

Student academic hardiness: descriptive analysis and its relationship with individual characteristic

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze students' academic hardiness and examine its differences based on individual characteristics as well as its relationship with academic achievement. This research employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive and correlational design. The participants consisted of 103 students selected using accidental sampling. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring the dimensions of commitment, control, and challenge. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA. The results showed that students' academic hardiness was categorized as high. However, there were no significant differences in academic hardiness based on gender and semester. In addition, no significant relationship was found between academic hardiness and academic achievement (GPA). These findings indicate that academic hardiness is an important psychological resource in dealing with academic pressure, but it does not directly determine students' academic success. This study implies that the development of academic hardiness needs to be systematically implemented through psychological and educational interventions to support students' academic success.

Introduction

In the context of higher education, students are faced with various complex academic demands, ranging from workload, exam pressure, to the demands of achieving optimal academic performance. These conditions require students to have adaptive abilities in facing academic pressures and challenges. One of the relevant psychological constructs in explaining this ability is academic hardiness, which refers to an individual's hardiness in facing stress and pressure in the academic context. The concept of academic hardiness was first introduced to explain the differences in students' responses to academic challenges, where some students tend to face challenges, while others avoid them (H. Cheng et al., 2018) (Sepiadou, 2024).

Academic hardiness is a concept that evolved from the theory of psychological hardiness, introduced in psychology studies as a personality characteristic that helps individuals endure and adapt to pressure. In the academic context, academic hardiness refers to students' ability to persist, adapt, and thrive in the face of various academic demands and pressures (Jia et al., 2021) (Yi et al., 2024a). Academic hardiness encompasses three main components: commitment, control, and challenge, which describe an individual's involvement in academic activities, belief in their ability to control outcomes, and view of difficulties as opportunities for growth (Wong et al., 2021); (Spiridon, 2022a). The commitment dimension reflects an individual's active involvement in academic activities and their willingness to continue participating in the learning process. The control dimension relates to an individual's belief that they can influence academic outcomes thru their efforts. Meanwhile, the challenge dimension refers to an individual's ability to view difficulties as opportunities for learning and growth, rather than as threats (Wong et al., 2021) (Spiridon, 2022a).

Students with a high level of academic hardiness tend to have stronger learning motivation, are able to manage emotions effectively, and demonstrate perseverance in facing academic difficulties (Abdollahi et al., 2018); (Jia et al., 2021). Conversely, students with low levels of academic hardiness tend to experience stress, anxiety, and difficulties in coping with academic demands more easily (Jia et al., 2021); (Santos & Faro, 2025). Several studies show that academic hardiness is an important factor in supporting academic success and the psychological well-being of students. Academic hardiness is known to play a role in reducing academic stress, increasing learning engagement, and encouraging the use of adaptive coping strategies (Oktavia et al., 2019); (Abdollahi et al., 2020a)

In addition, academic hardiness has also been found to positively correlate with academic achievement and academic engagement, both directly and thru certain mediating variables (Jia et al., 2021) (Sepiadou, 2024). Even in the context of modern learning, such as digital and online learning, academic hardiness remains an important psychological resource that helps students adapt and achieve academic success (Rafatjoo et al., 2025a); (Kuo et al., 2021a). However, the development of academic hardiness studies in contemporary literature shows a shift in focus from mere description of the construct to analyzing its functional role in various academic contexts. Recent studies position academic hardiness not only as an independent variable but also as a mediating and moderating variable in the relationship between psychological factors and academic outcomes. Academic hardiness has proven to play a role as a mediator in the relationship between digital informal learning and academic performance, as well as a moderator in the relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination (Rafatjoo et al., 2025; Abdollahi et al., 2020). This indicates that academic hardiness has a strategic position in explaining the dynamics of students' academic adaptation more comprehensively. On the other hand, research also indicates that academic hardiness is closely related to various other psychological variables such as self-efficacy, academic engagement, learning motivation, and subjective well-being. Academic hardiness contributes to shaping academic engagement and indirectly affects students' academic achievement (Jia et al., 2021); Yi et al., 2024).

