

The Relationship of Demographical Factors on University Students' Coping Strategy

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ABSTRACT

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This study examined the relationship between demographical factors and coping strategies in higher education students. A total of 606 students from a large public university in the Indonesia completed a survey that included measures of demographical variables (such as gender, age, living area, siblings, spending in a month, part-time job, and living arrangement) and coping strategies (such as problem focused, emotional focused, and disengagement). The results of the study indicated that having a part-time job was significantly correlated with coping strategies, in particularly problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. While gender, age, living area, siblings, spending in a month, and living arrangement, were not observed to be significantly correlated with coping strategies. The findings of this study have a crucial implications for understanding the relationship of demographical factors affect coping strategy in university students. Furthermore, these findings may inform the development of interventions to support university students' mental health. Future research should consider employing participants from various background and a longitudinal design to comprehensively understand the relationship between demographical factors and coping strategy in university students.

Keywords: *demographical factors; coping strategies; university students; part-time job; mental health*

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INTRODUCTION

Students in university level face a range of challenges that could significantly affect their well-being. These challenges include academic demands, financial concerns, social and personal issues, and more (Sarafino, 2008; Cragg et al., 2013; Lopez & Snyder, 2009). It means the issues come from both internal and external factors. As a result, it is important for authors to study the factors that may affect how university students cope with these challenges, and to identify effective coping strategies that may help them to better manage their stress and improve their overall well-being.

There is a growing body of research on the relationship between demographical factors and coping strategies in university students. This literature finds that various demographical factors have the possibility of how university students cope with challenges. One demographical factor that has received considerable attention in the literature is gender. Several studies have found that female tend to use emotion-focused

coping strategies while male tend to use problem-focused coping strategies (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Gilbar, 2005; Senad, 2022). Furthermore, age is another factor that has been related to coping strategies. Some research has observed that younger individuals tend to use more emotion-focused coping strategies while older individuals tend to use more problem-focused coping strategies (Inguglia et al., 2020). Younger students were more likely to use emotion-focused coping strategies such as seeking emotional support and expressing emotions, while older students were more likely to use problem-focused coping strategies such as seeking information and developing new skills (Munroe et al., 2022).

Other demographical factors that have been linked to coping strategies in university students were living area, siblings, spending in a month, and living arrangement. Zhang et al. (2011) found that students who stayed in a city were more likely to employ problem-focused coping, while those who lived in a village were likely to use emotion-focused coping. Similarly, Freire et al. (2020) found that students who lived with siblings were likely to use problem-focused coping, in the opposite, individuals who lived alone were more likely to use emotion-focused coping. Overall, the literature finds that other demographical variables such as spending in a month, and living arrangement probably affecting how university students cope with stress and challenges (Zhang et al., 2011; Freire et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2012; Yoo et al., 2014).

The contribution of this study lies in its specific area in the relationship of demographical factors and coping strategies in university students. While previous research has examined this relationship, there is still much that is unknown about the specific ways in which these factors may influence coping strategies in this population. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining a range of demographical factors (such as gender, age, living area, siblings, spending in a month, part-time job, and living arrangement). and their potential impact on coping strategies in university students.

METHODS

Design

In this study, authors used data from Hatta et al. (2023) reseach. They were collecting survey data using an online questionnaire administered in Google Form during November 2022.

Participants

The subjects of this study were drawn from a large public university in Aceh, Indonesia. The recruitment efforts included promoting through whatsapp group. The final sample size used for analysis was 606 students.

Instruments

The instrument used (Coping strategy) in this study was originally in English but was subsequently translated to Bahasa Indonesia for the study. One recommended process for translating an instrument is the forward-backward translation method from International Test Commision (Hernandez et al., 2020). In this method, the original instrument is first translated into the target language by a translator. The translated instrument is then reviewed by a second translator, who translates it back into the original language. The two translations are then compared to identify any discrepancies or differences in meaning.

Demographical questions

Demographical questions were included in the survey questionnaire to provide information about the characteristics of the sample. The following demographical questions were included in the questionnaire: gender, age, living area, siblings, spending in a month, part-time job, and living arrangement.

Coping Strategy

The COPE Inventory is a self-report questionnaire that assesses an individual's coping strategies in response to stress or challenges. It consists of 28 items, which are organized into three dimensions: problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and disengagement coping (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). The COPE Inventory was administered to all participants in this study. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they use each coping strategy on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "I do not use this at all" to "I use this a lot." Total scores for each dimension and sub-dimension were calculated by summing the ratings for the relevant items. The COPE Inventory has demonstrated good reliability and validity in previous research (Carver et al., 1989).

Procedures

The study was conducted online using a survey questionnaire. As stated by Hatta et al. (2023), participants completed the questionnaire on their own devices at their own convenience. The questionnaire took about 20 minutes to complete. After completing the questionnaire, participants were thanked for their participation and provided with information about the purpose of the study. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected, strict procedures were followed during the data collection process. The survey questionnaire was pretested for clarity and comprehension before being distributed to the participants. Only participants who met the inclusion criteria and provided informed consent were included in the study.

