



The Relationship Between Family Support and Stress Levels in Final Report Preparation Among Students

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Academic stress during the final year of study, particularly during the preparation of culminating reports or theses, is a well-documented phenomenon. Although family support is often posited as a protective factor, empirical evidence regarding its specific impact remains limited. This study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between perceived family support and stress levels among pharmacy students at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis engaged in final report preparation. The research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how family dynamics influence academic stress within this particular context.

Objective: To examine the association between perceived family support and stress levels among final-semester students during final report preparation.

Method: A cross-sectional quantitative study was conducted from March to May 2024 at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis involving 33 final-semester Pharmacy students. Data were collected via a validated online questionnaire assessing family support (16 items) and stress levels (14 items) using a 4-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Chi-square test with a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Results: Most respondents experiencing moderate to very severe stress reported having supportive families. However, statistical analysis showed no significant relationship between family support and stress levels ($p = 0.177$).

Conclusion: There is no significant association between perceived family support and academic stress. These findings suggest that other internal and academic factors may play a greater role in influencing student stress during final report writing.

Keywords: family support, academic stress, final-year students

Introduction

In the realm of higher education, final-year students are frequently confronted with a multitude of academic challenges that test not only their intellectual capacity but also their emotional resilience (Le et al., 2024). One of the most significant sources of academic pressure is the process of writing a final report or thesis, which is typically a culminating requirement

for graduation (Pangket et al., 2023). This task demands extensive research, analytical skills, critical thinking, time management, and the ability to synthesize complex information (Rivas et al., 2022). For many students, the final report is a source of considerable stress, often exacerbated by tight deadlines, academic expectations, and uncertainty about the future (Kerr et al., 2023). As a result, the phenomenon of academic stress among students in the final stages of their studies has become a topic of increasing interest and concern in educational and psychological research.

Stress, by definition, is a physiological and psychological response to demands that exceed an individual's adaptive capacity (Córdova Olivera et al., 2023). In an academic context, stress arises when students perceive an imbalance between the demands of their educational environment and their available resources to cope with these demands (Jagodics & Szabó, 2023). Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of stress posits that an individual's cognitive appraisal of a situation determines whether it is experienced as stressful, and this appraisal is influenced by both internal and external factors. Among the external factors that have received significant attention is social support, particularly from the family (Khayru et al., 2021). Family support is often cited as a critical buffer against the adverse effects of stress, serving as a protective factor that enhances students' ability to manage academic challenges effectively (Booth et al., 2021).

Family support encompasses a wide array of behaviors, including emotional reassurance, informational guidance, and practical assistance (Bradshaw et al., 2022). Emotional support involves expressions of empathy, love, and understanding that can help reduce feelings of isolation and anxiety (Motorny et al., 2022). Informational support refers to the provision of advice, feedback, and information that can aid decision-making and problem-solving (Schultz et al., 2022). Instrumental support involves tangible help, such as financial assistance or help with daily tasks, which can reduce external stressors (Deng et al., 2022). When students feel supported by their families, they are more likely to develop a positive outlook, maintain motivation, and exhibit greater resilience in the face of academic stressors.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of family support in promoting students' mental health and academic success. Research indicates that students who perceive high levels of family support tend to report lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress (Largani et al., 2022). For example, a study by Zarowski et al. (2024) found that emotional support from family members significantly reduced stress levels among college students, particularly during periods of academic strain (Zarowski et al., 2024). Similarly, academic stress models proposed by scholars such as Sarafino and Smith (2017) emphasize that the presence of a strong support network, especially familial support, can mitigate the negative impact of stress by enhancing coping mechanisms and providing a sense of stability.

In the context of higher education in Indonesia, where collectivist cultural values emphasize family interconnectedness and mutual support, the role of the family becomes even more pronounced (Abubakar et al., 2023). Indonesian students often rely heavily on their families not only for financial support but also for emotional encouragement and moral guidance. This cultural context underscores the relevance of investigating the relationship between family support and stress levels, particularly during crucial academic milestones such as the preparation of final reports or theses (Cao et al., 2024). Despite this cultural emphasis, there remains a paucity of empirical research that specifically examines how different types of family support affect students' stress levels in Indonesian educational settings.

Moreover, the nature of academic stress during final report writing is unique in its intensity and complexity. Unlike routine assignments or examinations, the final report represents an extended and self-directed academic endeavor that often spans several months. Students must navigate multiple phases including topic selection, literature review, data collection, analysis, and presentation (Chigbu et al., 2023). Each of these phases presents distinct challenges that can trigger stress responses. The pressure to meet academic standards, align with supervisor expectations, and complete the work within institutional timelines can be overwhelming (Tull et al., 2023). Inadequate coping strategies or a lack of support can lead to emotional exhaustion, reduced academic performance, and in severe cases, mental health deterioration (Długosz & Liszka, 2021).