Additionally, individuals with high levels of academic hardiness tend to have better emotional regulation abilities, adaptive coping strategies, and a tendency to view academic pressure as an opportunity for growth (Jia et al., 2021) (Zhou et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the position of academic hardiness as a key psychological resource in facing the complexities of academic demands in higher education. Nevertheless, research findings related to the relationship between academic hardiness and demographic factors as well as academic achievement still show inconsistencies. Some studies have found a significant relationship between academic hardiness and academic achievement, while other studies show that this relationship is not always significant and is influenced by other factors such as self-efficacy, motivation, and social support (H. Cheng et al., 2018); Zhou et al., 2025). In addition,

demographic factors such as gender and individual background have also been reported to have varying influences on academic hardiness and academic achievement (Marlia et al., 2025).

In the context of Indonesia, particularly among students with diverse backgrounds such as recipients of educational assistance programs, academic pressure tends to be more complex. Students are not only required to complete their studies on time but also to maintain certain academic achievements and be active in various academic and non-academic activities. This condition demands strong academic hardiness so that students can endure and thrive in high-pressure situations (Santoso, 2023); (Hambali et al., 2026).

However, empirical studies on academic hardiness among students in religious higher education institutions in Indonesia are still relatively limited. Moreover, most previous studies have focused more on complex relationship models, while studies that combine descriptive analysis, difference tests, and simultaneous relationship tests are still rarely conducted. Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the level of academic hardiness among students and examine the differences based on individual characteristics, such as gender and level of semester, as well as to test the relationship between academic hardiness and students' academic achievements. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of educational psychology research, particularly related to students' academic hardiness, and serve as a basis for designing interventions that support the improvement of students' academic hardiness quality.

Methods

Design

This study used a quantitative approach with a descriptive and correlational design. The descriptive approach was used to describe students' levels of academic hardiness, while the correlational approach was used to examine the relationship between academic hardiness and academic achievement and differences based on individual characteristics.

Participants

The subjects in this study were students from several universities in North Sumatra. A total of 103 respondents were recruited using a non-probability sampling technique using accidental sampling, involving questionnaires distributed via google forms. Accidental sampling is a sampling technique based on chance, where respondents encountered by the researcher and deemed to meet the research criteria are made into a sample. In this context, students who voluntarily access and fill out the Google Forms questionnaire become research respondents.

Instruments

The instrument used was an academic hardiness scale structured around three main dimensions: commitment, control, and challenge. Each item was measured using a Likert scale with four response options: Very Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Appropriate (3), and Very Appropriate (4). several items from 3 aspects of academic hardiness can be seen in table 1:

Table 1. Several Items of Academic Hardiness

No	Statement
<i>Commitment</i>	
1	I always try to understand the lecture material thoroughly, even if it takes longer.
2	I continue to study seriously despite facing many distractions.
3	I feel that academic success depends on my own efforts.
<i>Challenge</i>	
1	I enjoy the challenge of difficult courses because it helps me grow.

2 I feel good when I can find solutions to difficult academic problems.

3 I believe that failing exams is just part of the learning process.

Control

1 If I get a bad grade, I will analyze my mistakes and correct them.

2 I believe that I can control my academic performance with enough effort.

The results of the validity and reliability test of the academic hardiness scale can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Result of Validity and Reliability Scale of Academic Hardiness

P	R Tabel	R Hitung	Result
P1	0.195	0.468	Valid
P2	0.195	0.702	Valid
P3	0.195	0.607	Valid
P4	0.195	0.536	Valid
P5	0.195	0.692	Valid
P6	0.195	0.614	Valid
P7	0.195	0.582	Valid
P8	0.195	0.668	Valid
P9	0.195	0.605	Valid
P10	0.195	0.624	Valid
P11	0.195	0.491	Valid
P12	0.195	0.594	Valid
P13	0.195	0.722	Valid
P14	0.195	0.676	Valid
P15	0.195	0.664	Valid
P16	0.195	0.542	Valid
P17	0.195	0.612	Valid
P18	0.195	0.626	Valid
P19	0.195	0.528	Valid

