

Burnout and Idealism of Young Lecturers: Coping Strategies in a Competitive Academic Culture

Reni Alfiah¹, Salwia²

^{1,2} Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Hukum, Universitas Negeri Makassar

Email: renialfiah@unm.ac.id

ABSTRAK

Kultur akademik yang semakin kompetitif menempatkan dosen muda pada berbagai tuntutan profesional, seperti publikasi ilmiah, pelaksanaan tridarma, dan pencapaian target institusi, yang berpotensi memunculkan konflik antara idealisme akademik dan realitas kerja serta meningkatkan risiko *burnout*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengalaman *burnout* dosen muda dan mengidentifikasi strategi *coping* yang digunakan dalam menghadapi tekanan akademik. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *burnout* pada dosen muda ditandai oleh kelelahan emosional, tekanan produktivitas akademik, penurunan motivasi, dan konflik antara tuntutan institusi dengan idealisme akademik. Strategi *coping* yang ditemukan meliputi *problem-focused coping*, *emotion-focused coping*, serta pembangunan makna terhadap profesi akademik. Secara teoritis, penelitian ini memperluas pemahaman mengenai keterkaitan antara *burnout*, idealisme akademik, dan *coping* dalam kultur akademik kompetitif. Secara praktis, temuan ini dapat menjadi dasar pengembangan kebijakan dukungan psikososial bagi dosen muda.

Kata Kunci: burnout akademik; dosen muda; idealisme akademik; kultur akademik kompetitif; strategi *coping*

ABSTRACT

An increasingly competitive academic culture places young lecturers under various professional demands, including scientific publications, the implementation of the three pillars of higher education (Tri Dharma), and the achievement of institutional performance targets, potentially creating tension between academic idealism and workplace realities while increasing the risk of burnout. This study aims to analyze burnout experiences among young lecturers and identify the coping strategies employed in dealing with academic pressures. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The findings indicate that burnout among young lecturers is characterized by emotional exhaustion, academic productivity pressure, decreased motivation, and conflicts between institutional demands and academic idealism. The coping strategies identified include problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and meaning-making toward the academic profession. Theoretically, this study expands understanding of the relationship between burnout, academic idealism, and coping within a competitive academic culture. Practically, the findings may serve as a basis for developing psychosocial support policies for young lecturers.

Keywords: Academic Burnout; Academic Idealism; Competitive Academic Culture; Coping Strategies; Young Lecturers.

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INTRODUCTION

The digital era transformation of higher education has turned universities into increasingly competitive academic spaces grounded in performativity, where productivity is measured quantitatively through publications, citation indexes, research grants, accreditation, and institutional performance (Alenezi, 2021; Jiang et al., 2025; Katyeudo & de Souza, 2022). In Indonesia, pressure over publications and performance indicators is part of everyday academic life, gradually narrowing the reflective and humanistic spaces of the teaching profession. This intensifies professional pressure on lecturers, who must carry out the Tri Dharma of Higher Education simultaneously while meeting high productivity expectations, and recent studies link these demands to heightened work-related stress ((Deswara et al., 2023; Georgiou et al., 2022; Hashim et al., 2022).

Burnout, understood as emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion arising from prolonged work pressure and an imbalance between institutional demands and individual capacity ((Cadena-Povea et al., 2025; Dewey et al., 2024; Kovalkova & Malkova, 2021), has therefore attracted growing attention because it affects psychological well-being, academic performance, and educational quality ((Akour & Alenezi, 2022; Yingying et al., 2025). Faculty burnout is triggered not only by teaching workloads but also by publication pressure, administrative tasks, student supervision, research targets, and a hyper-productive culture reproduced by institutions ((Babayeva & Ismayilova, 2026; Gonzales et al., 2022) and recent systematic research identifies this competitive work culture as a significant factor because it sustains performance pressure (Cao et al., 2025; Razak et al., 2019).