It is within this demanding context that family support can play a crucial mediating role. A supportive family environment can provide students with the psychological comfort and practical assistance they need to manage their academic responsibilities more effectively (Shi & Ko, 2023). For instance, families that maintain open communication and offer encouragement can help reduce students' feelings of self-doubt and helplessness (Ankori et al., 2022). Similarly, families that acknowledge students' academic burdens and offer practical help such as assisting with household responsibilities can create a more conducive environment for focused academic work. This support can be particularly valuable for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may lack other forms of academic or institutional support (Olana & Tefera, 2022).

Despite the theoretical and empirical recognition of the importance of family support, there is a need for more targeted research that examines the specific impact of family support on stress levels during final report writing. Existing studies often explore general academic stress or focus on the role of peer support and institutional resources, leaving a gap in understanding the unique contribution of family dynamics (Capannola & Johnson, 2022). Furthermore, it is important to differentiate between various types of family support and assess which forms are most effective in reducing stress. Emotional support, while crucial, may not be sufficient if students also require informational or practical assistance (Ulenaers et al., 2021). Therefore, a multidimensional analysis of family support is essential to capture the full scope of its influence.

Findings of this study are expected to contribute to both academic literature and practical interventions. From a theoretical perspective, the study will enhance understanding of how family systems interact with individual stress responses in academic environments. From a practical standpoint, the results could inform the development of student support services that involve family engagement as a strategic component. Educational institutions could use this information to design family-inclusive programs and workshops that equip parents and guardians with the tools to support their children effectively during critical academic periods. In addition, counselors and educators could tailor stress-reduction interventions by considering students' family backgrounds and support systems.

Objective

This study aims to examine the relationship between the level of family support and the degree of stress experienced by students during the process of writing their final reports.

Method

Design and setting

This cross-sectional study was conducted at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis from March to May 2024. The study involved students of the Diploma in Pharmacy program who were in the process of writing their final reports. Participants were selected using inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and validity of the data. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) students who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study, (2) students who were actively enrolled in the final semester of the Pharmacy Diploma Program, and (3) students who were currently engaged in the process of preparing their final reports or theses. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria included: (1) students who were on academic leave or not actively participating in academic activities during the data collection period, (2) students with a known history of severe mental illness, and (3) students who did not complete the questionnaire in full. These criteria were established to ensure that the participants accurately represented the population under study and that the collected data reflected the intended academic and psychological context.

Population and sampling

The study's target population comprised all final-semester Diploma in Pharmacy students enrolled at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis between March and May 2024. This cohort was chosen based on their common experience of preparing final reports, a recognized source of academic stress, and logistical accessibility within the designated timeframe. Participants were recruited using a non-probability, purposive sampling method. Inclusion criteria mandated: (1) voluntary informed consent, (2) active enrollment in the final semester of the Diploma in Pharmacy program, and (3) current engagement in the final report or thesis preparation process. Exclusion criteria encompassed: (1) students on academic leave or otherwise not actively participating in academic activities during the data collection period, (2) students with a documented history of severe mental illness, and (3) incomplete responses to the questionnaire. This sampling strategy was implemented to ensure that selected participants possessed characteristics relevant to the study's objectives. The final sample consisted of 33 students who satisfied all inclusion criteria and did not meet any exclusion criteria.

Instrument and measurement

The instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended questions designed to measure two main variables: family support and stress levels. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: respondent identity, statements regarding family support, and statements related to stress levels. The family support section contained 16 items, each rated on a 4-point Likert scale: Never (1), Sometimes (2), Often (3), and Always (4). The total score was then categorized into two groups: supportive (41–64) and less supportive (16–40). Meanwhile, the stress level section included 14 items with the same response format. Scores were classified into five categories: normal stress (0–14), mild stress (15–18), moderate stress (19–25), severe stress (26–33), and very severe stress (≥ 34).

Prior to data collection, the questionnaire was subjected to a content validation process conducted by academic experts, including a supervisory lecturer. Although the specific validity indices were not provided in the main text, the instrument was declared valid based on expert judgment and was deemed appropriate for assessing the intended variables without modification. In addition, the reliability of the questionnaire was tested using SPSS version 25,

yielding a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.741. This value indicates that the instrument had good internal consistency and was reliable for measuring both family support and stress levels among students.

Data collection and analysis

The data collection for this study was carried out using an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Prior to distribution, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained electronically at the beginning of the form. The questionnaire consisted of several sections, including demographic information, a family support assessment, and a standardized stress level scale. The link to the Google Form was shared directly with eligible students through official academic communication channels and messaging platforms commonly used by the Diploma Pharmacy students. Participants were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire at their convenience, and the responses were automatically recorded in a secure database for further analysis. This method was chosen to facilitate accessibility, ensure participant anonymity, and streamline data collection during the limited time frame.

Result

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics

Variable	F/Mean	% / SD
Gender		
• Male	6	18.2%
• Female	27	81.8%
Age		
	20.85	0.667
• < Mean	10	30.3%
• > Mean	23	69.7%
Semester		
• 6	33	100.0%

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of the study participants. The majority were female (81.8%), while only 18.2% were male. The mean age of the respondents was 20.85 years with a standard deviation of 0.667, with 69.7% being older than the mean and 30.3% younger. All participants were in their sixth semester, representing 100% of the sample. These data indicate a predominantly female and relatively homogenous age group within the same academic level.

