

## Original Research Article

# Understanding Academic Burnout and Its Association with Academic Performance in Higher Education

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**Abstract:** Academic Burnout has become an important concern in higher education, particularly among postgraduate students who often face demanding academic responsibilities and performance expectations. The present study examined academic burnout and its association with academic performance among postgraduate students. A descriptive correlational research design was adopted. The sample consisted of 200 postgraduate students from Gauhati University, Assam, comprising 100 Arts and 100 Science students selected through stratified random sampling. Academic Burnout was assessed using a self-structured 30-item Academic Burnout Scale, while previous semester CGPA was used as an indicator of academic performance. Descriptive statistics, Spearman's rank-order correlation, Mann-Whitney U test and multinomial logistic regression were used for data analysis. The mean academic burnout score was 84.29 (SD = 22.95). A significant moderate negative relationship was found between academic burnout and academic performance ( $\rho = -0.408, p < .001$ ). Multinomial logistic regression showed that academic burnout significantly predicted academic performance categories, particularly the 4.5-5.4 (OR = 1.203,  $p = .025$ ) and 5.5-6.4 (OR = 1.113,  $p = .011$ ) CGPA categories relative to the 8.5-10 reference category. A significant difference in burnout was also found between Arts and Science students ( $U = 7049.00, Z = 5.008, p < .001, r = .35$ ) with science students reporting highest burnout. Academic burnout was significantly associated with academic performance and was particularly related to lower CGPA categories. The higher burnout observed among science students also suggests the need to consider academic-stream differences when planning student support. Universities may benefit from strengthening academic counselling, stress management support and learning environments that promote students' academic and psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** Academic Burnout, Academic Performance, Postgraduate Students, Higher Education, Student Well-Being.

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## INTRODUCTION

The modern world is fiercely competitive, emphasizing a strong performance mindset that demands learners to adjust to intricate learning and social scenarios. Among the various education levels, higher education plays a crucial role in shaping both the professional and personal identity of the student. Higher education provides students with specialized career paths, research opportunities and fosters innovation, contributing to national development. As academic achievements rise, so do the demands and pressures on

the students, leading those in higher education to experience academic burnout and stress. In recent times, academic burnout has become a notable issue impacting students' well-being and their academic performance. Academic burnout is characterized by a state of physical, emotional and mental fatigue that arises from continuous academic pressures and academic workload. It manifests through feelings of fatigue, cynicism toward studies and a reduced sense of accomplishment. Burnout is especially common among postgraduate students because of their heavy workloads, peer pressures and uncertainty about their future careers. Motivation,

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learning effectiveness and emotional stability can all be adversely affected by these pressures. In addition to impairing students' academic performance, chronic academic burnout negatively impacts their general mental health and level of participation in the classroom. Burnout reduction needs more than management of extrinsic academic pressures, but also the building of intrinsic psychological strength through self-awareness, control of emotions and learning strategies.

The concept of burnout was first introduced by Herbert Freudenberger in 1974, who described it as a state of physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from prolonged stress and excessive demands. Later, Christina Maslach established a more thorough framework and broadened the idea, characterizing burnout as a psychological condition that arises as a protracted reaction to chronic interpersonal pressures. Although the idea was initially studied in professional contexts, it has been extensively applied to academic settings, where it is known as Academic Burnout. Academic burnout is defined as a student's experience of chronic fatigue related to academic demands, a disinterested or cynical attitude towards their studies and a reduced sense of academic efficacy. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), burnout has three main dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (or cynicism) and reduced personal accomplishment. In the academic context, these dimensions are often reframed as exhaustion (feeling overwhelmed by study demands), cynicism (a detached or negative attitude toward academic work and inefficacy (a reduced sense of competence and achievement as a student). These dimensions collectively capture the multifaceted nature of academic burnout. Exhaustion reflects the depletion of emotional and physical resources due to academic pressure. Cynicism represents a distancing attitude toward academic tasks, often accompanied by a loss of interest or meaning in studies. Inefficacy refers to decline in students' belief in their academic abilities and productivity.

#### **Academic Burnout:**

Academic Burnout is a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged and excessive stress related to academic work. It often results from a combination of high workload, pressure to achieve and lack of adequate rest or balance between academic and personal life. Burnout, which was originally conceptualized in the context of work. Academic demands as a risk factor of burnout also cause anxiety, depression and disengagement which results in a decrease in academic performance. In addition to emotional consequences, burnout disrupts sleep patterns, often leading to insomnia, which further contributes to decreased academic engagement and performance. This means that burnout is not only caused by academic stress directly, but also by academic pressure that lasts continuously so that negatively impacts mental and emotional fatigue. As a result, students become less engaged in academic activities and experience academic

performance and self-esteem. The crippling effects of academic burnout are becoming more common among students of all ages in today's hectic and demanding educational environment.

