Alienation among University of Indonesia's Psychology Students: A Comparative Study amongst First-Year, Second-Year, and Third-Year Students

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Abstract

Previous studies on alienation were mostly done within Western business context focusing on gender and racial/ ethnicity differences. However, their results were still equivocal. Less attention has been given to address the phenomenon in higher education context, especially in a developing country with collectivist culture. The present study examined gender differences at the levels of alienation amongst psychology students enrolling in semester two, four, six, and eight at the University of Indonesia. Participants were 107 female and 20 male university students ($M_{age} = 19.95$; range = 18– 24 years old). It was found that levels of alienation among male and female students were not significantly different. Although male students showed higher levels of alienation than their female counterparts, only semester six female and male students showed significance difference at their level of alienation. Results indicated that gender had a marginal influence on alienation. These findings suggested that the awareness of university demands and learning process are important; familiarity to learning environment is vital; and optimisation of the student support service is needed.

Alienasi pada Mahasiswa Psikologi di Universitas Indonesia: Studi Komparasi antara Mahasiswa Tahun Pertama, Tahun Kedua, dan Tahun Ketiga

Abstrak

Studi mengenai alienasi sebagian besar dilakukan di konteks Barat berfokus pada perbedaan jenis kelamin dan ras/etnis. Bagaimanapun, hasil studi-studi tersebut masih belum jelas. Hanya sedikit studi yang mempelajari alienasi dalam konteks pendidikan tinggi, khususnya pada negara berkembang dengan budaya kolektivis. Studi ini menguji tentang perbedaan jenis kelamin pada tingkat alienasi mahasiswa psikologi yang berada di semester dua, empat, enam dan delapan di Universitas Indonesia. Partisipan studi ini adalah 107 mahasiswi dan 20 mahasiswa (Rata-rata usia = 19,95 tahun; kisaran usia = 18-24 tahun). Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa tingkat alienasi antara mahasiswa dan mahasiswi tidak berbeda secara signifikan. Meskipun mahasiswa menunjukkan tingkat alienasi yang lebih tinggi dibandingkan mahasiswi, perbedaan tingkat alienasi yang signifikan hanya tampk pada mahasiswa dan mahasiswi semester enam. Hasil ini mengindikasikan bahwa jenis kelamin memiliki pengaruh yang kecil pada alienasi. Temuan ini menunjukkan pentingnya kesadaran akan tuntutan universitas dan proses belajar; peran penting familiaritas terhadap lingkungan belajar; dan dibutuhkan optimalisasi terhadap layanan pendukung mahasiswa.

Keywords: alienation, gender difference, university students, learning, higher education

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1. Introduction

Alienation is a feeling of estrangement in the learning process that students might feel (Brown, Higgins, & Paulsen, 2003). It is marked by an individual's separation from her/his environment (Hajda, 1961; Malik, 2015) and the lack of feeling of connectedness (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). According to Mann, 2001; Malik, 2015). Alienated individuals feel isolated from a group or activity to which one should belong or with which one should be

involved. Ascher (1982) argues that alienation is a phenomenon commonly found in large institutions, such as big city schools. Ascher (1982) continued that in a large institution, it tends to be difficult for one to reach an agreement compared to when one is in a smaller institution. Therefore, the more varied values, origins, and ideology are, the higher the likelihood of alienation to occur. This variety is apparent in big city universities where the students come from various backgrounds with different values and point of views. It is argued that the need to belong is one of the strongest human needs and ignoring this need can have damaging impacts on wellbeing (Ifeagwazi, Chukwuorji, & Zacchaeus, 2014). Thus, alienation is also related to loss of self, anxiety, depersonalisation, restlessness apathy, social disorganisation, loneliness, atomisation, powerlessness, meaningfulness, isolation, pessimism, and loss of belief or value (Josephson, 1962). Further, alienation is also viewed as a state or an experience of being isolated from a group or activity to which individuals should belong or in which they should be participated (e.g., Mann, 2001; Ifeagwazi et al., 2014). Yu and Bang (2015) pointed out that general social support shows negative association with the perceived level of alienation.

