



BURNOUT AMONG EMPLOYED STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE ROLES OF WORKLOAD AND ROLE CONFLICT

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of workload and role conflict on burnout among employed students in higher education. An explanatory quantitative approach was adopted, involving students from the 2021 cohort of the Management and Accounting Study Programs at ITEBIS PGRI Dewantara Jombang who simultaneously undertook academic and employment responsibilities. Data were collected through a questionnaire survey and analyzed to determine the relationships among the variables under investigation. The findings indicate that both workload and role conflict significantly affect burnout among employed students. Notably, role conflict emerged as the more dominant predictor of burnout than workload. These findings underscore that burnout among employed students is driven not only by substantial task demands, but also by the incompatibility between academic obligations and work responsibilities. Accordingly, this study highlights the importance of institutional support and adaptive coping strategies in helping employed students manage the pressures associated with their dual roles more effectively.

Keywords: burnout; employed students; workload; role conflict; higher education

A. INTRODUCTION

Burnout among university students has become a central issue in higher education research because it is directly associated with the quality of the learning experience, study persistence, and psychological well-being. In the contemporary literature, academic burnout is generally understood as a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, the development of cynical attitudes toward academic activities, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment resulting from prolonged academic demands. Empirical studies have shown that burnout can no longer be positioned merely as an individual problem, but should instead be understood as a response to the configuration of demands and resources within the higher education environment. For instance, Shankland et al. (2019) demonstrated that daily hassles contribute to student burnout, while Jagodics and Szabo (2023) showed that the demand-resource framework is relevant for explaining the emergence of burnout in higher education. These findings suggest that when academic demands intensify and psychological or social resources are insufficient, students become more vulnerable to academic exhaustion.

The urgency of this issue is further reinforced by evidence linking burnout to a range of important academic outcomes. A meta-analysis by Madigan and Curran (2021), which synthesized data from more than 100,000 students, found that burnout was negatively associated with academic achievement. In a similar vein, Asikainen et al. (2022) reported that student profiles characterized by higher burnout were more likely to be associated with less adaptive approaches to learning and weaker academic performance. Moreover, Wang et al. (2024) showed that, within the symptom network of student burnout, cynicism occupies a highly central position, indicating that burnout is not merely a form of ordinary fatigue, but rather a syndrome capable of disrupting academic functioning more broadly. Burnout should therefore be regarded as a strategic variable in explaining the decline in students' learning quality, particularly among those exposed to layered and persistent demands.

One of the determinants most consistently associated with burnout is workload. In the student context, workload refers not only to the volume of assignments, dense class schedules, grade expectations, and assessment demands, but also to the cumulative set of activities that consume cognitive, emotional, and temporal resources. Gong et al. (2023) found that learning stress was positively associated with learning burnout, while systematic reviews involving nursing students have likewise indicated that burnout is related to various forms of intense and repeated educational demands. In other words, the greater the demands students must respond to within limited time, the greater the likelihood of exhaustion, withdrawal from academic activities, and reduced self-efficacy. The demand-resource framework is especially relevant in this regard, as burnout tends to emerge when high demands are not balanced by adequate resources.

However, in the case of students who are simultaneously employed, workload cannot be confined to the academic domain alone. Employed students operate in a more complex situation because they must respond to two major sources of demands at once, namely study and work. International scholarship suggests that managing the boundaries between work and study roles is a critical challenge for working students. Eastgate et al. (2023) emphasized that the management of role boundaries is crucial for student success in higher education, whereas Creed et al. (2023) found that students who were more capable of managing work-study boundaries tended to report more positive well-being and academic outcomes than those with weaker boundary management. This suggests that students who must continuously shift between classroom responsibilities and workplace obligations are at greater risk of experiencing accumulated pressures that may ultimately culminate in burnout.

