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**SCHOOL COUNSELORS' STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING ACADEMIC**  
**STRESS**

**Devi Indah Febriyanti<sup>1</sup>, Evi Winingsih<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>State University of Surabaya, Lidah Wetan, Sub-District Lakarsantri, Surabaya, Indonesia,  
[devi.22041@mhs.unesa.ac.id](mailto:devi.22041@mhs.unesa.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup>State University of Surabaya, Lidah Wetan, Sub-District Lakarsantri, Surabaya, Indonesia,  
[ewiwiningsih@unesa.ac.id](mailto:ewiwiningsih@unesa.ac.id)

**ABSTRACT**

*Academic stress is experienced when students believe the demands of their studies outstrip their abilities or resources. Long-term stress has a negative effect on academic performance and may initiate emotional and behavioral problems, which could result in mental health issues like anxiety, burnout, and low motivation. Therefore, this study aims to investigate a multi-layered approach to explore how school counselors can play a significant role in reducing academic stress among students by systematically examining theoretical foundations, assessment instruments, and effective interventions tested within educational settings. The narrative review methodology synthesized national and international sources on academic stress, assessment instruments (such as the ESSA), cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness practices, group coaching, peer support programs, and school-family partnership approaches. Research findings support that a multi-level support system increases overall effectiveness in dealing with stress when approached promotively, preventively, and curatively. Evidence-based practices have been listed, which decrease the level of stress and improve the resilience, self-regulation, and overall well-being of students, such as psychoeducation about study skills, cognitive-behavioral counseling, mindfulness and relaxation techniques, training in time management, mentoring from peers, and referral in collaboration. Helpful suggestions are also put forward in this essay, specifically for school counselors in Indonesia, related to ethical issues in the delivery of counseling services, optimization of resources, and cultural sensitivity. The novelty of this research is its integrative approach, putting together research from around the world with context-specific suggestions, especially aimed at improving the implementation of school counseling programs to address academic stress.*

**Keywords:** academic stress, school counselor, counseling intervention, student mental health, resilience

## **INTRODUCTION**

Academic stress has been a major issue in the modern educational setting due to changes in curriculum, rapid digitalization, and increasing demands from educators, parents, and society in general (Barseli et al., 2017; Aini & Heni, 2018). Mental health among adolescents has been deteriorating worldwide due to academic stress, considered one of the major contributors. With the big role that schools and educators play in nurturing the psychological well-being of students, especially school counselors, it would be paramount for them to be active in efforts to address the issue. No different is the situation in Indonesia, where one in every three adolescents is said to suffer from mental health disorders, including psychosocial stress linked to school obligations; more than 10% of adolescents with psychiatric disorders in Indonesia. Therefore, school counselors become very important in investigating their strategies aimed at mitigating academic stress in Indonesian schools, where academic competition is pretty high and counseling services rank among low priorities. This work ensures the psychological well-being of the students and achievements in school. These findings bring to the fore the need for education to establish learning environments which create conditions favorable to achieving academic success and emotional resilience.

The Yerkes-Dodson Law was described to show how the relationship between stress and performance is best explained by an inverted U-shaped curve: whereas mild levels of stress may stimulate motivation, extreme levels of stress are detrimental to mental health and academic performance. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping postulates that reactions among students depend on their evaluation of stressful events and coping strategies employed. Self-Determination Theory places a greater emphasis on feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as being particularly significant for sustaining intrinsic motivation and emotional resilience. In this respect, this theory has proved especially useful in this context as a means through which elementary school counselors can develop theoretically driven interventions targeting the emotional and cognitive elements of academic stress.

However, even today, the Indonesian school system prioritizes academic achievement over psychological support services, and stress levels are getting higher among students due to a lack of counselors and the stigma against seeking help. Aini & Heni (2018), Barseli et al. (2017), and Ogakwu et al. (2023) confirm this fact. This study applies theories on coping with stress and motivation within an Indonesian and international empirical framework to focus on the systemic function of school counselors within a whole-school paradigm, rather than merely their personal characteristics or piecemeal interventions. Therefore, this study intends to bridge the gap between theory and practice in assessing how school counselors can apply pragmatic, culturally and contextually appropriate techniques to lower academic stress levels. Grande et al. (2023), Dieu Yin et al. (2025), and Zhang et al. (2023) confirmed this.

Table 1. Summary of Previous Studies and Their Comparison with the Current Study

No.	Previous Study	Focus/Objective	Method/Design	Similarity with Current Study	Difference with Current Study
1.	Arora, P. G. et al., 2017	CBT for adolescents with depression	Quasi-experimental	Focus on counselor-led interventions to	Focuses on academic stress in Indonesian and

				improve emotional well-being	uses a multifaceted strategy (CBT + mindfulness + study-skills psychoeducation + peer mentoring + group counseling + school-family collaboration)
2.	Aini, Z. & Heni, A., 2018	Sudy-skills psychoeducation to reduce academic procrastination	Descriptive qualitative	Uses a psychoeducation and counseling to improve academic management	More comprehensive, combines multiple strategies including school-family collaboration and peer mentoring
3.	Ramadhani, D. R & Naini, R., 2024	Group counseling to reduce academic stress	Quasi-experimental	Counselor-led intervention to reduce academic stress	Uses a systematic multifaceted approach and emphasizes practical implementation in Indonesian school contexts
4.	Feng, L. et al., 2024	Facilitating school counselors occupational well-being	Narrative review/Survey	Focus on counselor well-being as part of student support	Focuses on student outcomes (stress, resilience, self-regulation, well-being) rather than counselor occupational well-being

