The Effect of Merit Score Towards the Stress Score Among First Year Student

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Abstract

The paper presents the result of the relationship between merit score and stress score among first year undergraduate students of the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences (FSKB) of session 2009/2010. A cross sectional study among students living in university residences, that is (College) Tun Syed Nasir, has been choosen using the stratified sampling. The merit score has been divided into three groups which is less than 30, between 31 to 59 and above 60. The stress score was modified from the Inventory of College Students’ Recent Life Experience (ICSRLE). The study showed that the average stress score was moderate (44.42 ±11.61). Furthermore, there was significant weak relationship between merit score and stress score (r=0.187, p<0.05). The comparison of stress score indicated that there was no significant difference between male and female students (p>0.05). Moreover between bumiputra (indigenous) and non-bumiputra there was no significant mean differences of stress score (p>0.05). One way analysis of variance showed that there was no difference of mean score merit between the stress score (p>0.05). In conclusion, the study showed that the stress score was not influenced by merit score among first year undergraduates of FSKB for the academic session 2009/2010. However, the undergraduates of FSKB that achieved higher merit score do have a higher mean of stress score.

Keywords: merit score; stress score; undergraduate; university residences;

1. Introduction

The first year students of FSKB academic session 2009/2010 have been introduced to the college merit system. The merit was given to the students who participated in any co-curricular programme that was organized by the university or the university residences (referred to a colleges). The students have to be active in such activities in order to be able to stay in the colleges for the next semester. Study by Misra and McKean (2000) indicated that if the
student have a good time management between academic and college activities they can reduce or overcome the emotional stress.

Almost every FSKB student wants to live in the colleges because of the convenient facilities such as near to the faculty, low fees, availability of transportation to the faculty, access to cyber cafe, Wi-Fi, prayers room and cafeteria. However students have to achieve a certain level of merit score to stay in the colleges. Students with low merit score would probably have to find private accommodation by themselves and that maybe far from the faculty. The faculty is situated in the centre of Kuala Lumpur and the cost of accommodation is usually high. Therefore, is the merit score giving a stress to the students in order to remain staying in the university residences for the next semester? If the merit system is giving a stress to the student, it is a matter of concern because it can influence their academic performance and health (Marcos & Tillema 2006).

This study was conducted to determine the effect of merit score towards the stress level among the first year undergraduate students of FSKB.

2. Methodology

The population of this study was the first year students of FSKB who lived in Tun Syed Nasir Collage (KTSN). The sample size of the study was 124 students. Stratified random sampling was used, and the population was divided into three strata based on the merit score (≤30, 31-59 and ≥60). Furthermore, the simple random sampling was used to select the student from each strata. The questionnaire was modified from ICSRLE (Kohn et al. 1991) was used to evaluate the stress level. The score for each question consists of, score three for really part of my life, score two for slightly part of my life, score one for part of my life and zero for not at all part of my life.

3. Results

The total number of student participated in this study was 124. There were 72.6% (n=90) female and 27.4% (n=34) male students. Among races, the bumiputera (Malays) was 56.5% (n=70) while non-bumiputera (Chinese and Indians) was 43.5% (n=54). According to the merit score, percentage of respondents that has lower level of merit score (≤30) was 32.2%, moderate merit score (31-59) was 36.3% and higher merit score (≥60) was 31.5%.

The Spearman correlation showed that there was positive correlation between stress score and merit score (r=0.187, p<0.05). This indicated that as the merit score increased the stress score also increased. However, the relationship was weak because of the low value of correlation coefficient. Meanwhile, the comparison between gender from table 1 showed that the average stress score was higher among male students compared to female students which is 46.50 ±12.67 (n=34) and 43.42±11.09 (n=90), respectively. However there was no significant mean difference of stress score between gender (t=1.325, p>0.05). Moreover, the mean stress score was slightly higher among non-bumiputra (45.78± 10.26, n=54) compared to bumiputra (43.10±10.26, n=70). However, there was no significant mean difference of stress score between bumiputra and non-bumiputra (p>0.05).

Table 1 indicated that the mean of stress score according to merit score category which is low (≤30), moderate (31-59) and high (≥60) was 42.80±11.88, 43.09±12.30 and 47.13±10.07 respectively. The comparison between the merit score indicated that the mean score of stress was higher among the student who get higher merit score. However, from the one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) there was no significant difference of stress score between the merit score category (F=1.768, p>0.05).
Table 1. The mean score of stress according to gender, race and score merit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean ± standard deviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46.50± 12.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43.42± 11.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumiputra</td>
<td>43.10± 10.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Bumiputra</td>
<td>45.78± 13.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Merit score</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>42.80± 11.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>43.09± 12.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>47.13± 10.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Discussion

The study showed that there was no significant mean difference of stress score between male and female students. The result of the study is almost similar to the study by Mohd & Adi (2003) where there was no difference in mean stress level among students of distance learning at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM). In contrast to the study by Saat et al. (2010), the mean stress score was higher among female student of biomedical science from first until third year students. Furthermore, the comparison of stress score between merit score also indicated there was no significant mean difference. Therefore, this showed that there are other factors that can cause stress besides merit.

The study by Bandura (2007) showed that undergraduate students who participate in activities and programme organized by the university or other organization will have more skills in controlling their stress. Therefore, students that achieve higher merit score should theoretically, have a capability in managing time wisely between college activities and academic. However, based on this study the results showed that there was a relationship between score merit and stress score. A study by Supe (1998) revealed that one of the stress factors among students was co-curriculum activities. Therefore, maybe one of the stress factor among the high achievers of merit score in this study was heavy involvement in college activities. There are other factors that can cause stress among students such as academic performance, friends, family, and financial (Muhamad et al. 2010). Study by Poovarasen (2006) among college student of Universiti Teknologi Tun Hussein Onn revealed that there was no significant association between stress and academic performance.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study shows that the merit score has no significant effect on stress score amongst the first year undergraduate students of FSKB. However, there is a weak relationship between merit score and stress score.

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References


