

The Analysis of Solution Focused Brief Counseling Contribution in Reducing First-Year Students Academic Stress Symptoms

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ABSTRACT

Various contributing factors influence the success of the learning process. Stress is one of the big problems experienced by students, especially first-year students. Students in the first year who live separately from parents tend to experience stress resulting in stressful conditions. Life changes to career decisions in the form of majors will also affect students' stress levels. Furthermore, these stress conditions are also compounded by changes in educational patterns at the educational level. An approach considered capable of being a strategic step in reducing these conditions is Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC). This approach can help clients strengthen self-autonomy, strengthen thinking that focuses on solutions, formulating responsibilities, develop independence, increase self-control, and increase clients' quality of positive resources. This research aims to analyze the contribution of SFBC in reducing the academic stress conditions of first-year students. This study involved five students with high academic stress levels using the Student Academic Stress Scale (SASS). The research results show that SFBC is effective in reducing the academic stress level of first-year students.

Keywords: *Academic stress, first-year student, SFBC*

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic stress is the primary variable that contributes negatively to mental health, emotional conditions, general psychological functioning, and student learning abilities [1-3]. This pressure arises from various stressors related to academic demands. The evidence by various reports from world health associations such as the National College Health Assessment Association in the United States states that more than 58% of students in the United States find it difficult and pressured by academic demands [4]. First-year students from various European countries, such as Germany, Poland, and Bulgaria, experience high academic stress related to future academic demands [5, 6]. Students' perceptions about the many lecture assignments that require hard effort to complete one subject are also a determining factor for the high level of stress among students, so this significantly affects the level of student happiness and affects subjective well-being [6-8].

Beliefs and perceptions of academic demands also cause academic stress conditions that cause

psychosomatic reactions in first-year students [9-11]. This reaction is also reinforced by the emergence of stress symptoms related to the lecture, such as Barker's findings that academic stress will increase as students approach exam times such as midterms and final exams [12, 13]. The manifestations of academic stress cause not only psychosomatic conditions but also affect impulsive behavior. This was revealed by Yeo and Lee's research results, which stated that 66.8% of students in South Korea hurt themselves in the form of pinching themselves as a form of outlet for high academic stress conditions [14, 15].

Other findings reveal a significant relationship between students' academic stress conditions with maladaptive behavior and low psychological quality. This is revealed from the research findings that academic stress effectively contributes 6% to student life satisfaction [16, 17]. Another finding states that academic stress is significantly related to self-efficacy, where an increase in academic stress will reduce the level of self-efficacy [18]. The research suggests that academic stress

can significantly predict the emergence of high anxiety among students [19].

Apart from the various findings from abroad, research on academic stress conditions also produces findings that are not much different in Indonesia. The National Commission for Child Protection and the Ministry of Health stated that from 2011 to 2015, students experiencing stress each month increased by more than 90% from previous years. The Padang City area also shows that more than 13% of students experience high levels of academic stress [20].

Moving away from the academic stress conditions that students are prone to, especially first-year students, it is necessary to minimize the impact. Academic stress is an experience inseparable from the educational process in higher education, so there should be appropriate and efficient steps in providing treatment for this condition [21, 22]. Academic stress can be one of the main gateways to mental health problems and other practical life problems that students can experience, so it needs reasonable, progressive, effective, and efficient efforts to reduce stress symptoms. For this reason, counseling services are the right step in reducing and minimizing the academic stress conditions of first-year students [22].

Considering that academic stress conditions are a common symptom experienced by students in the form of various levels, various demographic conditions of students, and the ineffective handling and counseling services so far in universities in reaching the psychological conditions of students, it is necessary to have an approach based on methods and media, which is close to the daily lives of students [23].

To reduce academic stress conditions experienced by students, an approach considered capable of being a strategic step in reducing these conditions is Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) [24-26]. This approach can help clients strengthen self-autonomy, strengthen thinking that focuses on solutions, formulating responsibilities, develop independence, increase self-control, and increase the quality of positive resources in clients. Unlike other traditional approaches (which also focus on solutions), SFBC has the premise that the details about a problem are not overly questioned and are not significant in finding solutions to problems [27, 28]. This approach also focuses on problems that need quick handling but at a less severe level, previous client experiences that are successful in problem-solving, and focuses on the present and the future, not on the past [29, 30].

Furthermore, this approach has five basic principles, namely (1) the counseling approach is directed at constructive change, (2) in finding solutions, there is always an exception process if the problem does not exist to lead the client to find a solution gradually. To problems, (3) small and positive changes bring more significant and positive changes, (4) all clients can solve their problems by exposing, detailing, and replicating previous successes, (5) counseling objectives need to be stated in favorable, measurable terms, and active voice [31]. Besides, this approach is also suitable for various

problems related to maladaptive behavior, including those related to conditions of anxiety, stress, and depression.

This study focuses on finding the extent the Solution Focused Brief Counseling approach can reduce the level of academic stress experienced by students. This study also focused on first-year students as the students with the highest levels of academic stress symptoms with more symptom-forming variables.

2. METHODS

2.1 Participant

The research sample was taken after mapping the academic stress conditions experienced by students so that the sample conditions were known after the distribution of assessments related to student academic stress conditions. After measuring 3524 students using the Student Academic Stress Scale (SASS) in the Sumatra Indonesia area, it was found that more than 15% students had high levels of academic stress. From the measurement results, five people were selected to follow the counseling process using the Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) approach.

