
Beyond assignment deadlines: Explaining academic stress through *deadline behavior* among university students

Susi Juniarti Pardosi^{1*}, Darwis Robinson Manalu²

^{1,2} Universitas Methodist Indonesia, Medan, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: susypardosi90@gmail.com

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Abstract

Deadline behavior, defined as the habit of completing academic assignments close to submission deadlines, is presumed to contribute to higher levels of academic stress among university students; however, empirical evidence specifically examining this relationship remains limited. This study aimed to analyze the effect of *deadline behavior* on academic stress among students at Universitas Methodist Indonesia. A quantitative associative design was employed involving 100 undergraduate students who completed a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire. The data were analyzed using simple linear regression with IBM SPSS Statistics 22. The findings revealed that *deadline behavior* had a positive and significant effect on academic stress ($B = 0.278$; $t = 4.082$; $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.145$) indicates that *deadline behavior* explained 14.5% of the variance in academic stress, while the remaining variance was influenced by factors outside the proposed model. These findings highlight the importance of effective time management as a preventive strategy for reducing academic stress and contribute to the growing literature on academic behavior in higher education.

Keywords: *Deadline behavior*; Academic stress; University students; Time management; Simple linear regression.

Abstrak

Kebiasaan mengerjakan tugas mendekati batas waktu (*deadline behavior*) diduga menjadi salah satu penyebab meningkatnya stres akademik mahasiswa, namun penelitian yang secara khusus menguji pengaruh perilaku tersebut terhadap tingkat stres masih relatif terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh *deadline behavior* terhadap tingkat stres mahasiswa di Universitas Methodist Indonesia. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain asosiatif yang melibatkan 100 mahasiswa melalui penyebaran kuesioner skala Likert lima poin. Data dianalisis menggunakan regresi linear sederhana dengan bantuan IBM SPSS Statistics 22. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *deadline behavior* berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap tingkat stres akademik ($B = 0,278$; $t = 4,082$; $p < 0,001$). Nilai koefisien determinasi ($R^2 = 0,145$) menunjukkan bahwa *deadline behavior* menjelaskan 14,5% variasi tingkat stres akademik, sedangkan sisanya dipengaruhi oleh faktor lain di luar model penelitian. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya pengelolaan waktu sebagai strategi preventif dalam menekan stres akademik mahasiswa sekaligus memperkaya kajian mengenai perilaku akademik di pendidikan tinggi.

Kata Kunci: *Deadline behavior*; Stres akademik; Mahasiswa; Manajemen waktu; Regresi linear sederhana.

Introduction

University students constitute an academic population exposed to a wide range of demands throughout their educational journey, including attending lectures, completing individual and group assignments, participating in laboratory sessions, preparing reports, and taking examinations within predetermined deadlines (Millis, 2023). These academic responsibilities require students to manage their time effectively to ensure that all learning activities are completed efficiently. However, not all students possess adequate time management skills or are able to prioritize their academic responsibilities appropriately. Many tend to postpone their assignments until the submission deadline approaches (Hooshyar et al., 2019). Although this habit is often perceived as a strategy for enhancing productivity under pressure, it frequently generates greater psychological strain. Consequently, students become more vulnerable to anxiety, difficulty concentrating, fatigue, and declining learning quality, all of which may contribute to elevated levels of academic stress.

Academic stress is one of the most prevalent challenges experienced by university students during higher education (Pascoe et al., 2020). It arises when academic demands are perceived to exceed an individual's capacity to cope with them. Excessive academic stress affects not only students' psychological well-being but also their physical health, learning motivation, cognitive performance, and academic achievement (Trigueros et al., 2020). In many cases, prolonged academic stress causes students to lose interest in learning, experience sleep disturbances, suffer from persistent fatigue, and struggle to fulfill their academic responsibilities effectively (Majerová & Sokolová, 2025). Therefore, academic stress should no longer be regarded merely as an individual concern but rather as a critical issue that warrants serious attention because it influences learning quality, psychological well-being, and students' success in completing their university studies.

One behavioral factor presumed to contribute to academic stress is the tendency to complete assignments close to submission deadlines, commonly referred to as *deadline behavior* (Svartdal & Løkke, 2022). This behavior is characterized by delaying the initiation of assignments, inadequate time planning, frequent distractions from other activities, and completing coursework only when the submission deadline is imminent (Steel et al., 2022). Under such circumstances, students are required to complete multiple academic tasks within a very limited timeframe, substantially increasing time pressure. This situation may trigger anxiety, physical exhaustion, impaired concentration, and various other emotional responses that ultimately intensify academic stress. In other words, the primary issue lies not merely in the volume of academic assignments but also in how students manage the process of completing those assignments before the deadline.

