Academic Help Seeking Behavior Among Students in Higher Education: Assessment for Counseling

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Abstract: Help-seeking behavior is an important and fundamental strategy for successful learning when knowledge and understanding are not able to solve problems. This descriptive qualitative research aims to obtain an overview of the patterns of help- seeking behavior applied by students of the psychology faculty of UIN SUSKA. The respondents of this study were 112 students representing semesters 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11. Data collection was carried out using an open-ended questionnaire. The data obtained were then coded to create categories and analyzed. Furthermore, the answers are determined based on their frequency and the effect is seen if it is related to the GPA value. The results showed that the pattern of student behavior in seeking help was as follows: tends to optimize external sources such as asking friends and lecturers. When facing difficulties, students will emphasize instrumental help, such as reading books or not asking for help at all. The type of assistance that is often needed is material assistance in the form of reference loans, providing assistance to do and asking others to show how to do the task. The figures who are often asked for help are friends. The reason for choosing figures is based on cognitive considerations, such as providing solutions, having the competence to help. The strategy used to optimize the help that has been obtained is to make time arrangements.

Keywords: help-seeking, academic difficulties

Abstrak: Perilaku mencari bantuan merupakan strategi penting dan mendasar untuk kesuksesan proses belajar ketika pengetahuan dan pemahaman yang dikuasai tidak mampu menyelesaikan persoalan Penelitian kualitatif deskriptif ini bertujuan untuk memperoleh gambaran mengenai pola perilaku mencari bantuan yang diterapkan oleh mahasiswa fakultas psikologi UIN SUSKA. Responden penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa berjumlah 112 yang mewakili semester 3, 5, 7, 9, dan 11. Pengambilan data dilakukan menggunakan open ended questionare. Data yang diperoleh selanjutnya dikoding untuk dibuat kategorinya dan dianalisis. Selanjutnya jawaban ditentukan berdasarkan frekuensinya dan dilihat pengaruhnya jika dihubungkan dengan nilai IPK. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pola perilaku mahasiswa dalam mencari pertolongan sebagai berikut: cenderung mengoptimalkan sumber-sumber eksternal seperti bertanya kepada teman dan dosen. Ketika menghadapi kesulitan mahasiswa akan menekankan bantuan yang sifatnya instrumental yaitu dengan membaca buku atau tidak meminta bantuan sama sekali. Jenis bantuan yang sering dibutuhkan adalah bantuan materi berupa pinjaman referensi, memberi bantuan untuk mengerjakan dan meminta orang lain menunjukkan cara mengerjakan tugas. Adapun figur yang sering dimintai pertolongan adalah teman. Alasan pemilihan figur didasari oleh pertimbangan-pertimbangan kognitif, seperti memberi solusi, memiliki kompetensi untuk membantu. Strategi yang digunakan untuk mengoptimalkan bantuan yang telah diperoleh adalah dengan melakukan pengaturan waktu.

Kata Kunci: pencarian bantuan, kesulitan akademik

INTRODUCTION

The learning system in higher education is different from the learning system at the primary to secondary education level. This difference in learning culture is often an obstacle for students and becomes a stressor. This condition is caused by challenging academic situations and creates subjective perceptions related to the inability to deal with environmental demands. (Bedewy & Gabriel, 2015). Research from Lubis, Ramadhani & Rasyid (2021) shows that students in Indonesia have high academic stress. Meanwhile, research from Dewi et al (2022) on 487 students found that only 4% did not feel academic stress, while the rest felt academic stress. Academic problems that occur will have an impact on mental health. To prevent unexpected conditions, students must be able to carry out certain strategies as an effort to seek help.

The efforts made by students to seek help in overcoming their academic problems are referred to as help-seeking behavior. Some research on help-seeking behavior has focused on individuals at crisis point such as HIV-AIDS victims, alcoholics and individuals with mental illness (Murray, 2005). Therefore, it is not surprising that at some stages of the development of theories about this behavior, a "clinical" perspective was used. Help-seeking behavior can be seen in various perspectives from several experts. Bucher and Crosbie (1977) suggested several stages of help-seeking based on their research on parents: perception of distress, motivation to act, perception of what to do and decision to act.