Data analysis

To analyze the data collected in this study, a series of statistical tests were performed using statistical software. The specific tests chosen were based on the research questions and the characteristics of the data. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies. These statistics provided a summary of the sample characteristics and the distribution of the data. The relationships between the demographical factors (gender, age, living area, siblings, spending in a month, part-time job, and living arrangement) and coping strategies were examined using Pearson's correlations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1 describes a sample of university students. The sample consists of a total of 606 participants, with 440 (72.5%) identifying as male, 166 (27.5%) identifying as female. The average age of the participants is 20.2 years old, with a standard deviation of 1.63. The data indicates that a majority of the participants in the study (44.5%) live in a rural area, while a smaller portion (21.6%) live in an urban area and a slightly larger portion (33.9%) live in a sub-urban area. This suggests that a significant proportion of the participants come from more rural or suburban areas, while a smaller proportion come from urban areas. The majority of the participants (552, 91.4%) have 2 or more siblings,

with the remaining participants having 0-1 siblings. The participants reported a wide range of monthly spending, with 117 (19.3%) reporting spending less than IDR 500,000 per month and 40 (6.6%) reporting spending more than IDR 2,000,000 per month. The majority of the participants (393, 65.1%) live in boarding houses, with the remaining 213 (35.1%) living with their parents or relatives. 123 (20.3%) of the participants have a part-time job, while the remaining 483 (79.7%) do not.

Table 1. Demographical factors (606)

Variables	N
Gender	
Male	440
Female	166
Age	Mean = 20.20, SD = 1.63
Living area	
Urban	206
Sub-urban	106
Rural	294
Siblings	
0	24
1	30
2	122
>3	430
Spending per month (IDR)	
<500.000	117
500.000 - 1.000.000	225
1.000.000 - 1.500.000	156
1.500.000 - 2.000.000	68
>2.000.000	40
Living arrangements	
Boarding house	393
With relatives	59
With parents	154
Having parttime job	
Yes	123
No	483

Table 2. Assumption test with demographical factors as independent variable (N=606)

Dependent Variables	Normality	VIF	Mean	SD
Coping Strategy	.108	< 10	73.97	9.466
Problem focused	.147	< 10	18.57	3.330
Emotion focused	.406	< 10	28.98	4.371
Disengagement (transformed)	.143	< 10	5.11	.508

Table 3. Inter-correlation (N=606)

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Sex	-.055	.023	-.043	-.083*	.109**	.045	.023	-.033	.050	.028
2 Age		-.037	-.107**	.058	-.161**	.102*	.029	.056	.017	.003
3 Living area			.009	-.043	.101*	-.193**	-.013	-.023	-.033	.019
4 Number of siblings				-.033	-.044	-.013	-.032	.010	-.050	-.027
5 Spendings					.011	-.273**	.042	.040	-.003	.058
6 Parttime job						-.127**	-.084*	-.102*	-.083*	-.018
7 Living arrangement							.004	-.004	.007	.006
8 Coping Strategy								.691**	.828**	.672**
9 Problem focused									.698**	.034
10 Emotion focused										.222**
11 Disengagement (transformed)										

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

According to table 2, the residuals for all of the dependent variables in the study are normally distributed, as determined by the Monte Carlo Asymp test. In addition, the variance inflation factor (VIF) values for all variables are below 10, indicating that there is no significant multicollinearity between the predictor variables. This suggests that the statistical model used in the study is appropriate and the results are reliable.

Based on the results presented in table 3, it appears that having a part-time job is significantly correlated with coping strategies and their sub-variables. More specifically, having a part-time job is negatively correlated with coping strategies overall, as well as with problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping in particular. This means that individuals who have a part-time job tend to use these coping strategies to a lesser extent compared to those who do not have a part-time job. It is worth noting that the other demographical factors (such as gender, age, living area, siblings, spending in a month, and living arrangement) did not show significant correlations with the coping strategy variable or its sub-variables.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that having a part-time job is significantly correlated with coping strategies and their sub-variables in university students. Specifically, having a part-time job was found to be negatively correlated with coping strategies overall, as well as with problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping in particular. This means that individuals who have a part-time job tend to use these coping strategies to a lesser extent compared to those who do not have a part-time job.

This finding is consistent with previous research on the relationship between employment and coping in college students. Several studies have examined the impact of part-time work on stress and coping in college students and have generally found that part-time work is associated with either lower levels of stress or greater use of adaptive coping strategies (e.g., Kember et al., 2005). For example, Kember et al. (2005) conducted a study with college students

found that those who worked part-time reported lower levels of stress and greater use of adaptive coping strategies compared to those who did not work. Similarly, Sarros & Densten (1985) conducted a study with college students found that those who worked part-time had higher levels of stress and lower levels of well-being compared to those who did not work. Other studies have also found similar results. For example, Mardelina & Muhson (2017) conducted a study with working students found that those who worked part-time had lower levels of stress and higher levels of well-being compared to those who did not work.

