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RESEARCH PAPER

Academic Burnout, Mindfulness and Psychological Well-being in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Academic Burnout is part of student life, and it affects the psychological well-being of young adults. Mindfulness acts as a buffer against negative effect of academic burnout on young adults' psychological well-being. The present study was designed to examine the relationship between academic burnout, mindfulness, and psychological well-being in young adults. A sample of 200 students was taken from different colleges and universities of Punjab, Pakistan. Copenhagen Burnout Inventory, Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, and Psychological Well-being Scale were used as assessment measures. A correlation research design with a purposive sampling strategy has been used. Results revealed that academic burnout and mindfulness has significant positive relationship with each other. Classmate related burnout significantly predict psychological well-being in young adults and mindfulness does not mediate the relationship between academic burnout and psychological well-being. It was concluded that classmate related burnout has a great impact on psychological well-being.

Keywords: Academic Burnout, Mindfulness, Psychological Well-being

Introduction

Academic burnout has become an important point of discussion in both educational domain and in context of psychological well-being. Academic burnout often means prolonged exhaustion and apathy which reduces the academic performance of students. Burnout in college/university can be prompted by various factors, but it is usually caused by heavy workloads and prolonged periods of severe stress. Therefore, academic burnout negatively affects students' mindfulness and psychological well-being. Mindfulness is the quality or state of knowing something consciously. It also involves paying attention to a person's thoughts and feelings without believing or judging them (Zinn, 2015).

The presence of academic burnout in youth is explained by various theories. Conservation of resources theory states that people have a basic motivation to acquire, maintain and protect what they value. These things can be expressed as resources. This theory emphasizes that social support protects the individual from stress and burnout especially when the demands are intense. In particular, the abundance of social support resources presents more appropriate ways of coping with stressful situations and burnout (Salanova, et al., 2010). Demand resources model states that students are faced with too much demand in the academic environment about the lessons and studies that will affect burnout and engagement to the educational institution in the future (Wei et al., 2015). From an existential point of view, the real reason for academic burnout is that students do not find their lives and studies meaningful and functional (Garcia & Calvo, 2013).

Mindfulness is consciousness on the basis of purposefully paying attention in the present moment without any prejudice (Zinn, 2003). It is a state of keen focus on the present and is characterized by noticing an individual's feelings and thoughts without evaluating them as right or wrong. The goal of mindfulness is to cultivate an attitude toward one's consciousness and identity that promotes more mental and interpersonal peace. It can also be used in mindfulness therapies to relax and reduce pain, anxiety, burnout and tension. (Zinn, 2012)

Mindfulness trains the brain to be more efficient, more focused and less anxious. Thus, the adoption of mindfulness and meditation practices can help in combating stress and burnout as well. It means living in the present moment so all human energy is focused on it. Hence, a person can become more mindful by letting go of past and future thoughts, embracing the present, meditating or practicing mindfulness during routine activities. Therefore, it is said that mindfulness can increase productivity and relieve stress as it is a gentle effort to be aware of every moment. (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). There are various therapies comprising mindfulness. There are four main approaches of mindfulness: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).

Inter- and intraindividual degrees of positive functioning, similar to, self-referent attitudes like personal growth and self-control, and one's connections with others, are referred to as psychological well-being. Psychological well-being refers to the quality of one's life. It is a combination of feeling well and being able to operate efficiently. (Huppert, 2009). Hedonic well-being, is commonly used to describe subjective feelings of felicity. It is made up of two constituents i.e., emotional (with a high positive effect and a low negative effect) and cognitive (with a low positive effect and a high negative effect). (Carruthers & Hood, 2004).

Eudaimonic well-being, the lesser known term, refers to the goal-oriented part of psychological well-being. A psychologist, Carol Ryff, has devised a detailed model that classifies eudaimonic well-being into six different forms of psychological well-being. (Ryff, 2005). These forms are comprised of Positive interpersonal relationships, individual abilities, a feeling of purpose and value in life, personal growth and development, and autonomy, these are all components of psychological well-being.

