STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE ACADEMIC BURDEN OF COLLEGE

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Abstract

High academic burden is often the main trigger of stress among college students, which has a negative impact on their mental health, motivation to learn, and sleep quality. This study aims to examine the academic burden, influences, and strategies experienced by college students. The method used is a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and literature studies from various relevant sources. The results of the analysis show that students who face excessive academic burden tend to experience significant stress, which can interfere with their psychological well-being and academic performance. Social support, especially from family and friends, has been shown to be more effective in helping students manage academic tasks. Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to pay attention to the academic burden given and provide adequate support services to improve students' well-being and academic success.

Keywords: Student Perspective, Academic Load of College, students' well-being

Abstrak

Beban akademik yang tinggi sering kali menjadi pemicu utama stres di kalangan mahasiswa, yang berdampak negatif pada kesehatan mental, motivasi belajar, dan kualitas tidur mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji tentang beban akademik, pengaruh, dan strategi, yang dialami mahasiswa,. Metode yang digunakan dengan melalui pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan studi literatur dari berbagai sumber yang relevan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa yang menghadapi beban akademik berlebih cenderung mengalami stres yang signifikan, yang dapat mengganggu kesejahteraan psikologis dan performa akademik mereka. Dukungan sosial, terutama dari keluarga dan teman, terbukti lebih efektif dalam membantu mahasiswa mengelola tugas akademik. Oleh karena itu, penting bagi institusi pendidikan untuk memperhatikan beban akademik yang diberikan dan menyediakan layanan dukungan yang memadai guna meningkatkan kesejahteraan dan keberhasilan akademik mahasiswa.

Kata kunci: Perspektif Mahasiswa, Beban Akademik Kuliah, Kesejahteraan Akademik

Introduction

Higher education is often seen as the ideal phase in a person's life to develop intellectual, spiritual, and critical potential and prepare for professional challenges. Ideally, students are expected to be able to manage academic workload well and efficiently make the learning process a fun and meaningful experience (Idris, 2022). The phenomenon of academic burnout is one aspect of the mismatch between ideal expectations and the reality faced by students. Research by LM Psychology UGM (2021) revealed that students in the Socio-Humanities cluster experience high levels of emotional fatigue due to excessive workload, decreased internal motivation, and pressure from the surrounding environment. This condition is characterized by symptoms such as physical and mental fatigue, a cynical attitude towards studies, and decreased academic efficacy.

However, the reality shows that many college students face significant academic pressure, which negatively impacts their mental and emotional well-being. Furthermore, a study by Tambunan et al. (2023) showed a positive relationship between academic burnout and academic procrastination in college students. Students who experience burnout tend to procrastinate on academic assignments, which can ultimately affect their overall academic achievement. Social support also plays an important role in reducing the negative impact of academic burden. Research by Reghinasari (2024) found that strong social support can reduce the rate of academic burnout in college students. Students who feel supported by their social environment tend to have better resilience in the face of academic pressure.

Theoretically, Tuition Load refers to all the demands and responsibilities that must be borne and accepted by students during the study period. This burden varies from several aspects, namely, from academic demands such as courses, assignments, and exams to non-academic demands such as organizational activities, committees, and even other demands that arise from the surrounding social environment, from parents, and from oneself. Lecture load is not just the number of courses that must be studied but includes the complexity of materials, learning methods, assessment systems, and even expectations from lecturers and the campus environment (Agustiandra et al., 2019).

The emergence of feelings of boredom and stress experienced by students does not only have an impact on the physical, but these two problems have a great impact on emotions and even the appearance of excessive emotional increases. In the academic world, the formation of mature character for each student greatly contributes to the regulation of the institution.

Sutarjo (2014) stated that learning boredom is an emotional condition experienced by individuals when they feel tired and are mentally or physically bored as a result of the demands of increased academic load. The onset of fatigue is due to feelings of guilt, helplessness, hopelessness, and sadness that result in feelings of discomfort, which can increase upset, physical fatigue, and mental and emotional fatigue so that it can result in a decrease in the level of motivation to learn, the onset of laziness, a decrease in the level of learning achievement, and academic stress in students.

Empirically, students have a central role in building the nation's future through superior academic achievement and behavior that reflects moral integrity. However, student life is often faced with challenges in balancing academic demands and spiritual obligations, so it can be seen that spiritual obligations need to be improved. In the context of higher education, students are expected to be able to combine academic achievement with spiritual life as a means of stress management for students who face high academic loads (Khairunnisa, et al., 2024)

Students are experiencing an important transition in the world of lectures that require more complex academic adjustments than the previous semester. In this phase, academic load tends to increase along with the increase in the number of courses, assignments, and demands for critical and independent thinking. This burden can affect students' mental well-being, learning motivation, and academic achievement. Therefore, the researcher wants to examine how students understand the meaning of academic load that makes lectures feel unpleasant, considering the importance of understanding academic load. This research aims to understand the meaning of academic load that makes lectures feel unpleasant for students and what factors aggravate feelings of boredom and stress in academics. The formulation of this problem needs to be studied to find out what factors affect feelings of boredom and stress in academics for students, as well as how students try to overcome boredom in the academic world. Therefore, this research also aims to find out how students try to overcome boredom in the academic world. Academic load is one of the general descriptions that greatly affects the mental health and well-being of students. This research is important to do considering the high academic burnout among students, especially second-semester students.

