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Impact of anxiety and stress on the readiness among students after new student orientation programs

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Abstract

Background: The transition from one school to another marks a critical phase in a student's educational journey. The transition from elementary school to high school can be challenging as it is a significant milestone in adolescent development. During this period, students experience a variety of physical, emotional, and social changes along with new environments, friendships, and increased academic demands. This can also lead to anxiety and stress in adolescents. Anxiety and stress are mental health conditions that can negatively impact a person's emotional, cognitive, and social functioning. A 2022 study by the Indonesian Adolescent Mental Health Survey found that anxiety disorders are the most common mental health problem among adolescents, affecting 3.7% of the population.
Purpose: To determine the impact of anxiety and stress on the readiness among students after new student orientation programs.
Method: This study used a quantitative descriptive design with a cross-sectional approach. The study was conducted from July to October at Telkom junior high school, Purwokerto. The population of the study was 210 seventh grade students, but the sample was selected using simple random sampling so that the sample used was 114 respondents. The sample inclusion criteria included students who participated in the school environment introduction program, had a mobile phone, and were in good physical health, while the exclusion criteria were students in grades VIII and IX and students who did not participate in the school environment introduction program. The independent variables in this study are anxiety and stress, while the dependent variable is the school readiness of respondents after the school environment introduction program.The research instrument used was the DASS 42 questionnaire consisting of 28 items to measure the level of anxiety and stress experienced by respondents..
Results: The average age of respondents was 12.219 years with a standard deviation of 0.475 in the age range of 11-13 years as many as 83 respondents (72.8%) and the majority were male as many as 70 respondents (61.4%). the Spearman correlation coefficient of -0.516 with a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000, this indicates a significant negative correlation between anxiety levels and students' readiness to go to school. Conversely, the Spearman correlation coefficient for stress levels with students' readiness to go to school after the school environment introduction activity is -0.996 with a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000, this also indicates a significant negative correlation between stress and school readiness.
Conclusion: There is a strong negative correlation between anxiety and stress levels and students' readiness for school after being introduced to the school environment. This suggests that lower stress levels are associated with higher readiness for school. Conversely, higher stress levels are associated with lower readiness for school.

Keywords: Anxiety; Readiness; Stress; Students.

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INTRODUCTION

The transition from one school to another marks a critical phase in a student's educational journey. The transition from elementary school to high school can be challenging as it is a significant milestone in adolescent development. During this period, students experience a variety of physical, emotional, and social changes along with new environments, friendships, and increased academic demands. This can also lead to anxiety and stress in adolescents (Fatah, Susanti, Ariyanti, & Nursyamsiyah, 2021; Spernes, 2022).

Anxiety and stress are mental health conditions that can negatively impact a person's emotional, cognitive, and social functioning (Paulus, Ohmann, Möhler, Plener, & Popow, 2021). A 2022 study by the Indonesian Adolescent Mental Health Survey found that anxiety disorders are the most common mental health problem among adolescents, affecting 3.7% of the population (Juliansen, Heriyanto, Muljono, Budiputri, Sagala, & Octavius, 2024). Globally, adolescents are facing increasing sources of anxiety and stress, which can result in behavioral changes such as social withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, loss of appetite, irritability, emotional dysregulation, anger, and sleep disturbances (Locsin & Salvador, 2021). In Indonesia, a mental health survey of adolescents aged 10-17 years old showed that 15.5 million adolescents were affected and found that around 2.45 million experienced mental health disorders (Widhawati, Lubis, & Komalasari, 2024). Data shows that the prevalence of anxiety and stress disorders in adolescents, especially in Central Java, reached 7.71%, an increase compared to the previous year of 4.7% (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018).

