



Anxiety Reviewed from the Perspective of Emotional Regulation in Students Writing Their Theses

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Abstract

A thesis is a final assignment that must be written by students to complete their study program. In writing a thesis, many students experience anxiety, both during guidance and when faced with the repeated revision process. Excessive anxiety can prevent students from completing their thesis on time. One factor that causes anxiety is students' emotional regulation. With good emotional regulation, students can overcome their anxiety appropriately. The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between anxiety and emotional regulation in students who are writing a thesis. The hypothesis is "there is a negative relationship between emotional regulation and anxiety in students of the Faculty of Medicine, Islamic University of North Sumatra who are writing a thesis." The subjects of this study were 93 individual students who were writing a thesis at the Faculty of Medicine, Islamic University of North Sumatra, using a *total sampling technique*. The method used in this study was a quantitative method, data were collected using an emotional regulation and anxiety scale. The calculation applies the analysis prerequisite test, which includes the normality test and linearity test, as well as data analysis using *Spearman correlation* through the *IBM SPSS Statistics 25 application*, obtaining data analysis results showing a correlation coefficient value of $r = -0.502$ with $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$), which means that the higher the student's regulatory ability, the lower the level of anxiety experienced by the student, and vice versa, the lower the student's emotional regulation ability, the higher the level of anxiety experienced by the student.

Keywords: emotional regulation, anxiety, students, thesis, North Sumatra

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1. Introduction

Education is a learning process aimed at understanding, comprehending, and providing opportunities for individuals to create important things in their thinking. Education is also a means to a better life, a desire and intention to learn and create learning experiences so that students can develop their abilities [1]. One workplace for learning is at a university. According to Nikmah, universities are institutions that have a vital role in producing quality human resources (HR) to realize the demands of national development through the education sector [2].

To complete their educational studies and obtain a bachelor's degree, students will complete a project called a thesis. According to Faiza, a thesis is a scientific work that is a student's final assignment based on the knowledge gained and research that has been carried out [3]. However, many students fail to complete their education due to laziness and all their efforts end in vain. When students write scientific papers, the writing process must begin with good time management and not delay each time working on their scientific work. However, students also need to pay attention to when they should rest and when to continue their research [4]. Considering that this research is an important step in

completing a bachelor's degree and its preparation goes through a long and time-consuming process, it is not surprising that students become stressed because of it. This is partly because students are required to make their scientific work as perfect and different from others.

One of the many things that students face when working on their scientific work is the fear of facing research because of the long data collection and the lack of enthusiasm to improve their work when ordered by lecturers to revise, said PAN, a graduate of the Faculty of Psychology, Tarumanegara University. Regarding this final assignment, RH, a final year student also said that he felt a lack of focus and was unable to concentrate. He faced many obstacles, for example, excessive anxiety and fear so that he became less active in meeting with his supervisor [5]. The same thing was also experienced by students at the Faculty of Medicine, Islamic University of North Sumatra, based on the results of interviews with several students who were writing their theses, they experienced excessive worry, became afraid of being left behind by their other friends in completing their theses, and were afraid of not being able to maintain their focus in writing their theses.

Some of the things experienced by the students above are forms of mental tension that cause anxiety due to the anxiety they feel. Anxiety is a feeling of mental pressure

as a general reaction to a problem or a lack of control over a sense of security [6]. This feeling is often unpleasant and ultimately causes or accompanies physical and mental changes. The stress that arises during research work can cause discomfort. This discomfort causes an inability to concentrate and solve problems while working. A student who often faces problems by avoiding them is a form of someone who is unable to adapt well. The loss of the ability to face problems causes the thesis writing process to become hampered.

41% of students have moderate emotional regulation skills when facing their thesis. This anxiety is caused by the guidance process, lack of self-confidence, worry about difficult research and parental demands. In addition, students experience anxiety and stress due to uncertainty and disruptions in the learning process which cause research to be stopped or postponed [7]. Several factors influence the delay in final year students in compiling their thesis such as the distance to campus, having courses that are still being taken, lack of guidance, being too relaxed and already having a job [8].

A person is said to be anxious if they show several symptoms. The anxiety scale used is the HARS, with the aim of assessing various signs of anxiety, both psychological and somatic. This scale consists of 14 statement items used to measure anxiety symptoms in children and adults, including: feelings of anxiety, worry, fear, sleep, cognitive problems, depression, somatic symptoms, sensory symptoms, cardiac symptoms, respiratory symptoms, gastrointestinal symptoms, urogenital symptoms, personality, symptoms during the interview, and personality [9].

