
Supportive Families and Self-Compassion: Keys to Alleviating Academic Stress in Thesis-Engaged Undergraduate Students in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: Academic stress arises from academic demands that exceed an individual's adaptive capabilities. The family is one of the elements causing academic stress. Families are essential in reducing the possibility of academic stress. This study delves into the mediation role of self-compassion within the interplay of family support and academic stress among undergraduates working on their thesis in the Faculty of Engineering and Science at a Banyumas, Indonesia university. By examining whether self-compassion acts as a conduit through which family support impacts academic stress, the research uncovers the intricate psychological dynamics shaping how students respond to academic demands. Employing a rigorous sampling method, the study involved 181 participants and utilized established measurement scales. The analysis, conducted via bootstrapping procedures, elucidated the dual influence of family support on academic stress—both directly and indirectly through self-compassion. These findings contribute to understanding academic stress experiences, suggesting interventions to bolster well-being and stress management strategies. The study's outcomes underscore the significance of familial support in reducing academic stress while highlighting self-compassion's protective mechanism. The study advocates for the implementation of interventions promoting self-compassion and fostering supportive family environments, offering valuable insights for educational institutions and policymakers to enhance student mental health and academic success.

KEYWORDS: Self Compassion, Family Support, Academic Stress, Quantitative method

INTRODUCTION

The academic journey entails a multitude of challenges for students, and the culmination of this voyage often manifests as the completion of final projects. However, this process is not without its complexities, and these challenges can result in adverse effects such as waning enthusiasm, sleep disturbances, social isolation, and strained familial interactions. This amalgamation of stressors contributes to a phenomenon known as academic stress (Putra, 2016), which can undermine the students' ability to effectively manage their academic responsibilities. While academic stress itself is a well-documented issue, the mechanisms through which external factors, such as family support, interact with internal psychological variables, like self-compassion, to influence academic stress are less explored.

Numerous studies, including those by Weidner et al. (1996) and Gadzella dan Masten (2005), have highlighted the multifaceted nature of academic stress, elucidating its emotional, physical, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. The perceptual gap between academic expectations and actual outcomes, as posited by Yi et al (2008), further complicates the students' psychological landscape. This stress can be disruptive, impacting sleep patterns (Waqas et al., 2015) and overall academic performance (Khan et al., 2013), and warranting a comprehensive understanding of its underpinnings.

The diverse manifestations of academic stress—ranging from anxiety and depression to diminished self-confidence—are well-documented (Sudarya I Wayan, Begia I Wayan, 2016) further break down these stress responses into psychological, physical, and behavioral changes, revealing the intricate interplay between students' mental, physiological, and emotional well-being. As previous research attests, a substantial proportion of students experience heightened stress levels during the demanding period of thesis writing (Zakaria, 2017).

In this context, self-compassion emerges as a potential factor to mitigate the effects of academic stress. Self-compassion involves treating oneself with kindness, embracing one's experiences without judgment, and practicing self-care (Neff, 2003). This capacity for self-soothing and self-support is crucial for students grappling with the challenges of academia (Gilbert & Procter, 2006). Research, such as that conducted by Putra, (2016), has indicated that self-compassion is inversely related to academic stress.

Moreover, the role of family support in influencing students' academic stress cannot be overlooked. Family support offers emotional, informational, and practical assistance to students (Amaranggani et al., 2021). This support has been shown to significantly reduce

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stress among students (Nur et al., 2021). However, the precise mechanisms through which family support translates into reduced academic stress remain underexplored. This leads us to a potential avenue of inquiry: Could the influence of family support on academic stress be mediated by the students' level of self-compassion?

This research aims to explore the mediating role of self-compassion in the association between family support and academic stress among undergraduate students currently working on their thesis within the Faculty of Engineering and Science at University in Banyumas, Indonesia. The study seeks to understand whether self-compassion functions as a mechanism through which family support influences levels of academic stress, contributing to a deeper comprehension of the psychological factors that shape individuals' responses to academic demands.

METHOD

In this study, we employed a quantitative approach to analyze the relationships between the variables under investigation. Prior to data collection, we ensured that each informant had provided consent by following the established informant consent procedures. Data collection was conducted offline using the questionnaire, allowing respondents to conveniently complete the structured questionnaire. We adopted the stratified proportional random sampling method for sample selection, ensuring that each subgroup within the population was appropriately represented in our sample.

Participant

Participants were recruited from University in Purwokerto, Indonesia. We used simple random sampling technique to determine respondents in this study. The participants were asked for their consent before participating in the study. A total of 181 Undergraduates participated in the study with inclusion criteria is students who are completing their thesis. The average age was 23.12 with a large of 23 years and standar deviation of 1.04. Most of the participants with divorce problem, domestic violence problem and pass away problem. with regard to sex 64.6% identified as male and 35.4% identified as female.