Alienation was studied across different organisational settings, and the results indicated that alienation was born out of frustrated situations (e.g., Yadav & Nagle, 2012). Kaçire (2016) adapted the construct of alienation from business organisations to educational areas and conceptualised alienation as disappointment and dispersal in business organisation that also occurred in university. The majority of early research on alienation in the educational context was concerned with ethnicity and racial issues focusing on school dropouts (e.g., Calabrese & Poe, 1990; Loughrey & Harris, 1992; Cabrera & Nora, 1994). More recent research started to examine other related concepts, such as student participations, school cultures, dropout rates, social acceptance, and academic success (e.g., Cecen, 2006; Case, 2008; Hascher & Hagenauer, 2010; Hands & Warshak, 2011; Bekhet, Elguenidi & Zauszniewski, 2011). It was found that alienation was positively related to adolescents' failure at school (Brown, Higgins, & Paulsen, 2003; Hernandez-Martinez, in press) and poor academic performance (Mau, 1992; Seeman, 1959). This might be due to students' feeling of detachment from their environment (Brown, 2004). Aviles, Guerrero, Howarth, and Thomas (1999) asserted that alienation might emerge as a function of pervasive social forces beyond schools, such as specialisation, mobility, bureaucratisation, capitalism, or other features of the modern world that part human experience. The alienated often felt they were part of an inactive and inattentive bond, and unsure about the purpose and pleasure in studying. Seeman (1959) also proposed that a student would experience academic alienation when school and society's expectations were inconsistent with those of student's needs and expectations. This inconsistency could lead to students' declining motivation and dropping out (Fan & Wolters, 2014).

Alienation is a multidimensional construct which consists of four dimensions (i.e., powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, and estrangement) (e.g., Brown, Higgins, Pierce, Hong, & Thoma, 2003). The four dimensions of alienation are also evident within the higher education setting. First, powerlessness is represented through the loss of control over events in one's life (Dean, 1961). Powerless students are more likely to be manipulated and used by others (i.e., peers), given their feeling of helplessness in controlling the events in their lives as well as the consequences in their social system (Fetco, 1985; Silverman, Lucas, & Gear, 1970). They feel as if others are using them, and they live in constant threat of having their lives affected by forces over which they have no control (Fetco, 1985). Second, meaninglessness is characterised by the inability to predict outcomes. Meaningless students are lacking understanding of the school activities in which they participate, which leads them to fell uncertain whether the school will bring about positive impact to their future (Rafalides & Hoy, 1971). Third, normlessness is marked by the loss of socialized values that give life a purpose (Dean, 1961). Normless students are more likely to experience uncertainty in deciding what rules to be followed (Fetco, 1985), while feeling supported to break the rules of society and showing great concern on getting ahead as well as obeying for appearances only in the surface (Silverman et al., 1970). Fourth, estrangement is mirrored through feelings of loneliness or separation from group norms or standards (Dean, 1961). Estranged students tend to enjoy loneliness and dislike others company (Fetco, 1985).

Hascher and Hagenauer (2010) defined motivation as the bridging concept that connects alienation with other academic variables. This implies that less intrinsically motivated students tend to be more vulnerable to alienation, and it acts as external restriction that leads the individuals to the feeling of estrangement from the learning activity. Hence, Mahmoudi, Brown, Saribagloo, and Dadashzadeh (2015) concluded that the more an individual relies on external stimuli, the more likely he or she experiences academic alienation. Higgins-D'Alessandro and Sadh (1997) noted that dimensions of school culture (normative expectations, namely internalisation level and observance of school regulations by the students, student-teacher relationships, student-student relationships, and educational opportunities) were related to adolescent academic alienation. Solidarity feeling individuals experience with their school that environment and the internalisation of its rules and norms are argued to improve students' interest in school and act as a buffer from alienation (Rovai & Wighing, 2005). Further, Mahmoudi et al.'s (2015) study on Iranian adolescents' academic alienation found that all basic individual-level psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) and school culture variables are significantly and negatively correlated with academic alienation. Student-student and studentteacher relationships and education service quality are negatively correlated with the levels of alienation (Mahmoudi et al., 2015; Hascher & Hagenauer, 2010). Roeser, Lord, and Eccles (1994) found that academicalienated students tended to have more negative assessments of their academic competence, negative view of the importance they attach to school, negative feelings of belonging in school and the received lower grades. These results imply that students are more engaged in schooling and feel less alienated when they experience autonomy and freedom of action and that more academically competent and qualified students are less likely to feel alienated.

