

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ANXIETY AMONG FINAL-YEAR STUDENTS WORKING ON THEIR THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Final-year students often face psychological challenges when working on their theses, especially feelings of loneliness that can increase social anxiety. This study aims to evaluate the role of loneliness in social anxiety among final-year students working on their theses. The research used a non-experimental quantitative approach employing correlation testing. Participants were 152 purposively sampled final-year students from Indonesia, currently working on or having completed their theses. Data was collected using the UCLA Loneliness Scale and the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A). Analysis with Spearman's correlation showed a correlation coefficient of 0.683 and $p = 0.001$, indicating a significant positive relationship between loneliness and social anxiety in this population. The higher the loneliness, the higher the social anxiety among students working on their theses. These findings support previous research by Maes et al. (2019) and others highlighting the detrimental psychological impact that thesis writing can have on students. The study also found significant correlations between loneliness and age and gender differences, with males tending to experience higher loneliness. Limitations include sample size and data collection methods. Future research should focus on larger, balanced samples to deepen understanding of loneliness and social anxiety in academic contexts. This study contributes important insights into psychological well-being of final-year students, emphasizing the need for support systems addressing loneliness and social anxiety during thesis completion.

Keywords: *Loneliness, Social Anxiety, Final-Year Students, Thesis.*

1. PREFACE

As students, final semester students are generally assigned to write a thesis. A thesis can be described as a scientific paper presenting research findings at the undergraduate level that discusses a problem or phenomenon in a specific field of study, adhering to applicable guidelines (Awaliyah & Listiyandini, 2018). In completing the thesis, students must face various obstacles and challenges, both internal and external (Ramanda & Sagita, 2020). On the other hand, Herianda et al. (2021) state that the process of writing a thesis often increases psychological problems, one of the most common being feelings of loneliness. During the thesis writing phase, final-year students often feel lonely (Qolbi & Hatta, 2023). This feeling of loneliness may arise due to a lack of support from friends, family, or supervisors, as well as communication issues with peers, ultimately increasing stress levels (Herianda et al., 2021).

Loneliness is also described as a condition that arises when an individual's social relationship needs are not met (Weiss, 1973). Perlman and Peplau (1979) explain loneliness as a subjective and unpleasant condition that occurs when an individual's social interactions decrease in both quantity and quality. Loneliness can be explained as a behavior influenced by a person's thoughts and feelings, which are affected by their mental and physical conditions (Russel, 1996). According to Weiss (1973), loneliness is divided into two main types: emotional loneliness and social loneliness. Emotional loneliness occurs when an individual feels a lack of intimacy in existing relationships, even if they may have social interactions, often triggering negative emotions such as sadness and helplessness (Hidayanti, 2016). This is caused by a lack of emotional support from close relationships, such as family or partners. Meanwhile, social loneliness occurs when individuals are less integrated into their social networks, feel alienated,

and lack sufficient satisfying social interactions, such as friendships or community relationships (Weiss, 1973).

According to Peplau and Perlman (1979), loneliness can be influenced by two main factors: (a) Predisposing Factors, where personal and environmental variables play a role in increasing the likelihood of loneliness. Individuals who are shy, quiet, or lack self-confidence often experience a lack of social interaction, although shy individuals do not always feel lonely. While introverts may feel comfortable in small groups, they tend to feel lonelier when trying to meet new people. (b) Triggering Factors, where loneliness arises when significant changes occur in social relationships or changes in needs or desires related to those relationships, such as the breakdown of important social connections (Dayaksini & Hudaniah, 2015). Loneliness can trigger prolonged feelings of anxiety and depression. Students may feel alienated, especially when they realize that many things are beyond their control, which can lead to feelings of despair (Hidayati, 2016).

Social anxiety can be defined as the fear that arises from the urge to influence others and the fear that such goals will not be achieved (Wolman & Stricker, 1994). La Greca and Lopez (1998) define social anxiety as an intense and pervasive discomfort in social situations that can lead to severe discomfort for individuals. This is due to the pressure on individuals to interact with strangers, which can provoke anxiety related to being evaluated and the fear of being embarrassed in public.

