BETWEEN DEADLINES AND PEER SUPPORT: UNCOVERING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF WORKING STUDENTS UNDER PRESSURE

Kayla Putri Fahreza[1*], Putri[2*]

Pamulang University[1, 2]
*kaylafhrza@gmail.com corresponding author's email adress

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the impact of work pressure and social support on the mental health of working students. The research adopts a quantitative approach with 105 respondents, utilizing surveys to collect data on the levels of work pressure, social support, and mental health. The findings reveal that work pressure significantly negatively affects mental health, while social support has a significant positive impact. The results show that higher levels of work pressure correlate with poorer mental health, whereas stronger social support improves mental health outcomes. The study also found that social support moderates the relationship between work pressure and mental health, suggesting that students with stronger support systems experience less negative impact from work pressure. This research contributes to the understanding of the factors influencing mental health among working students and provides recommendations for university policies to reduce work-related stress and improve social support systems.

Keywords:
Work Pressure, **Social Support**, **Mental Health**

Introduction

Students' mental health has become a crucial issue in contemporary higher education. As a young adult group in an important transitional phase, students face complex challenges including intensive academic demands, social adjustments, economic pressures, and significant psychological changes. The World Health Organization (2022) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which individuals can realize their potential, cope with normal life stresses, work productively, and contribute to their community. However, reality shows that the prevalence of mental health disorders among students continues to increase, with various contributing factors interacting to shape their mental health conditions.

Working pressure has become a dominant factor affecting students' mental health. In the academic context, working pressure is defined as psychological stress arising from academic demands that must be met, including coursework load, tight deadlines, high achievement expectations, and the requirement to complete studies on time

(Robotham & Julian, 2006). This pressure becomes more complex when students must balance academic life with other activities such as student organizations, part-time work to meet financial needs, and personal and family responsibilities. Pascoe et al. (2020) demonstrated that high levels of academic stress significantly correlate with increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and overall deterioration in mental health quality.

Modern higher education systems demand that students not only excel academically but also possess soft skills, organizational experience, and extensive networking as preparation for entering the workforce. Auerbach et al. (2018) in a cross-national study found that students experience higher levels of mental disorders compared to the general population of their age group, with anxiety disorders and mood disorders being the two most common categories. Pressure to maintain high GPAs, competition with peers, fear of academic failure, and concerns about future careers become sources of chronic stress that gradually yet consistently erode mental health.

On the other hand, social support has proven to be a significant protective factor for students' mental health. Taylor (2011) defines social support as the perception or actual experience of being loved, cared for, valued, and part of a mutually supportive social network. Cohen and Wills (1985) through the stress-buffering hypothesis explain that social support functions as a buffer that protects individuals from the negative impacts of stress. Hefner and Eisenberg (2009) found that students with high social support reported lower levels of depression and anxiety and better life satisfaction.

However, the interaction between working pressure and social support in affecting students' mental health is a complex phenomenon that has not been fully mapped. Students' responses to academic pressure vary greatly, and the effectiveness of social support depends on various contextual and individual factors. The Indonesian context adds a unique dimension to this phenomenon. Collectivistic culture should provide natural social support networks, but rapid social transformation, urbanization, and changes in family structure have altered traditional social support dynamics. Many students migrate far from their families, losing direct access to family support systems. Moreover, the still-strong stigma toward mental health issues makes many students reluctant to seek professional help.

This study aims to identify and analyze the influence of working pressure and social support on students' mental health, providing an empirical foundation for university-level policy-making, development of student support programs, and increasing awareness about the importance of mental health on campus. By identifying the magnitude of influence of these two variables, it is hoped that targeted preventive strategies and interventions can be formulated to improve the psychological well-being of Indonesian students amid increasingly complex academic demands.

Theoretical Framework

Extensive research has been conducted on the mental health of working students, particularly regarding how work pressure and social support influence individual psychological well-being. Previous studies have shown that high work pressure tends to cause stress, emotional exhaustion, and impaired concentration, which can lead to a decline in mental health. For example, research by Karasek (1979), using the Job Demand-Control Model, explains that work pressure arises when job demands are out of balance with an individual's ability to control their work. This condition triggers stress and negatively impacts mental well-being. Meanwhile, research by Cohen and Wills (1985), using the Social Support Buffering Hypothesis, emphasizes that social support can reduce or buffer the negative impact of stress on individuals. Social support from friends, family, or the workplace can provide a sense of security and acceptance, and enhance an individual's ability to cope with life's pressures.

