

A Study on Undergraduate EFL Students' Help-Seeking Skills in Doing Their Academic Assignments

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the complexities of help-seeking skills, academic achievement, personality traits, and barriers encountered during the process of seeking assistance. The research objectives include examining the correlation between help-seeking skills and academic achievement among undergraduate students majoring in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), exploring the association between help-seeking skills and personality characteristics, and identifying the barriers faced by students when seeking help. The study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, involving three students in their 14th semester and two students in their 12th semester from the Department of English Literature as participants. Data collection methods include interviews, documentation of GPA scores, and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessments. The findings demonstrate that help-seeking skills significantly influence students' GPA scores, personality traits shape individuals' help-seeking behavior, and barriers to seeking help encompass stigma and embarrassment, negative experiences, and a preference for self-reliance.

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KEYWORDS

Achievement; Help-Seeking Behaviour; Help-Seeking Barriers; Personality.

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1. Introduction

Academic assignments are one of the teaching methods used by teachers and lecturers to keep students motivated to study. In fact, in our society, students are motivated to learn when they are given assignments by teachers or lecturers (Mwasalwiba, 2010; Rahman, 2016). Because given the task, students indirectly open and read the previous or subsequent material in order to be able to complete the task as much as possible. Even if academic assignment have good intentions and goals, their implementation sometimes has a different effect. Assignment is not only to train the skills of the students and extend their study time, but also to burden the students (Yundayani & Ardiasih, 2021; Rahman, 2018). Tasks can also be labeled as unimportant if they do not impact student ability (Baars & Wijnia, 2018; Aswad et al., 2019; Hasnia et al., 2022). The bad grades of the students are not due to their respective abilities, but also due to excessive demands when studying. When students are given a task, not all students are able to understand the intent and purpose of the task. In this phase, each student's Help-Seeking skill is tested. Help-Seeking is a form of coping strategy or a strategy for dealing with problems.

Help-seeking is defined as the process of addressing problems that cannot be solved alone, involving active effort and involving third parties. As a process, help-seeking behavior has three characteristics, namely: problem-oriented, intentional action and an interpersonal interaction (Cornally & McCarthy, 2011). The definition clearly states that seeking help is a willful act. Actively selecting and pursuing a source of help is recognized by experts as an important aspect of help-seeking behavior (Rickwood et al., 2005) and can be termed planned behavior (Cornally & McCarthy, 2011).

Ryan et al., (2001) stated that here are several factors that students do academic help seeking, one of which is due to affective experiences and how students assess these experiences as positive or negative affective experiences. Affective experiences play an important role in creating motivation and encouraging student involvement in seeking help (Roeser and Eccles, 1998). However, not everyone who needs help has the intention to seek help from other parties to solve the problem (Schreiber, et al., 2009), and one of the factors that influences the intent to seek help is individuals' attitudes towards help-seeking behavior (Chang, 2008; Mo & Mak, 2009).

2. Literature Review

A. Help-Seeking Behaviour

According to Rickwood et al. (2005), help-seeking behavior is a term commonly used to refer to active behavior that seeks help from others. It involves communicating with others for help with understanding, advice, information, treatment, and general support in responding to a distressing problem or experience. Help-seeking behavior is a conscious act. Actively selecting and pursuing sources of help is recognized by experts as an important aspect of the emergence of help-seeking behavior and can be termed planned behavior. According to Cornally & McCarthy (2011), help-seeking behavior is a conscious act to solve problems that challenge personal abilities. The decision-making process to seek help begins with the presence of a problem, leading to a socio-cognitive-influenced action decision. Once a behavioral intention is formulated, the person selects a resource to contact and brings up the problem by asking for help.

B. Academic Achievement

According to Sujana (2000), academic achievement is the abilities obtained by the students after experience learning. Meanwhile, according to Winkel (2009), academic achievement is a proof of a students' success in learning or students' ability to conduct learning activities in accordance with the score achieved.

