

Management of Human Emotions and Stress in Facing Life's Competition Based on Psychological Aspects and Stoicism Philosophy to Achieve Happiness

Syukriyya Zuhrotul Endang Purwaningsih

Pendidikan IPA, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Sebelas Maret

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Abstract

Human life feels increasingly difficult every day because of the competition in life. Humans always feel dissatisfied with what they have achieved when they see and compare their own achievements with those of others. A person's standard of happiness is measured by his success in facing life's competition, resulting in reasonableness in managing emotions. As a result, a person will experience mental disorders such as anxiety, overthinking, and depression and even prolonged stress. This research aims to examine how the philosophy of stoicism can help humans face the competition of life by looking at a person's ability to achieve happiness. The research method is a literature study with a descriptive analytical approach. The analysis technique is carried out through literature studies selected based on research into various journals, books and other literature sources. This psychological problem will involve the philosophy of Stoicism which teaches emotional processing about how a person places the standard of happiness under his own control and keeps his mind calm without caring about bad things that will happen. Stoicism teaches not to focus on other people's standards or targets, but to focus on oneself.

Abstrak

Kehidupan manusia semakin hari terasa semakin keras karena adanya persaingan hidup. Manusia selalu merasa tidak puas akan apa yang telah dicapainya apabila melihat dan membandingkan pencapaiannya sendiri dengan orang lain. Standar kebahagiaan seseorang diukur dari keberhasilannya dalam menghadapi kompetisi kehidupannya sehingga mengakibatkan ketidakseimbangan dalam mengelola emosi. Akibatnya, seseorang akan mengalami gangguan mental seperti kecemasan, *overthinking*, dan *depresi* hingga berujung stres. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana filsafat stoikisme dapat membantu manusia dalam menghadapi persaingan kehidupan dengan cara pandang seseorang dalam mencapai kebahagiaan Metode penelitiannya adalah studi literatur dengan pendekatan deskriptif analitik. Teknik analisis dilakukan melalui studi literatur yang dipilih berdasarkan penelaahan berbagai jurnal, buku, dan sumber literatur lainnya. Permasalahan psikologis ini akan melibatkan filsafat Stoikisme yang mengajarkan olah emosi tentang bagaimana seseorang menempatkan standar kebahagiaan di bawah kendali diri sendiri serta menjaga pikiran dengan tenang tanpa memedulikan hal buruk yang akan terjadi. Stoikisme mengajarkan untuk tidak berpacu pada standar atau target orang lain, melainkan fokus kepada diri sendiri.

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Corresponding Author:

Syukriyya Zuhrotul Endang Purwaningsih,

Pendidikan IPA, Universitas Sebelas Maret

Email: syukriyyazuhrotul@student.uns.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an inner condition that is not physically visible but influences behavior and emotions, such as fear, stress, anxiety or worry about everything. Mental health is a condition of well-being where individuals can realize their own abilities, overcome the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and are able to make a contribution to their community (WHO, 2013). One of the cases of mental health disorders that many people experience today is stress. Stress is a psychophysical phenomenon that is human or inherent in nature, where it can occur in every individual regardless of age, position, or social and economic status.

Based on Riskesdas data, from 2013 to 2018 the prevalence of GME (Mental Emotional Disorders) in the 15-24 year age group has increased significantly compared to

other age groups. Based on this fact, students are the main subject to be discussed, where the age range according to Erikson (in Santrock, 2003) is in the stages of late adolescence (adolescence: 10-20 years) and early adulthood (early adulthood: 20's and 30's). This period causes emotional instability along with quite complex conflicts faced by a student while studying. These psychological disorders can have an impact on academic achievement, emotional management, and social relationships (Agnafors et al., 2021; Bruffaerts et al., 2018; VanderLind, 2017) so that individuals will feel like they are always suffering and never achieve a happy life.

In general, factors influencing mental health consist of internal and external factors (Daradjat, 2001). Internal factors can come from personality, psychological conditions, maturity and balance of thinking, or life experiences. External factors involve social aspects such as social stratification, social interaction, and environmental conditions, both family, school and community (Muhyani, 2012: 51).