Effective help-seeking behavior is an important and fundamental strategy for successful learning when knowledge and understanding are unable to solve problems. Help-seeking behavior when experiencing difficulties in learning is needed by students in higher education. The learning system in higher education is different from the learning system at the primary to secondary education level. This difference in learning culture is often an obstacle for students. In addition, academic problems commonly experienced by students are, difficulty adapting to the learning system that is enforced, not in accordance with the majors of interest, psychological constraints (intelligence level and others), difficulty dividing time, difficulty focusing orientation and so on.

Ryan and Hicks (1997) found that students who feel threatened and feel that their academic performance is not as good as others will apply less effective strategies such as giving up easily, passively waiting for others to offer help, and not being motivated to seek help. Therefore, it is important for students to realize that seeking help can be applied as a positive learning strategy. Different assumptions were proposed by Greenlay and Mullen (1990) who studied individuals with mental disorders, namely: the presence and recognition of certain symptoms as problems, the definition of these symptoms as indicative of mental health problems, the decision to seek help and the choice of which source of help to use.

The terminology used by the two experts above uses a medical perspective. In contrast to Shapiro (1984) who describes help-seeking behavior as follows: determine that they need help, determine to seek help, determine from whom to get help and decide how to get help. Students who understand that they need academic help will affect their academic achievement.

Research on help-seeking behavior in education has been developed by Newman. According to Newman (2002) help-seeking behavior during the learning process can prevent students from the possibility of failure, increase engagement in learning, play an important role in success and increase long-term mastery and independence in learning. Students who realize the importance of help in dealing with academic obstacles or difficulties will take the initiative to get help from friends and teachers or lecturers. Academic difficulties are crucial and require problem solving for students in order to achieve optimal learning process results. For this reason, this research needs to be done to obtain an overview of the patterns of help-seeking behavior in

students. This study aims to identify patterns of help-seeking behavior in overcoming academic problems in students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Help-seeking behavior is viewed as a self-regulatory behavior. Many authors view these behaviors as self-regulatory rather than as dependent behaviors. Help-seeking behavior is an important strategy and tool for developing abilities and skills to become independent (Newman, 1994). Nelson-le Gall distinguishes help-seeking behaviors into instrumental and executive help-seeking. Instrumental help refers to the ability to optimize the amount and type of help desired. While seeking executive help refers to the intention of students to ask others to solve their problems or jointly achieve their goals. The first form of help-seeking is mastery or material oriented while the second type is dependent on others. Nelson's own research found that students who always ask for help often do not want to be said to be dependent, but they think that asking for help is a way to overcome problems that are beyond their ability (Nelson-Le Gall & Glor- Scheib, 1985).

Newman (1994) developed Nelson's model of help-seeking behavior. He defined instrumental help-seeking behavior as a series of decisions and actions. Adaptive or instrumental help-seeking behavior includes: (a) students realize that they lack understanding (b) consider the importance of asking for help, the help needed and the person who gives help (c) ask for help in a way that is good according to the circumstances (d) process the help provided in such a way that the help can continue. Newman's (1994) research further shows that the decision to seek help is made through an affective motivational system that includes the intention to seek help, how attitudes towards benefits and disadvantages, and achievement goals. Achievement focuses on the goals and meanings that students attach to achievement behavior. Students who are oriented to mastering the material will need more help than students who are oriented to performance alone.

In other words, students who are oriented to mastering the material view help- seeking behavior as one way to solve problems (*problem solving*) and focus on achieving goals. While performance-oriented students are more focused on avoiding the impression that they lack ability, and seeking help is considered an indication that they are less able to master a material. And the risk of losing self-esteem is when asking for help to others.

Other studies have shown that students who rarely ask questions in class and low-achieving students rarely ask questions (Nelson-Le Gall & Glor-Scheib, 1985). In contrast, effective help seekers ask detailed questions, always seek help, apply the explanations they get.

Psychology suggests that help-seeking behavior is the ability to solve problems effectively and efficiently. It also means (a) the ability to learn from or form relationships with experts or people who know better, (b) obtain information and expertise, (c) show how one performs on tasks and (d) learn new skills and knowledge to solve future problems (Murray, 2005).

