

SELF-RECOVERY STRATEGIES AMONG FINAL-YEAR ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS: COPING WITH LOW MOTIVATION DURING THESIS WRITING

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ABSTRACT

Completing an undergraduate thesis exposes final-year students to academic and emotional pressures that may reduce their motivation and delay thesis progress. Previous studies have widely examined academic stress, burnout, and procrastination among university students; however, limited qualitative attention has been given to how final-year students actively restore and maintain their motivation after experiencing motivational decline. Grounded in Lazarus and Folkman's Coping Theory and Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, this qualitative case study explored the self-recovery strategies used by final-year English education students in coping with low motivation during thesis writing. Four final-year English education students who were actively writing their undergraduate thesis were selected through homogeneous purposive sampling. They were chosen as information-rich participants based on screening results, and the number of participants was considered sufficient because data saturation was reached when no substantially new themes emerged after the fourth interview. Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed four major themes: (1) restoring motivation through adaptive strategies; (2) maintaining motivation through self-regulation; (3) personal reasons for persisting; and (4) external support for motivation. Theoretically, this study advances the understanding of students' motivational recovery by conceptualizing self-recovery as an integrated process that connects coping strategies and self-determined motivation. Practically, the findings suggest that thesis supervisors and academic institutions should provide autonomy-supportive guidance, emotional encouragement, and structured academic support to help students sustain motivation during thesis completion.

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INTRODUCTION

Completing an undergraduate thesis is one of the most challenging academic stages experienced by final-year university students. During this phase, students are required to conduct independent research, manage deadlines, revise their writing, communicate with supervisors, and maintain consistent academic progress. These demands require not only academic competence but also emotional endurance, self-regulation, and sustained motivation. When students experience excessive academic pressure, their thesis progress may be disrupted, leading to stress, anxiety, burnout, procrastination, and declining motivation. Therefore, motivation becomes an important psychological factor that enables students to continue working on their thesis despite facing academic and emotional difficulties.

Thesis writing has also been associated with academic stress and delayed completion. Domaley et al. (2023) found a significant relationship between academic stress and thesis completion, indicating that higher academic stress may negatively affect students' ability to complete their thesis. Similarly, Dzikunu et al. (2025) reported that delayed thesis completion can be caused by student-related factors, supervisor-related factors, institutional issues, and financial challenges. These studies indicate that thesis completion is influenced not only by students' academic ability, but also by emotional pressure, supervision quality, institutional support, and students' ability to manage their responsibilities.

Previous studies have shown that university students are vulnerable to stress and psychological pressure in academic contexts. Alkhawaldeh et al. (2023) found that most university students experienced moderate levels of stress and used several coping mechanisms, including problem-solving, seeking social support, and avoidance. Similarly, Surilena et al. (2025) reported that university students used various coping strategies when dealing with stressful academic situations, with self-distraction and acceptance being among the most common strategies. These findings indicate that coping strategies are important resources for students when they face academic pressure. However, coping responses may vary depending on the type of stressor, students' personal conditions, and the academic demands they encounter.

In the context of thesis writing, final-year students often experience more specific academic and emotional challenges. Kurniawati & Atmojo (2022) found that thesis-writing anxiety among EFL students was influenced by family expectations, financial concerns, work-related pressure, poor time management, and negative academic experiences. Rosyada et al. (2024) also reported that students commonly experienced stress, panic, confusion, and frustration during thesis completion, which encouraged them to use coping strategies such as emotional regulation, avoidance, distancing, and positive reappraisal. These studies show that thesis writing is not merely an academic task, but also an emotionally demanding process that can weaken students' motivation and delay their progress.

In EFL contexts, thesis writing becomes more complex because students are required to manage both research-related demands and English academic writing challenges. Fitria (2022) found that EFL students experienced internal difficulties such as boredom, pessimism, fear, limited understanding of thesis structure, and difficulties with grammar and vocabulary, as well as external difficulties such as communication problems with supervisors, limited references, financial issues, and an unsupportive environment. Hayati et al., (2025) also reported that undergraduate EFL learners experienced anxiety, lack of motivation, low self-esteem, and uncertainty during thesis writing, but they could overcome these problems by communicating with supervisors, seeking support, dividing tasks into smaller parts, and setting realistic deadlines.

Academic procrastination is another issue closely related to students' motivational decline during thesis writing. Ashraf et al. (2023) explained that academic procrastination can disrupt students' productivity, delay task completion, and lead to anxiety, frustration, weak academic progress, and emotional distress. Rad et al. (2025) further found that academic

procrastination was negatively associated with academic self-efficacy and positively associated with difficulties in emotion regulation. This means that students with lower confidence in their academic ability and greater difficulty managing emotions are more likely to postpone academic tasks. Nadhirah et al. (2023) also found that academic procrastination among final-year students during thesis writing was influenced by internal factors, such as laziness, perfectionism, unstable mental condition, social media addiction, and linguistic or conceptual difficulties, as well as external factors, such as environment, pressure from others, and family issues. In thesis writing, such procrastination may become more serious because students are expected to work independently, manage long-term tasks, and regulate their own progress without daily classroom structures.

