

Representation of Student Mental Health in Online Media: Linguistic Corpus Analysis Based on Framing and Critical Discourse

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Abstract: The issue of student mental health has received increasing attention in online media coverage as academic pressure and institutional demands in higher education have increased. This study aims to analyze how student mental health is represented in the online media *Kumparan* through a corpus linguistic approach combined with framing theory (Entman, 1993), Fairclough's (1995; Critical Discourse Analysis 2010), and the corpus linguistic methodological perspectives of Baker (2006) and McEnery & Hardie (2012). The research data consisted of 30 news articles published between 2021 and 2025 and analyzed using AntConc software through word frequency, collocation, and keyword in context (KWIC) techniques. The results showed that students were represented as a vulnerable group experiencing academic pressure, while campuses were ambiguously positioned as both a source of pressure and a provider of psychological support. The main findings explicitly confirm that the media predominantly frames the issue of student mental health in an individualistic manner rather than as a structural or institutional problem. This study reinforces corpus-based media framing studies in the context of the discourse on student mental health in Indonesia.

Keywords: Corpus Analysis, Mental Health, Students, Online Media, Representation

Abstrak: Isu kesehatan mental mahasiswa semakin mendapat perhatian dalam pemberitaan media daring seiring meningkatnya tekanan akademik dan tuntutan institusional di perguruan tinggi. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana kesehatan mental mahasiswa direpresentasikan dalam media daring *Kumparan* melalui pendekatan linguistik korpus yang dipadukan dengan teori framing (Entman, 1993), Analisis Wacana Kritis Fairclough (1995; 2010), serta perspektif metodologis linguistik korpus dari Baker (2006) dan McEnery & Hardie (2012). Data penelitian berupa 30 artikel berita yang dipublikasikan pada periode 2021-2025 dan dianalisis menggunakan perangkat lunak AntConc melalui teknik frekuensi kata, kolokasi, dan keyword in context (KWIC). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa direpresentasikan sebagai kelompok rentan yang mengalami tekanan akademik, sementara kampus diposisikan secara ambigu sebagai sumber tekanan sekaligus penyedia dukungan psikologis. Temuan utama secara eksplisit menegaskan bahwa media lebih dominan membingkai isu kesehatan mental mahasiswa secara individualistik dibandingkan sebagai persoalan struktural atau institusional. Penelitian ini memperkuat kajian framing media berbasis korpus dalam konteks diskursus kesehatan mental mahasiswa di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Korpus, Media Digital, Kesehatan Mental, Representasi, Mahasiswa

Introduction

The issue of student mental health has gained increasing attention in public discourse as academic pressure and institutional demands in higher education have intensified (Beiter et al.,



2015; Misra and McKean, 2000). Various studies show that workload, competition, and social expectations contribute to increased stress and anxiety among students. A global trend of increasing anxiety and depression disorders among students has also been reported over the past decade, particularly in the context of changes in learning systems and performative pressures in higher education (Ibrahim et al., 2016; Lipson et al., 2019). However, public understanding of this phenomenon is shaped not only by empirical data but also by how the media represents it. In the digital age, online media has become the main space for the production and circulation of discourse that influences social perceptions of student mental health. Recent literature shows that media representation patterns have a significant contribution in shaping public understanding while also reinforcing or reducing stigma against individuals with mental disorders (H. Zhang & Firdaus, 2024). This phenomenon is also evident in recent studies showing that digital media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of mental health issues through repetitive and selective reporting patterns (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2007; Lipson et al., 2019).

The media does not merely convey information, but also constructs meaning through its choice of language, perspective, and emphasis on certain aspects (Hall, 2013). From a framing perspective, Entman (1993) explains that the media frames reality by defining problems, identifying causes, providing moral judgments, and recommending solutions. On the issue of mental health, framing plays a role in determining whether psychological stress is understood as an individual problem or as a consequence of educational structures and institutional policies. Recent experimental studies show that negative framing in mental health reporting can reinforce stereotypes of danger and distrust of survivors of mental disorders (Kristofco & Fogler-Moore, 2023). Thus, analyzing representation is important to see how students and universities are positioned in the news. Research on digital media framing shows that narrative choices and news structure have a significant impact on shaping attribution of responsibility for a social issue (Entman, 2018; van Dijk, 2018).

