

# From Academic Pressure to Preventive Self-Help: Development of Academic Burnout Mitigation Guide for Students

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<https://doi.org/10.17977/um065.v6.i8.2026.3>

## Article history

Submitted: 11 April 2026

Revised: 22 May 2026

Accepted: 24 May 2026

Published: 31 May 2026

## Keywords

Academic burnout

Cynicism

Exhaustion

Ineffectiveness

Mitigation guide

## Abstract

Academic burnout has become a significant concern in higher education due to increasing academic demands and its impact on students' well-being and performance. Despite the availability of counseling services, structured self-help resources specifically designed to mitigate academic burnout remain limited. This study aimed to develop and examine the content validity and acceptability of an Academic Burnout Mitigation Guide designed as a self-help resource for university students. The research employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach adapted from the Borg and Gall model up to the operational product revision stage. The validation process involved nine experts representing guidance and counseling, design and media, and Indonesian language, as well as 11 prospective student users. Data were collected using acceptability scales covering appropriateness, usefulness, attractiveness, and ease of use, and analyzed using Aiken's V index alongside qualitative feedback. The results indicated a very high level of content validity and acceptability, with an Aiken's V index of 0.87 from experts and 0.85 from prospective users. These findings suggest that the guide demonstrates strong conceptual alignment and operational feasibility as a preventive self-help tool. The study concludes that the validated guide provides a theoretically grounded and practically acceptable foundation for subsequent effectiveness testing in broader higher education contexts.

## 1. Introduction

Students encounter increasing academic demands throughout their higher education. Universities expect students to manage intensive coursework, think critically, learn independently, and communicate effectively (Andreucci-Annunziata et al., 2023). When such demands accumulate over prolonged periods within competitive academic environments, they may contribute to academic burnout (Bakker & Mostert, 2024). This pattern indicates that sustained academic pressure can evolve into a significant psychological challenge affecting university students across diverse higher education contexts.

The phenomenon of academic burnout has been reported among university students across various countries, including Indonesia. A study involving 28,206 students from 24 countries reported a global prevalence of 12.1% (Kaggwa et al., 2021), indicating that more than one in ten students experience academic burnout. Research involving 22,983 students from 13 universities in China also identified a high proportion of burnout, particularly in the mild to moderate categories (Liu et al., 2023), while a survey of 14,437 undergraduate students in Spain reported an average prevalence of 35.3% (Olmos-Bravo, Sánchez-Ortí, Grevet, & Balanzá-Martínez, 2025), suggesting that burnout affects more than one-third of students. In Indonesia, a study conducted at Gorontalo State University found that 65.3% of students were categorized as experiencing moderate burnout and 35% as experiencing high burnout (Tuasikal & Smith, 2023), indicating a high level of vulnerability to academic burnout among students. Consistent with these findings, a preliminary study conducted in Gorontalo revealed that 34.04% of students experienced high levels of burnout and 29.79% experienced moderate levels. These findings indicate that academic burnout has affected a substantial proportion of students and reflects psychological vulnerability that requires more structured and accessible preventive interventions. Overall, the variation in prevalence across countries suggests that academic burnout represents a systemic issue in higher education that is influenced not only by excessive academic demands, but also by students' limited adaptive capacity to manage sustained academic pressure.

Academic burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism toward academic activities, and reduced motivation and self-efficacy (Hasan, Lakadjo, Sari, Siregar, & Tuasikal, 2026; Pérez-Jorge et al., 2025). This condition is not only associated with high academic demands, but is also influenced by personal and environmental factors, such as low self-control, limited self-regulation, and an imbalance between academic

demands and students' ability to manage academic tasks (Hwang & Kim, 2022; N. Kim, Oh, & Han, 2022; S. Kim et al., 2021; Wang, Havewala, Fan, Wang, & Bali, 2024). The mismatch between academic demands and students' adaptive capacity may increase vulnerability to prolonged psychological distress. Its impact is reflected not only in declining academic performance, but also in reduced quality of life and an increased risk of mental health problems (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). These findings indicate that academic burnout is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction between individual psychological factors and the broader academic context.

