



An Overview of Academic Stress among Guidance and Counseling Students on Campus

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the level of academic stress among students at Muhammadiyah University of Tasikmalaya, accounting for differences by gender and cohort year. The study is expected to serve as a basis for designing guidance and counseling services to reduce academic stress among students. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, this research examines students' levels of academic stress through an incidental sampling technique, selecting 216 Guidance and Counseling students from the 2021–2023 cohorts at Muhammadiyah University of Tasikmalaya. The results show that among the 216 students, 1% (2 students) experienced high academic stress, 63% (135 students) were in the low category, and 37% (79 students) were in the moderate category. The conclusion reveals that most students experience academic stress at low levels; however, some still experience higher levels. The implications of this study highlight the need to develop more targeted guidance and counseling programs that account for differences in cohort year and gender, so that efforts to reduce students' academic stress can be carried out more effectively.

KATA KUNCI

Stres Akademik;
Mahasiswa;
Kampus

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui gambaran stres akademik pada mahasiswa Universitas Muhammadiyah Tasikmalaya, dengan memperhatikan perbedaan stres akademik berdasarkan jenis kelamin dan angkatan. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi dasar dalam merancang layanan bimbingan dan konseling untuk mengurangi stres akademik pada mahasiswa. Menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kuantitatif, penelitian ini menggambarkan tingkat stres akademik mahasiswa melalui teknik pengambilan sampel incidental sampling, yaitu dengan memilih secara acak 216 mahasiswa Bimbingan dan Konseling Angkatan 2021-2023 Universitas Muhammadiyah Tasikmalaya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dari 216 mahasiswa, 1% (2 orang) mengalami stres akademik dalam kategori tinggi, 63% (135 orang) berada dalam kategori rendah, dan 37% (79 orang) dalam kategori sedang. Kesimpulan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa sebagian besar mahasiswa mengalami stres akademik dengan kategori rendah, namun masih terdapat sejumlah mahasiswa yang menghadapi stres dengan tingkat yang lebih tinggi. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan perlunya pengembangan program layanan bimbingan dan konseling yang lebih terarah dengan mempertimbangkan perbedaan berdasarkan angkatan dan jenis kelamin, sehingga upaya pengurangan stres akademik mahasiswa dapat dilakukan secara lebih efektif.

1. INTRODUCTION

Schools serve to develop and enhance students' potential; in other words, every activity students engage in at school involves a learning process. This learning process results in behavioral changes arising from experience and interaction with the environment and tends to be relatively enduring (Vlaev & Dolan, 2015). However, one common problem in educational settings is high academic stress. Academic stress is a psychological phenomenon frequently experienced by university students during their higher education. Wong Aitken et al. (2024) define academic stress as a form of psychological pressure experienced by individuals in educational contexts, encompassing frustration,

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conflict, pressure, change, and self-imposed demands. According to Gadzella's theory, academic stress arises from internal and external factors related to academic demands, social interactions, self-evaluation, and adjustment to changes in the academic environment.

The transition toward blended learning has further shaped students' academic experiences. Students from the 2021 cohort entered university during a period of fully online learning, while the 2022 cohort began experiencing hybrid learning, and the 2023 cohort underwent a readjustment to fully face-to-face instruction. These differing conditions generated varying levels of pressure across cohorts, ranging from difficulties with adaptation and limited social interaction to a gradual increase in academic workload.

Research by Nurtanto et al. (2023) indicates that students from pandemic cohorts experienced higher levels of academic stress than those in cohorts before and after the pandemic, with symptoms including anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and decreased learning motivation. Mamahit (2020) found that Guidance and Counseling (BK) students tend to experience academic stress stemming from pressure to serve as "role models" in emotional and behavioral regulation while simultaneously managing complex, intensive academic tasks. This finding is consistent with the study by Putri et al. (2023), which reported that the highest academic pressure was found among mid- and final-semester BK students due to increasing demands related to thesis completion and field practice. Therefore, it is important to map the academic stress profile of BK students more specifically by cohort year, given that each cohort faces distinct academic experiences and psychological pressures.