However, alienation may affect men and women differently. For instance, men and women have different levels of access to social networks and mentors, and thus, women are more disadvantaged than men, and that they have less access to opportunity, influence, and information in the workplace, and thus, women reported higher levels of alienation compared to their men counterparts (Datta & Bhardwaj, 2015). Also, Lucas and Berkel (2005) proposed that the women tend to experience more difficult university lives compared to men. This difference extends to how they respond to alienation and thus, in seeking for help. For example, Lewis, Coursol, Bremer, and Komarenko (2015) found that women tend to value face-to-face counselling more than men. On the other hand, Malik (2015) argued that male Madrasa students tend to feel more alienated than female Madrasa students.

Although alienation has been studied since the 1950s, only issues focusing on gender (male vs. female) and race/ethnicity (Caucasian vs. African American) that have received most attention within the alienation studies (Brown et al., 2003). Based on the existing research (Calabrese & Poe, 1990; Calabrese & Seldin, 1986; Loughrey & Harris, 1992; Wolfstetter-Kausch & Gaier, 1981), it has been widely accepted that male students feel more alienated from society than female students. However, findings suggested that although male students scored greater on total alienation, female students often reported higher scores on some domains of alienation. As Wolfstetter-Kausch and Gaier (1981) noted, female students reported greater feelings of meaninglessness and higher levels of isolation compared to their male counterparts. Similarly, some other studies found that female students did not show significant difference in their overall feelings of alienation (Calabrese & Seldin, 1986; Loughrey & Harris, 1992). Even though there are apparent conflicting results regarding the types and levels of alienation experienced by male and female students, it is evident that males were more likely to experience significantly higher levels of total alienation than female students.

Alienation can also be influenced by another factor, such as time, where the levels of alienation may change over time. For example, a study conducted by Carrington and Conley (1978) on first, second, and third year students found that the third year students show similar levels of alienations as their first year counterparts. This implies that alienation was not perceived as problematic by the second year students compared to those students in first and third year. This difference might be due to the cognitive aspect of alienation where one perceives his/herself as powerlessness and isolated/estranged as a result of the separation from a significant source of social support (Epperson, 1963). A heterogenic environment with students of various backgrounds, statuses, values, and beliefs as well as university requirements bring about stress to some students. As a result, they choose to withdraw themselves from their social environment, which then leads to a lack of social support. Alienation also involves a cognitive process and interpersonal relationship that are influenced by adjustment process, which in turn creates the difference in the levels of alienation based on study time-marked by the increase of courses undertaken and the semester students are enrolled in. Providing support for Carrington and Conley's (1978) study, Herawati (1991) stated that uncertainty that first year students have during transition period leads to attitude indecisiveness and doubt in deciding future actions. Enochs and Roland (2006) argued that drop out may serve as a result of individuals' failure in adjusting to college life. Consolvo (2002) stated that nearly 30-40% of college students drop out without achieving a college degree, and many of these students never manage to complete their degrees. According to Haber and Runyon (1984), adjustment is defined as a conformity attitude, routines regulation, or even a self-habituation and self-acceptance to certain thing. Given its various definitions and dimensions, Prasetyawati (2003) attempted to comprehensively define adjustment based on the existing definitions as a change in individuals' selves and their environment in order to achieve a safe relationship with others and the environment, which is done through balancing, managing, and controlling individuals' selves and environment. Lysgaard (1955) argued that there are three phases of adjustment, namely discovery, self-alignment, and intensive participation. The discovery phase takes place during the first to fourth month. The self-alignment phase occurs from the fifth to eighth month. The intensive participation phase is evident in the ninth to twentieth month. Furthermore, academic evaluation system also complicates students' adjustment process to university life, where the evaluation is conducted towards the end of study year or in the end of even semesters. This

implies that the levels of alienation might be higher during academic evaluation period.

