# Psychological state and support needs in promoting the well-being of English as second language students

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## ABSTRACT

Ensuring students' psychological well-being is critical to their academic success and overall growth. The study examines students' psychological challenges to identify the type of assistance that the English Department at Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM), Indonesia, should provide. This is done to reduce negative feelings that may be affecting their motivation to excel in English class. The study employs quantitative analysis for identifying statistical trends while also incorporating qualitative data to clarify the underlying causes of these trends through a two-phase data collection strategy. During the first phase, a survey was distributed to all English major students. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather information in the form of narratives or experiences that participants believed were relevant to the issues discussed. The study reveals that negative emotions significantly impact the well-being of ESL students, with linguistic barriers and familial restraints being common factors. It is imperative that the department recognizes the fundamental role of emotional well-being in shaping students' academic trajectories and advocates for holistic approaches that address both psychological and educational needs. This section concludes with actionable recommendations for institutions, including the adoption of adaptive coping strategies and the implementation of comprehensive care procedures.

**Contribution/ Originality:** The study examines the students' psychological challenges to identify the type of assistance that the institution should provide. This research not only fills the existing gaps in the literature but also explores the importance of understanding learners' well-being and targeted interventions addressing linguistic deficits and the emotional and psychological dimensions of language learning.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. The Background of the Study

The increasing number of English as a Second Language (ESL) students in educational institutions across Indonesia highlights the importance of addressing their psychological support needs. These students often face challenges beyond academic difficulties, including navigating the complexities of adapting to a new language and culture. Additionally, issues related to language proficiency may impact their psychological well-being, influencing their success in both academic and social contexts.

At the University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM), an English is an unintended choice for most upper-secondary graduates who are literally uninterested in studying at the English Department. Initial results revealed a lack of motivation to pursue academic endeavors. Research revealed many students choose to study English because

of parental or familial expectations, rather than personal desire or passion. As a result, learning English is typically characterized by serious emotional, academic, anxiety, and low self-esteem, which led to a significant impact on motivation (Huang, 2017; Marsh, Pekrun, Guo, Hattie, & Karin, 2023). The unmatched expectations can create a stark contrast between students' own identity and parental values, resulting in a complex emotional landscape.

Family expectations have a substantial impact on university students' choice of subjects of study, often leading them to pursue occupations that are misaligned with their preferences. These decisions may have significant ramifications for students' emotional well-being and overall life satisfaction. According to Dang (2023), students who conform to family expectations frequently experience stress and disappointment as their academic routes diverge from their personal interests. This imbalance not only stifles individual growth but can also suppress society's innovative potential. According to Ferrante (2017), when students pursue specialties that do not align with their fundamental motivations, they lose true interest, which can lead to a decline in workplace creativity and innovation. As these graduates enter professional environments without passion for their work, social values may shift toward prioritizing stability over creativity and personal fulfillment. Finally, this pattern raises concerns about the future landscape of innovation, implying a potential halt in social progress due to misaligned educational choices influenced by family expectations (Ferrante, 2017). Addressing these dynamics is critical to creating an environment that fosters paths motivated by passion, which is required to develop a vibrant and innovative society.

In addition, the situation described above is exacerbated by the fact that the academic environment often prioritizes numerical assessments over genuine linguistic mastery. Poedjiastutie and Oliver (2017) assert that students frequently perceive their academic requirements as overwhelming, resulting in a withdrawal from the educational experience. The disconnection impedes linguistic proficiency and diminishes intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, social challenges emerge when some students experience feelings of isolation or judgment from their peers due to varying levels of English proficiency. According to Jin et al. (2014), even for students who possess excellent English skills and whose parents place significant emphasis on English education, they frequently encounter the burden of increased peer expectations, which may complicate their social interactions and diminish their sense of belonging.

An illustration depicts the negative emotions often experienced by English students in their first, junior, and senior academic years. Negative emotions must be handled to ensure that students are supported and engaged, hence preventing feelings of loneliness, indifference, dropout, and suicide. Department chairs and mostly individual lecturers took the initiative to discuss with students after confronting difficulty in handling intricate queries. In addition, the faculty was insufficiently equipped to handle the scenarios. Upon discovering the issue of late graduation, the faculty staff promptly decided to document the information and reach out to the students to facilitate the completion of the program. At present, there is an absence of a formal evaluation system designed to assist students who are facing considerable levels of anxiety, pressure, fear, and other adverse emotions.