5.	Dieu Yin, S. Z. et al., 2025	School-based interventions to prevent anxiety and depression in LMICs	Systematic review	Interventions in school context, preventive approach	Focuses specifically on academic stress, integrates multiple strategies, and provides context-specific recommendations for Indonesia
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## METHOD

The research hypothesis puts forward that school counselors can decrease academic stress of students while improving resilience, self-regulation, and overall psychological well-being through cognitive-behavioral counseling techniques, mindfulness, psychoeducation of study skills, peer support, group counseling, and school-family collaboration. This theory is supported by the Yerkes-Dodson Law: "the extreme level of stress decreases academic achievements and worsens mental health, while a moderate level of stress encourages students" (Barseli, Ifdil & Fadli, 2017). According to De Silva, Gunasekara, Manikam, Fazel, and Saxena (2024), students use the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. On the other hand, Self-Determination Theory emphasizes relatedness, autonomy, and competence in the maintenance of emotional resilience and intrinsic motivation. Counseling techniques can include cognitive impairment counseling: "counseling to reduce negative thinking" (Arora, Connors, George, Lyon, Wolk & Garland, 2017); mindfulness and relaxation techniques to reduce stress: "Mindfulness and relaxation techniques reduced stress" (Phan, Vo, Hoang & Nguyen, 2022); psychoeducation, which is crucial to manage skills, time, and strategies for efficient pursuit; independent variables among punishments. These depend on "the intensity and sustainability of the program" (Niemi, Kiuru & Lerkkanen, 2021; Warren, Greer & Moore, 2024), "intensity of therapy", and school-based education (Ramadhani & Naini, 2024). Student resilience, headaches, increased academic stress, and healthy psychologists are their terms dependent on variables.

This research used a narrative review in compiling national and international studies regarding school counselors' strategies to reduce students' academic stress. A narrative review is chosen because it enables an integration of theoretical frameworks, empirical data, and practical interventions that is comprehensive and contextually relevant to Indonesia. Sources of data include peer-reviewed journals, books, seminar proceedings, and government reports. Data collection includes publications from 2010 to 2025. Keywords used consist of academic stress, school counseling, counseling interventions, student mental health, and resilience. In selecting the study, inclusion criteria were studies which discuss students' academic stress, the intervention of school counselors, and/or offer empirical evidence or theoretical insights, or practical suggestions (Phan et al., 2022; Ramadhani & Naini, 2024; Warren et al., 2024). Papers

discussing only noncounseling therapies or clinical populations outside the school setting were excluded to allow for generalization to the population under study (Ogakwu et al., 2023). Thematic data analysis was performed to identify good practice counseling techniques, those interventions that effectively promote the resilience and well-being of students, and the theoretical and practical basis of such interventions that can be applied in Indonesia (Grande, Lins, Silva & Carvalho, 2023; Dieu Yin, Low & Mishu, 2025; Jagiello, Belcher, Neelakandan, Boyd & Wuthrich, 2024). For example, the implementation of Indonesia consists of peer mentoring programs for managing study time effectively, brief mindfulness sessions before exams, group CBT counseling for students with a high level of stress, and collaborating between school and family to monitor students' academic workload. Based on a synthesis of findings, practical suggestions for school counselors include cultural sensitivity, maximizing resources that are available, and considering ethics while providing counseling services (Feng et al., 2024; Zhang, Zhou & Wong, 2023).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

A literature review indicates that students are socially, physiologically, and psychologically impacted by academic stress. High levels of stress reduce motivation and create anxiety that may further develop into depressive symptoms among adolescents. Fatigue, head ache, and sleep disorders are some of the issues widely cited by students. This can make students withdraw socially or become isolated since they experience high levels of stress, thereby diminishing support from peers and contributing to more stress. It is important for school counselors to ensure that such issues are alleviated through a comprehensive approach that takes into consideration group counseling, which has been effective in reducing academic-related stress since it is a forum where sharing of personal experiences takes place through storytelling that helps students cope with stress by promoting a sense of community among students. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) was quite helpful to reduce anxiety and improve emotional regulation by helping students to challenge harmful thoughts and adopt more positive attitudes toward life, as observed by Arora et al. (2017) and De Silva et al. (2024). Students who received mindfulness-based interventions were able to regulate their emotions and stay present, which improved focus and reduced feelings of stress, as stated by Phan et al. (2022).