Past researches have been looking at alienation in individualist Western context while little has been dedicated to collectivist non-Western context. In a collectivist culture, such as Indonesia, the power of communal relationships and norms is profound and may diminish individual's selfishness in many cases (Clark & Boothby, 2013; Clark & Mills, 2012) with emphasis on high levels of social support, cooperation, equality, and honesty. On the other hand, collectivism is significantly related to high levels of social responsibilities, powerlessness, and social isolation with low levels of normlessness and self-esteem (Upadhyaya, & Rittenburg, 2015). Based on Triandis, Leung, Villareal and Clack's (1985) and Upadhyaya, and Rittenburg's, (2015) studies, it is argued that alienation would be more problematic in collectivist society. As for the importance of tertiary studies in Indonesia, collectivist culture may pose as an issue to first year university students. For example, first year students are faced with transition period where they have to learn to adjust to the new environment and to adapt to new obligations, and alienation could negatively influence their physical and psychological state. This is mirrored through a high level of stress that individuals have which leads to poor academic achievement. On the other hand, second year students are argued to have successfully pass their transition period and that they have adapted well to the university environment, which is marked by their active participation in the learning process (Lysgaard, 1955). Nevertheless, alienated second year students still show poor academic performance (Mau, 1992; Carrington & Conley, 1978; Seeman, 1959). Moreover, third and fourth year students who are approaching their graduation are faced with a new obligation, which creates stress on them. For the alienated students, this stress leads them to feel more alienated.

Taking into account those variables discussed above, the present research sought to investigate gender differences in the levels of alienation amongst second semester, fourth semester, sixth semester, and eighth semester male and female university students. It was hypothesised that there would be a significant difference in the levels of alienation among male and female university students.

2. Methods

Participants. Participants were 127 (20 male) second to eighth semester Indonesian psychology students (Mage= 19.95 years old; range = 18 - 24 years old). It consisted of 33 second semester students, 33 fourth semester students, 30 sixth semester students, and 31 eighth semester students. Their participation was voluntary, and they received rewards as a token of their participation in this study.

Measure. Classroom Life Instrument (CLI). The CLI was originally a 67-item measure assessing the levels of social dependency as well as academic and personal support in classrooms (Johnson & Johnson, 1983). The measure has been modified (Johnson, 2005), and the study employed only eight items from the original CLI to assess the levels of alienation based on the feelings of connectedness between students and their learning process, peer, and course. There were five learning alienation items (e.g., "I am not doing as well in college as I would like"), one peer alienation items (e.g., "I should get along with others better than I do"), and two course alienation items (e.g., "The workload in this course is excessive"). This measure used a 7-point Likert scale (1= not at all, 7 = absolutely) for each item. In this questionnaire, favourable and unfavourable items were arranged randomly to avoid respondents' tendency to agree on the statement without considering the content, or known as acquiescence response style (Judd, Smith, & Kidder, 1991).

Procedure. To test the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted using Johnson's (2005) 8item CLI that was translated into Bahasa Indonesia. Forty-three University of Indonesia's students from the Faculty of Psychology and the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences participated in this pilot study. The participants were all Indonesian. Participants' responses ranged from 1 (not at all) to 6 (absolutely). Cronbach's Alpha analysis was run against two dimensions of alienation. The course dimension and the learning dimension had reliabilities of .05 and .76, respectively.

In order to increase the reliability of the measure as well as to better fitted and to be more representative of the Indonesian students, there were 16 new items added to the CLI (Johnson, 2005). These additional items were adopted from the original CLI (Johnson & Johnson, 1983), which are aligned to learning, peer, and course alienation dimensions, and some adjustment in wording were made to better targeted Indonesian students. The survey was administered to a different group of 127 Indonesian psychology students of the University of Indonesia who were currently studying at the University of Indonesia, Depok campus. The adapted version of the CLI used in this study was made of 24 items (five learning alienation items, nine peer alienation items, and ten course alienation items) that were presented in Indonesian language.

Using the data from the new sample of 127 psychology students, the newly devised instrument was found to be moderately reliable. The course dimension, learning dimension, and peer dimension had reliabilities of 0.73, 0.70, and 0.54, respectively. Two items from peer alienation dimension showed poor validity ("I should be able to socialise with others better than I do now"; "I tend to socialise in group of friends") were then removed and

excluded from further data analysis. The peer dimension now had a reliability of 0.70 (coefficient Alpha).

In addition to the CLI instrument, the participants were also required to fill in the demographic questionnaire, which serves as control data. These were additional data pertaining their demographic, such as gender, age, batch (semester), their hometown, marital status, their semester course credits, and their GPA.

