

A WORKING BRAIN, A WEARY HEART: A REFLECTION OF COLLEGE STUDENT WELL-BEING**Dini Nazlianda Panjaitan¹, Yenni Safitri¹, Tri Andini¹, Sandi Pradana²**¹Sheikh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary State Islamic University Padangsidempuan²STAI Ma'arif Kalirejo Lampung TengahCorresponding email: dinypanjaitan@gmail.com

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Abstract

Building balance and maintaining mental health in the waves of challenges faced by students is an important issue that requires serious attention. The level of student stress is closely related to the motivation to learn and the academic pressure they experience in campus life. This includes developing awareness and skills to face challenges and maintain emotional balance. The method we use is a descriptive qualitative method that aims to understand students' perceptions of a particular phenomenon. Data collection techniques are carried out using semi-structured interview guidelines so that the data obtained are more focused and in-depth. The data sources used in this study were students of UIN Syekh Ahmad Addary Padangsidempuan. Students use various strategies to maintain their mental well-being, ranging from being active, such as exercising, worshipping, and managing time, to telling close friends and family and seeking social support. Strengthening social support is also an important solution. Campuses need to build supportive communities through the formation of discussion groups, support groups, or healthy student organization activities. Students from difficult economic backgrounds must also receive special attention through adequate social scholarships and financial assistance. The results of the study show that many students face high mental and emotional burdens, which have an impact on learning motivation, social relations, and mental health. This study emphasizes the importance of institutional support and a campus environment that is responsive to students' psychosocial needs in order to create a more humane and sustainable educational ecosystem.

Keywords: Mental Well-being, Students, Academic Stress

Abstrak

Membangun keseimbangan dan menjaga kesehatan mental dalam gelombang tantangan yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa merupakan isu penting yang memerlukan perhatian serius. Tingkat stres mahasiswa erat kaitannya dengan motivasi belajar dan tekanan akademik yang dialaminya di kehidupan kampus. Hal ini mencakup pengembangan kesadaran dan keterampilan untuk menghadapi tantangan dan menjaga keseimbangan emosional. metode yang kami gunakan adalah metode kualitatif deskriptif yang bertujuan untuk memahami persepsi mahasiswa terhadap suatu fenomena tertentu. Teknik

pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan pedoman wawancara semi-terstruktur agar data yang diperoleh lebih terarah dan mendalam. Sumber data yang di gunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa UIN Syekh Ahmad Addary Padangsidempuan, Mahasiswa menggunakan berbagai strategi untuk menjaga kesejahteraan mentalnya, mulai dari aktif seperti olahraga, ibadah, dan mengatur waktu, hingga bercerita kepada teman dekat, keluarga, dan mencari dukungan sosial. penguatan dukungan sosial juga menjadi solusi penting. Kampus perlu membangun komunitas yang suportif melalui pembentukan kelompok diskusi, support group, atau kegiatan organisasi mahasiswa yang sehat. Mahasiswa dari latar belakang ekonomi sulit juga harus mendapat perhatian khusus melalui beasiswa sosial dan bantuan finansial yang memadai. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa banyak mahasiswa menghadapi beban mental dan emosional yang tinggi, yang berdampak pada motivasi belajar, relasi sosial, serta kesehatan mental. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya dukungan institusional dan lingkungan kampus yang responsif terhadap kebutuhan psikososial mahasiswa, guna menciptakan ekosistem pendidikan yang lebih manusiawi dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Kesejahteraan mental, Mahasiswa, Tekanan Akademik

Introduction

Able to intellectually and scientifically characterize the psychological well-being of students with a focus on positive affective states (such as happiness/life satisfaction) and the ability to perform optimally in individual and social life (self-control) (Kurniawan & Nuryana, 2023). Building balance and preserving mental health in the wave of obstacles faced by students is an essential topic that demands considerable attention. Student life cannot be separated from many sorts of pressures, which might impact their mental health. A healthy mental state among college students can bring several benefits, including enhanced concentration and productivity, healthy relationship building, and strong endurance in the face of adversity. A healthy mental state is also vital to ensure that students can adjust well in the professional world following graduation. Family has a significant influence on the mental education and well-being of students. The family is the most comfortable and safe location for all family members, as well as the beginning of all things' development, socialization, and self-actualization (Lindarda et al., 2024).

