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RESEARCH PAPER

Analyzing Gender and Location Disparities in Burnout among Secondary Students in Punjab: A Quantitative Investigation

[1]Bushra Hijazi, [2]Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal and [3]Dr. Jahan Ara Shams

1. MPhil Scholar, Department of Secondary Teacher Education, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Leadership, Plannig & Policy Studies, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor, Department of Early Childhood Education & Elementary Teacher Education, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author:** jahanarashams@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This quantitative study examines secondary students' burnout levels in Punjabi schools, highlighting variations based on gender and geography. The inquiry was directed by two main research questions: first, how much of a significant link there is between male and female students' degrees of burnout, and second, how different rural and urban students' levels of burnout in Punjab's secondary schools are examined. Different patterns of burnout were found for different genders and geographical areas. In comparison to their female peers, male students had greater levels of Cynicism (CY) and Emotional Exhaustion (EME). On the other hand, women had far more Academic Efficacy (AE) burnout. These results are consistent with the general public's opinion that female students are more conscientious and well-organized in their academic endeavours. Geographically speaking, students in rural areas demonstrated higher levels of EME and CY burnout than students in urban areas. Concerning geography, rural students showcased heightened levels of EME and CY burnout, while urban students reported elevated AE burnout. This discrepancy is attributed to better study resources and parental involvement in urban areas due to higher literacy rates. These outcomes underscore the impact of socio-environmental factors on student burnout, emphasizing disparities in educational support and resource availability between rural and urban settings. This research contributes valuable insights into understanding and addressing burnout among secondary students, aiding in the formulation of targeted interventions and support mechanisms.

Keywords: Academic Efficacy, Burnout, Cynicism, Emotional Exhaustion

Introduction

School serves as the initial institution crucial for a child's development and acts as the primary guide in their educational journey. While a certain level of stress is deemed beneficial for students to attain their objectives and cultivate motivation, it becomes problematic when the pressure becomes incessant. When education transforms into a source of burden rather than enlightenment, the issue becomes a serious cause for concern. The repercussions of school-induced burnout extend to negatively impacting overall academic performance and grades. Many students, unable to effectively manage examination pressure, either fail their exams or opt to leave educational institutions.

Public schools frequently emphasize rote memorization and the reproduction of prescribed textbook knowledge through assessments. The active involvement and interest of parents also play a crucial role in influencing a student's academic success (Barnard, 2004). The evaluation of students' academic achievement typically relies on continuous assessments or examination systems, which, unfortunately, fail to gauge the stress or burnout experienced by students.

Burnout concept in Education field as worth studying was possible due to the efforts and early works of Freudenberger (1974). Later on, students' burnout has become an increasingly serious problem and it showed a high concern as reported with higher burnout among the students. It was also found that school burnout was on high risk among Asian students, in which achieving high academic performance is associated with overall success in life and work- related assignments.

As students transition from primary to higher classes, they undergo a period of change encompassing physical, emotional, psychological, and social aspects, all contingent on their mental health. This mental well-being significantly impacts a student's physical health and overall happiness, elements essential for achieving academic goals. Gender dynamics within educational settings can significantly impact how stress and burnout manifest among students. Moreover, the academic environment may not always be equally accommodating to the diverse needs and learning styles of all genders. The impact of the school environment on student well-being can also vary based on location. Urban and rural schools may present distinct challenges and opportunities. Understanding how gender and location intersect with the challenges of education can guide the development of more nuanced and effective strategies for promoting student well-being and academic success. The study on gender and location disparities in burnout among secondary school students aims to investigate potential differences in burnout levels based on gender and geographical location. Understanding these disparities is important for addressing the specific needs of male and female students, as well as those in different locations. By identifying the factors contributing to higher burnout levels in one gender or location, the study can inform targeted interventions and support systems. It can also provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers to develop comprehensive mental health programs and policies that promote student well-being and academic success. Overall, the study seeks to contribute to the development of effective strategies for preventing and mitigating burnout among secondary school students

Literature Review

The concept of burnout was initially conceptualized as a composition of long-term emotional burnout, physical fatigue, not actively participating in other activities. He created burnout among students as a result of the studies he gained from his clinical experiences. It has been concluded that burnout was widely seen not only in the other service sector where face-to-face service was provided. He also discussed personality factors that inclined to specific situation for people to suffer from burnout. Burnout was actually started from human services related occupations, but, later on, it was also found in other occupations such as administrative workers, the people working in military and office workers. Several studies have shown that origin of burnout was actually found in social services or care giving related occupations. Burnout was actually a disorder or imbalance of mental and physical breakdown (Weber & Jaekel-Reinhard, 2000).

