



Impact of Perfectionism and Self- Compassion on Academic Burnout among Higher Education Students

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Abstract: The present research aimed to examine the impact of perfectionism and self-compassion on academic burnout among higher education students. A total of 287 participants, aged between 18 and 44 years, took part in the study. Data were gathered using the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised, the Self-Compassion Scale, and the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory-Student Version. The study employed a correlational research design, and data analysis was conducted using JASP. The findings indicated no significant gender differences in levels of perfectionism, self-compassion, or academic burnout. Moreover, there was no significant correlation between perfectionism and self-compassion, and the relationship between perfectionism and academic burnout was weakly negative but not statistically significant. On the other hand, a significant negative correlation emerged between self-compassion and academic burnout, suggesting that higher levels of self-compassion are associated with lower levels of burnout. Regression analysis further showed that perfectionism did not significantly predict academic burnout ($b = -0.060$, $p = .310$), whereas self-compassion emerged as a significant negative predictor ($b = -0.329$, $p < .001$). These findings highlight the protective role of self-compassion in mitigating academic burnout among higher education students, while perfectionism appears to have minimal impact.

Keywords: *Perfectionism, Self-Compassion, Academic Burnout, Higher Education Students*

1. Introduction

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world by student enrollment, exceeding that of both China and the United States (Matam & Sreejith, 2023). Since independence, the country has experienced significant expansion in its higher education sector, marked by a considerable growth in universities, university-tier institutions, and various colleges. However, this rapid expansion has also led to heightened academic pressure on students (Aparajita, 2024). The pressure from societal expectations, fierce competition, and high-stakes examinations generates significant stress, which, if not properly managed, can lead to severe mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and burnout (Aparajita, 2024). According to a 2024 report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), student suicides have increased sharply over the past decade, with a 50% surge among male students and a 61% rise among female students (Anand, 2024).

In addition, existing research indicates that high perfectionism and diminished self-compassion are key factors leading to academic stress and burnout. With the increasing mental health issues among Indian university students, understanding the role of perfectionism and self-compassion in academic burnout is vital. Understanding this relationship can provide insights into stress management, resilience, and student well-being in a competitive academic environment.

1.1 *Perfectionism*

Perfectionism is characterized by self-defeating beliefs and behaviors focused on achieving excessively high and unrealistic goals, even in areas where exceptional performance is unnecessary (Kaur, 2023). Hollender (1965) identified perfectionism as a maladaptive personality trait, driven by persistent and unrealistic expectations for impeccable performance from oneself or those around them in every context (Fang & Liu, 2022). Perfectionists frequently engage in overly critical self-assessments, often overgeneralizing their failures and focusing more on them than on their successes (Kaur, 2023). Their desire to achieve perfection in all areas of life means that failure to meet these high standards can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety, and guilt (Kaur, 2023). They are usually self-critical and demand perfection in all aspects of their lives (Kaur, 2023). While researchers have identified various types of perfectionism, this paper will focus on two specific forms: adaptive, and maladaptive perfectionism (Kaur, 2023).

Adaptive perfectionism is considered a healthy form of perfectionism, where individuals derive satisfaction from their achievements through effort but are able to accept imperfections without harsh self-criticism, unlike maladaptive perfectionism (Ashby & Stoltz, 2007; Sara, 2013). According to Stoeber and Otto (2006), adaptive perfectionism is linked to positive psychological outcomes such as increased self-esteem, life satisfaction, positive emotions, emotional regulation, better academic performance, motivation, career decision-making self-efficacy, active coping, secure adult attachment, and stronger interpersonal relationships (Sara, 2013).

