

Work Life Balance among Young Lecturers in a Private University

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Abstract

This study investigates how early-career lecturers at a private university in Pontianak manage work–life balance in the context of constrained institutional resources. It aims to elucidate the forms of role conflict they encounter, the strategies employed to delineate boundaries between professional and personal domains, and the extent to which institutional support shapes their wellbeing. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and contextual observations, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal sustained time pressures, emotional demands, and frequent digital interruptions arising from teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. While digital systems are intended to enhance efficiency, they often expand task volume and generate invisible labor, thereby intensifying fatigue. To cope with these challenges, young lecturers rely on planning practices, emotional regulation, and peer support networks; however, such individual strategies remain insufficient to address underlying structural limitations. Institutional support plays a critical role in shaping motivation and adaptive capacity, although its availability and consistency differ across organizational units. Overall, the study demonstrates that work–life balance is produced through the dynamic interaction of structural demands, individual coping mechanisms, and organizational practices. The findings underscore the importance of transparent workload policies, structured capacity-building initiatives, coherent communication, and reliable digital infrastructures in promoting lecturer wellbeing.

Keywords: *Work Life Balance; Role Conflict; Digital Workload; Young Lecturer; Private University.*

Introduction

Lecturers in private universities in Indonesia routinely manage teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities that expand more rapidly than the institutional support systems available to them. These institutions typically operate with small academic teams, constrained budgets, and limited access to professional development. Such conditions intensify workload demands while reducing opportunities for rest and recovery. Empirical studies indicate that lecturers in private institutions experience higher levels of work pressure than their counterparts in large, well-resourced universities with more stable organizational structures (Dara & Saparuddin, 2025; Heijstra & Rafnsdottir, 2010). Digitalization further amplifies this burden. Online learning platforms, digital reporting systems, and continuous communication channels increase task volume and compress the temporal boundary between work and personal life, thereby elevating stress and limiting opportunities for recuperation (Arantes & Vicars, 2024; Scanlon, 2014).

These pressures are felt more acutely by young lecturers who are simultaneously developing their academic identities and adapting to institutional norms. They face strong expectations regarding publication output, teaching quality, and compliance with administrative

requirements. Prior research documents increasing levels of technostress and emotional exhaustion among early-career academics, driven by rapid digital transformation and ambiguous workload arrangements (Kaeane & Molokomme, 2025; Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2023). Digital routines multiply messages, meetings, and reporting obligations, reducing temporal flexibility and intruding into personal time. Such patterns contribute to digital fatigue, which has been shown to undermine wellbeing and heighten exhaustion, particularly among lecturers performing multiple roles (Bonanomi et al., 2021; Bright, 2012).

In regional private universities, opportunities for structured training in digital competencies, research methodology, and curriculum development are often limited. Consequently, young lecturers must acquire digital skills independently or depend on informal peer support. This reliance increases the learning burden and heightens the risk of procedural errors in reporting and documentation. Errors frequently generate additional tasks, including document revisions and follow-up communications, creating a cycle of escalating pressure that reduces time available for teaching preparation and research activities. Although prior studies demonstrate that strong digital competence can alleviate stress and enhance job satisfaction, many early-career academics lack systematic opportunities to develop these skills (Devonport, 2008; Koh et al., 2024).

Organizational culture further compounds these challenges. Private universities commonly assign multiple committee roles to a limited pool of lecturers. Young lecturers are often responsible for student advising, event coordination, curriculum development, and accreditation-related tasks. These roles demand cross-departmental coordination and frequent meetings, increasing workload intensity as committee responsibilities overlap with teaching and research obligations. Research suggests that private institutions in regional contexts rely heavily on informal coordination and personal networks to sustain daily operations (Imran et al., 2025; Willems, 2015). Navigating these expectations during the early stages of an academic career reduces predictability and elevates stress levels.