Fradelos et al., (2014) reported that burnout is a state of physical, emotional, mental and psychological illness that occurs in a situation which needs focused attention, continuing efforts and active participation from a particular person to achieve difficult task. There is a thin line between stress and burnout. Burnout has been often mistaken for stress. Stress is like full of disturbance of distorted emotions but it is based on short time feelings whereas burnout can be seen as a long term stress which is not endurable.

Dimensions of Burnout process

Researchers have proved that that Burnout is a slow and gradual process (Hallsten, 2005; Kaschka et al., 2011). Burnout is actually the latest phase in the process of “burning out” (Hallsten, 2005, p. 518; see Figure 1).The first phase of burning out is so-called “absorbing commitment”, which shows serious involvement along with anxiety. Next phase

is “frustrated strivings”, used to develop strategies to cope stress. Burnout itself is a last phase, when strategies for coping stress fail and individual’s ability or power to handle this burnout is declines.

Burnout Signs

According to Schaufeli et al., (2002), various signs and signals of burnout used to appear when a person is suffering burnout or stressed. The list of symptoms might be including; depressed moods, tearfulness, increased tension / anxiety, helplessness, use of tobacco and alcohol, difficulty with complex tasks, ulcer / gastric intestinal disorders and chronic fatigue.

Causes of Burnout

Burnout is a stress-related syndrome, which is usually prolonged due to any unpleasant incident. Burnout is usually the result of continuous and prolonged stress. It occurs when someone not able to meet targets and demands. Burnout is actually a state of emotion combined with variety of undesirable and imprudent emotions such as negative feelings based on anger, a feeling of worry, nervousness due to any reason, eagerness or impatience to wait something happening and depression resulting from some aspect of their work (Kyriacou, 2001). According to various researchers, students are under –pressure to be successful to achieve higher grades in schools as these demands make students vulnerable to perform according to set demands (Salmela-Aro et al., 2009). It is also reported that the burnout has negative consequences and risk factors for the physical and mental health of students who are studying in schools. Moreover, the burnout among students is highly associated with negative school environment and low academic achievements (Salmela-Aro et al., 2008).

Michaeli et al., (2014) concluded that there were higher emotional students among female students. Despite the negative impact and academic performance, however, there were no significant differences between these two classes. Previous research revealed differences in academic achievement between the sexes. Researchers found that girls are academically more focused to perform in schools than boys and assign more value than boys to academic achievement. This finding was collected in two lower to middle-class school districts in the Midwest from elementary school children. Women, however, often experience higher stress levels and symptoms internalized (Pomerantz, Altermatt & Saxon, 2002). Another study, which analyzed eighth grade students from a socio-economic and ethnically diverse public magnet school in a northeastern city (USA), found that the females earned significantly higher grades than males (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006). Results of this study showed that at the end of 8th grade, girls secured higher grades than the boys. It was resulted that the girls felt more enthusiastic in the classroom, had better connections with their classmates and teachers, were more focused towards their learning assignments, and had positive vibes towards the completion of homework than boys. Overall, girls also had more energy to learn and completion of work than boys did. Girls tend to be more self-disciplined than boys, helping them to achieve more academically, thereby eventually achieving more.

The researchers were then able to conclude that the girls have performed academically better than boys. Researchers also found that the girls in the classroom were more attentive than the boys, and the very few students (boys) who were similarly interested as well as language girls (Van de Gaer et al., 2007). Such findings suggest the in-attention of the boys in the classroom plays a role in the disparity between the two genders in the academic achievement. Researchers found that girls reported a higher level of academic burnout, fatigue, cynicism, and inadequacy, both on an academic and vocational track, than boys. Girls showed higher performance than boys as well (Salmela-Aro et al.,

2008). This again demonstrates the overall impact of school burnout and is consistent with reports that social roles of girls subject them to more stress than boys.

