational programs for a maximum of seven academic years for undergraduate programs with a student learning load of at least 144 Semester Credit Units. Students who cannot complete their studies until the specified time, then the student will get a sanction, namely dropping out [5].

Students to avoid dropping out must complete coursework from lecturers, field assignments / field practice, midterm and final semester exams and write a final project. In addition to academic problems, students also have problems in terms of study time management and also lack of family support or away from family. Family support is needed when someone is experiencing a problem. Someone will seek support from people around to help and revive enthusiasm and confidence in facing the difficulties that are being experienced, especially when working on a thesis or final project [5]

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Students who prepare a thesis are vulnerable to stress because of the pressure received from lecturers, demands from themselves to graduate quickly or fear of running out of study period. Stress is a demand on the system that produces tension, anxiety and the need for energy, extra psychological effort. Stress occurs because a person perceives the consequences of a stressful event and does not have the ability to cope with it. Some factors that can cause stress in students who are preparing a thesis can be divided into internal and external factors. Internal factors come from individuals consisting of motivation/expectations, physical and personality types of the students themselves. While external factors come from outside the individual itself such as family, friends, work, facilities, environment, literature, costs, supervisors, existing credit load and other factors [10].

2. Material and methods

The type of research design used is quantitative with a descriptive correlation design through a cross sectional approach. Correlation research aims to get an overview of the relationship between two or more variables, where conclusions can be drawn from the problems studied whether the relationship is significant or not [6]. The sampling technique in this study was total sampling, which is a sampling technique where the number of samples is the same as the population [8]. The sample in this study was 70 students. Researchers use the total sampling formula where the sample size is equal to the population size. The place of this research is in the midwifery study program, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga. The population of this study were midwifery students in the 7th semester of the regular midwifery study program, Faculty of Medicine, Airlangga University.

This research instrument uses a peer social support questionnaire adopted from [9] with a reliability value of 0.733 which means that the estimated reliability of this measuring instrument is high or reliable and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) with an estimated reliability value of 0.70 which means that the estimated reliability of this measuring instrument is high or reliable. The assessment score for the peer social support category is less support = <56%, sufficient support = 56%-75% and good support category = >75%, while for stress, namely no stress = 0-7, mild stress = 8-11, moderate stress = 12-15, severe stress = 16-20 and very severe stress = ≥ 21 .

Researchers collected data by distributing questionnaires via google form which was given via student WhatsApp private chat. After completing the data collection, the researcher thanked the respondents. Furthermore, researchers analyzed the data using the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) 25.0 for windows application. Descriptive analysis uses frequency and percentage and for relationship analysis using spearman rank.

3. Results and discussion

This study managed to get a total population of 70 people. There were no subjects who refused to be respondents. The following is a table showing the frequency distribution of the characteristics of the research sample.

Table 1 Frequency distribution by age

| Age | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|-------|---------------|----------------|
| 20 | 7 | 10 |
| 21 | 54 | 78 |
| 22 | 8 | 11 |
| 23 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 70 | 100 |

Based on table 1. shows that the average age of the sample is 21.4 years with the youngest age of 20 years and the oldest age of 23 years. This means that the age of regular 7th semester midwife students who compile a thesis is in the age range of 20-23 years and all respondents are not married.

Based on table 2. shows that most regular 7th semester midwife students get good peer social support, namely 51 (72.9%). This means that for student midwives, peers are people who support, motivate, want to be a place to complain, and help them.

Table 2 Frequency distribution of peer social support variables

| Sample Characteristics | | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|--------|---------------|----------------|
| Peer Social Support | Less | 1 | 1.4 |
| | Enough | 18 | 25.7 |
| | Good | 51 | 72.9 |
| | Total | 70 | 100 |

Table 3 Frequency distribution of stress level variables

| Sample Characteristics | | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|----------------|
| Stress Level | Normal | 0 | 0 |
| | Mild | 5 | 7.1 |
| | Medium | 6 | 8.6 |
| | Heavy | 25 | 35.7 |
| | Very Heavy | 34 | 48.6 |
| | Total | 70 | 100 |

Based on table 3. 7th semester regular midwife students experience the most stress levels in the category of very severe stress levels as many as 34 (48.6%).

