

Burnout and Religious Coping among Academics

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ABSTRACT

Academics are burdened with supplemental tasks that surpass their main responsibilities of teaching, research, and service. These tasks are often ambiguous and demanding, yet they are rarely beneficial for their career development. This conflicting role may result in burnout. Academics, however, may cope with these demands in numerous ways, including religion. This study examines the influence of teaching and life interference with research (TLR) on burnout, with religiosity as a moderator. The sample was 91 Muslim higher education academics in Indonesia. Hierarchical regression was used for analysis. The results showed the positive effect of TLR on burnout and the buffering effect of religiosity against burnout. However, religiosity did not moderate between TLR and burnout. Policymakers should design policies that reduce the workload of academics, while academics themselves should consider turning to religion to reduce their work stress.

Keywords: *Job Demand; Religiosity; Burnout; Academics; Indonesia.*

ABSTRAK

Akademisi dibebankan dengan tugas tambahan yang melampaui tugas utama mereka untuk mendidik, meneliti, dan mengabdikan kepada masyarakat. Tugas-tugas ini seringkali bersifat ambigu dan menuntut, namun ia jarang sekali bermanfaat bagi pengembangan karier mereka. Peran yang saling bertentangan ini dapat menyebabkan *burnout*. Meskipun demikian, para akademisi dapat mengatasi tuntutan ini dengan beragam cara, di antaranya agama. Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh intervensi mengajar dan kehidupan terhadap penelitian (TLR) mengenai *burnout*, dengan religiositas sebagai moderator. Sampel penelitian ini adalah 91 akademisi pendidikan tinggi Muslim di Indonesia. Analisis dilakukan dengan regresi hierarki. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya pengaruh positif TLR terhadap *burnout* dan adanya efek penyangga religiositas terhadap *burnout*. Namun, religiositas tidak memoderasi antara TLR dan *burnout*. Para pembuat kebijakan harus merancang kebijakan yang mengurangi beban kerja akademisi, sementara akademisi sendiri dapat kembali ke agama untuk mengurangi stres kerja mereka.

Kata Kunci: *Tuntutan Kerja; Religiositas; Burnout; Akademisi; Indonesia.*



INTRODUCTION

The transformation of higher education institutions (HEIs) from traditional higher education providers into quasi-corporate education services providers has brought with it managerial elements, such as quality control system, standardization, performance evaluation, accountability, and audit and compliance (McCarthy & Dragouni, 2021). Audit culture, characterized by quantification and rankings, has become a common phenomenon in the higher education landscape (Craig et al., 2014). Both of these elements are also observed in Indonesia, where public HEI funding for the current fiscal year is determined by its performance in the prior year. This performance is measured using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) developed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MOE). MOE also requires every HEI to implement an Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) to ensure that the minimum standards of the input, process, and output of HEIs are achieved or exceeded. Academics, as one of the main actors in higher education, thus has the double responsibilities of producing outputs that can achieve the HEI KPIs while ensuring that the output generating process satisfies the defined minimum standards.

Both of these policies, while largely complementary, are contradictory in various aspects (Banna et al., 2022). For example, KPI 3 comprises academicians' academic activities at QS 100 institutions and as practitioners in industry, whereas KPI 5 includes quantity of research and service outputs that are internationally recognized or implemented in society. At the same time, the IQAS becomes the responsibility of academics, either as suppliers of relevant data and documents for compliance purposes or as a member or head of the quality assurance team at the faculty or institutional level. This thus takes up the resources, particularly time and energy, of academics and hamper them from effectively completing their main duties (Anderson, 2006; Newton, 2000). Put another way, academics experience an intra-role conflict: they are required to teach, advise, and produce numerous outputs—research, policy papers, prototypes, etc.—of highest quality, yet they are burdened with administrative tasks that obstruct them from doing so. Consequently, they risk unable to perform their primary duties well, or perform them without sufficient quality and quantity, which in turn affect their career development. This negative consequence of this administrative burden is further intensified by small financial and nonfinancial compensation of academics (Pertiwi et al., 2023). Another consequence of this additional burden is burnout, which subsequently cause academics to become dissatisfied with their own careers. Without support from IHE, in material terms or otherwise, the productivity of academics would continue to dwindle due to burnout (Barthauer et al., 2020).

