

The Effects of Mental Health Issues and Academic Performance

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Received: 15 September 2023; Revised: 30 September 2023; Accepted: 20 October 2023; Published: 10 December 2023

Abstract: The mental health of students has a significant impact on their academic performance. This study is aimed at investigating the effects of mental health issues on the academic performance of Albukhary International University students. A qualitative method and a semi-structured interview were used to answer the research questions. The results of the research study show that when students have problems with their mental health, it can affect how well they do in school and how productive they are. There is an influence associated with mental health in students towards a drop in academic accomplishment, which results in a fall in student productivity. As a result, policies in the form of programs or services related to mental health must be established as preventive initiatives, such as prevention through education and counseling.

Keywords: *Effects, Mental health, College students, Academic performance, Factors, Stress management*

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of Study

Academic performance is the main thing that must be prioritized for students at the university. This is also something that every lecturer is expected to do well, because good academic performance shows that the lecturer used the best ways to apply the learning methods. Each institution strives to create the best system and curriculum for maximum academic performance. Academic performance will be crucial because it will help their future, especially if they enter the professional world after graduation. Students' academic performance has also become one of the interests of academics or researchers as they pursue their studies [1]. On the other hand, according to Ma'ruf and Risya Afuza [2], the world of lecturing in the university demands a person begin living independently and be able to manage things on their own, particularly if they are required to live far away

from their parents. Not everyone is able to adjust to these changes, which might in turn generate tension or stress in a learner. Adaptability is not universal. A student's mental health may be affected if they are under a lot of stress during this time, especially because of the responsibilities they have in school and in their social lives [5]. The students are not only taught about the theory, but they are also given a lot of practice and tasks, all of which indirectly make the students feel that the tasks are challenging and tough. It indicates that the university phase is the time when students deal a lot with their mentality.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which people are able to use their talents to do their jobs well, use coping skills to deal with life's challenges, and become important members of their communities. Because of this, being mentally healthy means more than just not having a mental illness. The World Health Organization stated that one in four teenagers

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between the ages of 12 and 24 may have a mental illness like schizophrenia or depression in any given [4]. Several more studies have shown that mental health problems often start in childhood and get worse over time. This has been discovered to be the case rather frequently. Unluckily, a lot of people who are looking for help with their mental health are ignored or given less attention than they need. Students at universities make up the largest group of young people with mental health problems [3].

1.2. Problem Statement

Every student will face challenges that affect them mentally, which could lead to things like anxiety disorders, depression, and even suicidal thoughts and actions. The mental health of university students should be given adequate attention. In developed countries, the problem of mental health has been the subject of extensive research [6]. In the meantime, there hasn't been a lot of research into the problems with mental health in underdeveloped countries. Keyes [7] say that most institutions still put more emphasis on physical health because it may be easier to measure than mental health. However, at Albukhary International University (AIU) itself, there haven't been many studies on mental health, particularly among college students. The fact that students are not only learning in class but are also faced with various assignments, practicums, and research projects that cause an increasing burden on students.

In addition to the stress of taking a lot of classes, these students may also have to take on more adult-like responsibilities before they have all the skills and mental maturity that come with being an adult [5]. Thus, attending lectures may be stressful for some students with certain reasons, such as insecurity, lack of confidence, anti-social feelings, etc. In addition, some students also have to deal with stressful assignments and family matters, which requires them to pay attention to a great deal of work and family responsibilities, as was mentioned by Ma'ruf and Risya Afuza[2]. Therefore, there should be a study on how the mental condition of students can affect their learning process.

1.3. Research Objectives

There are several significant linkages between the mental health conditions of students and their academic performance. Thus, a study is needed to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To investigate the level of mental health among Albukhary International University students
- ii. To explore the reasons behind the mental issue
- iii. To explore its relation with their academic performance

1.4. Research Questions

- i. RQ 1: How is their mental state during their

studies at the university?

- ii. RQ 2: What are the factors that affect the mentality of students?
- iii. RQ 3: How do their mental issues affect their learning?

