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The Academic Stress of Final-Year Students in Covid-19 Pandemic Era

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Article Info

Abstract

Keywords: Academic Stress Covid-19 Final-Year Students This study aims to reveal the academic stress of final students in the current Covid-19 pandemic era. The research design used a quantitative descriptive survey of 113 students from various universities in Indonesia, including undergraduate (bachelor), master, and doctoral education levels. The research instrument used an academic stress scale developed by the researcher, which consisted of twelve question items. The distribution of the tool was carried out using google forms. The results showed that several factors caused student academic stress. There are cost factors (difficulty paying tuition fees / UKT and demands to return the scholarship), study conditions (difficulty consulting with supervisors/promoters and unable to find references in the library), and personal problems (conflicts with friends or with a partner and less comfortable boarding/house conditions). Student academic stress is the highest experienced by doctoral students compared to undergraduate and master's level students. Online counselling is recommended to help students experiencing academic stress to complete their studies on time.

Abstrak

Kata kunci: Stres Akademik Covid-19 Mahasiswa Akhir Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkap stres akademik mahasiswa tingkat akhir di era pandemic Covid-19 saat ini. Desain penelitian menggunakan deskriptif kuantitaif dengan jumlah responden sebanyak 113 mahasiswa dari berbagai perguruan tinggi di Indonsia yang terdiri dari jenjang pendidikan S1 (sarjana), S2 (magister) dan (S3) doktor. Instrumen penelitian menggunakan skala stress akademik yang dikembangkan sendiri oleh peneliti yang terdiri dua belas item pertanyaan. Penyebaran instrumen dilakukan dengan menggunakan google formulir. Hasil penelitian menujukkan bahwa stres akademik mahasiswa disebabkan oleh faktor biaya (kesulitan membayar uang kuliah/ UKT dan tuntutan mengembalikan beasiswa), kondisi studi (kesulitan konsultasi dengan pembimbing/ promotor dan tidak dapat mencari referensi di perpustakaan), dan problem pribadi (konflik dengan teman atau dengan pasangan dan kondisi kost/ rumah yang kurang nyaman). Stress akademik mahasiswa paling tinggi dialami mahasiswa jenjang doktor dibanding jenjang sarjana dan magister. Penggunaan konseling online direkomendasikan agar dapat membantu

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mahasiswa yang mengalami stress akademik sehingga mahasiswa dapat menyelesaikan studi tepat waktu

INTRODUCTION

The world is currently encountering the Covid-19 pandemic. It emerged at the end of December 2019 in Wuhan, China (Chahrour et al., 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus pandemic and declared it a public health emergency of international concern (Meng et al., 2020; Singh & Adhikari, 2020). As of February 26, Covid-19 has spread rapidly to 34 countries, with a total of 80,239 infected cases and 2,700 deaths (WHO, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted the global economy negatively (Cavallo & Forman, 2020; Nicola et al., 2020; Haleem et al., 2020). It also affects the education field (Rundle et al., 2020; Sintema, 2020), social (Bostan et al., 2020), environment (Chakraborty & Prasenjit, 2020), sports (Parnell et al., 2020), (Usher et al., 2020; A. Kumar & Nayar, 2020). As a result, governments in various countries have made multiple efforts to stop the spread of Covid-19. The World Health Organization (WHO) encourages people to practice social and physical distancing (WHO, 2020). China (Lau et al., 2020), India (Pulla, 2020; Lee, 2020), Italy (Chintalapudi et al., 2020), France (Roques et al., 2020), Malaysia (Salim et al., 2020; Altahir et al., 2020), and Vietnam (Salim et al., 2020) all participated in the lockdown (Le et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the Indonesian government uses large-scale social restrictions (known as PSBB, large-scale social limits) instead of a lockdown (Nurlaila et al., 2020). The consequence of the lockdown or PSBB is the limited community activities to carry religious activities in worship houses (mosques, churches, temples, temples, etc.), in public places/facilities, school holidays, and workplaces (PP No. 21 Tahun 2020). PP All activities are carried from home or known as Work from Home (WFH) (Mungkasa, 2020).

For students, the dismissal of lecture activities on campus and all learning activities at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic impact their mental health (Cao et al., 2020; Lee, 2020). Online learning tasks cause students to experience stress (Livana, Mubin Mohammad Fatkhul & Basthomi, 2020). Tang et al. (2020) found post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and student depression in China.

Stress is a psychological disorder that most people in this age group, including students, experience (Gomathi et al., 2012). On the other hand, stress can affect cognitive function by disrupting behavior, thoughts, and moods if it occurs frequently and excessively (Ahmad et al., 2019). Mood disorders can affect their learning and thinking abilities by causing mental, physical, and emotional problems (Stallman, 2010). Academic, social, family, and health issues are sources of stress for students (Cheryl Maykel, 2018). Academic stress is stress caused by educational activities (Akram & Kahn, 2012). Academic stress is a type of mental stress caused by academic failure (Krishan, 2013).