The anxiety we feel can be beneficial if the person becomes more enthusiastic. Conversely, if the pressure becomes excessive, it can have a negative impact, causing the person to become desperate. Therefore, stress is not a problem if a person is able to control it so that the balance is not disturbed [10]. There are many factors that cause stress, including parental stress, social environment, and the inability to control emotions [11]. Controlling emotions is often called emotional regulation.

Emotional regulation is the process of controlling thoughts and feelings that arise when an individual has, experiences, or talks about those thoughts [12]. Emotional regulation is also known as the process of reinterpretation or reappraisal, which is a cognitive assessment of triggers carried out with the aim of reducing the negative impact of the resulting reaction. Emotional regulation is a person's ability to control their emotions. Gratz and Roemer explain that emotional regulation is a multidimensional concept that includes knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of behavior, as well as the ability to engage in goal-directed actions, and the ability to respond negatively when negative

thoughts arise [13]. Involves the ability to inhibit behavior, using strategies to simply control the intensity of thoughts or the duration of thoughts in the mind, rather than eliminating the urge to have negative thoughts as part of the overall mind and life experience.

Students have more varied and flexible regulatory abilities, which can be adjusted to the environment they are in. The ability to regulate emotions in students can also decrease, the inability to control the intensity of negative emotions, as well as difficulty in realizing, analyzing, and expressing them adaptively, are signs that someone is having difficulty regulating their emotions [14]. Low emotional regulation skills, students tend to face challenges in social competence and adjustment in the educational environment.

To date, numerous studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between emotional regulation and anxiety. One such study found a correlation coefficient of 0.387 with a significance value of 0.046 <0.05. Emotional regulation is related to anxiety in judo athletes. A similar study, titled "The Relationship Between Emotional Regulation and Public Speaking Anxiety in College Students," found that the *analysis The product moment* showed an *r* value of -0.362 and a *p* value of 0.000 <0.01. The conclusion obtained was that emotional regulation had a significant negative relationship with public speaking anxiety in students [15], [16].

Based on the explanation above, this study was conducted to investigate the relationship between emotional regulation and anxiety in students writing their theses. The main objective of this study was to determine the importance of emotional regulation skills in managing anxiety. The research hypothesis was "there is a negative relationship between emotional regulation and anxiety in students writing their theses," with the assumption that the higher the emotional regulation skills, the lower the anxiety experienced by students, and vice versa.

2. Research methodology

Researchers used a quantitative research method with two variables. The research variable (research object) is an aspect that has a value that can be compared or determined, thus becoming an instrument in the research. For this research, the X or independent variable is emotional regulation, while the Y or dependent variable is anxiety [17].

The approach applied in this study is a quantitative approach. Basically, this method is very appropriate to use when researchers want to examine related variables but have a large population because it can expand the information that researchers want to obtain [17]. The population in this study was 93 7th semester students of the Faculty of Medicine, Islamic University of North Sumatra (UISU), who are writing their theses. Given the limitations in population size, this study uses the entire

population as a sample (*total sampling*). *Total sampling* is a technique for determining samples with all members of the population.

The variables used can also be observed using the selected research instrument. Therefore, researchers must first determine the purpose of their research and then use several available research instruments. In this study, the instrument chosen was a scale measurement. This scale measurement method is useful in referring to the interval class in sample measurements so that the length or shortness of the interval class can produce quantitative data. There are two scale measurements used, namely the ERQ (*Emotion Regulation Questionnaire*) scale by Gross and Thompson as a measurement of the emotional regulation scale and the HARS (*Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale*) scale as a measurement of the anxiety scale [18], [19].