Many boys reported that their classroom experiences were not very interesting or fun in a survey of elementary and middle school students from all over the United States. On the other hand, the same attitude was identified by girls as exciting and enjoyable. Boys at all levels often find their tasks in the classroom to be less pleasant than girls. Since boys have little interest in many academic activities, they are less likely to be inspired to get involved than girls and thus achieve academic goals. Lin and Huang (2014) reported that the university students had lower level of academic burnout as compared to secondary school students.

Previous research has shown gender differences in academic achievement and school adjustment. For example, girls tend to perform better at school than boys (Pomerantz, Al-termatt, & Saxon, 2002) and to attribute greater importance to academic achievement compared to boys. However, girls also experience higher levels of stress (Ge, Lorenz, Conger, Elder, & Simons, 1994), and internalized symptoms (Pomerantz et al., 2002).

In another research, Zahedbablaan, Pourbahram, & Rahmani Javanmard, (2014) concluded that male students had a higher academic burnout compared to their female counterparts. On contrary, Azimi and Piri (2013) revealed that there was no significant difference in academic burnout between male and female students. According to their point of view, both gender suffering burnout situation at the same level.

Michaeli et al., (2014) concluded that female students reported lower academic burnout compared to male students with better emotion regulation and positive effect. Despite negative impact and academic performance, however, there were no significant differences between these two classes. Marzoughi, Heidari, & Heidari, (2013) showed that there was no significant variations in academic burnout between male and female students. A survey conducted by the National Union of Students for Australian university students aged 17–25, and it was resulted that burnout was associated with the main factors affecting in tertiary studies. Another study found during an observational research that was comprised on 456 German Undergraduate medical students, that higher academic-related stress was recorded due to poor academic performance of students (Kotter, Wagner, Bruheim, & Voltmer, 2017).

Hypotheses

The researcher formulated the following hypotheses:

H_{01}: There is no difference between burnout levels of male and female students in Punjab's secondary schools.

H_{02}: There is no difference between burnout levels of rural and urban students in Punjab's secondary schools.

Material and Methods

Research design

It was a quantitative study in which gender and location based burnout levesl were explored among students in Punjab's secondary schools. A questionnaire was used to collect data further t.test was used for finding mean difference.

Sample

There were total 151 high public schools in district Rawalpindi. Male schools were 71 and female were 80 which further categorized into urban and rural setting. There were 34 urban and 37 rural male schools whereas, 52 urban and 28 rural female schools respectively. The total population of 9th grade was 10,916 students whereas, 5875 were males and 5041 were females of 9th grade at secondary level in Tehsil Rawalpindi.

The schools were further distributed into six male and six female schools. The total sample of 840 students was selected and further 70 students selected from each and every section of 9th class by using convenient sampling technique through survey method. The proportion of urban and rural student was fifty- fifty.

