

Research article

Social support and adaptive capacity as determinants of student success: diversity and agents of change in higher education in Indonesia

El apoyo social y la capacidad de adaptación como factores determinantes del éxito académico: diversidad y agentes de cambio en la educación superior en Indonesia

Putu Wijangga¹: Hasanuddin University, Indonesia.

wijanggap@gmail.com

Iqbal Latief: Hasanuddin University, Indonesia.

muhilberkelana@gmail.com

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Abstract

Introduction: Student academic success is now influenced not only by cognitive intelligence, but also by social support and adaptability, especially in university environments that are culturally, socially, and economically diverse. **Methodology:** This study used a quantitative approach with a survey of 70 Hasanuddin University students, using the Slovin formula for sample determination and multiple linear regression analysis. **Result:** The results of the study indicate that social support from family, friends, and institutions has a significant positive

¹ Corresponding author: Putu Wijangga. Hasanuddin University (Indonesia).

effect on students' learning motivation and academic resilience, with a calculated F value of 21.424 > table F value of 3.13 and significance of 0.000 < 0.05; a 1% increase in social support increases motivation and resilience by 1%, with a moderate strength of association (Adjusted R-Square 0.372), where empathy is the primary form of support (53%) and family is the primary source of support (80%). **Conclusions:** Research findings show that adaptive capacity encourages students to overcome academic stress, innovate, and play an active role as agents of change, thereby emphasizing the importance of inclusive and responsive higher education strategies.

Keywords: social support; adaptive capacity; higher education; academic resilience; inclusive education.

Resumen:

Introducción: El éxito académico de los estudiantes ya no solo depende de la inteligencia cognitiva, sino también del apoyo social y la capacidad de adaptación, especialmente en entornos universitarios cultural, social y económicamente diversos. **Metodología:** Este estudio utilizó un enfoque cuantitativo con una encuesta a 70 estudiantes de la Universidad Hasanuddin, utilizando la fórmula de Slovin para la determinación de la muestra y el análisis de regresión lineal múltiple. **Resultado:** Los resultados del estudio indican que el apoyo social de la familia, los amigos y las instituciones tiene un efecto positivo significativo en la motivación para el aprendizaje y la resiliencia académica de los estudiantes, con un valor F calculado de 21,424 > valor F de la tabla de 3,13 y una significación de 0,000 < 0,05; un aumento del 1 % en el apoyo social aumenta la motivación y la resiliencia en un 1 %, con una fuerza de asociación moderada (R cuadrado ajustado 0,372), donde la empatía es la forma principal de apoyo (53 %) y la familia es la fuente principal de apoyo (80 %). **Conclusiones:** Los resultados de la investigación muestran que la capacidad de adaptación anima a los estudiantes a superar el estrés académico, innovar y desempeñar un papel activo como agentes de cambio, lo que pone de relieve la importancia de las estrategias de educación superior inclusivas y receptivas.

Palabras clave: apoyo social; capacidad de adaptación; educación superior; resiliencia académica; educación inclusiva.

1. Introduction

Health is an important aspect in supporting the sustainability of community activities and productivity, including physical, mental, and social well-being, not just the absence of disease or disability. Health, according to Law No. 23 of 1992 and the WHO, encompasses overall well-being, including mental health that affects social functioning and productivity (Mulya et al., 2021; Usfa et al., 2023). According to Law No. 18 of 2014, mental health includes self-awareness, stress management skills, and social participation (Apriyanto et al., 2022), making it a crucial foundation for achieving overall well-being.

Mental health problems are now a global issue that requires serious attention, especially because the incidence of mental disorders continues to increase significantly. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2017 noted that 450 million people in the world experience mental health disorders, where one in four people will experience it in their lifetime. The most common disorders are depression and anxiety, with 322 million and 200 million people worldwide experiencing them respectively (Khoiriyah & Handayani, 2020).

Mental health is currently a global issue that is receiving increasing serious attention, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. According to the latest data, India has the highest number of mental health cases in the region, with 56 million sufferers, or around 4.5% of its total population. This figure highlights the urgency of addressing mental health as an integral part of the public health system. Various countries have responded to this phenomenon by designing specific policies to address mental health issues in a more structured and systematic manner.

