

Social Support as a Protective Factor: Examining Coping Strategies and Academic Anxiety in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT: Academic anxiety is a psychological problem commonly experienced by university students and may affect academic performance as well as individual well-being. This study aimed to examine the relationship between social support and coping strategies and academic anxiety among students of Bina Darma University Palembang, both simultaneously and partially. This research employed a quantitative correlational approach with a sample of 265 active students selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected through Likert-scale instruments that had been tested for validity and reliability and were analyzed using multiple linear regression. The results showed that simultaneously there was a highly significant relationship between social support and coping strategies and academic anxiety ($R = 0.746$; $p = 0.000$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.557$) indicated that both variables contributed 55.7% to academic anxiety. Partially, social support ($B = 0.413$; $p = 0.000$) and coping strategies ($B = 0.314$; $p = 0.000$) also showed positive and significant relationships with academic anxiety. Thus, the major hypothesis and both minor hypotheses in this study were accepted.

KEYWORDS: Academic Anxiety, Coping Strategies, Social Support

INTRODUCTION

University students are typically in the transitional developmental period from late adolescence to early adulthood, generally ranging in age from 18 to 24 years[1]. Siswoyo notes that students are characterized by relatively high intellectual abilities, advanced reasoning skills, and the capacity to plan and regulate their actions. They are also expected to demonstrate critical thinking and well-established principles in their academic pursuits[2]. Despite these competencies, students remain vulnerable to psychological difficulties, particularly anxiety. Anxiety is recognized as one of the most prevalent psychiatric conditions across all age groups. As explained by Chandra et al., university students represent a population undergoing multiple transitions, especially in relation to academic demands. The complexity of challenges encountered in higher education may increase the risk of psychological problems, including anxiety [3].

Academic anxiety can hinder students' performance by impairing cognitive processes such as attention, memory, conceptual understanding, and problem-solving abilities. Furthermore, prolonged anxiety may contribute to emotional exhaustion [4]. Valiante and Pajares, describe academic anxiety as a state of tension and fear associated with anticipated academic situations, which interferes with the execution of academic tasks and participation in learning activities[5].

Previous studies have identified various factors that influence anxiety among students. Stuart suggests that external factors such as coping strategies, social support, age, and gender play a significant role in shaping anxiety levels[6]. Similarly, Irman highlights that academic anxiety is affected by gender, parenting styles, emotional regulation, social support, coping strategies, and cultural context[7]. Consistent with these findings, Corsini emphasizes that social support and coping strategies are among the primary factors associated with academic anxiety[8].

Social support encompasses emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support, all of which contribute to anxiety reduction (House)[9]. In the context of academic stress, social support functions as an essential protective factor. Support derived from family, peers, and academic advisors provides both emotional reassurance and practical assistance, thereby enhancing students' resilience in completing their academic responsibilities. Students who perceive higher levels of social support generally report lower levels of academic anxiety than those who perceive limited support.

Coping strategies also play a crucial role in managing academic stress. Lazarus and Folkman define coping as a dynamic process involving cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage internal and external demands that are appraised as taxing or overwhelming[10]. Coping refers to the strategies or methods employed by individuals to deal with situations that give rise to anxiety or psychological distress.

Although numerous studies have examined social support and coping strategies in relation to academic anxiety, empirical evidence that simultaneously investigates both variables within the Indonesian higher education context remains scarce, particularly at BinaDarmaUniversity Palembang. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between social support and coping strategies and academic anxiety among students at BinaDarma University Palembang, with the aim of providing a foundation for preventive measures and effective psychological interventions in university settings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Ottens[11], academic anxiety is a significant issue affecting a large number of students. Excessive anxiety has a negative impact because students experience psychological pressure, reduced attention, and concentration, leading to poor academic performance. Ottens, divides the aspects of academic anxiety into four types: patterns of anxiety-engendering mental activity, misdirected attention, physiological distress, and inappropriate behaviors[12].

House states that social support emphasizes the importance of social relationships, where the presence of significant others can help individuals reduce the impact of experienced stress. House categorizes social support into four aspects: Emotional support, Appraisal support, Instrumental support and Informational support[9].

According to Lazarus and Folkman, coping is defined as a person's constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as exceeding their resources[10]. The aspects of coping strategies according to Lazarus and Folkman are divided into two categories: problem-focused coping, which includes confrontation, seeking social support, and planning problem-solving; and emotion-focused coping, which includes self-control, distancing, positive reappraisal, accepting responsibility, and escape-avoidance[13].

