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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Academic Adjustment and Social Support Roles among Undergraduate Students during the COVID -19 Pandemic

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Abstract:

Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected various areas, including the education sector, which has led to use of various alternatives, such as online learning platform, requiring undergraduate students' adjustment to academic conditions. Therefore, this study aims to assess the academic adjustment of undergraduate students and the social support from parents and lecturers, as well as peer support.

Methods:

A cross-sectional quantitative approach was used, while the data were obtained through surveys using an online adjustment measurement scale and self-report questionnaires to measure social support. The surveys were distributed through various online platforms, including Instagram, LINE, WhatsApp, and among lecturers in several universities in Indonesia, to be filled by registered undergraduate students learning from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 299 participants, with males being 93 and females 206 having a mean age of 19.76 years, spread across several provinces in Indonesia, were selected using a convenience sampling technique. The IBM SPSS Statistic version 24.0 was used to calculate the correlation between variables using Pearson correlation, and the analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression analysis.

Results:

The results showed parent involvement and lecturer support to have a significant impact on academic adjustment, while peer support did not prove to have a significant impact ($R^2=0.120$, $p<0.01$). Furthermore, the impact of social support on the dimensions of academic adjustment comprising lifestyle, achievement, and motivation was also evaluated. Based on the results, only lecturer support plays a significant positive role in the academic lifestyle dimension. In academic achievement, parent involvement and lecturer support exhibit a positively significant role, while only parent involvement significantly affects academic motivation. Among the three dimensions, only peer support has no significant impact.

Conclusion:

The results imply that the success of undergraduate students in academic adjustment during the COVID-19 pandemic can be facilitated by parental involvement and lecturer support.

Keywords: Academic adjustment, Achievement, Online learning, Social support, Undergraduate students, Pandemic.

Article History

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1. INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has changed the lifestyle of various people around the world. People are recommended to stay at home and limit their activities in crowded places. This is because the pandemic has a serious impact on students, instructors, and educational organizations globally [1], causing schools and

universities across to be locked down, and requiring students to follow social distancing rules [2]. The Minister of Education and Culture also issued regulations requiring the methods and media for implementing learning from home to enforce social distancing rules, as explained in the Circular Letter Number 4 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Education in the Emergency Period of Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) and Circular Letter Number 15 of 2020 concerning Guidelines for Organizing Learning from Home [3]. Consequently, the

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learning method must be changed from face-to-face to online at all levels, including kindergarten, elementary, junior and high school, as well as university.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, learning in university was significantly challenged. At first, the undergraduate students welcomed this new learning from home development with great anticipation. However, several difficulties ensued, such as technical barriers, ineffective material loads and assignments, inconsistency in study time, difficulty understanding material, and lack of communication and cooperation. This caused delays in the academic completion time, which increases concerns related to changes in plans and decreases academic performance [4, 5]. Several survey results show that more than 90% of undergraduate students prefer face-to-face learning over online due to the advantage of communicating in real classroom situations with lecturers and fellow students [6, 7]. Doyle and Walker [8] mentioned that undergraduate students often encounter a myriad of challenges. Furthermore, the learning environment is changing rapidly because the Covid-19 pandemic requires undergraduate students to have academic adjustment skills to deal with various challenges. Academic adjustment is an individual's ability to manage their performance, lifestyle, expectations, and motivation in the social, psychological, and physical environment of the school [9].

Undergraduate students' academic adjustment skill is important because it is positively related to study progress and academic performance [10]. Previous studies have also shown the important role of academic adjustment in predicting achievement [10 - 12] and persistence [13]. Adler *et al.* [14] stated that adjustment to university learning is critical for academic success. Furthermore, academic adjustment is a key indicator of adaptation for students to a new learning environment [15] and is an important predictor of academic success.

Other factors that influence academic adjustment in universities include internal/personal and external/environmental factors. The internal/personal factors related to student motivation are engagement [16], self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, self-regulated study behavior [16 - 18], and psychological capital [19]. The external/environmental factors are related to the role of social support [17, 20]. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the role of social support in academic adjustment was more intensively studied. Social support is the most important protective factor for undergraduate students [21]. In the pandemic period when undergraduate students were learning from home, there was a shift in the role of social support that affected academic adjustment.

