

The relationship between quality of college life and academic hardiness among college students

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between students' quality of college life and their academic hardiness. The quantitative method was used in combination with a correlational approach. The measuring instrument used was an adaptation of QCL Measure by Sirgy (2007) and Academic Hardiness Scale by Benishek (2005). The population of the study was 105 students majoring in psychology at a private university in Jakarta, while the sample consisted of 89 students. The data were analyzed using Pearson correlation test to obtain the correlation coefficient between the two variables. The results of the study showed that the quality of college life has a significant relationship with students' academic hardiness. It is suggested that education institutions enforce the quality of college life aspect that has the strongest relationship with academic hardiness, which is the academic aspect. The academic aspect encompasses the quality of lecturers, learning environments, and learning materials.

Keywords: quality of college life, academic hardiness, college students

Abstrak: Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui hubungan antara *quality of college life* dengan *academic hardiness* pada mahasiswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif dengan pendekatan korelasional. Instrumen pengukuran yang digunakan adalah adaptasi dari *QCL Measure* dari Sirgy (2007) dan *Academic Hardiness Scale* dari Benishek (2005). Populasi dari penelitian ini adalah 105 orang mahasiswa aktif di Prodi Psikologi Universitas X, sedangkan sampel penelitian adalah 89 orang dari populasi tersebut. Data hasil penelitian dianalisis dengan menggunakan uji korelasi Pearson untuk mendapatkan koefisien korelasi antara kedua variabel. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *quality of college life* memiliki hubungan yang signifikan dengan *academic hardiness*. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian ini, disarankan bagi instansi penyelenggara pendidikan untuk memperkuat aspek *quality of college life* yang memiliki hubungan paling kuat dengan *academic hardiness*, yaitu aspek akademik. Aspek akademik ini berupa kualitas dosen, suasana pembelajaran, hingga kualitas materi pembelajaran.

Kata kunci: *quality of college life*, *academic hardiness*, mahasiswa

INTRODUCTION

Today's young generation is facing the fast-paced development of the globalization era. Globalization is marked by the increase of focus or monopoly of resource and economic power by multinational companies and the shifting of national policies into those under the influence or process of international institution or large companies as well as international economics and financial practitioners (Khor, 2001). In other words, today's generation must face competitions not only in a national scale, but also with youths from abroad with diverse backgrounds and skills.

The escalation of competition demands the generations today to further hone their knowledge and skills in order to be ready for the challenges of globalization. Before entering the workforce, most of the generations today attend college for educational purposes. Colleges are obligated to provide education, conduct researches, and offer services to the community. In this respect, education provided by colleges is aimed to create a learning process so that students can actively develop their potentials and skills later needed when they step into the society. The skills that students need as the members of society will change constantly, and colleges have to keep up with this. A successful education system sets high expectations for all students and provides high degree of support for each student. A relevant curriculum and teaching process will prepare the students for the world of work (Malik, 2018). However, only graduating from a college seems to be inadequate. Data from Statistics Center Bureau in 2018 showed that 8% of the 7 million graduates were jobless. Although college graduates have an academic degree, not all of them have strong potentials or skills to compete for employment.

During the time as a student in college, each individual will face various challenges and obstacles. A research conducted by Musabiq & Karimah (2020) found that most college students have more than one type of stressors such as intrapersonal problem, financial condition, and responsibility in campus organization. These stressors have a great impact both on their physical and psychological health. Today's learning also demands the students to be more actively involved in its process, and they will also be given many assignments and tests from the teachers with various levels of difficulty and challenges. In other words, college may become a stressful environment for a student. College

students are demanded not only to solely study, but also to complete their studies by proper standards to be able to compete within the society. They are pushed not only to tackle a challenge, but also to challenge themselves to keep developing their skills and potentials during their study in college. Benishek and Lopez (2001) identified a variable that differentiates between students who are ready to face academic challenges and those who are not. This variable is called academic hardiness.