Indonesia, as part of the Asia-Pacific region, also faces similar challenges. The increase in emotional mental disorders in Indonesia has been significant in recent years. Data from Rizdanti et al. (2022) shows that the prevalence of emotional mental disorders rose from 6% to 9.8% in 2018. This figure indicates that nearly 1 in 10 Indonesians experience emotional mental disorders, which can include anxiety, depression, or other psychological disorders. This surge is a warning sign of the importance of paying more attention to the mental health of the Indonesian people. The 15–24 age group is the most vulnerable to mental disorders.

According to the findings of Usfa et al. (2023), there are over 14 million young Indonesians experiencing mental disorders ranging from mild to severe, particularly in the form of depression and anxiety. This indicates that adolescents and young adults are facing significant psychological pressure, whether from social environments, education, or the developmental changes they are undergoing. The transition period from adolescence to adulthood is known to be a phase vulnerable to psychological pressure, and if not properly addressed, it can have long-term effects on their quality of life.

Additionally, a report by Tanugeraha et al. (2023) notes that 19 million Indonesians aged 15 and above experience emotional disorders, with 12 million suffering from depression. In the context of education, academic stress is the primary contributor to mental health issues among students and young adults. The burden of assignments, pressure to perform well academically, and high social expectations are the main triggers causing students to experience significant mental stress. This condition not only hinders academic performance but also negatively impacts social relationships, physical health, and increases the risk of suicide if not properly addressed.

These facts underscore the importance of early intervention and increasing public awareness of the importance of mental health, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Mental health education should be introduced early in school and university settings, both through the curriculum and active counseling services. The government, educational institutions, and families must collaborate to create an ecosystem that supports the psychological well-being of the younger generation. With a comprehensive and data-driven approach, it is hoped that the incidence of mental disorders can be reduced, and the younger generation can grow into mentally healthy and socially productive individuals.

Students are a group that is vulnerable to mental health disorders due to academic pressure and dense lecture activities, such as assignments and demands to complete studies. Academic stress, which includes emotional pressure from lecturers, parents, and the social environment, is the main cause of mental disorders among students. Research by Fardani et al. (2021) revealed that this stress is influenced by internal factors (such as mindset, motivation, and procrastination) and external factors (such as excessive assignments and minimal social support).

If this condition is not managed properly, it can have serious impacts, including the risk of suicide, as evidenced by research by Putra et al. (2023) which showed a significant relationship between academic stress, depression, and suicidal tendencies. Social support from family and peers plays an important role in reducing academic stress levels, as emphasized by Hidayat & Darmawanti (2022).

Social support has been shown to play a significant role in reducing students' academic stress levels, as shown by Ellis et al. (2023) who found that the higher the level of social support received by students – whether in the form of emotional support, information, appreciation, or material – the lower the level of stress they experience. Conversely, minimal social support increases the risk of academic stress which can have an impact on mental health. In addition, adaptability is also an important factor in maintaining students' emotional stability in facing academic challenges. Adaptation is not only related to adjusting to academic demands, but also to personal, social, emotional, and institutional aspects. Research by Rahmadani and Mukti (2020) supports this, showing that students who have good adaptability tend to be better able to adjust to changes and pressures in the lecture environment, so they are more resistant to stress and able to maintain their academic performance.

Based on the above research, it can be said that social support and adaptability are two components that are closely related in helping students deal with various social pressures in their environment. The more social support received, the more it helps students to deal with various academic pressures. In addition, adaptability also plays a role in helping students to adjust to academic demands and not only that but also personal, social and emotional adaptation. The increasing prevalence of mental health disorders, especially among students, is a serious concern in the world of higher education.

Students face various pressures, especially those originating from academic demands, which have the potential to cause stress and have a negative impact on their mental condition. This condition is exacerbated by the weak social support received and the low adaptability of individuals in dealing with the dynamics of campus life. In fact, social support and adaptive capacity have been empirically proven to reduce academic stress levels and increase students' mental resilience. Therefore, it is very important to examine in more depth the role of social support and adaptability as factors that can mitigate academic pressure and encourage student success, especially in the context of the very complex social and cultural diversity in Indonesia.

2. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive type and survey strategy to describe the influence of social support and adaptability on students' academic success. The study population was 163 Sociology students of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University, with a sample of 70 students selected using proportional random sampling techniques and the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 10%. Data were collected through observation, structured interviews, literature studies, and documentation.

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS version 26 through the stages of data coding, entering, cleaning, and analyzing, including classical assumption tests (normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity). Furthermore, multiple linear regression analysis, simultaneous tests (F tests), coefficients of determination, and hypothesis tests were carried out to see the significance of the influence of independent variables on dependent variables, so that statistically valid results were obtained and can be used as a strong scientific basis.

3. Results

Validity test on variables X1 (Social Support), X2 (Adaptability), and Y (Academic Success) showed that all question items were declared valid because the calculated r value of each item was greater than the r table of 0.198 at a significance level of 5%. The test was carried out using SPSS software version 26, which ensured that the research instrument was feasible to measure each variable.

Table 1.

Cronbach's Alpha Result

Variable	Total Item	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
X1 - Social Support	10	0,872	Reliable
X2 - Adaptability	8	0,845	Reliable
Y - Academic Success	6	0,816	Reliable

Source: Own elaboration.

Based on the reliability test results using Cronbach's Alpha method, the three variables in this study, namely Social Support (X1), Adaptability (X2), and Academic Success (Y), showed excellent results. The Cronbach's Alpha values for the Social Support variable are 0.872, Adaptability 0.845, and Academic Success 0.816. All three values exceed the minimum reliability threshold of 0.70, indicating that all instruments in this study have a high level of internal consistency. In other words, the items in the questionnaire were able to consistently measure the aspects corresponding to each variable's construct.

This high reliability also indicates that respondents provided stable and reliable answers to the statements presented in the instrument. These results provide a strong foundation for researchers to proceed with further data analysis, such as regression tests or analyses of relationships between variables, as the instruments used have proven capable of accurately representing the research variables and are internally valid. Additionally, good reliability also confirms that the results of this study can be replicated in similar contexts or populations with a high level of confidence.

3.1. Acceptance of Social Support Among College Students

Social support plays a crucial role in helping students cope with academic stress, which is divided into four main types: emotional, informational, instrumental, and reward. The level of acceptance of each of these forms of support is measured through five frequency categories (SL, SR, KK, J, TP) to provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of social interactions in the campus environment.

Table 2.

Percentage of Acceptance of Support Among Students

Support Types	Form of Support	Percentage				
		SL (%)	SR (%)	KK (%)	J (%)	TP (%)
Emotional Support	Getting attention	12%	34%	39%	14%	1%
	Get advice	10%	53%	24%	12%	1%
	Getting attention when sick	21%	33%	33%	9%	4%
	Get motivated	16%	44%	23%	14%	3%
	Getting attention when not attending lectures	23%	31%	27%	13%	6%
Informative Support	Receiving lecture schedule information	20%	23%	26%	24%	7%
	Receiving information on the time of collection of lecture assignments	26%	16%	34%	18%	6%
	Receiving information on work experience enhancement	4%	19%	44%	23%	10%
	Sharing lecture materials	9%	24%	40%	16%	11%
	Explanation of material when not attending lectures	4%	14%	27%	40%	15%
Instrumental Support	Lending Gadgets	17%	27%	24%	19%	13%
	Share notebooks	17%	38%	26%	13%	6%
Support Awards	Appreciation for winning the competition	7%	26%	21%	22%	24%
	Appreciation for getting High IP	9%	21%	31%	20%	19%
	Appreciation when diligently attending lectures	9%	21%	27%	24%	19%
	Appreciation when diligently completing college assignments	10%	21%	33%	23%	13%
	Appreciation when diligent in providing feedback	3%	17%	39%	31%	10%

Source: Own elaboration.

