

Toxic Productivity Among University Students: The Role of Institutional Policy and Student Experience Perspectives

Laila Sabrina¹, Ratna Dewi², Arizal Mutahir³, Wiman Rizkidarajat⁴

Sociology Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Indonesia¹

Sociology Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Indonesia²

Sociology Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Indonesia³

Sociology Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Indonesia⁴

E-mail: laila.sabrina@mhs.unsoed.ac.id¹, ratna.dewi0504@unsoed.ac.id²,
arizal.mutahir@unsoed.ac.id³, wiman.rizkidarajat@unsoed.ac.id⁴

Correspondent Author: Laila Sabrina, laila.sabrina@mhs.unsoed.ac.id

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Abstract

Toxic productivity has become increasingly prevalent among university students as academic expectations, social pressures, and institutional policies collectively shape a culture that normalizes continuous activity. This study examines the phenomenon within the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman by exploring how students interpret productivity-oriented academic regulations and how these structures interact with psychological tendencies. Using a descriptive quantitative design, data were collected from 233 undergraduate students through a structured questionnaire employing Likert and Guttman scales and analyzed using frequency distributions and descriptive statistics to identify behavioral patterns, perceptions of institutional policies, and experienced impacts. The findings show that many students experience persistent pressure to remain productive, often accompanied by guilt during rest, academic overload, and declining well-being. Students perceive institutional requirements, such as mandatory organizational involvement and credit-based activity systems, as reinforcing an achievement-oriented environment that promotes excessive productivity. These results demonstrate that toxic productivity arises not only from personal or social factors but also from structural academic expectations that shape bounded rationality in student decision-making. The study concludes that policy adjustments that promote flexibility, balanced performance indicators, and improved mental health support are essential to mitigating excessive productivity pressures and fostering healthier academic conditions.

Keywords: burnout, mental health interventions, toxic productivity, university policy, well-being

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INTRODUCTION

Toxic productivity refers to a condition in which individuals feel compelled to continuously work, study, or produce output beyond their physical and psychological limits (Parker et al., 2020). Although these behaviors may superficially resemble a strong work ethic, they are fundamentally dysfunctional: academic workaholism involves persistent feelings of guilt when not working, compulsive engagement in tasks, and difficulty separating personal needs from productive activity (Schaufeli et al., 2008; Afota et al., 2025; Ghaleb, 2024). Productivity, which was initially understood as a means of self-development, gradually transforms into an internalized pressure that discourages rest and fuels constant activity. Individuals experiencing toxic productivity often feel guilty when taking breaks and evaluate their self-worth based on continuous achievement (MacNeil, 2023). Such patterns disrupt life balance, diminish mental and physical well-being, and may lead to lethargy, burnout, and reduced quality of life. These tendencies are reinforced by a “do, be, and get more” mindset that encourages individuals to increase workloads and maintain unrealistic performance standards (Adjiwibowo et al., 2023).

Within higher education, toxic productivity has increasingly emerged as a global concern, particularly in academic environments shaped by achievement culture and workaholism. Studies across different regions indicate that university students experience persistent pressure to remain productive, accompanied by guilt when resting and a tendency to continue working despite physical or psychological strain (Komp et al., 2022; Wolfgram & Ahrens, 2022). This phenomenon is no longer understood solely as an individual psychological issue but rather as a socially and institutionally produced condition embedded within contemporary higher education systems. Lee et al. (2024), in their study of undergraduate students in Singapore, demonstrate that toxic productivity is influenced by Confucian cultural norms, labor market uncertainty, and intensified social comparison through digital platforms. These findings align with broader literature emphasizing the role of meritocratic values, employability-oriented logic, and competitive academic environments in fostering academic workaholism.

Previous studies have documented the negative consequences of toxic productivity among university students. Ramadhina et al. (2023) found that constant pressure to remain productive significantly increases stress and psychological distress. Tsabita et al. (2023) similarly linked toxic productivity to burnout and declining academic performance. Other studies highlight contributing factors such as fear of missing out (FOMO) (Aprianti & Purnama, 2023), toxic positivity on social media (Lubna, 2023), excessive academic demands (Yunalia et al., 2023), and organizational overinvolvement that intensifies academic stress (Bessie et al., 2024). Social media platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok further amplify these dynamics by normalizing excessive productivity and encouraging constant comparison, particularly among Generation Z students who are highly active digital users.



