

Social Support and Academic Burnout among University Students Living in an Islamic Boarding School in Pekanbaru, Indonesia

Ainun Salsya Agfirlila¹, Muhammad Jais², Wilasari Arien³

^{1,2,3} Community Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia.

Email: ainun.salsya4791@student.unri.ac.id¹, muhammadjais@lecturer.unri.ac.id², wilasariarien@lecturer.unri.ac.id³.

Abstract: University students who live in Islamic boarding schools simultaneously face academic demands and structured religious-residential obligations, which may increase vulnerability to academic burnout. This study examined the level of perceived social support and academic burnout and tested whether social support was associated with lower academic burnout among university santri at the Miftahul Huda Student Islamic Boarding School in Pekanbaru, Indonesia. A quantitative ex post facto, cross-sectional design was used. From a population of 135 students, 101 respondents were selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected between October 2025 and January 2026 using researcher-developed five-point questionnaires. Following a 30-person pilot test, the social-support instrument retained 39 items and the academic-burnout instrument retained 37 items; both showed very high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .988). Perceived social support had a mean score of 3.33, whereas academic burnout had a mean score of 3.78. Emotional support was the highest-rated support dimension (M = 3.36), while low academic self-confidence was the highest burnout indicator (M = 3.80). Simple linear regression showed that social support was negatively associated with academic burnout (B = -1.300, SE = .225, t = -5.767, p < .001), explaining 25.1% of the variance in burnout (R² = .251; adjusted R² = .244). The findings indicate that social support is a meaningful protective resource but is insufficient on its own; prevention strategies should also address workload, time management, self-efficacy, recovery, and coordination between academic and boarding-school responsibilities.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic burnout has become an important concern in higher education because prolonged exposure to demanding coursework, evaluation pressure, time constraints, and uncertainty about academic performance can erode students' psychological resources. Academic stress is not limited to the amount of work that students must complete; it also reflects perceived pressure to perform, concerns about failure, and the mismatch between academic demands and available coping resources (Bedewy & Gabriel, 2015). In the student context, burnout is commonly conceptualized through exhaustion, cynical or detached attitudes toward study, and diminished academic efficacy (Schaufeli et al., 2002). A recent systematic review further indicates that academic burnout arises from interacting academic, psychological, social, lifestyle, and structural risks rather than from a single cause (Sukamto et al., 2026).

The problem may be particularly salient for university students who also live as santri in an Islamic boarding school. Unlike students whose daily responsibilities are concentrated primarily on university study, university santri must negotiate two structured domains: formal higher education and the religious, communal, and disciplinary routines of a residential pesantren. In the Miftahul Huda setting, these routines include collective worship, Qur'anic study, memorization, community duties, and other scheduled activities alongside lectures, assignments, examinations, and campus obligations. This dual role can compress recovery time and intensify role conflict. The thesis from which this article was developed documented fatigue, limited rest, difficulty balancing deadlines, and reduced confidence as recurring experiences among participants.

Academic burnout is therefore better understood as an outcome of demand–resource imbalance than as a simple failure of individual endurance. Conservation-of-resources perspectives propose that burnout becomes more likely when demands repeatedly consume personal and contextual resources without sufficient restoration (Alarcon et al., 2011). Indonesian evidence similarly links low academic self-efficacy and weak engagement with higher burnout among university students (Arlinkasari & Akmal, 2017). For university santri, this imbalance may be amplified because time, sleep, attention, and emotional energy must be allocated across two institutions with overlapping expectations.

One resource that may reduce this imbalance is social support. Social support can function through both direct and stress-buffering pathways: feeling integrated into supportive relationships can improve well-being generally, while access to responsive interpersonal resources can attenuate the effects of stressful events (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Meta-analytic evidence across student populations shows that greater social support is consistently associated with lower student burnout, with school- or teacher-based support showing particularly strong relationships and parent and peer support also contributing significantly (Kim et al., 2018). More broadly, meta-analytic work on burnout indicates that the source and function of support matter because support can replenish resources that are threatened by chronic demands (Halbesleben, 2006).

Studies focused specifically on university students reinforce this protective interpretation. Ye et al. (2021) found that social support was linked to lower academic burnout through psychological mechanisms involving core self-evaluation and coping. During the pandemic, Muflihah and Savira (2021) likewise reported that perceived social support significantly predicted lower academic burnout among Indonesian university students. In another higher-education context, perceived support from teachers and peers was associated with lower burnout partly through stronger interaction engagement (Liu et al., 2023). These findings suggest that support is not merely a background condition; it can shape how students appraise demands, seek help, remain engaged, and sustain a sense of competence.

