

Lecturer burnout in Indonesian higher education : A portrait amid escalating tri dharma demands

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Abstract

Tri Dharma is a key indicator of lecturers' workload, requiring them to teach, conduct research, publish scientific papers, obtain research grants, and engage in community service. Beyond these responsibilities, lecturers also face administrative and institutional demands that may increase the risk of burnout. This study aimed to describe the level of burnout among lecturers in Indonesia. A descriptive quantitative approach was employed. The population consists of all 217 civil servant lecturers (PNS DPK) under LLDIKTI Region 6 (Central Java). The research sample is civil servant lecturers appointed in 2005, having more than 10 years of experience and working at private universities. Non Probability Cluster sampling was used. The instrument was tested on 88 respondents, and burnout was measured using the Indonesian-adapted Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) by Eva Demerouti. The 16-item scale demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = 0.858$). Descriptive analysis showed that 54.5% of respondents experienced moderate burnout and 45.5% low burnout. These findings indicate that most lecturers experience moderate burnout, representing an early stage of emotional exhaustion and work disengagement caused by increasing job demands and limited personal resources. Although productivity has not yet been significantly affected, preventive interventions are needed to reduce burnout risk and sustain lecturers' well-being and work performance.

Keywords: higher education demands; lecturer burnout; tri dharma

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a strategic role in human resource development through the implementation of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi (Three Pillars of Higher Education), which encompasses education, research, and community service. In carrying out these functions, lecturers are not only responsible for academic activities but are also burdened with various administrative duties such as preparing performance reports, maintaining databases, accreditation, reporting lecturer workloads, and other academic administration. The



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increasing complexity of this work makes the teaching profession one of the occupational groups vulnerable to burnout (Maslach et al., 2001; Watts & Robertson, 2011).

Burnout is a psychological syndrome that arises from chronic, unmanaged work stress and is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schaufeli et al., 2009). The World Health Organization (WHO) has even classified burnout as an occupational phenomenon related to chronic, poorly managed workplace stress (World Health Organization, 2019). This situation indicates that burnout has become a global issue that requires serious attention in various professions, including academics.

Increasing work demands placed on university lecturers such as scholarly publishing, research grants, teaching, community service, and institutional performance indicators have consistently proven to be predictors of stress and burnout. A recent meta-analysis identified a moderate-to-high effect size in the relationship between occupational stress and burnout among lecturers, with cultural background and measurement tools acting as moderators (Yingying et al., 2025). Systematic reviews confirm that excessive academic workloads and a lack of resources diminish the well-being of academic staff (Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021; Naidoo-Chetty & Plessis, 2021).

The specific demand most frequently triggering burnout is the conflict between teaching and research responsibilities. A study of 2,758 lecturers demonstrated that teaching demands, teaching-research conflict, and new challenges reduce job satisfaction by fostering emotional exhaustion (Han et al., 2019). Teaching-research conflict has also been shown to correlate positively with burnout, although supervisor support and psychological capital can moderate this effect (Lei et al., 2020). A comprehensive review of lecturer burnout highlights workload, task characteristics, and value conflicts as primary antecedents, with significant consequences for psychological health and performance (Sabagh et al., 2018).

Studies conducted in Australia and New Zealand have identified five themes regarding the causes of stress: balancing academic workloads, the casualization of the workforce, the phenomenon of managerialism, and the transition into academia (Lee et al., 2021). In Indonesia, work-family conflict has been proven to be a significant predictor of various burnout subtypes among academics (Makmun et al., 2025). Time pressure stemming from research and teaching demands also diminishes lecturers' subjective well-being (Chen et al., 2022), while work intensification during the pandemic exacerbated job demands and compromised well-being (Wood, 2022).

A recent meta-analysis of 20 studies confirms a moderate-to-high association between work stress and burnout among university lecturers, with cultural background and measurement tools acting as moderators (Yingying et al., 2025). A review of 36 empirical studies concludes that detrimental job demands (workload, task characteristics, value conflicts) and a lack of resources (social support, rewards, control) consistently increase lecturer burnout (Sabagh et al., 2018). A study of 2,758 lecturers indicates that teaching demands, teaching-

research conflicts, and new challenges reduce job satisfaction through emotional exhaustion (Han et al., 2019), while academic stress has been shown to increase burnout among 1,239 lecturers across 15 universities (Cao et al., 2024). The stress perceived by lecturers is directly related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Teles et al., 2020).

