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Student Self-Regulation from Bandura's Theoretical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Self-regulation is an individual's ability to control thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in order to achieve desired goals. In the academic context, self-regulation plays an essential role in students' learning success, time management, and emotional balance when facing academic challenges. This article aims to review student self-regulation through the perspective of Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Using a systematic literature review approach, this article analyzes concepts such as self-efficacy, observational learning, and reciprocal determinism as the main determinants of student self-regulation. The findings highlight that self-efficacy is the central element of self-regulation, while modeling and social support from the academic environment act as external reinforcements. This review emphasizes the importance of strengthening self-regulation in higher education as a preventive strategy against academic procrastination and as an effort to enhance students' academic achievement.

Keywords: Bandura, Self-efficacy, Self-regulation, Students, Social Cognitive Theory

Introduction

A student is a term for someone studying at a university, institute, college, or academy. A student engages in numerous activities, both on and off campus. In addition to regular lectures, students engage in non-lecture activities, such as participating in off-campus organizations and humanitarian causes. Such activities are essential for students as part of their self-development efforts.

Nevertheless, a student must remain aware that their primary task is to study. As a student, their most important obligation is to complete academic assignments. There are many academic tasks that must be completed on campus, including: writing individual and group papers, preparing presentations, reading books and scientific journals, writing scientific articles, and preparing for tests or exams (Tarigan et al., 2018).

The numerous activities a student must undertake require strong self-regulation. Self-regulation is a key factor contributing to academic success and the overall student experience. Students who manage their time well, manage tasks, motivate themselves, and effectively overcome obstacles tend to have better academic performance and higher levels of satisfaction with their studies.

Facts show that many students have low self-regulation. As a result, they cannot meet the academic demands of higher education. Poor self-regulation can even lead to students failing to complete their studies. Purba and Yulianto cite data from the Ministry of Research and Technology (2016), which states that in 2014-2015, more than 31% of students dropped out of a total of 286,278 graduates. They further explain that one of the causes is poor self-regulation in these students (Sugiarta Purba & Eko Yulianto, 2019).

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is a person's ability to manage their own achievements and actions, set targets for themselves, evaluate their success when achieving those targets, and reward themselves for achieving those goals (Shelley Taylor E and Letitia A. Paplau, 2008). According to Albert Bandura, self-regulation is a human ability in the form of the ability to think and with that ability they manipulate the environment, so that environmental changes occur as a result of these activities (Santrock, 2008). Regulation is a process that activates thoughts, behaviors and feelings continuously in an effort to achieve predetermined goals (Zimmerman, 1998).

Based on the definition presented above, it can be understood that self-regulation is the ability to organize, control, evaluate oneself, and determine one's own reactions to successes and failures. In the dictionary of counseling and therapy terms, self-regulation generally refers to the nature of a system that has dynamics and the ability to regulate and maintain the continuity of the system's work. Furthermore, it is stated that self-regulation in social learning refers to Bandura's concept for the process by which people regulate the reinforcement they provide themselves for their productive behavior. Recently, the term self-regulation is often used interchangeably with self-control methods and self-management techniques to refer to the same process (self-control and self-management) (Andimappiare, 2006).

One theory relevant to self-regulation is the role-oriented theory in social psychology, namely self-monitoring theory. The self-monitoring theory proposed by Mark Snyder assumes that it is proportional to individuals' ability and inclination to practice controlling expressive behavior, self-presentation, and displays of affection (Walgito, 2011). Self-monitoring refers to the extent to which people can monitor, monitor, and regulate their behavior according to situational cues. Individuals who have high self-monitoring skills are sensitive to the appropriateness of situational cues and regulate and adjust their behavior (AndiMappiare, 2006). Related to self-control in self-regulation, Bandura proposed the theory of self-efficacy, namely the feeling of ability to perform a task, the feeling of competence and effectiveness (Widyastuti, 2014).

The phenomenon of student self-regulation is a crucial issue in higher education. The transition from high school to college demands greater independence in managing their learning process. The absence of strict supervision, unlike in school, requires students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their academic activities independently. However, many students struggle to adapt to these demands, leading to various academic problems such as procrastination, low motivation to learn, poor time management, and increased psychological stress, which can lead to academic stress.

Zimmerman (2000) emphasized that self-regulation is a proactive process that allows individuals to direct their thoughts, motivation, and actions toward achieving goals. Self-regulation in students serves as a crucial skill in maintaining learning motivation and effectively organizing learning strategies. Boekaerts (1999) added that self-regulation involves not only cognitive dimensions but also motivational and emotional aspects, which are crucial for students' academic success.

