IDEAS

Journal on Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature

ISSN 2338-4778 (Print)
ISSN 2548-4192 (Online)

Volume 14, Number 2, December 2026
pp. 9188 - 9207

Copyright © 2026 The Author
IDEAS is licensed under CC-BY-SA 4.0 License



Issued by English study program of UIN Palopo

Understanding Learning Anxiety and Mental Well-being in Final-Year English Language Students

Eliza Trimadona[1], Rahmadani Putri[2], Chyntia Damayanti[3]

[1,2]Tadris Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Indonesia

Article Info

Received: 2024-12-26
Revised: 2026-10-29
Accepted: 2026-10-30

Keywords:
Academic anxiety;
EFL thesis writing;
final-year students;
foreign language anxiety;
mental well-being;
qualitative research

DOI:
10.24256/ideas. v14i2.6087

Corresponding Author:
Eliza Trimadona
elizatrimadona@uinjambi.ac.id
Tadris Bahasa Inggris,
Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi,
Indonesia

Abstract

Final-year students in English education programmes must write a thesis in a foreign language while preparing for life after graduation, a combination that can threaten both their academic progress and their mental well-being. This qualitative descriptive study addressed two research questions: (1) what factors contribute to learning anxiety among final-year English language students as they complete their theses, and (2) how do their daily attitudes and coping behaviours differ from those they recall as regular (non-final-year) students? In-depth semi-structured interviews (19 guiding questions; 45–90 minutes each) were conducted with five purposively selected final-year students (three undergraduate and two master's students) from two public universities in Jambi Province, Indonesia: Universitas Jambi and UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. The data were analysed thematically, and credibility was supported through member checking. Four themes emerged: (a) low confidence in speaking English, driven by fear of mistakes, high self-expectations and limited practice; (b) thesis-writing anxiety arising from supervision deadlines, social-evaluative fear and language-related perfectionism; (c) research-literacy difficulties in linking theory to findings, choosing a methodology and analysing data; and (d) a shift in the final year towards closer supervisor and peer interaction, stronger family and career pressure and more proactive preparation for work. Across cases, fear of negative evaluation and avoidance (silence, procrastination, postponed supervision and repeated revision) formed a self-reinforcing cycle that supervisor and peer support appeared to soften. The findings suggest that thesis supervision in English as a foreign language (EFL) programme should address students' emotional as well as technical needs through negotiated deadlines, structured methodology and statistics clinics, peer writing groups and accessible counselling. Because the study involved only five participants from one province, the findings are not intended to be generalised; they provide an in-depth account that should be tested in larger and more diverse samples.

1. Introduction

The final stage of university study is a high-stakes transition. In Indonesia, the undergraduate thesis (*skripsi*) and the master's thesis (*tesis*) have long been the main graduation requirements. Although Ministerial Regulation No. 53 of 2023 now allows study programmes to accept other forms of final project (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2023), the thesis remains a common requirement in many English education programmes. Final-year students must design and report an independent study, meet their supervisors' expectations and deadlines and, at the same time, prepare for employment and respond to their families' expectations. Indonesian studies have consistently reported moderate to high levels of anxiety among students completing final projects (Akhnar et al., 2022; Angelin et al., 2021; Malfasari et al., 2018; Susilo & Eldawaty, 2021), and anxiety has been associated with lower learning outcomes and academic achievement (Apriani et al., 2021; Kusumastuti, 2020; Suratmi et al., 2017).

Anxiety is a normal response to a perceived threat. It becomes a concern when it is excessive, persistent and out of proportion to the situation, at which point it can impair daily functioning and, in clinical forms such as generalised anxiety disorder, require professional treatment (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013; Diferiensyah et al., 2016; Soen et al., 2021). The present study does not diagnose or examine clinical disorders. It focuses on *learning anxiety*, the worry, tension and avoidance that students experience in relation to academic tasks, and on what this anxiety means for their *mental well-being*. Following the World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) and Keyes (2002), mental well-being is understood not merely as the absence of disorder but as a state in which individuals can realise their abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life and work productively.

Three complementary perspectives frame the study. The first is foreign language anxiety, which Horwitz et al. (1986) described as a situation-specific anxiety arising from language learning and comprising communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, that is, apprehension about others' judgements (Watson & Friend, 1969). Cheng (2004) extended this construct to second language writing, distinguishing somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety and avoidance behaviour. The second is the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), in which stress arises when people appraise the demands of a situation as exceeding their resources, and in which coping and social support can buffer the effects of stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985). The third concerns cognitive and linguistic resources: cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988) explains why attending simultaneously to linguistic accuracy, content and research procedures can overload working memory, while input and output perspectives on second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Swain, 1985) explain how limited exposure and practice constrain fluency. Together, these perspectives allow learning anxiety to be examined as an interaction of language-specific, task-specific and contextual factors rather than as a single trait.

For English education students, the usual pressures of the final year are compounded by language. They must read sources, write the thesis, consult supervisors and defend their research in a foreign language, and they are often expected, by themselves and by others, to be highly competent users of English because English is their major. Limited vocabulary can therefore affect many parts of the process, from understanding references and handouts to presenting in seminars and explaining findings in the final examination. The Indonesian context adds further layers.

ISSN 2338-4778 (Print)
ISSN 2548-4192 (Online)

Relationships between students and lecturers tend to be hierarchical, reflecting relatively high power distance (Hofstede, 2001), which can make students reluctant to ask for help or to admit difficulties to a supervisor. Mental health literacy among Indonesian university students remains limited (Nazira et al., 2022), and the shift to online and hybrid learning during the COVID-19 pandemic heightened students' anxiety and highlighted the need for mental health support (Deliviana et al., 2020; Rosefa et al., 2022; Suryanto & Nada, 2021).