Academic hardiness is derived from the hardiness theory formed in an educational setting. Hardiness is a personality style comprised of interconnecting orientations such as commitment, control, and perception of changes and life challenges (Kobasa, 1979). Highly-committed college students will believe that it is important to stay involved with situations or people around them; no matter how stressful the condition is at the time. In short, they will not escape or isolate themselves from the environment when faced with difficult college challenges or obstacles. Students with strong control will always want to influence any outcomes around them; no matter how hard the condition is. In other words, students with a strong control will not become passive and lose hope when facing difficult problems during their study. Students with a strong perception of challenges will perceive stress as a normal part of life and a chance to learn, develop, and grow. They will see academic challenges as a push to become individuals with better abilities and to leave their comfort zone (Maddi, 2006). Tho (2019), in his research, found that academic hardiness has significantly positive impacts on students' learning performance. Students with high academic hardiness are more capable of absorbing and applying what they learn properly. Strictly speaking, students with higher academic hardiness will be able to become the more competitive members of the society,

Beside the students themselves, the education program organizers essentially are responsible for providing learning conditions that motivate students to learn. A research by Nguyen and Westbrook (2011) found that universities can increase academic performances by providing programs that process students' hardiness in learning. In this regard, the college students' learning quality has an impact on how they face challenges during their study in college. There were cases where a lecturer had high expectations

for students, which led to pressure and other negative impacts. Limited opportunity, poor peer supports, and intense competition in the academic setting can create negative experiences among students, resulting in a high academic stress (Brand & Klein, 2019).

The college learning quality can be seen from students' satisfaction with their college life, also known as quality of college life. Sirgy (2007) defined quality of college life as the students' feeling of satisfaction with their life in college. Quality of college life reviews several aspects of students' college life, which are the satisfaction in academic aspect, social aspect, facility, as well as overall college life. Students' quality of college life can indicate their satisfaction in experiences and chances available for them through the educational institutions of their choice. How the students perceive their quality of life in the academic situation has been proven to have significant influence on their learning and academic achievements (Yang & Fan, 2017). In this regard, the aspects of students' college life such as educational programs, relation with friends of their ages and various sources available in universities influence their learning qualities.

Quality of college life and academic hardiness has been proven to have influence on students' learning motivation and quality. However, very few studies have assessed the link between quality of college life and academic hardiness despite the usefulness of understanding the relationship, especially for the educational program organizers. Tho (2019) has conducted several researches on hardiness and its role in quality of university life of Vietnamese business students. However, very few researches have examined these variables on Indonesian college students. By knowing which aspect of quality of college life has the strongest correlation with students' academic hardiness, education organizers can make necessary modifications to enhance the quality of education that bolsters the growth of students' academic hardiness.

Understanding the relationship between these two variables can benefit students. It can help them identify which aspect of academic hardiness they need to develop to improve their toughness in facing college challenges and competitions in society. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between college students' quality of college life and their academic hardiness.

METHOD

This research used quantitative method, with correlational approach that aims to find out the relationship between quality of college life and academic hardiness on college students. Research data were collected through a survey by distributing research questionnaires to the respondents directly. The population of this research was students majoring in psychology at a private university in Jakarta, numbering up to 105 people. The total participants of this research were 89 people, comprising of 27% of male participants and 73% of female participants. Most of the participants (83.1%) were between 18-21 years of age, while the rest were below 18 years of age (3.4%) and over 21 years of age (13.5%).

This research used two instruments to measure the students' level of Academic Hardiness as well as Quality of College Life. The participants' Academic Hardiness was measured using Academic Hardiness Scale (AHS) developed by Benishek (2005) and revised by Creed et al. (2013). The AHS consists of 19 items measuring three aspects of academic hardiness which are commitment, control, and challenge. Quality of College life was measured using QCL Measure from Sirgy (2017), consisting of four aspects which are satisfaction in academic, social, and campus lives, as well as the facilities.