In essence, humans, especially students, tend to be easily influenced by negative thoughts which are characterized by the emergence of stress disorders such as worry, where data shows that 53% of people are worried about their education, 30% are worried about relationships, and 53% are worried about the role of parents and finance (Manampiring, 2019). Therefore, managing emotions must be done well through understanding feelings and being kind to yourself and others. Negative emotions such as feelings of worry, stress, and other mental health disorders are not only treated by psychologists or psychiatrists. However, this emotional management can be widely and innovatively applied by spreading the concept of stoicism from the perspective of philosophical teachings. Stoicism has the principle of achieving happiness in life with calm joy and a mind free from anxiety. Thus, stoicism can be a practical method for achieving happiness, calm, and freedom from negative emotions that cause stress (Juniarni et al., 2021).

The existence of the philosophical teachings of Stoicism acts as a solution to this problem because it is relevant and closely related to emotional management from a psychological perspective. Therefore, Stoic teachings can be a medicine by teaching someone to set the standard for happiness within themselves. Simply put, stoicism is a philosophical school that helps humans control negative emotions as an outlet for gratitude and happiness. Stoicism defines life as being divided into two dimensions, namely the internal and external dimensions of humans (Yusuf, S., 2021). The internal dimension arises from a person's own self-control and the external dimension comes from influences outside of self-control, such as the opinions of other people. In fact, most people still place the standard of satisfaction and happiness in these external factors. As a result, a person experiences internal pressure that interferes with his emotional control so that he cannot achieve true happiness.

Stoicism exists to make humans aware that factors of happiness and satisfaction can be transferred from the external dimension to the internal dimension. The main principle of Stoicism is "to live under our control, not outside of our control" (Mujahid & Rahmawati, 2021 in Yusuf, S., 2021). The teachings of Stoicism emphasize the principle that humans are creatures who are easily influenced by emotions, so humans should not depend on things beyond their control. According to Zeno (in Aurelius, 180 AD in a book entitled "The Art of Meditation" published by Psychology Corner, 2021), states that the Stoic system is a careful distinction between things that exist and that do not exist in one's own power.

The second point is a strong insistence on the unity of the universe and man's duty as part of the great whole. Previous research has touched on the problem of managing stress and negative emotions in the view of stoicism by achieving pleasure (hedone), that with the emergence of a feeling of joy and happiness, people can overcome themselves and build

their own character (Tumanggor, 2018). Thus, the second principle of stoicism is living in harmony with nature which prioritizes reason and rationality. The existence of this research makes researchers interested in studying how the philosophy of stoicism can help humans face the competition of life by looking at a person's perspective on achieving happiness without comparing his or her abilities with those of others. It is hoped that this research can change the human mindset in setting standards for happiness in an era of competitive life. Apart from that, humans can appreciate themselves by being grateful and giving more meaning to life by taking care of their emotions and mental health.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is a literature study with a descriptive analytical approach. This approach aims to collect the collected data. The data analysis technique used is library research. Library research is a data collection technique by conducting a review of various books, literature and records related to research (Nazir, 2003). Literature studies selected based on journals will be analyzed critically and use qualitative research methods which according to Sugiyono (2012:9) are based on post positivist philosophy, used to examine natural conditions (as opposed to experiments), where researchers play a key role. Qualitative analysis is used to describe inductive data such as graphs and the results of qualitative research will emphasize meaning rather than generalization.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Walter Cannon (1932) stated that based on the psychological context, humans are able to respond to stressful events physically and psychologically to prepare themselves, whether to fight, avoid, or escape from stress (fight or flight response). When an individual is aware of a threat, their body will reflexively react to it through the sympathetic nervous system and endocrine system. This "flight-or-fight" reaction or response mobilizes the organism to attack or fight as a form of human adaptation to the threat of stress. However, despite this fact, stress still ultimately harms individuals because it can cause health problems and emotional disorders within a person. Stress as a negative emotional experience where changes in a person's biochemical, physical, cognitive and behavioral changes will certainly cause various impacts (Shelley E. Taylor, 2003).

The personality of someone who experiences a mild type of mental disorder, which often occurs in new students, is called neurosis or the struggle with anxiety (Aurelius, 2023). Thorpe stated that neurosis is an emotional condition that is distorted in symptoms that arise from external pressure. Sufferers of this neurosis respond to life stress with persistent anxiety (George W. Kisher, 1982). Students in their first experience at college certainly feel shocked by the various significant changes from their previous school, starting from environmental conditions, learning adaptations, to competition in the world of college. These things bring pressure, both internal and external, from within the individual. Internal pressure can come from oneself or the family, where students usually feel depressed because they are compared to other people or they themselves experience insecurity or feel small and feel like they are nothing compared to their friends.

