

The Meaning of Spiritual Well-Being in Relation to Academic Burnout

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Abstract: Students are individuals in a transitional phase toward adulthood, making them vulnerable to academic pressure that can lead to emotional exhaustion or academic burnout. This study aims to understand the meaning of spiritual well-being in relation to the level of academic burnout among students of the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Dakwah. High academic pressure often results in emotional and psychological fatigue among students, commonly referred to as academic burnout. On the other hand, spiritual well-being can serve as a source of inner strength that helps students face various academic challenges. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques including interviews and observations. The findings reveal that students with a high level of spiritual well-being tend to manage academic pressure more effectively, exhibit a more positive attitude, and show lower levels of burnout. Dimensions of spirituality such as relationships with God, oneself, others, and the environment significantly contribute to the students' psychological balance. Therefore, spiritual well-being plays a crucial role in mitigating the negative impact of academic burnout.

Keywords: *Spiritual Well-Being, Academic Burnout, Students*

Introduction

Higher education is one of the nation's key pillars for development. Students, as the main actors, are not only knowledge seekers but are also expected to become agents of change who can contribute significantly to societal progress in various aspects. (Cholili et al., n.d.) In general, students are educational participants at the tertiary level whether public or private institutions that are equivalent to universities.

Despite these expectations, students often face heavy academic pressures during their studies. These pressures stem from numerous assignments, demands to achieve academic excellence, and the urge to complete their studies on time. If not managed properly, this stress leads to psychological exhaustion known as academic burnout a condition in which students experience emotional fatigue, reduced interest in studying, and a feeling of incompetence in handling their academic responsibilities.

Academic burnout is defined as feelings of fatigue due to academic demands, avoidance of tasks, and a sense of incompetence as a student. This condition not only hinders academic achievement but also negatively affects the students' overall mental well-being. Burnout usually occurs due to a combination of high academic load, the process of identity formation, uncertainty about the future, and difficulties in establishing interpersonal relationships. Research by Jimenez-Ortiz et al. found that as many as 52% of college students experience academic burnout during their studies highlighting that burnout is not merely an individual issue but a collective concern that demands serious attention. Students must manage a complex array of demands, including adjusting to social environments, completing tasks within tight deadlines, and competing for high academic achievement.

In Indonesia, a study from the Mindset Laboratory at UGM's Faculty of Psychology identified three main causes of academic burnout: a heavy course load, declining intrinsic motivation, and social pressures from peers, family, or partners. (Fisher, n.d.)

This study is crucial to provide an accurate picture of academic burnout among students receiving Islamic counseling guidance. Humans are not merely physical beings but also spiritual ones. Therefore, wise and balanced self-care must include spiritual well-being an act of self-compassion. It is a smart way to maintain balance between the outward

world full of demands and the inner world that needs peace, meaning, and spiritual connection. (Oknita 2020) Spiritual well-being is living in affirmation with harmony toward God, oneself, others, and the environment as a whole.

Thus, the researcher is motivated to conduct this study titled “The Meaning of Spiritual Well-Being in Relation to the Level of Academic Burnout Among Students of the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Dakwah

Methods

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach in a field study. In qualitative research, the researched perspectives are emphasized, and the researcher refers to theoretical foundations to ensure the study aligns with on-site conditions. (Azwar, n.d.) Qualitative methods prioritize observing phenomena to deepen understanding. (Mulyana, n.d.) The aim is to apply and explain phenomena comprehensively by collecting as much information as possible.

The research location is the area used to gather the necessary data. The researcher employed observation and interviews to collect data. Perception involves using what is seen through vision and other senses. With direct observation during fieldwork, the researcher gathered essential information. (Mulyana, n.d.) Interviews took place through conversations with subjects, aimed at obtaining the required data. Researchers used these methods to study Islamic teaching and interactions among students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Results and Discussion

Definition of Spiritual Well-Being

Spiritual well-being stems from two words: *well-being* and *spiritual*. According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), “sejahtera” means a safe, prosperous, and peaceful condition, free from disturbance. Therefore, well-being refers to living in peace and happiness without worry.

“Spiritual” relates to the soul, belief, and deeper life values such as religious faith, meaning of life, or connection to something beyond oneself. (Laili and Suseno, n.d.) states that spiritual well-being is when a person feels

inner peace and happiness, experiences harmony in the heart, and perceives life as meaningful and connected to personal values or beliefs.

In the context of students, spiritual well-being can be a source of strength to cope with academic pressure and maintain mental health. (Nasution, n.d.) found that students with high spiritual well-being tend to have lower levels of stress and academic burnout compared to those who engage less in spiritual activities. Furthermore, spiritual well-being includes two main aspects:

a. Religious Aspect: One's relationship with God or a believed power, which brings calm and hope.

b. Existential Aspect: A deep sense of life's meaning and purpose, not always tied to formal religion but also personal values and life philosophy.

Thus, maintaining and enhancing spiritual well-being is a key factor in supporting students' mental health and academic performance. (Santrock, n.d.) developed a model of spiritual well-being with four interrelated dimensions that together create a balanced spiritual life:

a. Personal Domain (Relationship with Self)

This dimension involves self-knowledge, understanding, and acceptance. Students with a healthy inward relationship tend to have good self-confidence, emotional regulation, and the ability to handle life and academic pressures calmly. Spiritual well-being here is seen in inner peace and self-acceptance, even when facing failures or mistakes.

b. Communal Domain (Relationship with Others)

This concerns positive social relationships with family, friends, lecturers, and the community. Students who maintain supportive relationships feel less isolated and more resilient under academic pressure. Empathy, tolerance, and mutual respect are key indicators.

c. Environmental Domain (Relationship with Environment)

This refers to one's relationship with the natural environment. Students who respect and feel connected to nature often possess heightened awareness of their place in a larger ecosystem. This gives them peace, order, and a sense of responsibility toward a balanced life.

d. Transcendental Domain (Relationship with God or Transcendent Power)

This is the core of Fisher's spiritual well-being model: the individual's relationship with God or a higher power. Students with active spiritual beliefs or practices usually find their lives more meaningful and directed. Expressions of gratitude, prayer, and belief in a higher purpose foster inner peace amid difficulties. (Firman Maulidna, Khairatul Ulfi, Annisa Mulia, Ahmad Zuhri Ramadhan 2025)

Students engaged in religious activities typically exhibit better spiritual well-being. Zahrani and Idulfilastri found that religiosity plays a significant role in reducing stress among university students.