The school environment orientation period is an important and mandatory phase designed to welcome new students before the start of the school year (de Klerk, Krull, & Maleswena, 2021). However, this period does not always go smoothly because many students feel pressured to adapt quickly. This can increase feelings of anxiety and stress for them. Student adjustment during this phase involves social and emotional adaptation because the transition to a new school often presents challenges in interacting with peers, building social relationships, and managing emotions in an unfamiliar environment. At this stage, students must adapt to a new environment and peers, as well as an unfamiliar education system. This can trigger increased anxiety and stress. On the other hand, excessive anxiety has significant adverse effects on adolescents' physical and mental health. Junior high school students are particularly vulnerable to anxiety and stress, influenced by their stress management and emotion regulation skills (Singh, Singh, Mahato, & Hambour, 2020; Ulfah, 2022).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative descriptive design with a cross-sectional approach. The study was conducted from July to October at SMP Telkom Purwokerto. The population of the study was 210 seventh grade students, but the sample was selected using simple random sampling so that the sample used was 114 respondents. The sample inclusion criteria included students who participated in the school environment introduction program, had a mobile phone, and were in good physical health, while the exclusion criteria were students in grades VIII and IX and students who did not participate in the school environment introduction program. The independent variables in this study are anxiety and stress, while the dependent variable is the school readiness of respondents after the school environment introduction program.

The research instrument used was the DASS 42 questionnaire consisting of 28 items to measure the level of anxiety and stress experienced by respondents. Furthermore, respondents provided responses on a scale of 0 (never) to 3 (very often). A separate school readiness questionnaire included responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Data were analyzed using statistical tests and univariate analysis was used to describe the characteristics of the respondents, while Spearman's rank correlation was used to determine the correlation between anxiety and school readiness, as well as stress and readiness after the introduction period to the school environment.

This research obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto with registration number: KEPK/UMP/54/IV/2024.

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RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 1. Distribution Characteristics of Respondent (N=114)

Variables	Results
Age (Mean±SD)(Range)(Years)	(12.219 ± 0.475) (11-13)
11	3/2.6
12	83/72.8
13	28/24.6
Gender (n/%)	
Female	44/38.6
Male	70/61.4

Table 1. presents the characteristics of respondents based on age and gender. Of the 114 respondents, the average age of respondents was 12,219 years with a standard deviation of 0.475 in the age range of 11-13 years as many as 83 respondents (72.8%) and the majority were male as many as 70 respondents (61.4%).

Table 2. Correlation of Anxiety and Stress with Readiness

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)
Anxiety- Readiness	-0.516	0.000
Stress-Readiness	-0.996	0.000

Table 2 shows the Spearman correlation coefficient of -0.516 with a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000, this indicates a significant negative correlation between anxiety levels and students' readiness to go to school. Conversely, the Spearman correlation coefficient for stress levels with students' readiness to go to school after the school environment introduction activity is -0.996 with a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000, this also indicates a significant negative correlation between stress and school readiness.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of this study, the majority of respondents were around 12 years old, namely 83 respondents (72.8%). This result is different from previous studies which were dominated by students aged 15 years (36.7%) and 16 years (34.3%) (Pertiwi, Moeliono, & Kendhawati, 2021). However, a study showed results that the majority of respondents in the study were early adolescents aged 12-16 years, namely 54 respondents. In his research, he revealed that this age period is marked by significant physical, social, and emotional changes, so that it can influence individual behavior (Aisyah, Rakhmawati, & Maulia, 2022). In line with other findings, stress levels tend to decrease with age. However, adolescents are considered more vulnerable due to their instability in managing emotions and their limited experience. As experience increases, adolescents will develop a better understanding of how to regulate emotions effectively (Putri, Harti, & Fitriana, 2023).

The results of this study indicate that the majority of respondents were male, namely 70 students (61.4%), while female respondents were 44 students (38.6%). However, the level of anxiety was higher in female students because the results of the study showed that 56 respondents (61.5%) experienced anxiety with the majority of respondents being female while only 35 male respondents (38.5%) experienced anxiety. This is in line with previous studies which stated that gender is one of the factors that influences anxiety, where men have higher resilience than women (Novianti & Nurmaguphita, 2024). Women are often described as having higher emotional sensitivity and prioritizing emotions over common sense, while

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men tend to be more rational so that women are more prone to anxiety.