Based on the various descriptions above, it can be concluded that help-seeking behavior is a strategy used by students in overcoming their difficulties. This help can be by developing personal understanding through several ways, it can also be by getting help from others. In other words, help-seeking behavior reflects attitudes about learning, and their goals in achieving achievement.

METHODOLOGY

Research with a descriptive qualitative approach was deemed appropriate to obtain an overview of the behavior to be studied. Data was obtained through written interviews using open-ended questions and subsequent research questions. The main questions in this study are: 1) How do you overcome difficulties in understanding lecture material? 2). To whom (if anyone) do you ask for help to overcome these difficulties? 3) Why did you choose that person to help? 4.) What kind of help do you need to overcome the difficulty? 5). What is your strategy for dealing with the hectic lecture process?

The sample in this study were psychology students who represented semesters III, V, VII, IX, and XII. Sampling using *purposive random sampling* technique. This means that the samples used as research respondents represent their respective classes which are taken randomly. The total research sample amounted to 112 students, consisting of 34 men and 78 women. While based on the number of semesters obtained semester 3 (25 people), semester 5 (29), semester 7 (24 people), semester 9 (21 people), semester 11 (13 people).

Data analysis in this study was carried out with a coding system. Creswell (1998) explains that the systematic data coding process in this approach begins with analyzing specific statements to be categorized at levels of meaning that represent the phenomenon under study. Data obtained through interviews will be coded according to the variety of answers given by the subject. The answer code is then used to categorize the answers. In the next stage, the categorization of answers will be reduced in the form of themes. This theme will be counted for frequency and will be seen for its attachment to several demographic variables of the subject such as gender, semester, and GPA. The data analysis process is carried out through descriptive frequency analysis and cross tabulation with the help of the SPSS program.

FINDINGS

The results of the study found several themes resulting from the categorization process of the subject's answer variations. The presentation of the results of this study will describe the variations in the answers to the questions that the researcher asked.

First question, *What do you do when you encounter difficulties in understanding the lecture material?* The answers to this question were categorized into two major themes, 1) Activating external sources consisting of: asking the lecturer, asking friends, asking questions, discussing with friends and discussing with the lecturer. 2) Activating internal sources consisting of: browsing, reading, doing nothing, finding out, repeating learning, and understanding.
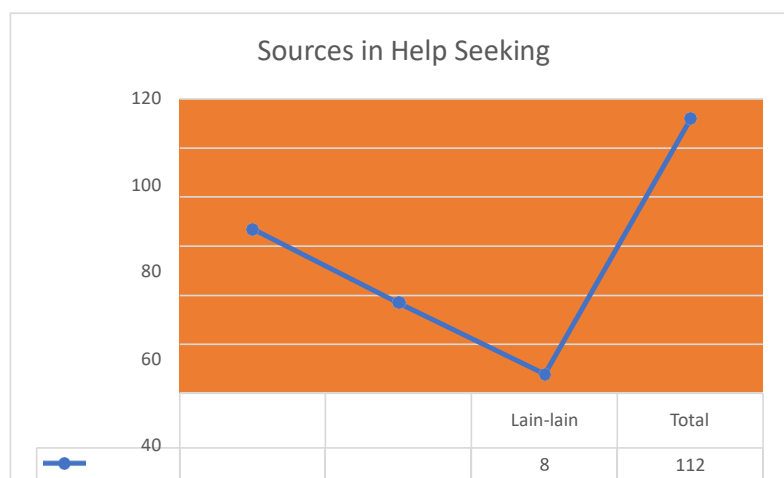

