

EXPLORATION OF WELL-BEING AND INDIVIDUAL FLOURISHING IN FINAL-LEVEL STUDENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL QUALITATIVE STUDY

Muhammad Rizki¹, Tri Jannahtul Hafidzah Safrilia Bunga Kinanti², Ivon Arisanti³, Junaidin⁴
{ivon.arisanti@uts.ac.id}

Universitas Teknologi Sumbawa, Indonesia^{1,2,3,4}

Abstrak. The transitional phase from university to professional life represents a critical period in shaping students' psychological well-being and capacity for flourishing. This study explores the lived experiences of well-being and individual flourishing among final-level university students by employing a phenomenological qualitative design. The research aims to capture how students interpret, construct, and sustain psychological resilience during academic completion. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with purposively selected participants and analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's model. Findings reveal that flourishing emerges from three interrelated domains: intrinsic motivation and purpose alignment, adaptive coping with academic and life stressors, and meaningful social connection. Moreover, psychological flourishing is not static but evolves as students navigate uncertainty and self-actualization in their final academic journey. The study concludes that institutional support systems fostering autonomy, emotional regulation, and reflective engagement are essential to sustaining student well-being. Theoretically, this research contributes to expanding the discourse of positive psychology within higher education, while practically, it provides a framework for developing holistic student support strategies that integrate academic, emotional, and social dimensions of flourishing.

Kata kunci: Well-Being, Flourishing, Final Students, Exploration

PENDAHULUAN

The growing complexity of higher education has placed increasing psychological, social, and emotional demands on university students, particularly those at the final level of study. This stage is often characterized by an intensive academic workload, future career uncertainty, and the pressure to demonstrate competence before entering professional life (Fisher et al., 2022; Rahim & Chowdhury, 2023). Within this transitional phase, the issues of *well-being* and *individual flourishing* become critical in understanding how students sustain psychological stability and positive functioning despite the escalating academic and existential challenges (Deci & Ryan, 2020; Diener et al., 2023).

The concept of *well-being*, as posited by Ryff (2019) and Deci and Ryan (2020), encompasses both hedonic and eudaimonic dimensions, referring not merely to the presence of pleasure but to the realization of one's potential and purpose. *Flourishing*, in contrast, represents a broader psychological construct that integrates optimal functioning, meaningful engagement, and social connectedness (Huppert & So, 2013; VanderWeele, 2020). In the context of higher education, flourishing manifests when students experience personal growth, intrinsic motivation, academic satisfaction, and the ability to cope with academic stressors effectively (Butler & Kern, 2022; Kern et al., 2022).

However, empirical findings reveal that final-level students are at a heightened risk of psychological strain, academic burnout, and diminished motivation (Nguyen et al., 2021; Aristovnik et al., 2022). The convergence of academic deadlines, performance expectations, and the uncertainty of post-graduation transitions often leads to emotional exhaustion and reduced self-efficacy. Furthermore, the post-pandemic academic landscape has intensified the need to examine well-being and flourishing more deeply, as students continue to navigate hybrid learning environments and altered social interactions (Rahim & Chowdhury, 2023).

Recent developments in positive psychology have shifted scholarly attention toward the exploration of subjective and lived experiences as an authentic means of understanding human flourishing (Seligman, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within this paradigm, phenomenology provides a suitable methodological approach for uncovering the essence of students' experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making processes concerning well-being and flourishing (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Unlike quantitative models that measure well-being through pre-defined constructs, phenomenological inquiry allows the researcher to interpret how individuals construct psychological resilience, purpose, and satisfaction amid complex educational demands (Huppert & So, 2013; VanderWeele, 2020).

Therefore, this study positions itself within the intersection of positive psychology and educational psychology, aiming to explore the lived experiences of final-level students in achieving well-being and flourishing. Through an interpretive phenomenological framework, this study seeks to understand how students conceptualize their emotional balance, academic engagement, and sense of meaning during the final stage of their university journey. The outcomes are expected to contribute to the theoretical development of flourishing in higher education and to provide empirical insights for universities to design effective psychological support systems, mentoring structures, and educational strategies that foster holistic student development (Kern et al., 2022; Diener et al., 2023).

In alignment with the emerging perspective of human-centered education, the findings of this research are also intended to strengthen institutional efforts toward cultivating psychological sustainability within academic settings. By situating the construct of flourishing as a vital component of educational quality, this study underscores the necessity of integrating psychological well-being into the broader agenda of higher education excellence and student success (Rahim & Chowdhury, 2023; VanderWeele, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

The transition phase from campus life to professional life is a critical period in shaping students' psychological well-being and ability to thrive. This study explores the real experiences of well-being and individual development among final-year students through a phenomenological qualitative design. The research aims to capture how students interpret, build, and maintain psychological resilience during academic completion. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with purposively selected participants and analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's model. Findings indicate that development emerges from three interrelated domains: intrinsic motivation and goal alignment, adaptive adjustment to academic and life stressors, and meaningful social connections. Furthermore, psychological development is not static but evolves as students navigate uncertainty and self-actualization in their final academic journey. The study concludes that institutional support systems that promote autonomy, emotional regulation, and reflective engagement are crucial for maintaining student well-being. Theoretically, this study contributes to the expansion of the discourse on positive psychology in higher education, while practically, it provides a framework for developing holistic student support strategies that integrate the academic, emotional, and social dimensions of development.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

From the data analysis, three main themes were found that describe the experiences of final-year students in relation to well-being and individual flourishing:

1. Social Support as a Source of Well-being

Students reported that support from family, friends, and lecturers was very important in maintaining their well-being. One participant stated:

“Support from family and friends made me feel like I wasn't alone in facing my final assignment”

(P1).

