

Psychoeducational Media as a Coping Strategy to Alleviate Academic Stress Among High School Students: A Systematic Literature Review

Taufik Hidayat¹, Agus Efendi², Akhmad Arif Musadad³

^{1,2,3}*Master's Program in Educational Technology, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret,
Jl. Ir. Sutami No. 36 A, Kentingan, Jebres, Surakarta City, Central Java, Indonesia*

¹taufikha@student.uns.ac.id; ²agusefendi@staff.uns.ac.id; ³akhmadarifmusadad@staff.uns.ac.id

Abstract: Academic stress experienced by high school students can negatively affect mental health, academic achievement, deviant behavior, sleep quality, physical health, school dropout, and long-term outcomes. This study aims to systematically review scholarly literature on the use of psychoeducational media as a coping strategy to reduce academic stress among high school students. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted following the PRISMA guidelines. Articles were retrieved from the Scopus database using inclusion criteria, including publications published between 2015 and 2025, within the subject areas of “psychology” and “social sciences,” written in English, open access, focused on academic stress in high school students, and examining psychoeducational media. 5 articles were finally included for thematic analysis. The results indicate that psychoeducational media, including gratitude journals, mindset modules, and multimodal programs (HSMP, MSC-T, and EASE), are effective in reducing academic stress and related psychological distress. These interventions also improve emotional regulation, self-compassion, and psychological well-being. The findings highlight the potential of psychoeducational media to be integrated into school-based mental health promotion. However, further research is needed to examine the long-term effectiveness and cultural relevance of these interventions in various educational settings.

Keywords: academic stress, coping strategy, high school students, mental health, psychoeducational media

1 INTRODUCTION

High school represents a particularly challenging phase in students' lives, as they navigate profound psychosocial changes while simultaneously facing substantial academic demands that may exceed their coping capacities. These demands often include heavy academic assignments, examination pressure, ambitious grade targets, strict academic standards, parental expectations, and a dense curriculum that creates an environment of constant strain (Jagiello et al., 2024; Becker & Börnert-Ringleb, 2025). Academic stress, defined as tension and discomfort stemming from pressures imposed by school, family, and society (Luo, Deng, & Zhang, 2020), has been documented globally with worrying prevalence rates. For example, Norwegian studies found that female students reported significantly higher stress levels than males, reflecting gender disparities in stress experience (Kristensen et al., 2023), while Indonesian data revealed that more than 90% of high school students in Bandung experienced high stress primarily linked to self-confidence issues (Saputri et al., 2024). The consequences of unaddressed academic stress extend far beyond academic performance, influencing psychological well-being, social functioning, and long-term educational trajectories. Research in South Korea demonstrated that academic stress directly predicts dropout intentions among high school students (Park & Lee, 2023), while severe cases have tragically escalated to suicidal behavior, such as the death of a 16-year-old student in Indonesia due to school-related stress (Wismabrata, 2020). In addition, maladaptive coping strategies such as substance use, smoking, or disengagement from learning are often reported, further worsening students' academic and psychological conditions. Although interventions like cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) have shown promise in reducing stress symptoms (Halim, Tjalla, & Fitri, 2025), the persistent and widespread prevalence of academic stress highlights the urgency of identifying more scalable, accessible, and contextually adaptable coping solutions that can be integrated within school systems. Without proper intervention, the cumulative impact of academic stress may not only disrupt adolescent development but also compromise future educational and career opportunities. This reality necessitates a stronger emphasis on preventive strategies that can be embedded into daily school practices rather than relying solely on clinical treatment models.