Research evaluation systems heavily reliant on metrics are associated with higher work demands and fewer resources, as well as increased burnout (Kulikowski et al., 2022). Pressure to publish ("publish or perish") has reportedly intensified in the post-pandemic period, resulting in stress and burnout among researchers (Suart et al., 2022). Workloads stemming from university bureaucratic practices are a predisposing factor for professors' negative perceptions of workplace well-being (Pace et al., 2019), and work intensification such as increased working hours and weekend work is negatively associated with the well-being of university staff (Wood, 2022).

A systematic review confirms that excessive work demands coupled with inadequate resources disrupt the work-family balance and well-being of academic staff (Naidoo-Chetty & Plessis, 2021). Qualitative studies have identified specific demands and resources associated with academic staff that institutions can manage to prevent strain (Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021). Quantitative and emotional demands have been shown to be risk factors for burnout, whereas personal resources and colleague support serve as protective factors (Stelmokienė et al., 2019). Psychological capital mediates the relationship between job resources and emotional exhaustion, underscoring the importance of balancing demands and resources (Trillo et al., 2025).

Emotional exhaustion is the only dimension of burnout significantly associated with productivity loss (absenteeism and presenteeism) among academic staff (Amer et al., 2022). Higher levels of burnout consistently impact lecturers' performance, commitment (turnover intention), and psychological and physical health (Sabagh et al., 2018). Emotional exhaustion also serves as a gateway to deeper depersonalization (Mohammed et al., 2020), and burnout among university lecturers is associated with a decline in quality of life as measured by well-being (Pakdee et al., 2025).

Burnout among clinical educator faculty affects not only the quality of care but also the quality of training provided to students (Nassar et al., 2019). A systematic review of interventions also notes that institutional focus on corporatization and student satisfaction often overlooks the impact on the well-being of academic staff (Ohadomere & Ogamba, 2020).

In Indonesia, the implementation of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi (Three Pillars of Higher Education) often places lecturers in multiple roles simultaneously. In addition to academic activities, lecturers are also involved in various structural tasks, committee roles, administrative management, and institutional reporting. The accumulation of these demands has the potential to increase the risk of burnout among lecturers.

The increasing use of digital systems in higher education management also presents new challenges. Various reporting applications, academic information systems, performance

reporting, and online-based documentation add to the complexity of lecturers' work. Although digitalization aims to increase efficiency, in practice, these systems often increase the administrative burden that lecturers must handle.

Several studies have shown that high workload is a major predictor of burnout in academic staff (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). An imbalance between job demands and individual capacity can lead to prolonged physical and emotional exhaustion.

Recent research confirms that the "publish-or-perish" culture driven by limited funding and academic positions heightens publication pressure and is linked to burnout and academic misconduct, with pressures intensifying during the pandemic (Suart et al., 2022). Performance-based research evaluation policies (neoliberal performativity) have been shown to create a "publish-or-no-degree" pressure that compels early-career researchers to opt for low-quality journals (Mertkan et al., 2022). Among 1,113 academics, low performance scores (KPIs) were strongly associated with burnout, and vice versa (Lei et al., 2025). A review of 36 studies concluded that academic job demands such as workload, value conflicts, and publication requirements—consistently trigger burnout (Sabagh et al., 2018), while the conflict between teaching and research demands exacerbates emotional exhaustion (Li et al., 2019).

Burnout has been shown to reduce lecturers' performance and commitment while also impacting student development (Sabagh et al., 2018). Emotional exhaustion is significantly associated with a loss of work productivity among academic staff (Amer et al., 2022). A study of female lecturers in Pakistan found a significant correlation between burnout and a decline in professional performance (Kirmani et al., 2024), and burnout among academics has been linked to reduced work engagement and organizational commitment (Barkhuizen et al., 2013). It should be noted that the direct impact on "academic innovation" has not been extensively researched; what is well-documented in recent literature is the decline in productivity, performance, teaching quality, and organizational engagement.

Although research on burnout has grown considerably, most previous studies have positioned burnout as a dependent variable influenced by various factors such as workload, organizational support, job satisfaction, or work-life balance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Research specifically examining burnout as the sole primary variable in lecturers remains relatively limited.

Furthermore, most research has been conducted on health professionals, school teachers, and public service personnel. Studies that specifically focus on lecturer burnout in the context of the implementation of the Tri Dharma (Three Pillars of Excellence) and administrative burdens in Indonesian higher education institutions still require empirical support.