Literature Review

Young adults experience academic burnout at multiple stages of their student's life. Some students are more susceptible to stress and experience more detrimental effects on their psychological well-being. The literature exploring the relationship between academic burnout and psychological wellbeing revealed that academic burnout has negative effect on one's health and it also has negative academic consequences (Wei et al., 2021). Mindfulness can reduce this risk to psychological health. The combination of these three variables i.e., academic burnout, mindfulness and psychological wellbeing in young adults is studied least indigenously.

In a research study by Yu and Chae (2020) the role of resilience in mediating the association between academic burnout and psychological well-being in medical students was examined. It was found that psychological well-being was negatively correlated with academic burnout and positively correlated with resilience, and academic burnout was higher in first- and second-year preclinical students than in third- and fourth-year clinical students. As a result, it was proved that academic burnout and resilience are essential elements in explaining medical students' psychological well-being. Rehman et al., (2020) explored the mediating role of social support and learning motivation in the relationship of

burnout and psychological well-being. The study's findings revealed that social support is crucial in the relationship between burnout and subjective well-being. Burnout and psychological well-being are also linked.

Xu et al. (2017) conducted research on dispositional mindfulness, negative posttraumatic beliefs and academic burnout among adolescents. It demonstrated that negative post-traumatic beliefs mediate the link between academic burnout and dispositional mindfulness. It was discovered that dispositional mindfulness can negatively predict academic burnout. Zhang et al. (2019) studied the effects of different stages of mindfulness meditation training on emotion regulation. This research showed that eight weeks of mindfulness meditation training improved the emotional state and awareness levels significantly. So, mindfulness eventually impacts psychological wellbeing. Several systematic reviews and meta-analyses have suggested that psychological well-being can be enhanced by interventions such as mindfulness training. IBMT has been shown to improve psychological well-being and appears to do so via changes in self-control that are reflected in changes in both the central (brain/mind) and the autonomic (body/physiology) nervous systems (Tang et al., 2019). Mindfulness is directly and positively related to psychological well-being in adolescents (Afrashteh & Hassani, 2022).

Hypotheses

Following hypotheses laid the foundation for this study:

- There is likely to be a significant relationship between academic burnout, mindfulness and psychological well-being in young adults.
- Academic burnout and mindfulness are likely to predict psychological wellbeing in young adults.
- Mindfulness is likely to mediate the relationship between academic burnout and psychological wellbeing.

There is research gap between academic burnout, mindfulness, and psychological wellbeing in Pakistan. Academic burnout is different here and mindfulness training are less prevalent here as people mostly don't know its importance indigenously. But mindfulness plays a significant role in predicting good psychological wellbeing and academic burnout of every student's life so in order to maintain good mental health it is necessary to take measures that can prove beneficial. The goal of this research is to assess the relationship between academic burnout, mindfulness, and psychological wellbeing in young adults. The mindfulness trainings can enhance psychological wellbeing in young generation.

Material and Methods

This section outlines the procedures that were employed to conduct this research. It includes research design, sampling strategy, and assessment measures used in the research.

Research Design

A correlational research design was used in the present study to assess the relationship between academic burnout, mindfulness, and psychological well-being in young adults.

Sample and Sample Strategy

A sample of 200 young adults was taken from different colleges and universities. Non-probability purposive sampling was utilized to recruit the sample with the following inclusion/exclusion criteria.

Inclusion Criteria

- Young adults were taken.
- Students from English medium institutions were included.

Exclusion Criteria

- Older adults were not taken.
- Private sector institutions were excluded.

