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Patience and academic stress among undergraduate students

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between patience and academic stress among Indonesian university students, considering the significant differences between educational systems at the university and school levels, which often lead to academic stress. Patience is seen as a key factor in managing stress by helping individuals maintain self-control in difficult situations. Using a correlational quantitative design, the study involved 75 students aged 18 to 25 years and employed the patience scale by Rusdi (2018) and the academic stress scale by Sun et al. (2011). Pearson correlation analysis revealed a weak but significant negative relationship between patience and academic stress ($p = 0.026$, $r = -0.225$), indicating that while patience reduces academic stress, it explains only 5% of the variance. These findings suggest that higher levels of patience are associated with lower academic stress, though its overall influence is modest.

Keywords:
Patience, academic stress, undergraduate students

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The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies individuals aged 17 to 25 as late adolescents. Adolescents face significant social responsibilities and pressures during this period, impacting their neurological, physiological, cognitive, emotional, somatic functions, and personality development (Brown, 2004). These developmental changes and external demands necessitate adaptation and coping mechanisms as adolescents transition into adulthood. One prominent issue faced by individuals in this age group is academic stress, particularly during the transition from high school to university.

As participants in higher education, students experience a shift in learning habits and expectations as they adjust to the demands of university life. (Siregar & Putri, 2019) emphasizes that interpersonal interactions play a crucial role in an individual's adjustment to their environment, especially during the transition to university, which introduces new academic and social challenges. Failure to adequately meet these demands may result in academic stress, which is often a common issue faced by students. Academic stress can be defined as the strain experienced when there is a perceived mismatch between an individual's goals and their biological, psychological, and social capacities (Siregar & Putri, 2019).

The experience of academic stress varies across individuals and is influenced by both internal factors, such as mindset and personality, and external factors, such as the academic environment. Seto et al. (2020) classify stress into eustress and distress. Eustress is a positive form of stress that enhances motivation and concentration, whereas distress is a negative form of stress that impairs cognitive functioning, such as concentration and emotional regulation. Academic stress typically falls under the distress category, as students often face demanding assignments that must be completed efficiently and to a high standard.

Academic stress is multifaceted, encompassing both external pressures and internal perceptions regarding the mastery of academic material. Students often struggle to adapt to urgent academic demands, which can lead to discomfort and stress, manifesting both physically and psychologically. Several factors contribute to academic stress, including monotonous learning environments, heavy workloads, and high-performance expectations (Davidson, 2001). Moreover, the significant differences between secondary school and university education systems contribute to this stress. In university, students are responsible for selecting their own courses, managing their schedules, and independently handling academic responsibilities. This demand for independence, coupled with the need for initiative, creativity, critical thinking, and innovation, can overwhelm students who are unprepared for these challenges.

Unpreparedness for the academic demands of higher education often leads to academic stress. Putri's (2015) research indicates that all student participants in her study experienced academic stress, with 29% reporting moderate stress, 58% reporting high stress, and 13% reporting very high stress. These findings highlight the pervasive nature of academic stress among students. Another contributing factor to academic stress is self-confidence. Students' belief in their ability to complete academic tasks is associated with their efforts to meet academic expectations. However, this confidence can also become a barrier to success when it leads to heightened stress levels.

As Goff (in Hamzah & Hamzah, 2020) notes, increasing academic stress negatively impacts students' learning abilities, leading to memory, concentration, and problem-solving difficulties. Prolonged or intense academic stress can also result in emotional disturbances such as anxiety and depression. When students experience high levels of stress, they may exhibit symptoms such as restlessness, nervousness, digestive issues, and excessive worry, all of which can interfere with academic performance (Ongori & Agolla, 2009).

Effective interventions to mitigate academic stress include coping strategies and resilience-building techniques. According to Lazarus & Folkman (1984), coping involves efforts to manage stressful situations. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is one example of a coping method, with techniques such as self-instruction helping individuals manage stress (Nurmaliyah, 2014). Indria et al. (2019) found that patience plays a significant role

in reducing academic stress. Their study demonstrated that students with higher levels of patience were less likely to experience academic stress, with a correlation coefficient of -0.559.

Safitri & Kumolohadi (2008) similarly found that patience is associated with reduced stress, particularly in the context of exam-related anxiety. Their research highlights that individuals with greater patience are more likely to persist and maintain diligence when facing academic stressors. Safitri (2018) also reported a negative correlation between patience and exam-related stress, with patience accounting for 27% of the variance in stress levels. Given the importance of patience in managing academic stress, this study aims to explore the relationship between patience and academic stress among university students.

