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### TRI HITA KARANA VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: EVIDENCE FROM LECTURERS' PERCEPTIONS

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#### Abstract

The integration of cultural values into higher education is receiving increasing attention due to its role in shaping character, social responsibility, and academic culture. The Tri Hita Karana (THK) philosophy is a local value framework that emphasizes harmony in human relationships with God (parahyangan), fellow human beings (pawongan), and the environment (palemahan). However, understanding how internal actors in higher education institutions perceive THK values remains limited. This study aims to analyze lecturers' perceptions regarding the internalization of THK values within the academic culture of higher education institutions. The study employs a descriptive, quantitative design and involves 98 lecturers selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a Tri Hita Karana questionnaire covering the dimensions of Parahyangan, Pawongan, and Palemahan. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics. The results indicate that lecturers have a very high perception of the implementation of THK values across all dimensions. The findings indicate that THK has gained legitimacy as a shared value framework within the academic environment and is perceived as part of the organizational culture of higher education institutions. The study reinforces the view that local wisdom not only functions as a cultural symbol but also has the potential to become an indigenous organizational culture that supports the development of values-based higher education. The results contribute to the development of discourse on integrating local wisdom into higher education management and to the strengthening of a more humanistic, harmonious, and sustainable academic culture.

**Keywords:** academic culture; higher education; local wisdom; Tri Hita Karana

#### INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are focused on transforming knowledge and developing intellectual capacity. However, the dynamics of contemporary higher education indicate that these functions are no longer sufficient to address the complex social, cultural, and moral challenges of modern society. The rise of academic individualism, institutional pressure for performance, competition in scientific publishing, and a weakening of ethical orientation have fueled criticism of a higher education paradigm that is solely focused on instrumental outcomes (Jayadi et al., 2022; Sakti et al., 2024). Higher education institutions face challenges not only in developing intellectual capacity but also in maintaining academic integrity, social responsibility, and humanistic values amid global social change. Consequently, higher education institutions are increasingly viewed as social spaces with a responsibility to shape the character, ethics, and social consciousness of future generations (Alfirević et al., 2023). These conditions have spurred the development of discourse on value-based higher education as an integral part of higher education governance and academic culture

The reinforcement of local culture and wisdom is increasingly being recognized as a strategic approach to building a more humanistic higher education system. Suprpto et al. (2021) explain that attention to the role of cultural values and local wisdom in educational institutions is growing in response to globalization and the homogenization of educational culture. Local values are viewed as a source of ethics, collective identity, and moral guidelines that can strengthen social cohesion within the academic community (Jayadi et al., 2022; Sakti et al., 2024; Yan & Chiou, 2021). Organizational culture theory states that the values embedded within an institution serve as foundational assumptions that shape patterns of behavior, social interactions, and organizational identity (Schein, 2010). Organizational culture is reflected not only in symbols and formal documents but also in values internalized and practiced by organizational members. Local wisdom serves as a cultural symbol and a source of values that can be integrated into educational institutions' organizational cultures to strengthen institutional sustainability and build an educational governance more oriented toward humanistic values.

One local value framework that is highly relevant to education is the Tri Hita Karana (THK) philosophy. This philosophy developed within Balinese tradition, which emphasizes the creation of harmony in life through a balance among the relationships between humans and God (parahyangan), among humans (pawongan), and between humans and nature (palemahan) (Subhaktiyasa, Sintari, et al., 2024). THK is positioned as the cultural philosophy of Balinese society and has begun to be adopted as an ethical and cultural framework for organizations across various sectors, including business, tourism, sustainable development, and institutional governance (Dewi et al., 2024; Sitiari et al., 2024; Subrata et al., 2025). THK values are seen as relevant to the needs of modern organizations that emphasize a balance between spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions. This understanding highlights THK as an indigenous organizational culture that offers an alternative approach to the development of educational organizations.

