
A STUDY ON ACADEMIC BURNOUT AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

Academic burnout is a growing concern in higher education because of its impact on students' academic performance, psychological well-being, and overall educational experience. Prolonged academic demands, continuous assessments, and competitive learning environments often contribute to burnout among university students. The present study aimed to assess the level of academic burnout among higher education students in West Bengal and to examine its variation with respect to gender, family type, social category, and age. A quantitative research approach was adopted using a cross-sectional survey design. The study was conducted among 386 higher education students selected through simple random sampling from eleven higher education institutions across six districts of West Bengal: Kolkata, Howrah, South 24 Parganas, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, and Cooch Behar. Data were collected using the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Student Survey (MBI-SS) and analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent samples *t*-test, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson's product-moment correlation. The findings revealed significant differences in academic burnout based on gender, family type, and social category. Male students reported higher burnout than female students, while students from nuclear families experienced greater burnout than those from joint families. Academic burnout also varied significantly across social categories, with General category students reporting the highest burnout levels. However, no significant relationship was found between age and academic burnout. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening institutional support systems, counselling services, and stress

management programmes to reduce academic burnout and promote students' psychological well-being in higher education.

KEYWORDS: *Academic Burnout, Higher Education Students, West Bengal, Gender, Family Type, Social Category, Age, MBI-SS, Student Well-being.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, higher education has undergone substantial transformation, with increasing emphasis on academic excellence, professional competence, and lifelong learning. Universities and colleges are expected not only to impart disciplinary knowledge but also to prepare students for complex personal, social, and professional challenges. While these expectations have contributed to improved educational opportunities, they have also intensified the academic demands placed upon students. Continuous assessment, competitive learning environments, demanding curricula, technological changes, and uncertainty regarding future employment have significantly increased the psychological pressure experienced by many university students. As a consequence, academic burnout has emerged as one of the most important concerns in contemporary educational psychology because of its influence on students' learning, mental health, and overall educational experience. Academic burnout refers to a prolonged psychological response that develops when students experience persistent academic stress without sufficient opportunities to recover or adequate resources to cope effectively. Unlike temporary academic stress, which may motivate students to perform better, burnout gradually reduces enthusiasm for learning, weakens academic engagement, and diminishes students' confidence in their own abilities. Students experiencing burnout often report persistent emotional exhaustion, feelings of detachment from academic activities, and reduced satisfaction with their educational achievements. These experiences not only affect academic performance but also influence students' psychological well-being, interpersonal relationships, and future career aspirations. Consequently, academic burnout has become an important focus of educational research aimed at promoting healthier learning environments and improving students' quality of life. One of the most influential theoretical foundations of academic burnout originates from the work of Maslach and Jackson (1981), who conceptualized burnout as a multidimensional syndrome comprising emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Although this framework was originally developed for occupational settings, subsequent research demonstrated that similar psychological processes occur among university students who

experience sustained academic demands. Recognizing this similarity, Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker (2002) adapted the burnout framework to educational settings by developing the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Student Survey (MBI-SS). In this student-oriented model, academic burnout consists of three interrelated dimensions: Exhaustion, Cynicism, and Professional Efficacy. Exhaustion refers to feelings of physical and emotional fatigue resulting from continuous academic work; Cynicism reflects a detached or indifferent attitude toward studies; and Professional Efficacy represents students' perceptions of competence and effectiveness in academic activities. Together, these dimensions provide a comprehensive understanding of how prolonged academic pressure influences students' psychological functioning. Another influential explanation of academic burnout is provided by the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model proposed by Demerouti et al. (2001). According to this framework, burnout develops when the demands placed upon individuals consistently exceed the personal and environmental resources available to them. Within higher education, students frequently encounter demanding coursework, frequent examinations, assignment deadlines, and expectations for high academic performance. When these demands are not balanced by supportive relationships, effective learning environments, adequate institutional resources, or adaptive coping skills, students become increasingly vulnerable to burnout. The JD–R model therefore emphasizes that academic burnout should not be viewed solely as an individual weakness but rather as the outcome of interactions between students and their educational environment. Similarly, Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory offers an important perspective for understanding academic burnout. The theory suggests that individuals strive to obtain, preserve, and protect valuable personal and social resources such as time, energy, motivation, emotional stability, and supportive relationships. Burnout occurs when these resources are continuously depleted without sufficient recovery or replenishment. In higher education, students often invest considerable effort in meeting academic expectations while simultaneously managing financial responsibilities, family obligations, and career-related concerns. Prolonged resource depletion may therefore result in emotional exhaustion, declining motivation, and reduced academic engagement. This perspective highlights the importance of strengthening both personal coping capacities and institutional support systems to protect students from burnout. Within educational settings, academic burnout has profound implications for students' learning and overall development. Students experiencing lower levels of burnout generally demonstrate greater academic engagement, stronger motivation, better concentration, and higher persistence in completing academic tasks. In contrast, those experiencing severe