On the ERQ (*Emotion Regulation Questionnaire*) scale, valid ERQ criteria are stated if ($t > 1.96$; $p = 0.000$) and the *Cronbach Alpha reliability value* is $\alpha = 0.951$ in the *cognitive reappraisal strategy* and $\alpha = 0.790$ in the *expressive suppression*. The emotional regulation scale is divided into 2 strategies, namely the *cognitive reappraisal strategy* and the *expressive suppression strategy*. It has 10 items, with 6 items measuring the *cognitive reappraisal strategy* and 4 items measuring the *expressive suppression strategy*. The blueprint of the Emotion Regulation scale can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Emotion Regulation Scale Blueprint

Emotion Regulation Strategies	Items	Amount
<i>Cognitive Reappraisal</i>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	6
<i>Expressive Suppression</i>	7, 8, 9, 10	4

Meanwhile, for the validity of the HARS scale, valid HARS criteria are stated if the *Corrected Item-Total Correlation* is positive with a significance of > 0.05 and *Cronbach's Alpha reliability* of $\alpha = 0.793$ where if the items totaling 14 items with a significance of > 0.6 , then the questionnaire is declared reliable. The anxiety scale consists of 14 statement items, with 6 items to measure psychic symptoms and 8 items to measure somatic symptoms. The *blueprint* of the anxiety scale can be seen in Table 2.

Table 1Anxiety Scale Blueprint

Symptoms of Anxiety	Items	Amount
<i>Psychic symptoms</i>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	6
<i>Somatic symptoms</i>	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	8

This normality test can show that the sample data is normally distributed if the p value > 0.05 while the sample data is not normally distributed if the p value < 0.05 . This test is also often found in research to show the relationship between variables whether it is linear or not linear, where if $p < 0.05$ then both variables are stated to be linear while if $p > 0.05$ then the variables are not linear [19]. In this study, Spearman correlation was used as a data analysis technique where this technique can be used to find correlations between ordinal

variables because in this study, the data sources to be obtained for each variable are not the same [20].

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Trial Implementation

The trial was conducted on June 13, 2024, on 70 7th-semester students of the Faculty of Medicine at Prima Indonesia University. Two scales were used: the emotional regulation scale and the anxiety scale. For the emotional regulation scale, the first test was to determine valid items based on the validity test. This test was conducted using the SPSS version 25 application by looking at the *Corrected Item Total Correlation value*. The *Corrected Item Total Correlation* method is a measurement commonly used in validity tests where an item is declared valid if the r value is > 0.30 [21]. Based on the test results, it was found that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 were declared valid, with the r value ranging from 0.376 to 0.526, while item 10 was declared invalid. Therefore, 9 out of 10 items can be used in the study.

The next test is to test the reliability using the *Cronbach alpha value*, from all valid items, the reliability value is $0.769 > 0.6$. Based on the test results, it can be concluded that the research emotion regulation scale items are declared reliable for use. Valid Emotion Regulation Scale Items can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Details of Valid Emotion Regulation Scale Items

Emotion Regulation Strategies	Statement Items Favorable		Valid Amount
	Valid	Fall	
<i>Cognitive Repraaisal</i>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	-	6
<i>Expressive Suppression</i>	7, 8, 9	10	3

In anxiety, the first test also aims to determine valid items based on validity testing. This test was also conducted in the SPSS version 25 application by looking at the *Corrected Item Total Correlation value*. The *Corrected Item Total Correlation* method is a measurement commonly used in validity testing where an item is declared valid if the r value is > 0.30 [21]. Based on the test results, it was found that all 14 items were declared valid with the r value obtained ranging from 0.343 to 0.667. Therefore, these 14 items can be used in research.

The next test was to test reliability using the *Cronbach alpha value*. From all valid items, the reliability value was $0.843 > 0.6$. Based on the test results, it can be concluded that the research anxiety scale items are declared reliable for use. Valid Anxiety Scale Items can be seen in Table 4.

Table 2. Details of Valid Anxiety Scale Items

Symptoms of Anxiety	Statement Items Favorable		Valid Amount
	Valid	Fall	
<i>Psychic symptoms</i>	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7	-	6
<i>Somatic symptoms</i>	4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	-	8

3.2. Research Implementation

The author scheduled this research for Monday, October 21, 2024, with a sample size of 93 seventh-semester students from the Faculty of Medicine, Islamic University of North Sumatra. Data were collected based on a 9-item emotional regulation scale and a 14-item anxiety scale administered to the sample. The numbering of the emotional regulation scales is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. New Numbering of SEQ Tabel_1. * ARABIC the Emotional Regulation Scale After Try Out

Emotion Regulation Strategies	Item Number	Amount
<i>Cognitive Reappraisal</i>	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8	6
<i>Expressive Suppression</i>	4, 7, 9	3

The numbering of the anxiety scale is presented in Table 6.