#### **Dimensions of Academic Burnout:**

Academic Burnout is most commonly understood through the framework developed by Christina Maslach and colleagues. In the academic context (especially for students) burnout typically consists of three core dimensions. Schaufeli *et al.*, adapted Maslach's model to the academic setting, defining student burnout through the dimensions of emotional exhaustion (emotional depletion due to educational demands), cynicism (an indifferent attitude toward academic activities); and reduced academic efficacy (a diminished perception of personal competence). 1. Emotional Exhaustion: it refers to feelings of being mentally and physically drained due to academic demands. Students feel overwhelmed, fatigued and unable to cope with study-related pressures such as assignments, exams and deadlines. It is often considered the central dimension of burnout. 2. Cynicism (Depersonalization): Cynicism involves a negative, detached or indifferent attitude towards studies. Students may lose interest, become less engaged and develop a sense of meaninglessness about their academic work. This dimension reflects emotional distancing from learning activities. 3. Reduced Academic Efficacy (Personal Accomplishment): this dimension refers to a decline in feelings of competence and achievement in academic tasks. Students may feel incapable, unproductive and dissatisfied with their performance, even if they are doing reasonably well. It reflects low self-confidence in academic ability.

#### **Signs of Academic Burnout**

Burnout often manifests in both physical and emotional symptoms, which can significantly impact a students' ability to perform and thrive.

#### **Emotional Exhaustion:**

Students may experience emotions of loneliness and alienation from their studies and peers, as well as feelings of overburden, ongoing tension and emotional exhaustion.

#### **Decreased Performance:**

Academic performance may noticeably deteriorate as a result of burnout. Lower grades and a lack of desire may come from students' inability to focus, remember material and fulfil deadlines.

#### **Physical Symptoms:**

Chronic fatigue, headaches and sleep disturbances are common physical manifestations of academic burnout. These symptoms can lower general wellbeing and increase emotional stress.

### **Feeling Detached, Cynical Hopeless About Studies:**

Students lose interest, get emotionally detached and adopt unfavourable attitudes concerning their academic work. They might also mistrust their abilities to achieve and believe that their efforts are futile. This indicates a more profound degree of mental exhaustion and disengagement.

Although academic burnout has been examined in relation to academic achievement and student well-being, fewer regional studies have considered these relationships specially among postgraduate students within the Indian higher education context. In addition, differences in burnout across academic streams may receive less attention when students are considered as a single group. The present study therefore examines the level of academic burnout and academic performance among postgraduate students, the relationship between the two variables, the predictive role of burnout in academic performance categories and differences in burnout between Arts and Science students.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

An increasing amount of study has looked at how students' psychological, cognitive and environmental aspects relate to academic burnout. Research has repeatedly demonstrated a negative correlation between academic burnout and adaptive human resources including psychological capital and self-regulated learning, both of which improve academic engagement and lower stress level (Shazia, 2025). Poorgholamy *et al.*, 2020. On the other hand, social support and adaptive perfectionism act as protective factors, whereas maladaptive characteristics like perceived stress and incompatible perfectionism have been demonstrated to positively predict burnout (Behroozi *et al.*, 2013). Additionally, it has been shown that burnout has a negative impact on academic performance, with aspects including academic inefficacy appearing as important predictors of decreased achievement (Pouratashi, 2018). Research also emphasizes the importance of psychological and contextual interventions, such as mindfulness and cognitive-behavioural strategies, which show moderate effectiveness in alleviating burnout symptoms in students (Madigan *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, the connection between burnout and psychological well-being seems intricate with specific aspects, such as burnout related to classmates, having a notable impact on well-being. In contrast, elements like mindfulness do not consistently act as mediators (Tanveer & Kamran, 2021). Similarly, the relationship between metacognition and academic burnout has been explored with mindfulness as an important intervening variable, where dysfunctional metacognitive beliefs were found to increase burnout, while mindfulness partially mediated and reduced its negative impact, thereby supporting students' well-being and resilience (Sapanrı, 2023). The existing literature indicates that academic burnout is a complex phenomenon shaped by various individual and

environmental elements, thereby requiring comprehensive strategies for its effective management.

### **Need for the Study:**

In recent years, academic burnout has emerged as a critical concern in higher education due to increasing academic demands, competition and psychological pressure among students (Dopmeijer, J). Post-graduate students, in particular face heightened expectations related to academic performance, research productivity and career advancement making them more vulnerable to burnout. Although previous studies have examined various predictors and outcomes of academic burnout, there remains a need to further explore its direct association with academic performance, especially within specific educational contexts. Understanding this relationship is essential, as burnout not only affects students' mental well-being but also impairs their motivation, engagement and overall academic achievement.

