

Academic Resilience as a Foundation for Superior Human Capital: A Narrative Study of Final-Year Students

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Abstract

Final-year university students frequently experience intense academic pressure arising from thesis completion, time constraints, and limited institutional support, which may negatively affect their psychological well-being and academic performance. Academic resilience plays a crucial role in enabling students to adapt to these challenges and prepare for professional life. This study aims to explore the lived experiences of final-year students in dealing with academic pressure and to identify coping strategies that contribute to the development of academic resilience as a foundation for superior human capital. This research employed a qualitative narrative approach involving one final-year student selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured online interviews lasting 15-30 minutes and analysed using narrative thematic analysis, including transcription, repeated reading, and inductive theme development. Data credibility was ensured through member checking and triangulation. The findings indicate that the participant experienced significant academic pressure related to workload, time management, lecturer expectations, and limited internship opportunities. To cope with these challenges, the participant applied adaptive strategies such as positive distraction, peer support, and internalization of academic responsibility. These strategies strengthen self-discipline, persistence, and emotional regulation. The study demonstrates that academic resilience is essential in helping final-year students manage academic stress and develop professional readiness. By fostering adaptive coping strategies, students can enhance their autonomy, consistency, and work ethics. Therefore, higher education institutions are encouraged to strengthen academic support systems and counselling service to promote student resilience and sustainable human capital development.

Keywords: Academic Resilience, Academic Pressure, Final-Year Students, Coping Strategies, Educational Psychology

1. Introduction

In the world of higher education, students in the final stages of their studies often face various complex academic pressures. These pressures include demands to complete final projects or theses, increased academic workload, and pressure from the transition to the working world (Sari & Suhariadi, 2019; Yu et al., 2025). The inability to manage this pressure effectively can cause psychological disorders such as academic anxiety, decreased learning motivation, and hindered academic productivity (Hernawati & Yudiati, 2023; Purnomo & Azhari, 2024).

However, some students demonstrate the ability to rise and persevere amidst such pressure. This phenomenon is known as academic resilience, which is the ability of individuals to adapt positively in facing academic pressure and manage stress with constructive coping strategies (Lin & Talib, 2025). Resilience not only helps students complete their studies well, but also shapes their readiness in facing challenges in the working world that are dynamic and uncertain (Sawitri & Purnamasari, 2024; Wicaksana, 2025).

In the perspective of human resource (HR) development, resilience is a key characteristic that prospective workers must possess. Students are HR agents being formed through academic experiences,



and the experience of facing academic pressure becomes an important part of the adaptive learning process (Tahir, 2024). Therefore, a deep understanding of how students build resilience is very important, not only in the context of academic achievement but also as a foundation for readiness to face the demands of the professional world (Efandi et al., 2025; Ritonga et al., 2024).

However, although previous studies have examined factors influencing academic resilience such as creative educational approach (Slimmen et al., 2025), resilience training programs (Marbun & Christian, 2024), and narrative reflections on academic experiences (Kalampung et al., 2025), limited attention has been given to an in-depth exploration of how final-year undergraduate students construct resilience while navigating academic pressure during their transition to the workforce. Existing research tends to focus on intervention-based or generalized resilience frameworks, rather than on contextualized lived experiences that connect academic resilience with the formation of professional readiness and human capital development. Particularly in the Indonesia higher education context, narrative-based investigations of resilience among final-year students remain underexplored. Therefore, this study offers a contextual and methodological contribution by employing a quantitative narrative approach to examine how academic resilience is developed through lived experiences and how it serves as a foundation for superior human capital formation. This positioning distinguishes the present study from prior intervention-based and conceptual analyses by grounding resilience within real-life academic struggles at the final stage of undergraduate education.

With this background, this research aims to reveal and comprehensively understand the experiences of final-year students in facing academic pressure and the strategies they use to build resilience. This research also wants to answer how these academic experiences contribute to their readiness to become quality and adaptive human resources. Several main questions are raised in this research, including how students understand the academic pressure they experience, what strategies they use to overcome that pressure, and how these experiences strengthen their readiness to face challenges in the working world.