Mental and character education is essential in the development of ethics and improving the mental health of students. This includes developing awareness and skills to face challenges and maintain emotional balance. As such, it is important for educational institutions and the general public to understand and address student mental health challenges. It involves a comprehensive approach, including mental health education, psychological support, and policies that support a balance between academic life and mental health. Mental health does not only mean being free from mental disorders but also includes a person's ability to live life as well as possible (Kamila, S. A., 2024).

Students are faced with various obstacles in the thesis writing process that cause students to become stressed. Students' stress levels are closely related to the learning motivation they

experience in campus life. Stress is a state experienced by humans when there is a mismatch between the demands received and the ability to cope with them. The classification of stress consists of two types, namely constructive stress, also known as eustress. Eustress makes a person excited and increases concentration in studying, while stress that is unpleasant and negative in nature is known as distress. Distress has various negative impacts, such as being nervous, high blood pressure, irritability, and difficulty concentrating. Academic stress is classified as negative stress (distress). Academic stress occurs in the educational environment. This negative stress arises when students are faced with demands and tasks that must be done by students. (Hidayat et al., 2023).

Students in Indonesia, who are between the ages of 18 and 40, often experience high levels of stress during their late teens. Often experience a lot of turmoil and conflicts that cause high stress levels. Academic stress occurs when they can't cope with the demands of learning. New students often feel overwhelmed by changes from high school to college, such as cultural differences and housing adjustments. Research shows that academic stress increases every semester, especially when writing a thesis. There are two types of obstacles in the preparation of a thesis: internal factors from the student and external factors. If stress is left untreated, it can threaten physical and mental health and potentially lead to depression (Yanti, 2021).

Theoretically, academic stress can trigger various changes in students, ranging from psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression and physiological changes such as headaches and insomnia to decreased learning motivation that has an impact on the quality of learning. Stress is an interaction between an individual and the environment that is assessed as a threat to well-being. The appraisal process consists of two stages: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal, which determine how individuals respond to stress (Gisela et al., 2025).

Empirically, it is proven by An Al Rivaldi that Stress among students is increasingly occurring due to various factors. High academic load, assignment and exam demand, and poor time management are the main causes of stress. Changes in the environment when entering campus can also make students feel lonely. In addition, poor physical health, such as lack of sleep and irregular diets, worsens mental conditions. Students must also be aware of the symptoms of stress and find ways to overcome them (Rivaldi, 2024).

In a meta-analysis conducted by nova juniar gasa et al., it was stated that academic fatigue experienced by students is caused by various pressures, such as high academic demands, psychological problems, and lack of support from the environment. Heavy workloads and tight deadlines can lead to prolonged stress, affecting physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion.

Problems such as low motivation to study and difficulty managing time also worsen the situation. The lack of support from family, friends, and lecturers makes students feel isolated (Nova et al., 2025).

When you're feeling stressed, anxious, and anxious, you need to know what's happening to you, and there's a chance you need help right away. Individuals often exaggerate a person's condition as depression. The above statement is, of course, questionable because we have all experienced bad moods, sadness, and stress. However, not all prolonged sad states are referred to as depression. People who are so busy will certainly feel very tired when they reach the end of the day. It can happen to anyone. So, because we feel tired, we also feel unhappy if someone wants to ask for help. It felt like I wanted to scold him back. Even more so if at the end of the tiring day we still have overtime work.

So, instead of just doing bad things because of the fatigue factor, it is very good if we always read *istighfar* so that the heart, feelings, and mind become calmer (Nurrohman, 2020). In an environment that supports mental health, excessive stress can be well managed. Higher education institutions, as one of the important environments for students, have a big role in creating a positive and supportive environment. This can be done by providing accessible counseling and emotional support services, engaging students in activities that improve mental well-being, and providing comprehensive mental health education programs. In addition, a preventive approach is also important in creating an environment that supports mental health (Oktarizal et al., 2023).

