Peer Counseling as A Strategy for Overcoming Academic Stress and Burnout

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ABSTRACT: This research seeks to explore and analyze the effectiveness of peer guidance and counseling (Peer Counseling) in addressing academic stress and burnout experienced by final-year students in Metro City. Academic stress, defined as the pressure stemming from academic demands and competition, is a common issue among students, particularly those nearing the end of their studies. Burnout, which often accompanies this stress, manifests in feelings of exhaustion, detachment, and decreased academic performance. Through the method of library research, this study examines how peer counseling can be utilized as a strategy to alleviate these challenges. Peer counseling provides a supportive environment where students can share their experiences, seek advice, and receive emotional support from their peers. The findings of this research suggest that there is a significant relationship between academic stress and burnout, and that peer counseling has the potential to play a key role in mitigating these issues, thus improving students' overall well-being and academic success. Furthermore, this research emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive academic environment that can help students cope with the pressures they face in their final year of study.

INTRODUCTION

Students who are studying at university are faced with various demands which will later help them to adapt to the real work environment. In carrying out their studies, students must adapt to an education system, learning methods and social skills that are very different from their previous level of education (Khoo, Abu-rasain, & Hornby in Chai, 2012). They are also expected to be able to fulfill various demands such as fulfilling lecture assignments, facing the complexity of lecture material which is increasingly difficult from year to year, making social adjustments in the campus environment, and fulfilling hopes to achieve academic achievement (Heiman & Kariv in Alfian, 2014).

Students who are unable to handle lecture problems efficiently will make them vulnerable to burnout. Burnout in the academic field or academic burnout is defined as feeling tired because of the demands of study, having a cynical attitude towards lecture assignments, and feeling incompetent as a student (Schaufeli, et al., 2002). Cordes (in Law, 2007) states that burnout in individuals is related to the deterioration of interpersonal relationships and the development of negative behavior that can damage the individual concerned. Students who experience burnout will miss class (absenteeism), not do their assignments well, and get bad exam results and ultimately have the potential to be expelled from college (Law, 2007).

The impact of burnout in the form of students being expelled from higher education or what is known as dropping out has often occurred in several universities in Indonesia. Ratnaningsih, Asep, and Hari (2008) found that the drop out rate from 2001 to 2007 at the Open University reached

85.08%, the majority of which was influenced by students' learning resilience. To overcome this, KM-ITB provides counseling for those who are at risk of dropping out. The high drop out rate, which is mostly caused by academic problems, has prompted several universities in Indonesia to open psychological consultation services for students.

Academic problems that are not resolved immediately have the potential to cause academic burnout in students. Leiter & Maslach (2000) say that there are six factors that influence whether or not burnout appears, namely workload, control, the relationship between School Engagement, Academic Self-Efficacy and Academic Burnout in Students (Fitri Arlinkasari and Sari Zakiah Akmal) 83 reward, community, value and fairness. In the context of lectures, workload can take the form of doing many lecture tasks such as preparing papers, understanding journals, making presentations, and preparing for exams in a short time. Control, such as difficulty in making decisions regarding coursework due to the influence of more dominant friends, lecturers, or campus regulations. Rewards, for example, students do not receive appreciation from lecturers, classmates or parents for their academic achievements. Community, for example, students do not have good relationships with classmates or lecturers so they feel less comfortable carrying out their lectures. Value can be in the form of a mismatch between the values that students adhere to and the demands of lectures. Fairness can be seen when students feel they have been treated unfairly by campus parties.

There are many factors that have the potential to cause academic burnout in students, which can become obstacles for students in carrying out their studies. To overcome this problem, Ugwo, et al (2013) suggest that students have adequate self-efficacy to protect themselves from potential academic burnout. Apart from confidence in students displaying maximum academic performance, stressful situations that have the potential to cause academic burnout can also be overcome by positive feelings, attitudes and behavior towards academic demands (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris in Bilge, Dost, Cetin, 2014).