However, the presence of many people in a residential educational environment does not automatically guarantee effective support. Students may be surrounded by peers and authority figures while still experiencing limited emotional validation, insufficient academic guidance, or inadequate recognition of their efforts. The distinction is important because the present study operationalized social support through esteem support, emotional support, and informational support. These forms of support address different needs: recognition can reinforce academic confidence, emotional support can reduce perceived isolation during

stressful periods, and informational support can help students identify practical ways to manage assignments and institutional demands.

Evidence from Islamic boarding-school contexts remains comparatively limited. Nurhidayah et al. (2024) found that academic self-efficacy and social support were related to academic burnout among santri, indicating that supportive relationships may be protective within pesantren-based education. Nevertheless, much of the existing literature concerns school-age santri or general university populations. Fewer studies have examined university students who are simultaneously members of higher-education institutions and residents of a student pesantren, where social support is potentially available from family, campus peers, lecturers, fellow santri, and pesantren managers. This multi-source support environment, combined with dual-role demands, creates a distinctive context in which to test the social support burnout relationship.

Accordingly, this study had three objectives: to describe perceived social support among university santri at the Miftahul Huda Student Islamic Boarding School in Pekanbaru, to describe their level and pattern of academic burnout, and to test whether social support was significantly associated with academic burnout. The study hypothesized that higher social support would be associated with lower academic burnout. The study contributes context-specific evidence from Indonesian residential Islamic higher-education life and, by examining esteem, emotional, and informational support alongside low confidence, task overload, and emotional exhaustion, provides a practical basis for designing support systems that are sensitive to students' dual academic and religious-residential roles.

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design and Setting

This study used a quantitative ex post facto design with an associative, cross-sectional analytical approach. The design was selected because social support and academic burnout were measured as naturally occurring characteristics rather than manipulated experimentally. Consequently, the analysis was intended to estimate statistical association and predictive contribution rather than establish causal effects. The study was conducted at the Miftahul Huda Student Islamic Boarding School in Tuah Karya, Pekanbaru, Indonesia, between October 2025 and January 2026. The boarding school provides a residential religious-learning environment for students enrolled in different university programs in Pekanbaru.

B. Population, Sample, and Data Collection

The target population consisted of 135 university santri living at the boarding school. The thesis reported the use of simple random sampling and a 5% error level, producing a final study sample of 101 respondents. The analyzed sample included 38 men and 63 women. Quantitative data were collected primarily through self-administered questionnaires. Observation and documentation were also used to characterize the setting, and brief interviews were used as contextual support for interpreting participants' experiences; these qualitative comments were not treated as a separate qualitative dataset or included in the inferential statistical model.

C. Measures and Instrument Quality

Perceived social support was measured using a researcher-developed five-point frequency questionnaire covering three dimensions: esteem support, emotional support,

and informational support. Academic burnout was measured using a second researcher-developed five-point questionnaire covering low academic self-confidence, task overload, and emotional exhaustion. Higher scores on the social-support scale represented greater perceived support, whereas higher burnout scores represented more frequent or intense burnout-related experiences. The instruments were developed by reviewing the relevant theoretical literature, defining indicators and sub-indicators, constructing item grids, drafting positively and negatively keyed items, and pilot-testing the measures.

The pilot test involved 30 university santri. Item validity was evaluated using item–total correlations with a critical r value of .361. For the social-support instrument, 6 of 45 initial items were removed, leaving 39 items, the post-deletion Cronbach’s alpha was .988. For the academic-burnout instrument, 6 of 43 initial items were removed, leaving 37 items, the post-deletion Cronbach’s alpha was also .988. These coefficients indicate very high internal consistency in the pilot sample. Because the instruments were locally constructed, however, their dimensional structure should be confirmed in future work using larger samples and factor-analytic procedures. Recent psychometric work on a santri specific adaptation of an academic-burnout instrument also underlines the importance of culturally and contextually validated measurement for pesantren populations (Robbani et al., 2026).

D. Statistical Analysis

Data were processed using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Descriptive analyses summarized the overall and indicator level means and the frequency distribution of social support and academic burnout. Prior to regression, normality was examined using the one-sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and graphical inspection, while linearity was evaluated using the deviation-from-linearity test. The primary inferential analysis used simple linear regression with social support as the predictor and academic burnout as the outcome. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$. The model coefficient (B), standard error, t statistic, F statistic, R^2 , and adjusted R^2 are reported. Because the design included only one predictor, no substantive multicollinearity assessment was required for the article-level analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

1. Descriptive Profile of Social Support and Academic Burnout

The mean perceived social-support score was 3.33 on the five-point response scale. Based on the category boundaries used in the original descriptive analysis, 62 respondents (61.4%) were in the medium social-support category and 39 (38.6%) were in the high category; no respondent was classified in the very-low, low, or very-high categories. Academic burnout had a higher mean score of 3.78. Most respondents were in the high burnout category ($n = 62$, 61.4%), followed by very high ($n = 21$, 20.8%), medium ($n = 16$, 15.8%), and low ($n = 2$, 2.0%); no respondent was in the very-low category. Thus, the sample was characterized by moderate perceived support but predominantly high academic burnout.

