The Emotional Intelligence and Academic Stress in Aliyah Madrasa Students during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

One of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the education sector, is the ongoing online learning at home. Online learning has constraints due to the learning environment and student characteristics. Various obstacles faced by students may have a negative impact, including creating academic stress. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the characteristics of students during online learning, namely how the role of emotional intelligence on student academic stress. A total of 100 students of one of the Aliyah Madrasas of Tahfidzil Qur'an in Medan were involved in this study. The instruments used were the emotional intelligence scale and academic stress scale. The data collection method was carried out through a survey by distributing online questionnaires. The results of this study indicated that the students' academic stress was categorized as low for 16 students (16%), as moderate for 57 students (57%), and as high for 27 students (27%). Based on the analysis of the hypothesis test, it proved that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress ($r = 0.497$; $p < 0.01$), which means that the higher the students' emotional intelligence, the lower the academic stress they experience. Emotional intelligence can influence academic stress by 24.7%. This research implies that one of the students' internal factors such as emotional intelligence can minimize academic stress when studying at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords*: Academic stress; COVID-19; emotional intelligence; learn at home; students

INTRODUCTION

Many studies have proven that the stress experienced by students during this pandemic is due to the changes in their learning process. They have to be able to adapt to online learning. They need to make adjustments to learn online at home. It turns out that online learning brings to the challenges that affect their psychological condition. Those challenges are among other many tasks that they have to do cause anxiety in them (Cao, et al., 2020), being unable to see friends at school so that getting bored of spending most of the time at home (Livana, et al., 2020), the problem of internet connection (Dewi, 2020), and online learning becoming boring (Kurniasari, Pribowo, & Putra, 2020). These problems are faced by students at home and online learning causes stress in them.

Stress is a condition in which an individual is unable to adapt to their condition. For a student, the academic demands that must be fulfilled such as school tasks and good grades can cause academic stress, which is a condition when a student experiences helplessness and problems of adaptation because

of receiving high academic demand yet having a limited capacity (Wilks, 2008). The finding of the study done by Fathiyah in 2015 (Fathiyah, 2019) proved that the most problematic for students were academic problems (57%), which was followed by family problem (21%), relationship problem with peer friends (17%), and others (5%). This study also found that there were 27.3% of the students went through a high degree of academic stress.

Student's academic stress is a critical phenomenon that should be comprehensively studied. Different studies have proven that online learning can cause new problems for students. Various factors influence the emergence of academic stress such as examination, poor achievement, procrastination, unsupportive atmosphere for learning, low confidence and desire to learn (Liu, 2011), and low learning motivation (Fadillah, 2013).

However, every student will respond differently to the existing demand, depending on how they perceive sources of stress. According to Barsel, Ahmda, and Ifdil (2018), sources of stress having either a positive or negative effect is determined by how an individual perceives it. Personal resources such as emotional intelligence influence how an individual manages the sources of stress. According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence is the ability an individual has to identify their feelings and other people's feelings, and also to self-motivate and regulate their feelings in facing any source of stress so that it affects their actions.

How is emotional intelligence able to determine academic stress? When students get stressed, they will be carried away by their unstable emotions, becoming more sensitive, easier to have uncontrollable anger, having negative feelings that trigger tension and stress. The stress is also caused by their lack of emotional control and inability to self-control, having less ability to regulate emotion in overcoming problems of learning. A few studies have proven that there is a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and academic stress, i.e. studies done by Chlarasinta (2015), and Wijaya, Pamungkas, and Pramesta (2020). The results of their studies proved that students with good emotional intelligence experience the least academic stress. Otherwise, the lower the emotional intelligence students have, the higher degree of stress they experience.

The results of previous studies proving the importance of the role of emotional intelligence towards academic stress supported the objective of this study, namely to further explore the role of emotional intelligence towards the academic stress experienced by the students of Aliyah Madrasa of Tahfidzil Qur'an . To know the conditions of the students who experienced stress and not to bring negative effects, an early survey on the role of emotional intelligence towards the students' academic stress was tested in this study. This study hypothesized that emotional intelligence affects students' academic stress.

METHOD

Participants

There were 100 students of Aliyah Madrasa of Tahfidzil Qur'an participating in this study. They consisted of 56 female and 44 male students. Using the technique of *cluster random sampling*, the samples were collected from these 11th-grade students of three different classes; 34 students from class 1, 33 from class 2, and 33 from class 3.

Instrument

Emotional Intelligence Scale

The emotional intelligence of the students was measured with the emotional intelligence scale based on the indicators formulated by Goleman (1995), which consist of emotion self-recognition (8 items), emotion management (6 items), self-motivation (9 items), recognition of other people's
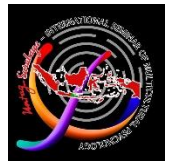
emotions (7 items), and relationship building (7 items). The total number of the items is 37 with four choices of answer, ranging from 1 (very inappropriate) to 4 (very appropriate). This scale has a reliability of 0.925.

Academic Stress Scale

The academic stress of the students was measured with the academic stress scale adapted from Fathiyah (2019), with four aspects of academic stress, namely: physiological aspect (4 items), cognitive aspect (4 items), affective aspect (8 items), and conative aspects (4 items). The total number of items is 20, and the answer choices range from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The reliability value of this scale is 0.904.

