
The Ability of Islamic Religious Education Study Program Students in Overcoming Academic Stress Problems at Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan

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Abstrak

The high level of academic stress in students of the PAI Study Program at UIN Sumatra Utara Medan is caused by academic demands, social pressure, and family expectations. The data show a significant prevalence of academic stress globally (38-71%), Asia (39.6-61.3%), and Indonesia (36.7-71.6%). This academic stress negatively impacts students' concentration, problem-solving abilities, and academic performance, even though they have an advantage in faith-based coping strategies. This study aims to find out what are the factors that affect the academic stress of study program students and find out how PAI study program students in overcoming the problem of academic stress at the UIN Sumatra Utara Medan. This study uses quantitative descriptive research. This study uses the data collection method used is the questionnaire method. Questionnaires used by researchers as research instruments. The data was taken using a questionnaire to students to determine the level of academic stress in classroom learning. The results of this study show that there are two factors. Namely: the first factor when students can overcome academic stress by: sharing stories about the problems they are facing with peers, asking for moral support from friends, and sharing stories about the problems they are facing with parents. While the second factor when students overcome academic stress by: taking advantage of free time to do assignments, and immediately do assignments. The implications of this study show that the handling of academic stress in PAI students requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. The findings that students use a combination of social strategies (sharing stories with friends and parents, seeking moral support) and time management strategies (working on tasks immediately, making use of free time) provide important guidance for educational institutions to develop more effective support systems.

Keywords: *Academic; Student; Stress*

INTRODUCTION

Every human being created by Allah Swt. must not be the same. Every human being has different circumstances, situations or life conditions (Ruslan, 2018). Not all of their hopes and desires will be achieved and run smoothly as desired. Every human being must face various kinds of problems, challenges and difficulties which will be felt by each individual (Utami, 2017). How these humans are able to face, undergo and overcome difficulties, challenges, and problems (Sulistiyawati & Mbato, 2022). Each individual's perspective greatly influences how they overcome problems, difficulties and challenges (Hardiansyah et al., 2020). As faced such as the problems faced by students or students in the educational environment, especially in the university environment.

Higher education undertaken by students is one example of the problems, difficulties and challenges that will be faced by them. Students in the higher education level are brought to different conditions from their previous education. They are expected to be independent both in learning, active and critical (Kopzhassarova et al., 2016). Even students are required to study ideas or ideas and opinions, statements to know the truth.

In addition, students are also faced with the course assignments they take. Not only learning various theories, but students have to face pressure from lecturers who teach and other problems (Kapasa et al., 2015). With various problems, challenges and pressures experienced by students both from lectures, assignments, grade targets and interactions with lecturers. Students must be able to adjust and deal with it. Then this student is called academic resilience (Kaur, 2019). Therefore, with so many demands on students that sometimes make students stressed in completing academic demands.

It should be noted that the academic stress experienced by most students certainly has many factors. Some of them are the adjustment of students to the new environment and culture, the semester credit system which is one of the changes experienced by every student so that there is a great need for social support such as friends, as well as the help of parents to complete academic tasks (Marhamah & Hamzah, 2017). Academic demands, to the work on course assignments given by lecturers. This is because there is indeed a significant difference between high school and university so that students need to make academic adjustments (Christy & Soetjningsih, 2024). This is as explained by Rony in his research conducted on first-year students at the University of Riau. The results of the study stated that there was a higher level of stress at the initial level compared to the final stage with a prevalence of 57.23% (Wahyudi et al., 2017).

Then according to the results of research by Nurul Romadhona, et al, that the level of depression, anxiety, and stress in students in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic showed that 61.5% of respondents experienced depression, stress, and anxiety (Romadhona et al., 2021). Meanwhile, according to Habeeb and Koochacki, the percentage of students who experience academic stress globally is 38-71%, while in Asia it is 39.6-61.3%. In Indonesia, the percentage of students who experience academic stress is 36.7-71.6% (Wibowo et al., 2021).

Students of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program (PAI) at UIN Sumatra Utara Medan (UINSU) Medan also face various challenges related to academic stress. In addition to academic burdens such as piling up assignments, tight deadlines, and exam preparation, they also have to face pressures from the social environment, including expectations from family and society. Another challenge is how they balance academic obligations with spiritual demands that are also important in the lives of PAI students. The academic stress experienced

by PAI Study Program students is often influenced by the pressure to maintain religious values in carrying out daily activities in the campus environment.