The case of Pontianak exemplifies these dynamics. Small academic teams result in higher teaching loads and frequent reporting requirements. Lecturers are expected to complete extensive administrative tasks, including updating student records, preparing accreditation documentation, and supporting internal evaluations, often under tight deadlines and with repeated submission requirements. Prior research identifies administrative workload as a primary source of stress among young lecturers in regional private universities (Mulyadi et al., 2024). Digitalization intensifies these pressures by expanding tasks associated with online communication, monitoring, and assessment, thereby further eroding the boundary between professional and personal life (Becker & Lanzl, 2023; Lee & Sirgy, 2019).

Publication requirements introduce an additional layer of pressure. Accreditation standards require regular publication in indexed journals, placing substantial demands on early-career academics who must balance research expectations with teaching loads that frequently exceed national guidelines. Academic writing requires sustained concentration, yet administrative interruptions disrupt these processes and diminish productivity. Studies on Indonesian higher education highlight that lecturers in private universities face greater difficulty meeting publication targets due to limited access to research funding, training, and mentoring support.

Collectively, these pressures reflect a structural rather than individual problem. They arise from institutional constraints rather than personal deficiencies. Role Conflict Theory explains how incompatible role expectations generate strain, reduce effectiveness, and undermine wellbeing

(Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Young lecturers are required to simultaneously fulfil teaching, research, and administrative roles that compete for time and cognitive resources. Digital routines intensify this conflict by introducing continuous notifications, messages, and task demands throughout the workday, thereby increasing time-based conflict and diminishing control over work–life boundaries.

Coping strategies play a critical role in managing these demands. Work–Family Border Theory highlights how individuals actively construct and negotiate boundaries between professional and personal roles in response to institutional pressures and cultural norms (Clark, 2000). Young lecturers attempt to manage boundary permeability through scheduling practices, regulation of digital communication, and reliance on peer support. These strategies provide partial relief from role overlap, particularly in contexts where formal support mechanisms are weak. Prior research indicates that coping among early-career academics is strongly relational and shaped by solidarity within academic communities (H. S. & Rajeena, 2024; Jiménez-Hidalgo et al., 2025).

Institutional support critically influences the effectiveness of these coping efforts. Perceived Organizational Support Theory suggests that employees exhibit higher motivation and stronger commitment when they believe their institution values their contributions and wellbeing (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Support may include access to training, equitable workload allocation, and transparent communication. In resource-constrained private universities, support often takes informal forms, such as leadership empathy or flexible deadlines. While these practices can enhance morale, they may also create inconsistencies and perceptions of unequal treatment due to their reliance on personal relationships (Kaeane & Molokomme, 2025; Willems, 2015). Evidence suggests that structured and transparent support systems are more effective in reducing stress and sustaining motivation (Jiménez-Hidalgo et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2025), with robust human resource management enhancing institutional adaptability and performance (Ratu et al., 2022; Roswaty & Siddiq, 2019).

Despite growing interest in academic wellbeing, a clear research gap remains. Existing studies have not sufficiently examined how young lecturers in private regional universities navigate the interaction between role conflict, digital pressures, and institutional support. Limited attention has been paid to the influence of cultural norms and peer networks on boundary management in contexts characterized by small academic teams and informal organizational systems. Similarly, research on technostress rarely addresses the specific challenges faced by lecturers operating under persistent resource constraints.

In response to these gaps, this study explores how young lecturers at a private university in Pontianak manage work–life balance within conditions of limited institutional support. Drawing on Role Conflict Theory, Work–Family Border Theory, and Perceived Organizational Support Theory, the study examines how role conflict emerges, how boundaries are negotiated, and how institutional support shapes lecturer wellbeing. The central research question focuses on how young lecturers respond to overlapping responsibilities, digital work routines, and uneven organizational support structures.

