

Handling Academic Stress Among Students In Indonesia: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: Academic activities at school present various challenges for students. The obligations assigned must be completed immediately, sometimes becoming a demand that causes boredom both internally and externally. The purpose of this study is to collect and identify interventions to reduce academic stress levels. This study uses a systematic literature review (SLR). The literature review procedure follows the PRISMA model. Based on the selection process using the PRISMA model, 83 articles were identified. After further screening according to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, 13 articles were deemed suitable and aligned with the research criteria and objectives for analysis. Based on the analysis and literature review, it was found that in the application of several interventions used on participants experiencing academic stress, counseling, stress management techniques, and therapy were effective in reducing stress levels. For future research, it is recommended to consider the application of interventions in various contexts, such as understanding the participants' conditions, formulating intervention plans tailored to their needs, using a systematic approach applicable in both individual and social contexts, and encouraging active participation from the participants and their social environment..

Keywords: *Academic Stress, Students, College Students, Intervention*

1 INTRODUCTION

Academic stress is defined as the body's response to academic demands that exceed a student's ability to adapt. According to Alvin (2007), academic stress is the result of pressure to demonstrate achievement and excellence in an increasingly competitive academic environment, which burdens students with various pressures and demands. Another perspective defines academic stress as a student's inability to meet demands, feeling unhappy, or experiencing physical and mental issues arising from academic problems or challenges faced (Lin & Chen, 2009). In this context, other researchers add that academic stress is a source of stress caused by academic stressors, such as pressure to advance to the next grade, the length of study, anxiety about exams, the number of assignments to be completed, poor test scores, complex bureaucracy, making decisions about majors and careers, and time management (Kariv & Heiman, 2004).

Intervention in psychology is a method that can modify a person's behavior, thoughts, and feelings. Interventions are classified into several types, including group, community, organizational, and systemic interventions. The application of these interventions can take the form of psychotherapy, rehabilitation, and prevention (Trull, 2005). Therefore, further research on this topic is needed. The purpose of this journal is to further examine the effectiveness of several interventions for addressing academic stress among students in Indonesia.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a systematic literature review (SLR). The literature review procedure used the PRISMA model. The researchers also established a number of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Both criteria are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1.
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Description
Inclusion	1. The articles used are those published between 2018 and 2025.. 2. In the form of a published national scientific journal. 3. Reputable journal articles SINTA 1 – 4. 4. The article comes from a reliable source..
Exclusion	1. Articles that are not used are those published before 2015. 2. Articles in the form of books or final projects (theses, dissertations, books). 3. The article is from an international journal.. 4. The article comes from an unreliable source..

The PRISMA model consists of a number of stages, including identification, screening, eligibility, and analysis of conclusions (included). Further details are provided in the systematic literature review diagram in Figure 1.

