

Examining Self-Compassion, Social Support, And Mental Well-Being Among Fast Track Students at UIN Malang

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi hubungan antara self-compassion, dukungan sosial yang dirasakan, stres akademik, dan kesehatan mental di antara mahasiswa *Fast-Track* di UIN Malang. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif, penelitian ini menggunakan desain korelasional untuk menguji interaksi variabel-variabel tersebut dalam lingkungan akademik yang penuh tekanan. Data dikumpulkan dari 61% sampel mahasiswa *Fast Track* dengan menggunakan kuesioner terstruktur, dengan menggunakan skala yang telah divalidasi untuk mengukur self-compassion, dukungan sosial, stres akademik, dan kesejahteraan mental. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa mahasiswa *Fast-Track* umumnya menunjukkan belas kasih yang tinggi, yang secara signifikan berkorelasi dengan kesejahteraan mental mereka. Tingkat kebaikan diri yang tinggi, perhatian penuh, dan kesadaran akan kemanusiaan bersama menonjol di antara para siswa, menunjukkan ketahanan psikologis yang kuat. Dukungan sosial yang dirasakan dari keluarga dan teman secara signifikan berdampak pada kesejahteraan secara keseluruhan, meskipun pengaruh langsungnya terhadap stres akademik lebih kompleks. Penelitian ini tidak menemukan hubungan langsung yang signifikan antara belas kasih dan stres akademik, yang menunjukkan bahwa belas kasih membantu dalam mengelola respons emosional terhadap stres daripada menguranginya. Studi ini menggarisbawahi perlunya pendekatan holistik untuk mendukung siswa dalam program akselerasi akademik. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa meningkatkan belas kasih diri dan memperkuat jaringan dukungan sosial dapat meningkatkan kinerja akademik dan kesehatan mental mahasiswa. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam memahami dinamika psikologis siswa dalam lingkungan akademis yang penuh tekanan. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan untuk mengembangkan intervensi yang ditargetkan dan sistem dukungan untuk menumbuhkan lingkungan pendidikan yang seimbang dan mendukung.

Kata kunci: *Dukungan Sosial; Kasih Sayang Diri; Kesehatan Mental; Mahasiswa Fast-track; Stres Akademik*

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between self-compassion, perceived social support, academic stress, and mental well-being among Fast Track students at UIN Malang. Adopting a quantitative approach, the research employs a correlational design to examine the interactions of these variables in a high-pressure academic environment. Data were collected from a 61% sample of Fast Track students using a structured questionnaire, incorporating validated scales for self-compassion, social support, academic stress, and mental well-being. The findings reveal that Fast Track students generally exhibit high self-compassion, significantly correlated with their mental well-being. High levels of self-kindness, mindfulness, and an awareness of shared humanity were prominent among the students, suggesting a solid psychological resilience. Perceived social support from family and friends significantly impacted overall well-being, though its direct influence on academic stress was more complex. The research did not find a significant direct relationship between self-compassion and academic stress, indicating that self-compassion aids in managing emotional responses to stress rather than reducing it. The study underscores the need for a holistic approach to supporting students in accelerated academic programs. The findings suggest that enhancing self-compassion and strengthening social support networks can improve students' academic performance and mental well-being. This research contributes to understanding students' psychological dynamics in high-pressure academic settings. It provides insights for developing targeted interventions and support systems to foster a balanced and supportive educational environment.

Keywords: *Academic Stress, Fast Track Students, Mental Well-Being, Perceived Social Support, Self-Compassion*

INTRODUCTION

The Fast Track Program at UIN Malang is an innovative educational scheme designed for students eager to complete both their Bachelor's and Master's degrees in a relatively short time. This program allows students to blend undergraduate and postgraduate courses, enabling them to achieve both degrees quicker than regular programs. The Fast Track program, primarily targeting students with high academic capabilities and motivation, requires them to embark on Master's courses during their seventh semester of Bachelor's studies. While offering benefits in terms of time, cost, and advanced academic skills development, the program also demands significant commitment and dedication due to its intensive study load and increased pressure. (Panduan Fast Track, 2022)

Fast Track students at UIN Malang face unique challenges in their academic environment. They endure a high-intensity curriculum with a compact schedule, requiring them to quickly complete undergraduate and postgraduate programs. This scenario creates higher academic stress and workload compared to regular students. The substantial academic demands, coupled with the challenge of balancing thesis work and Master's assignments, limit their time for rest and study, necessitating effective time management and prioritization skills.