Various interventions have been developed to address academic burnout in higher education, including cognitive behavioral and mindfulness-based counseling services, stress management training, online module-based interventions, and peer support programs (Chen & Qi, 2025; Dou et al., 2025; Körner, Kortsch, Rieder, & Rigotti, 2024; Rähä, Katajaviuri, Vehkalahti, & Asikainen, 2024; Ruuska, Katajaviuri, & Asikainen, 2025). However, most of these approaches remain broad-based and reactive, without specifically targeting the symptoms of academic burnout, and continue to rely heavily on professional involvement, limiting their implementation to formal services and scheduled participation (Guanghai, Cao, Fu, Wang, & Lian, 2024; Yu et al., 2024). In addition, negative stigma, feelings of shame, and limited student awareness of counseling services further hinder access to professional support (Ayinde, Akinnuoye, Molodynski, Battrick, & Gureje, 2021; Darmawani, Surtiyoni, Nurlala, & Putri, 2023; Eseadi, 2022). The limited availability of structured self-help learning resources also reduces students' ability to recognize early symptoms and apply adaptive coping strategies independently (Madigan, Kim, & Glandorf, 2024). These conditions indicate that accessible and independently applicable preventive support remains limited within higher education settings.

In contrast to previous approaches that largely depend on professional involvement, the present guide was designed to help students recognize early symptoms, engage in self-reflection, and independently implement academic burnout mitigation strategies. The development of this guide was based on the principle that an effective self-help guide should be practical, systematic, and capable of supporting users' self-evaluation processes (Hanafi, 2018; Idris et al., 2023; Rahim, Puluhalawan, Lakadjo, Sari, & Hamidah, 2025; Sari, Triyono, & Mappiare, 2018; Wantu et al., 2025). The guide includes practical steps, examples of strategy implementation, as well as reflection and evaluation sheets equipped with measurement and interpretation components to support the independent application of academic burnout mitigation strategies.

Based on these gaps, this study aimed to develop and evaluate the feasibility of an Academic Burnout Mitigation Guide as a self-help learning resource for university students. The primary focus of this study was to examine the validity and acceptability of the developed guide. The guide is expected to assist students in identifying risk factors, implementing prevention and coping strategies, and managing the impact of academic burnout adaptively to support psychological well-being and academic success.

## 2. Method

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach focusing on the development and feasibility evaluation of a psychoeducational product in the form of an Academic Burnout Mitigation Guide for university students. This approach was selected because it enables the integration of needs analysis, theory-based product development, and systematic iterative evaluation. The development procedure adapted the (Borg & Gall, 1983) model, which was modified up to stage seven, namely operational product revision (see Figure 1). The model was selected because it emphasizes an iterative process involving expert validation and user testing before broader implementation.

The stages included: (1) initial information gathering on academic burnout and students' needs; (2) planning and designing the guide structure; (3) developing the initial draft of the guide; (4) initial field testing through expert validation; (5) major product revision based on expert feedback; (6) major field testing through limited trials with potential users; and (7) operational product revision based on user feedback to produce the final version of the guide. These stages were intended to ensure the quality of the guide in terms of content, language, and design. Subsequent stages, such as operational field testing and dissemination, were not conducted because they require large-scale implementation and effectiveness testing using experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Therefore, this study did not include effectiveness testing on changes in students' psychological conditions, as the initial development phase primarily focused on evaluating content validity, procedural clarity, and user acceptability before empirical intervention testing. Consequently, the findings of this study are limited to product feasibility and cannot yet be used to draw causal conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the guide in reducing academic burnout.