Education has a very important meaning for the lives and development of students. Education at school can meet several students' needs and determine the quality of their lives in the future. However, in the educational process at school, students often experience stress due to their inability to adapt to the school program. The stress experienced by students in the school environment will accumulate into psychological disorders and physical illnesses (Santrock, J. W. 2007; Hidayat, B. U. A. 2012). The stress that is often experienced by students is academic stress (Taufik, T., Ifdil, 2013). Academic stress is a source of stress that occurs in school settings (Calaguas, 2011; Azhar, A. 2015). There are several factors that cause stress in students, namely academic demands that are considered too heavy, poor exam results, piling up assignments, and the social environment. Academic stress is stress that is included in the distress category (Rahmawati, W. K. 2017; Adawiyah, R. 2017).

Academic stress is a situation where students are unable to face academic demands and perceive the academic demands they receive as a nuisance. Academic stress is caused by academic stressors (Sayekti, E. (2017). Academic stressors are stress that stems from the learning process such as: pressure to advance to class, long periods of studying, cheating, lots of assignments, low achievements, decisions about majors and careers, and anxiety when facing exams (Rahmawati, W. K. 2017).

Academic stress is pressure that occurs within students caused by competition and academic demands. In line with this (Taufik, T., & Ifdil, I. 2013; Muharrifah, A. 2009) explains that academic stress arises when expectations for achieving academic achievement increase, both from parents, teachers and peers. These expectations often do not match the students' abilities, giving rise to psychological pressure that affects learning achievement at school. Furthermore, according to Thurson (2005) academic stress can be caused by subject matter that is difficult for students, so that

students appear afraid of the teacher who teaches. Students whose level of resilience (ability to adapt) to stress is good can have good learning outcomes. Pressure and demands that originate from academic activities are called academic stress. Furthermore, Misra and Castillo (2004) stated that academic stress includes students' perceptions of the amount of knowledge they must master and their perception of insufficient time to develop it.

This situation often makes teenagers an exclusive group. This phenomenon arises as a result of the development of personal fable characteristics which are driven by cognitive development during the formal operations period. Closeness, openness and feelings of shared destiny among fellow teenagers can be opportunities for efforts to facilitate adolescent development. On the other hand, several psychological characteristics of adolescents (emotional, unstable) also pose challenges to the effectiveness of peer counseling services. Based on the problems, phenomena in the field and research findings above, researchers took the initiative to create a peer counseling service model in an effort to reduce academic stress and academic burnout for final year students in the city of Metro Lampung, Indonesia.

Literature Review

Peer counseling places a strong emphasis on communication skills to facilitate self-exploration and decision making. Peer "counselors" are not professional counselors. Peer "counselors" are students who provide assistance to other students under the guidance of expert counselors. In peer counseling, the role and presence of expert counselors is still needed. In essence, peer counseling is counseling through peers, because most teenagers (pupils and university students) discuss their problems more often with peers than with parents, mentors or teachers at school. Even for problems that are considered very serious, they discuss them with their peers (friends). Even if there are teenagers who end up telling parents, mentors or teachers about the serious problems they are experiencing, it is usually because they are forced to (conversations and efforts to solve problems with peers run into dead ends). This happens because teenagers have very strong interests, commitments and ties to peers.

Stress that occurs in the school or educational environment is usually called academic stress (Sinaga, 2014). Desmita (2010) states "Academic stress is stress caused by academic stressors". Academic stressors are stress experienced by students which originates from the learning process or things related to learning activities such as: pressure to go up a class, long periods of studying, cheating, lots of assignments, getting test scores, decisions about majoring or career as well as exam and management anxiety. stress. In line with the opinion above, Rahmawati (2012) states that academic stress is a condition or situation where there is a mismatch between environmental demands and the actual resources that students have so that they are increasingly burdened by various pressures and demands. (Alvin 2015) also states that academic stress is stress that arises because of pressure to demonstrate achievement and excellence in conditions of increasing academic competition, so that they are increasingly burdened by various pressures and demands. Furthermore, (Bariyyah 2013; Rahmawati, W. K. 2017) states that academic stress is a student's response to various demands originating from the teaching and learning process including: (1) demands for promotion, (2) completing many assignments, (3) getting high test scores , (4) the decision to determine a major, (5) anxiety about facing exams, and (6) the demand to be able to manage study time.