1.4. Significance of Study

This study was made with the hope of creating awareness about maintaining mental health for students at Albukhary International University, which is an issue that is not looked at very much. This will give them the impression that they must validate what they truly experience and feel in order to know what they must do. On the other hand, this study will significantly contribute to becoming the voice of the voiceless, especially for lecturers or campus management, who will understand that student mental health is a major problem for society's health that must also be considered and given platforms. Sometimes some students don't know how to complain about their problems because there is no platform and education. This study will be a common thread for both students and the campus.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Factors that Affect Students' Mental Health

College students are typically adults who are in their early adult years, beginning at the age of 18 [6]. Early adulthood is a time when a person learns to live in a new way that is very different from their teenage years. There are big differences between the social expectations of a person and the other responsibilities that person has. Furthermore, there are many assumptions in society that this is the age when a person can be said to be "mature" and capable of doing many things that rely on his own strength, so that students experience a lot of pressure as a result of the burden of society's high expectations for them, especially those who have entered the young adult phase.

According to the survey by Hasibuan [11], students' mental health can be affected by a wide variety of things, including their genetics, the friendships they keep, their lifestyle, family factors, pressures, and many others. These factors can be either positive factors that support individual mental health conditions or negative factors that reduce individual mental health conditions due to the individual's lack of awareness of their own interests and inner health [6]. In either case, these things may affect the person's mental health, either for the better or for the worse. In fact, a significant number of them end up experiencing feelings of stress and depression while they are in college, which is also a transitional era between the stages of being an "immature" teenager and a "mature" adult.

For example, many students in Indonesia are depressed as a

result of their hectic academic schedules and tasks, and they don't have time to simply have refreshments. There are also those who often feel burdened because they are not used to the culture on campus and are afraid to adjust. Students who are new and not used to a new environment will feel homesick. This shows that a person can't always control himself and set limits on how much work they can do [6].

2.2. Symptoms of Mental Issues Experienced by Students

According to the data surveyed by Pedrelli et al. [5], the most common mental issue symptom experienced by students is depression. Depression can hit at various levels and on a spectrum, ranging from mild and undetected to serious and requiring quick professional assistance. In 2013, more than 36.4% of students in the United States had mild to severe depression symptoms. This makes depression the main reason why students can't finish their education. The most common and easy-to-spot sign of depression is a change in sleep, such as sleeping too often or for too long, having trouble sleeping, or having insomnia. Appetite problems are also somehow indicative of depression. College students who are depressed tend to isolate from their peers and feel hopeless or alone [6].

In addition, the next level of mental issue symptoms among students is anxiety. Apparently, anxiety is a typical emotion that even a healthy person might experience. Anxiety disorders happen when a person's worry gets in the way of their activities and daily life so much that they can't live their lives normally because they're always scared [8]. Students with anxiety disorders are often afraid to tell their peers that they have this condition because they feel pressure from their peers as well. Anxiety disorders are serious and shouldn't be taken lightly. They can lead to tension headaches and heart attacks, among other things. According to the Kaluku [17], a person may have an anxiety disorder if he often feels sad, gets angry and offended easily, and has trouble focusing to the point where it gets in the way of his daily life. Students often get this disorder because they are under a lot of pressure in college, both academically and socially. These mental symptoms can also be accompanied by physical ones, like shortness of breath, an irregular heartbeat, and muscle aches that don't make sense ([6]).

Moreover, one mental disorder that affects both men and women in college is an eating disorder. This disorder can get worse if the person doesn't know they have it and doesn't want to get checked out. Binge eating, bulimia, and anorexia are examples of eating disorders [13]. If a person thinks he eats too much or too little, always feels too thin or too fat, or works out too much, these are all signs he may have an eating disorder [9].

2.3. The Effects of Mental Health Issues on Students' Academic Performance

The impact of mental health on college students has huge and direct effects on learning levels and focus, which will affect

academic accomplishments [7]. Academic achievement is how well someone does in school as a result of putting in the best possible effort to learn. One of the factors influencing the acquisition of academic accomplishment is the level of student focus on the learning process. Stress contributes to a decline in student concentration. It is well known in the literature that students with mental health problems or disabilities, whether they are known or not, have lower GPAs and are more likely to drop out of school [9]. Students might also drop out of school if they don't have the tools to deal with stress or a good support system. Therefore, students who have trouble in school often say they are stressed, have trouble sleeping, feel alone, have low self-esteem, and have trouble adjusting [1].