On the other hand, maladaptive perfectionism is characterized by extremely high personal standards and a tendency to be overly self-critical (Rice & Stuart, 2010; Sara, 2013). Maladaptive perfectionists strive to control their environment and develop negative attitudes when things don't go as planned (Ashby & Stoltz, 2007; Sara, 2013). Maladaptive perfectionism is linked to various psychological issues, including depression, anxiety, stress, eating disorders, emotional dysregulation, physical pain, insecure adult attachment, and poor academic performance (Rice & Stuart, 2010; Sara, 2013). Both types of perfectionism can influence how individuals respond to challenging situations. However, maladaptive perfectionists are more likely to withdraw or avoid situations that threaten their sense of status, self-worth, or success (Bieling et al., 2004; Sara, 2013). Kung and Chan (2014) confirmed the existence of both adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism, with maladaptive perfectionism linked to negative outcomes such as fear of mistakes and academic burnout, while adaptive perfectionism is associated with academic engagement (Fang & Liu, 2022).

1.2 Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is the practice of directing compassion toward oneself (Aydın, 2023). It entails embracing oneself, acknowledging personal shortcomings, and responding with compassion instead of engaging in severe self-judgment (Aydın, 2023). It involves acknowledging and embracing personal pain rather than avoiding or suppressing it, along with a genuine desire to comfort and heal oneself (Neff, 2017). Kristin Neff describes self-compassion as a framework made up of interconnected elements that collectively promote a compassionate approach toward oneself when dealing with personal shortcomings or life challenges (Neff, 2017). The three fundamental elements—self-kindness versus self-judgment, shared humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification—interact and mutually affect one another (Gupta, 2017; Neff, 2003 & 2009). Self-kindness, in contrast to self-judgment, represents the first core component. Self-kindness involves offering warmth, compassion, and understanding to oneself in moments of pain or failure, embodying

an attitude of self-acceptance marked by kindness and support rather than harsh criticism (Gupta, 2017; Neff, 2003). On the other hand, self-judgment is characterized by severe self-criticism and self-loathing, where individuals find it difficult to provide themselves with comfort, reassurance, or acceptance (Gupta, 2017; Neff, 2003).

The second element highlights common humanity in contrast to isolation. Common humanity refers to the understanding that personal challenges, setbacks, and disappointments are universal experiences, rather than unique or isolated events (Gupta, 2017; Neff, 2003). In contrast, isolation occurs when people perceive their struggles as unique, adopting an irrational "why me?" mindset that leads to feelings of separation and loneliness (Gupta, 2017). This disconnection intensifies distress and self-criticism. By embracing common humanity, individuals can combat isolation and develop a more compassionate and supportive attitude toward themselves and others (Gupta, 2017).

The third element entails the distinction between mindfulness and over-identification. Mindfulness involves maintaining a balanced and non-judgmental awareness of negative emotions, rather than avoiding them or becoming overwhelmed (Lathren et al., 2021). According to Neff (2003), mindfulness involves maintaining a balanced, moment-to-moment awareness, where feelings are neither over-identified nor avoided (Gupta, 2017). In contrast, over-identification with emotions or suffering intensifies negative feelings, clouds objectivity, and prevents a full awareness of the present moment. This makes it difficult to gain a deeper understanding or learn from the experience (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Gupta, 2017; Neff, 2009). Self-compassion has been found to partially mediate the relationship between self-critical perfectionism and negative outcomes such as depression and burnout, with higher levels of self-compassion associated with lower levels of these difficulties (Richardson et al., 2018).

1.3 Academic Burnout

Freudenberger (1970s) first introduced the term burnout to describe the deep fatigue and frustration felt by healthcare workers (Schaufeli, 2017). Burnout was first noted in service-based professions, including healthcare, education, social work, counselling, and law enforcement (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1996; Norez, 2017). Over time, the concept has expanded beyond occupational settings and is now also acknowledged in academic contexts among students (Bakker et al., 2002; Demerouti et al., 2001; Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996; Kaur, 2021).