Table 1. 3New Numbering of Anxiety Scale After Try Out

Symptoms of Anxiety	Item Number	Amount
<i>Psychic symptoms</i>	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7	6
<i>Somatic symptoms</i>	4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	8

In accordance with the table explained above, the scale in this study contains 23 statement items that have been sorted to facilitate the process of collecting research data. In creating a scale, the first thing the author did was to compile a scale containing (1) instructions for filling out the scale, (2) respondent identity, (3) emotional regulation scale, (4) anxiety scale. Then, after completing the collection of all research samples, testing was carried out using the SPSS Version 25 application with the help of MS Excel in the data summarization process before testing the relationship between the research variables used.

3.3. Research Data Analysis Results

Data collection was conducted directly with the sample by administering a scale. The data analysis technique used *Spearman correlation* with the assistance of *IBM SPSS Statistics 25*. This method was applied to analyze the relationship between emotional regulation and anxiety in students writing their theses at the Faculty of Medicine, Islamic University of North Sumatra.

In the normality test for the emotional regulation variable, the coefficient result in the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov-Z test* was 0.083 with a p-value of 0.136 > 0.05. Meanwhile, for the anxiety variable, the coefficient result in the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov-Z test* was 0.091 with a p-value of 0.054 > 0.05. Therefore, it is concluded that both variables have data that has been normally distributed.

In the linearity test results table, it was found that there was a linear relationship between the emotional regulation variable and the anxiety variable with a significance value of 0.00 < 0.05, which means that the testing requirements have been met and can be continued

to test the research hypothesis through *Spearman correlation analysis*.

The results of the study showed a *Spearman correlation* between the emotional regulation variable and the anxiety variable of $r = -0.502$ with a significance level of $0.000 < 0.05$. So with these results, based on the hypothesis, it can be concluded that there is a significant negative relationship in the correlation between the emotional regulation variable and the anxiety variable in 7th semester students of the Faculty of Medicine, Islamic University of North Sumatra who are writing their thesis. Furthermore, the *R-Square test* showed that 30.4% of the anxiety variable was influenced by the emotional regulation variable, while the remaining 69.6% was influenced by other factors not included in this study.

3.4. Discussion

The study was conducted on 93 seventh-semester students of the Faculty of Medicine, Islamic University of North Sumatra who were writing their theses. The results of this study indicate a negative relationship between emotional regulation and anxiety with a *Spearman's value* of 0.502 with a *Sig* of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). The results indicate that the research hypothesis is accepted. The effective contribution of emotional regulation to anxiety is 30.4%. The results obtained that the higher the ability to regulate emotions, the lower the anxiety experienced by students who are writing their theses, and vice versa, the lower the ability to regulate emotions, the higher the anxiety experienced.

The findings of this study are in line with the results of research found in judo athletes, the results of the study showed a correlation coefficient value of 0.387 with a significant level of 0.046 or ($p < 0.05$), it can be concluded that there is a relationship between emotional regulation and sports anxiety in judo athletes. Other research was also found in class XI students of SMAN 13 Surabaya, the results showed a correlation value of 0.568 with a significant level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), so there is a relationship between emotional regulation and anxiety when speaking in public [15], [22].

The results of the study showed that 2 students, or 2.2%, had low emotional regulation skills. 42 students, or 45.2%, had moderate emotional regulation skills, and 49 students, or 52.6%, had high emotional regulation skills. In this case, individuals who have difficulty regulating their emotions can experience mental health disorders. Meanwhile, someone who is able to regulate their emotions makes them calmer and more focused in facing the thesis writing process. This is consistent with the results of the study, where students agreed that they try to remain calm when faced with stressful situations by changing their mindset to experience more positive emotions.

A person with good regulation skills can effectively maintain psychological well-being and engage in adaptive behavior. Furthermore, a person with good

emotional regulation can behave positively and benefit themselves and others, and is also able to cooperate, help, reconcile, and share [23] , [24] .

Meanwhile, for the level of anxiety of students who are writing their thesis, the research results obtained data that 4 students or 4.3% have very severe anxiety and 18 students or 19.4% have severe anxiety, this is because students have not been able to overcome their worries in facing a problem in the world of their studies, especially in working on their thesis. Meanwhile, 36 students or 38.7% have moderate anxiety, and 35 students or 37.6% have mild anxiety, this is because students tend to be able to overcome their fears or worries in facing the process of working on their thesis.