Other studies have emphasized the importance of recovery, support, and self-regulation in maintaining students' well-being and academic performance. Stang et al. (2025) highlighted that stress and recovery are closely related to students' well-being and academic success, and that coping mechanisms play an important role in how students manage academic pressure. In addition, supportive academic environments, psychological support, and recovery activities are needed to reduce students' mental strain and support their academic careers. These findings suggest that students' ability to recover from stress is not only influenced by individual coping strategies, but also by external support systems such as peers, family, supervisors, and institutional environments.

Academic burnout is another element that may reduce students' motivation when writing their thesis. Asni et al. (2024) discovered that final-year English education students had moderate academic burnout, which included emotional exhaustion, demoralization, and decreased personal accomplishment. Sulthon & Baraja (2024) discovered that self-efficacy, social support, coping stress, and demographic characteristics all influenced academic burnout among final-year students. These data indicate that students' motivational drop throughout thesis writing is tightly related to emotional tiredness, perceived academic ability, coping capability, and the assistance they receive from others.

Although previous studies have extensively examined academic stress, anxiety, burnout, coping strategies, academic procrastination, self-efficacy, and emotion regulation, several critical gaps remain. First, many existing studies tend to position students as individuals who experience stress, burnout, or procrastination, rather than as active agents who attempt to restore their motivation after experiencing motivational decline. As a result, previous research has provided valuable explanations of the causes and consequences of academic pressure, but has offered limited insight into the recovery process through which students rebuild motivation, regain control, and continue their thesis work. Second, several studies have relied heavily on quantitative approaches that measure relationships among psychological variables, while paying less attention to students' lived experiences, personal meanings, and context-specific strategies during thesis writing. Third, existing studies often discuss academic motivation in general university contexts, whereas the thesis-writing process involves long-term independent work, emotional uncertainty, repeated revisions, and continuous interaction with supervisors. Therefore, little is known about how final-year English education students personally recover from low motivation, regulate themselves, seek support, and sustain their progress during thesis completion.

The present study explores the self-recovery strategies used by final-year English education students in coping with low motivation during thesis writing. This study is guided by Lazarus and Folkman's Coping Theory and Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory. Coping Theory helps explain how students manage academic and emotional pressure through adaptive strategies such as emotional recovery, planning, and seeking support. Meanwhile, Self-Determination Theory explains how students sustain motivation through autonomy, personal responsibility, future goals, and relatedness with others. By integrating these two theoretical perspectives, this study conceptualizes motivational recovery as a dynamic process

that involves coping, self-regulation, personal persistence, and external support.

This study addresses the following research questions: (1) How do final-year English education students restore and maintain motivation when they feel unmotivated during the thesis-writing process? and (2) What personal and external factors influence the way students stay motivated while completing their thesis? The novelty of this study lies in its focus on self-recovery strategies as an active motivational recovery process, rather than merely examining stress, burnout, or procrastination as negative academic outcomes. Accordingly, this study contributes to student motivation literature by extending the concept of self-recovery as an integrated process that connects coping mechanisms and self-determination processes in helping students recover from low motivation during thesis writing. Indeed, the findings may assist thesis supervisors and academic institutions in providing more responsive assistance, such as emotional encouragement, autonomy-supportive supervision, organized guidance, and peer-support opportunities, to help students sustain motivation and complete their thesis.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore self-recovery strategies used by final-year English education students when experiencing low motivation during thesis writing. This design was considered appropriate because it allows an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, meanings, and perspectives in a specific academic context (Creswell, 2014).

The participants were four final-year English education students who were actively writing their undergraduate thesis. They were selected through homogeneous purposive sampling because they shared similar characteristics relevant to the study, namely being final-year students, working on a thesis, and having experienced low motivation. Screening questions were used to identify students who met these criteria. From the screening results, four students obtained the same highest score; therefore, they were selected as information-rich participants.

The number of participants was considered sufficient because this study focused on the depth of data rather than statistical generalization. Data saturation was reached during the interview process because no substantially new themes emerged after the fourth interview. Similar patterns of motivational decline and recovery, such as emotional recovery, planning, self-regulation, personal objectives, and support from others, were displayed by the participants.

A semi-structured interview guide served as the primary tool, and screening questions were used to help choose participants. Previous research on thesis writing challenges, academic stress, coping mechanisms, self-regulated learning, and student motivation led to the development of both tools (Howard et al., 2021; Mudmainna, 2025; Muryono et al., 2023; Sophia Akila Zar et al., 2025; Yahya & Al-Arief, 2025). The indicators included low motivation, time management problems, psychological barriers, supervision challenges, coping strategies, self-regulation, autonomy, persistence, personal goals, relatedness, external support, and amotivation. Participants with low motivation were identified using the screening questions, and their self-recovery techniques were further examined using the interview guide.

