

## **COPING STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC VALUES IN STUDENTS OF ISLAMIC COUNSELING GUIDANCE STUDY PROGRAM, FACULTY OF DA'WAH AND COMMUNICATION, UIN NORTH SUMATRA**

**\*<sup>1</sup>Ummi Nurhasanah, <sup>2</sup>Mutiawati**

<sup>\*1,2</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

Email: <sup>\*1</sup>ummi0102213058@uinsu.ac.id, <sup>2</sup>mutiawati@uinsu.ac.id

### **Abstract**

This study aims to identify the causes and symptoms of stress, as well as the coping strategies employed by students of the Islamic Guidance and Counseling Program at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU), in facing academic pressure that affects their academic performance. A qualitative approach with a case study method was used. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving six active students who were experiencing academic stress during their coursework. The findings indicate that academic stress is caused by multiple factors, including heavy workload, difficulty understanding course materials, limited learning resources, and pressure to maintain or improve their Grade Point Average (GPA). Symptoms of stress included physical fatigue, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, and decreased motivation. To cope with these challenges, students employed a combination of strategies: problem-focused coping such as time management and seeking additional resources; emotion-focused coping such as calming themselves and seeking emotional support; and religious coping through spiritual activities such as reciting the Qur'an, performing sunnah prayers, and sending blessings upon the Prophet. These flexible and adaptive coping strategies were found to be effective in managing academic pressure and supporting optimal academic performance.

**Keywords:** coping strategies, academic stress, academic performance, students

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi penyebab stres, gejala stres, serta strategi coping yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa Program Studi Bimbingan Penyuluhan Islam Fakultas Dakwah dan Komunikasi Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara (UINSU) dalam menghadapi tekanan akademik yang berdampak pada nilai akademik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi terhadap enam mahasiswa aktif yang sedang mengalami tekanan akademik selama menjalani perkuliahan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa stres akademik disebabkan oleh berbagai faktor, seperti beban tugas yang menumpuk, kesulitan memahami materi, keterbatasan referensi belajar, dan tekanan untuk mempertahankan atau meningkatkan Indeks Prestasi Kumulatif (IPK). Gejala stres yang dialami mencakup kelelahan fisik, kecemasan, sulit konsentrasi, dan menurunnya motivasi belajar. Untuk mengatasi hal tersebut, mahasiswa menerapkan kombinasi strategi coping, yaitu problem-focused coping seperti pengaturan waktu belajar dan mencari referensi tambahan; emotion-focused coping seperti

*menenangkan diri dan mencari dukungan emosional; serta coping religius melalui aktivitas spiritual seperti membaca Al-Qur'an, shalat sunnah, dan bershalawat. Strategi coping yang fleksibel dan adaptif ini terbukti membantu mahasiswa dalam mengelola tekanan serta mendukung pencapaian nilai akademik secara optimal.*

**Kata Kunci:** *strategi coping, stres akademik, nilai akademik, mahasiswa*

## INTRODUCTION

Higher education is the main pillar in producing superior, adaptive, and highly competitive human resources (Wahyuni & Marno, 2024). In the lecture process, students are not only required to understand and master academic materials, but also face various psychological, social, and emotional challenges. The pressure that comes from academic demands, parental expectations, social environment, and competition between students often causes stress that directly affects the achievement of academic grades (Ali & Asrori, 2010). Students of the Islamic Counseling Guidance Study Program (BPI) Faculty of Da'wah and Communication UIN North Sumatra have their own burden because the curriculum integrates aspects of Islam, da'wah, communication, and counseling. Students are not only required to master theory, but also be able to apply it practically in social life. These demands demand balanced academic and personality skills (Putri & Yuline, 2021). When students experience difficulties in managing this burden, it can have an impact on decreased learning motivation and decreased academic achievement.

In their academic journey, students often face various problems such as poor time management, difficulty understanding lecture materials, busy lecture schedules, and pressure to maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA). These conditions, if not managed properly, have the potential to cause academic stress that affects their concentration, productivity, and learning evaluation results (Himmah & Shofiah, 2021). Various symptoms such as mental fatigue, feelings of inadequacy, and anxiety about low grades often appear as a result of such pressure (Handoko, 2022). To deal with this pressure, students need a coping strategy, which is an effort made to manage and respond to the stress experienced. Coping is not just a self-defense mechanism, but an active and adaptive process in assessing a situation and choosing the most effective response in handling it (Fariz et al., 2025). The right coping strategy can help students maintain emotional stability, improve their learning effectiveness, and maintain their academic performance.