Financial aspects also influence Fast Track students' conditions at UIN Malang. The program often incurs higher costs, including increased tuition fees and additional expenses for

intensive academic activities. This financial burden adds to the stress and strain, particularly for students with limited financial resources. Academic stress manifests as time pressure, heavy task loads, intense competition, and high self or external expectations, leading to anxiety, fatigue, tension, and significant feelings of inadequacy.

High levels of academic stress negatively impact students' mental well-being, potentially leading to reduced motivation, mental exhaustion, depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders (Barusi, 2021). Prolonged and unmanaged academic stress can impair cognitive, emotional, and social functions, highlighting the importance of understanding and managing academic stress to maintain students' mental well-being (Irfada et al., 2023). Fast Track students must develop self-compassion and perceive positive social support to combat high academic stress. Self-compassion refers to being kind and accepting of oneself in the face of failure or hardship. High levels of self-compassion can help students reduce self-criticism and develop patience, understanding, and attentiveness to their needs and well-being (Waters et al., 2022). Moreover, a positive perception of social support from peers, family, and the community is vital. Students feeling supported will likely have more confidence and emotional security, helping them better cope with academic pressures (S. Li et al., 2020).

While existing studies, such as those by Barusi (Barusi, 2021), Irfada et al. (Irfada et al., 2023), Waters et al. (Waters et al., 2022), and Li et al. (Li et al., 2020), have addressed the negative impacts of academic stress and the role of self-compassion and social support, there remains a gap in the exploration of how these strategies may vary across different educational contexts or cultures. Specifically, further research is needed to examine whether the effectiveness of self-compassion and social support differs in various demographic groups, such as international students, or among those in non-traditional educational tracks like Fast Track programs. Additionally, more longitudinal studies are needed to investigate the long-term effects of these interventions on students' mental well-being beyond immediate academic pressures.

This research focuses on the relationship between self-compassion, perceived social support, academic stress, and mental well-being among Fast Track students at UIN Malang, emphasizing its importance and relevance in the ever-evolving educational landscape. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective interventions and support mechanisms to tackle academic stress and promote students' mental well-being. The research also incorporates a gender analysis perspective, which is crucial for understanding how gender roles influence these issues. Gender analysis will reveal differences in how male and female

students experience and respond to academic stress, the coping strategies they employ, and the impact on their mental well-being. It will also explore how gender influences the perception and experience of stress, the utilization of coping strategies, and the consequences for mental well-being. The findings will provide a deeper understanding of how gender affects the relationships between the studied variables, offering a foundation for developing more appropriate and relevant interventions and support to address academic stress and enhance the mental well-being of Fast Track students at UIN Malang, considering gender differences in experiences and needs.

In conclusion, this research aims to comprehensively understand the relationship between self-compassion, perceived social support, academic stress, and mental well-being among Fast Track students at UIN Malang. By incorporating gender analysis, it offers insights that can guide educational institutions in designing supportive programs and environments conducive to the growth and development of Fast Track students, ultimately contributing to their academic success and overall well-being.

METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative approach, emphasizing data collection through instruments for gathering numerical data and applying statistical methods for analysis. Specifically, a correlational design is employed to identify the existence and strength of relationships among variables, namely self-compassion, perceived social support, academic stress, and mental well-being. This design aims not to establish causality but to detect potential patterns of association. Pearson's correlation coefficient, ranging from -1 to +1, assesses the strength and direction of linear relationships between these quantitative variables. The correlational design facilitates multivariate analysis, allowing simultaneous examination of multiple variables to understand their interplay.

Data collection involves disseminating a questionnaire via Google Forms to Fast Track students at UIN Malang from the 2022/2023 batch, utilizing random sampling to select participants based on active program participation and willingness to complete the survey. Data were collected from a 61% population sample of 185 Fast Track students. The sample included 65% male and 35% female students aged 21-22, representing various academic disciplines. Additionally, the participants were selected based on their active participation in the program and willingness to complete the survey.

