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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**Academic Pressure on University Lecturers in the Transition toward World-Class Universities (WCU)**

**Laili Qomariyah<sup>1</sup> ✉, Dian Ekowati<sup>2</sup>, Mohammad Fakhruddin Mudzakkir<sup>3</sup>, Fiona Siska Dinda Nadia<sup>4</sup> Suacillo<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Postgraduate School Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia Jalan Airlangga No. 4-6, Airlangga, Kec. Gubeng, Surabaya

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Economic Airlangga, Ins and Business, Departement of Management Science, Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia Jalan Airlangga No. 4-6, Airlangga, Kec. Gubeng, Surabaya

<sup>3</sup> Postgraduate School Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia Jalan Airlangga No. 4-6, Airlangga, Kec. Gubeng, Surabaya

<sup>4</sup> Postgraduate School Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia Jalan Airlangga No. 4-6, Airlangga, Kec. Gubeng, Surabaya

**Corresponding Author:** Laili Qomariyah, **E-mail:** [laili.qomariyah-2022@pasca.unair.ac.id](mailto:laili.qomariyah-2022@pasca.unair.ac.id)

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**| ABSTRACT**

This study examines the forms of academic pressure in Indonesian higher education institutions in their efforts to achieve World-Class University (WCU) status. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, the findings reveal six main forms of pressure experienced by lecturers: teaching demands, funding constraints, administrative workload, community service obligations, academic career requirements, and publication expectations. These pressures arise as consequences of government policies, international ranking targets, and internal institutional strategies. Although they create workload and psychological burdens, academic pressure also triggers positive changes, including the enhancement of lecturers' hard and soft skills, increased research productivity, and the expansion of academic networks. Support in the form of funding, incentives, mentoring, and international collaboration plays an important role in transforming pressure into constructive motivation. As a result, lecturers' performance in the three pillars of higher education (tridharma) improves, institutional reputation strengthens, and students benefit through enhanced competence and confidence. Therefore, academic pressure can serve as a catalyst for positive transformation when properly managed through systemic support and lecturers' intrinsic motivation.

**| KEYWORDS**

Academic pressure; lecturers; higher education; World-Class University; tridharma; academic performance; Indonesia

**| ARTICLE INFORMATION**

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**I. Introduction**

Since the emergence of global university rankings in the early 2000s, higher education institutions have increasingly aligned their policies and strategies with globalisation and international competitiveness agendas (Rhein & Nanni, 2023). In Indonesia, improving universities' positions in global rankings has become a strategic component of higher education internationalisation and competitiveness policies over the past decade (Rachman et al., 2024). The existence of world-class university rankings has led the government to revise its policies (Kang & Mok, 2024). These changes are linked to the Indonesian government's continuous encouragement and policy support for universities to achieve World-Class University (WCU) status through internationalisation, research productivity enhancement, and global competitiveness initiatives (Anisyah et al., 2025). The government is promoting policies to accelerate academic improvement and increase its involvement in achieving WCU status (Do & Mai, 2023). However, research on world-class universities is a highly complex endeavor requiring substantial resources (Muller, 2017). World-class university initiatives have become a strategic agenda for both governments and higher education

institutions, with universities actively restructuring their governance and performance systems to meet global competitiveness and ranking expectations (Sulistiyono et al., 2025).

Universities are implementing reforms in the areas of administration, management, and staff capacity (Kang & Mok, 2024). These reforms have resulted in significant changes in academic professional practices, institutional governance, and research cultures within universities pursuing global competitiveness and world-class status (Sulistiyono et al., 2025). A series of targeted reforms have been implemented in human resource management systems and performance evaluation, which have produced not only desired behaviors and conditions but also undesired ones (Gao & Li, 2020). The impacts of institutional reforms vary across universities because each institution adopts different strategies in carrying out its core missions of teaching, research, and community engagement, which are shaped by its governance, resources, and strategic priorities (Fia et al., 2023).

### 1.1 Academic Pressure

Currently, universities have begun to focus on internationalization. This status is not merely a symbol of prestige but also a recognition of high-quality education, research, and social contributions. To achieve this goal, universities must undergo various strategic and structural changes (Salmi, 2009). Education, research, and social contributions are the activities of faculty members, known in Indonesia as the “tridharma,” which constitute the academic realm.

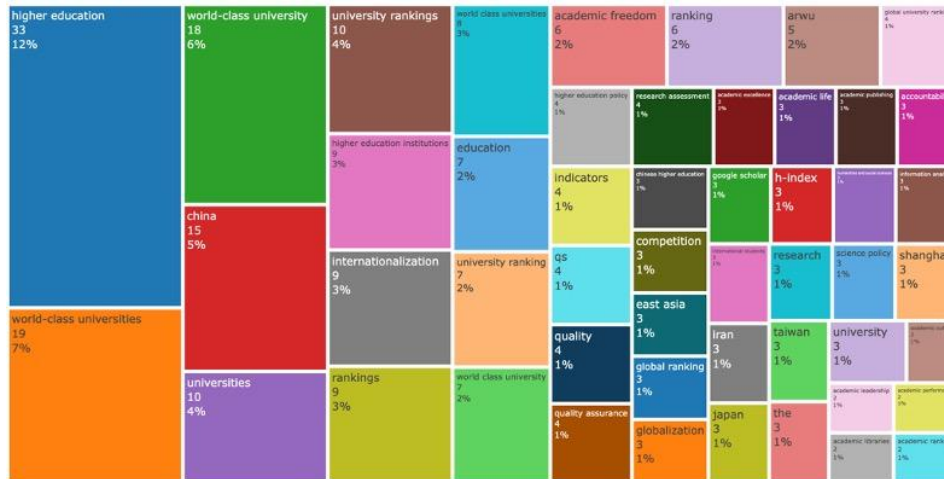
However, the journey toward becoming a World Class University (WCU) is fraught with challenges, one of which is academic pressure (Osareh et al., 2023). Prior to 1990, universities focused more on teaching than on research. At that time, research activities were a secondary priority after teaching. Now, there must be a balance between research and teaching, both of which must be of equally high quality in accordance with WCU requirements. However, not all universities are prepared for this academic shift (Takagi, 2018).

This phenomenon can be explained through the theory of *dynamic capabilities* proposed by Jossey and Reader (2012), which explains that organizations possess the capabilities to achieve competitive advantage. Organizations with strong dynamic capabilities can continuously adapt by integrating, renewing, and reconfiguring resources and competencies in response to environmental turbulence and strategic change (Zhang et al., 2023). Organizations that fail to develop and renew their capabilities are more likely to experience declining performance and reduced competitiveness in dynamic environments (Schilke et al., 2018; Teece, 2023). Universities with strong organizational capabilities are better able to respond to policy changes, internationalization demands, and global ranking pressures by reallocating resources and strengthening academic capacities (Sulistiyono et al., 2025). If this theory is applied to dissect and analyze the conditions of world-class universities, it implies that universities with low capabilities will struggle to achieve government targets (Xie, 2018).

The dynamics within a university depend on its response to demands and its ability to navigate toward transformation. The efforts undertaken by universities involve integrating, building, and reconfiguring their internal and external competencies (Rincón, 2024). Based on this, the dynamics occurring within universities can illustrate how phenomena unfold and the responses implemented by the institutions.

Over the past few decades, higher education systems worldwide have undergone various transformations due to demands from *stakeholders* (Guerrero & Menter, 2024). One such demand is the use of ranking methodologies as indicators for evaluating universities, which have placed a strong emphasis on academic performance—a pressure that has become a distinct academic burden for some institutions. This has ultimately become the focus for universities to improve their performance in line with WCU evaluation indicators (Horta, 2009). However, not all universities possess a strong human resource base to carry out academic activities with high quantity and quality (Zhou & Wu, 2016). This situation forces universities to adopt more innovative strategies to meet their targets (Oleksiyenko, 2022). Previous research on *academic pressure* at world-class universities was conducted by Kang and Mok (2024), who explained that *academic pressure* leads to the loss of research culture identity. The form of research culture in question is characterized by low innovation in research—where studies are conducted for short-term gains, such as producing publications quickly—as well as a lack of research creativity (Hong, 2022). The loss of *academic freedom* among researchers stems from the *top-down* nature of research conducted to ensure the achievement of government-mandated research targets. Rapid academic changes in universities can result in poor teaching quality, thereby damaging the institution's reputation. Quality teaching must be accompanied by curriculum updates aligned with international standards. *Academic pressure* in world-class universities is also reflected in the *talent* metrics they employ (Takagi, 2018). The lower the research capabilities of faculty members, the more difficult it will be for universities to produce research and publications in line with existing targets (Gao & Li, 2020). Existing research findings indicate that studies on the forms of *academic pressure* at world-class universities have not been conducted comprehensively. Based on this, the researcher aims to delve deeper into the forms of *academic pressure* at world-class universities.

