

Economic Inequality Academic Stress, Optimism, And Mental Health Among Students In Response To Going Back To Offline School After Covid-19 Pandemic



Anissa Lestari Kadiyono*¹, Aryo Bima Fathoni Cahyono²
¹Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia
²Center for Innovation and Psychological Research

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between academic stress, optimism, and mental health among students transitioning from online to offline education following the COVID-19 pandemic. The abrupt transition from online to offline education has presented significant obstacles for students, negatively affecting their academic performance and mental health. This study seeks to comprehend the factors influencing academic stress during the transition, the challenges of readjustment encountered by students returning to offline education, and the potential benefits of this change. In addition, the function of optimism as a coping mechanism and its impact on academic stress and mental health will be investigated. This investigation will be conducted using a secondary research methodology. The existing literature, including research articles, journals, and other pertinent sources published after 2015, will be analysed critically to glean useful insights. The research will examine previous studies examining the connection between academic stress and mental health, the impact of optimism on contending with academic stress, and the effects of the transition from online to offline education on mental health. To provide a comprehensive comprehension of the factors at play, theoretical frameworks such as stress and coping theories will be utilised.

Keywords: Academic stress, optimism, mental health, online learning, traditional schooling, transition, coping, and the COVID-19

Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

This includes the education system. In an effort to halt the spread of the virus, educational institutions across the globe implemented measures to ensure the safety of their students and employees (Alavi, Darestani, and Zolfaghari, 2016). This precipitous shift from traditional face-to-face education to distance learning presented significant challenges for students, teachers, and parents. Students were required to adjust to a new mode of instruction, navigate technological platforms, and deal with the disruption of their regular routines and social interactions. In addition to these obstacles, the pandemic increased

students' levels of uncertainty, anxiety, and tension, which negatively impacted their well-being.

1.2 Justification for the Study

As the situation improves and vaccination efforts advance, educational institutions progressively reopen, allowing students to return to traditional classrooms. This transition from online to offline education is a unique and crucial time for understanding student experiences, particularly in terms of academic stress, optimism, and mental health (Alavi, Darestani, and Zolfaghari, 2016). It is crucial to investigate the factors that influ-

ence the transition process, the challenges and opportunities that arise, and the potential impact on the well-being of students. By investigating these factors, educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals can develop targeted interventions and support systems that facilitate a successful and seamless transition for students.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study's primary objective is to investigate the relationship between academic stress, optimism, and mental health among students as a result of returning to offline education following the COVID-19 pandemic. Research Objectives are:

- To examine the factors that affect academic stress during the transition from online to offline education.
- To examine the challenges of readjustment faced by students returning to traditional classrooms and their potential impact on mental health.
- To examine the function of optimism as a coping mechanism during the transition and its relationship to mental health outcomes among students.
- To identify the potential benefits of offline education for the entire well-being of students.

1.4 Research Significance

Understanding the impact of the shift from online to offline education on students' academic stress, optimism, and mental health is crucial for a number of reasons. Initially, it provides valuable insights into the challenges students confront during this crucial period and their prospective effects on mental health. Second, it emphasises the role of optimism as a coping mechanism and its impact on students' capacity to adapt and flourish in offline educational settings. Lastly, the study contributes to the existing corpus of knowledge by filling in voids in the literature and providing educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals with practical recommendations for better supporting students during the transition.

1.5 Research Scope and Design

This study examines the transitional experiences of students from online to offline education following the COVID-19 pandemic. The scope

of the investigation includes academic pressure, optimism, and mental health outcomes. Secondary research methods is used to collect data. This research seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide insights that can inform interventions and support systems to promote students' well-being during the transition from online to offline education by investigating the experiences of students during this transitional period.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Academic Stress, Mental Health, and Optimism

Academic stress is the psychological and emotional strain students endure due to academic obligations, pressures, and obstacles. It includes workload, time management, academic achievement expectations, competitiveness, and failure dread. Academic stress can harm students' mental health and well-being.

