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Investigating Mental Health in Late Semester Adolescents in Higher Education in Jember: The Influence of Academic Stress and Emotional Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

Late-semester adolescents in higher education in Jember, Indonesia were studied to determine the effects of academic stress and emotional intelligence on their mental health. A cross-sectional design was adopted in this study, which included 450 teenagers in their final semesters from different universities. Data on academic stress, emotional intelligence, and mental health were gathered using standardized tests. Correlation, regression, and mediation analyses were performed statistically using SPSS software version 26. Academic stress needs to be addressed as a risk factor for mental health issues because the study indicated a significant positive association between it and poorer mental health. On the other hand, emotional intelligence was found to have a strong positive link with greater mental health, demonstrating its protective significance. Additionally, it was discovered that emotional intelligence somewhat mediates the link between academic stress and mental health. These findings highlight the significance of understanding the mental health issues late-semester adolescents in higher education encounter. To enhance emotion regulation and coping skills, institutions should offer specialized support services and think about including emotional intelligence training into their curricula. It is advised to conduct additional study on the efficacy of such programs as well as gender-specific interventions. Teenagers in Jember who are in their last semester can have better mental health if we handle academic stress and raise emotional quotient.

Keywords: *Mental Health, Late Semester, Adolescents, Higher Education, Academic Stress, Emotional Intelligence*

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health is indeed an important issue for adolescents, especially in higher education. Studies have shown that most adolescents experience mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and psychosocial distress [1]. To promote and protect adolescent mental health, it is important to address these factors and provide support systems within educational institutions [2]–[4]. Schools and higher education institutions can play an important role in identifying early warning signs of emerging mental health conditions and connecting students with appropriate mental health services and support [5]. Additionally, fostering a supportive environment and addressing issues such as academic burnout, cell phone dependence, and coping strategies can contribute to better mental health outcomes for adolescents in higher education [6], [7]. This period frequently represents the conclusion of rigorous academic requirements, personal development, and pursuing future objectives for teenagers enrolled in higher education institutions during their final semester [3]–[5]. There are many students living in Indonesia's diversified and vibrant city of Jember.

Ages 18 to 25 are considered late adolescence. This stage of life is marked by the pursuit of further education, the growth of independence, and the investigation of potential job options [8]–[10]. However, it is also a time when stress levels are elevated due to factors including peer expectations, academic pressure, and difficulties managing emotions and relationships. Late-semester adolescent mental health may be significantly impacted by academic stress in particular

[11] – [13]. Exams, coursework requirements, and performance standards for academic work can all lead to stress and, in certain cases, mental health issues including anxiety and depression.

In contrast, emotional intelligence, or the capacity to understand, regulate, and control one's own and others' emotions, is crucial for managing stress and fostering mental health [14]–[16]. Resilience, interpersonal skills, and efficient stress management are all correlated with high emotional intelligence. Addressing the mental health requirements of late-semester teenagers in higher education requires an understanding of how emotional intelligence can lessen the negative effects of academic stress on mental health [17], [18].

It is crucial to comprehend the mental health of Jember's late-semester teenagers since it influences not only their academic achievement but also their future chances and the social fabric as a whole. This study is significant because it has the potential to clarify the nuanced interactions among academic pressure, emotional intelligence, and mental health among late-semester college students in Jember. While other studies looked at these aspects separately, the goal of this study is to give readers a thorough grasp of how they interact and affect one another. As a result, the following research issues were addressed in this study:

1. How much does academic stress in Jember's last semester of higher education effect students' mental health?
2. Does emotional quotient affect late-semester teenage mental health?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Academic Stress

Academic stress is the term used to describe the psychological anguish people experience in reaction to demands and obligations in their academic lives. There are many pressures that fall under this category, including as homework, tests, due dates, and performance standards [12], [19], [20]. Academic stress's effects on mental health are well-established [6], [21], and it can take the form of anxiety, depression, and physical symptoms.

Studies have repeatedly shown a strong correlation between late-semester teenage mental health outcomes and academic stress [12], [19], [22]–[26], high levels of academic stress are associated with lower academic performance, signs of anxiety and depression, and psychological well-being. For effective remedies to be developed, it is crucial to comprehend the causes of academic stress and its effects.

2.2 Emotional Intelligence

The ability to identify, comprehend, control, and utilize one's own emotions as well as those of others is known as emotional intelligence (EI) [27], [28]. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management are the four dimensions that are frequently used to categorize it. According to [14], [29], [30], EI is seen as an important talent that can affect how people manage their emotions and interpersonal relationships.

