



The Influence of Social Support on the Duration of Thesis Completion among Physics Education Students

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Abstract

Thesis is a final assignment that students must complete as a prerequisite for graduation and to obtain a bachelor's degree at a university. This is a challenging task for most students, who must face numerous challenges and obstacles while completing the thesis within a predetermined one-semester timeframe. One factor that is believed to influence students in achieving their thesis is social support, whether from friends, parents, lecturers, or the university. This phenomenological study aims to investigate the influence of social support on the time it takes to complete the thesis of final semester students in Physics Education at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. Research data collection was conducted by administering a questionnaire to 10 final-semester students. Data analysis, which involved analytical reduction, began by identifying important statements from respondents' answers, determining core themes, and interpreting the essence of social support for the completion of the thesis. The study's results found that social support influences the completion of the thesis, as it provides enthusiasm, motivation, and support to students. Social support received by students, whether from friends, parents, or lecturers, offers various types of support, each with its own benefits. All three play a significant role in student life, despite differing types of social support. The positive impact of social support for final-semester students is that it boosts their enthusiasm for their thesis and increases their motivation. The adverse effect is that students become dependent on support from others and misinterpret social support as a social demand that final-semester students must have.

Keywords: Final semester students; social support; student obstacles; study period; thesis completion

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INTRODUCTION

Students play a crucial role in realizing the nation's ideals because they are considered individuals with high intellectual capacity. Students possess abilities developed since entering tertiary institutions, enabling them to meet the challenges and demands encountered there (Okolie et al., 2019). These demands include writing papers, reports, practicums, and other scientific works. When students reach the final stage of their study, they are required to complete a final assignment, known as a thesis. A thesis is a scientific paper that students must write as part of the final requirements for their academic education (Krumsvik, 2022). A thesis is generally developed based on empirical research or an extensive review of the literature. In most universities, students are expected to complete their thesis within one semester or approximately six months. However, because writing a thesis demands substantial effort, time, and concentration, as well as the ability to overcome various challenges, many students require more than the allotted period to complete it (Matin & Khan, 2017).

Several internal factors contribute to the extended duration of thesis completion, such as students' limited ability to articulate ideas in writing, insufficient academic skills,

and low interest in research (Aygün & Hacıoglu, 2022). In addition, external factors hinder progress, including difficulties obtaining data and literature, limited financial resources, and inadequate supervision by academic advisors. Other contributing factors include a mismatch between students' interests and their chosen field of study, excessive involvement in non-academic organizations, part-time employment, and uncertainty about post-graduation career prospects (Banda & Nzabahimana, 2021). In the Department of Physics Education at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, writing a thesis is an integral component of the learning process and a graduation requirement. Typically, students are expected to complete their thesis within two semesters, or approximately one year after registering it on their Study Plan Card (KRS). However, many physics education students require more time to complete their theses (Al-Kamzari & Alias, 2025). This delay often results from a range of difficulties encountered during the research and writing process.

Previous studies have identified several causes underlying such delays. Assem et al. (2023) found that a lack of motivation significantly hinders students' progress in completing their thesis. Likewise, Bekkouche et al. (2022) reported that thesis-related stress negatively affects students' overall well-being. The adverse consequences of this stress include mental and physical health issues such as anxiety, depression, fatigue, headaches, hypertension, and weakened immunity. Among the various factors influencing the duration of thesis completion, social support has been recognized as an important factor. Empirical studies have demonstrated that social support contributes to students' psychological well-being, both directly and indirectly (Brunsting et al., 2021). Similarly, Vidal et al. (2024) showed that students who receive adequate social support experience lower perceived stress levels, which, in turn, enhances their thesis-writing performance.

Social support refers to the presence of individuals who provide motivation, guidance, attention, and solutions when someone faces difficulties or obstacles in accomplishing a specific task (Jolly et al., 2021). However, to support this, it is necessary to examine the type and source of support an individual receives, as well as how the roles of support giver and recipient contribute to positive social support outcomes. According to Lessil (2023), social support can be categorized into five major aspects. First, emotional support entails expressing empathy, care, and concern for others. Second, appreciation support includes positive reinforcement, encouragement, and recognition of an individual's strengths or achievements. Third, instrumental support consists of direct actions or tangible assistance aimed at helping individuals solve problems, such as providing guidance or lending necessary resources. Fourth, informational support entails offering advice, motivation, or suggestions during challenging or stressful situations.