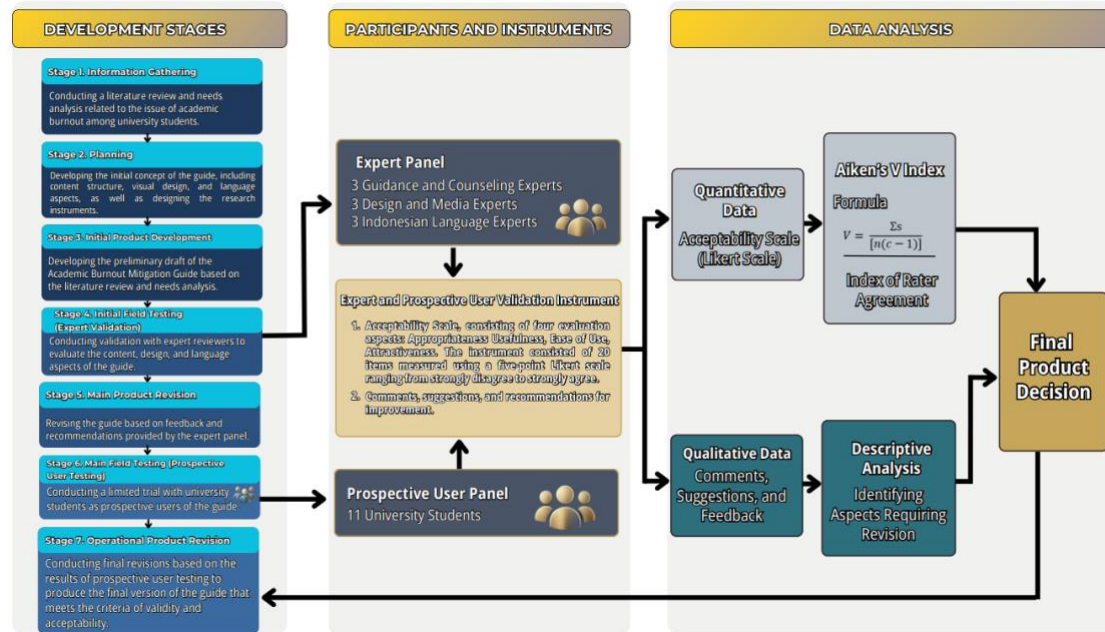


Figure 1. Research and Development Procedure of the Academic Burnout Mitigation Guide

The participants consisted of an expert panel and prospective users. The expert panel included nine individuals: 3 guidance and counseling experts, 3 design and media experts, and 3 Indonesian language experts. This composition ensured cross-disciplinary expertise relevant to the characteristics of the guide while meeting the requirements of content validation through an adequate number of experts and diversity of perspectives to obtain reliable agreement among raters (Polit, Beck, & Owen, 2007). The prospective user test involved 11 active students from Gorontalo State University who were selected using purposive sampling based on faculty representation and indications of experiencing academic burnout. This selection aimed to obtain contextual and in-depth feedback during the limited field testing stage, consistent with the characteristics of development research (Yusoff, 2019).

Data were collected using expert validation and prospective user evaluation instruments. Both instruments were designed as acceptability scales assessing four aspects of the guide: appropriateness, usefulness, attractiveness, and ease of use. Each instrument consisted of 20 statements rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In addition to quantitative responses, the instruments provided open-ended sections for respondents to offer comments and suggestions, enabling the collection of qualitative feedback regarding the content, language, and visual presentation of the guide (Creswell & Clark, 2017). To identify the tendency of academic burnout among prospective users, the study also employed an Academic Burnout Scale adapted from (Sari, Hasan, Lakadjo, & Prasetyo, 2025), consisting of 10 items with item validity coefficients of  $\geq 0.30$  and a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.814, indicating good reliability.

The data were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data derived from expert validation and prospective user evaluations were analyzed using Aiken's V index to determine the level of content validity and user acceptability of the guide based on the level of agreement among raters. The Aiken's V coefficient was calculated using the following formula (Aiken, 1985).

$$V = \frac{\sum s}{[n(c-1)]} \tag{1}$$

Where:

- s : the adjusted score for each rating ( $s = r - 1$ ), where  $r$  represents the score given by each rater
- $\sum s$  : the sum of the adjusted scores given by all raters
- n : the number of raters (experts and prospective users)
- 1 : the lowest score on the rating scale (in this study = 1)
- c : the highest score on the rating scale (in this study = 5)

A higher Aiken's V value indicates stronger agreement among raters regarding the relevance and acceptability of the evaluated items. Qualitative data in the form of comments and suggestions from experts and prospective users were analyzed descriptively to identify aspects of the guide that required revision and refinement. The findings from this analysis informed the decision-making process during product revision until

the final version of the guide was produced. The resulting guide was considered feasible and suitable for use as a self-help learning resource for university students (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Results

##### 3.1.1. Academic Burnout Mitigation Guide

The primary product developed in this study is an Academic Burnout Mitigation Guide for university students, designed as a self-help guide to help students recognize, understand, and manage symptoms of academic burnout systematically (see Figure 2). The guide represents the final outcome of a research and development (R&D) process adapted from the Borg and Gall model up to the operational product revision stage. During this process, the guide underwent several stages, including conceptual planning, content development, design development, limited field testing, and iterative revisions aligned with the objectives of the study.



