

# DYNAMICS OF ACADEMIC STRESS IN MADRASAH IBTIDAIYAH STUDENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines academic stress in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students aged 10-12 years, a critical stage in children's psychological and academic development. The research employed a phenomenological approach to understand the experiences of two students dealing with a heavy academic workload. Data were collected through interviews and observations, focusing on emotional, cognitive, physiological, and behavioral aspects. The findings revealed that academic stress was caused by factors such as a large volume of tasks, pressure to perform, and lack of support and effective time management. This stress negatively impacted students' mental health, leading to anxiety, mood swings, sleep disturbances, and other physical symptoms. The study underscores the need for emotional support from teachers and parents, as well as the importance of balancing academic demands with recreational activities to promote psychological well-being.*

**Keywords:** *Academic stress, Emotional Support, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students, Mental health impact*

## INTRODUCTION

One interesting phenomenon is excessive activity in children that can cause children aged 10-12 years to become stressed. Children aged between 6-12 years old begin to develop their psychological, moral, and social aspects. During this period, children also begin to optimize their growth and development (Sugiyanto, 2021). Stress can affect children and result in a decrease in their physical, mental, and emotional health. However, most studies have been conducted on university students and have not highlighted academic stress in students. Researchers revealed that 10 to 12 years old are vulnerable to stress, when their developmental tasks are hindered or inhibited in carrying out due to a condition (Vismara L et al., 2020). Participants were Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students who showed signs of excessive stress or anxiety related to their lessons, homework, or exams. In addition, participants also have quite a lot of activities outside of school such as tutoring, Quran recitation, and sports.

Students experience academic pressure that causes students to study for long hours, complete many assignments, and get satisfactory exam results. Today's students spend a lot of time studying such as taking lessons, in contrast to

students in previous generations who had a lot of time to play after school with their friends (Pranadji, 2009). Today's students have less free time so it is feared that the academic load received by students has an impact on their mental well-being. Most stress experienced by children is considered trivial by adults. This is because students lack learning experience, so even situations that cause small changes can affect students' emotions.

The Indonesian National Commission for Child Protection (KPAI) received an average of 456 case reports per month or 5,987 cases of violations throughout 2019, an increase of 76% from the previous year. This report also indicates an increase in stress disorders in students in Indonesia. Based on research conducted by previous researchers at SD Negeri 11 Tanah Abang, it is known that the highest percentage of students who experience academic stress are students aged 11 years as many as 20 students (50%) with 40 students as respondents. KPAI noted that 82.9 percent of what causes student stress comes from a lack of communication between students and parents (Agustina et al., t.t.). Moreover, it is exacerbated by the attitude of parents who tend to push students' energy in a

busy routine, so that the right to play and be creative is lost. Traumatic events, such as being left by a loved one, can cause a student to experience depressive disorders.

Academic stress is a condition of pressure on students during the learning period which can occur when facing exams, adapting to the environment, social judgment, and time management (Alawiyah, 2020). Meanwhile, according to (Agustina et al., t.t.) Stress is a situation where someone is in a condition of feeling depressed and feeling anxious, restless, tense due to mental pressure. Stress at the age of children is something that needs attention, especially parents who need to pay more attention to their children's mental health. Parents are responsible for educating and taking care of their children's lives including taking care of the problems their children face. Academic stress can be caused by curriculum achievement targets, piling up homework, and unfavorable evaluation results.

According to (Robotham, 2008) aspects of academic stress include 4 aspects, namely emotional, cognitive, physiological, and behavioral aspects. Emotional or affective aspects include negative feelings including negative feelings that arise from oneself. Meanwhile, in the cognitive aspect, stress conditions are caused by difficulty focusing on the learning process and having negative thoughts about oneself from the surrounding environment. Physical physiological aspects usually feel pain in certain parts of the body or physical condition decreases. Behavioral aspects include behaving negatively and starting to avoid people around them.

