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Psychological Well-Being as a Predictor of Academic Resilience Ahead of Vocational Competency Exams

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Abstract

Vocational secondary schools play an important role in preparing students for the world of work. However, high academic demands often cause stress, especially in the run-up to vocational competency exams. The main objective of this study is to know the relationship between psychological well-being and academic resilience in vocational secondary school students in the run-up to their final exams. The research method used quantitative correlational analysis. A total of 190 Year 12 students at a vocational school in Lampung were selected as research subjects through cluster random sampling. The instruments used included an academic resilience scale and a psychological well-being scale. Data analysis used Pearson's Product-Moment correlation with the help of SPSS version 25.0 software. The results showed a highly significant positive relationship between psychological well-being and academic resilience (r = 0.675 and p = 0.000). Psychological well-being accounted for 45.6% to students' academic resilience. These findings reinforce the role of psychological well-being as an important predictor of academic resilience in vocational education. The implication is that interventions to improve psychological well-being in vocational schools are necessary to prepare students better to face exam pressure and academic challenges leading up to exams.

Keywords: academic resilience, psychological well-being, vocational school

INTRODUCTION

Vocational High Schools (SMK) are institutions designed to produce graduates who are ready to work, equipped with knowledge, skills, and internship experience (Riza & Yoto, 2023). To achieve this goal, students are required to master subject matter and vocational skills that are relevant to the world of work (Abdillah et al., 2023; Tentama & Abdillah, 2019). In the process, students will face various academic demands, such as a series of assignments, preparation for promotion exams, adaptation to the work culture during internships,

and readiness for the Vocational Competency Exam (Yudhianto, 2023). This layered pressure can elicit negative responses, especially when students are unprepared to take the Vocational Competency Exam (Agustiningsih et al., 2024). A study conducted by Aseta et al. (2023) shows that 68% of students who take the Vocational Competency Exam experience anxiety. This condition can affect students' concentration and academic performance during exams (Erdemir et al., 2024).

Based on interviews with Year 12 students at one of the vocational schools in Pringsewu, it was revealed that some students experienced excessive anxiety ahead of the Vocational Competency Examination. In addition, many students experienced mental and physical fatigue, as well as decreased self-confidence and motivation to study. Therefore, to address these negative feelings, academic resilience is needed so that students can persevere, adapt, and achieve optimal academic performance (Jiang, 2024). Marsh and Martin (2003) define academic resilience as an individual's capacity to effectively cope with setbacks, stress, and various academic pressures. This ability is seen as a major strength in shaping positive character, as without resilience, students tend to lack confidence in the learning process (Meiranti & Sutoyo, 2021). Thus, academic resilience helps students deal with difficult situations in the learning process and maximise their academic performance.

For vocational school students who will take the Vocational Competency Examination, academic resilience is a very important psychological attribute because it enables students to remain focused throughout the learning process, preparation, and examination (Amelia et al., 2023). Conversely, students who lack academic resilience are at risk of greater stress during exams, thereby preventing them from demonstrating their full academic potential (Yüksel & Açikel, 2024). This condition can also make it difficult for students to recover and can

lead to future loss of control (Bangun et al., 2024). One psychological factor associated with academic resilience is psychological well-being (Martin & Marsh, 2008). According to Ryff (1989), psychological well-being is a condition that reflects the positive fulfilment of psychological functions and is a source of individual resilience in facing various life difficulties. Good psychological well-being helps students cope with pressure and challenging situations, so they do not give up easily and maintain an optimistic attitude when taking exams (Araoz & Uchasara, 2020).

Given the anxiety vocational school students experience when facing the Vocational Competency Examination, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on the role of psychological well-being in strengthening students' academic resilience. Through good psychological well-being, students are expected to be mentally prepared for exams. Therefore, the hypothesis proposed in this study is that there is a positive relationship between psychological well-being and academic resilience in vocational high school students.

RESEARCH METHODS

Approaches and Types of Research

This study uses a quantitative, correlational approach to analyse the relationship between psychological well-being and academic resilience among vocational school students approaching their final exams. This approach was chosen because it provides an objective numerical description of the direction of the relationship between the research variables (Azwar, 2019).

