



# SEICR Mathematical Modelling of Academic Stress Dynamics Among Chemistry Students in Aceh Province: An Epidemiological Approach to Sustainable Student Mental Health

Jelita Jelita<sup>1\*</sup>, Budi Irwansyah<sup>1</sup>, Lilla Puji Lestari<sup>2</sup>, Faidliyah Nilna Minah<sup>3</sup>, Nuraida Nuraida<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institut Agama Islam Negeri Langsa, Langsa, Indonesia.

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Maarif Hasyim Latif Sidoarjo, Sidoarjo, Indonesia.

<sup>3</sup> Institut Teknologi Nasional Malang, Malang, Indonesia

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Corresponding Author:

Jelita Jelita

[jelita@iainlangsa.ac.id](mailto:jelita@iainlangsa.ac.id)

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**Abstract:** Academic stress among higher education students is a common concern that requires thorough investigation. This study develops and analyzes a SEICR (Susceptible–Exposed–Infected–Confirmed–Recovered) mathematical model to describe academic stress dynamics among chemistry students, treating stress as a contagious phenomenon transmitted through social interactions and peer influence. The model captures the progression of students from susceptibility to stress exposure, active stress, coping intervention, and recovery while incorporating behavioral and institutional factors. A system of nonlinear ordinary differential equations is formulated and analyzed through equilibrium and stability analyses. The basic reproduction number,  $R_0$ , is derived using the Next Generation Matrix method and serves as a threshold parameter governing system dynamics. Results indicate that academic stress diminishes and approaches a stress-free equilibrium when  $R_0 < 1$ , whereas stress persists and becomes endemic when  $R_0 > 1$ . Sensitivity analysis based on the Partial Rank Correlation Coefficient (PRCC) identifies the coping transition rate ( $\delta$ ) as the most influential parameter in reducing stress prevalence, while the transmission rate ( $\beta$ ) has a moderate effect. These findings suggest that intervention accessibility plays a greater role than transmission intensity in shaping stress dynamics. Therefore, mitigation strategies should emphasize early detection, timely intervention, and accessible coping support.

**Keywords:** Academic stress; Chemistry students; Epidemiological approach; Mathematical model; SEICR

## Introduction

Academic stress represents a significant challenge to student well-being globally. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines academic stress as "a student's perception of events in the learning process as threatening to themselves, resulting in a variety of undesirable behaviors" such as worry, anxiety, or fear. Rois et al. (2021) defined stress as "the inability to cope with perceived (actual or perceived) threats to mental,

physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being." Persistent academic stress manifests through symptoms including low energy, depression, difficulty concentrating, irritability, and physical discomfort (Zhang et al., 2022). A public opinion poll found that approximately 80% of college students worldwide said they experienced academic stress (Nguyen et al., 2022). This suggests that students have reached a level of academic stress that warrants in-depth investigation. Stress is understood as a crisis that affects any individual regardless of their

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developmental stage (Banerjee & Chatterjee, 2016). When examining the impact of stress, evidence has shown how stress is related to emotional, behavioral, and cognitive symptoms (Benedetto et al., 2020; Scharp & Hall, 2019). Stress has now become a serious reality referred to as a "career blocker" (Kadapatti & Vijayalaxmi, 2012). There is a significant relationship between suicidal ideation and stress levels (Windarwati et al., 2022). Depression and suicide occur due to low self-esteem (Nikitha et al., 2014). There is ample evidence linking stress to negative health conditions (Shaw et al., 2017). Huli (2014) noted that disturbed family dynamics, peer pressure, inability to cope with schoolwork, drug abuse, and lack of competence are the main reasons for stress during adolescence. Ghatol (2017) reviewed the literature on academic stress among high school students and presented the causes and symptoms of stress, as well as coping mechanisms. Their literature review indicated that the causes of stress during adolescence include disrupted family dynamics, peer pressure, learning disabilities, substance abuse, and lack of competence. From an educational psychology perspective, it is reasonable to assume that academic stress factors in schools can originate from the students themselves, as well as from their context. Several researchers have conceptualized stress factors in education in various ways. For example, student-centered factors, such as self-efficacy (Lazarus, 1999), personality (Saklofske et al., 2012), temperament (Hirvonen et al., 2019), self-regulation behavior (Boyras et al., 2016; Fuente et al., 2020), stress management (Freire et al., 2019), student anxiety (Cassady et al., 2019; Putwain, 2019), and student goals (Cabanach et al., 2007; Rusk et al., 2011). In addition to these psychological factors, academic factors also play an important role in shaping students' responses to academic pressure. Learning motivation, scientific literacy, and effective learning strategies have been shown to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes, which may help students better cope with academic challenges and learning demands (Amala et al., 2023; Abdullah et al., 2021; Asri et al., 2021; Taupik & Fitria, 2023). Stress has been studied in many studies related to learning. Students are most affected by academic stress, because they face various types of stressors, such as academic stress and the obligation to succeed (Veena & Shastri, 2016). Academic stress in particular is considered as a process where students feel overwhelmed by academic tasks, difficulty meeting academic demands and requirements to achieve adequate performance (Frenzel et al., 2018; Karaman et al., 2019). Academic demands and requirements in the learning process such as presentations in class, excessive workload, team-based assignments, and testing situations, according to