Social anxiety also has several specific symptoms described by Kaplan and Sadock (2010), which can be observed through three main dimensions: (a) Recognition of cognitive and emotional stress experienced in relation to social anxiety. Individuals feel significant physiological or psychological pressure; (b) Changes in physical function, which may manifest as sweating, increased heart rate, difficulty breathing, and dizziness; (c) Psychological changes characterized by heightened fear, worry, and ease, accompanied by emotions of vulnerability or discomfort in social situations. According to La Greca and Lopez (1998), social anxiety has three specific components. First, the fear of negative evaluation, which is the fear of negative judgments from others that can make them feel uncomfortable and anxious in social situations. Second, social avoidance and stress in unfamiliar situations or when interacting with strangers or new acquaintances. This reflects a tendency to avoid new and unfamiliar social situations due to anxiety and discomfort. Third, social avoidance and general tension experienced in the presence of familiar people. This indicates that even in familiar social circles, individuals with social anxiety can still feel tension and tend to avoid interactions.

Research conducted by Sari (2022) on the relationship between loneliness and social anxiety shows a significant relationship between social anxiety and loneliness among students who use social media, particularly among active Instagram users (Sari, 2022). The results of this study indicate that loneliness and social anxiety have an impact of 20.3% on students who use media. These findings highlight the complexity of the interaction between social anxiety and loneliness among students using digital media. Research by Yustika and Istiqomah (Yustika & Istiqomah, 2023) also found a significant positive relationship between loneliness and social anxiety, where loneliness contributed 7.3% to social anxiety.

This study aims to fill a gap in the literature by examining the relationship between loneliness and social anxiety among final-year students in Jakarta, a topic that has not been extensively studied before. This research replicates the study by Maes et al. (2019), which examined the relationship between loneliness and social anxiety among adolescents. In the Maes study, they

analyzed 102 studies involving more than 41,000 participants with an average age of 15.59 years and found a strong positive relationship between loneliness and social anxiety symptoms. They also examined longitudinal data from 10 other studies involving nearly 4,000 participants. There is a difference between this study and previous studies; this research focuses on final-year students working on their theses, hoping to provide a deeper understanding and stronger recommendations for preventing social anxiety and loneliness among final-year students. Therefore, the title of this study is "The Relationship Between Loneliness And Social Anxiety Among Final-Year Students Working On Their Thesis."

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study involved 152 young adult participants aged 18 to 25, consisting of 50 males and 102 females in Indonesia. Participants were recruited through an online questionnaire. All participants were students currently working on their theses in their final semester and residing in Indonesia. The participants in this study were not restricted by race, ethnicity, religion, or culture.

To measure loneliness, the UCLA Loneliness Scale version 3 by Russell (Russell, 1996), which was adapted into Indonesian by Harlenda and Kartasasmita (2021), was used. It employs a Likert scale consisting of 11 liked items (e.g., "How often do you feel lonely?") and 9 disliked items (e.g., "How often do you feel that you are 'connected' to those around you?"). There are four options on this scale: Never (TP), Rarely (J), Sometimes (KK), and Always (S).

To measure social anxiety, the Social Anxiety For Adolescents (SAS-A) scale by La Greca and Lopez (1998), which has been adapted into Indonesian by Apriliana and Suranta (1), was used. This scale consists of 20 items and has five options (1 = not at all, 5 = always).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study uses a non-experimental quantitative method, employing purposive sampling techniques. The research uses the nonparametric Spearman Correlation test to determine the relationship between loneliness and social anxiety among final-year students working on their theses. The study is designed to sample specific characteristics, namely, active final-year university students, both male and female, who are currently writing their final thesis, within the age range of 18-25 years. According to Arnett (2007), final-year students fall within this range and are considered in the emerging adulthood stage.

The total number of participants in this study is 152 final-year students, consisting of 50 males and 102 females. A general overview of the participants is categorized by age and gender. Among the participants, there is 1 participant aged 18, 13 participants aged 20, the majority aged 21 with a total of 105 participants, 74 participants aged 22, 5 participants aged 23, 1 participant aged 24, and 1 participant aged 25.

