



Emotional Engagement in Undergraduate Thesis Writing: Systematic Review

Moesarofah^{1*}, Endah Yulia Rahayu²

¹Prodi Bimbingan dan Konseling, Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya, Indonesia

²Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya, Indonesia

*Email: moesarofah@unipasby.ac.id

Articles Information

Abstrak

Keywords:

Student emotion;

Writing undergraduate thesis;

Systematic review

Submitted:

25-01-2023

Accepted:

30-01-2023

Published:

26-02-2023

Systematic review selama tujuh tahun terakhir ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis keterlibatan emosi dalam penulisan skripsi atau tugas akademik. Mengacu dari teori emosi akademik dari Pekrun, objek fokus dalam menulis skripsi sarat dengan muatan emosi selain aspek kognitif maupun sosial. Ketidakesesuaian antara kesalahan dan rencana yang ditargetkan membangkitkan beragam emosi positif maupun negatif. Sepuluh studi yang relevan dalam pencarian literature antara tahun 2016-2022 dimasukkan dalam review, menunjukkan bahwa tema penelitian membutuhkan atensi peneliti untuk mengembangkan studi lanjut. Hasil review menunjukkan bahwa perasaan cemas merupakan emosi yang dominan dirasakan bagi mahasiswa saat menulis skripsi di berbagai negara. Hasil review dikelompokkan dalam tiga aspek: dasar teoritis, metode penelitian, dan hasil yang relevan. Implikasi untuk penelitian masa depan menunjukkan bahwa regulasi diri, maupun penguatan lingkungan sosial membawa konsekuensi positif dalam menulis skripsi. Sementara itu keterbatasan penelitian berkaitan dengan kriteria inklusi yang terlalu membatasi.

Abstract

This systematic review of the last seven years aims to identify and analyze emotional engagement in academic writing or undergraduate thesis. Referring to Pekrun's academic, emotional theory, the object focus in writing a thesis is loaded with emotional content besides cognitive and social aspects. The discrepancy between the error and the targeted plan evokes positive and negative emotions. Ten relevant studies in the literature search between 2016-2022 are included in the review, indicating that the research theme requires the attention of researchers to develop further studies. The results of the review show that anxiety is the dominant emotion students feel when writing their undergraduate thesis in various countries. The review results are grouped into theoretical basis, research methods, and relevant results. Implications for future research indicate that self-regulation and strengthening the social environment bring positive consequences in writing an undergraduate thesis. Meanwhile, the study's limitations are related to the inclusion criteria that are too restrictive.



INTRODUCTION

In conveying ideas, critical thinking, and problem-solving, writing can be described as a critical skill that produces challenging academic work for students. Various challenges in academic writing are experienced by students, such as theoretical knowledge, logical reasoning, and low synthesis ability (Abdulkareem, 2013; Xia & Luxin, 2012). Despite these difficulties, writing an undergraduate thesis is one of the graduation requirements for undergraduate-level students in Indonesia. The preparation for writing an undergraduate thesis in a limited time, corrective feedback from lecturers, and confusion about where to start writing are one of the causes of delays in the completion of the undergraduate thesis previously expected (Hallberg & Olsson, 2017; Jabali, 2018; Mbato & Cendra, 2019).

Writing a thesis is a process full of emotions (Han & Hyland, 2019). The research conducted by Rahayu and Moesarofah (2022) reported this during interviews with eight students of the Counseling Guidance and English Language Education Study Program at PGRI Adi Buana University after completing their undergraduate thesis revision. The interview was conducted in mid-November 2022; the results showed that the average student felt confused and worried about writing an undergraduate thesis as their first experience. At the same time, various research results show that maintaining positive emotions amid writing difficulties can be a buffer in completing an undergraduate thesis on time. As suggested by Pekrun (2006) and Wagener (2017), when students can apply self-regulation that leads to goals and give positive values for the difficulties and efforts made, then undergraduate thesis writing can be solved by flowing without burden.