THK principles have begun to be integrated into the vision, mission, and various strategic documents of higher education institutions as part of the development of institutional identity and academic culture (Aryani et al., 2024; Saputra et al., 2023; Suci et al., 2018a). The implementation of these values is evident in various symbolic practices on campus, including spiritual activities, strengthening academic and social relationships, and institutional environmental sustainability initiatives. Previous studies have also highlighted the potential of THK as an ethical foundation for developing educational organizational culture and ethnopedagogical approaches in higher education (Matera et al., 2025; Pramerta, 2023; Suci et al., 2018b). However, integrating local cultural values into modern higher education remains a challenge, with various conceptual and practical challenges. The integration of cultural values into modern organizations risks remaining merely institutional symbolism unless accompanied by their internalization within the social practices of the academic community. The increasingly competitive and global nature of higher education modernization often drives educational institutions to prioritize performance indicators over the reinforcement of cultural values. This situation raises questions about the extent to which THK values are truly embedded in the organizational culture of higher education institutions and their academic practices.

Previous studies have focused more on the philosophical dimensions of THK or its application in non-educational organizational contexts, such as tourism, sustainable development, and organizational governance (Dewi et al., 2024; Sitiari et al., 2024; Subrata et al., 2025). Research in the field of education has been dominated by conceptual approaches, philosophical reflections, and descriptions of institutional policies without providing empirical exploration of how THK values are understood, accepted, and realized by internal actors within higher education institutions (Matera et al., 2025; Pramerta, 2023; Suci et al., 2018b). However, from an organizational culture perspective, the success of value internalization is determined by how organizational members interpret and reproduce those values in social interactions and institutional practices within higher education institutions.

Understanding the implementation of THK is essential when considering the role of lecturers as key actors in shaping academic culture at higher education institutions (Budiartini

et al., 2025; Suci et al., 2018b). Lecturers not only play a role as implementers of educational, research, and community service functions in administrative and quantitative terms, but also as agents who transmit academic values, ethics, and culture through interactions with students, colleagues, and the institutional environment (Subhaktiyasa, Agung, et al., 2024). The perceptions of organizational members are considered important because they reflect how institutional values are understood, interpreted, and experienced in social practice. Therefore, lecturers' perceptions of the implementation of THK values can serve as an epistemological basis for understanding the extent to which these values have been internalized within the higher education's academic culture. Furthermore, lecturers' perceptions are also important for identifying whether THK has functioned as a substantive value that shapes academic behavior and social relations on campus. This study aims to analyze the extent to which THK values have been internalized in the academic culture of higher education institutions based on lecturers' perceptions. This study contributes to the discourse on integrating local wisdom into value-based higher education management. Furthermore, this study is expected to strengthen understanding of THK's potential as a framework for indigenous organizational culture that supports the development of a more humanistic, harmonious, and sustainable higher education system.

## METHOD

The study used a descriptive quantitative design to obtain an overview of lecturers' perceptions of THK values in higher education. The research location was a higher education institution in Bali that integrates THK values into its organizational identity and culture. The research sample consisted of 98 lecturers selected through purposive sampling, meeting the criteria of being permanent lecturers with a minimum academic position of assistant expert (Subhaktiyasa, 2024b). Data were collected using the THK questionnaire developed by Subhaktiyasa, Sintari, et al. (2024), which was tested for validity and reliability using the PLS-SEM approach. The convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability values produced met the requirements recommended by Subhaktiyasa (2024c). The THK questionnaire consisted of Parahyangan, Pawongan, and Palemahan, with a total of 12 items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The Parahyangan dimension measures the spirituality of lecturers' relationship with God, and the Pawongan dimension measures the harmony of lecturers' social relationships in the academic community. The Palemahan dimension examines the harmony of lecturers' relationships with the campus environment. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage, and category (Subhaktiyasaa et al., 2025). All respondents were informed of the study's purpose and benefits and asked for their consent to participate before completing the questionnaire. The research data was kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