However, PAI Study Program students have advantages in terms of religion-based coping strategies that can help them manage stress. Unlike students from other study programs, PAI students tend to rely more on religious approaches, such as worship, dhikr, and reading the Qur'an, as a way to relieve academic pressure. These coping strategies are not only effective in helping them cope with stress, but they also strengthen their emotional and spiritual balance. In addition, the religious values they learn also provide guidance in dealing with difficult situations, so that they can be calmer and motivated in undergoing the academic process.

Seeing the problem of academic stress experienced by students, this problem is very important to study. Because the problem of academic stress can hinder students' concentration, and hinder solving a problem which in turn will affect academic performance. Especially in the academic environment of higher education, where there is academic pressure, limited and high opportunities and competitiveness that causes stress for academics. Even the problem of academic stress can damage students' physicality and there is psychological pressure that causes irritability (Ali & El-Sherbini, 2018).

Therefore, various ways that can be done by students in solving the problem of academic demands. Usually, most students in completing academic demands are very diverse. Such as, immediately doing a task when given a new task, postponing to do it, taking a vacation to calm down and so on. This is also in accordance with the results of research by Ramahsendran on "Academic Stress, Stress Levels and Ways of Coping Among Students of Johor Bahru Allied Health Sciences College." The results of his research show that there are several ways to overcome academic stress, namely by controlling yourself, distancing, accepting responsibility, and seeking social support (Ramahsendran et al., 2017).

This study aims to find out the extent of the ability of PAI Study Program students to deal with academic stress, as well as identify factors that contribute to the reduction of stress. The main focus of this study is on the role of coping strategies, social support, and time management in managing academic stress. Therefore, this research is very important to research, this is because it will be a solution for students in general in overcoming the academic stress they face. The importance of this research is that many students will know what factors can affect academic stress and what will be done in completing academic demands. Thus, students are able to use their skills in overcoming the problems they face and, in the end, can be civilized and can solve academic demands well.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative descriptive research method (Rukminingsih, 2020). The data was taken using an online questionnaire to students to find out the level of academic stress in completing the lecture load at university. The subjects of this study are 40 students who are studying at the UIN Sumatra Utara Medan.

The data collection techniques in this study include: identifying the construct, that is, the researcher starts by designing a scale, which starts from identifying the purpose of the measuring tool, namely choosing a definition and recognizing the theory underlying the construct to be measured. Before writing the item, the researcher first determines what type of scale to use, then creates a statement item from the behavioral indicator. Furthermore, the validity of the content is the validity that is estimated through testing the feasibility or relevance

of the test content through rational analysis by a competent person or through expert judgment. Next, conduct a trial, after the scale is in the validity of the content, then the researcher disseminates the scale through a google form (online) so that 40 respondents are obtained. Then the last step, item Analysis. Item analysis is the process of testing item parameters to determine if an item meets the psychometric requirements to be included as part of the scale. The analysis carried out is validity and reliability.

The data analysis technique in this study uses an exploratory factor analysis technique, which aims to reduce or summarize a number of independent variables to fewer (Hidayat et al., 2023; Abzalov, 2016). The steps of exploratory factor analysis are as follows:

1. *Variable Identification*

The variables to be analyzed and reduced by factor analysis should be based on existing theories or previous research or existing justifications. In this context, the variables used to measure the academic stress of PAI students must be based on established theories or previous research related to academic stress and religion-based coping strategies.

2. *Selecting Variables*

The process of factor analysis is based on the correlation between variables. Therefore, a number of variables that have a fairly high correlation correlate with other variables and tend to group, there should be a strong correlation between the variables that want to be grouped. On the other hand, those whose correlation is low or weak with other variables will be removed. The statistical method used in testing the factor analysis model based on correlation is KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) or Bartlett's test. The minimum amount of KMO is 0.5 and if the results of the KMO factor analysis are < 0.5 , then the factor analysis cannot be used.

3. *Determining the Number of Factors*

To determine the number of factors, eigenvalue, and persentase of variance can be used. Based on eigenvalue, only factors that have an eigenvalue > 1 can be used. Meanwhile, based on the percentage of variance, for social sciences, the percentage of cumulative variance is at least or at least 60%. The factors that form must be able to describe the differences between the forming factors.

4. *New Variable Naming*

If the factors have really been formed, then the name is given based on the content of the existing factors. Sometimes it is difficult to determine the right name to combine the number of variables that make up a factor, and the naming of a factor can be the name of the variable that forms the factor that has a value

5. *Determining the Number of Factors*

Determining the number of factors that have a dominant influence can be seen from the highest present of variance eigenvalue. The data analysis technique in this study uses descriptive statistical data analysis techniques and also inferential statistical data techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study aims to provide an overview of what factors make students' academic stress at the UIN Sumatra Utara Medan and how to solve the problem of academic stress. Based on the results of the descriptive test, it was known that there were 20 students experiencing academic stress due to the many pressures of assignments given by lecturers to students. If we understand what is meant by academic stress is an anxiety and stress that comes from school to

college. This often happens because of the many pressures that come together when you want to pursue your goals. Usually, academic stress is due to too many assignments, competing with others, failures in relationships with other people, students, students, teachers or lecturers.