Cabanach et al. (2007) and Pozos-Radillo et al. (2014) are factors that influence academic stress. Bello & Gumarao (2012) stated that stress is not correlated with academic achievement. Tus (2020) also stated that stress and motivation do not have a significant relationship with student academic achievement. However, Alyami et al. (2017), found a relationship between self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, and perceived stress on academic achievement. Their findings are also supported by Kötter et al. (2017) who stated that stress negatively impacts academic performance and can also create a vicious cycle that continuously increases stress and decreases performance. Using structural equation modeling, Edjah et al. (2020) examined stress and its impact on academic and social life among college students in Ghana. Yuhuan et al. (2022) also used structural equation modeling to investigate the relationship between academic stress, social support, and self-regulation fatigue among a group of nursing students in Heilongjiang Province, China. In the context of mathematics, Mahato & Sen (2021) in their study compared academic stress, mathematics self-efficacy, and mathematics anxiety among high school students in India. Sathishkumar & Vannathi (2024) explored the role of reasoning ability and academic stress in mathematics achievement among high school students. Silva & Vera (2025) investigated the relationship between academic stress and mathematics scores in 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. Gupta et al. (2017) on the other hand, stated that neither perceived stress nor emotional intelligence was related to academic stress in medical students. However, perceived stress was significantly predicted by emotional intelligence. In essence, students with higher emotional intelligence showed lower stress, although neither had a significant relationship with academic achievement. Ranasinghe et al. (2017) also stated that academic stress was negatively correlated with emotional intelligence and academic achievement. Llego et al. (2018) found that the main source of stress for nursing students was academic work, where the higher the stress level, the lower their academic achievement. Therefore, various learning innovations, such as virtual laboratories, flipped learning, and problem-based learning, have been implemented to enhance students' motivation and learning outcomes, thereby supporting their readiness to cope with the complex academic demands of chemistry learning (Pane et al., 2024; Ndoa & Jumadi, 2022; Safitri et al., 2023). Despite academic stress remains a significant issue among students and continues to attract research attention. Using multilevel structural equation modeling, Hosseinkhani et al. (2020) examined the relationship between various sources of academic stress and adolescent mental health through mediator variables at the student and school levels.

However, despite its significance in the context of general chemistry, academic stress has received limited attention, particularly from a mathematical modeling perspective. Although extensive studies have examined academic stress in various educational settings, research focusing on chemistry students remains scarce. Furthermore, learning motivation, critical thinking skills, and academic resilience have been identified as important factors that support students in coping with the demands of chemistry learning (Annisa et al., 2023; Dibyantini et al., 2023; Nilyani et al., 2023). To the best of our knowledge, no previous study has specifically modeled the spread of academic stress among chemistry students using a SEICR mathematical epidemiological model.

Conventional approaches to analyze educational preferences typically utilize psychological or sociological approaches. However, in a more dynamic and collective context, a social epidemiological approach becomes relevant and powerful. By borrowing a framework from the infectious disease transmission model, the spread of academic stress among students towards a particular course can be modeled as the spread of a disease or social fever, which spreads from one individual to another through social contact and interaction. We then introduce this model as the "spread of academic stress model," a mathematical model based on a system of differential equations that categorizes the student population into several compartments according to the tendency of academic stress among chemistry students. This model categorizes the student population into five compartments: students who are susceptible, exposed, infected, confirmed, and recovered to academic stress. Transitions between compartments occur through social interactions that occur over time. Using a social context-based epidemiological approach, this study is expected to investigate how this academic stress spreads and changes within the population collectively, thus explaining how the trend of this social phenomenon is contagious and dynamically develops. Most epidemic models are primarily based on transmission through human-to-human interactions. Micro-level epidemic diffusion models first establish the population structure and construct nonlinear differential equations that describe changes in the status of population classes. These micro-level models are referred to as equation-based models (EBMs). EBMs operate on global laws defined by equations and applied to all members of a compartment. The underlying assumption of EBMs is that the population is homogeneous and governed by holistic rules. These models assume that people have a constant rate of contact, are infected with a disease with a unique rate of contagiousness, and recover at a certain rate. There are

numerous examples of equation-based models used to analyze specific outbreaks or epidemics after they occur. For example, modelling the 2001 foot and mouth disease epidemic in the UK (Kao, 2002); modeling the spread of H<sub>1</sub>N<sub>1</sub> (Vaidya et al., 2014); and modeling the spread of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa (Mamo & Koya, 2015). These models are used to determine lessons learned from the outbreak. Using diffusion models, we can understand how a new disease, information, or product spreads, predict its success or failure early on, and increase or decrease its chances of diffusion.

Social epidemiology has now become an accepted part of the academic intellectual landscape. However, in many ways, social epidemiology is also at risk of losing the identity that distinguished it as a discipline during its emergence (Galea & Link, 2013). According to Muntaner (2013), social epidemiology has become a field of study in Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Africa, realism is more suitable for social epidemiology than positivism, more research is needed on social mechanisms (social class relations, racial discrimination) to increase the explanatory power of social epidemiology, increased attention to causal (social) models will result in more innovative social interventions, and social interventions must be carried out in full partnership with the affected population. Compared to other subfields, social epidemiology is uniquely positioned to benefit from partnerships to help raise new questions and ensure that findings are used to inform population health interventions. Partnerships, in particular, can be formed with those implementing social policies and programs to help determine the impact of social change on health, especially given that most social programs do not measure health as an outcome (Hwang et al., 2012). Social epidemiology studies the social distribution and social determinants of health, emphasizing that all epidemiological exposures are related to social factors. This discipline is often contrasted with individualistic epidemiology, which focuses only on the causes of disease at the individual level (Bauch & Galvani, 2013; Berkman & Kawachi, 2023; Roux, 2022; Eastwood et al., 2019; Kawachi & Subramanian, 2018). The research framework in social epidemiology includes identifying relevant contexts (e.g., geographic environment, socioeconomic status), measuring contextual characteristics, analyzing across generations, and developing quasi-experimental methods to assess causal effects (Eastwood et al., 2019; Takaeb, 2021). This approach also emphasizes the importance of reducing health inequalities, not just improving the average health of the population (Roux, 2022).