Figure 1. Categorization sources of help-seeking behavior

Based on the figure 1, it can be explained that the number of students who seek help by empowering external sources is 59.8% and those who seek help by empowering internal sources is 33%. Another 7.1% did not give an answer. The behavior of seeking help through empowering these sources when associated with the value of GPA then obtained the following picture:
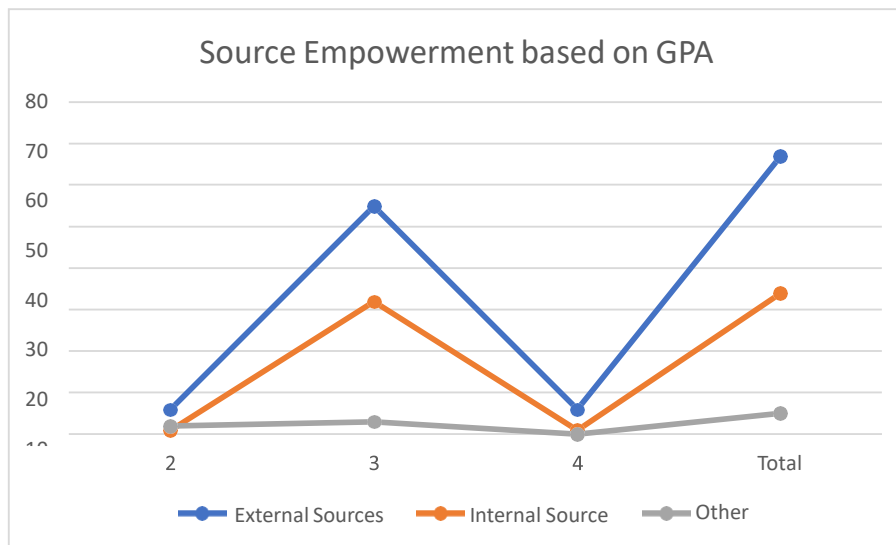

Figure 2. Overview of source usage associated with GPA values

Students who have a GPA of 3.50-4.00 tend to empower external sources more as help when experiencing difficulties. While internal sources are more widely used by students who have a GPA of 2.5-3.00.

Second question, *"Who do you turn to for help in overcoming these difficulties?"*. This answer is categorized into two: 1) Executive help-seeking, students who put the responsibility to help on the person who gives help. The behavior shown is asking for help from God, lecturers, family, seniors, friends and asking anyone. 2) Instrumental help-seeking is the behavior of seeking help in students by placing responsibility on the students concerned such as finding solutions by themselves, looking information with reading books and not asking for help at all.
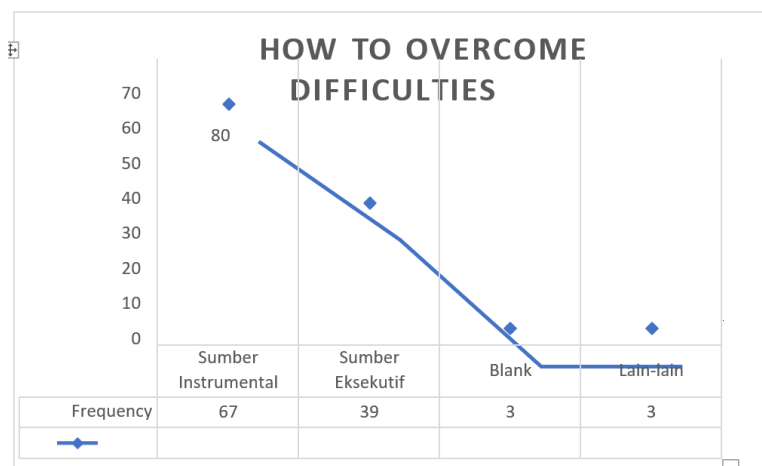

Figure 3. How to overcome difficulties

The use of instrumental sources such as reading books, searching for information on the internet and learning independently is mostly done by students, about 59.8% in overcoming difficulties. While executive sources such as asking lecturers and friends are 34.8%.
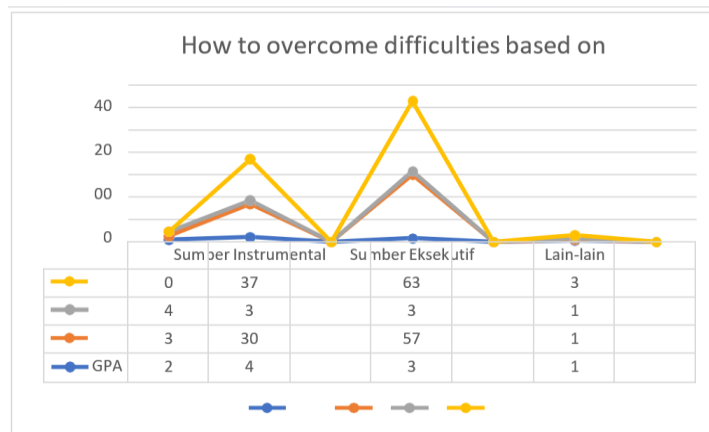
Figure 4. How to overcome difficulties in relation to GPA

Based on the GPA value, students with an average GPA of 3 prefer to use scuttle sources such as asking for explanations to others by 63.3%.

