

Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Academic Stress of First-Year Cadet at Surabaya Merchant Marine Polytechnic

Rendry Revansha Prasetyo^{ABCD*}, Hermien Laksmiwati^{2A*}, Ditto Prihadi Kususanto^{3CD}

¹²Department of Psychology, State University of Surabaya, Indonesia

³Department of Psychology, Sekolah Pendidikan Sunway University, Malaysia.

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ABSTRACT

Background: First-year cadets at Surabaya Merchant Marine Polytechnic (Poltekpel Surabaya) experience a distinctive educational environment characterized by demanding daily routines and limited time, which may act as academic stressor. Self-efficacy has been identified as one of the factors associated with academic stress, as students with higher self-efficacy are generally better able to cope with challenges encountered during their education. **Objective:** This study aimed to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and academic stress among first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya. **Methods:** Quantitative non-experimental correlational design was employed with total of 228 respondents were selected using purposive sampling, and data were collected through an online questionnaire using General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) and Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA). Data were analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation because one of the study variables was not normally distributed. **Results:** The findings showed that self-efficacy was not significantly related with academic stress among first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya, with a significance value of 0.513 ($p > 0.05$). **Conclusion:** Self-efficacy was not significantly related to academic stress among first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya. Distinctive educational environment at Poltekpel Surabaya, characterized by standardized routines and highly structured regulatory system, may contribute to academic stress experienced by the cadets.

Keywords: Academic stress, self-efficacy, educational environment

ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Taruna tingkat satu Politeknik Pelayaran (Poltekpel) Surabaya memiliki karakteristik pendidikan dengan tantangan khas, kegiatan harian yang padat dan terbatas berpotensi menjadi stresor akademik pada taruna. Efikasi diri diketahui menjadi salah satu faktor yang berkaitan dengan stres akademik karena pelajar dengan efikasi diri yang baik akan sanggup menghadapi masalah selama mengikuti pendidikan. **Tujuan:** Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui hubungan efikasi diri dengan stres akademik pada taruna tingkat satu Poltekpel Surabaya. **Metode:** Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui hubungan efikasi diri dengan stres akademik pada taruna tingkat satu Poltekpel Surabaya. Penelitian menggunakan desain penelitian kuantitatif non eksperimen korelasi dengan sampel 228 responden menggunakan teknik purposive sampling dengan pengumpulan data melalui kuesioner daring dengan instrumen penelitian General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) dan Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA). Analisis data yang digunakan adalah korelasi Spearman karena salah satu variabel penelitian tidak terdistribusi normal. **Hasil:** Dalam penelitian ini, diketahui bahwa efikasi dan stres akademik pada taruna tingkat satu Poltekpel Surabaya tidak memiliki hubungan signifikan dengan nilai signifikansi 0,513 ($p > 0,05$). **Kesimpulan:** Efikasi tidak memiliki hubungan yang signifikan dengan stres akademik pada taruna tingkat satu Poltekpel Surabaya, faktor lingkungan pendidikan yang ada di Poltekpel Surabaya punya karakteristik pendidikan khas dengan pola yang memiliki keseragaman dan lebih sistematis dalam aturan kemungkinan memiliki kaitan dengan stres akademik.

Kata Kunci: Stres akademik, efikasi diri, lingkungan pendidikan

Corresponding Author: Rendry Revansha, Prasetyo
E-mail: rendry.22156@mhs.unesa.ac.id



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Introduction

Surabaya Merchant Marine Polytechnic (Politeknik Pelayaran Surabaya/ Poltekpel Surabaya) is a government-affiliated higher education institution/school specializing in maritime education and training under the Ministry of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia. According to Permenhub Nomor PM 110 Tahun 2021 Tentang Organisasi dan Tata Kerja Politeknik Pelayaran Surabaya Pasal 2 “Politeknik Pelayaran Surabaya mempunyai tugas menyelenggarakan program pendidikan vokasi, penelitian, dan pengabdian kepada masyarakat di bidang pelayaran” Poltekpel Surabaya is mandated to provide vocational education, conduct research, and carry out community service in the field of maritime transportation. Historically, maritime education has emphasized the development and application of practical competencies (Manuel, 2017). Consequently, cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya encounter educational demands and learning challenges that differ from those experienced by students in conventional higher education institutions.

