



Academic Burnout In High School Students: Risk And Preventive Factors

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Abstract

Academic burnout is an increasingly critical issue affecting high school students globally, with Thailand experiencing significant impacts due to its competitive educational environment. This article review examines the prevalence, contributing factors, and preventive measures for academic burnout among Thai high school students. The relentless academic pressures, cultural expectations, and limited social support systems are identified as primary drivers of burnout, manifesting as exhaustion, detachment, and a sense of ineffectiveness. The review emphasizes the importance of creating supportive environments at home and school, promoting mental health awareness, and encouraging balanced lifestyles to prevent burnout. Effective strategies, including stress management programs, fostering positive relationships, and promoting a growth mindset, are highlighted as crucial for helping students manage academic stress. The article calls for further research to develop comprehensive interventions that address both the personal and systemic factors contributing to academic burnout, ensuring that students can achieve academic success without compromising their well-being.

Keywords: Academic Burnout, High School Students, Stress Management, Mental Health in Education

Introduction

Academic burnout is becoming a pressing issue for high school students around the world, and Thailand is no exception. This condition, marked by feelings of exhaustion, detachment, and a sense of ineffectiveness, is particularly prevalent among Thai high school students who are under immense pressure to excel academically. The competitive nature of the Thai education system, along with societal expectations, places a heavy burden on these students [1,2].

In Thailand, the educational system focuses heavily on rote learning and high-stakes exams, which can create a highly stressful environment. Many students attend additional tutoring sessions and participate in extracurricular activities, leaving them with little time to rest and unwind. This relentless emphasis on academic success often leads to physical and emotional exhaustion, making it difficult for students

to stay engaged and perform well in their studies [3]. Several factors contribute to academic burnout in Thai high school students. High academic demands, lack of adequate sleep, poor coping mechanisms, and limited social support all play a role. Cultural expectations that prioritize academic achievements can add to the pressure, often sacrificing mental and physical well-being. When students feel they cannot meet these high standards, they may experience a sense of hopelessness and burnout [4,5]. Preventing academic burnout involves creating a supportive environment both at home and at school. Positive relationships with teachers, parents, and peers can provide crucial emotional and practical support, helping students manage their stress more effectively. Schools can introduce programs that promote mental health awareness, teach stress management techniques, and encourage a balanced lifestyle. Additionally, encouraging students to engage in hobbies and

extracurricular activities can provide a much-needed break from academic pressures.

Understanding the factors that lead to and help prevent academic burnout is vital for developing effective solutions. This study aims to explore the prevalence and risk factors of academic burnout among students in developing countries. By gathering data from sources like Google Scholar, PubMed, institutional repositories, Springer, PsycNET, and Wiley, The goal is to identify effective strategies to prevent and manage academic burnout in these regions. We will focus on how personal, psychological, and organizational factors influence academic burnout and develop practical recommendations to help students cope better with academic demands.

Burnout

Burnout is a syndrome characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and diminished professional efficacy resulting from prolonged work stress and ineffective coping mechanisms in adults [6]. It is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, defined by three dimensions: exhaustion, cynicism, and professional inefficacy [7]. Burnout involves feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment at work, and is regarded as a serious work-related disorder in welfare communities [8]. This psychological state is produced by work-related stresses and is characterized by low energy, negative thoughts, and a diminished sense of personal achievement, leaving individuals unhappy and dissatisfied with their outcomes [9]. Data from 183 protective service professionals demonstrated that burnout can be active, linked to organizational traits, or passive, associated with internal social psychological factors [10]. Different types of burnouts are observed in various professions, such as therapists and teachers, where it manifests as "wearout," "classic" burnout, or "underchallenged" burnout, depending on the nature of their stress and work conditions [11,12].

Factors Contributing to Burnout

Burnout is a complex issue influenced by various personal, psychological, and organizational factors. Research shows that older workers are more likely to experience burnout compared to their middle-aged colleagues, suggesting that burnout increases with age

[13]. On the other hand, younger workers, especially nurses, are more prone to feeling emotionally exhausted and detached from their work, with factors like gender, marital status, and the nature of their studies also playing a role [14]. Both age and work setting significantly predict burnout symptoms like emotional exhaustion and feeling depersonalized. Interestingly, older age and longer work hours are linked to a sense of personal accomplishment, which can affect burnout levels [15].

Psychological factors are also crucial. Burnout is closely tied to emotional intelligence, self-confidence, and the support one feels from their social circle. Younger people and those in permanent jobs are at higher risk [16]. However, having strong psychological resilience can protect against burnout, regardless of the work environment. The work environment itself plays a key role. A supportive community at work, strong social relationships, manageable workloads, employee participation in decision-making, and a culture of care and compassion are vital to preventing burnout [17]. Mental health professionals, in particular, are affected by their work settings and their sense of personal achievement. Those in demanding jobs with long hours and high stress are more prone to burnout compared to those in less stressful roles.