Anderson and Cole (1988) stated in their study that high levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout are prevalent among students in higher education (Kaur, 2021). Furthermore, research suggests that burnout occurs more frequently in younger individuals (Maslach et al.,

1996; Maslach, 2001; Kaur, 2021). Bresó et al. (2007) highlighted that, from a psychological perspective, various student activities can be considered work (Kaur, 2021). Higher education is a demanding pursuit that involves attending lectures, taking notes, preparing and delivering presentations, participating in internships, completing assignments, engaging in workshops and conferences, and conducting research. Higher education is a demanding period for young adults, often marked by prolonged stress due to heightened academic expectations, greater financial responsibilities, and social pressures (Briggs et al., 2012; Pfund et al., 2020; Sandhu, 2024). All these factors contribute to academic burnout, which is more prevalent among students in higher education (Sandhu, 2024).

Academic burnout refers to a negative emotional, physical, and mental response to extended periods of studying, leading to exhaustion, frustration, decreased motivation, and impaired academic performance (Nair, 2022). It develops over weeks or months of engaging with the same material or working on long-term projects, as well as from continuous years of education. Unlike temporary frustration from studying for several hours or fatigue from an all-nighter, academic burnout is a persistent condition resulting from prolonged academic demands (Nair, 2022).

Academic burnout can also contribute to mental health issues. Longitudinal studies have shown that it can lead to negative psychological outcomes, including depressive symptoms, disordered eating behaviours, and suicidal thoughts (Dyrbye et al., 2008; Mazurkiewicz et al., 2012; Kristanto et al., 2016; Sandhu, 2024). It has also been shown to lead to reduced personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion, and cynicism (Liu et al., 2023). Higher academic burnout has been found to be associated with lower life satisfaction (Sun, Wang & Wu, 2022).

2. Review of Literature

Relationship Between Perfectionism, Self-Compassion, and Academic Burnout

The existing literature consistently highlights a dynamic relationship between perfectionism, self-compassion, and academic burnout among students. Aydın (2023) found a weak yet significant inverse correlation between self-compassion and burnout in Iraqi university students. Similarly, Kyeong's (2013) results from Korean cyber-university students, which showed that self-compassion moderated the relationship between academic burden and psychological health, including burnout and depression. Perfectionism—particularly its maladaptive dimensions—has consistently been identified as a risk factor for academic burnout. Reed et al. (2018) found that perfectionistic concerns were directly and

indirectly linked to academic burnout through repetitive negative thinking. Likewise, Ijaz and Khalid (2020) highlighted that the discrepancy dimension of perfectionism, along with depressive rumination and worry, positively predicted academic burnout in Pakistani university students.

Furthermore, Fisher et al. (2023) conducted a longitudinal study on accounting students in the U.S. and found that maladaptive perfectionism heightened test anxiety and contributed to academic burnout, whereas self-compassion mitigated these effects. Daniilidou (2023) also confirmed that maladaptive perfectionism was strongly associated with negative aspects of self-compassion, while adaptive perfectionism supported positive self-compassion traits. These links were particularly evident in younger adults, who showed higher levels of both adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism compared to middle-aged adults, who tended to be more self-compassionate. Raju and Sudhesh (2023) added nuance by examining how early disciplining experiences impacted perfectionism and self-compassion among Indian emerging adults. They found that punishment experiences predicted socially prescribed perfectionism, while parental warmth was a positive predictor of self-compassion. These early experiences likely shape how individuals manage academic pressures later in life.

Additionally, Şahin (2021) demonstrated that self-compassion fully mediated the relationship between maladaptive perfectionism and life satisfaction in Turkish university students, further emphasizing how perfectionistic tendencies can affect broader emotional outcomes through self-compassion.

Impact of Perfectionism and Self-Compassion on Academic Burnout

A growing body of literature has explored the significant roles that perfectionism and self-compassion play in influencing academic burnout, especially within student populations ranging from high school learners to those in higher education and professional training programs. Numerous studies highlight self-compassion as a protective factor against academic burnout. For instance, Farisandy et al. (2023) and Aydın (2023) both found that students with higher levels of self-compassion experienced lower levels of academic burnout. While Aydın (2023) reported a weak negative correlation, further regression analysis confirmed that self-compassion significantly predicted reduced burnout symptoms, emphasizing its relevance as a preventive psychological resource. Similarly, Farisandy et al. (2023), in their study among Indonesian undergraduates, observed a statistically significant negative effect of self-compassion on academic burnout, although the effect size was relatively modest.