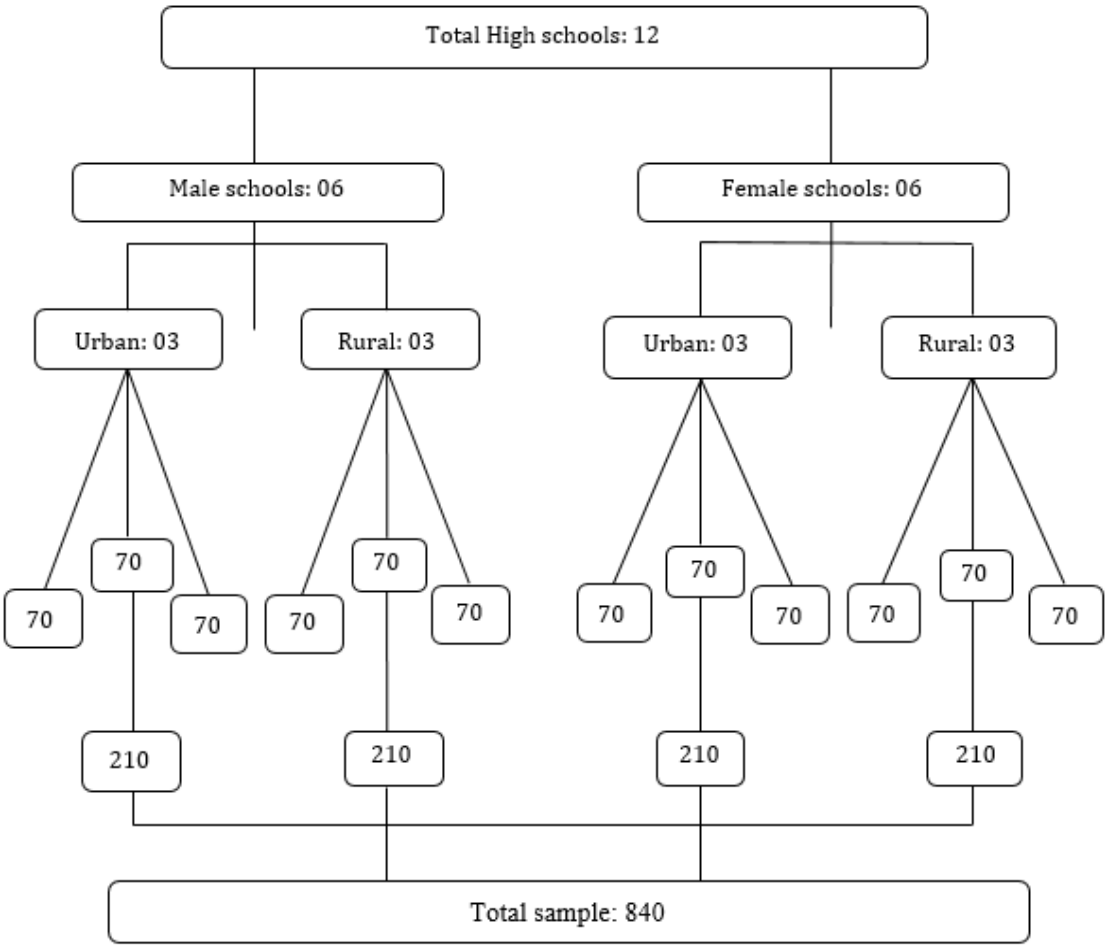

Figure 3: Sampling framework

Data collection instrument

In this study, the researcher used students' burnout questionnaire which showed three subscales; Emotional Exhaustion (EME), Cynicism (CY) and Academic Efficacy (AE) whereas dependent variable was students' academic achievement scores. To get the achievement scores of 9th grade students, the result and percentages of same students was obtained from Punjab Examination Commission (PEC) for academic year (2018-19).

Reliability of the instrument

The research instrument underwent language adjustments guided by three bilingual experts to enhance comprehension among secondary-level students. Originally in

English, the questionnaire was translated into Urdu, yet comprehension remained challenging. To facilitate understanding, the experts simplified the Urdu version specifically for 9th-grade students. The resulting revised questionnaire underwent mutual validation among researchers.

Pilot testing of the instrument

Additionally, a pilot study involving 50 students from two schools tested the practicality and reliability of the research tool. The internal consistency of the instrument, measured across three subscales (emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and academic efficacy), yielded acceptable reliability values: 0.73, 0.71, and 0.76, respectively. The overall Cronbach's alpha value was 0.695, confirming the tool's reliability for use in the research.

Data Analysis

After collecting and compiling data, it was sorted into students' burnout relationship with academic performance scores using SPSS software. For data analysis the two important steps were used to conduct like entering and coding of data in specific software. In coding of data, every variable was defined parameters of name and type, that is as 1 for male and 2 for females. The completeness, consistency and eligibility of the data were also checked and then the data analysis was carried out. All data has been tested on computer through the use of SPSS for descriptive statistics, independent sample and t- test.