The questionnaire incorporates four variables: self-compassion (measured by a modified 12-item version of Kristin Neff's Self-Compassion Scale), perceived social support (assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support), academic stress (evaluated with the Student Stress Inventory), and mental well-being (measured by the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale). Data analysis includes testing for validity and reliability. The validity of the instruments was confirmed through a factor analysis, where all items loaded significantly on their respective constructs with factor loadings ranging from 0.65 to 0.85, indicating strong construct validity. The reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with values for the four scales being 0.89 for self-compassion, 0.91 for perceived social support, 0.87 for academic stress, and 0.90 for mental well-being, all indicating high internal consistency. Additionally, normality and linearity prerequisites were met, and Pearson's correlation test was employed to assess the relationships between variables, with significance determined by p-values less than 0.05.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Levels of Self-Compassion, Perceiving Social Support, Academic Stress, and Mental Well-Being of Fast Track Students at UIN Malang

a. Interpretation of Results

The levels of self-compassion, perceived social support, academic stress, and mental well-being among Fast Track students at UIN Malang present diverse student experiences. The self-compassion scale (\bar{x} 3.37) indicates that students generally exhibit a moderate ability to be gentle and understanding toward themselves in the face of difficulties. Regarding social support (\bar{x} 3.97), students tend to feel strong support from their surrounding environment, an essential aspect of maintaining psychosocial balance in a competitive atmosphere. However, academic stress (\bar{x} 3.11) suggests that Fast Track students experience significant academic pressure, though not to a critical level. Mental well-being (\bar{x} 4.08) shows that students generally feel mentally healthy. Specifically, the MPI study program has the highest self-compassion score (\bar{x} 3.83), while PGMI records the lowest (3.04). The HES program reports the highest perception of social support (4.33), whereas PAI has the lowest (3.84). Academic stress is highest in the Islamic Studies program (3.43), contrasting with ES, which has the lowest academic stress (2.25). Mental well-being is highest among HES students (4.29), while the Biology program ranks lowest (3.50). These findings can serve as a basis for UIN Malang to explore targeted

intervention strategies to enhance emotional resilience and support Fast Track students' academic success. However, further research with a larger sample is needed to analyze the factors contributing to the varying levels of these variables across different study programs.

The study indicates that Fast Track students at UIN Malang generally exhibit high levels of self-compassion, which is marked by solid tendencies towards self-kindness, mindfulness, and an awareness of common humanity. This aligns with the hypothesis that students facing higher academic demands may develop greater self-compassion as an adaptive psychological mechanism.

Respondents perceive significant social support from family and friends, supporting the hypothesis that high social support correlates with lower academic stress and better mental well-being. The consistency in normality test results reinforces the reliability of these findings, indicating that social solid support perception is a common phenomenon among the sample.

Regarding academic stress, average scores suggest that role conflict is perceived as lower despite high academic demands and time pressures. This may indicate that Fast Track students have developed effective time management and prioritization strategies or found a better balance between academic and social roles, challenging common assumptions about role conflict as a primary component of academic stress.

Overall, mental well-being is reported as high, with average scores reflecting strong positive feelings, good social relationships, feelings of autonomy, competence, and high self-regard. This supports the hypothesis that self-compassion and positively perceived social support correlate with mental well-being. The linearity test results confirm that the relationships between these variables tend to be linear, reinforcing traditional models of psychological variable interactions.

A descriptive analysis of scores related to social support perception, academic stress, and mental well-being among undergraduate and postgraduate students at UIN Malang shows consistently high scores for HES program students, indicating high perceived social support and low academic stress levels. Conversely, programs like Biology and Islamic Studies indicate higher academic stress. For Biology, this could be due to the heavy laboratory workload and research demands. At the same time, for Islamic Studies, the high stress could stem from the intellectual intensity of the material and high expectations for students to master complex concepts.

Regarding mental well-being, PAI (Islamic Education) and HES programs show high scores, reflecting successful balancing and resource provision to support student well-being.

PAI, especially, shows high mental well-being despite variations in social support, possibly due to strong community support and values embedded in the curriculum.

These findings emphasize the importance of a holistic approach in education, focusing on academic achievement, student well-being, and social support. Attention to the balance between academic demands and socio-emotional support plays a crucial role in enhancing the educational experience and overall student well-being.