2.2 Importance of Optimism in Mental Health

Optimism is an optimistic approach, a conviction in one's capacity to overcome problems, and an anticipation of favourable consequences. Optimists have better resilience, coping, and mental health. Optimism reduces stress, improves psychological performance, and boosts mental well-being. Academic stress has been linked to several detrimental mental health effects in students in numerous research. Academic stress can lead to anxiety, sadness, burnout, lower life satisfaction, and poor academic achievement. Academic pressures can harm students' mental health and quality of life. Understanding academic stress, optimism, and mental health is crucial to designing effective treatments and support systems for students' well-being in educational environments (Alavi, Darestani, and Zolfaghari, 2016). We may learn about academic stress, optimism, and mental health by reviewing the research on these issues.

2.3 COVID-19 and Education System

Transition to Online Learning during the Pandemic The COVID-19 pandemic required extensive use of online learning to maintain educational continuity and reduce viral propagation. Students and teachers struggled to adapt to online learning. Remote learning, limited resources, and new learning settings disrupted tradition-

al schooling's structure and social relationships. Online learning posed several obstacles and stresses for students. These problems included adjusting to new digital platforms, fewer face-to-face contacts with classmates and instructors, decreased structure and accountability, and possible hurdles to technology and dependable internet connections. Academic stress and student well-being were exacerbated by a lack of direct supervision and direction, increased self-motivation, and home distractions. Online learning had major effects on student mental health. During the epidemic, students reported higher stress, anxiety, and isolation. The merging of personal and academic life, social alienation, and weakened peer support networks have harmed students' mental health. Online learning's lack of regularity, physical exercise, and sleep habits worsen mental health issues. Understanding how online learning affects student well-being is essential for designing targeted treatments and support systems. We may learn about online students' specific pressures and their mental health by studying the pandemic's impacts on education and student well-being (Amarasuriya, Forbes-Mewett, and Wickramasekara, 2019).

2.4 Online-to-Offline Schooling

After the COVID-19 epidemic, students' academic stress may increase when they switch from online to offline instruction. These considerations may include adjusting to physical classroom surroundings, a regimented schedule, increased workload and academic demands, re-establishing social relationships, and performance concerns. Students may face new problems and academic stresses when learning settings and techniques change.

2.5 Offline Schooling Adjustment problems

Students returning to offline schooling may face several adjustment problems. Readjusting to face-to-face contacts, developing new habits, managing time, adapting to in-person education, and dealing with heightened social demands and expectations can be difficult. Reintegrating into the physical learning environment and re-establishing ties with classmates and teachers can affect kids' well-being and academic achievement.

2.6 Potential Benefits of Returning to Offline

Schooling

Offline schooling has pros and cons for students. Offline schooling offers direct social contacts, real-time involvement with teachers and students, collaborative learning, and access to tools and facilities that may boost learning. Structure, responsibility, and social support in the classroom can improve academic achievement, motivation, and well-being (Amarasuriya, Forbes-Mewett, and Wickramasekara, 2019). Optimism is a psychological attribute characterised by an optimistic perspective, belief in the capacity to overcome problems, and expectancy of favourable consequences. It includes dispositional optimism, explanatory style, and self-efficacy (Shankland, Ros, and Dockett, 2016). Optimists are proactive and resilient. Optimism helps manage academic stress and use good coping techniques. Optimistic students are more likely to view academic challenges as controllable and transient, reducing their mental health effects. Optimism helps kids manage academic obstacles and feel in control by promoting adaptive coping techniques including problem-solving, seeking social support, and positive reframing (Shankland, Ros, and Dockett, 2016). Optimism protects mental health, especially in difficult conditions like the shift from online to offline schooling. Optimists are more resilient and have lesser anxiety, depression, and psychological pain. They are more likely to retain mental health and well-being during difficult times. Optimism boosts positive thinking, adaptive coping, and psychological flexibility, which can mitigate academic stress and improve students' mental health (Shankland, Ros, and Dockett, 2016). Academic stress and student mental health results have been widely studied. High academic stress has been linked to anxiety, depression, burnout, lower life satisfaction, and poor academic performance in several research. Academic stress has been shown to harm students' mental health and quality of life.