Research Procedure

This study was done in one of Aliyah Madrasa of Tahfidzil Qur'an in Medan City. At the early phase, the study prepared its instruments such as a letter of research license from the faculty given to the Madrasah, research scales consisting of the emotional intelligence scale, and academic stress scale. The next phase was a visit to the Madrasah in May 2020 in which the school had already been closed and it held the education in online method. However, there were teachers on duty whom the researcher could meet for explaining about the research. The researcher was introduced to a teacher who would help the research. After obtaining the license to collect data from the school, the researcher distributed the research scales online via this link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1tf6GCHtbd7Wh24tg3b0gqGbJxHah1u69HLHwc9cqz6Q/edit. For almost two weeks 100 respondents were willing to fill in the online questionnaire. The next phase was data analysis by scoring each answer. The data then were processed using SPSS version 23.0 for windows.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis used a simple linear regression test for determining the contribution of emotional intelligence to academic stress.

RESULT

Categorization of Variable Scores of the Study

The categorization scores of emotional intelligence and academic stress were established based on empirical mean with the normal distribution model. There are three categories of research respondents (Azwar, 2000), with the following formulation:

Low	: $x < (\mu - 1.0\ SD)$
Moderate	: $(\mu - 1.0\ SD) \leq x < (\mu + 1.0\ SD)$
High	: $(\mu + 1.0\ SD) \leq x$
Notes	: μ = empirical mean
	SD = empirical deviation standard

The categorization of emotional intelligence and academic stress scores is shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Categorization of emotional intelligence scores

Category	Value Range	Frequency	Percentage

Category	Value Range	Frequency	Percentage
Low	X < 85	18	18%
Moderate	$85 \leq X < 106$	63	63%
High	$X \geq 106$	19	19%

The categorization of the emotional intelligence score of the students of Aliyah Madrasa of Tahfidzil Qur'an was dominated by the moderate category (63%). Likewise, the categorization of academic stress scores is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Categorization of academic stress Scores

Category	Value Range	Frequency	Percentage
Low	X < 41	16	16%
Moderate	$41 \leq X < 62$	57	57%
High	$X \geq 62$	27	27%

Based on the categorization of the students' academic stress scores, most t=of them were categorized as moderate (57%).

Results of Hypothesis Test

There was a significant effect of emotional intelligence on academic stress. It was proven by the value (R^2) or Determinant Coefficient of 0.247, with the value (F (1.99) = 32.192, P < 0.01. The dependent variable X (emotional intelligence) had a contribution of 24.7% to Variable Y (academic stress).

DISCUSSION

This study was able to prove the hypothesis through a regression test that there was a significant effect of emotional intelligence on academic stress by $R^2 = 0.247$. The contribution of emotional intelligence to affecting the academic stress of the students was 24.7%, while 75.3% of the influencing factor was not revealed in this study. A few studies have tested these factors and discovered that they can minimize students' academic stress during this pandemic. These factors are self-efficacy (Utami, Rufaidah, & Nisa, 2020), coping strategy in overcoming stress (Baloran, 2020), increased mental health (Liu et al., 2020), and mental welfare empowerment (Lyons et al., 2020).

The importance of positive emotion in every student brings up positive effects especially in the cognitive aspect as they being able to change negative perceptions to be positive, and in the affective aspect as they can manage emotions using their coping strategies when stressors appear. The importance of emotional intelligence has been tested in previous studies. Wijaya, Pamungkas, and Pramesta (2020) proved that there is a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and academic stress. Prihatina, Latifah, and Johan (2012) proved the contribution of emotional intelligence through a coping strategy for minimizing academic stress. Julia and Setiyawati (2019) revealed that emotional intelligence and academic stress have a reciprocal correlation in affecting the welfare of an individual. Muhnia, Isnah, and Hapsah (2019) discovered the academic stress experienced by first-year students. Academic stress can be decreased through the management of emotional intelligence and an appropriate coping strategy (Situmorang & Desiningrum, 2018).

Emotional intelligence is a crucial aspect that everybody should have so that they can control negative emotions, not easily getting angry when being faced with an unfortunate situation, being able to adapt to a new situation, and being able to act properly when being challenged with difficulties. For a child, emotional intelligence does not appear instantly, it needs constant development of positive emotions from an early age. Thus, the role of the family is very important to provide role models as wise and discipline figures who conduct good deeds and avoid bad ones. Daulay (2015) has confirmed that children's good character develops through a process of education especially religious education from an early age. Therefore, it becomes one of the reasons why Moslem parents send their children to schools like Tahfidzil Quran Madrasa. They hope their children can build positive character and optimize their emotional intelligence (Ro'uf, 2018). Previous studies involving students of Tahfidzil Quran Madrasa proved that positive traits in the students indicate the positive correlation between their ability to recite the Quran and their emotional intelligence (Sari, 2020). The *Tahfidz* program is also able to bring a positive influence on children's emotional intelligence (Fardiansyah, 2020).

One of the internal factors contributing to the emergence of academic stress in students is the low degree of emotional intelligence. Therefore, low academic stress can indicate good emotional intelligence. The implication of this research is to enrich the information given by previous researches that confirm the importance of developing children's emotional intelligence from an early age to make them able to minimize stress especially when they are demanded to be able to adapt to a new situation like the current Covid-19 pandemic.

ACKNOWLEDGE, FUNDING & ETHICS POLICIES

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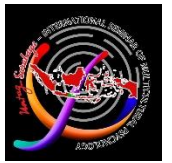
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