The role of the scout organization in reducing academic stress among university students

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ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT

This study delves into the pivotal role of the Scout organization in alleviating academic stress among students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, Medan. Academic stress, a physiological and emotional response to academic demands, is often characterized by anxiety, worry, avoidance behaviour, and emotional instability. This research, employing a qualitative descriptive approach, investigates how the Scout organization aids students in overcoming academic stress. The findings underscore the significant role of the Scout organization in developing not just managerial skills but also leadership skills. It provides social support, encourages physical activity and relaxation, enhances mental resilience, and fosters positive character traits. The integration of these aspects creates a supportive environment that not only alleviates stress but also enriches students' personal development. This study underscores the transformative potential of non-formal educational organizations like Scouts in building adaptive skills and resilience among students, thereby enhancing student well-being and academic success.

INTRODUCTION

Lecture activities serve as a means of interaction between lecturers and students, as well as among students themselves, within the context of the teaching and learning process. The academic environment is characterized by its unique community, known as the academic society. Within this community, students are essential members who represent both a scientific dimension as part of the academic society and a social dimension as representatives of youth groups. Students bear responsibilities and tasks that will shape their future (Simbolon et al., 2016). Students play various roles within the academic community and the youth community on campus. These two dimensions significantly influence an individual's experience as a student. Many students join organizations and communities as platforms for self-development, character-building, and gaining valuable experiences. This trend emerges from the perception that classroom learning alone does not fully satisfy their aspirations for personal growth.

According to Mathis et al. (2017), an organization is a social unit consisting of a group of individuals who communicate with one another in a structured manner. Each member of the organization has specific tasks and functions that contribute to shared goals established within clear boundaries to allow differentiation. Thus, an organization serves as a platform for individuals who share a common vision, mission, or values to interact based on their roles and responsibilities to achieve shared objectives.

Among the various organizations active on campus, the Scout organization stands out with its unique role in shaping the nation's character. According to the Articles of Association of the Scout

Movement, its foundation aims to guide Indonesian children and youth in utilizing the basic principles of scouting education methods. These methods align with the conditions, needs, and progress of the Indonesian nation and its people, enabling individuals to become valuable members of society who contribute to advancing the nation and the state (Ariani, 2015). Scouting in higher education institutions aims to develop the nation's character, making us all proud of our role in implementing the Tridharma of Higher Education in education, research, and community service.

Stress can be defined as any situation where non-specific demands require an individual to respond or take action (Mallo & Ronda, 2010). Bariyyah and Latifah (2015) notes that one of the primary causes of academic stress stems from the high expectations placed on students by parents, teachers, and peers. This stress is particularly felt by those who may not be fully prepared to face academic challenges. Academic stress can occur at nearly every level of education, whether in junior high school, senior high school, or university. However, it's important to note that it increases as education progresses, making students more vulnerable to its effects and highlighting the need for effective stress management strategies.

Social support plays a critical role in effectively managing academic stress. Social support refers to the presence of individuals who provide personal guidance, motivation, direction, and solutions to help individuals face challenges while achieving their goals (Rif'ati et al., 2018). When students face academic stress, it is reassuring to know that they require social support to address the demands placed upon them effectively. When students can respond positively to academic pressures, it indicates that they receive adequate social support, reducing the severity of their academic stress.

Understanding social support is not just important, it is crucial. It becomes highly valuable when individuals face challenges. Social support refers to the assistance, care, and understanding of those around us, such as family, friends, and the community. This support can be emotional, practical, or informational aid that helps us navigate various situations in life. Individuals rely on their closest and most trusted relationships during difficult times to help them overcome problems. Social support makes a significant contribution to human development. For instance, individuals with strong relationships with others tend to have better mental and physical health, higher subjective well-being, and lower morbidity and mortality rates (Rif'ati et al., 2018). This understanding is enlightening and informs our approach to mental health and academic performance.

Many students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra experience academic stress due to various factors, such as demanding lecture assignments, pressure from lecturers, peer influence, and parental expectations. In response to this academic stress, students exhibit a wide range of emotions and behaviors, from sadness, irritation, and anger to cheerfulness, enthusiasm, and contentment. This diversity in reactions underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to understanding and managing academic stress, leading researchers to explore the role of the Scout organization in alleviating stress among students.

Soekanto and Sulistyowati (2013) explains that a role is not a static label, but a dynamic aspect of an individual's societal position. It encompasses the execution of an individual's rights and obligations related to their social status. According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI), a role is defined as the expected behavior of an individual based on their position in society. Furthermore, Yare (2021) elaborates that a role consists of a series of expectations related to an individual's attitudes and actions based on their social status and function. Therefore, a role is not a fixed entity, but a dynamic and evolving aspect of an individual's social responsibility and influence.