According to Lazarus and Folkman, coping strategies are divided into two main forms: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping aims to address problems directly, such as creating a study schedule or seeking academic help. Meanwhile, emotion-focused coping focuses on the regulation of emotions, such as seeking social support or calming down through spiritual activities (Nascimento et al., 2022). In the context of students, the proportionate use of these two strategies is essential to maintain optimal learning enthusiasm and academic achievement. Coping is also a reflection of an individual's internal and external efforts in responding to stress. Internal pressures such as conflicts between personal desires and academic demands, as well as

external pressures such as workload, repeated exams, or a less conducive learning environment, all require adaptive stress management strategies (Putra & Nuradina, 2023). Students who do not have adequate coping strategies are at risk of experiencing a decline in learning performance and motivation that has a direct impact on their academic scores.

However, studies on student coping strategies, especially for students of the Islamic Counseling Guidance Study Program in dealing with academic pressure that affects academic grades, are still relatively limited. In fact, a deep understanding of the coping strategies used by students can be an important foundation in the development of more effective guidance and counseling programs in the university environment. Therefore, this study aims to explore the coping strategies applied by students of the BPI Study Program UIN North Sumatra in the face of academic pressure, as well as how these strategies contribute to the achievement of their academic grades. The findings of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of student coping and become the basis for the formulation of academic assistance policies that are more responsive to the psychological needs of students.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. This approach was chosen because it aims to gain a deep understanding of students' experiences in the face of academic pressure as well as the coping strategies they apply to maintain or improve academic grades. The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the meanings, perceptions, and psychological dynamics experienced by students in a more contextual way, according to the reality they face. The location of this research was carried out at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, State Islamic University of North Sumatra, Islamic Counseling Guidance Study Program. The research period lasted for two months, covering the data collection stage to the analysis of research results.

The subject in this study is an active student of the Islamic Counseling Guidance Study Program, Faculty of Da'wah and Communication UIN North Sumatra who is undergoing lectures while working. The selection of informants was carried out by purposive sampling technique, which is the determination of research subjects based on certain criteria that are relevant to the focus of the study. The criteria for informants in this study include students who actively undergo lectures while working, experience academic pressure that has an impact on academic scores, and are willing to be interviewed in depth. The main informants in this study consisted of six students who were selected based on the consideration that they could provide rich, in-depth, and relevant information to the research objectives.

The data sources in this study are divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the results of in-depth interviews with informants about their experiences of facing academic pressure and coping strategies used. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from supporting documents such as scientific journals, reference books, academic reports, and other campus documents

related to research topics. Data collection techniques were carried out through *in-depth interviews*, non-participatory observations, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with open-ended questioning guidelines, allowing informants to express their experiences freely but remain focused on the focus of the research. Observations were conducted indirectly to assess the behavior, expression, and habits of students in the campus environment, while documentation studies were carried out to obtain complementary data that supported the findings of the fieldwork. The data obtained was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The first step is data reduction, which is the process of sorting and simplifying raw data from interview and observation results to focus on relevant themes. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of a descriptive narrative to facilitate the interpretation process. The final stage is the drawing of conclusions based on the thematic patterns and categories found, which are then analyzed to answer the formulation of the problem in the research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to identify the coping strategies of academic values used by students of the Islamic Counseling Guidance Study Program (BPI), Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, UIN North Sumatra. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with six students who were selected purposively, namely students who were undergoing college while working and were facing academic pressure, especially in maintaining or improving academic scores. The interview was conducted using the same question guide, but still adjusted to the context of each informant so that the responses given were more natural and in-depth. The results show that pressure on academic grades arises due to various factors, such as difficulty accessing references, heavy workload, time constraints due to work, and declining physical and psychological conditions. The following table summarizes the profiles of the subjects as well as the causes of stress related to their academic grades:

**Table 1.** Subject Profile and Causes of Academic Stress

KET.	INITIALS	SEX	SEMESTER	CAUSES OF STRESS RELATED TO ACADEMIC GRADES
N1	MNHP	L	VI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficult to find relevant references</li> <li>- Many tasks affect the quality of grades</li> </ul>
N2	FHS	L	VI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficulty understanding the task preparation process</li> <li>- Not optimal grades due to limited understanding</li> </ul>
N3	DK	P	VI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficulty finding references according to lecturers' standards</li> <li>- A C grade lowers confidence</li> </ul>