Theoretical Foundation

Research on work–life balance in higher education emphasizes the dynamic interplay between structural pressures, individual coping strategies, and institutional practices. Academic roles continue to expand across teaching, research, and administrative functions, while rapid

digitalisation intensifies cognitive and emotional demands. Lecturers in private universities are situated within a distinctive context characterized by limited resources, high performance expectations, and fragile support systems. These conditions contribute to chronic workload intensification, blurred work–life boundaries, and persistent role conflict (Arantes & Vicars, 2024; Heijstra & Rafnsdottir, 2010). A synthesis of key theoretical frameworks and thematic strands of the literature provides a conceptual foundation for examining these dynamics.

Role Conflict Theory

Role Conflict Theory explains the strain that arises when individuals face incompatible expectations associated with multiple roles. The framework identifies three primary forms of conflict: time-based conflict, which occurs when competing responsibilities vie for limited time; strain-based conflict, whereby stress from one role undermines performance in another; and behaviour-based conflict, which emerges when different roles require contradictory patterns of behaviour (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Young lecturers experience all three forms simultaneously. Teaching demands emotional engagement and sustained instructional focus, research requires uninterrupted concentration and intellectual autonomy, and administrative work entails rapid responsiveness and strict procedural compliance. Together, these responsibilities generate fluctuating and competing demands throughout the academic cycle.

Empirical studies support the applicability of Role Conflict Theory within academic settings, particularly in private universities. Research indicates that lecturers routinely face unpredictable reporting schedules, overlapping deadlines, and shifting institutional priorities (Dara & Saparuddin, 2025; Mulyadi et al., 2024). Digital communication further intensifies role conflict by erasing temporal boundaries, as requests and notifications arrive continuously. Under conditions of limited staffing, weak workflow coordination, and high institutional expectations, the theory remains effective in explaining how structural arrangements generate sustained conflict across academic roles.

Digitalisation extends the mechanisms of role conflict beyond traditional boundaries. Digital tasks introduce frequent interruptions, promote multitasking, and disrupt periods of deep cognitive engagement, particularly during research activities. Studies demonstrate that accelerated digital work intensifies strain because lecturers have limited control over the timing, volume, and urgency of digital demands (Becker & Lanzl, 2023; Bonanomi et al., 2021). These findings broaden the explanatory scope of Role Conflict Theory by illustrating how digital ecosystems amplify conflict across professional domains.

Work–Family Border Theory

Work–Family Border Theory conceptualizes the boundaries between work and personal life as socially constructed and continuously negotiated, shaped by cultural norms, institutional routines, and individual agency (Clark, 2000). Boundaries vary in terms of permeability, defined as the ease with which activities cross domains, and flexibility, referring to the degree of control individuals exercise over time and behaviour within each domain. In private universities, young lecturers often operate within highly permeable boundaries, as professional responsibilities extend into personal spaces through digital platforms. Normative expectations of constant availability further increase boundary permeability.

Research indicates that lecturers in collectivist cultural contexts are particularly responsive to informal expectations from peers and institutional leaders. Social norms emphasizing group

harmony and obligation encourage compliance, thereby weakening boundary separation (H. S. & Rajeeana, 2024). Digital technologies dissolve physical boundaries by enabling teaching, supervision, and communication beyond campus and formal working hours. Online learning platforms frequently extend instructional duties into evenings and weekends, reducing boundary flexibility and limiting lecturers' ability to refuse additional tasks without social repercussions.

While boundary management involves individual strategies, institutional arrangements significantly influence boundary stability. Studies show that unscheduled meetings, sudden administrative requests, and ambiguous reporting procedures undermine lecturers' control over work–life boundaries (Lee & Sirgy, 2019). These findings reaffirm the relevance of Work–Family Border Theory in organizational contexts where institutional demands routinely override personal routines and temporal autonomy.

Perceived Organizational Support Theory

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) Theory explains how employees interpret institutional signals regarding recognition, fairness, and concern for wellbeing (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Perceptions of support influence motivation, resilience, and work engagement. Empirical research demonstrates that lecturers who perceive higher organizational support exhibit stronger commitment and lower stress levels (Jiménez-Hidalgo et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2025). Support is conveyed through formal policies, equitable workload allocation, professional development opportunities, and empathetic leadership practices.