First-year cadets undergo a transitional period as they move from senior high school to maritime education, particularly in the field of merchant marine studies (Simanjuntak et al., 2023). In Indonesian maritime academies, newly admitted cadets are enrolled as first-year cadets. The importance of mental health in maritime education stems from the demanding nature of the training environment, where cadets are exposed to high levels of stress, social isolation, and a rigid hierarchical system (Santoso, 2025). At Poltekpel Surabaya, one source of these demands is the cadets' intensive daily schedule and the restricted use of electronic devices, such as laptops, which may only be used for academic purposes within designated hours. According to the Cadet Rules and Regulations (Peraturan dan Tata Tertib Taruna/ Pertibtar) of Poltekpel Surabaya (2025), the Cadets' Daily Activity Schedule (Kegiatan Harian Taruna/ KHT) begins at 4:00 a.m. with wake-up time and continues with academic and other institutional activities until lights-out at 10:00 p.m. In addition, laptop use for academic purposes is permitted only until 10:00 p.m. (Poltekpel Surabaya, 2025).

These conditions may be related to higher levels of academic stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) described stress as an interaction between individuals and their environment, in which a situation is perceived as overwhelming, exceeding one's abilities, and threatening personal well-being. In line with this perspective, Walburg (2014) explained academic stress as the stress experienced by students due to the demands of their roles as learners, including various pressures arising from academic activities and responsibilities. This assumption is also supported by a study conducted by Zuhriyah et al. (2023), which found that the primary academic stressors among first-year students in a boarding university in Semarang were related to limited study time caused by packed daily schedules. As a result, students struggled to manage their study time and complete assignments, especially with restricted laptop access. Academic stress refers to psychological pressure caused by various academic demands and environmental expectations faced by individuals (Novitasari & Laili, 2025). This phenomenon is quite common in higher education because students are often confronted with heavy academic workloads, intensive examination schedules, and high expectations from their surroundings (Dewi et al., 2025).

To obtain a preliminary overview of academic stress among first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya, a pilot study was conducted involving 50 cadets. The results showed that 32 cadets (64%) experienced moderate levels of academic stress, 11 cadets (22%) reported high levels, and 7 cadets (14%) reported low levels of academic stress. These findings indicate that the majority of first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya experience moderate to high levels of academic stress. If left unaddressed, this condition may have adverse consequences for the cadets. First-year university students who experience academic stress are at risk of various negative outcomes, including reduced concentration, feelings of restlessness, worry, and anxiety, as well as sleep disturbances (Siallagan et al., 2023).

Yusuf and Yusuf (2020) stated that self-efficacy, or an individual's belief in their own abilities, is one of the internal factors influencing academic stress. Perceived self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute the actions required to achieve specific goals (Bandura, 1997). Previous research by Fernandes et al. (2023) found that higher levels of self-efficacy enable individuals to

regulate themselves more effectively when facing stressful situations. In the context of first-year students, those with stronger self-efficacy are better equipped to cope with the various challenges encountered during their academic journey. Similarly, Lestari et al. (2025) reported a significant negative correlation, with a weak strength of association, between self-efficacy and academic stress among undergraduate nursing students at the Faculty of Medicine, Udayana University, during the period of online learning. Students who have confidence in their abilities also tend to be more motivated, put forth greater effort, and achieve better academic outcomes (Zimmerman, 2000).

Based on the preceding discussion, first-year cadets experience a transitional period while adapting to maritime education, where they face demanding academic responsibilities, intensive daily activities, and various institutional restrictions that may contribute to academic stress. This concern is further supported by preliminary findings indicating that academic stress among first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya ranges from moderate to high levels. Therefore, it is important to examine factors that may be associated with academic stress, such as self-efficacy. Furthermore, a review of the existing literature found no previous studies specifically investigating the relationship between self-efficacy and academic stress among cadets enrolled in government-affiliated higher education institutions. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and academic stress among first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya and to provide empirical evidence regarding this association.