Responses to academic stress manifest in physical, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive symptoms. Students experiencing severe academic stress may display reactions such as sleep disturbances, irritability, decreased concentration, and avoidance of academic tasks (Aziz et al., 2024). Accordingly, a comprehensive understanding of the sources and manifestations of academic stress among BK students from the 2021–2023 cohorts can serve as a foundation for developing more effective and targeted guidance and counseling programs tailored to each cohort's needs. Nugroho et al. (2023) found that students from pandemic cohorts (2020–2021) experienced higher academic stress levels due to limited social interaction and increasing demands of online learning. Meanwhile, Sembiring and Astuti (2023) reported that BK students are particularly vulnerable to stress due to their dual roles as students and prospective counselors, which require maintaining a professional image and emotional stability.

Although several studies have been conducted, research comparing levels and forms of academic stress based on cohort year remains very limited, particularly among BK students. As Gadzella (1991) explains, environmental and temporal contexts significantly influence students' perceptions of and responses to stress. Therefore, it is essential to link temporal factors (cohorts 2021, 2022, and 2023) with sources of academic stress and responses to academic stress to design appropriate interventions.

To date, institutional efforts have included academic counseling services, stress management training, and mental health education. Some universities have also developed peer counseling programs as a form of peer support (Rohmah & Suharto, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these services has not been explicitly evaluated with respect to the needs of students from different cohorts. Moreover, most interventions are implemented in a general manner and do not integrate theory-based stress assessment results. Therefore, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of academic stress among BK students, based on Gadzella's model, while considering cohort-specific conditions, to strengthen the foundation for academic and psychosocial policy-making within the university environment.

Thus, research is needed to comprehensively map the academic stress profiles of Guidance and Counseling students from the 2021, 2022, and 2023 cohorts as a basis for developing academic counseling programs grounded in students' actual needs. Such research also plays a crucial role in providing objective data for faculties and campus psychological service units to design policies, stress management training, and appropriate promotive–preventive approaches.

This need is reinforced by the findings of Rahayu et al. (2023), which indicate that intervention approaches based solely on standard stress questionnaires tend to overlook temporal and situational factors faced by students from different cohorts. Consequently, cohort-specific interventions based on Gadzella's stress classification and students' lived experiences are urgently required. Research by Wati et al. (2022) revealed that 68% of students from the 2021 cohort experienced moderate to high academic stress due to challenges in adapting to online learning and limited social interaction. Meanwhile, Maulana and Rachmawati (2023) reported that students from the 2022 cohort faced transitional dilemmas, experiencing anxiety due to changes in academic rhythm and a sharp increase in academic demands. Students from the 2023 cohort, despite returning to face-to-face learning, continued to experience high stress as they struggled to compensate for gaps in social and academic skills resulting from disruptions during the previous two years.

Guidance and Counseling students are a vital subject of this study because they are not only engaged in academic processes but are also preparing to become counselors who are expected to demonstrate emotional stability, high empathy, and practical stress management skills. This is further supported by evidence indicating that BK students face a higher risk of stress than students in other majors due to ongoing demands for professionalism and personal development. However, to date, there has been limited research explicitly examining differences in academic stress levels based on cohort year among BK students, even though year of entry significantly influences students' academic and psychological experiences.

The objectives of this study are to describe the level of academic stress among Guidance and Counseling students at Muhammadiyah University of Tasikmalaya and to examine differences in academic stress by gender across the 2021–2023 cohorts. The theoretical contribution of this study is expected to enrich knowledge and provide additional insights for researchers, particularly regarding the impact of optimism on students' psychological well-being. Furthermore, this study is anticipated to serve as a reference for future related research. Practically, the findings are expected to assist universities in guiding the enhancement of students' optimism, understanding students' levels of optimism and psychological well-being, and identifying the impact of optimism on psychological well-being. These insights may serve as a basis for developing strategies to improve psychological well-being through increased optimism, thereby enhancing the quality of higher education. Additionally, for university counselors, this study offers valuable insights to support students with low psychological well-being through interventions that strengthen optimism and enhance personal development.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research approach with a descriptive focus. Rather than explaining causal relationships between variables, the study aims to provide a transparent and objective description of the observed conditions. According to Creswell (2017), descriptive research is intended to address current problems based on actual data. Therefore, the descriptive method offers an accurate depiction of real conditions based on data obtained from the surrounding environment.