Young lecturers are particularly vulnerable because they are building academic identity and career stability while meeting high administrative and academic demands. At this stage they also strive to uphold academic idealism, a commitment to educational quality, scientific integrity, the development of knowledge, and intellectual service (Doyle et al., 2025; Murdiyani et al., 2026; Wright et al., 2025). In practice, these values often clash with an institutional performativity logic that prizes quantitative achievement over reflective academic quality, a tension sharpened by the burden of pursuing doctoral education (Stamati & Willmott, 2023; Tusriyanto et al., 2024). Young lecturers thus face a dilemma between preserving idealism and adapting to a competitive culture.

Facing these pressures, young lecturers develop coping strategies to maintain psychological well-being and professional continuity, commonly understood as the capacity to manage stress through problem-focused, emotion-focused, or avoidance coping (Amponsah et al., 2020; Chukwuemeka et al., 2023; Isa & Palpanadan, 2020). In academia, coping extends beyond individual stress management to a social negotiation within a competitive system, developing through emotional management, adjusted work patterns, social support, resilience, and self-regulation (Gultom, 2022; Kaborloomene et al., 2023). Coping is significantly related to academic burnout (Ayar, 2023; Dinh, 2026; Kovalkova & Malkova, 2021; Lawer et al., 2025), rational, problem-solving, and socially supportive strategies tend to protect against burnout, whereas emotional and avoidance coping may heighten emotional exhaustion and disengagement (Nisar Ul Haq et al., 2020; Zhao & Ding, 2020), and social support, psychological capital, work-life balance, and stress management training are effective institutional forms of coping (Iloakasia, 2024).

Over the last five years, research on lecturer burnout has focused largely on work stress, workload, work-life balance, psychological well-being, and intervention effectiveness (Chukwuemeka et al., 2023; Gonzales et al., 2022; Kaborloomene et al., 2023; Lawer et al., 2025), while coping research typically uses quantitative psychological approaches that treat coping as individual adaptation, and studies of academic idealism are usually situated in professionalism, ethics, and intellectual identity. Three gaps follow. Conceptually, burnout, idealism, and coping are studied in separate streams, so how value commitments shape the experience of and response to pressure remains unexplained. Theoretically, the institutional and cultural conditions that make certain strategies necessary or available remain unexamined, although critical studies show that academics respond to performativity through resistance, ethically conflicted compliance, or acceptance and that early-career scholars' professional identities are shaped by system demands with consequences for health and social relations (Mula et al., 2022). Contextually, to our knowledge, qualitative evidence on young lecturers in Indonesia remains scarce.

The matter is urgent because young lecturers are the future academic workforce: unaddressed burnout threatens retention, the quality of teaching and research, and the ethical foundations of the profession, and understanding whether idealism operates as a resource or a source of strain can inform institutional responses such as mentoring and balanced teaching loads (Mosleh et al., 2022). This study therefore adopts an exploratory case study of young lecturers at a state university in Indonesia to examine how burnout, academic idealism, and coping strategies interrelate within a competitive academic culture.

This study offers a socio-cultural perspective on burnout by positioning academic idealism as a central element of coping dynamics. Its novelty lies in (1) integrating burnout, academic idealism, and coping strategies into a single analytical framework; (2) treating academic idealism not merely as a professional value but as a dimension that shapes how individuals negotiate academic pressure; and (3) viewing burnout as the outcome of interaction between individual psychological experience, institutional structures, and competitive academic culture rather than personal capacity alone. Through this approach, the study broadens the discourse on academic burnout in a more critical and contextual direction relevant to performance-based higher education. It addresses three questions: (1) how burnout is experienced by young lecturers within a competitive academic culture; (2) how academic idealism shapes their professional experiences amid performativity demands; and (3) how they employ coping strategies to maintain psychological well-being while preserving their academic idealism.

