

The Causes and Effects of Academic Burnout Among University Students

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The problem of academic burnout has become one of the most alarming ones in higher education that impacts the achievements of the studies, mental health, and life outcomes of the students in the long run. Burnout is generally described as the feeling of emotional, physical and mental depletion that occurs as a result of academic stress at length (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Although stress is inevitable in the course of university life, the level, sustained nature, and the nature of present-day academic pressures have increased the chances of burnout among students. Key contributors to academic burnout include excessive work, the need to perform, lack of emotional support and the outcomes of academic burnout including its impact on academic performance, mental health, and physical well-being.

The overworking is one of the main factors that cause academic burnout. Modern university students have a variety of obligations: they have to attend lectures, complete assignments, work in groups, study and do exams, and even take some extracurricular classes or do part-time jobs. Studies indicate that stress levels of students who are persistently overloaded with workloads that they cannot manage increases very high (Misra and Castillo, 2004). This is particularly so in competitive courses like medicine, engineering, law and sciences where course work is intensive and demands are high. Students who have workload overload tend to lose their sleep, leisure and social life, which weakens their emotional strength even more. With time, emotional exhaustion as the main symptom of burnout develops with chronic overload. The second reason is the high pressure to perform that is driven in many directions: family pressure, financial issues, the competitive university atmosphere, and social ideas concerning success. Number of students believe that the future security is related directly to the academic achievement. The education process is regarded as the main way of economic and social

improvement and social pride in certain families, particularly the collectivistic cultures (Kim and Park, 2006). This leads to the students having a fear of failure that they always carry. They can participate in perfectionist activities, excessive studying and comparing themselves with others. Research indicates that academic pressure is closely connected to burnout, and students who are pressured to achieve good grades are higher-risk of experiencing burnout attributes, including cynicism, hopelessness, and lower academic satisfaction (Rahmati, 2015). Such kind of pressure makes the process of learning a burden instead of an enjoyable one.

The other notable cause is the lack of emotional and social support. College students will go out of the house and they will be joining other known people. Life in the university may be socially overwhelming, new setting, new expectations, and inadequate guidance may drive students off. Academic difficulties that are otherwise simple can seem overwhelming when students do not have supportive relationships with friends, mentors, or family members. Emotional support serves as a protective factor to stress; otherwise students are more susceptible to burnout. In the course of a study, low perceived social support was associated with increased emotional exhaustion and academic stress among the students (Bland et al., 2012). Lack of supportive relationships would also deter students to seek help at the early stages which would enable burnout to go unnoticed. Academic burnout has multidimensional effects that in many cases are long term. The former is the initial significant impact of academic performance. Learners with burnout are unable to concentrate, remember, and be motivated. What seemed to be possible before becomes too big. They can procrastinate, miss out deadlines or skip classes. Burnout is cyclical: when performance is poor, this results in an increase in stress, which further aggravates burnout, and this further results in poor performance. A number of researchers support the claim that emotional exhaustion and cynicism are strongly predictors of poor

academic performance at a high level (May et al., 2015). Burnout also reduces creativity, the power to solve problems and desire to engage in learning, which are vital in academic development.

The second primary impact of burnout is worsening of mental health. Burnout is strongly associated with anxiety, depression, irritability, lack of interest and emotional numbness. Long emotional exhaustion may result in students becoming socially withdrawn, hopeless or having a loss of identity. When students perceive the academic difficulties as not being able to fight through them, they might engage in the depressive modes of thinking. The available studies have shown that burnout is a significant risk factor that leads to the onset of clinical depression and generalized anxiety disorders (Huang et al., 2020). Severe cases might include panic attacks, emotional breakdowns or suicidal thoughts among the students. Due to the tendency of burnout to progress over time, most students fail to notice its extent until their mental health has been seriously damaged.

Finally, there are high levels of physical effects of academic burnout. The chronic type of stress comes in the way of hormonal balance, the immune system, and sleep rhythm in the body. Insomnia, chronic fatigue, headaches, digestive problems, and depressed immunity are the most frequent symptoms of burnout among the students (Dyrbye et al., 2014). The sleep deprivation, in particular, is very devastating because it interferes with the process of consolidating memories, rationalizing and managing emotions. The low physical state at the moment is contributing to the further academic stress as an extension of the burnout cycle. The students are physically present but they are mentally absent out of the classroom because they are exhausted. To sum up, academic burnout is an increasing problem in higher learning, and it is caused by work overload, increased pressure to achieve success, and lack of emotional support. The effects

of it are far-reaching covering academic performance, mental health, and physical well-being. Burnout is a problem which should be addressed jointly: universities need to provide more favorable learning conditions, families need to support more realistic expectations, and students need to learn to study healthier and seek assistance earlier. When collaboration between institutions and individuals is aimed at eliminating the factors that triggered burnout, students would not find education an ordeal to go through, but a learning experience that would enable them to gain knowledge both personally and professionally.

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