There are 2 factors that affect academic stress, namely external factors and internal factors. The first internal factor of stress is self-ability, according to (Syed Abdul Rahman & Kasa, 2021). Difficulties in understanding subject matter and completing assignments can increase academic stress, while External Factors include Academic Load according to (Syed Abdul Rahman & Kasa, 2021). Heavy academic loads, such as many assignments, exams, and projects, can be one of the main factors causing academic

stress. Academic stress is caused by *academic stressors*, namely causes of stress that originate from the learning process such as pressure to get good grades, lots of assignments, and long periods of study (Barseli, 2020). Student growth is strongly influenced by the social environment, which is where everything is learned, which includes the home environment and the school environment (Krisna et al., 2023).

According to Hadi et al. (2021), there are 2 types of academic stress, namely academic stressors related to various school assignments such as material assignments and learning evaluations, then social stressors related to student interactions at school. In addition, changes in the learning system can result in changes in student behavior and habits (Adriantoni & Kenedi, 2022). Demands for achievement from both parents and the school environment can add to the psychological burden of students so that they often feel they have to maintain rank and get high scores, which can cause excessive anxiety (Utami, t.t.).

There are 2 psychological conditions, namely positive psychological conditions that can be seen from student learning motivation in achieving their learning outcomes. and negative psychological conditions that can be from student learning outcomes that tend to be low (Barseli et al., 2018). According to Mahmudah & Rusmawati (2019) academic stress is influenced by confidence and self-esteem, which means that if there is an increase in self-confidence, it is followed by a decrease in academic stress. To overcome this, teachers must have certain skills such as Islamic counseling, communication, motivation, and the ability to provide feedback on student feelings (Sari & Tri, 2022).

Previous research entitled "Overview of Stress Levels in Elementary School Children" written by Fitriani Agustina, et al which discusses how the Overview of Stress Levels in Elementary School Children in Grades IV and V at SDN 11 Tanah abang, PALI district. The type of research used is descriptive in which the population of this study is all 4th and 5th grade students totaling 40 students at SDN 11 Tanah Abang using total sampling technique, data obtained through stress

level questionnaires and analyzed univariately from each question answer variable. The results showed that the level of stress categorized as normal stress had the highest percentage, namely 22 people (55.0%), the average school-age child experienced normal stress. Normal stress is a natural part of life. For example, feeling a harder heartbeat after activity, fatigue after doing assignments, fear of not passing the exam (Agustina et al., t.t.). In this study, the results of respondents with mild stress were 37.5% (15), mild stress is a stressor that is faced and can last several minutes or hours. Moderate stress 7.5% (3). Stress that lasts several hours to several days. For example, homework assignments that cannot be completed. This stressor can cause symptoms, namely, easily feeling tired, irritable, difficult to rest, irritable, restless.

The shortcoming of the previous scientific literature entitled "Overview of Stress Levels in Elementary School Children" was the lack of practical and applicable solutions to overcome academic stress. One of the main limitations of the scientific literature was the lack of a practical approach in addressing the root causes of the problem. Many factors were identified, but there was a lack of detailed solutions to implement. The lack of practical and relevant solutions may hinder the positive effects that can be generated.

Based on the research that the researcher made as a reference, it was found that the stress experienced by Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students was due to their lack of time management of the schedule of activities while at school, resulting in the impact of mental health disorders in the form of anxiety, stress, depression, and other serious disorders in children. Therefore, this research was conducted to discuss more deeply about academic stress in students which includes:

1. What are the factors that cause academic stress in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students.
2. What are the symptoms of stress in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students.

## METHOD

This research design is qualitative phenomenology to understand the subjective experiences of 2 participants. The determination

of participants refers to the criteria: madrasah students, aged 10-12 years, experiencing academic stress, and actively participating in school activities. In this study, researchers used interview and observation data collection techniques to dig deeper into how participants felt academic stress and the factors that caused the academic stress.

This study used an unstructured interview method to explore participants' views and experiences related to academic stress. This method allows researchers to create an atmosphere of free conversation so that participants can share their stories and perspectives without being limited by a rigid list of questions. This study also applies the participant observation research method so that researchers can observe participants' behavior in more depth. Observations were made while participants were doing their schoolwork. During the observation process, the researcher recorded various aspects related to academic stress including emotional changes, concentration levels, and participants' physical reactions when facing the task load. This method was used with the aim of generating more contextualized data and providing a more in-depth view of the factors that influence academic stress.

