




The Association of Socioeconomic Characteristics with Psychological Distress and Burnout in Disability Assistance Cadres in Bandung

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Abstract

People with disabilities risk facing obstacles in participating in and benefiting from development. Indonesia is committed to supporting people with disabilities, one of which is through services and rehabilitation provided by cadres. Unfortunately, there is currently no regulation governing compensation for cadres that puts them at risk of psychological distress and burnout. This research intends to analyze the association of different socioeconomic characteristics with psychological distress and burnout and the association between the two conditions in cadres providing services in Bandung City. Through a secondary cross-sectional research, 648 cadres' data were obtained. The data included were socioeconomic characteristics, psychological distress (Kessler-10), and burnout (The Burnout Measure Short Version). This article discovered a significant negative correlation between age ($\rho = -0.097$; $p = 0.014$) and seniority ($\rho = -0.134$; $p < 0.001$) toward psychological distress and a significant positive correlation between psychological distress and burnout ($\rho = 0.505$; $p < 0.001$). These findings highlight the importance of considering age and seniority to support cadres' mental health and ensure a sustainable recruitment and regeneration strategy.

A. Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 emphasize the importance of the leave no one behind (LNOB) principle. This principle highlights the need for every individual to not only benefit from development outcomes but also actively participate in the development process (Buzeti et al., 2020). However, people with disabilities remain at risk of exclusion due to the limitations they experience (UNDP, 2023). The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately 1.3 billion people (16% of the global population) have significant disability (WHO, 2022a). In Indonesia, the Ministry of Health (Kemenkes) reported in 2023 that about 22.97 million people, or 8.5% of the population, have disabilities. In West Java, the number of people with disabilities reaches 72,565 people or 8.5% of the provincial population. Bandung emerged as the city with the highest number in the province, with approximately 9,020 individuals, or 0.36% of the city's population (BPS Jawa Barat, 2024). Although the number of people with disabilities in Bandung may seem small, the LNOB principle reinforces that they are an integral part of society. Their rights and equality should be actively advocated for, ensuring they are not excluded from societal progress.

Through the enactment of UU No. 19 of 2011, the government demonstrated its commitment to eradicating discrimination against people with disabilities and to actively supporting and providing services for them. This support is not only provided by professional healthcare workers but also by social workers, including cadres (Koalisi Kesejahteraan Kader Kesehatan, 2023). Cadres held a great role in the success of the government's program through their direct involvement and interaction with the group they

served, particularly peoples with disabilities in this case (Permenkes RI, 2016). In the City of Bandung cadre-based services for people with disabilities have been implemented, including the establishment of the *Rehabilitasi Berbasis Masyarakat* (RBM) program since 1985 (Humas Kota Bandung, 2022).

Regrettably, there is still no policy or budgetary commitment regulating the standard working hours or providing adequate incentives for cadres, which may affect their work quality and performance (Wibowo et al., 2018). This issue is also evident in Bandung: although the allocated budget for 2025 has increased to Rp7.78 trillion from Rp7.38 trillion in 2024, the health sector budget (Rp794 billion) remains smaller than those for education and infrastructure. Furthermore, funding specifically for cadres is not prioritized, with allocations limited to cadre coordinators and supervisors. The limited attention given to cadres may negatively impact the services they provide for people with disabilities in Bandung, as seen in the shortage of human resources willing to volunteer as cadres (Desionita et al., 2021). In the absence of regulation and appropriate incentive schemes, voluntary cadres are often compelled to seek alternative sources of income to support their daily needs.

The lack of appreciation or incentive provided to cadres for their contributions may reduce their sense of self-recognition and job satisfaction, thereby placing them at risk of burnout in the long term (Tanimoto et al., 2023). Moreover, cadres are also at risk of experiencing psychological distress due to the emotional burdens they carry while serving people with disabilities (Geirdal et al., 2022). These two conditions not only affect the cadres themselves but also have broader implications for their environment. Burnout can lead to cognitive, emotional, and behavioral changes, which may be reflected through negative attitudes toward their work, colleagues, and the communities they serve (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Meanwhile, psychological distress raises concern due to its effects on both mental and physical health, as well as the professional performance of social workers (Kagan & Itzick, 2019). For cadres, the impacts of both conditions may influence their attitude toward the people with disabilities they serve. Previous studies have shown that negative attitude toward people with disabilities can adversely affect their quality of life (Babik & Gardner, 2021). Additionally, study among people with disabilities in Bandung found that perceived attitudinal barriers were associated with lower quality of life (Hilfi et al., 2024).

