



## **ACADEMIC BURNOUT AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES, AND POTENTIAL COUNTERMEASURES**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the academic burnout among university students, analyzing its causes, effects, and potential countermeasures. Academic burnout is described as a state of emotional exhaustion, loss of interest in studies, and reduced academic engagement, often resulting from prolonged academic stress, intense workloads, and high-performance expectations. The study emphasizes that burnout develops gradually when students struggle to balance academic responsibilities with personal, social, and financial demands. The article also highlights strategies to prevent or reduce academic burnout, emphasizing interactive teaching methods, development of academic self-efficacy, and practical approaches such as time management, adequate rest, social support, coping strategies, and maintaining work-life balance.

**Keywords:** Emotional exhaustion, Student wellbeing, Academic engagement, Stress management, Sleep quality, Lifestyle habits, Socioeconomic factors, Self-efficacy, Mental health, Prevention strategies, Work-life balance, Coping strategies

### **Introduction**

Academic exhaustion, loss of interest in studying, and becoming very passive in classes are common problems among university students all over the world. The term *academic burnout* refers to exhaustion and the tendency to ignore academic tasks, often after studying intensely or taking exams under great pressure. It is indisputable that almost every student has experienced academic burnout at least once during their university life. As higher education environments become increasingly competitive and academically demanding, students often encounter



sustained psychological pressure, intense workloads, and continuous expectations for high performance. Academic burnout is now acknowledged as a major obstacle to students' wellbeing and academic success. It is commonly characterized by emotional exhaustion, feelings of detachment or cynicism toward studies, and a diminished sense of academic accomplishment. This phenomenon does not arise suddenly; rather, it develops gradually when students struggle to balance academic responsibilities with personal needs, social expectations, and, in many cases, financial or familial pressures. The prevalence of academic burnout has grown in parallel with the expansion of higher education systems, the rise of technology-mediated learning, and the increasing emphasis on productivity and achievement. Recent studies indicate that continuous experience with stressors such as exam pressure, competitive grading systems, and tightly organized courses contributes to a noticeable decline in students' motivation and engagement. Beyond its immediate impact on academic performance, burnout has broader consequences for mental health, potentially leading to anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and weakened capacity for resilience. When burnout occurs, the brain will automatically signal the pituitary gland and adrenal glands to produce cortisol and adrenal hormones which will be dangerous if excessive production continues, which are as follows:

- 1.High blood pressure
- 2.Headache or dizziness
- 3.Frequent heart palpitations
- 4.Blurred vision
- 5.Affects the menstrual cycle
- 6.The body feels painful, heavy and tired even though it has rested
- 7.Decreased immune system
- 8.Failure of oxygen distribution in blood vessels
- 9.Disorders of the gastrointestinal tract
- 10.Reproductive health disorders. (Ummu Hany Almasitoh, Japar, Nuryanti, Surjati, & Raza, 2024)

These issues, if ignored, can persist long after students leave university, affecting their future careers and overall quality of life. Developing successful prevention and intervention strategies requires an understanding of the causes and effects of academic burnout, given its complex nature. Universities, educators, and



government officials have a shared responsibility to create supportive learning environments that promote durability, healthy study habits, and psychological well-being. Building sustainable academic success and assisting students in navigating the demands of contemporary higher education require investigating the underlying causes of burnout as well as identifying workable and scientifically proven countermeasures.

### **Methods:**

Researchers used an online questionnaire distributed via respondent-driven sampling (RDS) to conduct a cross-sectional study among Heilongjiang Province university students from September to December 2021. The first step in this sampling strategy is to find a preliminary group of participants (called "seeds") who meet the study's inclusion criteria. These seeds subsequently refer peers who also meet the criteria, thus forming the first wave of the sample. The final sample becomes more representative of the larger student body as recruitment moves through successive waves, usually reaching five or six layers. The study followed a two-stage collection process. First, thirteen universities across the province were purposively selected to guarantee coverage of different institutional types and student demographics. Within each chosen university, 400 students who met the requirements for participation were invited to participate, resulting in an initial sampling frame of 26,000 students recruited across five RDS rounds. A total of 24,890 questionnaires were returned. After excluding responses of insufficient quality—such as incomplete, inconsistent, or invalid surveys—a final sample of 22,983 questionnaires was thought suitable for statistical analysis. This corresponds to an effective response rate of 88.40%, indicating a high level of participation and reliability in the data collection process. The study involved students who were currently enrolled in higher education institutions, demonstrated clear understanding of the study purpose, and voluntarily agreed to participate after being informed about the research methods. Furthermore, participants were required to be able to communicate their views logically and to have adequate knowledge regarding time, place, and personal identity. Individuals with a self-reported history of mental disorders or any form of consciousness problems were not included in order to minimize potential causes of error and boost the accuracy of responses related to academic burnout and



associated behavioral factors. (Liu et al., 2023) This experiment provides a methodologically sound analysis of burnout prevalence within a sizable and diverse university population. Their use of respondent-driven sampling (RDS) is especially notable because it improves the sample's representativeness and offers insightful information about students' experiences in various institutional contexts. Their findings are more reliable due to the large sample size and high effective response rate, which provide a solid empirical basis for comprehending the complex nature of academic burnout. Additionally, their study's inclusion and exclusion criteria guarantee that the information gathered represents real academic experiences rather than confusing psychological conditions.

