

Understanding the Struggle of University Students in Indonesia

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Abstract. The aim of this study is to describe university students' concern and its complexity. Participants were 68 students from two private universities in Indonesia. In order to achieve deep understanding of the issue, the qualitative approach was adopted. Data were obtained through individual interviews and focus group discussions. Results show that problems related to academic, relationships with others, transitions to university, romantic relationships, and self were frequently reported by students. Academic-related problems were mostly characterised by difficulties in coping with academic demands and difficulties over time management. In regard to problems in romantic relationships, the selection of a partner is a strong issue, which was complicated not only by a lack of social skills to build relationships, but also by parental prohibition from having such relationships before students complete their studies. Self-related problems involve concerns related to self-concept, self-esteem and confidence, uncertainty about values and struggle towards maturity. The interrelations of these issues and the implications for supporting students are further discussed.

Keywords: students' concern, academic-related problems, self-related problems.

Abstrak. Tujuan studi ini adalah menguraikan keprihatinan mahasiswa dan kompleksitasnya. Partisipan adalah 68 mahasiswa dari dua universitas swasta di Indonesia. Agar diperoleh pengertian yang mendalam, dilakukan pendekatan kualitatif. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara dan diskusi kelompok terpumpun. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa masalah terkait akademik, hubungan dengan orang lain, transisi ke perguruan tinggi, hubungan romantis, dan masalah pribadi sering dilaporkan para mahasiswa. Masalah terkait akademik terutama dicirikan oleh kesulitan mengatasi tuntutan akademik dan kesulitan mengatur waktu. Terkait masalah hubungan romantis, pemilihan pasangan merupakan masalah berat, yang makin rumit bukan hanya karena kelemahan keterampilan sosial untuk membangun hubungan, tetapi juga oleh larangan orang tua untuk terlibat hubungan demikian sebelum studi tuntas. Masalah pribadi menyangkut hal-hal terkait konsep-diri, percaya-diri dan keyakinan, ketakpastian tentang nilai dan perjuangan ke arah kematangan. Kesalingterkaitan antar-isu tersebut dan implikasinya untuk mendukung para mahasiswa dibahas lebih lanjut.

Kata kunci: keprihatinan mahasiswa, masalah terkait-akademik, masalah pribadi

Several studies (such as Cook et al., 1984; Carney, Peterson, & Moberg, 1990; Soliman, 1993; Grayson, Clarke, & Miller, 1995; Rudowicz & Au, 2001) have been conducted to investigate problems commonly experienced among students. Study by Carney et al. found that self-support finances, career indecision/job search frustration and academic performance difficulties were the area of most common concern to students. Study by Cook et al. showed that education achievement and anxiety came as the

most frequently cited problems. Grayson et al. found that problems with finance, course-related, domestic, interpersonal and personal crisis, and the management of resources and facilities were commonly experienced by university students. Soliman (1993) who conducted his study in Kuwait found the top five most encountered problems, including "need for support in a stressful situation," "need to achieve a goal," "having problems with grades," "needing money," "wanting to understand oneself better." Meanwhile, Rudowicz and Au (2001) did similar research in Hong Kong and found that problems related to study was the one experienced most by students. Other commonly experienced problems were problems related to health, emotional life, peer relationships, and love relationships.

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