

## Academic Resilience of Lecturers at State and Private Islamic Universities During the Pandemic: Meaning, Adaptation, and Innovation

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Submitted: 21-03-2023

Revised: 28-04-2023

Accepted: 07-05-2023

**ABSTRACT.** This article aims to discuss the meaning of academic toughness by lecturers in these two tertiary institutions and what kinds of meanings, adaptations, and innovations the respondents make to increase their academic toughness in carrying out the tri-dharma of higher education. The Google form collected online surveys from state and private Islamic religious college professors. The poll was distributed via WhatsApp to all State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges lecturer networks. According to the study, respondents define academic toughness as the ability to adjust in the face of obstacles and demands throughout the learning and teaching process in a demanding setting. Only a tiny percentage of respondents saw academic toughness as related to students' ability to adapt to challenges and pressures during the learning process in a demanding environment. Most respondents perceived a need to adapt and innovate in higher education tri-dharma activities, academic administration services, and resource management supporting academic activities. Most respondents also rated the significance of personal and professional factors contributing to academic toughness as a teacher.

**Keywords:** *Disruption of academic activities; lecturer; academic toughness; the covid-19 pandemic*



<https://dx.doi.org/10.32678/tarbawi.v9i01.8060>

**How to Cite** Khalilah, K. (2023). Academic Resilience of Lecturers at State and Private Islamic Universities During the Pandemic: Meaning, Adaptation, and Innovation. *Tarbawi: Jurnal Keilmuan Manajemen Pendidikan*, 9(01), 109-122. doi:10.32678/tarbawi.v9i01.8060.

## INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has been declared a worldwide pandemic and has profoundly influenced many aspects of people's lives in Indonesia since March 2020. This pandemic has had a detrimental influence on more than only public health. This outbreak has also caused issues in the realm of education and instruction, not only in Islamic boarding schools (Khaeroni et al., 2021) and schools (Salim et al., 2021) but also in some Indonesian universities (Projomaroeto & Muhyidin, 2020). The introduction of large-scale social restriction regulations and severe health standards has temporarily stopped Indonesian educational institutions' face-to-face/direct learning approach. As a result, learning models in many tertiary institutions are now held online or through a combination of approaches (Nurwakhidah & Suganda, 2022).

The government encourages all parties to be more responsive and adaptable in dealing with the Covid-19 epidemic not long after it spread. Adaptation is vital for larger community groups, professional employees, and artists (Budjana, Kompas, May 15, 2022). Adaptation must also be done entirely by higher education institution administrators. Instructors, particularly instructors and lecturers at higher institutions, must also adapt to ensure the continuity of the learning process and the quality and learning results (Susila, Kompas, February 27, 2022). Indonesia, it is hoped,



would avoid what is known as learning loss (Subagya, Kompas, February 6, 2021; Napitupulu, Kompas, March 16, 2022; Adiputri, Kompas, March 21, 2022).

Lecturers are one of the most valuable resources available to universities. Improving competency and flexibility and sustaining lecturer professionalism are critical components of human resource management in higher education (Muhtarom, 2015). Not only colleges were expected to be more adaptable during the epidemic (Mediana, Kompas, 4 September 2022). Teachers or lecturers at various tertiary institutions are also expected to enhance their competency in educational administration (Pancawati, Kompas, 5 October 2021). In other words, professors and lecturers must be academically demanding to respond to the different issues they experience as educators and teachers in higher education institutions (Napitupulu, Kompas, 29 November 2021). Such academic resilience is required so students can cope with the disruption of academic activities caused by the Covid-19 epidemic. Various research on academic resilience has been conducted, including since the Covid-19 outbreak (Raghunathan et al., 2022). However, the research discusses explicitly the meaning of academic toughness for lecturers who work at State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges in Indonesia, as well as their meanings, adaptations, and innovations to increase their academic toughness in carrying out the *tri-dharma* of higher education, has not been widely conducted. It is the topic of this article.

This study is significant for several reasons. *First*, resilience in arranging educational and instructional activities is critical for instructors (Naidu, 2021). During the pandemic, conventional education models were deemed ineffective. Teachers and students are increasingly expected to have academic toughness in order to respond to a variety of government policies implemented during a pandemic, particularly restrictions and the implementation of health protocols, in order to meet the learning achievement targets desired by both (Naidu, 2021). *Second*, current evidence suggests that, in addition to student academic toughness, the following two forms of academic toughness are required to respond to and handle numerous difficulties that develop in education, both due to natural disasters and pandemics. This resilience includes university organization resilience (Ayebi-Arthur, 2017; Nandy et al., 2021; Bartuseviciene et al., 2021) and teacher resilience (Bento et al., 2021; Wang, 2021). Academic resilience refers to these two forms of resilience. In recent years, research on this topic has advanced remarkably (Raghunathan et al., 2022). In the Indonesian context, for example, some of them are concerned with determining the academic resilience of prospective teachers in the face of the many obstacles that respondents confront, as well as what factors might influence their academic resilience (Dalimunthe et al., 2021). Another study was also carried out to investigate the teacher resilience of the English language education department at a State University in West Nusa Tenggara in the face of changes in education policy implemented by the Indonesian government during the pandemic (Amin et al., 2022).