Before data collection, the screening questions and interview guide were reviewed to ensure content validity. The validation focused on clarity, relevance to the research questions, and suitability with the theoretical framework. Unclear, overlapping, or leading questions were revised before the final instruments were used.

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews. The interviews were recorded with participants' consent and then transcribed for analysis. To protect confidentiality, participants were coded as P1, P2, P3, and P4.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). The process included reading the transcripts repeatedly, generating initial codes, grouping similar codes into themes, reviewing the themes, and interpreting the findings based on the

research questions and theoretical frameworks.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied member checking, peer debriefing, audit trail, and triangulation. Participants were asked to verify the accuracy of their interview summaries as part of the member checking process. Peer debriefing was carried out by discussing the coding process and emerging themes with academic supervisors. An audit trail was maintained by documenting the participant selection, interview process, transcription, coding, and theme development. Triangulation was conducted by comparing participants' interview data with the theoretical framework and relevant previous studies. These techniques were applied to strengthen the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the findings on how final-year English education students restored and maintained their motivation during the thesis-writing process. The thematic analysis revealed four major themes: (1) restoring motivation through adaptive strategies, (2) maintaining motivation through self-regulation, (3) personal reasons for persisting, and (4) external support for motivation. These themes did not stand separately; rather, they formed an interconnected process of students' self-recovery from low motivation.

The findings indicate that students' motivational recovery began with adaptive strategies, such as emotional recovery, seeking support, and planning, which helped them reduce stress and regain readiness to continue their thesis work. After this initial recovery, self-regulation played an important role in helping students maintain discipline, manage distractions, and continue their thesis progress. Personal reasons, such as graduation goals and family-related motivation, strengthened their persistence, while external support from supervisors, friends, and family reinforced both emotional recovery and self-regulation. Therefore, self-recovery in thesis writing can be understood as a dynamic process involving emotional coping, behavioral control, personal meaning, and social support.

Restoring Motivation Through Adaptive Strategies

The first theme shows that students' self-recovery process began with adaptive strategies used to reduce emotional pressure and regain readiness to continue thesis writing. These strategies included emotional recovery, seeking support, and planning. Rather than indicating avoidance, these strategies reflected students' efforts to manage emotional exhaustion and reorganize their academic responsibilities. In this sense, adaptive strategies functioned as the initial stage of motivational recovery because they helped students move from feeling overwhelmed to becoming more prepared to continue their thesis work.

Emotional Recovery Strategies

Thesis writing required sustained concentration and emotional endurance. However, participants reported experiencing burnout, emotional exhaustion, and discouragement during the process. To deal with these conditions, they used temporary breaks as a way to calm themselves before returning to their academic responsibilities. These breaks included watching movies, going outside, spending time in relaxing places, or doing enjoyable activities.

P1 explained:

"Usually, I take a break for about a day. For example, I might spend a whole day just watching something or doing whatever I want to do that day. So, after my break is over, I have to take responsibility for finishing whatever I haven't finished yet."

Similarly, P3 stated:

"There are a few things I usually do when I'm feeling a little down, like getting some fresh air, going to the park, or feeding the cats."

These responses indicate that temporary breaks were not used as complete avoidance of thesis work. Instead, participants used them as controlled emotional recovery strategies. After taking a break, they became more emotionally ready to continue their thesis tasks. This finding suggests that emotional recovery became an important starting point in the self-recovery process because students needed to reduce emotional tension before they could regulate their behavior and regain academic focus.

Seeking Support to Overcome Difficulties

Support-seeking also appeared as an important strategy in restoring motivation. Participants did not rely only on themselves when facing confusion or low motivation. They sought emotional and academic support from friends and family to reduce feelings of isolation and regain confidence in continuing their thesis work.

P4 explained:

“I call my mom or my friends and ask about suggestions how to work on my thesis. So, I can keep on working on my thesis.”

P4 also stated:

“Thanks to these strategies, I actually felt more enthusiastic about working on my thesis, especially when I was with my friends—that was a real plus during the process. As a result, I felt more motivated and didn’t feel stuck anymore.

Whenever I hit a roadblock, I’d invite my friends to work on our thesis together, so when I got stuck, I could ask them for help.”

This finding shows that support-seeking was not merely a form of emotional dependence. Instead, it helped participants transform feelings of confusion into practical action. Advice from friends and family helped students identify what to do next, while peer interaction made them feel less alone in the thesis-writing process. Therefore, support-seeking became a bridge between emotional recovery and self-regulation because it helped students regain confidence and continue working on their thesis.

Regaining Motivation Through Planning

Planning appeared as another adaptive strategy that helped students restore motivation. Participants clarified that when thesis assignments were perceived as big, confusing assignments, they frequently felt overwhelming. They were able to divide their thesis work into smaller, manageable pieces by using planning.

P4 stated:

“I usually start by making a plan for what I should do next for my proposal. I start by creating a work plan for chapters one, two, three, and so on.”

