

## Academic Stress Factors Among Indonesian Students: A Case of IAIN Batusangkar

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**Abstract: Academic Stress Factors Among Indonesia Students: A Case of IAIN Batusangkar.**

**Objective:** This present study aims at investigating factors causing students' academic stress among Indonesian students **Methods:** This research used cross-sectional design. The data analysis used descriptive statistics with statistical analysis tool, SPSS 22. **Findings:** This study indicates that the causes of academic stress are different at each semester of students. Family causal factor, for example are the most factors affect the second semester. Likewise, family causal factors, academic causal factors, personal causal factors, and peer pressure are factors faced by the fourth and sixth semester students. Peer pressure, however, is experienced for the eighth semester students. **Conclusion:** These findings conclude that students are vary in the causes of academic stress.

**Keywords:** academic stress, academic achievement, students' academics stress.

**Abstrak: Faktor-faktor yang Mempengaruhi Stres Akademik bagi Mahasiswa Indonesia: Kasus di IAIN Batusangkar. Tujuan:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi stres akademik bagi mahasiswa Indonesia. **Metode:** Penelitian ini menggunakan desain cross sectional. Data analisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dengan bantuan SPSS 22. **Temuan:** Studi ini menemukan bahwa faktor-faktor stres akademik yang dialami mahasiswa Indonesia berbeda di setiap semester. Faktor penyebab keluarga menjadi faktor yang dominan yang dialami bagi mahasiswa semester kedua. Hal yang sama, faktor keluarga, akademik, personal, dan tekanan teman adalah faktor-faktor penyebab stress akademik yang dihadapi mahasiswa semester keempat dan keenam. Terakhir, teman menjadi factor penyebab stress akadmik yang dialami mahasiswa semester delapan. **Kesimpulan:** Temuan ini menyimpulkan bahwa stress akademik yang dihadapi mahasiswa disebabkan oleh faktor yang berbeda pada setiap tingkatan mahasiswa.

**Kata kunci:** stres akademik, prestasi akademik, stres akademik mahasiswa.

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## ■ INTRODUCTION

It is imperative to state that stress is a part of academic life for some college students due to various expectations. Academic stress has been indicated by inability to fulfil the demands (Khan, Altaf, & Kausar, 2013), workload (Agolla & Ongori, 2009), time limit and difficulty to accomplish test or examinations (Smith and Peters, 2000), lower level of Grade Point Average (GPA) in the final year (Wintre & Yaffe, 2000), and poor self-esteem (Baste & Gadkari, 2014).

The academic achievement of students at some universities in the world nowadays has recently come under scrutiny for a number of reasons. For instance, several researches have been carried out to identify causal factors of poor academic achievement in a number of institutions worldwide. Most of these studies focus on the three elements that intervene, that is, parents (family causal factors), teachers (academic causal factors), and students (personal causal factors). Among personal variables most studied are motivation and self-concept. Motivation is considered to be the element that initiates the subject's own involvement in learning: when a student is strongly motivated, all his effort and personality are directed toward the achievement of a specific goal, thus bringing to bear all his or her resources. Self-concept results from the subject's internalization of his social image. It is developed from different interactions with the social context and agents, great importance assigned to acceptance or rejection from others, especially significant others (Díaz, 2003).

The combination of factors influencing the academic achievement of students varies from one academic environment to another, from one set of students to the next, and indeed from one cultural setting to another. More often than not, students have worked hard but their input has not been positively correlated to their output. Some studies, Karue, Njagi, & Amukowa

(2013); Kyei & Nemaorani (2014); Kapur (2018) recognized internal and external factors related to academic achievement. One of these factors is stress. Several theories Elliot, Shell, Henry, & Maeir (2005); Choi, Abbott, Arthur, & Hill (2007) state that stress affects students' academic achievement. Stress is a force that tends to distort a body. College life is one of the most stressful periods of students' life much more when they are in College of English Teaching Department.

Stress is could be caused by several factors such as environmental, psychological, biological, and social (Rana, Gulati, & Wadhwa, 2019). A student can be stressed due to different stressors such as financial, family, friends, emotions, and procrastinations. Some of the reasons why students perceive stress are time pressure and the need to perform well in the exams (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006). Mainly, the period before the exams is perceived as highly stressful by students (Nandamuri & Ch, 2011). Bennet (2003) reports a similar finding in his study and points out that stress is significantly correlated with poor academic achievement. Elias, Ping & Abdullah, (2011) also mention that studies show that undergraduate students have to handle the possible negative effects of stress concerning their academic achievements.