Expanding on these findings, Pereira et al. (2022) further demonstrated the buffering power of self-compassion through mediation analysis, showing that it significantly mediated the relationship between perfectionism and burnout among Portuguese medical and dentistry students. Their findings suggest that even when perfectionistic tendencies are present, fostering self-compassion can reduce their harmful impact on student well-being.

The complexity of perfectionism itself has also been a central theme in the literature. Studies by Kaur (2021) and Karami and Hatamian (2016) differentiate between adaptive (positive) and maladaptive (negative) forms of perfectionism. Kaur found that the discrepancy dimension—indicative of maladaptive perfectionism—was positively associated with academic burnout, while the standards and order dimensions (more adaptive in nature) showed negative associations. Similarly, Karami and Hatamian (2016) observed that negative perfectionism strongly predicted burnout, whereas positive perfectionism had a protective effect.

Supporting this distinction, Behroozi et al. (2013) reported that incompatible perfectionism and perceived stress were significant predictors of burnout. Conversely, compatible perfectionism and social support were associated with reduced burnout, highlighting the importance of not only individual traits but also external resources in buffering against academic stress. Further integrating both constructs, Vazitan et al. (2023) examined self-compassion and perfectionism together in a sample of talented students. Their findings reinforced the opposing psychological impacts of these traits: self-compassion was positively associated with psychological well-being and negatively with burnout, while perfectionism exhibited the inverse pattern. This duality emphasizes the need to balance these internal dispositions for better academic adjustment.

Gender Differences in Self-Compassion, Perfectionism, and Academic Burnout

A substantial body of literature explores how gender differences manifest across self-compassion, perfectionism, and academic burnout. Beri and Kaur (2024) found no significant gender differences in academic burnout among undergraduate students from Punjab, suggesting that burnout may not always vary by gender in traditional learning environments. Similarly, Ogbueghu et al. (2019) reported no significant gender-based variations in academic burnout among Economics Education students in Nigeria. In contrast, Praveen (2022) identified that female students experienced higher levels of academic stress and burnout in online learning settings, indicating that contextual factors such as the mode of learning may amplify gender differences. Paidar et al. (2017) found that male students had higher levels of academic burnout and its components, including exhaustion, cynicism, and inadequacy.

Regarding perfectionism, Thakur et al. (2024) found that females exhibited significantly higher self-critical perfectionism, with SES also playing a contributing role. Sand et al. (2021) supported this pattern, reporting that girls showed higher scores on socially prescribed and self-oriented perfectionism than boys. Gawlik (2012) also observed that female university students had elevated levels of perfectionism, stress, and lower self-esteem compared to their male counterparts. Macsinga and Dobrița (2010) noted that men showed greater concern over mistakes, while Siegle and Schuler (2010) revealed that gender differences in perfectionism were shaped by both birth order and grade level, with girls displaying more concern with organization and mistakes.

In the domain of self-compassion, Yarnell et al. (2015) conducted a meta-analysis and found that men reported slightly higher levels of self-compassion than women, though the effect size was small. Karakasidou et al. (2020) also found higher self-compassion levels among men, especially older adults. Conversely, Perinchery (2023) found no significant gender differences in self-compassion among young adults, highlighting the possibility that these differences may diminish in certain populations or contexts.

Rationale of the study

Although perfectionism, self-compassion, and academic burnout have been studied individually, their combined impact remains unexplored, especially among Indian university students. Research in this area is largely Western-centric, and existing Indian studies have yet to examine the interaction of these variables. Even within Western studies, the focus has typically been on particular student groups rather than a diverse range of disciplines. Given their significant role in students' well-being and academic performance, this study seeks to address this gap by exploring their relationships within a unified framework. Additionally, unlike previous research limited to specific academic disciplines, this study will encompass students across different fields of higher education, offering broader insights. The findings will contribute to developing targeted interventions to strengthen academic resilience and well-being in Indian higher education.

