

COPING MECHANISMS AND STRESS LEVEL IN THESIS WRITING AMONG NURSING STUDENTS

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Submission date: 24-Dec-2021 10:44PM (UTC+0800)

Submission ID: 1735506318

File name: Manuscript_Feri_5_Ainic.docx (36.7K)

Word count: 2626

Character count: 15044

COPING MECHANISMS AND STRESS LEVEL IN THESIS WRITING AMONG NURSING STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: During the process of thesis completion, students face various internal and external problems that can distress them. They need to make adjustments to face the stress by using coping mechanism. The aim of this research is to identify the relationship between coping mechanism and stress level among nursing students in Universitas Andalas. Samples of this research constitute 124 respondents chosen through survey (total sampling) method. Data were collected at the Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Andalas in the periode of 15-23 May 2017. This study shows that more than half (54.8%) of the respondents used the maladaptive coping mechanism and almost half (45.2%) of them had a high level of stress. Then, there was a significant relationship ($p=0.000$) between coping mechanism and stress level among the students when completing their thesis. The result of this study also indicates that the nursing students should be able to find emotional support from others to overcome the problems that arise during the thesis completion so that their stress level it can be reduced.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health is very important for human beings. Mental health should be a healthy emotional, psychological, and sociological condition seen from satisfactory interpersonal relationships, behavior and effective coping, positive self concept, and emotional stability (Videbeck, 2011). According to Stuart and Laraia (2012), the state of mental health is associated with happiness, satisfaction, accomplishment, and hope.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 35 million people experienced stress in 2016, 60 million people were affected by bipolar disorder, 21 million people were affected by schizophrenia, and 47.5 million people were exposed to the dimensia. Data of *Riskesdas* (2013) show that the prevalence of mental disorders, the emotional symptoms of depression, and anxiety for over 15 years have reached around 14 million people or 6% of the Indonesian total population while the prevalence of severe mental disorder, like schizophrenia, reached 1.7% per 1,000 inhabitants. The prevalence of mental disorder in West Sumatra was 4.5% and 1.9% experienced severe psychiatric disorders which earn the province the 9th from 33 provinces in Indonesia to have the highest case of mental disorder (Riskesdas, 2013).

Stress can occur at different age levels and in different employments including students. Results from the National College Health Assessment's (2013) research over 125,000 students from 150 colleges and universities in the United States revealed that 30% of the students experienced stress (Psychological American Association, 2014). Another investigation on 1,224 students in India showed that 299 students (24.4%) experienced stress with 10% of heavy level of stress prevalence, 7.6% of moderate level of stress, and 6.8% of low level of stress (Waghachavera, 2013).

A stress is caused by the presence of stressor. A stressor is a situational stimulus that reduces one's ability to feel happy, comfortable, happy, and productive (Saam & Wahyuni, 2012).

Research conducted on 1,400 students of Midwestern University showed that stressors on students can originate from academic demands and financial pressures (40%), problems with friends or other social relations (27%), career concerns (22%), and physical appearance (20%) (Prichard, 2012). This result is in line with research conducted by Eva et al. (2015) that demands for academic excellence, one of which is thesis completion, is the main stressor for college students.

Failure in thesis completion can result from the difficulty of finding literature and reading materials, bad coordination between students and thesis advisor, and lack of ability to do the research (Broto, 2016). When these problems generate the pressure on the students, stress in completing thesis can manifest (Gunawati & Hartati, 2006). Scarfi's (2014) study on 374 students of Universitas Andalas who were completing their theses indicated that 72.2% of the students experience stress, 15.2% experienced moderate stress, and 12.6% experienced severe stress.

Stress Overload (*distress*) can be a threat to student's academic performance, such as the academic procrastination. Academic procrastination is a kind of delays made on formal types of assignments related to the academic tasks (Ferrari et al., 1995). This is in line with the results of Andarini's (2013) research finding that the higher the distress, the higher academic procrastination will occur, and vice versa. Yanti's (2016) investigation on teenagers in MTsN (Islamic Junior High School) Lubuk Basung noted that 81 respondents (52.3%) underwent high academic procrastination and 74 respondents (47.7%) dealt with low academic procrastination.