METHOD

This study employed an exploratory qualitative case study to understand how young lecturers experience burnout, academic idealism, and coping strategies within a competitive academic culture. A qualitative approach captures the subjective experiences, social meanings, and psychosocial dynamics of early-career lecturers, while a socio-cultural perspective frames burnout not merely as an individual psychological issue but as the outcome of interaction among institutional demands, a competitive work culture, and the negotiation of academic identity.

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Makassar State University (FIS-H UNM), an academic environment shaped by Tri Dharma demands, performance targets, and a competitive academic culture. The population comprised 77 young lecturers with Civil Servant Candidate (CPNS) status (45 female, 32 male). Thirty primary informants were selected through purposive sampling based on CPNS status, length of service, study program, and gender, to obtain information-rich cases capturing variation in burnout, academic idealism, and coping, and were interviewed in depth. The remaining 47 supporting informants supplied no primary interview data; through observation, informal conversations, and document review, they provided contextual data on shared institutional conditions such as workload, performance targets, and administrative demands, enabled source triangulation by showing whether reported patterns reflect individual circumstances or shared structural conditions, and delimited the case by showing that primary informants' experiences are not isolated. Their data serve only to corroborate and contextualize the primary data and are not quoted as findings.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews explored workload pressure, conflicts between institutional demands and professional values, and efforts to maintain psychological well-being and academic idealism. Observation examined social interaction, Tri Dharma implementation, and situations likely to generate work pressure, while documentation (institutional policies, workload records, and academic performance reports) complemented the data on the competitive academic system. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and systematically coded. Data were analyzed with the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing), applied iteratively. Coding yielded five themes (burnout under academic and administrative pressure, clash between idealism and performativity, competitive culture and hyperproductivity, coping strategies, and idealism as a psychological anchor; Table 1), which were displayed through thematic matrices and interpretative narratives to identify patterns linking burnout, idealism, and coping.

Table 1. Example of the Coding Path from Informant Excerpt to Theme

Informant	Excerpt (translated from Indonesian)	Initial code	Category	Theme
P01	"I'm just starting to adapt as a new lecturer, but I already have to chase many targets at once... over time, it becomes mentally exhausting."	Simultaneous targets while adapting	Emotional exhaustion	1. Burnout under academic and administrative pressure
P04	"Ideally I want research that is truly well-developed... but in reality it is chased by targets... the focus is on how quickly it can be completed."	Quality sacrificed to speed	Conflict between quality and quantity of outputs	2. Clash between idealism and performativity
P03	"Even on holidays I still open my laptop... if I stop even for a little while, I might fall behind."	Working on holidays out of fear of lagging	Normalization of work outside formal hours	3. Competitive culture and hyperproductivity

P09	“I prefer to create a priority scale... I am also starting to learn collaborative work so that the burden is not too heavy.”	Prioritization and collaboration	Time management and social support	4. Coping strategies
P12	“Being a lecturer is not merely about publications or performance numbers; there is a moral responsibility to educate students.”	Moral responsibility to students	Moral responsibility toward students	5. Idealism as a psychological anchor

Note: Excerpts are shortened from the original transcripts. Initial codes and categories correspond to data condensation; themes are displayed in Table 2 (see Results). Informant codes (P01–P30) are pseudonyms assigned to the primary informants.

Credibility was ensured through source triangulation (comparing primary and supporting informants), technique triangulation (linking interviews, observations, and institutional documents), and member checking with several primary informants to confirm that the researcher’s interpretations matched their experiences. Fieldwork proceeded from pre-field preparation (problem identification, literature study, instrument development) and permit and informant arrangements to data collection until saturation, when recurring patterns emerged and no significant new information appeared.

The study adhered to ethical principles of respect for participants’ rights, dignity, and well-being. Informants gave informed consent after receiving an explanation of the objectives, procedures, benefits, and potential risks, and participation was voluntary, with the right to refuse or withdraw at any time without consequences. Identities were protected through codes or anonymity, and all data were used solely for academic purposes and managed responsibly to prevent misuse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Result

Coding of interviews with the 30 primary informants, corroborated by observation and documentation, yielded five themes, each comprising five forms of experience. Informant counts per theme are summarized in Table 2, and an example of the coding path from excerpt to theme appears in Table 1.