Based on the validity test results for all questionnaire items, it was found that all items have a calculated R value greater than the table R value of 0.195, thus all items are valid. This indicates that the items in the instrument are capable of accurately measuring the construct being studied. In addition, the researcher also conducted a reliability test to see the reliability level of the academic hardiness scale. The results of the reliability test can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Result of Test Reliability Scale of Academic Hardiness

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.902	19

Based on the results of the reliability test, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.902 was obtained. This value is greater than 0.60, so it can be concluded that the research instrument has a good level of reliability and is suitable for use as a data collection tool.

Procedure

The data in this study were collected using a Google Form-based questionnaire. The questionnaire also included data on respondent characteristics such as gender, semester, and academic achievement as measured by the Grade Point Average (GPA).

The respondents in this study are students at state religious universities and several state and private universities in the city of Medan.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was conducted using statistical software. The analysis stages included:

1. Descriptive Analysis

This was used to describe the level of student academic hardiness through the mean score, standard deviation, and academic hardiness level categories.

2. Difference Testing

- An Independent Sample t-test was used to test differences in academic hardiness based on gender.
- A One-Way ANOVA test was used to test differences in academic hardiness based on semester.

Results

The descriptive analysis results show that students' academic hardiness is in the high category. The average academic hardiness score was 3.30 with a standard deviation of 0.36. The minimum score was 2.58 and the maximum was 4.00. the result of descriptive analysis can show in the tabel 4

Table 4. Descrptive Analysis of Students Academic Hardiness

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Category
Academic Hardiness	103	3.30	0.36	2.58	4.00	Tinggi

Based on the categories used, these scores indicate that the majority of students have a good level of academic hardiness. This indicates that students demonstrate commitment to learning, have confidence in their ability to control academic outcomes, and view academic challenges as opportunities for growth.

The results of the independent sample t-test showed that there was no significant difference in the level of academic hardiness between male and female students ($t = 0.689$; $p > 0.05$). The average academic hardiness of male students was 3.37, while that of female students was 3.29. the results can see at table 5

Table 5. Test of Differences in Academic Hardiness Based on Gender

Jenis Kelamin	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (p)	Keterangan
Laki-laki	12	3.37	0.35	0.689	0.492	Tidak signifikan
Perempuan	91	3.29	0.36	0.689	0.492	Tidak signifikan

The results of the One-Way ANOVA test showed no significant difference in the level of academic hardiness based on student semester ($F = 1.29$; $p > 0.05$). This indicates that the level of student academic hardiness is relatively consistent across semester levels. The result can see at table 6 and table 7

Table 6. Academic Hardiness Difference Test Based on Level of Semester

Level of Semester	N	Mean	SD
early of semester (1–3)	42	3.36	0.33
Middle of semester (4–6)	14	3.38	0.33
Final of semester (7–9)	21	3.18	0.39

Table 7. One Way ANOVA Test Results

Variable	F	Sig. (p)	Keterangan
Academic Hardiness	1.29	0.204	Tidak signifikan

Table 7 shows that the average academic hardiness of students at each semester level is relatively similar. Students in the first semester had an average of 3.36, in the middle semester 3.38, and in the final semester 3.18. All of these scores are in the high category. Furthermore, based on Table 7, the results of the One-Way ANOVA test indicate no significant differences in academic hardiness levels based on student semester ($F = 1.29$; $p > 0.05$). This indicates that students' academic hardiness levels are relatively consistent across different phases of study.