An effort to ensure the novelty of this study involves analyzing the research landscape established by previous scholars. The researcher conducted a trend analysis of research on “academic pressure” at world-class universities using a bibliometric analysis approach, based on 212 articles retrieved from the Scopus database. Keywords and specific information from the bibliometric analysis of these journals were used to explore the relevance of the research topic. *Tree Map* (Figure 7) shows that the keyword “higher education” (12%) is a commonly used term. Additionally, the keyword WCU (7%) is the second most popular keyword. Other studies focusing on WCU are related to rankings, *academic culture*, *academic libraries*, *academic performance*, *academic freedom*, *academic excellence*, *academic publishing*, and *academic life*, among other topics. Furthermore, another focus of *academic research* within the WCU context pertains to specific countries, namely Iran, Japan, China, Taiwan, and other East Asian nations.



**Figure 1. Tree Map**

Source: Researcher’s data analysis

Based on prior research and the analyzed research map, it is evident that previous studies have centered on academic pressure specific to East Asian countries. Therefore, research on the topic of *academic pressure* in a comprehensive manner at world-class universities in Indonesia is a new topic that has not been addressed by previous researchers. Based on this, the research questions are:

- What forms does academic pressure take at universities aspiring to become WCU institutions?
- What are the patterns of academic pressure at universities aspiring to become WCU institutions?

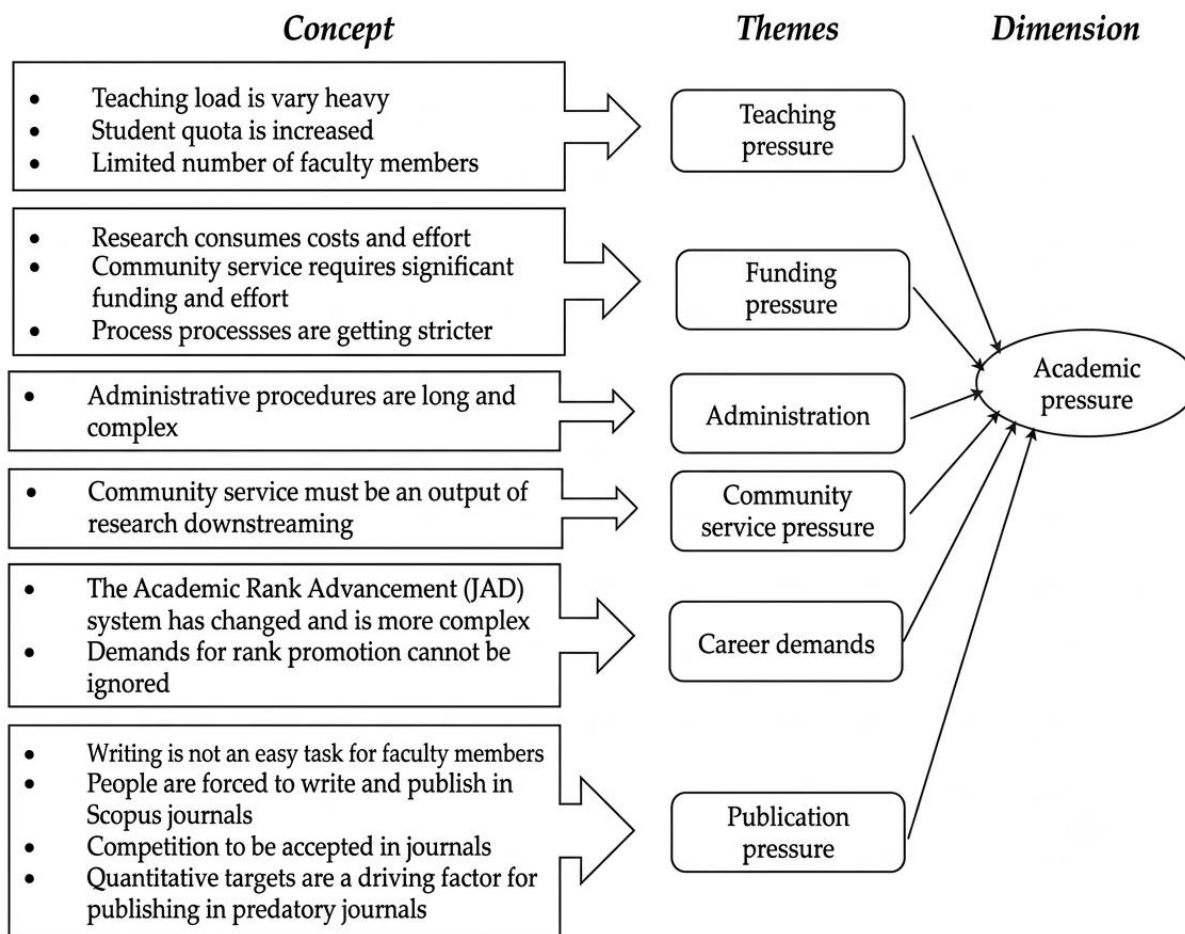
## II. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach using the case study method at universities in Indonesia that aim to rank among the top 1,000 in the QS World University Rankings (QS-WUR). Participants consisted of 4 faculty members with a positive research trend from 2015 to 2025, as well as 3 WCU-related policy makers at the universities. WCU-related policy makers were selected because they are the individuals who understand the changes in university strategies and policies toward WCU. The participants comprised 4 men and 3 women. The research was conducted over an average duration of 50–60 minutes. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format, and prior to the interview, each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form. During the interviews, the researcher recorded the sessions with the participants’ permission.

### III. Findings

#### Forms of Academic Pressure

The interview results revealed six themes related to academic pressure experienced by lecturers, namely teaching pressure, funding pressure, administrative pressure, community service pressure, academic career demands, and publication pressure. These forms of pressure are illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Forms of Academic Pressure**

In general, academic pressure emerged following policy changes implemented by universities in their efforts to achieve World-Class University (WCU) status. According to the participants, teaching workloads have increased substantially. This situation is primarily due to the growing student quota without a corresponding increase in the number of lecturers. One participant stated:

*"Untuk tantangannya pertama dari segi pengajaran alhamdulillah di prodi saya saat ini memang bebannya sangat banyak karena keterbatasan jumlah dosen dan quota mahasiswanya ditambah akan tetapi dengan penjadwalan yang bagus kan kita sampai terkadang sore itu masih ada kuliah."* (P2)

"The first challenge is related to teaching. In my study program, the workload is currently very high due to the limited number of lecturers while the student quota has increased. However, with good scheduling, we sometimes still have classes until late in the afternoon." (P2)

In addition to teaching-related pressures, participants identified funding demands for research and community service activities as another significant source of pressure. Obtaining funding has become increasingly selective and highly competitive, both for internal university grants and external government funding schemes. One participant explained:

*"....kemudian saya lihat juga untuk proses pendanaan juga semakin ketat saat ini, apakah dari dalam ataupun di pemerintah juga semakin ketat untuk bersaing disana." (P3)*

"I also see that the funding process has become increasingly stringent, both within the university and at the government level, making competition much tougher." (P3)

Furthermore, research and community service projects emphasizing downstream impact and practical implementation require substantial financial resources. Since these activities are expected to generate tangible benefits for society, lecturers often face additional financial and operational challenges. As one participant noted:

*"akan tetapi yang ketiga itu pengabdian masyarakat, nah itu sangat mempengaruhi karena pengabdian masyarakat itu membutuhkan dana dan tenaga yang cukup banyak," (P4)*

"The third aspect is community service, which greatly affects us because community service activities require considerable funding and effort." (P4)

Another source of pressure arises from the extensive administrative responsibilities assigned to lecturers. In addition to fulfilling the tridharma obligations, lecturers are required to complete various administrative tasks, including workload reports (BKD) and documentation related to academic promotion. One participant explained:

*"menurut saya itu penyederhanaan prosedur administratif mbak, jadi dosen itu kan sudah dibebani tridharma, jadi ketika administratifnya terlalu banyak dan rumit itu bisa membebani juga, artinya tanpa administrasi yang ruwet dosen bisa istilahnya lebih tancap gas lagi untuk berprestasi." (P2)*

"In my opinion, administrative procedures should be simplified. Lecturers are already burdened with the tridharma responsibilities, so when administrative processes become excessive and complicated, they create additional burdens. Without such complex administration, lecturers could focus more on achieving academic excellence." (P2)

In carrying out their duties, lecturers must not only focus on teaching, research, and community service but also deal with numerous administrative processes. Lengthy and complex administrative procedures create additional pressure, consuming time that could otherwise be devoted to designing research projects, writing scholarly articles, supervising students, or conducting community service activities. As a result, lecturers frequently experience administrative stress and fatigue because their work becomes more oriented toward fulfilling documentation requirements than engaging in substantive academic activities. This situation may ultimately reduce their effectiveness in conducting research and community service since much of their energy is expended on administrative matters.