In private universities, however, formal support systems are often underdeveloped. As a result, support frequently takes informal forms, such as verbal encouragement, discretionary flexibility, or personal understanding from leaders. Although these practices may provide short-term relief, they often generate inconsistency, as access to support varies across individuals and units. POS Theory highlights the centrality of fairness in shaping staff perceptions; uneven workload distribution and selective support reduce perceived organizational support and intensify role conflict (Kaeane & Molokomme, 2025; Willems, 2015). Young lecturers are particularly vulnerable due to their limited bargaining power and junior status, which restrict their influence over workload negotiations and institutional decisions.

Digital Workload and Cognitive–Emotional Demands

Digital workload refers to the volume and complexity of tasks generated by digital systems, including responding to messages, updating online platforms, uploading documents, developing digital teaching materials, and participating in virtual meetings. Research shows that digital workload fragments tasks and disrupts sustained concentration, particularly during research activities (Becker & Lanzl, 2023). Young lecturers frequently report difficulties maintaining cognitive flow due to constant digital interruptions, which increase mental load and undermine long-term planning.

Digital work also extends temporal boundaries, as tasks remain accessible across multiple devices. Studies indicate that digitalisation increases the likelihood of working during evenings and weekends, creating a boundaryless work environment (Arantes & Vicars, 2024). This expansion of working time intensifies role conflict by destabilizing daily routines across professional and personal domains.

Emotional Labour in Academic Work

Emotional labour involves regulating emotions to meet professional expectations during interpersonal interactions. In academic contexts, lecturers engage in emotional labor when supporting students, collaborating with colleagues, and communicating with supervisors. Research identifies emotional labor as a significant component of academic work, driven by heightened student needs, performance pressures, and administrative demands (Bright, 2012). Young lecturers face intensified emotional demands due to limited experience in managing institutional stressors.

Teaching requires sustained emotional engagement, including empathy, patience, and responsiveness. Administrative tasks demand professional composure under time pressure, while research activities expose lecturers to emotional strain through peer review and manuscript rejection. Digital communication amplifies emotional labour, as lecturers are expected to maintain professionalism in written interactions regardless of stress or fatigue.

Hidden Work in Digital Reporting Systems

Hidden work refers to time-consuming tasks that remain formally unrecognized, such as repeated document uploads, correcting formatting errors, revising reports due to unclear instructions, or resolving technical system failures. Studies indicate that hidden work contributes significantly to exhaustion because it is unpredictable and difficult to schedule (Mulyadi et al., 2024). Young lecturers frequently identify hidden work as a major source of frustration within administrative routines.

Hidden work intensifies role conflict by intruding unexpectedly into planned schedules. Reporting requirements often emerge without warning, digital systems malfunction, and tasks must be repeated to meet institutional standards. These processes expose structural weaknesses in organizational and digital infrastructures and increase reliance on personal time for task completion.

Power Dynamics and Institutional Hierarchy

Power relations play a critical role in shaping lecturers' work experiences. Young lecturers occupy subordinate positions within institutional hierarchies, with limited authority over task allocation and performance evaluation. Research shows that hierarchical pressure intensifies role conflict, as junior staff are often unable to decline assignments without fear of negative evaluation (Willems, 2015). In Indonesian private universities, cultural norms emphasizing respect for authority further reinforce these dynamics.

Early-career lecturers frequently avoid questioning instructions or negotiating workload expectations, which reduces boundary control and increases workload accumulation. Within this context, POS Theory helps explain how perceived indifference or silence from leaders is interpreted as a lack of appreciation, thereby intensifying emotional strain and stress.

Integration of Theoretical Perspectives

The reviewed literature demonstrates strong conceptual integration across the three theoretical frameworks and associated thematic constructs. Role Conflict Theory elucidates structural tensions arising from competing academic roles. Work–Family Border Theory explains how

boundaries become increasingly fluid in digitally mediated work environments. Perceived Organizational Support Theory accounts for emotional and motivational responses to leadership behaviour and institutional practices. Constructs such as digital workload, emotional labor, hidden work, and power dynamics extend these frameworks by illustrating how contemporary academic conditions reshape traditional mechanisms of conflict and coping.

