

## **Description of Stress Among Students Participating in the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Program**

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### **ABSTRACT**

While Indonesian students demonstrate enthusiasm for the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program, it is undeniable that they may encounter challenges during their participation. These challenges can stem from the program itself, the surrounding environment, or ongoing university academic activities. Consequently, students may experience physiological and psychological disturbances, potentially leading to stress. This research aims to descriptively explore the experiences of stress among MBKM students using a qualitative phenomenological approach. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 16 research participants who are MBKM students from nine existing programs. Purposive sampling was employed, where participants were selected based on predetermined criteria. The findings revealed that MBKM students experience stress, manifesting in both physiological and psychological symptoms. Physiological symptoms included headaches, dizziness, and reduced sleep time. Psychological symptoms included task procrastination, increased alcohol consumption, irritability, worry or anxiety, and fear of program failure. This research emphasizes the importance of student preparedness for the program and informs potential revisions to the MBKM program by the government.

*Keywords: MBKM program, student, stress*

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### **Introduction**

Policy Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) is a policy proposed by the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, Nadiem Makarim, through the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 3 of 2020 for universities to give students the right to study outside the study program. There are various forms of MBKM programs that students can undertake, namely: (1) Independent Student Exchange, (2) Teaching Campus, (3) Certified Internship, (4) Independent Study, (5) Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA), (6) Building Villages (Thematic KKN), (7) Humanitarian Projects, (8) Research, (9) Entrepreneurship. Through these various program opportunities, we hope to encourage students to understand various knowledge that can be used and is relevant to the needs of the times when entering the world of work (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020).

The MBKM program, which has been running for almost 4 years, shows that students have high enthusiasm for the program. This is proven by data that 725,000 students are registered and have independent campus accounts (Direktorat Jenderal

Pendidikan Tinggi, 2024). Given this enthusiasm, it cannot be denied that in the process of undergoing the program, there are many dynamics experienced by students. Of course, the dynamics experienced by students when participating in the MBKM program are different when students are in the learning environment at their home campus. This is supported by research results which show several problems experienced by students while participating in MBKM activities, including students experiencing difficulty in finding the root of the problems that are occurring at the MBKM location due to the lack of opportunities to conduct in-depth surveys or field visits. It was also found that the separation of students from their families and close friends on campus caused fluctuations in students' enthusiasm for undergoing the MBKM program. Apart from that, discussing the preparation of the program schedule often triggers various conflicts with fellow students taking part in the program (Saputra, Matulesy, & Suhadianto, 2024).

This condition is also experienced by students who take part in certified internships. Students who take part in this certified internship not only undergo an internship program but also attend lectures. The student admitted to experiencing conditions such as fatigue, frequent headaches, feeling empty, crying for no reason, avoid everyone, and even often getting angry at his family for no apparent reason. Apart from that, the student's relationship with his friends was also strained due to his frequent canceling of promises. This also had an impact on his friends who no longer invited the student to go back. Judging from the lecture perspective, the students cannot carry out their assignments well, even in terms of internships, these students often run away from meetings because they think they are not needed (Putri, 2024).

In the opinion by research stated that based on student perceptions, implementing the MBKM program has a positive impact on self-development, but can also trigger stressful conditions in MBKM academic activities (Hakim, Fajri, & Faizah, 2022). According to theory of Sarafino and Smith (2014), stress is considered a condition that is the result of interactions between a person and the surrounding environment which results in disharmony originating from a person's biological, psychological, and social systems. The stressful conditions experienced by MBKM students are also supported by research who have conducted stress research on MBKM students, especially on campus teaching programs. The research results showed that 6.25% of students experienced high levels of academic stress, 18.75% of students experienced low levels of academic stress, and 75% of students experienced moderate levels of academic stress (Santi, Bagus, Alkayis, Dirgantara, & Rahman, 2023).

According by research of Stuart (2013), if stressful conditions are left unchecked, excessive stress will arise which will worsen the life process that is being lived. This is proven by reports of suicide attempts experienced by students and this is thought to be due to the stressful conditions that happened to the student. For example, news about the case of a student at a private campus in Yogyakarta who allegedly committed suicide due to stress from college assignments (CNN Indonesia, 2024). This case is in line with research that there is a relationship between stress levels and suicidal ideation

in the first and second-year students at the Tangerang Private University. This research shows that there is a positive correlation between stress levels and suicidal ideation. This result means that the higher the stress level, the higher the suicidal ideation, and vice versa (Lalenoh, Zega, Yuni, Florensa, & Anggraini, 2021).