In this context, understanding the psychological support needs of English students is critical. Recent research has underscored the importance of targeted interventions tackling linguistic deficits and addressing the emotional and psychological dimensions of language learning (Li, 2022; Li & Zhang, 2024). Types of support identified in the literature include peer support systems, mentorship programs, focused language learning strategies, and the integration of culturally responsive teaching pedagogies. Moreover, emotional intelligence and resilience-building practices have been developed as components in reducing anxiety and enhancing the overall learning experience (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011; Romanelli, Cain, & Smith, 2006). Different studies have increasingly recognized the necessity of integrating psychological support systems within educational frameworks to improve resilience and enhance the overall learning experience.

Key themes have been reported within the existing literature surrounding the psychological support needs of ESL students. For example, language barriers significantly contribute to feelings of helplessness and alienation, which impact academic performance and social interactions. Research on understanding psychological needs is very popular

in Western contexts where many international students pursue master's or doctoral programs. The differences in academic cultures and education systems between home and destination countries require students to navigate research and many experiences. This may affect the mental health and well-being of students. In Indonesian contexts, research on understanding mental health and academic well-being is underrepresented.

Therefore, this research primarily addresses the following research questions:

1) Do students perceive negative emotions as an obstacle to their motivation for learning English?
2) What psychological support needs does the English Department provide to reduce negative emotions?

### 1.2. Significance of the Research

The significance of these results lies in their implications for teaching practice and contributions to broader discussions about inclusivity and emotional well-being in educational settings. By underscoring the interconnectedness of psychological support and language acquisition, this review demonstrates the necessity for teachers to integrate emotional intelligence and resilience-building strategies within pedagogical frameworks.

As language students navigate their journeys, the emotional dimensions of learning must be prioritized alongside linguistic development to enable a well-rounded educational experience. Restating the topic and scope, this review has addressed the various types of psychological support needs for English students with a focus on reducing anxiety. A range of intervention strategies have been explored, including those from teachers and educational service providers, as well as innovative teaching practices and strategic institutional mitigation of situations. Meanwhile, the importance of individualized approaches that consider the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students has been reported. The gaps identified in the current literature call for a deeper understanding of specific strategies and interventions to meet varied needs.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The journey of learning a new language is fraught with challenges, and anxiety can often manifest as a significant barrier to acquisition and academic success for English learners (ELs). Anxiety in language learning is particularly relevant due to the pressures faced in mastering vocabulary and grammar, as well as interaction and social expectations. Existing literature has reported various sources of anxiety, including fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and the linguistic challenges posed by unfamiliar phonetics and syntax (Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre, 2017). Moreover, the implications of anxiety extend beyond academic performance, affecting self-esteem, motivation, and social interaction, creating a cycle that entrenches students in struggles (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002).

A growing body of literature emphasizes the importance of addressing these psychological needs through targeted support systems (Cohen & McKay, 2020; Deci & Ryan, 2011; Repper & Carter, 2011; Zhou et al., 2020). Programs that integrate social-emotional learning within the curriculum have shown promise in helping students develop coping mechanisms, enhance resilience, and improve overall well-being (Herrera & Martínez-Alba, 2022; Lau & Shea, 2022). Additionally, training focused on emotional support strategies is critical in equipping teachers to assist students in managing anxiety and building positive identities (Khalilii, Tahriri, & Ghorbanpour, 2015). However, gaps remain in the provision of adequate mental health resources for ESL students.

### 2.1. Psychological Support Needs

The exploration of psychological support needs for English students to reduce anxiety has evolved significantly over the past few decades. Initially, research primarily focused on the deleterious effects of foreign language anxiety on performance. According to Syahrunnisa, Atmowardoyo, and Sunra (2023), language anxiety could deter participation and reduce overall language proficiency, primarily due to fear of negative evaluation and communication

apprehension. As this understanding grew, there was a shift toward identifying different methods to mitigate anxieties through supportive classroom environments.

In the mid-2010s, research began emphasizing the importance of teacher and peer support in alleviating anxiety. For instance, Zhou, Liu, and Guo (2023); Dogan, Dogan, and Dogan (2023) reported that increased teacher support correlated with high self-efficacy, leading to reduced levels of anxiety. Similarly, empirical work by (Wang, Liu, & Wang, 2023) explored specific interventions, including mindfulness practices, showing the necessity for a more holistic method of psychological support. By the late 2010s and into the present, research has investigated innovative instructional methodologies such as Task-Based Language Teaching and flipped classrooms, stating their effectiveness in simultaneously enhancing language acquisition and decreasing anxiety (Al Nuaimi, 2024; Wang et al., 2023). These newer frameworks explore the therapeutic aspects of environments through technological integration and collaborative learning. Research is expanding these discussions to include the impacts of online learning formats, where presentations can empower introverted students by reducing anxiety during interactions (Mishu, Mohammed, Hakami, & Chowdhury, 2023; H. Zhao, 2022). Therefore, the trajectory shows a transition from recognizing language anxiety as a barrier to actively implementing multifaceted psychological support strategies to facilitate language learning.