Discussion

The results of the analysis of students' academic hardiness in terms of commitment, control, and challenge. The results of the analysis of students' academic hardiness obtained show that the condition of students' academic hardiness is in the high category. This can be interpreted as the students being able to commit to their studies, control the entire study process they undergo, and face the challenges that arise during their study period. Academic hardiness refers to a set of psychological traits and characteristics that enable individuals to endure, adapt, and thrive in the face of academic challenges and setbacks. It involves a combination of hardiness, determination, and a strong commitment to one's academic goals despite facing obstacles or difficulties (Wang et al., 2023). Academic hardiness is a framework for understanding how students respond to academic challenges (Abdollahi et al., 2018). Hardiness is a characteristic personality structure that makes individuals stronger, more resilient, and stable in managing pressure and reducing the negative effects faced in positive challenges (Oktavia et al., 2019). Academic hardiness has been used to investigate why some students are willing to face academic challenges, while others avoid challenging academic tasks out of fear of damaging their academic performance (Cheng et al., 2019). The hardiness mindset can influence students' reactions to difficulties and setbacks and their success in facing them (Kamtsios, 2023). The commitment aspect of hardiness is about actively engaging and participating in one's activities and the surrounding world. Control allows students to make more active efforts in finding solutions and engaging in those activities, and the sense of commitment enables them to remain mentally present in their studies and face them. These characteristics are associated with individual happiness and well-being, and the Challenge aspect emerges in motivating performance situations (situations relevant to the individual, goal-oriented situations, and after evaluating task demands) (Spiridon, 2022). All dimensions of academic hardiness (challenge, commitment, control) have a positive correlation with academic achievement (Spiridon, 2022). Individuals who superior in facing challenges perceive their study situations (e.g., exams, tests, deadlines) as motivating and engaging, and consider their studies as important, beneficial, and valuable. They are encouraged to actively engage in their learning activities and shape their personal learning experiences. From this perspective, students' activities are intrinsically motivated. Students view learning as their goal, willing to challenge themselves and persist in the face of difficulties.

From the analysis of the level of academic hardiness among students, it was found that there is no significant difference in the academic hardiness conditions of male and female students. This indicates that gender differences do not affect the academic hardiness conditions of students. This could be due to the support of educational institutions in developing students' academic hardiness. Educators and institutions can support the development of academic hardiness by providing resources, fostering a growth mindset, and creating a supportive learning environment that encourages perseverance and hardiness in facing challenges (Wang et al., 2023). Digital informal learning can enhance students' academic hardiness, which ultimately contributes to improved academic achievement (Rafatjoo et al., 2025). Academic hardiness is a valuable psychological asset that offers support to individuals in achieving academic success and overcoming academic challenges, whether in physical or remote learning environments (Yi et al., 2024a). Students with a high

level of academic hardiness are more prepared to overcome obstacles and maintain positive emotions in difficult situations (Na'imah et al., 2025). Academic hardiness is crucial for enhancing students' adaptability and their ability to tackle unique challenges in school (Na'imah et al., 2025). Academic hardiness serves as an important foundation for students to cope with academic pressure, manage their time effectively, and maintain the emotional balance necessary to sustain motivation and optimal academic performance (Heriansyah et al., 2025a). Individuals with academic hardiness produce students who possess strong determination in academics, motivation to carry out all assigned tasks and responsibilities, and confidence in performing their academic activities (Heriansyah et al., 2025a). Hardiness builds stress management skills, reduces exam anxiety, and creates a much more positive educational experience, thereby maintaining academic success and psychological well-being (Hamed et al., 2025).

If we look at the results of the difference test analysis conducted by the researcher by comparing semester levels, namely early semester, mid-semester, and late semester, it was found that there were no significant differences in the results of the difference test. Students in their early semesters have the same academic hardiness as students in their middle and final semesters. This shows that the semester level does not affect the academic hardiness of students. This is in line with the opinion of (Yi et al., 2024a), who states that students' academic hardiness can be measured in various academic contexts, especially at the educational level. Students' academic hardiness is characterized by a combination of three hardiness attitudes: commitment, control, and challenge, which offer individuals the courage and motivation to transform a high-pressure environment into positive opportunities for personal development (Kuo et al., 2021). Moreover, individuals with higher learning commitment will also have a strong sense of participation and mission for all learning activities and opportunities (Wong et al., 2021). Individuals with high academic hardiness may have higher internal motivation to engage in academic activities to improve academic performance, and are also more likely to participate in academic activities under external pressure (Zhou et al., 2025).