Based on this background, this research is needed to obtain information regarding the symptoms of stress experienced by MBKM students and students pressures. It is hoped that the results of research on stress among Udayana University students who have undertaken the MBKM program can provide valuable input for the development and implementation of program policies.

### **Methods**

The method in this research uses qualitative methodology. Qualitative methods are research methods used to study scientific objects, the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out by triangulation, data analysis is inductive, and research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2018). The qualitative approach used in this research is a qualitative phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is a study that studies phenomena, such as the structure of experience and consciousness (Kuswarno, 2009). Data collection was carried out using semi-structured interviews with 16 participants from Udayana University students who had participated in each of the 9 MBKM programs. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a technique for determining and taking samples determined by researchers with certain considerations (Sugiyono, 2018).

### **Results and Discussion**

The results of interviews with 16 participants in this research found that MBKM students who experience physiological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral psychological conditions show symptoms of stress (Sarafino & Smith, 2014). According to theory of Sarafino and Smith (2014), stress is considered a condition that is the result of interactions between a person and the surrounding environment which results in disharmony originating from a person's biological, psychological, and social systems. The symptoms of stress, include: 1) Physiological, such as headaches, sleep problems, digestive problems, eating pattern problems, fast heartbeat, difficulty breathing, frequent urination, feeling weak, throat dry, nausea, skin problems, and increased sweat production. 2) Cognitive psychological, such as problems concentrating, not being able to make decisions, easily forgetting, worrying excessively about an uncertain future, in the form of feeling threatened, imagining scary things, worrying about less important things, fear of bad judgment, and difficulty communicating. 3) Emotions psychological, such as irritability, excessive anxiety about everything that is seen, feeling sad, irritable, anxious, depressed, and excessive feelings of guilt. 4) Behavior psychological, such as locking yourself in your room, skipping activities, procrastinating doing assignments, and being afraid to meet people (Sarafino & Smith, 2014). Table 1. shows the symptoms of stress experienced by MBKM students.

Table I. Description of MBKM Student Stress

<b>No.</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Symptom Stress</b>
1.	24.5% (12 people)	Worried and restless because of fear of failure because the task is considered quite challenging in a short time
2.	20.41% (10 people)	Headaches and dizziness due to mental stress due to high- intensity assignments or work, busy activities, or problems in the field that occurred while carrying out MBKM
3.	18% (9 people)	Students feel like they procrastinate on assignments because they are busy on campus, lazy, bored, and afraid of doing their assignments wrong
4.	14% (7 people)	Students felt easily irritated by the surrounding environment because of too many demands from the program or accompanied by campus activities, external disturbances that disrupted the creation of work programs, and school students on campus teaching who were difficult to manage
5.	12% (6 people)	Students also felt that the amount of sleep time was reduced due to culture shock, overthinking, assignments, preparation for work programs, and taking part in too many activities
6.	8% (4 people)	Students feel afraid of failure Because they are influenced by the first experience of doing something that has never been done before and the consequences of failure
7.	2% (1 people)	Students feel that while undergoing MBKM, their intensity of drinking alcohol increased

Individuals can experience stress when facing various difficulties and pressures at work (Arianti & Irwanto). Several different pressures experienced by students in each program can be seen in table 2.