Third question *"What help do you need to overcome difficulties?"* There were two categories of respondents' answers: 1) Material, seeking help with work, borrowingnotes, looking for references, asking for explanations, looking for understanding from the others. 2) Morale, working in groups, getting support, giving solutions, getting direction, being given a different approach, being given advice and repeating explanations.
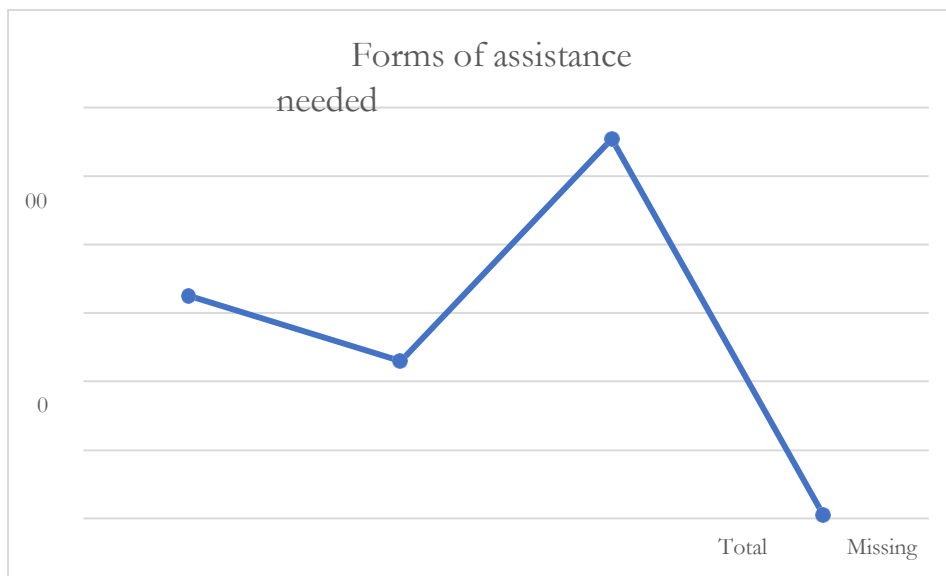

Figure 5. Forms of help needed

In the figure 5 seen form of help sought, in general, the help that is sought is material help. The material needed is explanations, help from others to demonstrate, and borrowing references. Material assistance is needed more by students with a low GPA.
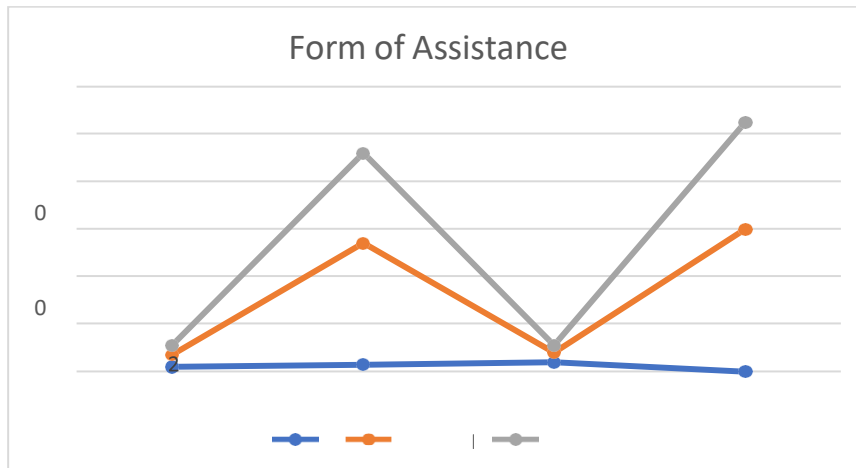
Figure 6. Form of help needed based on GPA