Robbins in Jaelani (2021) defines an organization as a deliberately designed and structured social entity with clear boundaries that function to achieve shared goals sustainably. Meanwhile, Siagian (2023) describes an organization as a formal collaboration between two or more individuals who interact to pursue specific objectives, with a hierarchical structure that regulates the relationships between superiors and subordinates. This structured nature of an organization provides a clear framework for understanding its functioning and effectiveness.

Based on the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 2010, the Scout Movement is a non-formal educational organization with legal entity status. This organization serves as a unique platform for fostering the younger generation outside the school and family environment, using an approach based on the Among System, the Basic Principles of Scouting, and Scouting Methods. The

unique approach of the Scout Movement involves structured learning, focusing on character formation and strengthening leadership skills.

Academic stress is defined as the psychological pressure experienced by individuals due to complex academic demands. According to Govaerts and Grégoire (2004) and Dewanti (2016), academic stress arises from an individual's perception of educational pressures, such as heavy assignments, exams, and academic competition. Barseli et al. (2017) adds that academic stress often occurs when expectations for academic achievement are not aligned with students' abilities. Consequently, this stress can affect students' physical, emotional, and behavioral conditions and hinder their academic performance. Social support is one of the key factors in overcoming academic stress. Social support includes emotional, instrumental, informational, and community support (Mutmainnah, 2020; Tajalli et al., 2010). Emotional support involves empathy, attention, and appreciation that create a sense of comfort, while instrumental support provides concrete assistance such as material or financial aid. Informational support comes from advice and guidance, whereas community support provides a sense of acceptance and belonging in a particular social group.

Emotional, instrumental, informational, and community support are interconnected forms of social support that enhance individual well-being. Emotional support, characterized by empathy and understanding, significantly impacts mental and physical health, particularly among low-income populations, where it moderates the relationship between financial status and health outcomes (Namkoong et al., 2020; Pan & Ye, 2025). Instrumental support provides tangible assistance, such as financial aid or material resources, crucial for alleviating stress and building resilience (Jennings & Britt, 2017). Informational support, in the form of guidance and advice, fosters positive outcomes by reducing symptoms of depression and empowering individuals through shared experiences and peer-based programs (Evans, 2023; Jennings & Britt, 2017). Community support promotes a sense of belonging, which is essential for mental health and social integration, especially for individuals facing stigmatized conditions (Evans, 2023). These forms of support often overlap and complement one another; for example, emotional support plays a key role in creating an environment of trust, enhancing the effectiveness of instrumental and informational support. Furthermore, technological advancements, such as Social Assistive Robots (SAR), provide innovative ways to deliver emotional support, reflecting the evolving nature of social support systems (Yee et al., 2024).

The urgency of this research is paramount, given the high levels of academic stress experienced by students, which can negatively impact their academic performance and mental well-being. This study, with its potential to reveal how the Scout Movement can serve as an effective intervention to address academic stress through a structured, non-formal educational approach, is of significant importance. Furthermore, this research provides relevant perspectives on the role of student organizations in supporting mental health in higher education environments. This study aims to analyze the role of the Scout organization in helping students cope with academic stress at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to explore and analyze the role of the Pramuka organization in alleviating academic stress among students at the Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara. A qualitative approach is particularly suitable for understanding specific phenomena from the perspectives of the research subjects, providing a holistic view of behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions through detailed descriptions in the form of words or narratives (Moleong, 2018). Qualitative research also effectively explores complex social phenomena and develops hypotheses or a deeper understanding of various social variables (Bungin, 2011).

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at the Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara. The participants were purposively selected and meticulously categorized into three groups: key informants (students who are not members of the Pramuka organization), primary informants (students who are members of the Pramuka organization), and supporting informants (other members of the academic community

considered relevant to the study). This comprehensive categorization was designed to capture diverse perspectives and ensure a thorough and valid exploration of the research topic.

Role of the Researcher and Data Collection Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher plays a pivotal role as the primary instrument for data collection, ensuring flexibility and adaptability in gathering in-depth information. Additional tools, such as observation sheets and interview guides, were used to supplement and organize the data collection process (Nugrahani, 2014). Data collection began with direct observations of the daily activities, attitudes, and behaviors of students who are members of the Pramuka organization. These observations provided contextual understanding, which was further enriched through in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted orally and documented through detailed notes, audio recordings, and visual materials to ensure data accuracy and reliability.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, which involve processing information in words rather than numbers. Sugiyono (2022) states that qualitative data analysis includes three key stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data was reduced by summarizing and focusing on essential information to identify emerging patterns and themes. The reduced data were then organized and presented in narrative form, making the findings more comprehensible. Finally, conclusions were drawn to address the research questions and provide opportunities for further exploration (Sugiyono, 2022).