Figure 2. Front and Back Cover Design Guide

In terms of format, the guide was developed in A5 size (14.8 × 21 cm) to support portability and independent use. The guide is available in both printed and digital (PDF) formats to improve accessibility. The product identity appears on the front cover and introductory page, including the guide title, author's name, supervisor, institutional affiliation with Gorontalo State University, and year of publication. The back cover presents a brief overview of the guide's contents. The visual design predominantly employs green and blue color schemes with a consistent layout, clear typography, and supporting illustrations and infographics to facilitate content navigation. The page structure uses a multi-level heading system, subsection indicators, and balanced visual elements to support readability and continuity of the material.

In terms of content, the guide is structured based on the conceptual framework of academic burnout, which includes three core dimensions: exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness. This framework serves as the foundation for the development of learning materials, mitigation strategies, and supporting instruments integrated throughout the guide. The content is designed to be practical and operational, providing systematic explanations of objectives, implementation steps, and self-evaluation activities that enable students to use the guide independently.

Systematically, the guide consists of five chapters that are conceptually and functionally interconnected. Chapter I (Introduction) presents the rationale for developing the guide based on the urgency of academic burnout among students, along with the objectives and intended benefits for students, academic advisors, and the Academic Support Unit for Guidance and Counseling at Gorontalo State University. This chapter serves as an initial orientation for users before engaging with the main content. Chapter II (Academic Burnout) provides a theoretical overview of the definition, characteristics, and three core dimensions of academic burnout: exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness. It also outlines factors contributing to burnout, including both personal and academic environmental factors such as study workload, time management, social support, and individual characteristics. Furthermore, the impacts of burnout on students' academic, emotional, physical, and social functioning are presented systematically to provide a comprehensive understanding of the consequences of this condition.

Chapter III (Prevention and Management Strategies for Academic Burnout) presents a range of practical strategies aimed at preventing and managing academic burnout. Preventive strategies include time management, sleep regulation, balanced nutrition, physical activity, managing self-expectations, and strengthening social support, while management strategies involve relaxation techniques, cognitive reframing, and expressive activities such as independent writing and drawing. Each strategy is presented in an operational format consisting of objectives, implementation steps, recommended duration and frequency, practical examples, and evaluation worksheets, with several sections also equipped with QR codes that direct users to additional supporting materials to facilitate independent practice. Furthermore, Chapter IV (Access to Professional Help) provides information on professional support services that students can access if independent strategies do not produce optimal outcomes. This chapter specifically introduces the services of the Academic Support Unit for Guidance and Counseling at Gorontalo State University, including the types of services available, access procedures, and mechanisms for requesting assistance, which are presented systematically to help students understand how to obtain appropriate professional support.

Chapter V (Conclusion) summarizes the main contents of the guide and provides recommendations for its use by students and relevant stakeholders. The final section includes an academic burnout assessment instrument, scoring and interpretation guidelines, a glossary of key terms, and additional supporting appendices. The inclusion of the assessment instrument and interpretation guidelines is intended to facilitate self-evaluation and the sustained use of the guide. Overall, the guide is organized in a systematic and operational format that integrates conceptual understanding with practical implementation steps across each chapter. The structure and presentation of the content are designed to enable students to use the guide independently through a clear and logically sequenced framework.

### 3.1.2. Expert Validation

Expert validation was conducted by three groups of specialists representing key domains relevant to the development of the guide: Guidance and Counseling experts focusing on substantive content, Design and Media experts focusing on visual presentation and instructional design, and Indonesian Language experts focusing on linguistic clarity and readability. The evaluation covered four aspects: appropriateness, usefulness, attractiveness, and ease of use. Overall, the Aiken's V index of 0.87 indicates a very high level of agreement among the expert panel, suggesting that the guide meets the criteria for strong content validity.

For the appropriateness aspect, the Aiken's V index was 0.88. The distribution of scores across expert groups was as follows: Guidance and Counseling experts obtained an index of 0.86, Design and Media experts 0.87, and Indonesian Language experts 0.90. The consistency of these values across expert domains indicates that the representation of the academic burnout construct is considered appropriate not only conceptually but also in terms of visual presentation and linguistic clarity. This consistency further suggests that both the substance and presentation of the guide demonstrate a stable level of quality across evaluation criteria.

