

The Dynamics of Self-Esteem in Facing the Duck Syndrome Phenomenon Among University Students

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ABSTRACT

Issues regarding the phenomenon of duck syndrome are increasingly prevalent among university students, where individuals appear calm on the surface but experience significant mental distress. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of duck syndrome on college students' self-esteem and identify factors that lead to increased levels of anxiety, low self-efficacy, and depression. The method used was qualitative research with primary data collection through online interviews with 10 active university students from two target regions, West Java and Central Java. The results showed that students who face high academic pressure, heavy social expectations, and negative influence from social media tend to experience duck syndrome, which causes low self-esteem, increased anxiety, and depressive symptoms.

Keywords : Duck Syndrome, Self Esteem, College Students

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of duck syndrome is not just a term but a fact that has a serious impact on the mental well-being of students. The phenomenon of duck syndrome opens up new ideas for researchers who are curious about this topic. Starting from the view of religiosity that can be reduced by listening to the holy verses of the Qur'an (Amanda et al., 2024), the effect on students' assertive communication (Dewi., 2021; Safitri., 2024), and those that examine social media exposure (Godrey et al., 2024); Akcay & Ohashi., 2024; (Glebko et al., 2024); Coşkun et al., 2021). This phenomenon should not be considered as a term alone because there is a seriousness that should be of more concern regarding the mental health of students.

The problem that is often found by students today is none other than low motivation to learn and is filled with negative thoughts that if these things are not resolved immediately, it is likely that students only look big physically and age but are less mature in dealing with problems and developing themselves (Tasalim Rian., Cahyani., 2021; Marsidi., 2021). The results of research written by Panditha (Kompas.id, 2024) said that research on several campuses in Indonesia showed that around 22.4 percent of students were detected to have symptoms of depression, and around 3.3 percent had suicidal thoughts.

In fact, students are skilled at covering up all their difficulties, as if they are calm and productive from the outside even though they are struggling with pressure and anxiety, which can then trigger other health problems (Alodokter.com., 2024). Students who experience duck syndrome are usually characterized by low self-esteem about their perspectives,

thoughts, and feelings about themselves (Sugiarti et al., 2022). Low self-esteem among students can cause various problems such as decreased academic performance, motivation, increased stress and anxiety, self-harm, and procrastination (Wijaya., 2024; (Yunita et al., 2024); Purwandara, A., Pertiwi., 2022). The above studies highlight the complex dynamics related to self-esteem and duck syndrome separately, but there is still a lack of research in combining the topics of both. Therefore, there is a need for researchers to examine in order to be a reminder of the mental well-being of college students.

This research completes the gap from previous research, which views that self-esteem only focuses on self-assessment issues. Self-esteem is basically a first step in shaping an individual's personality, such as attitudes and behaviors that arise, so that it can have a big impact on his life in the future. A low level of self-esteem will affect psychological problems, including duck syndrome itself. Thus, this research aims to reveal the level of social anxiety, the level of low self-efficacy, and the level of student depression as a benchmark for the issues raised.

Based on the above ideas, the disturbance of students' mental well-being can be serious and even high-risk as a form of handling cases that are not handled properly. The lack of attention in handling duck syndrome students can be seen from the lack of understanding of educators and professional staff regarding this case. In addition, the absence of clear guidelines in dealing with students who experience duck syndrome also worsens their level of self-esteem. Research (Asa, 2023) reveals a lack of understanding regarding duck syndrome students who appear calm from the outside but are unyielding in facing their internal parts, making this condition often undetected so that it can have a negative impact on their self-esteem. This is reinforced by (Jennifer, 2023) that low self-esteem students tend to experience high anxiety and difficulty expressing themselves, which has an impact on long-term mental health. Thus, the lack of attention to duck syndrome can worsen students' self-esteem and potentially lead to more complex psychological problems.

Literature review

Duck syndrome is a depiction of appearing calm in front of others while struggling to conquer various problems or demands experienced from the environment (Maura et al., 2023). This phenomenon is likened to a duck that appears to be swimming calmly, but its feet underneath are paddling frantically in a struggle to stay afloat (BetterHelp Team., 2025). The opinion of (Dewi, G. S., & Rahman, 2023) agrees that duck syndrome is a form of gap between external conditions and psychological reality experienced by individuals, where academic, social, and emotional pressures are the main triggering factors.