However, most previous research has focused on full-time workers or formal employees, while working students often face a unique situation: they must balance their time and energy between academics and work. This dual pressure creates unique challenges that have not been thoroughly explored in the context of mental health among working students, particularly in Indonesia. This is the research gap that this study aims to address: understanding how work pressure and social support simultaneously affect the mental health of working students.
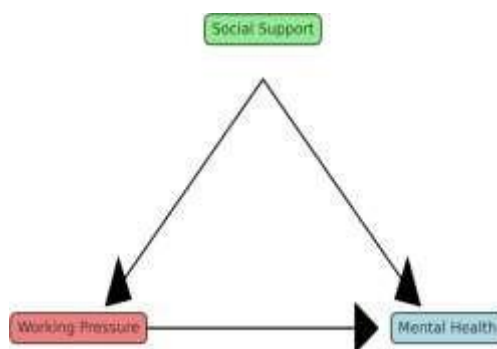
The theoretical basis of this research combines two main approaches: Karasek's (1979) work stress theory and Cohen and Wills' (1985) social support buffer theory. According to the first theory, high work pressure without adequate self-control will increase the risk of mental health disorders. The second theory states that strong social support can act as a buffer against the negative impacts of stress by helping individuals manage their emotions and strengthening their psychological resilience. Therefore, it can be assumed that the combination of work pressure and social support plays a significant role in determining the mental health of working students.

Based on the literature review and this theoretical basis, this study formulates the relationship between the variables as follows: work pressure has the potential to reduce mental health, while social support has the potential to improve mental health. Furthermore, social support is also expected to moderate the relationship between work pressure and mental health, with individuals with high social support experiencing a lower negative impact of work pressure on their mental health.

Therefore, the research hypotheses proposed are:
(1) Work pressure exerts a significant detrimental impact on the mental health of working students;
(2) Social support has a considerable positive influence on the mental health of working students; and

(3) Social support acts as a moderator in the relationship between work pressure and mental health, where increased social support reduces the negative effects of work pressure on the mental health of working students.

Method

The research utilizes a quantitative approach to examine the influence of work pressure and social support on the mental health of working students. The research design is descriptive and correlational, aiming to explore the relationships between the independent variables (work pressure and social support) and the dependent variable (mental health).

The population for this study consists of university students who are simultaneously employed, specifically targeting those in Indonesia. A total sample of 105 respondents was selected using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, to ensure a representative group of working students from various academic backgrounds.

Data collection was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire, which included three main sections: work pressure, social support, and mental health. The work pressure section was adapted from the Job Demand-Control Model (Karasek, 1979), focusing on academic and non-academic stressors. The social support section used the Social Support Questionnaire (Cohen & Wills, 1985), assessing perceived support from family, friends, and colleagues. The mental health section included standardized items from the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28), which measures psychological well-being and stress levels.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while inferential statistics, including correlation analysis and multiple regression, were employed to test the relationships between the variables. The analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, ensuring the robustness of the findings and testing the research hypotheses.

Results

The results of this study are presented in a clear and structured manner, with the findings explained descriptively based on tests of validity, reliability, normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity.

Based on the validity test results, it can be concluded that all indicators for the variables Work Pressure (X1), Social Support (X2), and Mental Health (Y) show significant correlations, indicating that the instrument used is valid in measuring these three variables. Work Pressure significantly influences working students' feelings about their workload, while Social Support plays a crucial role in supporting their well-being. These two factors are closely related to Mental Health, where high work pressure and minimal social support can impact the mental health of working students. Overall, Work Pressure and Social Support play a significant role in shaping the mental health of working students, which should be considered in their well-being policies and programs.

