

THE EFFECT OF PROBLEM-FOCUSED COPING ON THE STRESS LEVEL OF INTERNSHIP STUDENTS OF THE CLASS OF 2022 HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG

Abstract

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Purpose — This study aims to examine the effect of problem-focused coping on internship stress levels among Hospitality Management students of the 2022 cohort at Universitas Negeri Padang.

Methodology/Design/Approach — This research employed a quantitative causal approach with a population of 132 internship students from the July–December 2025 period, from which a sample of 100 respondents was determined using the Slovin formula. Data were collected through a validated and reliable Likert-scale (1–5) questionnaire and analyzed using simple linear regression and a t-test with the aid of SPSS 27.00.

Findings — The results show that problem-focused coping falls into the good category with a Respondent Achievement Level (TCR) of 3.53, while internship stress also falls into the good category with a TCR of 3.62. Simple linear regression analysis produced an F value of 84.727 with a significance of 0.000, and a t value of –9.205 with a regression coefficient of –0.801, indicating that problem-focused coping has a negative and significant effect on internship stress levels. The better students' problem-focused coping ability, the lower the stress they experience during internships.

Originality/value — This study empirically confirms the causal link between problem-focused coping and internship-related stress among hospitality students, and recommends stress-management debriefing and strengthened problem-focused coping strategies before students undertake internships in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: problem-focused coping, internship stress, hospitality students, simple linear regression

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is one of the service sectors in which service quality functions as the primary determinant of guest satisfaction and organizational competitiveness. The success of a hotel is not solely determined by the physical facilities it provides, but more fundamentally by the capability of its human resources to deliver service that is professional, efficient, courteous, and consistent with established operational standards. As competition among hospitality businesses intensifies, organizations increasingly rely on employees including trainees who possess strong technical skills, effective communication ability, adaptability to dynamic guest demands, and the psychological resilience to perform consistently under pressure (Achmad et al., 2025).

To prepare human resources that meet these industry requirements, the Hospitality Management Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang, as with most vocational hospitality programs, requires students to undertake a structured industrial internship as part of the academic curriculum. The internship is designed to bridge the gap between classroom-based theoretical knowledge and the practical realities of hotel operations, allowing students to apply what they have learned in an authentic work environment. Beyond technical skill acquisition, internships also serve as a socialization process through which students internalize workplace culture, service standards, and the professional norms and expectations that govern the hospitality industry (Asmaraida et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, the transition from an academic environment to an operational, guest-facing workplace is rarely seamless. Internship students are simultaneously required to deliver excellent service to guests with varying characters and expectations, resolve complaints professionally and often under time pressure, coordinate effectively within a team, comply strictly with

company operating procedures, and adjust to industrial work rhythms that frequently include long and irregular working hours. For students who are still in the process of developing professional competence and self-confidence, these cumulative demands can generate considerable psychological pressure. When such pressure exceeds a student's perceived capacity to manage it, it has the potential to develop into internship-related stress (Nangia & Garg, 2025; Widyachandra et al., 2023).

The consequences of unmanaged internship stress are well documented in the broader stress literature. Prolonged exposure to workplace pressure without adequate coping resources has been associated with a range of negative outcomes, including physical fatigue, sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating, decreased motivation, and in more severe cases a decline in cognitive and even academic performance, as demonstrated among students experiencing high stress during the COVID-19 pandemic (Charles & Halim, 2023). Beyond the individual level, stress has also been linked to broader health consequences over the life course when left unaddressed (Adelia & Aulia, 2025), underscoring the importance of identifying and managing stress-inducing conditions as early as possible including during the internship period, which for many students represents their first sustained exposure to real workplace pressure. In the specific context of hospitality internships, unmanaged stress does not only affect the wellbeing of the student but can also directly compromise the quality of service delivered to guests, creating a compounding risk for both the intern and the host organization.

Given these risks, understanding how students cope with workplace pressure becomes essential. One coping strategy considered particularly relevant to structured, task-based environments such as hotel operations is *problem-focused coping* a strategy oriented toward directly addressing the source of a problem through deliberate planning, active information-seeking, and concrete corrective action, rather than merely regulating the emotional reaction to the stressor. Prior research suggests that individuals with strong problem-focused coping skills are generally better equipped to manage academic and occupational stress, as this strategy enables them to take control of stressful situations rather than remaining passive toward them (Kresnawan, 2021). Similar findings have been reported among students undergoing internships more broadly, where problem-focused coping has been associated with more adaptive stress outcomes compared to avoidance-oriented coping strategies (Lubis & Komalasari, 2024). At the same time, existing studies also indicate that certain sub-dimensions of problem-focused coping particularly the willingness to actively seek social or informational support from supervisors and peers tend to be less optimally utilized by students, even when their planning and confrontational coping abilities are relatively strong (Pitaloka & Mamahit, 2021). This suggests that problem-focused coping is not a uniform construct, and that its effectiveness may depend on how well each of its dimensions is developed and applied within a given work context.