Regarding community service activities, participants indicated that the burden can be reduced through research group grants and community service grant schemes. One participant stated:

*"....dengan adanya skema hibah grup riset yang termasuk pengabdian tadi ini sangat membantu karena setiap grup riset itu bisa melakukan minimal 1 program pengabdian masyarakat yang dimana itu untuk memenuhi output dari pengabdian masyarakat. Kalau misal itu misal harus ditopang sendiri itu biayanya akan menguras biaya dan tenaga, seperti itu mbak." (P1)*

"The existence of research group grant schemes that include community service activities is very helpful because each research group can implement at least one community service program to fulfill the required outputs. If these activities had to be supported individually, they would consume significant financial resources and effort." (P1)

Another form of pressure experienced by lecturers relates to achieving higher levels of Academic Rank (Jabatan Akademik Dosen/JAD). Advancing to the highest academic rank has become increasingly challenging, even for lecturers who have accumulated the required credit points (KUM). This is because additional performance indicators are now considered in promotion assessments. A participant explained:

*"....aturan yang sekarang kenaikan jabfung lebih lewat SKP, dan SKP itu jadi pokoknya dosen perilakunya bagus dia dapat nilai 25, itu tidak memandang nilai pengajaran, penelitian, pengabdian, nah sekarang tidak dipandang lagi itunya, yang penting ada pengajaran, penelitian, pengabdian, ok dapat nilai 25. Kalau jaman dulu publikasinya banyak berarti nilai penelitiannya banyak itu diakumulasi akan banyak sekali sehingga lebek cepat naik jabfungnya," (P4)*

"Under the current regulations, promotion is assessed more through the performance appraisal system (SKP). If a lecturer demonstrates good performance, they receive a score of 25 regardless of the specific teaching, research, or community service outputs. Previously, extensive publications would significantly increase research scores, making academic promotion much faster." (P4)

Participants also emphasized that lecturers can no longer ignore academic promotion targets. Promotion requirements encourage lecturers to engage actively in research and community service activities. One participant explained:

*"Kalau abai saja sekarang saya pikir nggak bisa ya karena kan untuk publikasi pun untuk kenaikan pangkat, itu kan mereka harus memiliki artikel ya, apakah walaupun di LK minimal di sinta 2 ya lalu guru besar, saya pikir mereka juga nggak bisa abai ya, cuma memang masalahnya kesadaran tersebut kapan timbulnya mungkin saat mereka kadar untuk menjadi guru besar atau LK gitu baru sadar ya. Tapi kalau dikatakan abai tidak. Mereka juga akan melihat....oh ini to syaratnya." (P5)*

"I do not think lecturers can simply ignore these requirements anymore because publications are essential for promotion. They must have published articles, at least in SINTA 2 journals for certain promotion levels, and even more for professorship. Therefore, they cannot neglect these requirements, although awareness often emerges only when they begin pursuing higher academic positions." (P5)

Publication pressure was identified as another major source of academic pressure. Lecturers are expected to publish in reputable journals and produce a substantial number of publications. Publishing extensively in Scopus-indexed journals is particularly challenging, especially for lecturers who lack strong external research networks. One participant stated:

*".....karena dengan adanya jejaring tadi misalnya ambil contoh publikasi penulisan paper ketika kita tidak punya jejaring, kita nulis sendiri itu otomatis outputnya tidak akan banyak." (P1)*

"Networks are important because, for example, in paper publication, if we do not have academic networks and write on our own, the publication output will naturally be limited." (P1)

Another participant added:

*"....Jadi kan cut off pertama 15, sekarang Sudah mulai banyak dorongan untuk publikasi di jurnal scopus" (P2)*

"The initial cut-off used to be 15, but now there is increasing pressure to publish in Scopus-indexed journals." (P2)

*"Orang dipaksa untuk menulis dan publikasi di jurnal yang scopus sekali lagi bukan hal yang mudah, sehingga menjadi kendala ya." (P1)*

"Being required to write and publish in Scopus-indexed journals is certainly not easy, and this becomes a significant challenge." (P1)

### Pattern of Academic Pressure

Academic pressure began with government policies requiring higher education institutions to orient themselves toward the QS World University Rankings (QS-WUR). Universities responded to these demands by establishing dedicated units responsible for managing ranking-related activities. One participant explained:

*"Sebetulnya perguruan tinggi eeeeeee sangat sangat concern saya kira ya dengan WCU itu sendiri, dengan tuntutan perankingan, itu sangat concern, itu dibuktikan dengan kita punya subdirektorat sendiri yang mengurus masalah regulasi dibawah direktorat kami" (P6)*

"Universities are, I believe, highly concerned about the World-Class University (WCU) agenda and ranking requirements. This concern is reflected in the establishment of a dedicated sub-directorate under our directorate that specifically manages ranking-related regulations." (P6)

However, universities do not perceive rankings as the ultimate objective of institutional management. Instead, rankings are viewed as a tool for institutional improvement.

*"Cuma mungkin kita melihat itu bukan tujuan akhirnya gitu, jadi indikator-indikator yang ada di perankingan itu sebetulnya sebagai guidance sebagai yang bisa dipakai untuk mengarahkan kita untuk menjadi kampus yang lebih baik begitu." (P7)*

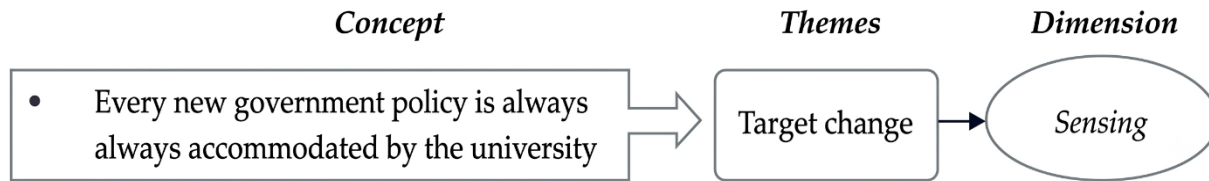
"We do not see rankings as the final goal. Rather, the indicators used in ranking systems serve as guidance that can direct us toward becoming a better university." (P7)

This perspective influences how universities engage in the sensing process. Institutions demonstrate a commitment to strengthening their fundamental capacities while simultaneously responding to the requirements imposed by international ranking agencies.

"Yang saya tangkap itu spirit itu jadi sambil membenahi sambil meningkatkan fundamental-fundamental yang ada di kampus ini kita juga akan mengikuti tuntutan-tuntutan lembaga perankingan ya kita diminta submit data ya kita ikuti." (P6)

"What I perceive is a spirit of continuously improving and strengthening the university's fundamentals while also complying with the requirements of ranking institutions. When they request data submissions, we comply accordingly." (P6)

The government's target of placing Indonesian universities among the top 1,000 institutions in the WCU rankings prompted universities to revise their institutional targets and adjust the support provided to lecturers as key operational actors. This finding emerged consistently from the interview data.



**Figure 3. University Policy Flow**

Participants explained that the WCU target introduced by the government in 2015 required substantial interpretation and adaptation. At that time, universities were still in the process of understanding the concept and implications of becoming a World-Class University.