Data Validation and Credibility

Data validation was conducted through a rigorous process of triangulation to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Triangulation involves cross-checking data from multiple sources, employing different techniques, and analyzing data at different times (Sugiyono, 2022). Source triangulation was performed by comparing information from various informants, while technique triangulation used different methods, such as interviews and observations, to validate the same data. Temporal triangulation accounted for potential variations in participants' responses due to time-specific factors, ensuring that the data collected were consistent and reliable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Academic Stress Experienced by Students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra

Academic stress refers to the pressure arising from a subjective perception of an academic condition. This pressure triggers responses experienced by students in the form of negative physical, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional reactions caused by academic or educational demands. The level of academic stress experienced by university students is significantly greater compared to students at lower educational levels. It is crucial to understand that academic stress arises as a response to the overwhelming demands and tasks that students must complete. This stress condition is caused by the pressure to demonstrate achievement and excellence amidst increasing academic competition, thereby imposing various burdens and demands on students. Academic stress experienced by students results from a subjective perception of the mismatch between environmental demands and the actual resources students possess.

It's important to note that some students who experience academic stress tend to withdraw from social interactions. They may not participate in social activities or avoid spending time with friends because they feel burdened by their academic responsibilities. Students experiencing academic stress often exhibit physical symptoms such as headaches, body aches, digestive problems, or eating disorders (such as overeating or loss of appetite). These symptoms are not uncommon and are often experienced by students with academic stress. Students with academic stress may also

display changes in sleep patterns, such as staying up late or even experiencing insomnia, as they remain preoccupied with assignments and exams.

Academic stress symptoms can include emotional and physical indicators. Emotional symptoms arise due to students experiencing academic stress, which can be identified as (1) Restlessness or anxiety, (2) Feelings of sadness or depression caused by academic demands, and (3) A decline in self-confidence or feelings of inadequacy in meeting educational or academic expectations. Academic stress can also manifest physically with symptoms such as (1) Headaches, (2) Dizziness, (3) Irregular sleep patterns or difficulty sleeping, (4) Back pain, (5) Diarrhea, and (6) Fatigue or loss of energy.

Research at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra has shown that academic stress can have a significant impact on students. They often feel overwhelmed by academic demands, leading to a range of symptoms, including sadness, frustration, and anger. Understanding these effects can help educators and parents provide the necessary support and empathy to help students manage their stress.

Several common factors trigger academic stress among students, including accumulated coursework, internal and external demands, and the inability to manage academic tasks effectively. Internal factors contributing to academic stress include:(1) Mindset;,(2) Personality;,and (3) Beliefs. External factors causing academic stress encompass: (1) Pressure from various parties, such as self-expectations, parental expectations, lecturer expectations, or even the surrounding social environment; and (2) The pressure to always perform perfectly or meet very high academic standards, which can lead to heightened stress levels.

Stress and its manifestations, such as anxiety, depression, and burnout, have become common issues across various professions, significantly impacting employee well-being and productivity. Chronic work stress has been linked to numerous physical health issues, including cardiovascular disease and hypertension, as well as mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and exhaustion (Alalhareth et al., 2024). The highly demanding work environment in the healthcare sector often leads to burnout, anxiety, and counterproductive behaviors (Burtea et al., 2024). Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment, is a central symptom frequently found among workers, particularly in the fields of radiation and clinical therapy. Risk factors such as long working hours and younger age increase vulnerability to this condition (Amin et al., 2024; Gu et al., 2024).

On a global scale, work stress is recognized as a serious health issue with significant implications for employees' well-being and mental health (Jacobs, 2024). Sustained stress and burnout are often exacerbated by symptoms of depression and anxiety, creating a complex interaction between mental health conditions and workplace pressures (Gu et al., 2024). While specific stressors and their impacts may vary based on the work environment and individual factors, understanding these dynamics is not just crucial, but empowering for developing effective strategies and interventions. A comprehensive approach is required to manage workplace stress to improve mental health and support employees' long-term productivity.

The Role of Scout Organizations in Overcoming Student Academic Stress

The role of the Scout organization in overcoming student academic stress can be seen from several important aspects, including (1) Managerial and Leadership Skills, (2) Social Support, (3) Physical Activity and Relaxation, (4) Increased Mental Resilience, and (5) Positive Character Formation.

Managerial and Leadership Skills

Scouting can help improve managerial skills, both in the context of leadership, planning, coordination, and decision-making. The findings in the field show that leadership skills acquired through scouting activities are very beneficial in helping individuals overcome academic stress. Students who develop leadership skills in scouting are likely to be better prepared to face academic challenges more confidently and effectively. Based on the findings in the field, overall, the coordination of the scout team in planning activities reflects solid cooperation, good communication, and the ability to complete tasks in a structured and efficient manner. This serves to make scouting

activities successful and develops leadership, organizational, and cooperation skills that are very useful in daily life. The observations that have been made also reveal the same thing: each Scout member is given responsibilities and tasks in planning, shaping, and carrying out activities so that each individual can play a role and be empowered. Based on the explanation above, students who are members of the Scouts feel an improvement in managerial and leadership skills.