Table 2. Number of Primary Informants per Theme and Indicator (n = 30)

Theme	Indicator	Informants	%
1. Burnout under academic and administrative pressure	Emotional exhaustion from early-career productivity expectations	27	90.0
	Pressure from simultaneous academic duties	24	80.0
	Difficulty adjusting to administration and institutional work systems	21	70.0
2. Clash between idealism and performativity	Dilemma between high-quality work and fast targets	23	76.7
	Pressure to meet publication targets	19	63.3
	Shift in work orientation due to administrative demands and performance indicators	17	56.7

3. Competitive culture and hyperproductivity	Work outside formal hours	25	83.3
	Fear of falling behind colleagues	22	73.3
	Difficulty separating work and personal life	19	63.3
4. Coping strategies	Problem-focused coping (time management, priorities)	26	86.7
	Collaboration and social support	21	70.0
	Emotion-focused coping (non-academic activities)	18	60.0
5. Idealism as a psychological anchor	Orientation to educational quality and knowledge development	24	80.0
	Moral responsibility toward students	20	66.7
	Professional meaning mitigates pressure	17	56.7

Note: One informant may appear under more than one indicator.

1. Burnout Among Young Lecturer Under Academic and Administrative Pressure

Burnout among young lecturers at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Makassar State University, did not emerge suddenly as an individual psychological problem but developed through the simultaneous accumulation of academic and administrative pressures and institutional performativity demands since their initial appointment (Table 2). Observation added that these demands intensify within a short period, and that some lecturers visibly showed emotional fatigue, psychological stress, and declining academic motivation.

One informant said:

“Kadang saya merasa baru mulai beradaptasi sebagai dosen baru, tapi sudah harus mengejar banyak target sekaligus. Mengajar, administrasi, publikasi, belum lagi tuntutan aktif di kegiatan kampus. Lama-lama capek secara mental.” (“Sometimes I feel like I am just starting to adapt as a new lecturer, but I already have to chase many targets at the same time. Teaching, administration, publication, not to mention the demand to be active in campus activities. Over time, it becomes mentally exhausting.”) (P01)

Another added:

“Yang paling berat sebenarnya bukan mengajar, tetapi ketika semua datang bersamaan. Ada administrasi, laporan kegiatan, penelitian, publikasi, sementara kita juga masih belajar menyesuaikan diri dengan lingkungan kerja.” (“The hardest part is actually not teaching, but when everything comes at once. There are administrative tasks, activity reports, research, publications, while we are also still learning to adjust to the work environment.”) (P02)

These experiences took five forms: emotional exhaustion, administrative pressure, academic role conflict, anxiety about institutional performance demands, and decreased professional motivation. Emotional exhaustion was the most dominant, reported by 90.0% of informants (Table 2) and marked by mental fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and declining enthusiasm for academic activities.

2. The Clash Between Academic Idealism and the Demands of Performativity

Alongside academic and administrative pressure, young lecturers at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Makassar State University, also faced a conflict between academic idealism and the demands of institutional performativity that have developed in the higher

education environment (Table 2). Observation added that since the beginning of their appointment, informants were confronted with demands such as preparing teaching materials, managing academic administration, conducting research, and achieving output targets that form part of performance evaluation, and that some lecturers experienced internal conflict between their professional values and the realities of academic work.