METHOD

Research Subjects

The respondents in this study were 75 active students aged between 18 and 25 years. Of the 75 participants, 23 were male and 52 were female. The sample comprised 3 diploma students, 4 applied undergraduate students, and 68 undergraduate students, all of whom were selected based on predefined criteria for inclusion in the study.

Research Strategy

The present study employed a quantitative correlational research design. Two variables were measured: patience as the independent variable and academic stress as the dependent variable. Data collection was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire, which included patience and academic stress scales, was distributed to student groups meeting the specified criteria.

The patience variable was measured using the Psychometric Properties Scale of the Patience Scale (SS-15), developed by (Rusdi, 2018). This scale consists of 15 items and assesses four dimensions of patience: (1) patience in facing adversity, (2) patience in obedience, (3) patience in controlling desires, and (4) patience in controlling anger (Ghadab). The scale has demonstrated good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.848 and an item-total correlation range of 0.49–0.76.

Academic stress was measured using the Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA), developed by Sun et al. (2011). The ESSA comprises 16 items and evaluates five dimensions of academic stress: (1) pressure from academic lessons, (2) workload, (3) concerns about grades, (4) self-expectations, and (5) feelings of sadness. The ESSA has demonstrated acceptable reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 and an item-total correlation range of 0.44–0.67.

Both scales utilized a 5-point Likert scoring system, where responses were scored as follows: Strongly Disagree (1 point), Disagree (2 points), Neutral (3 points), Agree (4 points), and Strongly Agree (5 points). Data were analysed using the Spearman rho statistical technique to assess the correlation between patience and academic stress. The analysis was conducted using Jamovi software to ensure accuracy and reliability in statistical processing.

RESULTS

The respondents in this study were 75 active students, consisting of 23 male and 52 female participants aged between 18 and 25 years. Most participants were female (n = 52) and 20 years old (n = 37). A normality test was conducted to assess whether the data met the assumption of normal distribution. The results showed that the data were normally distributed with a p-value of 0.342 ($p > 0.05$). The Q-Q plot further confirmed linearity, as most data points aligned closely with the reference line. Thus, it was concluded that the data met the assumptions of normality and linearity.

Table 1

Distribution of respondent gender

Frequencies of Jenis Kelamin

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Sabar	Perempuan	52	60.6	60.0	7.87	1.09
	Laki-laki	23	60.1	61.0	8.03	1.67
Stres Akademik	Perempuan	52	53.8	53.0	11.56	1.60

Table 2

Distribution of Respondent Age

Frequencies of Usia

Usia	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
18	3	4.0 %	4.0 %
19	9	12.0 %	16.0 %
20	37	49.3%	65.3%
21	15	20.0%	85.3%
22	8	10.75	96.05
24	1	1.3%	97.3%
25	2	2.7%	100.0%

Correlation Test

A Pearson correlation test was conducted to investigate the relationship between patience (X) and academic stress (Y), as the data were normally and linearly distributed. The results revealed a negative correlation between the two variables, with a p-value of 0.026 ($p < 0.05$) and a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.225$. This indicates a weak negative relationship, meaning that academic stress decreases slightly as patience increases, although the effect is minimal.

Table 3

Statistic Test

Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

Statistic	p
0.981	0.333

Correlation Matrix

		Sabar	Stres Akademik
Sabar	Pearson's r	_	
	df	_	
	P-value	_	
Stres Akademik	Pearson's r	- 0.225*	_
	Df	73	_
	p-value	0.026	_

Note. H_a is negative correlation

Note. * p <.05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001, one tailed

A test for gender differences in the variables of patience and academic stress was also conducted. The results indicated no significant difference in the level of patience between male and female participants (p = 0.392, p > 0.05). However, there was a significant difference in academic stress levels between genders, with female students reporting higher levels of academic stress compared to their male counterparts (p < 0.001).

Table 4

Comparison of Patience and Academic Stress Scores by Gender

Independent Samples T-Test

		Statistic	df	p
Sabar	Student's t	0.276	73.0	0.392
Stres Akademik	Student's t	3.236	73.0	<.001

Note. H_a μ Perempuan > μ laki-laki

Group Descriptives

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Sabar	Perempuan	52	60.6	60.0	7.87	1.09
	Laki-laki	23	60.1	61.0	8.03	1.67
Stres Akademik	Perempuan	52	53.8	53.0	11.56	1.60
	Laki-laki	23	44.3	48.0	12.18	2.54

This study's findings indicate a weak negative relationship between patience and academic stress, suggesting that higher levels of patience are associated with lower levels of academic stress. However, the strength of this relationship is limited. The correlation coefficient (r = -0.225) suggests that patience explains only about 5% of the variance in academic stress, with the remaining 95% likely attributable to other factors not examined in this study.