Previous studies have established a link between psychological distress and burnout, with some highlighting the role of resilience and other factors, such as job satisfaction, as mediators (Ren et al., 2022; Watson, 2023). However, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the association between these two conditions and the influence of socioeconomic characteristics, particularly among disability assistance cadres in Bandung City.. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by assessing psychological distress and burnout among cadres. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a basis for policy formulation and effective interventions to support cadre well-being, which in turn may improve the quality of services provided to people with disabilities.

B. Methods

This study employed a cross-sectional secondary research design using data from disability assistance cadres in Bandung as the study population. The data were obtained through a total sampling method. The variables included in the study were socioeconomic characteristics, psychological distress, and burnout among cadres. This research utilized secondary data obtained from the dataset of the *Riset Percepatan Lektor Kepala (RPLK)* under the name of Lukman Hilfi, based on Contract Number 1649/UN6.3.1/PT.0-0/2024 dated March 18, 2024. The study was conducted in Bandung City between June 2024 and February 2025. The inclusion criteria for this study were as follows:

1. Data of disability companion cadres registered in the RPLK dataset under Lukman Hilfi's name and contract number as stated above.
2. Data entries that included socioeconomic characteristics, psychological distress, and burnout variables.
3. Cadres aged over 18 years.

The exclusion criteria were:

1. Data entries in any domain with less than 70% completeness.
2. Duplicate entries of the same disability companion cadre.

Psychological distress scores and levels were measured using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (Kessler-10). This instrument is a clinical tool for assessing psychological symptoms and has been widely validated, including in Bahasa Indonesia (Fananni & Pratikto, 2021; Tran et al., 2019). The Kessler-10 consists of ten items designed to assess the level of distress based on anxiety and depressive symptoms experienced by individuals over the past four weeks, with responses ranging from "never" (1 point) to "very often" (5 points)). The total score is the sum of all item responses, ranging from 10 to 50 points.

Burnout scores and levels were assessed using the Burnout Measure (Short Version) (BMS). This instrument consists of ten items that evaluate various emotional and physical conditions related to an individual's duties, with responses ranging from "never" (1 point) to "always" (7 points) (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The final score is calculated by summing the total points from all items and dividing it by 10, yielding a score range of 0.7 to 7 points. As this instrument had not yet been validated in Bahasa Indonesia, the translation process was first conducted through Pusat Bahasa Universitas Padjadjaran. Both instruments underwent validity and reliability testing using Rasch Model analysis. The results showed that all items demonstrated good validity and reliability, with Item Outfit Mean Square values within the acceptable range, fulfilled unidimensionality criteria, and high person-item reliability. Both instruments also showed excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient exceeding 0.9.

After applying the exclusion criteria, a total of 23 entries related to socioeconomic characteristics were excluded due to invalidity, and 6 entries related to psychological distress were excluded due to insufficient completeness (less than 70%). The final sample consisted of respondents who met all inclusion criteria and were free of any exclusion indicators. Frequency distribution and percentage analyses were conducted to summarize the characteristics of cadre, including age, gender, educational attainment, employment status, monthly income as a cadre, monthly household income, length of time as a cadre, and marital status. Twenty-three invalid entries for socioeconomic characteristics and six incomplete psychological distress records were excluded. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the psychological distress and burnout scores were not normally distributed; therefore, non-parametric analyses were employed: Chi-square tests for categorical variables and Spearman's rank correlation for continuous variables. This research was conducted in Bandung City from June 2024 to February 2025. Ethical approval was obtained through Komite Etik Penelitian Universitas Padjadjaran (No. 95/UN6.KEP/EC/2025).