Variables

The descriptive statistics of some important variables is given in table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables (N=200)

Variables	M	SD	f	%
Age (in years)				
18-20	-	-	67	33
21-23			127	64
24-25			5	2.5
Education				
Intermediate			33	16.3
Bachelors			56	27.6
Masters			110	55.7
Gender				
Male			100	50
Female			100	50
Major Areas of study				
Science			50	24.6
Arts			47	23.2
Computer/Business			86	43.8
Education			16	7.9
Marital Status				
Unmarried/Single			193	96.6
Married			5	2.5
Committed			1	0.5
Family System				
Nuclear	-	-	130	65
Joint			70	34.5
Family Background				
Urban			126	63.1
Rural			74	36.5
Sleep Duration				
6-8 hours	-	-	118	59.6
8-10 hours			71	35.0
10-12 hours			10	4.9
Internet Usage for Study				
Less than 2 hours	-	-	64	31.5
More than 2 hours			113	55.7
None			22	12.3
Library hours for Study				
Less than 2 hours			22	10.8
More than 2 hours			35	17.2
None			142	71.4
No of Friends				
More than 10			68	33.5
Less than 10			131	68.0

Note. *f*= frequency, %age= percentage

Academic Burnout

Burnout is the degree of physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion experienced by the person (Kristensen et al. 2005). It was measured on Copenhagen burnout inventory that had three subscales of burnout.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is receptive state of mind in which attention, informed by a sensitive awareness of what is occurring in the present, simply observes what is taking place (Carlson & Brown, 2005). It had been measured on six-point Likert scale by Brown & Ryan (2003).

Psychological wellbeing

Psychological well-being is a factor supporting someone's future happiness, which is stimulated by individual's learning in dealing with problem or environment (Mock et al., 2019), and affected by their experience and education (Ryff, 2014). It had been measured on scale by Ryff that measured six components of wellbeing.

Results and Discussion

The results of the current research are presented for relationship of academic burnout, mindfulness, and psychological wellbeing in young adults.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients of Study Variables

Scales	A	k	M	SD	Range	
					Potential	Actual
Academic Burnout	.91	25	69.44	17.82	125	33
Mindfulness	.84	15	55.91	13.57	90	20
Psychological Well-being	.88	42	16.99	26.37	252	80

Note: α= reliability coefficient, K= no. of items in scale and subscale

SPSS version 23 has been used to assess the reliability of the scales for academic burnout, mindfulness and psychological wellbeing. Cronbach's alpha reliability for Copenhagen burnout inventory containing 25 items was α = .91 which is quite good. Mindfulness consisted of 15 items and had a reliability value of α = .84. The psychological wellbeing scale had a reliability value of .88.

Table 3
Independent Samples T-Test Comparing Public and Private Universities of Beauty Conceptualization, Body Esteem and Instagram usage in Female University students (N=120)

Variables	Male (n=100)		Female (n= 100)		*t* (50)	*p*	Cohen`s d
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Academic Burnout	70.50	16.8	68.39	18.74	.847	.398	.11
Mindfulness	55.72	12.9	56.10	14.27	-.202	.840	.02
Psychological Wellbeing	169.32	27.3	170.52	25.50	.760	-8.47	.04

Note: CI= confidence interval, LL=lower limit, UL= upper limit, M = mean, SD = standard deviation.

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the gender difference between academic burnout, mindfulness and psychological well-being. There is nonsignificant gender difference in academic burnout, t (200) = 169.4, p = .398 (two-tailed),

in score for males (M=70.50, SD =16.8) and females (M=68.39, SD =18.74). Results also indicated that there is non-significant difference in mindfulness, t (200) = -40.4, p = .840 (two-tailed), in score for males (M=55.72, SD =12.9) and females (M=56.10, SD =14.27). Also, there is non-significant gender difference in psychological well-being, t (200) = -61.2, p = .760 (two-tailed). The effect size of academic burnout, mindfulness and psychological well-being was 0.11, 0.02 and 0.04 respectively.