The data show that students quite often receive social support in the form of emotional, informative, instrumental, and appreciation, although the intensity varies. Emotional and instrumental support tend to be more consistently received, while informative and appreciation support still face challenges in their sustainability and distribution. Overall, students feel the positive impact of various forms of social support in dealing with academic and daily stress, although there is still a need to increase the intensity and consistency, especially in the aspects of information and appreciation.

Table 3.

Role-Taking Analysis Matrix in Providing Support

Support Types	Role Taking	Forms of Support
Empathy	- Using another person's perspective to understand students' emotions or experiences - Internalizing an individual's feelings or condition to offer emotional support	- Parents imagine their children's (students') academic pressure and provide support in the form of encouragement and motivation. - College friends/close friends (boyfriends) listen to complaints without intervention and show sympathy for the academic problems faced.
Informative	- Understanding students' information needs from their perspective - Adopting a perspective to identify what is relevant and useful to students	- Lecturers understand that students have difficulty finding information about academic opportunities such as scholarships and then provide detailed explanations. - Friends provide information about lecture schedules and reading resources.
Instrumental	Understanding the practical challenges faced by students	- Parents help with financial needs after understanding the needs their children require for college. - Friends offer to lend tools or help with group assignments
Award	Taking a role in understanding how rewards can motivate and increase individual self-confidence	- Lecturers give verbal or formal appreciation for student efforts. - Friends give praise and appreciation for their friends' hard work to boost self-confidence.

Source: Own elaboration.

Social support becomes effective when the support provider is able to do *role-taking*, that is, understand the student's situation from their perspective, so that the response given is relevant and meaningful. Research shows that family empathy, information from friends, and appreciation from lecturers contribute significantly to students' emotional, cognitive, and social well-being.

3.2. Student Adaptation Capacity

Social adaptation is an important part of student life, especially in facing the dynamics of lectures and campus life. The following data shows various forms of student social adaptation categorized into five types, namely *recognition*, *participation*, *social approval*, *altruism*, and *conformity*, by looking at the distribution of student responses to each form of adaptation.

Table 4.*Percentage of Student Adaptation Capacity*

Types of Adaptation	Adaptation Form	Percentage				
		SL (%)	SR (%)	KK (%)	J (%)	TP (%)
Recognition	Confession	11%	53%	21%	9%	6%
	Awards when active in discussion	9%	49%	21%	14%	7%
	Recognition of academic achievement	1%	11%	40%	29%	19%
Participation	Actively involved in group assignments	41%	40%	16%	3%	0%
	Active discussion in class	9%	31%	44%	14%	2%
	Active discussion outside class	6%	33%	33%	21%	7%
	Actively ask the lecturer questions	1%	19%	46%	24%	10%
Social Approval	Feeling accepted in a friendship group	27%	43%	20%	7%	3%
	Get support from friends	19%	42%	27%	11%	1%
	Easy to interact with other people	21%	46%	16%	16%	1%
Altruism	Helping friends	11%	37%	42%	9%	1%
	Sharing resources	31%	46%	21%	2%	0%
	Prioritize the interests of others	18%	46%	36%	0%	0%
	Igniting time	17%	40%	37%	6%	0%
	Happy when helping others	50%	40%	10%	0%	0%
	Offer help to others	14%	21%	50%	13%	2%
Conformity	Comply with the study contract	36%	46%	17%	1%	0%
	Equalizing behavior	20%	24%	44%	6%	6%

Source: Own elaboration.

The data shows that the most successful form of student social adaptation is seen in the aspect of participation and altruistic attitudes, such as being active in group assignments (81%) and being happy to help others (90%). In contrast, recognition of academic achievement is still low (48%), although acceptance in friendships and compliance with college rules show high positive responses, confirming the importance of healthy social interactions in the adaptation process.

3.3. The Role of Social Support and Adaptive Capacity

Social support and adaptability are two main components that support individuals in interacting, socializing and participating in their social environment. Social support includes all forms of assistance received by individuals from other people in their social environment. The social support in question is in the form of providing motivation, encouragement, information and physical assistance given to individuals who are in a condition of facing many problems.

Table 5.