Table 1. Descriptive indicators of social support and academic burnout

Construct / Indicator	Mean	Primary interpretation	Frequency profile
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Social support, overall	3.33	Medium	61.4% medium; 38.6% high
Esteem support	3.32	Indicator mean	—
Emotional support	3.36	Indicator mean	—
Informational support	3.35	Indicator mean	—
Academic burnout, overall	3.78	High	61.4% high; 20.8% very high
Low academic self-confidence	3.8	Indicator mean	—
Task overload	3.75	Indicator mean	—
Emotional exhaustion	3.77	Indicator mean	—

2. Indicator-Level Patterns

Among the three social-support dimensions, emotional support had the highest mean ($M = 3.36$), followed closely by informational support ($M = 3.35$) and esteem support ($M = 3.32$). Although the differences were small, the relatively lower esteem-support score is practically relevant because recognition, positive feedback, and confidence-building may be especially important for students who must perform across both academic and pesantren roles. The item analysis in the thesis further suggested that peer praise and encouragement were meaningful sources of confidence, while respondents reported less certainty that recognition from others strengthened their own perceived competence.

Within academic burnout, low academic self-confidence had the highest indicator mean ($M = 3.80$), followed by emotional exhaustion ($M = 3.77$) and task overload ($M = 3.75$). Specific high-scoring experiences included discouragement after receiving low examination scores, physical fatigue associated with insufficient rest, and daytime sleepiness during learning activities. These patterns indicate that burnout in this sample was not limited to workload volume; it also involved reduced efficacy beliefs and depletion of emotional and physical resources.

3. Assumption Checks

The one-sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov tests yielded $p = .200$ for both social support and academic burnout, indicating no statistically significant departure from normality under the criterion used in the study. Graphical inspection of the normal P–P plot and residual histogram was also reported as compatible with approximately normal residuals. The deviation-from-linearity test yielded $p = .541$, supporting the use of a linear model for the relationship between social support and academic burnout.

4. Association between Social Support and Academic Burnout

Simple linear regression indicated that social support was significantly and negatively associated with academic burnout. The unstandardized coefficient for social support was $B = -1.300$ ($SE = .225$), $t = -5.767$, $p < .001$, with an approximate 95% confidence interval of $[-1.746, -0.854]$. The overall regression model was significant, $F(1, 99) = 33.256$, $p < .001$. The model explained 25.1% of the variance in academic burnout ($R^2 = .251$; adjusted $R^2 = .244$), leaving 74.9% of the variance associated with other variables not included in the model. The negative coefficient supports the study hypothesis: higher perceived social support was associated with lower academic burnout.

Table 2. Simple linear regression predicting academic burnout

Term	B	SE	t	p	95% CI for B
Constant	29.821	29.455	1.013	0.314	—
Social support	-1.3	0.225	-5.767	< .001	[-1.746, -0.854]

Model summary: $F(1, 99) = 33.256, p < .001; R^2 = .251; adjusted R^2 = .244; standard error of the estimate = 16.256.$

B. Discussion

This study examined social support as a protective correlate of academic burnout among university students living in a residential Islamic boarding-school environment. Three findings are central. First, perceived social support was moderate overall, suggesting that respondents had access to meaningful interpersonal resources but did not experience support at uniformly high levels. Second, academic burnout was predominantly high, with more than four in five respondents classified in the high or very-high categories. Third, social support was significantly and negatively associated with burnout and accounted for 25.1% of its variance. These results suggest that supportive relationships are important in this population, but they cannot fully offset the cumulative demands created by university study and structured pesantren life.

The inverse social-support–burnout relationship is consistent with both theoretical and empirical literature. Cohen and Wills (1985) argued that social support can protect well-being by providing resources that become especially valuable under stress, while conservation-of-resources theory emphasizes the importance of preserving and replenishing resources when demands are chronic (Alarcon et al., 2011). At the student level, the meta-analysis by Kim et al. (2018), which synthesized 19 studies and 95,434 participants, found an overall negative relationship between social support and student burnout. The present finding therefore extends a well-established pattern into a university-santri setting where demands arise from two interconnected educational systems.