A number of studies show that news coverage of mental health tends to place individuals at the center of the issue, while structural factors receive less attention (P. W. Corrigan et al., 2012; Jaworska & Krishnamurthy, 2018). In the Indonesian context, the issue of student mental health often appears in sensational narratives, especially when related to extreme cases such as suicide or severe academic pressure (Nabila and Hidayat, 2020; Rasyida, 2019). Corpus-assisted discourse analysis studies in Indonesian media show that individuals with mental disorders are still often represented through medical and criminal frameworks that have the potential to reinforce stigma (Al Fajri & Isti'annah, 2025). Students are often portrayed as vulnerable groups, while the role of educational institutions is not always presented critically. This pattern of representation has the potential to shape public understanding that simplifies the complexity of mental health issues. A number of recent studies also show that media framing of mental health issues tends to reproduce individualistic perspectives rather than structural approaches (Wahl, 2018; Zhang and Liu, 2021).

Although studies on student mental health in the media have developed, most research still uses a qualitative interpretive approach based on limited text reading. This approach tends



to rely on selective interpretation and does not yet fully utilize data-based linguistic analysis on a broader scale. In fact, corpus linguistics offers methodological tools that enable the systematic identification of patterns of representation through word frequency, collocation, and context of occurrence (KWIC) (Baker, 2006; McEnery and Hardie, 2012). This gap is the important basis for this study. The corpus-assisted discourse studies approach in media research has proven capable of expanding the validity of framing analysis by combining quantitative evidence and critical interpretation (Jaworska and Krishnamurthy 2018; Baker et al., 2019).

By integrating corpus linguistics and Fairclough's (1995; Critical Discourse Analysis 2010), this study not only identifies dominant lexical patterns but also links them to broader discursive practices and social contexts. This approach allows for a more objective reading of how framing is constructed through recurring language choices in news texts. In the context of student mental health, linguistic patterns can reveal the media's tendency to emphasize academic pressure as an individual problem or as a systemic consequence.

This study analyzes thirty Kumparan news articles from 2021-2025 to identify how student mental health is represented and how individualistic and institutional framing is constructed through lexical choices. The analysis was conducted using AntConc software to examine word frequency, collocations, and the context of keyword appearances in the corpus. The purpose of this study is to describe linguistic patterns in news reporting and explain the framing tendencies that are formed. The results of this study are expected to contribute to strengthening corpus-based media framing studies and enriching the literature on the representation of student mental health in Indonesian online media.

Method

This research is a media communication study that uses a corpus linguistic approach with a descriptive design to explore how student mental health is represented in online media news texts. This study does not aim to analyze the psychological condition of students clinically, but rather to examine the media discourse construction on this issue. The corpus approach was chosen because it allows for the systematic and data-based identification of recurring language patterns, so that discourse representation can be proven through the frequency, collocation, and context of word occurrence (Baker, 2006). A similar approach has been used to identify patterns of metaphor and representations of mental health in digital media, which shows that lexical choices influence reader's interpretations (Foley, 2024). In media discourse studies, this method is effective for revealing trends in the representation of social issues that are not always apparent in manual readings (Mautner, 2016). This approach is increasingly being developed in digital media research because it allows for the identification of ideological patterns through lexical distribution and meaning associations in large corpora (Zhang and Liu, 2021).

The research data consists of thirty news articles on the topic of student mental health published by the online media outlet Kumparan between 2020 and 2025 (Sigit, 2020; A. Azizah, 2021; Pertiwi, 2021; Permata, 2022; News, 2022; Dahlan, 2022; News, 2022; A, 2022; Permata, 2022; News, 2023; Dahlan, 2023; IPB, 2023; Fikri, 2023; Meliana, 2024; Ismu, 2024;



Gemasih, 2024; Kirana, 2024; Rizky, 2024; Payment, 2024; Aisha, 2024; Azzahra, 2024; Rizki, 2024; Kumparan, 2024; Sastia, 2025; Zaki, 2025; N. Z. Azizah, 2025; Rizal, 2025; Sya, 2025; Rengganis, 2025; & Farissetiawan, 2025). The articles were selected purposively based on the criteria of explicitly discussing student mental health, stress, or academic pressure, containing student experiences or institutional responses, and being written in a news or *feature* format. Thirty articles are considered sufficient in *small corpus studies* because they can identify stable lexical patterns and discourse tendencies in specific and homogeneous topics (Baker, 2006; McEnery and Hardie, 2012). Preliminary analysis shows that discourse saturation has been achieved because the collocation patterns are relatively consistent across texts.