2.7 Research on Optimism and Academic Stress

Optimism has been studied in relation to academic stress. Optimistic students use problem-solving, social support, and positive reframing to improve their mental health (Wang, Woo, Chen,

and Chu, 2017). Optimism protects students from academic stress, according to research. Optimists cope better with academic stress, have reduced anxiety and despair, and are more resilient (Auger, Gaskin, and Vander Stoep, 2018).

2.8 Gaps in the Literature and Research Questions

Previous research has illuminated the association between academic stress, optimism, and mental health, but there are still gaps. Research topics include:

1. Longitudinal research: Many studies are cross-sectional, restricting our knowledge of the dynamic link between academic stress, optimism, and mental health. Longitudinal studies can show how these characteristics vary and how they affect students' well-being (Auger, Gaskin, and Vander Stoep, 2018).
2. Moderating and mediating factors: More study is needed to determine how academic stress, optimism, and mental health are related. Social support, self-efficacy, resilience, and coping may affect this connection.
3. Intervention and preventive measures: Future research should design and evaluate treatments and preventative techniques to reduce academic stress and promote student optimism and mental health. Mindfulness-based therapies, resilience-building programmes, and educational positive psychology interventions are examples (Auger, Gaskin, and Vander Stoep, 2018). Addressing these gaps in the literature will help us understand the complex relationship between academic stress, optimism, and mental health and inform evidence-based interventions to support students' well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic transition from online to offline schooling (Auger, Gaskin, and Vander Stoep, 2018).

2.9 Theory Frameworks

Stress and coping theories can explain academic stress, optimism, and mental wellness. Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (1984) proposes that stress is caused by the appraisal process, when people assess a situation's demands and their resources to meet them. Problem-focused and emotion-focused coping methods might mitigate stress's effects on mental health.

2.10 The Role of Optimism in Theoretical Frameworks

Optimism is a personal resource that impacts stressor evaluation and coping techniques. According to Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory, positive emotions like optimism expand cognitive and behavioural repertoires, enabling adaptive coping. Optimism as a cognitive appraisal style makes stresses seem less dangerous and controllable, improving coping and mental health. Theoretical frameworks may be used to study the shift from online to offline schooling and its effects on students' well-being (Auger, Gaskin, and Vander Stoep, 2018). The Stress and Coping Theories can assist students to understand how academic expectations, social relationships, and self-perceptions change during the shift. These theories can guide the study of student transition coping methods including problem-focused (e.g., academic help) and emotion-focused (e.g., social support). These theories can help explain how optimism affects kids' transition assessments and coping methods. Optimists may see the change as a chance to grow, solve problems, and get assistance. Using stress and coping theories, researchers can examine how positive assessments affect students' offline schooling and mental health. These theoretical frameworks help illuminate students' experiences, coping mechanisms, and mental health outcomes throughout the transition from online to offline learning. This knowledge can help create focused interventions and support systems for a seamless transition and student well-being (Auger, Gaskin, and Vander Stoep, 2018). Academic stress is regularly linked to poor mental health results (Wang, Woo, Chen, and Chu, 2017). Academic stress increases the risk of anxiety, depression, burnout, life satisfaction, and academic achievement. Academic pressures can harm students' mental health and quality of life (Chan, 2019). Optimism and Academic Stress Research demonstrates optimism protects against academic stress. Optimists are more resilient, see academic challenges as transient, and use adaptive coping mechanisms. Optimism reduces anxiety, sadness, and academic stress (Wang, Woo, Chen, and Chu, 2017).

2.11 Effect of Online-to-Offline Schooling

Transition on Mental Health

The COVID-19 epidemic has had both beneficial and bad consequences on students' mental health. Returning to offline schooling provides direct social contacts, regulated routines, and academic assistance, which can improve mental health. However, the transition's adjustment difficulties and academic expectations might raise students' stress and mental health issues (Wang, Woo, Chen, and Chu, 2017). We can grasp academic stress, optimism, and mental health research methods and major conclusions by evaluating past research. This insight can help researchers build effective treatments to enhance students' well-being throughout the transition from online to offline schooling.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The link between academic stress, optimism, and mental health among students returning to offline school following the COVID-19 outbreak is examined in this secondary research study. Secondary research gathers and analyses pertinent literature, studies, and academic publications.

