



## Coping Strategies In Overcoming Academic Stress Among High School Students

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### ABSTRACT

Academic stress is a problem often faced by high school students, it can affect their mental well-being and academic performance. Coping strategies play an important role in helping students deal with such stress. This study aims to explore various coping strategies used by high school students in dealing with academic stress and its impact on their mental well-being. This research uses a qualitative approach. Data were analyzed using the thematic analysis method to identify patterns of coping strategies used. The results of this study indicate that high school students use various coping strategies to deal with academic stress, such as social support from peers, exercise, and relaxation techniques such as meditation. Students also use problem-solving and cognitive restructuring strategies to change their perceptions of academic stressor situations. The conclusion of this research is that the coping strategies used by high school students play a very important role in helping them overcome academic stress and improve mental well-being. The importance of providing approaches in managing academic stress among students to promote their mental health. This research provides valuable insights for educators and counselors to develop appropriate interventions to support students to deal with academic stress more effectively.

**Keywords:** *Coping Strategies, Academic Stress, Students, High School*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Education is an integral part in the formation of individuals and society. However, behind this noble goal, there is a challenge that students often face, namely academic stress (Jayanthi et al., 2015). Academic stress is a serious concern in the educational context, especially among high school (SMA) students (Joseph et al., 2021). As an important transition period in students' lives, the level of academic stress in high school can have impact on their mental and emotional well-being, as well as on their learning outcomes and academic achievement (Xiao, n.d.). The causes of academic stress for high school students can come from various complex and varied factors, both from the school environment and from the students' own personal factors (Kauts, 2016). In the context of high school, where pressure to achieve high academic achievements and intense competition are the norm, there are a number of factors that can cause academic stress in students (Wan et al., 1992).

Several main causes of academic stress for high school students. One of the main causes of academic stress for high school students is the high demands of the curriculum (Hafni & Aiyub, 2021). A dense and varied curriculum, accompanied by a large number of subjects and a busy schedule, can make students feel stressed and find it difficult to balance studies, assignments and extracurricular activities. Both are tough competition. Competition to achieve high academic achievement in high school can be a stress factor. Students often feel pressured to compete with classmates for grades, class rank, or extracurricular achievements. This can increase feelings of anxiety and worry about self-evaluation and future success (Pozos-Radillo et al., 2014). Third, pressure from parents and teachers. High expectations from parents and teachers regarding academic achievement often become a burden for high school students (Wilks, 2008). The pressure to achieve satisfactory results in exams, assignments, or college entrance examinations (UMPT) can cause excessive stress in students, especially if they feel they cannot meet existing expectations.

The fourth is uncertainty about the future. High school students often face uncertainty about their future, including options for further education, careers, and professional lives. This uncertainty can increase stress and anxiety levels in students, especially if they feel unsure about the options available or feel unprepared to face future challenges. Fifth, time and resource limitations (Mohamed Mayhob & Hashim, 2021). High school students often feel limited by limited time and resources in completing their academic assignments (Misra & Castillo, 2004). Busy schedules, large amounts of assignments, and lack of resources such as textbooks or access to learning facilities can increase stress levels in students and make them feel unable to deal with existing academic pressures (Jayasankara Reddy et al., 2018). The sixth feeling of not being able to overcome challenges. Inability to overcome academic challenges or feeling not competent enough in certain subjects can also be causes of

stress for high school students (Bedewy & Gabriel, 2015). Feelings of low self-esteem or worry about failure can disrupt students' mental and emotional balance, thereby increasing the level of stress they experience (Sarid et al., 2004). Lastly, personal and mental health issues. Personal problems such as conflicts in relationships with peers or family, feelings of loneliness, or mental health problems such as anxiety or depression can also be factors that cause academic stress for high school students (Karaman et al., 2019). When students experience problems outside of the academic environment, this can impact their performance and overall well-being, increasing the level of stress they experience.