This high anxiety arises due to worry, while low anxiety shows that they are able to overcome their fears and worries. This is indicated by the presence of disorders such as worry, fear of one's own thoughts, experiencing bad feelings, being easily irritated, having difficulty resting peacefully, lethargic, crying easily, restless, afraid of others especially strangers or loneliness, experiencing sleep disorders such as difficulty falling asleep, waking up easily at night, difficulty sleeping soundly, decreased memory, difficulty concentrating, loss of interest, feelings of sadness, frequent pain and soreness in the muscles, weakness, palpitations, a feeling of pressure in the chest or tightness, nausea or vomiting, weight loss, frequent urination, dry mouth, red face and easy sweating. This feeling of anxiety will affect the process of working on the thesis that is being done because anxiety tends to produce confusion and distortion of perception [25] .

In line with the statement above, students who have high anxiety can harm themselves because it can hinder them, causing difficulties in completing their thesis [2 5] . Anxiety experienced in the process of working on a thesis certainly creates feelings of discomfort which results in impaired ability to concentrate and ability to face problems during the work process [2 6] . This causes students to feel hampered in working on their thesis.

Based on the research results and explanation above, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between emotional regulation and anxiety. This study proves that emotional regulation influences anxiety. If a student has high emotional regulation, they will have low levels of anxiety during the thesis writing process. Conversely, if a student has low emotional regulation, they will experience high levels of anxiety, which will hinder the thesis writing process. However, uniquely, there are some students who demonstrate good emotional regulation despite low levels of anxiety. Unfortunately, the researchers did not delve deeper into this phenomenon.

Based on the research conducted, it was also concluded that although writing a thesis requires hard work, not all final year students experience anxiety when writing their

thesis. For example, this study showed that final semester medical students at the Islamic University of North Sumatra did not feel hampered in the process of writing their thesis. They also did not experience anxiety during the process of working on their thesis. This can occur because they have good emotional regulation skills, including due to good calm and focus [27] .

Good emotional management can help students face the challenges of completing their thesis more calmly and efficiently, while poor emotional regulation can exacerbate anxiety and hinder their academic progress. However, some students have low emotional regulation skills, experiencing various symptoms that indicate high levels of anxiety. Unfortunately, the researchers did not conduct further interviews to delve deeper into the factors causing their poor emotional regulation behavior. This was because some subjects did not provide their real identities, making it impossible for researchers to conduct further interviews to dig deeper into the information.

In general, the anxiety experienced by final-year students writing their theses isn't limited to the process itself; other factors can also contribute to mental stress. Uncertainty, lack of confidence, and pressure can also contribute to anxiety in writing their theses.

The uncertainty referred to is such as forward thinking regarding the fear that the research will not run smoothly, the inability to process data, the fear that the research results will not be able to prove the truth of the hypothesis that has been made, the fear of questions from the examiner and supervisor, the fear of not being able to make a presentation during the defense, the fear of being late to graduate or graduation, the fear of his own thoughts, the fear of not being met the grade, the fear of not being able to fulfill the requirements for fulfilling the credits so that it hinders the defense process and so on. Sometimes students also divert their attention from this anxiety by doing other things to avoid working on the thesis, but the anxiety will come back and even increase when the progress of the thesis work is asked by friends, parents or supervisors and also when *the deadline is approaching* .

Therefore, good emotional regulation skills are essential. Research shows that if students are unable to regulate their emotions effectively, their anxiety will continue to increase and can even reach the most severe level, leading to depression. However, emotional regulation skills don't just emerge. Emotional regulation skills must be cultivated from an early age, with family education being a key factor influencing an individual's emotional regulation skills. Generally, how a person regulates their emotions is learned from their family environment and is formed from childhood. Children's emotional regulation skills are formed through imitation of the adults around them, especially their parents. Therefore, to develop good emotional regulation skills, the role of family and parents is crucial in the development process.

4. Conclusion

the Spearman correlation test on the hypothesis test obtained a negative relationship between emotional regulation and anxiety for 7th semester students of the Faculty of Medicine, Islamic University of North Sumatra who are writing a thesis with a value of -0.502 and p of 0.000, so $p < 0.05$, meaning that the higher the emotional regulation a student has, the lower the level of anxiety, and vice versa. The results of the study showed a significant contribution from the emotional regulation variable, namely 30.4% influencing anxiety, while the remaining 69.6% was obtained from factors outside the study.

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