Researchers use data triangulation techniques to increase the validity of findings by combining various data and methods. The research was conducted by collecting information from various data collection techniques such as observation and interviews and then comparing the results to get a more objective and comprehensive picture so as to minimize bias and strengthen the credibility of the research results.

In this phenomenological research, data analysis is carried out through data reduction, namely filtering and simplifying information obtained from interviews and observations, then organizing it to find patterns and themes. Data reduction is a process of simplifying and filtering data that has been collected so that it is more structured. This process also helps researchers to identify important patterns, themes, and categories in large and complex data.

## RESULTS

From the results of research conducted by researchers through observations and interviews based on emotional, cognitive, physiological, and behavioral aspects in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students, the following results were obtained:

**Emotionally**, research results from observations and interviews show that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students experience low-level emotional disturbances which include the emergence of negative feelings from themselves. From the data obtained, students easily feel mood swings such as feeling emotional and irritated because they are always given a lot of assignments by their teachers and often cry if they are too tired of the assignments received.

“Emotion and annoyance, because I am tired at school and still given assignments for home”.

“Emotions because there are too many assignments”.

“Once, because there were too many assignments. I cried because I was tired”.

“Yes, often because I am tired and have tried to work but there are still many assignments”.

**Cognitive**, research results from observations and interviews show that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students experience cognitive disorders caused by difficulties in the learning process and have negative feelings about themselves. From the data obtained, when getting a lot of assignments with a fast deadline and exceeding their abilities, students feel lazy to do it but still try to do it as much as possible and if they can't do it ask for help from their siblings.

“At first I was lazy to do it, but I still tried my best”.

“I was tired because I had a lot of assignments, but I still did as much as I could, if I couldn't I usually asked my brother or mother for help”.

“ Trying to do as much as I can, I feel upset with the teacher because I don't understand”.

“I will cry because I have little time, but I still do it”.

**Physiological**, research results from observations and interviews show that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students experience a decrease in physical conditions such as difficulty sleeping because

they are too concerned about their school assignments and feel dizzy because the assignments are difficult and afraid they cannot be completed on time.

“Once, because the assignment was so much that I didn't sleep well”.

“Yes, I have, because I have a lot of schoolwork”.

“Yes, I've felt like my head was throbbing because I had a lot of assignments and I was afraid I wouldn't finish them on time”.

“Yes, when I couldn't do difficult assignments, I was afraid of being scolded by the teacher”.

**Behavior**, research results from observations and interviews show that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students experience changes in behavior such as often biting their nails unconsciously when they are too confused to do their assignments and are less consistent in doing their assignments well and on time.

“Sometimes I unconsciously bite my nails when I am nervous”.

“Yes, I once reflexively bit my nails when I was too confused to do the assignment”.

“Sometimes yes, if there are not many assignments”.

## DISCUSSION

The results showed that academic stress is a condition of pressure on students during the learning period that can occur when facing exams, adapting to the environment, social judgment, and time management. Students experience similar pressures when facing academic stress. They feel deep anxiety. It is crucial to provide emotional support and ensure they have access to resources that can help them manage such stress. According to (Aliana & Ernawati, 2022) the emergence of situations that are not in accordance with what is expected can cause its own pressure on students, if they cannot withstand it students will become stressed.

Aspects of academic stress include 4 aspects, namely emotional, cognitive, physiological, and behavioral aspects. Emotional or affective aspects include negative feelings that arise from oneself. While in the cognitive aspect, stress conditions are caused by difficulty focusing on the learning process and having negative thoughts

about oneself from the surrounding environment. Physical physiological aspects usually feel pain in certain parts of the body or physical condition decreases. Behavioral aspects include behaving negatively and starting to avoid people around him according to (Robotham, 2008). According to (Lestari & Yusufi, 2021) there are also other physiological reactions characterized by trembling hands and feet, stomach nausea, and headaches.