Similarly, P2 further reflected on how planning helped reduce feelings of burnout and confusion during thesis writing:

“I think that when I start planning, I realize, “Oh, it’s actually easy to do.” Before that, I felt burned out or started to feel like it was hard to do or work on, but after planning it out, all those things I thought were hard turned out to be easier than I thought. That’s the change. When I make a plan, I feel motivated, so that’s the turning point where my motivation to work on my thesis comes back. I usually make a plan first, like what I should do next for my proposal.”

These responses suggest that planning helped participants change their perception of thesis writing. Tasks that initially felt difficult became more achievable when organized into specific steps. Planning therefore did not only support productivity, but also reduced emotional pressure and restored students’ sense of control. This finding indicates that adaptive strategies became the foundation for the next stage of self-recovery, namely maintaining motivation through self-regulation.

Maintaining Motivation Through Self-Regulation

The second theme shows that after participants restored their motivation through adaptive strategies, they needed self-regulation to maintain their thesis progress. Self-regulation

appeared in the form of self-discipline, personal responsibility, environmental regulation, focus management, persistence, and self-control. This theme indicates that motivation during thesis writing was not maintained only by emotional recovery, but also by students' ability to control their behavior, manage distractions, and return to their academic responsibilities.

Self-Discipline and Personal Responsibility

Several students explained that self-discipline and personal responsibility helped them continue working on their thesis even when their motivation decreased. They realized that thesis completion depended on their own commitment and ability to manage themselves.

P2 stated:

"I kind of force myself to finish this project."

P2 further explained:

"In my opinion, what helps the most is self-management, because when I take a break from writing my thesis, I sometimes think about the dreams I want to achieve, and those dreams will remain just dreams if I don't do anything or if I stop for too long. So, I start working on them again.

For example, if there's a chapter I need to work on, I'll start by planning or setting a goal to finish it in two or three days—something like that."

Similarly, P1 described self-discipline as a form of responsibility after taking breaks during thesis writing:

"So, after I finish my break, I have to take responsibility for finishing what I haven't done yet. Since I've been taking it easy today, that means tomorrow I'll have to make up for taking it easy yesterday, so I just feel more responsible for my work. The result is that I'm more motivated to get things done because of that sense of responsibility."

They demonstrate how self-control served as a continuation of emotional healing. Participants exercised personal responsibility to return to their thesis assignments after a break rather than being passive. This result implies that a transition from emotional relief to behavioral control occurred during self-recovery. Students had to use self-discipline to avoid long-term procrastination and maintain work after initially regaining their emotional state.

Environmental Regulation and Focus Management

Participants also maintained motivation by managing their environment and reducing distractions. Some participants intentionally chose places that supported productivity, while others limited activities that could interfere with thesis writing.

P1 explained:

"I go to the library every day and sit there. It's really helpful because at home I'd just laze around, but at the library I see other people working, so I feel motivated to work too."

Some students also experienced difficulties balancing work responsibilities and thesis writing, which sometimes disrupted their thesis progress.

In that case, P3 explained:

"When I'm really busy with work, I always remind myself that I need to focus on my thesis. I need to take a step back and focus on my thesis. That means I need to focus on myself—not always running around or going to places that aren't important."

These results show that self-regulation was shaped not only by internal discipline but also by the surrounding environment. For example, the library provided a productive atmosphere because participants could see other students working, which encouraged them to stay focused. This shows that external conditions could strengthen students' self-regulation. In other words, supportive environments helped participants transform motivation into consistent action.

Building Persistence and Self-Control

Persistence and self-control also became important parts of maintaining motivation. Participants believed that they had to take control of their thesis process because they were the ones responsible for completing it.

P1 stated:

“I have full control with my thesis process, because I’m the one who does it and I’m the one who know my struggles. If I don’t have the control of my own thesis, then who will be responsible with my own thesis. So, I have the full control.”

This response suggests that persistence was built through a sense of ownership. Participants did not view thesis writing only as an academic requirement, but also as a personal responsibility that required control, commitment, and consistency. This finding shows that self-regulation helped students maintain motivation after the initial recovery stage. While adaptive strategies helped them recover from emotional exhaustion, self-regulation helped them stay engaged with thesis tasks and continue their progress.

Overall, this theme reveals that self-regulation served as the mechanism that sustained students’ motivation after it had been restored. Emotional recovery helped students feel ready to continue, but self-discipline, environmental control, and persistence helped them remain productive. Therefore, self-regulation connected the initial recovery process with longer-term thesis persistence

Personal Reasons for Persisting

The third theme reveals that students’ persistence during thesis writing was strengthened by personal reasons that gave meaning to their academic struggle. These reasons included graduation goals, future aspirations, and family-related motivation. Unlike adaptive strategies and self-regulation, which helped students manage immediate difficulties, personal reasons functioned as deeper motivational anchors that reminded students why they needed to continue their thesis. This theme shows that students’ motivation was not only maintained through discipline, but also through personal meaning and emotional commitment.