This study analyses the relationship between job demand, job resource, and burnout among academics through the moderation of religiosity. Academics around the world have exhibited moderate to high levels of stress and burnout due to the increasing workload and work intensity, which could lead to lower productivity (Cao et al., 2024). Interventions in the form of external and internal support are therefore necessary to subdue stress and burnout. Indonesians generally have strong religious values (Ministry of Religion Indonesia & INKLUSIF, 2024), and religion forms one of the resources to which individuals can turn to cope with stress (Badawy & Mohamad, 2015; Shariff et al., 2022). However, there is limited evidence for the alleviative effect of religion against job demands and burnout among Indonesian academics; in fact, most studies on burnout are undertaken in Western nations (Jensen & Olsen, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework: Job Demands–Resources Model and Role Theory

The study is underpinned by two theories: the job demands–resources (JD–R) model and role theory. The JD–R model states that burnout emerges from insufficient job resources and high job demands. Job resources are those factors that could mitigate strain at work, e.g., support from peers and management. Job demands, on the other hand, are those factors that could introduce and intensify strain at work, e.g., role ambiguity (Demerouti et al., 2001). One may cope with these negative consequences with a variety of resources, ranging from optimism and social support to spirituality and religion (Anderson et al., 2022; Charzyńska et al., 2021; Shariff et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2012).

Role theory states that job strain may emerge from in-role and between-role demands (Goode, 1960). One has multiple roles in one's life, e.g., as a child at home and a student in school, or as a mother at home and a manager at work. These roles are inherently conflicting due to time and strain. Fulfilling one of the two roles means that the time, energy, and overall resources available for the other role becomes more limited. In academia, preparing for class and teaching reduce time and resources available for research. This is further

exacerbated by an academic's role at home. These conflicting roles, then, introduces physical and/or psychological strain to the academic, which may negatively affect his well-being, eventually leading to burnout.

Hypotheses Development

Academics' supplemental duties (Barney et al., 2022) and work overload that interfere with their personal and family life (Zhao et al., 2024) may lead to teaching–research conflict and work–family conflict (Boamah et al., 2022). Work overload may also lead to conflicts within and between roles. An academican, for example, must balance several roles at work: teaching, doing research, and carrying out supplemental tasks, for instance being part of a taskforce or committee. These conflicting roles prevent the academic from effectively carrying out his professional duties on which their career development hinges. For instance, focusing on teaching limits time available for research, the latter of which is professionally more valuable for an academic's career. As a result, his career may not progress at the pace at which he would have liked. Time for research is also limited by his role at home. In this case, the academic's teaching and personal demands interfere with his research obligations (Lee et al., 2021). This conflict may eventually lead to burnout (Xu, 2019).

H1: Teaching and life interference with research (TLR) is positively associated with burnout.

Job resources act as buffers against work stress and burnout. These buffers may be internal (e.g., self-efficacy) or external (e.g., peer support) to an individual. Religion is an important internal buffer that can help one to cope with stress and burnout at the workplace. Religious coping means understanding and facing stressors through sacred matters, i.e., God and those that relate to Him (Pargament, 1997). Much of the relevant literature measures religiosity as a buffer burnout without a specific religious context (Badawy & Mohamad, 2015) or as spirituality (Charzyńska et al., 2021). This study, on the other hand, proposes to measure religiosity as academics' implementation and internalization of Islamic values. Previously, Shariff et al. (2022) found that Islamic religiosity is negatively correlated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and positively associated with personal achievement among Malaysian academics. Islamic personality also reduces work stress and improves wellbeing among faculty and administrative staff (Achour et al., 2016). Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework.