A qualitative approach with narrative study method was chosen to explore experiences deeply and contextually. This method is considered suitable for reconstructing stories, personal reflections, and internal processes experienced by students in building academic resilience (Rahmani et al., 2025). Hopefully, the results of this research can become a scientific contribution in the development of higher education policies and strategies for improving HR capacity in an increasingly competitive era that demands psychological toughness and adaptability.

2. Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a single narrative study design to understand the academic resilience experience of a final-semester student in facing academic pressure while completing their thesis. The informant was selected purposively with criteria of being in semester 7 or above, experiencing significant academic pressure, and willing to be interviewed. Primary data was collected through semi-structured online interviews lasting 15-30 minutes, supplemented with notes on nonverbal expressions, while supporting data was obtained from a review of several relevant journals regarding academic resilience, coping strategies, and academic stress. Analysis was conducted using narrative thematic analysis method, including transcription, repeated reading, and inductive theme identification. Data validity was maintained through member checking, triangulation between interview results and literature, and researcher reflexivity to avoid bias.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. General Overview of Informant

The participant involved in this research is a final-year student from the Visual Communication Design Study Program at a private higher education institution located in Indonesia. The selection of students in the final stage of their studies was based on the assumption that they have acquired adequate knowledge, skills, and academic and practical experience in that field of study. This is expected to provide a richer and more relevant perspective on the phenomenon being studied. To maintain confidentiality and privacy of respondents, the actual identities of the participants are not included in this research report. Instead, each participant is given a special identification code, for example P₁, which is used consistently in the presentation and discussion of data. This coding system not only functions as a form of protection for personal data, but also facilitates researchers in managing, interpreting, and referring to statements or information provided by each participant during the research process.

3.2. Academic Pressure Experienced

Interview results show that P₁ experienced complex academic pressure, encompassing various factors such as the burden of completing final project work, limited time to complete various academic demands, high expectations from lecturers, and obstacles in obtaining suitable internship locations. Of all these burdens, the most dominant factor is the density of final project work that must be completed in a relatively short time frame. This was clearly expressed by the participant through the statement:

“The hardest experience during college was working on my final project. I had to do everything myself because in Visual Communication Design, the work is expected to be individual.” (P₁)

In addition, mental pressure was also exacerbated by large assignments given at inappropriate times. The assignment of work with significant workload during the early Midterm Exam (UTS) period but with deadlines close to the Final Exam (UAS) limited the participant's space to arrange schedules effectively. This situation is described in the following quote:

“The teacher assigned a major project at the start of midterms, but its deadline fell right around finals. There was very little time to get it done.” (P₁)

Another source of pressure came from the difficulty in obtaining internship placements, especially due to the absence of institutional support in the form of official partnerships with external parties. This condition forced students to seek opportunities independently, which according to P₁ became a burden in itself:

“Finding an internship is tough, especially since our university doesn't have any corporate partnerships. We have to look for one on our own.” (P₁)

The combination of these various factors significantly impacts aspects of student well-being, including disrupted sleep patterns, decreased quality of social relationships, and the emergence of psychological pressure symptoms. This finding is in line with Zhang (2025) which asserts that high levels of academic stress, if not balanced with adequate coping strategies, can substantially increase the risk of burnout in students at the final stage of their studies.

3.3. Student Strategies in Facing Academic Pressure

P₁ implemented a number of adaptive coping strategies to manage the academic pressure faced. The first strategy is positive distraction, namely diverting focus of thoughts from academic burdens with light and enjoyable entertainment activities. This approach is used as a means to reduce emotional tension and provide mental breaks before returning to work on assignments, as expressed:

“When I'm stressed, I usually watch short videos or play a casual game to calm my mind.” (P₁)

The second strategy is utilizing social support from peers. In this context, P₁ relied on help from friends, especially in fields or assignments that are outside their main area of interest and expertise. Such support, although not always comprehensive, still helps in improving understanding of difficult material:

“When it comes to animation, I often ask friends for help. They help a little, but it’s enough for me to get the idea.” (P₁)

The third strategy is internalization of academic responsibility, which is shown through a strong commitment to complete assignments on time to maintain the smoothness of the graduation process. This intrinsic motivation becomes the main driver for P₁ to remain productive despite facing significant pressure:

“If I don’t do the assignments, it could affect my graduation. So I have to be responsible.” (P₁)

This series of coping strategies is in line with Wang (2025), which indicate that students with high levels of resilience tend to apply effective coping mechanisms, have strong self-efficacy, and show perseverance in facing academic challenges. This result is also strengthened by elnaem et al (2024), who assert that the application of appropriate coping strategies contributes positively to increasing student resilience in managing academic pressure.

3.4. Resilience as Capital for Facing the Working World

P₁'s experience in facing various academic pressures during college contributes significantly to the formation of personal resilience, especially in terms of time management, consistency, and the ability to complete work without giving up easily. Through the process of adapting to strict academic demands, P₁ developed work discipline skills that are internalized as life principles. This is reflected in the statement:

“The important lesson is to be consistent. If you work on assignments bit by bit, you really have to keep doing it, don’t postpone it.” (P₁)

The participant also considers that the toughness formed during college has direct relevance to the needs of the working world, which generally demands a high level of responsibility, punctuality, and discipline. In their view, the challenging academic process has become a means of crucial character learning:

“In my opinion, this college experience helps. If I hadn’t gone to college, I might still be a person who is less responsible.” (P₁)

This finding is in line with Zhang et al. (2025) who states that academic resilience has a correlation with professional performance and students’ work readiness. The study also emphasizes that support from instructors plays a role as a mediating factor that strengthens the relationship between academic toughness and readiness to face the demands of the working world.

3.5. The Importance of Resilience in Forming Excellent Human Resources

Resilience does not merely function as a defense mechanism against pressure, but also becomes strategic capital in developing the quality of excellent human resources. This ability includes firmness of attitude, commitment, and the ability to remain productive even when in challenging situations. P₁ affirmed this never-give-up attitude through a straightforward statement:

“Whether I can or cannot, I still have to do it. The important thing is that there are results.” (P₁)

This statement is in line with the results of Romano et al. (2021), which shows that emotional intelligence makes a significant contribution to the formation of academic resilience. This result is also strengthened by Shen et al. (2024), which reveal that students with high levels of resilience tend to show active engagement in the learning process, especially in the post-pandemic period, where adaptation to change becomes a very essential skill.

Therefore, academic experiences laden with challenges can function as an important stepping stone in forming graduates who are not only resilient, but also independent and adaptive to the dynamics of change in the professional world. This capacity will ultimately support the development of human resources capable of competing in an increasingly competitive and complex work environment.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings in this narrative research, it can be concluded that academic resilience has a very significant role in helping final-year students face various complex academic pressures, such as demands to complete final assignments, time limitations, high academic expectations, and lack of support from institutions. The implementation of adaptive coping strategies by students including positive distraction, utilization of social support, and appreciation of academic responsibility has proven effective in increasing psychological resilience, consistency, and independence in meeting academic demands. The process of facing such pressure not only contributes to academic success, but also shapes the character of discipline, sense of responsibility, and toughness that become important provisions in entering the working world. Therefore, academic resilience can be viewed as a strategic foundation in the development of excellent, adaptive, and competitive human resources. Based on these conclusions, higher education institutions are expected to take a more active role in strengthening students' academic resilience, especially in the final stage of their studies. Such efforts can be realized through the provision of continuous academic counselling services, improving the quality of guidance from supervising lecturers, more proportional management of academic workload, and strengthening institutional support that supports students' academic and professional needs. In addition, students are expected to be able to increase awareness and self-management abilities in facing academic pressure by consistently applying adaptive coping strategies. For future researchers, it is recommended to develop research with a wider number of participants and use diverse methodological approaches so that a more comprehensive and in-depth picture of academic resilience is obtained.

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