Preliminary field observations conducted through initial interviews with a number of 2022-cohort students who had completed their internship placements reinforce the relevance of this issue. Several recurring complaints emerged, including working hours that exceeded normal limits, pressure from senior staff and supervisors, difficulty managing guests who lodged complaints, and disrupted sleep patterns due to demanding shift schedules. These accounts indicate that stress during internships is not merely a theoretical concern but a tangible condition experienced by students in the field, warranting systematic empirical investigation rather than reliance on anecdotal reports alone.

Despite the apparent relevance of problem-focused coping to internship stress, much of the existing literature on coping and stress among Indonesian students remains concentrated on academic stress within classroom or online-learning contexts (Rashadri, 2022; Nurhafizah et al., 2024) rather than on the distinct pressures encountered during industrial internships in service-intensive sectors such as hospitality. Moreover, many available studies on internship-related stress tend to be descriptive in nature, mapping the prevalence or forms of stress experienced by trainees, without statistically testing the extent to which a specific coping strategy causally influences stress levels (Widyachandra et al., 2023). This leaves a gap in understanding the actual magnitude and statistical significance of problem-focused coping's contribution to reducing internship stress specifically within the hospitality education context a gap that is particularly relevant for Hospitality Management study programs seeking evidence-based justification for the stress-management content included in their pre-internship preparation curricula.

Addressing this gap, the present study seeks to move beyond descriptive mapping by employing a quantitative causal design to statistically examine the effect of problem-focused coping on internship stress levels among Hospitality Management students of the 2022 cohort at Universitas Negeri Padang. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) describe the condition of the problem-focused coping variable among internship students; (2) describe the condition of the internship stress variable among the same group; and (3) analyze and test the extent to which problem-focused coping exerts a significant effect on internship stress levels. It is expected that the findings of this study will provide empirical evidence to support the design of more targeted stress-management and coping-skill interventions prior to student deployment, thereby contributing both to the academic literature on workplace coping and to the practical development of internship preparation programs within hospitality education.

RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative causal (associative) research design, aimed at determining the extent to which an independent variable statistically predicts and influences a dependent variable. The causal-associative approach was selected because the research problem sought not merely to describe the condition of each variable, but to test whether a directional, cause-and-effect relationship exists between problem-focused coping and internship stress. In this framework, problem-focused coping (X) was positioned as the independent (predictor) variable, while internship stress (Y) was positioned as the dependent (criterion) variable. Field data collection was carried out at Universitas Negeri Padang, Jalan Prof. Dr. Hamka, Air Tawar,

Padang, West Sumatra, during the period of July–August 2026, targeting Hospitality Management students of the 2022 cohort who had completed their industrial internship program.

2.2 Operational Definition of Variables

Problem-focused coping (X) was operationally defined as a set of cognitive and behavioral efforts directed at actively resolving the source of a work-related problem, rather than merely regulating the emotional response to it. Referring to the coping framework commonly used in prior coping-stress literature (e.g., Kresnawan, 2021; Lubis & Komalasari, 2024), this construct was measured through three dimensions: (1) *Planful Problem Solving* the ability to analyze a situation and design a deliberate action plan; (2) *Confrontative Coping* assertive effort to directly change the problem situation; and (3) *Seeking Social Support* the effort to obtain information, advice, or emotional assistance from supervisors, colleagues, or peers.

Internship stress (Y) was operationally defined as a state of psychological and physical pressure experienced by students during their industrial placement as a result of job demands exceeding their perceived coping resources. This construct was measured through four dimensions: emotional (e.g., anxiety, irritability), cognitive (e.g., difficulty concentrating, negative thinking), behavioral (e.g., procrastination, withdrawal from tasks), and physical (e.g., fatigue, sleep disturbance) symptoms, consistent with stress indicators used in prior internship- and academic-stress studies (Charles & Halim, 2023; Zalma et al., 2025).