Thus, emotional engagement in completing an undergraduate thesis is an important thing that can enlighten students in maintaining their motivation to write an undergraduate thesis on time. But so far, there has been no systematic review of emotions related to undergraduate thesis writing, so the purpose of this study was to identify and analyze the emotional engagement in undergraduate thesis writing through a systematic review design to answer the research questions:

1. What emotions do students experience in writing their undergraduate thesis?
2. Do their emotional reactions change while writing their undergraduate thesis?

Value-Control Theory of Emotions

Academic emotions are directly related to academic learning, classroom teaching, and achievement (Pekrun et al., 2002). The dimensions of academic emotion include valence, activation, and focus objects. Valence relates to positive or negative emotional charge. Activation is related to arousal to physiological relaxation, while the focused object is related to specific references that accompany emotions (Pekrun, 2006).

Academic emotions are divided into two categories: positive emotions and negative emotions. Positive emotional activation includes enjoyment, joy, hope, pride, and gratitude, whereas deactivation of positive emotions includes relaxation, contentment, and relief. Negative emotional activation has anger,

frustration, anxiety, shame, and anger. Meanwhile, negative emotion deactivation includes boredom, sadness, disappointment, and hopelessness.

Emotions in Thesis Writing

Benesch (2012) revealed that emotions include affective, cognitive, motivational, expressive, and physiological components. The affective component is the leading cause of the need for more student progress in undergraduate thesis writing. In writing a thesis, self-esteem, writing performance, and opposite personalities between supervisors and students can play a supporting or disturbing role. Some students may feel proud, confident, or excited, whereas others may be cheating, frustrated, or indifferent. Various emotions can be motivations that provide energy in writing, but some others may be drowned in negative emotions.

There are two emotional poles in the writing experience: efficacy and anxiety writing. Writing efficacy relates to writing, comprehension, and performance ability. While writing, anxiety is related to feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes such as increased blood pressure (Huerta et al., 2017). The lower the students feel the efficacy in writing, the less they enjoy the writing experience, and worry arises if their writing is rated lower.

METHOD

The study of emotions in this undergraduate thesis writing uses a systematic review design from 2017-2022. Search through electronic databases: Taylor & Francis, Elsevier, and Google scholar. The search keywords include academic emotion, student emotion, and undergraduate thesis writing. The steps in this systematic review are as follows: (1) formulate research questions; (2) search for literature; (3) group information from literature; (4) analyze and interpret findings; and (5) present findings.

The key concepts being researched must be consistent with the review and analysis in formulating a systematic review. In this review, the definition and theory of academic emotion refer to Pekrun (2006) because this theory is well-known in the academic field and is widely referred to by other researchers. After the key terms are identified, the search continues in the electronic database and utilizes the thesaurus function so that relevant files are captured in the search. Next, the inclusion criteria were determined. The same search strings and delimiters are applied across all databases, including (1) literature published between the period 2017-2022; (2) empirical research; and (3) published in a reputable journal. The search string is as follows: academic emotion OR student emotion, AND undergraduate thesis writing.

Searching for empirical findings according to keywords through Google Scholar resulted in 980 articles, but after applying the inclusion criteria, 141 articles were obtained. Relevant articles are determined by reading the title and abstract, as well as the full text, to determine the appropriateness of the review. After deleting several articles according to the purpose of the systematic review, finally, ten articles were obtained from the database: Taylor & Francis (N=4), Elsevier (N=2), and Google Scholar (N=4) (Table 1).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The evaluation, analysis, and interpretation results of the ten articles are presented in several tables to provide insight and consideration for future researchers.

Table 1. Theoretical Basis for Each Source

	Author	The Emotions of Writing Undergraduate Thesis	Emotions Writing in English	Self-Regulation
1	Aloairdhi (2019)	Anxiety (Hilgard, Atkinson, & Atkinson, (1979)	Second language writing anxiety (Alfajen, 2013; Oliver & Oliver, 2016)	-
2	Han & Hyland (2019)	Academic emotion in a written corrective feedback situation (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012)	Not specific	-
3	Mbato & Cendra (2019)	Not specific	Not specific	Self-regulation (Zimmerman, 1998)
4	Yu et al. (2019)	Engagement of friends in the affective domain (Fredricks et al., 2004)	Not specific	-
5	French (2018)	The affective domain (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964)	-	-
6	Jabali (2018)	Not specific	Not specific	-
7	Wagener (2017)	Affect (Ahern & Manathunga 2003)	-	Cognitive self-regulation (Strain, Azevedo, & D'Mello 2013; Zimmerman 1989)
8	Anttila et al. (2017)	Academic emotion (Pekrun et al. 2002).	-	-
9	Huerta et al. (2017)	Writing anxiety (Daly, 1977) Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) Emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990)	-	-
10	Tsiriatakis et al (2017)	Processing efficiency theory (Eysenk & Calvo, 1992)	Foreign language anxiety (Howitz et al., 1986)	-