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to examine the relationship between patience and academic stress in active university students. The central hypothesis proposed that a negative correlation exists between these two variables, meaning that students with higher levels of patience would experience lower levels of academic stress. In comparison, students with lower patience would experience higher levels of academic stress.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research by Dilla and Susanti (2022), which demonstrated a negative relationship between patience and academic stress among students at UIN Suska Riau. Similarly, research by Safitri and Kumolohadi (2008) found that students with greater patience tend to remain steadfast when faced with academic stressors, indicating a potential buffering role of patience in stress management. These findings suggest that patience may be a significant factor in helping students cope with the challenges and pressures of academic life.

In the context of Islamic teachings, patience is regarded as a highly recommended strategy for managing difficulties. The results of this research align with the teachings found in the Qur'an, specifically in Surah Al-Baqarah, verses 45-46, which encourage believers to seek help through patience and prayer. This verse underscores the spiritual dimension of patience, suggesting that those who cultivate patience, especially in the face of adversity, will be better equipped to handle life's challenges, including academic stress.

From a psychological perspective, Taylor (as cited in Indria et al., 2019) posited that individuals develop coping behaviors when faced with stress. According to Lazarus and Folkman (as cited in Maryam, 2017), emotion-focused coping strategies aim to regulate emotional responses to stress without necessarily altering the source of the stress. This approach shares conceptual similarities with patience, which involves maintaining emotional stability and perseverance in the face of adversity. In this sense, patience can be understood as an emotion-focused coping mechanism that helps individuals manage their reactions to academic pressures.

Further supporting this interpretation, Habeeb (as cited in Dilla & Susanti, 2022) defines patience as the ability to endure challenges without becoming disturbed or anxious. Students who demonstrate patience are likely to accept academic stress without succumbing to its negative effects, suggesting that patience is crucial in mitigating the emotional impact of academic challenges. Additionally, Najati argued that patience indicates mental stability, as individuals who exhibit patience are more resilient and courageous when faced with difficult situations.

Patience not only fosters emotional regulation but also encourages assertiveness and perseverance in the face of adversity. As a result, students with higher levels of patience may be less prone to feelings of anxiety, worry, or hopelessness when confronted with academic stress. This aligns with the teachings of the Qur'an in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 155, which states that those who are patient in the face of trials and difficulties will ultimately receive divine assistance. According to the Tafsir of Ibn Kathir, Allah tests His servants with both blessings and hardships, and those who remain patient in adversity are rewarded. This theological perspective reinforces the idea that patience is a personal virtue and a spiritual practice that enables individuals to face challenges with fortitude and trust in divine support.

In the context of academic stress, this perspective suggests that students who approach their academic difficulties with patience may be better able to navigate the pressures of their studies. Without patience, students may feel overwhelmed by the demands of their academic responsibilities. However, with patience, they are more likely to manage these pressures effectively and maintain a sense of control over their academic journey. This implies that patience is a personal coping strategy and a key factor in academic success, as it enables students to endure challenges and persist in their efforts.

In conclusion, the findings of this research support the hypothesis that patience has a negative relationship with academic stress. As both a psychological and spiritual concept, patience provides students with the emotional resilience needed to cope with academic challenges. These findings highlight the importance of cultivating patience as a means of managing stress in academic settings and suggest that interventions aimed at fostering patience may help students better cope with the pressures of their academic responsibilities. Further research is needed to explore the specific mechanisms through which patience influences academic stress and to investigate the potential for patience-based interventions to improve student well-being. One limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size, which was less than 100 respondents. Increasing the number of participants in future research would enhance the generalizability and accuracy of the results.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate a significant negative correlation between patience and academic stress among university students. This suggests that individuals with higher levels of patience experience lower levels of academic stress, whereas those with lower patience tend to experience higher stress levels in academic settings. Gender differences were also observed, with female students reporting higher levels of academic stress compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, this research analysed patience through five key dimensions: endurance, self-control, calmness, acceptance of reality, and persistence. The findings revealed that patience accounted for 5% of the variance in academic stress, with the remaining 95% influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study.

SUGGESTION

Although the influence of patience on academic stress is statistically significant, its contribution is relatively modest, explaining only 5% of the variance in academic stress. Nonetheless, the results suggest that fostering patience can be beneficial in reducing academic stress among students. Given the multi-faceted nature of academic stress, it is important to consider patience as one potential factor within a broader set of coping mechanisms that students can utilize to manage academic challenges more effectively.

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