Analysis Matrix of the Role of Social Support and Adaptation Ability

Support Types	Recognition	Participation	Social Approval	Altruism	Conformity
Empathy	Helping students understand and accept their emotional situations	Increase motivation and confidence to get involved	Providing a sense of emotional acceptance	Cultivate concern for helping others	Strengthening compliance with social norms
Instrumental	Recognition of the resources students possess	Practical assistance supports participation	Reducing disappointment when helping others	Real help in helping others	Conforming to social rules
Information	Helps understand relevant information	Providing insights for participation	Intellectual support enhances appreciation	Information drives altruistic actions	Instilling awareness of social norms
Award	Increase recognition for effort and achievement	Motivating active participation	Strengthening the sense of social acceptance	Appreciation motivates altruistic attitudes	Encouraging conformity to social norms through rewards

Source: Own elaboration.

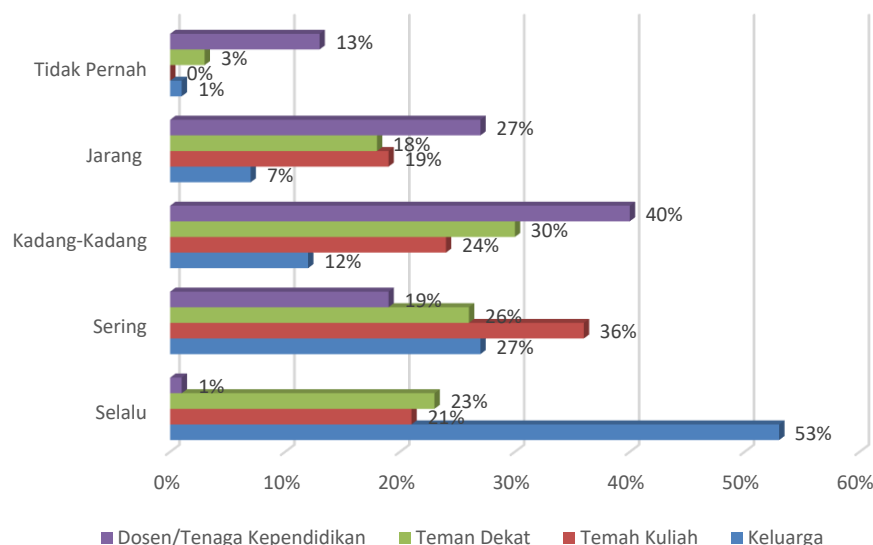
Social support and adaptability play an important role in helping students face academic challenges through increasing self-confidence, expanding social networks, and adjusting to prevailing values and norms (12). Based on the data from this study, as many as 81% of students were actively involved in group assignments and 90% felt happy helping others, which reflects the high role of participation and altruism as a form of social adaptation. The integration of these two elements is in line with George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism theory, which explains that the development of the mind, self, and society is formed through a complex process of social interaction, including role-taking and the use of symbols. This finding confirms that students who are able to adapt and receive social support are better prepared to face academic problems effectively.

3.4. Sources of Student Social Support Income

In the lives of college students, social support plays a vital role in supporting well-being and academic success. College students are often faced with a variety of challenges, whether academic, emotional, or social. Therefore, understanding the sources of social support available to them is crucial. Through the lens of Symbolic Interactionism theory proposed by Herbert Mead, we can explore how social interactions and the symbolic meanings associated with social support can influence college students' experiences.

Figure 1.

Percentage of Student Support Sources



Source: Own elaboration.

The data in the bar chart shows the frequency of emotional support received by students from various sources, namely lecturers/education staff, close friends, college friends, and family. It can be seen that family is the most consistent source of emotional support, with 53% of respondents stating that they “always” receive support from their family, far exceeding other sources. In contrast, lecturers/education staff tend to be the ones who provide emotional support the least, with the highest percentage in the categories “sometimes” (40%) and “rarely” (27%), and only 1% stating that they “always” receive support from them. Meanwhile, college friends and close friends provide support more often in the categories “often” and “always”, indicating that the peer social environment has an important role in supporting students’ emotional conditions. These findings emphasize the importance of family and peer support in maintaining students’ emotional health, while the role of educators is still limited in this aspect.