Despite this growing body of work, three gaps remain. First, most Indonesian studies of final-project anxiety have used questionnaires to measure anxiety levels, and many were conducted in health or sports science programmes (Malfasari et al., 2018; Setiyani, 2018; Susilo & Eldawaty, 2021); they show *how much* anxiety students report but say less about *how* it develops and how students respond to it. Second, research on foreign language anxiety has focused mainly on classroom speaking and examinations rather than on the extended, largely independent task of writing a thesis. Third, little is known about how the final year changes students' everyday attitudes and behaviour compared with earlier semesters. Relatively few qualitative studies have therefore explored, from students' own perspectives, how language anxiety and thesis-related anxiety interact in English education programmes. Such evidence is needed to design supervision practices and support services that respond to students' actual experiences.

This study therefore explores learning anxiety and mental well-being among final-year English language students at two universities in Jambi, Indonesia. It was guided by two research questions:

RQ1: What factors contribute to learning anxiety among final-year English language students as they complete their theses?

RQ2: How do final-year students' daily attitudes and coping behaviours differ from those they recall as regular (non-final-year) students?

By answering these questions, the study aims to offer an in-depth account of students' experiences and to identify practical implications for students, thesis supervisors and institutions.

2. Method

Research Design

This study used a qualitative descriptive design (Creswell, 2013; Sugiyono, 2015), which is suited to producing a rich and accessible account of participants' experiences in their own words without imposing a predetermined theoretical model on the data (Leskono, 2016). The design was appropriate because the aim was to understand how students themselves experience and make sense of anxiety during the final year, rather than to measure its prevalence.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at two public universities in Jambi Province that offer English education programmes: Universitas Jambi (UNJA) and Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi (UIN STS Jambi). Participants were selected through purposive sampling (Creswell, 2013) using four criteria: (a) being a final-year undergraduate or master's student in an English education programme; (b) having been in the final stage of the study, writing the *skripsi* or *tesis* under supervision, for more than

one year; (c) reporting anxiety or technical or psychological difficulties in completing the thesis; and (d) being willing to take part in an in-depth interview. The one-year criterion was used to identify students whose final stage had been prolonged, so that the kinds and levels of problems that keep final-year students from completing their studies could be explored in depth.

Students from both the undergraduate and the master's level were included to capture a broader range of these problems; the study was not designed to compare the two levels statistically. Potential participants were identified through information shared among students approaching graduation at each level, and their year of entry and length of study were then verified through the universities' academic information websites. Five participants took part: three undergraduate students and two master's students. Their characteristics are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. *Participant Profile*

Code	Level	Gender	Age	University	Semester	Thesis approach	Interview (min)
P1	S1	F	24	UNJA	IX	Quantitative	46
P2	S1	M	25	UNJA	X	Mix methods	45
P3	S1	M	25	UNJA	X	Quantitative	78
P4	S2	M	30	UIN	VI	Qualitative	90
P5	S2	F	28	UIN	V	Qualitative	55

Note. P = participant (pseudonymous code); S1 = undergraduate; S2 = master's. Programme level, semester and thesis approach are reported to support transferability; no other identifying information is given.

In qualitative research, the adequacy of a sample depends on the depth and relevance of the data rather than on numbers alone. Following the concept of *information power* (Malterud et al., 2016), the sample was judged adequate because the aim was narrow, all participants shared the experience under study (a prolonged final stage of writing an English thesis while experiencing anxiety), the analysis drew on established theory, each interview was long and in-depth (45–90 minutes), and the analysis compared cases rather than seeking statistical generalisation.

Five students who met all the criteria agreed to participate. Although the sample was small, the later interviews largely repeated the problems described in the earlier ones, and no substantially new themes emerged in the final interview. Nevertheless, empirical studies indicate that code saturation often requires more interviews (Guest et al., 2006; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022), so the small sample is acknowledged as a limitation.

Data Collection

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews using a guide of 19 open-ended questions (Appendix A). The questions covered five areas: (1) confidence in using English; (2) anxiety and worry while writing the thesis; (3) difficulties with thesis content, including theory, methodology and data analysis; (4) interaction with supervisors

ISSN 2338-4778 (Print)
ISSN 2548-4192 (Online)

and peers; and (5) changes in daily life, pressures and plans compared with earlier semesters. Follow-up probes were used to elicit examples and clarify meanings. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Bahasa Indonesia between May and June, 2025, lasted 45–90 minutes and were audio-recorded with the participants' permission. Recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the excerpts reported in this article were translated into English by the authors and checked by a second translator.

Data Analysis

The transcripts were analysed using the six phases of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the first phase, the authors read the transcripts repeatedly and wrote initial notes. In the second, the data were coded inductively, line by line, manually using a spreadsheet; codes stayed close to participants' words (for example, *fear of being judged*, *postponing supervision* and *revising one paragraph for hours*). In the third phase, related codes were clustered into candidate themes, guided by the two research questions. In the fourth, the candidate themes were reviewed against the coded extracts and the full data set, and overlapping themes were merged or separated. In the fifth, each theme was defined and named, producing the codebook summarised in Appendix B. In the final phase, representative excerpts were selected and the analysis was written up. To compare experiences systematically, a cross-case matrix was constructed showing which subthemes appeared in each participant's account (Table 2). The theoretical perspectives outlined in the Introduction were used at the interpretation stage, to explain the themes, rather than to predetermine the codes.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was addressed using the criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985). For *credibility*, member checking was conducted: transcripts and a summary of the preliminary themes were returned to the participants, who were asked to confirm or correct them (Birt et al., 2016). All five participants confirmed the accuracy of their accounts; minor clarifications were incorporated. In addition, two authors coded the transcripts independently, compared their codes and resolved disagreements through discussion with the third author (peer debriefing). For *transferability*, the setting and participants are described in detail (Table 1) so that readers can judge the relevance of the findings to other contexts. For *dependability*, an audit trail was kept, consisting of the interview guide, recordings, transcripts, the codebook and analytic memos. For *confirmability*, the authors kept reflexive memos and ground each interpretation in verbatim excerpts.

Researcher Reflexivity

The authors are lecturers in the English education (Tadris Bahasa Inggris) programme at UIN STS Jambi and have supervised undergraduate theses. This insider position helped the researchers build rapport and understand the supervision context. However, it may also have made participants reluctant to criticise supervisors, and it may have led the researchers to interpret the data from a supervisor's point of view. To reduce these risks, none of the participants was being taught or supervised by the interviewer during the study, participants were assured that there were no right or wrong answers and that their responses would not affect their academic standing, and the authors discussed alternative interpretations of the data and recorded them in reflexive memos

(Berger, 2015).

