

Can Learning Agility Predict Students' Academic Burnout During Distance Learning?

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Abstract

Various new academic challenges faced by students during the distance learning period lead to vulnerability in academic burnout. This condition requires them to become agile learners to be able to face various challenges in new learning situations. This study aims to determine the role of learning agility on students' academic burnout during distance learning. The online survey provided quantitative data from 210 students taking distance learning. The Learning Agility Scale and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS) were used to measure student learning agility and academic burnout, respectively. The results show that learning agility is a significant predictor of academic burnout, so the higher the learning agility, the lower the level of academic burnout. Furthermore, the difference in the length of study did not affect learning agility role on students' academic burnout. The implication and limitation of this study are discussed in this article.

Keywords: *Academic burnout, distance learning, learning agility.*

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Introduction

The coronavirus disease (Covid-19) declaration by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a pandemic has brought a significant impact on various aspects of life, one of them was found in the education field (Raimanu, 2020). In dealing with this situation, the government attempted to reduce the risk of the virus spreading by temporarily eliminating face-to-face teaching and learning activities and replacing them with online distance learning following the circular letter issued by the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 4, 2020 concerning the Implementation of Education Policy in the Emergency Period of the Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) Pandemic (Patimah & Sumartini, 2022; Yudhistira & Murdiani, 2020). As a result,

distance learning has been applied at all levels of education, including in higher education (Benner & Mistry, 2020; Sahu, 2020).

The implementation of distance learning created an unprecedented crisis (Churiyah et al., 2020; Mahapatra & Sharma, 2021). It raised various new academic challenges experienced by many students in higher education, both technically and psychologically (Moawad, 2020), such as difficulties in receiving learning materials caused by poor signals (Patimah & Sumartini, 2022), inadequate lecture times, uncertain learning conditions, inadequate environment for learning, limited communication with lecturers, and uncertainty in the implementation of learning (Moawad, 2020). These challenges then negatively affected the student's learning process during distance learning, such as difficulty in following and understanding learning materials, not working optimally on academic assignments, as well as decreasing learning motivation and boredom while studying (Li Dinillah, 2022; Madigan & Curran, 2021; Sagita & Meilyawati, 2021; Sunawan et al., 2021). These challenges lead to a stressor that causes students to be more susceptible to experiencing academic burnout (Pamungkas & Nurlaili, 2021; Patimah & Sumartini, 2022).

Academic burnout is defined as an emotionally exhausting feeling due to the demands of learning (academic exhaustion), having a cynical attitude and tending to depersonalize (cynicism), and feeling incompetent (inefficacy) as a student (Novianti, 2021; Yudhistira & Murdiani, 2020). Academic burnout is also conceptualized as a state of emotional, physical, and cognitive exhaustion that results from performing activities under pressure and demands (Fernández-Castillo, 2021). As a result, individuals experiencing academic burnout tend to be unable and unwilling to do the tasks related to their studies, which impacts poor performance in their academic activities (Adhiambo et al., 2016; Akbay & Akbay, 2016; Oyoo et al., 2018). Furthermore, they also tend to withdraw physically and psychologically from their studies (Madigan & Curran, 2021).

In distance learning context, several studies found that academic burnout negatively impact on several aspects in learning, such as academic adaptability (Xie et al., 2019), learning motivation (Alshobaili et al., 2020), academic performance, and mental health (Wang et al., 2021). Another study revealed differences in academic burnout based on the length of their academic year. The

level of academic burnout for students who had studied for one year was lower than those who had studied for two years. In comparison, the highest level of academic burnout was found in students having studied for three years (Pamungkas & Nurlaili, 2021; Zis et al., 2021). Based on the study of Kwan (2022), final-year students have the highest level of academic burnout due to the increasing number of academic burdens and concerns about job prospects after graduation. Meanwhile, first-year students have the lowest level of academic burnout due to the relatively light academic workload.