One promising approach to address these challenges is the development and application of psychoeducational media, which convey structured psychological information through diverse formats such as videos, digital modules, infographics, and leaflets designed to improve emotional literacy, resilience, and coping skills among adolescents (Brown et al., 2020). Compared to individualized therapeutic approaches, psychoeducational media offer advantages of scalability, cost-

effectiveness, and practicality, enabling schools to embed mental health promotion directly into learning environments. Early empirical evidence supports their feasibility; for example, an envelope-based psychoeducational tool achieved a 91.86% feasibility rating from media and content experts and effectively reduced anxiety levels, which are often linked to academic stress (Hidayat & Pujiriyanto, 2024). Nevertheless, despite their potential, a Scopus-based mapping of 77 publications between 2015 and 2025 found that only 2 specifically focused on psychoeducational media targeting academic stress, with most research instead addressing depression or adult populations. This underlines a significant research gap, especially since high school students represent a vulnerable group at a critical developmental stage. Furthermore, the limited literature rarely investigates issues of cultural adaptation, long-term effectiveness, or integration into formal school curricula, which are essential for sustainable implementation. In response to these gaps, the present study systematically reviews the scientific literature on psychoeducational media as coping strategies for high school students experiencing academic stress. The review aims to identify existing forms of psychoeducational media, evaluate their reported effectiveness, and highlight directions for future innovation, thereby offering both theoretical insights for adolescent stress research and practical recommendations for the design of scalable, school-based mental health interventions. By situating this review within both global and local educational contexts, the study also seeks to inform culturally relevant strategies that align with the needs of high school students in diverse settings.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method with the aim of identifying and analyzing relevant articles on the use of psychoeducational media as a coping strategy for reducing academic stress among high school students. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines were followed to screen the articles and examine the relationship between psychoeducational media as a coping strategy and its effectiveness in helping students manage academic stress. The literature search was conducted in July 2025 using Scopus as the primary database. Scopus was chosen due to its wide coverage of scholarly articles and high publication quality. The query used for the literature search was (“academic stress” OR “student stress” OR “school stress”) AND (“intervention” OR “program” OR “treatment” OR “education”) AND (student OR adolescent OR youth). To ensure alignment with the research focus, articles were filtered based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Published between 2015 and 2025	Published before 2015
Listed under the subject areas of “psychology” and “social sciences”	Not listed under the subject areas of “psychology” and “social sciences”
Written in English	Written in languages other than English
Open access	Closed access or subscription-based
Discusses academic stress in high school students	Discusses academic stress in non-high school populations (e.g., university students or children)
Examines the use of psychoeducational media	Conceptual or non-empirical reviews

The initial Scopus search using the defined query returned 2,254 articles. After applying the inclusion criteria (year of publication, subject area, language, access type, population, and focus of study), the number of eligible articles was reduced to 311. A further manual verification of bibliographic information resulted in the exclusion of 6 articles due to incomplete metadata, leaving 305 articles. At the title, abstract, and full-text screening stages, 300 articles were excluded because they either did not involve psychoeducational media or did not address academic stress in high school populations. Finally, 5 articles met all inclusion criteria and were included in the review for thematic analysis. This process ensured that only relevant and high-quality studies were analyzed.

Articles that reached the final stage were then analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify the types of psychoeducational media-based coping strategies employed among high school students. This approach enables researchers to interpret meaning from the content of textual data systematically and reliably, particularly when synthesizing qualitative findings across studies (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Thematic analysis also facilitates the identification of recurring patterns across diverse study contexts, thereby highlighting both common and unique coping strategies used in different educational settings. In addition, this analytic approach allows for a nuanced synthesis that connects empirical evidence with theoretical perspectives on stress management in adolescents, ensuring rigor, contextual sensitivity, and stronger educational research relevance.

3 RESULTS

The article identification process was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA guidelines, marked by the development of a PRISMA flow diagram. The initial search of the Scopus database yielded 2,254 records, which were reduced to 311 articles after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria. A manual verification of the metadata and subsequent screening resulted in the final selection of 5 articles that fully met the eligibility requirements. The progressive reduction of articles across these stages highlights the rigorous filtering process undertaken to ensure the relevance and quality of the final sources. These studies were then thematically categorized, with 3 articles focusing specifically on psychoeducational media designed to reduce academic stress and 2 articles addressing broader psychoeducational interventions relevant to stress in high school contexts. A summary of the reviewed articles is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Article Review