3. Results and Discussion

First, a one-way between-participants ANOVA was conducted. Results indicated there were no significant differences on the levels of alienation among second, fourth, sixth, and eighth semesters, F(3, 123) = 0.60, p = 0.614. This implied that the levels of alienation did not differ across semester.

Second, additional analyses were also performed using cross tabs, chi square, and correlation. Table 2 shows categorization of alienation score. Results indicated that there were no differences on the levels of alienation between male and female students (low < 62.26, $high \ge 62.26$). However, a significant difference on the levels of alienation was found on the sixth semester students, where sixth semester male students showed significantly higher levels of alienation compared to their female counterparts (Table 1).

It was also found that second semester female students (61.29%) showed higher alienation levels compared to their male counterparts (50%). In contrast, fourth- and eighth-semester male students showed higher alienation levels (60% and 50%, respectively) compared to fourth-and eighth-semester female students (50%) and 44%, respectively).

A chi-square test was performed to examine the relation between alienation across semesters and gender. The relation between these variables was not significant for second semester students, χ^2 (1, N = 31) = 0.10, p > 0.05; fourth semester students, χ^2 (1, N = 30) = 0.17, p > 0.05; and eighth semester students, χ^2 (1, N = 33) = 0.07, p > 0.05. Conversely, semester six male students (71.43%) showed higher alienation levels compared to their female counterparts (21.74%). A chi-square test result showed that there was significant difference between alienation and gender amongst sixth semester

 Table 1. Precentage of the Levels of Alienation based on Gender

Sex	Low	High	Total	χ^2	р
Male	40.00	60.00	100.00		
Female	54.21	45.79	100.00		
Total	51.97	48.03	100.00	1.36	0.24

students, χ^2 (1, N = 313 = 5.96, p < 0.05. Further, course credits were significantly negatively correlated to the levels of alienation. This is a negative correlation, where the levels of alienation decrease as the amount of course credits increase. However, a chi-square test result showed that there was no significant difference between alienation and course credit, χ^2 (2, N = 127) = 3.23, p > 0.05.

The current research aimed to investigate gender differences in the levels of alienation amongst psychology students in their second, fourth, sixth, and eighth semesters at the University of Indonesia. Results showed that gender difference was not correlated with alienation. It means that alienation was not influenced by individual's gender. It was also shown that semester levels were not correlated with alienation. However, gender was found to be correlated with the levels of alienation on sixth semester psychology students, in which male students tended to have higher level of alienation compared to female students. This finding is in line with Malik (2015) who found that alienation was more apparent among male Madrasa students compared to their female counterparts. This may be due to the difference in how they view their self-concept and how they react to stress and aggression. Stout and Tamer (2016) suggested that women tend to have a more negative self-concept, are more prone to suffer from depressive symptoms (Moieni, Irwin, Jevtic, Olmstead, Breen, & Eisenberger, 2015), and are more likely to exhibit forms of relational aggression (e.g. gossip, rumours) (Loflin & Barry, 2016) than men which make women experience more difficulties in their adjustment process and lead them to be more vulnerable to isolation and alienation.

Additional analysis on the levels of alienation among second semester, fourth semester, sixth semester, and eighth semester University of Indonesia's psychology students showed that there was no significant difference in the mean score alienation between second semester. fourth semester, sixth semester, and eighth semester University of Indonesia's psychology students. Thus, the levels of alienation between second semester, fourth semester, sixth semester, and eighth semester University of Indonesia's psychology students did not differ. This finding is in contrary with Carrington and Conley's (1978) study which found that there was a significant difference in the students' levels of alienation, where first year and final year American law students showed higher alienation levels compared to second year students. This difference may be attributed to the fact that Carrington and Conley's (1978) study employed law students, where male students outnumbered the female students. Also, Carrington and Conley's (1978) study was mainly focused on negative attitudes of law students, as opposed to specifically investigated alienation,

and that their measures assessed three different constructs (alienation, dissatisfaction, and sociability).