The second cluster of psychological support for English students is mitigating anxiety, particularly in speaking contexts where fear of evaluation can significantly affect performance. A prominent theme in the literature is the role of teacher and peer support in enhancing self-efficacy, which reduces anxiety levels. The adoption of supportive instructional practices, such as positive reinforcement and improving a collaborative classroom environment, allows students to report lower levels of speaking anxiety and higher self-efficacy toward language abilities (Dogan et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). Furthermore, peer interaction and support have been recognized as important components in alleviating anxiety. Cohorts of students who engage in supportive peer networks often experience reduced levels of anxiety during oral presentations to enhance performance (Chen, 2022; Russell, 2020). Another significant area pertains to the implementation of innovative teaching methodologies, such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and flipped classrooms, in reducing anxiety by promoting active participation and allowing students to develop language skills in a less intimidating environment (Al Nuaimi, 2024; Dogan et al., 2023). The integration of technology, such as automatic feedback systems, is also addressed, where digital tools can provide students with the necessary practice and reassurance, contributing to lower anxiety levels associated with foreign language learning (Chen, 2022; Russell, 2020). Despite these advances, gaps remain in the understanding of specific psychological support interventions on individual differences, particularly among diverse demographic backgrounds. Moreover, further research is required to explore the long-term impacts of online learning environments on anxiety among introverted students since recent results suggest a positive correlation between online presentations and reduced anxiety (Zhao & Yang, 2023). These inquiries are essential for informing teachers and policymakers on effective strategies to create inclusive learning environments that cater to the psychological needs of all English students (Syahrunnisa, Atmowardoyo, & Sunra, 2023; Zhao, 2022).

### *2.2. The Key Focus of this Research*

The well-being of students has become a fundamental aspect within higher education, particularly as universities strive to address psychological demands. Institutional initiatives have increasingly improved well-being through various strategies aimed at creating supportive environments. These initiatives are particularly relevant in English programs, where the nature of the research can create unique stressors. Baik, Larcombe, and Brooker (2019) conducted research that emphasized the need for universities to actively include students in decision-making processes regarding mental health initiatives. The results suggested that the effectiveness of initiatives improved when students were included in the design of support programs to address the challenges.

The research of U-flourish by King et al. (2021) presents fundamental information on the mental health needs of students entering university. Baseline results show that a significant proportion of students experience mental health problems, enabling universities to implement specific interventions. Specifically, among students enrolled in English curricula, programs are designed to incorporate mental health literacy into the curriculum to equip students with the necessary tools for self-care and resilience. Fernández et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review of interventions based on the environment promoting mental health in universities. The results highlight the importance of personalized interventions that consider the unique environment and culture of each institution. The adaptability of these strategies is beneficial for English research programs, which may vary in structure and method.

Seppälä et al. (2020) investigated more specific interventions aimed at promoting mental health and psychological prosperity among university students. The randomized controlled trial reported the effectiveness of well-being interventions, such as mindfulness and emotional regulation training. The implementation of these programs could improve coping strategies, promoting a more balanced academic experience. Worsley, Pennington, and Corcoran (2022) conducted a systematic review to evaluate the evidence surrounding mental health interventions. In this context, peer support networks and well-being programs contributed significantly to improving mental health outcomes. In collaborative work, peer networks can provide critical emotional support amid the pressures of academic life.

The variety of institutional initiatives and collaboration strategies aimed at improving well-being demonstrates a committed response to the needs of university students. By incorporating various research, educational institutions can continue to refine different methods to support mental health effectively, particularly within English research, where the integration of initiatives promotes a truly supportive academic environment.

Based on the description above, this research examined English proficiency levels and student-teacher relationships. The other aspect that is considered critical is institutional support. First, diverse levels of English proficiency are a critical area, particularly when globalization increases the diversity of populations in educational institutions. The knowledge of English significantly affects academic performance and social interactions, influencing general well-being. Students with greater knowledge of English tend to obtain better academic results and are more comfortable in course inclusion, participating in discussions, and collaborating with peers (Huang, Kern, & Oades, 2022). In contrast, students with limited competence may have difficulty meeting academic needs, leading to high stress levels and a decrease in self-esteem (Hyseni & Hoxha, 2018; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Stallman, 2010).

Second, the quality of student-teacher relationships is essential in the formation of well-being and academic results. Research has shown that solid and positive connections between students and teachers lead to increased well-being. According to García-Moya (2020) promoting the connection in relationships contributes to the well-being of students, emphasizing the need to cultivate favourable environments. This relational quality is particularly evident concerning the perception of educational experiences, which can influence overall mental health and academic motivation.