N4	MR	L	VI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduced physical/psychological condition due to work</li> <li>- Decreased focus on learning, impacting grades</li> </ul>
N5	ESS	L	VI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Constraints of learning resources hinder the achievement of maximum grades</li> </ul>
N6	LR	P	VI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Easily anxious if test scores are low</li> <li>- Hopelessness and loss of motivation when grades don't meet expectations</li> </ul>

The table above illustrates the variety of stress causes experienced by six students of the BPI Study Program. This data illustrates that academic pressure does not only come from the aspect of lecture assignments, but also from the limitations of learning resources, the physical and psychological condition of students, to the pressure of grades which is the standard for academic success. However, the majority of respondents cited difficulties in finding relevant book references to complete assignments and exams as one of the main causes of stress (N1, N3, N5). In addition, heavy workload (N1, N4), difficulties in the task process (N2), and psychological distress such as excessive anxiety and hopelessness (N4, N6) were also significant factors that affected their mental state during the study.

Some students also expressed anxiety because they were afraid of not meeting the minimum GPA standard or losing motivation to study due to physical and mental fatigue. This means that the academic pressure experienced is complex, coming from internal aspects, such as self-confidence, excessive anxiety, and high personal expectations for achievement; as well as external, such as many assignments, a busy lecture schedule, and pressure from lecturers, parents, and the surrounding environment to maintain good grades. When this pressure continues without proper handling, it can reduce the enthusiasm for learning and make students feel overwhelmed in carrying out daily academic activities. This pressure is often also exacerbated by declining physical condition as students have to divide their time between college, work, and other social responsibilities. In the long run, this can trigger chronic stress that disrupts students' learning and concentration and results in low academic scores.

The coping strategies used by students in dealing with academic pressure in general can be categorized into two main forms, namely adaptive coping and maladaptive coping. According to Lazarus and Folkman in ('Ashifa & Humaedi, 2025), *coping* is a cognitive and behavioral effort made by individuals to overcome external and internal demands that are perceived to be burdening or exceeding personal resources. Adaptive coping refers to positive and constructive strategies that help individuals cope with stress in a healthy way, such as time management, problem-solving, social support seeking, and emotion regulation (Luthfiah Mawar et al., 2025). In the context of this study, adaptive coping is

seen in student behavior such as arranging a regular study schedule, reducing break time to complete assignments, joining study groups, increasing religious activities as a form of inner peace, and discussing with lecturers to clarify the material. Some informants even took advantage of the holidays to restudy the material to improve exam results.

On the other hand, maladaptive coping is an avoidant strategy and tends to worsen the psychological condition of individuals in the long term (Luthfiah Mawar et al., 2025). This strategy includes behaviors such as procrastinating on assignments, withdrawing from academic activities, overblaming yourself, and comparing yourself to peers negatively. This maladaptive strategy arises when the pressure on academic grades is not balanced by the ability to manage stress or adequate social support. In this study, some students experienced emotional exhaustion, lost motivation to study, and felt hopeless when their academic grades did not meet expectations, which then had an impact on their overall decline in academic productivity.

Interestingly, work experience for some students actually helps them form a more effective coping strategy. Work routines make them used to setting priorities and thinking solutions when faced with pressure. This is proof that although working students face dual challenges, they also have the potential to build strong academic resilience if they are able to manage stress adaptively. These findings confirm that academic value coping strategies are strongly influenced by a combination of internal (motivation, confidence, self-control) and external factors (social support, learning resources, and workload).

Handoko (2022) states that stress is an unusual body response to stressful demands or burdens, and can affect a person's cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects. In this context, students who experience pressure in maintaining academic grades can show various symptoms, such as fatigue, difficulty concentrating, excessive nervousness during exams, feelings of failure, and loss of motivation to study. If not handled appropriately, this condition can lead to a decrease in academic performance, even the appearance of more serious burnout.

In response to these pressures, students develop various coping strategies to stay afloat and complete academic assignments. As a result, students who feel stressed need coping techniques as a problem-solving solution in order to complete assignments on time. The strategy needed is the ability of students to conquer or solve a problem faced. (*Problem Focused Coping*) includes the effort to regulate emotions in order to adapt to the impact that will be caused by stressful conditions or scenarios (*Emotion Focused Coping*). Some of them use a *problem-focused coping* approach, which is by rearranging their study schedules, looking for alternative references, or consulting with friends. Meanwhile, some students who feel that the academic burden is too great and uncontrollable, are more likely to use *emotion-focused coping* such as worshipping, being alone, crying, or seeking emotional support from those closest to them.