C. Results and Discussion

The data obtained from the dataset amounted to 648 cadres. The characteristic of the cadres were summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Cadres

No	Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1.	Age		
	Adult (18 – 59 years)	564	87
	Elderly (>60 years)	84	13
2.	Gender		
	Male	6	0.9
	Female	642	99.1
3.	Educational Attainment		
	No formal education	1	0.2
	Elementary School	29	4.5
	Junior High School	103	15.9
	Senior High School	422	65.2
	Diploma/Bachelor's/Master's/ Doctoral degree	92	14.2
4.	Employment Status		
	Employed	72	11.1
	Unemployed	576	88.9
5.	Monthly Income as A Cadre		
	Paid	568	87.7

	Unpaid	80	12.3
6.	Length of Time as A Cadre		
	< 1 year	50	8
	1 – 5 years	273	43.6
	6 – 10 years	114	18.2
	> 10 years	189	30.2
7.	Marital Status		
	Married	552	85.2
	Not Married	96	14.8
8.	Monthly Household Income		
	< UMR Bandung City	587	90.6
	> UMR Bandung City	61	8.4
	*UMR: Upah Minimum Regional/minimum wage		

The mean age of the cadres was 49.53 years with a standard deviation of 9.50 years and an age range of 20 to 78 years. The mean monthly household income was Rp2,351,294, with a relatively large standard deviation of Rp3,791,766, indicating considerable variability in cadres' income levels. The average length of service as a cadre was 9.5 years ($SD = 9.28$), ranging from 0.08 years (approximately one month) to 43 years. These findings demonstrate a wide variation in experience among the cadres, from those who had only recently started to those who had been serving for decades. The frequency distribution of psychological distress and burnout level based on the scoring from each instrument were summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Cadre's Psychological Distress and Burnout Level

No	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1.	Psychological Distress		
	Subclinical (≤ 19)	428	66.0
	Mild (20 – 24)	130	20.1
	Moderate (25 – 29)	61	9.4
	Severe (30 – 50)	23	3.6
2.	Burnout		
	Very low level of burnout <2.4	551	85.0
	Danger signs of burnout (2.5 – 3.4)	80	12.3
	Burnout (3.5 – 4.4)	13	2.0
	Very serious problem of burnout (4.4 – 5.4)	4	0.6

Psychological distress was divided into four levels, ranging from subclinical to severe psychological distress. Six cadre responses were deemed invalid due to less than 70% completion of the Kessler-10 questionnaire. Among these, three cadres were classified in the very low burnout category and three in the burnout risk category. No cadres were found to be at a level of burnout that required immediate professional assistance; therefore, this category is not presented in the table. The mean psychological distress score measured by the Kessler-10 was 17.07 ($SD = 6.1$), with scores ranging from 5 to 40. The mean burnout score, as measured by the Burnout Measure–Short Version, was 1.72 ($SD = 0.72$), with scores ranging from 1 to 7.

To perform the chi-square test for categorical variables, the categories of psychological distress and burnout were narrowed into binary groups to form 2×2 tables, as several cells had expected frequencies of less than 5. Psychological distress was categorized into No (subclinical) and Yes (mild, moderate, and severe), while burnout was categorized into No (very low and risk of burnout) and Yes (burnout and high burnout). Educational attainment was also dichotomized into Low Education (no schooling, elementary, and junior high school) and Higher Education (senior high school, diploma, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree). The results of the chi-square analysis for categorical variables are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of Psychological Distress and Burnout by Socioeconomic Characteristics

Socioeconomic Characteristics	Psychological Distress Status				P-value	Burnout Status				P-value
	No		Yes			No		Yes		
	n	%	n	%		n	%	n	%	
Monthly income as a cadre										
Paid	370	65.6	194	34.4	0.12	552	97.2	16	2.8	0.71
Unpaid	58	74.4	20	25.6		79	98.8	1	1.2	
Marriage status										
Married	365	66.8	181	33.2	0.81	539	97.6	13	2.4	0.24
Unmarried	63	65.6	33	34.4		92	95.8	4	4.2	
Employment Status										
Employed	42	58.3	30	41.7	0.11	72	100	0	0	0.24
Unemployed	386	67.7	184	32.3		559	97.0	17	3.0	
Educational Attainment										
Lower education	89	66.3	45	33.6	0.95	129	96.3	5	3.7	0.37
Higher education	339	66.7	169	33.3		502	97.7	12	2.3	

