

The Functional Career Development of Lecturers in Private Universities in Gorontalo Province

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of lecturers' functional career development in private universities in Gorontalo Province by examining individual and organizational determinants. The research was implemented using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving lecturers and institutional representatives. The analysis technique employed consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing to ensure a systematic and comprehensive interpretation of findings. The results indicate that lecturers' career development is influenced by academic competence, intrinsic motivation, discipline, and openness to experience, as well as the level of organizational support provided. Lecturers with strong internal motivation and positive work attitudes demonstrate higher engagement in academic activities and career advancement. However, the study also finds several constraints, including limited institutional resources, weak career management systems, and insufficient organizational support, which hinder optimal career progression. The study concludes that lecturers' functional career development is determined by the interaction between individual capacity and organizational environment. Therefore, an integrated strategy that combines individual capacity development and institutional strengthening is essential to achieve sustainable and competitive academic career advancement in private higher education institutions.

Keywords: Career Development, Lecturers, Private Universities, Motivation, Organizational Culture

Introduction

Higher education plays a strategic role in developing human capital and enhancing national competitiveness (Cherkesova et al., 2016; Zaakiyyah, 2024; Tarman et al., 2026). In this context, lecturers serve as key actors in determining the quality of academic processes through the implementation of the tri dharma of higher education, namely teaching, research, and community service. Therefore, the functional career development of lecturers has become a critical issue, not only for individual advancement but also for improving institutional performance in higher education. In recent years, the landscape of higher education has become increasingly complex, driven by demands for higher research productivity, digital transformation, and improved educational services. These changes require lecturers to continuously develop their professional capacities in a sustainable manner.

The role of lecturers has expanded significantly beyond traditional teaching responsibilities. Lecturers are now expected to be active researchers, community facilitators, and contributors to institutional governance. According to Asbari & Novitasari (2024), Mufanti et al. (2024), Hanun et al. (2025) the transformation of higher education in Indonesia has shifted the emphasis toward outcome-based education and research productivity, requiring lecturers to enhance their competencies in research methodology, publication, and innovation. This shift is

further reinforced by national policies that emphasize performance-based evaluation systems, where academic promotion is closely tied to measurable outputs such as scientific publications and community service impact.

Lecturer career development is inherently a multidimensional process influenced by both individual and organizational factors. Recent studies highlight that academic career success is not solely determined by competence, but also by motivation, work behavior, and organizational support. Motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation, plays a significant role in shaping lecturers' engagement in academic activities, including research productivity and professional development. According to Hammache (2025), lecturers with strong intrinsic motivation tend to demonstrate higher commitment to research and are more likely to pursue academic promotions proactively.

In addition to motivation, competence remains a fundamental determinant of career development. Competence includes pedagogical skills, professional expertise, research capability, and social competence. A study by Chavez (2025) found that lecturers with strong research competencies are more likely to achieve higher academic ranks, particularly in institutions that prioritize publication output. However, competence alone is insufficient without adequate institutional support. This indicates that career development is not merely an individual responsibility but also an organizational concern.

At the same time, organizational factors such as leadership, institutional policies, and academic culture contribute to creating an environment that either facilitates or constrains career progression. Effective leadership plays a crucial role in providing direction, motivation, and support for lecturers. Transformational leadership, in particular, has been shown to positively influence academic performance and career advancement. According to Riddel & Zulfikar (2024), leadership that fosters innovation, collaboration, and professional growth significantly enhances lecturers' engagement in academic activities.

Institutional policies also play a critical role in shaping career pathways. Transparent promotion systems, clear performance indicators, and structured mentoring programs can significantly improve lecturers' career progression. However, many private universities in developing regions still lack comprehensive career management systems. This condition often results in ambiguity in promotion processes and limited opportunities for professional development.

In addition to competence and motivation, personality traits have emerged as an important dimension in understanding career development. The Big Five personality framework—openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability—provides a comprehensive perspective on how individuals respond to professional demands and career opportunities. These personality dimensions influence lecturers' adaptability, collaboration, and resilience in facing academic challenges. According to LePine et al. (2000), lecturers with high levels of conscientiousness and openness to experience tend to be more productive in research and more adaptable to changes in academic environments.

Openness to experience is particularly relevant in the context of rapid technological change in higher education. Lecturers who are open to new ideas and innovations are more likely to adopt digital learning tools, engage in interdisciplinary research, and explore new teaching methods. Meanwhile, conscientiousness reflects discipline, responsibility, and goal orientation, which are essential for achieving long-term career objectives. Emotional stability also plays a crucial role in managing stress and maintaining performance under pressure, especially in competitive academic environments.