burnout frequently report diminished interest in learning, difficulties maintaining attention, reduced classroom participation, absenteeism, and declining academic achievement. Research by Schaufeli et al. (2002) demonstrated that students experiencing higher levels of exhaustion and cynicism are less engaged in academic activities and report lower satisfaction with their educational experiences. Likewise, Salmela-Aro and Upadaya (2014) argued that academic burnout interferes with students' educational trajectories by reducing motivation, academic persistence, and successful adaptation to university life. These findings indicate that academic burnout is not merely an individual psychological problem but also an important educational issue that directly affects learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. Beyond its influence on academic achievement, academic burnout has important consequences for students' mental health. Prolonged exposure to academic stress has been associated with anxiety, depressive symptoms, emotional instability, sleep disturbances, reduced self-esteem, and lower life satisfaction. Dyrbye, Thomas, and Shanafelt (2006) observed that persistent educational stress substantially increases psychological distress among university students, affecting both their academic functioning and personal well-being. Similarly, Lin and Huang (2014) reported that ineffective coping strategies combined with excessive academic demands significantly contribute to burnout among college students. These findings emphasize that academic burnout should be understood as both an educational and a psychological concern, requiring coordinated efforts from educational institutions, teachers, counsellors, and families to promote students' holistic development. Individual characteristics also play a significant role in shaping students' vulnerability to academic burnout. Research has shown that students differ considerably in their ability to manage academic demands, regulate emotions, and adapt to stressful situations. Factors such as gender, age, personality, resilience, emotional intelligence, and coping strategies have all been identified as potential influences on burnout. While some students demonstrate remarkable adaptability despite challenging academic conditions, others experience considerable emotional exhaustion under similar circumstances. These differences highlight the importance of examining demographic and personal characteristics when investigating academic burnout among higher education students. Family and social environments further contribute to students' experiences of academic burnout. Family support, emotional encouragement, effective communication, and positive parent-child relationships often enhance students' capacity to cope with academic challenges. Conversely, limited family support, excessive parental expectations, financial difficulties, and interpersonal conflicts may increase students' vulnerability to prolonged academic stress. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory explains that students'

development is shaped by continuous interactions within multiple environmental systems, including family, educational institutions, peer groups, and the wider community. From this perspective, academic burnout should not be viewed solely as an individual outcome but as a phenomenon influenced by the broader social environment in which students learn and develop. Social and cultural conditions also influence students' educational experiences. Bourdieu (1986) argued that differences in cultural and social capital affect access to educational opportunities, academic resources, and institutional support. Students from different social backgrounds often encounter unequal educational experiences that may shape their academic expectations, learning opportunities, and ability to cope with educational demands. Financial constraints, limited access to learning resources, and differences in family educational backgrounds may indirectly contribute to students' experiences of academic burnout. Although the relationship between social background and burnout is not always consistent across studies, existing research suggests that socio-cultural and institutional contexts play an important role in determining students' psychological adjustment and academic engagement. Within higher education, academic burnout has become increasingly relevant because university students are required to balance multiple responsibilities beyond their academic work. In addition to attending classes and completing assignments, many students manage internships, competitive examinations, financial obligations, part-time employment, and career planning. The rapid expansion of digital learning environments has further transformed students' educational experiences by increasing expectations for continuous academic participation and independent learning. While these developments have created valuable educational opportunities, they have also intensified academic pressure for many students. Consequently, institutions of higher education are increasingly recognizing that students' psychological health is essential for sustaining academic success and promoting meaningful educational experiences. The issue of academic burnout is particularly important in the Indian higher education system. Students frequently encounter intense academic competition, demanding curricula, parental expectations, economic uncertainty, and concerns regarding future employment. These challenges are often accompanied by limited availability of professional counselling services and mental health support within educational institutions. Consequently, many students experience persistent psychological stress that may gradually develop into academic burnout if appropriate coping resources and institutional support are unavailable. Recent educational research in India has increasingly emphasized the need to address students' mental health alongside academic achievement, recognizing that emotional well-being is essential for effective learning and long-term educational success. West Bengal