Fourth question is about the reasons why students chose spsific person to help. The answer are divided into twocategories: 1) Emotional Reasons, depent on closeness, willingness to provide help, feeling more comfortable, the individual asked for help is considered more capable, feeling trust in the individual asked for help.
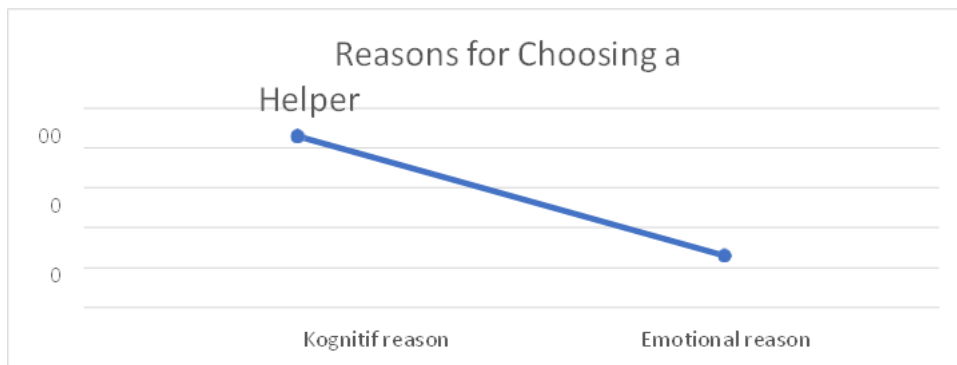

Figure 7. Reasons for choosing a figure to help

Most students choose people who will provide assistance based on cognitive considerations, about 76.8% (86 people). This means that the consideration of getting help is based on the competence of the person who will be asked for help that the person concerned can provide solutions to their problems.
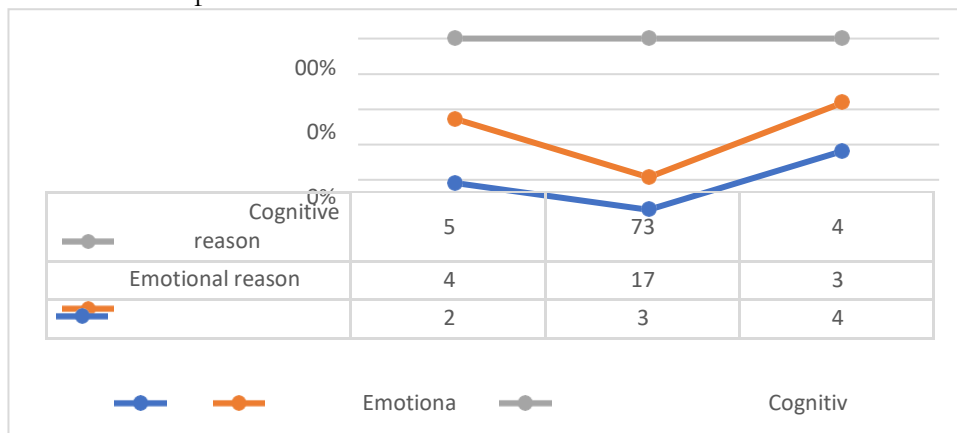

Cognitive reason	5	73	4
Emotional reason	4	17	3
	2	3	4

Figure 8. Reasons for choosing figure to help in relation to GPA

Students with average GPA scores use more cognitive reasons to choose people who will help them overcome academic difficulties. The strategy carried out by students to overcome a busy lectures process is divided into two : Organizing time by setting schedules, manage the time wisely and studying at night. Regulating activity by getting enough rest, maintaining health, being patient and accepting the condition what it is.
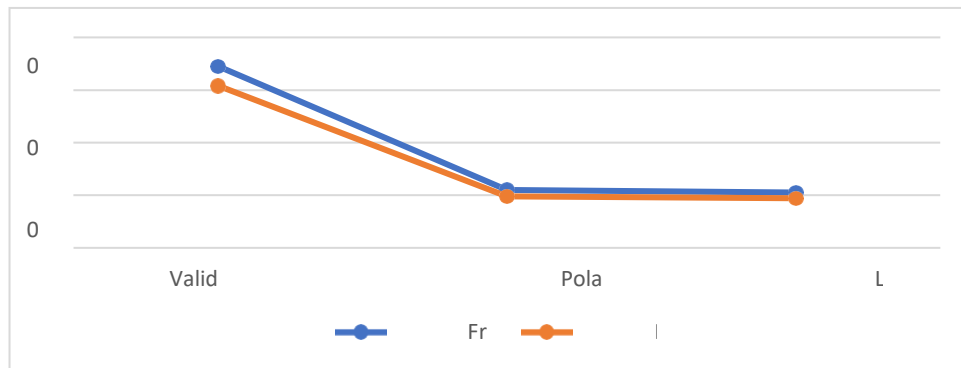