In a preliminary study on 18 April 2017, ten students of Program A of Nursing Faculty writing a thesis were interviewed. The study found that four people feel nervous and depressed when dealing with thesis. Two students said that they tended to eat excessively and two others said they tried to get help from others. Four people admitted that they become more easily upset because a lot of things were going out of their control. Two people said they prefer to extend their sleeping time to control emotions, one student preferred to watching tv to forget problems and another performed more prayers. Then, one more student confessed that she did not feel capable to cope with the problems and blamed her/himself for what happened to her. Another person said that s/he was able to overcome various problems and disorders that occur every day by trying to look at current issues with a positive outlook. Based on these phenomena, the researchers are interested in investigating "the relationship between coping mechanism and stress level in preparing thesis among nursing students of Andalas University".

2. METHOD

This is descriptive analytic research using cross sectional approach in order to identify the relation between coping mechanism and stress level among nursing students of Andalas University when preparing thesis. Research was carried out from February until July 2017. Samples are 135 students of program A (2013) by using total sampling technique .

The data collecting instruments used in this study consist of the Perceived Stress Scale-14 (PSS-14) questionnaire to measure stress levels in nursing students and the *Brief COPE Inventory* (BCI). Data were analyzed using univariate and bivariate analysis. Univariate analysis aims to identify the distribution of respondent characteristics, coping mechanisms, and stress level. Bivariate analysis is applied to recognize the relation between coping mechanisms and stress level. Chi-square test is used as the bivariate analysis.

3. RESULT

Description of Coping Mechanism and Stress Level

Table 1. Distribution of Coping Mechanism

Coping Mechanism	f	%
Adaptive	56	45.2
Maladaptive	68	54.8
Total	124	100

Table 1 reveals that 68 respondents (54.8%) use the maladaptive coping mechanism.

Table 2 Distribution of Stress Level

Stress Level	f	%
Low	15	12.1
Moderate	53	42.7
Heavy	56	45.2
Total	124	100

Table 2 shows that 56 respondents (45.2%) experienced heavy stress levels.

Relationship between Coping Mechanism with Stress Level

Table 3. Relationship between Coping Mechanism with Stress Level

Mekanisme Koping	Stress Level			Total	P value
	Low	Moderate	Heavy		
	%	%	%		
Adaptive	11.3	25.8	45.2	45.2	0.000
Maladaptive	0.8	16.9	37.1	54.8	
Total	12.1	42.7	82.3	100	

Table 3 Chi-Square test result indicates the *p value* 0.000, which confirms a meaningful relationship between the coping mechanism and the students stress levels in preparing a thesis in Nursing Faculty of Andalas University.

4. DISCUSSION

Results of the research on the coping mechanism of students in completing theses at the Nursing Faculty of Universitas Andalas Padang showed that more than half of the students (54.8%) use the maladaptive coping mechanism. This result supports Puspitasari's (2014) study on the nursing undergraduate students of the 8th semester of Fikkes Unimus showing that more than half of the students (58.9%) used the maladaptive coping mechanism.

The adaptive coping mechanism is a form of a mechanism that supports the integration of functions of coping, growth, learning and achieving goals. The category involves talking with others, solving problems effectively, performing relaxation techniques, and exercising balanced and constructive activity. Meanwhile, the maladaptive mechanism is a form of coping that inhibits the function of integration, growth, prevent lost autonomy, and tends to overwhelm the neighborhood. The category is manifested through overreacting or not willing to eat, working overload, and dodging (Stuart & Laraia, 2012).

Coping mechanism is a way committed by individuals in resolving the problem, adjusting to change, and responding to threatening situations (Keliat, 2011). However, everyone has a different approach in tackling and overcoming stress. In general, the coping happens automatically when individuals feel the existence of stressful situations or threats. The individual

is then required to overcome the tension that has befallen upon him as soon as possible. Afterwards, the individuals will do an evaluation to decide the coping mechanism to be applied. Coping reaction against the problems vary between one individual and another and from time to time in the same individual (Smeltzer & Bare, 2013).