"Kliatannya sudah mulai di 2015nya, nah inchargenya keliharannya jamannya Prof Irwan, Pak WR 4 kita, itu beliau juga ngurusin ranking Sebelum saya ada Pak Irwan, Pak Taufik, saya, Pak Budi. Ya..... Seperti halnya orang nggak tau apa-apa terus diberi target WCU, diberi target ranking, itu ya masih meraba-raba..... Saya kira begitu." (P6)

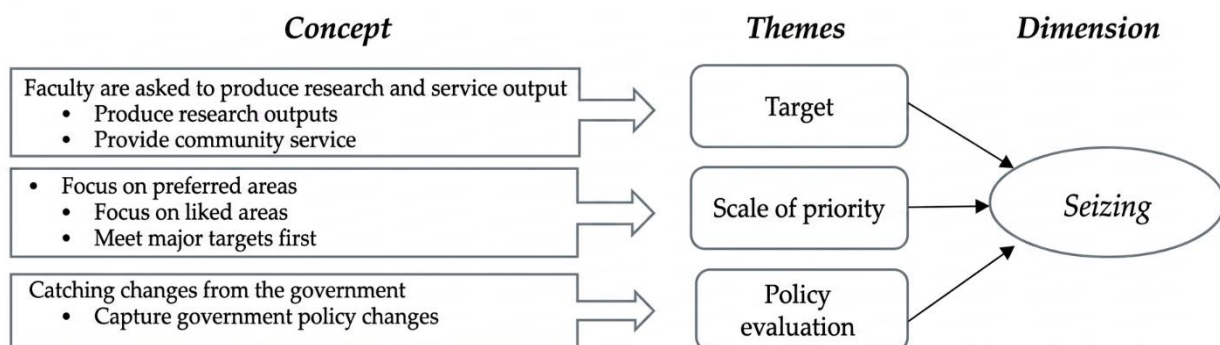
"It seems that the process started around 2015. At that time, the person in charge was Prof. Irwan, our Vice Rector IV, who was responsible for rankings. Before me there were Pak Irwan, Pak Taufik, myself, and Pak Budi. It was like being given a WCU target and ranking target without fully understanding what it meant, so we were still finding our way." (P6)

Participants also emphasized that the changes introduced around 2015 were clearly felt by lecturers. Prior to that period, academic pressure was not perceived as strongly as it is today.

"Yang menjadi perhatian saya, kebetulan saya kan sempat kuliah S3 dari tahun 2010 Sampai 2015, nah sehingga kalau di 2015 saya tidak terlalu merasakan sebenarnya itu." (P3)

"What stands out to me is that I was pursuing my doctoral studies from 2010 to 2015, so during that period I did not really experience these pressures directly." (P3)

The university's ability to sense emerging demands and environmental changes subsequently influenced its capacity to seize available opportunities. As a result, various support mechanisms and institutional programs were introduced to facilitate the achievement of WCU-related objectives.



**Figure 4. University Renstra and Rangking Dynamics**

Government expectations also prompted universities to revise their Strategic Plans (Renstra) by incorporating measurable ranking targets. One participant explained that institutional demands have increased steadily since the introduction of the WCU agenda.

*"Iya target baru pasti kita mengajukan renstra ya, di renstra kita lihat dari tahun ketahun ada tuntutan semakin meningkat posisi rankingnya dan seterusnya, tapi ranking itu bukan tujuan akhirnya meskipun itu dituliskan di renstra sebagai hal yang lebih mudah karena target itu kan harus measureable. Ya saya kita itu sudah di internalisasikan ya dari renstra itu target-target." (P6)*

"Whenever new targets are introduced, we revise our strategic plan. Over the years, we have seen increasing demands for higher ranking positions. However, rankings are not the ultimate goal, even though they are included in the strategic plan because targets need to be measurable. I believe these targets have been internalized through the strategic planning process." (P6)

The increasing demands have encouraged universities to evaluate existing policies in order to achieve institutional goals while considering their strengths and limitations. One area of policy evaluation concerns research funding programs.

*"penelitian ini mungkin kita akan mencoba mengevaluasi kebijakan-kebijakan yang ada ya, misalkan kayak global challenge dulu kan full funding ini kita coba untuk co-funding juga banyak yang mendaftar" (P5)*

"We are currently evaluating existing policies. For example, the Global Challenge program used to be fully funded, but now we are experimenting with a co-funding scheme, which has also attracted many applicants." (P5)

*"kemudian insentif remun itu juga agak disesuaikan ya supaya kan dulu ibaratnya orang baru belajar jadi conference juga dikasih remun Q4 juga dikasih remun yang cukup tinggi ini mau coba kita sesuaikan yang Q1 dinaikkan, jadi ada step-step yang encourage kita untuk membuat kita lebih baik-lebih baiklah gitu"*

"The remuneration incentives have also been adjusted. Previously, attending conferences or publishing in Q4 journals could receive relatively high incentives. Now we are trying to increase incentives for Q1 publications, creating gradual steps that encourage us to continuously improve."

The government's target of achieving a QS-WUR ranking within the top 1,000 institutions has driven substantial organizational changes within universities. Nevertheless, lecturers have responded differently to these changes. The WCU agenda has had significant implications for lecturers as the primary actors responsible for implementing the tridharma of higher education.

*"perankingan saya kira ada 2 mazhab besar mungkin ya, ada yang tidak begitu setuju dengan perankingan begitu kan. Saya kira ini juga bisa dijumpai di kampus-kampus yang lain gitu kan. Tapi ada juga yang "sambil meningkatkan kualitas sambil membenahi yang fundamental-fundamental yang ranking pun itu juga digarap". Jadi mazhab yang lain itu kan pokoknya natural aja nanti ranking kan akan mengikuti begitu, nggak usah ikut ranking dan seterusnya." (P4)*

"I think there are two major schools of thought regarding rankings. Some people do not really agree with ranking systems, and I believe this can also be found at other universities. Others argue that while improving quality and strengthening institutional fundamentals, ranking-related efforts should also be pursued. Another perspective is that rankings will naturally follow once quality improves, so there is no need to focus directly on rankings themselves." (P4)

As WCU performance standards increased, lecturers were confronted with new demands requiring adjustments in their performance, academic orientation, and daily work practices. The responses that emerged varied considerably, ranging from enthusiasm and motivation to feelings of pressure and adaptive behaviors that gradually shaped a new academic work culture.

Some lecturers responded positively to these changing targets by using them as motivation to improve the quality of their research and publications. They viewed the WCU agenda as an opportunity to expand international networks, access research grants, and enhance their academic competitiveness at the global level.

*"Baik, yang pertama minimal dulu mbak, artinya target, kewajiban sesuai beban kerja dosen atau BKD tercapai dulu, kemudian yang kedua dari tri dharma itu menurut saya, saya lebih condong di bidang penelitian memang sehingga memang saya bersemangat untuk publikasi dan mengembangkan jurnal yang ada di prodi," (P3)*

"First, the minimum targets and obligations according to the lecturer workload requirements (BKD) must be fulfilled. Beyond that, among the tridharma responsibilities, I am more inclined toward research, which motivates me to publish and develop the journal within my study program." (P3)

*"Jadi eeeee ini saya langsung fokus ke yang memang saya sukai yaitu penelitian, karena catatan pertama adalah semua terpenuhi dulu, kemudian yang kedua saya lebih condong di seni penelitian, kemudian yang ketiga perguruan tinggi itu selain memfasilitasi hibah riset juga memberikan insentif dan itu sudah bahkan di beberapa kampus yang saya temui, dan itu cukup memberikan*

*semangat dosen-dosen melakukan penelitian dan publikasi lebih banyak lagi. Kemudian kala saya sendiri, saya sebagai pengelola jurnal ya harapannya dengan meningkatkan penelitian juga bisa membawa jurnal saya sehingga kedepannya bisa terindeks internasional scopus seperti itu mbak." (P4)*

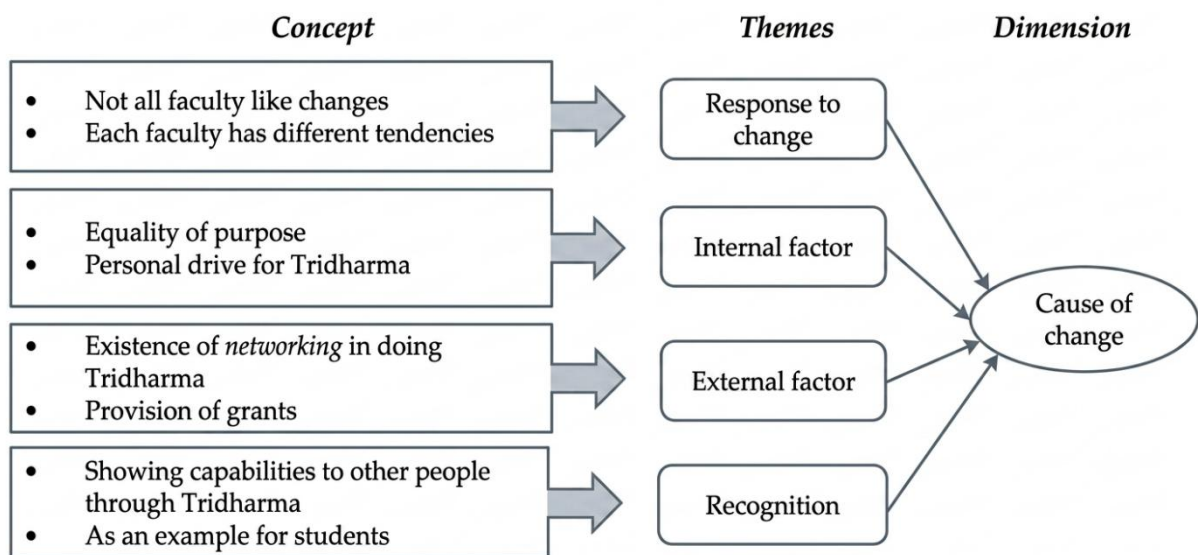
"I immediately focused on what I truly enjoy, namely research. First, all obligations must be fulfilled, and second, I am personally inclined toward research activities. Third, universities not only provide research grants but also offer incentives. I have seen this in several institutions, and it significantly motivates lecturers to conduct more research and publish more. As a journal manager myself, I hope that increasing research productivity will eventually help my journal become indexed internationally in Scopus." (P4)