To strengthen the argument about students' academic resilience across various semester levels and genders, the researchers conducted an ANOVA analysis with results indicating that the level of academic resilience among students is relatively consistent across different phases of education. This is also in line with the opinion of (Yi et al., 2024) which states that academic resilience can be conceptualized and adapted in the academic context, especially at the educational level. Essentially, hardiness is an important factor in determining students' success in higher education with various aspects involved. Academic resilience plays an important role for students in overcoming academic challenges (Heriansyah et al., 2025). Under any circumstances, students with academic resilience are able to fully complete their learning process in higher education. Individuals with a high level of academic resilience may have a higher internal motivation to engage in academic activities to improve academic performance, and are also more likely to participate in academic activities under external pressure (Zhou et al., 2025). Individuals who possess the trait of hardiness will become stronger, more resilient, and stable in facing stressful situations in life and can reduce the risk of experiencing negative emotions such as sadness, confusion, worry, and vulnerability (Nurrahmah, 2023). Academic resilience helps students strive to achieve academic excellence and overcome academic challenges (Rafatjoo et al., 2025c). Hardiness within an individual allows an event to be evaluated positively and managed effectively, and this evaluation will prevent someone from losing focus and becoming confused in problem-solving, adopting more effective and appropriate coping strategies, and transforming it into a positive experience (Mohammadi & Toghiani, 2024).

Implications

These findings indicate that academic hardiness tends to be a relatively stable characteristic throughout the college years, so other factors such as the learning environment, social support, or individual character are likely to have more influence than level of semester. Since there are no significant differences, the development of academic hardiness can be carried out with a uniform and continuous approach across all semesters. Programs such as academic hardiness training, stress management, and learning motivation, even individual approaches, need to be provided without specifically differentiating between first-year, middle-year, or final-year students, but rather designed as continuous programs throughout the study period. Further research is recommended to explore academic resilience through various experimental applications with specific methods and techniques to observe significant differences in academic resilience before and after the treatment is applied.

Limitations and future directions

This study has several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results. First, this study uses a cross-sectional design, making it impossible to observe changes or developments in students' academic hardiness longitudinally. Thus, the dynamics of students' academic hardiness over time cannot yet be comprehensively explained. Second, the limited number of respondents from a single institution means that the generalization of the research results is still limited. The relatively homogeneous characteristics of the respondents can also affect data variation, particularly in the analysis of differences based on individual characteristics. Based on these limitations, subsequent research is recommended to use a longitudinal design to examine the development of students' academic hardiness in greater depth. Additionally, it is necessary to expand the sample by involving various institutions and a more diverse background of students so that the research results have stronger generalizability. Subsequent research is also recommended to integrate other psychological variables into the analysis model, both as mediators and moderators, so as to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of *academic hardiness* in the academic context. The use of mixed methods can also be an alternative to explore quantitative and qualitative aspects more deeply. Thus, future research is expected to enrich the study of *academic hardiness* not only from the perspective of variable relationships but also from the dynamics of development and the broader context in higher education.

Conclusion

This research shows that the level of academic hardiness among students is categorized as high, indicating that students generally possess good abilities in facing academic pressures and demands. The academic hardiness possessed is reflected through commitment in carrying out academic activities, confidence in controlling learning outcomes, and the ability to view challenges as opportunities for growth. However, the analysis results show that there are no significant differences in academic hardiness based on gender or semester. This emphasizes that academic hardiness is more influenced by internal individual factors compared to demographic characteristics. Overall, this study emphasizes that academic hardiness is an important psychological resource in helping students cope with academic pressure, but it cannot stand alone in predicting academic achievement. Therefore, a more comprehensive approach is needed by considering various other factors that also influence students' academic success.

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Author Contribution Statement

The first Author contributed to the conceptualization of the research, the design of the methodology, data analysis, and the drafting of the initial manuscript. The second Author contributed to data collection, data processing, as well as writing and editing the manuscript. The third Author is involved in supervising the research, validating the analysis results, and reviewing and revising the final manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the published manuscript.

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