2.2 Measurement

Measurement of student academic stress conditions was carried out using the Student Academic Stress Scale (SASS) instrument, a development of the Educational Stress Scale for College-Student (ESSC) developed by Sun, Dunne, Hou & Xu [32]. After testing the instrument, the validity value was obtained based on a logit scale using Rasch analysis as in Table 1.

The results of the validation of the instrument show a reasonably good separation value, which can differentiate between one individual and another. Besides that, the item value also shows a fair value of reliability and validity.

2.3 Data Analysis

Hypothesis testing in this study was carried out by looking at the characteristics of the data. Research data has the following data characteristics. (1) in pairs (pretest-posttest), (2) small subjects who are assumed to be not normally distributed, (3) using experimental research or treatment. Based on the data's characteristics, paying attention to the small amount of data (less than 30) and considering the initial score (pretest), the data analysis technique used is nonparametric statistics;

Table 1. Instrument reliability conditions, mean and item separation (logit scale)

	Mean (SD)	Separation	Reliability	Alpha Cronbach
Person	-0.53 (0.65)	1.94	0.89	0.92
Item	0.00 (2.06)	14.48	1.00	

namely, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test and Kolmogorov Smirnov 2 Independent Samples.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, it is known that in general, students experience moderate levels of stress, this indicates that students feel the burdens and pressures in the lecture process and campus life to be quite disturbing even though they do not have a significant effect in various activities or daily activities.

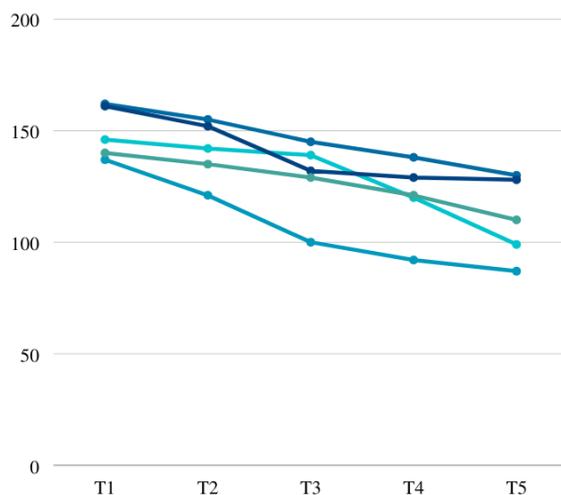
Even so, there are five students experience high levels of academic stress. This achievement indicated that some of these students' pressure and academic burden hampered their daily activities, both in self-development and other activities. High academic stress levels are also a reference for improving all elements in the student learning process.

Students' high academic stress level is also a reference in this study to provide intervention in the form of counseling using the Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) approach. Using these approaches will be known which approach effectively reduces student academic stress levels so that the implementation of counseling interventions becomes more effective and efficient.

Counseling interventions for subjects who have high academic stress levels are given within a week after the assessment through the instrument. The experimental subjects were taken based on respondents who had high academic stress levels as many as five subjects.

The provision of individual counseling interventions with the SFBC approach was carried out for two weeks, with each subject given a minimum of two counseling sessions. Before the intervention, the subject was informed that the intervention would be given with the SFBC approach.

Based on a series of counseling interventions with the SFBC approach, it is known through Graph 1 that there is a decrease in the level of academic stress of students from before being given treatment. In graph 1, it can be seen that the five times SFBC treatment was given shows a decrease in the level of academic stress experienced by students. In the first treatment, all research subjects had high academic stress levels (above a score of 136). There was a decrease in some subjects in the second treatment, but all subjects showed changes after the second treatment was given. This indicates that there is a contribution from the SFBC approach to reducing academic stress levels.



To prove SFBC treatment's contribution to reducing levels of academic stress, a sign test was carried out using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test as in Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Pretest and Posttest of Academic Stress

Analysis	N	Z coefficient	Asym.Sig	t-test
Pretest	5	3.064b	.002	.005
Posttest				

Based on the test results in Table 2, it is known that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results of the counseling treatment with the SFBC approach. The test also proved a significant change in the student's academic stress level after being given the treatment, where the post-test results showed that the students experienced a decrease in academic stress levels after the counseling intervention was conducted. This significant reduction is also illustrated through Graph 1 and strengthened by analysis testing through Table 2. The Z coefficient value also shows the value of a decrease in students' academic stress level with a gain of -3.064. This finding can be interpreted as a decrease in academic stress levels.

This finding is following the basic concept of counseling intervention with the Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) approach, which is an approach that emphasizes reducing the focus on the client's past problems but instead emphasizes a focus on what can work on the client (such as success and solutions) [28, 33, 34]. Furthermore, exceptions in the client's life during which the problem did not occur. This approach argues that everyone has strengths, resources, and problem-solving skills, which are the skills that the client will bring during the counseling process.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it is known that in general, students experience moderate levels of stress, this indicates that students feel the burden and pressure in the lecture process and campus life to be quite disturbing, although it does not have a significant effect in various activities or daily activities. There are still some students who have high levels of academic stress, so that they become targets of counseling interventions using the SFBC approach. With five treatments using SFBC, there was a significant reduction in academic stress levels. The Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) approach contributed to reducing students' academic stress in the experimental group.

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