Within such circumstances, role conflict becomes a highly relevant variable. Role conflict arises when the demands of one role hinder the fulfillment of another, thereby generating tension, time constraints, and competing priorities. Among students, role conflict may occur when working hours interfere with study time, when academic assignments reduce job performance, or when family, social, and academic responsibilities collide. O'Connor et al. (2022) found that role conflict originating from personal life and extending into academic responsibilities negatively affected the academic performance of healthcare students, although some of these effects could be mitigated by self-efficacy. Similarly, Nnubia and Eze (2024) showed that conflict between family and academic roles is sufficiently salient among students and should be understood as a form of inter-role conflict that affects learning functioning. These findings imply that role conflict is not merely a technical problem of schedule management, but a psychosocial strain that may accelerate emotional exhaustion and distance students from academic engagement.

The issue of burnout becomes even more significant when examined in relation to students' employment status. Fiorilli et al. (2022) identified worker status as one of the relevant characteristics for understanding student burnout in universities. Although their study did not reduce burnout solely to employment status, the findings suggest that the experiences of employed students warrant differentiation from those of non-employed students because the structure of their demands is fundamentally different. At a broader level, research on burnout among early-career academics has also shown that work-life interference and pressure are important predictors of burnout risk, whereas social support and meaningfulness function as protective factors. Although the context differs, this pattern reinforces the assumption that when individuals occupy academic roles alongside other demanding roles, the risk of burnout increases substantially.

Despite the growing body of literature on demands, role conflict, and burnout, several important research gaps remain. First, much of the previous research has focused on students in general, healthcare students, or specific academic populations, while employed students in management and accounting programs have received relatively limited attention. Second,

many studies have examined burnout within a broad demand-based framework, yet few have explicitly tested the simultaneous effects of workload and role conflict among employed students. Third, within the Indonesian higher education context, studies that specifically position employed students as the unit of analysis remain limited, even though this group faces overlapping economic, academic, and social pressures. This gap is important because, without a clearer understanding of the mechanisms of strain affecting employed students, higher education interventions are likely to remain overly general and insufficiently targeted.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study is grounded in the argument that students who simultaneously pursue higher education and employment are in a more vulnerable position with regard to burnout because they confront two major demands at the same time, namely workload and role conflict. High workload may deplete energy and reduce students' capacity to sustain academic engagement, while role conflict may intensify the pressure as students continuously negotiate priorities among study, work, and other responsibilities. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the effects of workload and role conflict on burnout among employed students from the 2021 cohort of the Management and Accounting Study Programs at ITEBIS PGRI Dewantara Jombang. Academically, this study is expected to extend the empirical evidence on burnout among employed students within the context of Indonesian higher education. Practically, the findings are expected to provide a basis for higher education institutions to design more responsive academic and psychosocial support for students with dual roles.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Burnout Among University Students

Burnout among university students refers to a condition of psychological exhaustion resulting from continuous academic demands that are perceived to exceed an individual's capacity to cope. In the higher education context, burnout is commonly conceptualized through three principal dimensions: emotional exhaustion, cynicism toward academic activities, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. This conceptualization is rooted in Maslach's development of the burnout construct, which was later adapted to the student context through the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS), an instrument that remains one of the most widely used measures in research on academic burnout.

Recent scholarship has shown that student burnout is closely associated with persistent daily pressures and a limited capacity to maintain psychological coherence in the face of academic demands. Shankland et al. (2019) demonstrated that burnout among university students is strongly linked to daily hassles and to students' ability to preserve a sense of coherence under sustained pressure. Similarly, Jagodics and Szabo (2023) emphasized that student burnout can be effectively explained through a demand-resource perspective, particularly when high study demands are not offset by adequate resources. These findings indicate that student burnout should not be reduced to ordinary academic stress; rather, it represents a more chronic psychological syndrome with deeper implications for the learning experience.