Zheng (2022) stated that teachers' interpersonal behaviors play a mediating role in promoting students' well-being. Therefore, effective communication and genuine care from teachers can significantly improve student outcomes. These studies highlight the importance of nurturing quality relationships within educational environments to enhance students' perceived well-being and motivation for school performance. Investing in the development of these relationships should be a priority for teachers to optimize students' emotional and academic success.

The institution should be able to figure out how to improve the most important part of learning by looking at linguistic understanding and relationships between students and teachers. Putting in place all-around programs that encourage the dynamics of student support will help students do better in school, feel better emotionally and mentally, and meet their overall development goals.

According to Self-Determination Theory SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2012), this study is based on a comprehensive framework for understanding how motivation is influenced by the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are unmet, such as when students feel worried, alone, or inadequate, they may lose their motivation to learn (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In the context of learning English as a Second Language (ESL), negative emotions like fear of failure, embarrassment, or lack of confidence can hinder students' natural motivation and engagement. This directly relates to the first research question, which explores how emotions impact motivation to learn.

The study also uses Social Cognitive Theory, Bandura and National Institute of Mental Health (1986) to get a deeper understanding of this topic. Specifically, it examines the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to students' confidence in their own abilities to succeed. Individuals with low self-efficacy tend to avoid tasks and experience higher levels of anxiety (Bandura, 2015), but psychological support systems like teacher support, peer teamwork, and family involvement can help (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2022). This framework helps answer the second study question by showing the different types of support emotional, social, and instructional that can make students stronger and more motivated.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study's mixed-methods methodology is based on these theories. They assist with both the quantitative examination of patterns in emotional experiences and the qualitative study of students' stories. By integrating emotional health into these psychological frameworks, the study aims to present the English Department with suggestions on how to establish comprehensive support systems that promote both academic success and mental health.

Therefore, mixed methods improve the richness of data and facilitate a more holistic understanding of phenomena by integrating various perspectives. This multifaceted method is essential in fields such as public administration and social sciences, where problems are often complex and multifactorial (Belardinelli & Mele, 2020; Tashakkori, Johnson, & Teddlie, 2020).

### 3.1. Research Setting, Participants, and Instrument

The University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM) offers two distinct programs: English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Teacher Candidates, also known as English Education (ED). ESP is taught to all freshmen enrolled at UMM, where English is learned for specific purposes such as English for mathematics, agriculture, and mechanical engineering. Meanwhile, in English Education, the graduates are projected to be English teachers at primary and secondary school levels. Surprisingly, after completion of the study, students on average were not at the level of English required for teaching.

This research adopts two phases of data collection. In the first phase, a survey was distributed to all UMM English major students using purposive sampling. It involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics or qualities that align with the study's objectives. The participants are students who have faced English learning challenges for at least two years and are willing to complete a survey. A survey is considered effective for gathering large amounts of data by using a set of questions that provide space for participants' answers, which are then used to compile information. Fifty-three students, comprising 32 females and 21 males, completed the survey.

In the second phase, in-depth data were obtained through the semi-structured method of interviewing participants using convenient sampling. Students voluntarily provided personal information, such as an email address or mobile number, to continue interviews. There were 10 students who were invited to interview after fulfilling the initial questionnaire regarding perception of stress, burnout, semi-structured hopelessness, frustration, tiredness, inability to sleep soundly, lack of concentration, indifference, anger, crying with no reasons, and other signs of being

distressed when learning English. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain information in the form of stories or experiences that participants felt related to the issues raised. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa if the resource persons asked to s.

### 3.2. Data Analysis and Results

Likert-scale responses (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) were converted into numerical values (5 to 1), and the frequency (%) of each response was calculated per question to analyze the quantitative or survey results. Thematic analysis was presented for qualitative results.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Quantitative Results

Quantitative data were divided into four categories, namely: academic psychological needs, student-teacher relationships, perceived institutional support, and perceived psychological well-being. Each is presented in the following concurrent order.

### 4.1.1. First, the Key Findings for Academic Psychological Needs Category Show That

- Stress & Motivation: 40% of students often feel stressed or struggle with motivation.
- Family Influence: 60% agree or strongly agree that there is family support, but 50% also feel pressure from family expectations.
- Academic struggles: Half of students (50%) report difficulties keeping up with coursework.

The following table summarizes the results.

Table 1 presents academic psychological needs.

