



CORRELATION OF ADAPTATION TO THE MENTAL HEALTH STATUS OF OUT-OF-TOWN STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Adaptation is a process of self-adjustment. Students' inability to adapt can cause mental health problems, especially among out-of-town students. Based on the initial survey conducted by researchers on 33 respondents, the results showed that most respondents had difficulty adapting, were disappointed with the new environment because they were far from their parents, had language and cultural differences, and had trouble finding friends with the same frequency, task demands, and different learning processes. Objective: This research aims to determine the correlation between adaptation and the mental health of first-year out-of-town students. Method: This quantitative research uses an analytical correlation design with a cross-sectional method. The sampling technique is purposive sampling. The sample consisted of 198 first-year out-of-town students. The research instrument used the SACQ (Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire) questionnaire for adaptation and the DASS (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale) as a mental health measuring tool. Researchers used univariate and bivariate analyses using the Spearman-Rho test. Results: The research shows a significant correlation between adaptation and the mental health of out-of-town students, with $r = 0.488$. Conclusions: Several factors, including age, gender, region, and ethnic origin, can influence the correlation between adaptation and mental health. Future researchers can develop this research by examining other variables or factors that influence student adaptation, mental health, and the coping strategies students use in their studies.

Keywords: adaptation; mental health; out-of-town-students

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INTRODUCTION

Adaptation is a way for living things to adjust to their new environment. It is needed because every environment we visit has different characteristics that we may not encounter in our home area (Debora et al., 2021). Humans, as social creatures who cannot live alone, certainly need to adapt when they are in a new environment to survive, one of which is out-of-town students (Ismail, 2015). Out-of-town students face different challenges than non-out-of-town students in continuing their higher education. According to Lee et al. (2018), students who come from outside the region must have the ability to adapt so that they can reduce mental health problems. Adaptation is essential because there is a process of self-adjustment for students when they are in a new environment, be it in a new learning system, lifestyle, habits, and friendships that have a variety of different cultural backgrounds, races, religions, and languages (Aryono & Leylasari, 2020). Out-of-town students who live in and outside dormitories also have differences in the adaptation process because they live with others students, so they have more challenges and pressures.

Students living in dormitories face challenges such as complying with dormitory rules, building harmony with roommates who have different characters and natures, sleeping in shared spaces, frequently experiencing loss of goods or money, encountering limited dining options and restricted hours outside, using facilities that may be inadequate, lacking choice in food selection, dealing with roommates who cannot be controlled as desired, and having limited space for hanging clothes. (Dias et al., 2023). Therefore, self-adjustment for out-of-town students in a new environment is very important because it can help them adapt. Adapting to a new culture and environment is very difficult and can affect one's mental health. According to research by Tahulending et al. (2023) on 147 new nursing students showed the results of academic adjustment (66.7%), social adjustment (81%), personal-emotional adjustment (68%), and institutional attachment (57.8%). Another study conducted by Handayani and Yuca (2018) showed that 60% of first-year students experienced stress and depression due to culture shock due to adaptation to a new environment. Therefore, self-adjustment skills are fundamental for out-of-town students when dealing with situations in a new environment.

A study of 33 first-year students who live outside Jabodetabek as an initial survey showed that 63.6% (21 people) had difficulty adapting, 60.6% (20 people) felt disappointed with the environment due to factors such as being away from parents, 82.6% (19 people), a different learning process (69.6%), much coursework (60.9%), and academic and non-academic demands (60.9%). A total of 66.7% (22 people) felt confused, stressed, and frustrated, 57.6% (19 people) wanted to leave the new environment and lectures due to inability to adapt, 54.5% (18 people) felt the difference between home and new environment, and 57.6% (19 people) felt depressed. Many students resign because they are unable to adapt. The obstacles can cause students to feel lonely, depressed, stressed, and resigned. Based on the results of this initial data survey, the researcher considers it necessary to conduct further research; this study aims to determine the correlation between adaptation and the mental health of first-level out-of-town students.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative method of correlational analytic type with a cross-sectional approach. The population in this study were first-year students of Nursing, namely 391, with a sample size of 198 respondents. The sampling technique used was the purposive sampling technique. The research process took place from February to May 2024. The research instrument used the SACQ (Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire) questionnaire for adaptation which has been tested for validity and reliability with a validity test value greater than the r table value and Cronbach alpha 0.847 (Rianti, et,al, 2022) and the DASS (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale) questionnaire for mental health which has also been tested for validity and reliability with normal validity values and Cronbach alpha 0.906 (Dianita, et,al, 2023). This study used univariate and bivariate analyses using the Spearman-Rho test. The ethical principles applied in this study are beneficence-nonmaleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity, justice, respect for people, and dignity.

