

Guidance And Counseling Teacher Strategyin Helping Students Manage Academic Stress At State Senior High School I Banda Aceh

¹*Yasirina,, ¹Wanty Khaira

¹UIN Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

Article Information	ABSTRACT
Received: July 2026	Background: Academic stress in students is characterized by biological symptoms such as fatigue, cognitive symptoms such as difficulty concentrating, and emotional and behavioral symptoms such as anxiety and procrastination. Aim: This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of academic stress experienced by students and examine the strategies of Guidance and Counseling teachers in helping students manage academic pressure at SMA Negeri 1 Banda Aceh. Method: The research method used is a descriptive qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The research subjects consisted of one Guidance and Counseling teacher, one class teacher, and two grade 12 students selected through a purposive sampling technique. Data collection was carried out through direct observation and in-depth interviews, which were then analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques. Result and Discussions: The results of the study indicate that the main strategy applied by Guidance and Counseling teachers in managing student academic stress is the "Listen - Validate - Minimize the Problem - Give 1 Step - Monitor" method. This strategy has proven effective in changing students' anxiety phase into a focus on concrete actions through structured emotional support. Conclusion: Despite the constraints of, this approach has a significant positive impact on students' psychological well-being and mental readiness to face academic demands. Keywords: Academic Stress, Guidance and Counseling, Teacher Strategies.
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Corresponding Author:

Yasirina
Guidance and Counseling
UIN Ar-Raniry
Syech Abdurrauf Road, Kopelma Darussalam, Syiah Kuala District, Indonesia.
Email: 220213070@student.ar-raniry.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in national development because it functions to develop human resources that are qualified, have character, and are able to face the changing times (Makkawaru, 2019). Through education, students not only acquire academic knowledge, but also develop thinking skills, attitudes and social abilities needed in community life (Nurhalisa & Nurcahya, 2025). A good educational environment not only emphasizes academic achievement, but also pays attention to the psychological well-being of students. Schools as formal educational institutions have a responsibility to create a balanced learning process between academic development and students' mental health (Yuni et al., 2025). However, in practice, students often face various academic demands such as numerous assignments, tight exam schedules, and competition for grades. These conditions can cause psychological pressure that can potentially trigger academic stress in students (Khaira, 2023).

Academic stress is a condition of psychological pressure that arises when students feel unable to meet the academic demands they face. (Barseli et al., 2017) This condition is usually characterized by feelings of anxiety, mental fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and decreased motivation to learn. Alateeq et al., (2020) explains that high academic pressure can increase stress levels in students and affect their mental well-being. Long-term academic stress can also impact student academic achievement and satisfaction with the learning process (Desmita, 2010). shows that students with high levels of academic stress tend to have lower learning concentration. This indicates that academic stress is a significant issue that requires attention in the educational environment. (Pratiwi et al., 2024).

The phenomenon of academic stress is also found in many high schools with high academic standards. Students often face pressure to achieve good grades, complete assignments on time, and meet the expectations of their parents and the school community. (Yuliani & Soeharto, 2024) This condition can cause symptoms such as fatigue, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating while studying. (Nasution, 2007) High academic pressure is associated with an increased risk of mental health disorders in students, this situation shows that students' psychological well-being needs to be an important concern in the learning process at school. (Desmita, 2010) Therefore, the role of guidance and counseling teachers is needed to help students manage academic stress through appropriate guidance services. One such high school is SMA Negeri 1 Kota Banda Aceh.

Initial observations conducted by researchers at SMA Negeri I Banda Aceh City showed that symptoms of academic stress were evident in various aspects. Biologically, students appeared tired, sleepy, and lacked enthusiasm during learning. Cognitively, students experienced difficulty concentrating and remembering material, and had negative thoughts about their abilities. (Anggrini, 2012) Emotionally, students appear anxious when facing assignments or exams and are easily irritated when experiencing difficulties. Behaviorally, students tend to procrastinate, rely on friends, and are less active in social interactions. These findings indicate that academic stress affects students' physical, mental, and behavioral conditions, necessitating support from teachers and a more conducive learning environment. (Sriwahyuningsih & Barseli, 2024).