The present study is significant as it provides empirical evidence based on data collected from postgraduate students, thereby contributing to the existing body of knowledge with context-specific insights. It helps in identifying the extent to which academic burnout influences academic performance, which can assist educators, policymakers and institutions in designing effective interventions and support systems. Furthermore, the findings of the study may be useful in promoting awareness about psychological health in academic settings and encouraging the development of strategies to enhance students' coping mechanisms and learning outcomes. Thus, the study holds both theoretical and practical significance in addressing the challenges of academic burnout in higher education.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

1. To assess the level of academic burnout among Postgraduate students.
2. To assess the level of academic performance among post graduate students.
3. To investigate the relationship between academic burnout and academic performance.
4. To determine whether academic burnout significantly predicts academic performance categories among postgraduate students
5. To compare academic burnout between Arts and Science postgraduate students.

## **METHODOLOGY**

To fulfil these research objectives, this section outlines the research methodology employed in the current study.

### **Research Design:**

The present study adopted the quantitative research approach using a descriptive- correlational design. The descriptive aspect of the study aimed to determine the levels, relationship and influence of

academic burnout and academic performance among post graduate students.

### Study Context and Data Collection

The study was conducted at Gauhati University, Assam, India, focusing on postgraduate students. A total of 200 postgraduate students participated, including 100 from the science stream and 100 from the arts stream. Participation was voluntary and respondents were assured confidentiality.

### Sampling Approach:

Stratified random sampling was used to select 200 post graduate students, comprising 100 students from the science departments and 100 students from the Arts departments.

### Data collection Tool:

A self-structured Academic Burnout Scale (ABS) was used to assess academic burnout, validated through a pilot test for clarity and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.87). The scale utilized a five-point Likert scale (1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Frequently and 5= Always). In addition, the questionnaire included a personal information section to collect participants' name and academic stream, while their previous semester C.G.P.A. was recorded as an indicator of academic performance.

### Data Collection Procedure:

Data were collected from postgraduate students of Gauhati University after obtaining permission from the concerned departments. The researcher personally visited the selected departments and administered the questionnaire in the classroom setting. Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of participation and the confidentiality of the information provided. The

questionnaire included demographic and academic information, including previous semester CGPA, followed by the 30-item Academic Burnout Scale and two optional subjective questions to provide additional contextual information regarding students' academic experiences and coping practices. Clear instructions were provided for responding to the five-point Likert scale items. Participants completed the questionnaire within 10-15 minutes and returned it to the researcher immediately after completion. The collected data were subsequently checked, organized and prepared for statistical analysis.

### Statistical Analyses

The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation were used to summarize the academic burnout and academic performance scores, while frequencies and percentages were calculated to describe the distribution of students across different levels of academic burnout and academic performance. The assumptions underlying the statistical analyses were assessed using appropriate normality tests and graphical methods. Spearman's rank-order correlation (Spearman's rho) was used to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between academic burnout and academic performance. A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare academic burnout between Arts and Science postgraduate students, as the data did not meet the assumption of normality. Multinomial logistic regression analysis was conducted to determine whether academic burnout significantly predicts the levels of academic performance among post graduate students.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Academic Burnout among Postgraduate Students**

| N   | Mean  | SD    | Minimum | Maximum |
|-----|-------|-------|---------|---------|
| 200 | 84.29 | 22.95 | 34      | 141     |

Note: SD- Standard Deviation, Number of Samples

**Table 2: Distribution of Postgraduate Students by Level of Academic Burnout**

| Level of Academic Burnout | Range of Z Score | Range of Raw Score | Total No | Percentage |
|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------|------------|
| High                      | +1.5 & above     | 118 & above        | 19       | 9.5%       |
| Above Average             | +0.48 to +1.4    | 96 to 117          | 49       | 24.5%      |
| Average                   | -0.47 to + 0.47  | 74 to 95           | 62       | 31%        |
| Below Average             | -1.4 to -0.48    | 53 to 73           | 53       | 26.5%      |
| Low                       | -1.5 & below     | 52 & below         | 17       | 8.5%       |
|                           |                  |                    | 200      | 100%       |

