Is Self-compassion the key? Predictor to against academic stress in high school students

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Abstract. One of the internal factors that wss predicted to reduce students' academic stress called self-compassion. The aim of this study was to prove self-compassion as a predictor of academic stress of 12th grade high school students. The research used quantitative approach with correlational design. Participants on the research were 737 students on 12th grade from four senior high school used accidental sampling. Instrument in this research used adaptation of Indonesian version Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) and Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PASS). Multiple regression used to analyze the data. The result showed that self-compassion influences academic stress with 7.5% effective contribution. Partially, self-judgement, isolation, and overidentification are had relationship with academic stress. This means that students perceived academic stress could be seen from their tendency to response to academic demands, whether they blame themselves and/or the situation they had. Students can reduce academic stress by better prepared themselves and improved their competencies. Students can also reduce academic stress by estimated and prepared for the worst-case scenarios when facing academic tasks.

1 Introduction

The learning process for students was struggle by facing various unavoidable challenges [1]. This situation will trigger academic stress for students. Reactions to academic stress are one of the biggest challenges for students, especially when facing final exams and college entrance exams. Other research also indicates that the level of academic stress on high school students in Indonesia is quite high. A study conducted by the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) in 2018 revealed that the academic stress felt by high school students reached 71.36%. Additionally, a survey by Indonesian Education Watch in 2019 found that around 40% of high school students experienced stress when facing final exams and university entrance exams [2].

Academic stress itself can be defined as the pressure faced by students related to the academic context, which is perceived negatively and impacts physical and psychological health, and academic performance. The stress experienced by students has several triggers, such as academic burden, time management, competition in the classroom, financial problems, family pressure, and adapting to a new environment. Academic stress doesn't always have a negative impact on students. Mild stress can improve student performance to

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a certain extent, but when stress increases, its negative effects can interfere with student achievement [3].

Academic stress often causes students to identify themselves negatively, especially when they experience failure or feel less successful than their peers. Often, students who receive low grades on exams view their failure as a reflection of their overall ability and potential. They believe that they are not intelligent enough or will not succeed in the future [4]. Instead of being understanding, they tend to blame themselves, feel like they've failed, and doubt their abilities. This involves harsh and critical self-evaluation, hypersensitivity to the judgments of others, excessive concern about mistakes, and an inability to feel satisfied even after achieving success. Individuals constantly strive to meet the high standards set by themselves or others [5]. They adopt a "zero-tolerance" approach to their performance, where a single mistake is viewed as a complete failure, leading to excessive self-criticism over what they perceive as suboptimal performance [6].

Based on the negative impacts that can occur in students due to academic stress, it is important for them to find strategies to reduce academic stress. One internal factor in adolescents that can help them avoid falling into despair from difficult circumstances, feelings of self-blame, and the emergence of self-compassion called self-compassion [7]. The concept of self-compassion involves a attitude of kindness and understanding towards oneself when experiencing pressure, difficulties, or failure [8]. Self-compassion consists of three main components: self-kindness, awareness of shared humanity, and mindfulness or awareness of the present moment. Self-compassion guides individuals to accept themselves even when they are experiencing suffering or negative situations [9].

Thus, self-compassion can help students regulate their emotions, enabling them to better cope with challenges without being overwhelmed by excessive negative feelings. High self-compassion enables individuals to learn from mistakes, reduce self-criticism, and view failure as an opportunity for learning, thereby reducing fear. However, students with low levels of self-compassion may experience impaired psychological well-being when facing academic pressure [10].

The aim of this research was to prove self-compassion as a predictor of academic stress of 12th grade high school students. The benefit that can be obtained from this research was provide an overview based on scientific references regarding factors that can predict 12th grades senior high school students to reduce their academic stress. This research can also be a reference for schools' policy in developing student in various academic's climate.

2 Method

This research used a quantitative approach with non-experimental correlational design. That means, measurements were carried out on participants to determine the interrelationships between the variables studied. This research was used to see the influence of self-compassion on academic stress of 12th grades senior high school students.

2.1 Participant

In this research, there were 737 12th grades of senior high school students that collect with accidental sampling. Subject selection is based on the academic stressors outlined in the introduction. Participants from four different schools. There were consist of 208 (28.23%) male and 529 (71.77%) female had on 12-20 years old. Majority participants in 17 years old within 355 (48.17%) students. The details show at the table 1.

Table 1. Demographics

Category		n	%
Sex			
	Female	529	71.77%
	Male	208	28.23%
Age			
	12 years old	1	0.13%
	15 years old	1	0.13%
	16 years old	59	8.02%
	17 years old	355	48.17%
	18 years old	314	42.61%
	19 years old	6	0.81%
	20 years old	1	0.13%
School			
	SMAN 1 Batu	179	24.29%
	SMAN 1 Rogojampi	180	24.42%
	MAN Batu	202	27.41%
	SMAN Darussholah	276	23.88%
Total		**737**	**100.00%**

2.2 Research Instrument

The instrument used for this study was Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) that adaptation into Indonesian with 26 items with six dimensions, namely: self-kindness, self-judgement, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and overidentification. SCS had a coefficient of reliability that 0.872 [11]. SCS is a self-evaluation in the form of a Likert scale with 5 response options ranging from strongly disagreement to strongly agreement.