2.3 Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all 132 Hospitality Management students of the 2022 cohort who undertook an industrial internship during the July–December 2025 period. Given that the population size was known and finite, the sample size was determined using the Slovin formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N \cdot e^2)$$

where $N = 132$ and $e = 0.05$ (5% margin of error). The calculation yielded $n = 132 / (1 + 132(0.05)^2) = 132 / 1.33 \approx 99.25$, which was rounded up to 100 respondents. Sampling was carried out using a proportionate random sampling technique, in which respondents were distributed proportionally according to their internship placement division and location, before being randomly selected within each stratum. This technique was chosen to ensure that the sample adequately represented the variation in placement divisions (e.g., Finance, Front Office, Housekeeping) and placement locations across the population, rather than being concentrated in a single group.

2.4 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The instrument consisted of 21 statement items in total: 9 items measured the problem-focused coping variable (X), distributed across its three dimensions, and 12 items measured the internship stress variable (Y), distributed across its four dimensions. Each statement item was developed from an indicator blueprint (kisi-kisi instrumen) derived from the operational definitions described above, ensuring that every dimension of both constructs was represented by at least two to three items.

2.5 Instrument Testing

Prior to its use in the main data collection, the questionnaire was piloted on 30 respondents outside the main research sample but sharing similar characteristics (Hospitality Management interns). Two instrument-quality tests were performed:

Validity test. Item validity was examined using the corrected item–total correlation coefficient, computed with SPSS version 26. An item was declared valid if its corrected correlation coefficient exceeded the critical value of $r\text{-table} = 0.361$ (for $n = 30$, $\alpha = 0.05$) and its significance value was below 0.05. All nine items on variable X and all twelve items on variable Y satisfied this criterion, meaning that no items required revision or elimination and the full set of 21 items was retained for the main study.

Reliability test. Internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. An instrument dimension was considered reliable if its Cronbach's Alpha value exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.60. The reliability test produced $\alpha = 0.818$ for the problem-focused coping instrument and $\alpha = 0.943$ for the internship stress instrument, both categorized as highly reliable. These results confirmed that the instrument produced consistent measurements across items and was suitable for use in the primary data collection.

2.6 Data Collection Technique

Primary data were obtained directly from respondents through the distribution of the validated questionnaire, administered both in printed form and through an online form (Google Form) to accommodate students who had already returned from their internship placements in various cities. Secondary data including the population list of the 2022 cohort, internship placement records, and division/location distribution were obtained from the internship coordination unit of the Hospitality Management Study Program, Universitas Negeri Padang.

2.7 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was carried out through the following sequential stages, using SPSS version 27.00:

a. Descriptive analysis. The distribution of responses for each variable was summarized using a continuum-line interpretation and the Respondent Achievement Level (Tingkat Capaian Responden/TCR), calculated as:

$$\text{TCR} = (\text{mean score} / \text{maximum possible score}) \times 100\%$$

The resulting percentage was then classified into five categories ranging from "very poor" to "very good," allowing each variable and its dimensions to be interpreted descriptively before inferential testing was performed.

b. Classical assumption testing. Three prerequisite tests were conducted to ensure that the regression model met the assumptions required for valid interpretation:

- *Normality test*, using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov one-sample test, to examine whether the regression residuals were normally distributed (data considered normal if $p > 0.05$).
- *Heteroscedasticity test*, using the Glejser method, to examine whether the variance of residuals was constant across observations (homoscedasticity assumed if $p > 0.05$).
- *Linearity test*, using the deviation-from-linearity value in the ANOVA table, to examine whether the relationship between X and Y followed a linear pattern (linear relationship assumed if $p > 0.05$).

c. Simple linear regression analysis. The causal relationship between problem-focused coping (X) and internship stress (Y) was estimated using the simple linear regression equation:

$$\hat{Y} = a + bX$$

where a is the constant and b is the regression coefficient indicating the magnitude and direction of X's effect on Y.

d. Hypothesis testing. The significance of the regression model was tested at two levels: the F-test (simultaneous/overall model significance) and the t-test (significance of the individual regression coefficient), both evaluated at a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). The decision rule applied was: H_0 rejected and H_1 accepted if the significance value (p) < 0.05 .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Respondent Characteristics

A total of 100 students participated in this study as respondents, consisting of 58% women and 42% men, indicating that the internship program in this cohort was undertaken by a slightly higher proportion of female students. In terms of internship placement division, Finance accounted for the largest share at 31%, followed by Front Office (18%), Sales and Marketing (13%), Housekeeping and F&B Service (12% each), Human Resources (10%), F&B Product (3%), and EHS Administration (1%). This distribution suggests that administrative and guest-facing divisions absorbed the majority of interns, which is consistent with the general structure of hotel operations where Finance and Front Office departments typically require larger intern intakes for routine transactional and service tasks.

