

# Student Stress and Anxiety in an Educational Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the experiences of stress and anxiety among students at the Institut Pendidikan Nusantara Global (IPNG), focusing on their causes, manifestations, and coping strategies. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed thematically to capture holistic patterns and themes of student experiences. Findings indicate that students experience multidimensional stress encompassing cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects, including fatigue, sleep disturbances, and feelings of being overwhelmed. To manage stress, students employ various coping strategies such as social support, time management, and relaxation activities. The study underscores the importance of a holistic approach combining the enhancement of students' internal capacities with the management of a supportive and responsive academic environment. Practical implications include the development of counseling programs, stress management workshops, and adaptive academic policies. The study's limitations concern generalizability, as data were collected solely from IPNG students and are context-specific.

*Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi pengalaman stres dan kecemasan mahasiswa di Institut Pendidikan Nusantara Global (IPNG), dengan fokus pada faktor penyebab, manifestasi, dan strategi coping yang diterapkan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi, serta analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola dan tema pengalaman mahasiswa secara holistik. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa mengalami stres multidimensional yang melibatkan aspek kognitif, emosional, dan fisik, termasuk kelelahan, gangguan tidur, dan perasaan kewalahan. Untuk mengatasi hal ini, mahasiswa mengembangkan berbagai strategi coping, seperti dukungan sosial, manajemen waktu, dan aktivitas relaksasi. Temuan menekankan pentingnya pendekatan holistik yang memadukan penguatan kapasitas internal mahasiswa dengan pengelolaan lingkungan akademik yang suportif dan responsif. Implikasi praktis meliputi pengembangan program konseling, workshop manajemen stres, dan kebijakan akademik yang adaptif. Keterbatasan penelitian terkait pada generalisasi, karena data hanya berasal dari mahasiswa IPNG dan sifat kualitatif yang kontekstual.*

**Keywords:** student stress, academic anxiety, coping, mental well-being

## Introduction

In recent years, concerns about student mental health have moved from the margins to the center of discussions in higher education. This shift is not without reason. Across different institutional contexts, students are increasingly reporting experiences of stress and anxiety that stem from a combination of academic demands, social expectations, and the challenges of adjusting to new learning environments (Beiter, 2015; Pascoe et al., 2020; Pérez-Jorge, 2025). These pressures are rarely isolated; instead, they tend to accumulate and interact in ways that shape how students engage with their studies. As a result, mental health is no longer seen as separate from academic life, but as something that directly influences motivation, participation,

and overall performance (Fang, 2025; Son, 2020). In the case of students at Institut Pendidikan Nusantara Global (IPNG), these issues become particularly relevant, as many are navigating a significant transition into higher education while simultaneously adapting to new academic and social expectations.

It is important to note that stress and anxiety should not be understood solely as individual psychological conditions. They are also shaped by the environments in which students learn and interact. Universities are not just places of knowledge transmission; they are social spaces where relationships, communication patterns, and institutional structures continuously influence student experiences (Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Wang, 2021). For some students, supportive interactions with lecturers and peers can provide a sense of stability and belonging. For others, however, unclear expectations, limited communication, or rigid academic systems may intensify feelings of pressure and uncertainty (Regehr, 2018; Simionescu, 2024). This contrast points to an ongoing gap between what educational theories suggest about supportive learning environments and what students actually encounter in practice.

The transition into university life further complicates this situation. Entering higher education often requires students to rethink how they learn, manage their time, and position themselves within new social settings. Many are expected to become more independent, while also meeting higher academic standards and forming new peer networks. This process can be overwhelming, particularly in the early stages of study, when students are still trying to make sense of unfamiliar systems and expectations (Cao, 2020; Stallman, 2019). Previous research consistently shows that first-year students tend to experience higher levels of anxiety compared to those who have already adjusted to university life (Aristovnik, 2020). This suggests that adaptation is not simply a personal matter, but a structured experience that requires attention from educational institutions.