The other instrument were 8 items of Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PASS) that adaptation into Indonesian. PASS had a coefficient of reliability that 0.942. There were three factors on PASS, namely: pressures to perform, perceptions of workload, and academic self-perceptions [12]. PASS is a self-evaluation in the form of a Likert scale with 5 response options from strongly disagreement to strongly agreement.

2.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were collected that analyzed with linear regression and pearson correlation used JASP 0.19.1 version. Assumption tests are carried out before regression analysis. The result showed that the data was normal and linear.

3 Result

Participants of this research were 737 students. This study showed that the self-compassion was able to predict 7.5% of the variance in academic stress. The model was statistically significant ($F=59.950$; $p= <0.001$). The data has been or assumptions tested and showed that academic stress scores and self-compassion scores have normal data (skewness kurtosis test) and linear data (linearity test). Then, table 1 showed the detail.

Table 2. Linear Regression

Variable	R	R^2	B	SE	F	p
Self-compassion	0.275	0.075	-0.355	0.046	59.950	< 0.001

Note. Dependent: Academic stress. N=737.

Furthermore, table 2 also presented that self-compassion (B=-0.170; $p < 0.05$) were statistically significant predictors of academic stress with negative relationship. It means that the more individuals have high self-compassion, the lower their academic stress would be.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Academic stress	–						
2. Self-kindness	-0.045	–					
3. Self-judgement	-0.249**	-0.135**	–				
4. Common humanity	0.026	0.622**	-0.291**	–			
5. Isolation	-0.294**	-0.110**	0.675**	-0.154**	–		
6. Mindfulness	-0.025	0.689**	-0.199**	0.620**	-0.071**	–	
7. Overidentification	-0.287**	-0.097**	0.656**	-0.214**	0.683**	-0.100**	–

Note. *p<0,05; **p<0,01.

Table 3 presented a correlation matrix among Academic stress with six dimensions of self-compassion, namely: self-kindness, self-judgement, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and overidentification. Academic stress showed only significant negative correlations with self-judgement ($r = -0.249$, $p<0.01$); isolation ($r = -0.294$, $p<0.01$); and overidentification ($r = -0.287$, $p<0.01$). Meanwhile, the dimensions of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness were not related to academic stress. This means that the higher scores on the dimensions of self-judgment, isolation, and overidentification, the lower the students' academic stress scores. Then, the scores on the dimensions of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness had not related on students' academic stress scores.

4 Discussion

The research results also show that academic stress can be predicted by self-compassion (table 2). This means that the more individuals have high self-compassion, the lower their academic stress would be. Also, self-compassion becomes effectiveness predictors with 7.5% on academic stress. This strengthens previous research which explains that self-compassion influenced academic stress in students [13]. Self-compassion is a strategy for regulating emotions by consciously accepting one's own failures and shortcomings, also understanding that these are part of every individual's experience. Self-compassion differs from general acceptance, which focuses more on accepting what is happening, such as feelings or thoughts. Self-compassion directs individuals to maintain self-acceptance even when experiencing suffering or negative situations [9].

Result showed that dimensions of self-compassion had related with academic stress. They were self-judgement, isolation, and overidentification. The result showed negative relationship. It means that individuals with a tendency to blame and criticize themselves, also be overwhelmed by sadness will tend to have low levels of academic stress. However, individuals with consciousness as humans who are normally had a mistakes have no relationship with academic stress (table 3). These results differ greatly from previous studies,

which suggest that self-compassion training, by increasing positive dimensions (self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness) and decreasing negative dimensions (self-judgment, isolation, and overidentification), can reduce academic stress [14]. Then, other studies describe self-criticism and self-blame as maladaptive (unhealthy) coping mechanisms. This means that these behaviors do not help students manage stress; rather, they worsen psychological and emotional conditions, thereby increasing the perceived stress load [5].

These results (table 3) also contradict the explanation for self-compassion. It states that individuals with high levels of self-judgment, isolation, and overidentification tend to self-destructive behavior and blame own self. This means these actions indicate low self-compassion [8]. Unfortunately, this study was a survey that cannot explore the dynamics and factors causing academic stress in 12th-grade high school students, Especially the dynamics and factors that can explain the direction of the relationship between the two variables, which is contrary to theory. Based on that explanation, for future researchers were expected to conduct more in-depth explorations of the factors causing academic stress, which tend to increase when students' tendencies to judge, isolate, and overidentify themselves are low.

5 Conclusion

The result in this research showed that self-compassion simultaneously influences academic stress. Partially, self-judgement, isolation, and overidentification were related with academic stress. This means that students perceived academic stress could be seen from their tendency to response to academic demands, whether they blame themselves and/or the situation they had.

6 Implication

Based on the results, several implications can be outlined for 12th grades senior high school students who want to reduce their academic stress. Students can reduce academic stress by better prepared themselves and improved their competencies. Students can also reduce academic stress by estimated and prepared for the worst-case scenarios when facing academic tasks. Another implication for future researchers and/or teachers and school conselors can provide interventions in the form of self-compassion training to reduce academic stress.

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