Although research into teachers' academic toughness in dealing with problems during the pandemic is progressing quickly (Raghunathan et al., 2022), research into what academic toughness means to lecturers at State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges in Indonesia has yet to progress much. Similarly, research that examines these lecturers' adaptations and innovations to increase their academic toughness in carrying out the *tri-dharma* of higher education has yet to be well developed. As a result, we only know a little about these two subjects. This essay will address these two topics in light of these circumstances. The following notions will be used to alter the discussion of these two topics. The first notion is called resilience, while the second is called academic resilience. The idea of resilience has been described in various ways (Pooley & Cohen, 2010; Southwick et al., 2014; Yates et al., 2015). The notion of academic resilience suffers from the same problem (Reyes et al., 2022).

Kangas-Dick and O'Shaughnessy (2020) describe resilience as a person's ability to exhibit his ability to endure and adapt constructively in the face of adversity. Meanwhile, Southwick et al. (2014) describe resilience as a person's purposeful endeavour to go forward and improve based on the lessons he learns when confronted with adversity. Morales (2008), on the other hand, sees

academic toughness as a term that is naturally tied to a person's ability to attain educational achievements within a specific amount of time despite the different risks and obstacles they confront. This skill is also linked to a person's level of academic accomplishment, which affects whether a person is successful or unsuccessful in school.

Toughness as a concept is frequently used to label these things. However, the meaning and application of this concept are still being debated among experts. One is whether resilience is a process and outcome that someone achieves or a personal feature or quality that someone possesses (Pooley & Cohen, 2000). Despite such disagreements, experts generally agree that resilience includes two essential elements: first, the challenges and risks a person must face, and second, the person's ability or competence in facing these challenges and risks (Pooley & Cohen, 2000; Yates et al., 2015). The writers refer to resilience based on these two characteristics in this article.

Not only the concept of toughness but the concept of academic toughness is also still being debated and also has various meanings from researchers. For example, Wang et al. (1994) define academic toughness as the extent to which an academic can succeed in a challenging environment. Somewhat similarly, Coronado-Hijon (2016) interprets academic resilience as the ability of academics to respond to and manage various types of difficulties when these academics want to realize their targeted personal, professional and academic achievements. Somewhat different from these experts, Martin (2002) defines *academic toughness* as a process of adaptation carried out by academics and, at the same time, as a personal capacity to respond to various challenges and threats as well as psychological pressures such as stress and academic activity obligations to achieve targets—target academic achievement. Beltman et al. (2011) and Mansfield et al. (2016) argue that academic toughness is ontologically related to three things.

*First*, academic toughness is the personal capacity of academics to overcome the various challenges they face by maximizing their personal and contextual resources. *Second*, academic toughness is a process carried out by an academician in achieving his targeted academic achievements. In this context, academic resilience can also be interpreted as a process in which an academic implements a strategy based on personal characteristics and personal, contextual and professional resources at his disposal to face the various challenges he is facing in carrying out his duties and role as a teacher. *Third*, academic toughness is an outcome or result of academic work carried out by an academic by maximizing the use of his personal, contextual and professional resources (Beltman et al., 2011; Mansfield et al., 2016). As a concept, *academic toughness* is defined from various perspectives. In this context, academic toughness can be studied by focusing on organizations (a), individuals (b) and individual interactions with their environment (b). Related to the first, the concept of academic resilience can be used to examine the extent to which an organization, such as a university, has the adaptability and capacity to solve the various complex problems it faces, for example, due to natural disasters or due to pandemics (Ayebe-Arthur, 2017; Nandy et al., 2021; Bartuseviciene et al., 2021; Shaya et al., 2022). Then related to the second, academic toughness is also interpreted as the extent to which a person can rise and survive amidst various difficulties in their environment.

In contrast to the second, the third sees academic resilience focusing on capacities that can be owned or attached to individuals alone and the environmental context, which gives rise to various questions and challenges that respondents must face (Wang, 2021). From an individual perspective, academic toughness includes a number of the following components, namely, self-belief, one's assessment of the importance of education, the ability to focus on learning, to be patient and diligent in learning, to plan, monitor and manage the learning process (Martin, 2002). This ability refers to the ability of someone who has limited resources amid difficult situations to overcome significant problems that occur in the academic world, which causes a person to become increasingly disinterested in the world of education and learning and is low in achieving learning targets and goals (Martin & Marsh, 2009; Martin, 2013; Ye et al., 2021).