Detail of Demographic Variables

Table 1
Gender wise description of respondents

Gender	N
Male	341
Female	354
Total	695

The above table shows gender wise proportion of male and female students. The total respondents were 695. There were 341 (49%) male students and 354 (51%) female students participated in the study. The response rate was 83%.

Table 2
Location wise description of respondents

Location	**N**
Urban	367
Rural	328
Total	695

This table shows the location wise proportion of urban and rural students. There are 367 (52.8%) urban and 328 (47.2%) rural respondents participated in the study.

Table 3
Level of Emotional Exhaustion (EME) with respect to Gender among students

Subscale	**Gender**	**N**	**Mean**	**S.D**	**df**	**t-value**	**p-value**
Emotional Exhaustion (EME)	Male	341	2.79	0.75	693	3.24	.001
	Female	354	2.55	1.13			

Table 3 showed the descriptive summary of statistics of burnout (EME) with respect to Gender. It showed that males were suffering high burnout (EME) (mean = 2.79) as compare to females (mean = 2.55). There was a large mean gap on Emotional Exhaustion

(EME) with t- statistics (t = 3.24) between male and female students and the p-value .001 < 0.05 for 5% level of significance. It also depicted that male students were suffering high average burnout Emotional Exhaustion (EME) than female students.

Table 4
Level of Cynicism (CY) with respect to Gender among students

Subscale	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	df	t-value	p-value
Cynicism	Male	341	2.40	0.83	693	2.64	.008
	Female	354	2.19	1.17			

Table 4 showed the descriptive summary of statistics of burnout (CY) with respect to Gender. It showed that males were suffering high burnout (CY) (mean = 2.40) as compare to females (mean = 2.19). There was a large mean gap on Cynicism (CY) with t- statistics (t = 2.64) between male and female students and the p-value .008 < 0.05 for 5% level of significance. It also depicted that male students were suffering high average burnout Cynicism (CY) than female students.

Table 5
Level of Academic Efficacy (AE) with respect to Gender among students

Subscale	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	df	t-value	p-value
Academic Efficacy	Male	341	3.48	0.81	693	-6.67	.001
	Female	354	3.91	0.89			

Table 5 showed the descriptive summary of statistics of burnout (AE) with respect to Gender. It showed that the females were suffering high burnout (AE) (mean = 3.91) as compare to males (mean = 3.48). There was a large mean difference on Academic Efficacy (AE) with t- statistics (t = -6.67) between male and female students and the p-value .008 < 0.05 for 5% level of significance. It also depicted that female students were suffering high level burnout Academic Efficacy (AE) than male students.

Table 6
Overall Mean difference of burnout with respect to Gender

Burnout	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p- value
Overall	Male	341	2.69	0.49	693	-0.97	.330
	Female	354	3.00	0.56			

Table 6 showed the descriptive summary of statistics of overall difference of burnout between males and females. It showed that female were suffering slightly higher burnout (mean = 3.00) as compare to male (mean = 2.69). Overall, both genders were suffering almost same level of burnout without any distinction. It showed a non-significant mean gap among male and female students with respect to overall burnout with t-statistics (t = - 0.97). It was resulted that the p-value .330 > 0.05 for 5% level of significance and the Null hypothesis $^{HO}{}_1$ was partially accepted.

Table 7
Level of Emotional Exhaustion (EME) with respect to Location among students

Subscale	Location	N	Mean	S.D	df	t-value	p-value
Emotional Exhaustion	Rural	328	3.06	0.04	693	11.04	.000
	Urban	367	2.31	0.05			

Table 7 showed the descriptive summary of statistics of burnout (EME) with respect to Location. It showed that rural students reported high burnout (EME) (mean = 3.06) as compare to urban students (mean = 2.31). There was a large mean gap on Emotional Exhaustion (EME) with t- statistics (t = 11.04) between rural and urban students and the p-

value .000 < 0.05 for 5% level of significance. It also depicted that rural students were suffering high average burnout Emotional Exhaustion (EME) than urban students.