One possible explanation for this finding is that part-time work may provide a sense of purpose, structure, and accomplishment that can enhance coping skills and well-being in college students (Kember et al., 2005). Working part-time may also provide students with an opportunity to develop skills such as time management, communication, and problem-solving, which can be beneficial in managing the demands and challenges of university life (Muluk, 2017). While many studies have found that part-time work is associated with lower levels of stress and greater use of adaptive coping strategies in college students (e.g., Kember et al., 2005; Mardelina & Muhson, 2017), there have also been a number of studies that have found different results. Taylor and Owusu-Banahene (2010) conducted a study with college students found that those who worked part-time had higher levels of stress and lower levels of well-being compared to those who did not work.

There are a number of possible reasons why these studies found different results compared to the current study. One possibility is that the relationship between part-time work and coping in college students may be influenced by cultural and contextual factors. For example, the demands and expectations of part-time work may be different in different cultural settings, which could affect the impact of part-time work on stress and coping. Another possibility is that the relationship between part-time work and coping in college students may be influenced by individual differences. For example, some students may be more resilient and better able to cope with the demands of part-time work, while others may be more vulnerable and prone to stress. Further research is needed to more fully understand the relationship between part-time work and coping in college students and to identify the factors that may influence this relationship.

It seems that the findings of this study have significant differences with other study when the results indicate that variables like sex, age, living area, number of siblings, spendings, and living arrangement are not significant. There are a few possible explanations for why certain demographical factors were not found to be significantly correlated with coping strategies in this study. One possibility is that the relationships between these variables are weaker than the relationships between other variables. For example, it may be that the relationship between part-time job and coping strategies is stronger than the relationships between other demographical factors and coping strategies. Another possibility is that the sample size may not have been large enough to

detect significant relationships between certain demographical factors and coping strategies. It is possible that with a larger sample size, the relationships between these variables would become statistically significant. It is also possible that the measures used in this study may not have been sensitive enough to capture the relationships between certain demographical factors and coping strategies. For example, the coping strategies measure used in this study may not have adequately assessed the ways in which certain demographical factors influence coping. Finally, it is possible that other factors not assessed in this study may be more important in determining the relationships between demographical factors and coping strategies. For example, factors such as personality, social support, or other life stressors may play a role in determining how university students cope with stress and challenges. Overall, it is important to consider these and other potential explanations when interpreting the results of this study.

Implications

The results of this study have several implications for understanding the relationship between demographical factors and coping strategies in university students. Firstly, the findings suggest that demographical factors may play a role in determining how university students cope with stress and other challenges. This is important because it highlights the need to consider the diverse backgrounds and experiences of university students when developing interventions to support their mental health and well-being. For example, targeting interventions specifically at university students who have a part-time job may be more effective at improving coping strategies in these individuals.

Secondly, the results of this study may inform the development of targeted interventions to support the mental health and well-being of university students. For example, understanding the specific ways in which demographical factors influence coping strategies may help researchers to design interventions that are more tailored to the needs of individual university students. Finally, the results of this study contribute to the existing literature on coping strategies in university students, and highlight the need for further research to better understand the complex factors that influence coping strategies in this population. Overall, the findings of this study have important implications for improving the mental health and well-being of university students.

Limitations and suggestions

One limitation of this study is that it relies on data collected using self-report measures, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability. Future research could consider using more objective measures, such as behavioral observations or physiological measures, to reduce the potential for bias. Another limitation of this study is that it used a cross-sectional design, which means that data were collected from participants at a single point in time. This type of design does not allow for the examination of change over time or the determination of cause and effect relationships. Future research using a longitudinal design, in

which data are collected from participants over an extended period of time, would be needed to address these limitations.

In addition, the sample used in this study was drawn from a single university, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other university populations. It would be beneficial for future research to examine the relationship between demographical factors and coping strategies in a more diverse sample of university students. Finally, the results of this study are based on the use of Pearson's correlation coefficients to examine the relationships between the variables. This statistical technique is useful for identifying the strength and direction of the relationships between variables, but it does not allow for the examination of the specific mechanisms through which these relationships may operate. Future research could consider using other statistical techniques, such as regression analysis or structural equation modeling, to more fully understand the relationships between demographical factors and coping strategies in university students.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study provide important insights into the relationship between demographical factors and coping strategies in university students. Further research is needed to more fully understand this relationship and to develop targeted interventions to support the mental health and well-being of university students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that demographical factors may play a role in determining coping strategies in university students. Specifically, the results indicate that having a part-time job is significantly correlated with coping strategies overall, as well as with problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping in particular. Other demographical factors, such as gender, age, living area, siblings, spending in a month, and living arrangement, were not found to be significantly correlated with coping strategies. These findings have important implications for understanding the ways in which demographical factors influence coping strategies in university students. In addition, the results of this study may inform the development of targeted interventions to support the mental health and well-being of university students.

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