The phenomenon of academic procrastination is a clear example of weak self-regulation. Wolters & Hussain (2015) found that students with low self-regulation were more prone to procrastination, poor time management, and ultimately experienced anxiety around deadlines. Conversely, students with strong self-regulation skills were more disciplined, consistent, and able to manage their motivation and emotions. Research by Kitsantas, Winsler, & Huie (2008) showed that good self-regulation was positively related to Grade Point Average (GPA), learning engagement, and long-term academic success.

Besides its relationship to academic achievement, self-regulation also impacts students' psychological well-being. Schunk & DiBenedetto (2020) explain that self-regulation helps students maintain long-term motivation, overcome obstacles, and increase resilience in the face of academic challenges. This demonstrates that self-regulation is not only a learning skill but also a crucial adaptive mechanism that supports students' mental health.

Albert Bandura, through his Social Cognitive Theory, explains that human behavior is influenced by the interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors, known as reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1986). Within this framework, self-efficacy, or belief in one's abilities, plays a central role in self-regulation. Students with high self-efficacy tend to have greater motivation, greater persistence, and more effective learning strategies than those with low self-efficacy. Furthermore, observational learning, or learning through observing the behavior of others, also strengthens students' self-regulation processes, particularly in the context of a university learning environment.

Self-regulation is not merely the ability to control behavior, but also encompasses metacognitive awareness to plan, direct, monitor, and evaluate the learning process. Students with high self-regulation are better able to anticipate obstacles, maintain learning motivation, and consistently complete assignments. Within the framework of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, self-regulation is understood as the result of a dynamic interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors, with self-efficacy as a central component influencing how effectively students are able to regulate themselves.

Self-Regulation in Bandura's Theory Perspective

Bandura (1997) explains that self-regulation involves three core processes: self-observation, judgmental processes, and self-reaction. In academic life, students observe their behavior, assess the extent to which it aligns with established standards or goals, and then react with satisfaction or a need for improvement. This process forms the basis for students determining learning strategies, managing their time, and evaluating their academic performance. Zimmerman (2002) found that students who consistently engage in self-monitoring and self-evaluation are better able to maintain long-term learning motivation.

However, self-regulation is not only determined by reflective awareness but also by self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) emphasized that self-efficacy is the core of self-regulation, as students' beliefs in their abilities will determine their choice of learning strategies, level of persistence, and response to failure. Research by Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) supports this view by showing that students with high self-efficacy are more consistent in using self-regulated learning strategies compared to students with low self-efficacy. Findings in Indonesia are similar, for example, Sari's (2019) study demonstrated a significant influence of self-efficacy on the self-regulation of students writing their theses.

The Role of Social and Environmental Observation

In addition to personal factors, self-regulation is also influenced by the learning process through observation, or observational learning. Students often imitate learning strategies from lecturers, seniors, and peers. Pajares (2002) explains that positive learning models can improve student self-regulation because individuals tend to internalize observed strategies. In Indonesia, research by Wulandari (2020) found that social support from peers plays a significant role in strengthening student self-regulation, particularly in dealing with academic pressure.

A supportive academic environment is a crucial factor in developing self-regulation. Yuwono (2018) demonstrated that students with supportive learning environments exhibited higher levels of self-regulation compared to those without such support. This aligns with Bandura's theory that self-regulation is inextricably linked to the individual's social context.

Reciprocal Interaction and Cultural Factors

Bandura's theory asserts that human behavior is influenced not only by internal factors but also by reciprocal interactions with the environment. Pintrich (2004) adds that self-regulation is dynamic and develops as learning situations change. In the context of Indonesian students, Omabak's (2025) research highlights that cultural factors, community values, and family support have a significant influence on shaping student self-regulation. This confirms that self-regulation is not merely an individual skill but also the result of internalizing social and cultural values.

Differences in cultural context also influence how students develop self-regulation. Students in Western countries tend to emphasize personal motivation, while Asian students rely more on family and environmental support (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). This fact suggests that self-regulation is a universal skill, but its development is influenced by the cultural values of the student's environment.

Self-Regulation and Academic Challenges of Students

In the world of college, self-regulation is closely linked to academic procrastination. Students who lack self-regulation skills tend to procrastinate, lose motivation, and experience emotional distress. Studies show that good self-regulation contributes to higher academic achievement (Pintrich, 2000; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Furthermore, self-regulation also helps regulate emotions during exams, manage time, and maintain consistent learning. A supportive academic environment, such as mentoring from lecturers and collaboration with peers, can strengthen students' self-regulation.

Strategies for Strengthening Student Self-Regulation

Based on Bandura's theory and research findings, there are several strategies to improve student self-regulation:

- a. Self-monitoring: Students need to record their learning progress and engage in self-reflection.
- b. Strengthening self-efficacy: Experiences of small successes can increase self-confidence.
- c. Self-reinforcement: Students reward themselves after completing tasks.
- d. Peer modeling: Learning from successful peers motivates them to imitate effective strategies.