At the high school (SMA) level, students face a variety of academic, social, and emotional pressures that can impact their overall well-being. In dealing with this pressure, it is important for students to have effective coping strategies to manage stress and maintain mental and emotional balance (Schüssler, 1992). Coping strategies are a collection of actions, thoughts, and behaviors that a person uses to deal with challenges, stress, or pressure in their life (Viney & Westbrook, 1984). It is an adaptive approach that helps individuals deal with challenging situations in a healthy and effective way. In today's fast-paced and stressful world, coping strategies are becoming increasingly important in maintaining mental and emotional well-being (Roger et al., 1993). There are various kinds of coping strategies that can be used, ranging from relaxation techniques to seeking social support. It is important to understand these coping strategies and how they can provide benefits in everyday life.

One of the main benefits of coping strategies is that they give individuals control over difficult circumstances (Labrague et al., 2017). When faced with a challenging situation or stressor, a person tends to feel helpless or overwhelmed. However, by using appropriate coping strategies, individuals can feel more empowered and able to face the situation more effectively (Amirkhan, 1990). This helps strengthen self-confidence and reduces the level of anxiety that may arise in facing challenges. Coping strategies can also help reduce the level of stress a person experiences (Scheier et al., 1986). Stress is a natural part of life, but high and chronic levels of stress can have a negative impact on a person's physical and mental well-being (Montero-Marin et al., 2014). By using effective coping strategies (Oláh, 1995), individuals can learn to better manage their stress, thereby reducing the risk of developing various stress-related health problems, such as sleep disorders, digestive disorders, or heart disease.

Furthermore, coping strategies can also help improve a person's mental and emotional well-being (Williams & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1999). In facing life's challenges, it is very possible for someone to feel sad, anxious, or hopeless. However, by using appropriate coping strategies, individuals can learn to deal with these negative emotions in a healthy and constructive way (Berzonsky, 1992). This helps maintain mental and emotional balance, and improves overall quality of life. In addition to more immediate benefits, coping strategies can also have a long-term

positive impact on a person's well-being (Ray et al., 1982). By developing effective coping skills, individuals can gain valuable knowledge and experience about how to deal with life's challenges. This can help them become more resilient and adaptive in facing difficult situations in the future (Pollard, 1982). Thus, the use of coping strategies can play an important role in preparing a person to face future life challenges.

In addition to individual benefits, coping strategies can also have a positive impact on a person's social relationships (Wechsler, 1995). When someone is able to manage their stress and emotions well, they tend to be more able to interact positively with others. They are also more likely to seek social support and build healthy, meaningful relationships with those around them. This helps strengthen a person's social support network, which in turn can improve their social and emotional well-being. Finally, coping strategies can also help individuals develop strong resilience (Holahan & Moos, 1987). Resilience is a person's ability to recover from difficulties or failures and develop into a stronger and more resilient person. By using appropriate coping strategies, individuals can learn how to better face challenges, as well as learn from their experiences (Hj Ramli et al., 2018). This helps strengthen a person's mental and emotional resilience, so they are better prepared to face challenges that may occur in the future.