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted under an official research permit *(surat izin penelitian)* issued by the authors' institution; formal review by a research ethics committee was not obtained. The following steps were taken to protect participants. Before each interview, the researchers explained the purpose of the study and how the data would be used, and participants agreed verbally to take part and to have the interview recorded. Participation was voluntary, and participants were free to decline to answer any question. Pseudonymous codes (P1–P5) are used throughout, details that could identify participants have been removed, and recordings and transcripts were accessible only to the research team.

3. Result

Overview of the Themes

The analysis produced four themes and twelve subthemes (Table 2). Themes 1 to 3 answer RQ1 by identifying the factors that contributed to learning anxiety: low confidence in speaking English, thesis-writing anxiety and research-literacy difficulties. Theme 4 answers RQ2 by describing how participants' daily attitudes and behaviour had changed since they were regular students. The cross-case matrix in Table 2 shows that no participant experienced only one source of anxiety; each account combined language-related, task-related and contextual pressures. In the excerpts that follow, each quotation is identified by the participant's code.

Table 2. Themes, Subthemes and Cross-Case Distribution

RQ	Theme	Subtheme	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
RQ1	1. Low confidence in speaking English	1.1 Fear of mistakes and negative evaluation	✓	✓			
		1.2 Avoidance and emotional strain	✓	✓			
		1.3 High self-expectations, accuracy focus and limited practice			✓		✓
RQ1	2. Thesis-writing anxiety	2.1 Time pressure in supervision		✓	✓	✓	
		2.2 Social-evaluative anxiety and avoidance of supervision	✓	✓			

ISSN 2338-4778 (Print)
ISSN 2548-4192 (Online)

RQ	Theme	Subtheme	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
		2.3 Language anxiety and perfectionism				✓	✓
RQ1	3. Research-literacy difficulties	3.1 Linking theory and findings	✓	✓	✓	✓	
		3.2 Choosing a research methodology		✓	✓	✓	
		3.3 Analysing and interpreting data			✓		
RQ2	4. From regular to final-year student	4.1 Intensive supervisor and peer interaction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		4.2 Family expectations and career pressure	✓	✓		✓	✓
		4.3 Proactive preparation for work	✓		✓	✓	

Note. ✓ = subtheme evident in the participant's coded interview data. RQ = research question.

Theme 1: Low Confidence in Speaking English as English Majors

Most participants felt less confident in English than they believed an English major should be, especially in formal academic situations such as presentations, seminars and supervision meetings. Three subthemes describe the sources and effects of this low confidence (Figure 1).

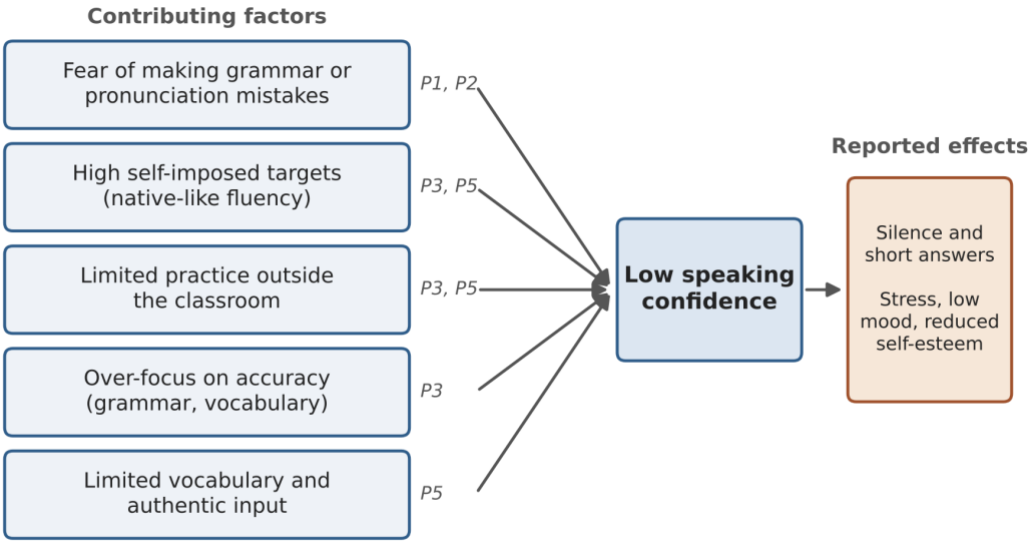


Figure 1. *Factors Contributing to Low Confidence in Speaking English and Their Reported Effects*

1.1 Fear of Mistakes and of Negative Evaluation

P1 and P2 traced their low confidence to a fear of making grammatical or pronunciation errors. Both linked this fear to their status as English majors: because others expected them to speak English well, every mistake felt like evidence that they did not meet that expectation. P1 explained that the lack of confidence came from the fear of making grammar or pronunciation mistakes, while P2 described being preoccupied with how others would judge their English ability. In both accounts, the anxiety concerned the audience as much as the language, which is characteristic of fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986; Watson & Friend, 1969).

1.2 Avoidance and Emotional Strain

This fear had behavioural and emotional consequences. P2 avoided speaking English in class or in English-language forums, choosing silence or short answers:

"Yes, in class, I prefer to remain silent rather than fear being blamed." (P2)

For P1, the anxiety extended beyond the classroom and affected their mood and self-esteem in daily life:

"I feel very stressed when using English in formal situations. The fear of being unable to convey it properly makes me anxious. The anxiety continues and, over time, becomes very disturbing, even affecting my mood in everyday life. I start to feel less confident and sometimes feel mentally depressed." (P1)

P1's description of feeling "mentally depressed" should be read as an expression of low mood rather than as a clinical diagnosis. It nevertheless shows how language anxiety, if prolonged, can spread from academic situations into students' general well-being.