The term "peer counselor" sometimes raises concerns for some people because they are worried about the connotation of a professional counselor. Therefore, some people call "peer counselors" "facilitators", or "junior counselors". Regardless of the various terms used, what is actually more important is how students relate to each other, and in what ways these relationships

can be used to enhance their development. Peer counseling is considered important because most teenagers (pupils and university students) often discuss their problems with their peers compared to their parents, counselors or teachers at school. Even for problems that are considered very serious, they discuss them with their peers (friends). Even if there are teenagers who end up telling parents, mentors or teachers about the serious problems they are experiencing, it is usually because they are forced to (conversations and efforts to solve problems with peers run into dead ends). This happens because teenagers have very strong interests, commitments and ties to peers. Teenagers feel that adults cannot understand them and they believe that only teenagers can understand each other.

Teenagers feel that adults cannot understand them and they believe that only teenagers can understand each other. This situation often makes teenagers an exclusive group. This phenomenon emerged as a result of the development of personal fable characteristics which were driven by cognitive development during the formal operations period (Steinberg, 1993; Santrock, 2004). Closeness, openness and feelings of shared destiny among fellow teenagers can be opportunities for efforts to facilitate adolescent development. On the other hand, several psychological characteristics of adolescents (emotional, unstable) also pose challenges to the effectiveness of peer counseling services.

METHOD
Research Design
This research employs a case study approach to analyze the role of peer counseling as a strategy for managing academic stress and burnout in final-year students in metropolitan cities. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive method, which focuses on understanding and interpreting peer counseling interventions through real-life examples, with the goal of providing in-depth insights into its effectiveness. The research is conducted using library research, a method that collects data from existing academic resources such as books, journals, documents, and other related materials, which are used to form the basis of the conceptual analysis.

Participants
The participants for this case study consist of three final-year students from different universities in Metro City, who have experienced varying degrees of academic stress and burnout. These students were chosen based on their academic background, involvement in peer counseling activities, and their willingness to share their experiences with academic challenges. The small number of participants is typical of a case study approach, where the focus is on gaining detailed and personal insights rather than broad generalizations.

Measures
The research relies on document analysis as the primary measure, with a focus on reviewing existing literature on peer counseling, academic stress, and burnout. Key materials include scholarly books and peer-reviewed journals that examine stress management strategies, particularly peer counseling, and their impact on students' mental health and academic performance. The study also considers historical data and previous case studies related to stress management in higher education. Additionally, participant experiences are used as supporting qualitative data to validate the concepts identified in the literature.

Data Analysis
The data analysis process follows a qualitative descriptive approach, where the collected documents and participant experiences are carefully analyzed to extract themes and patterns related

to peer counseling's effectiveness in managing academic stress and burnout. The study uses a thematic analysis technique, identifying recurring themes in the literature and participant accounts that align with the key concepts of stress management and peer counseling. The case study approach allows for a deeper understanding of each participant's experience and how peer counseling interventions have influenced their ability to cope with academic pressures.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result
Research Findings

This study applied peer counseling as a strategy to manage academic stress and burnout among final-year students in Metro City. The peer counseling process was conducted in several stages, from the initial phase to the final phase, focusing on building trust, sharing experiences, and developing solutions together. Below are the stages of peer counseling implemented in this research, along with simple conversation snippets with the respondents.

Initial Stage: Introduction and Building Trust

In this initial stage, the peer counselor and the client (respondent) work on building a trusting relationship. The peer counselor introduces themselves and explains the purpose of the counseling session. The student is given the space to share their initial experiences of academic stress, such as workload, pressure to graduate on time, and concerns about the future.

