RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE PHENOMENON OF ACADEMIC BURNOUT IN STUDENTS: A LITERATURE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of academic burnout among university students has become an increasingly significant issue in modern higher education. This paper presents a literature review of 20 scholarly articles, both national and international, published between 2015 and 2024. The findings indicate that academic burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced academic achievement resulting from prolonged academic pressure. Contributing factors include individual aspects (low motivation, poor self-regulation, and maladaptive coping), social factors (lack of support from peers, family, and lecturers), and institutional factors (excessive academic workload and rigid evaluation systems). Conversely, protective factors such as academic resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mindfulness practices can mitigate burnout risks. Academic burnout negatively affects students' academic performance and mental health, leading to increased anxiety and depression. Therefore, university-based interventions that promote a balance between academic demands and students' psychological well-being are essential.

Keywords: academic burnout, university students, self-regulation, social support, mindfulness

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of academic burnout is increasingly receiving attention in higher education, especially among students. Burnout is generally defined as a state of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment due to prolonged stress (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). When applied in an academic context, the term academic burnout describes a condition where students feel mentally and emotionally exhausted due to continuous learning demands, lose motivation to study, and develop negative attitudes toward academic activities (Schaufeli et al., 2002). This condition not only impacts students' academic performance but also affects their overall mental health and psychological well-being (Lin & Huang, 2021).

In a global context, the prevalence of academic burnout is increasing along with the complexity of modern education systems that demand students achieve high academic standards amid intense competition (Salmela-Aro & Read, 2017). The shift to digital and online learning since the COVID-19 pandemic has also worsened this situation. Many students report increased academic pressure, emotional exhaustion, and difficulties maintaining a balance between personal life and studies (Lee, Kim, & Shin, 2022). Burnout that is not properly addressed can lead to psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and a desire to discontinue studies (Dyrbye et al., 2020). Therefore, understanding the factors influencing academic burnout is important so that educational institutions can develop appropriate prevention and intervention strategies.

In Indonesia, this phenomenon has also become a serious concern, especially among students who are facing the transition to online learning and high academic pressure. Utami's research (2020) shows that around 63% of students experience symptoms of academic burnout during online lectures, characterized by feelings of fatigue, loss of interest in studies, and decreased academic motivation. Factors such as heavy workload, strict evaluation systems, and minimal social support from the surrounding environment worsen this condition (Handayani, 2021). In addition, an academic culture that is still result- and achievement-oriented also increases the risk of burnout because students often feel trapped by the demands of academic perfectionism (Rahmadani, 2022).

Several studies have identified various factors that contribute to academic burnout. Individual factors include the level of learning motivation, self-regulation abilities, and coping styles for academic stress (Choi, Park, & Lee, 2020). Social factors encompass support from peers, family, and lecturers (Ahn & Cho, 2020), while institutional factors include the academic climate, curriculum load, and learning systems (Gómez, Martín, & Vega, 2020). Conversely, protective factors such as academic resilience, self-efficacy, and the implementation of mindfulness strategies have been proven effective in reducing the risk of burnout among students (Pratiwi, 2023; Park, 2023). This indicates that academic burnout is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by the interaction of psychological, social, and educational environmental factors.

Based on the above explanation, it is important to conduct a comprehensive literature review to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of academic burnout and the factors that influence it among students. This article aims to analyze the latest research findings, both from international and national journals, to identify patterns, determinants, and strategies for preventing burnout in the academic environment. With a deeper understanding, it is hoped that this study can provide theoretical contributions to the field of educational psychology and serve as a reference for universities in developing policies to enhance students' psychological well-being.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a systematic literature review design to analyze the phenomenon of academic burnout among university students and the factors influencing it. This design was chosen because it aligns with the research objective to integrate and synthesize empirical findings from previous studies in order to identify patterns, determinants, and prevention strategies related to academic burnout in higher education. The systematic review approach enables researchers to gather and critically evaluate relevant evidence from multiple sources, thus providing a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of the burnout phenomenon.