Personal Goals and Future Orientation

Several students highlighted that graduation targets and future goals encouraged them to continue working on their thesis despite experiencing low motivation. For them, completing the thesis was not only an academic requirement but also an important step toward achieving future plans.

P2 stated:

“I think my goal is the target. I have a target for when I’ll graduate.”

This reaction suggests that having a specific goal assisted participants in staying on track while drafting their thesis. When students felt burned out or discouraged, graduation goals served as reminders to get back to work on their thesis. In this way, goal setting encouraged self-control since students were more inclined to employ self-control when they made the connection between finishing their thesis and their long-term objectives.

The finding also indicates that students’ persistence was shaped by their ability to attach personal value to the thesis process. Although thesis writing was often experienced as stressful, students continued because they saw it as meaningful for their academic completion and future opportunities. Therefore, personal goals helped transform thesis writing from a burden into a purposeful responsibility

Family-Related Motivation

Family also became an important reason for students to persist. Several participants explained that they wanted to complete their thesis to make their parents and family proud. This motivation was emotional in nature, but it also strengthened their commitment to continue the thesis process.

P3 and P4 similarly stated:

“To make my mom and family happy. I want to make the people around me proud.” (P3)

“To make both of my parents happy and satisfied with the results. So, my personal goal and source of motivation are my parents.” (P4)

These responses show that family was not only a source of external support, but also became part of students' internal motivation. The desire to make parents proud encouraged participants to continue working even when they felt tired, discouraged, or unmotivated. This finding indicates that family-related motivation connected external relationships with internal persistence.

In this study, family motivation helped students interpret thesis completion as both a personal achievement and a form of responsibility toward people who supported them. Therefore, family-related motivation strengthened the recovery process by giving students emotional reasons to persist. It also supported self-regulation because remembering their family encouraged them to control procrastination and continue their thesis work.

This theme shows that personal reasons played an important role in sustaining students' motivation after the initial recovery stage. Adaptive strategies helped students recover emotionally, self-regulation helped them maintain progress, and personal reasons gave meaning to their persistence. Thus, personal goals and family-related motivation became central factors that helped students continue their thesis despite academic and emotional challenges.

External Support for Motivation

The fourth theme shows that external support played an important role in strengthening students' motivation during thesis writing. Support from supervisors, friends, and family helped participants reduce emotional pressure, regain confidence, and maintain their thesis progress. This theme indicates that students' self-recovery was not only an individual process, but also a socially supported process. External support reinforced emotional recovery and helped students regulate themselves when they felt unmotivated or uncertain about their thesis.

Participants explained that support from supervisors was important because it provided academic direction and emotional reassurance. Constructive feedback, encouragement, and supportive supervision helped students feel more confident and less pressured during the thesis-writing process.

P1 and P4 stated:

"Actually, my supervisor really motivates me because she's great, really smart, and makes me think I have to succeed too, since my advisor is that awesome." (P1)

"My supervisor, was very supportive of what I wanted to create. He didn't ask for many revisions or anything like that; he fully supported my work and also gave me helpful feedback on how to carry it out." (P4)

These responses suggest that supervisor support did not only help students understand what to revise or improve, but also strengthened their confidence to continue. When students received clear feedback and encouragement, they were more able to organize their next steps and maintain their academic responsibility. In this sense, supervisor support contributed to students' self-regulation because it helped them manage uncertainty and continue their thesis work with clearer direction.

Peer and family support also became important sources of motivation. Friends helped participants feel less isolated, while family provided emotional encouragement during difficult phases of thesis writing.

P3 explained:

"The most influential factor was the support I received from my friends and family. They were a huge help when my motivation was low, gave me lots of advice, always cheered me up, and were always there for me."

This finding shows that emotional support from friends and family helped participants recover from discouragement and regain motivation. Peer support also had a practical function because students could share difficulties, discuss thesis-related problems, and work together. Therefore, external support did not only provide comfort, but also encouraged students to return to their thesis tasks and sustain their progress.

Therefore, this theme reveals that external support strengthened the whole self-recovery process. Friends and family supported emotional recovery, supervisors supported academic direction, and both forms of support helped students maintain self-regulation. Thus, students' motivation during thesis writing was shaped by the interaction between internal efforts and supportive social relationships.

The four themes identified in this study were closely connected in explaining how students recovered from low motivation during thesis writing. The process began when students experienced emotional exhaustion, confusion, or discouragement. In this stage, adaptive strategies such as emotional recovery, seeking support, and planning helped students reduce pressure and regain readiness to continue their thesis work.

After students regained emotional readiness, self-regulation helped them maintain their progress. Self-discipline, focus management, environmental regulation, and self-control enabled students to return to thesis-related tasks and prevent prolonged procrastination. This shows that adaptive strategies helped students recover from low motivation, while self-regulation helped them sustain their motivation over time.