Theoretically, various references refer to emotions in writing an undergraduate thesis or academic. Such as Han and Hyland (2019) and Anttila et al. (2017) refer to the academic theory of emotion from Pekrun (2006). At the same time, Aloardhi (2019) and Huerta et al. (2017) refer to the construct of anxiety (Daly, 1977; Hilgard, Atkinson, & Atkinson, 1979). Yuet et al. (2019), French (2018), and Wagener (2017)

refer to the affect construct (Ahern & Manathunga, 2003; Fredricks et al., 2004; Krathwohl, Bloom & Masia, 1964). Meanwhile, Mbato & Cendra (2019) and Jabali (2018) need to include specific references in studying emotions and Tsiriotakis et al. (2017) chose the theory of processing efficiency in explaining emotions (Eysck & Calvo, 1992). Theoretically, the emotions of writing an undergraduate thesis in the Indonesian and English versions do not show significant differences. Both activate anxious emotions to increase physiological vigilance and avoid the consequences of failure.

Table 2. Research Methods

No.	Author	Participant	Region	Design/Instrument
1	Aloairdhi (2019)	N=117 (19-23 years old)	Saudi Arabia	-Survey: Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) (Daly & Miller, 1975) and open-ended questions (qualitative)
2	Han & Hyland (2019)	N=2 (teacher), N=2 (students)	Cina	- Qualitative/Semi-structured interviews, retrospective verbal reports, class observations, and documents
3	Mbato & Cendra (2019)	N=102 (quantitative) N=9 (qualitative), students	Indonesia	- Survey: SRQ (Erickson, Soukup, Noonan, & McGurn, 2015) - Help-seeking (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997) - Academic Volitional Strategy Inventory (McCann & Garcia, 1999) - Qualitative/interview
4	Yu et al. (2019)	N=3 (25 years old)	Macau	- Qualitative/semi-structured interview
5	French (2018)	(N=1) doctoral level	UK	- Qualitative/telling personal experiences, focusing on the affective domain
6	Jabali (2018)	N=102 students	Palestine	- Mix method: Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Questionnaire and open questions
7	Wagener (2017)	N=165, graduate student	France	- Mix method: Positive Meta Cognitions and Positive Meta-Emotions Questionnaire (PMCEQ) (Beer 2011), Positive and Negative Affect Schedule or PANAS (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988)

				-Quality of Interpersonal Relationships Scale (QIRS) (Philippe et al. 2010)
8	Anttila et al. (2017)	N=19 (elementary school teacher majoring in education science and currently completing masters studies)	Finlandia	- Interview based on Student Teacher's Study and Professional Landscape Inventory (Ahonen et al. 2015; Soini, Pyhältö, & Pietarinen 2010)
9	Huerta M., Goodson, P., Beigi, M., & Chlup, D. (2017)	N= 174, a graduate student enrolled in the power class (<i>Promoting Outstanding Writing for Excellence in Research</i>)	USA	- Survey: Writing Anxiety Scale (Daly and Miller's (1975) - Writing Self-Efficacy Scale (Zimmerman and Bandura, 1994) - Emotional intelligence scale (Schutte et al., 1998).
10	Tsiriotakis et al (2017)	N=177 (11-12 years old)	Greek	- Survey: SLWAI (Cheng, 2004) language skill anxiety scale - Confirmatory factor analysis

Concerning research methodology, the characteristics of research participants varied from high school to postgraduate education levels, but the majority were at the undergraduate level. The research locations are spread across various countries, the average research design uses a survey, but some studies complement it with a mixed method.