*"Saya pikir tidak semuanya juga sih ya, karena saya lihat ada passion disana dan saya menyadari bahwa tidak semua dosen passionnya di penelitian, ada yang senang mengajar, apakah gayung bersambut atau tidak..... Saya melihat dari 2 sisi, memang ada beberapa dosen yang senang dengan itu ya, tapi beberapa dosen ya menjadi kendala bagi mereka, karena menulis juga bukan hal yang mudah ya apalagi dengan target di jurnal scopus itu ya." (P4)*

"I do not think everyone responds in the same way because I see that passion plays an important role. Not all lecturers are passionate about research; some prefer teaching. Looking at it from two perspectives, some lecturers enjoy these expectations, while for others they become a challenge because writing is not easy, especially when the target is publication in Scopus-indexed journals." (P4)

The increasing pressure to publish in reputable journals, participate in international conferences, and establish cross-border research collaborations has become a challenge that simultaneously stimulates academic enthusiasm. For many lecturers, the WCU agenda is not merely a burden but also an opportunity for both personal and institutional development.

Nevertheless, lecturers' responses to these changes varied considerably and were influenced by several factors. Interview findings revealed that one of the most important factors was the alignment between individual goals and institutional objectives.



**Figure 5. Alignment of Faculty Aspirations and Institutional Goals**

In carrying out the tridharma of higher education, lecturers often pursue personal goals related to career advancement, academic achievement, and social contribution. At the same time, universities seek to strengthen education, improve research quality, and optimize community service. These individual and institutional goals frequently complement one another, creating a harmonious relationship between lecturers' personal aspirations and the university's vision.

Within the research domain, lecturers aim to enhance their academic competencies, gain scholarly recognition, and advance their careers through publications and research grants. Universities share similar objectives, including increasing research quality and quantity, strengthening national and international reputations, and expanding collaborative networks. When lecturers' aspirations to publish internationally align with institutional goals of achieving World-Class University status, research outcomes

benefit both lecturers and universities. This alignment demonstrates that lecturers' personal achievements can become an integral component of institutional success.

*"Insyaallah sangat inline Karena perguruan tinggi terus mencoba maju ya dan saya lihat kebijakannya mendorong kita untuk terus maju sehingga untuk menjadi lebih maju terutama dalam konteks ini memperoleh pemeringkatan yang lebih baik, ya walaupun sekali lagi pemeringkatan itu menjadi debatable dan bukan segala-galanya ya bu ya. Tetapi itu kan menjadi salah satu tolok ukur bagi kita apakah kita berhasil atau tidaknya ya....salah satu ya....banyak hal lagi ya tolok ukurnya sehingga dengan adanya itu membuat saya terdorong untuk menjadi maju lagi."*

"I believe they are very much aligned because the university continuously strives to improve, and its policies encourage us to keep progressing. This is especially relevant in the context of achieving better rankings. Although rankings remain debatable and are certainly not everything, they serve as one indicator of whether we are successful. As a result, they motivate me to continue improving."

*"Kalau saya Pribadi memang saya senang menulis ya, sehingga itu inline dengan apa yang ingin saya capai sih, dan tentu saja itu bukan.....kalau saya Pribadi sih tidak menjadi tekanan yang terlalu tinggi ya. Dan kebetulan semenjak S3 itu kita sudah diarahkan untuk menulis, nah artinya sekali lagi itu sesuai dengan saya sendiri juga, saya senang menulis dan itu diarahkan kesana."*

"Personally, I enjoy writing, so these expectations are aligned with my own goals. For me, they do not create excessive pressure. Since my doctoral studies, I have been encouraged to write, and this matches my personal interests because I genuinely enjoy academic writing."

In addition to internal motivations, external drivers also encourage lecturers to fulfill their tridharma responsibilities. Research grants play a strategic role in increasing lecturers' publication productivity. Grants are not merely a source of funding but also function as policy instruments designed to encourage lecturers to produce scholarly outputs. Through grant support, lecturers gain additional resources that strengthen the research process from planning and implementation to publication.

*"Perguruan tinggi itu selain memfasilitasi hibah riset juga memberikan insentif dan itu sudah bahkan di beberapa kampus yang saya temui, dan itu cukup memberikan semangat dosen-dosen melakukan penelitian dan publikasi lebih banyak lagi."*

"Universities not only facilitate research grants but also provide incentives. I have observed this in several institutions, and it significantly motivates lecturers to conduct more research and produce more publications."

Research grants promote publication productivity by providing financial support, creating academic incentives, expanding networking opportunities, and strengthening researchers' capacities. Consequently, lecturers become not only more motivated but also better equipped to produce scholarly work that is recognized nationally and internationally.

*"Baik hal ini menurut saya penting karena dengan adanya fasilitas dari LPPM kampus tadi lewat hibah grup riset itu setiap dosen melalui hibah grup riset tadi diberikan pendanaan dan dimana pendanaan tadi diminta setiap dosen yang merupakan anggota grup riset itu untuk menghasilkan output penelitian dan pengabdian sehingga output penelitian dan pengabdian bisa terjamin ada, nah kemudian terkait penelitian lagi ada dosen yang memang aktif di penelitian termasuk saya yang aktif sehingga outputnya bisa melebihi target yang diberikan oleh kampus lewat hibah grup riset tadi sehingga dengan adanya grup riset itu output minimal tiap dosen yang ada di perguruan tinggi terjamin. Sedangkan untuk pengajaran memang sudah terjamin lewat pembagian mengajar seperti itu"*

"Well, I think this is important because, through the facilities provided by the university's LPPM through research group grants, every lecturer receives funding. Through this funding, lecturers who are members of research groups are required to produce research and community service outputs, ensuring that these outputs are achieved. In terms of research, some lecturers are particularly active, including myself, so our outputs can exceed the targets set by the university through the research group grant scheme. Therefore, the existence of research groups guarantees a minimum level of output from every lecturer within the university. As for teaching, it is already ensured through the allocation of teaching workloads." (P1)

*"Hal yang sangat mempengaruhi yang pertama dalam tridharma ada pengajaran itu pembagian beban kuliah sudah jelas, yang kedua tadi penelitian, penelitian ini bisa dilakukan secara pribadi Karena penelitian tidak harus membuat alat, penelitian bisa studi literatur dan lain sebagainya, akan tetapi yang ketiga itu pengabdian masyarakat, nah itu sangat mempengaruhi karena pengabdian masyarakat itu membutuhkan dana dan tenaga yang cukup banyak, artinya dengan adanya skema hibah grup riset yang termasuk pengabdian tadi ini sangat membantu karena setiap grup riset itu bisa melakukan minimal 1 program pengabdian masyarakat yang dimana itu untuk memenuhi output dari pengabdian masyarakat. Kalau misal itu misal harus ditopang sendiri itu biayanya akan menguras biaya dan tenaga, seperti itu mbak."*

"The first factor that greatly influences the implementation of the Tri Dharma is teaching, where the allocation of teaching workloads is already clearly defined. The second is research, which can be conducted individually because research does not necessarily require developing equipment or tools; it can involve literature studies and other forms of scholarly inquiry. However, the third aspect is community service, which has a significant impact because it requires substantial financial resources and effort. In this regard, the research group grant scheme, which also covers community service activities, is extremely helpful because each research group can carry out at least one community service program to fulfill the required community service outputs. If these activities had to be supported individually, they would consume a considerable amount of both funding and effort." (P1)

*"Kemudian yang ketiga perguruan tinggi itu selain memfasilitasi hibah riset juga memberikan insentif dan itu sudah bahkan di beberapa kampus yang saya temui, dan itu cukup memberikan semangat dosen-dosen melakukan penelitian dan publikasi lebih banyak lagi. Kemudian kala saya sendiri, saya sebagai pengelola jurnal ya harapannya dengan meningkatkan penelitian juga bisa membawa jurnal saya sehingga kedepannya bisa terindeks internasional scopus seperti itu mbak."*

"The third aspect is that universities, in addition to providing research grants, also offer incentives, and this has already been implemented in several universities I have encountered. These incentives are quite effective in motivating lecturers to conduct more research and increase their publication output. From my own perspective, as a journal manager, I also hope that by improving research activities, it can contribute to the development of my journal so that in the future it can be indexed in Scopus and recognized internationally." (P4)

In addition to grant support, networking was identified as another factor influencing lecturers' adaptation to academic pressure.