There was no statistically significant association between any of the socioeconomic variables and psychological distress or burnout among cadres. However, descriptive analysis of frequency distributions showed that psychological distress was more prevalent among cadres who were paid (34.4%), employed (41.7%), and unmarried (34.4%). The prevalence of distress was relatively similar between cadres with low and higher education levels. Burnout was most commonly reported among cadres who were paid (2.8%), unmarried (4.2%), and unemployed (3.0%). Regarding educational attainment, burnout was slightly more prevalent among cadres with lower education (3.7%) compared to those with secondary education and above (2.3%).

Table 4. Association of Age, Tenure, and Income with Psychological Distress and Burnout Scores Among Cadres

Socioeconomic Characteristics	Psychological Distress Score		Burnout Score	
	ρ	P-value	ρ	P-value
Age	-0.097	0.014	0.006	0.874
Length of time as a cadre	-0.134	<0.001	0.042	0.291
Monthly household income	-0.007	0.859	-0.006	0.871

The Spearman correlation test revealed a significant negative association between age and psychological distress ($\rho = -0.097$; very weak relationship, $P = 0.014$). Conversely, the correlation between age and burnout was positive but not statistically significant ($\rho = 0.006$; very weak relationship, $P = 0.873$). A similar pattern was observed for the length of service as a cadre, which showed a significant negative correlation with psychological distress ($\rho = -0.134$; very weak correlation, $p < 0.001$), and a non-significant positive correlation with burnout ($\rho = 0.042$; $p = 0.291$). Monthly household income also showed a weak negative, but non-significant, correlation with both psychological distress ($\rho = -0.007$, $p = 0.859$) and burnout ($\rho = -0.006$, $p = 0.871$).

The relationship between the two dependent variables—psychological distress and burnout—was also examined using Spearman’s correlation test. The results indicated a moderate positive correlation between psychological distress and burnout among cadres ($\rho = 0.505$, $p < 0.001$). The corresponding scatter plot demonstrates a positive linear pattern, as illustrated in Figure 1.

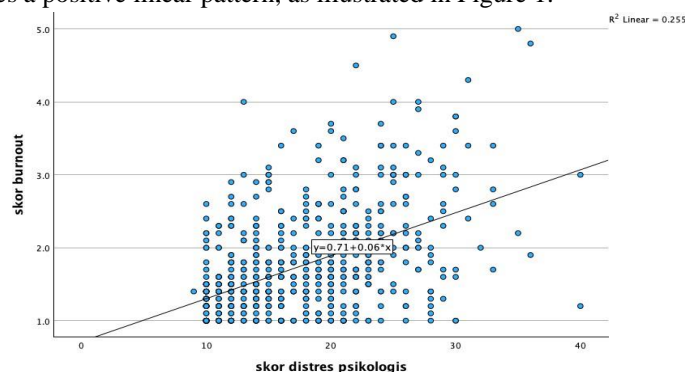


Figure 1. Scatter plot of Psychological Distress and Burnout Scores

Lower income has been associated with higher levels of psychological distress and burnout (McSorley & Bacong, 2023; Ptáček et al., 2019). However, this study did not find a statistically significant relationship between cadre compensation and either psychological distress or burnout. Interestingly, the prevalence of both conditions was higher among cadres who received wages, although these differences were not statistically significant. This finding may be explained by the nature of voluntary work, where other factors—such as intrinsic motivation, social support, and altruistic intentions—may play a greater role in determining mental well-being than income alone (Nichol et al., 2024). Despite their voluntary status, cadres serve at the forefront of community health service delivery. Beyond internal motivation, the lack of financial incentives may still influence cadres' psychological well-being over time. Previous research has shown that providing incentives positively impacts cadre motivation and performance (Anton, 2024). Therefore, despite the lack of statistical significance, discussing financial incentives remains relevant in the context of cadre welfare and performance.