All texts were compiled into a single corpus and cleaned of non-linguistic elements such as advertisements, metadata, and automatic links to maintain data purity. The analysis was conducted using the latest version of AntConc software (Anthony, 2022). The initial stage involved compiling a wordlist to identify words with significant frequency. Based on these results, six main word nodes were determined, namely *students*, *mental*, *stress*, *tasks*, *self*, and *campus*. The selection of word nodes was based on their frequency and relevance to the formation of issue representation (Hunston, 2002). These word nodes represent the subject of the news, the form of pressure, and the attribution of responsibility constructed by the media. A data-based approach in media analysis allows researchers to read communication patterns more systematically through available digital traces (Amalia, 2021). Social media and digital platforms generate big data that can be analyzed to see discourse trends and patterns of public interaction. Therefore, the use of corpus analysis in this study is relevant to identify patterns of student mental health representation in online media.

Collocation analysis was conducted with a range of five words on the left and right (L5-R5) to capture stable lexical associations (Sinclair, 1991). Collocation is understood as an important indicator in reading representation patterns because the repeated appearance of words in certain contexts reflects social meaning tendencies. The quantitative findings from corpus analysis were then interpreted qualitatively using Fairclough's (1995; Critical Discourse Analysis 2010). This integration allowed the study to move from a statistical description of language to an explanation of the relationships between meaning, power, and social practices in media reporting.

To strengthen validity, the analysis results are linked to Hall's (2013) concept of representation and Entman's (1993) framing theory through theoretical triangulation. This approach ensures that the linguistic patterns found are not only read as linguistic phenomena, but as part of discursive practices in the social context of higher education. Thus, this research method systematically integrates corpus-based quantitative analysis and critical qualitative reading to reveal how student mental health is framed in online media.

Results and Discussion

Word lists are an important component in corpus analysis because they are able to display a list of words based on their frequency of occurrence systematically (Anthony, 2019). The



results of the analysis show that there are 2,357 lexical ranks with a fairly wide vocabulary diversity. However, the dominance of thematic words at the top ranks indicates a concentration of meaning in the news coverage.

The word *mahasiswa* (student) had the highest frequency, followed by *mental*, *health*, *stress*, *self*, *tasks*, *lecturer*, *academic*, *campus*, and *pressure*. This pattern reveals three main axes of representation, namely students as the central subject, psychological conditions as the main issue, and the institutional context of lectures as a source of pressure. This consistent lexical repetition shows that the construction of meaning in news reports is built through the highlighting of certain aspects, thus forming a non-random framing tendency (Hall, 2013; R. M. Entman, 1993). In contemporary framing research, this pattern of repetition is understood as an indicator of meaning selection that contributes to the systematic formation of social perceptions (Entman, 2018; Jaworska and Krishnamurthy, 2018).

This word list is an important basis for further analysis, such as collocation and KWIC reading, because the frequency that appears in the early stages helps identify patterns of representation constructed by the media on the issue of student mental health.

Table 1 Wordlist of the Kumparan News Corpus

Rank	Freq	Word
3	492	<i>student</i>
4	306	<i>mental</i>
5	273	<i>health</i>
18	119	<i>stress</i>
20	107	<i>self</i>
22	100	<i>task</i>
24	93	<i>lecturer</i>
30	85	<i>academic</i>
37	74	<i>campus</i>
47	61	<i>pressure</i>
52	54	<i>lecture</i>

Source: Results of the author's corpus analysis using AntConc (2025).