ISSN 2338-4778 (Print)
ISSN 2548-4192 (Online)

1.3 High Self-Expectations, Accuracy Focus and Limited Practice

P3 and P5 described a gap between their goals and their opportunities to practise. P3 linked their low confidence to self-imposed targets, such as wanting to speak as fluently as a native speaker, and identified lack of practice as the main obstacle. P5 expressed a similar tension:

"I expect to speak English as well as possible, but I have no friends to practice with other than in class." (P5)

P3 also reported that, when speaking, they concentrated on grammar rules and vocabulary, which reduced spontaneity and flexibility. This accuracy–fluency trade-off can be understood through cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988): monitoring grammatical form consumes working memory that would otherwise support fluent speech. P5, for their part, found it difficult to expand their vocabulary and to learn everyday expressions, noting that "there is a lack of interaction in English other than in class" (P5). From an input and output perspective (Krashen, 1982; Swain, 1985), these accounts point to an environment in which participants receive limited authentic input and have few chances to produce output outside formal lessons. The tension between ambitious goals and limited progress also resembles cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), which participants experienced as frustration and reduced motivation.

Theme 2: Thesis-Writing Anxiety: Deadlines, Evaluation and Perfectionism

The second theme concerns anxiety during the writing of the thesis itself. Participants described three sources of anxiety, each with a recognisable manifestation and consequence (Figure 2).

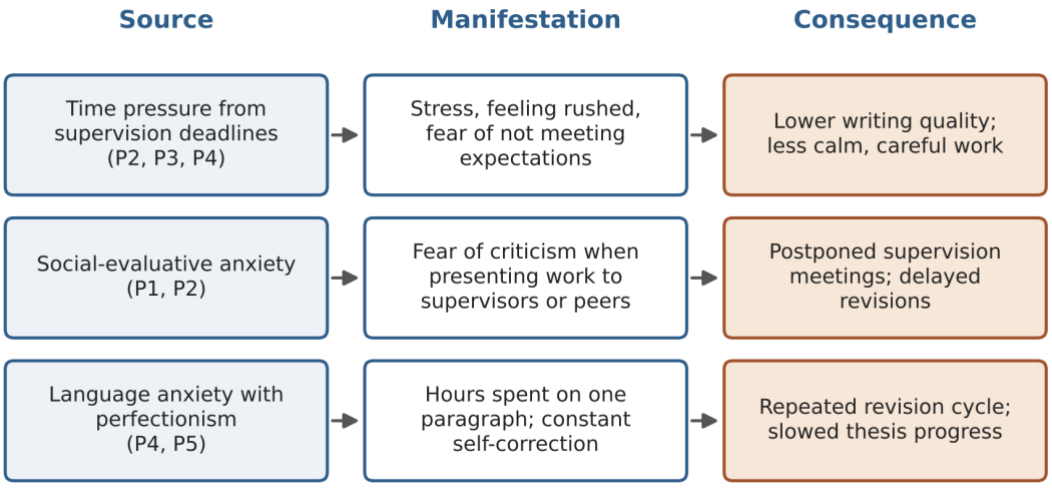


Figure 2. *Sources, Manifestations and Consequences of Thesis-Writing Anxiety*

2.1 Time Pressure in Supervision

P2, P3 and P4 identified deadlines set by supervisors, especially for completing chapters or revisions, as a major source of stress. The pressure was greatest when they felt that they had not yet mastered the material:

"Every time I approach the deadline given by the lecturer, I feel very anxious. It feels like a heavy mental burden because I can't complete the assignment according to the lecturer's expectations. I still feel like I need more time to understand this research topic." (P2)

"Every time the lecturer gave comments and asked for revisions, I felt like I was being forced to finish immediately, even though I still needed time to improve. When a deadline was set, I became afraid that I would not be able to meet the lecturer's expectations, which made me stressed." (P3)

"Sometimes, I feel stressed and anxious because I am not ready for the revisions requested. The time pressure prevents me from working more calmly and producing better results." (P4)

In terms of the transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), deadlines became stressors when participants appraised the demand (finishing a chapter by a certain date) as exceeding their resources (their understanding of the topic and the time available). Notably, P3 believed they could have finished faster without this pressure, suggesting that the way deadlines are set and communicated matters as much as the deadlines themselves.

2.2 Social-Evaluative Anxiety and Avoidance of Supervision

P1 and P2 feared being judged when presenting their work to supervisors or peers. Their accounts show fear and avoidance consistent with social-evaluative anxiety; however, the study did not assess clinical criteria, and no diagnosis is implied. P2 explained:

"I feel very anxious whenever I have to present to lecturers or friends. I fear others will judge me badly or even think my research is not good enough." (P2)

This fear led to procrastination. P2 delayed preparing presentations and consequently submitted revisions late, while P1 postponed supervision meetings altogether:

"I am afraid that the lecturer will give sharp criticism or feel that my research is not good enough. Because of this fear, I often postpone making an appointment for guidance, sometimes even preferring to do other lighter tasks." (P1)

Avoiding supervision is particularly costly because supervision is the main source of the feedback that could reduce uncertainty. In this way, anxiety removed the very resource that students needed to cope.

2.3 Language Anxiety and Perfectionism

P4 and P5 feared making language errors in their writing and held themselves to standards they recognised as unrealistic. This combination produced repeated cycles of revision:

"I feel I have to be perfect in every word. I know it's unrealistic, but I can't stop it. This need for perfection is causing me a lot of stress." (P5)

"I am terrified of making language mistakes. It feels like everyone will judge me if I make a mistake. Because of that, I spend hours just to fix one paragraph." (P4)

These accounts reflect the cognitive and avoidance components of second language writing anxiety (Cheng, 2004) and the concern over mistakes that characterises maladaptive perfectionism (Frost et al., 1990). Repeated revision gave a sense of control over errors but slowed progress, and P4 noted that the anxiety also weakened their confidence in writing more generally.

ISSN 2338-4778 (Print)
ISSN 2548-4192 (Online)

Theme 3: Research-Literacy Difficulties

The third theme concerns the content of the thesis rather than the language. Participants described difficulties in three areas of research literacy, which together produced feelings of incompetence and frustration (Figure 3).