Social support contributes to the selection of coping strategies used by individuals. Students who feel supported by those close to them tend to use more adaptive coping strategies, such as seeking solutions or professional help. Strong social support enhances individuals' confidence in managing stress, leading them to prefer active coping over passive coping. Thus, social support plays both a direct role in anxiety and an indirect role through the coping strategies employed.

Social support and coping strategies do not operate separately but complement each other in reducing academic anxiety. Students with a supportive social environment and effective coping strategies can manage academic pressure more effectively. Their collaboration enables students to face deadlines, exams, or thesis writing with greater calm. Coping effectiveness is further strengthened when students know they have a reliable support system.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research approach for data analysis. Quantitative analytical techniques were used to process numerical data with the assistance of SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) version 20. To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the measurement instruments, validity and reliability tests were conducted on the Likert-scale instruments utilized in this study. The instruments consisted of a social support scale, a coping strategies scale, and an academic anxiety scale. Furthermore, assumption testing was performed, including normality tests and linearity tests, followed by hypothesis testing using multiple linear regression analysis.

The population of this study comprised active students enrolled in the Faculty of Social and Humanities at BinaDarma University, totaling 1,152 students. The determination of sample size referred to the Isaac and Michael table as described by Sugiyono[14], with a margin of error set at 5%. Based on a population of 1,153 students and the specified error tolerance, the required sample size was 265 respondents. Accordingly, this study involved 265 students from the Faculty of Social and Humanities as research participants, with an additional 100 students included in the instrument try-out process. The sampling technique applied was simple random sampling, which allows each member of the population an equal opportunity to be selected as a research participant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Measuring Instrument Testing

4.1.1 Validation Trial Results

In this study, the validity of the items was checked using the Cronbach's Alpha method, and the minimum required correlation was set at 0.30 [15]. The results showed that of the 40 items on the Academic Anxiety Scale, 38 were valid and 2 were invalid, which are items 23 and 32. The highest correlation coefficient found was 0.758, and the lowest was 0.329.

Out of the 40 items examined in the Social Support Scale, 35 items passed the validity check, while 5 items were considered invalid, specifically items 14, 16, 32, 33, and 34. The strongest link was 0.767, and the weakest was 0.321.

Meanwhile, the Coping Strategy Scale found that 36 out of the 40 items were valid, but 4 items were not (items 14, 34, 35, and 36). The highest correlation score on this scale was 0.709, and the lowest was 0.304.

4.1.2 Reliability Trial Results

The reliability check showed that the Academic Anxiety Scale has a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.945, which means it is very consistent in measuring what it is supposed to and is good to use in research. The Social Support Scale had a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.947, which shows that it is very reliable and gives consistent results. At the same time, the Coping Strategy Scale showed a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.950, which means it has very strong reliability. All the instruments used were reliable and suitable for measuring the variables in the study.

4.2 Assumption/prerequisite test

4.2.1 Normality test

The normality test was conducted to determine whether the collected data were normally distributed. In this study, data normality was tested using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. The data were considered normally distributed when the significance value was greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), whereas a significance value less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) indicated that the data were not normally distributed.

Table 1. Normality Test

Variabel	KS-Z	P	information
Academic Anxiety (Y)	.814	.521	Normal
Social Support (X ₁)	1.016	.253	Normal
Coping strategy (X ₂)	.997	.273	Normal

Based on the results of the normality test, the variables of academic anxiety, social support, and coping strategies showed significance values (p-values) greater than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), indicating that the data were normally distributed. Specifically, the Academic Anxiety variable yielded a p-value of 0.512 (KS-Z = 0.814), the Social Support variable obtained a p-value of 0.253 (KS-Z = 1.016), and the Coping Strategy variable showed a p-value of 0.273 (KS-Z = 0.997). Therefore, it can be concluded that all variables were normally distributed.

4.2.2 Linearity Test

The linearity test was conducted to examine the direct relationship between variables X and Y. This analysis was performed using SPSS version 20 for Windows. The decision criteria were based on the significance value (p-value), where a p-value less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) indicates a linear relationship between the tested variables, whereas a p-value greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$) indicates a non-linear relationship.