Research examining the relationship between academic behavior and student stress has been conducted using various approaches. Omosehin and Smith (2019) reported that heavy academic workloads and time pressure contribute to increased student stress; however, their study primarily focused on the quantity of academic tasks and general academic pressure. Albulescu et al. (2024) found that academic procrastination was associated with increased anxiety and poorer academic performance, yet their study did not specifically conceptualize *deadline behavior* as an independent construct. Alhasani and Orji (2025) emphasized the importance of time management skills in reducing academic stress but concentrated on time management competence rather than students' tendency to complete assignments close to deadlines. Meanwhile, Öztaş et al. (2024) investigated online assignment submission behavior, placing greater emphasis on submission patterns than on their influence on students' academic stress. These differences in research focus indicate that the relationship between *deadline behavior* and academic stress remains insufficiently explored, particularly within the context of private universities in Indonesia.

Based on this research gap, the present study aims to examine the effect of *deadline behavior* on academic stress among students at Universitas Methodist Indonesia using a quantitative approach through simple linear regression analysis. This study is important because it provides a more specific perspective on a common academic behavior that is often regarded as a normal habit despite its potential to increase students' psychological distress. Unlike previous studies, which primarily emphasized academic workload, anxiety, or academic procrastination, this research isolates *deadline behavior* as the independent variable to determine its empirical contribution to academic stress. The findings are expected not only to enrich the literature on academic behavior in higher education but also to provide practical evidence for universities in designing more effective time management initiatives, academic support programs, and preventive strategies aimed at reducing academic stress among university students.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with an associative research design to examine the effect of *deadline behavior* on academic stress among university students (Creswell, 2014). The research was conducted at Universitas Methodist Indonesia during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The study population comprised all active undergraduate students at Universitas Methodist Indonesia, while the sample consisted of 100 respondents selected using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling. Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). A quantitative approach was adopted because it enables the objective examination of relationships

between variables through statistical analysis, allowing the effect of *deadline behavior* on students' academic stress to be empirically assessed.

The research instrument consisted of 10 questionnaire items distributed across two variables. The *deadline behavior* variable (X) was measured using five indicators: delaying the initiation of assignments, the tendency to complete assignments close to deadlines, poor time planning, susceptibility to distractions from other activities, and completing assignments in a rushed manner. These indicators were adapted from the concept of academic procrastination proposed by Steel (2007). Meanwhile, the academic stress variable (Y) was measured using five indicators: anxiety, sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating, physical fatigue, and feelings of uneasiness, adapted from the concept of *academic stress* developed by Bedewy and Gabriel (2015). All indicators were measured using a five-point Likert scale to capture respondents' perceptions of each research construct.

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22 through several stages (Hidayat, 2021). Instrument quality was first evaluated using the Pearson Product-Moment validity test and Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. Assumption testing was subsequently performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test and the linearity test to ensure the appropriateness of the regression model. Once all assumptions had been satisfied, the effect of *deadline behavior* on academic stress was examined using simple linear regression analysis. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the partial *t*-test at a significance level of 5%. The explanatory power of the independent variable was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2) to determine the empirical contribution of *deadline behavior* to students' academic stress.

Results and Discussion

Respondent characteristics and preliminary assumption testing

This study involved 100 active students from Universitas Methodist Indonesia who were selected using a convenience sampling technique. Respondent characteristics were first presented to provide an overview of the sample composition underlying the statistical analysis. Information regarding respondents' backgrounds helps contextualize the research findings, particularly because academic experience and learning environments may influence students' assignment completion habits as well as the level of academic stress they experience. In this study, respondent characteristics were classified according to two aspects: study program and academic semester. These characteristics were selected because they are closely associated with the intensity of academic workload encountered throughout the learning process. The distribution of respondents based on these characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent characteristics by study program and academic semester

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Study program	Information Systems	44	44.0
	Informatics Engineering	31	31.0
	Accounting	13	13.0
	Agribusiness	4	4.0
	Agrotechnology	2	2.0
	Management	2	2.0
	Information Technology Education	2	2.0
	Computerized Accounting	1	1.0
	Informatics Management	1	1.0
Academic semester	Semester 2	18	18.0
	Semester 4	15	15.0
	Semester 6	55	55.0
	Semester 8	12	12.0

Source: Primary data processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22 (2026).