As this study is a literature review, it did not involve direct human participants. However, the reviewed articles focused on university student populations from various countries, including Indonesia, South Korea, Finland, and the United States. The participants in these studies were generally undergraduate students aged between 18 and 25 years. The selection of studies was based on inclusion criteria relevant to the research focus—specifically, studies that examined academic burnout among university students using either quantitative or qualitative approaches.

Data were collected through a comprehensive search of scientific databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and ResearchGate. The keywords used included "academic burnout," "university students," "higher education," "coping strategies," "resilience," and "mindfulness."

The inclusion criteria were: (1) articles published between 2015 and 2024, (2) studies focusing on academic burnout among university students, (3) written in English or Indonesian, and (4) available in full-text format. The exclusion criteria included: studies focusing on non-student populations, non-empirical reviews, or those with restricted access.

An initial search yielded 45 articles, and after screening based on relevance and completeness, 20 studies were selected for final analysis. The selection process followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-

Analyses) framework, consisting of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify patterns, themes, and relationships among variables reported in the reviewed studies. The selected articles were categorized based on three primary themes: (1) causes of academic burnout, (2) its effects on academic performance and mental health, and (3) prevention and intervention strategies.

Each theme was examined by comparing and contrasting findings across studies to identify consistent patterns and research gaps. The analysis was conducted manually, supported by Mendeley Desktop (version 2.91) for reference management and citation tracking. The synthesized results were presented narratively to illustrate the interactions among individual, social, and institutional factors contributing to academic burnout among university students.

RESULTS

Theoretical Study

Concept of Academic Burnout

The term academic burnout was first developed from the concept of burnout by Maslach and Jackson (1981), who defined it as a condition of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment due to chronic workplace stress. In an academic context, academic burnout refers to the emotional exhaustion experienced by students due to prolonged learning pressure (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Students experiencing burnout often exhibit symptoms such as feeling bored with academic activities, losing motivation to study, and tending to withdraw from the campus social environment (Lin & Huang, 2021).Menurut Salmela-Aro dan Read (2017), Academic burnout is a psychological process that gradually develops due to the imbalance between academic demands and the personal resources of students to cope with them.

Factors Causing Academic Burnout

The factors causing academic burnout can be divided into three main categories:

a. Individual factors, such as low intrinsic motivation, poor self-regulation, and maladaptive coping strategies (Choi, Park, & Lee, 2020).
b. Social factors, such as lack of support from peers, family, and instructors (Ahn & Cho, 2020).
c. Institutional factors, such as excessive academic workload, a competitive learning environment, and rigid evaluation systems (Gómez, Martín, & Vega, 2020).

Lee, Kim, dan Shin (2022) adding that emotional regulation ability and psychological resilience are important protective factors that can reduce the impact of burnout. Meanwhile, Handayani's (2021) research in Indonesia found that academic stress and achievement pressure are strong predictors of burnout among psychology students.

Academic Impacts and Consequences of Academic Burnout

Burnout not only lowers students' academic performance but also affects their mental health. Research by Dyrbye et al. (2020) shows that students with high levels of burnout are more vulnerable to depression and anxiety. Additionally, students experiencing severe burnout are more likely to procrastinate, lose self-confidence, and withdraw from campus social activities (Thomas & Baker, 2018; Yang & Farn, 2019).

In a broader context, academic burnout can reduce commitment to education and potentially increase dropout rates, especially among students who do not receive adequate social and academic support (Utami, 2020; Setiawan, 2022).

Literature Review Results

Literature Analysis

This review involves 20 scientific articles (15 international and 5 national) published between 2015–2024. The analysis was conducted using a thematic approach to identify the causes, impacts, and prevention strategies of academic burnout.