Finally, network support fosters a sense of belonging by helping individuals feel part of a particular group that shares common values or interests. Furthermore, social support varies in its effectiveness depending on both its source and type. As Vuong et al. (2023) suggest, different forms of support occupy distinct roles in influencing an individual's well-being. For instance, emotional support is often more effective when provided by individuals outside the family circle, who can offer fresh perspectives and reduced emotional bias. In contrast, instrumental support tends to be more beneficial when it comes from close family members, as they are usually better positioned to provide practical help and sustained assistance (Shin & Park, 2022).

Social support should be tailored to the recipient's specific context and characteristics. Inappropriate or poorly timed support may have negative consequences for students. To ensure effectiveness, it is essential to consider individual factors, including personality, social roles, cultural background, and potential sources of support. The recipient's ability to seek, direct, and sustain social support is also a critical component of the overall support process (Mejova & Lu, 2022). Research has further indicated that

friendships play an important role in enhancing individuals' mental well-being due to their voluntary and reciprocal nature (Güroğlu, 2022). Since peers often share similar experiences and challenges, they can provide meaningful assistance and empathy to one another throughout the thesis completion process (Kim et al., 2025).

In addition to the source and type of support, the timing of social support is crucial to its effectiveness. Support that is beneficial at one stage may not yield the same impact at another. For instance, individuals who experience job loss may initially attribute their circumstances to external factors, such as economic instability. Still, over time, they may develop self-doubt and require renewed emotional support to rebuild self-esteem. Furthermore, social support networks are unsustainable due to resource constraints and emotional fatigue (Cho et al., 2022). Excessive dependence, frustration, disappointment, or perceived insensitivity may arise as unintended effects of receiving support. Given its inherently complex and multidimensional nature, studying social support requires diverse methodological approaches and nuanced measurement frameworks that account for its sources, functions, and delivery mechanisms (Saxton & Wang, 2014). Based on the description above, the questions to be answered by respondents in this study are as follows: 1) What are the causes of the delay in completing a thesis, and do you think it is related to the social support received? 2) In an academic context, what forms of social support can be provided by peers, family, or lecturers to students completing a thesis?; and 3) What type of social support was most influential in helping you complete your thesis? What positive and negative impacts did you experience?

METHODS

General Background

This study aims to investigate the impact of social support on the time required to complete a final-semester thesis among physics education students at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The research employs a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research is a type of research that requires precision in analyzing data and research facts, which presents humans, both as individuals and in groups. This research examines the objects (humans, environment, programs, and processes) within society and social communities (Faeni et al., 2025). This research was conducted from mid-May to mid-June 2023, covering one month.

Participant

Participants in this study were students of the Physics Education Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, selected through purposive sampling. Purpose sampling is a sampling technique based on the consideration that the most helpful information will be obtained from those who can provide insight and an in-depth understanding of the research problem (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). The following criteria were used to select participants in this study: final-year students of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta who are writing their theses and alumni of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta with experience in thesis writing. Furthermore, the participants in this study were ten students from the Physics Education Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, some of whom had already graduated as alumni. The following presents a profile of the participants in this phenomenological study, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of Participants in this Study

No.	Name	Age (year)	Year of Entry	Gender	
				Male	Female
1.	YM	22	2019	-	1
2.	RAP	25	2016	1	-
3.	PK	22	2019	-	1
4.	RYU	23	2019	-	1
5.	IAM	24	2017	1	-
6.	SMS	23	2018	-	1
7.	SZMR	22	2019	1	-
8.	MFA	22	2019	1	-
9.	RR	22	2019	1	-
10.	MLSAH	24	2017	1	-

Instruments and Procedures

In this phenomenological study, an open-ended questionnaire was employed to explore the perceived influence of social support on the duration of thesis completion among final-semester Physics Education students at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The questionnaire was distributed to ten eligible participants via an online link and was completed within four days. Furthermore, to facilitate participants' completion of the open-ended questionnaire, a guide was prepared. This guide contained an introductory section, the research objectives, contextual information about the study, and a list of questions to be answered by the participants. The instrument consisted of 14 main questions designed to explore participants' perceptions of social support and its influence on the duration of thesis completion. The initial section of the guide collected demographic information, including the participant's name, student identification number, study program, and year of study.