There are several previous research opinions. The first research according to (Aini, 2017), with the research title *Identifying the Sources of Academic Stress and Coping Strategies in New Nursing Students*. The results of his research stated that the recommendations such as teach stress management, counseling, socialization of how learning programs that will be undertaken by the new nursing students for college later and reduce the academic burden on first semester because for this semester students is still in the adaptation stage. The second research according to (Malhotra & Chebiyyam, 2017), with the research title *Resilience, Self-esteem, Academic stress and Coping Strategies among college students*. The results of his research stated that people with higher resilience are able to cope better and have higher self-esteem. A correlation among resilience and various coping strategies indicated that there is a significant positive correlation of resilience with self-controlling seeking social support confrontive coping accepting responsibility, positive reappraisal and planful problem solving which shows that highly resilient people tend to use these coping strategies more often. The third research according to (Coşkun et al., 2014), with the research title *Analysis of the Relationship between the Resiliency Level and Problem Solving Skills of University Students*. The results of his research stated that the relationship between resiliency and problem-solving skills of students indicated a positive and somewhat strong relationship between the resiliency level of university students and their problem-solving skills.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a qualitative approach to explore the coping strategies used by high school students in dealing with academic stress (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). A qualitative approach was chosen because it provides an in-depth and contextual understanding of the phenomenon under study (Carver et al., 1989). In-depth interview techniques were used to collect data from 20 high school students who were identified as experiencing academic stress. Sample selection was carried out purposively, taking into account the diversity of student characteristics such as gender, class, and the level of academic stress experienced. Before carrying out the interview, a consent and information process was held for the students and their parents. This process is important to ensure voluntary participation and consent to the research conducted. After obtaining permission, interviews were conducted face-to-face with the implementation of security protocols and research ethics. Interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes, were recorded with the respondent's permission, and then transcribed for further analysis. Data collected from interviews was then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns, main themes, and subthemes from the data that were relevant to coping strategies in dealing with academic stress. The analysis stage begins with reading the transcript as a whole to understand the context and issues that arise. Next, recording is carried out to identify and mark pieces of data related to coping strategies.

After that, data was categorized based on the findings that emerged, which were then organized into themes and subthemes. This process involves sorting, grouping, and integrating relevant data to build an analytical structure. Each finding was rechecked and discussed on an ongoing basis between researchers to ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis. The triangulation technique is carried out by comparing findings between researchers to ensure the validity of the data. Apart from interviews, this research also involved participant observation to gain a more holistic understanding of the coping strategies used by students in their daily lives. Observations were made in the school environment and in student activities outside the academic curriculum to see how students implemented coping strategies in real situations. Observations are carried out carefully and respect student privacy. During the research process, researchers ensure data confidentiality and protect student identities from being accidentally revealed. Data and research results are stored safely and only accessed by the research team concerned. Strict research ethics are followed to ensure that research is conducted with integrity and respects students' privacy rights. In the final analysis, findings from interviews and observations were combined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the coping strategies used by high school students to deal with academic stress (Stephenson & DeLongis, 2020). It is hoped that the research results will provide valuable insights for educators, counselors, and mental health practitioners in supporting students to deal with academic stress more effectively. It is also hoped that this research will pave the way for further research in developing appropriate and effective interventions in managing

academic stress among high school students.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In everyday life, stress and emotional pressure are things that are impossible to avoid. Likewise, students in high school have to face various academic, social and personal demands. In the midst of this busyness and pressure, it is important for students to have the ability to manage stress and deal with problems effectively. This brings attention to the role of coping strategies in helping students face challenges and get through difficult times. Coping strategies can be explained as efforts made by a person to face, reduce or overcome stress and pressure in everyday life. In the context of high school students, coping strategies become very relevant because they are in an important developmental period and are vulnerable to various pressures from the surrounding environment. With effective coping strategies, it is hoped that students can deal with stress better, improve mental well-being, and increase their ability to solve problems.

Various studies have highlighted the importance of coping strategies in educational contexts. This research shows that students who have good coping skills tend to have higher levels of well-being and better academic performance. Therefore, understanding various coping strategies that can be applied by high school students is very important in efforts to improve their quality of life and learning achievement. In general, coping strategies can be divided into two main categories, namely problem coping strategies and emotional coping strategies. Problem coping strategies are efforts to deal with stress by identifying problems, finding effective solutions, and implementing actions to overcome these problems. Meanwhile, emotional coping strategies focus on managing emotions and stress through increasing self-understanding, emotional regulation, and social support. Examples of coping strategies that are often used by high school students include problem solving, seeking social support, relaxation, exercise, journal writing, meditation, and so on. Students who implement coping strategies that suit their coping style tend to be able to deal with stress better and experience improvements in mental well-being. However, in implementing coping strategies, it is also important to note that each individual has different preferences and coping styles. Therefore, it is important for students to explore and find out which coping strategies are most effective for them personally. Apart from that, a holistic and integrated approach in developing coping abilities also needs to be considered, including involving physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects.