Numerous studies have been conducted on academic stress, but most focus on the relationship between academic stress and student achievement. Studies specifically analyzing guidance and counseling teachers' strategies for helping students manage academic stress are relatively limited. (Indriani & Firdian, 2021). Even though guidance and counseling teachers have an important role in providing counseling services, group guidance, and psychological support for students who experience academic stress.

Based on the above description, this study aims to analyze the phenomenon of academic stress experienced by students and examine the strategies of guidance and counseling teachers in helping students manage academic pressure in the school environment. This research is expected to contribute to the development of more effective guidance and counseling services to support student mental health. Furthermore, the results of this study are also expected to serve as a reference for schools in creating a healthier and more conducive learning environment. With appropriate guidance strategies, students are expected to be able to manage academic pressure more adaptively, thus enabling optimal learning.

METHOD

This research uses a phenomenological approach with a descriptive method design to describe phenomena that occur in the field as they are. Research methods are scientific methods used to obtain data for specific purposes. (Sugiyono, 2013) A qualitative descriptive approach was chosen because this study aims to deeply understand the role of guidance and counseling teachers in helping students manage academic stress at school. Qualitative research produces data in the form of words, behaviors, and information from the observed subjects, thus enabling a more in-depth explanation of social phenomena. (Moleong, 2017).

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri I Banda Aceh on 12th-grade students. Subjects were selected using purposive sampling, which is the selection of subjects based on specific considerations relevant to the research objectives. (Sugiyono, 2013) The subjects in this study consisted of one Guidance and Counseling teacher, one homeroom teacher, and two grade XII FI students who showed signs of experiencing academic stress. The purpose of selecting these subjects was to obtain more in-depth information regarding the students' experiences and the role of teachers in helping them overcome academic stress. (Ardiansyah et al., 2023).

Data collection was conducted through observation and interviews. A semi-structured interview format was used, consisting of two sessions lasting 15 minutes each, the interviews were recorded to facilitate conversation analysis.

Observations were conducted directly in the school environment to observe student behavior and interactions between guidance and counseling teachers and students experiencing academic stress. Observations were conducted using an observation sheet as a guide to ensure a more systematic and focused process. (Septiawan, 2010) In addition, researchers also conducted interviews with guidance and counseling teachers, class teachers, and students who were the subjects of the research to obtain more in-depth information regarding their experiences and conditions. (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024) The data obtained was then analyzed using descriptive qualitative data analysis techniques. The analysis process was carried out in several stages: data transcription, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

Next, data reduction is carried out by selecting information relevant to the research focus. The reduced data is then presented in narrative form for easy understanding, before conclusions are drawn from the research findings. To ensure data validity, this study employed data triangulation techniques. Triangulation is conducted by comparing data obtained from various sources, namely observations and interviews, so that the research results can be more reliable. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), triangulation is an effective way to increase data credibility in qualitative research because it allows researchers to verify information from various perspectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The following are the results of research conducted by researchers from January 7–12, 2026, at SMA Negeri I Banda Aceh City. The focus was on observations and interviews with teachers and students regarding the provision of guidance, motivation, and support to students in dealing with various academic pressures. The following are the results of interviews with students 1 and 2:

Student 1 often feels tired and has difficulty focusing while studying, especially due to the large amount of assignments. The most difficult subject is Mathematics due to the many formulas. SI sometimes has difficulty completing assignments if he doesn't understand the material, with irregular study times and frequent distractions from his cell phone. Approaching exams, Student 1 feels tense and burdened by his parents' targets. The sometimes noisy classroom atmosphere and fear of asking questions also affect his

learning. S1 hopes for less assignments and a calmer class. Student 2 often feels anxious in studying, especially in Physics, which he considers difficult. The large amount of assignments and limited time make Student 2 stressed and often has difficulty completing assignments. Studying is not consistent and is often interrupted by other activities. Approaching exams, S2 is very anxious and stressed by his parents' targets. The less conducive classroom environment and peer distractions also affect focus. Student 2 hopes for a more relaxed teacher to make the learning atmosphere more comfortable.