According to Fajlurrahman et al. [8], the stress that each person feels will be different. This will depend on a number of things, such as how their body works, their personality, how they act, and the characteristics of the stressor they are facing. Students will be exposed to five types of stressors: pressure, frustration, conflict, change, and personal desire. There is a desire to learn. Students with high values study diligently, which eventually results in academic excellence. Students need to know that learning will help them learn useful things and prepare them for the challenges of life in the future. Things that influence student learning motivation can come from the student himself, the school environment, or the family environment. Students who aren't interested in learning will have a harder time learning [11].

2.4. Prevention and Management of Mental Health Problems in College Students

According to a study conducted by Mentari et al., [18], stress management is the process of regulating the stress that exists in humans so that it does not become harmful. There are three steps to stress management: the first stage consists of understanding and identifying stress and its potential sources in daily life. 2) The second step involves acquiring and practicing previously studied stress management coping strategies. The third step involves applying stress management approaches to real-world challenges and evaluating their success. Several methods or strategies exist for stress management, including Problem-Focused Coping, Group Discussion Therapy, Behavioral Counseling, Emotionally-Focused Coping, and Guided Imagery. The Guided Imagery approach is the most successful and efficient of the five techniques for managing stress in adolescents, because it induces feelings of joy and happiness through the activation of reactions to psychophysiological changes [16]. Mental health disorders on campus can be prevented if campus officials who know how to handle the situation check for signs and symptoms of mental health problems early on [12]. Screening is when a person goes through a series of tests or procedures to look for possible health problems or diseases. Screening is a good way to figure out how much stress students are dealing with because of mental health problems. Research on the effect of online psychoeducation on informal "health-seeking" intentions among Law Faculty

students at Diponegoro University shows that early detection of one's health will lead to more health issues being brought up [10].

3. Method

3.1. Study Design

A qualitative method will be used to answer the research questions since this is a case study and this method is a good fit for it. Considering that this data collection must be done very carefully, respondents will be directly treated with in-depth interviews, commonly called "intensive" interviews [15]. Respondents were asked to choose when the interview would take place so that they wouldn't feel pressured. Then, after getting the respondent's permission, the interview was recorded and transcribed to collect data and information then compiled to adjust to the theme. According to the criteria, two students will be selected to participate in the interview. This study has been approved by the subject lecturer along with details of the title, method, a series of questions, etc.

3.2. Setting

This study will be conducted privately and confidential at Albukhary International University (AIU), which is located in Alor Setar, Kedah, Malaysia. To be exact, the in-depth interview will take place in one of the classrooms in the School of Business and Social Sciences (SBSS) building. This location was chosen because it has a fairly good atmosphere and is equipped with air conditioners and clean rooms so that respondents will feel safe and comfortable.

3.3. Sample of Study

The two selected samples are active students at Albukhary International University. One of them is a final-year student, and the other is a newcomer or first-year student. Both of them came from different schools. The first sample is from a student at the School of Education and Human Sciences (SEHS), who is majoring in Bachelor of Media and Communication, while the other is from a student at the School of Business and Science (SBSS), who is majoring in Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons). This study needs a certain type of respondent, so a purposeful sample will be used to see how the answers differ and how they are the same. Its characteristics are as follows: they have different majors, a minimum educational distance of 2 years, and are diagnosed with mental problems based on symptoms or experiences.

Respondents	Gender	Age	Nationality	Programme	Note
A	Male	23	Indonesia	Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons)	Final Year Student
B	Female	21	Indonesia	Bachelor of Media and Communication	First Year Student

Table 1. Background of the Respondent

3.4. Instruments

The instrument applied in this study is a qualitative methodology and a semi-structured interview. The interview is set up like a normal conversation, but the conversation will be directed toward seeking answers related to the topic. Several questions will be provided, which will be answered by the respondents. In this session, the respondent may say anything according to the question given without having to choose an answer option. Participants need to think up their own words, phrases, or sentences to respond [14]. In this study, interviews were used to find out what people thought about their mental health on campus and how that affected their ability to learn. Three sets of themes will be provided, along with three sets of questions (see appendix).