In addition, the results of the current study indicated University of Indonesia's psychology students generally tended to show high levels of alienation. This implies that the University of Indonesia's psychology students feel alienated from the learning process, course, and their peer. This could be due to the high academic pressure that they feel as the University of Indonesia students throughout their duration of study. Although there were no significant differences in the levels of alienation between second semester, fourth semester, sixth semester, and eighth semester University of Indonesia's psychology students, the results showed that most participants in their second semester showed high levels of alienation. This might be due to the adjustment process that first year students experience in adjusting to their new environment (Hicks & Heastie, 2008). While fourth semester, sixth semester, and eighth semester students are considered to have successfully adjusted to the university life, second semester students are still adjusting with their first year of university, which is marked by a diverse mix of people and ideas (Cox, Reason, Terenzini, & Lutovsky Quaye, 2016). Also, they are experiencing transition period from high school life to university life where educational system and life are different; many of the second semester students even have to leave their hometown and reside in new places close to their university. As a result, these students are more prone to suffer from physical and psychological stress. On the other hand, the fourth semester students are in their final phase of adjustment process (Quan, He, & Sloan, 2016), where they have successfully adjusted with their social lives and the learning demands. This is also true for the sixth semester students, who have succeeded passing their transition period since they are able to adjust with campus life, have a particular permanent peer group, are familiar with the learning system as well as show a relatively stable self-concept as well as academic self-concept. Furthermore, it was found that the more course credits students took, the less they would experience alienation. This suggests that higher participation with the learning process allows students the opportunity to be more involved with the university life. Similarly, Calabrese and Seldin's (1986) study found that alienated students show low interest to the school and educational function. Therefore, they tend to show low participation, which might be mirrored through their fewer course credits.

The results of this research may have practical implications for educational practitioners. Past studies have pointed out that using a variety of teaching styles improves student performance, diversity, and interest (e.g., Lage, Platt, & Treglia, 2000). For example, for the teaching staff, it is important to practise a relaxing, creative, and supportive study environment in the

classroom, such as flipped classrooms (DeLozier, & Rhodes, 2016). Therefore, students are expected to feel more relaxed and see themselves as a part of the learning system. Also, it will be beneficial to maximise the role of student counsellors in aiding student adjustment (e.g., Hossain, 2015). For instance, the student counsellors could allocate time specifically aimed to consult first year students to help their adjustment process to the university life. As for the University of Indonesia's psychology students, enrolling in more courses each semester might be beneficial. This means that enrolling in more courses will facilitate an individual to get more connected with the learning process in general and may also act as a means of socialisation which allows them to make new friends and eventually widen their social network. However, it is important to consider individual's own capability in deciding the numbers of courses enrolled.

However, there are some limitations to this research. For instance, there were more female than male respondents in this research. This is due to the nature of the University of Indonesia's psychology students in which female students outnumber their male counterparts. This makes female psychology students as majority, and in turn it may contribute to their adjustment process and thus, they do not feel as alienated as the minority male students. Future research needs to consider employing balance numbers of male and female respondents which may yield to different results. Further, participants in this current research were mostly students with high academic achievement. This yields to generalisability of the results as it might not be applicable to students with lower academic performance. This research also employed a quantitative approach (i.e., the questionnaire) which uses explicit and standardised procedures; future research might benefit by using a qualitative approach which allows the exploration of the phenomenon, as well as uses less standardized measures or explicit steps as well as focuses on the multiple meanings of individual experiences, socially and historically constructed meanings, with the intention to develop a theory or pattern (Creswell, 2014). For example, a qualitative longitudinal research (QLR) where a more accurate prediction can be made. Farrall (2006) noted that a QLR enables the researchers to measure and explore changes that happen over a course of time as well as to study the process related to those changes; this approach also minimises biases associated the recall process, offers follow-up studies, integrates micro and macro levels, and allows the researchers to assess the effectiveness of a particular intervention.

4. Conclusions

The focus of this research has been to examine gender differences on the levels of alienation amongst psychology students enrolling in semester two, four, six, and eight at the University of Indonesia. In doing so, this research identified key points associated with alienation, its dimensions, and its manifestations within the higher education context. This research contributes to the extant literature relating to gender differences in the levels of alienation among university students. This contribution is mirrored through our enhanced understanding of the phenomenon of alienation that is apparent among university students, and thus, to provide a better understanding regarding the impact of alienation on university students, such as on their academic achievements. Therefore, this study may assist educators in providing guidance and facilitating learning outcomes more effectively as well as to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

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