Material and Method

Participants

The population of this study consisted of 558 first-year cadets from Poltekpel Surabaya who were enrolled across seven study programs, namely D3 Nautical Studies (D3 Nautika), D3 Marine Engineering (D3 Teknik), D3 Electro-Technical Officer (D3 ETO), D4 Applied Science in Ship Operational Engineering Technology (D4 TROK), D4 Applied Science in Marine Engineering Technology (D4 TRPK), D4 Applied Science in Ship Electrical Engineering Technology (D4 TRKK), and D4 Applied Science in Sea Transportation (D4 Transla). The participants included active cadets who were in their second semester or first year of study. Due to limitations in time and research resources, the researcher used a purposive sampling technique by selecting participants based on two criteria: active cadets of Poltekpel Surabaya and first-year cadets. Based on these criteria, a total of 228 cadets were selected as the research sample.

Procedure

This study used a quantitative non experiment correlation design to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and academic stress. The research was conducted online at Poltekpel Surabaya. The researcher first submitted a research permit in October 2025 through the psychological unit at Poltekpel Surabaya. Data collection was conducted in March 2026. The questionnaire link was distributed through battalion officers and the psychology unit using WhatsApp. Participants voluntarily completed the online questionnaire through Google Forms.

Data Collection

Data were collected using two instruments. Self-efficacy was measured using the General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). The scale consists of 10 favorable items using a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Indonesian adaptation developed by Wardani et al. (2025) was used in this study. Academic stress was measured using the Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents developed by Sun et al. (2011) and adapted by Dewi et al. (2025) for Indonesian higher education contexts. The instrument consists of 9 favorable items covering five aspects: pressure from study, workload, worry about grades, self-expectation, and hopelessness. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale. The validity test showed that all GSES items had item-rest correlation values above 0.30. The reliability test showed a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.909 for GSES. For ESSA, all items also showed item-rest correlation values above 0.30, and the reliability coefficient was 0.853. Therefore, both instruments were considered valid and reliable.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using JASP 95.4.0 software. Descriptive analysis was used to describe self-efficacy and academic stress among participants. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to test normality. The results showed that self-efficacy was not normally distributed, while academic stress was normally distributed. Therefore, hypothesis testing used the non-parametric Spearman correlation test.

Result

The demographic profile of the respondents was described according to age, gender, and study major. This study involved 228 first-year cadets as participants. Detailed information regarding the respondents' characteristics is presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Characteristic of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	203	89%
Female	25	11%
Total	228	100%

It was found that the respondents in this study consisted of 228 cadets, with 203 male cadets (89%) and 25 female cadets (11%). These findings indicate a significant gender imbalance among the respondents, with male cadets representing the majority, while female cadets accounted for a considerably smaller proportion.

Table 2. Characteristic of Respondents by Age

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
17	3	1.3%
18	35	15.4%
19	123	53.9%
20	46	20.2%
21	12	5.3%
22	8	3.5%
23	1	0.4%
Total	228	100.0%

The respondents in this study ranged in age from 17 to 23 years old. Most respondents were 19 years old, consisting of 123 cadets (53.9%). This was followed by 46 cadets aged 20 years (20.2%), 35 cadets aged 18 years (15.4%), 12 cadets aged 21 years (5.3%), 8 cadets aged 22 years (3.5%), 3 cadets aged 17 years (1.3%), and 1 cadet aged 23 years (0.4%).