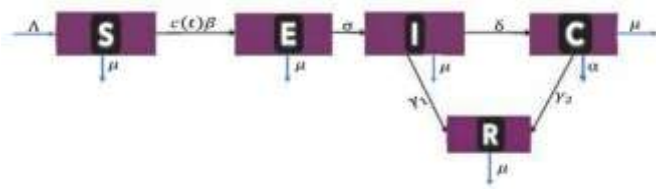
New diseases, information, or products, or social ills such as academic stress among chemistry students, can

spread through both indirect interactions and direct contact. Models that assume homogeneous mixing among individuals, in other words, random contact, are called population models. Population models divide the population into classes that reflect the status of individuals within the population. Network-based models consider the network within which diffusion occurs and focus on the influence of network properties on the diffusion process. Kermack & Mckendrick (1927) initially proposed the SIR epidemic model, a representative epidemic model, with three compartments: susceptible, infected, and recovered. The model expresses the status changes of the three compartments using differential equations. The epidemic model has been applied to the problem of the processes underlying word-of-mouth promotion in networks (Goldenberg et al., 2001), the spread of rumors (Kawachi, 2008), the spread of violent topics in a forum (Woo et al., 2011), financial crisis (Peckham, 2014), stock market financial network behavior (Balci, 2016), online game addiction (Li & Guo, 2019), coexistence of racism and corruption among individuals in society (Kotola & Teklu, 2022), and the spread of the game in the population (Wang et al., 2024). In education, Anwar et al. (2021) proposed the SEIRS epidemic model also for the problem of online game addiction in mathematics students. Recently, Side et al. (2024) also used the SEIRS epidemic model to address the problem of online game addiction among junior high school students in Makassar City. From several studies in the field of education that propose mathematical models using the epidemiological approach; in this study, we intend to develop a dynamic model of the spread of academic stress among chemistry students using an epidemiological approach. To develop a more complex model but appropriate to the educational context, we adapt the compartmental structure in the epidemiological approach.

## Method

In this study, we consider the total population of chemistry students given time  $N(t)$  and divide it into five subpopulations or compartments, namely the susceptible, exposed, infected, confirmed, and recovered from academic stress class compartments, which are denoted by  $S$ ,  $E$ ,  $I$ ,  $C$ , and  $R$ , respectively. The state variables are described as follows:

- a. Students who are vulnerable to academic stress, namely individuals who are in an academic environment that has the potential to cause stress but have not shown symptoms or significant exposure to such stress, symbolized by  $S(t)$ .
  - b. Students who have been exposed to academic stressors and are beginning to experience initial distress, but have not yet shown significant symptoms of stress or obvious performance impairment, symbolized by  $E(t)$ .
  - c. Students experiencing significant academic stress, characterized by decreased performance, anxiety, or mental exhaustion. Within the context of the model, this group also acts as a source of social contagion, influencing the stress levels of other students through social interactions and the academic environment, symbolized by  $I(t)$ .
  - d. Students who are undergoing a coping process or active efforts to manage stress, such as through counseling, social support, or time management strategies, symbolized by  $C(t)$ .
  - e. Students who have recovered from academic stress and returned to a stable condition, and have effective adaptation skills or coping strategies to face academic pressure in the future, symbolized by  $R(t)$ .
- In this study, we assume and define some model parameters as follows:
- a.  $\Lambda$  is the rate of recruitment of new students entering vulnerable classes.
  - b.  $\mu$  is the natural rate of exit from the system, including graduation, transfer, or dropout, which is not explicitly modeled as a result of stress.
  - c.  $\alpha$  is the rate of exit from compartment  $C$  due to failure of coping or severe fatigue (stress-induced dropout).
  - d.  $\beta$  is the rate of stress transmission through social interactions (social contagion rate), which represents the probability that an interaction between a vulnerable student and a stressed student results in stress exposure.
  - e.  $\sigma$  is the rate of transition from the exposure phase ( $E$ ) to active stress ( $I$ ).
  - f.  $\delta(t)$  is the rate of entry into the coping phase due to institutional detection/intervention.
  - g.  $\gamma_1$  and  $\gamma_2$  are immediate rate of recovery from stressful conditions without formal intervention (self-recovery), and rate of recovery through coping/intervention processes.
  - h.  $c(t)$  is the intensity of interaction (e.g. increases during exams).
  - i.  $\delta(t)$  is the intensity of campus intervention.
  - j. The total population size is not constant due to stress withdrawal represented by the parameter  $\alpha$ . The total population size satisfies  $N(t)=S+E+I+C+R$ , which can vary over time if there is a decrease in the population size due to stress ( $\alpha$ ).
- Based on the assumptions and description of the model above, a flow diagram of student transition between compartments is given in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The compartmental flow diagram of SEICR model

By using several model assumptions, parameter definitions, and Figure 1, the dynamic system can be formulated as a system of differential equations as follows:

$$\frac{dS}{dt} = \Lambda - c(t)\beta SI - \mu S \tag{1}$$

$$\frac{dE}{dt} = c(t)\beta SI - (\sigma + \mu)E \tag{2}$$

$$\frac{dI}{dt} = \sigma E - (\delta + \gamma_1 + \mu)I \tag{3}$$

$$\frac{dC}{dt} = \delta I - (\gamma_2 + \alpha + \mu)C \tag{4}$$

$$\frac{dR}{dt} = \gamma_1 I + \gamma_2 C - \mu R \tag{5}$$

Where:

- $c(t)$  : time-dependent contact levels representing variations in the intensity of academic stress.
- $\beta$  : The level of academic stress transmission through social interactions (social contagion).
- $\sigma$  : The level of development of an exposed individual into an individual experiencing stress.
- $\delta(t)$  : The degree to which a stressed individual enters the coping phase as a result of institutional detection or intervention.
- $\gamma_1$  : Immediate level of recovery from stress without formal intervention.
- $\gamma_2$  : Level of recovery through coping or intervention mechanisms.
- $\Lambda$  : dropout rate due to stress from stress management classes.