MEASUREMENT

The academic stress scale consists of 24 items based on aspects, namely biological aspects, cognitive aspects, emotional aspects, and behavioral aspects according Rustam dan Tentama, (2020). This scale is also compiled using a Likert scale in the form of characters whose nature is in the form of closed statements. The number of votes consisted of 5 (Strongly Agree), 4 (Agree), 3 (Neutral), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly Disagree). The results of the academic stress scale reliability test $\alpha=0.866$, the higher the score indicates the higher the level of academic stress.

The Self Compassion Scale consists of 26 items based on aspects according to (Neff, 2003), namely Common humanity vs isolation, Self kindness vs self judgment and Mindfulness vs overidentification. This scale is also compiled using a Likert scale in the form of characters whose nature is in the form of closed statements. The number of votes consisted of 5 (Strongly Agree), 4 (Agree), 3 (Neutral), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly Disagree). The results of the self-compassion scale reliability test $\alpha=0.907$, the higher the score indicates the higher the level of self-compassion.

The family support scale consists of 24 items based on aspects according to Allen & Friedman (2010), namely aspects of emotional support, instrumental support, information support and appraisal support. This scale is also compiled using a Likert scale in the form of characters whose nature is in the form of closed statements. The number of votes consisted of 5 (Strongly Agree), 4 (Agree), 3 (Neutral), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly Disagree). The results of the family support scale reliability test $\alpha=0.912$. the higher the score indicates the higher the level of family support.

Data Analysis

Correlations among variables were examined using Pearson correlation coefficients. The analysis aimed to explore relationships between age, self-compassion, family support, and academic stress. The mediation analysis was conducted using bootstrapping procedures with the aid of statistical software Jamovi version 2.3.21. The analysis involved three main steps: Path Estimates: Initial path estimates were calculated to assess the relationships between family support and self-compassion, self-compassion and academic stress, and family support and academic stress. Mediation Estimates: Mediation estimates were computed to determine the direct and indirect effects of family support on academic stress. The indirect effect, representing the mediating role of self-compassion, was calculated as the product of the path from family support to self-compassion (a) and the path from self-compassion to academic stress (b). Total Effect: The total effect of family support on academic stress was calculated as the sum of the direct effect (path c) and the indirect effect ($a \times b$). Bootstrap resampling was employed to derive bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect and direct effects. Statistical significance was determined using Z-scores and p-values.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to explore the mediating role of self-compassion in the association between family support and academic stress among undergraduate students currently working on their thesis within the Faculty of Engineering and Science at University in

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Banyumas, Indonesia. We conducted correlation analysis among variables as the initial step of analysis before proceeding with further analysis.

Table 1. Correlation among variables

	Mean	SD	Age	Self Compassion	Family Support	Academic Stress
Age	23.12	1.04	—			
Self Compassion	92.46	11.6	0.08	—		
Family Support	69.23	9.76	0.06	0.86***	—	
Academic Stress	72.65	8.49	0.06	0.86***	0.84***	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 1 showed the descriptive statistics and correlations among variables in the study. Participants' average age was 23.12 years ($SD = 1.04$), with mean scores of 92.46 ($SD = 11.6$) for self compassion, 69.23 ($SD = 9.76$) for family support, and 72.65 ($SD = 8.49$) for academic stress. Significant correlations emerged between self compassion and family support ($r = 0.86$, $p < .001$), self compassion and academic stress ($r = 0.86$, $p < .001$), as well as family support and academic stress ($r = 0.84$, $p < .001$). Age showed a non-significant positive correlation with self compassion ($r = 0.08$, $p > .05$).

Table 2. Mediation Estimates

Effect	Label	β	SE	95% CI		Z	p	% Mediation
				LL	UL			
Indirect	$a \times b$	0.44	0.05	0.34	0.55	8.17	< .001	57.29
Direct	c	0.33	0.07	0.2	0.45	4.98	< .001	42.71
Total	$c + a \times b$	0.77	0.04	0.68	0.85	17.66	< .001	100

A mediation analysis was conducted to examine the role of self compassion as a mediator in the relationship between family support and academic stress. Path estimates and mediation estimates were assessed using bootstrapping. Mediation Estimates: The results of the mediation analysis are presented in Table 2. The indirect effect of family support on academic stress through self compassion was significant ($\beta = 0.44$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [0.34, 0.55], $Z = 8.17$, $p < .001$), accounting for 57.29% of the total mediation effect. The direct effect of family support on academic stress was also significant ($\beta = 0.33$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI [0.20, 0.45], $Z = 4.98$, $p < .001$), accounting for 42.71% of the total mediation effect. The total effect of family support on academic stress, considering both direct and indirect pathways, was significant ($\beta = 0.77$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [0.68, 0.85], $Z = 17.66$, $p < .001$), constituting the full mediation effect.

