



Urban Students Striving for Balance in Academic and Spiritual Pursuits

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Abstract:

The balance between academic obligations and spiritual life is a big challenge for urban students in Malang City. This balance is important because urban students are dealing with a new lifestyle in Malang City and the many academic demands they must complete. The method used in the preparation of this paper is quantitative method, in which the data is processed by descriptive analysis method and then reinterpreted qualitatively. In this study, the balance is seen based on the concept of balance (work-life balance), namely: 1) personal life interferes with work, 2) work interferes with personal life, 3) personal life improves the quality of work, and 4) work improves the quality of personal life. From this analysis, it was found that there is an imbalance between efforts to fulfill academic demands and spiritual appreciation/activities of urban Catholic students in Malang. Therefore, the balance needs to be sought and realized continuously because both are important and interrelated so that their presence cannot be ignored.

INTRODUCTION

Pastoral theology has become an issue that must continue to be developed in the midst of an increasingly advanced world. The progress of the world necessitates advancement and development in pastoral theology or theologizing in the current pastoral situation (Marisi et al., 2020). In this regard, pastoral theology must be able to respond to the demands of the times or pastoral problems that exist.

The balance between spiritual/religious life and work is an interesting theme in a world full of busyness (Gea et al., 2023). This is one of the pastoral problems of the Church in the present era. This theme also applies to students busy with their academic affairs, especially urban students. Furthermore, urban students come from diverse backgrounds and must adapt to urban lifestyles.

Balance is one of the "laws of nature" that has proven to be true. It is necessary in all things and situations. It is like a compass that gives the right direction to life as we navigate the waves of time (Wiyono, 2022). This means that balance is crucial to ensure that life runs smoothly and achieves its goals.

Balancing academic and personal (spiritual) matters is important (Wibowo & Hartono, 2020). This balance is necessary because both of these are integral and important aspects of a

student's life. They should not eliminate each other but complement and coexist (Susanto & Susilo, 2022). Especially for those far from family, without direct supervision, they must determine their own path in the midst of city life and academic demands. This makes balance an important issue because the balance of human life is the key to achieving well-being and happiness (Ma'ruf, 2019). Balance will also bring harmony to human life itself (Sukarma, 2021), indicating that nothing is dominant, and nothing is sacrificed or neglected.

Malang, with all its progress and dynamics, has become home to thousands of students from various parts of the country (BPS Kota Malang, 2020). They are classified as urban students, living in an urban environment full of the hustle and bustle of modern life. Additionally, they must adapt to new cultures, both the local culture of Malang and the campus culture (Asikin et al., 2022). Encountering these new cultures makes it challenging for them in the early days of college. Therefore, they must adapt to the traditions of their new residence and follow the rules of the city they live in, to be accepted well in their new living environment in the city. Urban students usually learn a lot from their classmates who are natives of that area (Putra & Harianto, 2022).

The main challenge faced by urban students in Malang is the intense academic pressure. They immerse themselves in a competitive campus environment, with strict curriculum requirements and a hectic schedule. Competent instructors and challenging course materials are part of the academic dynamics they face every day. Most of them are involved in various campus organizations, seminars, and additional research projects. All of these are part of their efforts to maximize their academic experience and build a bright future.

Facing many important academic challenges, urban students often neglect their personal affairs. Campus demands become the primary focus for urban students in Malang. For them, meeting the demands of the campus is more crucial, leading them to sacrifice their personal and spiritual matters related to their religious obligations (Catholic). Moreover, campus academic activities often lead them to neglect spiritual matters, as academic events are often held on Sundays and other days of Christian religious observance. This is further supported by a hedonistic and individualistic way of life. They are trapped in the new campus culture that undermines their faith and weakens their rational and moral functions (Rabim, 2023).

Pastoral theology should address these issues so that students can develop their faith amid high academic tension. Therefore, I consider it important to discuss the theme of balance between academic and spiritual life for urban students in Malang. This issue is crucial to address because urban students often find themselves at a difficult crossroads, where they have to choose between campus activities (lectures, workshops, organizations, etc.) or participating in profound religious activities. This tension can lead to serious internal dilemmas, where students must find a middle ground that allows them to fulfill both aspects without sacrificing one for the other. As students, they must also contribute knowledge through ideas, insights, and practical knowledge within the campus.

