

STRESSORS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG STUDENTS' IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

SITI RAPIDAH OMAR ALI



INTRODUCTION

- Major phase of change in the lives of adolescent is beginning university.
- Due to a variety of internal and external expectancy to carries, stress also become part of students' academic life.
- As for student, the transition from adolescent to adulthood in academic and university life sometimes judged as a complicated journey.
- Depression, anxiety and variety of other mental wellbeing problems can take place within students who failed to manage their stress wisely.
- As reported by the Ministry of Health, mental health problems among Malaysian students is getting worse, from one in 10 persons in 2011 to one in five in 2016.
- Students who experience a protracted of psychological wellbeing problems become revoked, schizophrenia and tendency to do suicide.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ACADEMIC STRESS

- Following the issue of suicide case figures revealed by the Health Ministry lately, psychological health problem is increasing among students in Malaysia (Lee and Ahmad, 2016).
- Students with high academic stress is reported to have despair, anxiety, irritability, attitude problems and other related symptom (Deb, Strodl & Sun, 2015).
- Academic life is one of the activities which can have various stressors in an individual's life (Yasmin, Asim, Ali, Quds and, Zafar, 2013).
- Contemporary study indicates that various stressors in university life are triggered by academic strain, social problems and personal problems. It requires a great deal of individual resolve, determination, and commitment.

Financial Stress

- financial stress and instability have a negative impact on student wellbeing (Mahmoud, Staten, Hall, & Lennie, 2012).
- Financial stress for students is associated with higher self-reported mental health needs in college transition and a number of negative attitudes, social relationships and academic outcomes (Adams, Meyers, & Beidas, 2016).
-). Significant consideration has been received recently regarding the rising cost of higher education (Hemelt & Marcotte, 2011).

Social Support Stress

- Social support also has many physical and psychosocial health benefits to it. It strengthens empathy between students, which could be an indication of the effects of stress buffering (Park et al., 2015).
- Social support also serves as a mediator, buffering up the negative effects of stressful events on stress (Haddad et al., 2017).
- Falavarjani, Yeh, & Brouwers (2019) highlighted the beneficial importance of social support on the reduction of international student acculture stress.

Environmental Stress

- Students are facing new methods of education, new academic standards, new types of relationships between students and faculty and even new relationships between students themselves. (Yikealo, Yemane, & Karvinen, 2018).
- Rajasekar (2013) mentioned, as components of environmental stress, peers treating fresh people differently from one another, teachers treating different peer groups differently, interacting with peers of different races / ethnicity on campus, seeking support groups that are responsive to specific needs, living in the local community, adjusting to the campus atmosphere and taking part in classes.

Psychological Well-being

- The psychological wellbeing of students is an important consideration of growing interest in higher education (Kilgo, Mollet, & Pascarella, 2016).
- Increasing numbers of students were found to experience mental health problems (e.g. depression, anxiety, self-harm behaviour) (The National College Health Assessment, 2014).
- Payton, Patrick, Sofie and John (2019) suggested psychological distress has a negative impact on performance of students

METHODOLOGY

- A quantitative online survey was carried out on 350 undergraduate students in a public university in East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia
- The questionnaire consists of six parts:
 - Sec A: Demographic profile
 - Sec B: Academic stress
 - Sec C: Financial stress
 - Sec D: Social support stress
 - Sec E: Environmental stress
 - Sec F: Psychological well-being

Hypothesis development

H1 There is significant relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being

H2 There is significant relationship between financial stress and psychological well-being

H3 There is significant relationship between social support stress and psychological well-being

H4 There is significant relationship between environmental stress and psychological well-being

FINDINGS

Demographic information of respondents'

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	58	16.6
Female	292	83.4
Age		
18-21	350	100
Semester of study		
Semester 1	188	53.7
Semester 2	10	2.9
Semester 3	86	24.6
Semester 4	22	6.3
Semester 5	39	11.1
Semester 6	5	1.4
Program		
AC110	90	25.7
BA114	42	12
BA118	168	48
HM110	21	6
HM111	29	8.3
CGPA		
No CGPA	164	46.9
2.5 and below	6	1.7
2.51-2.99	46	13.1
3-3.49	84	24
3.5 and above	50	14.3
Residence		
On-campus	350	100
Parent's marital status		
Married	350	100
Educational fund		
Education loan	195	55.7
Self-funding	155	44.3