C. Personality

Most people are familiar with the terms extrovert and introvert from the Swiss psychiatrist C. G. Jung, who was originally one of Freud's closest friends. Widiantari and Herdiyanto in 2013 explained that personality comes from the Latin, namely persona which means mask. Masks are used in drama performances and then are analogous to representing certain personality characteristics or those that appear in front of other people. Meanwhile, Friedman and Schustack (Widiantari and Herdiyanto, 2013) revealed that personality is a characteristic of a person that causes the emergence of consistency of feelings, thoughts, and behavior. It is this personality that makes it easy for us to recognize other people.

D. Barriers to Help-Seeking

Gulliver et al., (2010) performed a systematic review of the available literature at that time, finding similar results; however, they stated that stigma was the most prominent barrier for seeking for help in young people. Another systematic review was made by Rowe et al., (2014). They found that in addition to stigma, negative reactions from others related to confidentiality breaches and being seen as an "attention seeker" were the most relevant obstacles.

Key themes in the barriers identified to help-seeking were :

a. Stigma and embarrassment

The most commonly encountered of all the obstacles. A general anxiety about what others, including the source of support, might think of them if they sought help was also prominent.

b. Problems recognizing symptoms

People were aware of their distress, according to one study, but they kept changing their notion of "normal" distress to avoid seeking help. According to Eisenberg (2007), stress is normal.

c. Preference for self-reliance

Seeking aid from others is sometimes interpreted as a sign of weakness or inability to deal with everyday challenges.

3. Method

A. Research Design

In this research, the researcher used a qualitative method. Descriptive research is scientific research that describes about event, phenomena or fact systematically dealing with certain area or population. Descriptive qualitative research is a set of activities to obtain data as they are under certain conditions, the results of which emphasize the importance.

B. Research Subject

In this research, the researcher chose the subject by applying certain criteria. Purposive sampling is also a technique used to fulfill certain aims and objectives in a study (Pujileksono, 2015). It meant that the researcher doesn't take a subject randomly to get appropriate data in this research. The subjects of this research were undergraduate EFL senior students at the Indonesia Moslem University who reached the eighth semester and above as the main informants.

C. Instrument of the Research

The research instrument that used in this research are observation to collect the data and confirm the findings; documentation to get the data about Grade Point Average (GPA), year of study and personality; Interview sheets; and recorder

D. Data Analysis

The steps of data analysis according to Miles and Huberman (1992) are: data collection was carried out by collecting data at the research location by conducting interviews and documentation; data reduction, namely as a process of selecting, focusing, abstracting, transforming raw data in the field, directly and forwarded at the time of data collection, starting with the researcher's focus on the research area; data presentation, an advanced stage of analysis where the researcher presents the research results in the form of categories or groupings; and draw conclusions, which is an advanced stage where the researcher draws conclusions from the data results at that stage.

4. Findings

A. Help-Seeking Skill Affect Toward Achievement

The first finding was obtained through interviews based on students' GPA, year of study and supported by documentation of students' GPA for 8 semester and above. To know the effect of students' Help Seeking Skill toward achievement based on GPA and year of study, the researcher interviewed 5 undergraduate EFL senior students at the Indonesia Moslem University who reached the eighth semester and above three of them were already in the last semester of the estimated lecture period, namely in the 14th semester, while the other two were in the 12th semester. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview techniques.

From the interview, the researcher found information which was considered important to reveal. It was essential to know why the students' Help-Seeking Skill affect towards achievement based on GPA and year of study. The five subjects of research have basic constraints where it is difficult to translate discourse and they are not fluent in English. Two of them admitted that majoring in English literature was not their original goal, so that language barriers were easy to spot, and sources of assistance were hard to find. Three subjects also claimed that they felt more comfortable attending organizational gatherings than attending lectures in class. Meanwhile, the other two interviewees, namely SSR and RL, had joined the organization but could not last long as their awareness of their multitasking skills was not well sharpened. RL and SSR also admitted they couldn't get much benefit from a place with many connections.

