

The Impact of Self-Disclosure on Academic Stress Among Final-Year College Students: A Qualitative Case Study

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ABSTRAK

This study employed a qualitative approach in the form of a case study to examine the process of self-disclosure among students and its influence on stress levels during their thesis completion. The research focused on 10 individual students, aiming to gain a deep understanding of their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and desires. Structured and in-depth interviews were conducted, along with non-participant observation techniques. The study found that self-disclosure played a significant role in students' stress levels, with stress and depression being predominant emotions due to various factors such as academic pressure and personal issues. The Johari Window model, which emphasizes the importance of self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships, provided a theoretical foundation for understanding the responses and reactions of students. Individual counseling was also explored as a supportive process for students, allowing them to enhance self-understanding and resolve problems. The findings highlight the significance of self-disclosure in fostering healthier interactions and creating a positive academic environment. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of self-disclosure and its implications for student well-being and academic success.

Keywords: self-disclosure; stress levels; students; case study; academic environment



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INTRODUCTION

Self-disclosure is an activity that entails the sharing of intimate feelings and information with others. There are two facets to self-disclosure: descriptive and evaluative. Descriptive self-disclosure refers to the act of revealing undisclosed personal facts to those around us. On the other hand, evaluative self-disclosure is the expression of an individual's perspectives or awareness concerning their feelings or personal opinions about someone they like or dislike (Morton as cited in Sears, Jonathan & Anne, 1985).

Self-disclosure represents an individual's ability to reveal information about themselves to others. There are two mechanisms associated with the effects of self-disclosure: first, venting negative feelings can provide a sense of relief. By revealing oneself, an individual cultivates the potential for trust, empathy, commitment, growth, self-acceptance, and friendship to emerge (Gainau, 2009). DeVito (1990:60) posits that self-disclosure is a form of communication that involves conveying information about oneself that is usually concealed, necessitating at least two people in the self-disclosure process. The term "self-disclosure" refers to the conscious impartation of information. This involves expressing how we interact with others in certain situations and relaying pertinent past information that can explain our present responses.

Individuals carry a diverse background, inclusive of issues and emotions that may confuse any student in their life journey, particularly postgraduate students. One of the common challenges in academic life is external demands and personal expectations. Academic factors can impose stress on students, such as the transition in learning methods from high school to college, academic assignments, attaining targeted grades, and the necessity to develop superior

self-control and critical thinking skills. Stress for final semester students encompasses writing scientific papers or a thesis.

Stress is a result of an individual's interaction with their environment perceived as threatening (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Selye, as cited in Santrock (2006), suggested that stress is the damage experienced by the body due to various demands imposed on it. Sarafino (2008) articulated that stress transpires when individuals encounter discrepancies between demands arising from their biological, psychological, and social systems and their surrounding environment. Alternatively, Taylor (1997) saw stress as a negative emotional experience that induces biochemical, physiological, cognitive, and behavioral changes in individuals, aimed at mitigating or adjusting to the stress-triggering event. Demanding situations are viewed as burdens or exceeding an individual's ability to cope. Stress can originate from within an individual, such as self-esteem and self-concept.

The cognitive appraisal of an event also contributes to stress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). This refers to how individuals interpret events in their life as threatening or dangerous and their beliefs about managing those events effectively. Stress can elicit physiological, psychological, and behavioral responses in individuals. However, positive responses can yield beneficial effects, such as growth, flexibility, adaptability, and productivity (Taylor, 1997). Stressful situations can also inspire and motivate positive actions, allowing individuals to maximize all their physical and psychological functions. However, if not managed adequately, stress can become a disturbance, prompting identical physical and psychological reactions.