When stress and anxiety are not managed effectively, their impact can be far-reaching. In the short term, students may struggle to concentrate, lose motivation, or disengage from learning activities. Over time, these difficulties can develop into more serious conditions, including burnout or depression, which may affect both academic progress and personal well-being (Dyrbye, 2017; Majerová & Sokolová, 2025). In addition, mental health challenges can influence how students relate to others, often leading to reduced participation in academic and social communities (Jagiello, 2024). These patterns highlight that student mental health is not an isolated issue, but one that is closely tied to the broader educational experience.

Despite the growing body of research in this area, much of the existing literature still tends to focus on psychological or clinical perspectives. While these approaches are important, they often overlook how educational environments and social interactions contribute to shaping students' experiences of stress and anxiety (Hikmah & Perdana, 2026; Lei, 2025). As a result, there is still limited understanding of how these factors operate together within specific institutional contexts. This study responds to that gap by asking a central question: how do students at IPNG experience and manage stress and anxiety within their academic environment? By focusing on this question, the study positions itself at the intersection of psychological, educational, and social perspectives.

To guide the analysis, this research draws on two complementary theoretical frameworks. The first is social capital theory, which emphasizes the importance of relationships, trust, and networks in shaping individual experiences within a community (R. D. Putnam, 2000). The second is academic stress theory, which focuses on how individuals interpret and respond to challenges or pressures in their environment. Bringing these perspectives together allows for a

more nuanced understanding of student stress—not only in terms of its causes, but also in terms of how it can be managed through supportive interactions and adaptive coping strategies. This article is organized in a way that reflects this analytical approach. It begins by reviewing relevant literature to establish the conceptual foundation of the study. It then outlines the research methodology, followed by a presentation and discussion of the findings. The final section highlights the implications of the study for educational practice. Overall, this research aims to contribute to a more grounded understanding of student mental health by situating it within real educational contexts. It is expected that the findings will offer practical insights for institutions seeking to create learning environments that are not only academically rigorous, but also supportive of student well-being.

## Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to gain in-depth understanding of students' experiences of stress and anxiety within the educational context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sugiyono, 2023; Suhirman et al., 2026). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to capture the subjective experiences of students holistically, including their perceptions, personal experiences, and social interactions shaping their mental conditions. Using a descriptive methodology, data are systematically analyzed to describe patterns, themes, and relevant social contexts without generalizing to the larger population. This approach also facilitates the exploration of factors causing stress and anxiety, as well as adaptation strategies applied by students in responding to academic and social demands.

The research participants consist of students from the Institut Pendidikan Nusantara Global (IPNG) who are actively engaged in academic activities, with inclusion criteria including voluntary willingness to share experiences regarding stress and anxiety. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who have direct and representative experiences of the phenomena under study (Sugiyono, 2023). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observation, allowing researchers to explore students' perceptions in depth and capture the dynamics of social interactions in the academic environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Each interview was recorded and transcribed to facilitate thematic analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, involving coding, categorization, and identification of key themes reflecting students' experiences of stress and anxiety (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Miles et al., 2014). Data validity was ensured through triangulation, comparing interview data with observations and institutional documents, as well as member checking to minimize interpretive bias (Suhirman et al., 2026). This approach allows clear mapping of the forms, causes, and impacts of student stress and anxiety, while highlighting the role of the educational environment and social interactions in supporting the mitigation of mental health challenges.

## Result

The findings reveal that students at the Institut Pendidikan Nusantara Global (IPNG) experience stress and anxiety in multifaceted ways, arising from academic demands and social interactions on campus. During interviews, students often described academic pressure as a nearly constant presence in their daily lives. Some students shared that feelings of anxiety begin as soon as they receive their course schedules and task lists. One participant recounted, "Whenever I see the pile of assignments and exam schedule, my heart races and my mind fills with fear of failure." This narrative demonstrates that stress encompasses cognitive, emotional,

and physical dimensions simultaneously. Beyond academic pressure, social interactions within the campus environment also influenced students' experiences of stress. Academic competition, the need to adjust to peers, and fear of judgment emerged as significant sources of anxiety. Students shared how study groups or discussion forums could be supportive, but if mismanaged, could also feel burdensome. One participant explained, "Sometimes I feel I have to always perform perfectly in front of my friends; if not, I fear being seen as incompetent." These findings confirm that student stress is dynamic and contextual, shaped by complex social interactions.