Overall, the literature underscores the need for empirical research focused on young lecturers in private universities operating under resource constraints. Existing studies offer limited insight into how digital routines, cultural expectations, and institutional practices intersect to shape everyday academic work. The present study addresses this gap by linking established theoretical frameworks with the lived experiences of early-career lecturers in a regional private university context.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to examine how young lecturers manage work–life balance within a private university operating under conditions of limited institutional resources. The design enables in-depth exploration of lecturers’ daily work practices, subjective perceptions, and the meanings they attribute to their professional and personal experiences. The research is situated in a single private university in Pontianak, selected because it reflects typical characteristics of regional private higher education institutions, including small academic teams, constrained financial capacity, and heightened performance expectations. This approach aligns with qualitative principles that emphasize close engagement with participants lived experiences and context-sensitive interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Participants

The study involves five early-career lecturers aged between 27 and 38 years, selected through purposive sampling. Participant selection was guided by three criteria: active involvement in teaching, research, and community service; direct experience with administrative responsibilities and institutional performance demands; and willingness to participate in interviews and observations. Among the participants, three are married and two are unmarried, with teaching experience ranging from two to six years. The lecturers represent disciplines in management, economics, and education, reflecting the typical composition of academic staff in regional private universities (Dara & Saparuddin, 2025).

Data Collection

Data were collected from two primary sources. The first consisted of semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Interview questions explored experiences of role conflict, coping strategies, perceptions of institutional support, leadership practices, and understandings of work–life balance. The second data source involved contextual observations conducted in physical and digital work environments, including offices, meeting rooms, and online platforms. Observations enabled the identification of routine work practices, interaction patterns, and informal social dynamics that complemented interview data. All data collection procedures adhered to ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a thematic approach based on the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analytic process involved repeated reading of interview transcripts and field notes to achieve data familiarization, followed by systematic coding of meaning units related to role conflict, coping practices, and institutional support. Codes were subsequently organized into themes and subthemes, and relationships across themes were examined to develop interpretive insights. The analysis combined inductive logic, allowing patterns to emerge from the data, with deductive reasoning that linked empirical findings to Role Conflict Theory, Work–Family Border Theory, and Perceived Organizational Support Theory.

Credibility and Reflexivity

Research credibility was strengthened through source triangulation, member checking, and detailed documentation of the analytic process. Triangulation involved comparing data across participants and observational contexts to enhance consistency and depth of interpretation. Member checking provided participants with opportunities to review and confirm the accuracy of interpretive summaries. An audit trail documenting coding decisions and theme development was maintained to support transparency and methodological rigor (Nowell et al., 2017). Reflexivity was integrated throughout the research process. As the researcher is employed as a lecturer in a private university, reflective notes were used to record assumptions, positionality, and emotional responses in order to minimize interpretive bias (Morse, 2015).

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for social research. Participants received clear information regarding the study objectives, procedures, and voluntary nature of participation. Institutional and personal identities were anonymized to protect confidentiality. Participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without negative consequences. Throughout the research process, the study upheld principles of respect, transparency, and responsibility in all interactions (Imran et al., 2025).

Research Findings and Integrated Discussion

The findings reveal a consistent and interrelated pattern linking teaching, research, administrative routines, digital systems, individual coping strategies, and institutional behaviour. These patterns reflect the interaction between structural pressures embedded in organizational arrangements and the ongoing negotiation undertaken by individual lecturers. The integrated analysis presented below connects the empirical findings with three key theoretical frameworks: Role Conflict Theory (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), Work–Family Border Theory (Clark, 2000), and Perceived Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Interview excerpts are presented in Bahasa Indonesia to preserve contextual authenticity, accompanied by English explanations to ensure accessibility for an international audience. Collectively, the findings illuminate the lived experiences of young lecturers working in a private university characterized by limited resources and sustained performance demands.