As presented in Table 1, the respondents were predominantly from the Information Systems program, accounting for 44 students (44.0%), followed by Informatics Engineering with 31 students (31.0%) and Accounting with 13 students (13.0%), while the remaining study programs contributed relatively small proportions. This composition indicates that most respondents were enrolled in computer-related disciplines, which typically involve project-based and practical assignments. Regarding academic semester, Semester 6 students constituted the largest group, with 55 respondents (55.0%), followed by Semester 2 with 18 respondents (18.0%), Semester 4 with 15 respondents (15.0%), and Semester 8 with 12 respondents (12.0%). The predominance of students in the intermediate and advanced semesters suggests that most respondents had considerable experience in coping with academic demands and completing assignments under strict deadlines.

Before conducting the regression analysis, the quality of the research instrument was evaluated through validity and reliability testing. The validity test was performed to determine the ability of each questionnaire item to accurately measure the intended construct, whereas the reliability test was conducted to assess the consistency of respondents' answers. An item was considered valid when its calculated *r*-value exceeded the critical *r*-table value (0.196) with a significance level below 0.05, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha with a minimum acceptable threshold of 0.60. The validity test results for all research indicators are presented in Table 2,

whereas the reliability results and preliminary statistical assumption tests are summarized in Table 3.

Table 2. Instrument validity test results

Variable	Item	Calculated <i>r</i>	Sig.	Interpretation
Deadline behavior (X)	X1	0.778	0.000	Valid
	X2	0.809	0.000	Valid
	X3	0.729	0.000	Valid
	X4	0.777	0.000	Valid
	X5	0.804	0.000	Valid
Academic stress (Y)	Y1	0.671	0.000	Valid
	Y2	0.709	0.000	Valid
	Y3	0.689	0.000	Valid
	Y4	0.724	0.000	Valid
	Y5	0.660	0.000	Valid

Source: Primary data processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22 (2026).

As shown in Table 2, all questionnaire items produced calculated *r*-values ranging from 0.660 to 0.809, with significance values of 0.000. Since all calculated *r*-values exceeded the critical *r*-table value of 0.196, every indicator was considered valid and capable of representing its respective construct. Following the validity assessment, reliability testing and preliminary regression assumption tests, including normality and linearity, were conducted. These procedures were necessary to ensure that the dataset satisfied the assumptions required for simple linear regression, thereby allowing the results to be interpreted accurately. A summary of these analyses is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability and preliminary assumption test results

Test	Indicator	Value	Criterion	Interpretation
Reliability (Variable X)	Cronbach's Alpha	0.837	>0.60	Reliable
Reliability (Variable Y)	Cronbach's Alpha	0.727	>0.60	Reliable
Normality	Kolmogorov–Smirnov significance	0.183	>0.05	Normal
Linearity	Deviation from Linearity significance	0.465	>0.05	Linear

Source: Primary data processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22 (2026).

As presented in Table 3, both research variables achieved Cronbach's Alpha values above the recommended threshold of 0.60, with coefficients of 0.837 for *deadline behavior* and 0.727 for academic stress. These findings indicate that the research instrument demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency. Furthermore, the normality test produced a significance value of 0.183, while the linearity test based on the *Deviation from Linearity* statistic yielded a significance value of 0.465. Both values exceeded the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the regression residuals were normally distributed and that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables was linear. Since all statistical assumptions were satisfied, the dataset was considered suitable for subsequent simple linear regression analysis to examine the effect of *deadline behavior* on academic stress among university students.

Regression analysis and hypothesis testing

After confirming that the research instrument was valid and reliable and that the dataset satisfied the assumptions of normality and linearity, the next step was to examine the effect of *deadline behavior* on students' academic stress using simple linear regression analysis. This analysis was conducted to determine both the direction and magnitude of the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable while simultaneously testing the proposed research hypothesis. Hypothesis testing was performed by estimating the regression coefficients and conducting a partial *t*-test, where the hypothesis was accepted if the significance value was less than 0.05. The results of the simple linear regression analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Simple linear regression analysis results

Variable	B	<i>t</i>	Sig.	Interpretation
Constant	14.943	13.875	0.000	–
<i>Deadline behavior</i> (X)	0.278	4.082	0.000	Positive and significant effect

Source: Primary data processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22 (2026).

