

WHAT MAKES A DIFFERENCES STUDENT ACADEMIC RESILIENCE IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING?

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the academic resilience of students with open and distance learning systems. Implementing open and distance learning is not without obstacles, students who choose this learning model must have the ability to manage their learning both individually and in groups. Students are required to be able to manage their learning independently, starting by determining learning schedules, and solving learning problems that may be encountered in the process of completing their studies. Preliminary studies conducted by the authors show that the number of non-active students at the Indonesia Open University reaches more than 50%. Non-active students are those who temporarily stop their lectures. Students choose not to continue their studies for a while due to several things, including; (1) economic constraints, (2) time constraints, and (3) personal constraints (demotivation). This research is an exploratory research design that will reveal the academic toughness of students based on the type of service, joining study group, student motivation, cumulative grade point average, and duration of the study. Quantitative data was obtained using the academic resilience scale created by Benishek, et al (2004) and modified according to the research context, then distributed online to 705 Indonesia Open University students. Differences in students' academic resilience using open and distance learning methods occur based on their affinity with the study group (Sig 0.001), age (Sig 0.031), and the purpose of enrolling in college (Sig 0.038). Other aspects measured in this study, namely the type of service, last education, last GPA, and semesters taken did not show significant differences. Students who join study groups have higher resilience than those who do not join. Students who join study groups have social support in the form of fellow students who can discuss the same problems. The study group can also act as intermediaries between students and universities, considering that the location of students is far from the university representative offices in the province. Student age is also a differentiator of academic resilience possessed by students with open and distance learning. Younger students have higher academic resilience. This is due to their ability to control when facing learning problems considering that in the last 3 years almost all learning modes have been carried out online. The last thing that distinguishes the academic strength of students who take open and distance learning is the initial goal when studying. The student's motivation that have the highest to the lowest average are motivating the families, adding knowledge, getting a degree, career promoting, and killing the time.

Keywords: academic resilience, open and distance learning

1 INTRODUCTION

Academic resilience has long been an issue in education. A student starts the lecture process with a goal, but along the way, students need toughness to complete their studies. Academic resilience is the dynamic ability of students to succeed in studies despite experiencing many disturbances or pressures and problems (Sembiring, M., et al, 2021).

Indonesian Open University is the first State University to implement an open and distance learning system. The open learning system means that UT does not impose restrictions on age, year of diploma, study period, registration time, and frequency of taking exams (Tim, 2019). The term distance means that learning does not have to be done face-to-face, but uses media, both print media (modules) and non-prints (audio/video, computer/internet, radio broadcasts, and

television) (Tim, 2019). The learning system implemented by UT opens the widest opportunity for the nation's children to be able to receive higher education, both people who have difficulty accessing educational facilities and people who have limited time to attend lectures on a regular basis.

Learning at UT applies an independent learning model, where students are required to be able to manage learning activities independently or without intensive guidance from lecturers. Independent learning can be done individually or in groups, both in study groups and in tutorial groups (Tim, 2019). To support student learning success, UT provides students with the option of being able to take online, offline, or blended study assistance (a combination of online and offline).

Students who have registered as new students at UT will be given the opportunity to choose the desired study assistance, namely online tutorials (tuton) and face-to-face tutorials (TTM). Online tutorials (tutons) are a type of fully online learning aid. Students who choose tuton will conduct online learning in virtual classrooms, starting from the provision of materials, discussions, assignments, and exams. Face-to-face Tutorial (TTM) is a learning aid in the form of face-to-face learning classes that will be guided by a tutor. As with ordinary lecture classes, TTM can be a place for discussion between fellow students in aspects related to teaching materials or others. The implementation of the TTM is handled by the local UPBJJ-UT assisted by the managers of study groups (pokjar) spread across cities/districts.

Implementing distance learning is not without obstacles, students who choose the independent learning model must have the ability to manage their learning both individually and in groups. Preliminary studies conducted by the author show that there are several obstacles in completing lectures with the independent learning model, including (1) being less able to understand lecture material with online tutorial methods, (2) Difficulties in the learning process that cause students to experience demotivation. The Open University called registered students who did not continue the lecture process for various reasons as sleeping students. The percentage of non-active students at the Open University is 45%. This high enough number illustrates that there are unresolved obstacles in the learning process. In the research of Sheard and Golby (2007), it is stated that academic success is influenced by internal factors and external factors. Internal factors include academic self-efficacy, setting educational goals, learning motivation, academic toughness, etc.