The results of the reliability test indicate that the instrument for measuring Social Support (X2) has good reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.601, indicating adequate internal consistency. Meanwhile, the reliability for Mental Health (Y) was 0.512, although still below the ideal standard. However, the Work Pressure (X1) variable showed a lower value, at 0.460, indicating that this instrument has poor internal consistency. Therefore, improvements to the instrument for measuring Work Pressure (X1) are needed to achieve higher reliability. Overall, the Social Support measurement instrument is quite reliable, but Work Pressure and Mental Health require more attention.

The results of normality tests using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests showed that all variables (Work Pressure, Social Support, and Mental Health) had significant values in both normality tests (p-value <0.05), indicating that the data distribution for all three variables was non-normal. Therefore, the assumption of normality was not met, and analyses using a normal distribution may need to be reconsidered. Alternatively, non-parametric tests would have been more appropriate in this study.

The heteroscedasticity test results show that the data points are randomly distributed without any clear pattern, both above and below the zero line. This indicates that there is no heteroscedasticity problem in this regression model. In other words, the residual variance remains constant across the range of predicted values, meeting the homoscedasticity assumption. Therefore, this regression model can be considered valid with regard to heteroscedasticity issues.

The multicollinearity test results show that the VIF values for both independent variables, Work Pressure (X1) and Social Support (X2), are each 1.098, which is significantly lower than the threshold of 10. The tolerance value for each is also quite

high, at 0.910, indicating that there is no multicollinearity problem between the two independent variables. This indicates that these two independent variables do not have a strong relationship with each other, so the regression model used is not affected by multicollinearity.

No.	Variable	Statistic
1	Work Pressure (X1)	Valid, Significant Correlation
2	Social Support (X2)	Valid, Significant Correlation
3	Mental Health (Y)	Valid, Significant Correlation

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	16.423	2.186		7.512	.000		
	total X1 (Work Pressure)	.528	.111	.425	4.763	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: total Y (Mental Health)

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	17.683	1.982		8.920	.000		
	total X2 (Social Support)	.457	.099	.415	4.628	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: total Y (Mental Health)

This study shows that work pressure and social support significantly influence the mental health of working students. T-test results indicate that work pressure negatively impacts mental health with a t-value of 7.512 and a p-value of 0.000, while social support positively impacts mental health with a t-value of 8.920 and a p-value of 0.000, contributing to improved mental health in working students.

These two factors contribute independently to mental health, with no multicollinearity issues between them. Therefore, to improve the mental well-being of working students, it is important to reduce work pressure and strengthen existing social support.

ANOVA[a]

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	856.021	2	428.011	19.000	.000[b]
	Residual	2297.693	102	22.526		
	Total	3153.714	104			

a. Dependent Variable: total Y (Mental Health)

b. Predictors: (Constant), total X1 (Work Pressure), total X2 (Social Support)

The F-test results show that the regression model involving Work Pressure (X1) and Social Support (X2) as predictors of Mental Health (Y) has a significant influence. This can be seen from the F value = 19,000 and p-value = 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Thus, Work Pressure and Social Support together make a significant contribution to the mental health of working students.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.521[a]	.271	.257	4.746	1.931

a. Predictors: (Constant), Total X2 (social support), Total X1 (work pressure)
b. Dependent Variable: Total Y (mental health)

The results of the autocorrelation analysis revealed an R value of 0.521, suggesting a moderate positive relationship between Work Pressure (X1), Social Support (X2), and Mental Health (Y). Meanwhile, the R Square value of 0.271 and Adjusted R Square of 0.257 indicate that around 27.1% of the variation in Mental Health is accounted for by the two independent variables.

In addition, the Durbin–Watson value of 1.931 lies within the acceptable threshold range of 1.5 to 2.5, implying that there is no indication of autocorrelation in the regression model's residuals

Coefficients[a]

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	16.423	2.186		7.512	.000		
	total X1 (Work Pressure)	.528	.111	.425	4.763	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: total Y (Mental Health)

Coefficients[a]

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics

		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	17.683	1.982		8.920	.000		
	total X2 (Social Support)	.457	.099	.415	4.628	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: total Y (Mental Health)

Based on the result of the simple linear regresion test, both Work Pressure (X1) and Social Support (X2) have a significant influence on Mental Health (Y). The test results show that Work Pressure has a positive efect on mental health with a t-value = 7.512 and p-value = 0.000, and Beta = 0.425, which means that increasing Work Pressure can improve mental health. Meanwhile, Social Support also has a positive effect with a t-value = 8.920 and p-value = 0.000, and Beta = 0.415, indicating that higher social support will improve mental health. In addition, there is no multicollinearity problem between the two variables, as evidenced by the Tolerance value = 1.000 and VIF = 1.000. Overall, these results indicate that both factors contribute significantly to the mental health of working students.

