

The Profile of Perceived Academic Stress in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Stress is a psychological symptom experienced by every human including students. This study aims to determine the profile of students' academic stress in State University of Surabaya. The research subjects were 3 of 7 faculties selected by cluster random sampling. There were 1553 students as participants, consisting of 301 male students and 1253 female students. The Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PASS) instrument from Bedewy and Gabriel (2015), was used after an adaptation process first. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the frequency of academic stress level. The analysis showed that there were 74 students or 5% of the population categorized as very high academic stress; 316 students or 20% of the population categorized as high academic stress; 833 students or 54% of the population categorized as moderate academic stress; 267 students or 17% of the population categorized as low academic stress category; and 63 students or 4% of the population categorized as very low academic stress.

Keywords: *Perceived academic stress, Higher education*

1. INTRODUCTION

Perception is defined as a process of selecting and interpreting the stimulus received by oneself [1]. Based on this understanding, it can be seen that individual perceptions determine the ability to deal with various stimuli. Each individual has a difference in perceiving the world, so it is interesting that the stimuli received by every individual are the same. However, there are many people with positive perception as a stimulus for the better situation and some perceive negatively as pressure. Therefore, the phenomenon of perception is very interesting to study.

Two factor emotion such as theory of Schachter & Singer explains that emotions are the result of the interaction of two factors, namely the existence of physiological desire and cognitive labels in individuals, so that a person's emotional state is determined by the physiological stimuli received by the body and cognition results from the suitability of existing stimuli being thought in current situation [2]. This shows that a person with physiological stimuli will give cognitive labels to his feelings, from available cognition such as past experiences or external environment [2]. Cognition is in the form of perception as an assessment on person's pressure or stress.

Stress is a condition the individuals feel that there is a threat that exceeds their own limits in the form of physical, environmental or social threats. James explains that emotions are the result of the perception of an exciting stimulus that causes visible physical and behavioral changes [2]. Therefore, stress is a part of emotion.

Stress is also perceived by student due to the high academic demands. The negative impact of students' perceptions of stress is that the higher the students' perceptions in assessing academic demands come continuously as pressure, the higher the level of stress they feel [3]. The positive impact of perceptions on stress is that it will make individuals feel that the demands as positive input, support and encouragement to be better, not as a cause of academic stress or pressure [3].

There are many types of academic stress felt by students, namely lack of free time, overloaded tasks, competition between friends, fear of change and failure of academic performance results [4]. The perceived academic stress is the perception of students' stress as result of the stimulus received in academic pressure, both from workloads, time limits, and views on one's abilities [5].

The results of analysis of mental health data in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada show that mental disorders in students are anxiety and depression, one of the biggest causes of which is student academic concern [20].

Currently, mental health is hot issue for world attention [19]. One of the student stress phenomena in Indonesia is suicide. Based on information from detik.com in December 2018 to 2019, that there were 3 students from State Universities in Yogyakarta conducting suicide by hanging themselves. One of them was the 6th semester student of the Faculty of Animal Husbandry [17]. Also the student's suicide in 2019 at a State University in Bandung was caused by depression which was known from a history of control letter from the hospital which stated that the student had depression [18].

Teddy Hidayat, Psychologist at the Faculty of Medicine, Padjajaran University, said that suicide happened students were unable to solve problems; academic burdens such as the difficulties in passing and the threat of dropping out. In addition, financial factors and social relations can also cause stress for students [17].

Several factors influence the perceived academic stress, including year of class, gender, relationships with classmates or roommates, pocket money, social support, and other substantial factors [6]; year of student class and the chosen academic study program [7]. The factor that mostly influences the perceived academic stress of students is students' class which causes differences in individual assessments of the perceived stressors. The ability and knowledge of a person to deal with stress will increase along with the higher education [9].

The results of other studies also show that the different academic year is a significant determinant of the stress felt by students [8]. This is because students in lower class years are more easily exposed to stress with new pressures than in higher class. The results of other studies indicate that there are factors that influence the perceived academic stress, namely the students' class year and the type of academic study program taken by students [7]. The students' class year factor affects the adaptability of students in facing academic pressures and demands while taking lectures.

This study describes the perception of stress experienced by students. Basically, the stress stimulus such as the same portion of academic load, the students who receive the stimulus have different perceptions. The stimulus can be perceived positively as so that it can encourage students to manage stress stimuli properly. However, those who perceive it negatively as pressure will can make students even more depressed with the burden that must be completed.

This research has several contributions in psychology and education. First, it can be used as a source of information for students to know and understand how to manage stress feelings. Especially, students can improve their adaptability in academic activities, when students have good adaptability, academic stress is low. Second, this research can be used as a source of information for higher education to develop both effective curriculum and learning process so that students have good stress management to reduce their perceived academic stress. Third, this study can be used as a source of research for further research on perceived academic stress in students. Basically, this research only describes the data that has been collected so that further research can carry out further research to make conclusions about relationships or comparisons with other variables. Therefore, researchers are interested in conducting research with the title "The Perception Profile of students' academic Stress in Higher Education".

