Burnout in Final Year Students: A Review from a Human Resource Management Perspective

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Abstract. The phenomenon of academic burnout is increasingly experienced by final year students who are faced with pressure in completing their final assignments. This study aims to identify and understand in depth the factors that cause academic burnout and how students overcome it. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews with final year students who were writing their theses. The results showed that burnout was triggered by a combination of academic pressure, difficulties in the guidance process, family expectations, and social communication with peers. Students experienced various symptoms such as emotional exhaustion, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and decreased motivation. To overcome this, students implemented coping strategies such as completing assignments in installments, finding a pleasant learning atmosphere, interacting with friends, and relying on support from family. This study emphasizes the importance of the role of educational institutions, especially supervisors, in creating a responsive and supportive guidance system to help students deal with academic pressure in a healthier way. These findings are relevant in the context of human resource management, especially in stress management and improving individual well-being in higher education environments.

Keywords: Burnout; Final Year Students; Thesis; Academic Pressure; HR

INTRODUCTION

Higher education refers to the stage of learning that follows secondary education, encompassing diploma, undergraduate, master's, doctoral, professional, and specialist programs offered by universities rooted in Indonesian cultural values. It plays a crucial role in developing high-quality human resources.. This stage comprises a range of programs, including diploma, bachelor's, master's, doctoral, professional, and specialist tracks, offered by higher education institutions such as universities, institutes, colleges, and academies. These programs are structured to cultivate knowledge, competencies, and specialized expertise aligned with workforce demands and scientific advancement.. Besides focusing on academic and professional aspects, higher education in Indonesia is also organized based on the nation's cultural values. This is so that graduates not only have intellectual competence, but also have strong character, ethics and national insight, so that they can contribute positively to national and global development. One of the goals of higher education, as stated in Article 5 of Law Number 12 of 2012 of the Republic of Indonesia, is to promote community service based on research, enhance public welfare, and contribute to the nation's intellectual development.. This goal is followed by universities in Indonesia, one of which is the University. One of the degrees given by the University to students is a bachelor's degree (Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia, 2012).

Students are a group that is vulnerable to psychological stress as a result of the high burden and demands in academic activities (Ilhamsyah et al., 2023).Students often face various pressures during their education in college. This pressure comes from various

academic demands, such as heavy assignment loads, exams that require intensive preparation, tight deadlines, and high expectations from lecturers, family, and oneself to achieve good academic performance. This situation can trigger significant stress and psychological pressure, especially if students do not have good stress management skills or adequate social support. Therefore, students are considered a group that is vulnerable to mental health disorders, such as anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and burnout. This is confirmed by Ilhamsyah et al. (2023) which shows that high academic pressure is one of the main factors causing psychological disorders in students. During their education in higher education, students must face various challenges, such as high task loads, pressure to achieve optimal academic performance, competition with fellow students, and limited time in managing personal life. Students are not only required to learn and attend lectures, but must also be able to face various complex challenges. One of the main challenges is the heavy academic workload, such as individual and group assignments, practicum reports, presentations, and various other forms of evaluation that must be completed within a certain time. On the other hand, there is pressure to achieve high academic performance, both from the expectations of oneself, family, and the surrounding environment, which can cause stress if not managed properly.

Students also have to face competition with their classmates, both in terms of grades, involvement in organizations, and career opportunities after graduation. In addition, they often experience time constraints in managing the balance between academic activities, social life, part-time jobs (if any), and personal needs such as rest and family time. If these challenges are not addressed wisely, it can have an impact on students' mental health and overall well-being. According to research conducted by Gisela et al. (2025), this situation has the potential to cause academic burnout, which is characterized by emotional exhaustion, decreased enthusiasm for learning, and the emergence of negative attitudes towards academic activitiesAcademic burnout not only diminishes students' academic performance but also poses significant risks to their overall mental well-being (Nasution et al., 2025). It refers to a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by prolonged academic pressure that is inadequately managed.