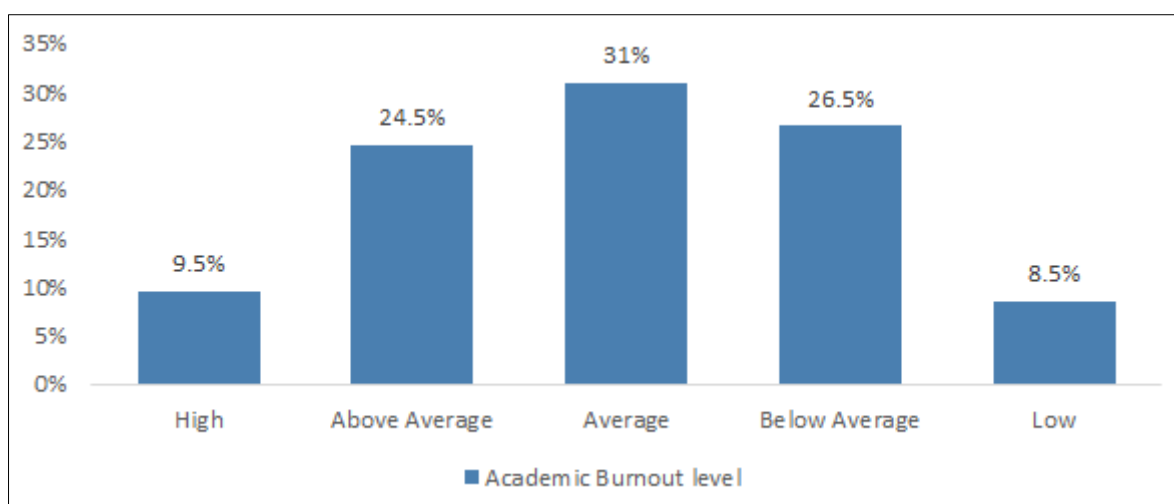


**Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of Postgraduate students by Level of Academic Burnout**

**Table 3: Distribution Academic Burnout Levels by Academic Stream**

| Level of Academic Burnout | Arts, n (%) | Science (%) | Total, n (%) |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| High                      | 9 (9%)      | 10 (10%)    | 19 (9.5%)    |
| Above Average             | 13 (13%)    | 36 (36%)    | 49(24.5%)    |
| Average                   | 28 (28%)    | 34 (34%)    | 62 (31.0%)   |
| Below Average             | 36 (36%)    | 17 (17%)    | 53(26.5%)    |
| Low                       | 14(14%)     | 3 (3%)      | 17(8.5%)     |
| Total                     | 100 (100%)  | 100         | 200 (100%)   |

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics among postgraduate students. The mean score of academic burnout of post graduate students is 84.29 and the SD is 22.95, with scores ranging from 34 to 141. Table no 2 presents the distribution of postgraduate students across the five levels of academic burnout, and the analysis indicates that 19 students out of 200 fell into high level of academic burnout, which is 9.5%. A total 24.5% of students reported an above average level. A considerable proportion, 31%, exhibited an average level of burnout. Additionally, 26.5% of students were found out to have a below average level and 8.5% experienced a low level of academic burnout. This indicates the largest proportion of students (31%) fell within the average burnout category, while 24.5% reported above average and 9.5% reported high burnout. However, a fair number of students also reported below average or low burnout levels. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage distribution of postgraduate students across the different levels of academic burnout.

Table 3 further presents the distribution of academic burnout levels according to academic streams. Among Arts students (N=100), 9% (9) students experienced high level of academic burnout, while 13% (13 students) reported an above average level. 28% (28 students) were at an average level, 36% (36 students) exhibited a below average level, and 14% (14 students) reported low levels of burnout. This result indicates that the majority of M.A. students tend to experience below average levels of academic burnout. In contrast, among the science students (N=100), 10% (10 students) experienced a high level of academic burnout, 36% (36 students) reported an above average level, 34% (34 students) were at average level, 17% (17 students) had a below average level and 3% (3 students) experienced a low level of academic burnout. These results indicate that higher proportion of M.sc students experience above average level of academic burnout. Overall, the findings indicate that academic burnout among the postgraduate students was predominantly at the average level, although the distribution of burnout levels varied across the Arts and Science streams.

**Table 4: Distribution of Postgraduate Students by Level of Academic performance**

| Level of Academic Performance | Range of C.G.P.A. | Total No | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------|------------|
| Excellent                     | 8.5 and above     | 9        | 4.5%       |
| Good                          | 8.4 to 7.5        | 54       | 27%        |
| Above Average                 | 7.4 to 6.5        | 96       | 48%        |
| Average                       | 6.4 to 5.5        | 38       | 19%        |
| Below                         | 5.4 and below     | 3        | 1.5%       |
|                               |                   | 200      | 100%       |