Teaching Demands and Emotional Labour

Participants consistently described teaching as the core responsibility shaping their daily routines. Teaching activities extend beyond classroom instruction to include lesson preparation, development of teaching materials, management of digital learning platforms, and continuous responses to student inquiries. Lecturers emphasized that teaching obligations frequently extend

beyond formal working hours due to constant digital communication. One participant noted, “*Mahasiswa bisa menghubungi saya kapan saja, bahkan malam hari,*” indicating that student contact occurs at all hours. This experience reflects broader evidence that digital communication fragments academic work and reduces temporal predictability (Becker & Lanzl, 2023).

Teaching also requires sustained emotional labour. Participants described the need to remain patient, supportive, and emotionally present regardless of workload intensity. This aligns with Bright’s (2012) argument that emotional labour constitutes a significant yet often underestimated source of fatigue in academic work, particularly when positive emotional engagement is expected under persistent institutional pressure.

Research Expectations and Cognitive Conflict

Research responsibilities introduced an additional layer of tension. Participants described publication targets closely tied to accreditation processes and performance evaluations. Research activities, such as reading, data analysis, writing, and revising manuscripts require prolonged periods of uninterrupted concentration. However, participants reported that such focus is frequently disrupted by digital communication. As one participant explained, “*Saat saya sedang menulis, sering muncul pesan dari pimpinan yang harus segera dibalas.*” This reflects findings by Mutsuddi et al. (2023), who note that digital technologies foster continuous cognitive switching, thereby reducing research productivity.

Role Conflict Theory provides a clear explanation for this tension. Research demands sustained cognitive engagement, whereas digital communication requires immediate responsiveness. These incompatible behavioural expectations create behaviour-based conflict, compounded by time-based conflict when digital interruptions intrude into scheduled research periods (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Administrative Work, Accreditation Pressure, and Hidden Tasks

Administrative responsibilities emerged as a dominant and persistent source of pressure throughout the academic year. Participants described administrative tasks as repetitive, urgent, and highly time-sensitive. Reporting systems often require multiple document uploads, repeated cross-checking, and frequent revisions. One participant remarked, “*Ketika tugas kampus meningkat, saya sering pulang terlambat dan istri saya mengeluh*” illustrating the spillover of administrative pressure into family life.

Accreditation periods intensified this burden considerably. As one participant stated, “*Saat akreditasi, hidup saya hanya laporan, rapat, dan revisi.*” These findings align with prior studies showing that administrative workloads are a major source of strain in private universities with limited support staff (Dara & Saparuddin, 2025; Mulyadi et al., 2024).

Digital systems further reinforced administrative pressure through the production of hidden work. Participants described repeated uploads due to system instability, revisions prompted by unclear instructions, and error correction caused by inconsistent templates. One participant explained, “*Saya harus unggah dokumen berkali kali karena sistem tidak stabil.*” Hidden work was perceived as particularly stressful because it is unpredictable and difficult to plan, a finding consistent with Arantes and Vicars (2024), who highlight the workload-expanding effects of weak digital infrastructures in higher education.

Digital Surveillance and Reduced Autonomy

An additional pattern emerged in the form of perceived digital surveillance. Participants described increased monitoring through reporting dashboards, message timestamps, and online activity logs. Several participants reported an expectation to respond within minutes, including during non-working hours. One participant noted, “*Saya merasa diawasi karena semua aktivitas terekam di aplikasi.*” This perception heightened anxiety and reduced autonomy, as lecturers adjusted their behaviour to appear constantly responsive.

This finding aligns with emerging literature linking digital monitoring to heightened stress and reduced perceived control among early-career academics. The expectation of constant availability intensified work–life conflict by narrowing personal time and increasing cognitive vigilance.