So far, urban students in the city of Malang have made efforts to engage in campus life and community life. They do this through activities in the Student Executive Board (BEM) and other organizations on campus. It is hoped that in carrying out their duties on campus, they emphasize Christian values. Values of justice, honesty, and service should color their service (Jegaut & Kristiyani, 2023). Additionally, they actively participate in their residential environment. There, they can play an active role in collective prayer, choir activities, and other spiritual activities (Jegaut & Kristiyani, 2023). By getting involved in the community and the Church, they find a new home or community that supports and helps organize their faith life. Furthermore, life balance can be achieved through strengthening human resources based on education, strengthening partnerships, and reinforcing control systems for students (Baskoro & Siburian, 2019).

Therefore, this research aims to explore and deepen into the understanding of urban students in the city of Malang regarding the balance between academic and spiritual life amid various complex and numerous academic routines and demands, and how they try to overcome the problems they face related to this balance. Additionally, it investigates how the Church and the campus support and facilitate the efforts of urban students to balance their academic and spiritual lives. This exploration intends to investigate various aspects of the complex relationship between academic activities and the spiritual life of urban students. The research aims to explain the importance of balancing academic and spiritual matters.

METHOD

This research employs a quantitative approach. The data is processed using a descriptive analysis method, then reinterpreted qualitatively (Wahyuni, 2020, p. 23). The respondents for this study are urban Catholic students in Malang who are enrolled in the Faculty of Dentistry at Brawijaya University. From this population, samples are randomly selected using a simple random sampling method. The data source used in this research is an online questionnaire/Google Form sent to the respondents. The resulting data will be in numerical form. The collected data is analyzed using the SPSS software.

In this study, the validity of each statement presented to the respondents has been tested. Validity testing is determined by comparing the table value (r-table) with the corrected item-total correlation value obtained from SPSS calculations. If the calculated r-value is greater than the table value, then the statement items are considered valid and can be used for data collection to be analyzed in the study (Wijayanti, 2014, pp. 57–58).

In this research, the total number of respondents is 30, with the condition $df=(n-2)$, thus the df used is 28 with a significance level for a two-tailed test of 0.05, which is 0.361.

Table 1. Items Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
P1	49,10	26,162	,639	,863
P2	49,13	25,154	,626	,865

P3	49,53	27,844	,504	,871
P4	49,53	27,361	,640	,864
P5	49,43	26,806	,564	,868
P6	49,53	25,913	,567	,869
P7	48,93	28,409	,515	,870
P8	48,93	28,409	,515	,870
P9	49,10	26,645	,739	,859
P10	49,10	26,645	,739	,859
P11	49,10	28,921	,487	,872
P12	49,17	29,454	,429	,874
P13	49,40	28,317	,375	,878

(Source: Research Data, 2023)

From the table above, it can be observed that the corrected item-total correlation values are greater than the table value (r-table). Therefore, statements P1-P13 are considered valid.

Reliability testing has also been conducted to determine the level of consistency in the measurement results when measuring the same phenomenon two or more times. This test is aimed at assessing whether respondents have answered the questions consistently, making their responses trustworthy. An instrument is deemed reliable if the Cronbach's alpha value is greater than the critical value, which is 0.6 (Wijayanti, 2014, p. 58).

Table 2. Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,843	13

(Source: Research Data, 2023)

Reliability testing was conducted by comparing the Cronbach's alpha value in the Reliability Statistic table with its critical value, which is 0.6. From the table above, it was found that the Cronbach's alpha value is 0.877. Therefore, this instrument is considered reliable.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Respondent Characteristics / Sample Demographics

Respondent characteristics refer to the variety of backgrounds that the respondents themselves possess. These characteristics aim to understand the background of the respondents in this study. Respondent backgrounds are focused on gender and academic semester. We distributed the questionnaire from October 25, 2023, to October 30, 2023. Based on this questionnaire, the results obtained are:

a. Gender Characteristics

Based on gender, respondents are divided into two categories: male and female.

Table 3. Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Laki-Laki	16	53,3	53,3	53,3

Perempuan	14	46,7	46,7	100,0
Total	30	100,0	100,0	

(Source: Research Data, 2023)

Based on the table above, out of 30 respondents, 16 are male, accounting for 53.3%, and the remaining 14 are female, making up 46.7%. This indicates that the responses in this study are relatively balanced. Although not precisely equal, the difference is not substantial, thus the provided data can represent each gender.

b. Semester Characteristics

Semester represents the level or duration of a student's education at the university. Based on the semester, respondents are categorized into four groups:

Table 4. Semester

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I	11	36,7	36,7	36,7
	III	7	23,3	23,3	60,0
	V	4	13,3	13,3	73,3
	VII	8	26,7	26,7	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

(Source: Research Data, 2023)

The table above shows that respondents based on the semester are distributed as follows: 11 respondents or 36.7% are in semester I, 7 respondents or 23.3% are in semester III, 4 respondents or 13.3% are in semester V, and 8 respondents or 27.7% are in semester 7. Based on this categorization, it can be said that the respondents in this study are relatively homogeneous, with representation from each semester/academic level involved in the research.