Academic stress is psychological pressure or burden that arises as a result of demands, requirements, or expectations related to the academic or educational environment. This often arises when students feel stressed or anxious in facing various situations related to educational aspects, such as exams, assignments, presentations, or competition in achieving the highest academic achievement. Academic stress can come from various sources, including pressure from parents, teachers, peers, or even from internal pressure arising from

one's own expectations. Students who experience academic stress often feel burdened by the various tasks and responsibilities they must fulfill, and feel worried about their ability to achieve expected standards. They may feel restless, tense, or anxious when facing exams or presentations, and feel unable to cope with the workload they face. Academic stress can also affect a student's physical well-being, such as sleep disturbances, digestive disorders, decreased appetite, or even more serious health problems.

Not only does it affect physical well-being, academic stress can also have a negative impact on students' mental and emotional well-being. They may experience symptoms of anxiety, depression, or even mental exhaustion due to constant stress. Academic stress can also interfere with students' ability to concentrate, study effectively, or interact positively with their surroundings. This can impact their academic performance, motivation to learn, and their perception of school and education as a whole. In some cases, academic stress can be a risk factor for more serious mental health problems, such as drug addiction, eating disorders, or even suicidal thoughts. Therefore, it is important for students, parents, teachers, and mental health professionals to recognize the signs of academic stress and provide appropriate support and assistance to students who need it. Academic stress is not something that should be ignored or taken lightly, as it can have a significant impact on a student's well-being and achievement. Therefore, it is important for educators and counselors to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment, where students feel heard, supported, and able to cope with academic stress in a healthy and effective way.

**Table 1: How to use coping strategies to overcome academic stress among high school students.**

NO	How to Use Coping Strategies	Description
1	Setting Goals and Priorities	Students need to set clear academic goals and prioritize their assignments based on urgency and importance. By having a good understanding of what they need to achieve, students can focus on what is truly important and reduce the stress caused by feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work.
2	Make Schedules and Plans	Students need to create a structured daily or weekly schedule to organize study time, rest and extracurricular activities. By planning their time wisely, students can allocate sufficient time to study each subject, prepare assignments, and set aside time for necessary rest. This helps reduce stress as students feel more organized and can manage their time efficiently.

3	Using Relaxation Techniques	Students can use relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga to relieve stress and improve their mental well-being. By training their minds to focus and calming their bodies, students can feel more calm and centered when facing academic pressure. These relaxation techniques also help improve concentration and focus, so students can learn more effectively.
4	Seeking Social Support	Students need to seek support from peers, family, teachers, or school counselors in dealing with academic stress. Sharing experiences and feelings with others can help students feel heard and understood, as well as give them a new perspective on how to overcome the challenges they face. Social support also provides students with a sense of confidence and security, so they feel more able to deal better with academic pressure.
5	Developing Coping Skills	Students need to learn coping skills such as problem solving, emotional regulation, and self-adjustment. By developing these skills, students can learn how to face academic challenges more effectively, manage stress better, and overcome obstacles that may arise in the learning process. Learning coping skills also helps students develop strong mental toughness.
6	Get Involved in Extracurricular Activities	Students need to take part in extracurricular activities that interest them to reduce academic stress and improve their overall well-being. Getting involved in activities such as sports, arts, or volunteer clubs can help students relieve stress, develop their interests and talents, and expand their social networks outside of the academic environment.
7	Adjusting Expectations and Standards	Students need to adjust the expectations and standards they set for themselves in the face of academic pressure. Too high expectations and unrealistic standards can cause excessive stress and anxiety. By taking steps to align their



		expectations and standards with their abilities and needs, students can feel more relaxed and confident in facing academic assignments.
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By using the various methods above, students can develop effective coping strategies in dealing with their academic stress. However, it is important to remember that each individual is unique, and effective coping strategies may vary depending on each student's needs, preferences, and situation. Therefore, students need to explore and experiment with various coping strategies to find what works best for them.