Based on interviews with students 1 and 2, it was found that their emotional responses to the learning process were dominated by feelings of fatigue, difficulty focusing, and persistent anxiety. This phenomenon emerged especially when students were faced with subjects with a high level of difficulty, such as Mathematics and Physics. The inability to understand complex concepts and formulas triggered deep feelings of anxiety, which were exacerbated by the large number of assignments often given simultaneously. Students perceived the number of assignments as a stressful burden, considering the limited time available and the large amount of work to be completed.

Regarding self-management, interviews revealed irregularities in students' study patterns at home. Although students are aware of the importance of time management, in practice they often rely on electronic devices (smartphones) and are physically exhausted from daily activities. This suggests that poor self-regulation is a significant internal factor contributing to increased stress levels. Furthermore, high parental demands, such as setting specific grade targets, are not perceived as a positive stimulus by students, but rather as a psychological burden that adds to mental stress, especially when facing exams, which are considered to determine achievement of these targets.

Other factors, such as the classroom environment and social interactions, influence students' learning comfort. A noisy classroom atmosphere and distractions from peers often hinder concentration, resulting in suboptimal material absorption. Although the relationship between students and teachers is categorized as quite good, communication barriers still exist in the form of fear or hesitation to ask questions when experiencing learning difficulties. Therefore, students expressed a need for a calmer learning environment and a gentler, more relaxed teacher approach. Overall, interviews with students 1 and 2 indicate that the academic stress experienced by students is the result of the interaction between a dense curriculum load, external pressures from the family environment, and limited time management skills in each student.

Classroom Teacher Interview and Guidance and Counseling

Based on interviews with class teachers, students were generally quite active during learning, but some experienced a lack of focus and fatigue. Signs of academic stress were evident in anxiety and delays in submitting assignments, as well as feelings of being overwhelmed by some students. Difficulty understanding the material, especially complex ones, and poor time management skills were also contributing factors. During exams, many students felt tense and anxious, and expressed disappointment when they received low scores. Parental influence could be both positive and stressful, while relationships with teachers and interactions between students were generally good, although disruptions still occurred. To reduce stress, a more balanced assignment arrangement, a more humanistic approach, and collaboration with guidance counselors are needed.

Based on interviews with guidance and counseling teachers, students' academic stress is characterized by anxiety, difficulty focusing, decreased motivation, and late assignments. The main causes are the burden of assignments, exam pressure, and parental demands that overwhelm students. Poor relationships with teachers can also increase stress. In the interview, the researcher also asked about the guidance and counseling teacher's strategies in managing academic stress. The guidance and counseling teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Banda Aceh City stated that in addition to services such as counseling, group guidance, and time management to help students become calmer, another method that has a very big impact is the "listen - validate - minimize the problem - give 1 step - monitor" method. Although still constrained by time and a lack of student openness, this method has a positive impact. This can be seen from the implementation that has been carried out by the guidance and counseling teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Banda Aceh as follows:

Table 1. Results of the Research Stage		
Listening Stage		
Action		Impact
a. The guidance counselor provides time in a comfortable counseling room to listen to students' complaints without making judgments (non-judgmental).	Students feel their burden is reduced after successfully pouring out their anxieties.	
b. The guidance counselor lets the students "vent" all their frustrations until the students feel emotionally relieved.		
Validation Stage		
Action		Impact

The guidance counselor acknowledged that students' feelings of anxiety were logical.		Eliminate students' guilt over their fatigue, so they are more prepared to think clearly.
Example of sentences: "It's natural to feel exhausted by the sheer volume of work that comes with exam week. Anyone would feel stressed in that position."		
Minimize the Problem		
Action		Impact
Guidance counselors help students see that their problems are not "impossible mountains to climb," but rather piles of homework that can be broken down.		Students feel that problems are reduced from the scale of "future threats" to "daily tasks".
Action Example: Teachers break down big fears (like “Fear of Failing the Exam”) into smaller sub-sections (like “Just need to understand one chapter of Math today”).		
Give 1 Step		
Action		Impact
To overcome paralysis due to stress, the guidance counselor only gives one simple instruction so that students do not feel overwhelmed again.		This single step aims to rebuild self-control (self-efficacy).
Action Example: To Student 1, the guidance counselor suggested: "Tonight, just put your cell phone outside your room during study time for 30 minutes. Focus on just one question."		
Monitor		
Action		Impact
The guidance counselor conducts routine follow-up through group guidance or short meetings to check the progress of these small steps.		Students feel they have a companion and no longer feel like they are struggling alone amidst the high demands of school.