Node Word *mahasiswa*: Subject of News Reports Positioned as “Recipients of Pressure”

The word student has the highest frequency and is the center of representation in the corpus. The KWIC pattern shows the emergence of constructions such as “*students experience stress*,” “*students face pressure*,” or “*students are unable to control their emotions*.” The dominance of experience verbs such as experience, feel, and face places students as subjects who receive the impact, not as active agents. The media does not merely convey information, but also frames reality through the selection of issues and the emphasis on certain meanings (Swarnawati, 2021). In this context, the highlighting of students as the main subject shapes the perception that this group is the most affected in the discourse on mental health in the digital



space. This representation constructs the image of students as a vulnerable group that reacts to academic and social pressure.

Collocations with words such as *mental health*, *stress*, *pressure*, and *workload* reinforce this association. Meanwhile, normative collocations such as *managing oneself*, *taking care of oneself*, and *seeking help* indicate that the solutions offered tend to be directed at personal capacity. This pattern indicates a tendency toward individualization, where pressures rooted in the institutional context are more often interpreted as issues of individual ability. These findings are in line with previous research showing that the media tends to reproduce individualistic perspectives when discussing mental health rather than structural approaches (H. Zhang & Firdaus, 2024). Within Entman's (1993) framing framework, students serve as the main entry point in defining the problem. The media clearly presents academic pressure as the source of the problem, but the recommended solutions lean more toward the personal than the structural. References to the role of the campus or educational policy are limited, resulting in a shift of responsibility from the institution to the individual. Thus, the news coverage not only describes the psychological condition of students but also limits the scope of solutions to self-management rather than systemic change.

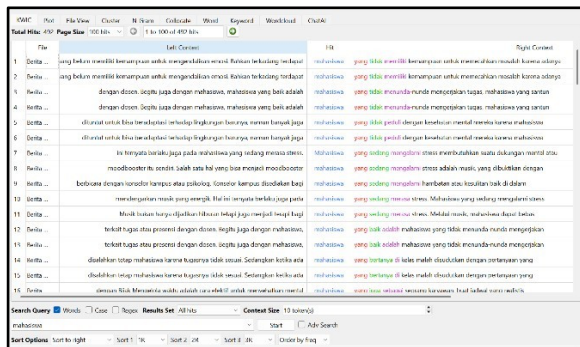


Image 1 KWIC results for the word “student”

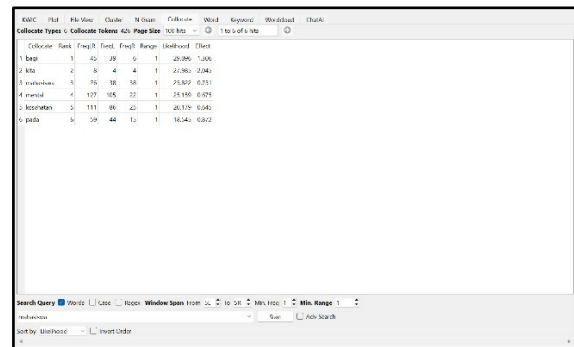


Image 2 results for word Collocation of “mahasiswa”

Source: AntConc Results of Kumparan News (2025).

Node Word *mental*: Discourse on Psychological Vulnerability under Academic Pressure

The word “*mental*” almost always appears in the context of mental health and is associated with problematic issues such as *stress*, *workload*, *anxiety*, and *depression*. The KWIC pattern shows narrative consistency, such as “*deteriorating student mental health*” or “*risk of mental health disorders*”, which confirms that college is represented as a vulnerable and stressful phase. Thus, mental health is positioned as an important issue in student life.

Collocation analysis shows that the word *mental* is most strongly associated with health, followed by *disorder*, *maintaining*, *improving*, and *condition*. This pattern indicates that the media frames mental health in a medical and preventive context, while promoting individual forms of recovery such as counseling, time management, and self-management. In contrast, institutional actors such as campuses or policies appear with lower intensity and tend to be peripheral.