This research gap highlights the need for research that focuses on the level of lecturer burnout without linking it to other variables. This approach allows for an empirical understanding of lecturer burnout as a stand-alone phenomenon.

This research provides a theoretical contribution to the development of burnout studies in the academic profession, particularly in the context of Indonesian higher education. The

results can broaden understanding of lecturer burnout, which is influenced by the complexity of Tri Dharma duties and the demands of modern administration.

Practically, the research findings are expected to provide a basis for higher education institutions in designing workload management policies, administrative simplification, and programs to improve lecturer welfare. Information on burnout levels can also be used as an evaluation tool for institutions in maintaining the psychological health of academic staff.

Furthermore, this research can provide a basis for developing intervention programs, psychological support, and burnout prevention strategies in higher education institutions. These efforts are crucial for maintaining lecturer productivity while sustainably improving the quality of higher education. Based on this description, this study aims to examine burnout among lecturers in the context of the increasing demands of implementing the Tri Dharma and the administrative burden in higher education. This research is expected to provide theoretical benefits by enriching the literature on burnout in the academic profession, as well as practical benefits as a basis for developing institutional policies to support lecturer well-being and performance.

METHODS

This research employed a quantitative approach with descriptive analysis to describe the level of lecturer burnout in the context of the demands of the Tri Dharma (Three Pillars of Implementation) and the increasing administrative burden. The population consists of all 217 civil servant lecturers (PNS DPK) under LLDIKTI Region 6 (Central Java). The research sample is civil servant lecturers appointed in 2005, having more than 10 years of experience and working at private universities. Non Probability Cluster sampling was used, selecting respondents based on groups.

Data collection used the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) instrument, developed by Eva Demereuti and adapted into Indonesian. It measures two dimensions of burnout : exhaustion and disengagement. The instrument is structured on a Likert scale with several alternative answers indicating the frequency of respondents' experiences with burnout symptoms. The scaling technique used is a Likert scale with scores ranging from 1 to 4, comprising "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure measurement quality before administering the scale to respondents. Due to the limited number of respondents in the sample, a tryout method was used. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics including the average value, percentage, standard deviation, and categorization of burnout levels into low, medium, and high categories. Data processing was carried out using statistical software, namely SPSS version 24 so that the results of the analysis can provide an empirical picture of the burnout conditions experienced by lecturers.

RESULT

Instrument Reliability Test

The level of internal consistency for the burnout instrument used in this study was determined by conducting a reliability test. The analysis using Cronbach's Alpha yielded a reliability value of 0.858 for 16 items from 88 respondents. A Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.70 indicates good reliability, while a value above 0.80 indicates high reliability. Therefore, the burnout instrument in this study has excellent internal consistency and is suitable for use as a data collection tool.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.858	16

Figure 1. Reliability Test Results

Item Differential Power Test

The item discrimination power test was conducted by examining the Corrected Item-Total Correlation (CITC) value. An item is considered to have good discrimination power if its correlation coefficient is ≥ 0.30 . The analysis results showed that most items had CITC values in the good category, ranging from 0.320 to 0.706.

The item with the highest discrimination power was item Z15 ($r = 0.706$), while the lowest discrimination power was item Z1 ($r = 0.320$), which still met the acceptance criteria. However, one item, Z13, had a Corrected Item-Total Correlation value of -0.211, indicating that the item was not aligned with the construct being measured and had poor discrimination power.

Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha value for Item Deletion for item Z13 increased to 0.882, higher than the total scale reliability of 0.858. This indicates that the removal of item Z13 has the potential to improve instrument reliability. Therefore, item Z13 is recommended for elimination or revision in future research.

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Z1	31.5568	34.020	.320	.856
Z2	30.7955	29.659	.589	.844
Z3	31.2955	31.038	.654	.841
Z4	30.6364	30.924	.499	.849
Z5	31.3068	33.525	.363	.855
Z6	30.9205	30.005	.598	.843
Z7	31.6818	33.001	.515	.849
Z8	31.0227	30.482	.620	.842
Z9	31.5455	31.216	.671	.841
Z10	31.3636	32.349	.482	.850
Z11	30.2500	30.833	.585	.844
Z12	30.1932	32.296	.499	.849
Z13	30.3750	37.524	-.211	.882
Z14	31.3295	33.994	.345	.855
Z15	31.4091	31.325	.706	.840
Z16	31.5341	31.976	.655	.843

Figure 2. Item Distinction Power Test

Descriptive Burnout Analysis

The descriptive analysis results show that respondents' burnout scores ranged from a minimum score of 15 to a maximum score of 45. The average lecturer burnout score was 30.38 with a standard deviation of 6.13.