Social Supporters

Based on the results of observations that have also been made, similar results have been obtained that each Scout member provides support to his fellow volunteers. The support provided is also diverse such as advice, solutions, empathy, entertainment, and so on. Some of these things are obtained by students who are members of the Scout Movement.

Physical Activity and Relaxation

In Scouting, the activities that teach survival skills such as making shelters, foraging for natural food, or navigating using a compass, are not just about individual achievement. They are about teamwork and the sense of community that Scouting fosters. These activities, which require physical exertion and can be done in the wild, are important in developing practical skills, mental toughness, and readiness to face natural and daily life challenges. Through this exercise, scout members gain useful knowledge and build strong character and resilience. The balance between challenging physical activity and time for relaxation is one of the important values taught in Scouting. Through physical activities that test the limits of the body's abilities, followed by fun and reflective rest time, Scout members can enjoy the benefits of both sides: maintaining physical and mental health. Overall, activities in the Scouts provide opportunities for its members to be physically active and space for relaxation and recovery, while also fostering a sense of community and teamwork.

Increased Mental Resilience

Joining the Scouts can significantly boost mental resilience. The challenging nature of Scout activities, such as camps, competitions, and group assignments, provides hands-on experience in facing difficulties and pressures. Members learn to cope with fear, anxiety, or physical fatigue. Additionally, Scouts instill values such as discipline, responsibility, and hard work, which are instrumental in building mental resilience. In tough situations, Scout members are taught to stay positive, think critically, and find solutions, which is a key aspect of mental reinforcement. The researcher's findings confirm that Scouts play a crucial role in increasing the mental resilience of their members through learning to face challenges, managing stress, developing discipline and responsibility, and shaping the ability to rise from failure. By engaging in physical, social, and self-reflective activities, Scouts help their members develop a positive mindset and mental toughness to face various challenges in life.

Positive Character Formation

An attitude of responsibility is formed when a student joins the Scouts. This is the impact of each student who is given responsibility when doing an activity. This is done repeatedly; each member is given responsibility without discrimination. In every activity carried out, there will be every member in charge, and they are fully responsible for the tasks given to them. The sense of responsibility possessed by students will bring out good character. Good character can realize a positive character for students.

Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that need to be addressed. First, the research was conducted exclusively at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational institutions with different characteristics. Second, the qualitative method used relies on the perceptions and experiences of the research subjects, which may introduce a degree of subjectivity. Third, the use of interviews and observations to collect data does not allow for in-depth exploration of quantitative data that could strengthen the validity of the

findings. Lastly, the long-term impact of participation in the Scout organization on students' academic stress was not analyzed longitudinally, making the results more of a snapshot.

Research Implications

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study provide significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study enhances the understanding of the effectiveness of non-formal organizations, such as the Scouts, in supporting the mental health of students in higher education settings. These results are relevant for expanding the literature on social support and non-formal education. Practically, the findings offer guidance for universities to integrate Scouting activities into their curricula as a strategy to reduce academic stress. Furthermore, the study encourages policymakers to support student organization programs focusing on the development of managerial skills, mental resilience, and social support, all of which play a crucial role in improving student well-being.

CONCLUSION

Scouting plays a crucial role in helping students cope with academic stress. It provides refreshing activities, improves time management and stress management skills, and strengthens social support that enriches their experience. More importantly, involvement in scouting ensures a healthy balance between academics and personal self-development. This balance is key to reducing academic stress and maintaining mental well-being, reassuring students, educators, and parents about the holistic approach of scouting. Scouting allows students to participate in various activities outside of the academic world that helps reduce stress. For instance, camping trips provide a break from the routine, survival drills instill a sense of preparedness, and team games foster a sense of camaraderie. These activities provide space for students to relax and release fatigue due to accumulated academic tasks. Relaxation activities in scouting, such as breathing exercises, meditation, or relaxing time in nature, help students reduce anxiety and tension. It provides an opportunity to rest and recover the mental energy needed to face academic tasks. Through physical and mental challenges in scouting activities, students learn to face and overcome difficulties, both in academic and personal life. Skills such as perseverance, wise decision-making, and stress management taught in scouting help students stay focused and not easily slump in the face of academic pressure. Scouting creates a supportive social environment where students can share problems and gain support from fellow members. This support can come in the form of advice, encouragement, or simply a listening ear. This is especially important in reducing the feelings of loneliness or isolation that often occur when a person feels depressed due to academic demands.

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