3.5. The Influence of Social Support and Adaptive Capacity on Students' Academic Success

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) data in this regression model shows how the independent variables simultaneously affect the dependent variable in the study. The results of the ANOVA test show that the F value is 21.424 with a significance (Sig.) of 0.000, which means it is smaller than the significance limit of 0.05. This indicates that the regression model used is statistically significant, or in other words, the independent variables together have a significant effect on the dependent variable. The Sum of Squares Regression value of 1107.761 indicates the contribution of variation from the model to the total variation of 2839.943, while the Residual of 1732.181 indicates variation that is not explained by the model. These findings provide a strong basis for further interpretation of the regression coefficients of each predictor variable.

Table 6.*Hypothesis Test Results Using the F Test Model*

ANOVA ^a						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1107.761	2	553,881	21,424	.000 ^b
	Residual	1732.181	67	25,853		
	Total	2839.943	69			

Source: Own elaboration.

Based on the results of the study, it shows that social support and adaptability have a simultaneous influence on academic success. The test results show that social support and adaptability have an influence of 0.372 or 3.72% on academic success.

4. Discussion

The results of this study can be interpreted to mean that the greater the social support received and the better the students' ability to adapt, the higher their self-confidence and motivation in facing various academic problems. This finding confirms that support from the surrounding environment does not only play a role as an external factor, but also becomes a key element in shaping students' psychological resilience. In this context, social support has the primary function of providing a sense of security, emotional attachment, and a sense of belonging that are essential for students in their academic process.

Support received from family, peers, and higher education institutions directly contributes to the improvement of students' self-confidence. When a student feels that they have a strong support system, they develop the belief that the academic challenges they face can be overcome. This is also closely related to intrinsic motivation that arises alongside social recognition and acceptance from the surrounding environment. Students who feel accepted and emotionally supported tend to have higher motivation to learn, are more diligent, and are less likely to give up.

The existence of social support depends heavily on the student's own adaptability. Adaptability, or the ability to adjust, is an important competency that enables individuals to survive and thrive in changing situations. In George Herbert Mead's theory, adaptability is closely related to the process of self-formation. In this context, students' self-formation occurs through the social experiences and interactions they engage in with their social environment. Furthermore, in Mead's concept of the "social game," the term "games" refers to the advanced stage of an individual's social development.

At this stage, individuals are not only able to take on the roles of others individually (as in the play stage) but also understand and adapt to more complex social expectations. In the context of students, this means that they will tend to act in accordance with the values, norms, and rules that apply in their social environment—for example, on campus—with the aim of gaining recognition and acceptance as part of that social group (Omniara et al., 2019). Adaptability in this case becomes an important asset for students to navigate the social dynamics that exist in the academic environment.

Simply put, students will strive to adapt to the values, norms, and rules that apply in their social environment as an effort to gain social acceptance. In the context of higher education, which is multicultural and multicontextual, this becomes very important.

Students who are able to adapt quickly not only find it easier to form social networks, but are also more open to differences, more flexible in their thinking, and more resilient in facing academic pressures. Further analysis of the research results shows that social support is closely related to the concept of society in Mead's theory, known as society.

Based on these research findings, it can be further analyzed that social support is the result of social interactions between individuals—in this case, students—who play a crucial role in shaping the social structure of the campus community. This is consistent with Mead's view that society is formed through symbolic interaction, where individuals learn and interpret their social roles through communication with others. Communication between students and their peers, lecturers, and institutional parties is a concrete form of the symbolic interaction referred to by Mead. In this process, students not only receive information but also develop their social identities, understand their roles as learners, and form healthy interpersonal relationships.

Social support such as empathy, information, appreciation, and instrumental support plays a role in strengthening interpersonal relationships and facilitating effective communication between individuals (Anidar, 2012). For example, when a student experiences academic difficulties and receives support from their friends or lecturers, they will feel that they are valued and not alone in facing challenges. This interaction not only provides concrete solutions to the problems faced but also strengthens students' social bonds and self-confidence. Thus, social support is not only practical but also symbolic—that is, as social recognition of students' existence and role in the academic community.