Table 3. Characteristic of Respondents by Study Major

Study Major	Frequency	Percentage
D3 Nautika	29	13%
D3 Teknika	30	13%
D3 ETO	32	14%
D4 TROK	44	19%
D4 TRPK	35	15%
D4 TRKK	18	8%
D4 Transla	40	18%
Total	228	100%

The respondents in this study came from seven study programs at Surabaya Merchant Marine Polytechnic. The largest proportion of respondents were from the D4 TROK program, consisting of 44 cadets (19%). This was followed by the D4 Transla with 40 cadets (18%), D4 TRPK with 35 cadets (15%), D3 ETO with 32 cadets (14%), D3 Teknika with 30 cadets (13%), D3 Nautika with 29 cadets (13%), and D4 TRKK with 18 cadets (8%).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistic

Variable	Frequency	Mean	Std. Dev	Min.	Max.
Self-Efficacy	228	34.16	4.662	20	40
Academic Stress	228	30.38	5.945	9	45

Based on the descriptive analysis, the self-efficacy variable had a mean score of 34.16 with a standard deviation of 4.662. The minimum score obtained for the self-efficacy variable was 20, while the maximum score was 40. Meanwhile, the academic stress variable showed a mean score of 30.38 with a standard deviation of 5.945. The academic stress scores ranged from a minimum of 9 to a maximum of 45.

Table 5. Mean by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Mean of Self-Efficacy	Mean of Academic Stress
Male	203	34.28	30.20
Female	25	33.20	31.84

The mean scores for each variable were also examined by gender. Descriptively, male cadets demonstrated slightly higher mean self-efficacy scores than female cadets. In contrast, female cadets exhibited slightly higher mean levels of academic stress than their male counterparts.

The variables were categorized to determine the overall levels of self-efficacy and academic stress among the respondents. The self-efficacy variable was classified into three categories using the quartile method because the data were not normally distributed. The respondents' self-efficacy scores had a 25th percentile (Q1) value of 30 and a 75th percentile (Q3) value of 39. According to Altman and Bland (1994), quartiles are cut-off points used to divide data based on the relative position of scores within a distribution. Specifically, the first quartile (25th percentile) and the third quartile (75th percentile) define the interquartile range.

Therefore, the first and third quartiles were used as the cut-off points to classify respondents into three levels of self-efficacy. To facilitate the categorization of self-efficacy, the first and third quartiles were used as the cut-off points for a three-category classification. Respondents with scores below 30 were classified as having low self-efficacy, those with scores ranging from 30 to 39 were classified as having moderate self-efficacy, and those with scores above 39 were classified as having high self-efficacy.

Table 6. Self-Efficacy Categorization

Category	Normative Range	Freequency	Percentage
Low	$X < 30$	36	15.79%
Moderate	$30 \leq X \leq 39$	145	63.60%
High	$X > 39$	47	20.61%
Total		228	100%

The self-efficacy levels of first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya were predominantly moderate, with 145 cadets (63.60%), meanwhile 47 cadets (20.61%) demonstrated high levels of self-efficacy, and 36 cadets (15.79%) were classified as having low self-efficacy.

The academic stress variable was categorized into three levels using the classification method proposed by Azwar (2022), as the data were normally distributed.

Table 7. Three Levels Categorization Norm by Azwar (2022)

Category	Norm
Low	$X < M - 0.75SD$
Moderate	$M - 0.75SD \leq X < M + 0.75SD$
High	$X \geq M + 0.75SD$

Table 8. Academic Stress Categorization

Category	Norm	Frequency	Percentage
Low	$X < 25.92$	40	18%
Moderate	$25.92 \leq X < 34.84$	131	57%
High	$X \geq 34.84$	57	25%
Total		228	100%

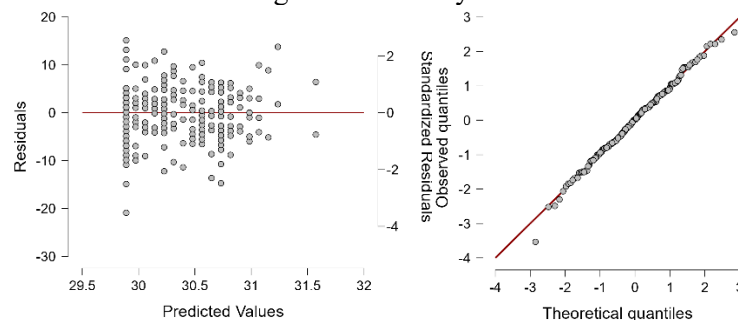
The majority of first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya experienced moderate levels of academic stress, with 131 cadets (57%). Meanwhile, 57 cadets (25%) experienced high levels of academic stress, and 40 cadets (18%) were classified as having low levels of academic stress.