Academic stress is stress related to learning activities, in the form of tension originating from educational factors, resulting in distortions in mind and affecting students' physical, emotional, and behavior (Nurmaliyah, 2014). Academic stress has become a common problem experienced by students in various countries, cultures, and ethnic groups (Wong et al., 2007). Students experience academic stress due to poor study habits (Nakalema & Ssenyonga, 2013), excessive assignments and pressure to attain high achievement (Liu & Lu, 2011), competition between students in the class (Misra & Castillo, 2004), financial pressure (Assaf et al., 2017), fear of failure and indigent relationship with lecturers (Phillips et al., 2020).

Expectations from parents and teachers make students experience academic stress (Calaguas, 2012). Parents hope that their children will get high academic achievement in each exam, making students depressed (Neuenschwander et al., 2007). Likewise, the teacher's hope that each student completes the assignment correctly and according to the set schedule makes them stressed.

Students in the current era of the Covid-19 pandemic have to change how they learn from face-to-face to online. Online lectures necessitate technological know-how and various tasks in a variety of subjects (Wahyu & Nurul, 2020). Students in their final year are also stressed as they work on their thesis and dissertation. They are unable to research due to social distancing policies and the fact that they can only communicate with their supervisors via email and social media platforms such as WhatsApp. Because of the limited time for discussion, students found it difficult (Elvira, 2020).

As a result, more researchers research the causes of academic stress in final-year students during the Covid-19 pandemic era. It also looks for what problem-solving to students who are experiencing academic stress. They require assistance in dealing with academic pressure, which has a broad impact on student life (S. Kumar & Jadaun, 2018) and has become a severe university issue (Phillips et al., 2020). Academic stress impacts students' physical and mental health (MacGeorge et al., 2005). Academic stress relates to anxiety and depressive symptoms in adolescents (Jayanthi et al., 2015), and it also impacts student wellbeing (Cheryl, 2018). High academic stress also influences the students' health and academic performance (Yumba, 2010).

Research on student academic stress in the Covid-19 era has been studied by researchers such as Andiarna et al. (2020), who examined the effect of online learning on student academic stress. Then, Sari et al. (2020) analyzed the relationship between student academic stress and limited internet access while studying during the Covid-19 pandemic. Both studies have not examined in detail the academic stress of late-year students in the Covid-19 pandemic era. Therefore, it is necessary to research the academic stress of final year students in the Covid-19 pandemic era.

This research is essential to conduct. The results of this research will determine the intervention model or assistance provided by parties related to students who experience academic stress in the Covid-19 pandemic era so that these students can complete their studies on time without being hindered by pandemic conditions.

METHOD

This research design is descriptive quantitative. The Respondents' number was 113 students consisting of 80 undergraduate students, 20 students at the master's level, and 30 doctoral students. The respondents come from various universities in Indonesia, currently working on their final assignments (undergraduate thesis, magister thesis, and dissertation). The instrument used was an academic stress scale developed from various sources as many as twelve question items consisting of three indicators: personal problems, study conditions, and tuition fees. The scale has a Cronbach alpha of 0.75. The distribution of the instruments is done via a google form. Data collection was carried out for five months (July-November 2020). The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive techniques with univariate analysis and then made in a frequency distribution.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of data analysis from the academic stress scale, the following will describe the research findings made in the form of frequency distribution based on gender, causes of academic stress, education level, and student academic stress levels:

Gender

Table 1: student academic stress based on gender

Variable	Category	Amount	
		N	%
Male	High	2	4,76%
	Medium	24	4,76% 57,14%
	Low	16	38,09%
	Total	42	100%
Female	High	4	5,71%
	Medium	38	54,28% 40%
	Low	28	40%
	Total	70	100

Table 1 shows that 4.76% of men have a high academic stress level, 57, 14% are in the medium category, and 38, 09% are in a low category. Meanwhile, 5.71% of women were in the high category,

54.28% were in the medium category, and 40% were in the low category. These results indicate that, in general, academic stress is experienced by men. This study's results contradict previous research conducted by Sutjiato et al. (2015), describing more women who experience stress than men. The reason is the dominant use of feelings in dealing with a problem and tends to be more emotional and sensitive to what is happening in their environment (Sulaeman et al., 2009). Meanwhile, men are more likely to use reason than when facing a problem.

Causes of academic stress

Tabel 2. Causes of academic stress

Variable	Category	Amou	ınt
variable		N	%
Personal problems	High	3	2,65%
-	Medium	41	36,28%
	Low	69	61, 06%%
	Total	113	100%
	High	21	18,58%
Ct., J.,	Medium	57	50,44%
Study conditions	Low	35	30, 97%
	Total	113	100%
Tuition fees	High	19	16,81%
	Medium	42	37,16%
	Low	52	46,01%
	Total	113	100%

Table 2 shows that in personal problems, as many as three students, or 2.65% are in the high category, 41 students or 36.28% are in a low category, and 69 students or 61.06% are in a low category. In this study, 21 students or 18.58% were in the high category. 57 students, or 50.44%, were in the medium category, and 35 students or 30.97%, were in a low category. While tuition fees, 19 students or 16.81% were in the high category, 42 or 37.16 were in the medium category, and 52 or 46.01% were in the low category.