At the institutional level, university policies play a critical role in shaping students' productivity-oriented behaviors. Academic regulations emphasizing measurable achievements, such as grade point averages, layered performance requirements, participation in student organizations, internships, competitions, and credit-based systems like the Student Credit Point (SKP), create structural incentives that encourage students to remain continuously active. From a rational choice perspective, students initially engage in multiple academic and non-academic activities as strategic efforts to accumulate social, symbolic, and career-related capital.

However, this rational engagement can shift into toxic productivity when students continue pursuing these benefits despite physical exhaustion and psychological strain, reflecting bounded rationality, in which decision-making is shaped by institutional expectations and internalized social norms (Pratiwi, 2023; Zuluaga & Roldán, 2024). Within the academic environment of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, students operate in a context that strongly promotes high productivity. They are expected not only to perform well academically but also to actively participate in research activities, student organizations, internships, and external competitions. This environment illustrates how academic policies, social expectations, and campus culture collectively construct a productivity-oriented ethos. While such a culture may enhance student engagement and achievement, it simultaneously creates conditions that foster toxic productivity, as students experience sustained pressure to remain visible, active, and continuously productive.

Despite the growing body of literature on toxic productivity, most existing studies focus primarily on individual psychological factors and social influences, with limited attention to institutional structures and academic policies as structural drivers of overproductivity. In particular, the role of university policies, such as mandatory organizational involvement through systems like SKP, and their interaction with campus culture, remains underexplored. This gap highlights the need for research that positions toxic productivity not merely as a personal or social phenomenon, but as a structurally produced outcome shaped by institutional policy frameworks.

Addressing this gap, this study examines how academic policies and campus culture at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, influence students' engagement in toxic productivity. By integrating institutional policy analysis with rational choice theory, this study conceptualizes toxic productivity as the outcome of students' rational responses to incentive structures embedded within higher education. The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on institutional and policy-level mechanisms as key contributors to toxic productivity, thereby extending existing scholarship that has predominantly emphasized individual or psychological explanations. Through this approach, the study offers a structural perspective on productivity culture in higher education and contributes empirical insights into how university policies shape student well-being and academic behavior.

METHOD

Research Method

The research employed a descriptive quantitative method, which emphasizes the collection and analysis of numerical data to describe and understand a particular phenomenon (Nurhabiba et al, 2023). This approach is appropriate for examining toxic



productivity among university students, as the phenomenon can be operationalized through measurable indicators such as excessive productivity levels, perceptions of campus policies, and experienced impacts. Although data were based on students' self-reported perceptions, structured questionnaire items enabled systematic statistical analysis of students' perceptions of their learning environment and academic outcomes (Han & Ellis, 2022). More specifically, this study used a survey method designed to gather information about individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics at a given time. The use of surveys allows the researcher to capture the actual conditions of FISIP Unsoed students, including how they interpret campus regulations, how social pressures influence their behavior, and how toxic productivity manifests in their daily academic lives.

Research Location and Research Subjects

The selection of an appropriate research site requires consideration of the extent to which the location represents the phenomenon under study. This research was conducted at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, a faculty that empirically demonstrates a strong culture of high productivity compared to other faculties within the university. Faculty of Social and Political Sciences consistently ranks among the top three in academic and non-academic achievements, with the highest number of cum laude graduates (283 students), a substantial volume of scientific publications (722 articles), and stable national and international student achievements. Student participation in the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program and campus organizations has also increased significantly, rising from 401 MBKM participants in 2021 to 534 in 2023, and from 654 to 921 active organizational members in the same period. While the Student Credit Point system is applied across all faculties, its implementation in the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences is more intensive due to the mandatory requirement that each student join at least one student organization as a graduation prerequisite.

Combined with the characteristics of Generation Z students who frequently showcase productivity and achievements on social media, this structural pressure fosters a campus environment that normalizes continuous activity and high performance. Within this setting, the study specifically targets students from the 2022 cohort, a group identified through pre-survey data as having high involvement in academic and non-academic activities, including organizations, committees, internships, and MBKM programs. Their position near the completion stage of university places them under increasing pressure to fulfill graduation requirements, particularly SKP, thereby creating a sense of being simultaneously "chased" by academic and extracurricular obligations. Consequently, the 2022 cohort represents the most relevant population for examining toxic productivity, as they are situated at a critical intersection of structural demands, social expectations, and personal aspirations, which collectively heighten the risk of excessive productivity at the expense of personal well-being (Collins, 2022).