Within the context of private universities in Gorontalo Province, lecturer career development presents unique challenges. As institutions operating in a developing regional context, many

private universities face limitations in terms of financial resources, research facilities, and structured career management systems. These constraints often result in low research productivity, slow promotion processes, and uneven distribution of academic ranks among lecturers. According to data from LLDIKTI Region XVI (2023), the proportion of lecturers with higher academic ranks in private universities in eastern Indonesia remains relatively low compared to national averages.

Furthermore, limited access to research funding and academic networks poses additional challenges for lecturers in these institutions. A study by Moore & Ward (2010) indicates that lecturers in private universities often rely on personal initiatives to conduct research, with minimal institutional support. This situation creates disparities in research output and career advancement opportunities. In addition, administrative burdens and high teaching loads further constrain lecturers' ability to engage in research and community service activities.

Consequently, there exists a gap between policy expectations and actual implementation at the institutional level. While national policies emphasize research productivity and academic excellence, many institutions lack the capacity to fully support these objectives. This gap highlights the need for context-specific strategies that address the unique challenges faced by private universities in developing regions.

Furthermore, the increasing demands of globalization and digitalization in higher education require lecturers to possess strong career adaptability. Career adaptability refers to an individual's ability to cope with changes, uncertainties, and challenges in their professional environment. According to Hirschi et al. (2015), career adaptability consists of four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. These dimensions enable individuals to navigate complex career paths and respond effectively to evolving demands.

In the context of higher education, career adaptability is essential for responding to policy changes, technological advancements, and global academic standards. Lecturers who possess high adaptability are more likely to engage in continuous learning, adopt innovative teaching methods, and participate in international collaborations. Conversely, lecturers with low adaptability may struggle to keep pace with changes, resulting in stagnation in career development.

Digital transformation has further intensified the need for adaptability. The integration of digital technologies in teaching and research requires lecturers to develop new skills, such as online teaching, data analysis, and digital communication. According to Rof et al. (2022), the adoption of digital learning platforms during the pandemic has accelerated the transformation of teaching practices, highlighting the importance of digital competence in academic careers.

Despite the growing body of literature on lecturer career development, studies that integrate individual factors such as competence, motivation, and personality with organizational dimensions remain limited, particularly in the context of private universities in developing regions. Most existing studies tend to examine these factors separately, thereby overlooking the complex interactions that shape career outcomes. This gap in the literature underscores the need for a more holistic approach to understanding lecturer career development.

A holistic perspective recognizes that career development is the result of dynamic interactions between individual characteristics and organizational environments. According to the social cognitive career theory proposed by Halim et al. (2023), career development is influenced by self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and environmental factors. This theory provides a useful framework for analyzing how individual and organizational factors interact to shape career trajectories.

In the Indonesian context, several studies have attempted to explore this interaction. For example, a study by Abdullahi et al. (2025) found that the combination of strong individual competence and supportive institutional policies significantly enhances lecturers' career progression. Similarly, research by Adeoye et al. (2023) highlights the importance of organizational culture in fostering academic productivity and career advancement.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the functional career development of lecturers in private universities in Gorontalo Province by examining the interplay between individual characteristics and organizational factors. This research is expected to contribute to the field of public administration, particularly in the area of human resource management in higher education, while also providing practical insights for institutions in designing more effective and sustainable career development strategies.

By integrating individual and organizational perspectives, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of lecturer career development. The findings are expected to inform policy makers, institutional leaders, and lecturers themselves in developing strategies that promote professional growth, enhance academic performance, and ultimately improve the quality of higher education in Indonesia.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of lecturers' functional career development in private universities in Gorontalo Province. A qualitative design was deemed appropriate as it allows for the exploration of meanings, experiences, and subjective perspectives of lecturers regarding their career development within real-life contexts. The study was conducted across several private universities, with participants selected purposively, including lecturers, institutional leaders, and individuals involved in human resource management. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and direct observations of academic activities, while secondary data were derived from institutional documents, policies related to functional academic ranks, and other relevant records. Data collection was carried out using a combination of interviews, observations, and document analysis to ensure the comprehensiveness of the findings. The data were analyzed using an interactive model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, which were conducted continuously throughout the research process. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation techniques were applied, including both source and method triangulation. In addition, member checking was conducted to validate the accuracy of the data by confirming the findings with the participants. This methodological approach is expected to provide a holistic and reliable understanding of lecturer career development within the context of private higher education institutions.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study reveal that the functional career development of lecturers in private universities in Gorontalo Province is influenced by the interaction between individual and organizational factors. From the individual perspective, the findings indicate that academic competence, intrinsic motivation, and personality traits play a significant role in determining lecturers' career progression. Lecturers who demonstrate strong research competence, discipline, and openness to experience tend to be more active in academic activities such as publishing scientific articles, participating in training, and pursuing academic promotions. Intrinsic motivation also emerges as a key driver, as lecturers with strong internal motivation show higher persistence in overcoming challenges related to career advancement.