RESULTS

The results of this study consist of data on respondents' characteristics and the results of the analysis of adaptation and mental health variables.

Table 1.
Demographic characteristics of the respondents (n=198)

	Characteristics	f	%	
Gender	Male	14	7,1	
	Female	184	92,9	
Regional Origins	North Sumatera	62	31,3	
	South Sumatera	1	5	
	Bengkulu	2	1,0	
	Riau	9	4,5	
	Jambi	3	1,5	
	Lampung	8	4,0	
	West Kalimantan	6	3,0	
	East Kalimantan	6	3,0	
	Central Kalimantan	6	3,0	
	West Java	4	2,0	
	Central Java	9	4,5	
	East Java	3	1,5	
	East Nusa Tenggara	33	16,7	
	Central Sulawesi	2	1,0	
	North Sulawesi	13	6,6	
	South Sulawesi	6	3,0	
	Maluku	23	11,6	
	Papua	1	5	
	South Papua	1	5	
	Tribe	Alifuru	1	5
Alor		1	5	
Ambon		21	10,6	
Bada		1	5	
Banjar		1	5	
Batak		51	25,8	
Belu		2	1,0	
Bugis		1	5	
Dawan		2	1,0	
Dayak		9	4,5	
Java		21	10,6	
Karo		3	1,5	
Klusin		1	5	
Kupang		3	1,5	
Manado		1	5	
Marae		1	5	
Minahasa		6	3,0	
Nias		26	13,1	
Rote		7	3,5	
Sabu		4	2,0	
Seko		1	5	
Sentani		1	5	
Simalungun		2	1,0	
Sumba		7	3,5	
Talaud		1	5	
Timor		7	3,5	
Tionghoa		2	1,0	
Toraja		14	7,1	
Age		17	13	6,6
		18	93	47,0
	19	65	32,8	
	20	23	11,6	
	21	4	2,0	

Table 1 shows that the gender of the respondents was mainly female, namely 184 (92.9%), the regional origin of the respondents was mainly from North Sumatra 62 (31.3%), East Nusa Tenggara 33 (16.7%), Maluku 23 (11.6%), the ethnicity of the respondents mainly was Batak 51 (25.8%), Nias 26 (13.1%), Ambon and Java 21 (10.6%). The respondents were 18 years old, namely 93 (47%).

Table 2.
Level of adaptation the respondents (n=198)

Category	f	%
Low	26	13,1
Moderate	143	72,2
High	29	14,6

Table 2 shows that the large majority of respondents, as many as 143 (72.2%), are included in the moderate adaptation level.

Table 3.
Mental health status of the respondents (n=198)

Category	f	%
Normal	51	25,8
Mild	27	13,6
Moderate	53	26,8
Severe	28	14,1
Extremely Severe	39	19,7

Table 3. Shows that most respondents have a moderate level of mental health, as many as 53 (26.8%).