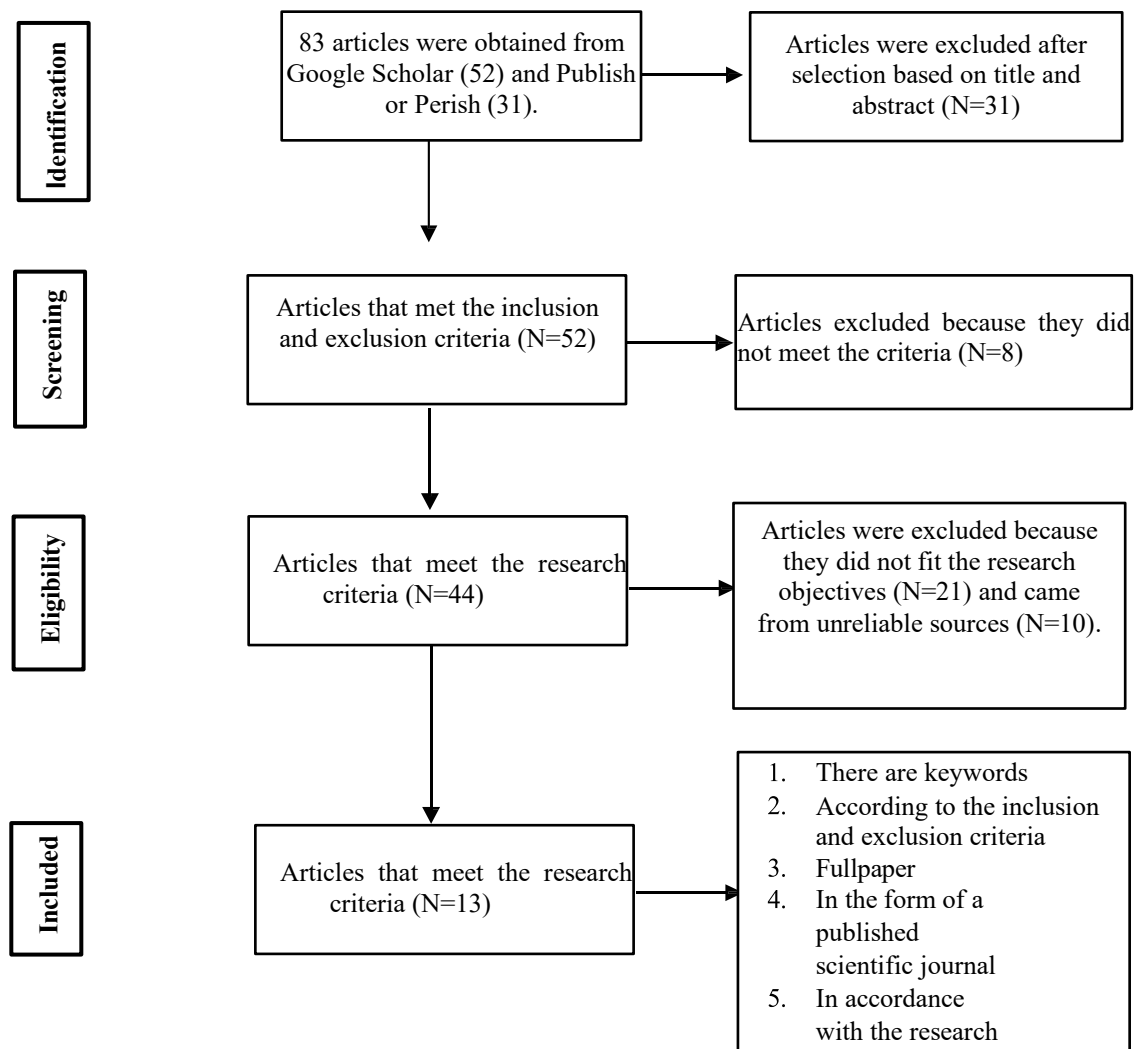


Figure 1. Systematic Literature Review Diagram Using the PRISMA Model
 (Source: Data processed based on the PRISMA 2020 guidelines)

In the identification stage, researchers searched for scientific articles using two scientific websites, namely Google Scholar and Publish or Perish, covering the period from 2018 to 2025. The keywords used as the basis for searching for scientific articles were intervention, therapy, counseling, students, and university students. Through the search results, 83 articles were identified for selection, with 52 articles obtained from Google Scholar and 31 articles from Publish or Perish. Based on the selection process, 31 articles were excluded because they did not align with the title or abstract of the research, leaving 52 articles. During the screening stage, 8 articles were excluded because they did not meet the research criteria, leaving 44 articles. During the eligibility stage, 31 articles were excluded, with 21 articles excluded because they did not align with the research objectives. The remaining 10 articles were excluded because they originated from unreliable sources. In the final stage (included), 13 articles were found to meet the criteria and eligibility to be used as study material. The researcher then reviewed, analyzed, and drew conclusions from the 13 articles that passed the selection and met the eligibility criteria..