Table 9. Normality Test Result

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk	<i>p-value</i>	
Self-Efficacy	0.928	< 0.001	Not Normally Distributes
Academic Stress	0.993	0.355	Normally Distributed

The normality test using the Shapiro–Wilk method showed that the self-efficacy variable had a significance value of < .001, indicating that the significance value < 0.05. Therefore, the self-efficacy data were considered not normally distributed. In contrast, the academic stress variable obtained a significance value of 0.355, which was > 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed.

Figure 1. Linearity Test Result



The linearity test results indicated that the residuals were normally distributed, as shown by the Q-Q plot on the right. In addition, the Residuals vs. Predicted Plot on the left showed that the residuals were randomly scattered without forming any discernible pattern, indicating a linear relationship between the variables. The random distribution of residuals in the Residuals vs. Predicted Plot suggests that the assumption of homoscedasticity was satisfied. Furthermore, the standardized residuals lying closely along the diagonal line in the Q-Q plot indicate that the assumptions of normality and linearity were met (Goss-Sampson, 2019).

Table 10. Hypothesis Test Result

Variable	Spearman's rho	p (Sig.)	
Self-Efficacy–Academic Stress	-0.044	0.513	Not Significant

As shown in the table, the Spearman correlation analysis yielded a correlation coefficient of -0,044, indicating a negative correlation between self-efficacy and academic stress with a very weak strength of association. According to Sugiyono (2017), a correlation coefficient ranging from 0.00 to 0.199 is interpreted as indicating a very weak relationship. The negative sign (-) indicates an inverse relationship between the two variables, meaning that an increase in one variable is associated with a decrease in the other (Walizada, 2021). Furthermore, the table shows a *p*-value of 0.513, indicating that the relationship between self-efficacy and academic stress was not statistically significant. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was rejected, as no significant relationship was found between self-efficacy and academic stress among first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted.

Discussion

The characteristics of the respondents showed that the majority of first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya who participated in this study were male. The gender distribution was highly imbalanced, consisting of 203 male respondents and 25 female respondents. Most respondents were between 17 and 23 years of age, with 19-year-old cadets representing the largest age group. In terms of academic programs, the respondents were drawn from all seven study programs offered at Poltekpel Surabaya, with the largest proportion coming from the Bachelor of Applied Science in Ship Engineering Operations (D4 TROK) program, comprising 44 respondents. Most respondents demonstrated moderate levels of both self-efficacy and academic stress, with respondents in the moderate self-efficacy category being slightly higher than that of academic stress.

This study aimed to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and academic stress among first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya. Based on the descriptive analysis, male cadets were found to have a slightly higher average self-efficacy score compared to female cadets, with a mean score of 34.28. In contrast, female cadets showed a higher mean academic stress score than male cadets, with a mean score of 31.84. Furthermore, most respondents were classified in the moderate category for both self-efficacy and academic stress, with the proportion of cadets in the moderate self-efficacy category being higher than the proportion of cadets in the moderate academic stress category. The Spearman correlation analysis resulted in a correlation coefficient of -0.044, indicating a negative relationship with a very weak correlation strength between self-efficacy and academic stress. The significance value of 0.513 ($p > 0.05$) indicates that the relationship was not statistically significant. Therefore, the findings support the null hypothesis (H_0), suggesting that there was insufficient evidence to accept the alternative hypothesis (H_a).

According to Bandura (1997), individuals with strong beliefs in their capabilities tend to perceive difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Conversely, individuals who doubt their abilities are more likely to recover slowly from failure, making them more vulnerable to stress and depression. This theoretical perspective suggests that self-efficacy is closely related to stress.

