

Exploring Stress of Part-Time FPTV Students with Self-Efficacy and Students Academic Achievement

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Abstract

Mental health problems and the rate of student failure in completing their studies are seen to be closely related to stress and student self-efficacy. The stress experienced can affect students' well-being and, consequently, their academic achievement. This study was conducted to identify the types of stress faced by part-time students, how they manage stress, and how academic self-efficacy and the stress they experience influence their academic achievement. Several research questions were formulated to address these aims. The study was conducted among final-year MBV part-time students from the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia. It was designed as a case study employing a qualitative approach. A total of six participants were interviewed to obtain the study data. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to generate themes. The findings of the study indicate that student self-efficacy, stress, and academic achievement are closely related. The MBV part-time students demonstrated four sources of self-efficacy, based on Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, which served as their coping mechanisms in facing challenges throughout their studies. Various types of stress faced by part-time students arise from the multiple commitments they must manage. Therefore, strategic coping mechanisms are necessary to overcome these challenges, to prevent stress from becoming overwhelming, and to avoid negative impacts on their emotional and physical health.

1. Introduction

In Malaysia, TVET Education has been promoted extensively by the Government by allocating a large portion of the budget to the TVET sector. The importance of the TVET sector has opened the eyes of many working individuals abroad to the benefits of continuing their studies at a higher level (TVET Madani, 2024). Various part-time TVET study programs are opened at the higher institution level to meet this demand. This approach also opens a space for adult students and professional workers who have work or family commitments to enable them to continue their studies in higher education (Sulaiman, 2024).

Basically, part-time students return to pursue higher education to improve their career prospects or increase their earning potential in employment (Majlis Keselamatan Negara, 2024). According to John Butcher

(2015), part-time students tend to study to advance their jobs and improve their individual skills. Recognizing the importance of continuing their studies, many adults in Malaysia work while continuing their studies as a way to earn a better income and improve their standard of living (Jamal, 2019).

However, stress has become one of the challenges once they change status as a student, especially part-time students. According to Savescu et al, (2017) found that students who work while studying in higher education face various challenges where they need to balance work, academics, family and personal life which can affect the stress level of part-time students.

The variety of stress faced by students can have a negative impact on their academic achievement (Lunchin, 2023). Although the trend of increasing enrollment of students continuing their studies in higher education is increasing every year, the problem of student failure to complete their studies is also becoming more acute. According to the findings of Ahmad Suhael's study (2022), there are more than 30,000 higher education students who failed to complete their studies, the KPT Data Collection System (MyMoheS) recorded 13, 291 students at Public Universities who failed to complete their studies in 2020. Meanwhile, in 2021, 17,613 students from the total number of existing students (589,879) were recorded as Public University students who failed to complete their studies. These failed students are often blamed when their academic failure occurs. This may be due to students being unable to focus and concentrate in class as well as lack of time or no time to study, especially if a student has a part-time job or works throughout their studies (Lunchin, 2023). Things like this have become a catalyst for increased stress, especially among part-time students.

Part-time students face prolonged stress due to academic, financial, and interpersonal pressures that can have a negative impact on psychological well-being. They (Roslan et al, 2017). In addition, according to Friedrich et al (2023), on the study of mental health and stress among Ph.D. students, it is stated that part-time students often experience high levels of stress due to workload and time pressure which has an impact on mental health. This is because stress can affect a student's academic achievement or decline. Uncontrolled stress can affect physical well-being and mental health, which in turn affects students' academic achievement. In addition, suicide attempt statistics also show a worrying increase. In 2021, a total of 81 percent, or 1,142 cases, were reported compared to 2020, when only 631 cases were reported. This is in line with Kok Low's statement (2019), namely, academic stress is one of the main types of stress experienced by young students.

Therefore, self-efficacy plays an important role in helping students manage stress. Positive self-efficacy can influence mental health and reduce motivational challenges among students (Hadwin et al, 2024). According to Bandura, academic self-efficacy is a student's consideration of skills in planning appropriate strategies to achieve educational goals (Gokcek et al., 2014). Academic self-efficacy also plays a role in guiding the educational journey and achievement because it involves personal expectations of mental and physical competence and ability to face academic challenges (Petersdotter et al., 2017).

Therefore, various issues are raised regarding part-time students who are said to have difficulty controlling stress factors such as family roles, jobs, and the need to have high self-efficacy to face and solve stress problems that come with studying. The diversity of roles has caused conflicts in their responsibilities. The effects of stress among part-time students have become a topic of study among researchers.

