

Prevalence of Academic Burnout in Higher Education Students and its Relationship with Study Habits

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the prevalence of academic burnout among higher education students and explored its relationship with study habits. A sample of 300 students completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Student Survey and the Study Habits Inventory. Results showed that 26% of students reported high burnout levels, while 47% experienced moderate burnout. A significant negative correlation was found between study habits and burnout ($r = -0.61$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that students with stronger study habits experienced lower burnout. The study highlights the importance of effective study behaviours as protective factors against burnout. Findings may inform educational policies, counselling interventions, and academic-support programmes.

Keywords: academic burnout, study habits, higher education students, prevalence, learning strategies

INTRODUCTION – BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Academic burnout has emerged as a significant mental-health and performance-related concern among higher education students worldwide. Characterised by emotional exhaustion, cynicism toward academics, and reduced academic efficacy, burnout is often a result of chronic academic stress and poor study-related behaviours. Increasing academic pressure, competitive environments, and inadequate coping strategies further contribute to the rising prevalence of academic burnout. Study habits—patterns of learning behaviours including planning, time management, and study techniques—play a decisive role in either preventing or intensifying burnout. Understanding the relationship between academic burnout and study habits is essential for developing preventive interventions and student-support policies.

Statement of the Problem

Despite increasing attention to student mental health, academic burnout continues to rise in higher education settings. Many students exhibit ineffective study habits, irregular learning patterns, and high stress levels, which may contribute to burnout. However, limited empirical studies exist that examine both the prevalence of academic burnout and its association with study habits within the local higher education context. This gap highlights the need for a focused investigation.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions

1. What is the prevalence of academic burnout among higher education students?
2. What types of study habits are most commonly observed in this population?
3. Is there a significant relationship between academic burnout and study habits?

Hypotheses

- H1:** Higher levels of academic burnout will be significantly associated with poor study habits.
H0: There is no significant relationship between academic burnout and study habits among higher education students.

Significance of the Study

This study provides valuable insights for educational institutions, counsellors, and policy makers by identifying the extent of academic burnout and highlighting the role of study habits. Findings can inform the development of student-support programmes, academic counselling frameworks, and institutional policies aimed at improving student well-being and academic performance.

Scope and Delimitations

- The study is limited to undergraduate and postgraduate students in selected higher education institutions.
- It focuses specifically on academic burnout and does not assess clinical mental-health disorders.
- Study habits considered include time management, learning strategies, concentration, and academic engagement.
- Data are based on self-reported questionnaires, which may introduce response bias.

Operational Definitions

- **Academic Burnout:** A psychological condition characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation/cynicism, and reduced academic efficacy.
- **Study Habits:** A set of behaviours and strategies that students use to plan, organise, and complete academic tasks.
- **Higher Education Students:** Individuals enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate programmes.
- **Prevalence:** The proportion of students experiencing academic burnout during the study period.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Perspective

Studies worldwide report increasing academic burnout, with estimates ranging from 20% to 60% among university students. Research highlights poor study habits, excessive academic workload, and inadequate coping skills as major predictors.

Indian Context

In India, rising academic competition and exam pressure have significantly increased burnout levels. Recent studies have found that ineffective study habits correlate strongly with academic stress and emotional exhaustion.

Relationship Between Burnout and Study Habits

Empirical findings reveal that students with strong study habits—such as effective time management, regular revision, and active learning—tend to experience lower burnout levels. Conversely, procrastination and disorganised learning are linked to higher burnout.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by **Maslach's Burnout Theory**, which includes:

1. Emotional Exhaustion
2. Depersonalisation / Cynicism
3. Reduced Professional (Academic) Efficacy Additionally, Self-Regulated Learning Theory is used to explain how study habits influence academic performance and burnout.

Identified Research Groups

- Group 1: Students with high academic burnout
- Group 2: Students with moderate academic burnout
- Group 3: Students with low academic burnout
- Group 4: Students with effective study habits
- Group 5: Students with poor study habits

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive, cross-sectional, correlational research design was used to determine the prevalence of academic burnout and its relationship with study habits.

Study Population and Sampling

- **Population:** Undergraduate and postgraduate students from selected higher education institutions.
- **Sample Size:** 300 students.
- **Sampling Technique:** Stratified random sampling based on year of study and programme.

Intervention Protocol

No intervention was applied; the study followed an observational design.

Data Collection Instruments

1. Maslach Burnout Inventory – Student Survey (MBI-SS)
2. Study Habits Inventory (SHI)
3. Demographic Data Sheet

Both instruments showed Cronbach's alpha reliability values above 0.80.

Data Collection Procedures

- Permission was obtained from institutions.
- Questionnaires were distributed physically and online.

- Instructions were provided to ensure consistent responses.
- Data were coded and entered into SPSS for analysis.

Statistical Analysis

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Prevalence, mean, SD
- **Inferential Statistics:** Pearson correlation, t-tests, ANOVA
- **Significance Level:** $p < 0.05$

RESULTS

Table 1: Prevalence of Academic Burnout (N = 300)

Burnout Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	78	26%
Moderate	141	47%
Low	81	27%

Table 2: Correlation Between Study Habits and Academic Burnout

Variable Pair	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Study Habits & Burnout	-0.61	0.001	Significant negative correlation

Key Findings

- 26% of students experienced **high** academic burnout.
- Study habits were **moderately and negatively correlated** with burnout.

DISCUSSION

Results revealed a substantial prevalence of academic burnout among higher education students, aligning with global findings. The strong negative correlation with study habits indicates that students with effective learning strategies experienced lower burnout levels.

Alignment with Existing Literature

FINDINGS

support previous studies demonstrating that burnout is influenced by academic workload, coping strategies, and study behaviours. The relationship identified mirrors the conclusions of international and Indian research.

Limitations

- Self-report bias may affect accuracy.

- Limited to selected institutions; generalisability is moderate.
- Cross-sectional design prevents causal interpretations.

CONCLUSION

The study found a high prevalence of academic burnout and confirmed a significant negative relationship with study habits. Enhancing students' study skills may help reduce burnout and improve academic performance.

Recommendations

1. Integrate study-skills training into orientation programmes.
2. Establish academic counselling and peer-mentoring systems.
3. Conduct awareness workshops on stress and time management.
4. Implement institutional policies to promote balanced workloads.

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