Resilience is a combination of an attitude of life consisting of courage and motivation to do something difficult or go through adversity, strategic work to turn stressful situations from potential disasters into growth opportunities (Maddi 2006). Resilience is a set of beliefs held by a person regarding himself and his interactions with his environment, emphasizing the importance of involvement rather than isolation, control over powerlessness, and challenge rather than a threat. Research has shown that hardiness is one of the factors influencing effective coping leading to good health and improved performance (Maddi 2005). Resilience has been conceptualized as consisting of three attitudes, namely commitment, control, and challenge. If someone is strong in commitment, they believe in staying involved with the events and people around them, no matter how stressful they are. For them, it was a waste of time to retreat into seclusion and isolation. If someone is strongly in control, they want to continue to influence the outcomes that are happening around them, no matter how difficult. According to them, it is a mistake to allow themselves to slip into helplessness and passivity. If they are strong in challenges, they see pressure as part of normal life and opportunities to learn, develop, and grow in wisdom (Maddi 2005, 2006). Toughness is the stage to survive under pressure (Maddi, 2006).

A tough person always tries to finish what he has started, no matter how difficult the path he has to go through. In the higher education environment, the toughness of learning is proven by the consistency of students in the lecture process until they finally get graduation. Non-active students at the Open University consist of students who do not register for their courses in the current semester (on leave) and students who no longer continue their studies at the Open University. The number is quite large, it is interesting to study how the level of academic toughness of students with open and distance learning and what factors cause it.

Much research on academic resilience has been carried out in higher education settings. One of them was carried out by Jannah, et al (2021) at Syiah Kuala University (USK). Jannah, et al (2021) examined academic toughness in bidikmisi program students at USK and it was found that academic toughness in bidikmisi students was at a moderate level. Another research was conducted by Wardani (2020) at Maranatha Christian University (UKM). The research subjects were 237 new students, and the research aimed to create a model of the relationship between transformational coping, social support, and psychological well-being. Wardani (2020) states that the variables in his research are related, but academic toughness in the context of psychological well-being can be studied separately without involving the direct outcomes, namely transformational coping and social support.

Research on academic resilience in open and distance learning settings has not been discovered by the authors. Therefore, this research is new academic resilience research with open and distance learning settings, where there are different characteristics in it.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design, Site, and Participant

The research design is exploratory research using a quantitative method approach involving 705 Open University students from various study programs and types of services. Respondent data in this study are as follows.

2.2. Data Collection

Quantitative data was collected through online questionnaires which were distributed via messages to student communication groups. The questionnaire used in this research is the academic toughness questionnaire (Benishek, et al, 2005) with 3 aspects namely commitment, control, and challenge. The total number of questions in the questionnaire is 35 items, but after testing the validity and reliability of the measuring instrument, 2 items are invalid (question number 7 "I experience severe disappointment every time I fail in one semester" and number 13 "When I get a bad grade, I told my closest friends") so that a total of 33 questions were used as the database for further data processing.

2.3. Data Analysis

The collecting data was analyzed using SPSS by conducting different tests on affiliation with study groups, service status, age, final education, GPA, course goals, and time taken to study.

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze what factors cause academic differences in students with open and distance learning systems. In the following, the research data is presented.

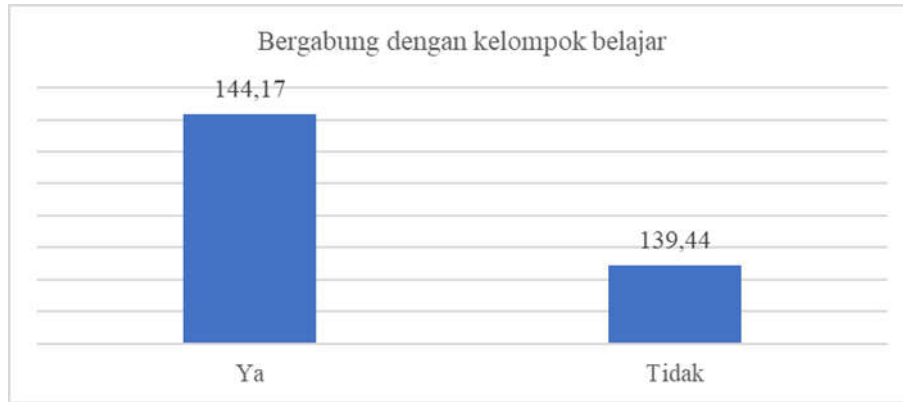


Figure 1. The level of student academic resilience based on joining the study group