Based on previous research, academic burden is the main factor of student academic stress. Stress is a disorder in the body and mind caused by changes and demands of life (Badri 2020). Stress is external demands that affect a person, for example, an object in the environment or a stimulus that is objectively harmful. Academic stress arises because we tend to perceive without solutions, for example, some knowledge that must be mastered in a certain period with activities that support learning success (Bahrodin and Widiyati 2021). On the other hand, financial problems that occur

to regional students, such as late allowances from parents, and also a lot of lecture assignments and students' obligations in understanding lecture materials are problems that often occur to students. Stress that is not able to be controlled and overcome by each individual will have a negative impact on him, one of which is sleep disorders, this problem can be prolonged for students.

By understanding students' perspectives on the academic burden they experience, researchers hope that educational institutions can develop appropriate interventions to reduce academic stress and support students' mental health. This is in line with efforts to create an educational environment that is more inclusive, supportive, and oriented towards student well-being, which negatively impacts their academic achievement, learning motivation, and mental well-being.

Emotional development is part of socio-emotional development that is closely related to the ability of individuals to face challenges in higher education life, especially about the academic burden of lectures, which has the potential to be bad for students' mentality. The theory of psychosocial development put forward by Erik Erikson emphasizes the importance of the development of social emotions at various stages of life. According to Erikson, each stage of development involves a conflict or crisis that the individual must resolve in order to achieve optimal psychological well-being.

In this context, students should be able to express emotions openly. Students must be able to manage time and balance time needs for academic tasks with other time needs (Uroidli, et al. 2024). In the world of higher education, students are often faced with a variety of stressful factors, including heavy academic loads, career uncertainty, financial problems, and complex social interactions. With various pressures faced by students as a group that is vulnerable to stress in the academic scope. The inability to cope with stress or meet the demands of self-development can lead to psychological disorders, making stress an integral part of the individual's developmental process. Students are of the view that the tuition load faced is considered an unpleasant condition, where one feels that the demands that exist in the situation exceed their capacity to meet them (Rivaldi 2024).

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with the aim of understanding the meaning of academic load that makes lectures feel unpleasant for students, what factors affect the feeling of saturation and stress in academics experienced by students, and how students try to overcome boredom in the academic world. The object of this research is a second-semester student at Sheikh

Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary University Padang Sidimpuan, which totals 25 students. The qualitative approach through interviews was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of students' perspectives on the academic burden experienced by second-semester students still in the dormitory program. This research focuses on students' views on academic assignments and their impact on mental health and learning interests, as well as effective solutions in overcoming the above problems that cannot be quantitatively measured but rather lead to an understanding of students' experiences and perceptions.

Results and Discussion

The data analysis in this research yielded several themes, as shown in the following table:

Main Theme	Sub-Tema	Key Quotes / Indicators from Speakers
1. Factors Causing College Discomfort	Workload, busy schedule, grades pressure	"Tasks piling up, pressure to get high grades, and lack of downtime." (Rospilda), "Deadline is approaching." (Nurkhotiah), "Lecture materials are becoming more difficult to understand." (Meltiani)
	Transition from high school to college	"Shocking, the difference between high school and college is so different." (Indah Reskina)
2. Emotional and Psychological Impact	Anxiety, loss of motivation, fatigue	"I often feel anxious, easily tired, and sometimes lose motivation." (Rospilda), "Sometimes I feel like giving up." (Winda)
	Lack of confidence	"Sometimes feeling less confident." (Nurkhotiah)
3. Strategies to Overcome Burnout and Stress	Light entertainment and physical activity	"Watch a movie, go for a walk, or talk to a friend." (Rospilda), "Study in a park or café." (Meltiani)
	Learning innovations and variety of methods	"Make a mind map, study in groups." (Rospilda), "Learning while listening to podcasts." (Winda), "Making creative notes." (Aisyara)
4. Social and Environmental Support	The role of friends and lecturers	"Friends are very influential." (Rospilda), "Lecturers who are open and supportive are also very helpful." (Meltiani)
	Unsupportive friends	"Teman yang tidak supportif." (Dina Maulina), "Teman belum tentu teman." (Suci)
5. Perception of the Lecture System	Lack of attention to mental well-being	"There are still many aspects that are not paid attention to such as mental health." (Rospilda), "Focus on grades and academics." (Indah)