Table 2. Linearity Test

Variable	F	P	Ket
Academic Anxiety (Y)	164.485	.000	Linier
Social Support (X ₁)			
Coping strategy (X ₂)			

The F value in the table indicates the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The analysis results show an F value of 164.485 with a significance level of $p = 0.000$, which is lower than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). These findings indicate that the multiple linear regression model is appropriate for predicting the dependent variable and suggest the presence of a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables in this study.

4.2.3 Hypothesis Testing

The study used hypothesis testing to look at how social support and coping strategies are connected to academic anxiety. Since the data was numerical, we used multiple linear regression and correlation methods for the analysis. The results from testing the hypothesis are shown here:

Table 3. Regression Correlation Test Of Staying up Late

Variabel	Nilai r	Nilai R ²	P	Ket
Academic Anxiety (Y)				
Social Support (X ₁)	.746	.557	0.000	SangatSignifikan
Coping strategy (X ₂)				

Based on the table, the correlation coefficient between Social Support and Coping Strategies with Academic Anxiety was $r = 0.746$ (74.6%) with a significance value of $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.01$). These results indicate a significant relationship between Social Support and Coping Strategies and Academic Anxiety among active students at UniversitasBinaDarma.

Furthermore, the R-square value showed that Social Support and Coping Strategies jointly contributed 0.557 (55.7%) to Academic Anxiety. This finding suggests that the remaining variance in Academic Anxiety is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

Table 4. Regression Correlation Test Of Staying up Late

Variabel	B	T	P	Ket
(Constant)	36.721	9.024	0,000	highly Significant
Social Support	0,413	8.836	0,000	
Coping strategy	0,314	5.59	0,000	

Based on the results of the multiple linear regression analysis, the regression equation obtained was $Y = 36.721 + 0.413$ (Social Support) + 0.314 (Coping Strategies). The constant (intercept) value of 36.721, which was statistically significant ($p = 0.000$), indicates that when social support and coping strategies are held at zero, the predicted level of academic anxiety is 36.721.

The regression coefficient for social support was 0.413 with a significance value of $p = 0.000$, suggesting that a one-unit increase in social support is associated with an increase of 0.413 in academic anxiety, while coping strategies are held constant.

Similarly, the regression coefficient for coping strategies was 0.314 with a significance value of $p = 0.000$, indicating that each one-unit increase in coping strategies corresponds to a 0.314 increase in academic anxiety, with social support controlled. These findings demonstrate that both social support and coping strategies have positive and significant effects on academic anxiety.

4.3 Discussion

The statistical analysis revealed a significant relationship between social support and coping strategies and academic anxiety among 265 active students at UniversitasBinaDarma Palembang. Multiple linear regression correlation analysis was employed to examine the linear relationship among the three variables using the correlation coefficient (R). The model summary indicated a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.746$ (74.6%) with a significance value of $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.01$), demonstrating a strong and statistically significant relationship. Therefore, the research hypothesis stating that social support and coping strategies are significantly related to academic anxiety was accepted.

The coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.557 (55.7%) indicates that social support and coping strategies jointly account for 55.7% of the variance in academic anxiety. The remaining 44.3% of the variance is influenced by other factors not examined in this study, such as personality traits, academic demands, learning environment conditions, and other psychological factors. These findings are consistent with Stuart's theory[6] which states that anxiety is influenced by various external factors, including stressors, developmental stage, level of knowledge, coping strategies, socioeconomic conditions, physical health, personality type, environmental factors, social support, age, and gender. This perspective is further supported by Irman[7], who argues that academic anxiety is also shaped by gender differences, memory processes, parenting styles, emotional regulation, social support, stress coping strategies, and cultural influences.

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis produced the following equation: $Y = 36.721 + 0.413$ (Social Support) + 0.314 (Coping Strategies). The constant value of 36.721 ($p = 0.000$) indicates that when social support and coping strategies are held at zero, the predicted level of academic anxiety is 36.721. These findings are supported by the study conducted by Shabrina et al. [16], which stated that problem-focused coping

is effective in enhancing students' sense of control and self-confidence, thereby helping to reduce academic anxiety. Social support was also identified as an important supporting factor in the coping process.

The regression coefficient of social support (0.413; $p = 0.000$) indicates a positive and significant relationship between social support and academic anxiety, supported by the t-test result ($t = 8.836 > 1.969$; $p = 0.000$). This finding is consistent with Putri et al.[17], who reported that high social support accompanied by social pressure and comparison may increase academic anxiety due to fear of disappointing others. In contrast, Sari and Itryah[18] found that supportive learning environments, interactive methods, and a positive atmosphere enhance students' comfort and engagement. Therefore, social support plays a crucial role in influencing individuals' psychological conditions in academic settings.