Previous Theory and Research Review

Albert Bandura proposed that human behavior is shaped through a triadic reciprocal causation mechanism, a reciprocal relationship between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. Student self-regulation is not only determined by internal cognitive abilities but also influenced by social support, learning strategies, and previous experiences. A crucial component of self-regulation is self-efficacy, an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute specific actions. Students with high self-efficacy tend to set challenging academic goals, persevere, and persist when faced with obstacles (Bandura, 1997).

Zimmerman (2000) explains that self-regulation in learning consists of three phases: planning (forethought), implementation (performance control), and reflection (self-reflection). Students with self-regulation skills are able to set learning goals from the outset, implement strategies with discipline, and evaluate success for future improvement. Research by Wolters (2011) shows that self-regulation is closely related to motivational regulation, where students who are able to control their motivation to learn are more resistant to distractions and more consistent in completing tasks.

Schunk and Di Benedetto (2020) found that self-regulation is also closely linked to academic resilience. Students who are able to regulate themselves are more resilient to stress, able to adapt to changing academic demands, and better prepared to face the pressures of college. In Indonesia, research by Sulistyarini (2018) revealed that students with high self-regulation tend to have better academic achievement and lower levels of procrastination.

Discussion

Self-regulation is a term first coined by Albert Bandura in social learning theory. According to Bandura, self-regulation involves several cognitive processes, such as planning, self-monitoring, self-assessment, and behavioral regulation. Individuals use their knowledge and beliefs about themselves to regulate their actions. Self-regulation, according to Albert Bandura, is an individual's ability to regulate and control their own behavior, thoughts, and emotions (Bandura, 1991).

In a similar line of thought, Zimmerman explains that self-regulation is the process of controlling, directing, and managing one's behavior, emotions, and thoughts to achieve goals or comply with existing norms. Self-regulation relates to the ability to manage oneself, overcome temptation, and maintain focus on desired tasks or goals (Zimmerman, 2000).

Furthermore, according to Woolfolk, as quoted by Kusaeri and Mulhamah, self-regulation is the process of activating and regulating thoughts, behaviors, and emotions in achieving a goal. When the goal is related to learning, the self-regulation in question is self-regulated learning. Self-regulation in learning is described as the strategies used by individuals (students) to regulate their cognition (using cognitive and metacognitive strategies) and also the use of strategies to manage knowledge resources (Kusaeri & Mulhamah, 2016).

Furthermore, Schunck defines self-regulation specifically in learning. According to him, self-regulation refers to the process individuals (students) use to systematically focus their thoughts, feelings, and actions on achieving goals (Dale H. Schunk, 2012). Self-regulation for Indonesian students has become increasingly crucial amidst the complex challenges of the digital era. Students are not only required to attend lectures but also to be active in organizations, work part-time jobs, and social activities, which often take up a lot of time. This situation often causes students to lose focus and delay completing academic assignments.

However, students with high self-regulation are able to anticipate distractions by setting priorities, managing time, and maintaining internal motivation. In other words, self-regulation serves as a protective mechanism that allows students to remain consistent in achieving academic goals even when faced with numerous distractions.

The close relationship between self-regulation and self-efficacy is also inseparable. Bandura (1997) emphasized that self-efficacy is the driving force behind self-regulation. Students who believe in their abilities are more committed to their study plans, more persistent in the face of difficulties, and less likely to procrastinate on completing assignments. This aligns with research by Zimmerman (2000), which found that self-regulated learners are more effective in developing long-term learning skills than students who rely on external guidance.

Furthermore, self-regulation also plays a significant role in suppressing academic procrastination. Wolters (2011) emphasized that procrastination often arises from weak motivational regulation. With strong self-regulation, students are able to refocus their studies, choose alternative strategies when faced with obstacles, and evaluate progress to prevent repeated delays. Research by Sulistyarini (2018) in Indonesia also showed that strong self-regulation helps students suppress academic procrastination tendencies and increases learning productivity.

Conclusions and Implications

Self-regulation is an essential factor in supporting students' academic success. Bandura's theoretical perspective asserts that self-regulation is formed through the interaction of self-efficacy, learning behavior, and the academic environment. Previous research consistently shows that students with high self-regulation have stronger learning motivation, lower levels of procrastination, and better academic achievement.

From the various definitions above, it can be concluded that self-regulation is an individual's ability to organize, direct, and control themselves to maintain desired goals and meet desired standards. When linked to learning behavior, it can be concluded that self-regulation in learning is a student's ability to control their behavior (learning) to achieve their learning goals.

The implication is that Indonesian universities need to seriously focus on developing student self-regulation. Possible programs include time management training, strategy-based learning, strengthening self-efficacy, and providing a supportive academic environment. Through these efforts, students can master self-regulation skills, which are crucial not only for academic success but also for building readiness to face the challenges of future professional life.

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