Research Subject

The research subjects were Year 12 students at a vocational school in Lampung, selected for having completed the entire learning

process and for being currently preparing for the Skills Competency Test. The vocational school has several classes in each department, namely 8 classes in the Light Vehicle Engineering department, 9 classes in the Business and Motorcycle Engineering department, 14 classes in the Computer Network and Telecommunications Engineering department, 5 classes in the Broadcasting and Film department, 3 classes in the Nursing Assistant and Caregiver department, and 1 class in the Digital Business department.

The research sample was selected using cluster random sampling, which involved randomising at the class-group level by drawing lots from all Year 12 classes. This technique was used to obtain a representative sample that could reflect the characteristics of the research population (Azwar, 2019). Through this process, six classes were selected as research samples, consisting of the Nursing Assistant and Caregiver XII class, Broadcasting and Filmmaking XII 1 class, Computer Network and Telecommunications Engineering XII 4 class, Business and Motorcycle Engineering XII 1 class, Computer Network and Telecommunications Engineering XII 3 class, and Computer Network and Telecommunications Engineering XII 5 class, with a total of 190 students.

Table 1
Research Subject

Classes	Number of students
XII Nursing Assistant and Caregiver	25
XII Broadcasting and Film 1	31
XII Computer Network and Telecommunications Engineering 4	34
XII Business and Motorcycle Engineering 1	33
XII Computer Network and Telecommunications Engineering 3	35
XII Computer Network and Telecommunications Engineering 5	32
Total	**190**

Research Instruments

Data were collected using psychological scales, including academic resilience and psychological well-being scales. The academic resilience scale was developed based on the dimensions proposed by Marsh and Martin (2003), namely: self-confidence, control, composure (low anxiety), and persistence. This scale consists of 33 items with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.928.

The psychological well-being scale was developed based on the dimensions proposed by Ryff and Keyes (1995), namely environmental mastery, self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relationships with others, life purpose, and personal growth. This scale consists of 37 items with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.922.

The validity of this research instrument was tested using expert judgement. Meanwhile, the instrument's reliability was measured using the Spearman-Brown formula, with an expected reliability coefficient (rtt) of 0.8 and a minimum total item discrimination correlation (rit) of 0.3, ensuring that each item could measure the intended attributes accurately and consistently (Azwar, 2019).

Data Analysis

The initial stage of data analysis involves descriptive statistics to characterise respondents and the distribution of data, using frequencies, percentages, cross-tabulations, and graphs. Next, normality and linearity tests were conducted to ensure that the data met the requirements for inferential testing. The normality test was used to assess whether the data were normally distributed, and the linearity test was used to verify that the relationship between the two variables was linear (Herlina, 2019). The hypothesis-testing process used Pearson's correlation to assess the direction of the relationship between psychological well-being and academic resilience. All data

processing was carried out using SPSS version 25.0 software, so that the analysis results could be presented objectively and accountably.

RESEARCH RESULT

Table 2
Categorisation of Academic Resilience Variables

Interval	Categorisation	Subject	
		Frequency	Percentage
X ≥ 105.3	High	19	10%
83.7 ≤ X < 105.3	Medium	130	68%
X < 83.7	Low	41	22%

Based on the categorisation results for the academic resilience variable, 10% of students had high academic resilience, 68% had moderate, and 22% had low. These results indicate that, on average, vocational school students in this study had moderate resilience, which tended to be low.

Table 3
Categorisation of Psychological Well-Being Variables

Interval	Categorisation	Subject	
		Frequency	Presentation
X ≥ 117.3	High	51	27%
98.7 ≤ X < 117.3	Medium	109	57%
X < 98.7	Low	30	16%

Based on the categorisation results for the psychological well-being variable, 27% of students had high psychological well-being, 57% had moderate psychological well-being, and 16% had low psychological well-being. These results indicate that, on average, vocational school students in this study had moderate psychological well-being, which tended to be high.

Table 4
Normality Test Results

Variabel	Skor KS-Z	Sig (p)	Description
Academic resilience	0.037	0.200	Normal
Psychological well being	0.047	0.200	Normal

The normality test results indicate that the academic resilience variable has a KS-Z score of 0.037, with a p-value of p = 0.200 (p > 0.05). Meanwhile, the psychological well-being variable had a KS-Z score of 0.047, with a p-value of p = 0.200 (p > 0.05). Both results show p-values > 0.05, indicating that the data in this study are normally distributed.