In addition, strengthening social support is also an important solution. Campuses need to build a supportive community through the formation of discussion groups, support groups, or healthy student organization activities. Students from difficult economic backgrounds should also receive special attention through social scholarships and adequate financial aid. Lecturers and educators are also expected to have empathy and sensitivity to student conditions so as to create a safe and supportive learning climate. With this approach, it is hoped that the mental and emotional well-being of students can be maintained so that they can develop optimally both academically and personally (Nadhiroh & Ahmad, 2024).

1. How do college students define mental well-being in college life?
2. What factors cause excessive mental load on college students?
3. What coping strategies do students use to maintain well-being?

It aims to describe how students define mental well-being in the context of campus life, identify the factors that cause mental overload, and explore coping strategies that students use in maintaining their mental well-being.

Academic stress has more effect on students' subjective well-being than emotional intelligence, according to a study conducted by Denovan and Macaskill on 192 first-year students in the UK. The study showed that stress levels remained stable, with increased dissatisfaction with academic activities and decreased confidence. Constant stress negatively impacts life satisfaction and positive affect, while emotional intelligence does not show a significant effect. While other research has found that emotional intelligence can predict subjective well-being, there is also the suggestion that better measures of emotional intelligence improve the link.

Fernandez-Berrocal and Extremera asked several questions about the relationship between emotional intelligence and well-being, including that individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to experience less stress, can manage confidence better, establish good social relationships, and are able to use positive coping strategies. They assume emotional intelligence could be a connecting variable between subjective well-being and other factors such as personality, stress, and coping.

Personality factors also play a role in subjective well-being. Research states that extraversion personality correlates with positive affect, while neuroticism correlates with negative affect. In addition, social relationships also have an effect, with family playing a role in negative affects and relationships with friends having an effect on positive affects. Academic activities can be a source of stress for students, and involvement in various activities can improve student well-being. Active students have higher welfare (Julika & Setiyawati, 2020).

Unlike previous studies that generally focused on stress rates, burnout, or achievement index, this study emphasizes students' personal experiences of losing a sense of fun in college, which is still rarely explored in depth. This study focuses more on the emotional and perceptive aspects of students as early indicators of a potential psychological well-being crisis, while most other studies focus on cognitive aspects and academic achievement, which are rarely discussed by other researchers. "A busy mind, a tired heart" as a portrait of student well-being in higher education is very important to be addressed immediately because it is directly related to the quality of life and the future of the younger generation. Academic and social inequities can cause chronic stress and mental health disorders. If ignored, this can reduce academic achievement and productivity, as well as increase dropout rates. It also threatens the development of quality human resources. Therefore,

attention to student welfare is the responsibility of the institution that needs to be handled systematically.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative technique that tries to understand students' perspectives of a certain phenomenon. The data collecting technique is carried out through in-depth interviews using semi-structured interview rules so that the data acquired is more directed and in-depth. The data source in this study is 20 students of UIN Syekh Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan. The data analysis procedures employed involve three basic stages, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drafting by Miles and Huberman. This research was carried out on May 8, 2025 and was focused on active students in UIN Sheikh Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan as the major participant.

Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis in this research yielded several themes:

Table 1.1 Qualitative Findings: Themes and Subthemes

No.	Main Themes	Subthemes That Appear
1.	Definition of Student Mental Well-Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional, spiritual, and social balance - Ability to manage stress and emotions - Able to cope with academic pressure - Not trouble-free, but able to cope with stress in a healthy way
2.	Factors Causing Mental Fatigue in Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic load and deadlines - Unsupportive environment (toxic friends, unresponsive lecturers) - Energy-draining cognition - Social pressure or injustice of the academic system
3.	Signs and Symptoms of Mental Fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Irritable - Loss of interest - Difficulty concentrating - Withdraw - Lazy communication

