



**A Study on Relationship between Academic Burnout and Psychological Well-being
among University Students**

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Abstract

With increasing academic pressures, students often experience exhaustion and disengagement impacting their overall mental health. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between academic burnout and psychological well-being among university students. Understanding the relationship between these variables can help in developing better intervention strategies for students' well-being. A total of 65 university students, aged 18-25 years, participated in the study. Data was collected using standardized scales. Findings revealed a significant negative relationship between academic burnout and psychological well-being, indicating that students experiencing higher burnout reported lower well-being. The study highlights the need for support programs focusing on stress management and promoting mental well-being for students. Universities should implement burnout prevention strategies, such as counselling and time management workshops, to enhance students' mental well-being.

Keywords: *Academic burnout, psychological well-being, university students*

Introduction

“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you”

Anne Lamott.

In today's competitive world where every person is running after achieving goals set by the capitalist society, not only working professionals but also students also face burnout in their academics. Students try to keep up with curricular and co-curricular activities that often lead to stress and exhaustion. Academic burnout has emerged as a critical concern in all fields of study, highlighting need to investigate its impact on psychological well-being of students. Psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct that includes self-acceptance, autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and positive relations with others. Students with high level of psychological well-being deal better with academic pressures, maintain motivation, and sustain emotional balance. However, when students experience prolonged academic burnout, their psychological well-being tends to decline. The overwhelming demands of coursework, exams, and future career uncertainties often lead to emotional exhaustion, disengagement, and a loss of academic motivation. This not only affects their academic performance but also contributes to anxiety, stress, and a diminished sense of personal fulfilment. Understanding this dynamic relationship is crucial in designing interventions that promote students' mental health and help them develop strategies to manage academic stress effectively. By fostering an academic environment that prioritizes psychological well-being alongside performance, universities can contribute to holistic development of students, ensuring both academic success and psychological resilience.

Dhanabhakym and Sarath (2023), conducted a study to gain theoretical knowledge about psychological wellbeing and knowledge of the various studies conducted in the area of psychological wellbeing. In this study the researchers found out that psychological well-being is an important aspect of mental and emotional health that requires on-going attention and care. The components of psychological well-being include life satisfaction, positive emotions, low levels of negative emotions, autonomy, positive relationships, purpose in life, and personal growth. These components are interdependent and can impact each other, leading to improved

overall well-being. Maintaining high levels of psychological well-being is essential for leading a fulfilling life and promoting overall health and happiness.

Rehman et al. (2020), studied how role of social support and learning motivation influenced student's burnout and psychological well-being. The study was conducted with 486 participants from age group 18-35 years. The following scales were used, Maslach Burnout inventory (MBI) for college students, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), motivation strategy learning scale, and psychological well-being by Ryff. The findings of this study suggested that social support plays a significant role in the link between burnout and subjective well-being. The increase in social support at an educational institute reduces the effects of burnout and enhances psychological well-being.

Academic Burnout

Schaufeli et al. (2002) Academic burnout refers to “a psychological syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced academic efficacy, resulting from prolonged exposure to academic stress”. Salmela-Aro et al. (2009) defined Academic burnout as “a chronic study-related stress condition that manifests as exhaustion, feelings of incompetence, and withdrawal from academic work due to overwhelming demands.” Maslach and Leiter (2016) defined academic burnout “is a multidimensional construct involving physical and emotional exhaustion, detachment from studies, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment, often caused by prolonged academic pressure and workload.”

Psychological Well Being

Ryff (1989) defined psychological well-being “as a multidimensional concept that includes self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. It represents an individual's effort to achieve meaningful goals, maintain positive social connections, and adapt effectively to life challenges.”

Ryff's Six Dimensions of Psychological Well-being

- a) ***Self-Acceptance*** : A positive evaluation of oneself and one's past life.
- b) ***Positive Relations with Others*** :The ability to maintain warm and trusting relationships.
- c) ***Autonomy***: Self-determination and independence in decision-making.
- d) ***Environmental Mastery*** :The ability to effectively manage life's demands.
- e) ***Purpose in Life*** : Having meaningful goals and a sense of direction.
- f) ***Personal Growth***: A continuous process of self-improvement and realization of potential.

Diener et al. (2010) defined psychological well-being as a subjective evaluation of one's life that is categorized by affirmative emotions, engagement, and meaning. This definition encompasses a broad range of positive experiences, including happiness, satisfaction, and a sense of fulfilment." Similar to this, Seligman (2002) put out the idea of "positive psychology," which sees psychological well-being as a confluence of fulfilment and enjoyment. This definition acknowledges that happiness is characterised by positive emotions, pleasure, and a sense of meaning and purpose in life rather than just the absence of unpleasant feelings or events.

Review of Literature

Indreswari et al. (2024) conducted research to study the relationship between psychological well-being and student academic burnout. Random sampling was used to collect the data of 180 students. The researchers used two scales, namely, psychological well-being scale and Academic burnout scale. The results of the study showed that psychological well-being had a negative relationship with academic burnout.

