

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND ANXIETY IN FACING THE *OBJECTIVE STRUCTURED CLINICAL ASSESSMENT* (OSCA) EXAM IN UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Objective Structured Clinical Assessment (OSCA) is one of the evaluation methods used in nursing education to assess students' clinical competence. However, the OSCA exam often causes significant anxiety for nursing students due to high academic and professional demands. Anxiety is a common emotional response experienced by individuals in the face of stressful or challenging situations. One way to reduce anxiety is with good social support. Social support is the opinion of others who tell that individuals need affection, attention, valued, respected, and involved. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social support and the level of anxiety experienced by undergraduate nursing students in facing the OSCA exam. The type of research is quantitative with a cross-sectional approach. The study population was nursing students totalling 572 respondents. This research uses the spearman test, and this research was conducted from August to Septembe. Researchers used non-probability sampling with purposive sampling method, the research sample above showed 90 people to become respondents with inclusion criteria (1. Active students of semester II, IV, IV of the Nursing Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta who took the OSCA exam, 2. Students take the OSCA exam directly on the appointed day, 3. Willing to fill out the research questionnaire). Measurement of social support using the MSPSS (Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support) questionnaire and the HARS (Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale) questionnaire for anxiety levels. The results showed that the majority of respondents had moderate social support with 35 respondents (38.9%) and severe anxiety 27 respondents (30%). Data analysis using Spearman Test. Spearman correlation test results obtained a p-value significance of $0.001 < 0.05$ and a correlation coefficient value of 0.767. The conclusion of the study is that there is a relationship between social support and anxiety levels in nursing undergraduate students when facing OSCA exams.

Keywords: Social Support, Anxiety, Students, OSCA

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the competencies that must be possessed in the nursing curriculum is to carry out professional nursing care. Laboratory practicum is a place for students to use an approach in solving a problem. Laboratory skills help students practice skills in structured and systematic practice

situations to develop competence and build self-confidence (Saman, 2022). Undergraduate programme evaluation is a major component in assessing the ability of students in nursing higher education. One form of evaluation is *Objective Structured Clinical Assessment* (OSCA).

Objective Structured Clinical Assessment (OSCA) exam is one of the evaluation methods widely used in nursing education to assess students' clinical competence (Pane, Lase and Barus, 2022). This exam involves a series of stations where students must demonstrate their practical skills in clinical situations that simulate real-world conditions (Rachmawati and Mustikasari, 2020). OSCA has emerged as an additional approach to evaluate clinical skills. OSCA aims to test knowledge, clinical skills, and decision-making abilities that are important to the nursing profession (Pane, Lase and Barus, 2022). However, OSCA examinations are often a significant source of anxiety for nursing students due to the high academic and professional demands.

Anxiety is a common emotional response experienced by individuals in the face of stressful or challenging situations (Wita, Rahayuningsih, Rahayu, Hanifahs, Zamroji, Agustin, 2022). Anxiety is a negative emotional state characterised by foreboding and somatic tension, such as a racing heart, sweating, and difficulty breathing (Savitsky *et al.*, 2020). In Indonesia, it was found that 36.7-71.6% of students experienced stress before the practical examination (Akbar, 2023). Research conducted (Rachmawati and Mustikasari, 2020) at Riau University to 120 new students showed that as many as 42% experienced high anxiety and as many as 58% experienced low anxiety levels in facing laboratory practical exams.

Examination anxiety can negatively affect student performance, particularly in nursing students as it can interfere with their ability to think clearly and make informed decisions. Excessive anxiety can lead to a decline in the clinical skills displayed during OSCA, ultimately impacting on exam results and student confidence

(Marsidi, 2021). According to research conducted by (Wahyuningsih, Manangkot and Rahajeng, 2022) stated that academic problems often occur in undergraduate students because they have a high learning load and are required to be able to master skills in certain fields of expertise. Based on these reasons, social support is needed.