Table 5
Linearity Test Results

Variable	Dev. from Linearity	Sig (p)	Description
Psychological well being *Academic resilience	0.785	0.824	Linear

The results of the linearity test between psychological well-being and academic resilience obtained a Dev. from Linearity value of 0.785 with a significance level of p = 0.824 (p > 0.05). These results indicate a linear relationship between psychological well-being and academic resilience.

Table 6
Hypothesis Test Results

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig (p)	Description
Psychological well being*Academic resilience	0.675	0.000	Accepted hypothesis

Based on the results of the Product-Moment analysis, a Pearson Correlation value of 0.675 was obtained with a significance level of p = 0.000 (p < 0.01). This indicates a highly significant positive relationship between psychological well-being and academic resilience. Psychological well-being accounts for 45.6% to academic resilience. These results indicate that the researcher's hypothesis can be accepted.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide insight into the relationship between psychological well-being and academic resilience among

vocational school students approaching exams. The field results show a positive relationship between the two variables, with psychological well-being contributing significantly to strengthening students' academic resilience. These findings confirm that psychological factors play an important role in helping students face academic pressures and challenges (Limin & Agustina, 2024). The positive direction of this relationship indicates that the better students' psychological well-being, the greater their ability to persevere, adapt, and bounce back when facing academic problems (Ropret et al., 2023). Thus, students become more mentally prepared to face exams (Amreen & Malik, 2022).

The results of this study also reinforce empirical evidence from previous studies that psychological well-being can increase students' resilience in facing academic pressure (Amalia & Ahmad, 2023; Maris & Fathiyah, 2024). This support further emphasises the importance of psychological interventions that focus on improving psychological well-being during crucial periods, such as before exams, to help students be mentally prepared to meet academic demands (Cassidy et al., 2023). Although in line with previous research, this study identified a novel discrepancy between the results of the hypothesis analysis and those of the categorisation analysis. Based on the results of the hypothesis analysis, the relationship in this study is positive: the higher the psychological well-being, the higher the academic resilience, and vice versa. However, the categorisation analysis results show that, on average, vocational high school students in this study have moderately high psychological well-being and moderately low resilience.

This discrepancy does not necessarily indicate that the research hypothesis is invalid, but rather illustrates that the relationship between the two variables is not always linear at the group-level categorisation (Trpcevska, 2017). A positive correlation indicates the direction of the relationship between variables, but does not always

describe the distribution of variable levels in the population or sample as a whole (Duman et al., 2020). Thus, despite a strong positive relationship, students' academic resilience in general has not yet developed optimally (Lee et al., 2017). This condition can be influenced by various external factors that are not directly measured in this study. High academic pressure ahead of the UKK, demands for mastery of practical skills, and concerns about exam results can leave students' academic resilience underdeveloped, even though they have relatively good psychological well-being (Khairina et al., 2020).

Thus, the discrepancy between the correlation and categorisation results in this study can be understood as an indication that psychological well-being is an important factor related to academic resilience, but not the only determining factor (Surum et al., 2022). This means that psychological well-being does contribute to academic resilience. However, other factors, such as social support, coping strategies, experiences of academic difficulties, and the learning environment, also influence resilience formation. Therefore, efforts to improve students' academic resilience should not only focus on strengthening psychological well-being but also on developing coping skills, social support, and academic readiness to face various learning demands and examinations.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there is a highly significant positive relationship between psychological well-being and academic resilience in vocational high school students approaching their final exams. This finding confirms that psychological well-being plays an important role in strengthening academic resilience and helping students mentally prepare for exams. However, the categorisation results show that, on average, students have psychological well-being in the moderate to high

category and academic resilience in the moderate to low category. This indicates that psychological well-being is not the only factor influencing academic resilience; other factors also shape it. Therefore, the implications of this study indicate the importance of developing psychological intervention programmes in schools, such as guidance and counselling services, coping skills training, and strengthening social support from teachers and the learning environment, so that students are better mentally prepared to face academic pressure.

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