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are:

- a) To examine the level of perfectionism, self-compassion and academic burnout in males and females studying in higher education.
- b) To explore the relationships between perfectionism, self-compassion, and academic burnout among higher education students.
- c) To assess the impact of perfectionism and self-compassion on academic burnout among students in higher education.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

The study included 287 higher education students, with an age range of 18 to 44 years and a mean age of 21.35 years ($SD = 2.84$). In terms of gender, 47% ($n = 136$) were male, while 52% ($n = 151$) were female. Regarding educational levels, most participants were undergraduate students (59%, $n = 170$), followed by postgraduate students (39%, $n = 112$), with a small proportion (1%, $n = 5$) at the doctoral level. In terms of academic disciplines, 39% ($n = 112$) were from science, 10% ($n = 30$) from commerce, and 50% ($n = 145$) from arts and humanities.

3.2 Tools used

The present study focuses on three variables: perfectionism, self-compassion, and academic burnout. To measure these variables, the following tools will be used:

Almost Perfect Scale-Revised

To measure perfectionism, the scale developed by Slaney and colleagues in 2001, known as the Almost Perfect Scale, was utilized in the study. It consists of three subscales: standards, order, and discrepancy. The Standards subscale represents the level of excellence a student strives for, while the Order subscale reflects preferences for organization and tidiness (Kaur, 2021). The Discrepancy subscale measures the perceived gap between one's actual performance and personal standards (Kaur, 2021). The APS-R includes 23 items. Its reliability is well-established, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically ranging from .85 to .92, indicating a high level of internal consistency (Slaney et al., 2001).

Self-Compassion Scale

To assess self-compassion in students, the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), created by Kristin Neff in 2003, was applied. The scale contains six subscales that measure various facets of self-compassion. The SCS comprises 26 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Almost never (1) to Almost always (5) (Neff et al., 2003). The scale has strong internal reliability, with a total Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 and subscale alphas ranging from 0.75 to 0.81. Test-retest reliability over a three-week period is also high, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93 for the total score and subscale reliability ranging from 0.80 to 0.88. The scale also demonstrates good validity (Neff et al., 2003).

Copenhagen Burnout Inventory-Student Version

Academic burnout in students was assessed using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory-Student Version (CBI-SV), a tool developed by Campos and colleagues in 2012. The scale comprises four subscales that measure different dimensions of burnout: Personal Burnout,

Studies-Related Burnout, Classmates-Related Burnout, and Teacher-Related Burnout (Campos et al, 2012). The scale demonstrated strong validity, with a content validity index averaging 0.9 and favourable face validity (Krishnappa et al., 2024). The reliability was satisfactory, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.7 to 0.8 (Krishnappa, 2024).

3.3 Procedure

For this study, a synopsis presentation was initially prepared, outlining a brief overview of the research. This was submitted to the university-assigned guide for review, and approval was obtained before proceeding further. After getting approval from the university guide, the data collection process began. The data was collected from higher education students using convenience and snowball sampling methods. Participants consent was taken while ensuring confidentiality. After the data collection, it was analyzed.

4. Results

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics*

	Age	Gender	Educational Level	Academic Discipline
Sample	287	287	287	287
Mean	21.359	1.526	1.425	2.115
Std. Deviation	2.841	0.500	0.529	0.941

(Note. n=287. The table shows the mean and standard deviation of age, gender, educational level, and academic discipline of all the participants).

Table 2: *Statistical Details of the sample*

	Perfectionism		Self-Compassion		Academic Burnout	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sample	136	151	136	151	136	151
Mean	36.868	37.298	3.006	3.054	50.375	49.139
Std. Deviation	7.245	7.041	0.383	0.500	18.471	17.118

(Note. n=287. The table shows the level of perfectionism, self-compassion, and academic burnout in males and females studying in higher education).