Geographically, internship placements were dominated by the Riau Islands (52%), followed by West Sumatra (25%), Jakarta (10%), Bandung (6%), Pekanbaru (4%), and Yogyakarta (3%). The dominance of the Riau Islands as a placement destination likely reflects the concentration of international hotel chains and resort properties in that region, as well as existing institutional partnerships between the university and hospitality industry players in that area.

Table 1. **Respondent Distribution by Gender**

Gender	Total	Percentage
Male	42	42%
Female	58	58%

Sumber: Primary data processed (2026)

Table 2. **Respondent Distribution by Internship Placement Division**

Division	Total	Percentage
Finance	31	31%
Front Office	18	18%
Sales and Marketing	13	13%
Housekeeping	12	12%
F&B Service	12	12%
Human Resources	10	10%
F&B Product	3	3%
EHS Administration	1	1%

Sumber: Primary data processed (2026)

Table 3. **Respondent Distribution by Internship Placement Location**

Location	Percentage
Riau Islands	52%
West Sumatra	25%
Jakarta	10%
Bandung	6%
Pekanbaru	4%
Yogyakarta	3%

Sumber: Primary data processed (2026)

3.2 Description of Problem-Focused Coping Variable

The problem-focused coping variable obtained a mean score of 31.75 with a standard deviation of 5.918, and an overall TCR of 3.53, which falls within the "good" category on the continuum-line interpretation. Examined at the dimension level, both *Planful Problem Solving* and *Confrontative Coping* were similarly categorized as good, indicating that most interns were able to identify the source of a workplace problem, design a course of action, and confront the issue directly rather than avoiding it. In contrast, *Seeking Social Support* fell into a moderately favorable ("cukup baik") category lower than the other two dimensions.

This pattern is theoretically meaningful: it suggests that while students are relatively well-equipped in independently planning and confronting job-related problems, they remain comparatively reluctant to actively seek guidance, feedback, or emotional support from supervisors and co-workers. This finding is in line with Pitaloka and Mamahit (2021), who similarly found that the help-seeking dimension of problem-focused coping tends to score lower among students than the planning and confrontation dimensions, often attributed to hierarchical workplace dynamics or reluctance to appear incompetent in front of superiors. In the hospitality context specifically, this reluctance may be reinforced by a steep power distance between interns and senior staff, making students hesitant to ask questions or request help even when it would resolve a problem more efficiently.

3.3 Description of Internship Stress Variable

The internship stress variable produced a mean score of 43.40 with a standard deviation of 6.959, and a TCR of 3.62, likewise categorized as "good" meaning stress levels were relatively well-managed, though not absent. All four stress dimensions (emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical) were classified in the same favorable category, indicating a fairly uniform stress profile across psychological and physiological domains rather than one dimension being disproportionately more severe than the others.

Despite this generally favorable classification, the relatively high raw TCR value still signals the continued presence of tangible stress symptoms among interns, manifesting as feelings of being burdened by job demands, reduced concentration, procrastination of assigned tasks, disrupted sleep patterns, and rapid physical fatigue. This finding reinforces earlier observations by Nangia and Garg (2025) and Widyachandra et al. (2023), who reported that internship stress among hospitality and service-sector students commonly stems from long working hours, high guest-service demands, and adaptation pressure to a new, often rigid, organizational culture. The consistency of symptoms across emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical dimensions in the present study suggests that internship stress in this cohort is not confined to a single domain but reflects a holistic strain response affecting how students think, feel, behave, and physically cope during placement.

3.4 Classical Assumption Testing

Before the regression model was estimated, three classical assumption tests were conducted to verify that the data satisfied the statistical prerequisites for simple linear regression.

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test produced a significance value of $p = 0.200$, well above the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the regression residuals were normally distributed and that parametric inferential testing (F-test and t-test) could be validly applied.

The Glejser heteroscedasticity test yielded $p = 0.826$ for the problem-focused coping predictor, also exceeding 0.05, indicating the absence of heteroscedasticity that is, the variance of residuals remained constant across the range of predicted values, satisfying the homoscedasticity assumption.

The linearity test, examined through the deviation-from-linearity value, produced $p = 0.489$, providing no statistical evidence against a linear specification of the relationship between X and Y. Taken together, all three diagnostic tests confirmed that the data satisfied the classical assumptions required for a valid and interpretable simple linear regression model.