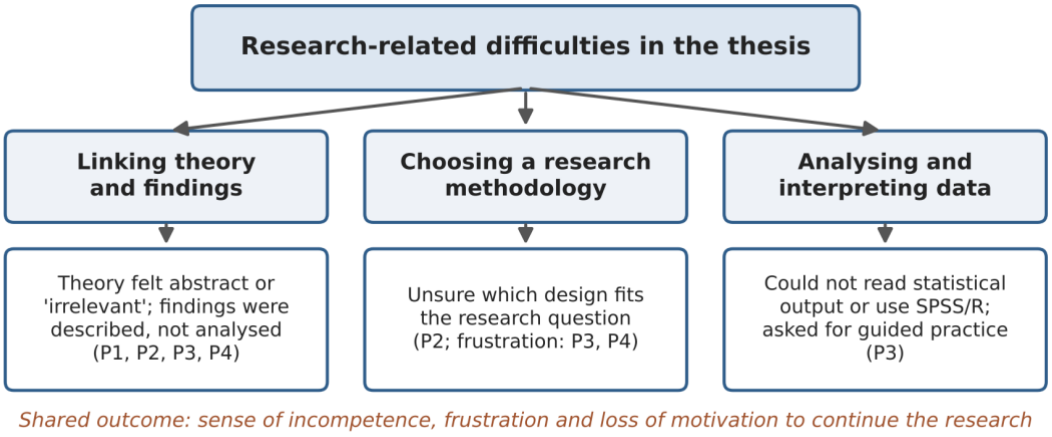


Figure 3. *Research-Literacy Difficulties Reported by Participants*

3.1 Linking Theory and Findings

This was the most widely shared difficulty, reported by four of the five participants. Theories felt abstract, and participants were unsure how to use them to interpret their own data:

"I find understanding the theory used in my research challenging. The theory is too abstract, so I am confused about how to relate it to the research results." (P4)

"When reading theories, I often feel that they are irrelevant to my findings, and I don't know how to adapt them." (P2)

"I don't know how to adjust it sometimes. It doesn't match the results I get." (P1)

"I tend to write down what I find, but I don't know how to analyze the results based on existing theories." (P3)

These excerpts show that participants tended to describe their results rather than analyse them, and that they found it particularly hard to deal with findings that did not fit theoretical expectations.

3.2 Choosing a Research Methodology

P2 struggled to choose a methodology that would answer the research questions:

"I find it difficult to choose the right research methodology. There are many approaches to choose from. Often, I feel trapped in this complexity and unsure whether my chosen method will provide the answers I need for this research." (P2)

For P3 and P4, methodological uncertainty turned into frustration and loss of motivation:

"Eventually, I felt like I couldn't do it, and honestly, that made me lose my enthusiasm for studying." (P3)

"When I fail to understand the right method for my research, I start to feel frustrated. It feels like everything I do is wrong, making me not want to continue my research." (P4)

3.3 Analysing and Interpreting Data

P3, whose thesis used statistical analysis, could run tests but not interpret their output, and asked for guided practice:

"After I run a statistical test, I am confused about how to read the results. Whether the results are significant or not and what they mean for my research frustrates me. I feel like I need someone who can guide me through this." (P3)

"I know there are software like SPSS or R, but I don't understand how to use them. If there is a simple guide or training for that, it would be beneficial, especially for students new to data analysis." (P3)

P3 added that repeated practice gradually improved their understanding, although their confidence remained low. This suggests that statistics anxiety is partly a matter of skill and can be reduced through structured, hands-on support (Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Theme 4: From Regular to Final-Year Student: Support, Pressure and Proactivity

The fourth theme answers RQ2. Participants compared their present daily lives with their earlier semesters and described three changes, summarised in Table 3. Because these comparisons are based on participants' recollections, they describe perceived change rather than data collected from regular students.

Table 3. *Perceived Differences Between the Final Year and Earlier Semesters*

Aspect	Earlier semesters (as recalled)	Final year
Interaction with lecturers	Occasional; mainly to clarify assignments (P2)	Frequent, thesis-focused supervision, e.g. about twice a week (P1)
Peer relationships	Organised around group assignments	Mutual advice and emotional support (P3, P4, P5)
Main pressure	Weekly assignments and examinations (P5)	Completing the thesis on time; family expectations (P1, P2)
Career preparation	Limited; organisations, internships or part-time work, with no urgency (P4, P5)	Active job search, career seminars, webinars and networking (P1, P2, P3, P4)
Dominant stance	Relaxed; "there would still be time" (P5)	Proactive but anxious about the future

4.1 More Intensive Interaction with Supervisors and Peers

In the final year, interaction with supervisors became frequent and focused on the thesis. P1, for example, "usually interact[ed] with the lecturer about twice a week to discuss the thesis progress and ask for methodological input" (P1). Peers became an important source of practical and emotional support:

"When discussing with friends, we usually advise each other about each other's research. In addition, light chats like this make the atmosphere more relaxed, not too tense. So, the challenges of the thesis feel lighter." (P4)

ISSN 2338-4778 (Print)
ISSN 2548-4192 (Online)

"Sometimes, when I'm stuck with my thesis, talking to friends helps. They usually give me input, or if not, at least listen to my story. It makes me feel more relieved and motivated to continue." (P3)

By contrast, participants recalled that in earlier semesters they met lecturers mainly when an assignment needed clarification (P2) and that their peer relationships centred on group assignments.

4.2 Family Expectations and Career Pressure

Final-year pressure came not only from the thesis but also from family expectations and the job market:

"The main pressure comes from the responsibility to complete the thesis on time and the high expectations from the family to graduate soon and get a good job." (P1)

"Now I attend career seminars more often and look for information about job vacancies. I feel anxious because I fear not getting a job that matches my family's expectations or my field of study." (P2)

In earlier semesters, by contrast, participants had focused on coursework and examinations and felt that "there would still be time" to think about work (P5).