Previous studies examining the relationship between self-efficacy and academic stress have consistently reported a significant negative correlation, indicating that higher levels of self-efficacy are associated with lower levels of academic stress. Such findings were reported by Lestari et al. (2025), Fernandes et al. (2023), Arum and Wibawanti (2023), Rintaka and Yunita (2025), and Noviana and Khoirunnisa (2022). However, these studies were conducted in general educational settings, such as senior

high schools, universities, and Islamic boarding schools, which differ from the context of the present study conducted at a maritime vocational academy. In addition, the participants in this study differ from those in previous research. Cadets in official maritime education institutions are subject to stricter regulations, more structured routines, and more demanding daily activities than students in general schools, universities, or religious boarding schools. These contextual differences may explain why the present study did not find a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and academic stress.

Compared with conventional educational institutions, government-affiliated schools operate within a unique educational environment in which students' daily activities, behavior, and uniforms are regulated by institutional rules that must be followed by all cadets. As a result, the learning environment tends to be relatively homogeneous, and the academic stress experienced by cadets may show less variability because they are exposed to similar forms of training and supervision. According to Sulistiani et al. (2021), Indonesia's merchant marine education system places strong emphasis on mental and moral development, cadets' rights and responsibilities, organizational activities, daily routines, codes of conduct, institutional regulations, disciplinary violations, and applicable legal provisions. Likewise, the educational environment at Poltekpel Surabaya is characterized by standardized regulations and disciplinary practices governing cadet education and training. These provisions are formally outlined in the Cadet Rules and Regulations (Peraturan dan Tata Tertib Taruna/ Pertibtar) of Poltekpel Surabaya 2025, which all cadets are required to follow (Politeknik Pelayaran Surabaya, 2025).

The findings of this study suggest that the relationship between self-efficacy and academic stress among first-year cadets in government-affiliated schools does not necessarily mirror the findings reported in studies conducted within conventional educational settings. The distinctive educational context of maritime cadets, particularly the demands and disciplinary structure inherent in a government-affiliated school, may have contributed to the absence of a significant relationship between the two variables in the present study. Therefore, it is possible that other factors not examined in this study, including aspects of the educational environment, may play a more important role related to academic stress among first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, research on psychological issues within the context of Poltekpel Surabaya is still relatively limited, making it difficult to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the psychological characteristics of its cadets. Second, the study was conducted exclusively among first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya, a government-affiliated maritime vocational institution, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other government-affiliated schools or cadets at different academic levels. In addition, this study employed a correlational design focusing only on the relationship between self-efficacy and academic stress, therefore it does not examine other potential factors associated with academic stress or allow conclusions regarding causal relationships between the two variables. Finally, the study relied on self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias, including socially desirable responding, inaccurate self-reporting, or random responses.

Future studies are expected to examine other factors or variables related to academic stress among cadets in official academies, especially external factors related to educational environments. Future research may also involve cadets from different polytechnics levels or other maritime polytechnics to provide broader findings regarding academic stress among cadets.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and academic stress among first-year cadets at Poltekpel Surabaya across seven study programs. The respondents were predominantly male, with a considerable gender imbalance, and most participants were 19 years of age. The findings showed that the majority of respondents demonstrated moderate levels of both self-efficacy and academic stress, although the proportion of cadets with moderate self-efficacy was higher than those with moderate academic stress. Furthermore, the results indicated that there was no significant relationship between self-efficacy and academic stress, which contrasts with the findings reported in most previous studies examining the same variables.

These findings suggest that academic stress in government-affiliated maritime institutions cannot be explained solely by internal factors such as self-efficacy. Other factors, particularly those related to the

educational environment, should also be considered and investigated in future research. Maritime institutions such as Poltekpel Surabaya operate within a distinctive educational system characterized by highly structured regulations, standardized routines, and a uniform training environment. These unique characteristics may influence cadets' academic experiences and contribute to academic stress in ways that differ from those observed in general educational settings.

Author contribution statement

Rendry Revansha Prasetyo contributed to the study design, data collection, statistical analysis, and manuscript drafting. Hermien Laksmiwati contributed to the study design.

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