The implementation of distance learning in universities also leads to students' difficulties in adapting, which impacts the inhibition of the learning process (Palar et al., 2021). It requires students to have learning agility, which is the willingness and ability to learn from experiences and implement them when facing new, complex, or unidentified conditions (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000). Learning agility consists of four subcategories, namely (1) people agility, which refers to the ability to know themselves and deal with difficult situations; (2) mental agility, which refers to the ability to deal with complex situations, analyze problems, and make connections between different things; (3) change agility, refers to the ability to learn new things and be able to handle themselves with the adversity of immediate changes; (4) result agility, refers to the ability to give good results even at the new situations (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2003). Sung et al. (2016) found that learning agility is a competency needed by students in preparing themselves to face an uncertain future and live in the present. Furthermore, agile learners' students will show high intellectual curiosity, have the initiative to learn, and can accept changes in every condition (Sung, 2021). Individuals with high learning agility will perform well even in new or difficult situations (Santoso & Yuzarion, 2021). Based on the characteristics of the agile learner, learning agility is essential during the distance learning period to reduce academic burnout levels and achieve students' academic success.

Learning agility role toward academic burnout becomes necessary to study because individuals who are identified as highly agile learners will be more adaptable to changes and exposed to new learning (Byrum et al., 2021). They also deal with new academic challenges and show good performance under uncertain and constantly changing conditions, as in the current distance learning period. Yudhistira & Murdiani (2020) also revealed that learning agility takes interactive

solid skills and high self-confidence to take unexpected risks during distance learning periods to reduce students' academic burnout. Meanwhile, the courage to take risks in an unexpected situation is a characteristic of one dimension of learning agility (Tripathi et al., 2020)

Studies about the role of learning agility on student academic burnout is still very limited. Several previous studies examined the role of learning agility on academic burnout indirectly (Lee et al., 2021) and used learning agility as a mediator of the relationship between academic burnout on students' learning engagement (Jeon et al., 2022). In addition, no research has been specifically conducted during distance learning. Current study aims to examine the role of learning agility towards students' academic burnout during the distance learning period. In addition, this study also aims to explore how the length of study affects the role of learning agility toward students' academic burnout.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were students from a university in Bandung who were doing distance learning. Sampling was done using a stratified random sampling, with strata as the length of the study differences at the university. Through the sample estimation formula by Scheaffer et al. (2012), with a bound of error = 0.05 and proportion = 0.50, a minimum sample size obtained was 210 students.

Measurement

This study collected participant demographic data, including gender, age, and length of study. The measuring tools used in the study were Learning Agility Scale (Gravett & Caldwell, 2016) to measure learning agility as an independent variable and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS) (Schaufeli et al., 2002) to measure students' academic burnout as the dependent variable.

The Learning Agility Scale used has been adapted and translated into Indonesian by Ipmawati (2021). This measuring instrument consists of 7 statement items and uses a Likert scale with five

ranges (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Examples of statements from measuring instruments are presented in Table 1. The reliability of this scale was measured using internal consistency with $\alpha = 0.75$. The validity of this instrument was measured using the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with a model fit test in the form of Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Comparative Fit Indicated (CFI), Goodness of Fit Statistics (GFI), and the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI). The results show that this measuring instrument is in accordance with the model fit standard (Hooper et al., 2008), namely RMSEA of 0.04 (lower than 0.08), SRMR of 0.02 (lower than 0.08), CFI of 0.99 (higher than 0.90), GFI of 0.99 (higher than 0.95), and TLI of 0.98 (higher than 0.95).

The measurement of academic burnout was done using the MBI-SS, which has been adapted and translated into Indonesian by Astaman (2020). This measuring instrument consists of 15 statement items consisting of 9 favorable items and six unfavorable items, using a Likert scale with seven ranges (0 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree). Examples of measuring instrument statement items are presented in Table 1. The internal consistency value of this measuring instrument was 0.82. Based on the results of the CFA, the validity of the measuring instrument showed results that were in accordance with the model fit standard (Hooper et al., 2008), namely RMSEA of 0.04 (lower than 0.08), SRMR of 0.07 (lower than 0.08), CFI of 0.98 (higher than 0.90), GFI of 0.96 (higher than 0.95), and TLI of 0.97 (higher than 0.95).