*"Yang saya alami selama ini memang saya suda punya network dengan teman waktu s3 dulu ya jadi teman S3 saya kebetulan pindah ke Inggris kerjasama disana, ya mungkin yang utama tetep kualifikasi kita ya sebagai seorang peneliti yang ini ditunjukkan dari kualitas artikel yang diterbitkan, dan itu memang inline dengan kualitas jurnalnya, jadi publikasi ditempat yang bagus tetap berpengaruh" (P3)*

"In my experience, I have maintained networks with colleagues from my doctoral studies. One of my former PhD colleagues moved to England, and we continue to collaborate. Ultimately, our qualifications as researchers are reflected in the quality of our publications, and publication in high-quality journals continues to matter." (P3)

Finally, lecturers emphasized the importance of recognition derived from fulfilling the tridharma of higher education. Lecturers experience a sense of satisfaction when students develop confidence in their academic abilities and benefit from research-informed teaching.

*"Saya kira mahasiswa lebih puas ya lebih confident, kebetulan saya mengajar ekonomi islam ya diantara materi itu saya sampaikan juga hasil riset saya yang relevan tengan topik-topik yang ada itu kan, kemudian dari situ mahasiswa akan lebih punya gambaran lebih riil terhadap dunia diluar sana Karena ada hasil risetnya. Jadi kita bisa bberbicara lebih spesifik mengenai topik tertentu. Saya kira dari sisi soft skill, hard skill, konfiden penting juga ya....oh saya diajar oleh dosen yang terabit di jurnal-jurnal bagus nih,"*

*"I believe students feel more satisfied and confident. Since I teach Islamic economics, I often incorporate findings from my own research into the course material. This provides students with a more realistic understanding of the world beyond the classroom and enables more specific discussions on particular topics. From both hard-skill and soft-skill perspectives, confidence is important. Students may feel proud knowing that they are taught by lecturers who publish in reputable journals."*

In the domain of education and teaching, intrinsic motivation becomes evident when lecturers experience satisfaction from witnessing students' growth and development. They teach not merely to fulfill formal obligations but because of a sense of calling to educate future generations. This satisfaction emerges when students successfully understand course materials, demonstrate academic achievement, or even attain career success as a result of lecturers' guidance. Such motivation encourages lecturers to devote additional time to designing innovative teaching methods, mentoring students beyond classroom hours, and creating meaningful learning experiences.

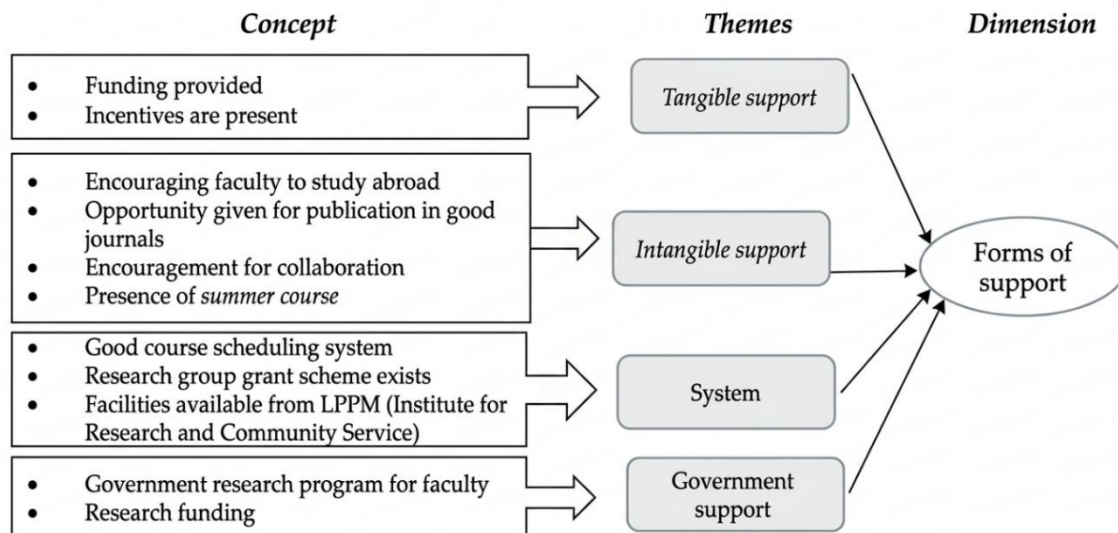
Within the research domain, intrinsic motivation arises when lecturers are driven by intellectual curiosity toward a particular phenomenon, a desire to discover solutions, or the intellectual satisfaction derived from producing scholarly work. For many lecturers, conducting research is not solely motivated by promotion requirements or university performance targets but also by an internal drive to contribute to the advancement of knowledge. The sense of pride associated with discovering new knowledge, solving complex problems, or receiving recognition from the scientific community serves as a source of energy that sustains their research productivity.

Therefore, intrinsic motivation encourages lecturers to carry out the tridharma of higher education not merely because of administrative obligations, functional promotion requirements, or institutional targets, but because of internal satisfaction, a sense of moral responsibility, and a desire to make meaningful contributions. This form of motivation is particularly important because it is more enduring, consistent, and capable of sustaining lecturers' enthusiasm despite various challenges and limitations.

*"Untuk Pengembangan jejaring tadi tidak dituntut, hanya disarankan dan itu juga tergantung pribadi dosen masing-masing. Kalau saya biasanya memanfaatkan konferensi internasional, ketika konferensi internasional kan pesertanya banyak dari berbagai negara itu saya memanfaatkan untuk mencari jejaring baru baik itu nasional maupun internasional, karena dengan adanya jejaring tadi misalnya ambil contoh publikasi penulisan paper ketika kita tilak punya jejaring, kita nulis sendiri itu otomatis outputnya tidak akan banyak karena kita juga punya load yang lain, ada pendidikan dan pengabdian, tetapi ketika kita punya jejaring, kita punya kerjasama riset, kita tidak hanya menulis sendiri tetapi kita bisa menulis kolektif Bersama jejaring kita baik itu dalam negeri maupun luar negeri, seperti itu."*

"The development of academic networks is not mandatory; it is only encouraged, and it depends on each lecturer personally. I usually take advantage of international conferences because participants come from many different countries. I use these opportunities to establish new networks, both nationally and internationally. For example, in academic publishing, if we do not have networks, we write papers on our own, and the output is automatically limited because we also have other responsibilities such as teaching and community service. However, when we have networks and research collaborations, we do not write alone. Instead, we can publish collectively with our academic partners, both domestically and internationally."

Once universities have developed the ability to sense external demands and institutional changes, they respond by providing various forms of support to encourage high lecturer performance. This was reflected in the themes and dimensions identified through the interview findings.



**Figure 6. Academic and Faculty Career Pressures: A Dynamics Model**

The support provided by universities can be categorized into tangible support, intangible support, and system-based support.

*"Baik hal ini menurut saya penting karena dengan adanya fasilitas dari LPPM kampus tadi lewat hibah grup riset itu setiap dosen melalui hibah grup riset tadi diberikan pendanaan dan dimana pendanaan tadi diminta setiap dosen yang merupakan anggota grup riset itu untuk menghasilkan output penelitian dan pengabdian sehingga output penelitian dan pengabdian bisa terjamin ada"*

"I believe this is important because through the facilities provided by the university's Research and Community Service Institute (LPPM), particularly through research group grants, each lecturer receives funding. In return, lecturers who are members of research groups are expected to produce research and community service outputs. As a result, the production of research and community service outcomes can be assured."