The results of the validity test suggested that all the items of QCL were valid and 18 out of 19 items of AHS were valid. The AHS item found not valid was then omitted and not included in the data analysis process. The reliability test results showed that the QCL measuring tool had a reliability of 0.944 while AHS measuring tool has a reliability of 0.710. The research result data was analyzed using Pearson correlation test to obtain the correlation coefficient between the two variables. Before the correlation test, normality and linearity tests were conducted in advance on the data to fulfill the requirements of making a correlation test. The results of the Komogorov-Smirnov normality test and linearity test showed that the data were normally distributed and both research variables had a linear-natured relation.

RESULTS

The data of the participants' academic hardiness are shown in Table 1, while the data of the participants' quality of college life are shown in Table 2. It can be seen from Table 1 that most

participants (69.7%) had a moderate level of academic hardiness. However, 30.3% of the participants had a high level of academic hardiness, and no participants (0%) had low academic hardiness. These results suggest that

most of the participants are hardy students. They view academic pressure as an opportunity to grow, and they thrive under the stresses confronted in a demanding environment.

Table 1. Academic Hardiness Profile

Category	Number	Percentage
Low	0	0%
Moderate	62	69.7%
High	27	30.3%
Total	89	100%

Table 2 shows that 59.6% of the participants had moderate quality of college life; 1.1% had low quality of college life; and 39.3% had high quality of college life. Overall, most of

the participants had a feeling of satisfaction with college life. On the contrary, 1.1% of the participants were not satisfied with their life and experiences in university.

Table 2. Quality of College Life Profile

Category	Number	Percentage
Low	1	1.1%
Moderate	53	59.6%
High	35	39.3%
Total	89	100%

The correlation test result between the quality of college life and academic hardiness is shown in Table 3, and the correlation tests between the first variable with the aspects of the

second variable (and vice versa) are shown in Tables 4 and 5. Table 6 describes the correlation between the academic hardiness aspects and the quality of college life aspects.

Table 3. Correlation Test Result between Quality of College Life and Academic Hardiness

R	Sig
0.314	0.003
	Significant

Based on the correlation test result, it can be seen that the quality of college life has a significant relationship with academic hardiness.

However, the strength of the relationship between the two variables can be said to be weak with a correlation coefficient as much as 0.314.

Table 4. Correlations between the Quality of College Life Aspects and Academic Hardiness

QCL Aspect	r	Sig
College life	0.366	0.000
Academic	0.337	0.001
Social	0.247	0.020
Facility	0.211	0.047

Based on Table 4, it can be seen that all the four aspects of quality of college life have significant relationships with academic hardiness.

However, the four aspects have weak correlations. The aspect with the strongest relationship with academic hardiness is the college life in general

Table 5. Correlations between Quality of College Life and the Academic Hardiness Aspects

AH Aspect	r	Sig
Commitment	0.388	0.000
Challenge	0.146	0.172
Control	-0.067	0.534

Significant
Not Significant
Not Significant

Table 5 shows that only the commitment aspect of academic hardiness has a significant relationship with quality of college life. On the other hand, the aspects of challenge and control have no significant relationships with quality of college life as a whole. These results are aligned with Tho's findings (2017) that challenge and control do not affect quality of college life.

Table 6. Correlations between the Aspects of Quality of College Life and of Academic Hardiness

QCL Aspect	AH – Commitment		
	r	Sig	
College life	0.272	0.010	Significant
Academic	0.410	0.000	Significant
Social	0.277	0.009	Significant
Facility	0.315	0.003	Significant
QCL Aspect	AH - Challenge		
	r	Sig	
College life	0.224	0.035	Significant
Academic	0.223	0.036	Significant
Social	0.159	0.137	Not Significant
Facility	0.037	0.731	Not Significant
QCL Aspect	AH - Control		
	r	Sig	
College life	0.135	0.207	Not Significant
Academic	-0.118	0.270	Not Significant
Social	-0.049	0.646	Not Significant
Facility	-0.068	0.526	Not Significant