H2: Religiosity is negatively associated with burnout.

H3: Religiosity buffers the negative association of TLR with burnout.

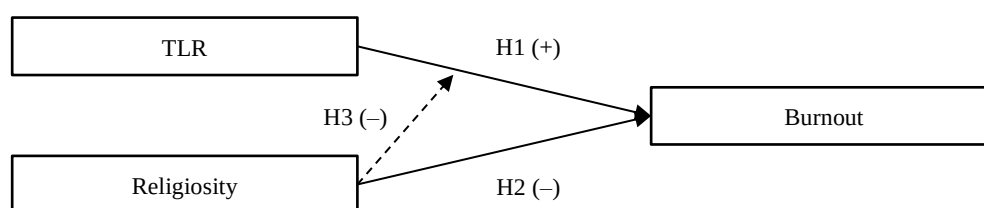


Figure 1 : Conceptual Framework

Source: Primary Data, 2024

RESEARCH METHODS

The cross-sectional survey design was employed. Primary data was collected from a population of Muslim higher education academics in Indonesia. The sample was randomly selected and contacted by email, phone, social media, and/or other media. Following Faul et al. (2009), the sample size is calculated using G*Power. Based on the set parameters ($f^2 = 0.15$, $\alpha = 0.05$, power = 0.80, predictors = 3), the required sample size is 77. The final sample was 91 respondents from various Indonesian IHEs (Table 1). Most of the respondents were male with a master's degree. Senior Lecturer was the most common rank, and they typically

work 36–48 hours per week.

Table 1. Sample Profile

Indicator	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	49	53.8
Female	42	46.2
<i>Education</i>		
Master's	56	61.5
PhD	34	37.4
Undisclosed	1	1.1
<i>Rank</i>		
No rank	6	6.6
Lecturer	31	34.1
Senior Lecturer	41	45.1
Associate Professor	9	9.9
Full Professor	3	3.3
Undisclosed	1	1.1
<i>Work hours per week</i>		
<36 hours	15	16.5
36–48 hours	49	53.8
>48 hours	26	28.6
Undisclosed	1	1.1
<i>Total</i>	91	100

Source: Survey Data, 2023

A questionnaire was used for data collection. It comprises three scales adapted from previous studies. Job demand was measured as the interference of teaching and life with research (TLR). The items were adapted from (Bowling et al., 2017) ($\alpha = .822$). Religiosity was measured using two items adopted from Jana-Masri and Priester (2007) ($\alpha = .733$). Burnout was measured as frenetic burnout resulting from work overload (Montero-Marín et al., 2011) ($\alpha = .782$). TLR and religiosity were measured on a five-point scale, whereas burnout on a seven-point scale. Hierarchical regression was used to test the hypotheses. It is a common technique for moderation analysis in various research subjects, including burnout (e.g., Antoniou et al., 2023; Kilic et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics are summarized in Table 2. The sample experienced a moderate level of TLR and relatively high burnout and had a high level of religiosity. Burnout is correlated positively with TLR, indicating a linear relationship between the two constructs. Conversely, it is negatively correlated with religiosity, suggesting the buffering effect of religiosity against burnout.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlation

Construct	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Correlation		
			1	2	3
TLR	2.97	1.42	1		
Religiosity	4.62	.70	-.18	1	
Burnout	3.35	1.42	.39**	-.29**	1

** $p < 0.01$

Source: SPSS output, 2024

The proposed hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regression, and the results are shown in Table 3. There were three steps (models). In the first step, only TLR was included. In the second step, burnout was regressed against both TLR and religiosity. In the final step, the interaction term was introduced to determine whether religiosity buffers against the distressing effect of TLR. For each model, the *F*-value, *R*², change in

R^2 , and VIF were computed. The F -value indicates the degree to which the model is a better fit compared to the base model. In all three models, the F -values were significant. Each step of the model increasingly explained the variance in burnout, as indicated by the rising value of R^2 in each model. Finally, multicollinearity was not deemed an issue because the highest VIF values in each model was within the acceptable threshold.