2. Methodology

A qualitative approach was selected for this study as it is suitable for capturing human emotions and experiences. The researcher choose a qualitative approach as it allows for an in-depth description and interpretation of social phenomena from the participants' perspectives. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is particularly useful for investigating issues that require exploration and detailed data in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. A multiple case study design was used to study groups of part-time students enrolled in the MBV programme at the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education (FPTV), Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). This interview method was conducted orally, and participants' responses were recorded in written form through video recordings or audio recordings and thematic analysis method was used to identify patterns or themes from the data collected by the researcher during the interview process (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

3. Results and Discussion

According to the study's findings, role conflict, financial strain, social pressure, and academic pressure are all major sources of stress for part-time students. Additionally, stress has a positive as well as negative impact on students' academic performance. Additionally, part-time students employ a variety of stress-reduction techniques during their academic careers, including seeking out social and spiritual support and engaging in self-care. Group dynamics and strategic time management are two stress management techniques that have an impact on academic performance. Lastly, the results of the interview study show that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have an impact on part-time students' self-efficacy.

3.1 Challenges of Part-time Students throughout their MBV studies

Based on the findings of the study from interviews with the study participants, the researcher identified that among the challenges faced by part-time students during their MBV studies is role conflict. The role conflict in question includes work demands and family commitments. This finding is supported by Cohen and Greenberg (2001), who found that part-time students in universities are struggling with many roles and commitments such as at work, home and school.

In addition, the challenge of part-time students during their MBV studies is academic stress. Academic stress includes problems of time constraints, financial burdens and limited access to learning. Time constraints faced by part-time students such as having to take leave to complete assignments and lack of time to prepare for exams. Kwaah & Essilfie (2017), through their study, stress among distance education students in Ghana is one of the academic workloads. Next, financial burden is also a factor in academic stress. This financial burden is such as financing the relatively high tuition fees. This is because enrollment for MBV studies is in high demand. At UTHM, MBV receives the highest number of part-time students until 2024 compared to other part-time programs (UET, 2024). This causes part-time students to have multiple jobs to cover their tuition fees. The findings of this study are reinforced by Thomsen & Haaren-Geibel (2016) who stated that Students have to pay tuition fees and are also subject to other expenses, thus forcing them to work extra hours (overtime) to collect additional money to pay their fees.

The cost of students' travel to attend classes is also one of the financial burdens of students. Part-time students need to take into account the cost of accommodation and petrol for travel to the campus as stated by Wang et al. (2012), students who live further from campus are more likely to have higher travel costs due to increased car used and accommodation costs. Moreover, limited access to learning is also a factor in academic stress. Lack of face-to-face interaction with lecturers can lead to confusion about a subject being studied and online learning makes it difficult to understand a subject being studied. This finding is in line with the study by Ngah et al. (2021) which stated that distance learning students prefer face-to-face learning because online methods are less satisfactory for students due to real study materials and lack of direct learning experience. The relatively limited opportunity to meet lecturers during online studies can contribute to stress and affect the mental health and well-being of participants (Ruslan et al., 2023)

Other than that, the challenge faced by part-time students is social pressure. The social pressure referred to is pressure from people around them and spiritual disturbances experienced during their studies. Pressure from people around them is caused by saying bad things about part-time students. This finding is reinforced by studies that psychological distress tends to be triggered by factors related to the individual, their surrounding environment or the specific situations they face. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are various challenges faced by part-time students throughout their MBV studies. These challenges show some of the types of stress part-time students experience.

3.2 Coping Mechanism of MBV Part-Time Students

Coping mechanisms are strategies used by part-time students to deal with stress and adapt to the challenges they face. Among the coping mechanisms identified from the study interview findings are social support, spiritual approaches, self-care and strategic time management. Social support for part-time students is largely received from family members and peers. The family members in question are husbands and parents. Academic support from the family not only improves academic performance, but also fosters student motivation, emotional well-being and adaptability in the school environment (Chen, 2024). Social support from peers also has a great impact on part-time students when they are experiencing problems in learning and want to find motivation to study. Thus, this can open a space for part-time students to have open discussions about difficulties, thus allowing students to share experiences and strategies to deal with them (Li et al., 2023)

In addition, a spiritual approach is also one of the coping mechanisms needed by part-time students. Spiritual approaches include dhikr, recitation, prayer and praying to Allah. This type of approach can help students deal with stress in academics. The findings of the study show that prayer and prayer that focus on students' emotions can be a valuable strategy for managing stress, especially related to academic challenges (Harris et al., 2010).