Title (Author, Year)	Country	Subject	Coping Strategy	Outcome
Impact of Holistic Stress Management Program on Academic Stress and Well-Being of Indian Adolescent Girls: A Randomized Controlled Trial (Rentala et al., 2019)	India	200 adolescent girls aged 16-19 from pre-university level	Holistic Stress Management Program (HSMP) based on the Body-Mind-Spirit (BMS) approach, including breathing exercises, mindfulness, progressive muscle relaxation, and clay modeling	Significant reduction in academic stress and improvement in psychological well-being in the intervention group
Does Gratitude Work at School? Piloting the Modified Interventions for Managing Academic Stress in Pakistani High Schools (Sahar, Baranovich, & Tharbe, 2022)	Pakistan	162 tenth-grade high school students from 2 public schools in Rawalpindi	Gratitude-based interventions, including writing gratitude lists, letters to valued individuals, and loving-kindness meditation	Considerable reduction in academic stress and improvement in students' subjective well-being
How to Improve Adolescent Stress Responses: Insights from Integrating Implicit Theories of Personality and Biopsychosocial Models (Yeager, Lee, & Jamieson, 2016)	United States of America	205 ninth-grade high school students (mean age 14.5) from diverse backgrounds	Intervention based on incremental theory of personality delivered through reading-writing exercises and digital journaling	Students receiving the intervention showed improved academic performance and healthier physiological stress responses (cortisol)
Effectiveness of a Group Psychological Intervention to Reduce Psychosocial Distress in Adolescents in Pakistan: A Single-Blind, Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial (Hamdani et al., 2024)	Pakistan	566 students aged 13-15 from grades 8-9 in public schools	Early Adolescent Skills for Emotions (EASE) intervention including psychoeducation, relaxation exercises, and problem-solving	EASE was more effective in reducing psychosocial distress compared to the control group
Feasibility, Acceptability, and Depression Outcomes of a Randomized Controlled Trial of Mindful Self-Compassion for Teens (MSC-T) for Adolescents with Subsyndromal Depression (Bluth et al., 2024)	United States of America	57 adolescents aged 13-17 with mild depressive symptoms	Mindful Self-Compassion for Teens (MSC-T) program including mindfulness, self-kindness, and common humanity	MSC-T significantly reduced depressive symptoms and negative emotions, and improved students' self-compassion

The first study was conducted by Rentala et al. (2019) in India, involving 200 adolescent girls aged 16 to 19 years from pre-university level, equivalent to high school. The study developed an intervention program called the Holistic Stress Management Program (HSMP). Based on the Body-Mind-Spirit (BMS) approach, the program included breathing exercises, mindfulness, progressive muscle relaxation, and art therapy such as clay modeling. The intervention was delivered over 8 group sessions facilitated by trained practitioners. The findings indicated a significant reduction in academic stress among the experimental group. Furthermore, there was an improvement in psychological well-being after the intervention. The program was considered feasible and well-accepted by the participants. The coping strategies promoted focused on self-awareness, emotional regulation, and spiritual resilience. This study directly measured academic stress as the primary outcome, providing valuable insights for practice.

The second study, conducted in Pakistan by Sahar, Baranovich, & Tharbe (2022), involved 162 tenth-grade students from 2 public schools. The study evaluated the effectiveness of a gratitude-based intervention to reduce academic stress. The intervention consisted of 3 components, including writing gratitude lists, composing appreciation letters to significant individuals, and practicing loving-kindness meditation. It was delivered over 4 weeks through structured sessions at school. The coping strategy aimed to enhance positive emotions and social connectedness. Results showed a meaningful decrease in academic stress among the experimental group compared to the control group. Additionally, students reported increased subjective well-being. The intervention was developed using a positive psychology approach applicable to adolescents. This study explicitly addressed academic stress as a measured variable.