Social support is the opinion of others who tell that individuals need affection from the closest people, attention, valued, respected, and involved (Eva *et al.*, 2020). Social support, which can be defined as help or support obtained from others, such as friends, family, or mentors, is a factor that can help reduce anxiety levels. Social support can provide a sense of security, increase self-confidence, and help individuals feel more capable of dealing with stressful situations during exams (Hasanuddin and Khairuddin, 2021).

In the context of nursing education, social support can come from a variety of sources, including peers, instructors, family and the academic community. There are three sources of social support: family, friends and specialised groups (Alawiyah *et al.*, 2022). Social support is divided into five forms: information support, which is getting useful information such as tips and tricks for solving problems, instrumental support, which is the direct provision of material goods in the form of money or goods, appreciation support, which is a positive evaluation of a person's thoughts, feelings and actions that stimulate development, emotional support, which is getting support by attracting attention and sympathy (Maqbool *et al.*, 2021).

This study aims to examine the relationship between social support and the level of anxiety experienced by undergraduate nursing students in facing the OSCA exam. This study is

also expected to provide insights for educational institutions to develop more comprehensive and targeted support programmes, to ensure the mental and emotional well-being of nursing students.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This type of research is a quantitative descriptive study using a *Cross Sectional* design approach, which is a research design that studies risks and effects by observation, and its purpose is to collect data simultaneously or at one time (Yuliawan and Wanniatie, 2021).

Description of respondents including gender, age, parents occupation, parents' income, frequency of taking the OSCA exam. The data analysed was the relationship between social support and anxiety in facing the OSCA exam in undergraduate students of Nursing, University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta. The study used a sample of nursing students, University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta. The population in this study amounted to 527.

Researchers used non-probability sampling with purposive sampling method, a sampling method selected based on specific objectives in accordance with the criteria for including and excluding certain elements (Andrade, 2021). The samples of this study were nursing students in semester 2, 4, and 6 who took the OSCA exam.

The sample formula for this study is the Slovin formula to determine the sample size. The sample is very influential on the presentation of the population in the research process. The results of the calculation of the research sample above show 90 people to become respondents.

Inclusion criteria are criteria for filtering members of the population

who will be sampled according to the criteria in the topic, theory and research conditions. (1. Active students of semester II, IV, IV of the Nursing Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta who take the OSCA exam, 2. Students take the OSCA exam directly on the appointed day, 3. Willing to fill out the research questionnaire)

Execution criteria are standards that can be used to exclude sample members from inclusion requirements in research. (1. Active students other than semester II, IV, VI of the Nursing study program, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta who take the OSCA exam, 2. Students who take the OSCA exam in a supplementary manner, 3. Not willing to fill out the questionnaire).

Identity characteristics data include initial name, age, parents occupation, parents' income, number of experiences taking the OSCA exam. An ethical eligibility letter was obtained from the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta with ethical No.475/KEPK-FIK/VIII/2024.

Data collection will be conducted using a questionnaire-based survey instrument. The questionnaire will be carefully designed to cover variables relevant to social support and anxiety in nursing students who will take the OSCA examination. The questionnaire uses MSPSS (*Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support*) created by Zimet, et al 1988 for social support and HARS (*Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale*) questionnaire for anxiety level. The data analysis used in this study was univariate and bivariate analysis using Chi-Square and using the Spearman rank test to determine a relationship (Leff-Gelman *et al.*, 2020).

3. Result and Discussion

a. Univariate Analysis

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics
(n=90)

Respondent Characteristics	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	17	18.9%
Female	73	81.1%
Age		
18 Year	7	7.8%
19 Year	25	27.8%
20 Year	33	36.7%
21 Year	15	16.7%
22 Year	10	11.1%
Parents' occupation		
PNS	23	25.6%
Farmer	5	5.6%
Employee	38	42.2%
Entrepreneur	13	14.4%
Retired	3	3.3%
Military/Police	4	4.4%
Merchants	4	4.4%
Parents' Income		
<1.500.000	13	14.4%
1.500.000 – 3.000.000	32	35.6%
>3.000.000	45	50%
Length of time taking the exam		
1-4 times	35	38.9%
5-8 times	36	40%
9-12 times	19	21.1%

Based on Table 1 above, it was found that the majority of respondents were female with 73 respondents (81.1%) and 17 respondents (18.7%) were male.