Table 3: T-test Table

		t		df		p	
Perfectionism		-0.510		285		0.610	
Self-Compassion		-0.889		285		0.375	^a
Academic Burnout		0.588		285		0.557	

Note. Student's t-test

^a Brown-Forsythe test is significant ($p < .05$)

($n=287$. The table shows the t-test scores which was performed to assess the difference between the level of perfectionism, self-compassion, and academic burnout in males and females studying in higher education).

Table 4: Correlation Table

			Pearson	
			r	p
Perfectionism	-	Self-Compassion	0.010	0.862
Perfectionism	-	Academic Burnout	-0.060	0.310
Self-Compassion	-	Academic Burnout	-0.329***	<.001

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

(Note. $n=287$. The table shows Pearson's correlation between Perfectionism, Self-Compassion, and Academic Burnout).

Table 5: Regression Table

					95% C.I	
Predictors	R²	F	b-value	p-value	Lower	Upper
Perfectionism	0.004	1.033	-0.060	0.310	-0.439	0.140
Self-Compassion	0.108	34.605	-0.329	<.001	-17.380	-8.665

(Note. $n=287$. The table shows perfectionism and self-compassion as a predictor of academic burnout).

5. Discussion

In India, education is often seen as a crucial path to success, which places significant academic pressure on students to perform well. The intense competition, societal expectations, and high-stakes examinations contribute to significant academic stress (Aparajita, 2024). Excessive academic demands and societal expectations can contribute to academic burnout among students. In addition to the external pressures, certain psychological factors also play a role in burnout. Perfectionism and low self-compassion are two such factors. While extensive research has been conducted on these variables in Western and other Asian contexts, the Indian academic environment remains underexplored. Therefore, the current study seeks to explore the impact of perfectionism and self-compassion on academic burnout among higher education students.

The first objective the study was to assess the levels of perfectionism, self-compassion and academic burnout in males and females studying in higher education. An independent samples t-test was conducted to assess this objective, and the results indicated no statistically significant differences across these three variables. The t-test results showed no significant difference in perfectionism scores between male ($M = 36$, $SD = 7.24$) and female students ($M = 37$, $SD = 7.04$), $t(285) = -0.50$, $p = .61$. This indicates that both genders in the current sample reported similar levels of perfectionistic traits.

Although previous literature offers varied perspectives—such as Gawlik (2012), who reported higher perfectionism among women, and Thakur et al. (2024), who found that females demonstrated more self-critical perfectionism—our data did not reflect a significant gender gap. However, it is consistent with the results of Sand et al. (2021), who found minimal gender-based variations in levels of perfectionism. Some earlier studies have pointed out subtle gendered patterns in perfectionism. For instance, Siegle and Schuler (2010) suggested that gender differences in perfectionism may depend on contextual factors like birth order or grade level. While Macsinga and Dobrița (2010) found men to be more concerned about mistakes, our study did not find such distinctions between male and female students.

The t-test results revealed no significant difference in self-compassion scores between males ($M = 3$, $SD = 0.30$) and females ($M = 3$, $SD = 0.50$), $t(285) = -0.88$, $p = .37$, indicating that both genders reported almost similar levels of self-compassion. These findings align with Perinchery (2023), who reported no significant gender differences in self-compassion among young adults. Likewise, Muris et al. (2015) reported no notable gender differences in self-compassion among adolescents in the Netherlands. In contrast, Yarnell et al. (2015) noted

that men reported slightly higher levels of self-compassion than women, although the effect size was small. Karakasidou et al. (2020) similarly found higher levels of self-compassion among men, particularly in older adults. These differences highlight that gender-based variations in self-compassion may vary across different populations or age groups.