Figure 1 shows the average value of academic toughness of students who join working groups of 144.16 (number of respondents 572) and those who do not join working groups 139.44 (number of respondents 133). After the different tests, it was found that there was a difference in academic toughness between these two groups of students (Sig 0.001).

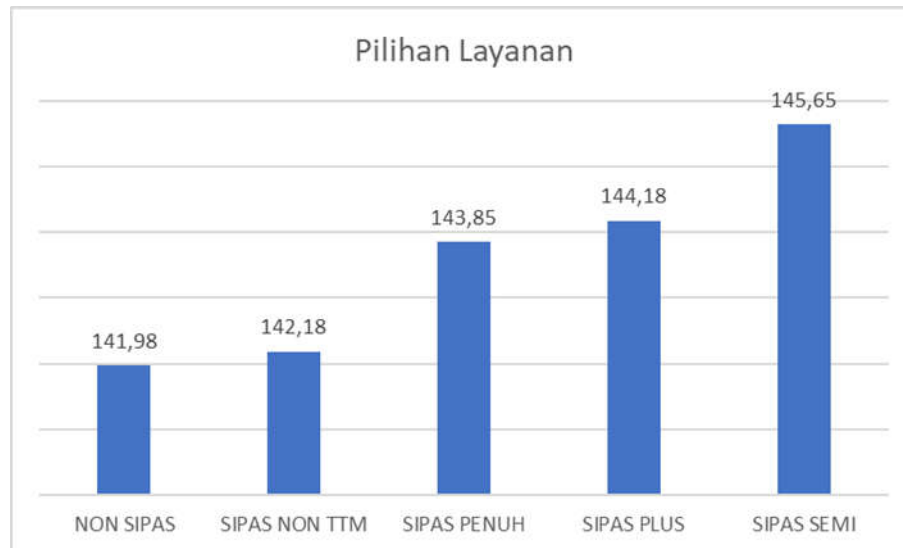


Figure 2. The level of student academic resilience based on course package

Figure 2 shows the average value of student academic toughness with various choices of learning services. Students who chose non-SIPAS services had an average academic toughness of 141.98 (220 respondents), non-TTM SIPAS students had an average academic toughness of 142.18 (153 respondents). Full SIPAS and SIPAS plus and semi-SIPAS students respectively have academic toughness scores of 143.85, 144.18, and 145.65. Then a different test was carried out and the

result was that there was no difference in the value of academic toughness between students of different services (Sig 0.143).

