

## **Academic Stress among High School Students During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Banda Aceh**

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### **Abstract**

Academic stress is a condition where there is a mismatch between the demands of the school and the student's abilities, so the students are burdened by the various school or academic needs. This article aims to describe the level of academic stress of State Senior High School 4 Banda Aceh students during the learning process during the Covid-19 pandemic. This type of research uses a descriptive-analytic method with a cross-sectional study design. The population in this study were students of SMA Negeri 4 Banda Aceh, which amounted to 542 people. The sampling technique was proportionate stratified random sampling with a total of 230 respondents. Data were taken using 2 standard questionnaires, namely the Educational Stress Scale For Adolescents (ESSA) questionnaire, which consisted of a demographic data questionnaire and a questionnaire containing 16 questions about academic stress. The results of this study showed that 161 respondents (70%) experienced high levels of academic stress and 69 respondents (30%) experienced low levels of academic stress. So, Educators are expected to reduce assignments at school, and home works to minimize academic stress on students.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Academic Stress, Students, Learning process

### **Introduction**

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the lifestyle of people around the world and is also a very dangerous disease.<sup>1</sup> The rapid spread of Covid-19 has created concern for the Government, particularly the Ministry of Education and Culture, among parents and students, as well as teaching staff, namely with the issuance of the Circular Letter of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 1 of 2020 concerning Prevention of the Spread of Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19).<sup>2</sup> The pandemic conditions that have

changed the way and process of student learning have resulted in students experiencing academic stress. This stress occurs because students must continue to study with all their limitations and must be able to adapt to new learning patterns during a pandemic. Changes in the education system due to the Covid-19 pandemic have made students vulnerable to academic stress.<sup>3</sup> This is evidenced by the report of the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) team, which received 246 complaints from students throughout Indonesia with complaints of

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assignments piled up with close collection times during learning during the pandemic.<sup>4</sup>

The problem of academic stress that occurs in students is not new. Desmita<sup>5</sup>, in her study, revealed that academic stress is stress caused by academic stressors. Academic stressor itself is stress experienced by students and comes from the learning process or things related to learning activities. Even before the pandemic occurred, based on research conducted by Govaerts & Grégoire on 100 school teens, as many as 80% of respondents reported that they had experienced academic stress at least once during their education.<sup>6</sup>

According to Safiany & Maryatmi<sup>7</sup> high school students experience academic pressure due to being burdened with various tasks in all subjects, whether students must complete compulsory subjects, specialization, inter-interest, and deepening of interest. The number of academic assignments makes students have to work on these assignments late at night and become tired and sleepy when in class. This causes students to be lazy to study and less concentrated on lessons in the course. Students also often feel anxious during exams and are afraid of dropping marks.

Research by Zhang et al.<sup>8</sup> on the psychological impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on adolescents in China stated that 6.8% of high school students experienced moderate stress during the pandemic, while symptoms of severe to very severe stress occurred in 2.6% of high school students and High school students have a higher prevalence of stress symptoms than other students. This is in line with other research by Gusella<sup>9</sup> on students who are currently studying at high school (SMA) in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic, where based on the results of this study, as many as 81.6% of high school students in Indonesia experienced high levels of academic stress and 18.4% of students experienced low academic stress. Previous research findings regarding student academic stress during the pandemic were strengthened by the KPAI<sup>4</sup> survey in April 2020. The survey was conducted on 1,700 respondents from a combination of kindergarten to high school students spread across 20 provinces and 54 districts/cities, with the most respondents

being high school students. This survey showed as many as 77.8% of students had difficulties due to the accumulated workload from teachers, and 37.1% of respondents complained that the time for doing assignments was narrow, making students less rested and tired.

Academic stress can have negative effects and can have an impact on a person's physiological and mental state. Academic stress is a condition of tension experienced by students related to the learning activities undertaken. This stressful condition encourages behavioral changes in students such as decreased interest and effectiveness, reduced energy, tendency to express cynical views on others, feelings of anger, disappointment, frustration, confusion, despair, and weakened responsibility.<sup>10</sup> In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, several changes that have occurred due to the pandemic have put a lot of stress on students psychologically, triggering academic stress. Many learning assignments given by teachers to students during a pandemic make students depressed, and it becomes increasingly difficult to achieve learning goals. Therefore, the article aims to describe calm academic stress on high school students during the Covid-19 pandemic in Banda Aceh City.

## Method

This type of research used in this study is quantitative, non-experimental, with a descriptive-analytical approach. The research design used is a cross-sectional study. The study was conducted at SMAN 4 Banda Aceh City, Aceh Province, because the school is one of the superior schools in Banda Aceh City that applies to learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The population in this study were all SMAN 4 Banda Aceh students in classes X and XI, 542 students.

The sampling technique was proportionate stratified random sampling with a total of 230 respondents. The data collection tool in this study is questionnaire A, containing demographic data in the form of respondent identity consisting of respondent code, age, gender, and class. Then questionnaire B determined the stress level in respondents who were adopted from the Educational Stress For Adolescents

(ESSA) Questionnaire. The ESSA questionnaire consists of 16 questions to measure academic stress, including; pressure from learning activities, workload/tasks, worries about grades, self-expectations, and hopelessness. The scale used in this questionnaire is a Likert scale, where each item has an answer choice of 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (undecided), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). The results of this questionnaire were measured using a cut-off point provided that respondents with a total score of  $x > 48$  are categorized as having high academic stress, and 48 are categorized as having low academic stress.<sup>11</sup>

The instrument's validity has been tested on 20 class XII students of SMAN 4 Banda Aceh with the table number of 0.444 with a significant mean of 5%. Thus the instrument is declared valid. Then reliability was also carried out with Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.902, which means the questionnaire is reliable. This research has passed the Ethics test by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Nursing, Syiah Kuala University, with the code of ethics 111117050122.