Systematic steps in the analysis of epidemiological compartmental models (such as SIR, SEIR) generally involve several sequential and interrelated main stages, including: identifying compartments and relevant underlying assumptions of the formulated model; formulating a mathematical model using a system of differential equations that describes the movement of individuals between compartments; conducting model analysis, including stability analysis, numerical simulations, and exploration of intervention scenarios (Bernardi et al., 2025). The identification and parameter estimation stages of the formulated model can be performed using available epidemiological data through various methods, see Beira & Sebastião (2021), Ferrández

et al. (2023), Li et al. (2024), and Schiassi et al. (2021). However, in this study, we explore the model behavior for the spread of academic stress using sensitivity analysis methods. To identify the parameters that most influence the number of students in the chronic stress phase ( $C_{final}$ ), a sensitivity analysis was conducted using the Partial Rank Correlation Coefficient (PRCC) method on six main parameters:  $\alpha, \beta, \sigma, \delta, \gamma_1, \gamma_2$ . Sensitivity analysis is a commonly used tool, at least in traditional modeling, to examine the robustness of model results to changes in parameter values (Broeke et al., 2016). Sensitivity analysis is a widely used tool in computational modeling, used for various purposes, such as better understanding the relationship between parameter values in a mathematical model and its results, and identifying parameters whose changes in value imply greater variation in model results, among other purposes (Galvão & Lobosco, 2020). The PRCC method is used to measure the nonlinear but monotonic relationship between input and output. The PRCC method appears to be the best choice, because it provides a measure of monotonicity between parameters and model output after removing the linear effects of all parameters except the parameter of interest. The PRCC method is based on calculating the partial correlation coefficient between the ranks of each parameter and the rank of the objective function value (Marino et al., 2008):

$$r_{x_j,y} = \frac{\text{Cov}(\hat{x}_j, \hat{y})}{\sqrt{\text{Var}(\hat{x}_j) \cdot \text{Var}(\hat{y})}} \tag{6}$$

A higher positive PRCC indicates that the parameter has a greater positive control on the response variable of interest, while a higher (absolute value) negative PRCC indicates a greater negative control (Jiang et al., 2012). This method provides a measure of the sensitivity of the objective function to each parameter, while taking into account the interactions between parameters. Rank-transformed data are used to take into account possible nonlinearity in the data. This approach is therefore computationally efficient and can be applied to large-scale models with many parameters. To calculate the PRCC sensitivity coefficient, a set of random points in the parameter set is sampled using the Sobol low discrepancy sequence, as described in previous work (Sorokin et al., 2019; Sorokin & Goryanin, 2023). The PRCC sensitivity coefficient is then calculated as a partial correlation coefficient between each parameter and the objective function value, with the influence of other parameters controlled for.

## Result and Discussion

### Simulation of Student Academic Stress Dynamics

National empirical data shows that academic stress is a widespread phenomenon among Indonesian students. Based on a 2019–2020 survey by ILMPI (Indonesian Psychology Student Association), out of more than 5,000 respondents, 1,470 students experienced persistent anxiety, 1,235 experienced prolonged fatigue, and 907 showed symptoms of sadness that disrupted daily activities. This shows that academic stress is multidimensional: it is not just a single symptom, but includes anxiety, burnout, and emotional distress. In the context of the model, this reinforces that the I(t) compartment is not simply “mild stress,” but a significant (clinical/behavioral) condition. In line with these findings, Ambarwati et al. (2019) reported that the prevalence of academic stress among Indonesian students ranges from 36.7 to 71.6%, indicating varying levels of stress depending on the academic and social context of the campus. This indicates the variability of the system, which depends on the campus environment, academic load, or social support. In the model, this actually supports the use of  $c(t)$ ,  $\beta$  as a contextual & dynamic parameter. Furthermore, 72.4% of students experience stress due to academic workload, future concerns, and financial uncertainty; this indicates a multi-driver system, meaning stress is not only from “social contact.” In the model, this can be interpreted as an increase in  $c(t)$ , or an increase in  $\beta$ . These three data points confirm that our proposed SEICR model is relevant, as stress is systemically distributed; there is “social contagion” where students influence each other; and a Coping (C) compartment is necessary, as not everyone recovers immediately; there is an adaptation process. This strongly justifies the SEICR model we propose in this study. Based on data (Humaira & Astuti, 2024), where from a total of 180 students (15% low, 72.8% medium, and 12.2% high), this data is based on stress levels, not epidemiological compartments. Therefore, we conducted a rational mapping.