3 RESULTS

Based on the results of the analysis, it was found that the interventions and approaches used were effective in reducing academic stress among students. Stress experienced by students can occur due to several factors, including too many subjects to study, lack of feedback, teacher quality, and the amount of homework assigned. Therefore, appropriate interventions are crucial and must be tailored to the abilities and needs of the participants. Further details regarding the systematic literature review are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2.
 Results of Systematic Literature Review

No.	Researcher (Year)	Method	Research Results
1	Utami, Nurmala & Prabowo (2023)	Experiment with Single Subject Research (SSR) design	Art therapy techniques can significantly reduce academic stress levels in students. Data shows a decrease in stress levels from a baseline of 74% to 38% at baseline 2, with a difference of approximately 36%. In addition, the high level of data stability and the absence of data overlap (0%) indicate that art therapy interventions have a positive and consistent effect in reducing academic stress..
2	Hardayati et al, (2023)	Quasi Experimental <i>Pre-Posttest Control Group</i>	A 10-week multiple stress management intervention was effective in reducing stress levels, burnout, and signs of emotional mental disorders in graduate students. In the intervention group, there was a significant decrease in stress scores ($p = 0.002$), burnout ($p = 0.003$), and signs of emotional mental disorders ($p = 0.003$) after the intervention.
3	Widayati, Guterres & Sucipto (2024)	Quasi-experimental, pre-test and post-test with control	The combination of Benson therapy and aromatherapy significantly reduced academic stress levels in nursing students. This study is consistent with previous studies showing that aromatherapy, such as lavender and vanilla, is effective in reducing stress and anxiety, as well as promoting relaxation and mental well-being.
4	Aisa et al, (2021)	Qualitative	Self-healing against academic stress levels among students has decreased significantly. Students reported positive changes both physically, such as healthier bodies and less fatigue, and psychologically, such as increased enthusiasm for online lectures, motivation to complete assignments, and confidence in asking questions and seeking information independently.

5	Novitasari & Cahyaningrum (2021)	<i>True Experiment pretest and posttest control group design.</i>	Effective self-management techniques in reducing academic stress among students. The experimental group that received this intervention showed a significant reduction in stress levels compared to the control group.
6	Baroroh & Azzahrah (2024)	<i>Experiment one group pre-test post-test design</i>	The structured dzikir intervention resulted in a significant decrease in academic stress scores among all participants. The average pretest score was 87.67, indicating a moderate to high level of academic stress. After the intervention, the average score decreased to 61.33, indicating that most participants moved to the moderate to low category.
7	Bessie et al, (2024)	<i>Experiment one group pre-test post-test design</i>	The “SEEING” training was effective in reducing the academic stress levels of students involved in organizations. There was a mean deviation of 2.889, indicating a significant decrease in academic stress levels after participating in the training..
8	Distina (2021)	<i>Single Subject Design (SSD)</i>	Mindful breathing intervention successfully helped subjects cope with academic stress and reduce self-harming behavior, creating positive changes in their psychological well-being.
9	Fitria & Putri (2021)	<i>Exsperiment pretest-posttest control group design</i>	Laughter therapy is effective in reducing academic stress in adolescents facing online learning during the pandemic. Laughter therapy has a significant effect in reducing academic stress levels, with a significant value of $p = 0.030$ and a large effect size (1.24).
10	Baen, Tjalla & Fitri (2025)	<i>Pre-Experimental Design</i>	Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) showed a decrease in 15 participants from the high category to the low category after treatment.
11	Lubis & Daulay (2024)	<i>Quasi Eksperimen Pre-Test and Post-Test Control Group Design</i>	Group counseling using the SEFT method has benefits for participants, but research shows that the application of this psychoeducation does not significantly reduce students' academic stress. This may be due to various factors, including the timing of implementation and the unique circumstances of each student.
12	Savira, Afiati & Rahmawati (2024)	<i>Experiment one group pre-test post-test design</i>	Progressive relaxation techniques are effective in overcoming academic stress in students. Before receiving progressive relaxation treatment, students' academic stress levels were in the very high category. However, after receiving the treatment, the students' academic stress levels decreased and fell into the moderate and low categories.
13	Henrizka et al, (2022)	<i>Experiment</i>	The effectiveness of prayer therapy in reducing academic stress in high school students shows that there is an increase in stress coping abilities in students after participating in prayer training. The results of the analysis show that there is a significant increase in students' stress coping abilities ($p = 0.002 < 0.05$), which means that prayer therapy is effective in reducing academic stress.