However, the study also identifies several organizational constraints that hinder optimal career development. Limited institutional resources, including research funding and access to academic facilities, significantly affect lecturers' ability to produce scientific outputs. In addition, the absence of structured career management systems, unclear promotion procedures, and limited mentoring programs contribute to slow and uneven career progression among lecturers. Organizational support, particularly in the form of leadership encouragement and institutional policies, is found to be inconsistent across institutions.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that lecturers' career adaptability is still relatively low, particularly in responding to digital transformation and increasing demands for research productivity. Many lecturers face difficulties in integrating digital technologies into teaching and research activities, which affects their overall performance and competitiveness. This situation indicates a gap between policy expectations and actual implementation at the institutional level. The study finds that while individual capacity is relatively adequate, the lack of strong organizational support systems becomes the main barrier to achieving sustainable and optimal lecturer career development.

The findings of this study confirm that lecturer career development is a multidimensional process shaped by the dynamic interaction between individual capacity and organizational environment. From a theoretical perspective, these results are consistent with the Social Cognitive Career Theory proposed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett, which emphasizes that career development is influenced by personal attributes and environmental factors. The strong role of intrinsic motivation found in this study supports the argument that self-efficacy and internal drive are critical determinants of career success.

The influence of competence and personality traits on career development aligns with previous studies. For instance, research by Ting et al. (2019) highlights that research competence significantly affects academic promotion, while Chamorro-Premuzic (2006) emphasize the role of personality traits such as conscientiousness and openness to experience in enhancing academic productivity. The current findings strengthen these arguments by demonstrating that these individual factors are also relevant in the context of private universities in developing regions.

However, this study also reveals that individual capacity alone is insufficient without adequate organizational support. This finding is in line with Kamarzaman et al. (2025), who argue that institutional support plays a crucial role in facilitating lecturers' career advancement. The lack of structured career management systems and limited resources identified in this study reflects structural issues commonly found in private higher education institutions, particularly in regions with limited funding capacity.

From a problem-solving perspective, the main issue identified is the imbalance between individual readiness and organizational support. While lecturers possess the motivation and competence to advance their careers, institutional constraints limit their opportunities. Therefore, solutions must focus on strengthening organizational systems, including the development of clear career pathways, provision of research funding, and implementation of mentoring programs. Transformational leadership is also essential in creating a supportive academic environment that encourages innovation and professional growth, as suggested by Al-Husseini et al. (2021).

In addition, the issue of low career adaptability highlights the need for capacity building in digital competence and lifelong learning. This finding is consistent with Carabregu-Vokshi et al. (2024), who emphasize the importance of digital skills in responding to changes in higher

education. Institutions must provide training and support systems that enable lecturers to adapt to technological advancements and global academic standards.

Compared to previous studies, this research provides a more integrated perspective by combining individual and organizational dimensions in analyzing lecturer career development. While earlier studies tend to focus on single variables, this study demonstrates that career development outcomes are the result of complex interactions between multiple factors. This contribution is particularly relevant for policy development in private universities, where contextual challenges require comprehensive and adaptive strategies.

In conclusion, the discussion highlights that sustainable lecturer career development requires a balanced approach that integrates individual capacity building and organizational strengthening. Without such integration, efforts to improve academic performance and institutional quality will remain limited. Therefore, higher education institutions must adopt holistic and context-sensitive strategies to support lecturers' professional growth and ensure long-term competitiveness.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the functional career development of lecturers in private universities in Gorontalo Province is a complex and multidimensional process shaped by the interaction between individual and organizational factors. At the individual level, academic competence, intrinsic motivation, and personality traits are identified as key determinants influencing career progression. Lecturers who demonstrate strong competencies, high levels of motivation, and adaptive personality characteristics tend to exhibit better career advancement. However, these individual capacities do not automatically translate into career success without adequate organizational support. From an organizational perspective, institutional factors such as academic culture, leadership, and career management systems play a crucial role in facilitating or constraining lecturers' career development. The findings reveal that limitations in institutional resources, weak career management structures, and insufficient organizational support remain significant barriers to career progression. Furthermore, the gap between formal policy frameworks and their implementation at the institutional level highlights the need for more effective governance in managing academic careers.

Suggestions

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, higher education institutions should strengthen their career development systems by establishing structured, transparent, and sustainable mechanisms, including mentoring and support for academic promotion processes. Second, institutions need to enhance lecturers' capacities through continuous professional development programs, research facilitation, and support for scientific publication. Third, institutional leaders should foster a supportive and collaborative academic culture that encourages productivity and innovation. Finally, policymakers and stakeholders should ensure that regulatory frameworks are not only well-designed but also effectively implemented to bridge the gap between policy and practice. An integrated approach that aligns individual development with institutional strengthening is essential to promote sustainable and effective lecturer career development.

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