98 lecturers from various higher education institutions in Bali participated as respondents in the study, with the characteristics shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

| Characteristics | Classification      | Total | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------|----------------|
| Gender          | Male                | 43    | 43.88          |
|                 | Female              | 55    | 56.12          |
| Age             | < 30 years          | 4     | 4.08           |
|                 | 30–39 years         | 54    | 55.10          |
|                 | 40–49 years         | 26    | 26.53          |
| Academic Rank   | ≥ 50 years          | 14    | 14.29          |
|                 | Assistant Expert    | 21    | 21.43          |
|                 | Senior Lecturer     | 65    | 66.33          |
|                 | Associate Professor | 12    | 12.24          |

| Characteristics   | Classification | Total | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Length of Service | Professor      | 0     | 0              |
|                   | < 5 years      | 8     | 8.16           |
|                   | 5–10 years     | 37    | 37.76          |
|                   | 11–15 years    | 34    | 34.69          |
|                   | > 15 years     | 19    | 19.39          |
| Institution Type  | Public         | 18    | 18.37          |
|                   | Private        | 80    | 81.63          |
| Accreditation     | A / Excellent  | 30    | 30.61          |
|                   | B / Very Good  | 49    | 50.00          |
|                   | C / Good       | 19    | 19.39          |

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents (56.12%) were female. 55.10% were in the 30-39 age range, while the lowest age group, 14.29%, were 50 years old and above. The age distribution shows that most respondents were in the productive phase of their academic careers. The majority (77.55%) have a master's degree; the most common functional position is senior lecturer (66.33%); and the majority have worked for 5-10 years (37.76%). 81.63% of respondents come from private higher education institutions, and half of them are very good, accredited institutions. Furthermore, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on 12 indicators representing the three dimensions of Tri Hita Karana, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of Tri Hita Karana Indicators

| Dimension   | Indicator                                                                                                                                          | Mean | SD   | Category  |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-----------|
| Parahyangan | 1. I participate in campus spiritual activities.                                                                                                   | 4.38 | 0.67 | Very high |
|             | 2. Spiritual values are a key consideration in how I carry out my academic responsibilities as a lecturer.                                         | 4.30 | 0.66 | Very high |
|             | 3. The ethical and spiritual values I uphold influence my conduct in performing academic duties.                                                   | 4.40 | 0.67 | Very high |
|             | 4. The campus environment provides space for the academic community to express spiritual practices or reflections in academic life.                | 4.28 | 0.69 | Very high |
| Pawongan    | 1. In academic activities, I perceive mutual respect among lecturers, staff, and students.                                                         | 4.28 | 0.64 | Very high |
|             | 2. In this campus environment, lecturers and staff assist one another when facing difficulties in academic work.                                   | 4.39 | 0.65 | Very high |
|             | 3. Differences in perspectives, backgrounds, and identities within the academic community are valued on campus.                                    | 4.18 | 0.66 | High      |
|             | 4. I feel I have a strong, supportive relationship with the academic community at this institution.                                                | 4.39 | 0.65 | Very high |
| Palemahan   | 1. In daily campus activities, I use resources such as electricity, water, and paper more wisely.                                                  | 4.47 | 0.60 | Very high |
|             | 2. The campus encourages the academic community to participate in environmental preservation activities.                                           | 4.27 | 0.67 | Very high |
|             | 3. The academic community on this campus shares a collective concern for maintaining the cleanliness and sustainability of the campus environment. | 4.44 | 0.61 | Very high |
|             | 4. The physical campus environment reflects efforts to maintain cleanliness, greenery, and balance with nature.                                    | 4.45 | 0.58 | Very high |

Table 2 illustrates that almost all indicators have average values in the very high category. Scores are interpreted as follows: 1.00-1.80 (very low), 1.81-2.60 (low), 2.61-3.40 (moderate), 3.41-4.20 (high), and 4.21-5.00 (very high). The indicator with the highest average score is the first indicator in the Palemahan dimension with a score of 4.47. This indicator relates to the wise use of resources in campus activities. Meanwhile, the lowest average score is the third indicator in the Pawongan dimension with a score of 4.18, which relates to respect

for diversity of views in the academic community. Furthermore, a comprehensive overview of the implementation of the THK dimension is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the Tri Hita Karana dimensions

| Dimension   | Mean | SD   | Min  | Max  | Category  |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|-----------|
| Parahyangan | 4.34 | 0.58 | 2.75 | 5.00 | Very high |
| Pawongan    | 4.31 | 0.57 | 2.25 | 5.00 | Very high |
| Palemahan   | 4.41 | 0.54 | 3.00 | 5.00 | Very high |