The subsequent section presented the core questions that addressed the study's central themes. Examples of the questions included: "Do you feel you received adequate social support during your thesis process?", "Do you think social support influences the time required to complete your thesis?", "What types of social support were most helpful?", and "Are there any negative aspects of receiving social support from peers, family, or lecturers?" Other questions examined the forms of social support perceived as most influential, their effects on motivation and productivity, and participants' reflections on how this support affected their emotional state during thesis writing. The final question asked participants to provide suggestions or recommendations for students currently completing their thesis, regarding the importance of seeking and maintaining social support.

Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed using the analytical reduction method. The process began by organizing the qualitative data and identifying key ideas and themes from participant responses to construct a conceptual model explaining the observed phenomena (Hossain et al., 2024). The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, participant responses were saved and reformatted from Excel to Word for easier interpretation. The responses were then read several times to identify central ideas and recurring patterns. Next, textual descriptions were developed to capture the essence of participants' experiences, followed by structural descriptions that reflected their reactions to and interpretations of the phenomenon. The final stage involved synthesizing these textual and structural descriptions to capture the essence of each experience. The stages of the analytical reduction process are summarized schematically in Figure 1.

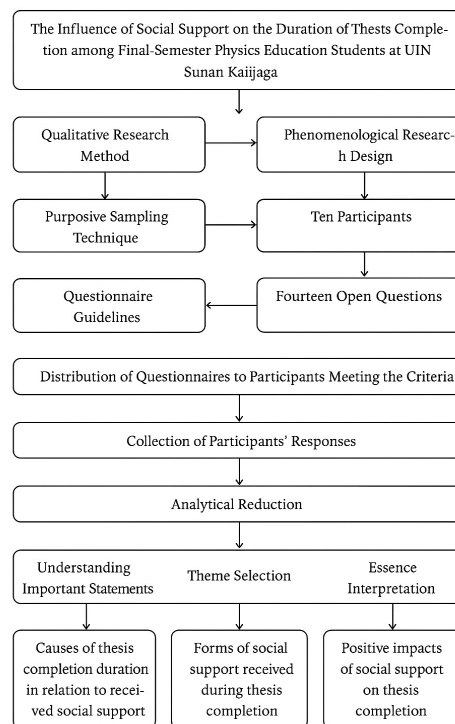


Figure 1. Scheme of Phenomenological Research Methods

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

Thesis Completion Time and Its Relationship to Social Support Received by Final Semester Students

Writing a thesis is an essential academic requirement for final-semester students to earn a bachelor's degree. Generally, students are expected to complete their thesis within one or two semesters. However, many exceed this period. This delay can be attributed to both internal and external factors. As one participant (IAM) stated, *“What often causes delays is the difficulty in finding research sources, including data, respondents, and relevant references”*. Another participant (PK) noted similar obstacles during the data collection process: *“When conducting preliminary research at schools, some respondents, such as teachers, faced difficulties in answering interview questions, which delayed my progress”*. Likewise, DPS remarked that the unavailability of respondents also hindered timely completion. PK further noted that supervisors were sometimes difficult to reach, thereby extending the duration of the thesis. In addition to supervision issues, environmental and social factors also played a role. As expressed by MLSAH and RR, *“The social environment is like a second world beyond oneself. A supportive environment fosters enthusiasm to complete the thesis. However, if the environment is unsupportive, filled with distractions such as social invitations or leisure activities, it can hinder progress”*.