The research results on the causes of academic stress indicate that the conditions of study and the tuition fees are the causes of students experiencing academic stress. This result is supported by Hamzah B & Hamzah (2020) research, which shows that the study conditions cause a person to experience academic stress during the current Covid-19 pandemic. Learning that is usually carried out in the classroom becomes online (Livana et al., 2020). Therefore, students must adapt to being online learning with multiple assignments. Completion of these tasks takes a little time (Hamzah B & Hamzah, 2020).

The problem of tuition fees is also the cause of a person experiencing stress (Robotham, 2008). The research results by Nakalema & Ssenyonga (2013) revealed that the cost factor is one of the factors that cause students to experience academic stress. For students who are stressed due to being constrained by tuition fees, it will be difficult for students to buy books that are not available in the library. Besides, the cost of photocopying and printing the revised final project is a stressor due to cost difficulties (Tarwiyah et al., 2020).

In the Covid-19 pandemic, many parents of students have been dismissed from companies. They have lost their income and jobs due to this outbreak (Rohmah & Syari, 2020). Accordingly, students will find it difficult to pay tuition fees and meet their needs. Therefore, tuition fee relief assistance and Internet quota need to be given to students in this pandemic era (Ikhwan Nur Rois, 2020; Ermawati et al., 2020).

Education level

Tabel 3: student academic stress based on education level

T7	Category -	Amout	
Variable		N	%
	High	1	1,40%
S1	Medium	39	54,92%
	Low	31	43,66%
	Total	71	100%
S2	High	4	14,28%
	Medium	17	60,71%
	Low	7	25%
	Total	28	100%
S ₃	High	11	44%
	Medium	7	28%
	Low	7	28%
	Total	25	100%

The results of table 3 show that academic stress is generally experienced by doctoral students (S3). As many as eleven students, or 44%, experienced academic stress in the high category. Seven students, or 28%, experienced academic stress in the medium category, and seven students or 28%, also experienced academic stress in the low category.

Students' high academic stress in doctoral programs is caused by anxiety about finances because they already have a social responsibility to their wives, children, and elderly people (Smith et al., 2006). Not to mention the demand to return the scholarship funds totalling twice the government's amount through the applicable repayment mechanism if they cannot complete their studies following the stipulated time (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, 2011). It is experienced by students who received scholarships from the Indonesian Ministry of Religion.

Doctoral education is the most difficult of all academic levels (Gardner & Holley, 2011). Doctoral education takes a long time, takes a lot of effort and money so that many students experience psychological pressure so that they are unable to complete their studies (Pyhältö et al., 2012). Therefore, students need to be helped to manage their stress well because it can interfere with their wellbeing, impacting their dissertation completion productivity (Russell-Pinson & Harris, 2019).

Academic Stress Level

Table 4. Student Academic Stress Level

Variable	Category -	Amount	
		N	%
Academic Stress	High	6	5,30%
	Medium	63	55,75%
	Low	44	5,30% 55,75% 38,93%
	Total	113	100%

Table 4 showed that as many as six students, or 5.30% experienced stress levels in the high category. Sixty-three students or 55, 75% were in the medium category. As many as 44 students or 38.93% of students were in a low category. Even though only six students are in the high category, 63 students are in the medium category that needs attention because students who experience academic stress will hurt physical and mental health and do academic tasks well (Akgun & Ciarrochi, 2003).

Doctoral education is the most difficult of all academic levels (Gardner & Holley, 2011). Doctoral education takes a long time, takes a lot of effort and money so that many students experience psychological pressure so that they are unable to complete their studies (Pyhältö et al., 2012). Therefore, students need to be helped to manage their stress well because it can interfere with their wellbeing, impacting their dissertation completion productivity (Russell-Pinson & Harris, 2019).

Therefore, to cope with stress at the academy, students must develop defence mechanisms and adapt to stressors that trigger stress from academic life (Smeltzer et al., 2008). Besides, through acceptance, planning, and positive reframing, students can make the necessary efforts to overcome academic stress (Sreeramareddy et al., 2007).

Higher-education institutions need to help overcome student academic stress by creating a conducive educational environment so that the learning process can be better, focusing on meeting student needs(Joseph E. Angolla & Ongori, 2009). Another way that can be done is by providing counselling, relaxation training, and academic resilience (Wang et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic currently hitting the world has an impact on academic stress for final-year students. Students experience academic stress due to study conditions and tuition fees as a result of Covid-19. The effect is they worry that they will be hampered in completing the study. Academic stress is felt the most by doctoral students. The government needs to help students reduce their study costs and maximize higher education stakeholders, such as academic advisers, to assist students who experience academic stress in online counselling. Online counselling helps a person through a technology application to allow counselling to occur without coming in person directly using a website/ site, telephone/ mobile phone, email, and video conferencing. Online counselling is also called e-counselling

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