Table 4
Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Study Constructs (N=200)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.Academic Burnout	_	-.310**	.039	.723**	.826**	.745**	.782**	-.093	.005	-.069	-.192**	-.083	.023
2.Mindfulness	_	_	.104	-.231**	-.244**	-.297**	-.181**	.097	.076	.202**	.192**	.165*	.104
3.Psychological Well-being	-	-	-	.015	.057	.076	-.031	.759**	.70**	.754**	.696**	.73**	.691**
4.Personal Burnout	-	-	-	-	.648**	.306**	.364**	-.161*	-.061	-.152*	-.221**	-.16*	.086
5.Studies Related Burnout	-	-	-	-	-	.042**	.505**	-.028	.034	-.012	-.102	-.016	.059
6.Classmate Related Burnout	-	-	-	-	-	-	.495**	.031	.048	.013	-.132	-.012	.104
7.Instructor Related Burnout	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.079	-.016	-.077	-.144*	-.082	-.023
8.Autonomy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.79**	.796**	.878**	.82**	.781**
9.Environment Mastery	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.741**	.757**	.70**	.890**
10.Personal Growth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.793**	.88**	.816**
11.Postive Relations With Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.79**	.764**
12.Purpose In Life	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.753**
13.Self-Acceptance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

The table 4 showed the results of Pearson product moment correlation analysis that had been used to investigate the connection among demographics and study variables. The result showed that there was significant positive correlation between psychological well-being as well as subscales personal burnout, studies related burnout, class related burnout, instructor related burnout, environment mastery and self-acceptance. And there was non-significant negative correlation between mindfulness as well as subscales autonomy, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life.

Table 5
Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Psychological Wellbeing from Academic Burnout in Young Adults (N= 200)

Variables	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	95% Cl
Constant	72.61	3.85	18.82	.000	[65.01, 80.22]
PB	-.30	.23	-.1.30	.195	[-.77, .15]
SRB	-.18	.23	-.80	.425	[-.64, .27]
CRB	-.51	.17	-2.98	.003	[-.84, -.17]
IRB	.03	.18	.20	.841	[-.32, .40]
F	6.25***				
R2	.11				

Note. PB= Personal Burnout, SRB = Studies related burnout, CRB = Classmate related burnout, IRB = Instructor related burnout, SE= Std. Error, R^2= R square; CI = confidence Interval; ***ρ<.001

Result shows whether academic burnout can predict mindfulness. We are using Barron and Kanney approach to assess mediation and it is one of the steps to check whether independent variable can predict mediator. The R^2 value of .11 indicates that predictors explained 11% variance in the outcome variable with F=6.25, p <.001. The findings revealed that only one subscale of academic burnout i.e., classmate related burnout is negative significant predictor of psychological well-being (β= -.23, p= .003). To further assess mediation, other steps from this approach are assessed via hierarchical regression.

Table 5

Variable	*B*	*95% C. I*		*SE*	*β*	R^2	ΔR^2
		LL	*UL*				
Step 1						.01	.01
(Constant)	164.73	149.17	180.28	.88			
PB	-.18	-1.14	.77	.48	-.03		
SRB	.44	-.48	1.37	.47	.09		
CRB	.44	-.24	1.13	.35	.10		
IRB	-.51	-1.26	.23	.37	-.11		
Step 2						.03	.01
(Constant)	144.27	118.43	117.11	13.10			
PB	-.09	-1.05	.85	.48	-.01		
SRB	.49	-.43	1.41	.46	.10		
CRB	.58	-.11	1.28	.35	.14		
IRB	-.52	-1.26	.21	37	-.12		
MAAS	.28	-.00	.56	.14	.14		

Note. PB= Personal Burnout, SRB = Studies related burnout, CRB = Classmate related burnout, IRB =Instructor related burnout, CI= confidence interval, LL= lower limit; UL= Upper limit; *p< .05; **p< .01; p<.001

Hierarchical regression analysis was run to see whether mindfulness can mediate the relationship between academic burnout and psychological well-being. Barron and Kanney approach was used to assess mediation. All assumptions were fulfilled. Durbin Watson value was between 1 and 3. Value of tolerance was above .2. The results of hierarchical regression analysis for mediation revealed that in Step 1, the model was nonsignificant and explained 1% variance in psychological well-being. Standardized value of beta depicted that all subscales of academic burnout i.e., personal burnout, studies related burnout, classmate related burnout, instructor related burnout were non-significant predictor of psychological well-being. In Step 2, the model was non-significant and explained 3% variance in psychological well-being which showed that all subscales of academic burnout i.e., personal burnout, studies related burnout, classmate related burnout, instructor related burnout and mindfulness did not predict psychological well-being and mindfulness did not mediate the relationship between academic burnout and psychological well-being.