One informant said:

“Idealnya saya ingin penelitian yang benar-benar matang dan punya kontribusi, tapi realitanya sering dikejar target. Akhirnya kadang fokusnya bukan lagi kualitas, tapi bagaimana cepat selesai.” (“Ideally, I want research that is truly well-developed and has a contribution, but in reality, it is often chased by targets. In the end, sometimes the focus is no longer on quality, but on how quickly it can be completed.”) (P04)

Another added:

“Awalnya saya masuk menjadi dosen karena ingin mengembangkan ilmu dan mengajar dengan baik, tetapi lama-kelamaan ada perasaan bahwa yang lebih sering dikejar justru capaian angka, laporan, dan target publikasi.” (“Initially, I became a lecturer because I wanted to develop knowledge and teach well, but over time there was a feeling that what was more often pursued was actually numerical achievements, reports, and publication targets.”) (P05)

These experiences took five forms: the dilemma between high-quality work and fast targets, pressure to meet publication targets, a shift in work orientation due to administrative demands and performance indicators, negotiation of professional identity, and value exhaustion. The dilemma between high-quality work and fast targets was the most dominant, reported by 76.7% of informants (Table 2) and marked by a conflict between the quality and quantity of academic outputs, followed by pressure to meet publication targets (63.3%) and a shift in work orientation (56.7%).

3. Competitive Academic Culture and the Normalization of Hyperproductivity

A competitive academic culture among young lecturers at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Makassar State University, was evident not only in demands for publication and performance indicators but also in work interaction patterns that encouraged them to remain active, responsive, and continuously engaged (Table 2). Observation added that most young lecturers were still involved in academic activities outside formal working hours, such as completing article revisions, preparing lecture materials, compiling administrative reports, responding to academic communications, and finishing other institutional tasks during evenings and weekends, so that the boundary between personal life and academic work became increasingly blurred.

One informant said:

“Kadang hari libur pun tetap buka laptop karena ada revisi artikel atau administrasi yang harus selesai. Rasanya kalau berhenti sedikit saja takut tertinggal.” (“Sometimes even on holidays I still open my laptop because there are article revisions or administrative tasks that need to be completed. It feels like if I stop even for a little while, I might fall behind.”) (P03)

Another added:

“Awalnya saya pikir setelah jam kerja bisa istirahat, tetapi ternyata pekerjaan akademik sering terbawa sampai rumah. Akhirnya susah membedakan mana waktu kerja dan mana waktu pribadi.” (“Initially, I thought that after working hours I could rest, but it turns out that

academic work often carries over to home. In the end, it becomes difficult to distinguish between work time and personal time.”) (P06)

These experiences took five forms: normalization of work outside formal working hours, fear of falling behind colleagues, difficulty separating work and personal life, social pressure to maintain productivity, and internalization of academic performance demands as part of professional identity. Work outside formal hours was the most dominant, reported by 83.3% of informants (Table 2), followed by fear of falling behind colleagues (73.3%) and difficulty separating work and personal life (63.3%).

4. Coping Strategies of Young Lecturers in Facing Academic Burnout

Amid academic and administrative pressure and the demands of institutional performativity, young lecturers at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Makassar State University, were not passive. They developed various coping strategies to maintain psychological well-being while sustaining their academic careers (Table 2). Observation added that these strategies were not only individual but also emerged through social interaction and adaptation to the academic environment. Most informants adjusted their work patterns by setting task priority scales, limiting workloads considered less urgent, and building academic collaborations with fellow lecturers, while some also tried to create boundaries between professional and personal life. Some also used emotion-focused coping through non-academic activities such as sports, religious activities, and time with family, viewed not merely as relaxation but as efforts to maintain emotional balance amid high academic demands.

One informant said:

“Sekarang saya lebih memilih membuat skala prioritas. Tidak semua harus sempurna sekaligus. Saya juga mulai belajar kerja kolaboratif supaya beban tidak terlalu berat.” (“Now I prefer to create a priority scale. Not everything has to be perfect at once. I am also starting to learn collaborative work so that the burden is not too heavy.”) (P09)

Another added:

“Saya mulai membatasi membuka pesan pekerjaan di malam hari. Dulu hampir setiap waktu selalu mengecek grup atau email kampus, tetapi sekarang saya berusaha memberi ruang untuk diri sendiri.” (“I have started to limit checking work messages at night. I used to check the campus group or emails almost all the time, but now I try to give myself some space.”) (P07)

These strategies took five forms: time management and setting priorities, collaboration and social support, emotion-focused coping through non-academic activities, delineation of work and personal life spaces, and negotiation of academic identity in interpreting the teaching profession. Problem-focused coping through time management and priority setting was the most dominant, used by 86.7% of informants (Table 2), followed by collaboration and social support (70.0%) and emotion-focused coping (60.0%).