The third study was conducted by Yeager, Lee, & Jamieson (2016) in the United States of America with 205 ninth-grade high school students. The intervention employed the incremental theory of personality, which posits that personality can change. It was delivered through reading and writing exercises as well as digital journaling to foster a positive mindset. The targeted coping strategy was cognitive reappraisal, or the reinterpretation of stress as a challenge. The intervention was delivered in a single session and followed by online diary completion. The results revealed that students who received the intervention achieved higher academic performance than those in the control group. Additionally, they showed more stable cortisol patterns, indicating healthier physiological responses to stress. This study demonstrated that shifting one's mindset can reduce the physiological impact of academic stress.

The fourth study, conducted by Hamdani et al. (2024) in Pakistan, involved 566 students aged 13 to 15 from grades 8 and 9 in public schools. The intervention used was the Early Adolescent Skills for Emotions (EASE) program, developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). This program included psychoeducation on emotions, relaxation techniques, problem-solving, and behavioral activation. It was implemented in group sessions facilitated by non-specialist facilitators. The coping strategy aimed to improve daily emotional regulation and adaptive stress management. The findings indicated that the EASE intervention significantly reduced psychosocial distress among students. The experimental group experienced greater improvements in stress and emotional well-being compared to the control group. Although it did not explicitly target academic stress, the school-based context rendered the intervention highly relevant. This study reinforced the role of psychoeducation in enhancing emotional regulation among high school students.

The fifth study, originating from the United States of America and conducted by Bluth et al. (2024), involved 57 adolescents aged 13 to 17 with mild depressive symptoms. The intervention used was Mindful Self-Compassion for Teens (MSC-T), a program teaching mindfulness, self-kindness, and common humanity. The intervention sessions included educational videos, group discussions, art activities, and reflective exercises. The coping strategies promoted involved strengthening self-awareness and fostering a compassionate attitude toward oneself. The program was delivered in group settings over several weeks within the school environment. The results indicated a significant reduction in depressive symptoms and negative emotions among participants. Moreover, self-compassion scores increased following the program. Although academic stress was not the primary focus, the MSC-T intervention was relevant for alleviating emotional pressure related to academic performance. This study emphasized the importance of self-compassion-based approaches in adolescent psychoeducation.

4 DISCUSSIONS

The analyzed studies demonstrate that psychoeducational media such as gratitude journals, mindset modules, and multimodal programs (HSMP, MSC-T, EASE) are effective coping strategies for reducing academic stress among high school students. The gratitude intervention employed by Sahar, Baranovich, & Tharbe (2022) spanned 4 weeks and significantly lowered academic stress. This intervention aligns with positive psychology findings that gratitude enhances students' emotional well-being (Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008). Rentala et al. (2019) explicitly evaluated academic stress using the Student Academic Stress Scale and found that the Body-Mind-Spirit based Holistic Stress Management Program (HSMP) significantly reduced academic stress and enhanced psychological well-being among adolescent girls in India. Yeager, Lee, & Jamieson (2016) reported that an incremental mindset module improved academic performance and reduced physiological stress responses in ninth-grade students.

Two additional studies, Hamdani et al. (2024) and Bluth et al. (2024), assessed general psychological distress such as depression, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation, which are highly relevant to academic stress in adolescents. Their programs, EASE and MSC-T, incorporated psychoeducation, relaxation, and reflective practices, providing an adaptive multimodal response to academic pressure. Combined findings from these 5 studies underscore that psychoeducational media address students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral needs in formal learning contexts. The main advantage of these interventions is their sustainability in realistic school environments; they are easily adapted by school counselors or non-clinical facilitators. However, few studies conducted long-term follow-up, so the enduring effectiveness of psychoeducational media in diverse educational contexts and cultural settings requires further systematic investigation.