As shown in Table 4, the resulting regression equation was $Y = 14.943 + 0.278X$. The constant value of 14.943 indicates the estimated level of students' academic stress when *deadline behavior* is assumed to remain unchanged. Meanwhile, the positive regression coefficient of 0.278 indicates that every one-unit increase in *deadline behavior* is associated with a 0.278-unit increase in students' academic stress. The partial *t*-test produced a calculated *t*-value of 4.082 with a significance value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 significance threshold. Therefore, H_1 was accepted and H_0 was rejected, indicating that *deadline behavior* had a positive and statistically significant effect on academic stress among students at Universitas Methodist Indonesia.

In addition to examining the statistical significance of the relationship, this study also evaluated the explanatory power of the independent variable using the coefficient of determination (R^2). This statistic was employed to determine the extent to which

deadline behavior explained variations in students' academic stress relative to other factors not included in the research model. The results of the coefficient of determination analysis are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Coefficient of determination results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Interpretation
1	0.381	0.145	0.137		Positive relationship with low strength; the independent variable explained 14.5% of the variance in students' academic stress.

Source: Primary data processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22 (2026).

As presented in Table 5, the correlation coefficient (R) of 0.381 indicates a positive relationship between *deadline behavior* and students' academic stress, although the strength of the relationship falls within the low category. Furthermore, the R² value of 0.145 indicates that *deadline behavior* explained 14.5% of the variance in students' academic stress, while the remaining 85.5% was attributable to other factors beyond the scope of the research model. These findings suggest that completing assignments close to submission deadlines is an important contributor to increased academic stress, although it is not the sole determinant. Therefore, a more comprehensive discussion of other factors potentially influencing students' academic stress is necessary to provide a broader interpretation of the findings.

The effect of deadline behavior on academic stress among university students

Academic stress has traditionally been understood as a consequence of the heavy workload imposed on university students. However, this perspective does not fully explain why students with relatively similar academic demands often experience different levels of stress. This discrepancy suggests that the source of academic stress is determined not only by the quantity of assignments but also by how students manage their completion. The present study demonstrates that *deadline behavior* is one of the factors contributing to increased academic stress among university students. The regression analysis produced a coefficient of 0.278 with a *t*-value of 4.082 and a significance level of 0.000, indicating that the research hypothesis was supported. These findings suggest that the greater the tendency of students to postpone completing assignments until deadlines approach, the greater their likelihood of experiencing psychological distress throughout the learning process.

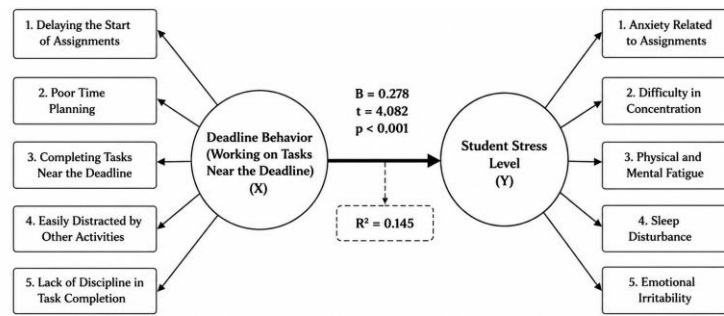


Figure 1. Conceptual interpretation of the effect of *deadline behavior* on student stress level

Source: Developed by the authors based on IBM SPSS Statistics 22 analysis results (2026).

Figure 1 was developed to facilitate the interpretation of the regression findings by illustrating the conceptual relationship between academic behavior and students' psychological responses. Unlike statistical results, which merely indicate the magnitude of the relationship between variables, this conceptual framework demonstrates how individual indicators interact to shape that relationship. The figure illustrates that increased academic stress does not occur instantaneously but develops through a sequence of behavioral patterns that emerge during the assignment completion process. Therefore, the figure serves as a bridge between the quantitative findings and their theoretical interpretation, enabling readers to better understand the underlying mechanism through which *deadline behavior* contributes positively to academic stress before proceeding to a more detailed discussion.

In the present study, *deadline behavior* was conceptualized through several key dimensions, including delaying the initiation of assignments, poor time planning, completing assignments close to submission deadlines, susceptibility to distractions from other activities, and rushing to finish assignments at the last minute. Collectively, these behaviors reflect ineffective time management practices that prevent students from distributing their academic workload more evenly over time. As a consequence, time pressure intensifies as submission deadlines approach, increasing psychological strain. This mechanism explains the positive regression coefficient of 0.278 obtained in this study, indicating that increases in *deadline behavior* are accompanied by higher levels of academic stress. These findings are consistent with those of Zacks and Hen (2018), who reported that delaying assignment completion intensifies academic pressure because of limited available time. Likewise, Au et al. (2023) emphasized that effective time management is an essential factor in maintaining students' psychological well-being, further supporting the findings of the present study.

