

Test Anxiety and Competitiveness as Correlates of Academic Burnout Among University Students

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to find the relationships between test anxiety, competitiveness, and academic burnout among college students. A cross-sectional survey study was conducted with 250 undergraduate and postgraduate students from various disciplines and academic institutions. Participants filled self-report questionnaire assessing their levels of test anxiety, competitiveness, and academic burnout. Results prove that test anxiety, and competitiveness were all positively correlated with academic burnout. Specifically, higher levels of test anxiety, and competitiveness were linked with higher levels of academic burnout. These findings suggest that test anxiety, and competitiveness are significant correlates of academic burnout among university students. The results have important implications for the development of targeted interventions to prevent and treat burnout among students. In conclusion, this study contributes to the broader understanding of academic burnout and its underlying causes, highlighting the importance of psychological aspects such as test anxiety, and competitiveness in the development of academic burnout. Impending research is needed to explore the mechanisms underlying these relationships and to develop effective interventions that address these factors to prevent and treat academic burnout among university students.

Keywords: *Academic Burnout, Test Anxiety, Competitiveness*

Test anxiety is a common experience among students, characterized by feelings of apprehension, nervousness, and tension before, during, or after taking an exam (Miller 2013). Fear of negative evaluation refers to the anxiety and self-doubt that arise from the perceived threat of being judged or evaluated negatively by others (Carleton 2007). Competitiveness, in turn, refers to the tendency to compare oneself with others and to strive to outperform them, often at the expense of one's own well-being and mental health.

While each of these factors has been studied in isolation, their combined effects on academic burnout have yet to be fully explored. Understanding the relationships between these psychological factors and academic burnout is critical, as it can inform the development of targeted interventions to prevent and treat burnout among students.

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Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the relationships between test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, competitiveness, and academic burnout in university students.

Long-term stress can cause physical and emotional exhaustion, which is known as burnout (Maslach, 2009). chronic stress that has become unmanageable is typically the cause of burnout. Personal and professional performance are affected by burnout, which can occur in both the workplace and educational settings. The first use of the term "burnout" was to refer to mental exhaustion.

Extensive research has been conducted on burnout in recent decades. The idea that burnout is a psychological syndrome caused by prolonged, chronic stress emerged from this research. According to Balkis (2014), a sense of overwhelming exhaustion, cynicism, and self-efficacy constitute burnout in psychology. the experience of burnout can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction, which may prompt individuals to disengage or retreat from their surroundings.

Maslach investigated the three aspects of burnout. The stress-related aspect of burnout is represented by exhaustion. This specifically pertains to a person's feelings of exhaustion and overuse of their physical and emotional resources. The self-evaluation aspect of burnout is represented by the self-efficacy component. The feeling of failure and incompetence is referred to in this component. The interpersonal context aspect of burnout is represented by cynicism.

According to Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter (2001), It pertains to unfeeling, pessimistic, or excessively disengaged reactions towards different aspects of work. One of the most important predictors of burnout is exhaustion, which is a significant factor in this syndrome. People frequently use the term "exhaustion" when describing their own feelings of burnout. This is the aspect of burnout that has received the most research and the most coverage. According to Shirom (1989), there are those who argue that the other two factors are unnecessary due to the obvious sign of exhaustion associated with burnout. However, although exhaustion is a key element of burnout, it is insufficient as a sole predictor.

While exhaustion captures the stressful aspect of burnout, it fails to capture the essential connection individuals have to their jobs.

According to Maslach (2001), exhaustion can cause people to emotionally and cognitively withdraw from their work, presumably as a means of coping when it becomes overwhelming. Using cognitive distancing, cynicism tries to separate the recipient from the individual. Individuals may resort to a mechanism of adopting a cynical attitude of indifference when they feel discouraged or exhausted. Distancing oneself is a clear sign of exhaustion, and the literature on burnout consistently finds a strong correlation between exhaustion and cynicism.

However, self-efficacy, the third component of burnout, is somewhat more complicated than the other two. In various contexts, burnout is primarily predicted by cynicism and exhaustion, or their combination, while self-efficacy is a more challenging factor to predict.

According to Maslach (2001) the most common signs of burnout are feeling emotionally drained, overwhelmed, and unable to manage their workloads. In addition, as stress increases, individuals may experience a decline in their interest and motivation to fulfil their

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responsibilities in each role. For instance, university students face a lot of pressure, which can make stress hard to control. According to Brazeau, a significant amount of pressure can lead to student burnout. According to research (Maslach et al.,) Irrespective of the profession, the primary cause of burnout is the accumulation of work overload and a lack of control over it, leading to eventual burnout. Additionally, burnout can result in a significant drop in productivity when it comes to completing work. This is because burnout sufferers are less committed to their work.