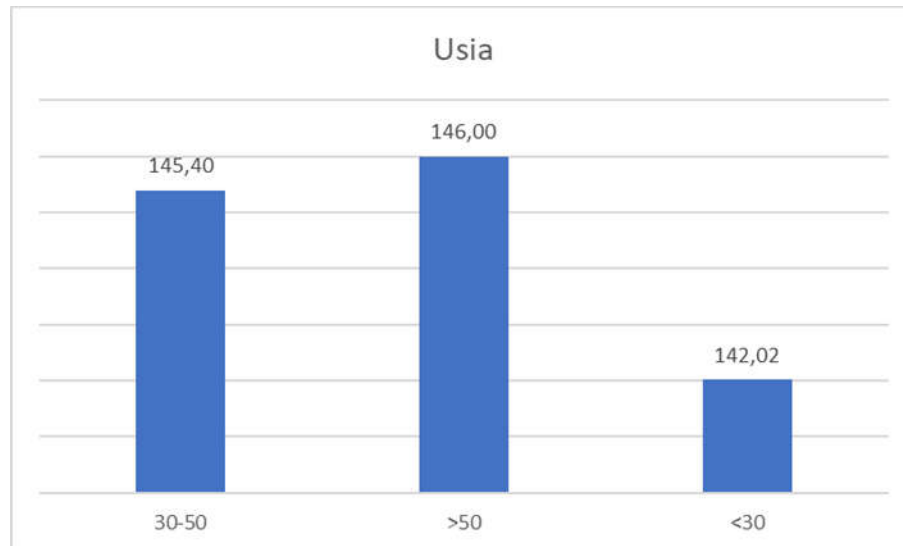


Figure 3. The level of student academic resilience based on age

Figure 3 shows the average value of students' academic toughness in several age groups. Students under the age of 30 have an average academic toughness score of 142.02. The student group aged 30-50 years has an average academic toughness score of 145.40 and the student group over 50 years old has an average academic toughness score of 146.00. Then a different test was carried out and the results showed that there were differences in the value of academic toughness between groups of students of different ages (Sig 0.031).

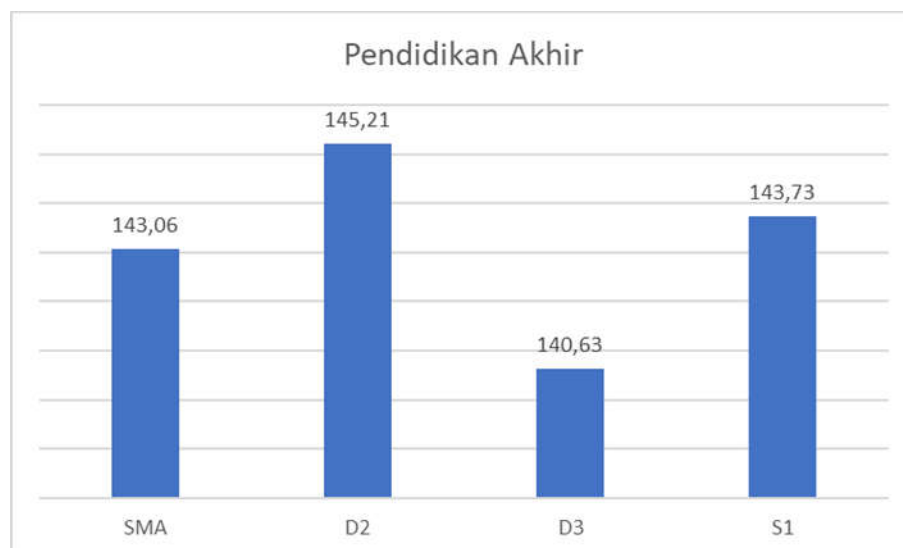


Figure 4. The level of student academic resilience based on the past education's level

Figure 4 shows the average value of students' academic toughness with various students' last educations before taking lectures at UT. Students who have previous experience as students in D2, D3, and S1 respectively are 145.21, 140.63, and 143.73. Fresh graduate students from high school have an average academic toughness score of 143.06. Furthermore, a different test was carried out and the result was that there was no difference in the value of academic toughness between students from SMA, D2, D3, and S1 (Sig 0.798).

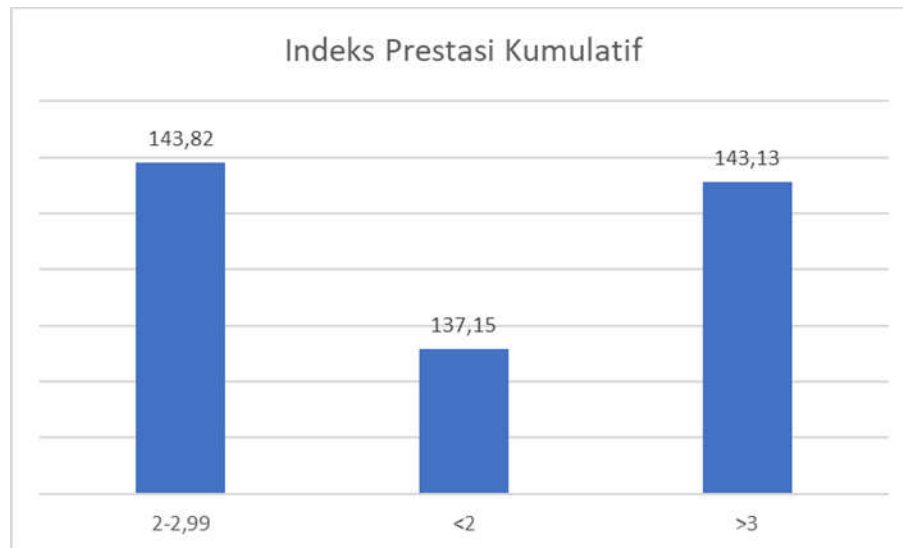


Figure 5. The level of student academic resilience based on student's GPA

Figure 5 shows the average value of student academic toughness in several groups of students with GPA <2, 2-2.99, and >3. Students with GPA <2, have an average academic toughness score of 143.82. The student group with a GPA of 2 – 2.99 has an average academic toughness score of 137.15 and students with a GPA > 3 have an average academic toughness score of 143.13. Then a different test was carried out and the results showed no difference in the value of academic toughness between groups of students with different GPA (Sig 0.231).