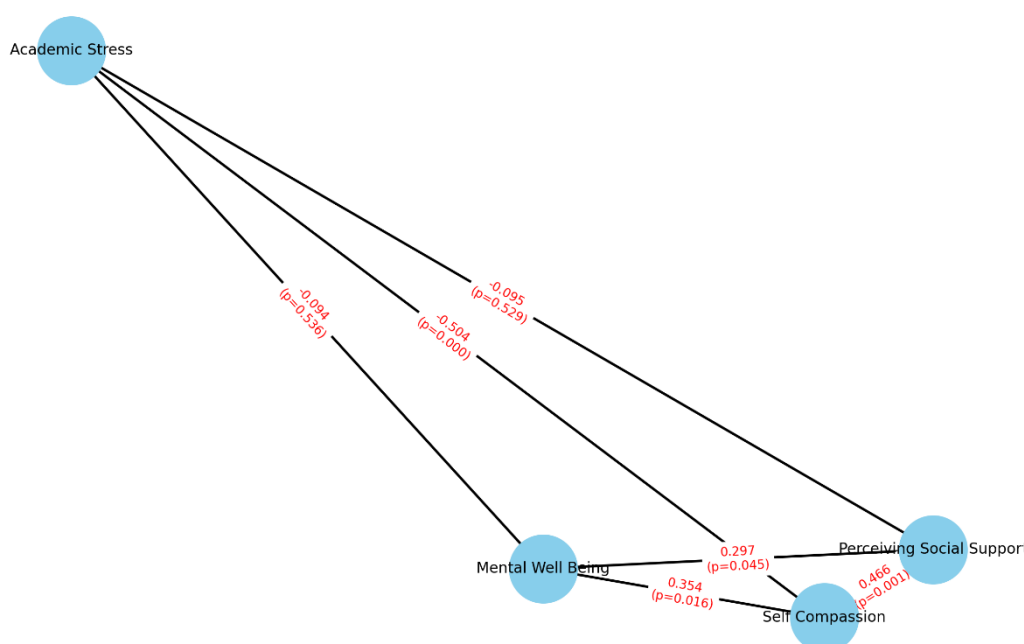
This study also found a significant correlation between self-compassion and perceived social support among Fast Track students at UIN Malang ($r=0.297$, $p=0.045$). This indicates that students' ability to be kind and forgiving toward themselves can enhance their capacity to perceive and utilize social support from their environment. Furthermore, a significant negative relationship exists between self-compassion and academic stress ($r=-0.504$, $p=0.000$), suggesting that self-compassion may be a buffer in managing academic pressure and demands. The study did not find a significant relationship between perceived social support and academic stress ($r=-0.095$, $p=0.529$). Social support for Fast Track students at UIN Malang does not directly impact their level of academic stress. This suggests that the influence of social support on reducing academic stress may be more complex and indirect, potentially mediated by other factors such as stress coping strategies or the nature of academic stress itself. Finally, both self-compassion and perceived social support show positive correlations with mental well-being ($r=-0.354$, $p=0.016$ and $r=0.297$, $p=0.045$, respectively). In contrast, no positive relationship was found between academic stress and mental well-being ($r=-0.094$, $p=0.536$). as shown in the following table:

Table 1.

Variable

Variable	Self Compassion	Perceiving Social Support	Academic Stress	Mental Well Being
Self Compassion	-	0.466 (0.001)	-0.504 (0.000)	0.354 (0.016)
Perceiving Social Support	0.466 (0.001)	-	-0.095 (0.529)	0.297 (0.045)
Academic Stress	-0.504 (0.000)	-0.095 (0.529)	-	-0.094 (0.536)
Mental Well Being	0.354 (0.016)	0.297 (0.045)	-0.094 (0.536)	-

The relationship between these four variables is illustrated in the following visual representation:



Overall, the findings affirm the theoretical view that self-compassion, perceived social support, and academic stress are critical factors in determining students' mental well-being. These factors appear to function within an interconnected system, where self-compassion provides a strong internal foundation, allowing students to navigate academic challenges and utilize available social support more effectively, thereby promoting better mental well-being.