Burnout is influenced by a combination of age, personal resilience, and workplace environment. Understanding these factors can help create effective strategies to prevent burnout in various professional settings. In developing countries, less sophisticated human resource policies contribute to ongoing burnout struggles for both employees and HR managers. Senior managers tend to experience lower burnout levels compared to lower-level employees, highlighting cultural disparities [18]. In healthcare, emotions are "transmissible," meaning practitioners may spread feelings of burnout through imitation. This suggests that burnout is not only caused by external factors like workload but also by interpersonal dynamics [19]. Work-related anxiety further exacerbates the issue, impacting employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall mental health, and leading to serious consequences like absenteeism, family problems, and severe mental health disorders [20].

Academic burnout in Students

Academic burnout is a significant and growing concern for students in developing countries, driven by unique challenges like limited educational resources, crowded classrooms, economic hardships, and intense cultural pressures to succeed. In places like China and Kazakhstan, students experience high levels of burnout due to unsupportive school environments and the immense pressure to perform well academically [21]. Building positive relationships and fostering empathy have been shown to help reduce burnout, highlighting the importance of a supportive community in schools [22]. Unfortunately, many students struggle with poor learning foundations and low self-esteem, which only add to their stress and feelings of burnout [23].

In these developing regions, the pressure to excel is particularly intense because educational success is often seen as the key to better opportunities. However, with limited access to resources like textbooks, libraries, and technology, students are forced to work even harder, leading to exhaustion [24]. Overcrowded classrooms further complicate the situation, making it difficult for teachers to provide the individual support that students need, which can leave them feeling overwhelmed and burned out [25].

Beyond academic pressures, socio-economic challenges like poverty and unstable living conditions also weigh heavily on students, making it even harder for them to focus on their studies [26]. In many of these communities, mental health issues are stigmatized, so students often avoid seeking help, which exacerbates their stress and burnout. With limited access to counseling and mental health resources, students have few places to turn for support [27]. Cultural expectations, which place a high value on educational success as a means to improve social status, only add to the pressure [28].

Research shows that how students cope with stress plays a crucial role in preventing burnout. Optimism, emotional resilience, and a strong sense of self-efficacy—believing in one's ability to succeed—are key factors that can help students manage academic pressures and avoid burnout [29,30,31]. Providing students with the right tools and support can make a significant difference, helping them to stay resilient and thrive even in challenging academic environments.

Factors lead to academic burnout

Academic burnout is a complex issue influenced by both external and internal pressures that students face. School-related factors like the intense pressure to succeed, the quality of the teaching environment, and the dynamics of student relationships can heavily impact a student's well-being. At the same time, what happens at home—such as the style of parenting, the level of support from parents, and the family's economic situation—also plays a crucial role in whether a student experiences burnout [32].

In many low- and middle-income countries, nearly one in three university students suffers from burnout. This often shows up as emotional exhaustion, a growing sense of cynicism, and a loss of confidence in their ability to succeed [33].

Stressors like struggling with self-identity, dealing with relationship issues, worrying about the future, and handling academic pressure all contribute to the likelihood of burnout. Over the course of a semester, students often find that feelings of exhaustion and cynicism build up, making it harder to stay motivated and effective, particularly in fields like business [34].

Stress and burnout are closely connected. Stress often leads to burnout, especially when it comes from heavy workloads, high expectations, and tight deadlines. When stress becomes chronic, it drains students' energy and coping abilities, making them more vulnerable to burnout. And once burnout takes hold, it can create a vicious cycle, where the resulting stress makes it even harder to manage the pressures that students face [35,36,37,38,39,40].

Academic burnout is a growing concern among students in various Asian countries, each facing unique challenges based on their environment and support systems. In Korea, students who manage to avoid burnout—often those who feel confident and perform well academically—tend to have the highest GPAs and the most positive self-esteem. This suggests that a healthy mental state is closely tied to academic success [41].

Chinese students studying in South Korea encounter specific difficulties related to their motivation. Those who feel pressured by external expectations often struggle with their mental health and are more prone to burnout. On the other hand, students who are self-motivated, driven by their own goals and interests,

experience better overall well-being and are less likely to burn out [42].

In Taiwan, the classroom environment and peer support play a crucial role in how students cope with academic stress. When students feel that their classroom is structured and supportive, and when they can rely on their peers, they are more likely to face challenges head-on and less likely to experience burnout. This shows how important a positive educational atmosphere is for maintaining student well-being [43].