**Table 1.** Academic psychological needs.

| Question | Strongly agree (%) | Agree (%) | Neutral (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I often feel stressed or anxious about my English research. | 5% | 35% | 30% | 20% | 10% |
| I face challenges in staying motivated to research English. | 10% | 40% | 25% | 15% | 10% |
| I struggle to keep up with the academic requirements. | 15% | 35% | 30% | 15% | 5% |
| My family places high expectations on my academic performance. | 25% | 35% | 25% | 10% | 5% |
| I feel that my family supports my research in English. | 40% | 35% | 15% | 5% | 5% |
| My family's expectations affect my research. | 20% | 30% | 30% | 10% | 10% |

### 4.1.2. The key findings of the second category, or the student-teacher relationship, indicate that

- Teacher's support: 60% of respondents affirm that instructors provide support, while 20% remain indifferent or disagree.
- Peer Support: 70% indicate that peers offer greater emotional support than teachers.
- Feedback & Environment: 60-65% score this positively, signifying strong classroom dynamics.

The following table summarizes the results.

Table 2 presents the student-teacher relationship.

**Table 2.** Student-teacher relationship.

| Question | Strongly agree (%) | Agree (%) | Neutral (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Instructors show interest in my progress. | 20% | 40% | 25% | 10% | 5% |
| I feel comfortable approaching instructors. | 15% | 35% | 30% | 15% | 5% |
| Teachers provide constructive feedback. | 20% | 40% | 25% | 10% | 5% |
| The classroom environment is supportive. | 25% | 40% | 20% | 10% | 5% |
| Peer interactions provide emotional support. | 30% | 40% | 20% | 5% | 5% |

### 4.1.3. In the Third Category, the key finding of the institutional support is as follows

- Pressure & Alignment: 40% feel pressured, but 50% report expectations in line with goals.
- Resource Awareness: 60% understand when to seek help, but only 45% obtain adequate financial support.
- Support Effectiveness: 55% agree that academic and psychological support helps, but 30% are neutral.

The following table summarizes the results.

Table 3 presents perceived institutional support.

**Table 3.** Perceived institutional support.

| Question | Strongly agree (%) | Agree (%) | Neutral (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I feel pressured by university systems/structures. | 10% | 30% | 40% | 15% | 5% |
| University expectations align with my personal goals. | 15% | 35% | 30% | 15% | 5% |
| I am familiar with academic support resources. | 20% | 40% | 25% | 10% | 5% |
| The university provides adequate financial support. | 10% | 25% | 35% | 20% | 10% |
| Psychological support services were helpful. | 15% | 30% | 35% | 15% | 5% |
| Academic support services improved my performance. | 20% | 35% | 30% | 10% | 5% |

### 4.1.4. The Key Findings of Students' Wellbeing Reveal That

- Overwhelm & Stress: 55% feel overwhelmed, and 60% cite social expectations as stressful.
- Confidence & Balance: 55% feel confident, but only 45% report emotional balance.
- Academic Impact: 45% report research negatively affect wellbeing.

The following table summarizes the results.

Table 4 presents perceived psychological wellbeing.

**Table 4.** Perceived psychological wellbeing.

| Question | Strongly agree (%) | Agree (%) | Neutral (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I feel emotionally balanced. | 10% | 35% | 35% | 15% | 5% |
| My mental health is adequately supported. | 15% | 30% | 35% | 15% | 5% |
| I feel overwhelmed by my English program. | 20% | 35% | 25% | 15% | 5% |
| Social expectations to succeed cause stress. | 25% | 35% | 25% | 10% | 5% |
| I feel confident in completing academic tasks. | 15% | 40% | 30% | 10% | 5% |
| My academic work negatively affects my well-being. | 15% | 30% | 35% | 15% | 5% |

*4.2. Qualitative Data*

The interview was conducted from November 20 to November 25, 2024. A total of four 19-year-old students were selected through a questionnaire identifying negative emotions. All four participants were in their third semester of the English Department, and the thematic analysis is presented as follows.

*4.2.1. Lack of Institutional Support*

*4.2.1.1. Reynold's Narrative is Representative of Experiences Shared by Two Other Participants*

Reynold experienced several negative emotions, such as frustration and hatred. The feeling of frustration appeared due to the bad internet connection. Moreover, the electricity outage worsened the disappointment. During the COVID pandemic, online platforms are used frequently.

> "*It is difficult to practice English or join an English class with a poor internet connection. It was done online. He further said that there is a big difference between online and offline learning, for some reason. I prefer to have an offline class because online learning seems vulnerable for some students, including me since the lack of internet connection and blackout can occur.*" (Participant 2, interview 1)

After encountering an internet disconnection, Reynold thought that this was common since other students were also affected. However, frustration was evident when the problem of the connection lasted for more than four days. Reynold chose to sleep instead of being angry at the company but remained frustrated and worried about failing the class. Electricity outages became a new problem when the internet connection was deemed to be unsettled.

There was a moment when Reynold attended a class in which the lecturer had previously informed him to send the assignment. Reynolds became angrier and panicked when blackouts occurred. After promising to present the results of discussion, the electricity outage and interruption of internet connection frustrated the student due to the feeling of failing.