However, by facing all of these things inside or outside university life, students faced the stress which so called academic stress. Academic stress impedes the smooth going of college students in achieving their optimal academic achievement. Yikealo, Yemane & Karvinen (2018) report that majority of students in the college are found to experience a moderate to high level of academic and environmental stress as a result of various stressors. The stressors explored to inflict stress among the students arise from teachers, exams, course loads, peer pressure, academic results, and time management.

Stress related to academic is known as academic stress. Academic stress refers to the unpleasant psychological situations that occur due to the academic expectations from parents, teachers, peers, and family members. Some experts state that several factors causing students' academic stress identified as too many assignments, competitions with other students, failures and poor relationships with other students and lecturers, time management issues, financial burdens, interactions with faculty, personal goals, social activities, adjustment to the campus environment, and lack of support networks. Academic problems have been become most common source of stress for students. Most irritating daily school related stressors are such as constant pressure of studying, too little time, writing term papers, taking tests, future plans and boring instructor.

Experts (Brown *et al.*, 1999; Towbes & Cohen, 1996; Pancer *et al.*, 2000; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000) explain that it is normal for the freshmen students to experience stress in their beginning of their academic life. Because they have just moved out from the childhood level into the adolescent level which is the unstable change in their life that cause them to feel nervous and excited in the same time. However, it is quite strange that the students experience stress in the high semester while they used to experience these kinds of academic life and should be prepared for it. This was what happens in English Teaching Department students at IAIN Batusangkar. Based on the result of survey, most of the students in the higher semester experienced stress. Some of students got limited time to finish the tasks ; they cannot manage their time properly due to a heavy workload, they got many assignments to finish, poor relationships with lecturers, afraid of failures and large amount of content to master in a small amount of time, increased study load, frustration due to misunderstandings. In addition, they felt

these kinds of symptoms such as, hard to get sleep; nervousness, anxiety, headache; depressed mood; and so forth.

Furthermore, a number of scholars and practitioners such as Byron, Brun & Ivers (2018) describe limited time of finishing the tasks; cannot manage time properly due to a heavy workload lead to academic stress. Fairbrother & Warn (2013) mention many assignments to finish as factors causing academic stress. Then, Khan, Altaf & Kausar (2013) mention that poor relationships with lecturers, afraid of failures and large amount of content to master in a small amount of time are factors of academic stress. Increased study load can be led to stress (Kiani *et al.*, 2017). Similarly, Essel & Owusu (2017) state that frustration due to misunderstandings as factors of academic stress. Furthermore, the unclear explanations of how to finish the tasks that given by lecturers is mentioned by Masih & Gulrez (2006) that lead to academic stress. Besides, the symptoms that felt by the students are also mentioned by several experts such as Hernawati (2006) states that hard to get sleep; nervousness are the symptoms of stress. Furthermore, anxiety according to Simbolon in Ifdil (2017) is the characteristics of someone who gets stress. Last, Esben Strodl (2015) mention headache, depressed mood, and so forth as symptoms of stress.

## ■ METHODS

### *Research Design*

This study employed a quantitative approach. It used cross sectional design. The population of this research were students of English Department of IAIN Batusangkar, ranging from 18 to 24 years of age. The samples consisted of 283 students that taken by applying stratified random sampling technique (Gay, 2012). Those students have various factors causing their academic stress.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The factors causing students' academic stress were assessed by using a questionnaire developed from the factors causing students' academic stress with Cronbach's Alpha 0,927. The questionnaire consisted of 99 statements. Responses of various factors were expressed on a 5-points scale (*very high to very low*). Each statement was graded based on the scale considering the positive and negative form of the statement. The data of students' academic achievement were taken from Academics Office of IAIN Batusangkar in form of the tabulation of students' GPA in each semester.