Gratitude and mindset interventions emerge as dominant approaches for coping with academic stress. Sahar, Baranovich, & Tharbe (2022) used gratitude listing and letters in Urdu, reducing expectation pressure and learning anxiety. In contrast, Yeager, Lee, & Jamieson (2016) employed an incremental mindset rewriting module, resulting in higher academic achievement and more adaptive cortisol patterns. Gratitude fosters positive emotions, while mindset shifts reinterpret stress. However, brief one-session mindset interventions make long-term effects uncertain. Gratitude practices built over several weeks allow for coping internalization. Gratitude interventions are low-resource and easily implemented in classrooms. Mindfulness or reflective modules like EASE, however, require facilitator training and greater resources (Hamdani et al., 2024). A future hybrid combination of gratitude and mindset may offer complementary benefits by strengthening positive emotion and fostering adaptive cognitive framing. Such a model could offer a more robust psychoeducational intervention for schools integrating coping media into student wellness curricula.

The adoption of multimodal media within interventions like HSMP, EASE, and MSC-T represents a methodological strength worth noting. Rentala et al. (2019) combined physical relaxation exercises such as breathing and yoga with clay modeling art therapy and mindfulness, creating a holistic bodily and cognitive approach. Hamdani et al. (2024) adapted the WHO's Early Adolescent Skills for Emotions (EASE) program in group sessions led by non-specialists, combining emotional psychoeducation and problem-solving skills delivered in schools. Bluth et al. (2024) integrated educational videos, group discussions, and individual self-compassion practices such as meditation and reflective writing in MSC-T. These multimedia models offer varied and engaging media formats suited to adolescents and provide multiple coping strategies that can be tailored to individual needs. Such approaches elevated student engagement and intervention acceptability in formal school contexts, though implementing them requires facilitator training and material preparation, which may be challenging in schools with limited resources. These interventions also tend to incur higher costs than simple written modules. Nonetheless, multimodal approaches consistently yield positive outcomes in reducing depressive symptoms and distress, while enhancing students' emotional well-being.

Regarding outcomes, the 3 studies explicitly measuring academic stress, Sahar, Baranovich, & Tharbe (2022), Rentala et al. (2019), and Yeager, Lee, & Jamieson (2016), reported statistically significant reductions and positive impacts on well-being and academic performance. Sahar, Baranovich, & Tharbe (2022) reported a medium effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.65$) on academic stress reduction and daily life impediments. Rentala et al. (2019) documented greater improvements in stress reduction and well-being in the intervention group compared to control. Yeager, Lee, & Jamieson (2016) observed improved GPA and healthier cortisol patterns, indicating adaptive coping. The other 2 studies, although not explicitly measuring academic stress, demonstrated reductions in psychological distress (Hamdani et al., 2024) and depressive symptoms (Bluth et al., 2024), which have broader implications for students' capacity to manage academic pressures. A key strength of these findings lies in the combination of subjective and objective outcomes (grades, hormonal data, self-reports). However, none of the existing studies included long-term follow-up, so the durability of coping benefits remains untested. Future research should incorporate rigorous, well-designed follow-up periods of at least 6 months to one year to thoroughly assess the long-term stability of coping effects.

A primary strength of this literature is that interventions were tailored specifically for high school students and implemented in formal school environments. All studies took place in school settings, facilitating practical translation to broader educational contexts. Media such as gratitude journals, mindset modules, educational videos, and creative activities encourage ready integration into regular lessons or counseling sessions organized by school counselors. Focusing on high school students narrows the population and enhances relevance for secondary education policy. Nonetheless, limitations include sample variability across countries and cultures, requiring caution in generalization to other school contexts. Some studies did not control for factors such as family support or task pressure, which may influence outcomes. Group-based interventions require consistent facilitator training, which is not always feasible in resource-constrained schools. Furthermore, research conducted in Ghana indicates that gender differences moderate the relationship between academic stress and resilience, underscoring the need to consider gender-specific adaptation of psychoeducational media interventions (Amoadu et al., 2024). Even so, the consistent positive results affirm psychoeducational media's potential as an academic stress coping strategy in secondary school settings.