From a personal perspective, academic toughness includes the following four aspects (Beltman, 2020). *First*, the emotional aspect, namely the extent to which a teacher can regulate emotions, can rise, has a sense of humour, and does not perceive everything as personal. *Second*, the motivational aspect is the extent to which a teacher has self-confidence, the ability to survive various challenges (persistence and perversion), realistic expectations, and always optimism. *Third*, the professional aspect, namely the extent to which a teacher continues to develop teaching competencies and skills, manage classes, facilitate effective learning and always be flexible and adaptive to environmental conditions. Fourth, the social aspect is the extent to which a teacher has the habit of asking and seeking help in his social environment, has interpersonal communication skills, can take advice from other people who help and get personal and professional support networks (Beltman, 2020). The author, in this article, will use the concepts of academic toughness from an individual perspective based on the experts' opinions above. These concepts will be used to examine the meaning of academic toughness by lecturers who work at State and Private Islamic Religious Universities in Indonesia and what kinds of adaptations and innovations the respondents make to increase the academic toughness of respondents in carrying out the *tri-dharma* of higher education.

## METHOD

The authors carried out the study related to the above using quantitative research methods. The data source used is online survey data from lecturers in the State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges using Google Forms. This survey was carried out by distributing questions or questionnaires in the survey to all lecturer networks in the State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges via the WhatsApp group. The population in this survey are lecturers who work in State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges. Initially, the authors planned to survey with a target sample of lecturers teaching at State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges in Greater Jakarta. The response rate of respondents to fill out this questionnaire is very low. In response, the author then sent online survey questionnaire questions to lecturers of State and Private Islamic Colleges in all regions of Indonesia concerned with the issue of lecturer academic toughness and willingness to take the time to fill out the survey questionnaire. These lecturers are the target sample in this study.

The survey questionnaire instrument was distributed purposively through the WhatsApp group of lecturers, of which the author is a member. In addition, the author also asked the network of colleagues to send the instrument to the WhatsApp group of the lecturers they have. The process of collecting survey data was carried out in December 2022. A group of respondents filled out the data in this survey, but some filled in only part of it. Survey data sourced from this second group are not included in the analysis of this survey data. The survey data used in this article is from the first group of 37 respondents. The profiles of respondents to this survey are brief as follows. The majority of respondents are male (62.2%). Most respondents also have a Masters's degree (59.5%), and the rest have a Doctoral degree (40.5%). Respondents' academic rank levels were grouped into the following three categories, namely expert assistants (43.2%), Lectors (32.4%) and Associate Professors (24.3%). Respondents with the first academic level rank are 43.2%, the second academic level is 32.4%, and the third academic level is 24.3%. Most respondents are under 50, with details between 31-40 years old at 49% and those between 41-50 years at 37.8%. The rest were aged between 51 and 60 (10.8%) and under 30 (2.7%).

Of the respondents who filled out the survey questionnaire in the research that the author conducted, the majority of the respondents claimed to teach in the Islamic Religious Education study program, Islamic Education Management, Islamic criminal law, education management and management of Islamic education, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education, Arabic language education and Biology Tadris. Then from the type of faculty where the respondent teaches, the respondent works in various faculties. However, most respondents (51.3%) teach at the faculties of Tarbiyah and education (the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training and the Teacher Training

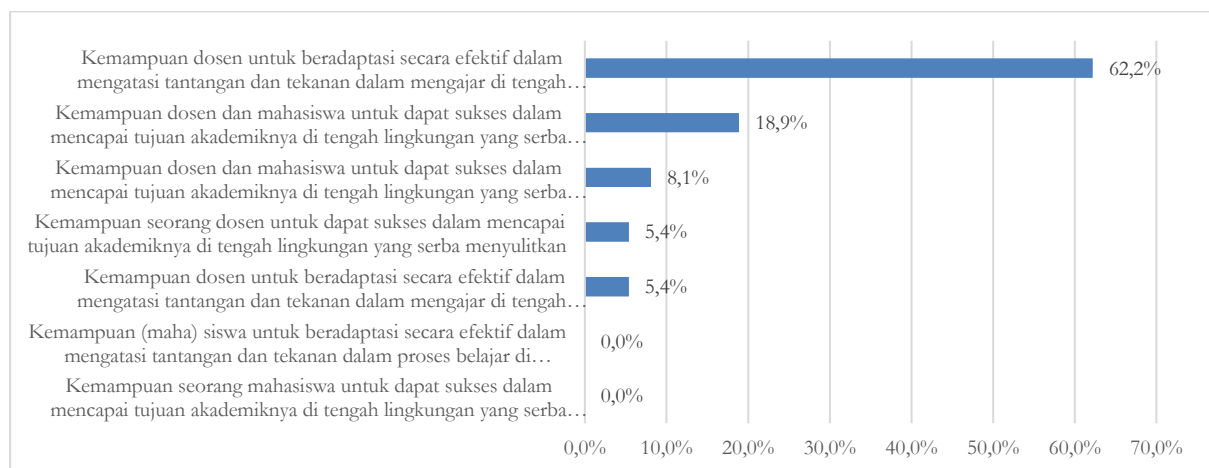
and Education Faculty). The rest teach in faculties outside these fields of study, such as the Faculties of Da'wah, Economics and Business, Sharia and Law. More than 54% of the respondents teach on campuses outside the State Islamic University of Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. Only 45.9% of the respondents are teachers on this campus. Judging from the time the respondents worked as lecturers, the majority worked under ten years. Respondents who work as lecturers are between 6 to 10 years of, 35.1%, and those who work under five years are 29.7%. Meanwhile, the number of respondents between 11-15 years is 10.8%, and those working as lecturers between 16-20 years is 16.2%. Only a tiny proportion of the respondents worked as lecturers over 21 years (8.1%). Most respondents are lecturers with regular lecturer status, equal to 70.3%. The usual lecturers referred to here are lecturers who currently need to hold structural positions at the university, faculty, department, or study program level. The survey data collected from these respondents were then analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis to produce the findings, as shown in the following sub-sections.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### **The meaning of academic resilience by lecturers of public and private Islamic religious universities**