### **Data Analysis**

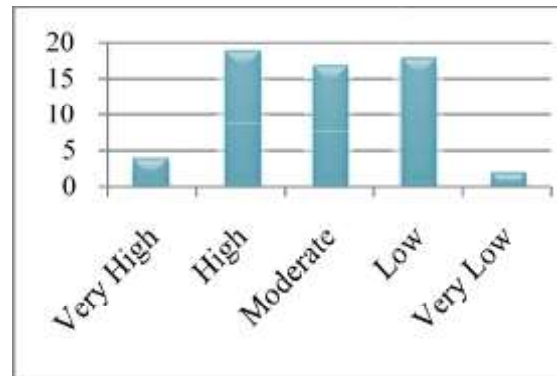
The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics analysis. In this process, statistical frequencies were used to find out the factors causing students' academic stress among all semester students. The first step to follow was to find what factors causing students' academic stress in each semester. It means the categories of factors were divided into five based on the theories. The categories of factors were very highly affect the students for those got the greatest to the frequency score, highly affect the students for those who got greater to the frequency score, moderately affect the students for those who got greater than or equal to the frequency score, lowly affect the students for those who got the lower to the frequency score, and very lowly affect the students for those who got the lowest score of frequency.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This part describes causal factors for each semester, namely the second semester students, the fourth semester students, the six semester students, and the eight semester students.

### **Second Semester Students (Family Causal Factors)**

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of family causal factors in second semester was 26,3 with percentage of 31,7%.



**Figure 1.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Family Causal Factors

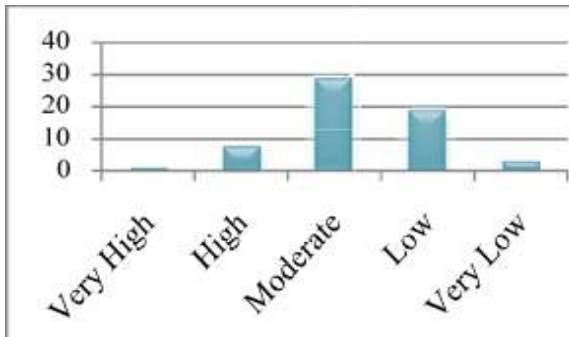
The figure 1 shows that the family causal factors was highly affect the students' academic stress in second semester. Interestingly, family causal factors was the only one factor that affect students' academic stress the most. Meanwhile, those three other factors; academic causal factors, personal causal factors, and other factors were moderately affect the students. This finding is consistent with a research reported by Reddy, Karishmarajanmenon, & Anjanathattil (2018) that parents are factors responsible for improved stress level.

### **Second Semester Students (in Academic Causal Factors)**

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of academic causal factors in second semester was 187,4 (48,3%).

The results presented in the figure indicates that the academic causal factors was moderately affect the students' academic stress in the second semester. These findings are in line with the idea

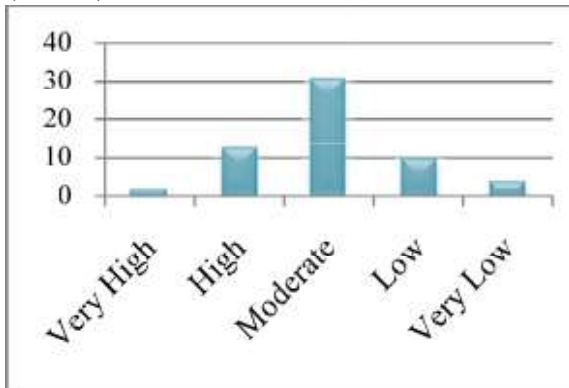
of Rana, Gulati & Wadhwa (2019) who reported that students were facing academic stress. It includes inability to understand the topic, exam stress, and lack of willingness in attending classes. Furthermore, Khan, Altaf & Kausar (2013) explained that students have limited time period but they are forced to accomplish the tasks.



**Figure 2.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Academic Causal Factors

**Second Semester Students (Personal Causal Factors)**

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of personal causal factors in the second semester was 90.21 (51.7%).