Supporting literature further reinforces these findings. A cross-cultural study in China found that self-compassion moderates the relationship between neuroticism and depression in junior high school students, reducing psychological stress impact (Wang & Wu, 2024). Moreover, a quasi-experimental study in Thailand showed that a mindful self-compassion program reduced depression and stress among junior high school students, with effects sustained up to 6 weeks post-intervention (Yiamthaisong & Rujkorakarn, 2024). Another school-based mindfulness study found individual self-regulation accelerates the acquisition of self-compassion (Razza et al., 2025). All these findings align with the notion that psychoeducational media can strengthen adaptive coping and emotional resilience in adolescents. The presence of international evidence broadens the implications of media interventions for high school students in Indonesia and other developing countries. However, gaps remain in the global literature regarding long-term interventions and follow-up within formal education settings, necessitating rigorous and context-specific exploration.

Although not part of the 5 core articles reviewed, recent studies on CBT-based interventions provide additional insights relevant to school-based coping strategies. Recent evidence also supports the utility of CBT in educational settings. A quasi-experimental implementation of the “Study Without Stress” program in an Australian high school showed that teacher-delivered CBT maintained manageable stress levels and reduced severity among initially distressed students at three-month follow-up (Jagiello, Wuthrich, & Ellis, 2022). In a randomized controlled evaluation among rural secondary-level economics students, CBT sessions delivered over 8 weeks significantly decreased academic stress, with sustained effects observed in follow-up assessments (Eneogu, Ugwuanyi, & Ugwuanyi, 2024). Likewise, a six-session CBT intervention targeting test anxiety in adolescents aged 14-16 led to large reductions in test anxiety and small-to-moderate reductions in clinical anxiety, supporting its relevance for academic stress (Putwain & von der Embse, 2021). Additionally, a mixed-methods intervention using a CBT-based psychoeducational app among secondary students significantly reduced school burnout, integrating qualitative feedback with quantitative improvement (Ulaş & Seçer, 2022). These studies highlight that CBT interventions, whether delivered by school staff or digital platforms, offer robust, scalable strategies for addressing academic stress and burnout in high school settings.

Overall, this review confirms that psychoeducational media, whether in the form of gratitude journals, mindset modules, or multimodal programs, have strong potential as coping strategies to mitigate academic stress among high school students. Models such as HSMP, MSC-T, and EASE offer diverse and adaptable implementation frameworks compatible with school curricula. Gratitude and mindset interventions are scalable, low-cost, and easily adopted by teachers without extensive training. Multimodal programs such as MSC-T and EASE promote a holistic approach, though they require facilitator support and resources. Major limitations include short intervention duration, lack of long-term follow-up, and limited cross-cultural generalizability. To address these gaps, future research should explore hybrid models that combine gratitude, mindset, and self-compassion components, tested through rigorous RCTs across diverse sociocultural and educational contexts. Cross-national comparisons could further illuminate how cultural values influence the effectiveness and reception of psychoeducational media in schools. Research across diverse educational and cultural settings will be crucial to ensure inclusive, adaptable, and evidence-based implementation. This review offers strong evidence to support the design of scalable school-based programs that improve academic well-being in adolescents worldwide.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This systematic review concludes that psychoeducational media, such as gratitude journals, mindset modules, and multimodal programs like the Holistic Stress Management Program (HSMP), Mindful Self-Compassion for Teens (MSC-T), and Early Adolescent Skills for Emotions (EASE), are effective coping strategies for reducing academic stress among high school students. These diverse interventions have been shown to enhance emotional regulation, strengthen healthy cognitive processing, and support overall psychological well-being. Gratitude and mindset-based media are notably simpler, more affordable, and easier to implement within formal school settings. In contrast, multimodal programs offer more comprehensive benefits, particularly in cultivating students’ reflective capacities and mental resilience, although they require additional training and resources. All the analyzed studies reported a reduction in stress or psychological distress following intervention, although some did not explicitly measure academic stress. These findings reinforce the urgency of integrating psychoeducational media approaches in schools, particularly as part of mental health promotion and long-term prevention. A common limitation identified is the lack of long-term evaluations in most studies, leaving the long-term sustainability of intervention effects unverified. Therefore, future research is recommended to design sustainable, culturally sensitive interventions that can be evaluated longitudinally to inform education policies that are more responsive to students’ psychosocial needs.

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