Improving the ability to lower the level of academic stress experienced by students at the UIN Sumatra Utara Medan has fostered sensitivity to themselves. This means that some students have their own responsibilities to solve their problems. In addition, some students already know and understand the mind gradually and try to solve the problems that are being faced by every student.

Some of the efforts that can be made by students at the UIN Sumatra Utara Medan in overcoming the problem of academic stress can be seen from the table below.

Table 1.
Stress Management Efforts

		MSA
Overall MSA		0.681
P1	Share stories about the problems you are facing with friends	0.716
P2	Ask a friend for moral support	0.778
P3	Memanfaatkan waktu luang untuk mengerjakan tugas	0.553
P4	Sharing stories about the problems they are facing with parents	0.758
P5	Work on it as soon as there is a new assignment	0.584

Based on the table above, it can be seen that there are five ways carried out by students in dealing with academic stress, that is, from this table it shows five ways or strategies carried out by students in dealing with academic stress, with the level of suitability of each strategy based on the MSA score. Strategies that involve social support, such as sharing stories and asking for moral support, seem to have stronger relevance than other strategies, such as getting on tasks right away.

The table above can be understood in the prerequisite test, then the assumption of the data must be met, namely the MSA value must be more than 0.05. If this value is greater than 0.05, it means that the set of variables can be analyzed by factor analysis. From the table above, an MSA value of 0.681 was obtained, so it was concluded that it was greater than 0.05 and the data assumption test was met.

Furthermore, the conclusion of the results of the exploratory factor analysis is seen from the scree plot and factor loading which aims to determine the number of factors obtained.

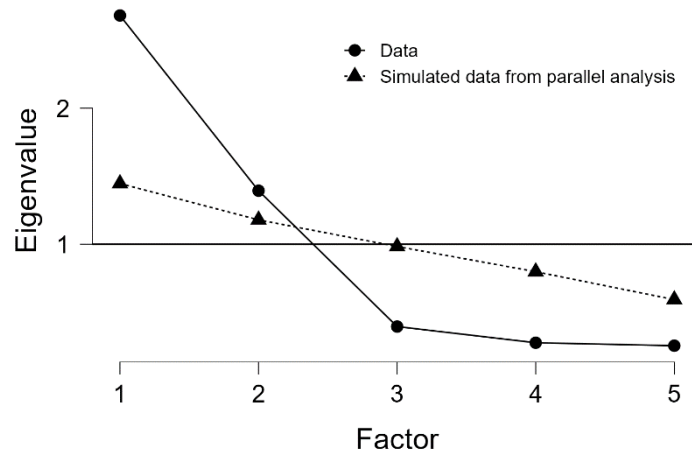


Figure 1.
Scree Plot

From the table above shows the scree plot graph. Based on the graph, it appears that there are two component factors that will be explained by faht as a diagram as follows.

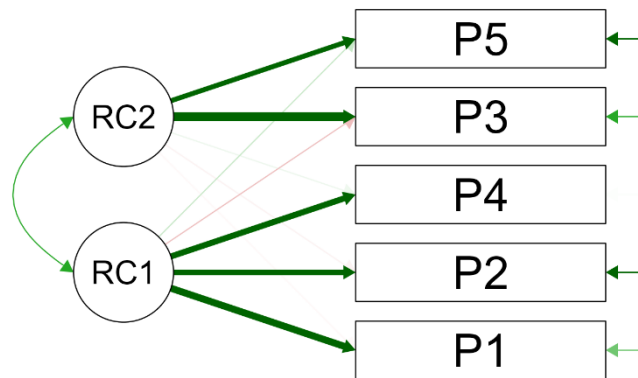


Figure 2.
Two Component Factors

Based on the table above, dimension 1 (RC1) is measured by P4, P2, P1, while dimension 2 (RC2) is measured by P5, P3, P4. The thicker the line on the path diagram, the greater the loading factor. The thinner the line in the path diagram, the smaller the loading factor. Then it is seen in terms of the results through the results of the loading factor:

Then it is seen as a result through the results of loading factors:

Table 2.
Factor Loadings

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Uniqueness
P1	0.883		0.225
P4	0.803		0.340
P2	0.771		0.416
P3		1.027	0.004
P5		0.713	0.443

Based on the table above, it is known that factor 1 is measured by items P1, P4, and P2. While factor 2 is measured by items P3 and P5. The value of the loading factor (uniqueness) was obtained more than 0.03, so it can be concluded that the factor analysis is quite good. If we look at these three items, it must be known that how to deal with student academic stress at the UIN Sumatra Utara Medan, namely: the first factor.