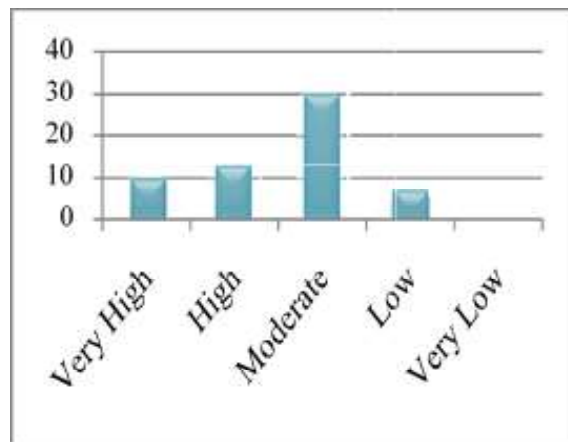
**Figure 3.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Personal Causal Factors

The figure demonstrates that the personal causal factors was moderately affect the students' academic stress in the second semester. The research highlighted by Saleh, Camart, & Romo

(2017) advocated that university students, especially first academic year, often face stressful situation due to personal problems. Another study found that personality is one of the strongest factors faced by the first year medical students (Bob, Popescu, Pirlog, & Buzoianu, 2014).

**Second Semester Students (in Other Factor)**

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of other factor in second semester was 5,6 (50%).



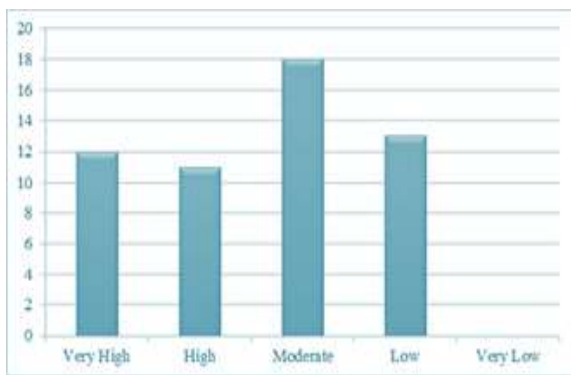
**Figure 4.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Other Factor

The figure clearly confirms that the other factor was moderately affect the students' academic stress in second semester. Interestingly, the researcher did not find the factors causing students' academic stress caused by friendships and academic in second semester. It means that the stress experienced by the second semester students only caused by family. It is related with them, because most of the second semester students live with their parents and stay at home. When they go to college from home, and before that they hear something bad happen between their parents, or even they know something wrong with their family, or they are quarrelling with their siblings in early morning, believe or not, it can affect them until that day ends. The worst is if they the type of people who overly thinking

toward something. They will think about it over and over while you are reading, studying, writing or anything that you are doing in college. Therefore, it can lead you to be stress in their academic.

**Fourth Semester Students (Family Causal Factors)**

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of family causal factors in fourth semester was 26 (33,3%).



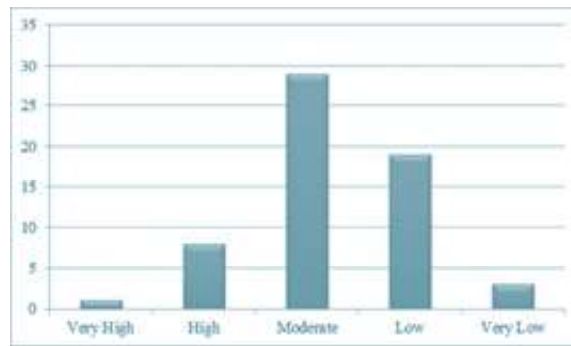
**Figure 5.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Family Causal Factors

The figure indicates that the family causal factors was moderately affect the students' academic stress in fourth semester.

The findings clearly show that family causal factors is one of dominant factors causing students' academic stress. This is not parallels as However, Hudd *et al.*, (2000); Towbes & Cohen (1996): Roisman *et al.* (2004) who state that the college students were to explore and establish identity through salient (for example, friendships and academic) that makes them to be stress.

**Fourth Semester Students (in Academic Causal Factors)**

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of academic causal factors in fourth semester was 186,1 (48,1%).

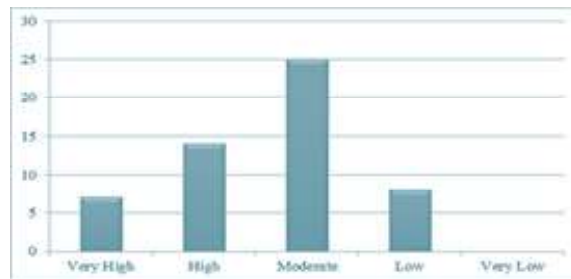


**Figure 6.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Family Causal Factors

The figure 6 shows that the academic causal factors was moderately affect the students' academic stress in fourth semester. The findings of this research is in accordance with the previous research reported by Erkutlu & Chafra (2006). They state that college students can be stressed due the need to perform well in the exams.