Of the 70 students who were respondents, 32 (45.7%) students said that it was difficult to meet lecturers as the reason for their stress, 9 (12.8%) students said that lack of motivation from within themselves was the reason for their stress, 6 (8.6%) students said that it was difficult to manage time so that they ended up stressed, 5 (7.1%) students said internal family problems were the main factor causing them stress, 6 (8.6%) students said it was difficult to find journal literature which made them stressed, 7 (10%) students said they did not understand research methodology which made them stressed, 13 (18.5) said they were not confident and were afraid of adding semesters because they had seen many friends at the results seminar while their thesis was not finished and time was running fast.

Table 4 Spearman Rank test analysis of peer social support variables with stress levels based on Perceived Stress Scale

| Peer Social Support | Student Stress | | | | | | | | | | | | P value |
|---------------------|----------------|---|------|-----|--------|-----|-------|------|------------|------|-------|------|---------|
| | Normal | | Mild | | Medium | | Heavy | | Very Heavy | | Total | % | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | | | |
| Less | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.4 | 1 | 1.4 | 0.304 |
| Enough | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.4 | 3 | 4.3 | 3 | 4.3 | 11 | 15.7 | 18 | 25.7 | |
| Good | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5.7 | 3 | 4.3 | 22 | 31.4 | 22 | 31.4 | 51 | 72.9 | |
| Total | 0 | 0 | 5 | 7.1 | 6 | 8.6 | 25 | 35.7 | 34 | 48.6 | 70 | 100 | |

Based on table 5.4 shows that according to the Spearman rank statistical test with the Statistical Product And Service Solution (SPSS) 25.0 for windows program, the p value is 0.304. From the calculation of the p value is $0.304 > \alpha (0.05)$ so it means that there is no relationship between peer social support and stress levels. 34 students with very severe stress levels claimed that they were not stressed (denial) if they were experiencing stress. This is because they feel they have good social support so they don't feel stressed. Therefore, researchers provide education about stress coping to 70 students through distributing YouTube video links about stress coping and stress management. In addition,

researchers also advised 70 students to consult a psychiatrist or psychologist if based on the results of measuring stress levels in the severe and very severe stress categories.

3.1. Average Age of Students Who Prepare Thesis

Individual characteristics can be seen from the respondent's demographic data which includes age where regular 7th semester midwife students at Airlangga University have an average age of 21.4 years. Age is related to a person's tolerance to stress. In adulthood, a person is usually better able to control stress that occurs compared to childhood and old age. The more mature the age will usually show more mental maturity, in the sense of being wiser, more able to think rationally, more able to control emotions, more able to show their intellectual and psychological, and more tolerant of views and behaviors that are different from themselves [1].

3.2. Identification of Peer Social Support in Midwifery Students Who Prepare Thesis at Airlangga University

Social support is divided into four aspects, namely [7] :

- Emotional Support
 - Includes expressions of empathy, care and concern for the person concerned (eg: feedback, affirmation).
- Appreciative Support
 - Occurs through expressions of positive regard (appreciation) for the person, encouragement or agreement with the individual's ideas or feelings, and positive comparisons of the person with others.
- Instrumental support
 - Includes direct assistance, such as people lending the person money or helping with work during times of stress.
- Informative support
 - Includes giving advice, instructions, suggestions or feedback.

Peer social support in midwifery students who prepare theses at Airlangga University is best at emotional support. Students often motivate each other not to delay doing assignments. Many students are willing to listen to their friends' complaints when friends need a listener. In addition, many students also comfort other friends who are sad. Most students want to help friends who are having trouble finding literature. In addition, students also like to give praise when friends succeed in solving their difficulties. When friends do not understand the assignments given by the lecturer, students want to provide information about the assignments given.