Table 8
Level of Cynicism (CY) with respect to Location among students

Subscale	Location	N	Mean	S.D	df	t-value	p-value
Cynicism	Rural	328	2.67	0.86	693	9.56	.001
	Urban	367	1.96	1.04			

Table 8 showed the descriptive summary of statistics of burnout (CY) with respect to Location. It showed that rural students reported high burnout (CY) (mean = 2.67) as compare to urban students (mean = 1.96). There was a large mean gap on Cynicism (CY) with t- statistics (t = 9.56) between rural and urban students and the p-value .001 < 0.05 for 5% level of significance. It also depicted that rural students were suffering high average burnout Cynicism (CY) than urban students.

Table 9
Level of Academic Efficacy (AE) with respect to Location

Subscale	Location	N	Mean	S.D	df	t-value	p-value
Academic Efficacy	Rural	328	3.53	0.76	693	-4.74	.000
	Urban	367	3.85	0.95			

Table 9 showed the descriptive summary of statistics of burnout (AE) with respect to Location. It showed that urban students reported high burnout (AE) (mean = 3.85) as compare to rural students (mean = 3.53). There was a large mean gap on Academic Efficacy (AE) with t- statistics (t = - 4.74) between rural and urban students and the p-value .000 < 0.05 for 5% level of significance. It also depicted that urban students were suffering high average burnout Academic Efficacy (AE) than rural students.

Table 10
Overall mean differences of burnout with respect to Location

Burnout	Location	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p- value
Overall	Urban	328	2.84	0.48	693	8.13	.001
	Rural	367	3.15	0.53			

Table 10 showed the descriptive summary of statistics of overall difference of burnout between rural and urban students. It showed that rural students were suffering overall high level of burnout (mean = 3.15) as compare to urban students (mean = 2.84). Overall, rural students were suffering higher burnout as compare to urban students. It showed a large mean gap among rural and urban students with respect to overall burnout with t-statistics (t = 8.13). It was resulted that the p-value .001 < 0.05 for 5% level of significance and the Null hypothesis $^{HO}{}_2$ was rejected.

Burnout EME with respect to Gender and Location

The study was aimed to investigate the students' burnout at secondary level by gender and location. Table 3 showed a descriptive summary of burnout (EME) with respect to Gender. The findings showed that the burnout (EME) was higher in male students (mean = 2.79) as compare to females (mean = 2.55) which means male students reported slightly higher burnout with feeling of tiredness and exhaustion as compare to females. The females had experienced slightly lower burnout of (EME) as compare to males. Both genders were equally tired and exhausted to achieve their academic goals. The study showed that there was significant mean gap between male and female students (t = 3.24) and p-value 0.001 < 0.05. It was resulted that male students were experiencing higher burnout (EME) than females to achieve their academic goals.

Table 7 showed a descriptive summary of burnout (EME) with respect to Location, The findings showed that the burnout (EME) was higher among rural students (mean = 3.06) as compare to urban students (mean = 2.31) which means rural students experienced tiredness and fatigue more to achieve their academic goals. The urban students had experienced lower burnout of (EME) to achieve their academic success. The findings proved that there was a significant mean gap between urban and rural students (t = 11.04) and p-value 0.000 < 0.05. It was resulted that rural students were emotionally more disturbed with burnout (EME) while achieving their academic success as compare to urban students.

Burnout CY with respect to Gender and Location

The secondary level students were further investigated for mean differences of second subscale of burnout Cynicism (CY) with respect to Gender and Location. Table 4 showed a descriptive summary of burnout (CY) with respect to Gender. The findings showed that the burnout (CY) was higher in males (mean = 2.40) as compared to females (mean = 2.19) which means that the males were more un-interested and detached to achieve their academic success as compare to females. The female students reported slightly lower burnout of (CY) to achieve their academic scores as compare to male students. The study showed that there was a significant mean gap between male and female students (t = 2.64) and p-value 0.008 < 0.05. It was resulted that males were experiencing higher burnout (CY) than females to achieve their academic goals.