Table 1. Descriptive Burnout Analysis					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation
ZTOTAL	88	15.00	45.00	30.3750	6.12572
Valid N	88				

The average score of 30.38 indicates that lecturers' burnout levels are generally moderate. The standard deviation of 6.13 indicates variation in burnout scores among respondents, although the data spread is relatively small.

Burnout Level Categorization

The burnout score categorization results indicate that no respondents were in the high category. The majority of respondents were in the moderate category, with 48 lecturers (54.5%), while 40 lecturers (45.5%) were in the low category.

OLBI Scale Score Categorization

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rendah	40	45.5	45.5	45.5
	Sedang	48	54.5	54.5	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Figure 3. Categorization of Lecturer Burnout Levels

These results indicate that the majority of lecturers in this study experienced moderate levels of burnout. This indicates that lecturers have experienced symptoms of work exhaustion due to the demands of implementing the Tri Dharma (Three Pillars of Leadership) and administrative burdens, although they have not yet reached the high level of burnout. The absence of respondents in the high category indicates that lecturers are generally still able to manage their work demands. However, moderate levels of burnout still require attention because they have the potential to develop into more serious burnout if work demands continue to increase.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the burnout instrument used has good reliability, most items have adequate discrimination, and lecturer burnout levels tend to be in the moderate category. These findings indicate the need for institutional attention to lecturer psychological well-being through workload management, administrative simplification, and strengthening organizational support within the higher education environment.

DISCUSSION

The research results show that the burnout level among lecturers is in the moderate category, with an empirical mean of 30.38 and a standard deviation of 6.13. This finding indicates that lecturers have experienced symptoms of burnout, although not yet at a high level. Fifty-four percent of respondents fell into the moderate category, while 45.5 percent fell into the low category, and no respondents fell into the high category. These results address the research question regarding the profile of burnout among lecturers and indicate that the work pressures faced by lecturers have led to a certain level of work exhaustion.

These findings indicate that the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, which encompasses education, research, and community service, coupled with increasing administrative demands, contributes to the emergence of burnout among lecturers. Lecturers are not only required to conduct teaching but also to produce scientific publications, manage

research, carry out community service, and fulfill various academic administrative obligations. These conditions create high job demands that can lead to prolonged work stress.

According to the burnout theory proposed by Maslach et al. (2001), burnout is a response to chronic work stress characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased self-actualization. The moderate burnout levels in this study indicate that some lecturers have begun to experience psychological exhaustion due to accumulated work demands. Although not yet severe, this condition still requires attention because burnout is progressive and can develop if work pressure persists.

The results of this study align with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model developed by Demerouti et al. (2001) and Bakker and Demerouti (2007). This model explains that burnout occurs when job demands exceed an individual's job resources. In the context of this study, the demands of the Tri Dharma (Three Pillars of Employment) and academic administration can be categorized as high job demands, increasing the risk of burnout in lecturers.

The findings of the systematic review by Watts & Robertson (2011) are reinforced by a recent meta-analysis confirming a moderate-to-high association between work stress and burnout among university lecturers (Yingying et al., 2025), as well as by a comprehensive review concluding that academic work demands (such as workload, value conflicts, and research requirements) and resource deficits consistently trigger burnout (Sabagh et al., 2018). Another systematic review regarding the demands placed on and resources available to academic staff also highlights mounting work pressures stemming from globalization, massification, and institutional changes (Naidoo-Chetty & Plessis, 2021). Studies on Indonesian lecturers report an "overworked, underchallenged" pattern characterized by constant task switching and role conflict (Makmun et al., 2025), while a study of 2,758 Chinese lecturers found that teaching demands and teaching-research conflicts reduced job satisfaction by inducing emotional exhaustion (Han et al., 2019).

The findings of Winefield et al. (2008) align with recent studies showing that perceived stress among university lecturers is directly correlated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Teles et al., 2020); that workloads linked to university bureaucracy increase psychological distress and work-life conflict (Pace et al., 2019); and that a scoping review in Australia and New Zealand identified workload, workforce-related factors, and managerialism as primary causes of occupational stress (Lee et al., 2021). Evidence regarding burnout levels is also consistent, with 42.8% of Lithuanian lecturers reporting frequent or chronic burnout (Stelmokienė et al., 2019), and studies involving 410 Thai and 1,239 Chinese lecturers finding that academic stress predicts burnout (Cao et al., 2024; Pakdee et al., 2025).