P1 : Sharing stories about the problems you are facing with friends

P4 : Sharing stories about the problems they are facing with parents

P2 : Asking for moral support from friends

Meanwhile, the second factor can be seen in items P3 and P5. From this second factor, the ways that students do to overcome academic stress while in college are:

P3 : Taking advantage of free time to do assignments

P5 : Immediately work as soon as there is a new assignment

According to Suliyanto, to determine the names of factors that have been formed in factor analysis, it can be done in two ways, namely: (1) providing the names of factors that can represent the names of the variables that make up the factor. (2) Giving the name of the factor based on the variable that has the highest factor loading value (Fardani et al., 2021).

Discussion

A. Factors Affecting Academic Stress of Islamic Religious Education Students

Based on the results of the descriptive test, it is known that there are 20 students at the UIN Sumatra Utara Medan who are experiencing academic stress. The existence of this academic stress is widely understood. As explained by Alejenik and Holchuh, he said that what is meant by academic stress is a response that arises because there are too many demands and tasks that must be done by individuals. Academic stress is a strain that individuals must work with. Academic stress is a strain due to too many tasks that individuals have to do. This is in accordance with Sinaga's opinion, that stress that occurs in the school or educational environment is usually called academic stress (Adom et al., 2020).

Academic stress is a feeling of anxiety, stress both physically and emotionally, tension and worry experienced by students because there are academic demands from teachers/lecturers and parents to get good grades, complete assignments on time and well, and homework assignments that are not clear about the uncomfortable classroom environment (Mulya & Indrawati, 2016). Then according to Desmita that academic stress is stress caused by "academic stressors". Academic stressors are stress experienced by students that comes from the learning process or things related to learning activities such as: pressure to move up grades, long time to study, cheating, many assignments, getting test scores, decisions to decide on a major or career as well as exam anxiety and stress management (Desmita, 2014).

The academic stress experienced by several students at the UIN Sumatra Utara Medan during learning can certainly have a negative impact on academic achievement and concentration in doing assignments in lectures. From the results of the data collected by the researcher, that the impact of the negative of the many lecture assignments, finally students have difficulty in doing lecture assignments, difficulties in concentration, difficulty remembering the number of tasks that must be done, lack of attention and guidance on assignments, difficulty in finding and contacting lecturers, and finally some students like to procrastinate in doing the lecture assignments. This is in line with the opinion of Kohn and Frazer, both of whom explained that one of the sources and causes of academic stress is the accumulation of work, unclear tasks, and even uncomfortable study spaces. The impact of this, in the end, students often take shortcuts by plagiarizing assignments from the internet.

As the results of the research presented by Yusuf and Rahim, from the results of the research, it is stated that there are several things that cause students to experience academic stress, namely the number of subject matters that must be studied and understood, the lack of attention from lecturers in helping to explain lecture assignments and the number of assignments given by lecturers to students (Lubis et al., 2021).

Academic stress also occurs due to pressure that occurs in individuals caused by competition or academic demands. This means that academic stress can be interpreted simply as a response of a person, with the threat of a change in his environment that is felt to be disturbing and resulting in him being threatened, the threat can be in the form of financial, emotional, mental and social (Octasya & Munawaroh, 2021).

B. Student Efforts in Overcoming Academic Stress in Islamic Religious Education Learning

Looking at various factors that cause students at school or students in higher education to experience academic stress due to the inability of students to adapt. This causes some students to tend to avoid tasks by withdrawing, such as difficulty sleeping, sleeping continuously, and even having difficulty eating (Putri & Yuline, 2021). Then academic stress can not only be seen from the form of behavior, but academic stress can also be in the form of the physiology of each individual, such as the skin feels easy to sweat cold, sick, dizzy, and tired quickly. Every individual experience changes in emotions and behaviors if humans experience a pressure or conflict that occurs as long as a person is still active in carrying out various life activities.