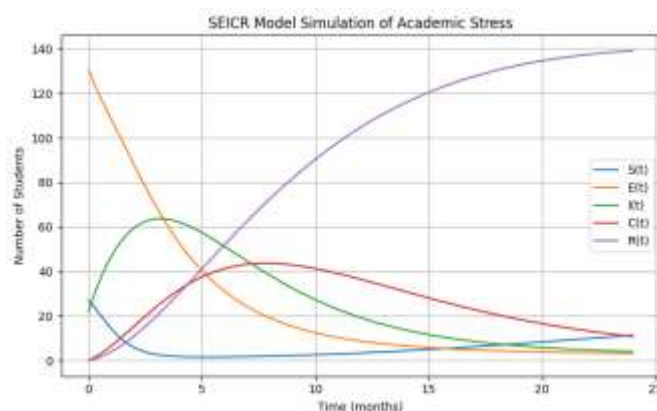
**Table 1.** Mapping to SEICR

Category	Model
Low (15%)	S (susceptible)
Medium (72.8%)	E (exposed)
High (12.2%)	I (active stress)

Because it is “moderate” (already under pressure), then E is suitable “high” which proves that stress  $\rightarrow$  I. By calculating the initial value, where the total is 180, we obtain:  $S_0 = 15\% \times 180 = 27$ ;  $E_0 = 72.8\% \times 180 = 131$ , and  $I_0 = 12.2\% \times 180 = 22$ . And because the data only has 3 categories, we use  $C_0 = 0$  and  $R_0 = 0$ . So, the final initial condition  $(S_0, E_0, I_0, C_0, R_0) = (27, 131, 22, 0, 0)$ . Next, using

time  $t \in [0, 24]$ , the realistic parameters for the initial simulation of the SEICR model are  $\beta=0.002$ ;  $c(t)=10$ ;  $\sigma = 0.3$ ;  $\delta = 0.2$ ;  $\gamma_1 = 0.1$ ;  $\gamma_2 = 0.15$ ;  $\mu = 0.01$ ;  $\alpha = 0.02$ , and  $\Lambda=\mu N$ . Under these conditions: E will be high at the beginning (because it is 72% of the population); I will rise first (transition from E  $\rightarrow$  I); C starts to rise after that (effect of  $\delta$  (intervention)); and R rises slowly (effect of  $\gamma_1$  and  $\gamma_2$ ).

The initial conditions were derived from empirical data reported by Humaira & Astuti (2024), where 15% of students experienced low stress, 72.8% moderate stress, and 12.2% high stress. These categories were mapped into the SEICR framework as susceptible, exposed, and stressed compartments, respectively.



**Figure 2.** Temporal dynamics of the SEICR model

The simulation results (Figure 2) show that the dynamics of academic stress follow a gradual transition pattern from exposure to an active stress state before finally recovering through coping and recovery mechanisms. In the initial phase ( $t = 0-3$  months), the Exposed (E) compartment dominates the population because most students are at a moderate level of stress. This condition reflects the presence of extensive academic pressure that has not yet fully developed into severe stress. Over time, there is an increase in the Stressed (I) compartment due to the transition from E  $\rightarrow$  I at a rate of  $\sigma$ . The peak number of individuals in the I compartment generally occurs in the middle phase of the simulation (around the 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> month), which indicates a critical period where academic pressure reaches maximum intensity. Contextually, this phase can be associated with exam periods, assignment deadlines, or cumulative academic pressure. After reaching a peak, the number of individuals in compartment I begins to decline as the Coping compartment (C) increases. This indicates that the detection and intervention rate  $\delta$  plays an important role in shifting students from stressful conditions to the adaptation process. The increase in C(t) reflects the effectiveness of counseling services, social support, and individual coping strategies. However, the

presence of the parameter  $\alpha$  (dropout due to stress) causes some individuals to leave the system before reaching full recovery. This indicates that coping is not always successful, especially in cases of severe stress. The Recovered (R) compartment increases gradually throughout the simulation period as a result of two recovery pathways: direct recovery from stress ( $\gamma_1$ ) and recovery through coping ( $\gamma_2$ ). The contribution of the coping pathway ( $\gamma_2$ ) tends to be more dominant in the long term, which emphasizes the importance of structured interventions over spontaneous recovery. By the end of the simulation period (month 24), the system tends to reach a quasi-steady state, where the number of stressed individuals decreases, the recovered population increases, and stress exposure remains but at a more controlled level. Despite the increasing number of individuals recovering, the Exposed (E) compartment did not completely disappear. This suggests that academic stress persists in the system, primarily due to ongoing academic pressure, social interactions between students, and external factors such as future uncertainty. In other words, the system did not return to a stress-free equilibrium, but rather to an endemic state.

The simulation results provide several important implications: a) Early intervention (reducing  $\sigma$ ) can prevent severe stress spikes, b) Increasing detection and access to coping ( $\delta$ ) significantly reduces the number of individuals in active stress, c) Coping effectiveness ( $\gamma_2$ ) is a key factor in increasing the population's recovery rate, and d) Reducing systemic stress ( $\beta, c(t)$ ) is necessary to reduce the overall spread of stress. The simulation results demonstrate that academic stress behaves as a persistent and dynamically evolving phenomenon within the student population. The inclusion of a coping compartment provides a more realistic representation of behavioral adaptation, highlighting that effective intervention strategies are crucial to preventing the escalation of stress into severe conditions.