Emotional Contagion and Collective Stress

Participants also described emotional contagion within academic teams. Stress was reported to spread quickly during peak workload periods, particularly during accreditation cycles. As one participant stated, “*Kalau ada satu tugas mendadak, biasanya yang lain ikut menyusul.*” While shared pressure occasionally fostered teamwork, it also amplified collective anxiety. This pattern supports the view that coping in private universities is often collective rather than purely individual, shaped by shared uncertainty and informal coordination.

The Triad of Overload

The findings reveal a recurring triad of overload encompassing teaching, research, and administrative work. These domains do not operate independently; rather, each interrupt and constrains the others. Teaching demands reduce research time, administrative tasks interrupt teaching preparation, and digital reporting disrupts both. This layered overload mirrors patterns identified in studies of academic labour in resource-constrained institutions and explains why individual planning strategies alone are insufficient to restore control.

Boundary Negotiation and Personal Life

Participants reported significant challenges in coordinating academic responsibilities with personal life. Married lecturers described conflicts between family responsibilities and extended evening work, while unmarried participants reported a lack of personal space. One participant shared, “*Saya harus atur waktu dengan ketat supaya pekerjaan tidak mengganggu keluarga,*” while another stated, “*Saya merasa tidak punya ruang untuk diri sendiri.*” These experiences reflect findings by Lee and Sirgy (2019), who show that digital work erodes personal boundaries regardless of family status.

Work–Family Border Theory provides a useful lens for interpreting these experiences. Digital communication increased boundary permeability, particularly when leaders contacted staff outside formal working hours. One participant noted, “*Jam delapan malam masih ada pesan dari pimpinan, jadi terpaksa saya balas.*” As Clark (2000) suggests, boundary control diminishes when institutional expectations override individual preferences. Fear of negative evaluation further discouraged resistance, as one participant admitted, “*Saya takut dianggap tidak patuh.*”

Power Dynamics and Hierarchical Pressure

The findings reveal the influence of institutional hierarchy on lecturers' experiences. Junior status limited participants' ability to negotiate workload or decline tasks. One participant explained, "*Saya tidak enak menolak tugas karena saya masih dosen baru.*" This reflects patterns described by Willems (2015), where hierarchical cultures generate silent pressure to comply, reinforcing role conflict and boundary erosion.

Coping Strategies and Their Limits

Participants employed a range of coping strategies. Planning was the most common, involving schedules, task lists, and time blocking. This aligns with proactive coping strategies identified by Devonport (2008). While planning enhanced clarity, it could not prevent digital interruptions.

Emotional coping strategies included brief withdrawal, self-reflection, and seeking quiet spaces. One participant noted, "*Kadang saya butuh duduk sendiri beberapa menit agar pikiran jernih lagi.*" Although effective in reducing immediate stress, these strategies remained vulnerable to institutional demands.

Social support emerged as a critical resource. Participants relied heavily on colleagues to interpret instructions, share templates, and distribute tasks. One participant stated, "*Kalau tidak ada teman kantor, saya tidak tahu harus mulai dari mana.*" This finding aligns with H. S. and Rajeena (2024), who emphasize the importance of relational coping in collectivist contexts.

Digital competence also shaped coping outcomes. Participants with strong digital skills completed tasks more efficiently but were subsequently assigned additional responsibilities. As one participant observed, "*Karena saya cepat mengerjakan tugas digital, saya diberi tugas tambahan.*" This dynamic contributed to unequal workload distribution.

Institutional Support and Perceived Fairness

Institutional support moderated the intensity of role conflict. Participants reported higher motivation when leaders demonstrated empathy. One participant explained, "*Kalau pimpinan mengerti kondisi saya, saya lebih semangat.*" Perceived Organizational Support Theory explains this response, as supportive behaviour signals institutional value (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

However, support was inconsistent across departments. Unequal task adjustments reduced perceptions of fairness, as illustrated by one participant's comment: "*Teman saya dapat keringanan tugas, tapi saya tidak.*" Prior research confirms that fairness enhances commitment and reduces stress (Jiménez-Hidalgo et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2025).