Themes of Findings:

- i. First year students will be more prone to mental issues compared to higher years
- ii. Factors that influence students' mental health
- iii. Things or symptoms occur when students have a mental problem
- iv. Students with mental health problem tend to score low in academic
- v. How students cope with their mental problem

4. Results & Discussion

4.1. Findings (1): First year students will be more prone to mental issues

Respondent A:

"...At this time, I think my mental health is quite good, and I do not have many stressful things that could make me suffer, but when remembering the past or previous years, I obviously have it. I have been struggling with all things in my life, especially at this university, since the beginning of the year..."

Respondent B:

"In this current situation, I think my mental health is in shambles, not in a very good situation actually, but I just try to speak. I do not have any good sense to do anything..."

"...I feel depressed because I have many problems. Additionally, I am still in culture shock because I am a first year student in this university, I need to adapt with many things..."

It can be seen from the first responders that they will understand more about their mental health and be able to identify their problems after they have gone through several

years of study. They will become more mature individuals because they will have learned from the past. Meanwhile, new students, especially in their first year, will have a difficult time, especially when they experience culture shock. Like at Albukhary International University, which is a campus that is rich in diversity, they need to adapt not only to the campus system but also to the people around them who come from abroad. This is a normal thing and will definitely happen to all students, but the difference that occurs is when they are not used to dealing with situations as previously mentioned. On the other hand, everyone has different backgrounds and problems, so they have different levels of stress [19].

4.2. Findings (2): Factors that Influence Students' Mental Health in University

Respondent A:

"Several things really distracted me during my bad period; my mental state was very low because of the accumulation of problems that I experienced all at once, and I couldn't handle them all..."

"...My mother struggled financially while my father was imprisoned, so I have financial issues. I have to really minimize my living costs on campus..."

"...Also, I had problems in relationships caused by my high expectations of people..."

Respondent B:

"My mind is not here, but in my house. I have family problems... I have also trauma from my past that affects my behavior and the way of my thinking"

According to the answers from the respondents, in general, students will feel quite stressed when they have too many problems at one time. In this case, their background will greatly influence their behavior and mental state. One of the respondents is a student who comes from an underprivileged family, which makes them feel burdened with all the expenses on campus. Meanwhile, the second respondent is a student who comes from a broken family, so he grew up with a different affection and upbringing. After comparing and contrasting, both respondents will face the climax of the mental health problems when the accumulation of stress occurs at one time and becomes stressors. The accumulation of all these problems will trigger future stress with various effects and symptoms [10].

4.3. Findings (3): Things or symptoms occur when students have a mental problem

Respondent A:

"I feel some signs or symptoms when my mental health is bad. I feel stress, sadness, anxiety, self-compassion, low self-esteem, and I always feel unconfident..."

Respondent B:

"I have panic attacks and depression. When I face problems, my body reacts in abnormal ways. My breath is coming in fast. I am also nervous to show up anything, this is something that I do not really like actually..."

According to the findings of a study conducted by the American Psychological Association, depression is the mental illness that affects students the most frequently. The findings of the research point to this being the case. Students have a tough time managing their time effectively due to the large number of activities and groups both on and off campus that compete for their goals. Students have a greater amount of work to do because they have a greater desire to discover themselves in the world of lectures, which, by the way, is a universal desire in comparison to the old high school days.

Respondents A and B both have anxiety, easily startled, and have panic attacks, which are nearly identical. They are frequently overwritten by anxiety. It is stated that students who have higher goals than their friends are more likely to worry too much [12]. This stems from the dread of being abandoned by other pals. Students typically fear receiving poor grades, which leads to extreme anxiety. This anxiety might emerge not just during classroom activities but also during other daily tasks. On the other hand, they experience low self-esteem, as experienced by respondent A, which is a lack of confidence, while respondent B has nervousness.

4.4. Findings (4): Students with mental health problem tend to score low in academic

Respondent A:

"Because of this problem, I ignored my academic activity at this university. When I want to study, my brain is not working. I could not focus on my learning..."

"...I tend to surrender my marks and can't maintain my GPA. I always feel that all the tasks given by lecturers are burdens to me."