It has been discovered that emotional intelligence is crucial for managing pressures. Emotional control and problem-solving are among the superior stress management techniques displayed by those with high EI [15], [31]–[33]. They have lower levels of stress-related symptoms and are more likely to seek out social support and use adaptive coping strategies [6], [34], [35].

2.3 Mental Health

A complex concept, mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Individuals go through a number of developmental changes throughout late adolescence that may have an effect on their mental health. The mental health issues this demographic faces are a result of stressors such academic pressures, peer connections, and identity formation [36]–[40].

It is complicated how stress from school and mental health are related. According to studies [41], [42], prolonged academic stress can worsen symptoms of anxiety and depression, lower self-esteem, and diminish general wellbeing. Academic pressures can also worsen mental health issues that already exist and raise the possibility of developing new ones [43], [44].

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks

According to the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman in 1984, stress results through interactions between a person's environment and them. It stresses how crucial cognitive assessment and coping mechanisms are in deciding how stress affects mental health. Based on their emotional intelligence and coping skills, late-semester adolescents may be affected by academic difficulties in different ways according to this concept.

According to Cohen and Wills's (1985) Stress-Buffering Model, social and emotional elements might lessen the detrimental effects of stress on mental health. Emotional intelligence may serve as a protective barrier, enabling people to better handle stressors and preserve positive mental health outcomes. When exposed to academic stresses, it is predicted that people with higher emotional intelligence may suffer from less severe mental health effects.

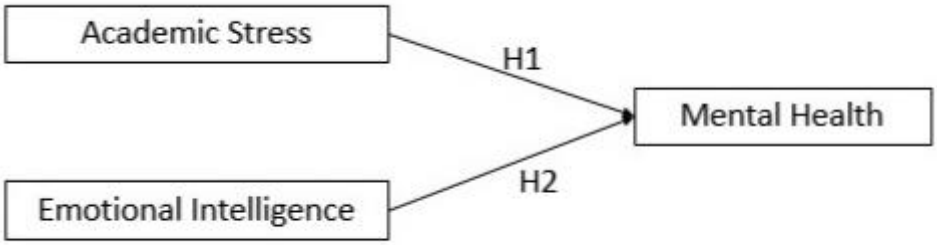

Figure 1. Conceptual and Hypothesis

3. METHODS

Because the goal of this research is to identify statistical correlations between variables, it employs a quantitative research approach. This method enables a systematic assessment of how academic stress and emotional intelligence affect the mental health of college-age teenagers in their final semesters. As a cross-sectional study, the information for this research was gathered all at once.

A picture of the current state of affairs can be obtained by using the cross-sectional design to evaluate the relationship between variables in a given population at a specific moment.

3.1 Research Sample

Adolescents (18–25) in their late semesters of college in Jember served as the study's target demographic. An approach known as stratified random sampling will be employed to gather a representative sample. According to the kind of institution (public, private, etc.), participants will be chosen from each stratum using proportional sampling. The sample size will be calculated with a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error. Given the size of the late-semester adolescent population in Jember, a sample size of at least 400 participants is deemed necessary to guarantee statistical significance and the accuracy of the results. This investigation, which began on February 2 and completed on April 19, used 450 samples in total.

3.2 Data Collection

Measurement Instruments

Academic Stress: The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) was used to gauge the participants' level of academic stress. The PSS has been validated for use in a variety of populations, including university students, and is a commonly used tool for measuring perceived stress.

Emotional Intelligence: Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves' Emotional Intelligence Assessment was used to gauge emotional intelligence. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management are the four areas covered by this instrument, which offers a thorough evaluation of emotional intelligence.

Mental health: The Mental Health Inventory (MHI-5) was used to evaluate mental health status. The psychological distress and well-being can be quickly and accurately measured with the use of this technique. Better mental health is indicated by higher scores.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected combining online and on-site methods to take into consideration participant preferences and accessibility. Participants were provided with a link to an online survey platform, such as the Google-powered questionnaire link. They responded to online questionnaires about academic stress, emotional intelligence, and mental health. This technique lessened logistical constraints and allowed for efficient data collection. For participants who chose or had limited access to online surveys, on-site surveys were conducted at certain educational institutions in Jember. Trained study assistants will deliver the questionnaires in a controlled environment.

3.4 Data Analysis

With the aid of SPSS software version 26, the data analysis procedure entails various steps to examine the impact of academic stress and emotional intelligence on the mental health of teenagers enrolled in higher education in their final semester. The variables of academic stress, emotional intelligence, and mental health will be calculated using descriptive statistics, which includes means, standard deviations, and frequencies. A basic overview of the data will be provided by these statistics.