Previous studies have shown that being unmarried including widowhood, widower hood, or never having been married is associated with a higher prevalence of psychological distress and burnout among older adults (Islam, 2019; Taranu et al., 2022). The differences in findings between this study and previous research may be attributed to variations in the characteristics of the study populations. While prior studies predominantly focused on older adults and found that the negative psychological impact of unmarried status was more pronounced in men, the present study included a more diverse age range and was comprised mostly of female participants. These demographic differences may explain the variation in results.

Employment has been associated with lower levels of psychological distress (McSorley & Bacong, 2023). However, for cadres who engage in voluntary work while also holding formal employment, the risk of a dual burden may increase the likelihood of burnout (Sufiyati, 2021). In the present study, no significant relationship was found between employment status and either psychological distress or burnout. This discrepancy may be due to differences in the operational definition of work, as the cadre role is categorized as informal and voluntary, potentially influencing how the relationship between formal employment and psychological well-being is interpreted. Voluntary work itself has been linked to improvements in mental and physical health, greater life satisfaction, and a reduced risk of depression (Yeung et al., 2017). Interestingly, this study found that psychological distress was more prevalent among employed cadres, consistent with findings that professional workload is a predictive factor for psychological distress (Pinto et al., 2024). Conversely, burnout was more commonly observed among unemployed cadres. This suggests that burnout is not solely driven by stress and workload but can also stem from a lack of challenge and stimulation in daily life. A monotonous routine may lead to boredom, which in turn negatively impacts mental health (Li et al., 2024). Therefore, managing cadres' workloads by taking into account their primary employment and providing varied, meaningful activities is essential to prevent burnout.

Lower levels of education have been associated with a higher prevalence of moderate to severe psychological distress and the use of less adaptive coping strategies, which may contribute to burnout (Martínez et al., 2020; McSorley & Bacong, 2023). However, the non-significant findings in this study may be explained by the informal nature of cadre work, which does not require specific educational qualifications. In practice, anyone can serve as a cadre regardless of their educational background (Nugraha et al., 2021). Nevertheless, given the varying educational levels among cadres as shown in the summary of participant characteristics there is a need for training and capacity-building efforts to ensure that all cadres possess a comparable level of knowledge and competence in performing their roles effectively.

Previous research has found a negative correlation between age and psychological distress as well as burnout (Marchand et al., 2018; Xie et al., 2021). In line with these findings, the present study revealed a statistically significant but weak negative relationship between age and psychological distress. However, a very weak positive though not statistically significant correlation was observed between age and burnout. This suggests a more complex relationship between age and mental health outcomes. As individuals age, they generally develop better emotional regulation skills, which may contribute to reduced psychological distress (Livingstone & Isaacowitz, 2021). However, older individuals may also face challenges such as monotony in their roles particularly in long-term voluntary positions like that of

a cadre—which may lead to boredom and potentially contribute to burnout (Nath & Babu, 2023). Additionally, age-related declines in physical energy and endurance may also increase susceptibility to burnout (Cunningham et al., 2022). These findings imply that age should be considered in both the recruitment and training of cadres. Older cadres may be more psychologically resilient and thus better equipped to handle the demands of their role with less psychological burden. At the same time, psychological support and stress management resources should be prioritized for younger cadres, who may be more vulnerable to psychological distress. Conversely, in the case of older cadres, efforts such as role rotation or task variation could be implemented to prevent burnout and sustain motivation over time.