Figure 9. Strategy to overcome difficulties

Managing time is the most strategy used by students and most helpful in overcoming academic difficulties. Managing time is shown at 61.6%.
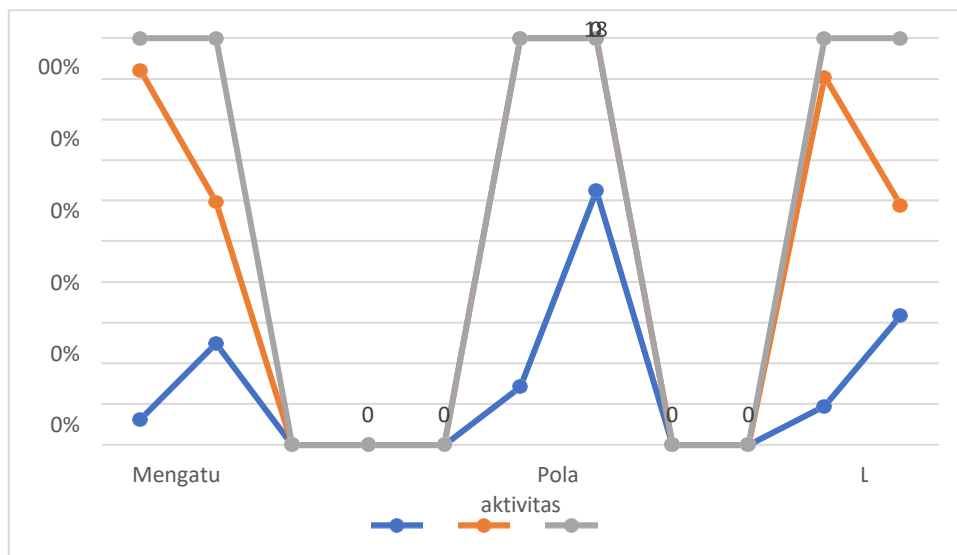

Figure 10. Strategy used relation to GPA

When viewed from the GPA value, students who use strategies by manage the time showed a high GPA achievement, which ranges from 3.5-4.00 with a percentage of 71.44%.

DISCUSSION

This discussion will be described in accordance with the order of questions and findings in this study. The findings of this study illustrate that when experiencing difficulties in understanding new course material, the tendency of students is to optimize external sources. Research from Bimerew & Arendse (2024) found that students use more informal information for academic learning, including course materials and books, YouTube and computers and also finding help from lecturers. Students are asking lecturers, asking friends for help. Friends became the top choice of the help resources. Student felt comfortable when discuss their problem with the peers than lecturers. Besides of emotional reasons, the other consideration to choose peers are is the available time to meet and talk. As expressed by students:

"It's good with friends, if it's with the lecturer, I'm embarrassed and afraid of being scolded"

"Friends, because you can meet them anytime if the lecturer is limited"

Asking for help from others makes some people feel low self-esteem and feel worried that others know their shortcomings (Frydenberg, 1997). Therefore, choosing friends as the main source of information in seeking help is done by many students for psychological and image reasons. If it is associated with the general answers given by students in item two, it can be concluded that the use of seeking instrumental help makes more sense. Overcoming problems by relying on instrumental sources means that students empower their own ability to understand, search and collect information through books, references and search for data on the internet.