The usefulness aspect obtained an Aiken's V index of 0.86. The distribution of scores across expert groups was as follows: Guidance and Counseling experts obtained an index of 0.77, Design and Media experts 0.90, and Indonesian Language experts 0.92. These results indicate that the guide was generally perceived as useful across expert groups. The relatively higher scores from Design and Media and Indonesian Language experts suggest that the presentation structure and language support the guide's function as a self-help resource, while the slightly lower score from Guidance and Counseling experts reflects a more cautious evaluation of the operational applicability of the strategies within guidance practice.

A similar pattern was observed for the ease-of-use aspect, with an Aiken's V index of 0.85. The scores were 0.77 for Guidance and Counseling experts, 0.90 for Design and Media experts, and 0.88 for Indonesian Language experts. These findings indicate that the layout, typography, and writing structure generally facilitated navigation and comprehension of the guide. The lower score from Guidance and Counseling experts may reflect a more careful evaluation of the clarity of the strategy implementation procedures. Overall, the variation in scores appears to reflect differences in evaluative perspectives across disciplinary expertise rather than substantial disagreement among the expert groups.

The attractiveness aspect obtained an Aiken's V index of 0.88. The distribution of scores across expert groups was as follows: Guidance and Counseling experts obtained an index of 0.80, Design and Media experts 0.87, and Indonesian Language experts 0.98. These results indicate that the visual design and linguistic presentation of the guide were perceived as highly communicative and engaging. Although the score from Guidance and Counseling experts was lower than those from the other two expert groups, it remained within the very high category, indicating general acceptance of the guide's design.

Comparatively, the average indices by expert group were 0.80 for Guidance and Counseling experts, 0.88 for Design and Media experts, and 0.92 for Indonesian Language experts. Although some variation across disciplines was observed, all indices remained within the very high category, with no aspect scoring below 0.85.

These findings suggest a strong level of agreement among experts that the guide meets substantive, visual, and linguistic standards in an integrated manner. A summary of the validation results and Aiken's V indices for each aspect and expert group is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Quantitative Validation Results from Experts**

No.	Aspect	Expert Scores			Index (Aiken's V)	Category
		Guidance and Counseling	Design and Media	Indonesian Language		
1	Appropriateness	0.86	0.87	0.90	0.88	Very High
2	Usefulness	0.77	0.90	0.92	0.86	Very High
3	Ease of use	0.77	0.90	0.88	0.85	Very High
4	Attractiveness	0.80	0.87	0.98	0.88	Very High
Overall average		0.80	0.88	0.92	0.87	Very High

In addition to the quantitative assessment, the validation process also generated qualitative feedback from experts that highlighted areas requiring improvement. The qualitative analysis indicated that the primary concerns were not related to the conceptual framework, but rather to operational and technical aspects affecting the guide's feasibility as a self-help resource. Experts emphasized the need to include more concrete examples for each strategy to improve procedural clarity and facilitate practical application. Without illustrative examples, strategies may remain abstract and more difficult to implement consistently. In addition, recommendations to incorporate worksheets and evaluation components reflected the need for structured reflection and monitoring mechanisms. The inclusion of these elements strengthens the guide's function as a self-regulatory tool rather than merely an informational resource.

Feedback related to readability, writing structure, and language use indicates that design and editorial aspects have direct implications for the effectiveness of the guide's use. Inconsistencies in typography and numbering may increase cognitive load and hinder navigation, while inconsistent terminology can reduce conceptual clarity. Therefore, the revisions implemented were not merely cosmetic but were aimed at enhancing structural coherence, instructional clarity, and academic rigor. Overall, the qualitative findings suggest that the optimization of the guide focused on strengthening its feasibility and procedural clarity without altering the underlying conceptual framework that had already been assessed as adequate. A summary of the qualitative expert evaluation results is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Qualitative Validation Results from Experts**

No.	Focus	Comments and Suggestions	Revisions Made
1	Applicability	Mitigation strategies require practical examples to make them easier to understand and implement.	Practical examples were added to each mitigation technique.
2	Instrument Completeness	The guide should include worksheets and evaluation forms.	Worksheets and evaluation sheets were systematically incorporated into the guide.
3	Readability	The font size in certain sections of the instrument and text was too small.	The font size was increased and standardized across sections.
4	Writing Structure	The numbering system and use of bullet points were inconsistent.	The numbering format was standardized (I, A, 1, a), and unnecessary bullet points were removed.
5	Language Use	Spelling errors, punctuation issues, and inconsistent terminology were identified.	Spelling, punctuation, and terminology were revised according to standardized Indonesian language conventions.