**Fourth Semester Students (in Personal Causal Factors)**

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of personal causal factors in fourth semester was 87,7 (46,3%).



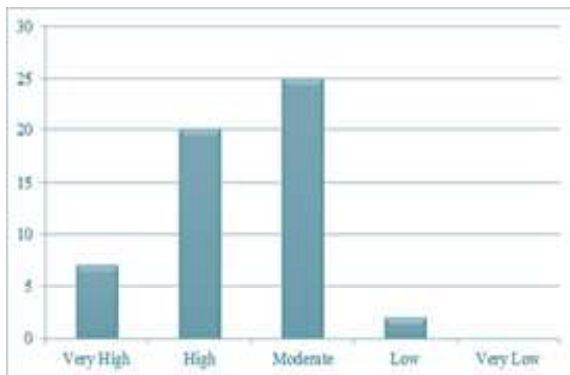
**Figure 7.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Personal Causal Factors

The figure explains that the personal causal factors was moderately affect the students' academic stress in fourth semester. The findings are similar with other researches although the samples to investigate were different (Bob et al

2014; Compton, Carrera, & Frank, 2008; and Ang & Huan, 2006).

**Fourth Semester Students (Other Factors)**

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of other factor in fourth semester was 5,2 (46,3%).

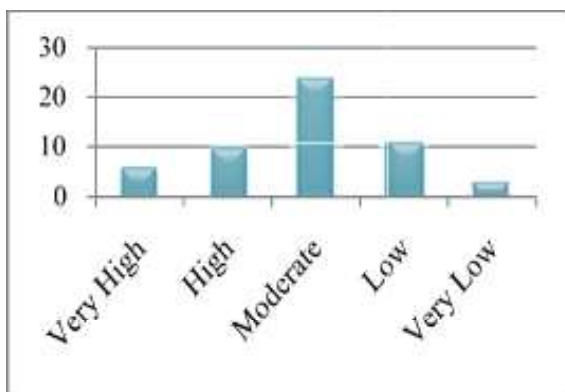


**Figure 8.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in other Factors

It can be observed from the figure that the other factor was moderately affect the students' academic stress in fourth semester.

**Sixth Semester Students (in Family Causal Factors)**

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of family causal factors in sixth semester was 26.03 (44.4%).

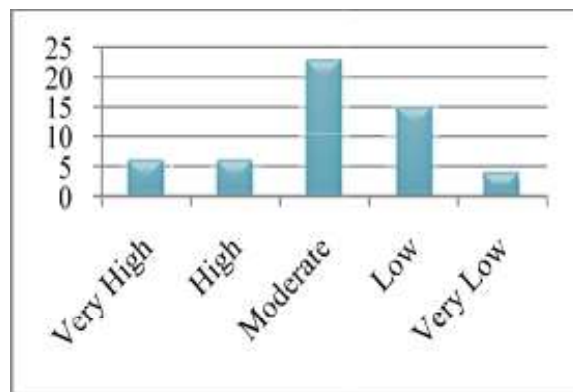


**Figure 9.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Family Causal Factors

The figure shows that the family causal factors was moderately affect the students' academic stress in sixth semester. This research finding is in line with the previous research of Pascoe, Sarah & Parker (2019) who claim that academic stress is be strongly related to families and the community.

**Sixth Semester Students (in Academic Causal Factors)**

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of academic causal factors in sixth semester was 179,7 (42.6%).

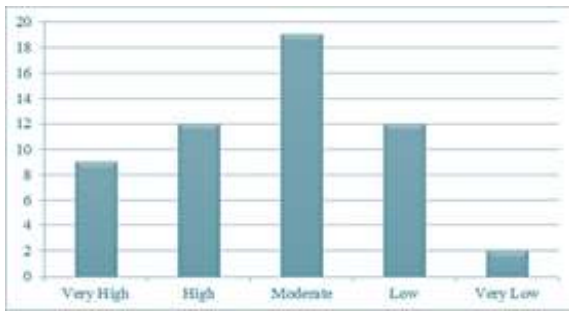


**Figure 10.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Academic Causal Factors

The figure demonstrates that the academic causal factors was moderately affect the students' academic stress in the sixth semester. These findings are to support the previous study reported by Pascoe, Hetrick, & Parker (2019) who explained that students in the tertiary level of education face a wide range of stressor related to academic demands.