The study underscores the importance of a holistic approach to supporting students. Educational institutions are advised to focus not just on academic aspects but also on developing intrapersonal skills like self-compassion and building supportive communities that strengthen social connections as strategies to enhance mental well-being.

b. Relevance of Research Findings to Theory

Self-compassion is a concept in psychology referring to how individuals relate to themselves, especially during difficult times or failures. Dr. Kristin Neff, a leading researcher in this field, has identified six components contributing to self-compassion: self-kindness vs. self-judgment, common humanity vs. isolation, and mindfulness vs. over-identification (Neff et al., 2021). The study's high scores in self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness indicate that Fast Track students at UIN Malang have a warm and accepting attitude towards themselves, recognize their experiences as part of the human experience, and maintain a balanced awareness of their current experiences.

The high self-kindness scores among students can be interpreted as a strong indicator of their ability to adopt a compassionate attitude toward themselves when facing challenges and failures. According to Kristin Neff's theory, self-kindness is a core component of self-compassion, including common humanity and mindfulness. In Neff's framework, self-kindness involves being warm and understanding towards oneself in suffering and not criticizing oneself. In the academic context, students often face pressures academically and socially, and the ability to practice self-kindness can be an essential buffer against stress and pressure.

Ariyani et al.'s research found that female students have slightly higher levels of self-compassion than male students, with self-kindness being a dominant component of their self-compassion (Politeknik Manufaktur Bandung et al., 2019). This suggests that female students may be more likely to understand and accept themselves and offer gentleness to themselves when facing difficulties.

Lower self-judgment scores among students indicate a tendency not to be overly critical of themselves. In Kristin Neff's self-compassion theory framework, self-judgment refers to the tendency to judge oneself harshly when facing failures or difficulties, the opposite of self-kindness. Research in positive psychology and mental health has shown that lower self-judgment often correlates with higher psychological well-being.

When students score low on self-judgment, this can indicate that they have a more accepting and understanding attitude towards their flaws and mistakes. This is consistent with research showing that individuals with low self-judgment tend to have lower stress levels and higher resilience in facing academic and life challenges. They are also more likely to experience positive emotions and have better social relationships, which are important components of psychological well-being.

In a higher education environment, where students often face high academic pressures, not judging themselves too harshly can help reduce academic anxiety and improve academic performance. Therefore, approaches that reduce self-judgment and strengthen other aspects of self-compassion, such as self-kindness and mindfulness, could be effective strategies to support students' mental health and academic success.

Furthermore, Neff's research emphasizes that self-compassion, involving self-kindness, is a productive way to deal with painful thoughts and emotions, ultimately supporting mental and physical well-being. Neff's research also challenges common myths about self-compassion, such as the assumption that self-compassion is a sign of weakness, selfishness, or overly indulgent behavior.

High scores in the "common humanity" aspect indicate that students have a strong understanding that difficulties and suffering are integral parts of the human experience. In Kristin Neff's self-compassion theory, "common humanity" is recognizing that failure and difficulties are not exclusive or isolated to an individual but are universal aspects of human life. This understanding can alleviate feelings of isolation by helping individuals understand that they are not alone when facing challenges. According to Neff, when someone acknowledges that difficulty is always present in everyone's life, they are more likely to feel connected with others when facing tough times rather than feeling alienated or separate. This is highly relevant for students, who often face academic and social pressures that can create feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Research findings have shown that individuals with high scores on the "common humanity" aspect generally have stronger social relationships, show more empathy, and receive more excellent social support. In addition, they tend to cope with stress healthier, adopt a broader perspective on the problems they face, and feel less shame or alienation when experiencing failure.

In an educational context, understanding "common humanity" can help students be more empathetic towards their fellow students and create a more supportive and less competitive environment. This can also facilitate collaborative learning and improve academic performance, as students feel more comfortable sharing their concerns and seeking help when needed.

Low scores on the isolation aspect indicate that students feel sufficiently connected with others and do not feel isolated when facing problems. These findings support existing literature stating that feelings of isolation can worsen stress and mental well-being. Good social connections and a sense of community involvement can provide emotional and practical support, which is essential for managing stress and nurturing mental health.

High scores on mindfulness indicate that students are aware of their current experiences without overreacting or rejecting them. Literature has shown that mindfulness, full awareness, and acceptance of current experiences contribute to healthier responses to stress. Mindfulness practices can help individuals not get carried away by negative thoughts and emotions, allowing them to respond to situations calmer and more controlled.