3.1 Data sources

This study used academic publications, research articles, books, and reliable web resources. University libraries, research databases, and search engines will provide these sources. Relevance to study topics, academic rigour, and recency will determine data source selection.

3.2 Data Collection

Data gathering entails rigorous literature search, filtering, and review. Step integrates: Keywords: Academic stress, optimism, mental health, offline schooling, and COVID-19 will be buzzwords. These keywords will help search. Literature Search: Academic databases including PubMed, Google Scholar, PsycINFO, and Education Research Complete will be searched using the keywords. "Academic stress" AND "optimism" AND "mental health" will be searched using Boolean operators. Screening and Selection: Titles and abstracts will be used to filter publications for relevance to the study subject.

3.3 Data Collection

Research aims, techniques, major findings, and theoretical frameworks will be retrieved from chosen papers. Analyse this information.

3.4 Data Analysis

The retrieved data will be analysed using thematic analysis to uncover relevant themes, patterns, and interactions linked to academic stress, optimism, and mental health during the online-to-offline education transition.

3.5 Evaluation

The trustworthiness of the authors, the rigour of the research methods, the relevance to the research topics, and the publication source's reputation will be used to evaluate the selected literature. To ensure data dependability and validity, only high-quality research will be analysed.

3.6 Research Ethics

This study depends on current literature; therefore, ethics mostly include citing and acknowledging authors. References and citations shall be correct to protect intellectual property and avoid plagiarism.

3.7 Limitation of Research

Secondary research is limited. These include literary prejudice, publishing bias, and inaccessibility to unpublished or restricted sources. The quality and availability of the literature—which may differ in techniques, sample sizes, and study contexts—also affects the analysis. The secondary research technique includes research design and data collecting. This study reviews and analyses evidence on academic stress, optimism, and mental health among students migrating from online to offline learning after the COVID-19 epidemic. The literature analysis results will be discussed in the following chapters.

4. RESEARCH ANALYSIS

4.1 Academic Stress, Optimism, and Psychological Health

Analysis of the existing literature reveals a substantial corpus of research on academic stress, optimism, and mental health in students (Jeon and Cho, 2018). Numerous studies have investigated the individual constructs and their interplay in a variety of educational settings (Russo-Netzer, Schulenberg, and Ben-Zur, 2017). The literature

consistently emphasises the negative effects of academic stress on the mental health outcomes of students, such as increased anxiety, melancholy, and overall well-being (Magson et al., 2019).

4.2 Impact of Online-to-Offline Schooling Transition on Academic Stress

After the COVID-19 pandemic, the transition from online to offline education has presented students with distinctive challenges, resulting in increased academic stress (Magson et al., 2019). According to studies, students have had trouble adjusting to the new learning environment, managing increased workload demands, and meeting academic expectations (Shankland, Ros, and Dockett, 2016). During the transition, factors such as lack of social interaction, unfamiliar classroom dynamics, and increased performance pressure contribute to increased academic stress (Chao and Au, 2018).

4.3 Adjustment Difficulties Encountered by Students Returning to Traditional Education

Students face a number of re-adjustment difficulties upon returning to traditional classrooms (Magson et al., 2019). The analysis emphasises the social and emotional challenges students experience as they re-establish face-to-face interactions, reintegrate into peer relationships, and adjust to classroom dynamics. During this transitional period, students may experience anxiety, social isolation, and a sense of disconnection, which can negatively impact their mental health (Magson et al., 2019).

4.4 Optimism as an Adjustment Mechanism Throughout the Transition

The capacity of students to manage the challenges associated with the transition from online to offline schooling is significantly influenced by optimism (Magson et al., 2019). The analysis reveals that during this transition, pupils with greater optimism exhibit greater resilience, adaptive coping strategies, and enhanced mental health outcomes (Russo-Netzer, Schulenberg, and Ben-Zur, 2017). As a protective factor, optimism enables students to maintain a positive outlook, control their emotions, and effectively manage academic stress.