Previous studies have identified a significant negative relationship between professional seniority in social work and levels of burnout and psychological distress (Kagan & Itzick, 2019; Mercan et al., 2024). Consistent with these findings, the present study revealed a significant, albeit weak, negative association between length of service as a cadre and psychological distress. However, a very weak positive—though not statistically significant—relationship was observed between length of service and burnout. As individuals gain experience, they tend to develop more effective coping strategies for managing stress and overcoming challenges (Abdou et al., 2024). This increased competence and adaptability may help cadres navigate their roles more effectively, thereby reducing psychological distress. On the other hand, with seniority often comes greater reliability, which may lead to an increased workload—potentially contributing to burnout (Sufiyati, 2021). The data also showed that nearly half of the cadres had served for more than five years, while only 8% were new cadres with less than one year of service. This imbalance in cadre regeneration may place a disproportionate burden on long-serving cadres, further increasing their risk of burnout. The observed negative association between length of service and psychological distress suggests that senior cadres generally possess greater psychological resilience. Therefore, experienced cadres could play an essential role in mentoring and supporting junior cadres by sharing strategies, offering guidance, and fostering a collaborative work environment. Formal mentoring programs involving senior cadres may help facilitate the adaptation process for new cadres, strengthen team cohesion, and ensure sustainable cadre regeneration. Such efforts can reduce stress among junior cadres while mitigating burnout risk among senior cadres. Furthermore, continued recognition and support for long-serving cadres are vital for maintaining their motivation and sense of purpose. Valuing their contributions not only sustains their engagement but also reinforces a culture of mutual support within the cadre system.

Lower income levels have been associated with a higher prevalence of moderate to severe psychological distress and increased burnout (McSorley & Bacong, 2023; Ptáček et al., 2019). Although the results in this study did not reach statistical significance, the analysis revealed a very weak negative relationship between monthly household income and both psychological distress and burnout. This finding highlights the potential vulnerability of cadres to mental health issues related to financial constraints. The frequency distribution further indicates that the majority of cadres earn incomes below the minimum wage in Bandung City. Given their critical role as frontline implementers of government programs—including services for people with disabilities—ensuring the welfare of cadres is essential. Adequate recognition and financial support for their contributions can serve not only as a form of appreciation but also as a strategy to promote the sustainability and effectiveness of their roles. Although most cadres in this study exhibited subclinical levels of psychological distress and minimal burnout, the implementation of regular mental health screenings could be beneficial for early detection and prevention of more serious mental health conditions. According to WHO guidelines, mental health screening should be accompanied by safeguards, including strict data confidentiality, guaranteed access to appropriate follow-up interventions, and the involvement of trained health personnel in its administration (WHO, 2022b).

Several studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between psychological distress and burnout (Chen et al., 2022; Ren et al., 2022; Zou et al., 2016). These two constructs are known to have a reciprocal relationship: prolonged psychological distress may contribute to the development of burnout, while burnout itself can act as a predisposing factor for various social and mental health disorders (Kandula & Wake, 2022; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The findings of this study are consistent with previous research, revealing a statistically significant and moderately strong positive correlation between psychological distress and burnout. This suggests that cadres experiencing higher levels of psychological distress are more likely to also experience burnout, highlighting the importance of addressing mental health concerns early to prevent a compounding effect on overall well-being and work performance.

When referring to the results of the previous variable tests, there was an opposite relationship between psychological distress and burnout with age and length of time as a cadre. However, since psychological distress and burnout have a significant relationship, it is important to consider how they may relate to each other. Although older and more experienced cadres tend to experience decreased psychological distress, they are more prone to burnout. This suggests that although senior cadres are more accustomed to dealing with stress, the long-term accumulation of tasks and responsibilities may lead to burnout. Therefore, the prevention of psychological distress and burnout should be carried out simultaneously through a comprehensive approach. In addition to psychosocial support and strengthening cadre capacity, strategies such as a fairer division of tasks, effective supervision and mentoring mechanisms, and appropriate appreciation or incentives can help maintain cadre well-being. With these measures, it is hoped that cadres will remain motivated and able to carry out their roles optimally.

This study has several limitations. First, the use of self-administered questionnaires is prone to response bias due to differences in participants' understanding of the questions. Second, participants were only recruited from one region in Indonesia (Bandung), which limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions in the country.

D. Conclusion

Most cadres assisting persons with disabilities in Bandung City are in a healthy psychological state, with the majority experiencing subclinical psychological distress and very low levels of burnout. Age and length of time as a cadre were significantly associated with psychological distress. Psychological distress was also significantly associated with burnout. These findings highlight the importance of considering age and experience to maintain the mental health of cadres. Recruitment and coaching strategies should take into account sustainable regeneration through the role of senior cadres as mentors.

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