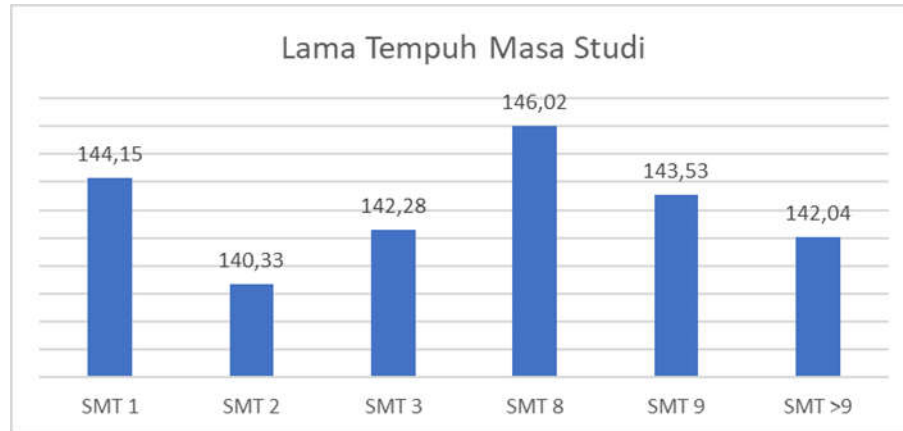


Figure 6. The level of student academic resilience based on time taken for study

Figure 6 shows the average value of student academic toughness with various lengths of study at UT. Students who are in their first semester have an average academic toughness score of 144.15, 140.33, and 142.28, respectively. Meanwhile, students who are in their final semester, even more than 9 semesters, have the following average academic toughness scores of 146.02, 143.53, and 142.04. Then a different test was carried out and the results showed that there was no difference in the value of academic toughness between students with different lengths of study (Sig 0.066).

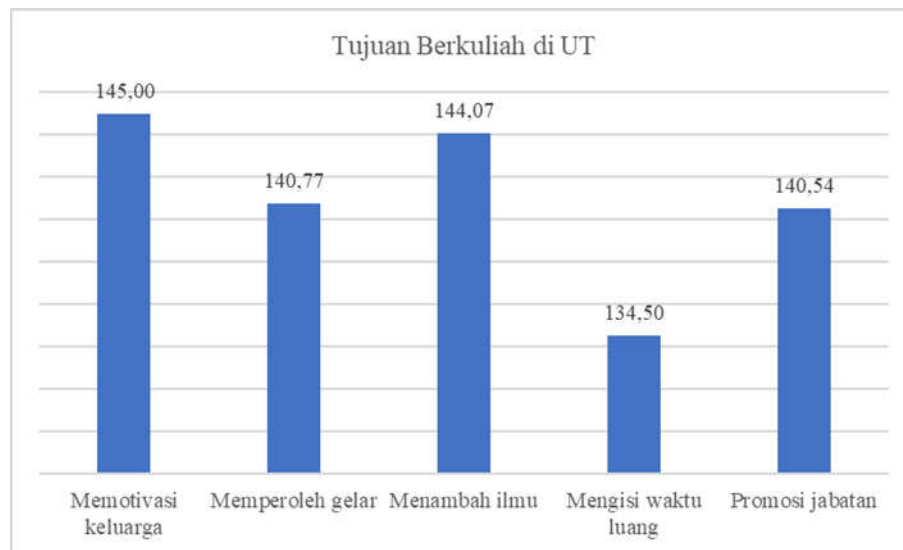


Figure 7. The level of student academic resilience based on student's objective

Figure 7 shows the average value of academic toughness of students with various objectives when starting their studies at UT. Students who aim to "motivate families" have an average academic toughness of 145.00 (number of respondents 14), and students who aim to "get a degree" have an

average academic toughness of 140.77 (number of respondents 149). Students who aim to “add knowledge”, “fill their spare time”, and to “promote positions” have an average academic toughness score of 144.07, 134.50, and 140.54, respectively. Furthermore, a different test was carried out and the result was that there were differences in the value of academic toughness between students with different purposes of studying at UT (Sig 0.038).