Personal reasons for persisting strengthened this process by giving meaning to students' academic struggle. Graduation goals, future aspirations, and family-related motivation encouraged students to continue working even when they felt tired or discouraged. These personal reasons functioned as motivational anchors that supported students' self-regulation and persistence.

External support also influenced the whole recovery process. Support from supervisors provided academic direction and confidence, while support from friends and family gave emotional encouragement. This support helped students feel less isolated, manage uncertainty, and maintain motivation. Therefore, students' self-recovery process was not only shaped by internal motivation, but also by supportive social relationships.

Overall, the findings suggest that self-recovery during thesis writing is a dynamic process. Adaptive strategies help students regain motivation, self-regulation helps them maintain progress, personal reasons strengthen persistence, and external support reinforces both emotional recovery and academic self-regulation.

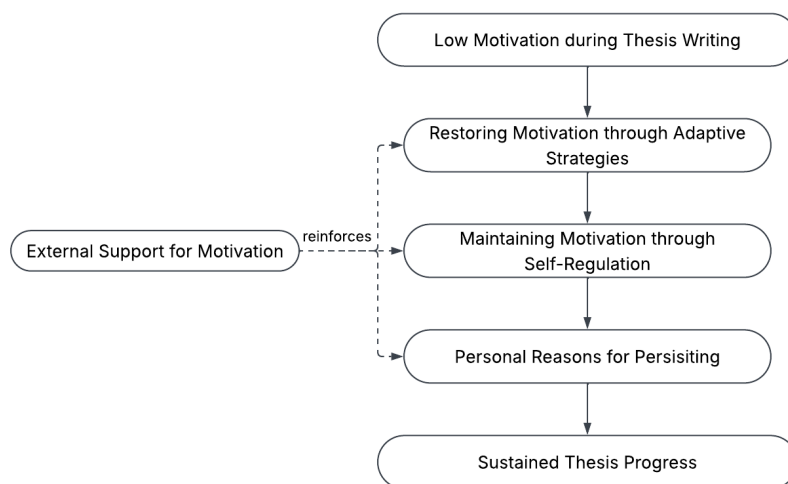


Figure 1. Model of Students' Self-Recovery Process during Thesis Writing

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship among the four major themes in students' self-recovery process during thesis writing. The process begins with low motivation, which leads students to restore their motivation through adaptive strategies. After gaining emotional readiness, students maintain their thesis progress through self-regulation. Personal reasons for persisting then strengthen students' commitment to continue working toward thesis completion.

External support from supervisors, friends, and family reinforces the recovery process by supporting adaptive strategies, self-regulation, and students' persistence. As a result, students' self-recovery during thesis writing involves the interaction between adaptive coping, behavioral regulation, personal meaning, and social support.

Discussion

This study explored how final-year English education students restored and maintained their motivation during thesis writing. The results demonstrate that students' self-recovery was a dynamic process including adaptive coping, self-regulation, personal meaning, and external support rather than a single solution. Initially, students tried to reduce emotional strain by taking short breaks, engaging in fun activities, asking for help, and making plans. After emotional pressure decreased, they maintained their thesis progress through self-discipline, environmental regulation, focus management, and self-control. Graduation objectives and family-related motivation bolstered their perseverance, while encouragement from friends, family, and supervisors bolstered their self-assurance and readiness to proceed with the thesis.

The relationship between motivation and burnout also helps explain why students needed self-recovery strategies during thesis writing. Shahnaz et al. (2025) found that motivation and burnout are closely related, and that excessive emphasis on external recognition may contribute to exhaustion. Yusof et al. (2024) also emphasized that motivation and burnout are important factors affecting students' academic success and well-being. In the present study, students' self-recovery strategies helped them move from emotional exhaustion toward renewed motivation and sustained academic engagement.

This finding implies that the connection between internal and external resources shapes motivational recovery throughout thesis writing. Students' ability to control their emotions, plan their work, avoid distractions, and give finishing their thesis importance to themselves were examples of internal resources. Supportive relationships, emotional support, and academic help were examples of external resources. Thus, this study's primary contribution is the description of self-recovery as an integrated process in which coping mechanisms assist students in regaining motivation while self-determination processes enable them to maintain motivation and carry out their thesis work.

The first theme shows that adaptive strategies became the initial stage of students' self-recovery when they experienced low motivation during thesis writing. These strategies consisted of emotional recovery, support-seeking, and problem-focused coping through planning. Students first needed to reduce emotional pressure before they could return to thesis-related tasks. This indicates that motivational recovery did not begin with immediate productivity, but with students' efforts to regain emotional readiness and reorganize their academic responsibilities.

Based on Lazarus and Folkman's Coping Theory, emotional recovery can be understood as emotion-focused coping because students tried to manage their emotional responses to thesis-related stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, in this study, taking breaks or doing enjoyable activities did not simply indicate avoidance. These activities became adaptive because students used them as temporary recovery moments before returning to their thesis responsibilities. This supports the view that recovery experiences are important for students' well-being and academic functioning when facing academic pressure (Stang et al., 2025).