Stress can emerge in the form of external demands faced by an individual, ultimately proving detrimental or causing various problems. Stress can also be defined as external pressure, tension, or disruption making someone feel uncomfortable. Another perspective is presented by Abdulghani (2008), who stated that stress can have both positive and negative impacts. Stress will have a positive effect if the pressure does not exceed an individual's tolerance or capacity. The positive impacts of stress on students include challenges for self-development and creativity. Negative effects of stress can include difficulties concentrating during lectures, a decrease in general interest, reduced motivation, and even maladaptive behavior (Arjanto, 2022). These threats can manifest as an incapacity and burden that exceeds an individual's capacity, for instance, difficulties in completing a thesis, feeling incapable of finishing the thesis, and experiencing delays in completing studies.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher utilized a qualitative approach in the form of a case study. A case study is a distinct phenomenon that occurs within a limited context, although the boundary between the phenomenon and the context may not always be clearly demarcated. The researcher focuses attention solely on the students as the subjects of the study, limiting the number to 10 individuals. By focusing on each individual, the researcher aims to gain a deep understanding of each subject. This study employed structured and in-depth interviews, which allowed the researcher to have guidelines in posing questions relevant to the researched topic, and used non-participant observation techniques, meaning that the researcher was involved in the research but was not actively involved in the environment where the research was conducted.

Self-disclosure, in this context, refers to the divulging of personal information through interpersonal communication. This includes sharing ideas, feelings, and fantasies, as well as revealing responses and reactions to specific situations that are typically concealed but communicated so others can understand what is thought, felt, and desired. The Johari Window model asserts that self-disclosure should accurately reflect an individual's psychological state

(Luft & Ingham, 1955). One significant aspect of social skills is self-disclosure, which is grounded in honesty and openness in conveying information.

Qualitative research allows researchers to explore and understand the richness, depth, and complexity of phenomena. A case study, as a specific form of qualitative research, enables the examination of the real-life context of a specific situation or phenomenon, offering deep insights into the case and illuminating the understanding of larger issues or theories (Yin, 2009). In the current study, the researcher aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the students, which is consistent with the goal of case study research. A limited number of participants can allow researchers to delve into each case deeply and thoroughly, leading to rich and detailed data (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

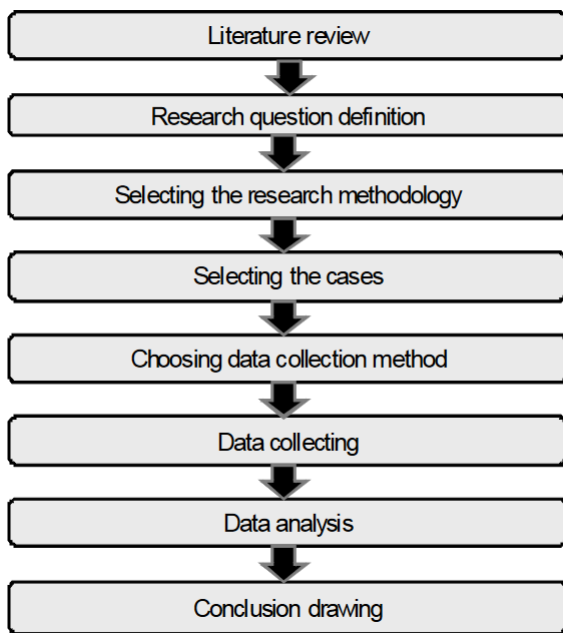


Figure 1. The Research Process for Case Studies

Self-disclosure involves revealing private and personal information to others. This can include divulging feelings, thoughts, desires, past experiences, and reactions to specific situations that are typically hidden (Derlega et al., 1993). According to the Johari Window model, self-disclosure should provide an accurate indication of an individual's psychological condition. This model emphasizes the importance of self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships and communication, suggesting that self-disclosure contributes to mutual understanding, trust, and intimacy in relationships (Luft & Ingham, 1955). The emphasis on honesty and openness in self-disclosure aligns with the ethical principles of respect for autonomy, honesty, and dignity in interpersonal interactions (Petronio, 2002). In this study, the researcher aimed to explore how students navigate the process of self-disclosure, focusing on their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and desires.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

When interacting in social life, the process of communication involves an exchange of self-related information and emotions between individuals. This correlates with a person's identity, feelings, and the conditions they are experiencing (Knapp, 2018). Self-disclosure can take place by discussing feelings, thoughts, and experiences related to the act of revealing oneself (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993). In descriptive self-disclosure, we portray

various facts about ourselves that others may not yet be aware of, such as our profession, place of residence, personal life, and so forth (Jourard, 1971). On the other hand, evaluative self-disclosure involves expressing personal opinions or feelings about specific individuals or situations, with the potential for anxiety resulting from excessive focus on negative perceptions, which then impact our emotions and lead to our being perceived differently by others (Chelune, 1979). This includes our thinking patterns and behavior when communicating with new individuals.