Participants also reported limited access to mentoring and formal training. One participant stated, "*Tidak ada pelatihan, jadi saya belajar sendiri.*" Studies in human resource management indicate that structured training is essential for strengthening staff resilience (Ratu et al., 2022; Roswaty & Siddiq, 2019).

Theoretical Integration

Overall, the findings strongly support Role Conflict Theory, demonstrating the coexistence of time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based conflict, intensified by digital acceleration. Work–Family Border Theory is also supported, as boundaries remained highly permeable in environments characterized by continuous digital communication and strong relational expectations. Finally, Perceived Organizational Support Theory explains how empathy and fairness enhance motivation, while inconsistency undermines trust and coping capacity.

Taken together, the analysis shows that work–life balance among young lecturers emerges from the interaction between structural constraints, individual strategies, and institutional behaviour. While personal coping strategies mitigate stress, they cannot resolve systemic pressures. Sustained institutional support, clear workload structures, and stable digital systems are essential for strengthening lecturer resilience and wellbeing.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that young lecturers in private universities operate within structural constraints that generate persistent and elevated levels of role conflict. Teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities are expanded through digitally mediated systems that increase task volume while simultaneously reducing opportunities for recovery. Continuous digital communication produces frequent interruptions that undermine research concentration and intensify overall workload pressure. Administrative routines further contribute to strain by generating hidden work in the form of repeated uploads, ambiguous instructions, and system instability. These conditions align closely with Role Conflict Theory, as competing role demands require time, cognitive attention, and emotional resources that exceed lecturers' available capacity.

To manage these pressures, young lecturers employ a range of coping strategies. Planning, emotional regulation, and efforts to establish boundaries help stabilise daily routines. Social support from colleagues emerges as a particularly important coping resource, as peers provide interpretive guidance, emotional reassurance, and practical assistance. Coping strategies are adaptive rather than fixed; they shift across academic cycles and respond to sudden increases in digital and administrative demands. These dynamics reflect Work–Family Border Theory, which explains how boundaries are continually renegotiated in response to institutional expectations and prevailing social norms.

Institutional support remains a decisive factor shaping lecturers' experiences. Supportive leadership practices enhance motivation and strengthen coping capacity, whereas inconsistent support undermines trust and increases strain. Participants reported uneven workload distribution, limited access to training, and unclear task expectations. These experiences are consistent with Perceived Organizational Support Theory, which emphasizes the role of perceived fairness, recognition, and clarity in shaping commitment and wellbeing. The findings indicate that individual coping strategies cannot compensate for weak institutional structures, insufficient mentoring, or unstable digital systems.

The study offers several theoretical contributions. First, it extends Role Conflict Theory by demonstrating its continued relevance in digitally intensified academic environments, where hidden work, emotional labour, and technical disruptions amplify role conflict. Second, it deepens Work–Family Border Theory by illustrating how boundary permeability is driven by digital alerts, hierarchical expectations, and culturally embedded norms. Third, it adds

contextual nuance to Perceived Organizational Support Theory by showing that informal support may be valuable but uneven and unreliable in small private institutions.

Several practical recommendations follow from these findings. Private universities should establish clear workload allocation mechanisms that align expectations with staff capacity. Leadership development initiatives should prioritise effective communication, procedural fairness, and empathetic engagement. Institutions need to invest in structured mentoring, stable digital infrastructures, and consistent reporting guidelines. Formal peer-support mechanisms can facilitate knowledge sharing and reduce uncertainty, while explicit digital communication protocols can help protect personal time and limit boundary erosion.

Overall, the findings indicate that work–life balance among young lecturers is shaped by the interaction of structural pressures, personal coping strategies, and institutional behaviour. Sustainable balance requires coordinated action across these domains. Strong support systems, transparent expectations, and equitable workload distribution are essential for maintaining lecturer wellbeing and performance in private universities operating under resource constraints.

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