Table 6 illustrates that every aspect of quality of college life has a significant relationship with the commitment aspect of academic hardiness. Furthermore, only the college life and academic aspects have significant relationships with the challenge aspect. However, it is apparent that no aspects of quality of college life have significant relationships with the control aspect. Overall, the strongest relation is found between the academic aspect of QCL and the commitment aspect of academic hardiness which was measured up to 0.410. On the contrary, the weakest relationship lies between the challenge aspect of academic hardiness and the facility aspect of quality of college life. Negative relationships are also seen between the control aspect of academic hardiness and the academic, social, and facility aspects of quality of college life. However, the negative relationships are still considered insignificant.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the statistical tests, it is found that the quality of college life has a significant relationship with academic hardiness of students in University X. This indicates that the

higher the students' satisfaction with their college life, the higher the toughness the students have in facing challenges as college students. This result is aligned with the research by Yang & Fan (2017) that found that quality of college life supports students' achievement in college. Learning qualities that they have, such as lecturers, study programs, relationships with campusmates, or available facilities, interact with each other, influencing their learning process. Hardiness is also positively related with students' satisfaction, and negatively related to perceived stress and negative effect (Acharya & Sethi, 2020).

Academic hardiness is a personality characteristic which can differentiate between students who will avoid challenging academic assignments and students who will be willing to face the challenges. The results of a study by Kamtsios & Karagiannopoulou (2012) showed that negative experience (failure in learning and low score in a test) is a subjective experience, influencing students' behaviors and ways in choosing the specific kinds of efforts to achieve learning objectives. The activities students can do to reach the objectives are the use of strategies (such as looking for help), modification of

stressor intensity (such as activities that provide emotional calmness), acceptance of a situation (example: failure is a normal thing in a learning process), and a student's choice for a certain activity (example: learning strategies chosen by the student). In college, these four activities are closely related with students' quality of college life. In using strategies, the quality of interaction between lecturers and students, the quality of learning, and the class atmosphere (learning atmosphere) are the determinant factors of which learning strategies a student will choose and whether a student feels capable of overcoming challenges during the learning process. The form of interaction between lecturers and students will influence students' perceptions of the support or responsiveness that the lecturers provide them with. If a lecturer creates a warm and supportive learning environment, students will tend to feel comfortable during the learning process and also feel that their needs (both emotional and academic) can be fulfilled by the lecturer. Assignments and social environment at the campus can also influence students' stressor intensity. If academic workloads are far beyond students' capabilities, coupled with unsupportive and social environment, students will be more likely to feel they are unable to face academic challenges. Other studies found that teacher-student relationship contributes to student engagement in academic activities (Xerri, Radford, & Shacklock, 2018), influences their academic performance (Chukwu & Deba, 2020), and also reduces educational stress (Akman, 2020).

The results of correlation tests between the quality of college life aspects and academic hardiness also showed that the college life aspect in general and academic aspect have the strongest relationships with students' academic hardiness. In other words, students' life satisfaction as both individuals and students is related to their academic hardiness. Furthermore, it is found that the academic aspects such as teaching quality, lecturer, class, assignment load, and university reputation are significantly related to students' academic hardiness.

College life in general is comprised of students' satisfaction with their life as a student in a university, students' satisfaction with their personal life, and students' perceptions of their classmates' satisfaction with college life. A student's life satisfaction is negatively related to the levels of stress (Mardea & Kristina, 2020).

This means that the more unsatisfied a student in his/her university life is (both as a student and as an individual), the higher the level of stress they have during their study. Students with high level of stress tend to have low academic hardiness (Kamtsios & Karagiannopoulou, 2015). They are more likely to judge their experiences in college negatively and perceive them as challenging and threatening. On the other hand, students with high academic hardiness tend to judge their college experiences positively and perceive them as challenging, but not threatening. They also have the ability to manage the stressors emerging in college environment and the capability of overcoming those stressors.