This phenomenon is very relevant in the context of students who are individuals in the early adult developmental period characterized by a transition from dependence to independence, facing intellectual and emotional challenges in adjusting to the campus environment (Santrock., 2012). (Hulukati & Djibran, 2018) say that students are individuals who are studying at the university level, both public and private. Students are seen as having high thinking intelligence and a mature plan for doing something. However, even so, students are also humans who are endowed with physical and mental health. According to research conducted by (Huang et al., 2022) obtained data if most students experience mental health

problems that are influenced by various aspects such as academic demands, family expectations, and social dynamics.

In the face of these pressures, many students try to present a strong and positive self-image to others. However, when these demands exceed their capacity, an imbalance between internal reality and external appearance arises. This imbalance is often a precursor to duck syndrome, where students hide their emotional exhaustion in order to maintain a self-image that seems calm and fine.

One of the psychological aspects that will be affected is self-esteem. Self-esteem is defined as a positive or negative assessment of oneself as a whole. Self-esteem is aimed self-assessment made by individuals derived from social interactions, acceptance, or treatment of others against themselves. Aspects related to student self-esteem are also not far from academic achievement and physical appearance, which play a role in shaping their self-concept (Srisayekti & Setiady., 2015).

High self-esteem can be protective against the emergence of duck syndrome because individuals with a strong self-image tend to be able to manage pressure more healthily. Conversely, low self-esteem makes students vulnerable to feelings of inadequacy, social anxiety, decreased self-efficacy, and even depression. In an effort to maintain their self-image, they may pretend to be strong and stable when in fact, there are unresolved conflicts and emotional struggles. This suggests that poorly managed academic and social pressures can undermine self-esteem, ultimately triggering duck syndrome. Thus, if students do not realize and deal with this condition, it can potentially hinder the process of personal development and student academics and endanger mental health in the long run.

METHODS

This study focused on university students who showed indications of experiencing the phenomenon of duck syndrome, especially those with low levels of self-esteem. Students were chosen because they are in the early adult developmental phase, which is vulnerable to psychological pressure due to the transition to independence and high academic and social demands. The phenomenon of duck syndrome in this context is identified through behaviors such as often sharing stories about emotional distress or the tendency to often return to their hometowns as a form of coping mechanism. In exploring the subjective experiences of students, this study uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study method, which focuses on psychological factors, especially the dynamics of self-esteem.

The participants in the study consisted of 10 active students aged 19-22 years old from various state universities (PTN), state religious universities (PTKIN), and private universities (PTS) in West Java and Central Java. This region was chosen because it is a center of higher education with a competitive academic environment and diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. Participant recruitment was conducted through direct observation, personal approach, and communication through social media. Prior to data collection, the researcher explained the purpose and procedures of the study to prospective participants and guaranteed data confidentiality through informed consent, followed by a semi-structured interview online for 30-45 minutes.

The data collection process was carried out through the preparation of interview guidelines, conducting interviews accompanied by observation of non-verbal expressions, as well as documentation in the form of transcripts, field notes, audio recordings, and photographs. All data was stored encrypted and used for academic purposes only. Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach involving four main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation in the form of thematic narratives and participant quotes, verification through triangulation and member checking, and conclusion drawing based on patterns of findings associated with the theory of duck syndrome and the concept of student self-esteem.

RESULTS

Self-perception and social expectations of self-esteem

The interviews were organized into outlines based on the questions asked and the participants' answers. In this section, the content of the interviews highlighted two main issues, namely, the perception of themselves and how they perceive others. Six out of ten informants expressed a poor perception of themselves due to nurturing feelings of comparison with others. The informants' benchmarks were other people's possessions, wealth, intelligence, and success, which seemed to go smoothly in contrast to their own, which was very steep. The more often felt and allowed these bad perceptions will gather, making a nest in the mind as well as the lack of socializing or simply sharing sadness can lead to a decrease in one's self-esteem, and unconsciously, the phenomenon of duck syndrome has been rampant. Thus, students in Indonesia need to control their psychological condition so as not to experience bad things in the future.