The current research shows that nearly half of the nursing students (45.2%) experienced the heavy levels of stress in completing their theses. This result supports the previous study's (Syofia, 2015) findings in the other Faculty of Nursing, that pointed out students' moderate and heavy stress levels (88.9%). Sarafino and Timothy (2012) claim that stress occur due to inaccurate perception between environmental demands and the actual resources. Everyone will feel different pressures from the same stressor. This study discovered that a majority of the respondents (83%) feel nervous and depressed when facing problems in making the thesis. The students list the heavy demands from the environment which they consider as threats. Then, they would feel the pressure and finally the stress.

The researchers assume that the stress experienced by the majority of respondents is also influenced by gender factors because most respondents in this study were women (96%). This is confirmed by the results of the research in the United States States claiming that women tend to have higher levels of stress than men. In general, women experience stress 30% more than men do (Gunawati & Hartati, 2006). In 2010, the picture of stress in America issued by the APA (*American Psychological Assosiation*) report statistics about women and stress, they said that 49% of women experience high levels of stress. Based on the theory above can be drawn the conclusion that women have the highest levels of stress than men.

This study also shows that the heavy level of stress occurs on students using the adaptive coping mechanisms (8.1%) and 37.1% to those using the maladaptive coping mechanism. Chi square test obtained the p value of 0.000 confirming that there is a meaningful relationship between coping mechanism and stress level among the nursing students of Universitas Andalas. This finding supports the same conclusions of previous studies such as Dwipermana (2016) at Stikes Ngudi Waluyo Unggaran and Wijayanti (2013) at the Faculty of Education, State University of Yogyakarta.

In preparing the thesis, the students are confronted by a variety of stressor from both internal and external. If their chosen coping mechanism are incapable of dealing with the stressor, the stress level will continue to be grow heavier and severe depression may even manifest and trigger self destructive actions such as suicide. This is in accordance with Pheukphan's (2009) argument saying that one of several studies he did pointed out that the heavy level of stress among nursing students will provide a very significant and visible impact characterized by such symptoms as depression and even the possibility to perform acts of suicide.

In addition, the emotional support and social support from other friends and parent need considering in order to have the appropriate and effective coping mechanism. It can be inferred from this current research that, of all respondents in the moderate level of stress (15 people), more than half admitted that they often asked for social and emotional support from others (53.3%) and 40% of the respondents confessed to do the same thing. This is in accordance with what Boyd (2012) have claimed that social support is very important for helping people to cope with stress. Success in coping mechanism dealing with stress improve the quality of life, physical, and mental health.

This study suggests students who are writing a thesis to apply adaptive coping mechanism which is evidently effective to resist the stresor being faced by accepting the problem, thinking positively, trying to find the source of support from the people nearby, and getting closer to God. The students will be able to cope with the stress caused by the thesis making related problems. In the mean time, students who apply maladaptive coping mechanism through refusing to cope with

the facts, thinking negatively, will usually be unable to cope with the stress triggering problems and can even experience higher level of stress.

5.CONCLUSION

The study has identified a relationship between coping mechanism with stress level. More than half of the students used maladaptive coping mechanism and almost half of students are experiencing severe level of stress in preparing their thesis. It is also suggested for the students to be able to find emotional support from others to overcome the problems that arise during the completion of the thesis so that this can reduce their stress levels. As to the Faculty of Nursing, the results of this study provides information that is expected to be used as a consideration when making policies for final-year students that define them to prepare the thesis before the pre-clinic in the 8th semester so that the focus of students is not divided and it reduces the stress of students in preparing the thesis. Researchers recommend that further research should be able to examine more details about forms of action that can be done to reduce the incidence of stress and about ways to manage stress with appropriate coping mechanisms among nursing students.

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