Table 3 shows that all THK dimensions are in the very high category. The Palemahan dimension has the highest average score, with a mean of 4.41, indicating that the harmony between humans and the campus environment is perceived as very strong. Environmental awareness is an important part of campus life. The Parahyangan dimension ranks second with an average score of 4.34. This finding shows that spiritual and ethical values play an important role in academic activities, both through participation in spiritual activities and through the integration of ethical values in the implementation of academic tasks. Furthermore, the Pawongan dimension has an average score of 4.31. Although slightly lower than the other two dimensions, the Palemahan dimension remains in the very high category, indicating that social relationships within the academic community are perceived to be harmonious.

## Discussion

The results indicate that lecturers have a positive perception of the implementation of Tri Hita Karana (THK) values in higher education. The high levels of perception regarding the Parahyangan, Pawongan, and Palemahan dimensions suggest that the THK philosophy is viewed as a relevant value framework in the higher education academic environment. The findings indicate that THK, from an organizational culture perspective, has gained normative legitimacy as a set of shared values accepted within the institutional environment. Subhaktiyasa et al. (2024) explain that shared values are a crucial element in shaping institutional identity and cohesion, thereby fostering a positive organizational culture. Strong values in educational organizations tend to foster a more cooperative academic environment focused on shared goals. Lecturers' positive perceptions of THK indicate that these values are not only perceived as symbols of local culture but have also become an integral part of the academic cultural identity of higher education institutions.

High levels of perceived commitment to THK do not automatically indicate that these values have been consistently internalized. Suprpto et al. (2021) emphasize that conceptual acceptance of an organizational value does not always align with its substantive implementation. This condition indicates a potential discrepancy between an institution's formal values and actual practices within the organizational context. High perception scores may also be influenced by THK's strong social and cultural legitimacy in Balinese society. Lecturers' positive perceptions may reflect normative acceptance of THK as an institutional identity, though the internalization of this value in academic practice remains to be further explored. These findings suggest that the presence of THK can serve as a substantive culture that shapes academic behavior and as an institutional symbol that strengthens the organization's cultural legitimacy.

The Parahyangan dimension relates to the harmonious relationship between humans and God. The findings reveal that lecturers have a positive perception of the application of spirituality in academic life. These findings align with Al-Thani (2025) and Subhaktiyasa, Agung, et al. (2024), who suggest that spiritual values can shape personal integrity, moral responsibility, and ethical orientation in professional activities. Spirituality is often associated with the cultivation of academic character and the strengthening of professional ethics, which can enhance performance. The role of lecturers is not restricted to the transfer of knowledge but also to serving as figures who shape students' moral and intellectual values. Therefore, spiritual values in education can provide an ethical basis for educational activities and maintain scientific integrity, academic responsibility, and a commitment to scientific truth. However, the role of spirituality remains debatable, especially in increasingly secular and pluralistic higher education institutions (Al-Thani, 2025; Donahoo, 2021; Sami et al., 2021). The integration of

spiritual values in the academic environment needs to be inclusive to avoid excluding them. The Tri Hita Karana philosophy can be understood as a relatively inclusive approach, as it considers spirituality as part of the balance of human life without imposing any particular religious practice.

The Pawongan dimension emphasizes the importance of harmonious relationships between people. The study's results show that lecturers have a positive perception of values related to social harmony in the academic environment. The findings indicate that interpersonal relationships on campus are seen as an important aspect in supporting the continuity of academic activities. Harmonious social relationships in higher education are often associated with academic collegiality as a pattern of professional cooperation, mutual respect, and commitment to academic goals (Dawson et al., 2022; Desta et al., 2023; Koskenranta et al., 2022). Furthermore, Liu & Sun (2025), McClunie-Trust et al. (2022), and Stratton-Maher et al. (2025) emphasize that a high level of collegiality can enhance research collaboration, strengthen the quality of the learning process, and create a more conducive work environment for academic development.