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was found that differences in the value of academic toughness were found in groups of students who joined study groups and did not join study groups. Pokjar is an abbreviation of “study group” which consists of a group of students and is managed by several administrators. Students who choose to take distance learning are scattered in different areas and do not meet each other in the same class. When problems occur related to the learning process, students ask questions and seek information through existing communication channels. Pokjar is a group of students who build commitment and mutual agreement to help each other and support each other smoothly and successfully study at the Indonesia Open University with or without the facilities of other parties. Pokjar management is needed to help provide administrative services and information about the Open University to students who need it. In the perspective of open and distance education, Pokjar can be positioned as a form of social support where students can convey all their problems to Pokjar, and Pokjar will help solve these problems to the University. Research on social support for academic hardiness is often done, a new finding in this study is that in distance learning, social support can come from Pokjar. The type of social support felt by students when they joined the Pokjar was in the form of companionship support, namely support that includes the availability of groups to spend time together. This support causes a person to feel that he is part of a group where members can share with each other.

In addition, differences in the value of academic toughness are also found in students of different age groups. The researcher divided the students into several age groups, namely <30 years, 30-50 years, and >50 years. The number of respondents available in each group was not the same, so the researchers used the Kruskal Wallis test to test the differences in academic toughness scores in the three groups. Several studies on academic toughness show that there is no relationship between age and academic toughness. Academic toughness can be measured from adolescence to adulthood, but does not show significant differences in different age groups. The findings in this study are a novelty, especially in an open learning system, where UT has students of various ages.

Chyung (2007) studied graduate students completing online university courses. Chyung found that older students (ages 40-57) posted on discussion boards more often than younger students (ages 22-39). But while the older students in the study were more active on the asynchronous web-based discussion boards, the younger students felt more confident about their ability to learn in an online environment by the end of the course. The two groups of students performed similarly, on average, in the final exams.

DiBiase and Kidwai (2010) conducted a mixed methods study of adult professionals (ages 22-65) and undergraduate students (ages 19-30) taking online geography courses. The researchers found that mature professionals spent more time communicating online and spent more time logging into learning management systems than relatively younger undergraduate students. Mature professionals, on average, score significantly higher on quizzes than undergraduates.

Other researchers have noted that older students devote more time to experiential learning (Raidal & Volet, 2009). According to these researchers, older students are more likely to go beyond what is required for class to explore new material and ideas that have occurred to them as a result of their experiences in university courses.

Furthermore, what distinguishes student's academic toughness is the purpose of studying at UT. The purpose of studying is closely related to one's motivation when deciding to start the learning process in college. Wentzel and Brophy (2014) explain that motivation is a theoretical construct used to define initiative, direction, intensity, persistence, and quality of behavior, especially behavior that has a goal direction.

When prospective students enroll at the Open University, they are required to fill in their study goals with five choices, namely motivating their family, obtaining a degree, increasing knowledge, filling in free time, and promotion. Students who choose different study destinations have different academic toughness. The average academic toughness of students who have the goal of "motivating the family" while studying at UT is the highest among the others. The purpose of studying at UT that students choose can be interpreted as something they want to achieve and this spirit accompanies them during the lecture process at UT. Wisudawati, et al (2017) explains that there is a significant influence between motivation and toughness. The toughness training conducted in the experimental group was concluded to be able to increase achievement motivation in students.

The family environment is where a person is educated from the start, and where the values that are believed by family members are shared. Motivating the family is an external motivation that comes from the family environment and is the most enduring motivation in distance learning (Hartnett, 2019). This can explain why students who have a college goal "to motivate families" have the highest average academic toughness among the others.

This study provides an overview of the differences in the level of academic toughness of students who take part in open and distance learning, namely the integration of students in pokjar, age, and purpose of studying at UT. Further research can be carried out with qualitative methods that explore what forms of support affect the level of student academic toughness.

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