Reliability Analysis

Items	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
Academic Stress	.797	10
Financial Stress	.846	9
Social Support Stress	.829	10
Environmental Stress	.805	10
Psychological Well-being	.907	10

The Cronbach's alpha for items in independent variables namely academic stress (0.797), financial stress (0.846), social support stress (0.829), environmental stress (0.805) and dependent variable; psychological wellbeing (0.907) indicated an acceptable and good level of internal consistency for the scale used with the specific sample.

Correlation analysis

Correlation between Academic, Financial, Social Support, Environmental Stress and Psychological Well-Being

Stressors		Physiological Well-Being	
Academic Stress	Pearson Correlation	.214*	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	350	
Financial Stress	Pearson Correlation	.113*	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	
	N	350	
Social Support Stress	Pearson Correlation	.523	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	350	
Environmental Stress	Pearson Correlation	.149	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	
	N	350	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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- Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationship between academic stressor and psychological well-being.
 - There was a low, positive correlation between academic stressor and psychological well-being, which was statistically significant ($r = .214$).
 - The same analysis also used to analyze the relationship between other factors of stress and psychological well-being.
 - Financial stress ($r = .113$) and environmental stress ($r = .149$) revealed a very low, positive correlation with physiological well-being. Meanwhile, social support indicated moderate and positive correlation with the psychological well-being with the r value of $.523$.

Regression

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.530 ^a	.280	.272	.50512

a. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Stress, Financial Stress, Social Support Stress, Environmental Stress
b. Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being

The R² value is 0.280. It indicated that variables employed in this study i.e. Academic Stressor and Financial Stressor explained 28% of the variance. Another 92% is explained by other factors that are not included in this study.

Coefficient model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	S i g
	β	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.367	.214		6.373	
Academic Stress	.099	.061	.093	1.626	
Financial Stress	-.015	.042	-.018	-.348	
Social Support Stress	.576	.054	.504	10.527	
Environmental Stress	-.008	.055	-.008	-.145	

Note: significant levels: $p < 0.05$

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- Based on the coefficient model, there is only one variable that was found to have significant relationship on students' physiological well-being that is social support stress ($\beta = .576$, $p < .05$).
 - This means that this variable makes the strongest unique influence on the dependent variable. While another three independent variables namely academic stress ($\beta = .099$, $p < .05$), financial stress ($\beta = -.015$, $p < .05$) and environmental stress ($\beta = -.008$, $p < .05$) have no significant contribution to the psychological well-being.
 - Hence, hypothesis 3; there is significant relationship between social support stress and psychological well-being developed for this study was accepted. However, the other three hypotheses were rejected since it did not significantly influence psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

- This study attempts to identify the relationship between stressors and psychological well-being of university students in a public university in East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia.
- This study concluded that, social support was the key reason of a good psychological well-being students had experienced.
- There are a significant and negative relationship between financial and environmental stress towards psychological well-being.
- Academic stress gives less impact on the psychological well-being while a positive relationship linked between social support on psychological well-being.
- Thus, it can be recapping that social support is more significant and highly contributed to dependent variable.
- Apart from that, students who experienced financial, environmental and academic stress will alleged more unfavourably towards their mental health than who have less stress.

RECOMMENDATION

- In light of the research finding, it is suggested to promote and improve the mental health of students in higher education.
- Academicians and lecturers particularly should take part by considering their efforts to avert and manage any possible academic stress sources students may encounter.
- During time of stress, social support building between lecturers and students is important. Further, the level of academic responsibility given also should be considered by universities authorities.
- Thinking of changes in teaching method, curriculum, students support approach at institutional level, mentoring programs are needed to help students in their stress coping strategies.