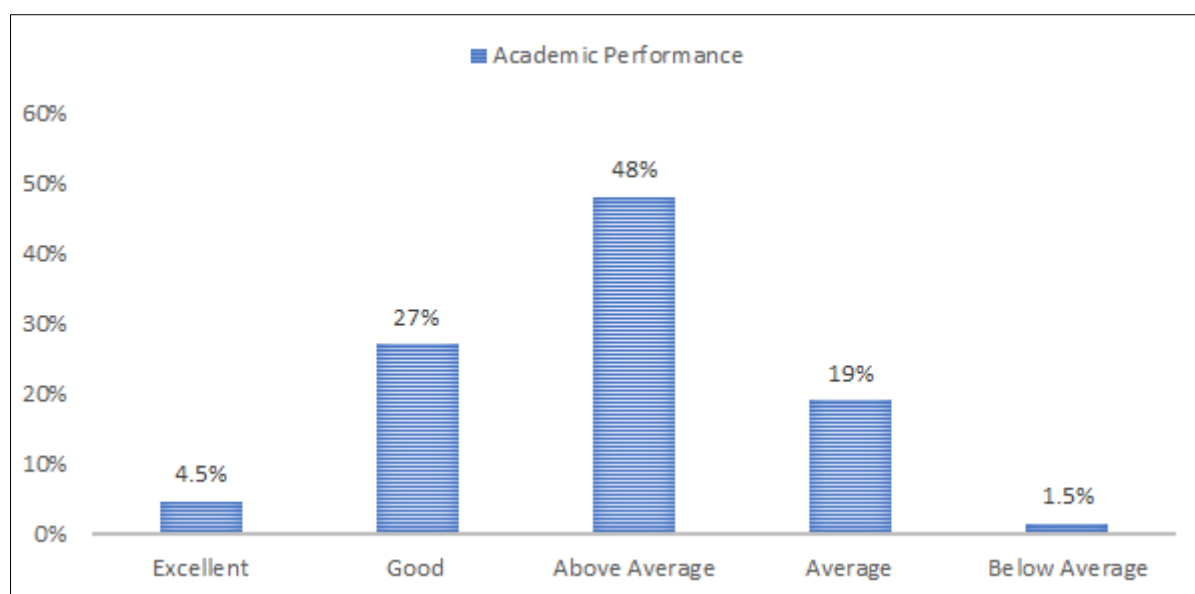


**Figure 2: Percentage Distribution of Postgraduate students by Level of Academic Performance**

Table 4 presents academic performance of post graduate students it is observed that a total of 9 (4.5%) post graduates' students only were found to have an excellent level of academic performance. 54 students (27%) demonstrated good academic performance, while

96 students (48%) showed above average performance. 38 students (19%) were found out to have an average level of academic performance. Only 3 students (1.5%) were categorized as below average category.

**Table 5: Distribution of Academic Performance Levels by Academic Stream**

| Level of Academic Performance | No. of Arts students | Percentage | No. of Science students | Percentage | Total No. of Students |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Excellent                     | 0                    | 0          | 9                       | 4.5%       | 9                     |
| Good                          | 29                   | 14.5%      | 25                      | 12.5%      | 54                    |
| Above Average                 | 47                   | 23.5%      | 49                      | 24.5%      | 96                    |
| Average                       | 21                   | 10.5%      | 17                      | 8.5%       | 38                    |
| Below Average                 | 3                    | 1.5%       | 0                       | 0          | 3                     |
| Total                         | 100                  |            | 100                     |            | 200                   |

From the table no. 8 it is observed that among Arts students the majority 47 students (23.5%) were found to have above average academic performance followed by 29 students (14.5%) who showed good performance. A proportion, 21 students (10.5%) were average, while only 3 students (1.5%) of students were in the below average category. None of the Arts students were found in the excellent category.

In contrast, among science students, 49 students (24.5%) exhibited above average academic performance, while 25 students (12.5%) showed good performance. Additionally, 17 (8.5%) of students were average and 9 students (4.5%) attained an excellent level of academic performance. None of the Science students fell in the below average category.

**Table 6: Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation between Academic burnout and Academic Performance**

| Correlation          |                         |                  |                      |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
|                      |                         | Academic Burnout | Academic Performance |
| Academic Burnout     | Correlation Coefficient | 1                | -0.408**             |
|                      | Sig (2 tailed)          |                  | < .001               |
|                      | N                       | 200              | 200                  |
| Academic Performance | Correlation Coefficient | -0.408**         | 1                    |
|                      | Sig (2 tailed)          | < .001           |                      |
|                      | N                       | 200              | 200                  |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed)