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

The subjects of this study were students of the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Economics, and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law.

2.2. Research Instruments

The instrument used in this study was the result of adaptation and modification of the Bedewy and Gabriel instruments consisting of 18 items [5]. Eighteen items which had been modified and adapted from the instrument were used in all.

2.3. Data Analysis

This study used descriptive statistical analysis to analyze the data by describing the data collected. Descriptive analysis is a basic analysis without the intention to make conclusions, relationships, and comparisons from the data that has been collected.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis showed a suitability profile as below:

Table 1. Level of perceived academic stress

Category	Range	f	%
Very high	62 <	74	5
High	50 - 55	316	20
Moderate	42 - 49	833	54
Low	36 - 41	267	17
Very low	> 32	63	4
Total		1553	100

Total number of population = 71162

mean = 46

St.dev = 5.605

Table 1 above showed 54% of students were categorized in moderate academic stress level and more than 20% are at high level. This can be concluded that some students still have a fairly strong negative academic stress perceptio, so that it can create pressure for themselves.

Why is the high perceived academic stress (PAS) still found in students? in theory, the higher the student level is, the lower the perceived academic stress will be [6]. Several things that can affect the high PAS are:

First: the student level will provide different picture in facing the pressure and academic demands (Elias, Ping & Abdullah) in [7]. This may cause the student who have experienced an academic demands but they cannot handle properly, and other demands arise at another time. Thus, students will easily assess these demands as the cause of new stress.

The high class year students have a tendency to study without having difficulty to adapt themselves and have a lot of experience in completing the academic demands[6]. Even though, year of students' class is high, students still have the possibility of being exposed to stress with the pressure they have just felt [8].

Second, the academic stress is influenced by the way of individual adaptation in dealing with situational pressures and the number of sources of stressors. Each student has ways in managing schedules and educational activities. They will have a number of academic tasks and activities as long as education is still ongoing [9].

The higher the year of students' class is, the ways of adapting themselves to the educational environment will also develop [10]. This development process comes from the learning process in assimilating a large amount of academic material in a short time [11]. The higher year of students' class relate to social aspects much better than the lower year [12], but this does not guarantee to reduce the academic stressors that they receive.

Third, the subjective perceptions or assessments will shape interpretations and responses about some of the stimuli received by each student. The results of interpreting the stimulus to students generally can be in the form of emotions [7]. This emotion is a form of academic pressure that turns into a stressor because students have subjective perceptions of their inability to handle academic demands [5].

Based on this theory, if the academic stimulus is categorized as pressure and a cause of stress, then the perceived academic stress will emerge. Students who have high perceived academic stress are students who have negative perceptions, namely the assessment of demands and pressures during academic life are a cause of stress because they are threatening [5].

The stress felt by individuals is influenced by the mechanism of self-perception and cognitive processing of the internal or external demands [13]. A subjective perception or assessment of the demands that happen to individuals in academic matters will lead to the perceived academic stress process. Perception is a determining factor whether pressure or threat will be perceived as stress or not by the individual [13].

The perceive stress in the academic field is the condition such as pressure from the results of their self-perceptions and assessments of academic stressors, and are related to science in higher education [14]. The perceived academic stress is a form of anxiety that comes from school and education [15]. This form of anxiety is in the form of students' perceptions about the amount of knowledge that must be mastered and perceptions of time that are deemed insufficient to develop it [15].

The high perceived academic stress still exist because students perceive academic events as frightening demands. The stressful academic perceptions will lead to despair, which will lead to low academic results [16].

Fourth, the problem solving to academic stimuli can be carried out by students by understanding the process of perceived academic stress. The first stage, when students feel that the stimulus is not related (irrelevant) to their welfare in carrying out activities, they have not felt the perceived academic stress, because they are able to choose and judge that the academic demands received are reasonable and workable so that they will not interfere or threaten 13].

The second stage, students must have awareness that every stress can be found a way out[13]. Avoiding the causes of stress does not mean not doing academic demands, but an ability to carry out academic demands as effectively and efficiently as possible. Thus, students do not feel stress due to academic demands. Then, focus on how to manage emotions so that they are not easily

depressed and look for other positive steps in order to cope with stress based on the personal needs [13].

The third, the stressful stage where the individual feels that the stress in the form of demands and threats received is considered to be more than one's own ability, causing the individual to feel that there is a threat (harmful), danger (threat), and challenge (13). If the student is in the third stage, the student feels that he is no longer able to carry out the academic demands, or feels that the demands exceed their abilities so that they can no longer be overcome [13]. This stage often causes students to experience perceived academic stress. They tend not to be able to manage the pressure.

4. CONCLUSION

The higher the year of students' class is, the ways of adapting themselves to the educational environment will also develop. The students with high stress will bring up cognitive, physical, emotional, and behavioral reactions showing the high stress. The high perceived academic stress exist because students perceive academic events as frightening demands. The stressful academic perceptions will lead to despair, which will lead to low academic results.

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