

THE STUDY ON ACADEMIC BURNOUT AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract—Academic burnout has become a pressing concern in higher education, affecting students' well-being and academic performance. This study examined burnout among 50 undergraduate students aged 17–21 years in Chennai, India, using the Academic Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ) developed by Bresó, Salanova, and Schaufeli (2007). Data were collected via Google Forms and analyzed using independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation. Results revealed that burnout was moderate across the sample, with no statistically significant differences across gender, locality, stream of study, or year of study. Correlation analysis further confirmed that demographic variables did not influence burnout levels. These findings suggest that burnout is a universal phenomenon among undergraduates, underscoring the need for institutional-level interventions such as counseling, wellness programs, and resilience-building strategies to support student well-being.

Index Terms—Academic burnout, Undergraduate students, Emotional exhaustion, Academic efficacy, Snowball sampling, Student well-being

I. Introduction

Academic burnout has become a critical issue in higher education, reflecting the cumulative effects of academic demands, stress, and limited coping resources on student well-being. It is commonly defined as a negative emotional state characterized by exhaustion, disengagement, and reduced motivation in academic contexts (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Burnout among undergraduates has been linked to decreased academic performance, poor mental health outcomes, and reduced persistence in studies (Vizoso et al., 2019). Recent research highlights that burnout is not confined to specific groups but is increasingly widespread across student populations. For instance, Hwang and Kim (2022) noted that academic pressures and expectations from self and others are major stressors leading to burnout. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2025) demonstrated that stress directly predicts burnout, with social support and self-esteem acting as mediating factors. Studies also emphasize that unmanaged stress can result in reduced motivation, feelings of laziness, and declining academic achievement (Lyndon et al., 2017).

Given these concerns, examining burnout among undergraduates is essential for designing effective interventions. This study investigates burnout among undergraduate students aged 17–21 years in Chennai, India, using the Academic Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ) developed by Bresó, Salanova, and Schaufeli (2007). A sample of 50 students was selected through snowball sampling, covering economics and science streams, gender, locality, and year of study. By situating the findings within recent literature, the study aims

to contribute to understanding the prevalence of burnout and its relationship with demographic variables, thereby informing institutional strategies to support student well-being.

Arora (2024) investigated the role of personality traits, self-esteem, and self-efficacy in predicting burnout among Indian undergraduate students. Using the Big Five personality framework, the study found that traits such as neuroticism and low conscientiousness were strongly associated with higher burnout, while self-efficacy served as a protective factor. These results suggest that personality-sensitive interventions, such as resilience training and confidence-building workshops, may help mitigate burnout in Indian higher education contexts.

Fiorilli et al. (2022) conducted a cross-sectional study in Italy to explore gender differences in academic burnout. Results showed that female students reported higher levels of exhaustion, cognitive impairment, and emotional impairment compared to their male counterparts. Interestingly, employment status did not significantly interact with gender in predicting burnout. This underscores the need for gender-specific support strategies, particularly focusing on emotional regulation and stress management for female students.

Duraku et al. (2024) provided a global review of mental health challenges in higher education, identifying vulnerable groups such as women, minority students, and first-year undergraduates as being at greater risk of burnout, depression, and anxiety. The study highlighted barriers including stigma, limited access to counseling, and lack of institutional inclusivity. Their findings call for universities to prioritize accessibility and inclusivity in mental health services, ensuring that vulnerable populations receive adequate support.

Waterhouse and Samra (2025) reviewed coping strategies employed by students to manage burnout. They found that while individual strategies such as problem-solving, avoidance, and seeking social support were common, institutional-level interventions such as wellness days, flexible teaching methods, and structured peer support programs proved more effective in preventing burnout. This suggests that universities should integrate systemic coping resources into curricula rather than relying solely on individual self-care practices. The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To assess the level of academic burnout among undergraduate students aged 17–21 years.
2. To examine whether academic burnout differs significantly across gender, locality (urban and rural), stream of study (economics and science), and year of study (first, second, and third year).
3. To analyze the relationship between demographic variables and academic burnout scores.

II. Methodology

This study adopted a **descriptive survey design** to examine academic burnout among undergraduate students. A sample of **50 students aged 17–21 years** was obtained using the **snowball sampling technique**, ensuring representation across economics and science streams, gender, locality (urban and rural), and year of study (first, second, and third year). Data were collected through a **Google Forms**, which included the **Academic Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ)** developed by Bresó, Salanova, and Schaufeli (2007), with items 11–15 reverse scored to maintain measurement consistency. Demographic details were gathered via a structured personal data sheet. **Informed consent was obtained electronically** from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Statistical analyses were conducted using **independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation** to examine differences and associations between burnout scores and demographic variables.

III. Results and Findings

The data collected from 50 undergraduate students aged 17–21 years were analyzed using independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation. Burnout scores were calculated using the Academic Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ),

3.1 Overall Burnout Levels (Table 1: Burnout Level of the Sample)

Burnout Level	N=50	(%)
Low	15	30.0%
Moderate	21	42.0%
High	14	28.0%

From the frequency distribution, only 28.0% (N = 14) of the students scored in the high burnout category, while the majority fell into the moderate range (42.0%) and a quarter reported low burnout (30.0%). These figures indicate that although high burnout exists, it is not predominant within the sample.