The majority of respondents in this study were female, in line with research made by (Sugiharno, Susanto and Wospakrik, 2022) It is known that female students will be more prone to experiencing higher levels of anxiety compared to men. This can be caused by various factors such as women will be more sensitive and think about their inability to do something, and men will think more logically and will focus on the causes of the problems being faced (Pratiwi *et al.*, 2023). Researchers assume that men and women can experience

anxiety and the only difference is the way of overcoming the problems faced, this is commonly referred to as coping strategies between men and women are different. Another factor may be due to the nature and openness of women, such as expressing more about themselves and something they feel, as well as about their anxiety or distress (Susilarini, 2022).

In terms of age, the highest number of respondents was 20 years old with 33 respondents (36.7%), 19 years old with 25 respondents (27.8), 21 years old 15 respondents (16.7), 22 years old with 10 respondents (11.1%), and finally 18 years old with 7 respondents (7.8%).

This is in accordance with the opinion put forward by (Sugiharno, Susanto and Wospakrik, 2022) In the transition from adolescence to adulthood, a person is very vulnerable in experiencing health problems in the form of anxiety from various feelings that are thought by individuals. Coupled with conditions where learning must be done online, anxiety can increase such as anxiety due to changes in the learning environment, heavy learning tasks, unpreparedness for new learning styles, and decreased interest and concentration in learning. According to (Santo and Alfian, 2022) Teenage age tends to experience anxiety because psychologically it is still immature, especially if it is about the final project that is the first time faced by adolescents, of course this will cause fear for adolescents and feelings of anxiety whether they can go through it or not. Researchers also assume that the average young age tends to experience anxiety more easily, this is due to the many factors that can affect psychology that has not developed well and is exacerbated by poor individual coping coupled with various gossip that arises among students (Scardera *et al.*, 2020)

Meanwhile, from the data on parents' occupations, most were private employees with 38 respondents (42.2), then civil servants with 23 respondents (25.6%),

entrepreneurs with 13 respondents (14.4%), then farmers with 5 respondents (5.6), TNI / Police and traders with 4 respondents each (4.4%), and the least was retired with 3 respondents (3.3%).

Research (Santo and Alfian, 2022) revealed that the level of parental education is related to the social support provided to children to overcome anxiety in these children. Parents' occupations are often related to their level of education (Shao *et al.*, 2020). Parents who have experience or knowledge in the medical or academic field, for example, can provide more appropriate and relevant advice, motivation and support that the individual needs. This can help students feel calmer and more confident when facing the OSCA exam. In addition to Social Influences and Perceptions of Success, parents with prestigious or high-income jobs may have higher expectations of their children, which can add pressure to students. In contrast, parents with more stable jobs without high pressure may provide a more relaxed environment, reducing performance-related pressure and anxiety (Ren *et al.*, 2020). Parents with flexible jobs or less working time may be able to spend more time supporting their child emotionally and helping to reduce anxiety (Shao *et al.*, 2020). Meanwhile, parents who work full-time may not always be available to support their children, which can make students feel less supported and more anxious, so that individuals feel the support provided by parents is lacking.

For parental income, the most data was obtained with a salary of .3,000,000 with 45 respondents (50%), then 1,500,000-3,000,000 with 32 respondents (35.6%). And the least with income <1,500,000 with 13 respondents (14.4%).

Parents with stable jobs or high income may be able to provide better financial support, such as providing additional tutoring or learning materials needed. This may help reduce stress related to test preparation (Ren *et al.*, 2020).

Data on the length of time taking the exam with 5-8 times with 36 respondents (40%), 1-4 times with 35 respondents (38.9%), and 9-12 times with 19 respondents (21.1%).