4.5 Theoretical Models and Frameworks

The analysis investigates a variety of theoretical frameworks and models used to comprehend the transition from online to offline education and its impact on academic stress, positivism, and mental health (Magson et al., 2019). The transactional model of stress and coping, cognitive-behavioural models, and positive psychology frameworks have been utilised to examine the complex interaction between these constructs. These frameworks provide valuable insights into the cognitive, affective, and behavioural processes that students engage in during the transition, casting light on the underlying mechanisms of their experiences (Chao and Au, 2018).

4.6 Limitations

Despite the abundance of research on academic stress, optimism, and mental health, the existing literature contains notable gaps. The analysis demonstrates the need for additional longitudinal studies examining the long-term effects of the transition on the mental health and well-being of students (Magson et al., 2019). In addition, there is a paucity of cross-cultural studies that investigate how cultural factors affect the experience of academic stress and the efficacy of coping mechanisms. Future research should also concentrate on the development and evaluation of interventions that promote resilience, optimism, and well-being during the transition from online to offline schooling (Chan, 2019).

4.7 Reviewing Previous Research Questions

This study's research questions are illuminated and clarified by a comprehensive analysis of the relevant literature. The analysis emphasises the effect of transition on academic stress, identifies optimism as a coping mechanism, and emphasises the effect on students' mental health. It provides a nuanced comprehension of the intricate relationships between academic stress, optimism, and mental health during the transition from online to offline education. The chapter on research analysis provides an in-depth analysis of the literature, revealing key findings, theoretical frameworks, and research gaps. It provides a comprehensive comprehension of the effect of transition on academic stress, adjustment difficulties encountered by students, the role of optimism as a coping mechanism, and the theoret-

ical foundations that support these constructs. Following this analysis, subsequent chapters will present the study's findings and implications.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

After the COVID-19 epidemic, students switched from online to offline learning. This study examined how academic stress, optimism, and mental health were affected. A comprehensive literature review revealed numerous noteworthy conclusions. First, online-to-offline schooling increases academic stress. Students stress over adjusting to a new school environment, handling increasing workloads, and meeting academic standards. Second, children face social, peer, and classroom transition issues while returning to offline learning. During this change, students may feel anxious, alone, and disconnected, which can harm their mental health. Thirdly, optimism was vital to transitioning. Optimistic students had better resilience, coping, and mental health. Optimism helps kids stay happy, control emotions, and handle academic stress. The transactional model, cognitive-behavioral models, and positive psychology frameworks illuminated the complicated relationship between academic stress, optimism, and mental health throughout the shift.

5.2 Recommendation

This research suggests various ways to help children adjust to offline schooling:

4. Implement extensive transition programmes: To help pupils adjust to offline learning, schools should create thorough transition programmes. Orientation, peer support, and counselling can help students with social and emotional issues.
5. Encourage optimism and resilience: Schools should encourage optimism and resilience in pupils. Teaching resilience, a growth mindset, and positive thinking may help pupils cope with stress and change.
6. Improve mental health support services: Schools should prioritise counselling, therapy, and mental health specialists. Accessible, stigma-free mental health services can help students cope with stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues throughout the transition.

7. Create a good and inclusive school environment: Students should feel connected and at home in schools. Promoting good peer interactions, extracurricular activities, and bullying and prejudice can create a supportive school atmosphere.

8. Conduct longitudinal study: Future research should explore the transition's long-term consequences on students' academic stress, optimism, and mental health. Longitudinal study will reveal these factors' trends and suggest focused actions.

9. Promote cross-cultural understanding: Cross-cultural studies should examine how cultural influences affect students' academic stress and coping techniques. Understanding culture helps create culturally relevant treatments and support networks.

10. Design evidence-based interventions: Based on this study and other studies, educational institutions should design interventions that enhance resilience, optimism, and mental well-being throughout the transition. These treatments should be customised for students and executed alongside mental health specialists.

In summary, academic stress, optimism, and mental health are crucial throughout the transition from online to offline learning. Educational institutions may promote students' well-being and transition by applying the recommended tactics and interventions.

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