Kinman's (2014) claims are supported by empirical evidence regarding the intensification of academic work and the emergence of a culture of performativity, which have been associated with increased stress and pressure on academics (Kenny, 2017). Empirical research involving 1,191 researchers has further demonstrated that metric-based research evaluation systems are associated with higher job demands and burnout and lower work engagement (Kulikowski et al.,

2023). Similarly, performance-oriented research evaluation policies may create substantial publication pressure among early career researchers, sometimes encouraging them to consider questionable or low-quality publication outlets (Mertkan et al., 2022). The “publish-or-perish” culture has also been associated with heightened publication pressure and researcher burnout (Suart et al., 2022). Beyond research and publication demands, university faculty members experience substantial teaching and administrative stress, with research, teaching, and administrative stress all contributing to emotional burnout (Xu & Wang, 2023). Time-related job demands and time pressure have likewise been identified as important sources of psychological strain among university faculty (Chen et al., 2022).

The absence of respondents in the high-burnout category indicates that the majority of lecturers remain capable of adapting to their work demands. This finding aligns with the view that burnout is not a condition that emerges suddenly but rather a gradual process evolving from mild fatigue into a more serious state. An eight-year longitudinal study demonstrated that burnout symptoms develop through distinct profiles, including one that begins with fatigue and intensifies over time (Mäkikangas et al., 2020). Clinical literature also distinguishes between mild burnout complaints in relatively healthy employees and severe clinical burnout characterized by debilitating symptoms and a prolonged recovery process (van Dam, 2021; Vandenberg et al., 2025). Consequently, the moderate burnout levels identified in this study should not be overlooked; instead, they must be viewed as a condition requiring preventive action. Schaufeli emphasizes that mild or subclinical symptoms such as fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating “require preventive action,” whereas clinical burnout necessitates diagnosis and treatment (Schaufeli, 2025). Approaches categorizing burnout symptoms by severity have also been developed to ensure that interventions can be tailored to an individual's specific stage of burnout progression (Arya et al., 2023).

The results also indicate that the instrument used has excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.858. This value indicates that the instrument is able to consistently measure the burnout construct. Furthermore, most items had Corrected Item-Total Correlation values above 0.30, thus the instrument is considered to have adequate measurement quality.

From an organizational perspective, the findings of this study demonstrate the importance of lecturer workload management policies. Universities need to evaluate the distribution of Tri Dharma tasks, simplify administrative systems, and increase organizational support. These efforts can help reduce work pressure and prevent increased burnout among lecturers.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of burnout studies in the academic profession by positioning burnout as a single, empirically described variable. Most previous studies have positioned burnout as a dependent variable influenced by other factors. Therefore, this study provides a direct overview of lecturer burnout within the context of academic work demands.

Practically, the research findings can serve as a basis for universities to develop burnout prevention programs, such as stress management training, counseling services, strengthening social support, and improving lecturer well-being. These efforts are crucial for maintaining the mental health of academic staff and improving the quality of higher education.

Overall, this study indicates that lecturer burnout is at a moderate level, indicating symptoms of work exhaustion due to the high demands of Tri Dharma and administrative burdens. These findings support burnout theory and previous research that suggests that high academic work demands can increase the risk of burnout. Therefore, greater attention is needed from higher education institutions in creating a work environment that supports the psychological well-being of lecturers.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be formulated from this study is that the level of burnout among lecturers is in the moderate category. The results showed that the majority of respondents experienced moderate levels of burnout (54.5%), followed by low levels (45.5%), while none were classified as having high levels of burnout. This means that lecturers are experiencing the early warning stage of burnout. Emotional exhaustion and the tendency to disengage from work occur due to an imbalance between increasing work demands and inadequate personal resources. Respondents' productivity and work function have not been affected, but they could develop if risk factors for burnout are not addressed.

The academic contribution of this research can enrich the empirical scientific study of burnout among lecturers. Practically, the research findings can serve as a reference for formulating policies regarding lecturer workload, streamlining administrative processes, and programs to improve lecturer well-being and mental health.

It is recommended that further researchers take samples with larger numbers and broader characteristics, as well as make comparisons based on scientific fields and academic positions and can examine burnout variables associated with other variables such as workload, job satisfaction, and organizational support in order to achieve a balanced work life to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of burnout in lecturers.

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AI Disclosure

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