Table 1
Statement Item Sample

Variable	Dimension	Statement Sample
Learning Agility	People Agility	I know when to ask others for help in solving my problems [Saya tahu kapan saya harus meminta bantuan orang lain dalam menyelesaikan masalah saya]
	Result Agility	I use the pressure or the burden of studying as a challenge to grow [Saya menggunakan tekanan atau beban perkuliahan sebagai tantangan untuk berkembang]
	Change Agility	I can keep the spirit of learning even though I have to go through a long process to overcome problems [Saya dapat menjaga semangat belajar meskipun harus melewati proses panjang dalam mengatasi masalah]
	Mental Agility	I have my own way or approach to learn from experience [Saya memiliki cara atau pendekatan tersendiri untuk belajar dari pengalaman]
Academic Burnout	Exhausted	I feel emotionally drained to study [Saya merasa terkuras secara emosional oleh kegiatan pembelajaran]
	Cynicism	I feel less enthusiastic to study [Saya menjadi kurang antusias dalam menjalani pendidikan]
	Professional Inefficacy	In my opinion, I am a good student [Menurut saya, saya adalah pelajar yang baik] (unfavorable)

Procedures

The data were collected by selecting participants randomly from each stratum through student identity numbers. Selected participants were then invited to participate and give information about the study. Through informed consent, participants who were willing to participate in the study were directed to access online questionnaires. The entire procedure of this research has obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Commission of Padjadjaran University (No. 769/UN6.KEP/EC/2022).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS software version 25.0 (IBM Corp., 2017). First, descriptive analysis was conducted to see the average and distribution of each variable. Then the correlation between variables was tested using Pearson correlation. Next, regression analysis was conducted to determine the role of learning agility on academic burnout. Furthermore, a covariance analysis test (ANCOVA) was conducted to see the effect of the length of study differences on the learning agility role toward academic burnout.

Result

Participants consisted of 210 students aged 16-22 years ($M = 19.98$; $SD = 0.07$) in which the majority were women (88.60%; $n = 186$). Based on the length of study, there were 32.90% ($n=69$) students who had studied for one year, 32.40% ($n = 68$) students who had studied for two years, and 34.80% ($n = 73$) students who had studied for three years.

Table 2 shows that the average score of participants in learning agility was 3.48 ($SD = 0.58$). Based on a scale of 1 - 5, the average score above the middle point indicates that the participants have a relatively high level of learning agility. The data on each dimension also showed that the highest score was on the people agility dimension ($M = 3.90$; $SD = 0.67$) and the lowest score was on the result agility ($M = 3.01$; $SD = 1.61$). Meanwhile, in the MBI-SS, the average score for the participants was 2.79 ($SD = 0.69$). Based on a scale of 0 - 6, the average score lower than the middle point indicates a relatively low level of academic burnout for participants. The highest dimension score on the MBI-SS was exhausted ($M = 3.89$; $SD = 0.92$) and the lowest score was on the cynicism dimension ($M = 2.11$; $SD = 1.19$). From the length of study differences, the highest average academic burnout score was found in students who had studied for one year ($M = 2.84$; $SD = 0.68$), followed by students who had studied for three years ($M = 2.83$; $SD = 0.74$), and the lowest mean score for students who have studied for two years ($M = 2.70$; $SD = 0.64$).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Relationships Between Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. MBI-SS	2.79	0.69	—								
2. Exhausted	3.89	0.92	0.74**	—							
3. Cynicism	2.11	1.19	0.83**	0.49**	—						
4. Professional Inefficacy	2.34	0.75	0.67**	0.16*	0.34**	—					
5. Learning Agility Scale	3.48	0.58	-0.61**	-0.26**	-0.41**	-0.70**	—				
6. People Agility	3.90	0.67	-0.42**	-0.12	-0.32**	-0.50**	0.69**	—			
7. Result Agility	3.01	1.61	-0.47**	-0.27**	-0.29**	-0.50**	0.70**	0.29**	—		
8. Change Agility	3.21	0.50	-0.47**	-0.25**	-0.24**	-0.57**	0.83**	0.42**	0.50**	—	
9. Mental Agility	3.58	0.71	-0.49**	-0.18*	-0.39**	-0.54**	0.80**	0.39**	0.49**	0.52**	—