*Equilibrium Point*

The SEICR model with recruitment rate  $\Lambda$  and exits rate  $\mu$  is given by the following differential system:

$$\frac{dS}{dt} = \Lambda - c(t)\beta SI - \mu S \tag{1}$$

$$\frac{dE}{dt} = c(t)\beta SI - (\sigma + \mu)E \tag{2}$$

$$\frac{dI}{dt} = \sigma E - (\delta + \gamma_1 + \mu)I \tag{3}$$

$$\frac{dC}{dt} = \delta I - (\gamma_2 + \alpha + \mu)C \tag{4}$$

$$\frac{dR}{dt} = \gamma_1 I + \gamma_2 C - \mu R \tag{5}$$

The SEICR system under consideration has an equilibrium point (balance point) which is obtained by setting the time derivative equal to zero, namely:

$$\frac{dS}{dt} = \frac{dE}{dt} = \frac{dI}{dt} = \frac{dC}{dt} = \frac{dR}{dt} = 0 \tag{6}$$

The stress-free equilibrium point occurs when no individual experiences exposure or stress, namely:  $E = I = C = 0$ .

From the system:

$$\frac{dS}{dt} = \Lambda - \mu S = 0 \Rightarrow S^* = \frac{\Lambda}{\mu}$$

$$\frac{dR}{dt} = -\mu R = 0 \Rightarrow R^* = 0$$

So, we get:  $E_0 = (\frac{\Lambda}{\mu}, 0, 0, 0, 0)$ .

The endemic equilibrium point occurs when academic stress persists in the population, namely:  $E^*, I^*, C^* \neq 0$ .

From the equation E:  $0 = c\beta S^* I^* - (\sigma + \mu)E^*$ ,

$$E^* = \frac{c\beta S^* I^*}{\sigma + \mu} \tag{7}$$

From the equation I;  $0 = \sigma E^* - (\delta + \gamma_1 + \mu)I^*$ ; substitution  $E^*$ :  $\sigma (\frac{c\beta S^* I^*}{\sigma + \mu}) = (\delta + \gamma_1 + \mu)I^*$ , and divided by  $I^* \neq 0$ :  $\frac{c\beta \sigma S^*}{\sigma + \mu} = \delta + \gamma_1 + \mu$ , we get:

$$S^* = \frac{(\sigma + \mu)(\delta + \gamma_1 + \mu)}{c\beta \sigma} \tag{8}$$

From the population balance relationship:  $\frac{dS}{dt} = 0 \Rightarrow \Lambda = c\beta S^* I^* + \mu S^*$ ; we get:

$$I^* = \frac{\Lambda - \mu S^*}{c\beta S^*} \tag{9}$$

$$E^* = \frac{c\beta S^* I^*}{\sigma + \mu} \tag{10}$$

$$C^* = \frac{\delta I^*}{\gamma_2 + \alpha + \mu} \tag{11}$$

$$R^* = \frac{\gamma_1 I^* + \gamma_2 C^*}{\mu} \tag{12}$$

An endemic point exists if:  $I^* > 0$ ;  $\Lambda - \mu S^* > 0$ . Substituting  $S^*$ , we obtain the following condition  $R_0 > 1$ . If  $R_0 < 1$ , academic stress disappears (DFE is stable), and If  $R_0 > 1$ , stress persists (endemic). The meaning is, academic stress is not a temporary phenomenon, but can become a systemic condition in the student population.

This model recognizes two equilibrium points: a disease-free equilibrium where no academic stress persists, and an endemic equilibrium where stress persists in the student population. The existence of an endemic equilibrium depends on the basic reproduction number  $R_0$ , which indicates that academic stress can persist as a systemic phenomenon when  $R_0 > 1$ .

*Basic Reproduction Number (R0)*

Using the Next Generation Matrix (NGM) method (Diekmann et al., 2010), the infectious compartment is considered to consist of E, I, and C. The new infection matrix F (appearing only at E) at the DFE point are formulated as:  $\mathcal{F} = \begin{bmatrix} c\beta SI \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}$ , and transition terms V:  $\mathcal{V} = \begin{bmatrix} (\sigma + \mu)E \\ [(\delta + \gamma_1 + \mu)I - \sigma E] \end{bmatrix}$ . Evaluation at  $S = S^* = \frac{\Lambda}{\mu}$ ,  $E = I = 0$ :

Matrix  $F = D\mathcal{F}|_{DFE}$  is:  $F = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{\partial(c\beta SI)}{\partial E} & \frac{\partial(c\beta SI)}{\partial I} \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}_{DFE} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & c\beta S^* \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$ ; and matrix  $V = D\mathcal{V}|_{DFE}$  is:  $V = \begin{bmatrix} \sigma + \mu & 0 \\ -\sigma & \delta + \gamma_1 + \mu \end{bmatrix}$ .

We get invers  $V^{-1}$ :

$$V^{-1} = \frac{1}{(\sigma + \mu)(\delta + \gamma_1 + \mu)} \begin{bmatrix} \delta + \gamma_1 + \mu & 0 \\ \sigma & \sigma + \mu \end{bmatrix}$$

Using the Next Generation Matrix method, we obtain:  $K = FV^{-1}$

$$K = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{c\beta S^* \sigma}{(\sigma + \mu)(\delta + \gamma_1 + \mu)} & \frac{c\beta S^*}{\delta + \gamma_1 + \mu} \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \tag{13}$$

The basic reproduction number  $R_0$  is defined as the largest eigenvalue (spectral radius) of the matrix  $FV^{-1}$ . Through substitution and simplification, we obtain the spectral radius:  $R_0 = \rho(K) = \frac{c\beta S^* \sigma}{(\sigma + \mu)(\delta + \gamma_1 + \mu)}$ , substitution  $S^* = \frac{\Lambda}{\mu}$  we get:

$$R_0 = \frac{c\beta \Lambda \sigma}{\mu(\sigma + \mu)(\delta + \gamma_1 + \mu)} \tag{14}$$

Biologically,  $R_0$  is the average number of “stress-exposed” freshmen generated by one stressed student during their stress period, in the entire susceptible population. If  $R_0 < 1$ , it means that each stressed student produces  $< 1$  new case (stress does not spread). The dynamic impact is  $I(t) \rightarrow 0$ , the system is heading towards DFE (stress-free), in this context coping is effective, campus intervention is successful, and the academic environment is relatively healthy. And if  $R_0 > 1$ , it means that one stressed student can cause more than 1 other student to be exposed (stress spreads and persists). The dynamic impact is the emergence of endemic equilibrium (stress becomes a systemic phenomenon), in this context academic pressure is high, coping is not effective enough, and the social environment reinforces stress.