The importance of burnout in higher education has become increasingly evident because its consequences extend beyond psychological well-being and directly affect learning quality and academic performance. Through a meta-analysis involving more than 100,000 students, Madigan and Curran (2021) found that burnout is significantly and negatively associated with academic achievement. In a similar vein, Asikainen et al. (2022) reported that students with higher levels of burnout tend to adopt less adaptive approaches to learning and achieve weaker academic outcomes. Moreover, Wang et al. (2024) showed that student burnout has a distinct symptom structure and should not be equated simplistically with depression, even though the two may be interrelated. Burnout should therefore be understood

as a key variable in explaining the decline in the quality of students' learning experiences in higher education.

In the present study, burnout is positioned as the dependent variable because it constitutes a highly plausible psychological consequence when students encounter academic and non-academic demands simultaneously. This positioning becomes even more relevant for students who are also employed, as they face more complex role-related pressures than their non-employed counterparts.

2. Workload

Workload refers to the quantity and intensity of demands that individuals are required to complete within a given period, involving the expenditure of physical, mental, and emotional energy. In the student context, workload does not merely refer to the number of assignments, dense academic schedules, grade expectations, and completion requirements, but also encompasses deadline pressure, the complexity of course material, and the continuing demand to maintain satisfactory performance. Workload may therefore be understood as a form of pressure arising from both the quantity and the quality of demands that students are expected to fulfill.

The relationship between workload and burnout can be explained theoretically through Job Demands-Resources Theory, which has subsequently been extended to the educational context as Study Demands-Resources Theory. Within this framework, workload is conceptualized as a form of study demand that has the potential to deplete students' energy. Jagodics and Szabo (2023) showed that high study demands constitute an important predictor of burnout, particularly when students do not possess sufficient resources to manage them effectively. This suggests that the greater the academic demands students are expected to meet, the greater their risk of experiencing emotional exhaustion, disengagement from academic activities, and a diminished sense of effectiveness in achieving expected outcomes.

This relationship is further supported by empirical evidence. Gong et al. (2023) found that learning stress is positively associated with learning burnout, indicating that the greater the academic pressure perceived by students, the greater the likelihood of burnout. In addition, recent studies across different higher education settings consistently identify intense educational demands as one of the strongest predictors of burnout among students. These findings reinforce the view that workload is an important explanatory factor in understanding the emergence of burnout within higher education.

For employed students, however, workload becomes more complex because academic demands do not stand alone. Employed students must allocate energy not only to academic tasks but also to job-related responsibilities. As a result, the total demands they face are greater than those experienced by students who are solely focused on their studies. Fiorilli et al. (2022) identified worker status as a relevant characteristic in understanding student burnout, suggesting that among employed students, workload arises not only from academic activities but also from work-related obligations that cumulatively intensify psychological pressure.

Conceptually, high workload requires students to continuously expend substantial cognitive, emotional, and temporal resources. When such conditions persist over time, students become increasingly vulnerable to emotional exhaustion, reduced engagement in academic activities, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment. For employed students, this risk is even greater because the demands they face are dual in nature, originating from both university study and employment. Accordingly, the higher the level of workload perceived by employed students, the greater their likelihood of experiencing burnout.

H₁: Workload has a positive and significant effect on burnout among employed students.

3. Role Conflict

Role conflict refers to a condition in which the demands of two or more roles performed by an individual are incompatible, such that the performance of one role makes the performance of another more difficult. In the context of employed students, role conflict emerges when academic obligations collide with work demands, or when family and social responsibilities further intensify the pressures that must be managed. Role conflict is not limited to clashes in time allocation, but also includes tensions involving attention, energy, commitment, and priorities. It is therefore one of the most relevant forms of psychosocial strain for understanding the experiences of students who perform dual roles.

From a theoretical standpoint, role conflict can be explained through inter-role conflict theory, which posits that individuals who occupy multiple roles are vulnerable to strain when the expectations associated with each role are not mutually compatible. Employed students represent a clear example of individuals with multiple roles. On the one hand, they are expected to attend classes, study, complete assignments, and achieve academic success. On the other hand, they must meet job targets, comply with work schedules, and maintain performance in the workplace. When these two systems of demands intersect or compete, individuals are likely to experience heightened psychological strain.