Academic toughness has been defined in various ways and is still debatable. Therefore, it is essential to see how academic resilience is understood by the actors who are the object of research, including lecturers/teachers. Related to what is meant by academic resilience, survey research data shows the following findings. Most lecturers in this survey stated that academic toughness is the ability of lecturers to adapt effectively to overcome challenges and pressures in the learning and teaching process. Respondents live in a challenging environment (67.6%). Only a small proportion of respondents understood academic toughness as the ability of lecturers and students to be successful in achieving their academic goals in a challenging environment (18.9%) or as the ability of lecturers and students to be successful in achieving their academic goals amid a problematic environment, which is very difficult (8.1%). Likewise, only 5.4% of respondents interpret academic toughness as lecturers' ability to achieve their academic goals in such an environment successfully.



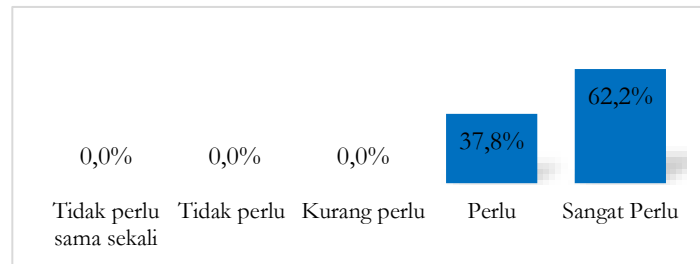
**Figure 1:** In your opinion, which of the following describes the notion of academic toughness?

The exciting thing, as shown in Figure 1, is that respondents in this study tend not to interpret academic toughness in the following two ways. First, academic toughness is the ability of students to adapt effectively to overcome challenges and pressures in the learning process in a demanding environment. Second, academic toughness is students' ability to achieve their academic goals in a complex environment successfully. On the contrary, most respondents interpreted academic

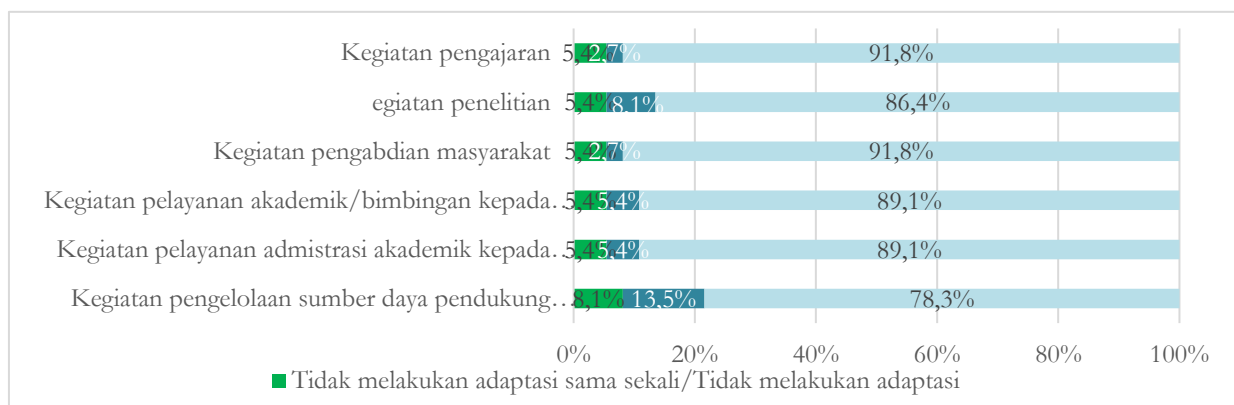
toughness as the ability of lecturers to adapt effectively in overcoming challenges and pressures in the learning and teaching process that respondents experienced in a challenging environment.

### Academic resilience of lecturers of state and private Islamic religious universities in the pandemic period: Adaptation and innovation

During the Covid-19 pandemic, all lecturers who were respondents in this study, as shown in Figure 2, believed that it was necessary to adapt to academic activities. As shown in Figure 3, this adaptation needs to be carried out in the following six types of activities. First, teaching activities. Second, research activities. Third, community service activities. Fourth, academic service activities (guidance) to students. Fifth, academic administration service activities to students. Sixth, resource management activities support the student learning process.