Implications and consequences of burnout

Numerous research studies indicate that university students often encounter high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Such students are more susceptible to developing conditions like academic burnout, which can lead to various personal and social challenges. These challenges arise because students face rising academic and social expectations, including making new acquaintances, taking on new responsibilities, adapting to unfamiliar situations, and managing increasing workloads.

Academic burnout can pose significant challenges for higher education students who are preparing to enter their respective professions. Inability to overcome burnout can hinder their graduation, potentially impacting their future practice and even leading to their inability to complete their studies and enter the workforce.

According to certain authors, academic burnout is associated with lower cognitive performance, reduced academic accomplishments, and dropping out of school, as well as depressive symptoms and even suicidal thoughts in university students. Now, if burnout reduces student motivation and productivity, it has a negative impact on these students' performance. As a result, burnt-out students are more likely to exhibit rage, difficulty overcoming challenges, and sadness.

Burnout has been associated with several negative outcomes, including loneliness, depression, isolation, difficulty in socializing with peers, feelings of indifference and disconnection, as well as the pressures of academic requirements and exams. Medical students experiencing burnout have also been found to have an increased risk of alcohol and drug abuse, as well as suicidal thoughts. These issues can potentially compromise the quality of patient care and therefore need to be addressed before medical students move on to residency programs with increased responsibilities.

Test anxiety and its role in causing academic anxiety

Tests play a crucial role in various aspects of society, including education, career advancement, and placement. As a result, students' lives are significantly impacted by their test performance in a society that values them, as they are used to establish thresholds and measure success. However, the pressure to perform well on tests can lead to increased stress and anxiety among students, making test anxiety a widespread issue over time. This can be particularly challenging for students who are preparing for college admission, graduate school, or professional exams, among other factors.

An undesirable reaction to evaluation is test anxiety. According to Khosravi & Bigdeli (2008), this is the most pressing issue that students worldwide face in their education. Students who suffer from test anxiety experience extreme distress and anxiety during test situations. Students will be more motivated and able to learn if they experience some anxiety during exams. A student's academic performance will suffer because of excessive anxiety,

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not helping them perform better (Coon & Mitterer, 2009). Prior to a test, students may experience a range of symptoms including restlessness, difficulty concentrating, fatigue, tremors, muscle tension, abdominal pain, and insomnia (Porto, 2013). These symptoms can have a significant impact on students' lives and hinder their academic and professional development.

According Kahan (2008), Research has shown that both high and low levels of test anxiety can negatively impact academic performance. Students with high test anxiety may become too anxious to perform well, while those with low test anxiety may not feel motivated to prepare adequately for the test. On the other hand, students with moderate levels of test anxiety tend to perform better academically, as the optimal level of anxiety can help them stay focused and motivated to succeed. Therefore, it is important for students to learn how to manage their test anxiety and maintain a moderate level to achieve academic success.

Negative consequences of exam anxiety

Some scholars have discovered that students with high levels of test anxiety tend to put in more effort compared to those with low test anxiety. However, not all students with test anxiety exhibit strong study habits, and this can negatively affect their social, emotional, and behavioral development. Test anxiety can also cause some students to feel inadequate and even drop out of school, with research indicating that nearly 20% of students with high test anxiety leave school before graduating. Additionally, some students may even attempt suicide due to the pressure of exams. Some students may experience real issues during exams, such as blanking out, shaking, or experiencing sudden physical symptoms (Hall, 1975). This study was conducted in light of previous research on test anxiety and the current examination format.

Competitiveness

Competitions can be observed in various levels and scopes in higher education, ranging from self-competition to rank-based grading, all-versus-all or groups-versus-groups. The emergence of competition is often unintentional, but it can develop when circumstances favor it. During childhood, we were often told that hard work and determination can lead to success in any field. However, societal values have changed over time, and there appears to be a growing trend of individuals adopting a "cut-throat" approach to get ahead of others, as noted by Johnson (1997). This approach has seeped into our professional and academic settings, from middle schools to universities. In today's academic climate, many students are driven by the desire to be the best and have become increasingly competitive, leading to unforeseen ethical and moral dilemmas. Johnson (1997) highlights the struggles that universities face in dealing with the rise of academic dishonesty among students who seek to outperform their peers and achieve higher levels of recognition.

Despite these findings, however, the relationships between these factors and academic burnout remain complex and not yet fully understood. For instance, it is unclear whether the impact of these factors on academic burnout differs between undergraduate and postgraduate students, who may face different academic demands and pressures.

We plan to conduct a research study to address the gaps in the current literature on the impact of competition and test anxiety on academic burnout. The study will involve administering a series of self-report measures to undergraduate and postgraduate students from different academic institutions and disciplines. The measures will assess their levels of test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, competitiveness, and academic burnout.