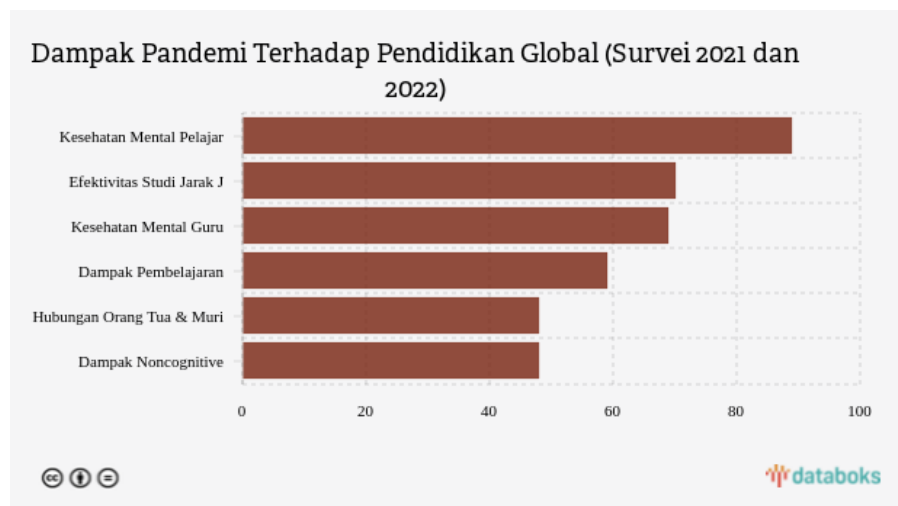
This condition causes forms of neurosis such as feelings of worry and anxiety. Anxiety and worry will form pressure within a person. Worrying about facing competition which is certain to continue to exist and become increasingly fierce, you feel that life will not run as smoothly as you had hoped. Then, a person's excessive anxiety arises about what will happen in the future, imagining how to live the days full of stress that drains them emotionally and mentally, and worrying about their parents' expectations and other people's high expectations of them. Students tend to be afraid that if what they achieve does not

match other people's expectations, there is a high possibility of being judged, causing psychological pressure.

Apart from that, this condition can get worse if it is influenced by an obsession, namely thoughts or feelings that are accompanied by strong emotions that force oneself and interfere with a person's normal thinking process. A situation where someone sees other people's achievements as a means of competition, then thoughts arise that exceed the threshold, such as feeling like they have to get other people's achievements (such as the achievements of college friends) no matter what crazy means. If this condition fails, a person will not be able to control their emotions, resulting in prolonged sadness (helplessness), frequent daydreaming (day dreaming), and ending in a severe type of mental health disorder, namely depression. Thus, campus environmental conditions have a close influence on students' psychological disorders (Fauzia, 2016).

The worst impact in terms of the psychological aspect of stress, anxiety and depression, as previously explained, is psychosomatics. According to Dadang Hawari (2009), negative psychological factors (stress, anxiety, and depression) through the psycho-neuro-endocrine network result in decreased immunity, so that the body is easily attacked by various diseases. Simply put, psychosomatics is a physical disorder caused by a psychological disorder. A student can experience heavy pressure in the lecture process if he finds a situation where he is forced to adapt and balance himself in the campus environment. For example, class conditions are very competitive, which causes stress because individuals have to balance this so as not to feel insecure. However, what happens actually creates a situation where someone will think excessively (overthinking).

According to the Dictionary of Psychology from the American Psychological Association, overthinking or in clinical language called rumination is obsessive or repetitive thinking that involves excessive thinking resulting in anxiety disorders that will interfere with other forms of mental activity (Aurelius, 2023). Continuous and uncontrolled feelings of overthinking have the potential to result in anxiety symptoms (Petric, 2018). Moreover, excessive anxiety about the future causes a person to focus more on the negative feelings they are experiencing. This happens because human instincts are vulnerable to negative things as survival instincts (Karimah, 2021). These mental disorders can of course spread to immune disorders because individuals must force themselves to adapt to their environment so that it will attack their physical condition and lead to the attack of various diseases.