The results indicated no significant gender differences in academic burnout, with males ($M = 50$, $SD = 18.47$) and females ($M = 49$, $SD = 17.81$) showing comparable levels, $t(285) = 0.50$, $p = .55$. This suggests that males and females in the present sample experienced comparable levels of academic burnout. These findings are consistent with those of Beri and Kaur (2024), who also observed no significant gender differences in academic burnout among undergraduate students in Punjab, suggesting that gender may not be a distinguishing factor in burnout levels within conventional educational settings. Similarly, Ogbueghu et al. (2019) reported no notable gender-related differences in burnout among Economics Education students in Nigeria. Conversely, these results diverge from Praveen (2022), who found that female students experienced greater academic stress and burnout compared to males. Likewise, Paidar et al. (2017) reported that male students showed higher levels of academic burnout.

For the second objective which was to explore the relationships among perfectionism, self-compassion, and academic burnout, Pearson's correlation analysis was performed. As presented in Table 4, the results revealed no significant correlation between perfectionism and self-compassion ($r = 0.010$, $p = .862$), suggesting that higher levels of perfectionism do not correspond with either higher or lower levels of self-compassion among higher education students.

This finding contrasts with the results reported by Raju and Sudhesh (2023), who found a positive relationship between perfectionism and self-compassion among emerging adults in India. It also differs from Şahin (2021), who reported that individuals with higher levels of maladaptive perfectionism tended to exhibit lower self-compassion, which was further associated with reduced life satisfaction. However, the present findings are somewhat in line with the observations of Vazitan et al. (2023), who described a complex and context-dependent interaction between the two constructs—where self-compassion was positively associated with psychological well-being, and perfectionism showed a no link. Likewise, Daniilidou (2023) reported that maladaptive perfectionism was associated with lower levels of positive self-compassion traits, which contrasts with the present study's findings.

In this study, perfectionism and academic burnout demonstrated a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.060$, $p = .310$), which was not statistically significant, indicating that perfectionism did not meaningfully relate to academic burnout in this sample. This finding differs from the results of several previous studies. For instance, Kaur (2021) reported that specific dimensions of perfectionism had distinct relationships with academic burnout—while perfectionistic concerns were positively associated with burnout, perfectionistic standards and order were negatively associated. Similarly, Reed et al. (2018) found that perfectionistic concerns had both direct and indirect links to academic burnout. Ijaz and Khalid (2020) also reported a positive relationship between perfectionism (particularly the discrepancy dimension), depressive rumination, worry, and academic burnout, highlighting a more maladaptive pathway. Moreover, Karami and Hatamian (2016) discovered that positive perfectionism was a negative predictor of academic burnout, while negative perfectionism showed a significant positive association with burnout.

However, self-compassion was found to have a meaningful negative association with academic burnout ($r = -0.329$, $p < .001$), indicating that students with higher self-compassion tend to experience lower levels of academic burnout. This finding is consistent with prior researches. For instance, Farisandy et al. (2023) also reported that self-compassion had a significant negative impact on academic burnout among Indonesian undergraduate students. Similarly, Vazitan et al. (2023) observed that self-compassion was positively associated with psychological well-being and inversely related to academic burnout, reinforcing the protective role of self-compassion in academic settings. Although Aydın (2023) also examined this relationship among university students in Iraq, the correlation observed in that study was weaker than in the current sample, suggesting possible contextual differences.

Additionally, Fisher et al. (2023) found that self-compassion helped reduce test anxiety and maladaptive perfectionism, which subsequently contributed to lower burnout levels. Together, these studies support the current findings, highlighting self-compassion as a valuable psychological resource in buffering against academic burnout. Overall, the findings suggest that while perfectionism did not display a significant association with self-compassion or academic burnout in this study, previous research has reported mixed results.

To evaluate the third objective, which focused on understanding the impact of perfectionism and self-compassion on academic burnout, a regression analysis was carried out (see Table 5). The results showed that the model accounted for 10.8% of the variance in academic burnout ($R^2 = 0.108$), indicating that these two variables collectively explain a small yet significant portion of the differences in burnout

experienced by students. The F- statistic ($F=34.605, p<.001$) shows that the model is statistically significant, meaning that at least one of the predictors significantly contributes to explaining academic burnout.