**Sixth Semester Students (in Personal Causal Factors)**

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of personal causal factors in sixth semester was 83,4 (35.2%).

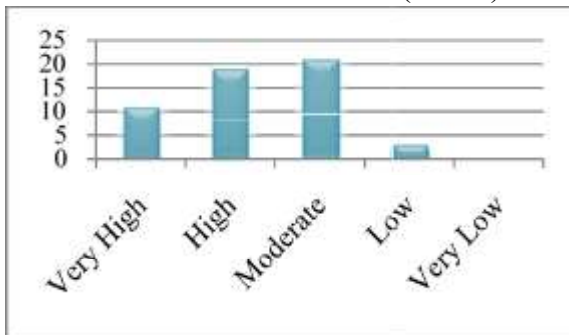


**Figure 11.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Personal Causal Factors

The figure shows that the personal causal factors was moderately affect the students' academic stress in sixth semester. These findings are in are to support the previous study of Rana, Gulati & Wadhwa (2019). They clearly state that students are experiencing stress in today's competitive world. It includes a loss of emotional control, depression, intense anger and aggravation.

***Sixth Semester Students (in Other Factor)***

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of other factor in sixth semester was 5.01(38.9%).



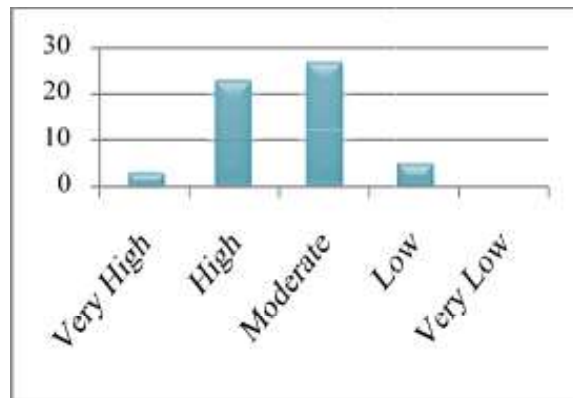
**Figure 12.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in other Factors

The figure clearly indicates that the other factor was moderately affect the students' academic stress in sixth semester. It becomes imperative to understand that other factors such as financial management, changes in live atmosphere, and peer completion were major

causes of stress among university students (Reddy, Kashmarajanmenon & Anjanathattil 2018).

***Eighth Semester Students (in Family Causal Factors)***

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of family causal factors in eighth semester was 26.6 (46.6%).



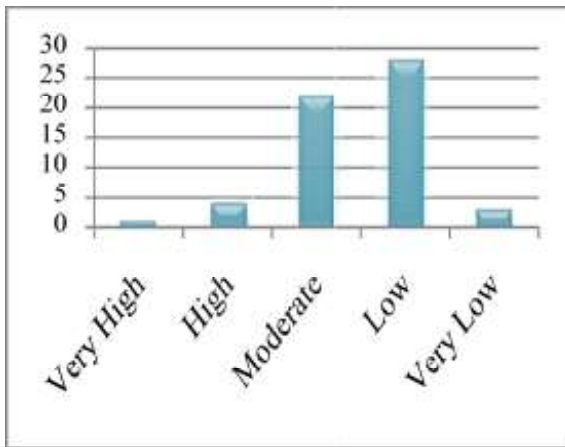
**Figure 13.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Family Causal Factors

The figure demonstrates that the family causal factors was moderately affect the students' academic stress in eighth semester. The findings clearly show that family causal factors becomes a factor causing students' academic stress. This is not parallels as However, Hudd *et al.*, (2000); Towbes & Cohen (1996): Roisman *et al.*, (2004) who state that the college students were to explore and establish identity through salient (for example, friendships and academic) that makes them to be stress.

***Eighth Semester Students (in Academic Causal Factors)***

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of academic causal factors in eighth semester was 179.3 (48.3%).