Support-seeking also played an important role in restoring motivation. Friends and family provided emotional encouragement, advice, and shared experiences that helped students feel less isolated and more confident. Previous studies also show that social support and coping strategies help final-year students manage academic stress during thesis writing (Prasetyaningrum et al., 2025). In this sense, support-seeking functioned not only as emotional support but also as a practical resource that helped students continue their thesis work.

Planning appeared as a form of problem-focused coping. By making work plans and breaking thesis tasks into smaller and clearer steps, students were able to manage the source of their academic stress more directly. Planning helped them reduce confusion, restore a sense of control, and rebuild motivation. This finding extends previous studies by Surilena et al. (2025), who explained that planning is regarded as problem-focused coping because it involves developing strategies to remove, avoid, or reduce the impact of stressful situations. Therefore, adaptive strategies in this study were not only coping responses to reduce stress, but also the first step in students' motivational recovery process.

The second theme reveals how, beyond the first stage of recovery, self-regulation emerged as a mechanism that assisted students in maintaining motivation. After using adaptive coping to reduce emotional strain, students needed self-control, self-discipline, focus management, and environmental regulation to move forward with their thesis. This means that self-recovery involved not only improving emotional well-being, but also regaining the ability to act consistently in completing thesis-related tasks.

From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, students' self-regulation reflects autonomy because they saw thesis completion as their own responsibility and believed that they had control over their academic progress (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This finding also relates to student motivation literature, which emphasizes that autonomous motivation and personal value are important for persistence and academic adjustment (Howard et al., 2021). In this study, students continued working on their thesis not only because they had external demands, but because they developed a sense of ownership over the process.

Environmental regulation also became part of students' self-regulation. Some students chose productive places, such as the library, or reduced distracting activities to maintain focus. This shows that self-regulation was not only internal, but also supported by the way students arranged their surroundings. This finding is relevant to Almayez et al. (2025), who found that motivation significantly influenced self-regulated learning strategies and self-efficacy among EFL learners. In this study, environmental regulation helped students maintain focus and transform recovered motivation into consistent thesis progress.

In this study, self-regulation formed a bridge between coping and persistence. While self-regulation enabled students to convert their restored motivation into steady thesis progress, coping mechanisms assisted students in overcoming emotional strain. This finding extends Rad et al. (2025), who reported that academic procrastination is linked to academic self-efficacy and emotional regulation difficulties. In the present study, self-regulation served as a mechanism that helped students manage discouragement, prevent prolonged procrastination, and sustain their thesis progress after recovering their motivation. This finding adds to the concept of self-recovery by showing that final-year students do not only need emotional coping to recover from low motivation, but also need self-regulation to transform recovered motivation into consistent thesis progress.

The third theme shows that personal reasons became motivational anchors that helped students persist during thesis writing. Graduation goals, future aspirations, and family-related motivation gave students a clear reason to continue even when they experienced stress, emotional exhaustion, or low motivation. This finding suggests that persistence did not only come from discipline, but also from the personal meaning students attached to thesis completion.

From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, these personal reasons reflect identified motivation because students continued working on their thesis when they perceived it as personally important for their future (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This explains why graduation targets and future plans were powerful sources of persistence. Students were more willing to regulate themselves when they connected thesis completion with long-term academic and personal goals. This is also in line with Howard et al. (2021), who emphasized that autonomous

forms of motivation, especially personal value, are strongly related to students' persistence and adjustment.

Family-related motivation also played an important role in students' persistence. In this study, family was not only an external source of pressure or support, but also became internalized as part of students' personal motivation. The desire to make parents proud encouraged students to continue their thesis even when they felt discouraged. This finding is relevant to Kotera et al. (2022), who found that academic motivation among Indonesian university students is related to psychological strengths such as resilience and self-compassion. In this study, students' family-related motivation strengthened their resilience because it helped them reinterpret thesis completion as both a personal goal and a meaningful responsibility toward their family.

Personal reasons in this study functioned as a bridge between self-regulation and sustained motivation. Coping strategies helped students recover emotionally, self-regulation helped them continue working, and personal reasons gave them a meaningful direction for persistence. This shows that self-recovery among final-year students is not only about reducing stress, but also about rebuilding purpose during thesis writing.

The fourth theme shows that external support strengthened students' motivation by providing emotional reassurance, academic direction, and a sense of belonging during thesis writing. Support from supervisors, friends, and family helped students feel less isolated and more confident when facing confusion, revision pressure, or low motivation. This finding suggests that self-recovery was not only an internal process, but also a socially supported process.

From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, external support reflects the need for relatedness, which refers to students' feeling of being supported, understood, and connected with others (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In this study, relatedness helped students maintain motivation because supportive relationships made them feel that they were not facing thesis difficulties alone. Supervisor support provided clearer academic direction, while peer and family support reduced emotional pressure.