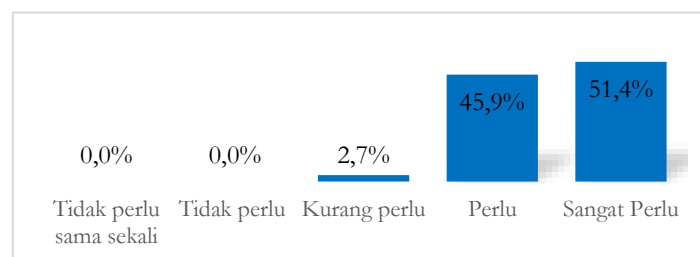


**Figure 2:** To what extent do you feel it is necessary or not necessary to adapt to academic activities during the co-19 pandemic?



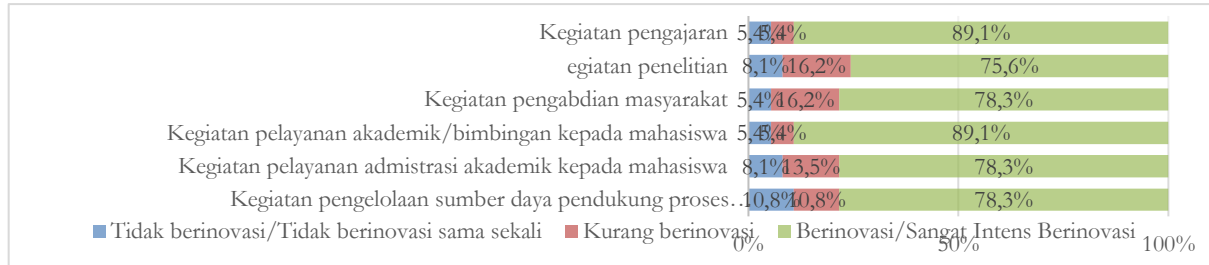
**Figure 3:** During the Covid-19 outbreak, to what extent did you adapt in carrying out the following academic activities?

Apart from needing to adapt, most of the lecturers in this study also felt the need to innovate in the academic activities the respondents carried out during the pandemic. As shown in Figure 4, only 2.7% of the respondents stated that there was no need to innovate academic activities during the pandemic. This innovation is considered necessary in several academic activities.



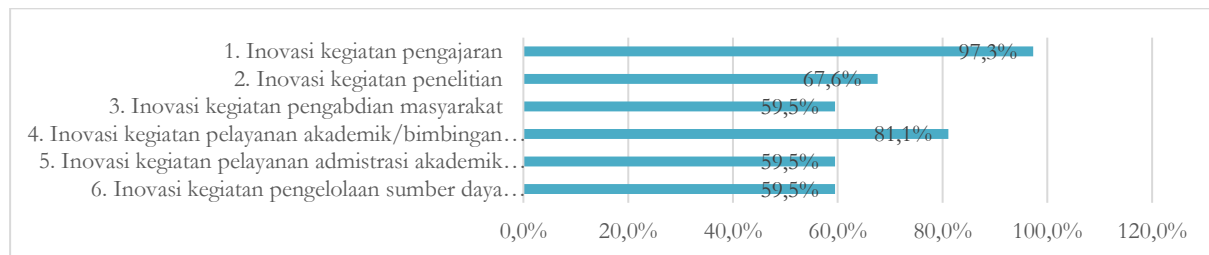
**Figure 4:** To what extent do you feel it is necessary or not necessary to innovate in academic activities during the co-19 pandemic?

From the existing survey data, as shown in Figure 5, more than 75% of the respondents admitted to innovating in carrying out the following six types of academic activities. First, teaching activities. Second, research activities. Third, community service activities. Fourth, academic service activities (guidance) to students. Fifth, academic administration service activities to students. Sixth, resource management activities support the student learning process.



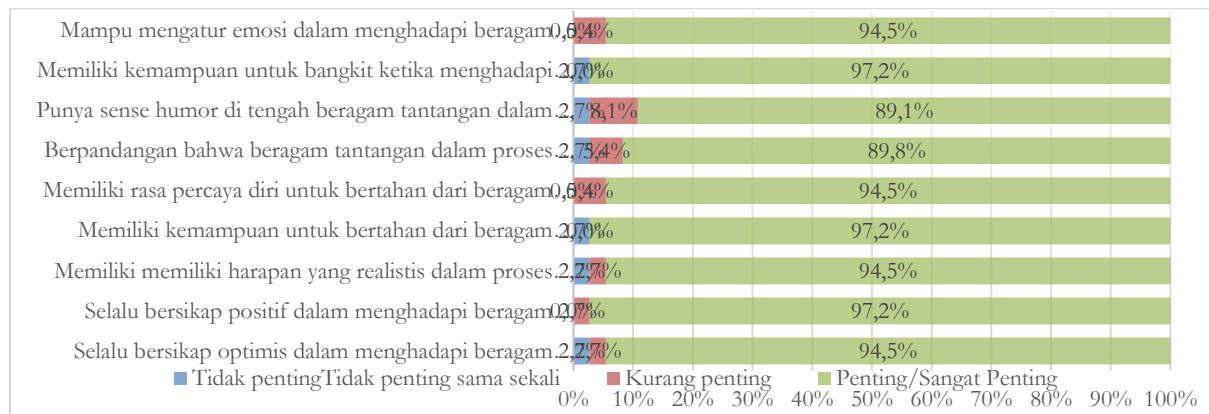
**Figure 5:** During the Covid-19 outbreak, to what extent did you innovate in carrying out the following academic activities?