Following the Next Generation Matrix approach, the infected compartments are identified as the exposed and stressed classes, since only these contribute to the generation of new infections. Although the coping class is included in the model dynamics, it does not produce

new infections and therefore does not influence the basic reproduction number.

*Numerical Interpretation*

Since detailed empirical data are not yet available, we use representative values based on literature & initial simulation (monthly):  $\beta = 0.002 \rightarrow$  stress transmission rate;  $c = 10 \rightarrow$  academic interaction intensity;  $\sigma = 0.30 \rightarrow$  E  $\rightarrow$  I progression;  $\delta = 0.20 \rightarrow$  entry into coping;  $\gamma_1 = 0.10 \rightarrow$  immediate recovery;  $\mu = 0.01 \rightarrow$  exit the system;  $N = 180 \Rightarrow \Lambda = \mu N = 1.8$ :

$$R_0 = \frac{(10)(0.002)(1.8)(0.3)}{(0.01)(0.3 + 0.01)(0.2 + 0.1 + 0.01)} \approx 11.24$$

The  $R_0$  value of  $11.24 > 1$  (this is the worst-case scenario / initial baseline) indicates that one student experiencing academic stress can, on average, trigger more than 11 other students to be exposed to stress during their stressful period. These results align with previous Indonesian data (Ambarwati et al., 2019) and Into The Light (2022), which showed a prevalence of 36–71%; 72.4% of students experiencing stress; and a predominance of the "moderate" category in data on Chemistry students in Aceh Province. This means that our proposed SEICR model successfully represents empirical reality Since the  $R_0$  value is  $> 1$ , the stress-free equilibrium point of our proposed SEICR model becomes unstable (academic stress has a high propagation power), and it can be concluded that the system has an endemic equilibrium point. This means that stress does not disappear from the population, and there will always be students under stress (social interactions and academic pressure play a dominant role). The academic environment allows stress to spread continuously, thus becoming a systemic phenomenon among students. This analysis shows that academic stress management can be achieved through: a) reducing the level of stressful interactions ( $c, \beta$ )  $\rightarrow$  for example, by reducing the workload or competitive pressure; b) increasing detection and intervention ( $\delta$ )  $\rightarrow$  counseling services, psychological screening; c) increasing coping effectiveness ( $\gamma_1, \gamma_2$ )  $\rightarrow$  stress management training.

*Sensitivity Analysis*

The following table presents the Partial Rank Correlation Coefficient (PRCC) values for each parameter in the SEICR model against the variable C(t) at the end of the simulation period (24 months,  $n = 200$ ). The PRCC values illustrate the strength and direction of the relationship between each parameter and the number of students experiencing chronic stress.

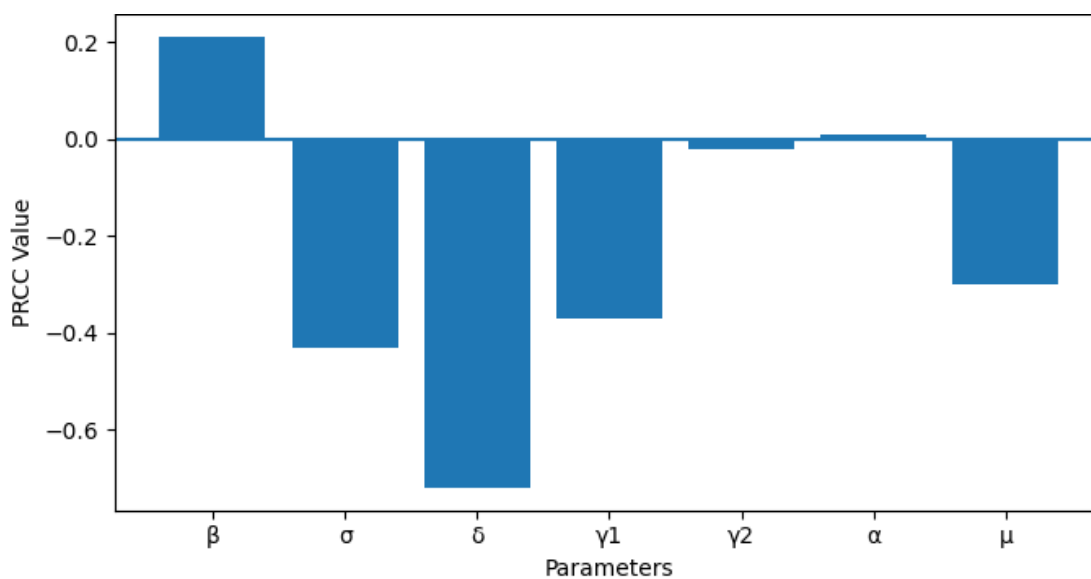
From the results in the Table 2, it appears that the  $\beta$  parameter has the strongest positive influence on the increase in the number of students experiencing chronic

stress, while  $\gamma_2$  and  $\mu$  have the greatest negative influence on this variable. Therefore, academic stress management strategies should focus on two complementary approaches: a) reducing the rate of stress transmission ( $\beta$ ) through learning policies that de-

emphasize competitive pressure and strengthen a supportive academic climate; b) increasing the rate of recovery ( $\gamma_2$  and  $\alpha$ ) through optimizing counseling services, academic mentoring, and mental health promotion programs for students.