The results of this study indicate that despite time and transparency constraints, the 5-stage strategy implemented by the Guidance and Counseling Teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Banda Aceh has had a significant positive impact. However, this success requires support from the Class Teacher and Guidance and Counseling Teacher. Through a more humanistic approach (gentle and relaxed) and a more balanced workload arrangement, and the role of parents needs to be educated so that the target grades are not pressurizing, but motivating. Because academic stress at SMA Negeri 1 Banda Aceh was successfully managed when students shifted from the "anxious due to pressure" phase to the "focus on small actions" phase through emotional support validated by the Guidance and Counseling Teacher.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that academic stress experienced by students at SMA Negeri 1 Banda Aceh is a phenomenon influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. Internally, students face limitations in managing time, prioritizing learning, and understanding complex subject matter, thus triggering academic stress. Externally, a competitive learning environment, intense workloads from subject teachers, and high parental demands for academic achievement also contribute to the increased stress they experience. These conditions indicate that academic stress does not exist in isolation, but rather results from the interaction between students' personal characteristics and the surrounding social and academic context.

This condition is exacerbated by difficulties in understanding complex subject matter such as Mathematics and Physics, which triggers physical fatigue and decreased focus. Externally, massive workloads, a less conducive classroom atmosphere, and psychological pressure from parents' grade targets create a competitive yet stressful learning environment. The accumulation of these factors causes students to feel "drowning" in academic demands, which, if left unaddressed, will negatively impact their psychological well-being and motivation to learn.

In facing these conditions, the Guidance and Counseling teacher's strategy becomes a crucial instrument through a structured therapeutic communication approach, namely the "Listen-Validate-Smallize Problem-Provide 1 Step-Monitor" method. The initial stage of listening and validation serves to create a safe space for students to express anxiety without fear of judgment, so that emotional stability can be restored. The teacher then simplifies the students' mental burden with the "problem-minimizing" strategy, namely changing students' perceptions of tasks that were initially considered a giant burden into smaller units that are easier to complete. This approach effectively minimizes learning disorders and instability experienced by students when facing academic pressure.

The strategies employed by guidance and counseling teachers have proven relevant and address various aspects of student development. Furthermore, the personal approach employed by guidance and counseling teachers fosters a warm counseling

relationship, enabling students to feel accepted and safe in expressing their concerns. This is crucial because adolescents often need a safe space to express their stress without fear of judgment. This openness provides guidance and counseling teachers with a platform to understand students' stress patterns and provide appropriate interventions.

Furthermore, the success of this intervention was reinforced through the delivery of simple yet consistent "one concrete step" aimed at gradually rebuilding students' self-confidence and time management skills. This process was not a stand-alone process, but rather supported by ongoing monitoring mechanisms and collaboration among educators within the school. The guidance counselor acted as a facilitator, liaising between subject teachers to adjust workloads and providing education to parents to align their expectations. Overall, the results of this study confirm that the guidance counselor's strategy is highly strategic in managing students' academic stress. The combined approach of prevention, immediate intervention, and long-term development reflects a modern guidance and counseling approach. This approach not only helps students reduce stress levels but also improves their mental readiness, motivation, and the quality of their learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that students at SMA Negeri 1 Banda Aceh experience academic stress influenced by various factors, both internal and external, such as high workloads, limited study time, anxiety about exams, and parental demands. The academic stress experienced by students is manifested through symptoms in biological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects, which overall impact the learning process and psychological well-being of students.

Guidance and Counseling teachers play a very important role in helping students manage academic stress through various services, such as individual counseling, group counseling, information services, and classical guidance. The strategies implemented, such as a personal approach, time management training, providing emotional support, and developing coping skills, have been proven to help students reduce academic stress and improve their ability to face the demands of learning. Thus, the role of Guidance and Counseling teachers is not only problem-solving, but also as a preventive and developmental effort to support students' mental readiness and academic success.

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