Of the types of innovation in academic activities, innovation in teaching activities and academic services (guidance) to students are two types of innovation that are mainly carried out by the majority of lecturers who are the respondents of this study. The survey data shows that 97.3% of the respondents carried out the first type of innovation, and 81.1% carried out the second type of innovation. In addition to these two types of innovative academic activities, more than 59% of the respondents, as seen in Figure 6, also innovate in the following four types of academic activities, namely, research activities, community service, academic, administrative services, and management of resources supporting the student learning process.

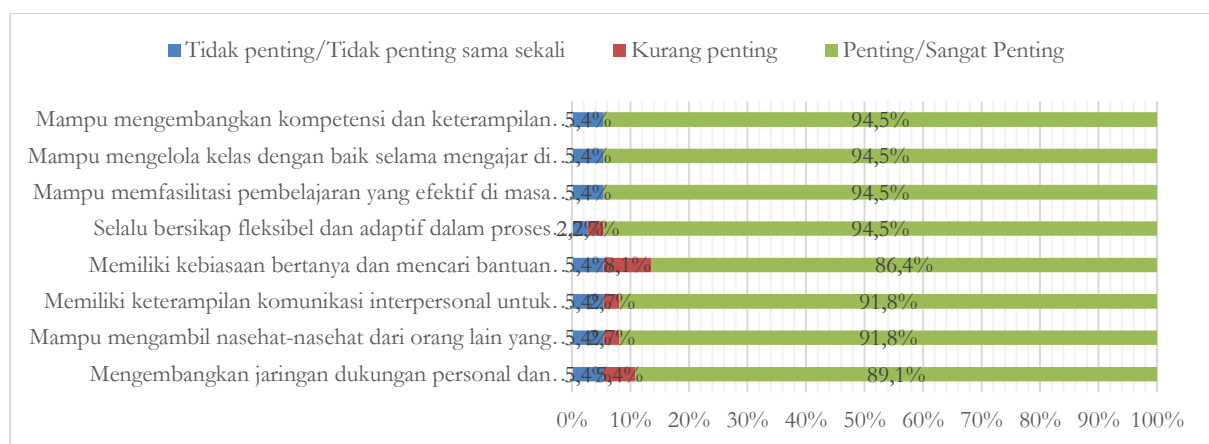


**Figure 6:** Of the various innovations in academic activities, which innovations have you implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic? (You can select more than one)

The survey data also indicates that most respondents consider it necessary and very important to develop academic responsibility in dealing with the challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. As shown in Figure 7, more than 89% of the respondents stated that doing the following things is essential: *first*, being able to regulate emotions in dealing with various challenges in the teaching process during a pandemic; *second*, having the ability to rise when facing various challenges in the teaching process during a pandemic; *third*, having a sense of humor during various challenges in teaching during a pandemic; *fourth*, having the view that various challenges in the teaching process during a pandemic are not merely personal problems that one faces alone; *fifth*, having the confidence to survive the various challenges in the teaching process during the pandemic; *sixth*, having the ability to survive in the face of various challenges that arise in the teaching process during the pandemic; *seventh*, have realistic expectations in teaching during a pandemic; *eighth*, always be positive in facing various challenges in the teaching process during the pandemic; and *ninth*, always be optimistic when facing various challenges in the teaching process during the pandemic.



**Figure 7:** To what extent is it essential or not necessary for a teacher/lecturer to do the following during the Covid-19 pandemic?