Sadoughi and Hesampour [20] explained that during university life, students are reassured to establish more intimate relationships with their friends, since they are away from their family. Similarly, Friedlander *et al.* [22] found that parents play a significant role in overall academic adjustment, while friends increase personal-emotional and social adjustment. During the Covid-19 pandemic, undergraduate students spent more time with their family and only virtually interacted with

lecturers and friends. There is also a limited explanation related to the lecturer's support role in academic adjustment. To fill the gap, this study aims to explain the role of social support comprising parents, lecturers, and peers in relation to undergraduate students' academic adjustment during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the study questions are: 1) Are parents, lecturers, and peers' social support predictor of academic adjustment; 2) Are parents, lecturers, and peers' social support predictor of academic lifestyle; 3) Are parents, lecturers, and peers' social support predictor of academic motivation; and 4) Are parents, lecturers, and peers' social support predictor of academic achievement?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Participants

The study population involved Indonesian undergraduate students. A total of 299 participants from several provinces in Indonesia were selected using a convenient sampling method, with the requirement that they are registered with the University and learning from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The required sample size must be close to 250 for a stable estimated correlation calculation in an unknown study population [23]. The participants consisted of 93 men and 206 women, with an age range of 17 - 25 years old and mean age 19.76 years.

2.2. Measuring Instrument and Data Collection

Data were collected through an online survey to assess academic adjustment and social support's role. The surveys were distributed through various online platforms, including Instagram, LINE, WhatsApp, and also among lecturers in several universities in Indonesia, to be filled by registered undergraduate students learning from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Before filling out the questionnaire, the participants were asked to read and agree to the informed consent. A questionnaire developed by Anderson *et al.* [9] was employed as the instrument to measure academic adjustment. It was initially subjected to an adaptation process to be used in Indonesia. This was carried out using back and forward translation, adjusting the items into the online learning context, and testing for the psychometric properties. The measurement consisted of 10 items from 3 dimensions:

- (1) Academic lifestyle refers to the fit between the individual's temporary role as a student and theory in online learning;
- (2) Academic achievement refers to satisfaction with academic progress and performance during online learning; and
- (3) Academic motivation means the drive for the student to continue and complete their online learning [9].

Responses to the questionnaire were given based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, namely *rarely applies to me* to *always apply to me*. To confirm the measurement model of the adjustment scale in the context of online learning and also in Indonesia, the reliability test using IBM SPSS Statistics version

24.0 and Confirmatory Factor Analysis was carried out with R analysis. The results showed that Alpha Cronbach had a value of 0.72 and the model fit the data with Chi-Square = 817.621, p-value < 0.1, CFI = 0.821, RMSEA = 0,045; SRMR = 0,053. The loading factor on the items ranged from 0.38 to 0.83.

Social support’s role was measured by a self-report questionnaire. The possible social support that can contribute to the academic adjustment was listed in the preliminary study. It includes 1) parent involvement; 2) peer support; and 3) lecturer support. Students filled each item based on the experience gained during online learning, and the items ranged from 1 to 3:

(1) Parent involvement, where score 1 indicates the highest level of involvement, 2 a moderate level, and 3 zero level;

(2) Peer support, wherein score 1 indicates very helpful, 2 quite helpful, and 3 unhelpful; and

(3) Lecturer support, with score 1 indicating very helpful, 2 quite helpful, and 3 unhelpful.

2.3. Statistical Analysis

The data obtained in this study were in a quantitative form. The analysis was performed using the Pearson correlation to examine whether there is a correlation between academic adjustment and social support. When a significant correlation was confirmed, the regression analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics version 24.0 was performed on the contribution of the social support role and each factor to academic adjustment.

3. RESULTS

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for undergraduate students' academic adjustment and social support role. Academic motivation had the highest average score, while lifestyle had the lowest among the dimensions of academic adjustment. Meanwhile, regarding the social support roles, peer support and parental involvement had the highest and the lowest average scores, respectively. The descriptive statistics also showed that the data had a normal distribution.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for undergraduate students on each scale.

	n	Min	Max	M	SD	Std. Error
Academic Adjustment Total	299	16	50	35.14	6.50	0.37
Academic Lifestyle	299	3	15	9.04	2.60	0.15
Academic Achievement	299	3	15	9.67	2.85	0.16
Academic Motivation	299	5	20	16.43	2.76	0.16
Parent Involvement	299	1	3	1.99	0.77	0.04
Peer Support	299	1	3	2.30	0.65	0.04
Lecturer Support	299	1	3	2.07	0.69	0.04