According to Sarafino and Smith [19], social support functions as a buffer against stress, where the presence of emotional, informational, and instrumental support can reduce the negative impact of academic pressure.

The multiple regression correlation coefficient for coping strategies was 0.314 with $p = 0.000$, indicating a positive and significant relationship between coping strategies and academic anxiety, supported by the t-test result ($t = 5.590 > t \text{ table} = 1.969$; $p = 0.000$). Similarly, Misalia et al. [20] in a study involving 369 final-year students, found a significant relationship between peer social support and anxiety ($p = 0.022$). The instruments used were confirmed to be valid ($r > 0.444$) and reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.858$).

Of the 265 active students at UniversitasBinaDarma Palembang who were surveyed, 125 students (47.2%) had high levels of academic anxiety, while 140 students (52.8%) had low levels of academic anxiety. This indicates that the majority of students tend to experience low academic anxiety. These findings suggest that students are generally able to recognize pressure and regulate their emotions effectively, allowing them to remain calm when facing assignments and examinations. Good time management skills also enable students to plan their study activities in a structured manner and complete academic responsibilities on time. Putri and Sari[21], stated that most students demonstrate low academic anxiety due to good academic adaptation skills. Similarly, Misra[22], argued that students with effective time management and learning strategies tend to experience lower academic anxiety. Even among individuals with low social support, academic anxiety may remain low due to internal factors such as self-confidence, self-discipline, and emotional regulation skills. This is consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's stress and coping theory [23], which emphasizes that individuals appraise stressful situations and select coping strategies based on personal resources, regardless of social support availability.

Regarding social support, 123 students (46.4%) reported high levels of social support, while 142 students (53.6%) reported low levels, indicating that the majority tend to have low social support. This may be due to limited attention, encouragement, or assistance from family, peers, and the campus environment, as well as restricted social interaction and limited academic communication. Taylor [24] explains that social support plays a crucial role in psychological well-being and stress management. Individuals with high social support tend to feel valued and cared for and have access to emotional and instrumental assistance, enabling them to use adaptive coping strategies more effectively. In contrast, low social support may increase the risk of loneliness, stress, and anxiety.

In terms of coping strategies, 127 students (47.9%) demonstrated high coping strategies, while 138 students (52.1%) were categorized as low, indicating that the majority tend to have low coping strategies. This suggests that some students may struggle to manage academic pressure effectively. According to Moskowitz[25], individuals with high coping strategies are more likely to use adaptive approaches such as planning, problem-solving, emotional regulation, and seeking social support, whereas those with low coping strategies are more vulnerable to the negative effects of stress. Furthermore, Sutrina et al. [26], in a study of 286 final-semester students, found a significant positive relationship between social support and problem-focused coping, indicating that higher social support is associated with stronger adaptive coping strategies.

The data analysis results of this study indicate that the major hypothesis was accepted, meaning that there is a relationship between social support and coping strategies on academic anxiety among students at UniversitasBinaDarma Palembang. Additionally, the minor hypotheses were also accepted, showing that there is a relationship between social support and academic anxiety, as well as between coping strategies and academic anxiety among students at UniversitasBinaDarma Palembang.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and data analysis conducted on 265 active students at Bina Darma University, it can be concluded that there is a highly significant relationship between social support and coping strategies with academic anxiety. The multiple linear regression analysis showed a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.746$ with $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$), indicating a strong and significant linear relationship between social support and coping strategies simultaneously with academic

anxiety. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.557 indicates that social support and coping strategies contribute 55.7% to the variation in academic anxiety, while the remaining 44.3% is influenced by factors outside these variables. Individually, social support has a regression coefficient of 0.413 with $p = 0.000$, and a t -value of 8.836 > t -table 1.969, demonstrating a positive and significant relationship between social support and academic anxiety. Similarly, coping strategies show a regression coefficient of 0.314 with $p = 0.000$, and a t -value of 5.590 > t -table 1.969, indicating a positive and significant relationship with academic anxiety. This study confirms that social support and coping strategies are important factors related to students' academic anxiety and should be considered in interventions and the development of student guidance programs in higher education institutions.

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