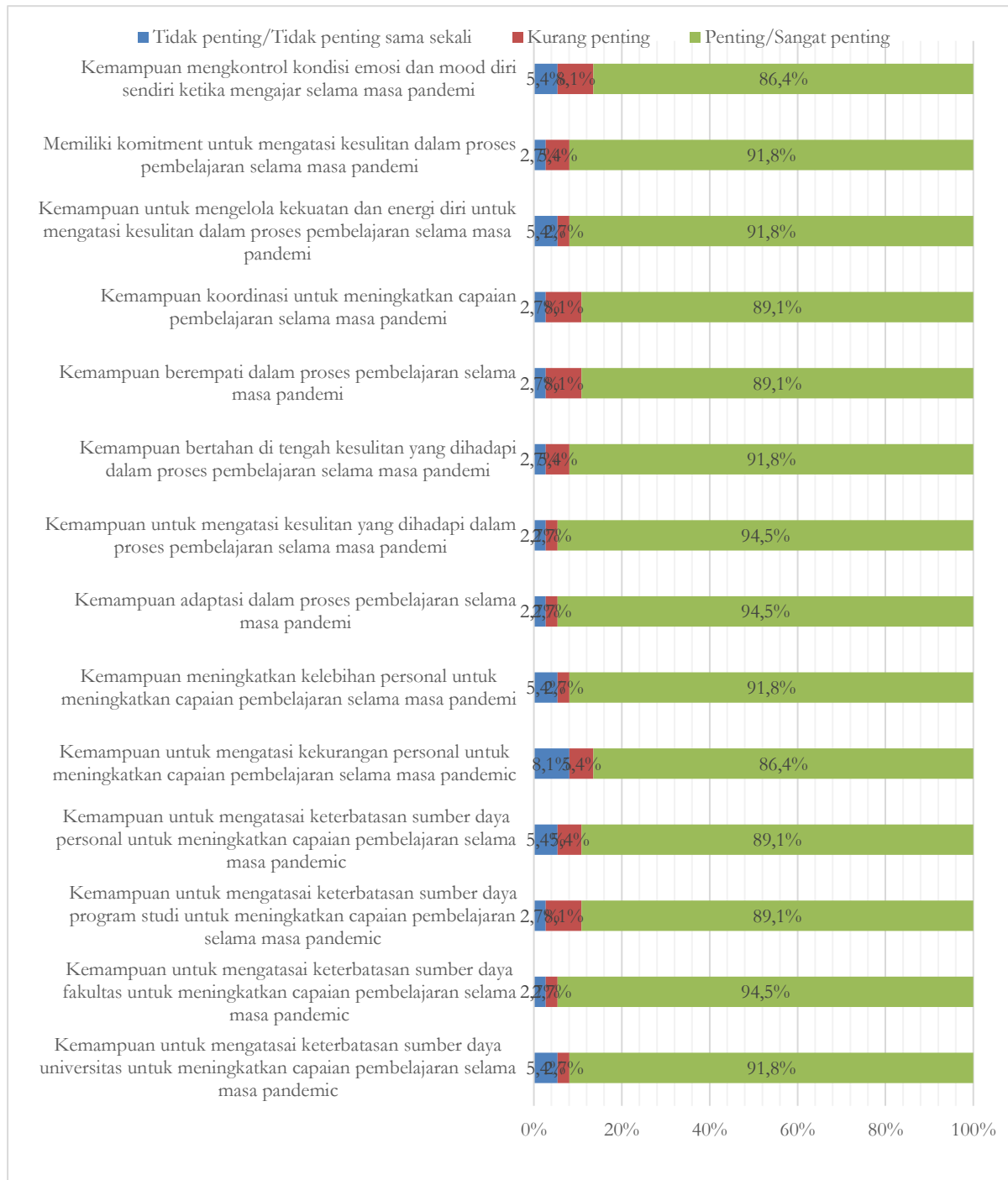


**Picture 8:** According to you, to what extent is it essential or not necessary for a lecturer to do the following things during a pandemic?

Apart from that, the existing survey data also shows that more than 89% of the respondents, as shown in Figure 8, considered it essential to do the following eight things during a pandemic: *first*, being able to develop competence and teaching skills; *second*, being able to manage the class well when teaching; *third*, being able to facilitate an effective learning process; *fourth*, being able to facilitate a flexible and adaptive learning process; *fifth*, have the habit of asking and asking for help from other teachers when facing problems in the learning process; *sixth*, have interpersonal communication skills to support the smooth learning process; *seventh*, being able to take advice from other people who can support the smooth learning process; *eighth*, developing personal and professional support networks to support learning process activities.

The majority of the lecturers who were survey respondents, as shown in Figure 9, also stated the importance of having the following fourteen abilities when carrying out their duties as lecturers on campus during the pandemic: *first*, the ability to control one's emotional state and mood when teaching; *second*, the commitment to overcome the difficulties encountered in the learning process; *third*, the ability to manage one's strength and energy to overcome difficulties during the learning process; *fourth*, the ability to coordinate to improve learning outcomes; *fifth*, the ability to empathize in the learning process; *sixth*, the ability to survive amidst the difficulties it faces in the learning process aimed at students; *seventh*, the ability to overcome the difficulties it faces in the learning process; *eighth*, adaptability in the learning process; *ninth*, the ability to increase personal strengths to maximize the targeted learning outcomes; *tenth*, the ability to overcome personal deficiencies to maximize learning outcomes; *eleventh*, the ability to overcome the limitations of personal resources to improve learning outcomes; *twelfth*, the ability to overcome limited study

program resources to improve learning outcomes; *thirteenth*, the ability to overcome limited faculty resources to improve learning outcomes; *fourteenth*, the ability to overcome the limited resources of the university where the respondent works to improve these learning outcomes.