The provision of funding encourages lecturers to conduct research activities more actively. In addition, lecturers receive incentives for publishing in targeted journals. These incentives strongly motivate lecturers to produce high-quality academic outputs.

Networking was also identified as an important factor that facilitates lecturers in implementing the tridharma of higher education, including teaching, research, and community service. Through academic networks, lecturers are no longer limited to working individually or within their institutional boundaries. Instead, they gain access to collaboration opportunities, broader resources, and professional support systems. Consequently, the implementation of the tridharma becomes more effective, efficient, and impactful.

Within the research domain, networking serves as a key mechanism for facilitating interdisciplinary and international collaboration. Academic networks enable lecturers to identify research partners, access research grants, and increase opportunities for publication in reputable journals. Research conducted in collaboration with international partners often possesses additional value in terms of quality, visibility, and credibility. Without such networks, lecturers may encounter limitations related to funding, access to resources, and collaborative opportunities.

Overall, networking facilitates the implementation of the tridharma by expanding access to knowledge, resources, and collaborative opportunities. Through strong academic, professional, and social networks, lecturers can extend their contributions beyond the capacity of their individual institutions. As a result, the tridharma can be implemented more effectively and in ways that remain relevant to contemporary academic demands.

*"Untuk Pengembangan jejaring tadi tidak dituntut, hanya disarankan dan itu juga tergantung pribadi dosen masing-masing. Kalau saya biasanya memanfaatkan konferensi internasional, ketika konferensi internasional kan pesertanya banyak dari berbagai negara itu saya memanfaatkan untuk mencari jejaring baru baik itu nasional maupun internasional, karena dengan adanya jejaring tadi misalnya ambil contoh publikasi penulisan paper ketika kita tilak punya jejaring, kita nulis sendiri itu otomatis outputnya tidak akan banyak karena kita juga punya load yang lain, ada pendidikan dan pengabdian, tetapi ketika kita punya jejaring, kita punya kerjasama riset, kita tidak hanya menulis sendiri tetapi kita bisa menulis kolektif Bersama jejaring kita baik itu dalam negeri maupun luar negeri, seperti itu." (P2)*

"The development of academic networks is not mandatory; it is only encouraged and depends on each lecturer personally. I usually use international conferences to establish new national and international networks. Without networks, publication output is naturally limited because lecturers also carry teaching and community service responsibilities. However, with networks and collaborative research partnerships, we can produce publications collectively with colleagues both within Indonesia and abroad." (P2)

*"Yang saya alami selama ini memang saya suda punya network dengan teman waktu s3 dulu ya jadi teman S3 saya kebetulan pindah ke Inggris kerjasama disana, ya mungkin yang utama tetep kualifikasi kita ya sebagai seorang peneliti yang ini ditunjukkan dari kualitas artikel yang diterbitkan, dan itu memang inline dengan kualitas jurnalnya, jadi publikasi ditempat yang bagus tetap berpengaruh." (P3)*

"From my experience, I have maintained networks with colleagues from my doctoral studies. One of my former PhD colleagues moved to England, and we continue collaborating there. Ultimately, our qualifications as researchers are reflected in the quality of the articles we publish, and this is closely aligned with the quality of the journals. Therefore, publishing in reputable journals remains highly influential." (P3)

*"Oh baik, jadi terkait WCU tadi memang perguruan tinggi mendorong kerjasama dengan luar negeri, sebagai contoh kembali lagi ke bidang penelitian ya mbak, karena memang saya lebih condong ke bidang penelitian bahkan di perguruan tinggi akan memberikan bantuan biaya jurnal, pembayaran jurnal atau istilahnya APC (article processing charge) itu diprioritaskan untuk jurnal yang ada author luar negerinya. Nah jadi disini perguruan tinggi sangat mendorong dan memfasilitasi dosennya untuk bisa membangun jejaring dengan luar negeri, sehingga ini secara publikasi, kemudian secara fakultas ada summer course dan juga ini dekan baru kami itu mendorong untuk yang mau sekolah itu sekolahnya ke luar negeri agar meningkatkan jejaring tadi, seperti itu mbak." (P1)*

"Regarding the WCU agenda, universities actively encourage international collaboration. For example, since my primary focus is research, the university provides support for journal publication expenses. Article Processing Charges (APCs) are often prioritized for manuscripts involving international co-authors. Therefore, universities strongly encourage and facilitate lecturers in building international networks. In addition, faculties organize summer courses, and our new dean encourages lecturers who wish to pursue further studies to do so abroad in order to strengthen their academic networks." (P1)

The support received by lecturers in carrying out the tridharma does not come solely from universities. Government support, particularly through research programs and research funding schemes, also plays a significant role.

*"yang bekerjasama dengan dosen-dosen, dan itu membuka mata saya juga, saat ini saya banyak rekan dari universitas lain bekerja bareng membuat proposal, dan itu ternyata tidak sekedar satu penelitian selesai enggak.....hubungan itu malah lama jadi artinya tetap berkembang menjadi network yang baik," (P6)*

"Collaborating with lecturers from other universities has broadened my perspective. Currently, I work together with many colleagues from other institutions in developing research proposals. These collaborations do not end when a single research project is completed. Instead, the relationships continue and develop into long-term academic networks." (P6)

Support provided by both universities and government agencies contributes to improvements in lecturers' competencies in carrying out the tridharma. Participants explained that many lecturers initially had limited understanding of Scopus-indexed publications, but mentoring and institutional support significantly improved their knowledge and skills.

*"Iya, eeee saya kira bagus ya dibuktikan dengan....saya bicara data ya co-authorship meningkat tahun ke tahun. Tahun 2023 skitar 400 500 an, ditahun 2024 kita punya 300 400 an nama baru, jadi luarbiasa sekali, kemudian banyak sekali dosen muda ngambil S3 ke luar negeri sering itu membuka network baru simpul-simpul jaringan yang baru juga." (P6)*

"I think the results are very positive, as evidenced by the data. Co-authorship has increased year by year. In 2023, there were approximately 400–500 collaborative publications, while in 2024 we recorded around 300–400 new collaborators. This is truly remarkable. In addition, many young lecturers are pursuing doctoral studies abroad, which continuously creates new academic networks and collaborative connections." (P6)

The process begins with government targets and the university's vision, which are subsequently translated into policy formulation. The policies that have been established then undergo an evaluation process, resulting in continuous improvement. This policy evaluation ultimately contributes to enhanced institutional performance, leading to improved rankings, increased public trust, and the expansion of academic networking.

Throughout this process, support from both the government and the university serves as the foundation for determining strategic priorities. Such support plays a crucial role in improving the performance of study programs, which function as the primary units responsible for implementing academic activities.

In addition, individual goals and lecturers' motivation contribute to the formation of personal performance targets. These individual targets influence lecturers' responses to institutional demands and consequently contribute to skill development. The resulting skill enhancement can be categorized into two major dimensions, namely hard skills and soft skills, both of which support the achievement of lecturers' Tri Dharma performance.

The impact on students is also substantial. Students benefit through increased self-confidence, improved hard and soft skills, and greater trust in both the learning process and the quality of the institution. Overall, the figure illustrates that support from the government and universities, combined with lecturers' individual motivation, plays a critical role in enhancing the performance of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education. The outcomes are not only experienced by the institution through improved reputation and rankings but are also reflected in students' increased competencies, confidence, and trust in the educational process.

#### IV. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that academic pressure has become an integral consequence of the transformation of Indonesian universities toward World-Class University (WCU) status. Consistent with previous studies, international ranking systems and global competitiveness agendas have increasingly influenced institutional governance, academic performance indicators, and faculty expectations (Fu & Larbi, 2022; Kang & Mok, 2024; Tian & Lu, 2017). However, this study extends existing literature by showing that academic pressure is multidimensional and not limited to publication requirements alone. Faculty members experienced pressure in six interconnected domains, namely teaching, research funding, administration, community service, academic career advancement, and publication performance.

The emergence of teaching pressure reflects the broader transformation of higher education systems characterized by increasing student enrolment and institutional expansion. Similar to the findings of Xie (2018), lecturers in this study reported heavier teaching responsibilities due to growing student numbers without proportional increases in academic staff. In the context of universities pursuing WCU status, this challenge becomes more complex because lecturers are simultaneously expected to maintain high levels of research productivity and international publication performance. Consequently, teaching responsibilities are no longer viewed as isolated academic duties but as part of a broader performance system requiring lecturers to balance multiple institutional expectations.