Students who frequently take OSCA exams may tend to be more familiar with the exam format and the situation at hand, so their anxiety may decrease over time. Conversely, high levels of anxiety may discourage participants from taking the exam repeatedly. Therefore, social support that can help reduce this anxiety plays an important role, because when anxiety levels can be controlled, participants will be more comfortable and confident to face OSCA exams more often (Camacho *et al.*, 2021). A supportive environment, both emotionally and instrumentally, can create conditions that are more conducive for participants to face the exam repeatedly. This support can be in the form of encouragement to try again, providing assistance in exam preparation, and calming when anxiety arises. Students who have strong social support may feel that the OSCA exam is not something to be avoided, but an opportunity to learn and grow (Huang and Zhang, 2022).

Table 2. Categories of Social Support and Anxiety

Variable	Frequence (f)	Presentation (%)
Social Support		
Low	26	28.9%
Medium	35	38.9%
High	29	32.2%
Anxiety		
None	6	6.7%
Lightweight	24	26.7%
Medium	22	24.4%
Heavy	27	30%
Very heavy	11	12.2%
Total	90	100%

Based on Table 2 above, the data shows that the majority of respondents have moderate social support with a total of 35 (38.9%), high social support as

many as 29 respondents (32.2%), and low categories with 26 respondents (28.9%).

Social support that is too high or too low can create excessive pressure or uncertainty. With moderate support, students feel supported but also given space to develop skills and face challenges independently (Huang and Zhang, 2022). This can reduce anxiety as they do not feel overly pressurised or completely alone. Provision of Emotional Resources, moderate social support provides enough emotional help to maintain psychological balance (Lestari and Wulandari, 2021). Students feel like they have a place to share their worries or anxieties without feeling overwhelmed. This can help them face the OSCA exam with a clearer mind. Moderate social support provides space for students to learn to cope with anxiety more independently. When support is provided at the right level, they can develop resilience and the ability to manage stress in pressure situations such as OSCA exams, which can lower their anxiety levels.

Moderate social support often means productive discussions with peers or constructive feedback from mentors. Thus, students feel more prepared and understand the exam material, which can reduce anxiety as they feel more prepared for the exam.

The anxiety level data obtained the results of severe anxiety 27 respondents (30%), mild anxiety 24 respondents (26.7), moderate anxiety 22 respondents (24.4%), very severe anxiety 11 respondents (12.2%), and no anxiety as many as 6 respondents (6.7%).

High anxiety can interfere with focus and concentration during the exam (McLean, Gaul and Penco, 2023). Students may find it difficult to recall information or follow instructions, resulting in lower judgement compared to other students. Severe anxiety can affect clinical skills that require calmness and accuracy (Annisa, Dewi and Zulfitri, 2023). For example, tremors or an inability to think

clearly may occur, inhibiting students from taking accurate action. Severe anxiety often leaves students feeling overwhelmed, making them unable to cope with situations that require quick problem-solving or decision-making, which are important components of the OSCA exam.

b. Univariat Analyst

Table 3. normality test of social support and anxiety

Variable	P value	Decription
Social Support	0.179	Normal
Anxiety	0.266	Normal

Based on the normality test in table 3, the data is normally distributed with a value of 0.179 for social support and 0.266 for anxiety scores. This means that the data is $p > 0.05$, which means that the data is normally distributed.

Table 4. Spearman Test of Social Support and Anxiety

Uji Spearman	P value	Correlation Coefficient
Social Support and Anxiety	0.001	-.767

The results of the spearmen correlation test obtained a significance p-value of $0.001 < 0.05$. The results of the spearman test on social support with anxiety levels in students when facing the OSCA Exam obtained a p-value of $0.001 < 0.05$ so that there is a relationship between social support and anxiety levels in UMS students when facing the OSCA exam.

This research is also in line with other research conducted by (Dr. Bhavesh A. Prabhakar, 2023) with the title of the relationship between social support of friends with academic anxiety in college students. Based on data analysis, the correlation value is -0.767 with $p = 0.001$

($p < 0.01$), meaning that there is a very significant negative relationship between friends' social support and academic anxiety. The higher the social support of friends, the lower the academic anxiety, and vice versa.