Sampling Technique

This study employed the Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling technique, in which the number of elements drawn from each stratum is proportional to its size within the total population. This approach ensures that all strata receive a sampling fraction



equivalent to their relative share in the population, producing a self-weighting sample that accurately reflects the population's distribution. The method was selected because the population comprised students from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, across five distinct departments: Public Administration, International Relations, Communication Science, Political Science, and Sociology, each with different population sizes. The total sample size was determined using the Slovin (Yamane) formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in 233 respondents. These respondents were then allocated proportionally across departments based on their respective population sizes. Through this procedure, proportionate stratified random sampling ensured fair representation from each department, thereby enhancing the accuracy and generalizability of the study's findings.

Data Collection Method

The data collection method in this study was a questionnaire distributed to respondents, as it is the primary instrument in survey research and enables the acquisition of large amounts of structured data. Questionnaire responses can be converted into numerical form, tables, statistical analyses, and descriptive explanations that form the basis for drawing research conclusions. This aligns with the study's objective, which aims to portray toxic productivity among students in the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman using measurable quantitative indicators. As a simple and efficient technique widely used in social and educational research, the questionnaire allows respondents to provide written responses based on their perceptions and experiences, making it well-suited to capturing students' views on campus policies, social pressures, and the impacts of toxic productivity. The instrument utilized two types of measurement scales: the Likert scale, used to assess complex attitudes, opinions, and perceptions with graded levels of agreement, and the Guttman scale, used to measure phenomena requiring definitive "yes" or "no" responses, particularly regarding the actual impacts experienced by students as a result of toxic productivity.

Data Sources

This study employed two types of data sources, primary and secondary, to examine the phenomenon of toxic productivity among students in the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman. Primary data were collected directly from respondents through a quantitative survey using a structured questionnaire designed around specific indicators to measure productivity levels, perceptions of campus policies, and the physical or psychological impacts experienced by students. This instrument enabled the researcher to gather large-scale, structured information from active FISIP students across different study programs. Secondary data were obtained through literature review and documentation, including books, journal articles, previous research, academic reports, and campus policy documents relevant to student engagement and institutional expectations. These secondary sources provided theoretical grounding and contextual information regarding productivity culture in higher education and institutional factors influencing student behavior. The combination of primary and secondary data allowed the study to not only describe toxic productivity based on students' experiences but also situate the phenomenon within broader academic literature and campus policy structures.



Data Analysis Method

This study employed a quantitative descriptive analysis, using frequency distributions to systematically illustrate toxic productivity among Faculty of Social and Political Sciences students at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, based on numerical data collected through questionnaires. Quantitative descriptive studies aim to describe characteristics or phenomena based on collected numeric data, analyzed systematically to present the data as they are without attempting to establish broader causal generalizations (Kintani, 2023). The questionnaire consisted of Likert and Guttman scales, and the analysis was adjusted accordingly. The Likert scale measured attitudes, perceptions, and levels of agreement regarding behaviors related to toxic productivity, such as constant pressure to be productive, guilt during rest, and academic environmental influence, and the data were analyzed using frequency distributions and descriptive statistics, including mean, median, mode, and standard deviation. Meanwhile, the Guttman scale captured dichotomous, factual experiences through “Yes” or “No” responses, which were analyzed using simple frequency distributions to determine the proportion of students who had or had not experienced specific indicators of toxic productivity. The results of both scales were then presented in frequency tables and graphs to facilitate interpretation, providing a comprehensive overview of the levels, variations, and concrete forms of toxic productivity experienced by Faculty of Social and Political Sciences students.

Validity

Construct validity refers to the extent to which the research instrument accurately measures the theoretical concept it is intended to assess. In this study, construct validity was applied to ensure that the questionnaire items appropriately represented the concept of toxic productivity among university students. Toxic productivity was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing persistent pressure to remain productive, feelings of guilt during rest, and the influence of the academic environment on students’ productive behaviors.

To establish construct validity, the questionnaire items were developed based on relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical literature on toxic productivity, academic workaholism, and achievement culture. Each item was designed to reflect key dimensions of toxic productivity as experienced in an academic context. Prior to analysis, the distribution of responses for each item was examined using frequency distributions to assess the consistency and plausibility of response patterns. This preliminary analysis ensured that items did not exhibit extreme response concentration or irregular patterns that could indicate ambiguity or misinterpretation.