Picture 1 Graph of the Impact of the Pandemic on Global Education

The worst case from this description is an act of suicide by a final year student who is unable to carry out his studies, resulting in physical problems due to overexertion along

with the mental pressure he is facing. According to data from the "Impact of the Pandemic on Global Education" in the 2020 and 2021 surveys, mental health cases of students, including university students, are on the highest graph among other cases. In fact, according to the Indonesia-National Adolescent Mental Health Survey 2022, as many as 15.5 million (34.9%) teenagers experience mental problems and 2.45 million (5.5%) teenagers experience mental disorders. Nearly 800,000 people die by suicide every year. Suicide ranks as the second leading cause of death among those aged 15-29 years. (WHO, 2018). This is proven that the topic "Mental Health" needs to be analyzed further to reduce the number of cases. Mental health disorders occur due to pressure which results in the emergence of negative emotions in humans, such as anger, frustration, confusion, overthinking, and even depression which really requires the involvement of self-control. Usually sufferers can visit a psychiatrist, doctor or psychologist to help overcome this. However, apart from the psychological context, researchers can further analyze the management of negative emotions and stress by involving philosophical teachings from a Stoicism perspective. In this case, the ability to understand stress and control negative emotions is the main basis for managing stress using the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach, from feeling sadness and fear to joy (Esa, 2017).

In general, stoicism is understood as a philosophical school which holds that humans must be able to control their emotions in order to be grateful for what happens. The teachings of stoicism are relevant to psychology and emphasize the principle that humans are creatures who are easily influenced by emotions, so stoicism teaches humans not to depend on things beyond their control. According to Zeno (in Aurelius, 180 AD in a book entitled "The Art of Meditation" published by Psychology Corner, 2023), states that the Stoic system is a careful distinction between things that exist and that do not exist in one's own power. Stoic means the control of desires which brings existence under the control of the will or main principle, just as the universe is regulated by a divine organizer. This means that Stoics teach that humans should not force themselves to be the same as other people, should not blame themselves for failures that befall them, and respect one's own strength by not pursuing ambitions that are tiring and have a negative effect on the individual's emotional health.

Failure is caused by the individual's inability to manage and differentiate between what can and cannot be controlled by emotions or personal strength. Stoicism has the principle of achieving happiness in life with calm joy and a mind free from anxiety. Stoicists teach to be brave in facing negative emotions, hone virtue, wisdom, justice, courage, and self-restraint (self-control) (Mujahid & Rahmawati, 2021 in Yusuf, S., 2021). Thus, stoicism is a practical method for achieving happiness, calm, freedom from negative emotions and mastery of desires that can cause stress (Juniarni et al., 2021).

The second point is a strong insistence on the unity of the universe and man's duty as part of a great whole. Stoic theory also puts forward the principle of "living in harmony with nature" which prioritizes reason or rationality (Syarifuddin et al., 2021). In fact, Islam really respects the role of reason as in the teachings of Stoicism. Reason in the Islamic religion plays a very important role in increasing a person's level of faith and is a way to obtain peace of mind, so that it is in harmony with efforts to control negative emotions, and if in Stoicism there is *amor fati*, then Islam has an attitude of gratitude (et al., 2021). The presence of Stoicism as a complementary solution in a philosophical perspective without opposing any religious teachings, which teaches humans to control negative emotions and manage stress to achieve a serene, peaceful and resilient life. The main goal is how a person can best live a life worthy of being a human (Manampiring, 2022). Stoicism comes from internal factors that occur in everything under one's complete control, such as personality, professionalism, desires and dreams. "You have power over

your mind, not outside events" (Marcus Aurelius in his book entitled *The Art of Meditation* 180 AD). This means that humans have complete control over what they think, and that is what leads them to become what they want. Regardless of the bad things that happen around him, if a person succeeds in sorting out what enters and what doesn't enter his mind, then he will achieve peace in life.

In fact, most people place their standards of happiness based on external factors, namely the opinions or judgments of other people. People in this era predominantly have high ambitions in facing an increasingly competitive environment. In fact, they think they can achieve happiness if they succeed in achieving certain targets to beat or at least match everything that other people have achieved. Therefore, many individuals experience psychological pressure and anxiety about bad things that will happen if they do not achieve their targets. Someone who follows other people's standards of happiness can cause themselves to feel insecure as explained in the previous psychological perspective. As a result, pressure arises within oneself or what is called overthinking, where this situation will interfere with emotional control so that a person cannot achieve true happiness.