### 3.1.3. Prospective User Validation

Validation by 11 prospective users produced an overall Aiken's V index of 0.85, indicating a very high level of acceptance of the guide. For the appropriateness aspect, the Aiken's V index was 0.88. Students reported that the material reflected their academic experiences and corresponded to the study pressures they commonly encounter. These results suggest that the conceptual structure of the guide is perceived as contextual and relevant to students' needs.

The usefulness and ease of use aspects each obtained an Aiken's V index of 0.87, indicating that the strategies and procedures presented in the guide were generally easy to understand and apply independently. User responses also indicated that the presentation format, sequence of steps, and supporting instruments facilitated the use of the guide without requiring intensive assistance. Although some variation was observed in individual scores, the overall pattern suggests that the guide functions not only as an informational resource but also as a practical tool for independent use.

The attractiveness aspect obtained an Aiken's V index of 0.80, which remained within the high category but was relatively lower than the other aspects. This result suggests that the aesthetic and visual elements of the guide were perceived as adequate but were not the primary factors influencing its overall acceptability. Student responses indicate that greater emphasis was placed on the relevance of the content and the clarity of the procedures than on visual appeal.

Overall, the appropriateness aspect obtained the highest score, followed by usefulness and ease of use, which showed relatively balanced values, while attractiveness received the lowest score despite remaining within the high category. This pattern indicates that the acceptability of the guide among students is driven primarily by the relevance of the content and the clarity of the implementation procedures rather than by aesthetic considerations. A summary of the prospective user validation results based on the Aiken's V index is presented in Table 3.

Qualitative feedback from prospective users highlighted four key operational aspects requiring improvement: (1) visual readability, (2) design variation, (3) reading comfort, and (4) clarity of presentation. The findings indicate that while the substance of the material was generally well understood, aspects of its visual presentation were perceived as less optimal. Respondents reported that the density of graphic elements on some pages, inconsistencies in font size, and repetitive layout patterns sometimes disrupted the flow of reading. As a result, users needed greater effort to maintain focus and locate key information, even though the conceptual content of the material was considered clear.

Further analysis suggests a relationship between visual design and the efficiency of content comprehension. High visual density may increase attentional distractions, limited design variation may contribute to reading fatigue, and an imbalance between text and visual elements may increase the cognitive load involved in processing information. Requests for a simplified layout were therefore intended not to reduce the depth of the material, but to improve continuity of meaning and facilitate a smoother flow of understanding across sections. These findings indicate that the quality of visual presentation plays an important role in supporting the readability and usability of the guide as an independent learning resource. A summary of the qualitative feedback from prospective users is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Qualitative Validation Results from Prospective Users**

No.	Focus	Comments and Suggestions	Revisions Made
1	Visual Readability	The layout on several pages appeared overly dense due to the combination of images and bold text, which distracted reading focus.	The number of images per page was reduced and the text layout was simplified.
2	Design Variation	The design pattern across pages was considered too uniform and potentially caused visual monotony.	Additional design and layout variations were introduced in the material and case example sections.
3	Reading Comfort	The balance between visual elements and text on several pages was considered less optimal.	The proportion of text and visual elements was adjusted to improve reading comfort.
4	Clarity of Presentation	Although the material was clear and easy to understand, the visual presentation required simplification.	The visual layout was simplified without reducing the clarity of the content.

**Table 3. Quantitative Validation Results from Prospective Users**

No.	Aspect	Prospective User Scores											Index ( <i>Aiken's V</i> )	Category
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
1	Appropriateness	0.85	0.85	1.00	1.00	0.75	0.95	0.75	0.95	0.90	1.00	0.50	0.88	Very High
2	Usefulness	0.90	0.90	1.00	1.00	0.95	0.85	0.65	0.80	1.00	1.00	0.50	0.87	Very High
3	Ease of use	0.80	0.85	1.00	1.00	0.85	0.90	0.85	0.80	0.90	1.00	0.60	0.87	Very High
4	Attractiveness	0.50	0.85	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.80	0.65	0.8	1.00	0.35	0.80	High
Overall average		0.76	0.86	1.00	1.00	0.89	0.89	0.76	0.80	0.90	1.00	0.49	0.85	Very High

### 3.2. Discussion

The development results demonstrated that the Academic Burnout Mitigation Guide possessed high content validity, with an Aiken's V index of 0.87 obtained from the expert panel. These findings indicate that the guide adequately represented the construct of academic burnout, particularly the dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. The involvement of experts in Guidance and Counseling, media design, and language enabled the product to be evaluated from multidisciplinary perspectives, allowing its conceptual, instructional, and linguistic quality to be assessed comprehensively. The consistency of scores across aspects also suggests that the guide maintained sufficient internal coherence in terms of content, structure, and presentation as a self-help-based psychoeducational product. Nevertheless, these findings should be interpreted as evidence of product validity and feasibility rather than evidence of intervention effectiveness in changing students' psychological conditions (Ifenthaler & Yau, 2020; Klinessmith et al., 2021).