This condition leads to a decline in learning motivation and enthusiasm, and it directly impacts students' ability to perform well academically. Those experiencing burnout often struggle to concentrate, find it difficult to complete assignments, and show lower academic outcomes. However, the consequences extend beyond academic performance. Burnout can also impair mental health, potentially leading to feelings of hopelessness, heightened anxiety, depression, and even social isolation. If left unaddressed, it can severely affect students' quality of life and obstruct the attainment of educational goals. Hence, early identification of burnout symptoms and the creation of a more balanced and supportive academic atmosphere are essential to help students preserve their mental health (Nasution et al., 2025). Several studies have found a strong correlation between academic burnout and elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among students. Therefore, gaining a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of academic burnout is vital. It does not emerge instantly, but rather results from the accumulation of various interrelated stressors in students' lives. One of the main factors is excessive study load, where students have to complete various assignments, face exams, and participate in other academic activities in a limited time.

This condition is further exacerbated if students do not have adequate social support, either from friends, family, or lecturers, so they feel alone in dealing with these pressures.

Poor time management is also a significant cause, because without good planning and time management, students tend to postpone work and end up overwhelmed. In addition, pressure from family to perform well or meet certain expectations can add to the psychological burden. Last but not least, a lack of coping skills or strategies to deal with stress makes students more vulnerable to mental and emotional exhaustion. If these factors are not handled effectively, the risk of academic burnout will be higher (Permata & Laili, 2025). By identifying and analyzing these factors, it is hoped that appropriate solutions can be found to reduce the risk of burnout and create a healthier and more supportive academic environment for students. The first step in dealing with academic burnout is to identify and analyze the various factors that cause it, such as heavy study loads, lack of social support, poor time management, family pressure, and weak coping skills. By deeply understanding how and why these factors affect students' mental state, relevant parties such as lecturers, educational institutions, and students themselves can design more targeted strategies or interventions. For example, through the provision of counseling services, time management training, improved communication between lecturers and students, and creating a campus culture that is more open and concerned about mental health.

These efforts are expected to reduce the risk of burnout, while creating a healthier, more inclusive and supportive academic environment, where students can learn and develop optimally, both academically and emotionally. However, the majority of previous studies still focus on the discussion of burnout in a psychological or educational context in general, and not many have reviewed the phenomenon of burnout in final year students from a human resource management (HRM) perspective. In fact, the HRM approach can provide more systematic insights in designing interventions, such as coping skills training, internal support systems, workload management, and academic policies that are oriented towards student welfare. Consequently, this study seeks to address the existing gap by exploring academic burnout among final-year students through the lens of Human Resource Management (HRM)..

1. Burnout

Burnout is defined as a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to stress, particularly in environments that require high levels of commitment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Within the educational context, academic burnout describes the fatigue experienced by students as a result of continuous academic pressure, achievement expectations, and an intense learning atmosphere (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Among students, burnout is typically identified through three core dimensions: emotional exhaustion, a sense of detachment or a cynical attitude toward one's studies (depersonalization), and a decline in academic performance (Maslach et al., 1996)..

2. Human Resource Management (HRM)

Human Resource Management (HRM) refers to a strategic approach to managing and developing human capital within organizations to ensure the effective and efficient achievement of organizational objectives (Dessler, 2015). In the context of higher education, HRM is not only applied to manage staff and lecturers, but also plays an important role in managing students as one of the human resources being developed (Mathis & Jackson, 2011). HRM focuses on managing human resources through the process

of planning, organizing, developing, and maintaining sustainable human resources (Hasibuan, 2016).

METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at exploring and gaining an in-depth understanding of the burnout experiences encountered by final-year students.. The focus of the research is directed at how students interpret the burnout conditions they experience and how this can be analyzed from a Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective, specifically related to stress management and individual well-being. This research is exploratory in nature and employs a phenomenological approach, aiming to understand students' subjective experiences firsthand. The researcher serves as the primary instrument for both data collection and interpretation. Data were collected at Wahid Hasyim University in Semarang, the main research site, during May 2025, encompassing the stages of preparation, data gathering, analysis, and report writing. The site was selected due to its relevance to the research topic and the accessibility of both data and participants aligned with the study's focus. Information was gathered through in-depth interviews with final-year students from various academic programs who were in the process of completing their final projects or theses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Emotional Dynamics During the Thesis Preparation Process
  Based on field findings, students experienced emotional fluctuations while completing their thesis. They admitted that their enthusiasm often went up and down, especially in the early stages when they had to find a topic and set a research title. However, most students felt relieved and proud after successfully completing their thesis, despite the challenging process. This shows that students' emotions are strongly influenced by the phases they go through during the preparation of the thesis.
- Burnout Symptoms: Physical and Psychic Fatigue
  Students revealed that during the thesis preparation process, they experienced quite intense fatigue. Symptoms of burnout include mood swings, anxiety, disturbed sleep patterns, and decreased appetite. The pressure to complete the thesis within a certain time is the main factor that triggers this condition. This is in line with burnout theory which includes dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased self-achievement.
- Factors that Trigger Burnout
  Some of the external factors identified as the main triggers of burnout are:
  o Communication constraints with supervisors, such as lecturers who are difficult to contact or unresponsive, make students feel frustrated and lost. When they have come all the way to campus and have to wait for a long time without results, students feel that their time is wasted.
  o The overlap between lectures and thesis, which causes students to feel overwhelmed to divide their time and energy.
  o Social pressure from peers, especially when they see their classmates have already completed their thesis, creating a feeling of being left behind and incompetent.

o Pressure from family, such as repeated questions about the status of the thesis or the timing of graduation, exacerbates students' mental burden and adds to emotional distress.

The findings of this study reveal that academic burnout among final-year students is influenced not only by internal factors, such as time management and learning motivation, but also significantly shaped by external factors, including the supervisory system, social support, and environmental pressures.. This finding reinforces previous research which states that academic burnout is a complex phenomenon that involves interactions between individuals and their environment.

The coping model used by students shows that despite the pressure faced, students are able to find ways to survive and complete their final project. However, to prevent burnout more systematically, an active role is needed from educational institutions, especially in providing a more adaptive guidance system, psychological support, and creating a healthy and supportive academic culture.

CONCLUSION

This research seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the academic burnout phenomenon among final-year students, particularly during the thesis writing phase, by employing a qualitative approach within the framework of Human Resource Management (HRM). Based on the findings and analyses presented, several key conclusions can be drawn:

1. Academic burnout is a genuine and multifaceted issue affecting final-year students. It is marked by emotional and physical fatigue, mood disturbances, anxiety, and a noticeable decline in motivation to study. Students frequently feel overwhelmed and powerless when facing the intense academic demands.

2. The factors that trigger academic burnout are multifactorial, covering both internal and external aspects. Internal factors include poor time management, perfectionism, and low coping skills. Meanwhile, the dominant external factors include:
   o Lack of effective communication with supervisors
   o Overlap between lectures and thesis preparation
   o Social pressure from peers and family
   o Lack of academic and psychological support systems from institution

3. Students have various coping strategies to deal with the pressure they experience, although not all of them are adaptive or systematic. Some commonly applied strategies include paying in installments for thesis assignments, finding a supportive learning atmosphere, sharing complaints with friends, and finding temporary entertainment on social media. Emotional support from family has also proven to play an important role in maintaining students' psychological balance.

4. The role of educational institutions is crucial in preventing and reducing academic burnout. Students expect a more flexible, responsive, and humanized guidance system. In addition, it is important for campuses to provide access to counseling services, stress management training, and create a more supportive and inclusive academic climate.

5. Academic burnout not only impacts on learning performance, but also on students' overall mental health and quality of life. Therefore, there is a need for a holistic and

sustainable approach from various parties, including students themselves, lecturers, and educational institutions, to create a healthy and balanced learning environment.

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