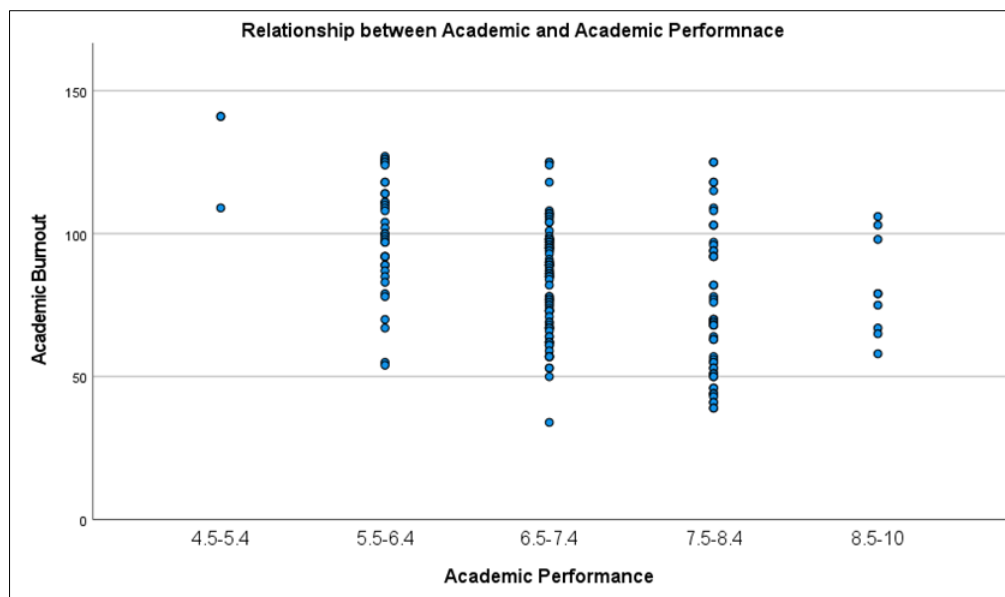


**Figure 3: Relationship between Academic Burnout and Academic Performance**

Table 6 presents the relationship between academic burnout and academic performance, and it was examined using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. A significant moderate negative correlation was

observed ( $\rho = -0.408$ , with a  $p$ -value  $< 0.01$  at  $N = 200$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that academic burnout is significantly and negatively related to academic performance among post graduate students.

**Table 7: Model Fit Statistics for Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting Academic Performance**

| Model Statistic           | Value     |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| N                         | 200       |
| Likelihood Ratio $\chi^2$ | 42.313    |
| df                        | 4         |
| p                         | $< 0.001$ |
| Cox & Snell $R^2$         | 0.191     |
| Nagelkerke $R^2$          | 0.209     |
| McFadden $R^2$            | 0.086     |

**Table 8: Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting Academic Performance from Academic Burnout**

| CGPA Category (vs 8.5-10) | B     | Std. error | p-value | Exp (B) |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|---------|---------|
| 4.5-5.4                   | 0.184 | 0.082      | 0.025   | 1.203   |
| 5.5-6.4                   | 0.107 | 0.042      | 0.011   | 1.113   |
| 6.5-7.4                   | 0.026 | 0.035      | 0.458   | 1.027   |
| 7.5-8.4                   | 0.003 | 0.036      | 0.928   | 1.003   |

Note: Reference category=8.5-10 CGPA

P<0.05 indicates statistical significance

Table 7 presents the model fit statistics of multinomial logistic regression analysis conducted to examine whether academic burnout predicts academic performance among postgraduate students. The model was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (4) = 42.313$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , indicating that academic burnout contributes significantly to predicting academic performance categories. The pseudo  $R^2$  values (Cox & Snell = 0.191, Nagelkerke = 0.209, McFadden = 0.086) suggest a moderate explanatory power of the model. The likelihood ratio test further more confirmed that academic burnout was a significant predictor ( $p < 0.001$ ). Table 8 presents the parameter estimates from the

multinomial logistic regression analysis examining the predictive effect of academic burnout on different academic performance categories, with the 8.5-10 CGPA category serving as the reference category. The results indicate the academic burnout significantly predicted membership in the 4.5-5.4 ( $B = 0.184$ ,  $p = 0.025$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 1.203$ ) and 5.5-6.4 ( $B = 0.107$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 1.113$ ) categories relative to the reference category. However, burnout did not significantly predict CGPA categories 6.5-7.4 ( $p = 0.458$ ) and 7.5-8.4 ( $p = 0.928$ ). The findings indicate that higher academic burnout is associated with poorer academic performance.

**Table 9: Comparison of Academic Burnout between Arts and Science Postgraduate Students**

| Academic Stream | N   | Mean  | SD    | Median | Mean Rank |
|-----------------|-----|-------|-------|--------|-----------|
| Arts            | 100 | 76.72 | 23.88 | 73.50  | 80.01     |
| Science         | 100 | 91.86 | 19.31 | 95.00  | 120.99    |