An interesting finding is that students with a low GPA use instrumental assistance as a help, which illustrates that the tendency of students who choose instrumental assistance does not know what to ask and try to search through the literature before asking others. Students with a GPA of 3.00-4.00 actually use a lot of executive assistance. The choice of this assistance is closely related to one's interpersonal skills. Not everyone can easily discuss with others, because it takes knowledge and courage to express opinions. Seeking help through discussions with others will provide many benefits for both those who ask for help and those who provide help. However, the deepening of knowledge for those who provide help and new understanding for those who are given help. This of course can help help-seekers to complete their cognitive structure with the process of elaboration. Karabenick and Knapp (1991) states that learners who have good cognitive competence will ask questions carefully, in accordance with the objectives to be achieved and able to utilize the description given by others to solve the problem. Cognitive abilities contribute to problem solving in individuals (Siswati & Suratno, 2023).

The form of assistance that is generally most needed by students is material assistance. Included in material assistance are giving explanations, lending references, providing assistance to do work, helping respondents to understand by explaining again. In determining who to ask for help, students use several considerations which are generally chosen, namely the person concerned has the ability and knowledge of the material to be asked, is experienced and faces the same problem so that he understands better, besides that, because the person asked for help is considered smart, understands better and knows more about the problems he faces.

In general, the following can be concluded: The difficulty of understanding new course material was felt by students at the beginning of entering the lecture period. They revealed that it was difficult to understand the connection between the new course and the course material that had been taken before. The strategy usually used is to ask for help from friends. The help needed by students is in the form of further explanation of the material they do not understand.

Friends who are used as references by students usually have emotional closeness and or are considered to better understand the material presented by the lecturer. Students choose to ask friends because in addition to feeling emotional closeness, they also feel that friends are more patient in giving explanations. Meanwhile, if they ask the lecturer directly, they feel reluctant. Asking the lecturer for most students is the last choice after friends are unable to provide explanations and have tried to find information via the internet. Furthermore, students who managed to overcome their academic difficulties in addition to activating their resources, they were also able to manage their time effectively. They will carry out activities in accordance with the time allocation they have planned.

Men tend to use the internet to seek help. The most common reason given was not to inconvenience others, and not to have to endure embarrassment if the question or help needed was thought to be solved by themselves without the help of others. The internet can also quickly provide a wide range of help information.

Asking and discussing with competent people will provide the clarity of information needed to solve problems related to the material at hand. Therefore, discussing with lecturers or friends should be developed as a learning strategy. Students tend to use instrumental sources for very ambiguous reasons, it is better for lecturers to establish open communication with students so that there are no emotional barriers between students and lecturers when there is a misunderstanding of academic problems. In addition, the results of research from Molla (2022) found that academic help-seeking behavior, belief in the effectiveness of counseling services and academic self-concept contribute to each other. Even Molla's research (2022) found that the effectiveness of counseling services has a significant contribution to academic help- seeking behavior. Utilizing counseling services either through lecturers or counseling service centers is a very beneficial action to solve academic problems.

CONCLUSION

The academic problems experienced by students vary greatly depending on which semester they are in. This variation of problems also specifically distinguishes the form of help or help needed and the source of obtaining help. In general, students feel more comfortable getting help in overcoming academic obstacles from executive sources such as asking other people, be it friends, lecturers or relatives. The assistance that is much needed is material assistance in the form of providing explanations, directing lending references and helping to do work. The figures who are interested in help are individuals who are cognitively considered to have knowledge and experience. In addition to obtaining assistance through executive sources, students also try to overcome difficulties in academic problems by streamlining the use of time and this last method has proven to have a major influence in achieving a good GPA.

This study was conducted with a very limited number of respondents. Therefore, if you want to develop further, it is better to add subjects and analyze the effect of gender on help-seeking patterns. Secondly, in this study, GPA data is only based on the trustworthiness of respondents' entries in the identity blank. For the future, collecting GPA scores from academic data is considered more accurate. A questionnaire containing a list of questions was given to each student totaling 220 copies but only 112 questionnaires were returned. This questionnaire initially contained 19 items. After conducting an initial analysis, the researcher decided that only 6 items were representative enough to answer the research question. This was done on the basis that there was saturation (saturation) of answers on several items. This means that the variation in respondents' answers to several questions is very small.

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