Table 4.
Correlation between level of adaptation and mental health status of first-year out-of-town students (n=198)

Adaptation	Mental Health Status										P-Value	Coefficient (r)		
	Normal		Mild		Moderate		Severe		Extremely Severe				Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%				
Low	1	73,	3	11,	3	11,	1	3,8	0	0,0	26	10	0.001	0.488
	9	1	5	5	5	1	3,8	0	0,0	26	10			
Medium	3	21,	2	16,	43	30,	2	14	25	17,	14	10		
	1	7	4	8	1	0	14	0	25	5	3	0		
High	1	3,4	0	0,0	7	24,	7	24,	14	48,	29	10		
					1	1	1	1	14	3	29	0		

Table 4. Shows that as many as 19 (73.1%) have a low level of adaptation accompanied by normal mental health, as many as 43 (30.1%) respondents have a moderate level of adaptation accompanied by moderate mental health as well and as many as 14 (48.3%) respondents have a high level of adaptation accompanied by extremely severe mental health. The results of statistical tests using spearman-rho obtained significance or p-value = 0.001, which means less than the specified <0.05, indicating a corellation between adaptation and mental health of first-level out-of-town. The coefficient (r) was obtained at 0.488, which means that there is a unidirectional corellation between the two variables, namely adaptation and the mental health of out-of-town students, and it is in the sufficient category or moderate level.

DISCUSSION

Overview of the Level of Adaptation in First-Level Out-of-Town Students

The results of the study show that most students have a moderate level of adaptation, 143 (72.2%). This is influenced by the characteristics of respondents, namely factors of gender, age, regional and ethnic origin. This research is in line with the research of Kurniati and Hamidah (2021), which reveals that most students tend to have a moderate level of adaptation, as many as 154 students (77.0%), so it can be concluded that first-year students are very vulnerable to experiencing difficulties in adapting. This research is different from research conducted by Yuni and Nurjanah (2020), which shows that most students have high adaptability, as many as 99 (63.9%). The background of the research conducted by Yuni and Nurjanah (2020) is similar to that of researchers, namely students in nursing study programs. On the other hand, there are also differences between these two studies, namely the difference in residence, where the respondents owned by the researcher are students who live in dormitories.

Most people assume that life in the dormitory fulfills social support needs with friends in the dormitory. In reality, not all fellow out-of-town students who live in dormitories respond to acceptance and support each other, which has an impact on the student adaptation process (Naiboho & Murniati, 2023). Rufaida and Kustanti (2017) also state that the impact of bad friendships will interfere with the individual adaptation process. Therefore, it is necessary to establish various good relationships in the community by making as many friends as possible and actively participating in organizations to maintain and improve self-adjustment.

Overview of Mental Health Levels in First-Level Out-of-Town Students

A person's mental health can be affected by the inability of out-of-town students to adapt to a new environment. The inability to adapt will affect how a person copes with and controls stress, conflict and frustration so that harmony is achieved between the demands of oneself and the environment (Fajar & Aviani, 2022). In this study, there are several factors that affect the level of mental health of the respondents including gender, regional origin, ethnicity and age affecting the level of mental health of students. Based on the results of the study, the respondents of this study showed that 184 of the 198 respondents were female. This is in line with the research of Kountul et al. (2018) which states that female students are 2.2 times more likely to experience severe stress than male students because women prioritise feelings while men are required to be stronger and use their wits in solving problems. This research is in line with research conducted by Handayani and Nirmalasari (2020), showing that the percentage of female respondents' stress is higher than male respondents because men use logic in solving problems while women use more emotionally. Emotional differences between women and men are due to hormonal differences and psychological conditions. Men are more stable in emotions due to the influence of testosterone and progesterone hormones while women are more anxious and sensitive to certain conditions because they are influenced by estrogen hormones. Each student has a different response to stress and one of them that affects it is a person's gender.