Table 1. Interview Questions Asked

No	Questions
1	Have you ever compared yourself to your peers in college in terms of academic achievements, social skills, and personal life? Do these comparisons affect how you assess your self-esteem?
2	Have you ever felt the need to hide academic difficulties, stress, or failures from friends or family in order to appear okay? If so, what motivates you to do so?
3	How much academic pressure do you currently feel, and how does this pressure affect your confidence and your view of yourself?
4	Have you ever felt that despite appearing fine externally, you are experiencing high stress or anxiety? How do these feelings affect your social interactions and academic performance?
5	How often do you use social media, and how does it affect your view of success and your self-esteem?
6	Do you feel the need to present a positive or "perfect" self-image on social media in order to be accepted or appreciated by others? If so, how does this affect how you feel about yourself?

- How do you balance maintaining your mental health and meeting the academic demands of college? Do you feel like your self-worth depends more on your academic achievements or your mental well-being?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where you felt the need to sacrifice your mental health for academic achievement? If so, how has this experience affected your view of your self-worth and personal achievement?
- When facing academic or social pressure, what strategies do you usually use to cope? Do these strategies help you maintain your self-esteem?
- Do you have a specific person or group (friends, family, mentors, or professionals) that you rely on when experiencing academic pressure? To what extent does this support help you in maintaining mental balance and self-esteem?

Table 2. Student Identity

No	Informant	Gender	Age	Origin City
1	C	Female	21	Sumedang
2	H	Male	20	Bandung
3	R	Male	20	Tanjungsari
4	J	Female	21	Bandung
5	L	Female	20	Bandung
6	S	Male	20	Sumedang
7	A	Male	19	Tegal
8	F	Male	20	Semarang
9	Y	Female	19	Kebumen
10	E	Female	21	Semarang

"...I often compare myself to my friends whether it's in terms of academic achievement, social skills, eee or personal life. And sometimes it eee makes me feel less confident, especially when I see friends who are more successful or more accomplished. And this can affect my self-esteem, making me feel like I'm not good enough or I haven't achieved what I expected." (Interview, 2025).

Another informant added:

"...Honestly, I was jealous of what they got in terms of academics. Eee maybe the results I get are eee my efforts are lacking in academic achievement. In social skills, maybe when I first entered college, I felt that I was lacking in terms of social interaction or social skills..." (Interview, 2025).

The responses of the informants above confirm that how often negative words are expressed to oneself so that such things affect the mental state and lead to frustration in dealing with them. Furthermore, participants said that there is no need to convey what is experienced to others.

"...I feel the need to hide my academic difficulties or stress and my motivation is, eee to maintain a positive image and don't want to be perceived as weak or a failure by others. I

feel that when I look okay, others will be more appreciative and won't worry about me." (Interview, 2025).

The results of this interview indicate that related to negative expressions of self-perception is also by suppressing the difficulties or failures experienced from others in order to look fine. Therefore, indeed the condition from outside a person does not guarantee that it is fine inside. If this cannot be overcome, self-esteem will decrease due to negative perceptions and social expectations.

Academic Stress and Anxiety Levels Due to Decreased Self-Esteem

In exploring the decline in self-esteem that can be caused by stress and anxiety, the core of the interview explores this. The results of the interview outlined that half of the ten informants felt this complexity. The academic pressure experienced by the informants is substantial, particularly when it comes to assignments and exams. The response of each informant tends to be different; some are good, and some are bad, depending on how they perceive themselves. However, the study found that most of them were overly critical in their self-assessments. The informants' self-confidence or self-efficacy appears to be diminished, especially when in the presence of those closest to them, as they feel there is no need to convey the negative feelings that arise in their minds. Even though they can do it with family and supportive people, at least to keep them mentally awake as well as minimize the pressure or difficulties they are facing by exchanging ideas. In other words, duck syndrome can affect the psychology of students because when they choose to be silent and hold the burden alone, the impact on long-term mental health.

Table 3. Psychological Treatment

No	Informant	Name College	Laboratory Psychology	Consultation History
1	C	Universitas Islam Bandung	Ada	Belum pernah
2	H	Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati	Ada	Belum pernah
3	R	Universitas Padjajaran	Ada	Belum pernah
4	J	Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia	Tidak ada	Belum pernah
5	L	Universitas Pasundan	Tidak ada	Belum pernah
6	S	Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang	Tidak ada	Belum pernah
7	A	Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo	Ada	Belum pernah
8	F	Universitas Negeri Semarang	Ada	Belum pernah
9	Y	Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo	Ada	Belum pernah
10	E	Universitas Diponegoro	Ada	Belum pernah

The results of the interviews revealed that the informants experienced a decrease in self-esteem due to the assumption that all pressures and difficulties must be kept to themselves. On the other hand, students do not utilize the facilities on campus to address this issue.