2.2 Participant

This research was conducted in 2024 at Muhammadiyah University of Tasikmalaya, located at Jl. Tamansari No. KM 2.5, Mulyasari, Tamansari District, Tasikmalaya City, West Java Province. The selection of this research site was based on the presence of phenomena related to academic stress among students at Muhammadiyah University of Tasikmalaya, which constituted a key consideration in determining the research location.

The study population consisted of all active undergraduate (S1) students from the 2021–2023 cohorts at Muhammadiyah University of Tasikmalaya. Specifically, the population included Guidance and Counseling students from the 2021–2023 cohorts, totaling 331 students. The selection of these cohorts was based on the consideration that they are still actively enrolled at the university. The sampling technique used in this study was simple random sampling. The sample size was determined using the Isaac and Michael (1981) table, as this method provides a predefined calculation while accounting for an acceptable level of sampling error.

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected using an academic stress instrument developed by the researcher based on the theoretical framework proposed by Gadzella (1991). The instrument consisted of 23 statement items that had been tested for validity. The academic stress instrument was constructed using a Likert scale with five response options: "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree," as developed in Gadzella's model. Based on the reliability test results, the academic stress instrument demonstrated high reliability (coefficient of 0.86).

2.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis techniques used in this study included descriptive statistics and classical assumption tests, consisting of normality, linearity, and homogeneity tests. For hypothesis testing, simple linear regression analysis and coefficient of determination analysis were employed. The collected data were analyzed using simple linear regression in SPSS version 22 for Windows. This technique was used to examine the effect of self-esteem on academic burnout among students. Simple linear regression was selected because it is appropriate for assessing

the extent to which the self-esteem variable (X) predicts academic burnout (Y). Through this analysis, the study is expected to provide a clear understanding of the magnitude of self-esteem's influence on reducing academic burnout among junior high school students.

2.5 Research Procedure

The research procedure consisted of a series of systematic stages conducted by the researcher to obtain accurate and relevant data in accordance with the research objectives. The first stage involved problem identification and the preparation of a research proposal, in which the researcher formulated the research problem and developed a research plan encompassing objectives, methods, and procedures. Subsequently, the researcher developed the research instrument for data collection, followed by validity and reliability testing to ensure it produced valid and consistent data. After the instrument was confirmed to be valid and reliable, the researcher determined the study's population and sample. Data were then collected using the predetermined method. Once the data were gathered, the next stage involved analyzing them to identify patterns and information relevant to the research objectives. Finally, the researcher conducted interpretation and reporting of the research findings, resulting in conclusions and recommendations based on the obtained results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Based on descriptive statistical analysis of data from 216 students, the minimum score was 23, the maximum was 115, the mean was 72, and the standard deviation was 12.

Table 1. General Overview of Academic Stress among Guidance and Counseling Students

Category	Score Range	Percentage Range	Frequency	%
High	85–115	74%–100%	2	1%
Moderate	60–84	52%–73%	79	37%
Low	23–59	20%–51%	135	63%
Total			216	100%

The results show that among the 216 students from the 2021–2023 cohorts at Muhammadiyah University of Tasikmalaya, 1% (2 students) were classified as having high academic stress, 63% (135 students) were in the low category, and 37% (79 students) were in the moderate category.