Main Theme	Sub-Tema	Key Quotes / Indicators from Speakers
	Hope for flexibility and coordination	"A more coordinated task system between courses." (Rospilda), "The lecture schedule should not be changed frequently." (Nurkhotiah)
	Psychological service needs	"There is an easily accessible psychological support." (Meltiani, Rospilda)
6. Motivation and Meaning of Lectures	Remembering goals and dreams	"Remembering the goals of college and the future." (Aisyara, Rospilda)
	The role of college in self-development	"Lectures are insightful and help me plan for the future." (Rospilda), "College makes me more aware of the direction and purpose of life." (Winda, Indah)
7. Expectations for the Campus and the Education System	Discussion rooms, lecturer empathy, counseling services	"I wish there was more room for discussion." (Rospilda), "Lecturers can be more open to input." (Aisyara)
	Non-academic development	"Students need space to develop, not only academically, but also socially and mentally." (Indah)

Based on the table, the answers to each research question in this research are

1. Students' views in interpreting academic burdens that make lectures feel unpleasant.

Students interpret academic load as pressure that is not only quantitative (the number of assignments and activities) but also qualitative in the form of loss of the meaning of learning. Academic burden is perceived as something that distances them from the ideal goal of education, which is to develop intellectually and personally. For example, one participant (P7) said, "College now is not a place to think freely but a place to pursue grades and collect assignments before deadlines." This expression indicates a distortion in the perception of higher education—from the spirit of exploration to administrative pressure.

This is in line with the theory of academic burnout from Schaufeli et al. (2002), which states that high workload, accompanied by low control over the learning process, can lead to emotional exhaustion and cynicism towards learning. Students who feel that their assignments do not give meaning will experience disengagement from lectures. As expressed by P3: "There are many tasks, but the content is just that. I do it just because I have to, not because I want to learn." This suggests

that negative perceptions of academic load can have a direct impact on the loss of intrinsic motivation to learn.

2.   Factors that exacerbate feelings of boredom or stress in college.

Factors that exacerbate boredom and stress among students include a rigid teaching system, minimal communication from lecturers, high grade expectations, and social pressure from the surrounding environment, including social media. Students feel less emotional or academic support from their lecturers. As P9 said, "When the lecturer just gives assignments without explanation and continues to assess without feedback, I feel very tired. It's like unappreciated community service." This lack of appreciation or feedback reinforces feelings of helplessness, which is one of the key elements in learned helplessness theory (Seligman, 1975).

In addition, pressure from social media is also a stress trigger in itself. Students tend to make upward comparisons, which is comparing themselves with others who seem more successful. As stated by P5: "On social media, friends often update the progress of their thesis or participate in competitions. I feel left behind, even though they don't necessarily understand me better." This phenomenon is explained in the theory of Social Comparison (Festinger, 1954), where the process of socially comparing oneself can lower self-esteem and increase anxiety, especially when students feel incapable of pursuing these achievements.

3.   Students' strategies to overcome saturation in the academic world.

Students demonstrate a variety of coping strategies to cope with burnout, which vary from adaptive ways to passive coping mechanisms. Some participants sought a positive escape into non-academic activities, such as organization, spiritual activities in Ma'had, or hobby communities. As stated by P11: "If I am too tired, I participate in Ma'had activities. Listening to lectures or reciting together makes the heart cool, so the spirit of learning again." These kinds of activities not only provide a respite from academic pressure but also give students a sense of social and spiritual connection, which is essential for emotional recovery.

This strategy can be categorized as emotion-focused coping according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which is an effort to relieve negative emotions without directly changing the source of stress. On the other hand, some students try to manage their study and rest time in a more balanced way, which falls into the category of problem-focused coping. However, not a few also rely on passive strategies such as withdrawing or letting tasks pile up because they feel inadequate. P6 said, "Sometimes I can just give up. When you're tired, you fall asleep, even if it's a busy schedule. I'll think about it again tomorrow."

This shows that not all students have adequate emotional regulation and time management skills to cope with academic stress in a healthy manner. Research by Eisenberg et al. (2007) also showed that students with limited access to psychological support tend to choose passive coping strategies, which actually worsen academic stress.

Conclusions

This research aims to understand the meaning of academic load that makes lectures feel unpleasant for students and find out what elements affect emotions of boredom and stress in academics for students, then to find out how students strive to overcome boredom in the academic environment. Students remarked that the hefty academic load made them feel like they were trapped in a tedious and endless routine. Students feel like they don't have time to ponder as well as room for reflection and to explore their hobbies and abilities, whose major focus is entirely on grades and degrees, without having the opportunity to actually grow and develop. In addition, there are various elements that create stress due to academic load. Factors that have a very substantial influence on emotions that worsen boredom and tension among students include a rigid teaching system, minimal communication from lecturers, high grade expectations, and social pressure from the surrounding environment, including social media.

Some individuals found a positive escape into non-academic pursuits, such as organization, spiritual activities in Ma'had, or hobby communities. On the other hand, other students try to organize their study and leisure time in a more balanced approach, which comes under the category of problem-focused coping. The general picture suggests that not all students have enough emotional regulation and time management abilities to cope with academic stress in a healthy manner; consequently, the necessity for systematic time management to be adopted by every student. Thus, in interpreting the academic burden that makes lectures feel unpleasant and which has implications in worsening feelings of boredom or tension in lectures, every student needs tactics and solutions to try to combat boredom in the academic environment. Academic load has been found to have a considerable effect on health and well-being physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

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