Table 2. Pressure Experienced by MBKM Students

No.	MBKM Program	Pressures
1.	Independent Student Exchange	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adapt to new environments and social life.</li> <li>2. Differences in administrative processes and learning methods with the student's home university.</li> <li>3. Acceptance from students at partner campuses towards PMM students.</li> <li>4. The major taken during the program is not in line with the home university major.</li> </ol>
2.	Teaching Campus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The school does not know that there are students who will undergo the program. This has an impact on students who have to take care of administration at the beginning</li> <li>2. The school does not permit students to carry out programs at the school.</li> <li>3. The friendliness of the school toward teaching campus students</li> <li>4. Demands from campus teaching programs to create additional work programs suddenly within one month</li> <li>5. Coordinate with the school regarding the work program being carried out</li> <li>6. Lack of teaching experience</li> <li>7. Elementary school children who are difficult to manage</li> <li>8. The funds needed to create work programs come from the students themselves</li> </ol>
3.	Certified Internship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Excessive workload</li> <li>2. Reports and work deadlines</li> <li>3. Adapt to the new area and culture of the internship location</li> <li>4. Lonely because the internship location is different from other fellow interns</li> <li>5. Lack of intensity of meeting and guidance with mentors directly</li> <li>6. Lack of openness and communication between permanent employees and students</li> </ol>
4.	Independent Study	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It's easy to feel bored and lazy because of online learning</li> <li>2. The method of delivering the material is less interesting and does not get direct practice from the tutor</li> <li>3. The learning schedule is busy, so on holidays, students are still required to attend classes</li> <li>4. Differences in perception between mentors and students regarding final report regulations, such as mandatory signatures</li> <li>5. Dissatisfied with the partner administration process</li> <li>6. The learning that was followed during the program, namely cloud computing, was not in line with the original university major, namely agribusiness, so it was difficult to understand the content of the material explained</li> <li>7. Given assignments every day and individually</li> </ol>
5.	Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA)	The difference in extreme weather in the Netherlands and Indonesia

No.	MBKM Program	Pressures
6.	Building Villages (Thematic KKN)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adapt to different colleagues because the schedule is divided into regular morning and regular afternoon</li> <li>2. Different cultures between villages and cities</li> <li>3. Several village residents are sensitive to several things</li> <li>4. Regional language used when communicating</li> <li>5. Administrative obstacles when Opening the program</li> </ol>
7.	Humanitarian Projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Facing partners who are not cooperative in seeking quantitative data regarding the impact of natural disasters that occur</li> <li>2. Conditions for continuing to stay at the post and not being allowed to go home by the field supervisor</li> <li>3. The distance between the village and campus is far, so it becomes a challenge when you have to go to campus for committees</li> </ol>
8.	Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change in the number of research journals that are the output of the program, namely from 1 to 3 journals</li> <li>2. Students receive unequal treatment from supervisors from partners with other students</li> <li>3. Repeated research revisions</li> </ol>
9.	Entrepreneurship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Challenges at the immersion stage. In the immersion stage, students carry out business processes and mentoring in Small and Medium Enterprises (UKM). The challenges in this stage are the differences in the fields pursued in Small and Medium Enterprises (UKM) and the prototyping of the products being made. The program does not require you to be in line and depend on the field supervisor, but according to students, it would be better if you were in line because there is a clear basis for product prototyping.</li> <li>2. Challenges in making products at the post-immersion stage. In the post-immersion stage, students receive coaching on product or business development and market analysis. The challenge at this stage is in making the product. The products made are children's books. This causes students who do not have a background in psychology to do more research on the needs of children at the target age, how to deliver the content and the values of the book.</li> </ol>

The results of this research are also supported by several studies examining the MBKM program. In the Independent Student Exchange program, students experienced culture shock due to differences in weather and speaking styles (Putri, Fadilah, Rachman, Lisda, & Febriadha, 2023). In campus teaching programs, students encounter challenges due to fundamental deficiencies in the subjects that must be taught, teaching opportunities that the school does not provide to students because they do not come from the education department, the long distance between where the student lives and the school (Hilmi, Mustaqimah, & Saleh). In certified internships, students experience the same challenges as the research results, namely excessive workload (Adinda, 2023). Apart from that, there is opposition, namely working outside working hours or holidays, and in the initial agreement, there is no mention of the workload during the internship process (Azzahra, 2024). In the Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA) program, students experienced culture shock due to the extreme temperature differences and the local community's non-English background in daily conversation, making communicating difficult (Budiarti,

Cangara, & Wahid, 2022).

### Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that MBKM students experience stress with symptoms of worry, anxiety, headaches, dizziness, assignment procrastination, irritability, reduced sleep time, fear of failure, and increased intensity of drinking alcohol. The causes of this stress differ for each program a student undertakes, namely from program implementation, partners, environment, and culture.

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