Table 8 showed a descriptive summary of burnout (CY) with respect to Location. The findings showed that the burnout (CY) was higher in rural students (mean = 2.67) as compared to urban students (mean = 1.96) which means that rural students were more burnout with negative feelings as compare to urban students. The urban students had experienced lower burnout of (CY) to obtain their academic scores. The findings proved that there was a significant difference of burnout (CY) between urban and rural students (t = 9.56) and p-value 0.001 < 0.05. It was resulted that rural students were filled with rigid and negative attitudes with burnout (CY) while achieving their academic goals as compare to urban students.

Burnout AE with respect to Gender and Location

The secondary school students were examined for mean differences of third subscale of burnout Academic Efficacy (AE) with respect to Gender and Location. Table 5 showed a descriptive summary of burnout (AE) with respect to Gender. The findings showed that the burnout (AE) was higher in female students (mean = 3.91) as compared to male students (mean = 3.48) which means females were academically more confident and determined to achieve their academic success than males. The males reported slightly lower burnout (AE) which means they were equally trying to pursue their academic scores but less than female students. The study showed that there was a significant difference of burnout (AE) between males and females (t = -6.67) and p-value 0.001 < 0.05. It was resulted that females were experiencing higher burnout (AE) than males to achieve their academic goals.

Table 9 showed a descriptive summary of burnout (AE) with respect to Location. The findings showed that the level of burnout (AE) was higher among urban students (mean = 3.85) as compare to rural students (mean = 3.53) which means urban students were academically more confident and determined to achieve their academic goals than rural students. The findings proved that there was a significant difference of burnout (AE) between urban and rural students (t = -4.74) and p-value 0.000 < 0.05. It was resulted that urban students were feeling more competent with burnout (AE) to achieve their academic goals than rural students.

Overall Burnout with respect to Gender and Location

Table 10 showed a descriptive summary of overall burnout with respect to Location. The findings showed the mean scores of overall burnout levels (EME, CY and AE) between urban (mean = 2.84) and rural (mean = 3.15) students. It was concluded that overall burnout (EME, CY and AE) had significant mean gap between urban and rural students (t = 8.13) and p-value 0.001 < 0.05. It was resulted that there overall rural students were suffering higher burnout than urban to achieve their academic goals and the Null hypothesis $^{HO}{}_2$ was rejected.

Conclusion

In the analysis of burnout among secondary students, distinct patterns emerged in relation to gender and location. Following a thorough discussion of the three burnout subscales (EME, CY, and AE), the overall mean variations in burnout between genders and locations were quantified and examined. In a gender-specific descriptive overview of total burnout. The results revealed the differences in the mean scores of total burnout levels (EME, CY, and AE) between males and females. Overall burnout (EME, CY, and AE) was shown to have a non-significant mean difference between males and females. The findings showed that there was little difference in the levels of burnout experienced by men and women in secondary school, with both sexes experiencing almost the same amount of burnout in order to meet academic goals. Among three sub-scales (EME, CY and AE) of burnout, male students exposed higher burnout (EME) and (CY) than females. On contrary, females scored significantly higher burnout (AE) than the boys. The females showed more positive attitude than males. The results were consistent with previous study, showing that the academic burnout was high in male students as compared to females (Zahedbablaan et al., 2014). Another study partially supported through literature and concluded that females experienced higher level of burnout (EME) and (CY) than boys (Salmela-Aro, et al., 2008). The reason might be that females are considered more hardworking, organized and disciplined towards their studies. This study is contrary to the study of Azimi and Piri (2013) who found that there was no gender difference of burnout to achieve their academic scores.

The findings proved that among three sub-scales (EME, CY and AE) of burnout, rural students experience higher burnout (EME) and (CY) whereas urban students reported higher burnout (AE). Rural students reported lower burnout (EME, and CY), and it was supported through literature that there was a strong relationship between exhaustion and cynicism. The possible reasons of high burnout in rural areas of district Rawalpindi might be that people from village areas still facing lot of issues i.e. electricity, water, gas, transportation, proper tuition or coaching centers. Parents are illiterate and working on daily wages. They find it difficult to spare their time for children on daily basis. On contrary, urban students might have proper facilities to study in academies and coaching centers. Moreover, their parents are literate; take special interest towards their studies and help out their children for academic tasks.

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