4.3 Proactive Preparation for Work

Participants also described themselves as more proactive: seeking information about jobs, attending training and webinars and building networks:

"I feel I have to actively seek job opportunities and take training to improve my skills." (P4)

"I always try to find information about job opportunities online, read articles, or join webinars. It helps to broaden my insight into the world of work, especially those related to my major." (P1)

"I started being active on LinkedIn and tried to network with people who work in the industry I am interested in. This way, I can get information about job opportunities that may not be widely known." (P3)

These behaviours can be seen as problem-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984): rather than only experiencing anxiety about the future, participants took concrete steps to increase their resources for it.

Cross-Case Analysis: An Anxiety–Avoidance Cycle

Comparing the participants' accounts (Table 2) reveals both shared patterns and individual profiles. Fear of negative evaluation was the most pervasive thread. It appeared in speaking (P1, P2), in presenting work to supervisors (P1, P2) and in writing (P4), and it underlay the perfectionism described by P4 and P5. Difficulty in linking theory and findings was almost universal (P1–P4), indicating a common gap in research literacy. The profiles also differed. P2's anxiety was predominantly social-evaluative, expressed through silence, procrastination and late revisions. P3's difficulties were mainly technical, concerning accuracy in speaking, methodology and statistics. P4 and P5 were most affected by perfectionism in writing.

Across these profiles, a common mechanism can be identified (Figure 4). When participants appraised the demands of the thesis (deadlines, accurate English, theory, methodology and statistics) as exceeding their resources, they anticipated negative evaluation and responded with avoidance: silence, procrastination, postponed supervision or endless revision. Avoidance reduced anxiety in the short term but delayed progress, which created new time pressure and renewed the cycle. Two factors appeared

to weaken the cycle: supervisor and peer support, which added resources and eased emotional strain, and the proactive behaviour that participants adopted in the final year.

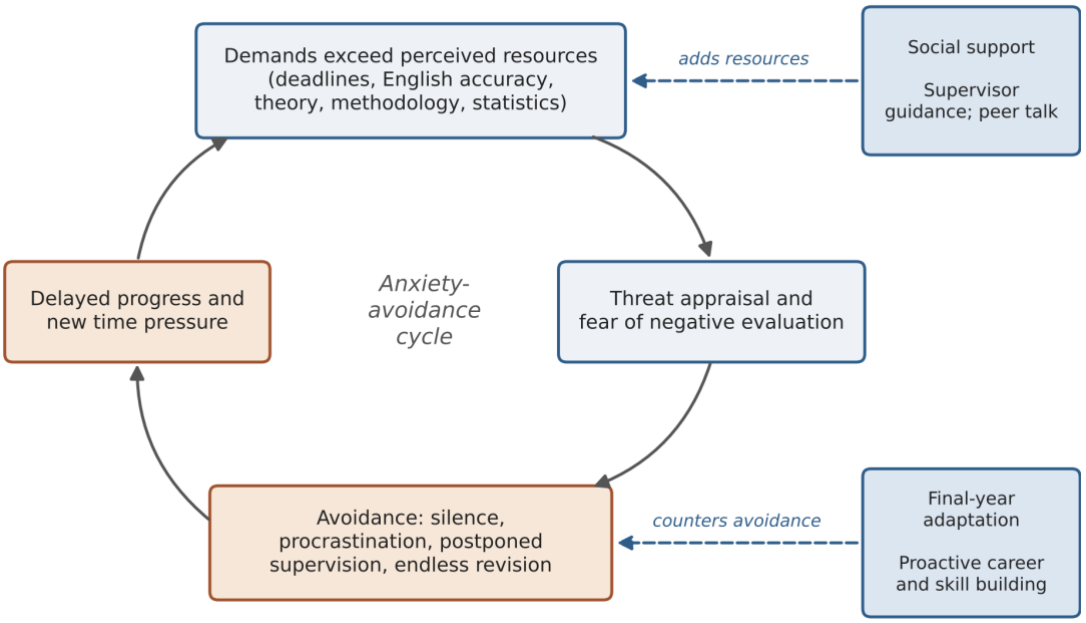


Figure 4. *Integrated Model of the Anxiety–Avoidance Cycle and Protective Factors*

4. Discussion

Fear of Negative Evaluation as a Cross-Cutting Mechanism

The findings extend foreign language anxiety research from the classroom to the thesis. Horwitz et al. (1986) identified fear of negative evaluation as a core component of language anxiety, and the present study shows that the same fear operates in the final year in speaking, in supervision and in writing. Participants' sense that English majors must speak and write almost flawlessly intensified this fear. The native-speaker ideal expressed by P3 sets a standard that few learners in an EFL setting with limited exposure can meet, and the resulting gap between expectation and reality produced frustration rather than motivation. The perfectionism reported by P4 and P5 is consistent with the cognitive and avoidance dimensions of second language writing anxiety (Cheng, 2004) and with the concern over mistakes described by Frost et al. (1990).

Appraisal, Avoidance and Procrastination

The anxiety–avoidance cycle in Figure 4 is consistent with the transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and with research identifying procrastination as a form of self-regulatory failure that offers short-term relief at a long-term cost (Steel, 2007). It also supports evidence linking academic anxiety to lower performance (Cassady & Johnson, 2002; Kusumastuti, 2020) and links between statistics anxiety and procrastination (Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The findings add that, in thesis supervision, avoidance often takes the form of postponing meetings with the supervisor, which cuts students off from the feedback that could reduce their uncertainty. In line with Indonesian studies of final-project anxiety (Akhnar et al., 2022; Malfasari et al., 2018; Susilo & Eldawaty, 2021), the present study confirms that anxiety is common among students completing theses; its contribution is to

ISSN 2338-4778 (Print)
ISSN 2548-4192 (Online)

show how that anxiety unfolds over time and how it interacts with language.

Research Literacy and Cognitive Load

Difficulties in linking theory to findings, choosing methods and interpreting statistics were not only technical problems; they generated feelings of incompetence and loss of motivation. From the perspective of cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988), English education students must handle the intrinsic complexity of research while also monitoring accuracy in a foreign language, which may explain why research tasks felt overwhelming. P3's observation that repeated practice gradually improved their understanding suggests that these difficulties respond to scaffolded, hands-on instruction rather than to more lectures on methodology.