The manifestations of stress and anxiety reported by students were diverse. Physically, students experienced sleep disturbances, chronic fatigue, and muscle tension. Emotionally, they frequently felt restless, irritable, and anxious without clear reasons. Cognitively, students struggled to concentrate, procrastinated, or felt incapable of meeting academic demands. One student shared, "Sometimes I sit in front of my laptop for hours, but my mind is blank and I can't focus. It feels like all tasks are piling up, and I don't know where to start." This illustrates the multidimensional nature of stress, involving body, emotions, and mind simultaneously. To cope with these pressures, students employed varied adaptation strategies. Social support from peers and lecturers played a crucial role, as students engaged in conversations, shared experiences, or received feedback to alleviate anxiety. Time management was key to reducing stress, with students creating daily schedules, prioritizing tasks, and breaking workloads into manageable parts. Relaxation activities such as exercise, meditation, or creative hobbies were also important. One participant remarked, "I started running every morning and writing in a journal about my feelings. Both help me feel calmer and face the day better." These strategies demonstrate that students actively create ways to manage stress, using both personal and social approaches.

These findings are summarized in Table 1: Summary of Main Findings on Stress and Anxiety among IPNG Students, providing a systematic overview of causes, manifestations, and coping strategies. The results indicate that students' experiences of stress are complex, interconnected, and influenced by both internal and external factors, as well as their interaction with the academic environment.

**Table 1:** Summary of Main Findings on Stress and Anxiety among IPNG Students

Finding Category	Subtheme	Participant Quote
Causes of stress	Academic pressure	"Heavy workload and exams often make me anxious."
	Social interactions	"Competition in class sometimes makes me feel pressured."
Manifestations of mental experiences	Physical	"I often have trouble sleeping and feel tired all day."
	Emotional	"I feel stressed every time a deadline approaches."
	Cognitive	"I find it hard to focus and my mind is always chaotic."
Coping strategies	Social support	"Friends and lecturers provide motivation and a space to share."
	Time management	"I create schedules to avoid task accumulation."
	Relaxation activities	"Morning exercise and hobbies make me feel more relaxed."

Overall, the findings provide a vivid and rich depiction of how IPNG students experience stress and anxiety, and how they actively manage these conditions through social support, time management, and relaxation activities.

## Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate how stress and anxiety among students at the Institut Pendidikan Nusantara Global (IPNG) are not isolated reactions to academic tasks, but rather emerge as continuous and layered experiences embedded within the rhythms of academic life. Students' narratives reveal that stress begins even before tasks are undertaken, often triggered by the anticipation of workload itself. The moment schedules, assignments, and examination timelines are encountered, students describe an immediate sense of pressure that is both mental and physical. This suggests that academic demands are not merely operational requirements, but are experienced as accumulative pressures that shape how students perceive their own capacity and performance. Such patterns resonate with prior studies that identify academic workload as a central driver of psychological strain, contributing to anxiety, fatigue, and emotional distress (Beiter, 2015; Son, 2020; Suyuhan et al., 2026; Yao et al., 2025). What becomes evident here is that stress is not only about "how much" work students have, but also about how that work is structured, presented, and internalized within the broader academic environment.

At the same time, the social world of the campus introduces another layer of complexity to students' experiences of stress. Interactions with peers and lecturers do not operate in a singular direction; rather, they oscillate between being sources of comfort and sources of pressure. Students speak of moments when sharing experiences with peers provides relief, a sense of understanding, and emotional grounding. Yet, in other instances, the same social spaces become arenas of comparison, where expectations of competence and fear of negative judgment intensify feelings of inadequacy. This duality highlights that social relationships are not inherently supportive or harmful, but become meaningful through the ways they are experienced and interpreted. In this regard, social support functions as an important buffer that can soften the impact of academic stress (Chen, 2025; Yao et al., 2025), while also reinforcing a sense of belonging that is essential for emotional stability (Mohamed et al., 2022). However, when social interactions are framed by competition and implicit performance standards, they can amplify psychological strain, echoing broader discussions on the ambivalent nature of social capital in educational settings (Kahu & Nelson, 2018; R. Putnam, 2015; Wang, 2021).