One participant emphasized that *“a less supportive environment can easily distract us with various unrelated activities.”* In addition to environmental factors, financial constraints also affect the pace of thesis completion. As RAP noted, *“If finances are insufficient, some students tend to finish their thesis more quickly, while others take longer.”*

It really depends on the individual.” Internal factors such as low motivation, lack of enthusiasm, poor time management, and limited interest in research were also found to contribute to delays. Ultimately, the ability to complete a thesis depends on each student’s self-management skills. As expressed by YM, RAP, SZMR, and MLSAH, *“The time it takes to finish a thesis depends on each individual. The best motivator is yourself, like in a motorcycle race, the engine matters, but the rider’s skill and determination determine the outcome”*. This study also revealed that social support plays a varying role in influencing thesis completion time. According to YM, *“I believe social support matters because students who do not receive it tend to lack motivation to start or continue their thesis.”* Similarly, SMS stated, *“Those with strong social support have higher enthusiasm to finish their thesis. In contrast, students who lack it often feel confused or demotivated when facing obstacles, leading to overthinking.”* Based on these findings, the relationship between thesis completion duration and social support can be illustrated schematically in Figure 2.

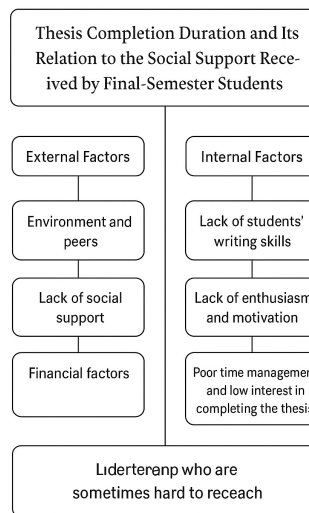


Figure 2. Factors Affecting the Length of Time Required to Complete a Final Semester Physics Education Student's Thesis

Forms of Social Support Received by Final Semester Students When Completing Their Thesis

Social support is one of the external factors that hinders students' completion of their thesis. Encouragement, motivation, and moral support are forms of emotional support that students can receive during the thesis-writing process. This is similar to the opinion expressed by PK, SZMR, MLSAH, and SMS that *“Motivation, support, and encouragement in working on and completing my thesis are beneficial in completing my thesis, providing support and inviting me to work together with targets or making challenges to be more enthusiastic, support such as advice and motivation is also a supporting factor for my thesis because sometimes there are times when students reach a level of fatigue, both physically and psychologically”*. The provision of social and emotional support takes the form of attention from friends, family, and lecturers. According to MLSAH, *“The most important social form is health concern, because final semester students tend to put their health aside to achieve graduation”*. Another example of social emotional support is the subject listening to the problems faced by students. According to SMS, *“Family and friends who took the time to listen to the stories of the obstacles I faced”*.

Collaborative support emerged as one form of social assistance that students received during the thesis-writing process. This finding aligns with the statements of RR

and MFA, which emphasized the importance of student collaboration. *“Fellow thesis writers who seek an academic discussion environment and engage in conversations about the systematics of thesis completion while maintaining a shared goal of graduation.”* Collaborative support also includes exchanging ideas and offering mutual challenges that encourage academic progress. As MLSH explained, *“Friends who invite us to exchange ideas and challenge each other give us additional motivation to complete our thesis.”* Another manifestation of collaborative support is mutual feedback, in which students exchange information and insights regarding their theses. MFA described this process as follows: *“A friend who invited me to exchange information regarding the thesis created a positive effect for both of us. Those whom I have shared information now understand more clearly about their thesis.”*

In addition to collaborative support, students benefit from instrumental support, which entails tangible assistance, such as research resources, data, respondents, and relevant literature. IAM highlighted this by stating, *“The provision of research resources, such as data sources, respondents, library references, and other needs, is the form of social support I received from others.”* Financial assistance is another example of instrumental support that significantly influences the thesis process. As YM, PK, IAM, and SMS jointly noted, *“Financial support is essential for printing and research costs. Students with limited financial resources often have to work part-time, which can distract them from focusing on their thesis.”* The different types of social support identified in this study are summarized schematically in Figure 3.