Table 3. Path Estimates

	Label	β	SE	95% CI		Z	p
				LL	UL		
Family Support → Self Compassion	a	1.03	0.05	0.93	1.11	21.64	< .001
Self Compassion → Academic Stress	b	0.43	0.05	0.33	0.52	9.21	< .001
Family Support → Academic Stress	c	0.33	0.07	0.2	0.45	4.98	< .001

Path Estimates showed in table 3. The relationship between family support and self compassion was significant ($\beta = 1.03$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [0.93, 1.11], $Z = 21.64$, $p < .001$). Similarly, the relationship between self compassion and academic stress was significant ($\beta = 0.43$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [0.33, 0.52], $Z = 9.21$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, the relationship between family support and academic stress was significant ($\beta = 0.33$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI [0.20, 0.45], $Z = 4.98$, $p < .001$). These findings highlight the significant mediating role of self compassion in the relationship between family support and academic stress. The pathways from family support to self compassion and from self compassion to academic stress contribute to the overall mediation effect.

The present study aimed to investigate the potential mediating role of self-compassion in the relationship between family support and academic stress among undergraduate students engaged in thesis writing. The results of the mediation analysis provide valuable insights into the complex interplay of these variables and offer implications for understanding and addressing academic stress in higher education.

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The correlation analysis conducted as an initial step revealed significant associations between self-compassion, family support, and academic stress. These findings are in line with existing literature that underscores the influence of family support on psychological well-being and the importance of self-compassion in managing stressors (Allen, K. N., & Friedman, 2010; Neff, 2003). The significant correlations suggest that students with higher levels of self-compassion tend to perceive stronger familial support and experience lower levels of academic stress.

Importantly, the mediation analysis provided a deeper understanding of how self-compassion operates as a mechanism through which family support impacts academic stress. The substantial indirect effect of family support on academic stress through self-compassion highlights the significance of self-compassion in buffering the negative effects of stressors. These findings align with previous research that has demonstrated self-compassion's role in mitigating the adverse impacts of stress and fostering emotional resilience (Gilbert & Procter, 2006; Reyes, 2011).

Furthermore, the direct effect of family support on academic stress remains noteworthy. While self-compassion plays a crucial role in mediating this relationship, the direct impact of family support suggests that supportive family environments can directly alleviate academic stress. This finding emphasizes the importance of familial relationships and highlights their potential role as protective factors against stressors associated with academic pursuits.

The individual path estimates corroborated the results of the mediation analysis, illustrating the significant relationships between family support, self-compassion, and academic stress. The strength and significance of these relationships emphasize the multifaceted nature of academic stress experiences. The finding that family support was positively related to self-compassion underscores the idea that supportive family environments contribute to the development of self-compassion in individuals (Neff, 2003).

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on academic stress among undergraduate students. By investigating the mediating role of self-compassion in the relationship between family support and academic stress, this research provides valuable insights for educational institutions and policymakers. Fostering family support and promoting self-compassion interventions could enhance students' well-being and their ability to cope with academic challenges. Recognizing the potential for family support to directly alleviate academic stress further underscores the importance of creating conducive familial environments for students' academic success. Future research could delve deeper into the nuances of family dynamics and the mechanisms underlying the relationship between family support, self-compassion, and academic stress, ultimately contributing to more effective strategies for supporting students' mental health and academic achievements.

The present study offers several strengths that enhance the credibility of its findings. First, the study employed a rigorous sampling technique, utilizing simple random sampling, to ensure a representative sample of undergraduate students. This approach increases the generalizability of the results to similar populations. Additionally, the use of validated measurement scales for academic stress, self-compassion, and family support enhances the reliability and validity of the data collected. The mediation analysis allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the relationships between family support, self-compassion, and academic stress, providing insights into the underlying mechanisms.

However, the study also has some limitations that should be considered. The cross-sectional design of the study prevents the establishment of causal relationships among the variables. Longitudinal studies could offer more insight into the temporal dynamics of family support, self-compassion development, and academic stress over time. Moreover, the study focused on undergraduate students from a specific university and cultural context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to different settings and populations. Additionally, the reliance on self-report measures could introduce response bias and social desirability effects, influencing the accuracy of the obtained data.

The findings of this study have significant implications for both academia and mental health professionals. The identified mediating role of self-compassion underscores the importance of promoting self-compassion interventions among students to mitigate the adverse effects of academic stress. Educational institutions can consider incorporating self-compassion training programs as part of their student support services, potentially leading to improved well-being and academic performance. Furthermore, recognizing the direct impact of family support on academic stress emphasizes the need for family-oriented interventions that foster supportive environments. Engaging families in discussions about their roles in reducing academic stress could enhance students' overall experiences in higher education.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of academic stress experiences among undergraduate students by investigating the mediating role of self-compassion in the relationship between family support and academic stress. The results highlight the significance of self-compassion as a protective mechanism that can buffer the negative impact of stressors. Moreover, the direct effect of family support on academic stress underscores the potential of familial relationships to alleviate stressors associated with academic pursuits. By recognizing the roles of both self-compassion and family support, educational institutions and policymakers can develop more effective strategies to support students' mental health and academic success. However, it is

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important to consider the limitations of the study and further explore these relationships through longitudinal and cross-cultural investigations.

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