Table 2. Correlationship Between Variables

Family Support		Stress Level						P Value
		Moderate Stress		Severe Stress		Very Severe		
		F	%	F	%	F	%	
Less Supportive	Less Supportive	1	20.00	6	50.00	3	18.75	0.177
	Supportive	4	80.00	6	50.00	13	81.25	
Total		5	100	12	100	16	100	

The table presents the relationship between family support and levels of stress (moderate, severe, and very severe) among participants, including frequency (F), percentage (%), and the p-value for statistical significance. Among those experiencing moderate stress, 20% reported having less supportive families, while 80% had supportive families. For severe stress, both less supportive and supportive family groups showed equal frequencies (50% each). In the category of very severe stress, only 18.75% had less supportive families, whereas 81.25% had supportive families. The p-value of 0.177 indicates that the association between family support and stress levels is not statistically significant.

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between family support and stress levels among students preparing their final reports. The results indicated no statistically significant association between these two variables, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.177. This suggests that the degree of family support perceived by students did not have a measurable impact on their experienced stress during the report writing process. While the expectation might be that stronger family support reduces stress, these findings challenge that assumption, implying that stress in academic settings is influenced by a variety of factors, and not necessarily mitigated by family involvement (Estevez et al., 2023). The absence of a significant relationship emphasizes the complexity of academic stress, which may be shaped more by academic demands, personal characteristics, and institutional environments than by familial interactions (Walsh et al., 2023).

One possible explanation for the lack of association lies in the nature of academic stress itself, particularly in the context of writing a final report or thesis. Academic stress is often driven by internal pressures such as perfectionism, time management issues, and fear of failure, as well as external factors like tight deadlines, lack of supervisor feedback, and workload (Eva et al., 2021). These academic-specific stressors may not be easily alleviated by family support, especially if the support is not directly related to academic tasks. For instance, emotional encouragement or general motivation from family members may be appreciated, but may not directly solve practical challenges such as understanding the research methodology, dealing with revisions, or managing academic burnout (Jiang et al., 2022). Therefore, students may still feel overwhelmed despite receiving support at home, leading to a disconnect between perceived family support and actual stress levels.

Furthermore, the role of family support may vary depending on the students' coping mechanisms, personality traits, and independence. Many students, particularly those in higher education, are in a developmental phase where autonomy and self-regulation are key (Blackmore et al., 2021). They may choose to rely on their own coping strategies or seek help from academic mentors and peers instead of family members. In some cases, students may even perceive family involvement as pressure, especially when high expectations or misunderstanding of academic challenges are present (Sun et al., 2023). Thus, what is intended as support may be interpreted differently by students, influencing how effective that support is in buffering stress. This subjective interpretation of support could contribute to the insignificant statistical relationship found in the current study (Kriegelstein et al., 2022).

In addition, cultural and contextual factors may influence how students experience and evaluate family support. In some family systems, particularly in collectivist cultures, academic success is a shared family goal, and students may feel obligated to meet expectations without

openly expressing their stress or struggles (Şengönül, 2022). This could lead to an underutilization of family support or reluctance to admit difficulty, which may diminish the perceived benefit of that support. Alternatively, students living away from home or managing academic responsibilities independently may naturally rely less on family support and more on institutional resources or peer networks (Huck et al., 2021). These contextual nuances must be considered when interpreting the findings, as they suggest that family support may not always be the most salient or influential factor during times of academic pressure (Veranika, 2021).

Although the findings do not indicate a significant relationship, this does not imply that family support is irrelevant to students' academic experiences. Rather, it highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of how support functions in different contexts. Future research could benefit from examining the types of support provided (emotional, financial, informational), the quality and frequency of that support, and how well it aligns with students' actual needs. Additionally, integrating other variables such as academic self-efficacy, resilience, peer support, and institutional support may offer a more comprehensive picture of what contributes to or mitigates academic stress. The use of qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could also enrich the findings by capturing the lived experiences of students beyond what can be measured in a questionnaire.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study found no significant relationship between family support and stress levels among D3 Pharmacy students at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis during the final report writing process, as indicated by a p-value of 0.177. While family support is often considered a protective factor against stress, the findings suggest that academic stress in this context may be more strongly influenced by internal academic pressures and individual coping mechanisms. These results highlight the importance of addressing stress through multiple dimensions, including academic support systems, personal stress management strategies, and institutional resources. Further research is recommended to explore other potential factors affecting student stress and to better understand the role of support systems in academic success.

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Author Contribution

Launa Lutfi Sania: Conceptualization, methodology, data collection, formal analysis, writing - original draft, and writing - review & editing. Sophia Oktaviani, Dilla Adisty Syahara, Sulton Al Fiqri, and Rin Rin Amelia: Data collection, data curation, and writing - review & editing. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Ethical Clearance

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis. All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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