Table 2 shows that social support roles were positively and significantly correlated with academic adjustment and its three dimensions. In other words, the higher the social support

obtained, the higher the academic adjustment and *vice versa*. This also applies to every dimension of academic adjustment. Based on the correlation coefficient, .70–.90 was considered strong, .40–.60 moderate, and .10–.30 weak [24]. The correlation data showed that lecturer support correlated with academic adjustment total ($r=0.296$), lifestyle ($r=0.293$), and achievement ($r=0.255$). Meanwhile, parental involvement mostly correlated with academic motivation ($r=0.176$). All social support roles were significantly and positively correlated with all dimensions of academic adjustment at $p < 0.01$.

Table 2. Pearson’s correlation between academic adjustment and social support role.

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Academic Adjustment Total						
2	Academic Lifestyle	0.726**					
3	Academic Achievement	0.856**	0.453**				
4	Academic Motivation	0.789**	0.299**	0.559**			
5	Parent Involvement	0.221**	0.168**	0.180**	0.176**		
6	Peer Support	0.209**	0.151**	0.175**	0.170**	0.180**	
7	Lecturer Support	0.296**	0.293**	0.255**	0.157**	0.234**	0.361**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Other regression assumption tests, including linearity, residual normality, absence of multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity, met the requirements of the regression test (*Kolmogorov-Smirnov*=0.2; *VIF*=1.070~1.190). Therefore, the results were subjected to further regression analysis.

Regression analysis was used to determine the role of social support as a predictor of academic adjustment and its dimensions. The coefficients generated through the following analysis are presented in Table 3. The result showed that social support roles significantly predicted academic adjustment, accounting for 12% of the variance. Furthermore, parent involvement and lecturer support indicated a significant effect, but peer support did not. The impact of social support on the dimensions of academic adjustment, including lifestyle, achievement, and motivation, was also evaluated. In the lifestyle, only the lecturer’s support played a significant positive role, and in motivation dimension, only parent involvement, while in academic achievement, both parent involvement and lecturer support had significant impacts. From all three dimensions, peer support proved to have no significant influence. Factors that predicted academic adjustment significantly from highest contribution to lowest were lecturer support ($B = 2.102, p < 0.01$) and parent involvement ($B = 1.267, p < 0.01$). All social support roles simultaneously predicted academic adjustment, with lifestyle accounting for 9.8% of the variance, achievement 8.6%, and motivation 5.7%.

Table 3. Regression coefficients of the role of social support in academic adjustment.

		B	SE B	β	T	P	R ²
Academic Adjustment Total							0.120
	(Constant)	25.921	1.579		16.415	0.000	
	Parent Involvement	1.267	0.478	0.150	2.653	0.008	
	Peer Support	1.024	0.592	0.102	1.730	0.085	
	Lecturer Support	2.102	0.560	0.224	3.756	0.000	
Academic Lifestyle							0.098
	(Constant)	5.996	0.640		9.363	0.000	
	Parent Involvement	0.342	0.194	0.101	1.763	0.079	
	Peer Support	0.166	0.240	0.041	0.690	0.491	
	Lecturer Support	0.958	0.227	0.255	4.220	0.000	
Academic Achievement							0.086
	(Constant)	6.279	0.705		8.910	0.000	
	Parent Involvement	0.441	0.213	0.119	2.066	0.040	
	Peer Support	0.366	0.264	0.083	1.384	0.168	
	Lecturer Support	0.811	0.250	0.197	3.246	0.001	
Academic Motivation							0.057
	(Constant)	13.646	0.694		19.670	0.000	
	Parent Involvement	0.485	0.210	0.135	2.311	0.022	
	Peer Support	0.493	0.260	0.116	1.895	0.059	
	Lecturer Support	0.334	0.246	0.084	1.357	0.176	

4. DISCUSSION

The results show that parent involvement and lecturer support have a significant impact on academic adjustment, while peer support does not. This is consistent with Sadoughi and Hesampour [20], who stated that parents have an important role in students' academic adjustment. When students have social support from their parents, they tend to possess a higher level of physical, mental, and social health, which makes them better at adjusting to academic challenges [20]. Similarly, Azila-Gbettor and Abiemo [25] mentioned that lecturers play an important role in shaping students' behavior by providing academic guidance and emotional support to increase comfort in the learning environment. Negative academic adjustment experiences are often associated with unsupportive lecturers [26].