Other studies support the results of this study, most of the stress levels in male and female students are within the normal range. However, male students are more likely to experience moderate stress, while female students are mostly categorized as experiencing severe stress (Wilujeng, Habibie, & Ventyaningsih, 2023). In contrast, a study involving a majority of female participants of 112 respondents (56.8%), found that gender did not significantly affect stress levels because male and female students reported the same stress experiences. However, women are more likely to experience moderate to severe stress than men. This may be due to the same coping strategies, especially during limited activities during the pandemic which offer fewer opportunities for students to manage stress effectively (Putri & Azalia, 2022)

Based on Table 2, the results of the Spearman Rank correlation test between anxiety and students' learning readiness in a new school environment, produced a correlation coefficient of -0.516 with a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000. This negative correlation indicates that low levels of anxiety are related to high student learning readiness. Anxiety occurs when the nervous system fails to respond effectively. Students with severe anxiety often focus on their problems, unable to focus on other aspects. Anxiety can also stem from unresolved problems at home or school because students have difficulty managing their emotions (Ariyani, Masroni, & Ristiani, 2022; Krogh, 2023).

Student readiness is influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors come from within the student, such as attitude. Attitude is an action taken in response to emotional and situational contexts (Wang, Olivier, & Chen, 2023). High school readiness is evident when students do not experience excessive anxiety (Karaman, Eşici, Tomar, & Aliyev, 2021). Meanwhile, external factors come from the student's environment, such as the family and school environment. Family dynamics, including parenting patterns, harmonious home life, family discipline, and economic stability have a significant impact on student readiness for school. The school environment also plays an important role, such as curriculum, teaching methods, student-teacher correlation, peer interactions, and a clean and pleasant school environment increase student readiness to learn (Djarwo, 2020).

The correlation between anxiety and school readiness shows that high readiness can broaden students' perspectives and efforts to adapt to the new school environment, thereby increasing their learning motivation (Farikoh, Darminto, & Sapti, 2022). Anxiety is commonly experienced by students during school orientation programs. This type of anxiety is included in academic anxiety, which can affect students' physical and psychological well-being (Evans, Borriello, & Field, 2018). The school environment introduction program aims to provide learning motivation, encourage students to build enthusiasm, and mental readiness to learn in a new school environment.

Spearman correlation analysis produced a coefficient of -0.996 with a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000. This correlation coefficient is close to -1, indicating a strong negative correlation between stress and school readiness. In other words, when stress levels decrease, students' readiness for school increases. Likewise, when stress levels decrease, students' readiness for school increases (Ursache, Blair, & Raver, 2012). Previous findings support the results of this study which also stated that stress is one of the factors that reduces students' motivation and interest in learning, stress has a negative impact on students' concentration and can reduce readiness to face new material in a more challenging educational environment (Sari, Bulantika, Utami, & Kholidin, 2020).

Lower stress levels help develop a realistic and objective attitude, and the ability to control excessive emotions leads to increased readiness for school. High school readiness is further supported by social factors, such as comfort, attention, support, and assistance provided by the school and peers (Putri & Hidayah, 2021). Stress is a common condition that affects individuals in their physiological and psychological states. Stress can be categorized into three levels, namely mild, moderate, and severe (Gavurova, Ivankova, & Rigelsky, 2020). Mild stress is characterized by fatigue, moderate stress with symptoms such as fainting, weakness, and decreased concentration and memory, and severe stress can cause digestive problems, increased heart rate, and shortness of breath. Academic stress consists of two components, namely, academic stressors and

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responses to these stressors (De la Fuente, González-Torres, Artuch-Garde, Vera-Martínez, Martínez-Vicente, & Peralta-S'anchez, 2021). Academic stressors can be classified into four categories, namely frustration, conflict, change, and self-inflicted pressure. Responses to these stressors include physical, emotional, and behavioral reactions (Jatira & Neviyarni, 2021).

CONCLUSION

There is a strong negative correlation between anxiety and stress levels and students' readiness for school after being introduced to the school environment. This suggests that lower stress levels are associated with higher readiness for school. Conversely, higher stress levels are associated with lower readiness for school.

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