		- Difficulty sleeping and decreased motivation
4.	Coping and Recovery Strategies	-Sport - Worship and spiritual activities - Watching movies, listening to music, playing games - Tell your parents or close friends - Rest and relaxation
5.	Academic Impact on Mental Well-Being	- Stacked tasks make students depressed - Leisure time is interrupted or cannot be enjoyed - Desire to quit college - Feeling burdened even though you have tried your best
6.	Social Roles: Friends, Lecturers, and Family	- Friends as an emotional support system - Lecturers sometimes motivate, sometimes add pressure - Family, especially parents, become motivators and places to recover from stress
7.	Personal Experience in Dealing with Mental Stress	- Slump due to assignments and academic pressure - Facing injustices in the system (e.g., being penalized for one class for one person's mistake) - Difficult times leading up to exams and final projects
8.	Time Management Mechanisms and Strategies	- Create a balanced schedule - Prioritize rest time and fun activities - Complete tasks when in a good mood - Not pushing yourself when not in optimal condition
9.	Expectations and Recommendations for the Campus	- Easily accessible campus counseling services - Stress management and life balance workshop

- Supporting facilities (lounge area, sports access, rest area)
- Reduction of mental health stigma in the environment

Students see mental well-being as a condition when they can maintain a balanced emotional, social, and spiritual relationship. They feel mentally healthy not because they don't have problems, but because they can manage stress and deal with stress well. There are many things that can make students feel mentally tired. Stacked coursework, tight deadlines, and an unsupportive environment, such as toxic friends or inattentive lecturers, are the main culprits. In addition, too much thinking and pressure from an unfair campus environment also added to the burden on their minds. This mental fatigue can be seen from several signs, such as irritability, loss of interest in doing things, difficulty concentrating, withdrawing from socializing, lazy communication, difficulty sleeping, and decreased motivation to learn. To overcome this, students have their own way. Some exercise, worship, watch movies, listen to music, or play games. There are also those who choose to tell their parents or close friends, and take time off to relax more.

1. How do students define mental well-being in campus life?

Students in this study define mental well-being as a condition in which a person is able to manage emotions, stress, and academic pressure in a balanced manner so that they can live campus life productively and comfortably. This definition includes emotional, social, and spiritual balance. Some students emphasize the ability to remain emotionally stable and able to establish positive relationships in the campus environment: "Mental well-being is when a person is able to manage emotions and cognitive control to the fullest." (Ade Maulina). "A condition where I feel emotionally balanced, able to cope with academic pressure, and have a good relationship with the people around me." (Mita Raisa Hutabarat). "Mental well-being is mental health or the spirit of life in carrying out daily activities." (Nurjannah). "A condition in which students feel emotionally, psychologically, and socially healthy, so that they are able to cope with academic pressure." (Nazmi Al Munawaroh Lubis). "The ability to manage stress, emotions, and academic pressure well so that I can live a more balanced and productive campus life." (Nur Zannah)

The definition of students is in accordance with the WHO theory of mental well-being (2004) which states that mental well-being includes the ability of individuals to cope with daily stress and lead socially and emotionally productive lives. In addition, this definition is also in line with Ryff's (1989) psychological model which emphasizes well-being as a function of self-acceptance, positive

relationships, and environmental management. In the context of higher education, this welfare management is crucial so that students are able to maintain academic performance and social adaptation, as found by Gallagher (2014) that the perception of mental well-being is related to students' academic and social readiness.

2. What factors cause excessive mental burden on students?

The main factor that causes excessive mental load on college students is heavy academic pressure, including stacked assignments and tight deadlines. In addition, a less supportive social environment, such as unresponsive lecturers and unsupportive friends, also contribute to student mental fatigue. Cognition or thinking processes that are too heavy also cause mental fatigue. "The workload of the task and tight deadlines often make me feel mentally exhausted." (Mita Raisa Hutabarat) "The most influencing factor is cognition which drains the thought process so that it causes mental fatigue." (Ade Maulina) "A less supportive campus environment – such as unresponsive lecturers, inadequate facilities, or an uncomfortable atmosphere." (Nazmi Al Munawaroh Lubis) "Feeling mentally exhausted on campus is a heavy academic burden, especially when there are so many tasks and deadlines that need to be met in such a short amount of time." (Nur Zannah) "The factors of the task that must be completed, the uncomfortable friendship environment." (Nurjannah)

These findings are consistent with the theory of the Demand-Control Model (Karasek, 1979) which states that work or academic stress arises when job demands are high and individual control over the situation is low. Unsupportive academic and environmental burdens contribute to stressors that weigh on the mental burden. Studies by Stallman (2010) also show that academic stress is one of the main causes of stress and mental disorders in college students.