2. Descriptive Analytic

Tabel 5.
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Ran ge	Mini mum	Maxi mum	Sum	Mean	Std. Devia tion	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Stati stic	Stati stic	Stati stic	Stati stic	Stati stic	Statist ic	Statist ic	Statistic	Statist ic	Std. Error	Statist ic	Std. Error
Academic demands enhance the quality of spiritual life.												
P1	30	3	2	5	127	4,23	0,774	0,599	-0,92	0,427	0,922	0,833
P2	30	3	2	5	126	4,2	0,925	0,855	-0,987	0,427	0,195	0,833
Spiritual life appreciation enhances the quality of academics.												
P3	30	3	2	5	114	3,8	0,664	0,441	-0,514	0,427	0,934	0,833
P4	30	2	3	5	114	3,8	0,61	0,372	0,117	0,427	-0,298	0,833
Academic/campus demands hinder spiritual affairs.												

Surip et al. (2024)/ Urban students striving.

P5	30	3	2	5	117	3,9	0,759	0,576	-0,335	0,427	0,041	0,833
P6	30	3	2	5	114	3,8	0,887	0,786	-0,852	0,427	0,342	0,833
Spiritual life experience interferes with academic affairs.												
P7	30	2	3	5	132	4,4	0,563	0,317	-0,198	0,427	-0,835	0,833
P8	30	2	3	5	132	4,4	0,563	0,317	-0,198	0,427	-0,835	0,833
Behavior and thinking												
P9	30	3	2	5	127	4,23	0,626	0,392	-1,105	0,427	4,407	0,833
P10	30	3	2	5	127	4,23	0,626	0,392	-1,105	0,427	4,407	0,833
P11	30	2	3	5	127	4,23	0,504	0,254	0,422	0,427	0,042	0,833
P12	30	2	3	5	125	4,17	0,461	0,213	0,67	0,427	1,132	0,833
P13	30	3	2	5	118	3,93	0,74	0,547	-0,988	0,427	1,862	0,833
Valid N (listwise)	30											

(Source: Research Data, 2023)

The table above presents the results of descriptive statistics from the conducted research. Based on the table, it can be seen that there are 2 variables under investigation, consisting of 5 dimensions: 1) academic demands enhance spiritual life quality, 2) spiritual life realization enhances academic quality, 3) academic/campus demands hinder spiritual affairs, 4) spiritual life realization disrupts academic affairs, and 5) behavior and thoughts.

By examining the average responses of the respondents (mean) in each dimension, the following interim conclusions can be drawn: in the dimension of academic demands enhancing spiritual life quality, the obtained average score is 4.2. This indicates that respondents tend to agree with this dimension. It suggests that respondents feel that academic demands enhance spiritual life or that an increase in spiritual life is significantly influenced by academic demands.

In the dimension of spiritual life realization enhancing academic quality, the average score is 3.8. This implies that respondents tend to answer hesitantly. It means that spiritual life realization does not affect or is unable to enhance academic quality, or conversely, academic quality is not influenced or improved by spiritual realization.

In the dimension of academic/campus demands hindering spiritual affairs, the average score in that dimension is 3.8. This can be interpreted that overall, respondents tend to answer hesitantly. It means that academic/campus demands do not hinder spiritual affairs, or spiritual affairs are also not influenced or hindered by academic demands.

In the dimension of spiritual life realization disrupting academic affairs, the tendency of respondents is also to agree, with an average score of 4.23. This means that respondents are aware that spiritual life realization also disrupts their academic life. In other words, if they prioritize spiritual life realization, their academic life will be disturbed.

In the dimension of behavior and thoughts, the tendency of respondents is also to agree, with an average score of 4.15. This means that respondents are aware of their presence as urban students in Malang. This awareness also influences their behavior and way of thinking.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that academic activities of students do not affect their personal lives or their spiritual/religious lives. However, on the other hand, spiritual life significantly influences their academic lives, meaning that spiritual life can enhance academic life, or conversely, spiritual life can hinder or disrupt academic life. Therefore, it can be said that there is a lack of balance between academic life and spiritual life among urban students in Malang.