Mann-Whitney U = 7049.00, Z = 5.008,  $p < .001$ ,  $r = .35$

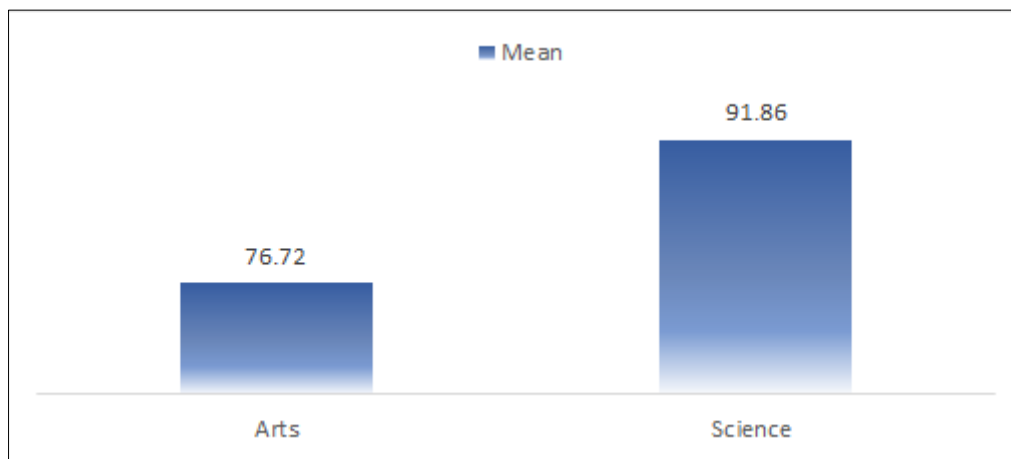
**Figure 5: Mean Academic Burnout Scores of Arts and Science Postgraduate Students.**

Table 9 presents the comparison of academic burnout between Arts and Science post graduate students. A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare academic burnout scores between Arts and Science postgraduate students because the burnout scores did not meet the assumption of normality. Arts students (N=100) had a mean burnout score 76.72 (SD= 23.88; Median= 73.50), whereas Science students had a higher mean score of 91.86 (SD = 19.31; Median = 95.00). The difference between the two groups was statistically significant,  $U = 7049.00$ ,  $Z = 5.008$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , with a moderate effect size ( $r = 0.35$ ). The mean rank was substantially higher for Science students (120.99) than for Arts students (80.01), further indicating higher academic burnout among Science students. Figure 5 illustrates the mean and academic scores of Arts and Science postgraduate students.

## DISCUSSION

The present study examined academic burnout and its association with academic performance among postgraduate students and also compared burnout between Arts and Science students. The findings showed that academic burnout was present at varying levels among the students, with the largest proportion falling within the average category, while a considerable proportion reported above-average or high burnout. This indicates that although burnout was not experienced at a high level by all students, a substantial group may still be dealing with academic exhaustion and related pressures. Previous studies have similarly reported academic burnout as an important concern among students in higher education and have linked it with academic demands, stress and difficulties in managing academic responsibilities. In the present study, most students demonstrated relatively satisfactory academic

performance, with the largest proportion falling within the above-average category, followed by good and excellent performance. However, satisfactory academic performance did not necessarily correspond with low burnout. This becomes particularly relevant when the subjective responses of some students are considered, as a few students who were performing well academically also described considerable academic pressure and burnout. The correlation analysis showed a significant moderate negative relationship between academic burnout and academic performance ( $\rho = -0.408$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that students with higher burnout tended to have lower academic performance. This finding is consistent with earlier research reporting an inverse association between academic burnout and academic achievement. Prolonged academic exhaustion may affect students' concentration, motivation, engagement and ability to manage academic tasks effectively, which may partly explain the observed relationship. The multinomial logistic regression analysis further showed that academic burnout significantly predicted academic performance categories, particularly the 4.5–5.4 and 5.5–6.4 CGPA categories in comparison with the 8.5–10 reference category. Students with higher burnout scores had greater odds of being in these lower CGPA categories. The finding is in line with previous research suggesting that burnout is associated with poorer academic functioning and achievement. However, the present findings should be interpreted as an association and statistical prediction rather than evidence that burnout alone causes lower academic performance, since the study used a cross-sectional descriptive-correlational design. An important finding of the study was the significant difference in academic burnout between Arts and Science postgraduate students. Science students reported a higher mean burnout score ( $M = 91.86$ ,  $SD = 19.31$ , Median = 95.00) than Arts students ( $M = 76.72$ ,