Stress should be overcome if humans can manage time optimally. There are at least two ways that can be done in overcoming stress for human life, namely with the principles of homeostatic and coping stress which are divided into two, namely problem focused and emotional focused. What is meant by the principle of homeostatic is an effort that can be made by every individual to be able to maintain and balance himself against a condition that occurs in him. This is aimed at if at one time an unbalanced situation occurs, there will be efforts made to restore it to balance again (Jannah & Santoso, 2021). Meanwhile, what is meant by the problem focused step is a step to eliminate the source of the cause of stress by reducing the cause of stress. Meanwhile, what is meant by emotional focused, which is a step that aims to control the emotions of each individual with situations that can provide emphasis. The point is that humans can seek support through a behavioral approach, namely seeking social support from parents, family and closest friends who can be trusted and can provide solutions to every problem.

Based on the results of the research, several ways are carried out by students of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program in overcoming their academic stress. Students use a variety of approaches to dealing with stress, including sharing stories about their problems with friends or parents, and seeking moral support from their peers. In addition, some students prefer to use their free time to complete assignments gradually, while others immediately work on new assignments as soon as they are assigned by the lecturer. The essence of this sentence is that students use a combination of social and behavioral strategies to cope with academic pressures, such as social support and time management.

The statement is supported by several theories of stress management and mental health in an academic context. According to the cognitive-behavioral theory of Lazarus and Folkman, there are two commonly used coping strategies: (1) emotion-focused coping such as seeking social support and sharing stories, and (2) problem-focused coping such as time management and gradual completion of tasks (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

In the context of PAI students, this approach is in line with the research of Rahmadani which found that students of religious study programs often integrate spiritual values with practical coping strategies. The study showed that 78% of PAI students used a combination of social support and time management to cope with academic stress (Rahmadani et al., 2023).

Zimmerman theory of self-regulation also supports this finding, where students who are able to manage their time and resources well show lower levels of stress. Nurdin et al. (2022) in their study of 250 PAI students in Indonesia found a significant correlation between self-regulation ability and academic stress levels ($r = -0.67$, $p < 0.01$) (Zimmerman, 2008).

Recent research from Ashila and Hakim on the mental health of students of religious studies programs during the pandemic and post-pandemic shows that social coping strategies such as sharing stories and seeking moral support remain the main choice (65.3%) compared to individual strategies (34.7%) (Ashila & Hakim, 2024). This reinforces the perspective that socio-cultural factors in religious communities play an important role in stress management.

Wahid and Mutmainnah (2023) in their longitudinal study found that students who consistently applied preventive time management strategies (doing assignments immediately after being assigned) had higher levels of academic satisfaction ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.6$) compared to students who used a gradual approach ($M = 3.7$, $SD = 0.8$) (Wahid & Mutmainnah, 2023).

The social support theory of Cohen and Wills is also relevant, which emphasizes that social support can serve as a buffer against stress. Hidayati's research on 320 students in the religious study program showed that social support was negatively correlated with the level of academic stress ($\beta = -0.42$, $p < 0.001$) (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Rizqullah & Ansyah, 2024).

An individual must be able to manage his emotional state in overcoming all forms of problems and problems or demands of life. As is the case as a student like a student. As a student, you should be able to overcome the problems that cause some of these students to experience academic stress in completing academic assignments, and students should be able to manage and manage the level of stress, meaning that students can manage the mismatch between their demands and abilities (Putra & Ahmad, 2020).

The implications of this study show that the handling of academic stress in PAI students requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. The findings that students use a combination of social strategies (sharing stories with friends and parents, seeking moral support) and time management strategies (working on assignments immediately, making use of free time) provide important guidance for educational institutions to develop more effective support systems. Universities need to consider strengthening counseling services, developing peer mentoring programs, and providing time management training for students. In addition, lecturers need to pay more attention to the workload and provide clear guidance in assignments to reduce academic pressure. This also implies the need to improve communication between lecturers and students, as well as the development of a more structured learning system that supports students' mental health.

CONCLUSION

The problem of academic stress experienced by students of the UIN Sumatra Utara Medan varies greatly, both physically and psychologically. Physical stress experienced by students is shown by symptoms such as weakness, sweating, getting tired quickly, nervousness, and worry. Meanwhile, emotionally, students experience various responses, such as those who are able to be patient, diligent, and remain strong in facing academic challenges, although there are also

those who are more susceptible to emotional pressure. This shows that the level of academic stress affects the physical and psychological condition of students differently, depending on their ability to manage stress.

As for overcoming academic stress, students of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program apply various strategies involving social support and time management. Some students shared stories about their problems with friends or parents, as well as asking for moral support from their social environment.

In addition, some students choose to manage their stress by making productive use of their free time, such as completing tasks gradually. While some others prefer to immediately completely new assignments from lecturers so as not to pile up. These strategies show that students have a variety of coping mechanisms that are used to cope with academic stress and balance their academic lives.

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