The use of frequency distributions also enabled an initial evaluation of whether items within the same construct exhibited coherent response tendencies. Items measuring similar aspects of toxic productivity, such as guilt when resting or the perceived need to remain productive, showed comparable response patterns, indicating that the instrument consistently captured the intended construct. Thus, the questionnaire demonstrated adequate construct validity for describing toxic productivity among students.



Reliability

In this study, reliability was assessed to ensure that the questionnaire items measuring toxic productivity produced consistent results and reliably reflected students' perceptions and experiences. Internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. This method is widely used in quantitative survey research to assess the degree to which intercorrelation items within a scale are interrelated. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or higher is generally considered acceptable for social science research, indicating that the instrument demonstrates satisfactory internal consistency.

Characteristics of respondents

The total number of respondents in this study was 233 students. This number represents the sample of students from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, who served as the primary data source for this research.

Table 1.

Respondent Gender			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	99	42.5
	Female	134	57.5
Total		233	100.0

Source: primary data

The respondent characteristics indicate that most participants were female (57.5%), while male respondents accounted for 42.5%.

Table 2.

Respondent Major			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Public Administration	49	21.0
	International Relations	41	17.6
	Communication Studies	49	21.0
	Political Science	35	15.0
	Sociology	59	25.3
	Total	233	100.0

Regarding study programs, respondents were distributed across five departments within FISIP. The largest proportions came from Public Administration (21%) and Communication Studies (21%), followed by Sociology (25.3%), International Relations (17.6%), and Political Science (15%).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Toxic productivity behavior among the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman students

Toxic productivity among Faculty of Social and Political Sciences students at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman refers to the tendency to remain continuously active and work beyond one's physical and mental capacity to meet certain productivity standards.



Although often perceived as a positive work ethic, this behavior is dysfunctional, characterized by guilt about resting, a persistent urge to achieve more, and an inability to establish boundaries between personal needs and academic activities (Allen, 2021). This phenomenon bears similarities to workaholism and perfectionism, yet is broader, as it also emerges in academic study and other campus-related activities.

Table 3.

Frequency Distribution of Toxic Productivity		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not Toxic Productivity	90	38.6
	Toxic Productivity	146	61.4
Total		233	100.0

Based on the processed data, out of 233 respondents, 61.4% fall into the toxic productivity category, while the remaining 38.6% are categorized as non-toxic productivity. These findings indicate that the majority of respondents exhibit excessive productivity. Overall, the results suggest that toxic productivity behaviors are notably prevalent among the participating students. The dominance of the toxic productivity category suggests that the pressure to remain consistently productive, to work beyond one's capacity, and to neglect the need for rest may be common among respondents.

Table 4.

Statement: "must remain productive even when the body is tired"

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	13	5.6
	Disagree	80	34.3
	Neutral	45	19.3
	Agree	74	31.8
	Strongly agree	21	9.0
	Total	233	100.0

Based on the frequency distribution table, the majority of respondents tend to feel pressured to remain productive even when their bodies are tired. The data indicate that 40.8% of respondents agree (31.8%) or strongly agree (9.0%) with this statement, placing nearly half of the students in a condition where the demands of productivity are seen as more important than their physical well-being. Meanwhile, 39.9% fall into the categories of disagree (34.3%) and strongly disagree (5.6%), indicating that although some students do not feel such pressure, their proportion is smaller than that of those who do. Interestingly, 19.3% of respondents chose a neutral stance. This neutral group is noteworthy because it may reflect ambivalence, either because they have not fully recognized the behavioral patterns they experience or because such pressure is perceived as 'normal' within their academic environment.



Table 5.

Statement “The desire to be productive drives the need to overwork (reducing the recommended eight hours of sleep at night)”

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	18	7.7
	Disagree	57	24.5
	Neutral	42	18.0
	Agree	83	35.6
	Strongly agree	33	14.2
	Total	233	100.0

Based on the frequency data, it is evident that the majority of respondents agree that the drive to remain productive leads them to overwork, reducing their nighttime sleep. A total of 35.6% of respondents agree and 14.2% strongly agree, indicating that 49.8% acknowledge sacrificing their sleep to meet productivity demands. These findings indicate that nearly half of the students experience internal and external pressures to maximize productivity, even at the expense of basic health needs such as adequate rest.