Following are the major findings of the study:

- Academic burnout and mindfulness have significant positive relationship with each other.
- Classmate related burnout significantly predict psychological wellbeing in young adults.

- Mindfulness is not mediating the relationship between academic burnout and psychological wellbeing.

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the association between academic burnout, mindfulness and physiological well-being in young adults.

Previously, it was hypothesized that academic burnout and mindfulness are likely to predict psychological well-being in young adults. Also, academic burnout and mindfulness are likely to be negatively correlated with psychological well-being in young adults. However, the results are not consistent with the hypotheses. The previous works of Rehman (2020), Risquez (2018), Yu (2020), Ryan and Brown (2003), Nyklićek (2008), Carmody (2007), Laukka (2007), Moskowitz (2010) and Flinders (2008) are consistent with the hypothesis. In a study by Rehman, Bhuttah and You (2020), burnout has been linked to psychological well-being. They explored the mediating role of social support and learning motivation in the relationship between burnout and psychological well-being. The results provided a better interpretation of psychological well-being and the way of reducing burnout by showing that as the social support of educational institutions increases, the effect of burnout decreases and psychological well-being increases.

Risquez, Izquierdo, Tebar, Garcia and Ruiz (2018) investigated the connection between academic burnout, resilience and psychological well-being in nursing students. Yu and Chae (2020) also examined the mediating effect of resilience on the relationship between the academic burnout and psychological well-being of medical students. According to the results, psychological well-being of medical students was negatively correlated with their academic burnout and positively correlated with their resilience. It was also found that the significant influence of academic burnout on the psychological well-being of medical students was mediated by resilience.

A study by Brown and Ryan's (2003) revealed that mindfulness is the positive as well as negative indicator of well-being. Another study by Nyklićek (2008) showed that mindfulness is beneficial in reducing stress and stress-related problems. Another research by Carmody and Baer (2007) reveals that there is a relationship between mindfulness practices on psychological and medical symptoms of well-being and results are significant.

A study that was conducted by Laukka (2007) showed that listening to music in leisure time can evoke positive feelings and leads to well-being. In addition, a study by Moskowitz (2010) showed improvement in psychological well-being as the result of stress reduction training based on mindfulness. Research conducted by Flinders (2008) indicated that increase in mindfulness in different meditation-based practices may partly mediate benefits. But the result of this research is not consistent with the hypothesis because, firstly there are cultural differences. In foreign countries, mindfulness plays a vital role in promoting well-being and stress reduction. Mindfulness based exercises are very beneficial in reducing stress. While in Pakistan, mindfulness is not very important in promoting wellbeing.

Secondly, physical illness is an important factor that plays a major role in psychological well-being. It is revealed that more a person is physically healthy, the more they are psychologically healthy. Thirdly the people of Pakistan are not so aware of the term mindfulness and mindfulness-based practice that promotes well-being. They are not very serious about this term and also about the research.

Fourthly, there is no research conducted on these variables in conjunction in Pakistan. All the research conducted simultaneously on these variables is foreign. People in

foreign countries are much different from the people of Pakistan. This can also be a reason in inconsistent results.

Conclusion

Considering all the results, it can be concluded that although academic burnout negatively affects the mindfulness and academic performance of the students in Pakistan, but it does not have an effective impact on their psychological well-being. Thus, most of the research of these variables in Pakistan is in the favour of current findings. Even though academic burnout and mindfulness play a vital role in an individual's well-being, but it is in foreign countries and due to the cultural differences, the results of present research do not support the hypothesis

The result of the present study can be taken into consideration for the future research as academic burnout and mindfulness are statistically significant, but they do not predict psychological well-being in young adults. It is important to make public aware that although academic burnout negatively affects the mindfulness and academic performance of the students in Pakistan, but it does not have an effective impact on their psychological well-being.

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