Relatively low scores on over-identification suggest that students do not overly identify with their negative thoughts and feelings. Over-identification, or the tendency to become too involved with negative thoughts and emotions, can exacerbate stress and mental health issues.

The ability to maintain a distance from negative thoughts and emotions allows individuals to confront them without becoming overwhelmed, which can help manage stress and maintain better mental health.

The finding that perceived social support significantly impacts stress and individual well-being is consistent with the broad theory of social support. This theory emphasizes the importance of the quality and quantity of social support as factors influencing how individuals experience and manage stress. High scores in social support from family and friends reflect the 'buffering hypothesis' in social support theory. This hypothesis states that social support acts as a buffer or shield that protects individuals from the harmful effects of stressors. In other words, strong social support can mitigate the negative impact of stressors on an individual's health and well-being.

In the context of fast-track students, who may face heavier academic demands and more significant time pressures, strong perceived social support can be an essential resource. This support can come in emotional forms, such as empathy and understanding; instrumental, such as practical help with tasks; or informational, such as providing advice or helpful information. Such support can help students manage their academic stress more effectively, maintain psychological well-being, and possibly contribute to academic success.

Strong social support can promote resilience, allowing students to recover from failures or setbacks more quickly. It can also enhance their sense of belonging and attachment to the academic community, a crucial factor in student retention and academic success.

Academic stress theory typically refers to Lazarus and Folkman's transactional stress model, highlighting the relationship between individuals and their environment (Biggs et al., 2017). According to this model, stress occurs when individuals perceive environmental demands exceeding their resources to cope with the situation. Looking at the average scores of fast-track students, we see that academic demands and time pressures tend to be high, indicating significant pressure due to heavy workloads and tight deadlines.

However, there is a low level of role conflict among these students, which may indicate that they do not experience significant conflict between various roles, such as academic, social, and possibly part-time work roles. This might suggest that conventional stress theory does not fully capture the complexity of fast-track students' experiences. They may have developed effective adjustment mechanisms or have strong support that helps them manage these dual demands.

This support could involve a strong social support system from family, friends, and educational institutions, helping them cope with academic demands and time pressures. Additionally, fast-track students may have good time management and organizational skills, helping them manage academic demands more efficiently.

Another important aspect is the high motivation and commitment that fast-track students have towards their studies. This may help them cope with academic stress more effectively. They might also be more accepting of academic demands as part of their educational journey and have realistic expectations of their challenges.

Carol Ryff's theory of mental well-being is a comprehensive framework identifying six significant factors contributing to psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. In the context of fast-track students at UIN Malang, findings indicating high levels of competence and autonomy can be interpreted through the lens of this model (Ryff & Singer, 2008). Autonomy in Ryff's model refers to an individual's ability to be themselves and make choices consistent with their values and beliefs, even in the face of external pressures. High autonomy levels among fast-track students suggest that they feel in control of their decisions and actions, an essential indicator of psychological well-being.

Competence, or environmental mastery, is managing a complex living environment and utilizing available opportunities. Fast-track students who show high levels of competence likely feel effective in managing their daily lives and achieving the goals they set, which also supports psychological well-being. High self-regard, often linked with self-acceptance in Ryff's model, relates to having a positive attitude towards oneself and accepting both positive and negative aspects of the self. High self-regard indicates that students have congruence between their self-perceptions and expectations, suggesting alignment between personal aspirations and self-reality, affirming good psychological well-being.

The consistency between high levels of competence, autonomy, and self-regard, as shown by Ryff's theory, indicates that fast-track students at UIN Malang may have psychological solid well-being. They seem to be able to navigate academic challenges and life with confidence and effectiveness, allowing them to feel satisfied and function well psychologically. This affirms the importance of these factors in supporting mental well-being and suggests that higher education, incredibly intensive fast-track programs, can significantly benefit students' personal and psychological development.

To analyze why specific study programs have the highest or lowest levels of perceived social support, academic stress, and mental well-being, researchers should consider various factors that may influence these indicators in an academic context. Previous research has mentioned various factors influencing the tendency of high or low levels of academic stress, such as self-compassion, perceived social support, academic stress, and mental well-being. Therefore, further research is needed to uncover more deeply the factors influencing these aspects' high and low levels.