SD = 23.88, Median = 73.50), and the Mann–Whitney U test showed that this difference was statistically significant ( $U = 7049.00$ ,  $Z = 5.008$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with a moderate effect size ( $r = .35$ ). The higher mean rank among Science students also indicate greater burnout in this group. Previous literature has suggested that burnout and study engagement may vary across academic subjects, although the specific reasons for the difference observed in the present study cannot be established because discipline-specific workload, practical requirements and assessment demands were not directly measured. The responses provided by students to the subjective questions offered some additional context for understanding these quantitative findings. Some students described regular study habits, confidence, a positive attitude and meditation as ways of managing academic pressure, whereas some students who maintained good academic performance nevertheless reported high burnout and referred to parental expectations and pressure to maintain academic achievement. Such responses suggest that academic performance alone may not adequately reflect students' academic well-being. The role of performance pressure is also supported by previous research identifying it as a factor associated with burnout among higher education students. Overall, the findings indicate that academic burnout is associated with academic performance and may be experienced differently across academic streams, while students' own accounts suggest that both academic demands and personal or external expectations may shape their experience of burnout.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS FROM SUBJECTIVE RESPONSES

The responses to the subjective questions provided additional information about students' experiences of academic burnout and the ways in which they attempted to manage academic pressure. Some students who reported comparatively lower burnout described maintaining regular study habits, confidence in their abilities, a positive attitude towards academic work and practices such as meditation. These responses suggest that students may use different personal strategies to manage academic demands. At the same time, some students who achieved relatively good academic performance also reported high levels of burnout. Their responses indicated that parental expectations, pressure to perform well and the desire to maintain academic achievement could contribute to their academic stress. These observations are important because they show that good academic performance does not necessarily mean that a student is free from burnout. The responses also suggest that support for students should not be limited only to those who obtain low grades, as academically successful students may also experience considerable pressure. However, these responses were used only to provide contextual understanding of the quantitative findings and were not subjected to formal qualitative analysis.

### EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings have important implications for postgraduate education. Since higher academic burnout was associated with lower academic performance and Science students reported significantly higher burnout, universities and departments may need to pay greater attention to students' academic well-being alongside academic achievement. Academic counselling, stress-management programmes, appropriate workload planning and supportive communication between teachers and students may help students manage academic demands more effectively. Particular attention may be given to students experiencing higher burnout, including high-performing students who may be under considerable academic or parental pressure. Discipline-specific support may also be considered where students face different academic demands.

### SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are proposed:

1. Academic counselling services may be strengthened at the postgraduate level to help students manage academic pressure, workload and performance expectations.
2. Stress-management programmes may be organised by universities or departments to introduce students to practical coping strategies, time management and healthy approaches to academic work.
3. Regular monitoring of student well-being may be considered so that students experiencing higher levels of burnout can be identified and supported at an early stage.
4. Since Science students reported significantly higher burnout in the present study, Science departments may examine discipline-specific academic demands, including workload, practical requirements and assessment schedules.
5. Support should not be limited to students with poor academic performance. High-achieving students should also be encouraged to seek support when they experience excessive academic pressure.
6. Students may be encouraged to develop regular study routines and healthy coping practices, as some students in the present study reported regular study, confidence and meditation as ways of managing academic pressure.
7. Future researchers may examine academic burnout using larger and more diverse samples and longitudinal designs to better understand changes in burnout over time and its relationship with academic performance.

### LIMITATIONS

The findings of the present study should be interpreted in light of certain limitations. The study was conducted among postgraduate students from a single

university, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to students from other institutions and regions. The cross-sectional design also does not allow causal conclusions to be drawn regarding the relationship between academic burnout and academic performance. Academic performance was assessed using previous semester CGPA, which represents an important academic indicator but may not capture all dimensions of students' academic functioning. In addition, academic burnout was measured through self-reported responses, which may be influenced by individual perceptions and response tendencies. The subjective responses provided by students were used only as contextual information and were not subjected to a formal qualitative analysis. Future studies may address these limitations by using larger samples from multiple institutions, longitudinal designs and systematic qualitative methods.

## CONCLUSION

The present study highlights academic burnout as an important concern among postgraduate students and demonstrates its significant association with academic performance. Although the largest proportion of students reported an average level of burnout, a considerable proportion experienced above-average or high burnout. Most students demonstrated relatively satisfactory academic performance, but higher burnout was significantly associated with lower academic performance. The regression analysis further showed that academic burnout significantly predicted membership in some lower CGPA categories, particularly the 4.5–5.4 and 5.5–6.4 categories in comparison with the 8.5–10 reference category. A significant difference in burnout was also found between academic streams, with Science students reporting higher burnout than Arts students, with a moderate effect size. The findings, together with students' own observations, indicate that academic performance alone may not fully represent students' academic well-being. Academic pressure may persist even among students who perform well, particularly where external expectations are involved. Therefore, greater attention to students' well-being, academic counselling, stress management and supportive learning environments may help students manage academic demands more effectively. Addressing academic burnout may contribute to healthier academic experiences and better academic outcomes among postgraduate students.

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**Research Ethics:** The ethical guidelines for the handling and use of human subjects were followed. Participation was voluntarily and anonymity was guaranteed. Respondents were informed about the data collection for academic purposes before participating.

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