This finding also explains how external support influenced self-regulation. When students received guidance and encouragement, they became more able to organize their tasks, control discouragement, and continue working on their thesis. This finding is supported by Dzikunu et al. (2025), who emphasized that thesis completion is influenced by student-related, supervisor-related, institutional, and financial factors. Asni et al. (2024) also suggested that supervisors should provide adaptive mentoring, understand students' individual needs, and help them develop realistic strategies to complete their thesis. Therefore, external support did not replace students' personal responsibility; rather, it strengthened their ability to regulate themselves and continue their thesis progress.

So, external support completed the self-recovery process by connecting coping and self-determination. Coping strategies helped students manage stress, self-regulation helped them maintain progress, and external support reinforced both processes through academic guidance and emotional encouragement. This shows that students' motivation during thesis writing was shaped by the interaction between personal effort and supportive social relationships.

Overall, the findings of this study show that students' self-recovery during thesis writing is a dynamic process shaped by the interaction between coping strategies, self-regulation, personal meaning, and external support. This study extends the understanding of self-recovery by showing that recovering motivation is not merely a process of reducing stress, but also a process of rebuilding emotional readiness, academic control, personal purpose, and supportive relationships. In this process, Coping Theory explains how students manage thesis-related pressure through emotion-focused coping, support-seeking, and problem-focused coping through planning. Emotional recovery helps students reduce emotional exhaustion, support-

seeking helps them gain encouragement and practical advice, while planning helps them organize thesis tasks into clearer and more manageable steps.

Theoretically, this study enriches the concept of self-recovery among final-year students by conceptualizing it as a process of moving from emotional disruption to sustained academic engagement. The findings show that self-recovery does not only involve reducing stress or overcoming low motivation, but also includes rebuilding emotional readiness, restoring a sense of control through planning and self-regulation, strengthening personal meaning, and receiving support from others. In this process, Coping Theory explains how students manage emotional and academic pressure through emotion-focused coping, support-seeking, and problem-focused coping through planning. Meanwhile, Self-Determination Theory explains how students sustain their recovered motivation through autonomy, personal responsibility, meaningful goals, and relatedness. Thus, this study extends the concept of self-recovery by showing that motivational recovery among final-year students is an integrated process that connects coping strategies with self-determined motivation during thesis writing.

The findings suggest that thesis supervisors and academic institutions should support both students' emotional recovery and academic regulation. Supervisors can provide clear guidance, constructive feedback, and autonomy-supportive supervision to help students feel more confident, responsible, and motivated during thesis writing. This implication is supported by Okada (2023), who emphasized that perceived autonomy support from instructors plays an important role in improving students' motivation and academic achievement. Therefore, supervisor support should not only focus on correcting students' thesis drafts, but also on creating a supportive academic environment that helps students regulate their progress, rebuild confidence, and maintain motivation during thesis completion.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the study involved only four final-year English education students, so the findings cannot be generalized to all university students. However, the small number of participants allowed for an in-depth exploration of students' self-recovery experiences. Second, this study focused only on English education students; therefore, students from other academic disciplines may experience different motivational challenges and recovery strategies. Third, the data were based on participants' self-reported experiences, which may be influenced by their emotional condition and personal interpretation during the interviews.

Future research is recommended to involve participants from different academic disciplines and broader educational contexts to explore wider variations in students' self-recovery experiences. Future studies may also use mixed-method or longitudinal designs to examine how students' motivation changes over time and how coping strategies, self-regulation, social support, academic resilience, and problem-focused planning interact throughout the thesis-writing process.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that self-recovery among final-year English education students during thesis writing is a dynamic motivational process involving adaptive coping, self-regulation, personal meaning, and external support. Emotional recovery, support-seeking, and problem-focused coping through planning helped students reduce emotional pressure and regain control over thesis-related tasks. After this initial recovery, self-regulation, graduation goals, family-related motivation, and support from supervisors, friends, and family helped students maintain their thesis progress.

Scientifically, this study contributes to student motivation literature by conceptualizing self-recovery as an integrated process that connects Coping Theory and Self-Determination Theory in the context of thesis writing. The findings show that motivational recovery is not only about reducing stress, but also about rebuilding emotional readiness, restoring academic

control, strengthening personal meaning, and sustaining engagement through autonomy, relatedness, and self-regulated action.

Also practically, the findings suggest that thesis supervisors and academic institutions should support students' motivational recovery, not only evaluate their thesis products. Supervisors can provide clear feedback, constructive encouragement, and autonomy-supportive guidance, while institutions can create supportive academic environments that help students manage emotional exhaustion, plan their tasks, and maintain motivation.

Although this study provides an in-depth understanding of students' self-recovery experiences, its findings are limited to four final-year English education students in one academic context and are not intended for broad generalization. Since the data were based on self-reported interview responses, participants' answers may also be influenced by memory, emotional condition, and personal interpretation. Future research is recommended to involve more participants from different academic disciplines and to use longitudinal or mixed-method designs to examine how students' self-recovery develops throughout the thesis-writing process.

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