Another important finding concerns funding pressure. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of research funding as a prerequisite for achieving research excellence and global competitiveness (Harty & Leiringer, 2017; Muller, 2017; Takagi, 2018).

The present study confirms these findings by demonstrating that competition for research and community service grants has intensified significantly. Faculty members not only compete for institutional funding but must also secure external grants to support increasingly complex research projects and community engagement activities. This situation reflects the growing expectation that academic activities should generate measurable societal and economic impacts, particularly through research commercialization and community empowerment initiatives.

Administrative pressure also emerged as a significant challenge. While previous discussions of WCU transformation have predominantly focused on research productivity and publication performance, this study reveals that administrative demands constitute an important yet often overlooked source of academic pressure. Participants reported that extensive documentation requirements, workload reporting systems, and promotion-related administrative procedures consumed substantial time and energy. These findings support Gao and Li's (2020) argument that performance management reforms may unintentionally increase bureaucratic burdens and reduce the time available for substantive academic work.

Community service pressure emerged as another distinctive form of academic pressure within the Indonesian higher education context. Unlike many international studies that primarily focus on teaching and research responsibilities, Indonesian lecturers are also required to fulfill community service obligations as part of the tridharma of higher education. Participants reported that community service activities often require substantial financial resources, coordination efforts, and time commitments. Although community service is intended to strengthen universities' societal contributions, lecturers frequently perceived these activities as additional responsibilities that compete with teaching and research demands. This finding highlights the unique multidimensional nature of academic pressure experienced by Indonesian academics pursuing WCU-related targets.

Academic career advancement also emerged as an important source of pressure. Participants indicated that promotion systems have become increasingly demanding as universities seek to align academic career pathways with institutional performance indicators. Similar to previous studies emphasizing the growing importance of measurable academic outputs in promotion systems (Ertaş et al., 2023), lecturers in this study reported that publications, research productivity, and performance evaluations increasingly influence career progression. Consequently, academic promotion is no longer perceived solely as a personal achievement but also as an institutional mechanism for encouraging competitiveness and academic excellence.

Publication pressure remains one of the most prominent forms of academic pressure experienced by lecturers. Consistent with previous studies (Do & Mai, 2023; Ertaş et al., 2023), lecturers reported increasing expectations to publish in reputable international journals, particularly those indexed by Scopus. However, this study contributes a more nuanced understanding by showing that publication pressure is closely linked to the availability of academic networks. Participants emphasized that successful publication often depends on access to collaborative networks, international partnerships, and research communities. This finding suggests that publication productivity is not solely an individual achievement but is strongly influenced by the social and institutional environments in which lecturers operate.

Beyond identifying forms of academic pressure, this study also reveals an important pattern regarding how universities respond to external demands. The findings indicate that government policies encouraging universities to improve their global ranking positions have triggered institutional adaptation processes. Universities responded by revising strategic plans, establishing ranking-oriented organizational units, introducing performance targets, and expanding support programs for lecturers. Similar institutional responses have been observed in Indonesian universities pursuing international competitiveness and WCU-oriented reforms (Usman & Rokhimawan, 2024).

The findings can also be interpreted through the lens of dynamic capabilities theory. Universities first engaged in sensing activities by recognizing changes in global ranking systems and government expectations regarding WCU performance. They subsequently seized opportunities through strategic initiatives such as research grants, publication incentives, international partnerships, and capacity-building programs designed to strengthen academic performance. Finally, universities reconfigured their organizational resources by revising strategic plans, adjusting performance evaluation systems, strengthening research groups, and encouraging international collaboration. This process enabled universities to transform external pressure into organizational learning and institutional improvement. Therefore, academic pressure should not be understood merely as a burden but as part of a broader adaptive process through which universities develop capabilities necessary for global competitiveness.

A particularly important contribution of this study concerns the relationship between academic pressure and lecturer performance. Existing literature frequently portrays academic pressure as a source of stress, reduced academic freedom, and declining well-being (Hong, 2022; Kang & Mok, 2024). While participants acknowledged the burdens associated with publication requirements, administrative obligations, and promotion targets, the findings also reveal a more positive dimension of academic pressure. When supported by research funding, publication incentives, mentoring programs, and networking opportunities, academic pressure became a source of motivation rather than merely a burden. Faculty members reported improvements in

research skills, publication competencies, collaborative abilities, and academic confidence. This finding suggests that the consequences of academic pressure are not inherently negative but depend on the availability of institutional support mechanisms and the ability of lecturers to adapt to changing expectations.

Another significant finding concerns the alignment between individual aspirations and institutional goals. Lecturers who perceived a strong correspondence between their personal interests and institutional performance targets tended to respond more positively to academic pressure. In contrast, lecturers whose professional interests differed from institutional priorities were more likely to perceive academic demands as burdensome. This finding highlights the importance of goal congruence in shaping academic behavior and suggests that successful WCU strategies require not only organizational policies but also the cultivation of individual motivation and engagement.

Unlike previous studies that predominantly emphasize the negative consequences of academic pressure, this study demonstrates that academic pressure can become a productive force when supported by adequate institutional resources and aligned with lecturers' professional aspirations. The combination of institutional support, professional motivation, and strategic adaptation enables lecturers to transform pressure into opportunities for academic growth and career development.

The study further indicates that the benefits of this transformation extend beyond faculty performance. Participants perceived that students benefited from research-informed teaching, greater exposure to contemporary knowledge, and increased confidence in learning from academically productive lecturers. These findings are consistent with arguments that improvements in academic quality and research capacity may indirectly enhance students' educational experiences and institutional trust (Horta, 2009). Although student outcomes were not directly investigated in this study, participants consistently viewed improvements in lecturer performance as contributing positively to the educational experience and institutional reputation.

Overall, the findings suggest that academic pressure should not be viewed solely as a negative consequence of university internationalization. Instead, academic pressure may function as a catalyst for professional development and institutional transformation when accompanied by adequate funding, mentoring, incentives, and networking opportunities. The Indonesian experience demonstrates that the effectiveness of WCU-oriented policies depends not only on performance targets but also on the capacity of universities to provide supportive environments that enable lecturers to transform pressure into academic achievement. Therefore, academic pressure can be understood as a mechanism that drives capability development, strengthens tridharma performance, and supports institutional competitiveness in an increasingly globalized higher education landscape.

## V. Conclusion

This study examined the forms and patterns of academic pressure experienced by lecturers in Indonesian universities pursuing World-Class University (WCU) status. The findings reveal that academic pressure is multidimensional, encompassing teaching pressure, funding pressure, administrative pressure, community service pressure, academic career pressure, and publication pressure. These pressures emerge from the interaction between government policies, international ranking expectations, institutional performance targets, and the expanding responsibilities of lecturers within the tridharma of higher education.

The study also demonstrates that academic pressure follows a dynamic pattern. Government expectations regarding WCU achievement are translated into institutional policies, strategic plans, performance indicators, and support mechanisms that shape lecturers' academic activities. Universities respond by providing research funding, publication incentives, mentoring programs, and opportunities for national and international collaboration. The findings indicate that lecturers' responses to academic pressure vary according to the degree of alignment between individual aspirations and institutional objectives.

A key contribution of this study is the finding that academic pressure should not be viewed solely as a negative phenomenon. While academic pressure may increase workload and professional demands, it can also stimulate positive transformation when supported by adequate institutional resources and intrinsic motivation. Under supportive conditions, academic pressure encourages the development of research competencies, publication skills, professional networks, and academic confidence, ultimately strengthening lecturers' performance in the tridharma of higher education.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on academic pressure and higher education transformation by demonstrating that academic pressure within WCU-oriented universities is multidimensional and can function as a catalyst for capability development rather than merely a source of stress. The findings also support the dynamic capabilities perspective by illustrating how universities adapt to external demands through sensing environmental changes, seizing strategic opportunities, and reconfiguring institutional resources to enhance competitiveness.

Practically, the findings suggest that universities seeking WCU status should balance performance expectations with adequate support systems. Research funding, publication incentives, mentoring programs, administrative simplification, and international networking opportunities are essential for ensuring that academic pressure contributes to professional development rather than

academic burnout. Policymakers should also recognize that achieving international competitiveness requires not only performance targets but also sustainable investment in academic capacity building.

This study is limited by its focus on a small number of participants from Indonesian universities pursuing WCU status. Future research may involve a larger number of institutions, include lecturers from different disciplinary backgrounds, and examine the perspectives of students and university leaders to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the consequences of academic pressure within higher education internationalization processes.

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