These findings indicate that the majority of Guidance and Counseling students at Muhammadiyah University of Tasikmalaya from the 2021–2023 cohorts fall into the low academic stress category, with 135 out of 216 students classified in this category. This suggests that, overall, the level of academic stress these students experience is relatively low. However, when examined across the assessed dimensions—namely frustration (feelings of hopelessness), conflicts (difficulties in decision-making), pressure (perceived demands), changes (adjustments to situational changes), and self-imposed stress (self-driven pressure)—there remains an imbalance that may still affect students’ academic and psychological well-being.

Table 2. Demographic Data of Students by Gender

Gender	Frequency	%
Female	178	82.4%
Male	38	17.5%
Total	216	100%

Based on the available data, female students accounted for 178 individuals (82.4%), while male students accounted for only 38 individuals (17.5%), indicating a significant imbalance in gender representation. This ratio suggests that the number of female students is nearly 5 times that of male students. Such an imbalance does not occur randomly but is closely related to gender-based preferences in academic program selection and to prevailing social constructions.

3.2. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that academic stress among Guidance and Counseling students from the 2021, 2022, and 2023 cohorts at Muhammadiyah University of Tasikmalaya, based on a sample of 216 students, shows that the majority of students, representing more than half of the sample, fall into the low academic stress category. This finding suggests that these students are generally in a condition characterized by minimal or no significant academic pressure. In other words, they do not experience severe emotional, cognitive, or physical disturbances due to academic demands and can manage academic pressure effectively.

These findings support the theory developed by Gadzella (1991), particularly the Student-Life Stress Inventory (SLSI), which measures academic stress based on several factors, including frustration, conflict, pressure, change, and self-imposed stress. Low academic stress scores on this inventory indicate that individuals can manage academic demands effectively, use adaptive coping strategies, and do not perceive academic tasks, examinations, or expectations as excessively burdensome. In line with the stress and coping theory proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), low academic stress occurs when students employ effective coping strategies and perceive academic demands as manageable rather than threatening.

Students are increasingly accustomed to changes in learning systems, particularly the transition from online to face-to-face instruction. A study by Wulandari and Pratiwi (2023) found that students with prior experience in online learning during the early stages of the pandemic were better prepared to adapt to changes in learning systems, as they were accustomed to managing time and academic tasks independently. Moderate academic stress falls between low and high. According to Rahmawati et al. (2022), students who are actively involved in campus organizations, communities, and social activities tend to experience lower academic stress because they can balance academic responsibilities with relaxation and social interaction.

Students with moderate academic stress still experience pressure from assignments, examinations, and academic demands; however, this pressure has not yet reached a level that significantly disrupts their well-being. Such students may experience academic-related fatigue or anxiety, but are generally able to cope using specific coping strategies. Nevertheless, if moderate stress is not managed correctly, it may escalate into high stress, which can negatively affect both physical and mental health (Yusof et al., 2025).

Academic stress is a common experience among students and is often triggered by excessive academic demands, such as examinations, assignments, and deadlines. Academic stress refers to an emotional or mental state frequently experienced by students during the learning process (Ramli et al., 2018). Consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) conceptualization, academic stress arises when individuals perceive that academic demands exceed their capacity to adapt, indicating an imbalance between demands and available coping resources.

Guidance and counseling services at universities play a crucial role in helping students manage academic stress (Pahlevi & Riksa, 2025). Through a holistic approach, guidance and counseling services can help students cope with academic pressure, enhance psychological well-being, and achieve a healthy balance between academic and personal life (Buana, 2024). Although most Guidance and Counseling students at Muhammadiyah University of Tasikmalaya experience low levels of academic stress, variations across cohorts and gender underscore the need for more structured support systems.

Guidance and counseling services can assist students in identifying sources of stress, such as academic demands, practicum pressure, and difficulties adapting to changes in learning systems. Through holistic interventions, counselors can help students develop practical coping skills, improve time management, and receive emotional support when facing academic challenges (Hanysha et al., 2025). Moreover, counseling services can provide a safe space for students to express their concerns without fear of judgment. Campus counselors can offer essential psychological support, particularly in addressing anxiety related to grades, academic tasks, and social pressures.