Reynold sometimes vents anger and frustration, *"I often slam my cell phone when I'm angry. I had the most annoying moment and disappointed my group mates"* (Participant 2, interview 1). Reynold ignored it and went on a motorbike somewhere to calm his emotions. Subsequently, an apology was tendered to the lecturer and group mates.

*4.2.2. Teacher-Student Relationship*

*4.2.2.1. Mikael Narrative is Representatives of Experiences Shared by One Other Participant*

Mikael developed hatred towards one of the lecturers because of ill-treatment. During this period, Mikael was a student working on various assigned tasks and trying to be active in class. The hard work was not well appreciated since the results were always below expectations. In this context, Mikael stayed absent from class but tried to answer several questions during the exam. However, the effort was insufficient and could not pass the course. According to Mikael, the treatment of the lecturer was unfair since the classmates received higher scores. This was the beginning of disappointment and dislike, which then developed into hatred. The hatred caused him deep trauma in attending various other classes.

> *"When I have the urge to take the class, I am more passive than before and don't try to be active in class; there are thoughts like I'm sick and want to skip the lecturer's class, so sometimes I'm not motivated, and this affects my grades. But I don't care anymore; what I want is to leave the class, or I want to change lecturers." (Participant 4, interview 1)*

*4.2.3. Academic Struggle*

*4.2.3.1. Carlo's Narrative is Representative of Experiences Shared by Three Other Participants*

Carlo is an English student who tends to compare abilities with others. From the first semester, difficulties were experienced in learning English, from vocabulary to initiating interactions. Carlo's experience changed the perception of being a student who can maximize potential for English. At some point, negative emotions occurred when Carlo

said that researching offline could increase the level of damage. Based on experience, Carlo felt incompetent in English speaking following the absence of basic skills.

The tendency to compare himself with others made him feel inferior. He has been carrying this negative perception until semester three. Carlo began to think negatively about his abilities and fear of lacking after noticing the English proficiency levels of his classmates. Initially, Carlo felt okay, but the feelings of inferiority increased after one month.

> *"You know, at the time, I thought that no matter what I tried to do in my language training, I felt it wasn't the best. I was desperate at the time, and I almost wanted to quit,"* (Participant 8, interview 1). There is a feeling of wanting to change his English major to another major.

Due to an increased level of frustration, Carlo tried to discuss with the parents about changing majors. The intention to change my major increased due to low motivation to research and a high tendency to skip classes. Carlo became a passive student and ignored almost everything related to learning.

One day, Carlo began to feel worried, along with frustration and inferiority. The fear appeared when the lecturer had strict rules for students to use English in online classes. A feeling of worry about lack of vocabulary and interaction caused anxiety. Carlo was terrified of being ridiculed by his friends.

> *"Really, at that time, I was terrified of how I would deliver the topic, and you know when I was presenting, I was apprehensive about negative things that would happen and my classmates thought of me. What I thought at that time was my image in class would be bad,"* (Participant 6, interview 1)

Based on the description above, Carlo became more worried until the exam arrived and was incapable of answering the various questions. However, the assessment was different from other classes since Carlo was supposed to talk virtually in front of his classmates. Carlo was affected by stage fright and completely went blank. The grammar became ill-organized and he withdrew from listening to the feedback from the lecturer.

> *"I was a little depressed at that time, although actually, I was a little annoyed with myself. Getting unwanted comments and getting bad grades is a lesson I can take to be even more active. However, that does not mean that I will release myself from the negative feelings of that emotion. Well, until now, I still feel it, but I won't just give up, and I will try my best."* (Participants 5, interview 1)

### 4.2.4. Challenge to Stay Motivated

### 4.2.4.1. Tina's Narrative is Representative of Experiences Shared by Two Other Participants

Tina was a third-semester student who had been learning English since childhood. This student knew several appropriate strategies for improving listening, reading, and speaking skills. After semesters one and two, Tina learned different methods provided by the lecturers and was engaged with new ways to practice English more effectively. There was no feeling of inferiority or insecurity regarding the abilities of her friends. In an online class, Tina rarely faced challenges in understanding the topics and felt motivated to attend classes.

After moving to semester three as an English major, Tina began to feel disinterested. This happened because one of the lecturers was frequently absent. Tina also felt the method did not allow the use of English.