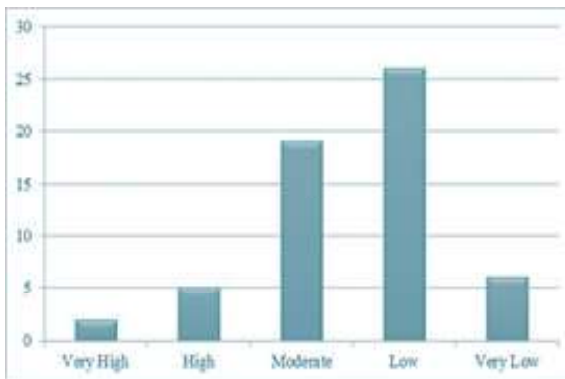


**Figure 14.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Academic Causal Factors

The figure indicates that the academic causal factors was lowly affect the students' academic stress in eighth semester.

***Eighth Semester Students (in Personal Causal Factors)***

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of personal causal factors in eighth semester was 87.2 (44.8%).

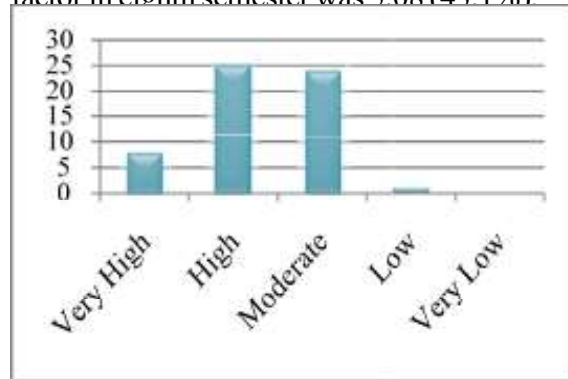


**Figure 15.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in Personal Causal Factors

The figure demonstrates that the personal causal factors was lowly affect the students' academic stress in eighth semester.

***Eighth Semester Students (in Other Factor)***

Based on the calculation of frequency score of the questionnaire, the mean score of other factor in eighth semester was 5.08 (43.1%).



**Figure 16.** Percentages of Factors Causing Students' Academic Stress in other Factors

The figure indicates that the other factor was highly affect the students' academic stress in the eighth semester. The research conducted by Yikealo, Yemane & Karvinen (2018) showed that one of the factors causing students' academic stress is other factors (peer pressure) that also have been agreed by Chernomas & Shapiro (2013). In the results of this research, other factors (peer pressure) is the factors experienced by the English Teaching Department students of eighth semester in IAIN Batusangkar which is high. However, according to Wright (1964) state that college students experience academic stress due to thinking about the jobs outside of the university setting such as evaluation by superiors and striving for goals, also the evaluation that college students are subjected to, such as weekly tests and papers. Agreed with that, Agolla & Ongori (2009) postulate that the major causes of stress among students are low motivation, poor performance in academic work, and uncertainty of getting jobs after graduation from university. Furthermore, problems in financial management, changes in living atmosphere, and difficulties managing personal and academic life are the factors causing students academic stress based

on Goff (2011); Jimenez, Navia-osorio & Diaz (2010); Moscaritolo (2009).

From the findings above, the eighth semester students who are already mature enough and experience enough in their campus life should be mind what will they do after finishing study in the college such as what company that they should apply, what kind of job that they should work, what next level of their life that should they arrange, and what kind of life that they will have. Not think about friends who only take advantage and give the disadvantage to them anymore. The peer pressure as factors causing students' academic stress in the eighth semester is experienced by the students is because they are too care about their friends and sometimes they envy their friends because their friends are one step ahead from them. Other than that, they often hear something bad from others about their friends and trust it without confirming that hoax to their friends. It happens to one another and it makes they hate each other. No wonders that the eighth semester students experience stress because of peer pressure.

## ■ CONCLUSION

This research scientifically concludes that students are vary in the causes of academic stress. The students of the second semester need to decrease their fear about their family in case to get better academic life and better academic achievement. Then, the students of the fourth and sixth semester need to enjoy more their time and try not to think something overly. Specially, for the eighth semester students, they need to be not really care about what people say. In short, students are suggested to be aware and decrease the things that can make their stress occur in order to have a better academic achievement. It is recommended for other researchers to conduct an extensive research on factors causing students' academic stress. The other researcher could the differences between male and female students' academic stress.

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