2. Relationship Between Self-Compassion, Perceiving Social Support, Academic Stress, and Mental Well-Being of Fast Track Students at UIN Malang

The research reveals a significant correlation between self-compassion, perceived social support, academic stress, and students' mental well-being. It was found that these variables are interrelated, where an increase in one variable tends to be followed by changes in others. However, previous studies on these topics have presented strengths and weaknesses that justify further exploration.

Previous studies, such as those by Neff (Neff et al., 2021) and P. Li et al. (Li et al., 2020) have established a solid foundation for understanding the role of self-compassion and social support in student well-being. These studies show that self-compassion is critical in fostering resilience and reducing stress, while social support provides an emotional buffer against academic pressures. However, many of these studies have focused predominantly on traditional students or general student populations, with limited research specifically targeting Fast Track students, who often face unique and intensified academic demands. Moreover, much of the existing literature focuses on the short-term impact of these variables without considering their long-term effects on mental well-being and academic performance over time.

Given these gaps, the rationale for conducting this research lies in exploring the specific dynamics of self-compassion, social support, and academic stress within the Fast Track program at UIN Malang. Fast Track students face heavier coursework and tighter deadlines, creating a distinct academic environment that needs to be sufficiently studied in previous research. Furthermore, the lack of longitudinal data or insights into how self-compassion and social support may interact over time with academic stress underlines the necessity for more focused studies on this population.

In terms of similarities, this study supports earlier research findings, such as Neff's theory of self-compassion and its role in improving psychological resilience. Like Neff, this research

confirms that students with higher levels of self-compassion tend to exhibit better mental well-being, even amidst academic challenges. Similarly, the role of social support in contributing to mental well-being, as found by Saud et al. (Saud et al., 2021), is also corroborated in this study, particularly among Fast Track students, who rely on their social networks to navigate academic stress.

However, this study differs in several critical aspects from prior research. Firstly, while previous studies have found a stronger correlation between social support and reduced academic stress, this study found no significant direct correlation between social support and academic stress ($r = -0.095$, $p = 0.529$). This suggests that in the context of Fast Track students, the relationship between social support and academic stress is more complex, potentially mediated by other factors such as coping strategies or the nature of the academic pressure itself. Additionally, previous studies have not focused on Fast Track programs or the Indonesian educational context, making this research essential to understanding these variables in a high-pressure, accelerated academic setting.

The accelerated nature of Fast Track programs presents a unique opportunity to study how students cope with heightened academic demands. This study provides novel insights into the role of self-compassion in helping students manage these demands effectively, even when social support alone does not significantly reduce their stress. Moreover, given the increasing prevalence of accelerated academic programs worldwide, understanding how students in such programs maintain their mental well-being is crucial for developing effective support systems and interventions. Focusing on Fast Track students, this research fills a gap in the literature that addresses a specific and understudied student demographic.

Understanding the interplay between self-compassion, social support, academic stress, and mental well-being among Fast Track students suggests targeted intervention programs. For example, universities could develop workshops or counseling services to foster self-compassion and enhance social support networks. Additionally, future studies should consider a longitudinal approach to assess how these variables evolve and their long-term impact on mental well-being and academic success.

CONCLUSION

The research on Fast Track students at UIN Malang offers a comprehensive look into the relationship between self-compassion, perceived social support, academic stress, and mental

well-being. This study aimed to explore how these psychological variables interact in a high-pressure academic environment, shedding light on the unique challenges faced by students in accelerated academic programs.

Firstly, the study found that Fast Track students exhibit high levels of self-compassion, which is closely tied to their mental well-being. Critical components like self-kindness, mindfulness, and an awareness of shared humanity are essential internal resources that help students navigate academic demands. This suggests that students with higher self-compassion are more resilient to emotional difficulties, although it does not directly reduce their academic stress. Secondly, perceived social support plays a significant role in student well-being, though its direct impact on academic stress is less evident. The findings indicate that social support from family, friends, and the academic community is vital for emotional and practical support. However, its influence on academic stress reduction is more complex and likely mediated by other factors. The study also highlights differences in how self-compassion affects academic stress, emphasizing its role in managing emotional responses rather than directly alleviating academic demands. This opens avenues for further exploration of the connection between internal coping strategies and external academic pressures.

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