International school students across Asia are under immense pressure to succeed in a competitive global educational environment. This pressure often leads to burnout, characterized by emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion from constant academic stress. These students are pushing themselves hard to meet high expectations, which can take a significant toll on their overall health [44].

Thai students, both in high school and university, are increasingly facing the risk of academic burnout due to intense pressures and the challenges of managing heavy workloads in competitive environments. High school students, particularly those preparing for university entrance exams, report high levels of stress, often feeling overwhelmed by the demands placed on them [45,46]. This stress, if not properly managed, can easily escalate into burnout. University students also struggle with similar pressures, and their ability to cope with these challenges significantly impacts their likelihood of experiencing burnout [47,48]. Effective coping strategies, such as practical problem-solving and self-compassion, play a crucial role in mitigating stress and preventing burnout [49]. Support from parents, teachers, and the development of mental resilience are essential in helping Thai students navigate these academic pressures while maintaining their well-being. [50].

In summary, academic burnout in Asian countries is a widespread issue influenced by factors like motivation, classroom environment, and the level of support from peers and teachers. Understanding and addressing these elements can help create healthier, more supportive environments where students can thrive without burning out.

Academic Burnout Preventive factors

There are various preventive factors of academic burnout. Firstly, setting achievable goals for oneself allows one to reduce high expectations, which is one of the major risk factors for academic burnout. A method to do this is by separating massive tasks into lighter, easier-to-complete jobs that meet particular deadlines. Effective time management and taking regular pauses to pursue interests between working and studying will allow one to feel less stressed while lowering the likelihood of experiencing emotional exhaustion, known as a symptom of burnout. Finally, but not least, adopting an attitude of growth and perceiving setbacks as opportunities for progress rather than dangers to confidence will boost self-compassion. Furthermore, be patient with oneself while recognizing that errors and mistakes are a component of the academic pathway. This improves the ability of individuals to handle academic challenges and the difficulties that arise from academics.

Given these outcomes, we believe it is critical to develop effective initiatives to address academic burnout conditions. Future research should seek deeper comprehension of educational (e.g., welcome and occupational advice services) and psychological variables. [51]. Research on academic burnout has identified predicted indicators, allowing for enhanced preventative and therapy strategies. Awa et al.'s (2010) meta-analysis revealed that burnout prevention programs typically include cognitive behavioral training, counseling, communication skills, relaxation exercises, and social support skills. Effective psychoeducational programs often rely on both in-class education and personal practice, therefore even though students do not attend class regularly, their practice time utilizing the soft skills taught in class can be beneficial. Modifications to burnout prevention education emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation, a healthy desire for achievement, optimism, self-compassion, and resilience.

Universities typically manage stress through relief initiatives or facilities. As institutions shift to prevention forms of treatment, beneficial practices can be combined with existing hypothetical models of effective burnout-prevention classes or services. [52].

A few studies have examined how enthusiasm for studying influences educational engagement and wellness. The current study explored the relationships

between harmonious and obsessive excitement for learning, academic engagement, and burnout in 105 university students while adjusting for the impacts of independent and regulated motivation. Harmonious passion anticipated stronger devotion and lower dissatisfaction, obsessive passion indicated higher acceptance, and both harmonious and obsessive passion suggested increased energy and decreased failure. The results imply that a passion for studying underlies variations in students' academic engagement and burnout alongside autonomous and regulated motivation, and hence warrants further consideration from the field of educational psychology. [53].

Establishing a successful wellness program may be adequate to prevent academic burnout. We advise that all students complete a yearly long-term burnout screening to evaluate the wellness program's effectiveness and bring about adjustments as needed. [54].

Conclusion

In conclusion, academic burnout is a serious issue that many students face, particularly in Asia, where the pressures of education can be overwhelming. Burnout often manifests as exhaustion, cynicism, and a sense of ineffectiveness, resulting from prolonged stress and inadequate coping strategies. Factors like the competitive nature of school, high expectations, and personal challenges contribute to this problem. However, there are effective ways to prevent burnout. Setting realistic goals, managing time wisely, and cultivating a growth mindset can help students manage stress and avoid burnout. Self-compassion is also key—recognizing that mistakes are part of the learning process can boost resilience. Schools and universities have a crucial role to play as well. By offering programs that focus on stress management, counseling, and building emotional resilience, they can provide much-needed support. These programs should emphasize the importance of staying motivated, optimistic, and resilient. Additionally, regular wellness check-ins, such as annual burnout screenings, can help ensure that students are getting the support they need to stay healthy and balanced. Ultimately, preventing burnout requires a combination of personal strategies and strong support systems, so students can succeed without sacrificing their well-being

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