The academic aspect of quality of college life is comprised of students' satisfaction with the faculty, learning method, classroom environment, assignments, and the university's academic reputation. Student's judgment over these five components is closely linked with the forming of their academic hardiness. If students consider the faculty/study program can support and fulfil their academic needs, they will tend to stay involved in dealing with the problems during their study. They believe that both the lecturers and the faculty can help and guide them in solving the problems. Learning methods that are compatible with the students' characteristics and needs, as well as assignments that are appropriate to their capabilities can spare students from severe stress or frustration due to academic failure. They will become more confident in their abilities to finish every task and to confront future stressors. Favorable classroom environments and positive academic reputation can provoke positive emotions within students and build their confidence in their abilities to overcome future academic challenges.

Regarding academic hardiness, it is found that only the commitment aspect has a significant relationship with students' quality of college life. Students' satisfaction with their college life is related with their willingness to give consistent effort and involvement in personal sacrifice to attain academic excellence. The quality of teaching and interaction between lecturers and students can encourage and motivate students to aim for academic success during their study. The students' trust in their lecturer is the strongest predictor of student commitment and engagement. Students who do not trust their instructor view active learning as a meaningless activity rather

than an opportunity to learn (Cavanagh et al., 2018).

The commitment aspect of academic hardiness can be reviewed from the Pintrich's (2003) theoretical model regarding motivation for achievement. There are several elements of learning process such as motivational elements (orientation for achievement, expectation over success and failure, and emotional reaction), cognitive elements (learning strategy and prior knowledge activation), and learning context elements (student's perception and interaction type between student and teacher). If students think they have a competent lecturer, the right assignments, accompanied by supportive classroom environments and sufficient facilities, students will tend to believe that they will have more chance for success. Satisfaction with college aspects will also trigger positive emotional reactions in students. Proper guidance and learning strategy application by the lecturer can help students understand learning strategies that suit their needs and lead to better learning outcomes. Besides, students' perceptions of the existence of positive learning context such as warm and supportive interactions between students and lecturers can convince students that they have every source of support needed to reach their learning targets.

On the basis of the relationships between aspects, the strongest connection is found between the commitment aspect of academic hardiness and the academic aspect of quality of college life. The academic aspect focuses on teaching lecturers, material quality, use of technology, classroom environments, assignments, and the difficulty levels of materials given to students. It is believed that the more positive a student's judgment towards processes and interactions they experience during class sessions, the higher their commitment in their study. A research by Abdollahi et al. (2020) showed that the culture of learning and the teacher's or lecturer's skills in teaching and supporting students are strongly correlated with students' academic hardiness. Positive culture or learning atmosphere can help students relieve their academic stress during learning processes. This is because students with a high academic stress will find it more difficult to put maximum efforts into academic excellence.

Furthermore, the facility aspect also has a significant relationship with the students' commitment aspect. The existence of good

learning facilities will affect students' learning interest significantly (Usman, 2020), meaning that the facilities provided by the university such as library, laboratory, Wi-Fi, and other supporting facilities needed by the students in their effort to reach academic achievements. The completeness and quality of each facility is an important support for the students to be more actively involved in learning process.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The results of the current study indicate that quality of college life is significantly related to college students' academic hardiness. Furthermore, the college life aspect of quality of college life has the strongest relationship with academic hardiness; and the commitment aspect of academic hardiness is connected most strongly with quality of college life. Looking at the relationships between the aspects of the two variables, it is found that the relationship between the academic aspect of quality of college life and the commitment aspect of academic hardiness is the strongest. In short, students' satisfaction with their faculty, lecturers, classroom environment, teaching methods, as well as their faculty's academic reputation correlate significantly with students' willingness to be involved in their study, no matter how stressful it will be.

Based on the results of the current study, it is suggested that higher education organizers strengthen the quality of college life aspects that have the strongest relationship with students' academic hardiness, which is the academic aspect. Strictly speaking, the quality of lecturers, learning environments, and learning materials should be improved in order to promote students' toughness during their study in university.

However, future studies are needed to explore other academic aspects of quality of college life, such as the characteristics and competencies of lecturers, the types of learning materials, and the characteristics of learning environments that can reinforce students' academic hardiness. In further research, the use of a qualitative approach could be as a means of gaining more in-depth data from students and lecturers.

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