Students’ Perceptions of University Policies Regarding Student Activeness

Students assess that campus policies place greater emphasis on quantity than on quality of activities. The data show that 34.3% of respondents agree and 33.5% strongly agree, resulting in a total of 67.8% of students who perceive that the campus encourages a high number of activities as the main indicator of student engagement. This finding suggests a systemic tendency within the campus environment to evaluate participation by the frequency or accumulation of activities rather than the depth or quality of the achievements. On the other hand, only 14.1% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree, a relatively small proportion indicating minimal resistance or skepticism toward such quantitative pressures. Meanwhile, 18% of respondents choose a neutral position, which may reflect two possibilities: first, ambiguity in their experiences regarding campus policies; and second, that students neither fully accept nor reject this claim due to variability in experiences across faculties or organizations.

Table 6.

Statement “University policies emphasize quantity rather than the quality of activities.”

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	8	3.4
	Disagree	25	10.7
	Neutral	42	18.0
	Agree	80	34.3
	Strongly agree	78	33.5
	Total	233	100.0

Of the 233 respondents, it is evident that the majority of students perceive campus policies as imposing additional burdens that encourage them to take on too many activities. The data show that 27% of respondents agree and 29.2% strongly agree, totaling 56.2% who feel structural pressure from the campus that may trigger



overinvolvement in various activities. The dominance of the agreeing group suggests that campus policies are perceived not only as regulatory but also as shaping competitive patterns among students regarding organizational participation, committees, and other academic and extracurricular activities.

Meanwhile, 21.9% of respondents remain neutral, reflecting ambivalence likely stemming from varied experiences across faculties, majors, or year levels. This uncertainty may also indicate a limited understanding of the policies' objectives, leaving students unable to clearly judge whether the policies genuinely encourage activity overload or are merely part of normal academic dynamics. The remaining 21.9% disagree or strongly disagree, showing that not all students experience the same pressure, which may suggest the presence of more adaptive environments or faculties with more flexible academic regulations. Nevertheless, this minority does not alter the fact that most students continue to feel the added burden imposed by campus policies.

Table 7.

Statement "University policies impose additional burdens that may encourage students to take on too many activities"

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	10	4.3
	Disagree	41	17.6
	Neutral	51	21.9
	Agree	63	27.0
	Strongly agree	68	29.2
	Total	233	100.0

Source: primary data

Impacts of Toxic Productivity

The study results indicate that the majority of respondents experience the effects of toxic productivity behavior. Of the 233 respondents, 165 students (70.8%) reported feeling its impact, while 68 (29.2%) reported no effects. These findings confirm that toxic productivity is not a marginal phenomenon but rather a condition experienced by most students in their academic lives.

Table 8.

Frequency Distribution the Impact of Toxic Productivity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Not experience any effects	68	29.2	29.2
	Experience any effects	165	70.8	70.8
	Total	233	100.0	100.0



Table 9.
 Tau Kendall Correlations

			Toxic Productivity	Kebijakan Kampus
Kendall's tau	Toxic Productivity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.247**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	233	233
	Kebijakan Kampus	Correlation Coefficient	.247**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	233	233

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The relations between toxic productivity and institutional policy was examined using Kendall's tau correlation test. The analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant correlation between total toxic productivity and total institutional policy scores ($\tau = 0.247$, $p < 0.01$, $N = 233$). This result indicates that higher levels of institutional policy demands are associated with higher levels of toxic productivity among students. Although the correlation is categorized as weak to moderate, the statistical significance suggests that institutional policies play a meaningful role in shaping students' productivity behaviors.

The positive direction of the correlation implies that academic policies emphasizing performance standards, achievement requirements, and continuous engagement may contribute to students' tendency to experience constant pressure to be productive, guilt about resting, and difficulty disengaging from academic demands. These findings support the assumption that toxic productivity is not merely an individual psychological issue, but is also influenced by structural and institutional factors within the university environment.

Discussion

Toxic productivity among Faculty of Social and Political Sciences students at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman can be understood as a behavioral pattern that drives individuals to remain continuously active and to work beyond their physical and mental limits to meet certain productivity standards. Although it is often framed as a positive work ethic, this behavior is, in fact, dysfunctional, characterized by feelings of guilt about resting, an excessive drive to constantly achieve, and an inability to set boundaries between personal needs and academic demands (Allen, 2021). In the context of higher education, toxic productivity does not emerge solely as an individual psychological issue, but also as a product of institutional structures and campus cultures that normalize excessive engagement.