2. Definition of Academic Burnout

Academic burnout is a psychological condition experienced by students due to prolonged academic pressure. It is marked by three main symptoms: emotional exhaustion, cynical behavior or detachment toward studies, and a sense of incompetence in completing academic tasks. Burnout is a syndrome that emerges as a response to chronic stress in demanding environments, including higher education.

Among students, academic burnout may occur due to excessive coursework, pressure to achieve high grades, and insufficient time for rest or personal activities. This leads to a loss of balance between academic and personal life, severely draining energy and enthusiasm.

Academic burnout affects not only learning ability but also social and emotional aspects. (Muhammad Saleh. Maria Ulfa Batoebara & Kamaruzzaman 2021) Students experiencing burnout often lose motivation, withdraw socially, and show significant declines in academic performance. Understanding these symptoms and causes is crucial for early prevention.

(Maslach and Jackson, n.d.) identified the three core dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

- Emotional exhaustion refers to physical and emotional fatigue from persistent academic demands. Students with this feel they lack energy to attend classes or complete assignments.
- Depersonalization (cynicism) is shown by apathy, indifference, or detachment from academic activities evident in lack of interest in courses, frequent absences, or indifference to learning outcomes.

- Reduced personal accomplishment is when students feel incompetent, fail, and unable to meet academic responsibilities, often accompanied by low self-esteem and loss of confidence.

This diminished sense of achievement can spill over into social and emotional realms, causing isolation and helplessness. Without early intervention, students are at risk of academic failure or dropping out.

3. Relationship Between Spiritual Well-Being and Academic Burnout

Spiritual well-being plays an essential role in addressing academic burnout. (Muhammad Saleh 2019) Academic burnout involves physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged academic demands. Students with burnout often feel powerless, lose motivation, and experience declining performance.

Spiritual well-being can be a reservoir of internal strength, allowing students to remain calm and focused amid pressure. Those with strong spiritual well-being typically hold positive perspectives, find meaning in experiences, and have clear life goals making them more resilient in facing academic challenges.

found that the higher a student's spiritual well-being, the lower their level of academic burnout. (Destriani and Ruhaena, n.d.) This is because spiritually grounded students tend to use healthier coping mechanisms such as surrendering to God, praying, or living with gratitude. A subsequent study by Zahrani and Idulfilastri (2024) reinforced these findings, showing spirituality as a protective factor against academic stress.

Within an Islamic perspective, spiritual well-being is achieved through closeness to Allah SWT, consistent worship, compassionate character, and maintaining good relationships with others. All these aspects contribute to inner peace and mental fortitude, enabling students to balance study demands without easily succumbing to exhaustion and burnout. Therefore, there is a negative correlation: higher spiritual well-being corresponds to lower chances of academic burnout.

4. Contributing Factors to Academic Burnout

According to Lin & Huang (2014), academic burnout arises from both internal and external factors. A major cause is a high academic load many assignments, exams, and pressure to graduate on time. Additionally,

lack of social support from peers, family, or lecturers exacerbates students' stress such as juggling multiple assignments, facing back-to-back exams, and feeling pressure to complete studies on schedule.

Without support, students struggle alone and their fatigue and stress escalate, causing decreased motivation and learning enthusiasm. Other key factors include poor time and stress management skills students with poor planning are easily overwhelmed. High expectations from themselves or parents also add pressure (Jacobs and Dodd, n.d.)

These conditions alongside inadequate support and time management heighten students' risk of academic burnout. Thus, the study confirms that spiritual well-being plays an important role in confronting academic pressure

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that spiritual well-being plays a vital role in helping students cope with academic burnout. Students who maintain a strong relationship with God, themselves, others, and the surrounding environment demonstrate greater mental resilience in the face of academic pressure. Spiritual well-being provides meaning, tranquility, and life motivation, enabling students to remain focused, composed, and grateful as they navigate their academic responsibilities.

Moreover, spiritual well-being enhances students' self-awareness, allowing them to better recognize their personal limits, manage emotions, and seek help when needed. Students with a mature level of spirituality tend to have a more positive life orientation, show greater optimism, and are less likely to despair when facing academic failures or challenges. These factors are key in reducing the risk of academic burnout, which is often marked by emotional exhaustion, cynicism toward study, and declining academic performance.

In the context of the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Dakwah, where religious understanding and spiritual values are central to the curriculum, spiritual well-being should not only be a subject of academic study but also an integral part of students' character development. Strengthening spirituality through religious activities, spiritual and mental coaching, spiritual counseling, and the integration of divine values (nilai-nilai

ilahiyah) into the learning process can serve as both a preventive and curative strategy to address the academic and psychological challenges faced by students.

In conclusion, developing spiritual well-being on campus is an urgent necessity in building an educational ecosystem that goes beyond academic achievement alone. It aims to foster holistic individuals knowledgeable, of strong character, and spiritually grounded. Therefore, educational institutions particularly the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Dakwah are encouraged to continuously innovate in designing programs that support the spiritual growth of students as a strategic effort to prevent and address academic burnout.

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