Counseling programs should also be tailored to the specific needs of each cohort, considering differences in academic experiences especially those related to the transition from online to face-to-face learning. By implementing appropriate interventions, such as stress management training, relaxation techniques, and the development of academic resilience, guidance and counseling services are expected to reduce students' academic stress levels and support them in achieving a healthy balance between academic and personal life.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that although most Guidance and Counseling students at Muhammadiyah University of Tasikmalaya fall within the low academic stress category, significant differences in stress levels exist across cohorts and gender. Students from the 2021 cohort, who predominantly experienced online learning during the pandemic, exhibited higher levels of academic stress compared to students from the 2022 and 2023 cohorts,

who were more accustomed to hybrid and face-to-face learning. This elevated stress was primarily associated with difficulties adapting to new learning systems and limited social interaction during the pandemic period. Additionally, the findings indicate that female students tend to experience higher levels of academic stress than male students, which differing social factors and academic expectations across genders may influence.

4. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Research on students' academic stress makes an important contribution to the development of knowledge in guidance and counseling. The findings of this study can also be compared with previous research, thereby enriching both theoretical and practical perspectives in addressing stress experienced by university students. The implications of this study can be outlined as follows.

Theoretically, this study strengthens the transactional theory of stress proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which posits that stress arises from individuals' cognitive appraisal of the relationship between environmental demands and their perceived ability to cope with those demands. The findings indicate that students who employ ineffective coping strategies, such as avoidance or self-blame, tend to experience higher levels of academic stress. This result is consistent with the findings of Clabaugh et al. (2021), who reported that students lacking social support or emotional regulation skills experienced increased stress, particularly during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, from a theoretical perspective, this study underscores the importance of the interaction between psychological factors and the academic environment in shaping students' stress responses.

Practically, the results of this study can serve as a foundation for designing guidance and counseling programs that focus on the development of adaptive coping skills, time management, and the enhancement of students' academic resilience. For example, group guidance services may focus on stress management training, relaxation techniques, and self-awareness development. Research by Putri and Saputra (2021) revealed that students who work while studying tend to experience higher levels of stress, particularly in cognitive and emotional aspects, which require both individual and group-based interventions. Therefore, guidance and counseling practitioners need to design services that are responsive to the diverse needs of students from different backgrounds.

From a managerial perspective, this study's findings highlight the important role of higher education institutions in fostering a healthy academic climate. Universities need to formulate academic policies that not only emphasize high academic achievement but also support students' psychological well-being. As found by Hasanah and Yuliana (2023), students who maintain a balance between academic and non-academic life tend to experience lower stress levels. Accordingly, university management is encouraged to provide easily accessible counseling services, flexible learning systems, and integrated stress prevention programs within student support services.

Methodologically, this study emphasizes the importance of a multidisciplinary approach and the use of valid and reliable stress measurement instruments. Future research is recommended to employ mixed-methods designs in order to capture both quantitative and qualitative data more comprehensively. In addition, Neigel et al. (2024) developed stress monitoring using wearable devices capable of measuring physiological stress in real time during examinations or periods of intense academic activity. This approach offers new opportunities for guidance and counseling research to integrate technology in identifying and responding to stress more effectively.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that academic stress is a common experience among students in the Guidance and Counseling program. Overall, most students experience low levels of academic stress, suggesting they can manage academic demands effectively. However, several students still experience higher levels of academic stress, underscoring the need for targeted attention and appropriate support.

Furthermore, the study reveals variations in academic stress levels by student characteristics, including cohort and gender. These differences suggest that academic stress is not experienced uniformly, but is influenced by developmental factors, academic workload, and social roles. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of students' diverse backgrounds and experiences is essential in identifying and addressing academic stress.

Based on these findings, guidance and counseling services in higher education should be developed more systematically and responsively. Preventive and remedial counseling programs that consider individual differences are expected to help students manage academic stress more adaptively. Ultimately, such efforts can contribute to students' psychological well-being and support their academic success.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The authors declare that each contributed to the writing of this article, and all data presented were obtained from research conducted by the authors.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this study.

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