### Finding

Demographic data of respondents in this study

include class, age, and gender. The demographic data of respondents can be briefly seen in table 1 below:

**Tabel 1: Respondent's Characteristic (n= 230)**

Characteristic	frekuensi	Persentase
Age		
15	102	44,3
16	110	47,8
17	17	7,5
18	1	0,4
Gender		
Male	131	57,0
Female	99	43,0
Classes		
X	117	50,9
XI	113	49,1

Based on table 1 above shows that the majority of respondents are 16 years old, which are 110 respondents (47.8%), the male gender is 131 respondents (57%), and most of the respondents are in class X, which is 117 respondents (50,9%).

**Tabel 2: Academic Stress Level based on Respondent's Characteristics**

Respondents' Characteristics	Academic Stress Level				Total	Percentage
	Low		High			
	f	%	f	%		
Age						
15	38	16,5	64	27,7	102	44,3
16	28	12,2	82	35,6	110	47,8
17	3	1,3	14	6,1	17	7,4
18	0	0	1	0,5	1	0,5
Gender						
Male	55	24	76	33	131	57
Female	14	6	85	37	99	43
Classes						
X	42	18,3	75	32,5	117	50,8
XI	27	11,7	86	37,5	113	49,2

Table 2 shows that for students aged 16 years, the majority of 82 respondents (35.6%) experienced high academic stress. The majority of female students, 85 respondents (37%), experienced high academic stress, and most students in class XI, 86 respondents (37.5%), experienced high academic stress.

**Table 3: Academic Stress Level category (n=230)**

Academic Stress Category	Freq	Percentage
High	161	70
Low	69	30

Based on table 3 above, it is known that the majority of high school students' academic stress levels during the learning process during the Covid-19 pandemic were in the high category, amounting to 161 respondents (70%).

### Discussion

Based on the study's results, it was found that most respondents experienced high levels of academic stress, amounting to 161 respondents (70%). The results of this study are also similar to the research conducted by Yusuf, which showed that 71 respondents (92.2%) experienced high levels of academic stress.<sup>12</sup> The results of this study are also similar to Ari Juniar's research which shows that 32 respondents (86.47%) experienced high levels of academic stress.<sup>13</sup> This is also in line with the study conducted by Wulandari, which found that 130 respondents (51.6%) experienced high levels of academic stress.<sup>14</sup>

Based on the results of the study, it was found that women who experienced high levels of academic stress were 85 respondents (37.5%) and 14 respondents (6%). In comparison, men experienced high academic stress were 76 respondents (33%) and low as many as 55 respondents (24%). The results of this study are similar to Maryam's research<sup>15</sup> which shows that women tend to experience higher levels of stress than men. Gender affects the stress caused by the different reactions between men and women. An obstacle can cause negative hormones in women, leading to stress, anxiety, and fear. Men are generally used to conflict or problems, which can be a positive encouragement for them. In this case, when women experience obstacles or problems, they typically experience stress.

In this study, it was found that students aged 16 years experienced high levels of academic stress

in 82 respondents (35.6%) and low 28 respondents (12.2%) aged 15 years experienced high levels of academic stress in 64 respondents (27.7%), and low 38 respondents (16.5%), 17 years of age experienced high levels of academic stress 14 respondents (6.1%) and low 3 respondents (1.3%). There was 1 respondent (0.5%) who experienced low levels of 18-year-old. At the age of teenagers often get problems or problems that are difficult to overcome both women and men. With the inability of adolescents to solve their problems, many teenagers finally find that solving a problem is not always in accordance with their expectations.<sup>16</sup> According to Jahja<sup>17</sup>, adolescents experience physical changes and psychological changes. Adolescence also experiences a rapid emotional increase which is commonly known as a period of storm and stress.

Academic stress is a response that arises because of the many tasks and demands that students must do. Stress is caused by pressure to show excellence and achievement in increasing academic competition, so students increasingly feel burdened by various pressures. The causes of stress experienced by students during the Covid-19 pandemic are loneliness in a new environment, financial responsibilities, limited interaction with teachers and friends, and changing social life.<sup>18</sup> Academic stress can appear on a person when there is pressure from the people around him, parents, teachers, and peers. Expectations that are not in accordance with the wishes of people can affect a person's learning achievement and cause stress.

The Covid-19 pandemic and its accompanying impacts have become a burden that brings academic stress to students. Academic stress during the Covid-19 pandemic highly depends on factors that affect an individual's adaptation style, such as age, physical condition, experience, environment, and learning process.<sup>19</sup> The variety of stressors in the learning process during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as completing many tasks in a fast time and the need to adapt to the situation in the school environment during the Covid-19 pandemic. This change is also not an easy thing for students.<sup>20</sup>

Researchers assume that the academic stress experienced by students during the Covid-19 pandemic can cause pressure on students because of the strict rules that must be followed. The regulations in question include the obligation to use masks during the learning process, implementing social distancing, and limited time to study in the classroom so that many tasks must be done at home.



## Conclusion

Based on the data collection that was carried out on February 24 and 25, 2022, on 230 students of State Senior High School 4, this study concluded that 161 respondents (70%) experienced high levels of academic stress, and 69 respondents (30%) experienced low levels of academic stress. So, Educators are expected to reduce assignments at school and home work to minimize academic stress on students.

**Ethical Clearance:** This research has passed the Ethics test by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Nursing, Syiah Kuala University, with the code of ethics 111117050122.

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**Conflict of Interest:** Nil

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