The effects of stress, as described by students, unfold across multiple dimensions in ways that are deeply interconnected. Physical exhaustion, disrupted sleep, emotional volatility, and cognitive difficulties are not experienced as separate symptoms, but as overlapping conditions that shape everyday functioning. Students describe moments of sitting in front of their work without being able to focus, feeling mentally "stuck" while simultaneously overwhelmed by the awareness of unfinished tasks. These accounts reflect how stress permeates both the body and the mind, influencing not only academic performance but also overall well-being. Such multidimensional manifestations are consistent with existing research showing that academic stress operates across psychological and physiological domains simultaneously (Dyrbye, 2017; Majerová & Sokolová, 2025). Importantly, these experiences do not position students as passive recipients of pressure; rather, they reveal ongoing efforts to make sense of and respond to the demands placed upon them.

In navigating these pressures, students actively construct coping strategies that are both personal and relational. Their responses are not uniform, but reflect a process of adaptation shaped by available resources and individual preferences. Conversations with peers, seeking reassurance from lecturers, and sharing experiences become ways of redistributing emotional burden. At the same time, students attempt to regain a sense of control through organizing their time, breaking tasks into smaller parts, and creating manageable routines. Activities such as exercise, journaling, or engaging in hobbies emerge as spaces where students can momentarily detach from academic pressures and recalibrate their emotional state. These practices align with broader findings that highlight the effectiveness of adaptive coping in supporting resilience and reducing stress (Pascoe et al., 2020; Regehr, 2018; Simionescu, 2024). What is particularly striking is that coping is not merely reactive, but becomes an ongoing process through which students negotiate their relationship with academic demands.

A deeper reading of these findings suggests that stress among students is shaped by an ongoing interaction between internal dispositions and external conditions. Students' sense of confidence, their ability to regulate emotions, and their personal interpretations of academic challenges influence how stress is experienced. At the same time, institutional structures—such as workload design, assessment systems, and communication practices—play a decisive role in either intensifying or alleviating pressure. Within this interplay, cultural identity and self-concept emerge as important elements that shape resilience. Students who possess a stronger sense of identity and alignment with their values appear better equipped to navigate academic demands, reflecting findings that link cultural congruity with lower stress levels (Chee et al., 2019; Fetter & Thompson, 2023). Cultural identity, in this sense, does not merely function as background context, but becomes an active resource that supports psychological stability (Carson et al., 2025).

Finally, the role of the institutional environment becomes particularly evident in shaping how stress is sustained or mitigated. Students describe noticeable differences between learning spaces that feel supportive and those that feel overwhelming. Environments characterized by openness, understanding, and flexibility allow students to feel seen and supported, while rigid and highly demanding settings tend to heighten anxiety. Although formal support systems such as counseling services exist, their limited use points to a misalignment between institutional provisions and students' lived realities, particularly when cultural considerations are not adequately addressed (Carson et al., 2025; Danielson et al., 2026). Taken together, these findings suggest that student stress cannot be reduced to individual weakness or academic difficulty alone; rather, it is produced through a complex web of interactions involving academic structures, social relationships, cultural identity, and institutional practices. Understanding this complexity is essential for developing approaches to student well-being that are not only effective, but also responsive to the realities of students' experiences.

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that students at the Institut Pendidikan Nusantara Global (IPNG) experience multidimensional stress and anxiety, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects. The primary contributing factors include academic pressure, social interactions, and the dynamics of the campus environment. Students actively employ diverse coping strategies, including social support, time management, and relaxation activities, to mitigate the negative effects of stress. These findings highlight the importance of a holistic

approach that combines enhancing students' internal capacities with the management of a supportive and responsive academic environment.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions implement structured mental health and well-being programs, such as counseling services, stress management workshops, social skills training, and the integration of relaxation activities into the curriculum. Furthermore, transparent, flexible, and responsive academic policies can enhance the effectiveness of the coping strategies developed by students. Implementing these measures is expected not only to improve mental health but also to enhance learning quality, academic engagement, and overall student well-being.

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