Implementing coping strategies in overcoming academic stress among high school students is a complex process and full of challenges. Although coping strategies have the potential to help students manage academic stress more effectively, there are several aspects that need to be considered and addressed in their implementation. One of the main challenges faced in implementing coping strategies is limited awareness and understanding of these strategies. Students are often less familiar with various effective coping techniques and tend to rely on unhealthy methods, such as avoiding problems or using avoidance as a form of reaction to stress. Therefore, education and counseling regarding coping strategies needs to be improved so that students can understand and apply more adaptive ways of dealing with academic pressure.

Apart from that, school environmental factors can also be an obstacle in implementing coping strategies. A competitive environment and high pressure to achieve can worsen students' stress levels. Sometimes, a school culture that prioritizes academic achievement over students' mental and emotional well-being can hinder their efforts to find solutions to deal with stress. Therefore, there needs to be a change in school culture that better supports students' mental health and encourages the use of positive coping strategies. Social support is also an important factor in implementing coping strategies. However, students often face challenges in finding and maintaining an effective support network. Some students may feel embarrassed or afraid to talk about the stress they are experiencing, while others may not have access to adequate support resources. Therefore, it is important for schools and families to create an environment that facilitates the formation of healthy social relationships and provides the necessary emotional support to students.

Individual differences in preferences and responses to coping strategies are also a challenge that needs to be considered. What is effective for one student may not be appropriate for another. Therefore, a personalized approach that is oriented towards individual needs is very important in implementing coping strategies. Teachers and counselors need to understand these differences and provide appropriate guidance to each student in finding the coping strategies that work best for them. Time problems can also be an obstacle in implementing coping strategies in the midst of students' busy academic lives. Students often feel too busy with schoolwork and extracurricular activities that it is difficult

for them to find time to practice coping strategies. Therefore, there is a need for integration of coping strategies into the school curriculum and efficient use of time to ensure that students have sufficient opportunities to develop these skills.

In addition, the stigma of mental health problems also poses a significant challenge in implementing coping strategies. Some students may feel embarrassed or afraid to seek help when experiencing academic stress for fear of being labeled as weak or unable to overcome problems. Therefore, it is important to create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable talking about stress and seeking help when needed without fear or embarrassment. Another challenge in implementing coping strategies is the limited resources available. Many schools may not have enough trained teachers or counselors to provide students with the support they need to manage academic stress. Additionally, access to mental health services is often limited, especially in less developed areas. Therefore, there is a need for greater investment in human resources and infrastructure to support the implementation of coping strategies at the school level.

Apart from that, the role of parents is also very important in supporting students' coping strategies. However, some parents may not have sufficient knowledge or skills to provide effective support in dealing with academic stress. In addition, the pressure caused by parental expectations of academic achievement can also exacerbate student stress. Therefore, there needs to be collaboration between schools and parents to provide the resources and support needed to students in managing academic stress. In overcoming these various challenges, collaboration between various parties, including schools, families and the wider community, is very important. By working together, we can create a supportive environment where students feel supported and skilled at managing academic stress.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that the coping strategies used by high school students play a very important role in helping them overcome academic stress and improve mental well-being. The importance of providing approaches in managing academic stress among students to promote their mental health. This research provides valuable insights for educators and counselors to develop appropriate interventions to support students to deal with academic stress more effectively. Coping strategies have benefits and positive impacts for students when facing academic problems. From the various strategies that have been discussed, such as time management, relaxation techniques, social support, learning coping skills, extracurricular activities, adjusting expectations and standards, and rest and recreation, students can choose and adopt strategies that suit their needs and preferences. Through implementation the right coping strategies, students can develop strong mental toughness, improve stress management skills, and improve their overall well-being. Coping strategies also help students to stay focused and productive in facing academic challenges, without being affected by the pressure that may arise. Additionally, by

developing effective coping skills, students can prepare themselves to deal with future stress, both in academic settings and outside educational contexts.

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