Lazarus and Folkman in (Kresnawan et al., 2021) divide coping into two main forms, namely *problem-focused* and *emotion-focused coping*. The first strategy focuses on



solving problems as a source of stress, while the second strategy is oriented towards managing emotions due to perceived stress. Based on the results of the interviews, it can be seen that students do not apply one type of coping absolutely, but combine the two according to their perception of the situation. When problems are considered to be overcome, they choose a problem-focused strategy. But when the pressure is felt uncontrollable, *emotion-focused coping* becomes an option.

*Emotion-focused coping* is an attempt to manage the emotional response to stressful situations. Emotion-focused coping is used when people are unable or unwilling to change difficult situations; instead, they regulate their emotions (Pratama & Ningsih, 2023). People often seek emotional support and distract themselves or occupy themselves with completing household or workplace activities when a loved one dies, for example. The management of emotional responses to stressful events is referred to as emotion-focused coping.

*Problem-Focused Coping* uses a new approach or ability to change conditions, circumstances, or subject matter, focused coping is a treatment to minimize stress (Dalimunthe & Daulay, 2024). If people believe that they can influence the situation, they will use this method. Problem-focused management is a type of stress management that emphasizes proactive and constructive actions to address stressful situations. The researchers discovered various features of *problem-focused coping* as a result of their research.

This is also supported by the opinion of Kendall and Hammen who state that stress develops when a person encounters events that require a personal response and are beyond the limits of his or her abilities (Pida Sakina & Zaifatur Ridha, 2023). Therefore, flexibility in choosing coping strategies is important so that students do not get trapped in prolonged stress conditions that can hinder academic achievement. In practice, the coping strategy used by students reflects the interaction between personal, spiritual, and social factors. Some subjects mentioned that spiritual closeness to God through worship is the main strength to survive. There are also those who say that the support of friends and family greatly affects their success in completing tasks. This suggests that coping is not just a psychological response, but also a social and spiritual process.

This finding is in line with the study by Rahmawati and Putra (2023) which found that students who combine coping strategies tend to be better able to withstand academic pressure. Larasati, et al. (2022) also show that effective coping strategies are closely related to the level of students' mental health. Meanwhile, research by Haq, et al (2021) concluded that the predominantly use of *problem-focused coping* has a positive impact on students' academic outcomes or achievements.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that coping strategies are very important for students, not only to maintain psychological balance, but also to maintain motivation to study and achieve academic achievement. The implementation of the right strategy, as well as strong social and spiritual support, is the key to students' success in dealing with academic pressure (Raharjo & Prahara, 2022). Therefore, institutional support through

academic guidance services and psychological counseling is very relevant to help students face the challenges of learning in a healthy and productive manner.

Thus, it can be concluded that the stress coping strategy applied by students of the Islamic Counseling Guidance Study Program of UIN North Sumatra in dealing with academic pressure, especially in maintaining academic grades, is complex and adaptive. Students do not only apply one type of coping strategy, but combine *problem-focused coping* and *emotion-focused coping* according to their perception of the source of stress. When pressure is considered to be still controllable, they tend to choose strategies that focus on problem-solving. On the other hand, when the pressure is felt out of control or emotional, they use strategies to calm down and maintain inner stability.

The application of coping is also greatly influenced by internal factors such as the ability to manage emotions, optimism, and mental resilience, as well as external factors in the form of social support and spirituality. Religious activities such as increasing worship, reading the Qur'an, and praying have proven to be a form of *religious coping* that strengthens the psychological resilience of students. Therefore, the right coping strategy plays an important role in maintaining psychological stability, maintaining learning motivation, and supporting the achievement of academic grades optimally. For this reason, higher education institutions are expected to provide comprehensive academic and psychological assistance services, so that students have space to explore and develop healthy coping strategies in the face of the dynamics of the academic world.

## CONCLUSION

Students of the Islamic Counseling Guidance Study Program of UIN North Sumatra face significant academic pressure in an effort to maintain or improve their academic scores. This pressure arises from various sources such as students studying while working, the accumulated workload, difficulties in understanding the material, limited references, and expectations for the achievement of certain GPAs. In the face of this pressure, students apply various coping strategies, both problem-focused such as rearranging study schedules and seeking academic help, and emotional-focused ones such as calming down and seeking emotional support. Religious coping strategies also play an important role, shown through worship activities that provide inner peace and strengthen psychological resilience. Thus, the right coping strategy is an important factor in maintaining mental stability and supporting the achievement of academic grades optimally.

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