The magnitude of the observed relationship is also comparable with prior higher-education evidence. Ye et al. (2021) showed that social support was related to lower academic burnout among university students through psychological and coping pathways. Muflihah and Savira (2021) reported that perceived social support predicted lower academic burnout in an Indonesian university sample, while Liu et al. (2023) demonstrated that support from teachers and peers was linked with lower burnout partly through interaction engagement. In an Islamic boarding-school context, Nurhidayah et al. (2024) likewise identified a negative relationship between social support and academic burnout. The convergence of these findings suggests that the protective value of support is robust across different educational environments, even though the strength of the association depends on context and other personal resources.

The indicator pattern offers additional insight into how support may operate in this population. Emotional support had the highest mean among the three support dimensions, which is plausible in a communal residential environment where peers live and study together. Informational support was similarly prominent, indicating that students may obtain advice, suggestions, and practical guidance from people around them. Esteem support was slightly lower. This difference matters because the highest burnout indicator was low academic self-confidence. Recognition of effort, constructive feedback, and

affirmation of competence may therefore be especially valuable targets for intervention. Rather than relying only on general encouragement, pesantren managers and university staff could create structured opportunities for feedback that acknowledges students' progress in both academic and residential responsibilities.

At the same time, the relatively high task-overload and emotional-exhaustion scores demonstrate why social support cannot be treated as a complete solution. Students reported difficulty balancing concurrent responsibilities, disrupted rest, late-night work, and fatigue. Social support may improve coping with these pressures, but it cannot eliminate excessive workloads or restore sleep by itself. The 2026 systematic review by Sukanto et al. identifies academic workload, psychological vulnerability, limited social support, lifestyle factors, and institutional conditions as interrelated burnout risks, while protective factors include self-efficacy, adaptive coping, supportive relationships, and a healthy academic environment. The unexplained 74.9% of variance in the present model is therefore theoretically expected and points to variables such as workload, time management, sleep and recovery, academic self-efficacy, coping style, motivation, role conflict, and the coordination of schedules across campus and pesantren.

The findings have practical implications for both pesantren management and higher-education stakeholders. Peer mentoring could be used to strengthen emotional and informational support, while regular advisor check-ins could identify students who are struggling to manage deadlines or experiencing sustained exhaustion. Families can remain an important source of emotional affirmation even when students live away from home. More importantly, support initiatives should be paired with structural measures: coordination of intensive pesantren activities during examination periods, protected rest time, access to counseling, time-management training, and clear referral pathways between boarding-school managers and university support services. A resource-oriented intervention package is more consistent with the study's evidence than a support-only approach.

Several limitations should temper interpretation. The cross-sectional ex post facto design cannot establish that social support causes reductions in burnout; reverse or reciprocal relationships are also plausible. All primary variables were measured through self-report, which introduces shared-method bias. The sample came from one boarding school in Pekanbaru, limiting generalizability to other pesantren models, universities, or regions. In addition, both questionnaires were researcher-developed. Although pilot reliability was very high, internal consistency alone does not establish construct validity, and the small pilot sample was insufficient for robust factor analysis. Future studies should use larger multi-site samples, confirm the dimensional structure of the measures, and consider validated santri-specific instruments such as the recent adaptation reported by Robbani et al. (2026). Longitudinal or mixed-method designs would also help clarify how changes in support, workload, and self-efficacy precede changes in burnout.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a contextually distinctive contribution. University santri occupy an intersection between higher education and residential religious education, and their support network can span family, lecturers, campus peers, fellow santri, and pesantren managers. Demonstrating a significant inverse association between social support and burnout in this setting suggests that social relationships should be understood as part of the educational resource system. The result also cautions against

individualizing burnout: effective prevention requires supportive relationships together with realistic workload, opportunities for recovery, and institutional coordination.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that university santri at the Miftahul Huda Student Islamic Boarding School in Pekanbaru experienced a combination of moderate perceived social support and predominantly high academic burnout. Social support was significantly and negatively associated with academic burnout, with the regression model explaining 25.1% of the variance. Emotional and informational support were relatively prominent, whereas esteem support was slightly lower; at the same time, low academic self-confidence emerged as the highest burnout indicator, followed by emotional exhaustion and task overload. These patterns indicate that supportive relationships may help students preserve psychological resources while facing simultaneous university and pesantren demands, but support alone cannot compensate for sustained workload, limited recovery, and role-management difficulties. The study contributes to the academic-burnout literature by focusing on university students who live within a residential Islamic educational setting and therefore experience a distinctive combination of academic, religious, and communal responsibilities. For practice, pesantren managers and universities should strengthen peer and advisor support while also coordinating schedules, protecting recovery time, improving access to counseling, and developing students' time-management and self-efficacy resources. Future research should adopt multi-site and longitudinal designs, use stronger psychometric validation, and examine workload, sleep, coping, self-efficacy, motivation, and role conflict as complementary predictors. Such work would provide a more complete explanation of burnout and support more targeted prevention strategies for university santri.

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