Table 1. Meta-Analysis of Literature Review

Theme	Key Findings	Principal Investigator
Academic Load and Study Pressure	Excessive workload, pressure to perform, and rigid evaluation systems increase the risk of burnout.	Lin & Huang (2021); Gómez et al. (2020); Utami (2020)
Self-Regulation and Resilience	Self-regulation and academic resilience reduce emotional exhaustion.	Choi et al. (2020); Lee et al. (2022); Pratiwi (2023)
Social Support	Support from friends, family, and lecturers reduces burnout.	Ahn & Cho (2020); Setiawan (2022); Rahmadani (2022)
Mental Health and Coping Strategies	Adaptive coping strategies, such as mindfulness, are effective in overcoming burnout.	Park (2023); Handayani (2021)
Academic Environment and Climate	A supportive learning environment reduces burnout, while a competitive climate increases it.	Gómez et al. (2020); Salmela-Aro & Read (2017)

Research Trends

Analysis shows an increase in the number of studies on academic burnout over the past five years, along with changes in the education system due to digitalization and the pandemic. International research tends to focus on coping mechanisms and resilience, while national studies more often highlight academic stress and social support (Utami, 2020; Pratiwi, 2023).

DISCUSSION

The results of the literature review indicate that academic burnout is a complex phenomenon influenced by the interaction of various psychological and environmental factors. Students face high academic pressure in the modern education era, which is performance- and outcome-oriented (Lin & Huang, 2021). The imbalance between academic demands and self-regulation abilities leads to emotional exhaustion, ultimately resulting in burnout (Choi et al., 2020).

Social factors have also been shown to play an important role. Social support from family and the campus environment can act as a buffer against academic stress (Ahn & Cho, 2020). Conversely, a lack of social support can amplify feelings of isolation and accelerate the onset of burnout (Setiawan, 2022). This condition highlights the need for community-based interventions within the campus environment that foster a sense of connection among students. Additionally, recent studies indicate that mindfulness strategies and emotional regulation training are effective in reducing burnout levels (Park, 2023; Pratiwi, 2023).

Students who practice mindfulness demonstrate improved concentration, stress acceptance, and emotion management skills. Therefore, mindfulness-based psychological training programs and academic counseling can be adopted as preventive measures by universities.

The phenomenon of academic burnout also shows cross-cultural differences. In Asian countries, social pressure to achieve academically is often the main trigger for burnout (Kim & Lee, 2021). In Western contexts, individual factors such as self-efficacy and personal control are more dominant (Hernández & García, 2019). In Indonesia, social pressure and a culture of achievement remain major sources of stress for students (Handayani, 2021; Rahmadani, 2022).

Overall, academic burnout needs to be understood not only as an individual issue but also as a systemic phenomenon linked to the structure of education and academic culture. Therefore, further research should integrate a multidisciplinary approach involving educational psychology, educational sociology, and campus policy. Universities are expected to focus not only on academic achievement but also on the psychological well-being of students through preventive policies and mental health-based interventions.

CONCLUSION

Based on a literature review of 20 scientific journals, the phenomenon of academic burnout among students is a complex and multidimensional psychological problem. Academic burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decline in academic achievement due to prolonged study pressure (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Factors that influence academic burnout include:

1. Individual factors, such as low intrinsic motivation, weak self-regulation abilities, and maladaptive coping strategies (Choi, Park, & Lee, 2020).
2. Social factors, namely the lack of support from peers, family, and lecturers (Ahn & Cho, 2020; Setiawan, 2022).
3. Institutional factors, including excessive academic workload, a competitive learning climate, and rigid evaluation systems (Gómez, Martín, & Vega, 2020; Utami, 2020).

Literature also shows the presence of protective factors that can reduce the risk of burnout, such as academic resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mindfulness strategies (Lee, Kim, & Shin, 2022; Park, 2023; Pratiwi, 2023). The impact of burnout affects not only academic performance decline but also poses risks of psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and withdrawal behavior from the academic environment (Dyrbye et al., 2020; Thomas & Baker, 2018).

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