3.5 Simple Linear Regression and Hypothesis Testing

The simple linear regression analysis produced the following estimated equation:

$$\hat{Y} = a - 0.801X$$

The regression coefficient of $b = -0.801$ indicates that for every one-unit increase in problem-focused coping score, the internship stress score is predicted to decrease by 0.801 units, holding other factors constant. The negative sign of the coefficient confirms an inverse relationship between the two variables — the stronger a student's problem-focused coping ability, the lower their internship stress level tends to be.

The overall model significance was tested using the F-test, which produced $F = 84.727$ with a significance value of $p = 0.000$ (< 0.05), indicating that the regression model as a whole was statistically significant in explaining the variation in internship stress. The significance of the regression coefficient itself was tested using the t-test, which produced $t = -9.205$ with $p = 0.000$ (< 0.05). Based on both tests, H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted, confirming that problem-focused coping has a statistically significant negative effect on internship stress among Hospitality Management interns of the 2022 cohort at Universitas Negeri Padang.

To assess the practical magnitude of this effect, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was derived from the reported F and residual degrees of freedom ($df_2 = n - 2 = 98$) using the relationship $R^2 = F / (F + df_2)$:

$$R^2 = 84.727 / (84.727 + 98) \approx \mathbf{0.464 \text{ (46.4\%)}}$$

This indicates that approximately 46.4% of the variance in internship stress can be explained by problem-focused coping, while the remaining 53.6% is attributable to other factors not examined in this model, such as workload, supervisor support,

organizational culture, individual psychological traits, and adaptability consistent with the multi-causal view of workplace stress discussed by Rashadri (2022) and Asmaraida et al. (2025).

3.6 Discussion

The findings of this study empirically support the theoretical proposition that active, problem-directed coping strategies serve a protective function against workplace-related psychological strain. Students who are capable of diagnosing the source of a problem, formulating realistic action plans, and directly confronting operational or interpersonal difficulties appear better equipped to manage the demands of an internship without accumulating excessive stress. Conversely, students with weaker problem-focused coping capacity particularly in the *Seeking Social Support* dimension, which scored comparatively lower in this study may be more vulnerable to unresolved problems accumulating into chronic strain, echoing the pattern reported by Kresnawan (2021) in the context of academic stress among university students.

These results also carry practical implications for internship preparation programs. Given that problem-focused coping explains a substantial, though partial, proportion of variance in internship stress (46.4%), interventions aimed solely at improving students' coping skills without addressing structural workplace stressors such as excessive working hours, insufficient supervisor support, or unsupportive organizational culture are unlikely to fully resolve the stress experienced during placements. This is consistent with the position of Nurhafizah et al. (2024) and Sulistiyowati (2023), who emphasize that individual-level coping interventions are most effective when paired with organizational-level support systems.

Accordingly, the Hospitality Management Study Program may consider two complementary strategies prior to student deployment: (1) structured pre-internship debriefing sessions focused on stress-management techniques and problem-solving skill-building, with particular emphasis on strengthening students' willingness and ability to seek help from supervisors and peers; and (2) closer coordination with industry partners to ensure a more supportive onboarding and mentoring environment for interns, thereby addressing the structural side of the stress equation that coping skills alone cannot resolve.

CONCLUSION

Evidence obtained from the 2022 Hospitality Management internship cohort at Universitas Negeri Padang supports three principal conclusions. First, coping directed at resolving problems obtained TCR = 3.53 and was positioned within the favorable range. This score suggests that students are generally capable of preparing resolution steps, confronting workplace difficulties, and drawing on interpersonal assistance during their placements. Second, work-placement strain reached TCR = 3.62 under the same scoring classification, although emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical symptoms remained present throughout the internship period. Third, the single-predictor equation and slope assessment produced $p = 0.000$, which was below 0.05, and $b = -0.801$. These figures support H1 and demonstrate that a stronger capacity for direct problem management corresponds with a statistically reliable reduction in internship-related strain.

Accordingly, improvements in students' capacity to address workplace difficulties at their source are accompanied by reduced psychological pressure during industrial placement. This outcome underscores the value of equipping hospitality trainees with practical problem-management abilities before they enter demanding service environments. The Hospitality Management Study Program should therefore deliver structured preparation covering stress regulation, coping procedures, and workplace communication before placement begins. Subsequent investigations could extend the explanatory model by incorporating job demands, assistance from supervisors or peers, self-efficacy, and resilience, thereby developing a broader account of the conditions that shape work-placement strain among students.

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