Next, a coping mechanism for MBV part-time students is self-care. Higher levels of self-care are positively associated with more effective stress management (Fauziah et al. 2024). Among the self-care identified based on the study findings are doing physical activities such as jogging and recreation. According to Antonova & Yurko (2023), physical activity is always emphasized as an important activity to maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout life including managing stress. Other self-care findings that can be identified are adequate sleep and rest. Part-time students need to get enough sleep to regain energy. Adequate sleep and rest can allow the body to return to its baseline state.

Moreover, strategic time management is also one of the strategies use for part time MBV students. Part-time students need to be aware of the tasks that need to be submitted. Based on the findings of the study, part-time students can list all the tasks that need to be carried out so that students can plan tasks more systematically and provide sufficient time to carry out the tasks, avoiding excessive time extension (Vladimirovich et al., 2015). This allows students to identify the most important tasks as well as plan the tasks that require sufficient time allocation.

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3.3 Sources of Self-Efficacy Among MBV Part-Time Students

Through the study findings, there are four main sources that can be identified that form the self-efficacy among part time MBV students according to Bandura's theory (1986), which are, mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional and psychological states.

Firstly, mastery experiences is one of the key aspects for self-efficacy in achieving academic achievement. The experience of part-time students completing a rather challenging subject has increased their self-efficacy, thus showing high self-efficacy among part-time students. Academic success such as getting a 4 flat GPA for several semesters has increased students' self-confidence. This finding is supported by Bandura (1989), namely that past success will increase self-efficacy and repeated failure will be successfully reduced, but it depends on the individual capability. Most part-time students pursuing study with their goal to achieve shows high self-efficacy among them. This indicates that their self-efficacy is high perhaps because of past experiences during their undergraduate studies have taught them to be more strategic in managing academic matters. This discussion is supported by Anjala (2024) who states that students who consider themselves capable are likely to see stress as an obstacle to academic achievement and are more likely to use effective coping strategies.

Secondly, the source of self-efficacy among part time students is vicarious experiences. Findings show that the success of other friends in achieving academic success such as getting excellent exam results or seeing friends successfully completing an assignment, has encouraged part-time students to persist in finishing the assignments and be consistent in obtaining excellent exam results. This high self-efficacy also helps students to manage stress more effectively. This approach is very effective if the model is in the same situation as the observer.

In addition, verbal persuasion can be a source of self-efficacy among part-time MBV students. Based on the findings of the study, part-time students receive various encouragement from people around them, especially from family members and peers. The encouragement received by part-time students is a source of motivation and moral support that can increase the self-efficacy of part-time students to gain enthusiasm and continue their studies. According to Falco & Summers (2019), if an individual receives positive social persuasion such as receiving encouragement and words of encouragement from peers, family and lecturers, the student will be more likely to increase their level of strong confidence in their academic abilities.

Lastly, emotional and psychological states are the sources of self-efficacy among part-time MBV students. The study findings show that the experience of emotional stress such as heartbreak has caused part-time students' performance to decline, leading to subject failure. Thus, showing a low level of self-efficacy. According to Tharaldsen et al. (2022) Negative stress effects such as emotional states of disappointment, anxiety or sadness are associated with high academic stress and poor results. This statement supports the findings of the study where students show a decline in performance because they fail to control negative emotional states. Positive emotional states, on the other hand, have provided the opposite picture, namely the satisfaction and interest gained by students during or after completing tasks, giving them the motivation to continue to complete the tasks and become more excellent students. This discussion is proven by Dehbozorgi and Kunuku (2024) that positive emotions such as relief and satisfaction are closely related to lower stress levels and better academic achievement. This positive emotional state will help students to use effective action in facing academic challenges

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion of the findings detailed in the previous chapter, the researcher concluded that part-time MBV students face various types of challenges such as role conflict, academic pressure, financial burden, limited access to learning and social pressure. These challenges can be overcome by practicing coping mechanisms such as social support, spiritual support, self-care and strategic time management as strategies to deal with stress throughout part-time students' studies. Various ways of coping mechanism among part-time students shows high self-efficacy among part-time MBV students and numerous sources of self-efficacy are received throughout their academic studies showing how they handle their stress and challenges in academic. Further research is suggested using mix method research, through interviews, observations and questionnaires, so that more accurate generalizations can be obtained.

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