Table 1. Students GPA From 8 Semester and Above

Initial	Semester					
	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th
SSR	3.92	3.80	3.74	3.60	3.42	3.74
ACS	2.00	3.12	3.00	2.76	3.00	3.44
RL	3.00	2.32	3.70	1.00	1.75	2.00
MF	3.54	2.90	3.62	3.80	-	-
AIA	3.50	3.00	2.32	3.00	-	-

B. Students' personality affect their Help-Seeking

The results of the MBTI test that the researcher conducted through the Golife.id psychology site, showed that three of the subjects had introverted personalities, while two others had extroverted personalities. Interviewees with extroverted personalities admitted that if the source of help was willing to help, they weren't too deterred from seeking help. Unlike resource people with introverted personalities, they find it difficult to open, especially to friends who are not close to them. Close friends are a reliable source of help for ACS, RL and MF Interviewees with introverted personalities

play it safe by asking close friends and people the respondent believes can welcome their help seeking. In contrast, the two interviewees with extroverted personalities did not mind receiving help as long as the task-related problems were solved. The five interviewees have avoided HSB, resource persons with extroverted personalities have avoided HSB in people with certain traits. Meanwhile, respondents with introverted personalities were more likely to avoid HSB because they believed in their own abilities alongside their shame and prestige.

C. The Barriers of Undergraduate EFL Students' Help-Seeking Skills In Doing Their Academic Assignments

There were several barriers that the researcher found from the five interviewees when doing their academic assignments and this often happened to the informants. SSR, ACS, RL, and MF chose 'Embarrassment' as their main barrier in seeking help. Contrasted with AIA who is 'lack of confidence'. Other barrier factors for seeking help by interviewee are doubt, stigma, experience, and too much self-reliance. The five interviewees experienced unpleasant things when seeking help from sources candidate of help and the people around them.

5. Discussion

A. Help-Seeking Skill Affect Toward Achievement

Academic achievement is the outcome or level of ability that has been achieved by students after conducting the process of learning in a certain time in form of changes in behaviour, skills, and knowledge which is reflected by the students' score. In this study, the university students' achievement is reflected by their Grade Point Average (GPA). Two Interviewee-assessed that the curriculum as the main instrument of education is too competitive so that academic assignments are done solely to gain value rather than knowledge. This is explained in Slameto's theory (2010) that curriculum will affect learning and student achievement.

This is in contrast to another three interviewee, who reported that help-seeking behavior was closely related to GPA. The level of difficulty in doing academic assignments for them greatly affects the results. According to Susanto, (2019) difficulties in acquiring high achievement are influenced by internal factors such as: less concentration while learning, the students do not have the ability to answer/solve problems, too many other activities rather than learning activities, etc. Psychological factors according to Slameto (2010) can be divided in to seven factors, they are intelligence, attention, talent, interest, motivation, maturity, and readiness. Interviewees who attended the organization admitted that the organization's activities were a factor in their unsatisfactory academic grades. This has been explained by Slameto (2010), that community factors also influence student achievement where student activities must be limited and selected to support learning.

B. Students' personality affect their Help-Seeking

The two interviewees who have extroverted personalities, have characteristics that are in accordance with the description given by Jung (1976) that people with the extrovert type are people who are sociable, friendly, and adaptable, able to form good relationships with other people despite problems. They also never questioned the source of help if the source of help was available. The researcher concluded that it was very easy for these two interviewees to get a source of help because there was no doubt from both of them. Their friendliness and sociability mean that a source of help can come from anywhere and from any background.

Sources with introverted personalities have the opposite characteristics of extroverts. They can be described as quiet, passive, not very sociable, cautious, introverted, caring, pessimistic, peaceful, calm and controlled like Jung's description of introverted types that they focus their instincts inward and sink deep within themselves, especially during times of stress. These three informants had a hard time seeking help as their trusted help was only friends who were close to them. Sometimes they prefer to work alone, which means they only rely on themselves. Even though they have a large circle of friends, they may not necessarily dare to ask for help due to their pessimistic nature.