Despite trying to deal with the challenges they face, students sometimes cannot control their responses.

"...The academic pressure I feel now is quite substantial, especially with the numerous assignments and exams I have to complete. Eee this pressure often makes me feel less confident, and sometimes I always doubt my ability to achieve academic goals." (Interview, 2025).

Another informant added:

"...Although I try to show that everything is going well, I often feel stressed and anxious. These feelings sometimes affect my social interactions, as I become more introverted or less engaged in conversations. When it comes to academics, sometimes this anxiety hinders my ability to concentrate well." (Interview, 2025).

The informants' responses above state that academic pressure is indeed very influential on students' psychological conditions and social interactions. When struggling with overthinking or uncertain feelings of anxiety, students will feel the need to withdraw from the people around them. Thus, for students to prosper mentally and physically, it is beneficial to share the burden with others.

Social Media Exposure on Self-Esteem

A decrease in self-esteem is also caused by the virtual world, which sometimes elicits negative responses to posts shared on social media; therefore, this research took steps to explore this aspect. After conducting interviews with ten informants, it was found that eight of them felt influenced by content that shows strong personal branding, such as academic achievement, success, happiness, and others. From this stimulus, they will eventually judge themselves to have a much worse comparison with virtual people. However, the balanced data related to the self-image that must be displayed perfectly on social media, five informants agreed, and five others disagreed. Each has its reasons for giving an opinion or as a way of minimizing the tendency of bad attitudes that will be present. Even so, the real and virtual worlds should be by their proportions, not too much or too little. Because when you let yourself be dominated by something all virtual, posts containing elements of branding every day may make you insecure, your self-efficacy drops, and your psychology can be shaken.

Table 4. Social Media Influence

No	Informants	Influenced by social media	Agree on perfect self-image on social media	Reason
1	C	Yes	Yes	Harus terlihat positif
2	H	Yes	No	Khawatir mendapat komentar jelek
3	R	Yes	Yes	Perlu untuk menunjukkan citra diri positif
4	J	No	Yes	Lebih merasa bahagia ketika terlihat positif <i>vibes</i>

5	L	No	No	Tidak ingin diketahui orang lain
6	S	Yes	No	Kesempurnaan dinilai diri sendiri
7	A	Yes	Yes	Ada kepuasan tersendiri
8	F	No	Yes	Berbagi ilmu pada orang lain
9	Y	Yes	No	Tidak suka mengumbar diri
10	E	No	No	Kurang suka berbagi informasi ke orang lain

"...I use social media a lot, and it is influential when the algorithms are showing good things. Sometimes, I realize that I need to look at myself positively. Because eee when other people know it's bad, I will feel anxious." (Interview, 2025).

Additional from another informant:

"...I use social media quite often, and it makes me feel the need to compare myself with others. I see people who are successful and happy, and that sometimes eee affects my self-esteem. On the other hand, there is a need to show a positive self-image on social media to look positive vibes." (Interview, 2025).

These statements are some of the selected ones that represent the rest, as Table 4 summarizes all the findings from the informants who were willing to participate. The results of this interview indicate that social media has a considerable influence on students' mental health. Every student is required to appear perfect and conceal as much as possible any accomplishments or activities that are not visible. Therefore, students consistently maintain high self-esteem and employ strategies to mitigate the phenomenon of 'duck syndrome' for optimal mental well-being.

The Imbalance of Mental Well-Being and Academic Achievement on Self-Esteem

Students' mental health should be considered to support their study process, ensuring it runs smoothly. If examined more closely, many students experience a decline in self-esteem due to several issues in the lecture world, ranging from minor to major problems. When students are unable to control their responses to problems or make academic standards a benchmark for living, this study produced findings that nine out of ten informants who were willing to contribute regarding mental and academic balance agreed that mental well-being was prioritized over academic achievement. In the situation of mental sacrifice, which makes a significant difference to the informants who experience it, six informants consistently make sacrifices to achieve and maintain academic excellence. Whereas being too inclined to one will cause the neglected one to be problematic even if it is taken for granted, and the phenomenon of duck syndrome occurs. In other words, students should be able to balance the two in order to prosper themselves and be enthusiastic about gaining knowledge.