**Figure 9:** According to you, to what extent is a teacher/lecturer essential or not essential to have or develop the following things during a pandemic?

## Discussion

From the findings described above, we have at least four exciting things to discuss. These four things will be described by the author as follows. *First*, most State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges lecturers who were respondents to the survey interpreted academic toughness as the ability of lecturers to adapt to overcoming challenges and pressures in the learning and teaching process

that respondents underwent in a demanding environment. It indicates that lecturers in Indonesia's State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges environments tend to interpret academic toughness as the 'capacity' possessed by someone who is shown by their ability to survive and adapt positively during difficulties they face. This tendency is in line with what Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy (2020) and Southwick et al. (2014) conveyed. This finding also confirms that academic resilience includes two essential elements, namely elements of individual ability and capacity—in this context, lecturers, on the one hand, and challenges and risks that can potentially become threats and challenges an academicians face. This finding is in line with what was stated by Pooley & Cohen (2000), Yates et al. (2015), Wang et al. (1994), Martin (2002), and Coronado-Hijon (2016).

*Second*, the survey data above also show that only a tiny proportion of State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges lecturers interpret academic toughness as a student's ability to adapt to overcoming challenges and pressures in the learning process in a demanding environment. Likewise, very few respondents interpret academic toughness as students' ability to achieve their academic goals in a demanding environment successfully. It indicates that respondents do not only understand the concept of academic toughness from an individual perspective (Martin, 2002; Wang, 2021) but rather prioritize the importance of lecturer academic toughness compared to the importance of student academic toughness. Nevertheless, according to Naidu (2021), academic toughness during a pandemic is not only needed for lecturers but also for students. In fact, according to him, it is even essential to develop academic toughness at the level of the organization and higher education system so that they can achieve the targets of the teaching and learning process during the pandemic (Naidu, 2021).

*Third*, the findings from the survey data also show that the majority of State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges lecturers who were respondents in the survey also felt the need to make adaptations not only related to academic activities related to the *tri-dharma* of higher education (teaching, research, and community service) alone. More than that, academic toughness is also needed in the context of academic administration services and the management of resources supporting academic activities. The majority of respondents did not just assess the lecturer's adaptation. More than that, most respondents also made adaptations and innovations related to these matters. These findings indicate that academic resilience is inherently multidimensional (Martin & Marsh, 2009), encompassing several sub-concepts (Pooley & Cohen, 2000). In the Indonesian context, the research findings presented in this article also imply that academic resilience covers the *tri-dharma* of higher education and includes resilience in academic, administrative services, and management of resources to support academic activities.

*Fourth*, the findings from the survey data also show that the majority of State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges lecturers who are respondents view the importance of abilities as essential elements of academic toughness. These abilities include two things, namely personal and professional abilities as a teacher. This personal ability is related to the ability to manage one's own emotions, the spirit to rise to face various challenges, develop a sense of humor, self-confidence, the spirit to survive in facing various challenges, a realistic and positive attitude and optimism in the teaching process during the pandemic. Personal abilities also include a commitment to overcoming difficulties encountered in the learning process, managing one's strength and energy to overcome difficulties, carrying out coordination, empathy, survival, adaptation, increasing personal strengths and overcoming personal deficiencies, and overcoming limited personal as program resources, studies, faculties, and universities where respondents work to improve learning outcomes. While professional abilities include competence and teaching skills, managing classes properly and effectively, facilitating a flexible and adaptive learning process, the habit of asking questions and asking for help from other teachers when facing problems in the learning process, interpersonal communication, developing networks, and taking advice from other people who can support the smooth learning process.

The findings above indicate that academic resilience, in essence, does not only include elements that indicate a person's capacity to use his resources in overcoming the challenges he faces in difficult times, as stated by Morales (2008: 228), Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy (2020) Southwick et al. (2014), Wang et al. (1994) and Coronado-Hijon (2016). More than that, academic toughness is also related to the professional capacity possessed by a person in using the contextual resources they have, especially the organizational resources where respondents work to achieve the achievements of their targeted academic activities (Beltman et al., 2011; Mansfield et al., 2016).

## CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted academic activities at various tertiary institutions in Indonesia, including lecturers working at State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges. This article discusses the meaning of academic toughness and what adaptations and innovations lecturers make to increase it. Survey data was collected from lecturers at State and Private Islamic Religious Colleges and analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis. Four main findings were presented: the majority of lecturers interpret academic toughness as the ability of lecturers to adapt effectively in overcoming challenges and pressures in the learning and teaching process, and only a tiny portion interprets it as the ability of students to adapt effectively in overcoming challenges and pressures in the learning process, and the need to adapt and innovate related to academic activities related to the Tridharma of Higher Education.

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