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Data will be analyzed using correlation analyses to investigate the relationships between these factors and academic burnout. We will also explore potential moderating factors, such as gender, age, academic discipline, and level of study, that may impact the relationships between these factors and academic burnout.

Overall, this research aims to contribute to the broader understanding of academic burnout and its underlying causes, and to inform the development of effective interventions to prevent and treat burnout among university students. By identifying the unique contributions of test anxiety and competitiveness to academic burnout, we can develop targeted interventions that address the specific needs and challenges faced by students in higher education.

METHODOLOGY

Present study is a correlational research.

Participants

Data was collected from 220 students attending a university. Participants' ages ranged from 18- 29year old, and they all are a citizen of India. 141 participants identified themselves as female, while 79 identified themselves as male.

Instrument

To measure burnout, a quantitative instrument called "The Maslach Burnout Inventory Student Survey" was utilized, which has been validated. The survey also had the Revised Competitive Index, BFNE questionnaire, and Test Anxiety Questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was conducted on collected data and pearson correlation was used to establish relationship between variables. SPSS and excel was used.

RESULTS

The aim of the study was to investigate different dimensions of academic burnout among university students. The sample consisted of 220 individuals, with 141 females (representing 64.1% of the total) and 79 males (35.9%). The participants were selected using a convenience sampling method and their ages ranged from 18 to 32 years, with an average age of 22.27 years and a standard deviation of 2.022.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of all variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TAQ	220	10	50	27.61	8.631
RCI	220	9	45	25.18	6.255
MBI-SS	221	0	96	50.06	23.051
Valid N (listwise)	220				

Table 2: Tabular representation of correlation between TAQ and MBI-SS

		TAQ	MBI-SS
TAQ	Pearson Correlation	1	.437**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	220	220
MBI-SS	Pearson Correlation	.437**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	220	221

***Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)*

We used a statistical measure called the Pearson correlation coefficient to see how closely two variables (TAQ and MBI-SS) were related in this study. The coefficient showed that there was a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. This means that when one variable (TAQ) increased, the other variable (MBI-SS) tended to increase as well. The p-value, which tells us how likely it is that the relationship is due to chance, was very low, indicating that the relationship is real and not just a coincidence. In other words, the more anxious someone was about tests (TAQ), the more likely they were to experience burnout (MBI-SS).

Table 3: Tabular representation of Correlation between MBI-SS and RCI

		MBI-SS	RCI
MBI-SS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.055
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.419
	N	221	220
RCI	Pearson Correlation	-.055	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.419	
	N	220	220

***Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)*

The Pearson correlation coefficient calculated in the example indicates a weak negative linear relationship between MBI-SS and RCI. This suggests that as scores on MBI-SS increase (indicating higher levels of burnout), scores on RCI tend to decrease slightly (indicating lower levels of competitiveness), but this relationship is not statistically significant. The correlation coefficient between burnout and competitiveness is not significant with a p-value of 0.419. This implies that the likelihood of obtaining such a correlation coefficient by chance is relatively high. Thus, based on this analysis, it can be concluded that there is no strong association between these two variables among students.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the current research was to identify the impact of test anxiety and competitiveness on academic burnout among university students. Based on the results, there is a moderate positive correlation between test anxiety and academic burnout, indicating that as the levels of one variable increase, so do the levels of the other variable. This implies that students who experience higher levels of test anxiety may also experience higher levels of burnout, potentially negatively affecting their academic achievement.

The study also tell us that there is a weak negative relationship between competitiveness and academic burnout. the analysis implies that there is no strong relationship between burnout and competitiveness among students. It is possible that other factors may be more strongly

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associated with burnout, or that different measures of competitiveness may reveal a different relationship with burnout.

CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the correlation between various psychological factors, including test anxiety, competitiveness, academic burnout and educational level in a sample of university student. The result shows a positive relationship between test anxiety and academic burnout, indicating that students with higher anxiety level are more likely to experience burnout. However, the study found no significant relationship between competitiveness and academic burnout, indicating that competitiveness does not play a significant role in these aspects. These findings have practical implications for the development of interventions aimed at preventing and treating academic burnout among university students. Strategies that address test anxiety, and competitiveness may be effective in mitigating the risk of academic burnout.

Although this study contributes to the literature on academic burnout, it has several limitations, such as the use of self-report measures and a convenience sampling method, which may impact the generalizability of the findings. Future research should address these limitations by employing larger and more diverse samples and incorporating objective measures of academic burnout.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the importance of psychological factors in the development of academic burnout and highlights the need for interventions to prevent and treat burnout among college students.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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