The presence of Stoic teachings teaches emotional processing about how a person can set the standard of happiness based on their internal self, namely under their own control and keeping their mind calm without caring about whatever bad things happen. Humans must focus on what they control and surrender to things outside their control. In this case, Stoicism is not a pessimistic teaching that kills a person's dreams, but rather a philosophical teaching about rationalism and naturalization in the course of human life. Because basically, humans who are controlled by feelings and passions are irrational, low, misguided and inappropriate (Of et al., 1986).

Therefore, stoicism teaches humans to behave and respond to everything with rationality. This means that when someone is going to do something, they can estimate the worst possibility that will happen so that they will be better prepared and more able to accept it if failure occurs. This can prevent a person from experiencing long adversity and suffering so deeply, and be able to resume their life normally. Because, the reality of the failure experienced is in accordance with one's own expectations. Meanwhile, if someone experiences success, they will achieve happiness that is more than their expectations. So, the Stoic principle is to do your best and prepare for the worst.

There are several things that must be applied to human life in the teachings of this philosophy. Above all, don't let yourself suffer because you think about too many problems. Many people are sadder, worse, and tormented because of their imagination than reality. Studying a problem too deeply, thinking about other people's opinions, and thinking about bad things because you are afraid it won't go according to plan, makes you tormented by your own thoughts (overthinking). According to Eupocrates, when problems come, humans only have two choices, between changing them or accepting them gracefully (Aurelius, 2023). The Stoic view teaches humans to accept reality and use the things they have to the best of their abilities, accepting the best things that should happen happily.

Based on the view of (Keyes, 2002), a person's mental health is not only caused by mental illness, but also by a state of mental well-being. In line with this statement, Veit and Ware (1983) stated that mental well-being includes two aspects, the first aspect is the freedom of individuals from psychological distress which is characterized by high levels of anxiety, depression and loss of control; The second aspect is the presence of psychological well-being which is characterized by general positive feelings, emotional conditions and life satisfaction. Based on the solution in Stoic teachings, individuals can make progress every day, even if it is small, to achieve prosperity. If you have big dreams, it will make you view those dreams as more realistic and real to achieve. The Stoic view

also studied life with great people to realize that if others can do it, then you can do it too. Because, Marcus Aurelius reminded that if an individual has a negative view, then everything he encounters will also appear negative. Therefore, Stoic philosophers really emphasized the efforts that humans should make to control negative emotions and hone virtue (Manampiring, 2019).

A solution idea in developing Stoicism teachings that are relevant to this psychological perspective is to disseminate them through social media, such as in the form of content on YouTube, Instagram, TikTok or Twitter. Apart from that, outreach can be done through podcasts, online seminars, or presenting arguments in the form of works by publishing books. According to (Bastaman, 1995), a meaningful life is the gateway to happiness. Stoicism teaches us not to focus on other people's standards or targets, but on our own targets. Because, other people's standards make someone continue to suffer because of the dissatisfaction they achieve. A person's ambitions and obsessions that arise due to feelings of insecurity will trigger a person's emotional imbalance in controlling themselves. As a result, a mentality is born that is thirsty for validation or proving oneself in the face of life's competition which continues to grow in the current generation, as if life is only about being seen and recognized by other people.

Stoicism is the most appropriate solution to face the madness of this era. If someone succeeds in changing their mindset regarding their satisfaction standards, then they can set targets according to their own control. Furthermore, if he succeeds in achieving this target, he will feel satisfaction that can even exceed his expectations, so that a person will achieve happiness with calm and simplicity to create a much more meaningful life. In this way, humans will realize that happiness comes not from how high an achievement is, but from how rational a hope (expectation) is. Self's success in recognizing one's abilities according to one's own threshold will make one realize how peaceful it is to live life in accordance with nature (naturalism) by making the universe one's own (Iii et al., nd).

4. CONCLUSION

Stress is a mental health disorder caused by a person's inability to manage emotions due to ambition, obsession, insecurity, overthinking and internal pressure. The main thing is about a person's mindset towards standards of satisfaction and happiness to try to achieve other people's achievements. The existence of stoicism is very relevant to psychological and religious perspectives so that it can be the best solution to change a person's standard of happiness from an external dimension to an internal one, namely under his own control and surrendering to everything outside his control. The existence of this philosophical teaching is not to kill someone's ambition, but rather to help define everything they want to achieve and get rid of all unimportant distractions that have only given rise to negative emotions. Stoicism is neither a religion nor pessimistic, stoicism is a teaching that helps process a person's emotions in dealing with the psychological conflicts they experience by changing their mindset from a philosophical perspective in order to achieve a calm life in harmony with nature.

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