** significant on $p < 0.01$

* significant on $p < 0.05$

The correlation test results between dimensions showed that each dimension of learning agility was moderately correlated with the MBI-SS score, with r of -0.42 to -0.49. The highest correlation was with the mental agility dimension ($r = -0.49$; $p < 0.01$), while the lowest correlation was with the people agility dimension ($r = -0.42$; $p < 0.01$).

The results of simple regression analysis showed that learning agility can predict academic burnout ($\beta = -0.61$; $p < 0.01$). A negative value in the regression coefficient means that when students' learning agility increases, their academic burnout level will decrease. Learning agility can predict 37% of academic burnout variance in students during distance learning.

Furthermore, each dimension of learning agility was also analyzed using stepwise regression. The results are shown in Table 3, which shows that each dimension of learning agility contributes little to student academic burnout. The most significant contributors consecutively are result agility, mental agility, people agility, and change agility.

Table 3

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis Between The Dimension of Learning Agility on Students' Academic Burnout

Variable	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Model 1					
Mental Agility	-3.59	0.44	-0.49	-8.20	0.00
Model 2					
Mental Agility	-2.52	0.48	-0.35	-5.26	0.00
Result Agility	-3.14	0.69	-0.30	-4.54	0.00
Model 3					
Mental Agility	-1.96	0.49	-0.27	-4.03	0.00
Result Agility	-2.83	0.67	-0.27	-4.21	0.00
People Agility	-1.81	0.47	-0.23	-3.83	0.00
Model 4					
Mental Agility	-1.62	0.51	-0.22	-3.21	0.00
Result Agility	-2.35	0.70	-0.23	-3.36	0.00
People Agility	-1.55	0.48	-0.20	-3.20	0.00
Change Agility	-1.01	0.45	-0.16	-2.24	0.03

Note: (1) model 1: $R = 0.49$; $R^2 = 0.24$; $\Delta R^2 = 0.24$; $p < 0.01$ (2) model 2: $R = 0.56$; $R^2 = 0.31$; $\Delta R^2 = 0.07$; $p < 0.01$ (3) model 3: $R = 0.60$; $R^2 = 0.36$; $\Delta R^2 = 0.05$; $p < 0.01$ (4) model 4: $R = 0.61$; $R^2 = 0.37$; $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$; $p < 0.05$

Moreover, the results of ANCOVA indicate that the role of learning agility on academic burnout remains significant after adjusting the length of study differences, which means that there is no effect of length of study on learning agility role toward academic burnout ($F(1.186) = 0.51$; $p = 0.47$).

Discussion

This study explains the learning agility role toward academic burnout during distance learning through two new findings. First, learning agility was found to have a significant negative role in academic burnout. Students with high levels of learning agility are found to have lower academic burnout levels. Likewise, if students have low learning agility, their level of academic burnout increases. Second, the length of study differences does not affect the learning agility role toward student academic burnout.

This first finding is in line with the study by (Lee et al., 2021), who found that learning agility play an important role in reducing academic burnout for students. Another study conducted by Jeon et al., (2022) also found that learning agility was negatively correlated with academic burnout. According to Jian (2022), individuals with learning agility are very easy to adapt. Students who cannot adapt to new learning situations will be incompatible (Xie et al., 2019) and more likely to experience academic burnout (Treat et al., 2021). One of the interesting aspects of learning agility is that it is not easy to predict what needs to be learned beforehand, so individuals must always be ready to learn (Bennett & McWhorter, 2021). Without the willingness and readiness to adapt to changes in new learning situations, students can have a higher potential to experience academic burnout (Ahadi et al., 2015; Arvandi et al., 2016; Fathoni et al., 2022)