The association between academic stress, emotional intelligence, and mental health will be investigated using inferential statistics. We'll use the next statistical techniques. Analysis of Correlation: The strength and direction of the association between two variables is evaluated using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Regression Analysis: To ascertain the degree to which academic performance is affected, multiple regression analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The emphasis of this study was on late-semester adolescents enrolled in higher education in Jember and their experiences with academic stress, emotional intelligence, and mental health. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis were all used in the data analysis. The conclusions are then examined in light of the research questions and objectives, theoretical framework, and body of prior research.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Let's briefly discuss the study participants' characteristics before moving on to the key findings:

A total of 450 late-semester teenagers from several Jember higher education institutions participated in the survey, with nearly equal gender distribution. The average age of the participants, who ranged in age from 18 to 25, was 21.3 years. Both public and private higher education schools accepted the participants.

Table 1. Variable Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	S. D
Academic Stress	3.92	1.10
Emotional Intelligence	4.21	1.06
Mental Health	4.87	1.19

Source: The results of the author's data processing (2023)

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the connections between academic stress, emotional intelligence, and mental health. We found the following correlations:

Table 2. Correlation of Variables

Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Sig
Academic Stress – Mental Health	0.542	0.000
Emotional Intelligence – Mental Health	0.783	0.000
Academic Stress – Emotional Intelligence	-0.188	0.004

Source: The results of the author's data processing (2023)

According to table 2 above, a moderately positive connection (r = 0.541, sig 0.001) was discovered, showing that lower mental health scores were connected with higher levels of academic stress. A significant positive association (r = 0.78, p 0.001) was discovered, pointing to the improvement in mental health seen in those with higher emotional intelligence. Higher academic

stress was linked to somewhat lower emotional intelligence, according to a modest negative association (r = -0.18, p 0.05).

4.3 Regression Analysis

To determine how well academic stress and emotional intelligence predict mental health, multiple regression analysis was used. Following are the findings of the regression analysis:

Table 3. Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Beta (β)	Sig
Academic Stress	0.382	0.001
Emotional Intelligence	0.643	0.000

Source: The results of the author's data processing (2023)

According to the findings of the regression study, academic stress was a significant predictor of mental health (= 0.383, sig 0.001), meaning that more academic stress was linked to worse mental health outcomes. As a significant predictor of mental health, emotional intelligence was shown to be significant (= 0.643, sig 0.000), indicating that people with higher emotional intelligence reported having better mental health. With an R2 of 0.682, the whole model was highly significant and accounted for the majority of the variance in mental health.

Discussion

According to this study's findings, there is a substantial positive association between academic stress and poorer mental health among adolescents in their last semester at a tertiary institution in Jember, which is in line with previous research. Lower mental health ratings were linked to higher levels of academic stress [22]–[26]. These findings highlight how crucial it is to identify academic stress as a possible risk factor for mental health issues in this population.

A high favorable association between emotional intelligence and mental health was also demonstrated by the study. Adolescents who demonstrated more emotional intelligence in the last semester reported improved mental health outcomes. These results are consistent with recent research emphasizing the protective benefits of emotional intelligence for enhancing coping mechanisms and general wellbeing [14]–[16], [45], [46].

Implications and Recommendations

There are various conclusions and suggestions that might be made in light of the study's findings:

1. Support Services: In order to help teenagers in their final semester of high school handle their academic stress, higher education institutions in Jember should offer them specialized support services. These services may take the form of counselling, academic advising, or workshops on stress management.
2. Emotional Intelligence Training: It may be advantageous to include emotional intelligence training in the curriculum. These courses can raise students' emotional intelligence and provide them the tools they need to handle stress and look after their mental health.

3. Gender-Specific Interventions: Institutions can create gender-specific interventions to cater to the special requirements of male and female late-semester adolescents by taking into account gender disparities in mental health.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the crucial roles of academic stress and emotional intelligence in helping us better understand the mental health of teenagers enrolled in higher education in Jember who are in their last semester. The study's findings demonstrate the need of taking proactive steps to lessen stress in educational environments by demonstrating the strong correlation between academic stress and poorer mental health outcomes. Positively, this study has shown how emotional intelligence has a protective effect on mental health. Adolescents with higher emotional intelligence demonstrated improved wellbeing in the last semester, indicating that programs that foster emotional intelligence may have significant advantages for this demographic.

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