**Table 2.** PRCC values for parameters in SEICR model

Parameters	PRCC Value	Interpretation	Insight
$\beta$	0.21	The level of academic stress transmission through social interactions (social contagion)	Academic stress is more controlled by intervention than by the spread of
$\sigma$	-0.43	The level of development of an exposed individual into an individual experiencing stress	Fast transition reduces accumulation
$\gamma_1$	-0.37	Immediate level of recovery from stress	Without formal intervention
$\gamma_2$	-0.02	Level of recovery through coping or intervention mechanisms	Coping is not effective on its own, meaning it must be supported by $\delta$ (access to coping)
$\delta$	-0.72	The sooner students enter the coping phase, the greater the overall reduction in stress.	Very strong results for policy: early detection + intervention = the key
$\alpha$	0.01	Dropout rate due to stress from stress management classes	Dropout does not affect core dynamics much
$\mu$	-0.30	The natural rate of exit from the system, including graduation, transfer, or dropout	is not explicitly modeled as a result of stress



**Figure 3.** PRCC sensitivity analysis of SEICR model

The Figure 3 shows the results of a PRCC sensitivity analysis of SEICR model after 24 months using 200 sample parameter variations.

The PRCC value is the largest (negative, around -0.7), the parameter  $\delta$ , representing the transition rate from a stressed individual to a coping compartment, shows the strongest negative correlation with stress prevalence. This means that the sooner students enter the coping phase, the greater the reduction in stress in the system. This suggests that early detection and access to intervention are the most crucial factors. The  $\sigma$  development rate also shows a relatively strong negative

effect, with a rapid transition from the early phase to active stress, and reduced accumulation in the “exposed” phase. This indicates that the system does not “accumulate” latent stress, but moves rapidly towards resolution (coping/recovery).  $\gamma_1$  and  $\mu$  have a moderate effect, where  $\gamma_1$  (direct recovery) can reduce stress, and  $\mu$  (exit system) can reduce the proportion of stress. This means that natural recovery is important, but not the main factor. The transmission parameter  $\beta$  shows a weak positive correlation (only a small effect), this is interesting; it differs from classical epidemics, and suggests that the spread of stress is not the dominant

factor, but rather internal processes & interventions. The parameter  $\gamma_2$  has a negligible effect. This means that coping effectiveness alone is not sufficient; what matters is access to coping ( $\delta$ ); and this is a very powerful insight in our model.  $\alpha$  is not significant; that is, dropout/late intervention does not significantly affect core dynamics. The sensitivity analysis suggests that academic stress dynamics are primarily controlled by intervention accessibility rather than transmission intensity. Unlike classical epidemic systems where transmission dominates, this model reveals that the accessibility and speed of intervention ( $\delta$ ) play a far more critical role in controlling academic stress. These findings align with various national surveys (Ambarwati et al., 2019; Humaira & Astuti, 2024).

Overall, the findings suggest that academic stress should be understood as an adaptive systems phenomenon, not simply a transmissible process. Therefore, effective intervention strategies should prioritize early detection and accessibility, rather than simply efforts to reduce exposure.

## Conclusion

This study developed a SEICR-based mathematical model to analyze the dynamics of academic stress among university students using an epidemiological framework. The model incorporates key behavioral transitions, including exposure, stress manifestation, coping, and recovery, allowing a more realistic representation of stress progression in academic environments. The analytical results show that the system is governed by a threshold parameter, the basic reproduction number  $R_0$ . When  $R_0 < 1$ , academic stress diminishes over time and the system converges to a stress-free equilibrium. Conversely, when  $R_0 > 1$ , stress persists and stabilizes at an endemic level, indicating that academic stress can become a sustained systemic phenomenon within the student population. The numerical estimation of  $R_0$  suggests that, under typical conditions, the system tends toward the endemic regime. Sensitivity analysis further reveals that the model is primarily driven by intervention-related parameters rather than transmission alone. In particular, the transition rate into coping ( $\delta$ ) is identified as the most influential factor in reducing stress prevalence, while the transmission parameter ( $\beta$ ) plays a comparatively minor role. This finding highlights that academic stress behaves differently from classical infectious diseases, where transmission dominates system dynamics. Additionally, the results indicate that faster progression through early stress stages ( $\sigma$ ) may reduce the accumulation of latent stress, emphasizing the importance of timely identification and response. The

relatively weak influence of recovery effectiveness ( $\gamma_2$ ) suggests that access to intervention is more critical than the intervention process itself. Overall, this study demonstrates that academic stress should be understood as an intervention-driven dynamic system. Effective mitigation strategies should prioritize early detection, rapid transition to coping mechanisms, and accessible institutional support systems. These findings provide a quantitative foundation for designing evidence-based policies to manage academic stress in higher education settings. This work contributes to the growing body of research by reframing academic stress as a controllable dynamic process, where timely intervention plays a more decisive role than exposure reduction. Future research may extend this model by incorporating behavioral heterogeneity, stochastic effects, and real-time data calibration.

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## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, methodology, software, data curation, J.J.; writing—original draft preparation, J.J. and B.I.; writing—review and editing, L.P.L. and F.N.M.; supervision, J.J. and N.N. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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