### **Results:**

According to Liu et al., (2023) the study polled 22,983 college students in order to better understand academic burnout and its contributing factors. The majority of the participants were from cities, and their gender distribution was nearly equal. Approximately half were only children, and more than half were first-year students. Many students did not participate in positions of leadership, and most reported that their parents' highest education level was junior high school. Lifestyle factors differed: most had never smoked or drunk alcohol, more than half exercised weekly, yet fewer than 40% reported good sleep quality. Nearly half had a monthly budget of between 1,000 and 1,500 yuan. In terms of academic pressure, only a small number (9.5%) felt very little stress over the previous two months, while the majority experienced at least some level of stress. Similarly, only 40.2% said they were interested in their academic major, and fewer than 40% were satisfied with their study and life conditions overall. About 20.5% of students met the criteria for academic burnout, with an average score of 40.73. More than half (55.16%) showed some signs of burnout, while a small minority experienced severe or very severe burnout. The researchers discovered variations among lifestyle and demographic groups when analyzing the elements of burnout. Students who were more interested in their field of study, slept better, exercised more, or whose parents had higher education levels were more likely to feel a stronger sense of personal fulfillment and experienced lower burnout. In contrast, higher stress levels, unhealthy habits (such as smoking or



drinking), financial difficulty, and low interest in their major were linked to higher emotional exhaustion and cynicism.

Gender, academic year, parental education, monthly expenses, stress levels, interest in one's major, exercise habits, life satisfaction, and sleep quality were all found to be significant predictors of academic burnout, according to a regression analysis. In general, the results highlight that a mix of academic, psychological, and socioeconomic factors contribute to academic burnout. Stress levels, sleep quality, and academic interest all have significant impacts, demonstrating that both individual behaviors and general variables influence students' well-being. These results highlight the need for universities to adopt broad approaches that support students' mental health and academic engagement.

### **Discussion:**

The present study's findings provide important insights into the prevalence of academic burnout and the key factors associated with it among university students. Apart from Lui et al., (2023) there was other research about academic burnout in university students. The study involved 143 undergraduate nursing students and investigated how sleep quality and healthy lifestyle habits contribute to academic burnout. Most participants acknowledged poor sleep quality, and analysis of correlation showed that burnout levels elevated significantly as sleep problems got worse, particularly in areas such as individual sleep quality, difficulty sleeping, and dysfunction during the daytime. In contrast, students with healthier lifestyle practices reported lower burnout scores. Regression analysis demonstrated that specific sleep-related factors poor perceived sleep quality, frequent disturbances, and daytime sleepiness along with unhealthy lifestyle patterns, were meaningful indicators of burnout, explaining 58% of its variance. (Naderi et al., 2021). These results support previous research demonstrating that students' daily activities and overall health have a significant impact on academic burnout. This experiment supports the deeper claim that both physiological and lifestyle factors significantly influence students' academic endurance by showing that sleep quality is not only linked to burnout but also functions as a reliable indicator, much like the earlier studies you analyzed.

When it comes to possible countermeasures of academic burnout, there are numerous methods to avoid academic burnout in university life. Firstly, university



professors and lecturers can use more interactive methods in their lessons to boost students interest. By doing so, they can manage to achieve higher results in both academic sphere and students overall well-being. According to Reyes-de-Cózar et al. (2023) modifying teaching styles and identifying classroom factors that enhance engagement are of interest in this path of improvement in the teaching–learning processes in higher education. Secondly, university students need to have self-efficacy. Academic self-efficacy (ASE) is the judgment and confidence in an individual’s ability to believe that he or she can successfully complete a specific academic task at a specific stage of learning. (Schunk, 1991) Self-efficacy plays a crucial protective role in the development and progression of academic burnout among university students. According to Bandura (1977, 1997), self-efficacy refers to individuals’ beliefs in their ability to successfully perform specific tasks. Students with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to interpret academic challenges as manageable rather than threatening, which increases their resilience when facing demanding coursework. This perception reduces emotional exhaustion, a core dimension of burnout, by helping students cope more effectively with academic stressors (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Moreover, high self-efficacy promotes persistence and adaptive problem-solving, thereby decreasing feelings of reduced personal accomplishment. In contrast, students with low self-efficacy often anticipate failure, avoid academic tasks, and experience heightened stress, which accelerates burnout symptoms (Zajacova et al., 2005). Self-efficacy functions as an essential psychological resource that mitigates the negative effects of academic pressure and supports students’ motivation, emotional stability, and long-term academic well-being. Furthermore, Li, Wang, Zhang, and Chen (2023) found that students with high academic self-efficacy usually have high expectations for their performance. When they face difficult tasks, these expectations can create anxiety, which may increase their risk of academic burnout. In contrast, students with low self-efficacy already have low expectations, so anxiety does not significantly add to their burnout. Therefore, learning anxiety tends to have a greater impact on academic burnout for students with high academic self-efficacy. In order to avoid academic burnout, students can use just 5 simple strategies:

1. Time management
2. Rest and Sleep
3. Social support



4. Coping strategies (mindfulness, meditation, positive mindset...)
5. Work-life balance

In conclusion, university students frequently experience academic burnout, which has a substantial negative influence on their mental, emotional, and physical health. According to the study, academic stress, heavy workloads, lifestyle choices, and socioeconomic factors all contribute to burnout by lowering students' engagement and sense of accomplishment. The issue is made worse by poor sleep, a lack of interest in one's major, and inadequate coping mechanisms, but it is lessened by healthy behaviours, consistent exercise, and encouraging surroundings. Institutional and individual interventions, such as interactive teaching techniques, the growth of academic self-efficacy, and useful tactics like time management, relaxation, social support, and work-life balance, are necessary for effective prevention. In order to promote sustainable learning, preserve student wellbeing, and guarantee long-term academic success, academic burnout must be addressed.

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