3.2 Gender Differences (Table 2: Burnout and Gender)

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value
Male	29	42.62	9.500	-.302	.952
Female	21	43.43	9.114		

The result yielded a t-value of -.302 with a p-value of .952, indicating no statistically significant difference. Since the p-value exceeds the .05 threshold, This suggests that gender does not have a meaningful impact

on academic burnout in this sample, and both male and female students are similarly affected by academic stressors, regardless of their gender identity.

3.3 Locality Differences (Table 3: Burnout and Locality)

Locality	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value
Urban	29	43.34	9.045	.342	.743
Rural	21	42.43	9.734		

The computed t-value of .342 and p-value of .743 indicate that this difference is not statistically significant. This suggests that geographic background whether urban or rural does not substantially influence students' vulnerability to burnout, and both groups report similar levels of academic stress within this sample.

3.4 Stream of Study (Table 4: Burnout and Stream of Study)

Stream	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value
Economics	24	43.08	8.319	-.090	-.348
Science	26	42.85	10.205		

The calculated t-value was -.090 with a p-value of -.348, well above the significance threshold. This confirms no substantial difference in burnout levels between students of economics and science disciplines.

3.5 Year of Study (Table 5: Burnout and Year of Study)

Year of Study	N	Mean	SD	F-value	p-value
1st Year	16	14.31	9.98	.074	.929
2nd Year	18	46.06	10.40		
3rd Year	16	95.75	23.12		

The results of the one-way ANOVA reveal a highly significant difference in academic burnout scores across years of study ($F = .074$, $p = .929$). Although the mean scores show a large increase from 1st to 3rd year (14.31 → 95.75), the ANOVA result is not statistically significant, likely due to small sample sizes and high variability.

3.6 Correlation Analysis (Table 6)

Variable	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Significant?
Gender & academic burnout	0.044	0.764	No
Stream of Study & academic burnout	0.013	0.929	No
Year of Study & academic burnout	0.027	0.851	No
Locality & academic burnout	-0.049	0.734	No

Pearson correlation revealed no significant associations between demographic variables and burnout scores. Reinforcing the conclusion that burnout is a universal phenomenon among undergraduates.

3.7 Key Findings:

- Burnout levels were **moderate** across the sample.
- **No significant differences** were found across gender, locality, stream of study, or year of study.
- **No significant correlations** existed between demographic variables and burnout scores.
- Burnout appears to be a widespread issue, requiring institutional-level interventions rather than subgroup-specific strategies.

IV. Discussion

The study revealed that academic burnout among undergraduate students is present at varying levels, with most students experiencing it in the moderate range. While a portion of the sample reported high burnout, it was not the predominant outcome, suggesting that burnout is widespread but generally manageable for the majority. This aligns with earlier research (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Vizoso et al., 2019), which emphasizes that burnout is a common phenomenon in higher education, though its severity varies across individuals.

Analyses of demographic variables showed no statistically significant differences across gender, locality, stream of study, or year of study. Male and female students reported similar experiences of burnout, supporting findings by Zhang et al. (2025) that stress and coping resources are more influential predictors than gender. Likewise, urban and rural students, as well as those from economics and science streams, reported comparable burnout levels, indicating that geographic background and academic discipline do not substantially shape vulnerability to burnout.

The year of study analysis suggested apparent differences in burnout levels across academic years, but these were not statistically reliable. This outcome may be attributed to the relatively small sample size and variability within groups, which limited the ability to detect subtle patterns. Future research with larger, representative samples could clarify whether burnout intensifies as students progress through their academic journey.

Correlation analysis further reinforced the conclusion that demographic variables do not significantly influence burnout. This supports the view that burnout is a universal phenomenon among undergraduates, cutting across background characteristics. Such findings resonate with Waterhouse and Samra (2025), who argue that institutional-level interventions such as wellness programs, counseling services, and peer support networks are more effective than narrowly targeted strategies.

V. Conclusion

The findings revealed that burnout is **moderate and widespread**, with most students reporting moderate levels and a smaller proportion experiencing high burnout. Importantly, no statistically significant differences were found across gender, locality, stream of study, or year of study, and correlation analysis confirmed that demographic variables did not meaningfully influence burnout. These results suggest that burnout is a **universal phenomenon** among undergraduates, shaped more by academic pressures and coping resources than by background characteristics. While apparent differences across years of study were observed, they were not statistically reliable, likely due to the **small sample size and variability**. This highlights the need for larger, representative samples and longitudinal designs in future research to clarify patterns over time.

Despite these limitations, the study underscores the importance of addressing burnout as a systemic issue in higher education. Institutions should prioritize **broad-based interventions** including counseling services, wellness programs, peer support networks, and flexible teaching methods to strengthen resilience and promote student well-being. By tackling burnout proactively, universities can enhance both academic performance and personal development, preparing students to thrive in demanding educational environments.

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