Previous studies have substantiated this relationship. O'Connor et al. (2022) found that role conflict negatively affects students' academic performance, indicating that competing demands across roles have a tangible impact on learning functioning. Likewise, Nnubia and Eze (2024) showed that conflict between family and academic roles is a salient issue among undergraduate students. Eastgate et al. (2023) further emphasized that students' ability to manage boundaries across roles is a critical factor in maintaining balance between study and other life domains. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that role conflict constitutes a form of pressure that can weaken academic engagement and undermine student well-being.

With regard to burnout, role conflict may worsen students' conditions because mental energy is used not only to complete tasks but also to continuously negotiate priorities across competing roles. Students who are required to move repeatedly from one role to another without sufficient time for recovery are more likely to experience fatigue, boredom, and a loss of enthusiasm toward their studies. When such conditions persist over time, role conflict may develop into a powerful source of burnout, particularly in the form of emotional exhaustion and cynicism toward academic activities.

Students who are simultaneously employed face a high likelihood of conflict between academic and occupational demands. When they are unable to maintain balance across roles, psychological pressure increases and drains the energy that should otherwise support healthy adaptation. Under such circumstances, role conflict may trigger emotional exhaustion, reduce engagement with study, and weaken students' sense of personal accomplishment. In other words, the greater the role conflict experienced by employed students, the greater the risk of burnout they face.

H₂: Role conflict has a positive and significant effect on burnout among employed students.

C. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. This approach was selected because the study aimed to examine the effects of workload and role conflict on burnout among employed students. The research was conducted among students from the 2021 cohort of the Management and Accounting Study Programs at ITEBIS PGRI Dewantara Jombang. To ensure consistency in the unit of analysis, the respondents were limited to active 2021-cohort students who, at the time of data collection, were simultaneously undertaking dual roles as students and workers.

The study population comprised students from the Management and Accounting Study Programs in the 2021 cohort, while the accessible population consisted of students from these two programs who were employed. The sample included 80 respondents. The sampling technique used was accidental sampling with clearly specified inclusion criteria, namely active students from the 2021 cohort, enrollment in either the Management or Accounting Study Program, and current employment at the time the study was conducted. The explicit formulation of these criteria was intended to make the sampling procedure more focused and methodologically defensible.

Primary data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The questionnaire served as the main instrument for measuring respondents' perceptions of workload, role conflict, and burnout, while documentation was used as supporting data. Prior to data analysis, the instrument was evaluated through validity and reliability testing; however, the results of these tests are presented in the Results section.

The independent variables in this study were workload (X1) and role conflict (X2). Workload was defined as the level of demands perceived by students in completing various obligations, with the following indicators: (1) the number of tasks, (2) time constraints, and (3) pressure in meeting academic and work-related demands. Role conflict was defined as a condition in which the demands associated with the roles of student and worker were incompatible. This variable was measured using the following indicators: (1) time-based conflict, (2) strain in performing dual roles, (3) impaired concentration, (4) imbalance in priorities, (5) fatigue resulting from dual demands, (6) difficulty in dividing commitments, and (7) pressure arising when one role interferes with the other.

The dependent variable was burnout (Y), defined as psychological exhaustion resulting from prolonged pressure. Burnout was measured through three dimensions: (1) emotional exhaustion, (2) cynicism toward academic activities, and (3) reduced personal accomplishment. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive analysis, instrument quality testing, classical assumption testing, and multiple linear regression analysis with the aid of SPSS version 21.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results

This study involved 80 employed students from the 2021 cohort of the Management and Accounting Study Programs at ITEBIS PGRI Dewantara Jombang. Data analysis was conducted in several stages, including descriptive analysis, instrument quality testing, classical assumption testing, and multiple linear regression analysis. The presentation of the findings is intended to demonstrate systematically how workload and role conflict influence burnout among students who simultaneously undertake academic and employment responsibilities.