Based on Jung's theory, which states some characteristics of introverts, especially in emotional states or conflicts, people with this personality tend to withdraw and be alone. They prefer to think alone than to talk to others. The introverted interviewee person also admitted that it was quite difficult to find other sources of help when their close friends had graduated first. Those who have to take classes again inevitably have to adapt to their juniors where when they have academic assignments, it is very difficult to find sources of help and prefer to seek answers from Google. Through this study, the researcher realized that personality had a major impact on help-seeking skills, such that the way they sought out sources of help and even avoided Help-Seeking was in stark contrast.

C. The Barriers of Undergraduate EFL Students' Help-Seeking Skills In Doing Their Academic Assignments

Key themes in the barriers identified to help-seeking according to Rowe et al., (2014) were stigma and embarrassment, problems recognizing symptoms, and preference for self-reliance. In this research, the barriers faced by the five interviewees were almost the same as in their previous exposure, including experience.

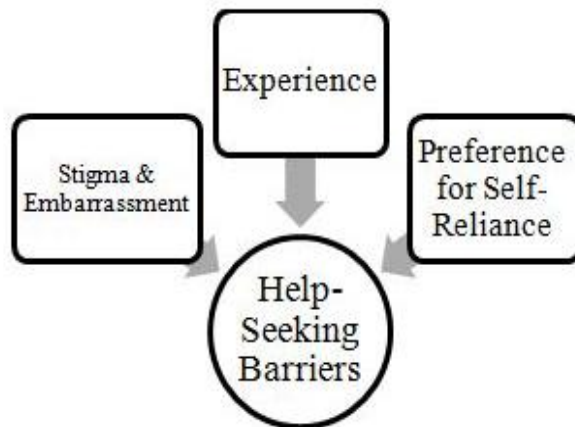


Figure 1. The Barriers of Help-Seeking Skill

Stigma and embarrassment is the most commonly encountered of all the barriers. The five interviewees admitted this. Even the two sources with extroverted personalities also agreed that the stigma and shame of seeking help is real because they feel it too. These barriers existed even before they had a chance to look for potential sources of help. According to Rickwood et al., (2005) one of the factors that influence help seeking is emotional competence, the low level of emotional competence is a barrier to seeking help.

Rowe also added that attitude towards the experience is one of the barriers in help seeking. The five interviewees had had unpleasant experiences when seeking help and resources. The experiences they go through will certainly be remembered every time they are in trouble. This causes the interviewees to select the source of help first. Various experiences were shared by the interviewees, such as being belittled by lecturers, seniors, and family members, being ignored by friends, and being bullied in group chats. Experiences when seeking help like this made the interviewees seem lazy and even afraid to seek help again.

According to Rowe, the tendency that people prefer to rely on themselves rather than seek outside help for their difficulties is a consistent element in both qualitative and quantitative studies. Seeking help from others is sometimes interpreted as a sign of weakness or an inability to face everyday challenges. Three out of five interviewees in this study relied heavily on themselves when struggling to complete academic tasks. Although the other two informants did not encounter much difficulty when seeking help, they also experienced this. Of course, if their academic responsibilities are personal, they have to rely more on themselves.

6. Conclusion

On average, the interviewees believe that achievement is closely related to Help-seeking skills. From the results of the interview, obtained participants had their own difficulties with specific issues and found it difficult to seek help due to limited resources and emotional issues. The main source of help for the interviewees is Google, because Google has a lot of knowledge about many things, easy to access, and free. One of the factors causing the nickname 'perpetual student' among the interviewees was the organization they joined, where the interviewees who claimed to have joined campus internal and external organizations were quite preoccupied with organizational activities so that they put academics aside.

The data that the researcher obtained showed that personality strongly influences the help-seeking skills of the interviewees. Personality also greatly influences Help-Seeking initiative and Help-Seeking avoidance. Help-Seeking initiative of interviewees with extroverted personality is much better than interviewees with introverted personality. In contrast, due to the very high pessimism of introverted interviewees, Help-Seeking avoidance of interviewees with

introverted personalities is greater than that of extroverted interviewees. Barriers in help-seeking are categorized into three, namely stigma and embarrassment; experience; and Preference for self-reliance.

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