Furthermore, psychoeducation of study skills decreases perceived stress from academic workload by teaching students time management and efficient study techniques (Aini & Heni, 2018). Peer mentoring programs provide social support and accountability, which decrease stress and enhance adaptive coping (Niemi et al., 2021; Warren et al., 2024). By collaborating, families and schools will be able to ensure that early signs of stress are noticed and addressed, and that expectations about academic performance are realistic. Available counselors are limited in number, mental health literacy among parents and students is low, and the culture emphasizes achievement at school above emotional well-being (Barseli et al., 2017; Ogakwu et al., 2023). The administrative duties of counselors commonly lower their capacity to conduct prevention and treatment programs. Research literature implies that effective approaches need to be multitiered, integrating prevention, treatment, and promotion interventions into a Multi-Tier Support System (MTSS). Technology-based approaches like online psychoeducation, online group therapy, and e-counseling could offer complementary support to face-to-face interventions to improve their reach and

continuity (Zhang et al., 2023). One such example could be the use of learning management systems or encrypted chats for monitoring student progress, brief sessions, or online delivery of mental health services by the counselor.

These findings indicate both personal or systemic methods for managing academic-related stress. There is evidence for both proactive, or prevention strategies for children to develop their own personal skills for managing it before it gets out of hand, then reactive strategies for managing it using counseling strategies such as mind-based therapies. School psychologists could use these strategies by allowing the school to become more of a supportive environment through study skills training, support groups, or collaboration with parents. More significantly, opportunities using technology could reach students who would never contemplate seeking help otherwise. It is hoped that by including students in such a way, it would be more effective for better personal resilience, regulation of self, or psychological adjustment despite their academic-related stress.

Moreover, the literature review implied that the practices adopted by school counselors are important in reducing academic-related stress, as well as improving students' welfare. Additionally, effective practices should encompass peer support, study skills psychoeducation, cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness, and school-family partnerships. Challenges for Indonesia, among other developing nations, lie in limited mental health literacy and the lack of professional school counselors, which can be managed through state legislation or the adoption of technology-based approaches. Schools would have the ability to reduce academic-related stress in their students by using active multi-level approaches in counseling. This would yield sustainable personal development of students.

### Concrete Implementation Steps

Several beneficial tasks for school counselors would be constructed from the literature that was reviewed:

1. **Assessment:** An assessment of the level of educational stress should be made among students in order to identify the need for intervention, using an instrument such as the Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents - ESSA.
2. **Prevention:** Psycho-educational group for stress management through class instruction, group counseling, collaboration with educational personnel, and parents.
3. **Intervention:** Utilize empirically-based practices like mindfulness training, group therapy, cognitive behavior therapy, or arts-based interventions that are specific for students.
4. **Cooperation:** For there to be broad-based support for the development of counseling, there has to be cooperation between stakeholders in education and institutions of public health. For better training to be achieved for counselors, there has to be cooperation with institutions of higher learning.

### Application of Theory into Practice by School Counselors

This review considers the significance of the role of school counselors in ensuring that students' psychological needs are taken care of. This is achieved through proactive efforts that are innovative, in

addition to the role of counseling. This suggests that with proper support, students can improve their psychological functioning without necessarily seeking professional psychological help. Therefore, this review focuses on the importance of the role of school counselors in ensuring that students' psychological needs are taken care of, it should be noted that apart from the importance of guidance and counseling services, this review considers additional factors such as the role of school counselors. Therefore, school-based interventions. In Indonesia, there is a need for improving mental health literacy, reducing the student-to-counselor ratio, and integrating counseling services into the educational system to make their contribution more effective. Technology integration is also important, as it allows more flexibility to accommodate students' needs with accessibility through technology.

Practical Steps Include::

1. Facilitates the development of a counseling calendar with semesters that synchronizes with the academic calendar.
  2. Carrying out screening tests using standardized instruments such as ESSA.
  3. Creation of the therapeutic approaches themselves: for example, developing mindfulness techniques, conducting CBT-based.
  4. Maintaining a referral network with family practice physicians or clinical psychologists.
  5. Engaging the involvement of educators as well as parents in collaborative supervisions.
- Conducting online therapy sessions, follow-ups, and reminders through digital means.

### **LIMITATIONS**

This review does not perform any quantitative meta-analysis, but it prefers a narrative approach. Some of the references used here are based on observational studies, while some of them provide a systematic review of evidence with meta-analysis. Thus, one should be careful when viewing any statement of causality. Additionally, it is important to note that cultural adjustment for differences in resource availability among schools is important for adapting this finding for application to various school settings in Indonesia.

### **CONCLUSION**

School counselors can make a significant contribution to children dealing with academic-related stresses by providing interventions such as group therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), mindfulness techniques, and resilience training. These interventions have proven effective in minimizing stress, improving concentration, and enhancing the mental well-being of children. Nevertheless, for children to make the best out of counseling, it would be important for the school faculty to work hand-in-glove with the counselor. From a policy point of view, educational policies that support student mental health, provide enough school counselors, and enable their professional development are becoming more relevant by the day. Therefore, in the future, the key would be to implement Multi-Tier Systems of Support along with technological approaches like e-counseling systems. This would improve the efficiency of school counseling. Schools can evolve learning environments that emphasize student mental health along with educational development through systematic approaches.



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