The method of self-disclosure serves to reveal information about a group or individual that may not be as free or the same as in other circumstances due to the limitations final year students must adhere to (Petronio, 2002). Furthermore, the character differences inherent in individuals result in variations in self-disclosure, as a person's feelings are not always positive (Wheless & Grotz, 1976). However, this can be used as a tool for self-control and self-reminder in conveying and sharing information (Sarafino & Smith, 2014). Group members can also learn from each other and share experiences about life, making the interviews conducted potentially more motivating and enhancing the quality of learning (Dindia & Allen, 1992).

Table 1. Individual Counseling Results Table1

No	Name	Forms of Emotion	Problem
1.	A	Depressed, saturated, and stressed	Personal thoughts, lecturers, thesis work
2.	R	Resignation, anxiety, stress	Spouse, parents, thesis
3.	F	Depression	Thesis, campus tuntuna
4.	MF	Lazy	Hindered due to position in the organization
5.	DP	Lack of enthusiasm	Family, economy, work
6.	NA	Stress, depression	Complicated by the campus, negative thoughts
7.	MA	Mind, stress	Economy, health
8.	DM	Pessimist	Shame karena friend is over
9.	NY	Stress, depression, difficulty thinking	Trauma, lecturers like to like, economicsmi
10.	RS	Indecisive, lack of confidence	Life pressures, economics, faculty

In line with the previously outlined objectives, this study aims to examine the influence of self-disclosure on the stress levels of students in the process of completing their thesis. According to the results of interviews conducted with 10 students, it was revealed that the emotional state experienced was overwhelmingly dominated by stress and depression, as the university prioritized the graduation of more senior cohorts (Beehr, Johnson, & Nieva, 1995). Another factor affecting stress levels is emotional regulation, which demonstrated that students were capable of handling stress as they were able to stabilize their emotions, thereby causing emotions to fluctuate in line with the students' personal issues (Gross, 2015).

The theoretical foundation of self-disclosure and the Johari window technique is a theory that elucidates responses or reactions to the current situation and provides information related to the past, useful for comprehending our current reactions (Luft, 1969). The Johari window is used to depict how an individual interacts with others, and it's represented as a "window"

composed of a four-cell matrix, each indicating an area of the self that is either open or hidden (Luft, 1970). One aspect related to human life is social interaction, where individuals adapt to one another (Hogan, 2018). The exploration of self-disclosure within this context allows an individual to maintain an emotional balance despite stressors, thus fostering healthier interactions and a positive academic environment.

Individual Counseling

Individual counseling embodies the relationship between a trained counselor and a client, centered on various aspects of the client's adjustment, development, or decision-making (Bordin, 1979). Therefore, individual counseling is the process of a professional personally providing support to the client in a direct environment, aiming to aid the client in enhancing self-understanding, changing behavior, developing potential in line with the decisions made, and assisting in resolving problems faced, so these issues can be overcome (Gelso & Carter, 1985).



Figure 2. Documentation of Individual Counseling

Individual counseling involves a personal relationship between a trained counselor and a client, focusing on various aspects of adjustment, development, and decision-making (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). This is a process of a professional (counselor) providing personal assistance to an individual who is facing problems, conducted through face-to-face interaction. The purpose is to aid the client in increasing understanding of themselves, changing behavior, developing potential in line with decisions made, and assisting in resolving problems faced, leading to problem-solving (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). According to Prayitno and Eman Amti, individual counseling involves counseling interviews by a professional (counselor) to an individual who is currently facing problems (Prayitno & Amti, 2004).

Self-disclosure

One of the most essential components of communication is the ability to reflect upon conscious experiences that shape one's perceptions, beliefs, and feelings about oneself (Devito, 2011). Self-disclosure, such as expressions about behaviors, attitudes, feelings, desires, motives, and relevant ideas, is a form of communication that allows an individual to provide personal information about themselves to others. According to Wheelless, Nesser, and McCroskey (1986), self-disclosure constitutes a component of self-reference communicated

verbally by individuals within small groups. On the other hand, Gainau (2009) defines self-disclosure as the act of providing accurate information about oneself. Consequently, self-disclosure is a form of communication that enables others to know an individual's true thoughts, desires, and feelings.