Fischer's Thoughts on Balance in Urban Students

The balance between spiritual and academic life in urban students can be examined based on the work-life balance theory proposed by Fischer et al. (Fisher et al., 2009), which includes the following four points: 1) personal life disrupts work, 2) work disrupts personal life, 3) personal life enhances work quality, and 4) work enhances personal life quality.

These four points serve as instruments to assess whether urban Catholic students in Malang are able to balance their academic and spiritual lives. In the context of this discussion, personal life refers to spiritual/religious life, and work refers to the academic demands of the campus (students).

Firstly, personal life disrupts work. This can be interpreted as an individual's spiritual life, which should bring pleasure and personal development but instead leads to academic setbacks. In this context, academic activities as a student and the study situation are not benefitted.

Secondly, work disrupts personal life. This can be interpreted as academic activities that primarily prioritize the smoothness and success of studies, tending to consume a significant amount of personal time. Consistent additions of lectures and other campus activities result in a negative impact on personal life.

Thirdly, personal life enhances work quality. This can be interpreted as a spiritual life where various enjoyable activities positively correlate with an increase in study enthusiasm or academic life, both on campus and within organizations (Tenney et al., 2016).

Fourthly, work enhances personal life quality. This can be interpreted as productive activities undertaken by an individual to enhance or fulfill their spiritual/religious life needs. When someone has successfully managed their academic tasks and communication and coordination on campus are harmonious, they won't experience stress. Emotional reactions will be positive, showing progress. Simultaneously, the impact on spiritual/religious life will also experience positive development. In this regard, students are free to engage in any personal/spiritual activities whenever they have completed their academic tasks. This, in turn, helps students become more focused, productive, and efficient in meeting academic demands while fulfilling personal needs, goals, and responsibilities (Perlow & Kelly, 2014).

Based on the research results on urban Catholic students in Malang, it is found that the personal life aspect is confirmed to disrupt work, meaning that spiritual/religious activities disrupt academic affairs or cause academic setbacks. This is unfortunate because urban Catholic students seem less capable of coping with academic demands and end up sacrificing

their spiritual/religious aspects. This happens because they prioritize campus demands as their main focus, especially for new students. For them, completing campus requirements is more important, leading them to sacrifice personal and spiritual matters related to their religious obligations (Catholic). This mindset is strongly influenced by age levels (Itriyati, 2016). Age and maturity levels significantly determine how they view and balance their lives.

In the point where work disrupts personal life, it was found that urban students in Malang tend to be neutral and not prioritize their academic lives, neglecting their spiritual lives. This indicates that academic activities may or may not disturb their spiritual lives. This is influenced by various factors, including optimism, perseverance, and motivation (Meiranti & Sutoyo, 2021). Additionally, academic procrastination supports this, as students deliberately and repeatedly postpone and neglect assigned tasks to engage in unnecessary activities (Efendri, 2021). Furthermore, some campuses organize academic activities such as seminars on Sundays, indirectly influencing the spiritual experiences of Catholic students.

In the point where personal life enhances work quality, it was found that urban students struggle to make spiritual or religious life a foundation for improving their academic lives. This indicates that spiritual or religious activities do not bring a renewed sense of enthusiasm for developing their academic lives. However, individuals with high spiritual intelligence exhibit optimism, high expectations, and the ability to cope with anxiety (Sari et al., 2021). These high expectations can significantly contribute to improving academic quality. Therefore, there is a need for innovation or renewal in the spiritual activities of urban students so that spiritual or religious activities can positively contribute to both their lives and academic activities.

The ideas of Marian Burchardt and Maria del Mar Grieria about using public spaces for religious activities that mobilize religious groups (Burchardt & Grieria, 2020) could be effective in overcoming the inability of spiritual activities to boost the academic spirit of urban students. In relation to the challenges faced by urban students in Malang, a similar approach can be taken by visiting spiritual destinations to ignite their enthusiasm for practicing their faith. This can be achieved through spiritual camping, typically conducted in specific places such as retreat houses or tranquil locations away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Through spiritual camping, students are invited to take a break from academic routines, refresh their spiritual aspects, and rekindle their spirit and motivation. The hope is that they will gain a fresh perspective, enabling them to face and solve life's problems, especially academic demands, by assessing the meaning of events in their lives (Meiranti & Sutoyo, 2021). During spiritual camping, students are also equipped with a deeper understanding of their faith, interspersed with various recreational and outbound activities that boost their spirits. Moreover, they are encouraged to reflect on and share their life experiences (Goo, 2021). Ultimately, they receive inputs that can be applied in their daily lives.