Philip et al. (2021) conducted a study on medical students in India to assess substance use, psychological well-being, and burnout using CAGE, Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI), and the short General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). The study revealed that medical students were highly stressed when compared to their age-matched peers.

Ríos-Risquez et al. (2018) conducted longitudinal research to study the association between academic burnout and resilience and psychological well-being and their stability in nursing students. Sample size was 218 students at T1 and 113 at T2 over a gap of 18 months. Standardized scales were used to collect data. The findings of the study revealed that emotional exhaustion was the most relevant dimension of academic burnout when predicting psychological well-being in the analysed sample.

Purpose

The purpose this research is to study relationship between Academic Burnout and Psychological Well-being among university student.

Hypothesis

There will be a significant negative relationship between Academic burnout and Psychological Well-being.

Method

Sample

Data for a total number of 65 college students in the age group of 18-30 was collected from the city Chandigarh.

Measure

- ***Ryff Scale of Psychological Well-being:*** (Ryff et al., 2010). The scale consisted of 18 items. There are a total of six sub-dimensions in this scale, namely, autonomy,

environment, personal growth, positive relationship with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance.

- **Oldenburg Burnout Inventory- Student Version:** (Demerouti & Nachreiner, 1998).

The scale consisted of 16 items and has two sub-dimensions of burnout, disengagement and exhaustion. The scale was originally developed to study burnout among working professionals and later adapted to study academic burnout among students.

Procedure

The data for this study was collected using a Google Form distributed online. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were instructed to respond honestly, and there were no right or wrong answers.

Analysis of Data

Results

Table 1: Descriptives

	DISENGAGEMENT	EXHAUSTION	AUTONOMY	ENVIRONMENT	PERSONAL GROWTH	POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS	PURPOSE IN LIFE	SELF-ACCEPTANCE
N	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
Mean	20.5	20.7	14.6	13.7	15.8	12.5	13.7	14.3
Standard deviation	4.29	3.51	2.99	2.99	3.32	3.37	3.19	3.97

Table 2: *Correlation between Academic Burnout and Psychological Well Being*

	DISENGAGEMENT	EXHAUSTION	AUTONOMY	ENVIRONMENT	PERSONAL GROWTH	POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS	PURPOSE IN LIFE	SELF-ACCEPTANCE
DISENGAGEMENT	—							
EXHAUSTION	0.567***	—						
AUTONOMY	-0.091	-0.302*	—					
ENVIRONMENT	-0.326**	-0.491***	0.330**	—				
PERSONAL GROWTH	-0.192	-0.324**	0.457***	0.506***	—			
POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS	-0.195	-0.247*	-0.026	0.141	0.305*	—		
PURPOSE IN LIFE	-0.085	-0.076	0.167	0.170	0.426***	0.362**	—	
SELF-ACCEPTANCE	-0.384**	-0.321**	-0.132	0.254*	0.190	0.426***	0.215	—
Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001								

Interpretation of Results

The results show that there is a significant positive relationship between exhaustion and disengagement. ($r = 0.567$, $p < .001$). There is non-significant negative relationship between autonomy and disengagement ($r = -0.091$). And there is significant negative relationship between autonomy and exhaustion ($r = -0.302$, $p < 0.05$). There is significant negative relationship between environment and disengagement ($r = -0.326$, $p < .01$). There is significant negative relationship between environment and exhaustion ($r = -0.491$, $p < .001$). Also, there is significant positive relationship between environment and autonomy ($r = 0.330$, $p < .01$). There is non-significant negative relationship between personal growth and disengagement ($r = -0.192$). There is significant negative relationship between personal growth and exhaustion ($r = -0.324$, $p < .01$). There is significant positive relationship between personal growth and autonomy ($r = 0.457$, $p < .001$). Also, there is significant positive relationship between personal growth and environment ($r = 0.506$, $p < .001$). There is non-significant negative relationship between positive relationship with others and disengagement. ($r = -0.195$). There is significant negative relationship between positive relationship with others and exhaustion ($r = -0.247$, $p < .05$).

0.05). There is a non-significant negative relationship between positive relationship with others and autonomy ($r = -0.026$). There is non-significant positive relationship between positive relationship with others and environment ($r = 0.305$). There is a non-significant negative relationship between purpose in life and disengagement ($r = -0.085$). There is a non-significant negative relationship between purpose in life and exhaustion ($r = -0.076$). There is a non-significant positive relationship between purpose in life and autonomy ($r = 0.167$). There is significant positive relationship between purpose in life and personal growth ($r = 0.426$, $p < .001$). There is significant positive relationship between purpose in life and positive relationship with others ($r = 0.362$, $p < .01$).