Positive perceptions suggest that the values of togetherness and social solidarity still play an important role in academic culture. This understanding is essential in higher education amid academic individualism, professional competition, and pressure to perform. Values that emphasize social harmony can serve as a cultural mechanism that helps maintain a balance between competition and collaboration in the academic community. However, social relationships in the academic environment do not always run ideally. Subhaktiyasa, Arisusana, et al. (2024) explain that organizational hierarchy, differences in academic interests, and administrative pressures can affect the dynamics of relationships among members of the institution. This situation suggests a potential contradiction between Pawongan's ideal values and the increasingly competitive reality of academic culture. Thus, the implementation of Pawongan cannot be limited to symbolic expressions of togetherness; it also requires institutional policies that foster a collaborative, inclusive, and participatory work culture.

The Palemahan dimension refers to the harmonious relationship between humans and the natural environment. The findings show that lecturers have a more positive perception of the importance of environmental responsibility in higher education. These results demonstrate that higher education institutions are aware of their role as social agents with a responsibility for environmental sustainability. The issue of sustainability has become an important agenda in the development of higher education in various countries through the integration of strategic plans and governance policies (Budihardjo et al., 2021; Kohl et al., 2021). The concept of a sustainable campus emphasizes that higher education institutions play a strategic role in fostering environmental consciousness in future generations, a value strongly relevant to Palemahan within the THK philosophy. Therefore, integrating Palemahan values into higher education policy can be a cultural approach to strengthening higher education institutions' commitment to environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, this issue requires encouragement at the policy level and institutional symbols to ensure that it is reflected in organizational behavior and becomes an enacted culture. The embodiment of Palemahan values requires transforming organizational culture toward ecological awareness.

Lecturers' positive perceptions of the three dimensions of THK are seen as complementary elements. Parahyangan emphasizes the spiritual dimension, Pawongan emphasizes social relationships, while Palemahan emphasizes environmental responsibility. The integration of these three dimensions reflects a holistic approach as three paths to happiness in the complexity of higher education dynamics. The education system should not only focus on developing intellectual competencies, but also on shaping moral values, social responsibility, and environmental awareness (Chen et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022; Yuan et al., 2021). Subhaktiyasa, Sintari, et al. (2024) confirm the role of THK as an organizational culture for the sustainability of higher education institutions in the era of Society 5.0. However, this study also demonstrates that THK's role in modern higher education cannot be reduced to a purely harmonious cultural value. The modernization of higher education—which is becoming increasingly competitive, managerialistic, and focused on institutional performance—has the potential to create tension with local values. THK can be considered a

form of indigenous organizational culture that offers an alternative approach to an academic culture that tends to be individualistic and performance-oriented. The research findings reinforce the understanding that THK, as local wisdom, can serve as a relevant organizational cultural framework for the development of higher education that is more humanistic, inclusive, and sustainable.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze lecturers' perceptions regarding the internalization of Tri Hita Karana (THK) values within the academic culture of higher education institutions. The findings indicate that faculty members view THK values positively. It confirms that this philosophy has gained legitimacy as a shared value framework within the academic environment. These results reinforce the view that local wisdom functions as a cultural symbol and can serve as an organizational culture that shapes academic life in higher education institutions. Lecturers perceive THK values as part of the construction and reproduction of academic culture that integrates spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions. Higher education leaders can utilize THK as a reference to strengthen a value-based institutional culture aligned with the purposes of contemporary higher education. However, this study has limitations related to its descriptive quantitative design, which focuses on faculty perceptions. Additionally, the study's respondents were lecturers employed at higher education institutions in Bali, so the generalizability of the findings is limited to higher education settings with different cultural backgrounds. Further research is needed to examine the impact of THK on organizational outcomes and to compare these findings across different cultural contexts.

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