3.3. Identification of Stress in Midwifery Students Who Prepare Thesis at Airlangga University

Students cannot avoid stress caused by many responsibilities such as, many coursework that must be completed immediately starting from practicum reports, individual and group assignments. Final year students, the stress level becomes higher because not only course assignments but also because they have to complete the final project in the form of a thesis. The number of tasks that must be completed and the tight schedule of lectures sometimes make it difficult for students to manage their time [10]. [2] explains that difficulty managing time is one source of stress from high academic load. The level of stress in students can vary, from mild, moderate, severe, to very severe stress [10].

The obstacles contained in the completion of the thesis consist of two factors, namely internal factors including lack of interest or motivation in students and low academic ability in expressing problems or ideas. External factors are the difficulty of the material or thesis title being worked on, the difficulty of finding literature or data, and problems with the supervisor during thesis consultation. These obstacles, if they cannot be overcome effectively, can cause stress and can interfere with emotional stability during the preparation of the final thesis [3].

Stress can not only come from academics but can come from other things. The sources of stress can be divided into 3, namely [7]:

- Internal sources of stress. Sometimes the source of stress is within a person. The level of stress that arises depends on the state of pain and age of the individual.
- Sources of stress in the family. Stress here can stem from interactions between family members.
- Sources of stress within the environment and community. The subject's interactions outside the family environment complement the sources of stress. An example is work

Stress can also be influenced by several factors. The following factors change the experience of stress [7]:

- Variables in individual conditions: age, life stage, gender, temperament, genetic factors, intelligence, education, ethnicity, culture, economic status, physical condition.
- Personality characteristics: introvert - extrovert, general emotional stability, personality 'hardiness', locus of control, immunity, resilience.
- Social-cognitive variables: perceived social support, social network, perceived personal control.
- Relationship with the social environment. Social support received, integration in social networks
- Coping strategies

3.4. Analysis of Peer Social Support on Stress Levels of Midwifery Students Who Prepare Thesis at Airlangga University

One of the things that can reduce stress levels is peer social support. According to LaRocco [4] the benefits of social support are to reduce anxiety depression, and symptoms of bodily disorders for someone experiencing stress. People who get high social support will experience positive things in their lives. In addition, they have high self esteem and better self concept and lower anxiety. The results of this study are in line with the results of research conducted by Da'awi [3] which states that peer social support is not related to the stress level of students who compile a thesis. This is because the social support obtained is not in accordance with the needs. Then the form of social support that is needed in working on the thesis is information support in the form of good and correct thesis writing procedures and understanding of the research methods used.

Peer social support can be influenced by several things. There are three factors that influence social support, namely [7]:

- Recipients of support where a person is unlikely to receive social support if they are not friendly, never help others, and do not let people know that they need help.
- Providers of support where someone who should be a provider of support may not have something that others need or may be so stressed that they do not think about others or may not be aware of the needs of others.
- Social network composition and structure factors where there are relationships that individuals have with people in the family and neighborhood. These relationships can vary in size (the number of people the individual is in contact with). The frequency of the relationship (how often the individual meets with these people, the composition (whether these people are family, friends, coworkers) and intimacy (the closeness of the individual's relationship and trust in each other).

4. Conclusion

Final year midwifery students often feel stress from various sources including academic stress, especially when doing assignments. The results showed that most students were at a very severe stress level with good peer social support. Based on the research analysis and discussion of the relationship between peer social support and the stress level of students who compile a thesis, the results show that:

- 1) Most midwifery students who compile a thesis at Airlangga University get good peer social support, namely 51 (72.9%).
- 2) Student midwives who prepare their thesis at Airlangga University experience the most stress levels in the very severe stress category as many as 34 (48.6%).
- 3) There is no relationship between peer social support and the stress level of midwifery students who prepare their thesis at Airlangga University with p value = 0.304.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to the head of the midwifery study program, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga, for giving permission for this study to be conducted. Thanks to those who contributed to the research and writing of this article.

Disclosure of Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Statement of informed consent

Before data collection, the researcher has explained to the respondent about the research that will be carried out. If the respondent agrees then directed to sign an informed consent sheet and the respondent is given the right to resign if they feel harmed.

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