The descriptive analysis indicates that the mean score for workload was 3.22, the mean score for role conflict was 2.93, and the mean score for burnout was 2.66. These findings suggest that the respondents tended to perceive their workload at a moderate-to-high level. Role conflict was also experienced to a considerable extent, although its intensity was slightly lower than that of workload. Meanwhile, burnout was observed at a moderate level, indicating that employed students had begun to experience symptoms of psychological exhaustion, albeit not yet at a severe level.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variable	Number of Items	Mean
Workload	3	3.22
Role conflict	7	2.93

Burnout	21	2.66
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Source: SPSS 21 output.

A closer examination of the workload variable shows that item X_{1.2} had the highest mean score, namely 3.39. This finding indicates that time constraints and pressure in completing tasks constituted the most strongly perceived form of burden among the respondents. For the role conflict variable, the highest mean score was found for item X_{2.4} at 3.21, whereas the lowest mean score was recorded for item X_{2.7} at 2.60. This suggests that role conflict was indeed experienced by the students, although not all forms of role conflict were perceived with equal intensity by all respondents.

For the burnout variable, the dimensional analysis revealed that emotional exhaustion had a mean score of 2.76, cynicism 2.34, and personal accomplishment 2.76. This pattern indicates that burnout among the respondents was more apparent in the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment, whereas cynicism toward academic activities appeared to be relatively lower.

Table 2. Mean Scores of Burnout Dimensions

Burnout Dimension	Mean
Emotional exhaustion	2.76
Cynicism	2.34
Personal accomplishment	2.76
Total burnout mean	2.66

Source: SPSS 21 output.

Before hypothesis testing, the research instrument was evaluated through validity and reliability testing. In general, the items used to measure workload, role conflict, and burnout demonstrated adequate measurement quality. The reliability test results showed that Cronbach's alpha was 0.717 for workload, 0.836 for role conflict, and 0.913 for burnout. These values indicate that all instruments were reliable, with the burnout instrument falling within the highly reliable category.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Workload	3	0.717	Reliable
Role conflict	7	0.836	Reliable
Burnout	21	0.913	Highly reliable

Source: SPSS 21 output.

Nevertheless, several items in the burnout variable, particularly within the personal accomplishment dimension, showed relatively lower item-total correlations, such as Y₁₅, Y₁₇, Y₁₈, Y₁₉, and Y₂₀. Although this does not undermine the overall quality of the instrument, it suggests that these items may need to be reviewed in future studies to improve measurement precision.

Furthermore, the results of the multiple linear regression analysis produced the following equation:

$$Y = 15.547 + 1.256X_1 + 1.600X_2$$

This equation indicates that both workload (X₁) and role conflict (X₂) exert a positive effect on burnout (Y). The constant of 15.547 represents the level of burnout when workload and role conflict are assumed to remain constant. The regression coefficient for workload, 1.256, means that each one-unit increase in workload is associated with a 1.256-unit increase in burnout, assuming role conflict remains constant. Meanwhile, the regression coefficient for

role conflict, 1.600, indicates that each one-unit increase in role conflict is associated with a 1.600-unit increase in burnout, assuming workload remains unchanged.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	15.547	-	3.357	0.001
Workload	1.256	0.248	2.305	0.001
Role conflict	1.600	0.609	5.355	0.000

Source: SPSS 21 output.

Based on these results, workload had a significance value of 0.001; therefore, H1 was accepted, indicating that workload has a positive and significant effect on burnout. Similarly, role conflict had a significance value of 0.000; therefore, H2 was accepted, indicating that role conflict also has a positive and significant effect on burnout. When viewed from the standardized beta coefficients, role conflict (0.609) exerted a stronger effect than workload (0.248). Thus, in this study, role conflict emerged as the most dominant variable in explaining burnout.

The coefficient of determination results showed $R = 0.723$, $R \text{ Square} = 0.523$, and $\text{Adjusted } R \text{ Square} = 0.510$. This means that 51.0% of the variation in burnout can be explained by workload and role conflict, while the remaining 49.0% is accounted for by other variables outside the research model.