Social Support within the Indonesian Cultural and Educational Context

Supervisor and peer support acted as a buffer against stress, consistent with the buffering hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985) and with Indonesian evidence on the role of guidance and counselling services in reducing academic stress (Daulay et al., 2022). These findings should be interpreted within the Indonesian context. In a relatively hierarchical academic culture (Hofstede, 2001), students may hesitate to ask supervisors for more time or to admit that they do not understand, which may partly explain why P1 avoided meetings rather than negotiating deadlines. Peers, who are equals, offered a lower-risk space for sharing difficulties.

Family expectations to graduate quickly and obtain a suitable job (P1, P2) reflect the strong family obligations common in Indonesian society and add a further source of pressure. The institutional setting is also relevant: in Islamic universities such as UIN STS Jambi, faith-based approaches to mental health (Radiani, 2019) could complement psychological support, although religious coping did not emerge in these interviews and should be examined in future research. Finally, the flexibility introduced by Ministerial Regulation No. 53 of 2023 (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2023) gives programmes an opportunity to reconsider how final projects are designed and supported.

The Final Year as a Transition for Mental Well-being

The contrast between participants' final-year and earlier experiences indicates that the final year is a transition in which academic, family and career pressures converge. Earlier studies have documented anxiety among new students (Setiyani, 2018) and during the pandemic (Suryanto & Nada, 2021); the present study shows that the final year brings its own combination of stressors. Participants were not passive, however. Their proactive career preparation and use of peer networks show agency and problem-focused coping, which are elements of positive mental health (Keyes, 2002). Online networking can broaden opportunities, although the wider literature cautions that social media use is also associated with anxiety (Farid et al., 2022).

Practical Implications

The findings point to specific actions for three groups of stakeholders, summarised in Table 4. For students whose anxiety becomes persistent or severe, referral to professional services is important, since evidence-based approaches such as cognitive

behavioural therapy and acceptance and commitment therapy are effective for anxiety (Prajogo & Yudiarso, 2021; Soen et al., 2021). Simple self-regulation techniques such as deep breathing can also help students manage acute anxiety before presentations or examinations (Pristianto et al., 2022).

Table 4. *Recommendations for Stakeholders*

Stakeholder	Recommendation	Related theme
Students	Set realistic, staged writing goals and agree on them with the supervisor; treat feedback as part of learning rather than as a judgement; join or form peer writing and speaking groups; practise English regularly outside class through clubs or online communities; seek counselling early if anxiety affects sleep, mood or daily functioning.	1, 2, 4
Thesis supervisors	Negotiate chapter deadlines with students and give written, prioritised feedback; schedule regular short meetings so that students do not have to request them; normalise mistakes and model how to link theory to findings using worked examples; watch for avoidance (missed meetings, late revisions) as a possible sign of anxiety and refer students to support services.	2, 3
Study programmes and institutions	Offer hands-on methodology and statistics clinics (e.g. SPSS or R) during the thesis stage; establish structured peer-mentoring or writing-circle schemes; train supervisors in supportive supervision; integrate mental health literacy into academic advising and make campus counselling visible and accessible; use the flexibility of Ministerial Regulation No. 53/2023 to review how final projects are designed and supported.	1–4

ISSN 2338-4778 (Print)
ISSN 2548-4192 (Online)

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, it involved only five participants from two universities in one province, so the findings cannot be generalised and may not reflect students in other regions or types of institution. Because the sample combined three undergraduate and two master's students, all with a prolonged final stage, it may also not reflect students who complete their theses on schedule, and differences between the two levels could not be examined systematically. Second, the data are self-reported and were collected at a single point in time; participants may have under- or over-reported their anxiety, and changes over the course of the final year could not be observed. Third, comparisons with regular students were based on participants' recollections rather than on data from students in earlier semesters. Fourth, the researchers' position as lecturers in the same field may have influenced what participants chose to share and how the data were interpreted, despite the reflexive measures described in the Method section. Finally, excerpts were translated from Bahasa Indonesia into English, and some nuances may have been lost in translation.

5. Conclusion

This study explored learning anxiety and mental well-being among five final-year English language students (three undergraduate and two master's students) in Jambi, Indonesia. In answer to RQ1, three groups of factors contributed to learning anxiety: low confidence in speaking English, rooted in fear of mistakes, high self-expectations and limited practice; thesis-writing anxiety arising from supervision deadlines, social-evaluative fear and language-related perfectionism; and difficulties in research literacy concerning theory, methodology and data analysis.

These factors were connected through an anxiety–avoidance cycle driven by fear of negative evaluation, which slowed thesis progress and affected participants' mood and confidence. In answer to RQ2, participants reported that, compared with their earlier semesters, the final year involved more intensive interaction with supervisors and peers, stronger family and career pressure and more proactive preparation for work. Support from supervisors and peers appeared to be essential in softening the anxiety–avoidance cycle.

The study contributes to the literature by showing how language anxiety and thesis-related anxiety interact in an EFL context and by proposing an integrated model that can guide supervision and support. Future research should (a) test the model with larger and more diverse samples, including private universities and other regions of Indonesia, using mixed methods that combine validated measures of foreign language and writing anxiety with interviews; (b) follow students longitudinally from the thesis proposal to the final examination to observe how anxiety changes; (c) include the perspectives of supervisors and of students in earlier semesters; (d) evaluate interventions such as peer writing groups, methodology and statistics clinics and supervisor training; and (e) examine the role of religious coping and family support in students' well-being.

6. References

Akhnar, A. F., Putri, R. P., Vaca, A., Hidayat, N. P., Zahra, R. I. A., & Rusdi, A. (2022). Self-awareness and anxiety in final year students. *Jurnal Muara Ilmu Sosial, Humaniora, dan Seni, 6*(1), 107–118.

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596

Angelin, L., Syenshie, W. V., & Ferlan, P. A. (2021). Stress levels are related to the incidence of generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) in final-year students. *Jurnal Keperawatan Jiwa: Persatuan Perawat Nasional Indonesia, 9*(2), 399–408.