Perfectionism was not a significant predictor of academic burnout ($b = -0.060, p = .310$), indicating that changes in students' perfectionism levels do not have a meaningful impact on their experience of academic burnout. The 95% confidence interval (-0.439 to 0.140) includes zero, further confirming the non-significance of this predictor. These findings suggest that perfectionism, as measured in this study, does not strongly influence burnout in higher education students. This contrasts with the findings of Karami and Hatamian (2016), who reported that positive perfectionism was negatively associated with academic burnout, while negative perfectionism significantly predicted higher levels of burnout. Similarly, Shih (2012) found that perfectionism was a significant predictor of academic burnout among high school students, indicating that perfectionistic tendencies may contribute to burnout in younger students. However, the current study's findings align with those of Ólafsdóttir (2022), who demonstrated that while the evaluative concerns dimension of perfectionism significantly predicted burnout, the striving dimension did not, highlighting the complexity of the perfectionism-burnout relationship.

In contrast, self-compassion emerged as a strong negative predictor of academic burnout ($b = -0.329, p < .001$), indicating that students with higher self-compassion tend to experience lower levels of academic burnout. The confidence interval (-17.380 to -8.665) does not include zero, reinforcing the significance of this result. The negative b-value suggests that as self-compassion increases, academic burnout decreases. Our study aligns with the research conducted by Aydın (2023), whose findings indicated that higher levels of self-compassion were a significant predictor of reduced burnout symptoms among university students in Iraq, highlighting the potential of self-compassion as a protective factor against academic stress. Farisandy et al., (2023) also reported a significant negative effect of self-compassion on academic burnout among Indonesian undergraduate students ($R^2 = 0.076, F = 38.960, p < 0.001$), demonstrating the consistent role of self-compassion in reducing burnout across different cultural contexts.

Additionally, Pereira et al. (2022) examined the protective role of self-compassion among Portuguese medical and dentistry students, finding that self-compassion served as a significant mediator between perfectionism and burnout, mitigating the negative effects of perfectionism and reducing the risk of burnout. This aligns with the findings of Kyeong (2013), who reported that self-compassion moderated the relationship between academic

burnout and psychological well-being, as well as between burnout and depression, further reinforcing its importance in academic settings.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the significant role of self-compassion in protecting students from academic burnout, offering new insights into student mental health within the higher education context. While perfectionism did not appear to be a strong influence on burnout levels, self-compassion emerged as a valuable psychological resource, suggesting that students who treat themselves with kindness and understanding are better equipped to cope with academic stress. These results point to the potential of integrating self-compassion training into student support programs and mental health interventions.

6.1 Strengths of the study

This study has several key strengths. It fills a significant research gap by examining perfectionism, self-compassion, and academic burnout among students from various academic disciplines, rather than focusing on a single field. This broader approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of these psychological traits. Additionally, while extensive research exists in Western and other Asian contexts, the Indian academic environment remains underexplored. Indian students face unique academic stressors that have received limited attention. The study also has practical implications, as severe academic burnout can lead to higher dropout rates, a reduction in skilled graduates, and increased strain on healthcare systems. Understanding the role of perfectionism and self-compassion in academic burnout can help inform interventions to support student well-being.

6.2 Limitations of the study

This study has several key limitations. First, it relies entirely on self-report measures, which may introduce biases such as social desirability or inaccuracies in how participants perceive themselves. Second, the sample was mainly from Delhi, which restricts the representation of other regions across India. Finally, the study employed a convenience method for data collection, which may limit the generalizability of the results.

6.3 Future Recommendations

Future research should consider incorporating mixed-method approaches or multi-source data collection to reduce self-report biases and gain deeper insights. Expanding the geographic scope to include participants from various states would enhance the generalizability. Ensuring a more balanced gender distribution in future samples could provide clearer insights into gender-specific patterns. Additionally, further studies should explore how cultural factors and

academic pressures unique to the Indian context shape the experiences of perfectionism, self-compassion, and burnout among students.

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