Regarding peer support, the result obtained was different from previous studies, which highlighted the importance of peer roles, especially in emotional support [20, 22]. This is assumed to be related to the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (LSSR) situation in Indonesia at the beginning of the pandemic, where undergraduate students were limited to indoor activities with family or friends. Students in online learning initially feel happy enough because they can exchange greetings with their peers virtually during zoom meetings or google meet. However, the virtual meetings were not passionately anticipated, and the effectiveness of their ability to deal with online learning in relation to peer support was questionable [27].

The impact of social support on the dimensions of academic adjustment in the form of lifestyle, achievement, and motivation was also evaluated. The academic lifestyle dimension showed that only lecturer support plays a significant positive role. It refers to the fit between the individual's

temporary role as an undergraduate student and learning from home [9]. During online learning, daily activities that are related to academics facilitate interaction with their lecturer. According to Fatoni *et al.* [28], one of the advantages of online learning is that it allows students to speak comfortably over the chat and ask questions freely from the teacher. They feel that taking a one-on-one class increases interaction with their lectures and makes them ask questions more easily than offline lectures [28]. Before the pandemic, most students preferred to interact more with their peers rather than with the lecturers. They were closer to their groups, spent time with their peers, carried out various activities with their peers, as well as received and provided encouragement and motivation for peer support. However, in the online learning process, overall interactions with other people, such as friends, have decreased significantly [29]. Based on a previous study, students receive less social support from their peers in online learning due to a lack of physical interaction [27].

Parent involvement and lecturer support play a significant positive role in academic achievement, which refers to satisfaction with progress and performance during learning from home [9]. Academic achievement describes the level of success that students attain while completing their formal education, for example, the final grade-point average or GPA [30]. According to Van Rooij *et al.* [31], academic achievement reflected by the GPA score is one of the indicators that undergraduate students have a good academic adjustment. The GPA score is indirectly influenced by the role of assistance from the lecturers. This is because lecturers who strive to improve their undergraduate students not only provide knowledge, but also develop self-regulation skills, which lead to better academic achievement [32]. As for parents, providing a comfortable educational environment, network instability,

and other facilities helps students survive online learning [28]. Salami [32] reported that students who received social support from family members, such as feedback, intimacy, positive social interactions, and real help, were able to deal effectively with academic problems. Therefore, social support indirectly helps students to attain academic achievement.

Regarding academic motivation, only parent involvement plays a significant positive role. Academic motivation refers to the drive for the student to continue and complete online learning [9]. The facilities and educational environment provided by parents to their children help them to be less worried about their life [33]. This is expected to help undergraduate students focus on their school life, thereby keeping their motivation high during online learning. The undergraduate students are motivated to complete their studies at the university. These results imply that the success of academic adjustment during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in relation to online learning, is significantly influenced by parental involvement and lecturer support.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, parent involvement and lecturer support have a significant effect on academic adjustment, while peer support does not. The impact of social support on the dimensions of academic adjustment, including lifestyle, achievement, and motivation, has also been evaluated in this study. The academic lifestyle dimension showed that only lecturer support plays a significant positive role. In academic achievement, parent involvement and lecturer support exhibited a positively significant influence. Meanwhile, regarding academic motivation, only parent involvement had a significantly positive effect. Among all three dimensions, peer support did not have a significant impact. Further studies are needed to examine whether the role of social support in academic adjustment has changed after learning has transitioned from online to hybrid. The major limitation of this study is related to data collection, which was carried out at the beginning of the pandemic; hence, the results only describe the role of social support in academic adjustment during this period.

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

LSSR = Large-Scale Social Restrictions

ETHICS APPROVAL AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

All human study procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the committee responsible for human experimentation (institutional and national).

HUMAN AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

No animals were used, while all human study procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the committee responsible for human experimentation (institutional and national), and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2013.

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

Informed consent was obtained from the participants, and the study procedure was duly explained.

STANDARD OF REPORTING

STROBE guidelines have been used in this study.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

The data supporting the results are available in the Repository at osf.io, reference number: <https://osf.io/cy2ux/>

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None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

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