Table 5. Coping Strategies

No	Informant	Coping Strategy	Indication of Mental Sacrifice	Indication of Duck Syndrome
1	C	Healing after the task is done	Yes, because of the high academic load for scholarship recipients	Yes
2	H	Take a break from thinking about the task, refreshing	No	No
3	R	Manage time, rest	Yes, stay up late on assignments	Yes
4	J	Manage time, manage stress	No	No
5	L	Pause, hangout, listen to music	Yes, stay up late on assignments	Yes
6	S	Refreshing and staying focused on the task	No	No
7	A	Postpone pleasure when there is an important task	Yes, in presentation conditions	Yes
8	F	Understand emotions, don't force yourself	No	No
9	Y	Cry, self-appreciation after the task	Yes, take other people's part in group assignments	Yes
10	E	Rest, organization, watching movies	Yes, especially during midterms and final exams	Yes

"...I prioritize mental well-being because, with the process of peace and comfort of mind and heart, learning becomes quicker. So far, I have never sacrificed myself or my mental health for academic achievement because I think it will cause conflicts such as feelings of unease, hatred of friends, and others." (Interview, 2025).

"...In terms of balancing between maintaining mental well-being and meeting academic demands, what I do is not always doing assignments, sometimes I take a break or don't think about academic matters for two days through refreshing. And I don't think I've ever experienced anything like that because I prefer to take a short break rather than continue with the assignment, but it's mentally miserable." (Interview, 2025).

The results of interviews with informants related to the compiled questions show that students are trying to balance their mental and academic demands. However, some students are still less competent and only lean towards one of them. Those who prioritize academics because they are standard-quality smart people, but those who choose mental health do not

need to worry about academic achievement because they feel they are qualified. There is nothing better than prioritizing one of them because both complement each other. If the imbalance is not addressed immediately, students will likely experience mental fatigue, decreased self-efficacy, anxiety, and even depression.

Coping Strategies and Adaptation Mechanisms in Facing Self-Esteem Decline

In this interview, each informant was asked to explain the strategies they used to deal with the challenges faced during their college years. The decline in student self-esteem can be resolved immediately when there is awareness from within themselves, and one way to achieve this is by implementing a defense mechanism and finding the right solution. The interview results indicate that all informants have their strategies, such as exercising, socializing, pursuing hobbies, watching movies, and others. Although coping strategies do not always help cure the problem, they can only slightly reduce the stress that disrupts the learning process. In addition, the informants have a reinforcing mechanism, namely through the support of those closest to them, both from family and friends. Indeed, individuals can solve their problems because they are given the mind to think, but sometimes, they do not realize or even choose to ignore their potential. Therefore, students need to explore and recognize their potential as preparation for facing life's challenges, especially during the lecture period, which is often full of pressure and dynamics. On the other hand, the institution should provide spaces and services that support students' mental health.

"...I need my own time for some time, I usually need quality time, like eee looking at the city light at night or not I go out with friends to chat. Anyway, I have to talk to my friends until I feel calm." (Interview, 2025).

"...My strategy to cope with academic pressure is to pursue my own hobbies because hobbies are fun things for me mentally, can make me calmer and maintain my self-esteem so that I am not affected by the words of others. I also had some friends who understood my condition when I was having difficulties. Even though I don't tell them, they notice my unusual facial expressions and gestures when I'm stressed." (Interview, 2025).

Secara tidak langsung penjelasan tiap informan mengenai strategi yang dimiliki tidak jauh berbeda. Mahasiswa cenderung menghadapi tekanan dan kesulitan dengan mengandalkan kombinasi antara coping masing-masing dan dukungan sosial sebagai bentuk jeda emosional dan menjaga kestabilan mental. Namun, tidak semua mahasiswa memiliki kesadaran akan pentingnya mekanisme ini sehingga memerlukan asupan edukasi dari berbagai pihak terutama institusi pendidikan sebagai upaya preventif agar fenomena duck syndrome ini tidak semakin meluas di kalangan mahasiswa.