Data used for measuring each variable was obtained by distributing loneliness and social anxiety scale questionnaires according to the variables used. The data were then analyzed using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) 24.0 software for Windows to generate the research results. Before analyzing the relationship, the researcher tested the data for normality to determine whether the data was normally distributed or not.

The normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for loneliness showed $p = 0.001$ (< 0.05). Meanwhile, the normality test for social anxiety also showed $p = 0.001$ (< 0.05), indicating that the data are not normally distributed. The presence of non-normally distributed data shows that the data analysis for this study uses a non-parametric test known as Spearman Correlation. Referring to Table 1, the researcher used the Spearman correlation test because the data were found to be non-normally distributed. The Spearman correlation coefficient obtained was 0.683 for social anxiety, and the correlation coefficient for loneliness was 1 with $p = 0.001$.

Table 1

Normality Test Results between Loneliness and Social Anxiety

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Kolmogorov-Smirnov</i>
	Sig. (p)
Loneliness	0.001
Social Anxiety	0.001

This indicates that $p < 0.05$, which means there is a relationship between loneliness and social anxiety among final-year students. From the results obtained, this study supports several previous studies, particularly the research by Maes et al. (2019), which found a strong relationship between loneliness and symptoms of social anxiety. The findings of this study corroborate earlier research, concluding that individuals, especially students working on their theses, experience higher levels of loneliness and social anxiety. This aligns with the theory proposed by Yustika and Istiqomah (2023), which states that loneliness has a significant positive relationship with social anxiety. The higher the level of loneliness an individual experiences, the higher their social anxiety.

Table 2

Correlation Test Results between Loneliness and Social Anxiety

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Loneliness	1.000	0.001
Social Anxiety	0.683	0.001

This is due to the individual's subjective perception of inadequate social relationships, even when surrounded by others. The researcher analyzed additional data regarding the resilience variable in relation to age and gender. The results indicate that age has a significant relationship with the loneliness of final-year students, as $p < 0.05$. The results of this study support the theory of Williams and Braun (William & Braun, 2019), which states that adolescents and young adults have the highest proportion of loneliness. This is because the young adulthood phase is often

characterized by identity exploration and unstable social relationships, increasing the risk of feeling lonely.

Table 3

Correlation Test Results between Loneliness and age gap

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Loneliness	16.51226	0.2	0.011
Age Gap	0.764	1	0.011

Furthermore, the researcher tested the differences in loneliness based on the gender of final-year students. The difference test was conducted using the Independent Sample T-test, comparing the total loneliness scores (the dependent variable) and gender as the independent factor divided into two groups: males and females. The obtained p-value indicates that $p < 0.05$, meaning there is a significant difference in loneliness among final-year students based on gender.

Table 4

Correlation Test Results between Loneliness and Gender

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Independent Sample T-test</i>				
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>sig</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Male	50	62.7	5.878	0.0017	0.004
Female	102	54.4			0.002

The results of this study are also consistent with the research by Maes (2019\), which conducted a meta-analysis finding that males tend to be lonelier than females, especially among young adults. This study indicates that men experience higher levels of loneliness. Research shows that men have a lower ability to establish intimate relationships and closeness compared to women. This is attributed to cultural norms and gender role stereotypes that make it difficult for men to express emotions and build deep connections (Fachrezy et al, 2022).

This study has several limitations. The participants involved in this research were very limited, which affects the variance and significance of the sample in the study. Additionally, during this research, the researcher was unable to distribute printed questionnaires to the subjects, limiting the optimal control of data distribution.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the correlation test, there is a positive and significant relationship between loneliness and social anxiety among final-year students. This means that the higher the level of loneliness felt by final-year students, the higher their level of social anxiety. Furthermore, additional analysis indicates a relationship between loneliness and age. Additionally, there are differences in loneliness based on gender, whether male or female.

Suggestions for future research interested in studying the variables of loneliness and social anxiety include collecting a larger number of respondents and ensuring a balanced number of male and female respondents. This aims to enrich the data analysis of the research.

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