Meanwhile, in the point where work improves personal life, urban students in Malang acknowledge this. This indicates that the academic activities of urban students can enhance their spiritual lives for the better. This is a positive characteristic that deserves appreciation because spirituality is an individual's way of understanding their existence and experiences

(Aditama, 2017). With a good spiritual state, these urban students will know themselves well and can perform their academic activities effectively.

The descriptions above indicate an imbalance between efforts to meet academic demands and the spiritual experiences/activities of Catholic urban students in Malang. They tend to neglect their spiritual/religious lives in pursuit of academic demands. Therefore, the concept of balance between spiritual and academic aspects needs to be promoted and pursued so that students truly understand their identity and are not easily influenced by the currents of the times or other negative factors. Balance is necessary for their lives to proceed normally and appropriately, both as students and as religious individuals (Wibowo & Hartono, 2020). In short, balance is necessary because both aspects are important and cannot be ignored.

The Church Reaches Out to Young People

Efforts to achieve this balance undoubtedly require guidance from others. However, in reality, most urban Catholic students are far from their families and lack direct supervision. This situation requires them to determine the direction of their lives and what their priorities are. They have to decide for themselves what they will do amidst the urban environment and academic demands. Furthermore, achieving balance also heavily depends on what has been instilled in them previously. Yet, in human nature, imbalances often arise between practical modern reasoning and theoretical thinking. Similarly, imbalances emerge between a focus on practical utility and the moral demands of conscience, with the conditions of communal life and the requirements of personal thought. Ultimately, there arises an imbalance between the specialization of human activities and a comprehensive vision of reality (GS, 8).

The Church truly recognizes that the imbalance affecting the modern world is related to a more fundamental imbalance rooted in the hearts of individuals. For within human beings, various opposing elements coexist (GS, 10). Therefore, the Church must be involved in shaping the identity of the people (urban students) so that they can truly be Christian. In this regard, the Church must approach urban students to actively participate in church life (Reinhart, 2021). The intended approach is not merely administrative data collection but should extend to shared activities.

From a management perspective, balance can be achieved through several aspects: first, proper allocation of responsibilities; second, effective agenda planning; third, establishing priorities; and fourth, accurate task and function management (Marbun, 2020). These are fundamental methods to achieve balance in life, ensuring that nothing is overlooked. Therefore, there needs to be cooperation between educational institutions and local governments to provide space and time that allows students to access spiritual activities according to their beliefs or to arrange campus activities that do not conflict with the spiritual activities of students of various faiths (Hoon, 2016). By accommodating spiritual needs, students will be able to prioritize the balance between academic and spiritual aspects in their lives.

Moreover, it is essential to promote awareness of spiritual values and build a spiritual community on campus (Salfarini & Sugianto, 2021). This can be achieved through seminars,

workshops, spiritual camping, and other interactive activities to facilitate discussions and joint reflections on the importance of spiritual life in the challenging lives of urban students. Additionally, spiritual guidance opportunities can help students understand God's concerns for His community (Malau, 2020), think about the needs of the Church, and be ready with a generous soul to respond to the Lord's call, echoing the words of the prophet, "Here am I, send me" (Isaiah 6:8) (PO, 11).

By implementing these efforts, it is hoped that Catholic urban students in Malang can build a solid foundation to face academic challenges while maintaining the strength of their spiritual lives. This will produce a generation of students who not only develop academically but also possess profound spiritual sensitivity, ready to be positive agents of change in society. Additionally, they can avoid the culture of capital breeding, which involves developing capital for the satisfaction of human desires and individualistic life spirit (Rabim, 2023). This culture rejects the spirit of solidarity and shared responsibility, leading to isolation. Consequently, individuals become asocial, disorganized, and non-spiritual.

CONCLUSION

Urban students face the dialectics of interests and priorities as they pursue their education here. The absence of external control requires them to determine their respective priorities. Nevertheless, they must be able to balance their academic life with their spiritual life. Both are important and must be harmonized, meaning they should not neglect or contradict each other.

From this study, it was found that there is currently an imbalance between the academic and spiritual/religious aspects of Catholic urban students in Malang. Although these aspects are inherently different and have different orientations, they are interconnected. Therefore, a balance between the two is necessary and should be continuously sought and acknowledged. This awareness is crucial to avoid being absorbed solely in academic or spiritual romanticism.

The Church also needs to be involved in shaping the identity of students as Christians. Additionally, the Church should promote awareness of spiritual values and build a spiritual community on campus in ways that are contextual and relevant for students in the present time.

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