Table 3. Relevant Results

No	Author	Relevant Results
1	Aloairdhi (2019)	- Study participants in Saudi students enrolled in the English department experienced moderate writing anxiety levels. - The primary source of anxiety from the participant's point of view is evaluation. It also deals with ideas, grammar, time pressure, and lack of self-confidence
2	Han & Hyland (2019)	- Corrective feedback, even though it causes an emotional reaction, both participants can give a positive value, as a teacher's sense of responsibility and concern for students. - Anxiety does not reduce enthusiasm (ambivalent effect). It is a continuum rather than a dichotomy.
3	Mbato & Cendra (2019)	- Although writing their undergraduate thesis in English creates difficulties, most students can plan, monitor, and evaluate the writing process (self-regulation). - Maintain positive intentions by seeking help and employing many motivational strategies
4	Yu et al. (2019)	- Active involvement of students to discuss their difficulties with friends dynamically and complexly, even though there are

		individual differences
5	French (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The inability to develop the complexity of academic writing results in negative consequences for students. - The importance of a holistic approach, such as the role of emotions and the social environment (community) in developing academic writing
6	Jabali (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitude influences writing ability - The writing process varies from raising fears to earning rewards. For some people, it may give perceptions, feelings, and anxious attitudes, but some others accept the task and do not waste the opportunity
7	Wagener (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The effect is central to the dissertation writing process, as it is strongly linked to interpersonal relationships and final grades. - Empirical findings show that there is a relationship between cognitive regulation, effect, and the quality of the supervisor-student relationship
8	Anttila et al. (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are five student-teacher emotional patterns: positive, negative, ascending, descending and changing. - Triggers of student-teacher emotional patterns: social support, value expectations, personal accomplishments.
9	Huerta et al. (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-efficacy is a significant predictor of writing anxiety, while emotional intelligence has no significant effect
10	Tsiritakis et al (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anxiety about writing in a foreign language harms foreign language learning and performance - The writing environment will encourage students to construct knowledge to improve foreign language writing skills and reduce anxiety

The empirical findings show that students can provide positive values for various emotions and difficulties encountered during the undergraduate thesis writing process. Anxiety does not demotivate; on the contrary, through physiological signs, they apply self-regulation and build active engagement with friends through the feedback provided.

Discussion

Based on relevant empirical findings, anxiety is the dominant emotion students feel when writing their thesis in various countries. In Saudi Arabia, writing anxiety is related to using a second language, namely weak English skills and fear of being evaluated through corrective feedback. Meanwhile, feelings of anxiety for (postgraduate) students in the United States are overcome by the ability to manage emotions better and increase self-efficacy so that they can complete the academic writing.

In other countries, which are the research locations in this systematic review, the average student does not experience significant anxiety. Anxiety that arises is a natural thing to increase the motivation of the instrument. Furthermore, final project writing projects, including corrective feedback received from supervisors, tend to be interpreted positively, able to be well controlled through the implementation of various self-regulation strategies, involvement, and feedback with friends.

Meanwhile, in terms of search years (2017-2022) regarding research on emotions in undergraduate thesis writing, it shows that research on emotions associated with undergraduate thesis writing is still rare. This can be seen from two things: first, emotions related to undergraduate thesis writing only obtained one finding (Mbato & Cendra, 2019). Meanwhile, emotions related to postgraduate thesis writing obtained three results (French, 2018; Wagener, 2017; Yu et al., 2019), and six other studies related emotions to academic writing. Second, the inclusion criteria applied in the search between 2020-2022 were not successful in obtaining findings on the feelings of undergraduate thesis writing.

CONCLUSION

Several studies in this systematic review identified a gap between anxiety, which is always present in undergraduate thesis writing, and several previous studies, which are classified as rare. Stress has an ambivalent effect; on the one hand, it can hinder the performance of undergraduate thesis writing, but on the other hand, it can be an instrument of motivation.

This review also has practical implications for future research. Empirical evidence shows that self-regulation and strengthening the social environment can increase success in writing a thesis. Meanwhile, the research limitations related to inclusion criteria may only capture some relevant literature because it is too limited

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was conducted through funding from the Grant of Adi Buana Surabaya, 2022/2023 academic year.

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