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination

Indicator	Value
R	0.723
R Square	0.523
Adjusted R Square	0.510

Source: SPSS 21 output.

2. Discussion

The findings show that workload has a positive and significant effect on burnout. This result is consistent with Job Demands-Resources Theory, which conceptualizes workload as a form of demand capable of depleting individuals' energy when not balanced by adequate resources. In the context of employed students, workload arises not only from the volume of academic assignments, but also from the pressure to complete job-related tasks and cope with time constraints. Consequently, the higher the demands perceived by students, the greater the likelihood that they will experience emotional exhaustion and reduced personal effectiveness. This finding is in line with the studies of Jagodics and Szabo (2023) and Gong et al. (2023), both of which demonstrate that high study-related demands are associated with student burnout. Within the Indonesian context, this result is also supported by Faizah and Oktawiranto (2020), Magribi et al. (2022), and Reditayani and Susilawati (2021), who likewise emphasize that intense academic pressure in the absence of sufficient personal resources increases students' vulnerability to burnout.

The next major finding indicates that role conflict has a positive and significant effect on burnout, and that this effect is stronger than that of workload. This result is consistent with inter-role conflict theory, which posits that conflict between two or more roles generates psychological strain when the demands associated with each role cannot be fulfilled simultaneously. Among employed students, role conflict emerges when academic responsibilities and work-related obligations collide. Under such conditions, students become exhausted not only because of the amount of work they must complete, but also because they are continuously required to negotiate priorities across competing domains. This finding corresponds with the results reported by O'Connor et al. (2022), Eastgate et al. (2023), and

Fiorilli et al. (2022), which show that role conflict and employment status are important factors in explaining student burnout. In the Indonesian context, similar findings were reported by Kristina et al. (2020) and Arifah and Kumala Sari (2024), who found that role conflict or work-study conflict contributes to burnout among students.

Taken together, this study demonstrates that burnout among employed students is a consequence of both high levels of demand and conflict between roles. Workload increases the overall pressure that students must face, whereas role conflict intensifies the subjective experience of that pressure. Given that role conflict exerts the more dominant influence, it can be inferred that the principal challenge faced by employed students lies not merely in the number of tasks they must complete, but in the persistent incompatibility between academic and occupational demands. This finding is important because it suggests that efforts to reduce burnout among employed students should not be limited to reducing task loads alone. Rather, interventions should also be directed toward managing role conflict through academic flexibility, psychological support, and more adaptive coping strategies.

E. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that both workload and role conflict have a positive and significant effect on burnout among employed students from the 2021 cohort of the Management and Accounting Study Programs at ITEBIS PGRI Dewantara Jombang. This indicates that the higher the demands faced by students, whether in the form of a heavy task load or incompatibility between academic and work-related roles, the greater their tendency to experience psychological exhaustion. The results also reveal that role conflict is the most dominant variable influencing burnout. This finding underscores that the principal challenge faced by employed students lies not merely in the intensity of their activities, but also in the difficulty of balancing the demands arising from two simultaneously enacted roles. Burnout among employed students can therefore be understood as a consequence of cumulative pressures and persistent incompatibility between academic and occupational responsibilities.

In light of these findings, employed students are advised to pay greater attention to time management, priority setting, and the maintenance of balance between academic and work responsibilities. Students need to recognize the limits of their own capacities so as to avoid taking on demands that exceed their physical and psychological resources. In addition, they should develop adaptive coping strategies, such as establishing realistic schedules, preserving adequate rest time, and seeking social support from peers, family members, and the university environment when facing academic and occupational pressures.

For future research, it is recommended that the respondent base be expanded beyond a single higher education institution in order to improve the generalizability of the findings. Subsequent studies may also incorporate other variables that potentially influence burnout, such as social support, resilience, self-efficacy, coping strategies, or work-study balance. In addition, the use of mixed-methods or qualitative approaches may be considered to obtain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of employed students in dealing with workload, role conflict, and burnout.

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