3. What coping strategies do students use to maintain well-being?

Students use various coping strategies to maintain their mental well-being, ranging from active coping such as exercise, worship, and time management, to social coping by telling close friends, family, and seeking social support. Relaxation activities such as watching movies, playing games, and listening to music are also important mechanisms for relieving stress. "Exercise, watching movies, playing games, worshipping." (Ade Maulina) "I usually exercise or spend time with friends to reduce stress." (Mita Raisa Hutabarat) "Going out and joking around with friends can reduce the burden of mind or stress." (Nazmi Al Munawaroh Lubis) "Exercise, listen to music, and spend time with friends and family to distract from academic pressure." (Nur Zannah) "Telling parents can relieve stress and listen to music." (Nurjannah)

The coping strategies found are in line with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theory of coping which is divided into two main types: problem-focused coping (e.g. time management, exercise) and emotion-focused coping (e.g. social support, relaxation). Research by Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) also emphasized the importance of social support and positive activities in maintaining students' mental well-being..

Conclusions

The goal of this study is to describe how students define mental well-being in the context of campus life, to identify the elements that contribute to mental overload, and to investigate coping methods that students employ to preserve their mental well-being. Students define mental well-being as the ability to maintain a balance of emotional, spiritual, and social relationships. They feel mentally well-being when they can manage stress, deal with academic pressure, and overcome problems in a healthy manner. Excessive mental burden on students can be caused by a variety of factors, including piling up coursework and tight deadlines, an unsupportive environment such as toxic friends or unresponsive lecturers, a mind that is constantly working and draining energy, and social pressure or injustice in the academic system they face. Students frequently maintain their mental well-being in a variety of ways, including sports, worship or spiritual activities, watching movies, listening to music, playing games, recounting stories to parents or close friends, and taking time for rest and relaxation.

These findings highlight the importance of prioritizing mental health as an intrinsic aspect of academic accomplishment, recognizing that mental well-being is more than just being free of difficulties, but also the ability to manage stress and stress in a healthy manner. As a result, universities must create counselling services that are easily available, welcoming, and stigma-free, as well as train lecturers and education staff to spot signs of mental tiredness and offer compassionate support. Furthermore, creating a supportive social climate through mentoring programs, peer support groups, and soft skills training is critical for establishing good and constructive interactions among students, lecturers, and staff.

Furthermore, incorporating stress management and life balancing programs such as mindfulness training and relaxation techniques, as well as providing supportive facilities such as lounges and sports areas, can aid students' mental health recovery. An examination of the academic system is also required to ensure that the workload and deadlines do not put students under undue stress by giving flexibility and constructive feedback. Strengthening mental health literacy through education and stigma reduction efforts will raise students' awareness of how to identify and overcome mental

health issues. Involving families in mental wellness initiatives, as well as working with external mental health specialists, can help students build stronger support networks.

In practice, these findings can help universities create and implement effective intervention programs, improve the quality of campus services and infrastructure, and reform the academic system in a more humane way. As a result, pupils will be more mentally and socially resilient, as well as intellectually prepared. This will eventually help to create a healthy, productive, and inclusive campus climate in which students can thrive both intellectually and emotionally.

As a result, paying close attention to kids' mental health is critical to their academic success and overall quality of life. Understanding the elements that generate mental tiredness and effective coping mechanisms allows universities to build more targeted programs to help students' mental health. Furthermore, strategic initiatives such as expanding counselling services, enhancing social support, and altering the academic system to benefit students must be taken. It is intended that these efforts will enable students to not only cope better with academic pressure, but also to develop into emotionally, socially, and spiritually healthy individuals capable of constructively contributing to society and reaching their full potential. This study also paves the way for future research into more effective interventions for maintaining and improving mental health in higher education settings

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