5. Academic Idealism as a Psychological Anchor

Amid high academic and administrative pressure and institutional performativity demands, academic idealism remained an important factor that helped young lecturers at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Makassar State University, maintain their motivation and professional sustainability (Table 2). Observation added that most young lecturers continued to show commitment to learning and academic interaction despite work situations that demand high productivity. Some still strove to develop their teaching methods, guide students, and

maintain the quality of their academic duties even when faced with administrative demands and institutional achievement targets.

One informant said:

“Kalau hanya mengejar target mungkin lama-lama bisa jenuh. Tapi saya masih percaya bahwa menjadi dosen itu bukan sekadar soal publikasi atau angka kinerja, ada tanggung jawab moral untuk mendidik mahasiswa.” (“If it is only about chasing targets, one might eventually get bored. But I still believe that being a lecturer is not merely about publications or performance numbers; there is a moral responsibility to educate students.”) (P12)

Another added:

“Kadang yang membuat bertahan bukan karena target institusi, tetapi karena masih ada keyakinan bahwa pekerjaan ini punya makna yang lebih besar.” (“Sometimes what keeps one going is not because of institutional targets, but because there is still a belief that this work has a greater meaning.”) (P08)

These experiences took five forms: orientation toward the quality of education and knowledge development, moral responsibility toward students, pursuit of professional meaning, commitment to the development of knowledge, and efforts to maintain academic identity. Orientation toward educational quality and knowledge development was the most dominant, reported by 80.0% of informants (Table 2), followed by moral responsibility toward students (66.7%) and professional meaning that mitigates pressure (56.7%).

Discussion

Burnout among early-career lecturers arises less from the weight of any single task than from the convergence of academic and administrative demands on people who are still adapting to the institution (Table 2). Teaching, research, publication, and reporting arrive together just as young lecturers are learning the administrative system and building their academic identity, so exhaustion stems from simultaneity and timing as much as from volume. This is consistent with burnout as exhaustion arising from an imbalance between institutional demands and individual capacity (Cadena-Povea et al., 2025), but it locates the imbalance in the interaction between newcomers' vulnerability and institutional expectations. From a socio-cultural perspective, performativity turns productivity into the main measure of professional success, which reproduces a hyper-productive culture (Alenezi, 2021; Gonzales et al., 2022; Urakova & Pyyhtinen, 2025), sustains performance pressure through competitive work culture (Cao et al., 2025), and shapes early-career scholars' professional identities with consequences for their health and social relations (Mula et al., 2022). The declining motivation observed alongside exhaustion suggests that burnout also affects commitment to the work, which leads into the discussion of value exhaustion below. Institutional responses should therefore address the conditions that produce burnout, such as mentoring and balanced teaching loads (Iloakasia, 2024), not only individual stress management.

The clash between idealism and performativity (Table 2) suggests that idealism is neither simply preserved nor abandoned but continuously renegotiated. Lecturers who entered the profession to develop knowledge and teach well find that the measurable outputs the system rewards gradually become the object of their effort, so quality is traded for speed not because they value it less but because the structure leaves little room to act on it. From a socio-cultural perspective, a performance-based culture redefines professional success, making measurable

output the standard against which values are judged, which is consistent with academic performativity (Deswara et al., 2023) and with ethically conflicted compliance rather than open resistance or acceptance. Burnout therefore extends beyond fatigue into value exhaustion: a loss of meaning when held values can no longer be expressed in rewarded work. For early-career lecturers this also shapes the negotiation of professional identity, since values and identity are still forming while demands to conform are already in place (Stamati & Willmott, 2023). Their experience is thus the outcome of interaction among institutional structures, performance demands, and the value systems that develop within higher education.