The escalation of these behavioral patterns was subsequently reflected in multiple dimensions of academic stress, including anxiety, sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating, physical fatigue, and feelings of uneasiness. These indicators demonstrate that academic stress is a multidimensional response involving emotional, cognitive, and physiological components simultaneously. When students are required

to complete numerous academic tasks within a limited timeframe, their cognitive capacity declines, anxiety intensifies, and sleep quality deteriorates, ultimately reducing academic productivity. This relationship is reinforced by the calculated t -value of 4.082 with a significance level of 0.000, confirming the robustness of the statistical relationship identified in this study. These findings support those reported by Córdova et al. (2023), who argued that academic stress develops through the accumulation of various psychological responses throughout the learning process. Nevertheless, the present findings differ from those of Pérez-Jorge et al. (2025), who identified academic workload as the dominant predictor of stress, whereas this study demonstrates that students' behavioral responses to approaching deadlines also make a significant contribution.

When these two groups of dimensions are considered together, a relatively consistent behavioral pattern becomes apparent. Students who postpone the initiation of assignments generally exhibit weaker time planning, are more susceptible to distractions from other activities, and eventually complete their work hastily as submission deadlines approach. This sequence of behaviors compresses the available time for completing assignments, thereby increasing academic pressure and leading to anxiety, fatigue, sleep disturbances, and concentration difficulties. In other words, elevated academic stress does not emerge suddenly but develops gradually through an accumulation of behaviors that begin at the initial stages of the assignment completion process. This pattern is consistent with the findings of Zhang et al. (2024), who identified time pressure as a major trigger of academic stress. In contrast, Van de Castele et al. (2025) argued that motivational factors exert a stronger influence than procrastination-related behaviors, suggesting that the present study offers an alternative perspective regarding the importance of time management in higher education.

Although the identified relationship was statistically significant, the strength of the association remained relatively weak. This is reflected in the correlation coefficient (R) of 0.381, while the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.145 indicates that *deadline behavior* accounted for only 14.5% of the variance in students' academic stress. Consequently, the remaining 85.5% of the variance can be attributed to factors beyond the scope of the present research model. These findings suggest that academic stress is a complex phenomenon that cannot be explained solely by a single academic behavior. Variables such as academic workload, self-regulation, social support, self-efficacy, financial conditions, and the learning environment may contribute more substantially to students' stress levels. Therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as indicating that *deadline behavior* is the sole cause of academic stress but rather as one influential factor that deserves attention in the management of students' academic lives.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that *deadline behavior* exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on academic stress among university students. The contribution of this study lies not only in empirically confirming this relationship through the regression coefficient ($B = 0.278$), t -value (4.082), and significance level ($p < 0.001$), but also in explaining how the behavioral dimensions of *deadline behavior* evolve into various manifestations of academic stress. Although the explanatory power of the model remains limited ($R^2 = 14.5\%$), the findings provide empirical evidence that improving students' learning behaviors, particularly in terms of time management and assignment completion practices, represents a practical strategy for reducing academic stress. Consequently, this study not only enriches the literature on academic behavior but also offers practical implications for higher education institutions in designing time management training programs, academic support initiatives, and counseling services aimed at preventing academic stress.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *deadline behavior* has a positive and statistically significant effect on academic stress among students at Universitas Methodist Indonesia. The finding is supported by the results of the simple linear regression analysis, which yielded a regression coefficient of 0.278, a t -value of 4.082, and a significance level of 0.000, confirming the proposed research hypothesis. These results indicate that an increasing tendency to postpone assignment completion until deadlines approach is associated with higher levels of academic stress, manifested through anxiety, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbances, and physical fatigue. This relationship arises because procrastination reduces the time available to complete academic tasks, forcing students to work under greater time pressure. Accordingly, the findings highlight that academic stress is influenced not only by the quantity of academic workload but also by how students manage their time and complete their academic responsibilities.

This study contributes to the literature by identifying *deadline behavior* as an important behavioral factor in explaining academic stress among university students while reinforcing the importance of effective time management in higher education. Nevertheless, the explanatory power of the proposed model remains limited, as indicated by an R^2 value of 0.145, suggesting that the independent variable accounted for only 14.5% of the variance in academic stress, whereas the remaining 85.5% was explained by factors beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, future research is encouraged to develop more comprehensive models by incorporating additional variables, such as time management, self-efficacy, academic workload, learning motivation, social support, and self-regulation. Expanding the study to include participants from multiple higher education institutions and employing more advanced analytical approaches would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing academic stress among university students.

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