Anxiety is a normal reaction shown by a person to stressors that arise to help individuals deal with situations that demand individual motivation in overcoming them, but when anxiety becomes excessive it can have a serious impact on daily life and interfere with a person's normal functioning (Lestari and Wulandari, 2021). Motivation to deal with this anxiety can arise from social support provided by other individuals, as explained that social support can protect individuals from mental health disorders, such as depression. Basically, individuals who have high peer social support are motivated by factors from within and outside the individual (Shao *et al.*, 2020).

Social support can provide a sense of calm by providing emotional resources. This support helps reduce anxiety because students feel supported and understood.

Motivation and Encouragement, Parents or friends who support students often provide encouragement that increases motivation, so that students can face exams with a more positive and confident attitude. In addition, Emotional Strengthening also increases in students, with social support, students can pour out their anxiety through conversations with friends or family, which can help reduce their emotional burden before and during exams (Camacho *et al.*, 2021).

Social support is needed to help students manage their anxiety levels, while severe anxiety can reduce their performance in the OSCA exam (Rachmawati and Mustikasari, 2020). The combination of adequate support and the ability to manage anxiety can greatly affect overall exam outcomes.

Social support and anxiety levels have a close relationship when facing OSCE (*Objective Structured Clinical*

Examination) exams this occurs due to several factors.

The first is the feeling of connection and involvement. Social support from friends, family, or instructors can provide a feeling of connection and involvement (Pane, Lase and Barus, 2022). In the context of nursing, these feelings can increase students' confidence when facing exams. When students feel supported, they tend to be calmer and more prepared to face challenges, which can reduce anxiety levels.

The second is the provision of information and strategies to deal with stress. Social support can serve as a source of information that helps students understand what to expect in the OSCA exam (Ren *et al.*, 2020). By sharing experiences and strategies from people who have successfully passed the exam, students can feel more prepared and reduce anxiety that may arise due to uncertainty.

The third is Coping Mechanisms. Social support can serve as an effective coping mechanism. When facing pressure, individuals who have strong social support tend to be better able to manage stress better (Michlig *et al.*, 2018). In nursing, healthy coping is essential for maintaining mental and emotional health, so it can help students focus on tasks and respond better during exams (Marsidi, 2021).

Fourth, the effect on mental health. High anxiety can affect students' mental health and academic performance (Sugiharno, Susanto and Wospakrik, 2022). Social support can reduce feelings of anxiety by providing emotional encouragement and motivation. In the context of nursing, good mental health is essential for the ability to provide quality care to patients.

Positive Behaviour Models, When students see their peers getting social support and coping well with anxiety, they are likely to emulate the behaviour (Alawiyah *et al.*, 2022). This creates a

culture of mutual support among nursing students, where all individuals help each other to reduce anxiety and improve test-taking readiness.

Lastly Facilitation of Interpersonal Skills Social support helps develop interpersonal skills that are essential in nursing practice. Positive interactions with others can improve communication and collaboration skills, which are key skills in the OSCA exam (Huang and Zhang, 2022).

Thus, social support can play an important role in reducing anxiety levels when facing the OSCA exam, which in turn can improve nursing students' performance and readiness to provide quality care.

4. CONCLUSION

- a. The level of social support for University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta nursing students during the OSCA exam has a moderate category, namely 35 (38.9%).
- b. The level of stress in University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta nursing students at the time of the OSCA exam had a heavy category, namely 27 respondents (30%).
- c. There is a relationship between social support and anxiety in University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta nursing students with a correlation of 0.51-0.767 (strong relationship) and a p-value of 0.001 <0.05.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Recommendation for Respondent Respondents are advised to be more active in utilising available social support, both from family, friends, and lecturers, as an effort to reduce anxiety levels. Joining a study or discussion group can also be an effective way. And respondents can also practice developing positive coping strategies, such as planning study time well and avoiding the habit of delaying studying.

- b. Recommendation for Future Researches In addition to social support, future research can add other variables such as coping strategies, self-efficacy, and the influence of the academic environment to get a more comprehensive picture of the factors that influence anxiety in facing OSCA.
- c. Recommendation for Institution Institutions can develop programmes that involve peer mentors or tutors as part of social support for students. This way, students can feel more supported and socially connected.

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