Based on the results of the research, the age of the respondents showed that the highest age was 18 years old with 93 people (47%). Age affects a person's experience in dealing with stress the older a person gets, the better a person's ability to manage stress. The adaptation process in early adulthood individuals starting at the age of 18 years is more vulnerable to having risk factors with moderate to severe stress levels due to changes in responsibilities and the surrounding environment (Masdiyanti, 2023). This study also looked at the ethnic differences of the respondents, which means the different cultures and values adopted by each

respondent. According to Insyirah (2021), students who enter a new culture will conflict with their original culture which can result in feelings of anxiety, tension, confusion and stress or often referred to as culture shock. Culture is one of the vulnerability factors for a person's mental health (Masdiyanti, 2023). In this study, the most respondents came from North Sumatra, 33 (16.7%) East Nusa Tenggara, and 23 (11.6%) and Maluku. The most common tribes were Batak 51 (25.8%), Nias 26 (13.1%), Ambon and Java 21 (10.6%). A distant city of origin can affect a person's level of mental health. This is supported by research conducted by Rahayu et al. (2021) which shows that, of the 53 students who have mild depression, the majority live with their parents, namely 30 of 53 people (56.6%), and of the 57 students who have severe depression, most of them bear tuition fees, namely 39 of 57 people (68.4%). New students who experience stress to depression tend to live alone rather than living with parents and busy schedules, changes to new environments and homesickness caused by students living away from parents (Karin, 2017).

Corellation between Adaptation and Mental Health of First-Year Out-of-Town Students

Based on the results of research conducted with the Spearman-Rho test, significant results were obtained between adaptation and mental health of first-level out-of-town with a value of $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$). Some respondents in this study have moderate adaptability and mental health, and some have normal mental health with high adaptability. However, besides that, there are still some respondents whose mental health is very heavy with low adaptability. This is influenced by various factors such as gender, age, place of residence, sense of security, friendship, ethnicity, and culture found in the new environment. This study's results align with research conducted by Yuni and Nurjanah (2020), which shows a corellation between the student adaptation process and mental health conditions with a p -value = 0.041. The study showed that the majority of respondents (70.9% of respondents) experienced moderate stress. This is also further strengthened by research conducted by Cao (2022), which states that there is a significant negative corellation between self-adjustment and mental health—factors of security and gender influence this. The study found that most respondents who experienced mental health problems were female because mood disorders in Chinese women are always much higher than in men.

Respondents in this study were late adolescents ranging from 17-21 years. Aziz et al. (2021) said that adolescents are prone to mental health disorders due to various factors, including high pressure in the adaptation process, a sense of wanting to be accepted by the environment, a desire for independence, and an increased need for access to technology and other needs. Respondents in this study are students who live in dormitories. According to Fathonah et al. (2017), students who live in dormitories have higher demands in instilling individual values, character, and personality building than those who live outside the dormitory, which can lead to increased mental health problems. This statement is in line with a study conducted by Saniskoro and Akmal (2017), showing that adjustment in the campus environment only contributes 4.1% to academic stress, while other factors influence 95.9%. Another study by Juli and Sulistyowati (2023) on female dormitory students from West Kalimantan in Yogyakarta showed that most students feel comfortable living in dormitories and can communicate well with fellow dormitory residents. However, not all can open themselves and share stories comfortably, depending on each individual's personality. Therefore, each student must have a coping mechanism that suits their personality, such as seeking social support from peers or friends they trust to tell stories that can help deal with mental health problems experienced during the adaptation process in a new environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research that has been conducted on 198 respondents of first-level out-of-town, the researcher concludes that the characteristics of the majority of respondents are female, namely as many as 184 (92.9%), the most significant regional origin of respondents comes from North Sumatra, namely 62 (31.3%), the largest respondent tribe is the Batak tribe, namely 51 (25.8%) the most significant age of respondents is 18 years, 93 (47%). Student adaptation levels were mostly at a moderate level, as many as 143 (72.2%), and the distribution of the most significant mental health level was at a moderate level, namely 143 (72.2%). The results of this study indicate that there is a significant correlation between adaptation and the mental health of first-year out-of-town, with a significant value <0.05 (p -value = 0.001) and a correlation coefficient value ($r = 0.488$). Several factors, such as age, gender, and regional and ethnic origin influence these results. Future researchers are expected to develop this research by examining other variables or factors that affect student adaptation and mental health, as well as coping used by out-of-town students in dealing with mental health problems experienced by students.

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