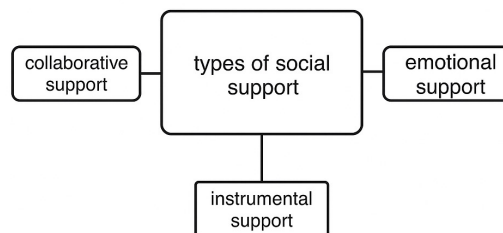


Figure 3. Types of Social Support That Final Semester Physics Education Students Can Receive

Positive and Negative Impacts of Social Support on the Completion of Physics Education Students' Theses

Students inevitably experience various forms of influence and benefit as they complete their theses. The positive influence of social support is reflected in the encouragement and motivation it provides. As YM stated, *“It is influential because final-year students truly need social support from friends, family, professors, and those around them. This indirectly increases their enthusiasm and motivation to work. Being alone is not frightening, but you still need others”*. However, while external support is beneficial, intrinsic motivation remains the most critical factor in completing the task promptly. This was emphasized by RAP, who explained that *“Students who receive social support should balance it with internal motivation. Ultimately, finishing a thesis depends on the student. Even with support from others, if they lack motivation, it is the same as failing to graduate.”*

Another important form of support involves providing advice and emotional reassurance when students experience physical or psychological exhaustion. As SZMR observed, *“Support in the form of advice and motivation is essential because students sometimes reach a stage of physical and mental fatigue. Family support, through prayers and words of encouragement, is the main source of energy for students.”* Beyond motivation, social support also helps reduce anxiety and feelings of hopelessness. PK explained, *“Through social support, we can express and share our despair and anxiety*

with others, which helps reduce these negative emotions.” Similarly, RYU stated that “Encouraging words, practical help, and reassurance during difficult times foster hope and reduce anxiety.”

From this study, the most common answer was that social support influences students' motivation to complete their theses. Students who receive social support are more motivated to work on their theses. As stated by the MFA, “Because motivation from within oneself and support from various parties are essential in carrying out the thesis process”. Then, those who still have the same opinion as the statement above are SMS who argue, “Social support plays a significant role in completing a thesis because during the thesis period, social interactions and interactions begin to diminish, unlike during college. Therefore, adequate social support can provide support and motivation, fostering enthusiasm for completion”. The positive impact felt from social support is that students do not feel alone. There is a place to share, discuss, and help in solving problems, as conveyed by SMS that, “It is a place for discussion and information exchange. Because it means they no longer feel alone; there is a place to share stories and find solutions to their problems. Even if there is no solution, at least there is someone to listen, which will help reduce overthinking”.

Ultimately, social support can provide the positive energy and confidence needed to complete a thesis. This aligns with MLSAH's statement: “Because social support provides positive energy in carrying out an activity, and the support of others will strengthen the belief and efforts made are correct.” A supporting statement was also made by the MFA that, “Because with support, we remember our goals from home. Motivation for the future, what needs to be achieved, and what has been planned”. In addition to the positive impacts experienced by students, receiving social support in completing their theses is associated with negative effects. One negative impact of social support is the misinterpretation of social support as a demand that final-semester students must accept. This aligns with the statement made by the IAM that “This social support may be misinterpreted as social demands.” Another potential outcome of social support is dependence on others in completing a thesis. This aligns with the MLSAH statement, “The negative aspect is when you depend on the support of others.” Social support also appears to foster competition among friends completing their theses and to elicit negative comments. As RYU explained, “There are times when you ask for support, but your friends instead complain about your fate and also say bad things”. Based on the statements above, the positive and negative effects of social support on the time required to complete a thesis can be organized according to the scheme shown in Figure 4.

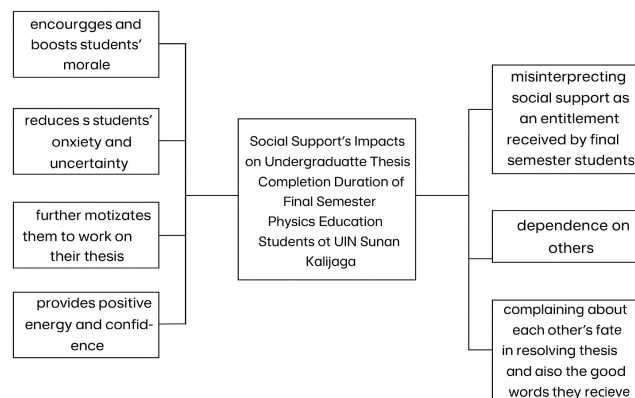


Figure 4. The impact of social support on the length of time it takes for a final semester student to complete their thesis