This imbalance indicates that although mental health is recognized as a public problem, responsibility for its management is more often directed at students as individuals. This representation shows a tendency toward individualization, where academic pressure is acknowledged, but structural solutions are not explicitly developed. Thus, the *mental* discourse in the corpus not only emphasizes the urgency of psychological protection but also reinforces a more personal than institutional framing pattern. These findings are in line with international research reports showing an increase in media exposure to student’s psychological vulnerability in the last decade (Ibrahim et al., 2016; Os & Eisenberg, 2007).

Image 3 KWIC results for the word “mental”

Image 4 results of word Collocation of “mental”

Source: AntConc results for *Kumpulan News (2025)*.

Node Word stress and tasks: The prominence of psychological pressure narratives and representations of the most dominant causes of pressure

The word *stress* appears with high frequency and almost always in an academic context. The KWIC pattern shows the emergence of phrases such as “*academic stress*” and “*stress experienced by students*”, which are often accompanied by anxiety and depression. This confirms that the media positions stress as part of the spectrum of mental health issues among students. In the framework of representation, this kind of lexical repetition serves to reinforce certain meanings in a stable and consistent manner (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, stress is not described as a sporadic individual experience, but rather as a condition inherent in college life. Recent studies on academic pressure confirm that the normalization of stress in higher education discourse has the potential to obscure the structural dimensions that accompany it (Pascoe Michaela C et al., 2020).

The *task* node shows a similar pattern. Phrases such as “*piling up of assignments*” and “*endless assignments*” indicate a dominant representation of academic overload. Collocations such as *workload*, *exams*, *presentations*, and *papers* reinforce the framing that psychological pressure stems from the accumulation of academic demands. These findings are in line with the report by Nafishafara et al. (2025), which states that task load contributes to more than half of the stress triggers for students. However, in the news, tasks are rarely positioned as pedagogical instruments, but rather as symbols of structural pressure that shape students' mental experiences.



Through Entman's (1993) framing perspective, the media clearly defines the problem and diagnoses the cause, namely the large number of assignments and busy schedules as sources of stress. However, the stage of recommending solutions tends to move into the personal realm. Collocations such as *doing*, *completing*, and *managing time* indicate that students are positioned as agents who must adapt and manage this pressure. Criticism of curriculum design or institutional policy is relatively limited, so responsibility is directed more toward the individual.

Overall, *the nodes of stress* and *tasks* form a mutually reinforcing discourse construction between cause and effect. Tasks are represented as excessive academic burdens, while stress becomes a psychological impact that is normalized as part of campus life. This pattern shows that the reporting not only reflects empirical reality, but also shapes the public's understanding that academic pressure is a normal condition that students must manage, rather than a structural problem that needs to be evaluated systematically.

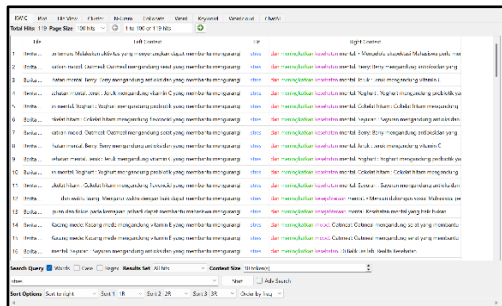


Image 5 KWIC results for the word "stress"

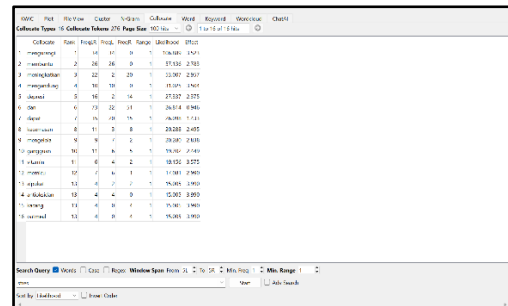


Image 6 results for the Collocation of the word "stress"

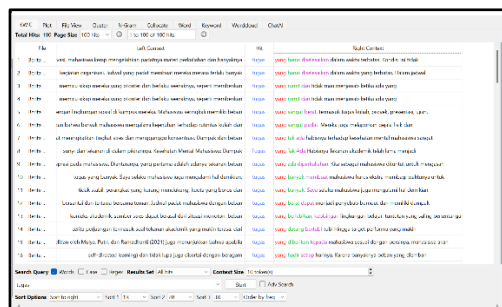


Image 7 KWIC results for the word "assignment"