Dimensional analysis of learning agility shows that each dimension has a low role in predicting student academic burnout. Result agility becomes the most significant dimension that contributes to student academic burnout. It means that students who desire to improve, change perspectives, and enhance their learning outcomes have a decreasing level of academic burnout (Saputra et al., 2018; Tripathi et al., 2020). When they can evaluate their learning outcomes, it will be easier to adapt and overcome their academic difficulties during the distance learning period. As a result, this condition leads to lower student academic burnout. (Xie et al., 2019). The finding is also in line with de Meuse et al., (2008), who states that the result of agility and mental agility are higher factors of learning agility, while people agility and change are the lowest factors found worldwide. Therefore, each dimension affects the portion differently to predict student academic burnout level during the implementation of distance learning.

The results show that students had a high average score for the dimensions of people agility. Individuals with high people agility mean that they can recognize themselves well (Gravett & Caldwell, 2016; Tripathi et al., 2020) have interpersonal skills that are more flexible, sensitive, open to change, and can learn more from other people with various (De Meuse et al., 2010). In addition, it shows that they can understand what they need during distance learning and are open to changes. In comparison, the lowest average score of students is in the result agility dimension. The low score on result agility indicates that individuals tend to have a low ability to give good

results in new situations (Tripathi et al., 2020). In addition, participants also have a low ability to inspire and build confidence in others (Ab Jalil et al., 2022; Gravett & Caldwell, 2016).

In academic burnout, students have the highest average score on the exhausted dimension, which refers to excessive emotional feelings and being emotionally exhausted due to their academic studies (Kaur et al., 2020). Exhaustion is also a major dimension and the initial stage of academic burnout that leads to the increasing dimension of cynicism (Kaur et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020). The high score on this dimension can be caused by an increasingly heavy burden of academic demands, the loss of physical and emotional energy, and the enthusiasm to be involved in their academic activities (Lee et al., 2020) Moreover, students may have demands to overcome new academic challenges and adapt to the distance learning situation. In contrast, the lowest average score is on the cynicism dimension, which refers to feelings of irritability, loss of idealism, and withdrawal from their studies (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Mostert & Pienaar, 2020). This dimension relates to the perceived discrepancy between expectation and reality, such as students' expectation in their college environment (Wei et al., 2015). Low scores on this dimension may be caused by students' willingness to build a good and positive relationships with friends or lecturers. In addition, they can also solve the problems that arise with their friends in the academic environment (Sagita & Meilyawati, 2021).

Several studies found that the length of student study differences led to levels of academic burnout, where the longer the student studies, the higher the academic burnout they have (Pamungkas & Nurlaili, 2021; Zis et al., 2021). However, this was not found in this current study, where the difference in length of study did not affect learning agility role on students' academic burnout. This finding is in line with the research of Kwan (2022) stating that no significant difference found in the level of academic burnout experienced based on the length of study. In this research, the finding was very likely to be influenced by new and uncertain learning situations, where uncertainty and lack of experience in these situations can be a serious burdensome and impact on their academic burnout (Zis et al., 2021). This study found that students who have studied for one year have high levels of academic burnout, which may be caused by the condition in which they have to face new and different academic demands when starting university life, coupled with concerns about the following learning situation that may continue to change.

This current study has several limitations that can be considered for further research. One of them is that the learning agility and academic burnout measurement tools used in this study have not explicitly measured participants in the context of distance learning. Then, this study can also have biased results since the data collection was conducted in the transition period, where learning activities began to shift to a hybrid learning method. This study also does not include potentially variables that could bridge learning agility with academic burnout, such as adaptability. In addition, the research sample was limited to only one faculty in a university.

Conclusion

This study found that learning agility can be a predictor of student academic burnout, especially during the distance learning period. When students have high learning agility, it will be easier for them to adapt and be ready to face new situations, decreasing academic burnout. The dimensional analysis of learning agility also shows that each dimension has a low role in predicting student academic burnout levels. In addition, this study also did not find a correlation between different lengths of study and the role of learning agility toward student academic burnout.

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