Respondent B:

"I hate to talk about my grades because my performance is always worse and I can't really focus on studying. Sometimes, I do not go to class because of my mental health problems.... my grade become low"

According to research, students who experience mental health problems tend to have poor academic performance [16]. This is caused by their lack of focus on understanding what is being learned. When they are stressed or feeling pressured, their brain will give a reaction that makes it difficult for them to learn. They will always feel burdened by the assignments given by their lecturers. them to think and absorb what is in front of them. Mental health issues can have a significant impact on a student's ability to learn. It's clear that mental health problems can make it hard to focus, handle

emotions, and deal with stress, all of which can make it hard for a student to learn and remember what they've learned. Mental health problems can also cause students to miss school, which can make it hard.

4.5. Findings (5): How students cope with their mental problem

Respondent A:

"I have learned many lessons from my life, especially from my previous years at this university. When I feel stressed, I always try to be rational or logical.... Sometimes I go to places of peace and healing to refresh my mind..."

"I tried to control myself, especially when I made decisions...lastly, I try to ask the advice from my friends and surround myself with good people"

Respondent B:

"I always try to improve my academic performance little by little. To deal with this, I inform my teacher about my mental health issue and request some time to recover. I also watch anime movies to heal myself. Finally, I try to push myself to be strong"

According to the answers given by the two respondents, they each have their own way of dealing with mental health problems. Students can deal with mental health problems at college by getting help from mental health professionals, taking care of themselves by doing things like working out and meditating, and staying in touch with supportive friends and family. Students can also use mental health resources on campus, such as counseling services, support groups, and programs to raise awareness about mental health. In addition, to deal with mental health problems, it is necessary to normalize conversations when people have mental problems. Sometimes, some people will feel relieved when they have shared what they experienced [18].

Not all students are aware of and understand the importance of maintaining mental health. From this study, it can be concluded that some students have an interest in discussing mental health, but sometimes they are reluctant or do not know who to talk about this with. In some cases, students will speak up more and take better care of their mental health when they experience mental problems.

5. Discussion

The results of the research study show that when students have problems with their mental health, it can affect how well they do in school and how productive they are. Based on what the two respondents said, students will have mental problems at the start of the school year. At any point in time, a student is likely to experience psychological disorders. There will be a transition from high school to college at the

beginning of the lectures, and this is something that not all students find to be a simple transition [20]. This may be the reason why there are so many alterations that need to be made before the start of each class. Many students have to be away from their parents, other family members, and close friends before they can start class. When children are separated from their parents, relatives, and other loved ones, they often have nowhere to tell stories, complain, or express other emotions that are disturbing to them. Harboring problems can take a toll on their mental health. In addition, the author asserts that it is challenging for students to make new friends or to join new organizations [17].

The fact that there have been so many cases of students with mental health problems who ended up killing themselves over the years opens everyone's eyes, especially students', and makes them care about and not ignore this mental health issue. Every student should know how important it is to keep their mental health in good shape and stay away from people who are likely to be bad for their mental health. All of the pupils in the world should take something away from this that teaches them how important it is to take care of their mental health. Also, one way to prevent mental health problems is for universities to have programs and services related to mental health. This will help create productive students, a good learning environment, and good graduates [16].

Based on what has been said so far about mental diseases, here are some ideas for reducing the number of mental diseases listed. The following are suggestions or ideas that can be implemented:

- i. By not accumulating the assigned responsibilities
- ii. Always keep a diet
- iii. Develop a daily schedule from waking to sleeping.
- iv. Avoid making lectures burdensome

6. Conclusion

This study presented several reviews of research findings about the effects of mental health issues on student academic performance. After reading a number of articles, the authors came to the conclusion that the change from high school to a higher level of study can cause stress in students. During lectures, students are frequently confronted with challenges and barriers for which they are not always prepared. There are students with the struggle personality type who are strong enough to face every obstacle, but there are also students who are not strong enough to handle the troubles they are encountering, resulting in mental health issues. There is an influence associated with mental health in students towards a drop in academic accomplishment, which results in a fall in student productivity. As a result, policies in the form of programs or services related to mental health must be established as preventive initiatives, such as prevention through education and counseling.

7. Recommendation

This study is far from perfect, and there are still things to be measured and considered in the future. From this study, there are several suggestions or recommendations for further study to be conducted, as follows:

- i. Directly analyze factors that influence academics such as teacher evaluation, grades, quiz scores and others.
- ii. Increase the number of respondents and conduct group interviews to see other views and exchange views and experiences.
- iii. Identify the emotional level of respondents through an emotional test that can be done online.

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