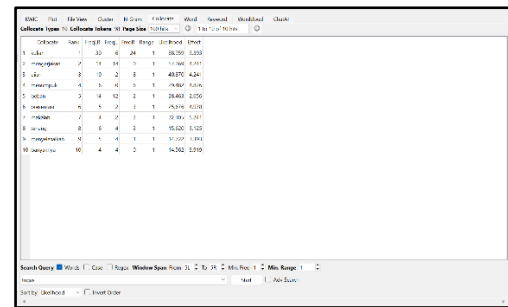


Image 8 results for the Collocation of the word "assignment"

Source: AntConc results from *Kumparan News* (2025).

Node Word self: Discourse on Individual Responsibility

The word *diri* appears with high intensity and forms two main axes of meaning, namely *diri* as an object of reinforcement and *diri* as a vulnerable entity. The KWIC pattern shows phrases such as recognizing *oneself*, *managing oneself*, *not forcing oneself*, to crisis-laden constructions such as *hurting oneself* and *student suicide*. The dominance of negative-toned phrases indicates that the media more often narrates the self in the context of pressure and



failure than resilience. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, the repetition of such patterns constructs a stable representation of the “*student self*” as a vulnerable subject who is constantly under pressure (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2006).

On the other hand, the emergence of phrases such as *strengthening oneself* or *recognizing oneself to manage stress* indicates the presence of a *self-care* narrative, albeit to a lesser extent. The media positions students as individuals who must proactively maintain their personal capacity through emotional regulation, expectation management, and increased self-confidence. This pattern is in line with the concept of responsabilization, which explains the shift of social responsibility to the individual level (Rose, 1999). In the context of digital news, the process of responsabilization often appears through narratives of self-management and self-care that place individuals at the center of the solution (Zappavigna, 2018; Wahl, 2018). In this context, mental health is understood as the result of personal ability to manage pressure, not as an impact of the structural configuration of higher education.

The dimension of vulnerability appears to be increasingly strong through the dominance of *suicide* collocations, which are the most significant pairings for the *self* node. Phrases such as rising *suicide* rates or *student suicide cases* show that *the self* is also represented as a fragile point when academic and social pressures are not addressed. Media representation studies show that mental health narratives often combine the discourse of *self-care* with a tendency toward *self-blame*, emphasizing individual resilience while highlighting personal failure in times of crisis (Jaworska & Krishnamurthy, 2018; O. F. Wahl, 2018). This pattern reveals the ambivalence of representation, in which the self is praised as a center of strength but also made the primary location of blame. This phenomenon is in line with health communication studies showing that media narratives often combine messages of empowerment with strong implications of personal responsibility (Berry et al., 2019).

Collocation analysis such as *forcing*, *comparing*, and *believing* shows that *the self* becomes an arena for social evaluation and internal pressure. Students are described as having to regulate themselves, take care of themselves, and not blame themselves when facing academic demands. Within an ideological framework, this discourse reflects a shift in responsibility from institutions to individuals, as described by Fairclough (2013). Thus, the *self* node shows that the media consistently reinforces an individualistic approach to understanding student mental health, where solutions are directed more toward self-management than systemic change.





Image 9 KWIC results for the word “self”

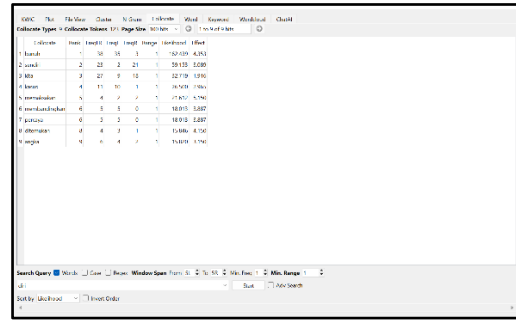


Image 10 results for the Collocation of the word “self”

Source: AntConc Results from *Kumparan News* (2025).