The normalization of work beyond formal hours and the fear of falling behind (Table 2) suggest that competitive academic culture dissolves the temporal and spatial limits of academic work: when tasks follow lecturers into evenings, weekends, and holidays, rest itself becomes a perceived risk to one's standing. From the perspective of academic performativity, productivity shifts from a job requirement to a marker of professional legitimacy, and young lecturers, who are still establishing their identity, appear particularly receptive, using senior colleagues' records as the reference for their own pace. These standards are internalized into daily routines and into self-understanding as a productive academic, which explains why the boundary between professional and personal life erodes. This extends research showing that competitive environments increase educators' work pressure (Deswara et al., 2023; Iloakasia, 2024) by showing that the pressure is symbolic as well as structural, sustained through social comparison, collective expectations, and internalized productivity standards. Burnout is thus tied not only to the amount of work but also to how academic culture shapes the way individuals interpret professional success.

The prevalence of prioritizing, collaboration, and emotional regulation (Table 2) suggests that coping among young lecturers is not only individual stress reduction but also social adaptation to a competitive academic structure. Consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's coping theory and with evidence that problem-solving strategies tend to protect against burnout (Nisar Ul Haq et al., 2020; Zhao & Ding, 2020), the dominant strategies are shaped by the specific pressures young lecturers face: priority setting responds to the simultaneity of demands, and limiting work communication after hours responds to the erosion of boundaries, so coping targets the mechanisms through which burnout develops. Because collaboration and boundary setting emerged through interaction with colleagues and the academic environment, coping appears as a collective process, which extends research that treats it as an individual response (Lawer et al., 2025) and supports its view as social negotiation within a competitive system (Gultom, 2022; Kaborloomene et al., 2023). The negotiation of academic identity indicates that young lecturers are also deciding what kind of academics they wish to be, so coping helps sustain well-being and idealism, although individual strategies carry limits when the conditions that produce burnout remain unchanged.

The persistence of educational orientation, moral responsibility toward students, and professional meaning (Table 2) suggests that academic idealism is not only a professional value underlying career choice but also a psychological anchor that helps young lecturers maintain emotional stability, purpose, and professional identity under pressure. This qualifies the earlier discussion of value exhaustion: the same idealism that makes performativity painful also sustains commitment, so it acts as both a source of strain and a resource, which addresses the

question of whether idealism operates as one or the other. Rather than producing an immediate decline in commitment, burnout prompts meaning-making that draws less on institutional rewards than on relationships with students and the belief that the work has a larger purpose, and this links to coping through the negotiation of academic identity. The results extend research that positions idealism as professional ethics or intellectual identity (Ogwueru & Augusta, 2025) by showing its psychological function as a source of resilience. The professional continuity of young lecturers therefore depends not only on managing workload but also on upholding a value system that gives the profession meaning.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that burnout among young lecturers is not merely an individual psychological issue but the outcome of interaction between simultaneous academic and administrative demands and a competitive academic culture that normalizes hyperproductivity and blurs the boundary between work and personal life. Under performativity pressure, burnout extends beyond exhaustion into value exhaustion, as the idealism lecturers hold conflicts with the work the system rewards. Young lecturers respond with coping strategies that are individual and social, namely prioritizing tasks, collaborating with colleagues, setting boundaries, and engaging in non-academic activities, while academic idealism acts as a psychological anchor that sustains motivation, professional meaning, and academic identity, even as it remains a source of strain.

Theoretically, the study contributes a socio-cultural perspective on academic burnout by integrating burnout, academic idealism, and coping into a single analytical framework. Practically, the findings can inform university policies on mentoring, balanced workloads, and psychosocial support for junior faculty. Because the study is a case study at one faculty, future research is recommended to use mixed methods or longitudinal designs across career stages and institutional contexts.

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