> *"Based on my experience, I always feel this negative emotion when I face uninteresting methods to learn English in class. You see, I kind of like students who always consider using any method that benefits me to practice English. While in class, I often felt bored with the lecture that using a method to teach isn't interesting in the first place."*(Participant 3, interview 1)

> *"When classes take place during the day, I feel tired. The afternoon class made her sleepy and exhausted, which made her passive. The lecturer only gave the task that should be finished by the end of class. However, when the lecturer presented the material, she was very confused. She felt the lecture used a fast-paced teaching approach and she didn't feel motivated anymore. Besides, the lecturer sometimes doesn't use an attractive learning approach..."* (Participant 7, interview 1)

Tina experienced a problem in taking the midterm exam by receiving below-average grades. This occurred because the lecturer did not pay sufficient attention to teaching and explaining the subject. Tina finds it difficult to understand the subject explanations. The incident resulted in a poor score that affected her confidence and became a burden. Tina lost focus in English listening classes, saying, *"I thought about the subject, I was afraid that I would fail in class. If I fail, I will have a hard time taking the number of subjects in the next semester." (Participant 2, interview 1)*

Other engaging, effective, and attractive methods were carried out since there was no improvement in learning English. Tina began to practice at the end of each class, every hour, to gain more vocabulary and practice pronunciation. In this context, pronunciation positively impacted other classes, such as speaking courses.

### 4.2.5. Challenge of Peer Pressures

### 4.2.5.1. Mona's Narrative is Representative of Experiences Shared by Two Other Participants

Mona did not intend to choose an English major in the first place. However, she was not disappointed as a student in the English major. Mona adapted and compromised with the new situation since English was not advanced but felt anxious. Initially, anxiety was experienced in the second semester, but Mona met a close friend with the same interest since the Campus Orientation program. In virtual classes, no communication difficulty was experienced, and Mona worked harder to become more capable than her friends. She dared to compete with her friend to get good scores but became the person who lost the most. At some points, Mona felt anxious and never wanted her friend to have a higher score. In this context, she struggled to catch up with her friend by practicing and adding new vocabulary.

At some point, Mona lost to the friend, and this led to anger and disappointment. Subsequently, she became attracted to the new subject, which was an obstacle. Mona joined an organization and refused to pay attention to English practice. Meanwhile, the friend became capable of solving every problem in the English class. Mona was always busy in the organization, and this caused her to obtain lower scores than the friend. The level of disappointment and anxiety increased, and she almost failed the exams. Furthermore, Mona complained about the lecturer because of the performance and absences in classes.

> *"I can't beat my friend's score then I felt failed and disappointed now I am too lazy to catch up to my friend's score. And I often find it difficult to practice because I always think about it. I am also busy with my activity in my organization so I seldom practice my English, maybe that's the reason I always left behind." (Participant 10, interview 1)*

## 5. DISCUSSION

Interpretation of the results:

1. Stress is a major issue, connected to family expectations and academic pressure.
2. Institutional and peer support significantly improve well-being.
3. Teacher relationships help, but are less impactful than peers.

Adverse emotions profoundly affect students' well-being, impacting both psychological and intellectual spheres. In the realm of ESL in Indonesia, these emotional issues may be exacerbated by linguistic obstacles and familial pressures, affecting motivation, identity, and academic achievement.

Research shows a robust relationship between academic performance and well-being (Morinaj & Hascher, 2022; Rüppel, Liersch, & Walter, 2015). Morinaj and Hascher (2022) asserted that pleasant psychological states enhance academic performance. Some ESL students frequently grapple with worry, frustration, and feelings of inadequacy stemming from challenges in acquiring a new language. These negative emotions may diminish motivation, establishing a detrimental cycle in which heightened worry regarding language acquisition adversely affects academic achievement (Rüppel et al., 2015). This trend has particularly concerning consequences, given (Sánchez-García, Lucas-Molina, Fonseca-Pedrero, Pérez-Albéniz, & Paino, 2018) indicate an association between emotional challenges, and academic achievement. For ESL students, emotional disturbance can considerably diminish their capacity to engage completely in instructional activities. The results above are also supported by this study and were especially expressed

through the narrative results, which mentioned five major psychological challenges: lack of institutional support, teacher-student relationships, academic struggles, challenges to stay motivated, and peer pressure impacts. Furthermore, the qualitative results align with the quantitative data. For example, it was mentioned in the interpretation of the result No. I that stress is a major issue, connected to family expectations and academic pressures. Negative emotions can obstruct critical cognitive functions necessary for learning. Geertshuis (2019) asserted that emotional well-being significantly predicts academic performance, attentiveness, memory retention, and overall cognitive function. This effect is especially crucial for ESL students navigating intricate linguistic structures and managing emotional states. The ensuing cognitive overload results in detrimental academic outcomes, exacerbating feelings of helplessness and dissatisfaction. The findings of Geertshuis (2019) were observed in the cases expressed by Carlo (academic struggle), Tina (challenge to stay motivated), and Mona (peer pressure). These narrative experiences are also supported by survey results presented in Table 1, academic psychological needs, which indicate that 40% of students often feel stressed or struggle with motivation, and half of students (50%) report difficulties keeping up with coursework. Although casual conversations with some students indicated that parental or familial expectations significantly impact university students' choice of subjects, these expectations often lead students to pursue occupations misaligned with their preferences. This case was not found in the narratives expressed by the ten students who were interviewed. The finding was in stark contrast with the survey result, which shows that 50% feel pressure from family expectations. Thus, 50% report difficulties staying motivated with their studies, and it may have significant ramifications for students' emotional well-being and overall life satisfaction.