There is a significant negative relationship between self-acceptance and disengagement ($r = -0.384$, $p < .01$). There is a significant negative relationship between self-acceptance and exhaustion ($r = -0.321$, $p < .01$). There is a non-significant negative relationship between self-acceptance and autonomy ($r = -0.132$). There is significant positive relationship between self-acceptance and environment ($r = 0.245$, $p < 0.05$). There is non-significant positive relationship between self-acceptance and personal growth ($r = 0.190$). There is significant positive relationship between self-acceptance and positive relationship with others ($r = 0.426$, $p < .001$). There is a non-significant relationship between self-acceptance and purpose in life ($r = 0.215$).

Discussion of Results

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of relationship between academic burnout and psychological well-being among university students of age group 18 to 30 years. The results of the present study support the hypothesis that there is a significant negative relationship between academic burnout and psychological well-being.

The present results are consistent with the findings of research conducted by Arya and Sharma (2023) on 150 students of Delhi NCR region, to examine the differences on the academic

burnout levels among the undergraduate and postgraduate university students. The researchers used Oldenburg Burnout Inventory- student version for this study. The finding of this study indicated statistically significant difference on the level of disengagement academic burnout dimension, whereas no significant difference was revealed on the level of exhaustion academic burnout dimension.

The findings of study provide insight into how different psychological well-being factors interact with the two dimensions of burnout - exhaustion and disengagement.

Exhaustion and Disengagement

A significant positive correlation between exhaustion and disengagement ($r = 0.567$, $p < .001$) suggest that individuals who experienced higher exhaustion were found to be more disengaged in their academics.

Autonomy and Burnout

The study found a significant negative relationship between autonomy and exhaustion ($r = -0.302$, $p < 0.05$) but a non-significant negative relationship between autonomy and disengagement ($r = -0.091$, $p > .05$). This suggest that individuals who experienced greater autonomy in their roles felt less exhausted, because they had more control over their academic burden. However, autonomy did not significantly predict disengagement, implying that other factors like motivation towards personal goals may play a role in whether exhaustion leads to detachment.

Environment and Burnout

The significant negative relationships between environment and both disengagement ($r = -0.326$, $p < .01$) and exhaustion ($r = -0.491$, $p < .001$) indicate that a supportive and positive environment at institutions play a crucial role in reducing burnout. When individuals feel their environment is conducive to emotional well-being, they are less likely to feel exhausted. Additionally, the significant positive relationship between environment and autonomy ($r =$

0.330, $p < .01$) suggest that a good environment fosters a sense of control and independence, which decreases the chances of burnout.

Personal Growth and Burnout

The significant negative correlation between personal growth and exhaustion ($r = -0.324$, $p < .01$) implies that individuals were consistent with their academics experienced less exhaustion. Additionally, the strong positive relationship between personal growth and autonomy ($r = 0.457$, $p < .001$) suggests that personal development is linked to a greater sense of control, which further lowers exhaustion.

Positive Relationships with others and Burnout

There was a non-significant negative correlation between positive relationships with others and disengagement ($r = -0.195$) and a significant negative relationship between positive relationships with others and exhaustion ($r = -0.247$, $p < .05$), which indicates that while strong social connections may not directly impact disengagement, they do play a role in reducing exhaustion levels. Social support is known to act as a buffer against stress and emotional exhaustion, helping individuals cope better with work demands. However, the non-significant correlation with disengagement suggests that having positive relationships alone may not necessarily increase engagement at work.

Purpose in Life and Burnout

The study found no significant relationships between purpose in life and either disengagement ($r = -0.085$) or exhaustion ($r = -0.076$). While a sense of purpose is generally considered a protective factor against burnout, the non-significant results suggest that purpose alone may not be enough to cancel out exhaustion and disengagement. However, the significant positive correlation between purpose in life and personal growth ($r = 0.426$, $p < .001$) and between purpose in life and positive relationships with others ($r = 0.362$, $p < .01$) suggests that having

a sense of purpose may indirectly support well-being by fostering connections and growth opportunities.

Self-Acceptance and Burnout

There was a significant negative correlation between self-acceptance and disengagement ($r = -0.384$, $p < .01$) and exhaustion ($r = -0.321$, $p < .01$), suggesting that individuals who had a positive self-view and accept themselves are less likely to experience burnout. Additionally, the significant positive relationship between self-acceptance and positive relationships ($r = 0.426$, $p < .001$) suggest that those who accept themselves may also have stronger social support networks, protecting themselves against burnout.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between academic burnout and psychological well-being among university students. With increasing academic pressure students often experienced exhaustion and disengagement, which impacted their psychological well-being in adverse ways. A total of 65 university students, aged 18-30 years, participated in the study. Data was collected using standardized scales. Findings revealed a significant negative relationship between academic burnout and psychological well-being, indicating that students experiencing higher burnout reported lower well-being. This suggests the need for universities to implement proactive measures, such as counselling services, stress management workshops, and peer support programs, to help students cope with academic pressure effectively. Additionally, promoting a balanced academic environment by incorporating flexible deadlines, mindfulness activities, and self-care practices can contribute to improved well-being. Educators and policymakers should focus on reducing excessive workload and fostering a supportive learning atmosphere to prevent burnout.

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