> Counselor: "Hi, I'm [counselor's name], and today we're going to talk about what's been making you feel stressed lately. There's no rush—feel free to share anything you'd like."
> Respondent: "Thank you. Honestly, I've been feeling really overwhelmed with my final project, and it's hard to focus because I keep worrying about what happens after I graduate."

Second Stage: Problem Exploration

After establishing trust, the session moves to a deeper exploration of the issues. The peer counselor actively listens to the respondent's complaints and concerns. At this stage, the respondent is encouraged to delve deeper into the root causes of their stress and burnout, breaking down the emotions and feelings they are experiencing.

> Counselor: "From what you've said, it seems like you're very anxious about the future after graduation. Could you explain more about what you're most afraid of?"
> Respondent: "Yes, I'm scared I won't be able to find a job in my field. Plus, the pressure from my family to graduate soon is making me feel even more stressed."

Third Stage: Developing Solutions Together

At this stage, the peer counselor and the respondent work together to develop solutions to reduce academic stress and burnout. The peer counselor guides the respondent to think positively and realistically about what they can control. The solutions typically involve time management, setting priorities, and seeking social support.

Counselor: "How about we start by creating a more organized schedule? You could set up dedicated times for studying and breaks so that you don't feel too overwhelmed. And don't forget to make time for relaxation."
Respondent: "That sounds like a good idea. I do often feel overwhelmed because I don't have a clear schedule for rest."

Final Stage: Reflection and Evaluation

In this final stage, the peer counselor and the respondent reflect on the sessions. The respondent is encouraged to think about their feelings after sharing and implementing some of the agreed-upon solutions. The peer counselor also offers encouragement and motivation to help the respondent stay committed to the strategies they've developed.

Counselor: "How do you feel now that we've discussed some solutions? Do you notice any changes in how you see the situation?"
Respondent: "I feel lighter after talking to you. I'll try to organize my schedule better and not be so hard on myself."
Counselor: "That's a great step. Remember, there's always time to rest, and you don't have to do everything all at once. If you need to talk again, feel free to reach out anytime."

The findings of this study show that peer counseling is highly effective in reducing academic stress and burnout among final-year students. Through a structured, step-by-step process, the respondents felt heard and gained significant support from their peers. They also became more motivated to implement the stress management strategies discussed during the counseling sessions. This demonstrates that peer counseling has great potential as a strategy to address academic stress issues among students.

Discussion

Stress is a condition caused by a mismatch (Garniwa, I. 2007) between the desired situation and the individual's biological, psychological or social system (Sarafino, 2006; Wardi, R., & Ifdil, I. (2016). (Anggola & Ongori 2009; Pratama, M. R., 2015; Siska, M., 2011) also defines stress as a perception of a gap between environmental demands and an individual's ability to fulfill them interferes with a person's ability to handle it (coping) (Santrock, 2012). Based on several opinions above, it can be concluded that stress is pressure that occurs due to a mismatch between the desired situation and expectations, where there is a gap between environmental demands and the individual's ability to fulfill them. assessed as potentially dangerous, threatening, disturbing and uncontrollable or in other words, stress is beyond the individual's ability to cope.

In line with the above research, research conducted by Hermawati (2007) explains that stress that occurs in the school or educational environment is usually called academic stress (Sinaga, M. A. J. 2015; Rahmadani, C. S. M. 2014; Hikmah, Y. 2014;). Desmita (2010) states "Academic stress is stress caused by academic stressors". Academic stressors are stress experienced by students which originates from the learning process or things related to learning activities such as: pressure to go up a class, long periods of studying, cheating, lots of assignments, getting test scores, decisions about majoring or career as well as exam and management anxiety. stress.

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CONCLUSION

The findings of this study conclude that peer counseling is an effective strategy for reducing academic stress and burnout among final-year students in metropolitan areas. By fostering a supportive and trusting environment, peer counselors help students openly share their concerns, explore the root causes of their stress, and develop practical solutions such as time management and self-care. The respondents reported feeling relieved and more motivated to manage their academic pressures after the counseling sessions, highlighting the positive impact of peer support in mitigating academic challenges and enhancing overall well-being.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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