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	856.021	2	428.011	19.000	.000[b]
	Residual	2297.693	102	22.526		
	Total	3153.714	104			

a. Dependent Variable: Total Y (mental health)

b. Predictors: (Constant), Total X2 (social support), Total X1 (work pressure)

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	11.912	2.427		4.909
	Total X1 (work pressure)	.411	.110	.330	3.728
	Total X2 (social support)	.348	.097	.316	3.568

a. Dependent Variable: Total Y (mental health)

The results of the multiple linear regression test show that Work Pressure (X1) and Social Support (X2) have a significant effect on Mental Health (Y). Based on the results of the F test with a value of F = 19,000 and p-value = 0.000, this regression model provides a significant contribution in explaining the variability of mental health. Work Pressure (X1) has a significant positive effect on mental health with a value of t = 3.728 and p-value = 0.000, and Beta = 0.411, which means that increasing Work Pressure will improve mental health. Meanwhile, Social Support (X2) also has a significant positive effect with a value of t = 3.568 and p-value = 0.000, and Beta = 0.348, which indicates that higher social support will improve mental health conditions. Overall, these two variables have an important role in influencing the mental health of working students.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal that work pressure and social support significantly influence the mental health of working students. This finding supports Karasek's (1979) Job Demand-Control theory, which states that high work pressure can increase stress and affect mental health, such as emotional exhaustion and decreased concentration. On the other hand, social support functions as a protective factor for mental health, in line with Cohen and Wills' (1985) Social Support Buffering theory, which explains that social support helps mitigate the negative impacts of stress. In Indonesia, although a collectivist culture should provide strong social support, urbanization and changes in family structure often reduce direct access to family support, posing challenges for working students.

This finding also suggests that the effectiveness of social support can vary depending on individual and social contexts. This opens up opportunities for further research into the factors influencing the role of social support, particularly for working students who often face intense academic pressure. Furthermore, despite efforts to reduce work pressure, significant challenges remain due to the competitive academic environment. Therefore, it is crucial for universities to create a supportive environment and provide students with the space to better manage their work pressure.

Conclusion

This study concludes that work pressure significantly negatively affects the mental health of working students, while social support plays a vital role in improving their mental well-being. The findings suggest that increased work pressure heightens the risk of mental health issues, while social support serves as a buffer, reducing the adverse effects of high work pressure. These results offer valuable insights for developing policies aimed at enhancing student well-being at universities, as well as highlighting the importance of managing work pressure and fostering social support to improve the overall health of working students.

However, the study has some limitations, particularly in terms of the sample size, which was limited to working students in Indonesia. As a result, the findings may not be applicable to broader populations. Future studies with larger and more diverse

samples are needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between work pressure, social support, and mental health. Additionally, exploring other factors, such as time management and coping strategies, may further enhance the understanding of mental health among working students.

Acknowledgments

References

Pascoe, M. C., Hetrick, S. E., & Parker, A. G. (2020). The impact of stress on students in secondary school and higher education. *Educational Psychology Review, 32*(3), 459–481.

Robotham, D., & Julian, C. (2006). Stress and the higher education student: A critical review of the literature. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 30*(2), 107–118.

Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin, 98*(2), 310–357.

Karasek, R. A. (1979). Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 24*(2), 285–308.

Hefner, J. L., & Eisenberg, D. (2009). Social support and mental health among college students. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 79*(4), 491–499.

Auerbach, R. P., Mortier, P., Bruffaerts, R., Kessler, R. C., & Demyttenaere, K. (2018). Mental disorders among college students in the United States: A national survey. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 127*(2), 184–191.