Discussion

Writing a thesis is a mandatory academic requirement that students must fulfill before obtaining a bachelor's degree. Throughout this process, many students experience increased stress from the demands of completing their theses, a stress that is often exacerbated by social comparisons with peers who have completed theirs earlier (Cardwell et al., 2024). Final-semester Physics Education students at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta are no exception. A combination of internal and external factors influences the duration of thesis completion. Internal factors include limited academic writing skills, anxiety, low enthusiasm and motivation, and ineffective time management. External factors include limited access to supervisors, financial constraints, peer influence, and the surrounding academic environment. Lin et al. (2015) found that prolonged thesis completion was primarily caused by decreased student motivation, anxiety, limited availability of relevant literature, poor writing skills, and the absence of a structured consultation schedule with supervisors. Similarly, Al Izza & Lailiyah (2024) reported that delays were often associated with health and psychological problems, inadequate guidance and reference materials, an unsupportive environment, and insufficient academic competence. Given these circumstances, social support emerged as a potentially significant factor influencing the duration of thesis completion among students.

The final semester of physics education at UIN Sunan Kalijaga was associated with higher enthusiasm among students who received social support to complete their theses. Conversely, those who received less social support were less enthusiastic about working on their theses. Another finding was that social support helped students feel less anxious and confused when facing problems by reducing their sense of isolation. This finding is also consistent with other research showing that factors that accelerate thesis completion include support from close friends or family (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Social support consists of four components: emotional support, appreciation, instrumental support, and informational support (Lin et al., 2015). In the context of thesis completion, acceptable social support includes emotional, instrumental, informational, and collaborative support. Emotional social support can take the form of empathy, encouragement, or support from friends, family, or advisors.

Instrumental social support can include helping students find information or references, organizing schedules, and providing financial assistance. Informational social support provides information and knowledge about the thesis topic or material. Informational social support is important for helping students deepen their understanding of the thesis topic, reduce confusion, and complete the thesis. This helps students feel calm and better prepared for their final project. Collaborative social support can include invitations to collaborate for mutual benefit. During the thesis writing process, students will inevitably experience a lack of social support, or even a complete absence of it. This can impact students' mental and psychological health, leading to illnesses such as stress, anxiety, burnout, and even depression. Lack of social support can increase the risk of chronic stress (Vidal et al., 2024). Adequate social support can play a crucial role in helping students overcome challenges and obstacles that arise during the thesis writing process.

Students must be able to appreciate and utilize the advice, guidance, and support provided by advisors, peers, and family members. The extent to which a person receives and perceives social support depends on the source and type of support provided (Melrose et al., 2015). Students experience many benefits from social support, including encouragement and morale boosting, reduced anxiety, increased self-confidence, and a space to share, discuss, and help solve problems. This is in line with Dupont et al. (2015), who found a positive relationship between social support and student thesis completion.

Students who received high levels of social support were more optimistic about their present and future, more skilled at problem-solving, and experienced lower levels of stress and anxiety (Sabouripour & Roslan, 2015). However, it is important to recognize that the use of social support also has negative aspects, such as misinterpreting social support as a social demand that final-semester students must accept, increasing dependence on others, fostering competition among friends completing their theses, and receiving negative comments.

CONCLUSION

Social support has been identified as coming from peers, relatives, family members, and lecturers. This support manifests itself in various forms, including emotional, instrumental, informational, and collaborative support. Internal factors contributing to delays in thesis completion may include low motivation, ineffective time management, and limited academic competence. Conversely, external factors include inadequate facilities, such as libraries, journals, and research software, as well as insufficient social support. Adequate social support provides substantial benefits in overcoming challenges, reducing stress, increasing motivation, and accelerating research progress, thereby reducing the overall time required to complete a thesis. Positive impacts of social support include increased enthusiasm, reduced anxiety and hopelessness, and increased motivation to complete academic tasks. However, some negative effects have also been observed, including increased dependence on others and pressure to meet external expectations when receiving support.

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