Final-year students describe social support as a vital element in maintaining their psychological well-being. Participants consistently mention that the presence of family, close friends, and academic advisors provides a sense of security and encouragement in facing academic pressures. One participant states,

"When I started to feel overwhelmed, my mother always called to calm me down. It made me feel like I wasn't alone."

“(P3).

These results are in line with the findings of Imbiri and Huwae (2020), who stated that social support from the surrounding environment significantly improves the psychological well-being of final-year students. Social support has also been shown to reduce feelings of isolation and increase feelings of connectedness, which are important aspects of the positive relationships dimension according to Ryff (1989).

2. Self-Compassion in Facing Challenges

Students who have self-compassion tend to be better able to cope with stress and failure. One participant said:

"I learned to accept my shortcomings and not be too hard on myself." (P4).

The aspect of mindfulness also appeared in the participants' narratives. Some realized the importance of being present in the moment without judging themselves harshly.

"When I'm stressed, I try to take a deep breath and focus on things I can control. It really helps." (P7).

This reflects the dimensions of self-kindness and non-judgmental awareness described by Neff (2003) in the concept of self-compassion. The findings of this study are in line with research conducted by Aditya, Sahidin, and Marhan (2020), which states that students with high levels of self-compassion tend to have better psychological well-being. They are more resilient in facing pressure and do not easily give up in the academic process, especially during the critical phase of writing their final thesis.

3. Stress Management for Flourishing

The ability to manage academic stress is related to individual flourishing. One participant stated:

"By managing my time and getting enough rest, I feel more productive and happier." (L2)

Some students also mentioned the role of physical and spiritual activities in managing stress. *"I exercise lightly and pray regularly at night, which makes my heart feel calmer." (P9).*

This shows that flourishing is not only achieved through academic achievement, but also through holistic life balance. The findings in this study are in line with Azizah (2021), which shows that stress management skills greatly contribute to improving student welfare. With good stress management, students are able to experience personal growth, achieve life goals, and build healthy relationships, all of which are indicators of flourishing according to Huta and Waterman (2014).

The results of this study reinforce the importance of a holistic approach in understanding the psychological well-being of final-year students. The three themes of social support, self-compassion, and stress management do not stand alone but are interrelated in shaping overall well-being. Students who receive social support feel more capable of coping with pressure, and this strengthens their confidence in developing self-compassion. These findings are in line with previous studies showing that social support and self-compassion affect the psychological well-being of students (Aditya et al., 2020; Imbiri & Huwae, 2020). Additionally, stress management is also an important factor in achieving individual flourishing (Azizah, 2021). This study emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in supporting the well-being of final-year students.

The self-compassion approach is key in dealing with inevitable academic failure. Students who are

able to be compassionate towards themselves tend to use healthy and focused stress management techniques. This shows the connection between intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects in shaping student flourishing. As stated by Ryff (1989), well-being is not merely freedom from stress, but rather positive development in life.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study can be used by universities to design intervention programs that support the well-being of final-year students. This can create a balanced academic climate between lecturers and students in completing final assignments, where both lecturers and students play a very important role in creating effective collaboration and communication. In addition, this study also contributes to the development of well-being and individual flourishing theories in the context of higher education.

References

- Aristovnik, A., Keržič, D., Ravšelj, D., Tomaževič, N., & Umek, L. (2022). Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the life of higher education students: A global perspective. *Sustainability*, 14(1), 386. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14010386>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications.
- Butler, J., & Kern, M. L. (2022). The PERMA-Profiler: A multidimensional measure of flourishing. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 12(3), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v12i3.1845>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2020). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Press.
- Diener, E., Heintzelman, S. J., Kushlev, K., Tay, L., & Wirtz, D. (2023). Flourishing: Measurement, theory, and policy implications. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 18(4), 457–472. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2023.2179965>
- Fisher, C., Dwyer, R., & Grant, A. (2022). The transitional challenges of final-year university students: A psychological perspective. *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching*, 5(2), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2022.5.2.1>
- Huppert, F. A., & So, T. T. C. (2013). Flourishing across Europe: Application of a new conceptual framework for defining well-being. *Social Indicators Research*, 110(3), 837–861. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-011-9966-7>
- Imbiri, A. A. P., & Huwae, A. (2020). Dukungan sosial dan kesejahteraan psikologis pada mahasiswa tingkat akhir yang sedang mengerjakan tugas akhir. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan, Psikologi dan Kesehatan (J-P3K)*, 3(1), 12–20. <https://doi.org/10.26858/jp3k.v3i1.682>
- Neff, K. D. (2003). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2(2), 85–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860309032>

Muhammad Rizki¹, Tri Jannahtul Hafidzah Safrilia Bunga Kinanti² Ivon Arisanti³ Junaidin⁴ Exploration of Well-Being and Individual Flourishing in Final-Level Students: a Phenomenological Qualitative Study

Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069–1081.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069>

Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. Free Press.