Furthermore, in-depth analysis shows that social support also plays a role in shaping the mind of individuals, especially students. In Mead's view, the individual mind develops through a process of social interaction, in which individuals learn to use symbols—such as language—to communicate and understand the world around them. In this case, social support provides the context for such symbolic interaction, enabling students to process their experiences, form self-perceptions, and understand and respond to social expectations in the campus environment.

For example, when a student receives feedback or advice from a lecturer, it not only enriches their academic knowledge but also influences their way of thinking, their perspective on problems, and their decision-making. Positive social support can help students develop reflective, creative, and adaptive thinking patterns. They become more open to criticism, more resilient in the face of failure, and more innovative in solving academic and social problems they encounter (Farlina, 2022). Therefore, consistent social support provided in the appropriate context is crucial for the intellectual and psychological development of students. It not only provides emotional security but also shapes how students think and behave in dealing with the complex dynamics of campus life. In this regard, the roles of family, peers, and educational institutions are crucial.

Family support creates a stable emotional foundation, peer support builds social connections and solidarity, while institutional support provides legitimacy and facilitates students' learning needs. Overall, the integration of social support and adaptability are two mutually reinforcing aspects in shaping resilient, reflective, and productive students in an academic environment. When students have good adaptability, they are better prepared to receive and utilize social support optimally. Conversely, a supportive social environment accelerates the adaptation process and the formation of students' self-identity.

The combination of both is not only important for short-term academic success but also lays a strong foundation for social engagement, independent thinking, and readiness to face life's challenges after graduation. Therefore, higher education institutions need to design responsive educational strategies, strengthen students' social networks, and instill adaptive and collaborative values in daily learning processes.

5. Conclusions

This study confirms that social support and adaptability play an important role in shaping students' self-confidence, motivation to learn, and academic resilience. Support from family, peers, and institutions not only provides emotional security, but also contributes to the formation of students' identities and minds through social interaction. Students' adaptability is key to effectively receiving and utilizing such social support, as through adaptation, students can understand and adjust to the values, norms, and social expectations of the campus environment.

Higher education institutions need to create an inclusive and supportive learning ecosystem where social relationships among students, faculty, and institutions are built openly and participatively. Mentoring programs, counseling, and self-development activities based on social collaboration can be effective tools for strengthening students' adaptability and social networks. Additionally, it is important to raise awareness among families and the broader community about their role in supporting students' academic journeys, thereby creating a comprehensive support system from the immediate environment to the institutional level.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS, FINANCING AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Contributions of the Authors:

Conceptualization: Wijangga, putu & Latief, Iqbal ; **Software:** Wijangga, putu & Latief, Iqbal
Validation: Wijangga, putu & Latief, Iqbal **Formal Analysis:** Wijangga, putu & Latief, Iqbal ;
Healing of data: Wijangga, putu & Latief, Iqbal ; **Writing-Preparation of the draft original:**
 Wijangga, putu & Latief, Iqbal **Editorial-Re- vision and Edition:** Wijangga, putu & Latief, Iqbal
Display: Wijangga, putu & Latief, Iqbal **Supervision: - Project Administration:** Wijangga,
 putu & Latief, Iqbal **All Authors have read and accepted the published version of the
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AUTHOR/S:**Putu Wijangga**

Hasanuddin University, Indonesia.

Putu Wijangga, born in Kalaena Kiri on November 18, 2003, graduated cum laude in 2025 with a bachelor's degree in Sociology from Hasanuddin University, where he actively participated in research and community empowerment and authored several nationally accredited journal articles and books. He is currently pursuing his master's degree in Sociology at Gadjah Mada University.

wijanggap@gmail.com**Orcid ID:** <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0205-6923>**Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=6b3NSGQAAAAJ&hl=id>**Iqbal Latief**

Hasanuddin University, Indonesia.

Muh. Iqbal Latief is an academic and lecturer currently teaching at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University. Muh. Iqbal Latief has written numerous nationally and internationally accredited journals focusing on political sociology, social welfare, and rural sociology.

muhilberkelana@gmail.com**Orcid ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7459-154X>**Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=98hrs7MAAAAJ&hl=en>