DISCUSSION

This study reveals five important dimensions related to the phenomenon of duck syndrome in college students who experience decreased self-esteem, such as negative self-perception and social expectations. Students often compare themselves to others, especially in terms of academic and social achievements, which leads to a decrease in self-esteem. To maintain a positive image in the social environment, they often conceal their emotional distress. Furthermore, high academic pressure is a significant factor in reducing students' self-efficacy.

Piling up assignments and exams can cause stress, leading to a decrease in self-confidence. Students tend to suppress their feelings and withdraw from their environment, which can worsen their mental state and academic performance. In this context, the inability to channel emotions and seek support reinforces the negative impact of duck syndrome.

Social media exacerbates students' psychological distress by presenting images of success and happiness that do not always match reality. Many students feel pressured to appear perfect online in order to gain social recognition. This reinforces a sense of inadequacy and worsens self-esteem, especially when unhealthy social comparisons are made. In addition, the imbalance between mental well-being and academic achievement is also highlighted. Some students tend to sacrifice their mental health to pursue academic achievement. This imbalance makes them more vulnerable to anxiety, mental fatigue, and depression. This condition underscores the need to strike a balance between the two aspects, allowing students to develop optimally.

In dealing with these pressures, students exhibit various coping strategies such as resting, sharing stories with friends, and pursuing personal hobbies. However, awareness of the importance of healthy coping strategies is still limited. Therefore, educational institutions are expected to provide education and counseling services that support students in dealing with lecture pressure. A supportive campus environment is needed to maintain a sustainable balance between mental health and academic achievement.

Educational institutions have a strategic role in providing mental health services to prevent negative impacts on students' academic performance, social relationships, and mental health (Aisah et al., 2024). In line with research by (Irawan, M., Nurhijatina, & Bella, 2024) which showed that students who participated in mental health programs tended to have lower levels of stress and depression than those who did not. These findings emphasize the need for support from educational institutions in creating an environment that supports student well-being. Psychological needs such as security and appreciation must be met to support the development of self-esteem and individual achievement.

Therefore, it is essential to incorporate education about duck syndrome into the curriculum, along with training for lecturers to identify and address students who exhibit psychological symptoms. Additionally, it is essential to offer a comprehensive mental health support program encompassing counseling and stress management workshops in line with the research of (Beiter R. et al. L, 2015), who said that academic pressure and life imbalance significantly contribute to mental disorders while the views of (Doyle & Catling, 2022) highlighted the risk of perfectionism duck syndrome on self-esteem and depression levels of college students. Social support and healthy coping strategies can significantly reduce stress and improve college students' well-being.

The results of this study indicate that high academic pressure, social expectations, social media influence, a lack of stress management skills, and inadequate social support are the primary factors affecting students' mental state. As for overcoming it, educational institutions need to provide mental health education that includes an understanding of Duck syndrome, coping training, and access to counseling services. Additionally, it is crucial to foster a supportive campus culture that allows students to share their thoughts and feelings without fear of stigma. Awareness campaigns about the negative impact of social comparison on

social media also need to be intensified so that students are more realistic and self-accepting. With these steps, it is hoped that students' self-esteem and overall psychological well-being will improve.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study highlights that university students often experience 'duck syndrome' due to high academic pressure, the social expectations they face, and the influence of social media, which can exacerbate self-comparison. The most significant findings reveal that, although university students may appear calm and fine on the surface, many of them experience profound internal struggles related to their self-esteem. This is implicated in higher levels of anxiety, decreased self-efficacy, and risk of depression, threatening their mental well-being during their studies.

The contribution of this research is significant in enhancing our understanding of mental health dynamics among university students. This research provides new insights for educators and educational institutions on the importance of recognizing and proactively addressing the phenomenon known as 'duck syndrome.' By understanding the challenges students face, institutions can develop more effective support programs, including coping skills training, raise awareness about mental health, and provide the necessary resources to help students manage the stresses they encounter.

However, this study also has limitations. One of the limitations is the relatively small number of participants, who are limited to two specific regions: West Java and Central Java. Therefore, the results may not fully reflect the situation of students in other regions. In addition, this study is qualitative, which allows for the exploration of students' subjective experiences; however, the findings cannot be generalized broadly. Therefore, further research using quantitative or mixed methods with a more diverse population, such as participants located outside Java, is needed to obtain a more transparent and holistic picture of the phenomenon of duck syndrome among university students.

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