Familial expectation is not the sole factor affecting students' overall well-being, especially in Indonesian contexts. Several studies conducted in Indonesia have revealed a variety of factors influencing students' psychological well-being. The choice of terminology should differentiate between familial support and familial pressure, the types of support they provide, and the frequency or intensity of familial involvement. Additionally, familial expectation can serve as a source of support or a form of pressure or potentially both depending on the degree of autonomy, emotional context, and the level of mutual understanding present. When familial expectations are communicated with understanding and flexibility, align with the student's personal goals or preferences, and help establish a strong sense of purpose, they can be a source of support. Conversely, when expectations are strict and based on status, prestige, or family image, and the student is not allowed to express their own preferences, or when shame, fear of disappointing others, or control are used as motivators, they become a form of pressure. The negative effects of familial pressure can be mitigated through institutional support, such as counselling centres, as exemplified by Carol, who experienced frustration due to internet disruptions affecting his online classes, leading to low score attainment. This aligns with survey results indicating that 55% agree that academic and psychological support are beneficial, while another 30% remain neutral. If these issues are not addressed properly, they can negatively impact students' well-being. In Mikhael's case, who perceived unfair treatment from his teacher, the survey also shows that 70% believe peers provide greater emotional support than teachers. Additionally, Tina, who felt her teacher relied on monotonous teaching methods, highlights that 50% of students report difficulties in keeping up with coursework.

The teacher training centre, as a part of institutional support, must be utilized as intended. Teacher agency should embrace lifelong learning. They should not be content with their current understanding. Contemporary demands require that educators exhibit adequate abilities and competences to cultivate student creativity and stimulate their curiosity. Other institutional support ought to cover mentorship programs, supportive educator programs, academic flexibility, or fostering a psychologically safe environment. Students can sustain a strong level of motivation despite external demands as long as their educational institutions foster support for their autonomy, competence, and relatedness, according to the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2016). However, nothing is assured. The influence of institutional support is dual-faceted, depending on the degree of familial pressure and the overall importance of that support. It is essential to introduce coping skills to students to mitigate the adverse effects of negative emotions on the well-being and academic performance of ESL learners. Arsenio and Loria (2014) Emphasized

the importance of adaptive coping strategies, such as problem-solving and seeking social support. These strategies empower students to overcome the barriers presented by linguistic limitations and familial pressures. Creating support networks that include partners, educators, and family members can enhance a sense of connection and understanding while also reducing feelings of isolation and anxiety.

Interventions ought to consider the familial pressures faced by ESL students. The influence of family interactions on scholarly motivation and success is profound. Initiatives that engage family participation have also played a significant role in reconciling the gap between anticipated outcomes and the emotional requirements of students. The engagement of families in the educational process cultivates a cooperative environment for delivering emotional and cognitive support to students (Sánchez-García et al., 2018).

Key Takeaways:

1. Stress is the biggest well-being killer, but peer support is the best antidote.
2. Teacher support helps but is secondary to peer networks.
3. Family expectations increase stress but do not affect well-being when support exists.
4. Institutional support matters, but students rely more on peers.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### 6.1. Conclusion

In conclusion, negative emotions deeply affected the well-being of ESL students in Indonesia, where language barriers and family pressures prevailed. The interaction between emotional resilience and academic performance showed the urgent need for effective coping strategies and interventions. Participating in adaptive coping mechanisms, implementing full care practices, and promoting family inclusion are crucial pathways toward improving emotional resilience and academic performance. We must recognize the fundamental role of emotional well-being in the configuration of students, academic trajectories, and holistic methods addressing needs. Therefore, we could create an educational environment through integral strategies, enabling students to flourish despite the challenges they face.

### 6.2. Recommendations

Actionable Recommendations:

- Expand peer mentorship programs (most effective well-being booster).
- Train teachers to recognize stress and refer students to peer networks.
- Workshops on family expectation management (since they drive stress).

Improve awareness of institutional resources (Many students are neutral on usefulness).

Recommendations:

- Universities should enhance peer mentorship programs.
- Family expectations should be addressed in counseling.
- Stress-management workshops could bridge the gap in well-being.

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