Table 3. Hierarchical regression

	1	2	3
H1: TLR	.39**	.35**	-.48
H2: Religiosity		-.46*	-1.13*
H3: TLR × religiosity			.18
F (df1; df2)	16.17** (1; 89)	11.27** (2; 88)	8.42** (3; 87)
R^2	.15	.20	.23
Adjusted R^2	.14	.19	.20
ΔR^2	.154	.05	.02
F for ΔR^2 (df1; df2)	16.17** (1; 89)	5.54* (1; 88)	2.37 (1; 87)
Highest VIF	1.000	1.034	1.193

Unstandardized coefficients; df = degree of freedom; VIF = variance inflation factor.

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Source: SPSS output, 2024

The regression results showed that TLR had a positive effect on burnout in models 1 and 2, $b = .35$, $p < 0.01$, and as such H1 was supported. This means that conflicts within and between roles, in this case between teaching and personal demands with research, may lead to burnout. Religiosity was introduced as a buffer in model 2, and the result showed its negative influence on burnout, $b = -.46$, $p < 0.05$. Therefore, H2 was also supported. It appears that personal resources, in this instance religion, enable academics to endure stress, which explains why it could lower burnout. Finally, H3 was not supported because the interaction of TLR × religiosity was not found to be a significant predictor of burnout, $b = .18$, ns .

This study examines the influence of within- and between-role conflict, measured as TLR, on burnout and the buffering effect of religiosity against it. It provides important evidence related to burnout and religiosity as buffer among Indonesian academics, a state-oriented higher education system. Informed by the JD-R model and role theory, the results are generally in line with the underpinning theories. Two main results are discussed below.

First, TLR was found to be a positive determinant of burnout. This is congruent with the literature, which highlights role conflict as among the most common forms of stressors and sources of burnout (Allen et al., 2015; Kim & Yeo, 2024; Ratnaningsih et al., 2023). The conflict measured here was between professional demands (i.e., teaching–research) and personal–professional demands (i.e., life–research). This finding could explain the relatively low research productivity of Indonesian academics, who are distracted by their teaching obligations in addition to their personal demands. Most often, the academics have low salary, necessitating them to take on more teaching load (with the expectation that extra teaching loads are remunerated accordingly). Additionally, the collectivist society of Indonesia broadens the scope of life demands on the individual, including not only those demands of the nuclear family but also of the extended family.

Second, religiosity was found to be a significant buffer against burnout. The literature has identified spirituality and religiosity as strategies to cope against stressors and burnout (Charzyńska et al., 2021; Shariff et al., 2022). It is likely that religiosity allows the academics to reorient their work towards a higher purpose, so that they perceive their work to be meaningful and valuable, enabling them to gain the energy to cope with stress. Religiosity also introduces additional environment support, perhaps from fellow mosque attendants or other religious communities. Such communities could provide counsel or at least an emotional barrier by which the academics could relieve stress. It should be noted that because the interaction term was not significant, it could not be concluded whether religiosity buffered against the negative effect of TLR.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has empirically shown the distressing effect of TLR and the protective function for religiosity against burnout among Indonesian academics. The findings have several important implications to both

practice and literature. Policymakers and higher education administrators should alleviate the administrative burden of academics, and as such lower their burnout. At the same time, academics can turn to religion or intensify their faith so that they may cope with role conflict and unsatisfying career direction. This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which does not permit causal inference. It also does not compare academics of different institution types; different types of institutions have different focus. For example, polytechnics emphasize teaching and practical work, whereas universities place more importance on research. Future work may consider analyzing the moderating effect of religiosity alongside other job demands and resources. It may also examine academics by type of institution (e.g., polytechnic, institution, university) or governance (e.g., state vs. private) to facilitate further understanding of the subject.

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