Apriani, Aryani, F., & Saman, A. (2021). The relationship between learning anxiety, learning motivation, and learning outcomes of vocational high school students during study from home in Bantaeng Regency. *Pinisi Journal of Education, 1*(2), 92–103.

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 15*(2), 219–234. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1802–1811. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Cassady, J. C., & Johnson, R. E. (2002). Cognitive test anxiety and academic performance. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 27*(2), 270–295. https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.2001.1094

Cheng, Y.-S. (2004). A measure of second language writing anxiety: Scale development and preliminary validation. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 13*(4), 313–335. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2004.07.001

Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin, 98*(2), 310–357. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.310

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Daulay, N., Harahap, A. C. P., & Sinaga, M. H. P. (2022). The role of guidance and counseling services in helping students with academic stress. *ProGCouns: Journal of Professionals in Guidance and Counseling, 3*(2), 78–86.

Deliviana, E., Erni, M. H., Hilery, P. M., & Naomi, N. M. (2020). Management of students' mental health for optimizing online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Jurnal Selaras: Kajian Bimbingan dan Konseling serta Psikologi Pendidikan, 3*(2), 129–138.

Diferiensyah, O., Septa, T., & Lisiswanti, R. (2016). Generalized anxiety disorder. *Jurnal Medula, 5*(2), 63–68.

Farid, M. F., Jalal, H., & Iqbal, S. (2022). Relationship between social media, general anxiety disorder, and traits of emotional intelligence. *Bulletin of Education and Research, 44*(1), 39–53.

ISSN 2338-4778 (Print)
ISSN 2548-4192 (Online)

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford University Press.

Frost, R. O., Marten, P., Lahart, C., & Rosenblate, R. (1990). The dimensions of perfectionism. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 14*(5), 449–468. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01172967

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903

Hennink, M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022). Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: A systematic review of empirical tests. *Social Science & Medicine, 292*, 114523. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal, 70*(2), 125–132. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1986.tb05256.x

Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi. (2023). *Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Nomor 53 Tahun 2023 tentang Penjaminan Mutu Pendidikan Tinggi* [Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 53 of 2023 on quality assurance in higher education].

Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 43*(2), 207–222. https://doi.org/10.2307/3090197

Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon.

Kusumastuti, D. (2020). Anxiety and academic achievement in college students. *Analitika: Jurnal Magister Psikologi UMA, 12*(1), 22–33.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer Publishing Company.

Leskono, S. P. (2016). *Qualitative research methods*. Intrans Publishing Group.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.

Malfasari, E., Devita, Y., Erlin, F., & Filler. (2018). Factors that influence students' anxiety in completing their final assignments at STIKES Payung Negeri Pekanbaru. *Jurnal Ners Indonesia, 8*(2), 124–131.

Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1753–1760. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315617444

Nazira, D., Mawarpury, M., Afriani, & Kumala, I. D. (2022). Mental health literacy in students in Banda Aceh. *Seurune: Jurnal Psikologi Unsyiah, 5*(1), 23–39.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Academic procrastination and statistics anxiety. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 29*(1), 3–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/0260293042000160384

Prajogo, S. L., & Yudiarso, A. (2021). Meta-analysis of the effectiveness of acceptance and commitment therapy for treating generalized anxiety disorder. *Psikologika, 26*(1), 85–100.

Pristianto, A., Tasya, R. H., Muflikha, I., Ningsih, A. F., Vanath, I. L., & Reyhana, F. N. (2022). Deep breathing and butterfly hug: Techniques for overcoming anxiety in students of MAN 2 Surakarta. *Contribution, 3*(1), 36–46.

Radiani, W. A. (2019). Contemporary mental health and Islamic management of its disorders. *Journal of Islamic and Law Studies, 3*(1).

Rosefa, Y. D., Iskandar, & Oktaviyana, C. (2022). Analysis of student anxiety towards hybrid learning in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic in Aceh. *Journal of Healthcare Technology and Medicine, 8*(2), 793–800.

Setiyani, R. Y. (2018). Perbedaan tingkat kecemasan pada mahasiswa baru di Fakultas Ilmu Kesehatan dan Non Fakultas Ilmu Kesehatan, Universitas 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta [Differences in anxiety levels among new students in the Faculty of Health Sciences and non-health faculties, Universitas 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta]. *Jurnal Psikologi Integratif, 6*(1), 16–28. https://doi.org/10.14421/jpsi.v6i1.1469

Soen, C. C., Hardjasasmita, I. M., & Ulituna, A. E. (2021). Generalized anxiety disorder: Diagnosis and treatment. *Jurnal Muara Medika dan Psikologi Klinis, 1*(2), 133–138.

Steel, P. (2007). The nature of procrastination: A meta-analytic and theoretical review of quintessential self-regulatory failure. *Psychological Bulletin, 133*(1), 65–94. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.133.1.65

Sugiyono. (2015). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R&D* [Quantitative, qualitative and R&D research methods]. Alfabeta.

Suratmi, Abdullah, R., & Taufik, M. (2017). The relationship between anxiety levels and student learning outcomes in the UNTIRTA biology education study program. *Jurnal Pembelajaran Biologi, 4*(1), 71–76.

Suryanto, A., & Nada, S. (2021). Analysis of mental health of college students at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in Indonesia. *Journal of Citizenship Virtues, 1*(2), 83–97.

Susilo, T. E. P., & Eldawaty. (2021). The level of student anxiety in writing a thesis in the Physical Education and Health Study Program, Faculty of Sports Science, Padang State University. *Consilia: Jurnal Ilmiah BK, 4*(2), 105–113.

Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. M. Gass & C. G. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235–253). Newbury House.

Sweller, J. (1988). Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. *Cognitive Science, 12*(2), 257–285. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15516709cog1202_4

Watson, D., & Friend, R. (1969). Measurement of social-evaluative anxiety. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 33*(4), 448–457. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0027806

World Health Organization. (2013). *Mental health action plan 2013–2020*. World Health Organization.