From the perspective of Rational Choice Theory, students are positioned as actors who consciously engage in cost-benefit calculations before deciding to participate in various campus activities. When institutional policies emphasize activeness, achievement, and continuous involvement as indicators of student success, over-commitment can be interpreted as a rational choice within the available incentive



structure. Students tend to prioritize external benefits such as institutional recognition, academic evaluation, organizational experience, and the accumulation of symbolic capital, even when these choices require sacrificing basic needs such as rest, physical health, and psychological well-being.

However, this rationality is inherently limited, reflecting what is known as bounded rationality. Students' decisions are not made in a vacuum, but are shaped by structural pressures, competitive norms, and social expectations that develop within the campus environment. Under these conditions, students continue to make choices that appear "rational" according to the prevailing rules of the game, yet without fully considering the long-term consequences of such behavior. Institutional policies and campus cultures that normalize extreme busyness indirectly restrict students' capacity to reflect on weighing productivity against personal well-being.

The tendency of campus policies to prioritize the quantity of activities further reinforces this logic. When participation is measured through the accumulation of activities, students are encouraged to continuously increase their involvement as an adaptive strategy to avoid falling behind institutional standards. Within a rational choice framework, refraining from participating in numerous activities is perceived as a loss of opportunity, whether academic, social, or administrative, leading students to remain highly active despite the escalating costs. This condition reflects what can be described as irrational persistence, namely the tendency to sustain self-damaging behavior due to external pressure and institutional legitimization.

The impacts of toxic productivity extend beyond physical fatigue to encompass psychological and social dimensions of student life. Persistent pressure to remain productive contributes to heightened stress levels, sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, and declining motivation to learn. In the long term, these conditions have the potential to undermine students' mental health and diminish the overall quality of their academic experience. This finding is consistent with the literature on burnout and academic workaholism, which emphasizes that performance-based systems and quantitatively oriented achievement standards tend to promote self-exploitative behaviors that are legitimized as commitment and dedication (Komp et al., 2022; Wolfgram & Ahrens, 2022).

Nevertheless, toxic productivity is not perceived entirely negatively by students. Some students continue to interpret activeness policies as opportunities for self-development. Within Coleman's framework, students' decisions to remain engaged can be understood as rational investments in human capital and social capital. Organizational involvement, committee work, and academic participation are viewed as means of developing skills, networks, and portfolios that are considered beneficial for future prospects. This suggests that students are not merely passive victims of institutional policies, but active agents who consciously seek to maximize the benefits offered by existing structures, even at the cost of certain psychological consequences.

Thus, toxic productivity in this context emerges from the intersection of individual rationality and institutional structures. Students are aware of the negative consequences of excessive productivity, yet remain trapped within these patterns because campus policies and cultures create incentives that continuously push them toward sustained engagement. Such behavior is rational within institutional logic, but becomes problematic when student well-being is no longer a primary consideration.



These findings underscore that toxic productivity cannot be reduced to a matter of personal motivation alone but must be understood as a structural phenomenon. Accordingly, necessary interventions should not focus solely on strengthening individual resilience, but also on critically evaluating campus policies to better balance demands for activeness with the protection of students' mental health. Without changes to incentive structures and academic culture, toxic productivity will continue to be reproduced as a logical consequence of rationality shaped by higher education institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that toxic productivity is a significant and systemic phenomenon among Faculty of Social and Political Sciences students at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, characterized by persistent overwork, reduced rest, and psychological strain, reflecting patterns of excessive academic engagement. The findings demonstrate that toxic productivity is not merely an individual behavioral issue, but is strongly shaped by institutional policies and a productivity-oriented campus culture that rationally incentivizes continuous involvement. While students are highly aware of campus regulations, they tend to respond to policies that prioritize quantitative participation by intensifying their activities, even when such behavior undermines their well-being. At the same time, students acknowledge that these policies also offer perceived benefits for self-development, reflecting a rational calculation of institutional rewards against personal costs. This study contributes to the literature on academic productivity by integrating rational choice theory with institutional policy analysis to show how structural incentives can normalize self-exploitative productivity patterns in higher education. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the university revise the Student Activity Credit system toward a quality-based evaluation model, reduce excessive requirements for activity accumulation, and integrate mental health considerations into student engagement policies. Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal or mixed-methods approaches to examine the long-term effects of toxic productivity and to explore additional factors, such as social media dynamics, family expectations, and inter-program differences.

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