Devito (2011) also outlines several factors influencing self-disclosure. The first factor is the size of the group or audience, where self-disclosure is more likely to occur in smaller groups than in larger ones, particularly in dyadic environments. The second factor is the feeling of liking towards the person we are speaking with, encouraging us to open up to them, and not to people we dislike. The third factor is the dyadic effect, that is, the tendency to engage in self-disclosure when with others who also self-disclose. The fourth factor is competence, where individuals who are more competent are likely to engage in more self-disclosure. The fifth factor is personality, where individuals who are more extroverted and sociable are likely to engage in more self-disclosure. The sixth factor is the topic, where we tend to disclose more about work-related or hobby topics than more personal and negative ones. The final factor is gender, which is a crucial determinant in influencing self-disclosure. Self-disclosure serves five functions. It acts as a tool of expression to vent our feelings, a tool to clarify our thoughts by discussing issues we are facing with others, a tool to obtain social validation by observing others' reactions when we disclose ourselves, a tool of social control to state or conceal information about ourselves, and a tool to strengthen interpersonal relationships by sharing information and trusting each other (Cozby, 1973). Through self-disclosure, we can reduce stress levels by sharing feelings, both good and bad.

The Johari Window in Individual Counseling Process

The Johari Window, named after personality psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, builds upon the theory of self-disclosure. This theory reveals an individual's reactions or responses to current situations and provides information about past experiences that relate to understanding present responses (Luft, 1969). This technique necessitates openness to the environment to generate good responses. However, openness here does not mean detailing personal affairs but rather disclosing reactions to various similar events experienced. Every individual can know or not know themselves and others; thus, self-disclosure between individuals is required for mutual self-understanding and knowledge of others. Self-disclosure has two aspects: being open to others and being open for others. If both occur simultaneously, an open relationship between individuals can be formed. The Johari Window concept is realized in the form of a "window" consisting of four cells: open self, blind self, hidden self, and unknown self. The open self describes an individual who is open to themselves and others. The blind self is where the individual does not understand themselves, but others can. The hidden self refers to someone who can hide what they deem unnecessary to disclose to others, and this space is divided into over-disclosed and under-disclosed. Lastly, the unknown self is the individual's space that neither they nor others can recognize. The Johari Window technique can be applied in counseling to help individuals understand themselves and improve communication with others (Luft, 1969).

Social Interaction in Individual Counseling Process

Social interaction refers to relationships between two or more individuals, where one's behavior is influenced by another's behavior. Such behavioral changes occur through biological drives and responses among these individuals (Collins, 2014). The process of social interaction is reciprocal, with each individual involved in a comprehensive process influencing or triggering others' actions. Therefore, social interaction can be considered reciprocal behavior

where individuals adjust their behavior to others' actions. Social interaction can occur in various environments, such as physical, psychological, or spiritual environments. According to Woodworth as quoted by Gerungan (1981), there are four types of relationships between individuals and their environments: 1) individuals opposed to their environment, 2) individuals utilizing their environment, 3) individuals participating with their environment, and 4) individuals adapting to their environment. One environment related to humans is social interaction, where individuals mutually adapt to each other.

CONCLUSION

The interaction in social life and communication processes are highly influenced by an individual's ability to self-disclose. This ability involves discussing feelings, thoughts, experiences and presenting various facts about oneself, as well as expressing personal opinions or feelings about specific individuals or situations. The study shows that self-disclosure plays a crucial role in the stress levels of students, particularly those in the process of completing their thesis. Emotions such as stress and depression were prevalent due to academic pressures and the process of emotional regulation. Furthermore, the results indicate that using the Johari Window technique, individuals can enhance self-understanding and improve communication, effectively managing stressors and fostering healthier interactions in an academic environment. Within the context of individual counseling, a professional provides personal support to the client in a direct environment. This process is instrumental in helping the client increase self-understanding, change behavior, develop potential in line with decisions made, and resolve problems faced. Self-disclosure acts as a pivotal communication tool, enabling others to understand an individual's thoughts, desires, and feelings. It is further influenced by factors such as group size, likability, dyadic effect, competence, personality, topic, and gender. In conclusion, self-disclosure, facilitated through the Johari Window technique, plays a significant role in individual counseling, impacting stress management, emotional regulation, and social interaction. By improving self-understanding and communication, individuals can effectively handle stress, fostering healthier academic and social environments.

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