4 DISCUSSIONS

A literature review found several interventions and therapies that are effective in dealing with academic stress in students. The findings of a study conducted by Utami, Nurmala & Prabowo (2023) suggest that art therapy significantly reduces stress levels in students and has a positive effect on reducing academic stress. According to Buchalter (as cited in Utami, Nurmala, & Prabowo, 2023), drawing therapy provides individuals with the opportunity to express various issues they are currently facing, their feelings, fears, desires, and concerns, along with safe solutions that can be applied.

Novitasari & Cahyaningrum (2021) in their research showed that self-management techniques are effective in reducing academic stress among students. This was further supported by the research of Hardayati et al. (2023), which found that stress management techniques provided to the intervention group significantly reduced stress levels ($p = 0.002$). Stress management techniques developed in research include those that can prevent, reduce, and address stress. Stress management emphasizes adaptive techniques that can reduce maladaptive behavior. These techniques include problem-solving, relaxation, time management techniques, and lifestyle modifications (Roohafza, H., et al., 2012).

Another intervention that can reduce academic stress levels is a combination of Benson therapy and aromatherapy. Widayati, Guterres & Sucipto (2024) found that the combination of Benson therapy and aromatherapy is effective in reducing academic stress. This aligns with research conducted by Gaber Zaghloul et al. (2022), which found that Benson therapy is effective in reducing anxiety, improving sleep quality, and alleviating pain in patients, both in pre-operative contexts and in the management of chronic illnesses. Meanwhile, aromatherapy also has the potential to improve blood circulation and provide a sense of comfort to the body (Tabatabaeichehr & Mortazavi, 2020).

Aisa et al. (2021) found in their research that self-healing is effective in reducing academic stress levels. Self-healing is defined as a process of treatment or healing that is carried out independently through a process of self-belief that is also supported by the environment and other external factors (Crane & Ward., 2016). In practice, self-healing is a process based on the principle that the human body has the ability to repair and heal itself through certain methods (Budiman & Ardianty, 2018).

Another intervention that can reduce academic stress is prayer therapy. Research by Henrizka et al. (2022) shows that after prayer training, students feel less mental burden and are optimistic that the problems they face can be overcome. They also become more enthusiastic about competing healthily and feel calmer when facing exams. In line with this, Yuwono (2010) mentions that one of the stress management techniques that Muslims can practice includes prayer, supplication, and remembrance of God. Further research conducted by Baroroh & Azzahrah (2024) also found that zikir therapy can bring calmness to students. With inner calmness, students can more easily develop self-awareness, help them cope with emotional instability, and find solutions to academic challenges.

Bessie et al. (2024) stated that psychoeducational training with the theme “SEEING,” which consists of four training sessions, including learning management, priorities, my emotions, and relaxation, is effective in reducing academic stress levels in students. This finding reinforces previous research that suggests enhancing self-regulated learning (SRL) skills can help students reduce the academic stress they experience (Karos et al., 2021; Kirana & Juliartiko, 2021).

Other interventions that can reduce academic stress levels include: Mindful breathing interventions are effective in addressing academic stress among high school students (Distina, 2021); Laughter therapy techniques are significant in reducing academic stress levels among adolescents during the pandemic (Fitria & Putri, 2021); Group counseling using the cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) approach has been proven effective in reducing academic stress levels among students (Baen, Tjalla & Fitri, 2025); Group counseling using the SEFT method showed only a small effect, which could help students cope with the stress they faced in the study (Lubis & Daulay, 2024); The application of progressive relaxation is effective in addressing academic stress among students (Savira, Afiati & Rahmawati, 2024).

The implications of this study can serve as guidelines for future research in determining appropriate interventions and treatments to reduce academic stress levels in students. The limitation of this study is that it only focuses on interventions and therapies that affect the intensity of academic stress in school and university students.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Based on 13 articles reviewed by researchers, several interventions were found that can be used and applied to reduce the intensity of academic stress. The interventions that can be carried out are art therapy techniques, stress management, aromatherapy, self-healing, self-management, prayer and dhikr therapy, mindful breathing, counseling, and progressive

relaxation. Efforts to reduce academic stress among students must be responsive so that students can engage in academic life optimally.

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