

Chapter 6

Academic Stress Toward Limited Internet Access When Learning During the COVID–19 Pandemic in Rural Areas

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ABSTRACT

Online learning has been optimized all over the world during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in Indonesia, this mode of learning brings several problems; mainly, limited internet access causing academic stress. This study was intended to analyze the impact of academic stress due to limited internet access in remote rural areas. The research applies a quantitative approach with purposive random sampling tested on 685 samples using Kendall's Tau-b test. The study results indicated the relationship between academic stress and the range of domiciles on internet access during the pandemic. The relationship between the academic stress variable and the range of residence to internet access during the pandemic is solid. Also, the level of academic stress experienced by students is relatively high based on the range of domicile for internet access during the pandemic. Thus, the lecturers must adopt the teaching methodology when teaching online platforms.

INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamental and essential in human life as it is a starting point for a sound mind (Anis et

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al., 2021; Bhardwaj, 2016; Winarti et al., 2021). Educated people will determine the country's development to progress and participate in technological discoveries, science and art. Education is essential and cannot be ignored by the government (Ngafifi, 2014). Thus, education must continue in any condition.

In normal conditions, education takes place offline where lecturers are not required to use the Learning Management System (LMS) designed by the university. But, the deadly epidemic of Covid-19 shaking the world has challenged education systems worldwide and forced educators to shift to online learning (Dhawan, 2020; Fatimah et al., 2020; Nash, 2015). The use of information technology is intended to support blended learning-based education (Sarbaini et al., 2019). In this condition, information technology has a crucial role in overcoming the problems in education during a pandemic (Al-Balas et al., 2020; Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020). Consequently, (Windihastuty & Samsinar, 2019) lecturers must upload all lecture materials to online learning platforms and applications, such as google meet, zoom, google classroom, Edmodo, quiver, teacher room, and other e-learning applications (Alshehri et al., 2020; Kristanto et al., 2017). These online education features are expected to encourage independent, flexible, collaborative, interactive, and efficient learning and can be accessed anytime and anywhere without limitation. This policy is also intended to break the chain of the spread of Covid-19 (Prem et al., 2020; Sahu, 2020) following several countries in Asia like Saudi Arabia (Alashwal, 2020) and China (Huang et al., 2020). Previously, when the SARS outbreak hit the world in 2003, Japan, Bulgaria, and Thailand had implemented policies to close face-to-face schools. This decision proved effective in reducing the transmission of influenza outbreaks at that time (Tsang et al., 2014).

However, this change resulted in the students being under heavy pressure as it influences learning styles and the students' psychological condition as they need a long time to adapt (Huang et al., 2020). Also, students must operate various technology platforms smartly, quickly, and responsively and follow technological developments as the primary online learning facility. They inevitably have to keep up with these changes (Favale et al., 2020; Radha et al., 2020).

Continuous online learning at home reduces motivation, eliminates interest in education, and makes physical and mental fatigue, making students stressed for a long time (Rinawati & Darisman, 2020). Therefore, students need treatment and actualization space according to their needs and potential to develop their abilities optimally (Sheldon, 2004), both in offline and online learning (Alashwal, 2020). The demand to shift from offline to online systems psychologically impacts students. They have to be creative, innovative, and quick to adapt to technology—inability to adapt to technology results in technostress (Wang et al., 2020). Technostress is the psychological and physical discomfort to master and keeps up with technological developments or vice versa (Weil & Rosen, 1997; Nimrod, 2018).

This psychological and physical discomfort might be from internet access. If internet access is fast and smooth, it will provide mental and physical comfort. Access to transfer data quickly helps students use the learning platform and impacts students' psychological calm, comfort, and concentration in online learning (Cooper et al., 2001). For a long time, millions of people have used internet access all over Indonesia (Sosiawan, 2008). The problem is that, like even in a country like the USA, there is a digital gap where urban areas have better internet access than rural areas (Sarkar et al., 2017). In Kalimantan, one of the biggest islands, Internet networks are often unstable because of the geographical condition of Kalimantan Island, which is primarily forested and bounded by nine wide and long rivers and many towering mountains. Also, surrounded by the sea in the western, eastern, southern, and northern parts, the people experience severe problems with the internet network (Andina, 2017). If the problem of internet access is not resolved, it will create negative feelings and decrease student interest in online learning (Kuo et al., 2014).

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