There are 2 influencing factors, namely external factors and internal factors. The first internal factor of stress is Self-Ability, according to (Rinawati, 2020) "Difficulty in understanding subject matter and completing assignments can increase academic stress", then Personality according to (Kessler et al, 2016) "Perfectionism can make individuals always try to achieve perfect results, making it easy to feel anxious and depressed." Neuroticism can make individuals feel anxious and worried more easily, making it easy to experience stress." (Kessler et al, 2016). While External Factors include Academic Load according to (Rinawati, 2020) Heavy academic loads, such as many assignments, exams, and projects, can be one of the main factors causing academic stress.

Symptoms of stress in a person can be seen from several aspects, namely physical, psychological/emotional and behavioral (Nasir & Muhith, 2011). Symptoms of academic stress that commonly occur in students include feeling dizzy/headache for no apparent reason, experiencing shaking hands, feeling uneasy, tense, anxious, or threatened, having difficulty sleeping or not being able to sleep well as usual. Stress can make students dysfunctional in carrying out activities at school in response to the balance between the task load and their ability to complete tasks and deal with various problems at school (Muhid & Ferdiyanto, 2020).

The Qur'an, includeh includes a guide for Muslims, not only provides guidelines for life, but also provides instructions on how humans should live a balanced and patient life. As written in surah Al-Baqarah (2:286)  
Allah SWT does not burden anyone except according to his ability. To him is the reward for

what he has done, and to him is the punishment for what he has done. (They pray,) "Our God, do not punish us if we forget or err. Our God, do not burden us with a heavy burden as You burdened those before us. Our God, do not impose on us what we are not able to bear. Forgive us, pardon us, and have mercy on us. You are our protector. So, help us against the disbelievers."

The verse explains that Allah SWT does not give a burden that exceeds one's ability. This can be related to academic stress, where someone feels pressure caused by academic demands. To deal with it, it is necessary to remind ourselves that Allah SWT always gives trials that are in accordance with our abilities and we can ask for help to deal with them.

Academic stress in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students in this study showed that excessive academic pressure, lack of time to play, and the demand to achieve good learning outcomes, had a significant psychological impact on students. Emotional disturbances, such as feelings of anxiety and irritability, as well as physical deterioration such as sleeplessness and headaches, are students' responses to the academic pressure they experience (Robotham, 2008). Internal factors such as perfectionism tendencies and self-efficacy, as well as external factors such as task load and high expectations from the environment, contribute greatly to the onset of this stress (Rinawati, 2020; Kessler et al, 2016). These findings emphasize the important role of teachers and parents in providing emotional support and paying attention to the balance between learning activities and playtime for students (Alawiyah, 2020). This is not only important to prevent the negative impact of academic stress, but also to help students develop stress management skills that benefit their well-being in the long run.

The limitations of this study includeincludee several aspects that may affect the accuracy and generalizability of the results. First, this study only involved two participants who were limited to Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students with an age range of 10-12 years, so the results obtained may not fully reflect the condition of academic stress in a wider population of students. In addition, the

presence of the researcher during the observation process has the potential to influence the participants' behavior, as students tend to adjust to the presence of an observer, which may cause bias in the observation results. This study also did not have longitudinal data or long-term monitoring, which means that changes or developments in academic stress in students cannot be measured over time. These factors are limitations in the study, so the findings obtained need to be interpreted with caution.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion presented in the research on academic stress in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students, several important conclusions can be drawn, namely, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students are vulnerable to experiencing academic stress due to excessive task loads, lack of time management, and pressure in undergoing school activities. Academic stress can have a negative impact on students' mental and emotional health, such as anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders. The behavior of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students who experience academic stress may change, such as being less consistent in doing assignments and showing signs of stress such as nail biting. So it is important to provide emotional support and access to resources that help students manage academic stress to prevent its negative impact.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A big thank you to the research participants for taking the time, providing information, and participating in this study. Their participation and contributions were very meaningful and provided important insights for this research. Their willingness to share their experiences and relevant data is key to producing in-depth findings that can provide wider benefits in this field. It is our hope that the results of this study will have a positive impact and be useful to the wider community. Once again, we would like to express our respect and gratitude to the participants who have been involved in this research.

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