The evaluation conducted by prospective users showed that the guide achieved an Aiken's V index of 0.85, indicating a high level of acceptability among students. These findings suggest that the guide was perceived as relevant, easy to understand, and applicable for independent use. The relatively more moderate ratings provided by Guidance and Counseling experts on the implementation aspect may reflect greater professional attention to procedural clarity and consistency of implementation. In contrast, the high ratings on design and language aspects indicate that the guide fulfilled the principles of instructional clarity and contributed to reducing users' cognitive load (Mayer, 2024). From the users' perspective, students emphasized ease of use and content relevance more than visual appearance. This pattern is consistent with cognitive load theory and self-regulated learning theory, which highlight clarity of information and operational guidance as important factors in supporting user engagement and self-regulation (Afzali & Hosseinian, 2024; Bulfone et al., 2022; Zhu, Yanhong, Melissa M., & Wang, 2022).

Conceptually, this study suggests that a structured self-help guide approach has the potential to function as a preventive strategy for academic burnout in higher education settings. The guide structure, which was developed based on the multidimensional aspects of burnout, supports the enhancement of self-awareness, self-reflection, and students' self-regulation abilities in dealing with academic pressure (Kang & Choi, 2021; Schaufeli, 2017). The organization of the material, which prioritizes conceptual understanding before introducing practical techniques, further indicates that burnout mitigation does not solely depend on coping strategies, but also on students' capacity to understand their psychological conditions more reflectively. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of limited access to professional services, stigma toward counseling, and the need for more flexible and accessible preventive support for students (Spătaru, Podină, Tulbure, & Maricuțoiu, 2024).

### 3.3. Implications

These findings strengthen the theoretical contribution to the development of self-help-based academic burnout interventions by translating multidimensional constructs of burnout (exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced self-efficacy) into a validated and structured guide format. The high levels of content validity and acceptability suggest that the integration of the burnout framework with a self-regulation approach can be operationalized without compromising conceptual coherence. From a methodological perspective, this study highlights the importance of multidisciplinary validation in research and development (R&D) studies as a critical step prior to effectiveness testing. Practically and from a policy perspective, the guide has the potential to function as a preventive resource within counseling services and student development programs. The high level of user acceptance indicates readiness for broader implementation in higher education settings, particularly as a complement to limited professional support services. Furthermore, this model may be replicated with contextual adaptations, thereby supporting systematic and evidence-informed promotional and preventive strategies for student mental health.

### 3.4. Limitations

This study has several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the R&D design used only reached the stage of content validation and acceptability testing, without testing its effectiveness in reducing academic burnout. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be used to conclude the causal impact of the guidelines on changes in students' psychological conditions. Second, this study has not evaluated the long-term use of the guidelines or the consistency of their implementation in a real-world context. These limitations indicate the need for further studies with experimental designs and longitudinal measurements to test the effectiveness and sustainability of the intervention's impact.

## 4. Conclusion

This study aimed to develop and validate an Academic Burnout Mitigation Guide as a self-help learning resource for university students. The validation results indicated an Aiken's V index of 0.87 from the expert panel and 0.85 from prospective users, demonstrating very high levels of content validity and acceptability. These findings suggest that the guide demonstrates conceptual and operational readiness as a preventive self-

help tool within higher education settings. The study also highlights the importance of multidisciplinary validation in development research as a foundational step prior to effectiveness testing. Conceptually, a preventive approach grounded in literacy and self-regulation may complement limited professional counseling services available to students. Future research is therefore recommended to examine the effectiveness of the guide through experimental designs with larger samples and longitudinal measurements to evaluate the impact and sustainability of its implementation across diverse higher education contexts.

## Author Contributions

All authors have equal contributions to the paper. All the authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

## Funding

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Indonesia, for the financial support provided for this study.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/ or publication of this article.

## Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/ or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## Declaration on AI Use

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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