Campus Word Node: Institutional Discourse Academic Emphasis

The representation of the word *campus* in the corpus forms a discourse construction that positions it as a social space that directly influences student mental health. The KWIC pattern shows that campus is often described as a competitive environment that demands adaptation to academic burdens and social expectations. This narrative presents campus as a space that triggers stress and performative pressure. These findings are in line with research (Beiter et al., 2015; Misra and McKean, 2000) showing that the campus environment can be a significant source of stress due to academic demands and competitive norms. Thus, campus is represented not merely as a place of learning, but as a psychosocial space that reinforces student vulnerability.

On the other hand, the media also frames the campus as an institution that has a responsibility to provide support. KWIC shows narratives about counseling services, a supportive culture, and safe spaces for students. *The literature on student wellbeing* emphasizes that campus psychological facilities and inclusive policies play an important role in reducing the risk of stress and depression (Eisenberg et al., 2007; D. J. Drum et al., 2009). This duality shows that campuses are represented as dual actors: on the one hand, a source of pressure, and on the other, a provider of solutions. Contemporary student wellbeing studies also emphasize that higher education institutions play a structural role in shaping student’s psychosocial conditions, although this responsibility is not always emphasized in media reports (Eisenberg et al., 2007; Loder, 2019).

However, critically, this institutional role has not been strongly framed as a structural responsibility. Physical aspects such as the campus environment and design are occasionally linked to well-being (Pascoe Michaela C et al., 2020) but are not part of the mainstream narrative. Campuses are more often presented as a backdrop for stress rather than as a subject of systemic evaluation. Furthermore, research on student welfare policies emphasizes that institutional interventions have a significant influence on reducing the risk of stress and depression in higher education environments (Auerbach et al., 2018). Thus, although it is recognized as having an impact on student mental health, the representation of campuses in



the news is still fragmentary and has not yet fully developed into consistent institutional criticism.

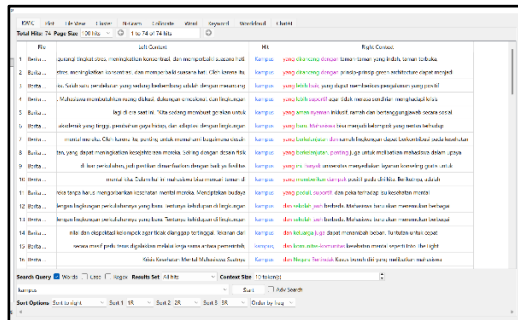


Image 11 KWIC results for the word “campus”

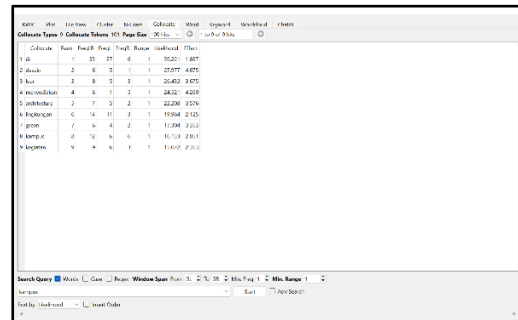


Image 12 results for the word Collocation of “campus”

Source: AntConc Results of *Kumparan* News (2025).

Conclusion

This study aims to identify how online media represents student mental health through linguistic patterns in news texts. The corpus analysis results show that this representation is constructed through a network of meanings centered on academic pressure, workload, social dynamics, and the institutional context of the campus. Words such as *stress*, *assignments*, *self*, and *campus* consistently construct students as a vulnerable group, as well as individuals who are required to manage pressure personally. Thus, mental health in the news is not only understood as an individual psychological issue, but as a reality constructed through the relationship between academic demands, social expectations, and self-management mechanisms.

These findings show that online media frames academic pressure as a dominant and normalized condition, while solutions are more often directed at individual capacity than institutional structural change. The limitations of this study lie in the scope of data, which is limited to one media outlet, and the analysis, which focuses on textual dimensions, thus not yet reaching the news production process. Future research could expand the cross-media corpus and integrate a discourse production approach to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Conceptually and methodologically, this study contributes to strengthening communication science studies, particularly in media representation studies and corpus-based discourse analysis, by showing how linguistic practices shape social constructions of student mental health.

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