provides a meaningful context for examining academic burnout among higher education students because the state accommodates a diverse student population representing different social backgrounds, family structures, educational institutions, and geographical regions. Students studying in universities and colleges across the state experience varying academic environments, institutional resources, family support systems, and socio-economic circumstances. Differences associated with gender, age, family type, and social category may therefore influence how students perceive academic demands and respond to educational challenges. Understanding these variations is important for designing student support services and educational policies that respond effectively to the diverse needs of higher education learners in the state. Although academic burnout has received considerable attention in educational and psychological research across different countries, comparatively limited empirical evidence is available regarding higher education students in West Bengal. Much of the existing literature has focused on academic stress, anxiety, depression, or general mental health without examining academic burnout as a multidimensional construct comprising exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy. Furthermore, relatively few studies have simultaneously investigated the influence of demographic characteristics such as gender, age, family type, and social category on academic burnout within the socio-cultural context of West Bengal. This indicates the existence of an important research gap that warrants systematic investigation. Against this background, the present study seeks to examine the level of academic burnout among higher education students in West Bengal and explore its relationship with selected demographic characteristics, including gender, age, family type, and social category. By employing a standardized measure of academic burnout, the study aims to generate empirical evidence that contributes to a deeper understanding of students' educational and psychological experiences. The findings are expected to assist educators, institutional leaders, counsellors, and policymakers in developing evidence-based interventions that reduce academic burnout, strengthen psychological resilience, and create healthier learning environments within higher education institutions. In conclusion, academic burnout represents a significant educational and psychological challenge that affects students' motivation, engagement, learning outcomes, and overall well-being. Its development reflects a complex interaction of individual characteristics, family environments, institutional practices, and broader socio-cultural influences rather than any single isolated factor. Addressing academic burnout therefore requires a comprehensive educational approach that balances academic excellence with psychological support, emotional well-being, and positive learning experiences. Higher education institutions, families, mental health professionals, and

policymakers share a collective responsibility to establish supportive educational environments where students can achieve academic success while maintaining their psychological health and personal development. Such efforts are essential for fostering resilient, engaged, and socially responsible graduates who are well prepared to meet the demands of contemporary society.

2. Literature Review

Academic burnout has emerged as one of the most significant psychological concerns among higher education students worldwide. The increasing academic workload, continuous assessment, competitive learning environments, expectations for high achievement, and uncertainty regarding future careers have contributed to elevated levels of stress and emotional exhaustion among university students. Although higher education aims to promote intellectual growth and personal development, excessive academic demands may adversely affect students' psychological health, motivation, and academic performance. Consequently, academic burnout has become an important area of investigation in educational psychology because of its profound implications for students' learning, well-being, and overall quality of life. Unlike temporary academic stress, academic burnout develops gradually when students experience prolonged exposure to academic demands that exceed their available psychological and emotional resources. Burnout is characterized by persistent exhaustion, detachment from academic activities, and a diminished sense of competence, ultimately reducing students' engagement and satisfaction with their educational experiences. As higher education systems become increasingly competitive and performance-oriented, understanding the factors associated with academic burnout has become essential for promoting student success and maintaining healthy educational environments. One of the most influential conceptualizations of burnout was proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1981), who described burnout as a multidimensional psychological syndrome resulting from chronic interpersonal and occupational stress. Their original model identified three core dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Recognizing that university students encounter stressors similar to those experienced in occupational settings, Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker (2002) adapted this framework to educational contexts by developing the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Student Survey (MBI-SS). In this model, academic burnout consists of Exhaustion, Cynicism, and Professional Efficacy. Exhaustion reflects feelings of physical and emotional fatigue arising from sustained academic demands; Cynicism represents a detached or indifferent attitude toward

academic work; and Professional Efficacy refers to students' perceptions of competence and achievement in their studies. Together, these dimensions provide a comprehensive understanding of students' burnout experiences and have become the foundation for contemporary research on academic burnout. Another important theoretical explanation is provided by the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model developed by Demerouti et al. (2001) and later extended to educational settings. According to this framework, burnout develops when academic demands such as excessive coursework, frequent examinations, assignment deadlines, and performance expectations consistently exceed the personal and institutional resources available to students. Resources such as supportive teachers, positive peer relationships, academic guidance, family support, and effective coping skills help students manage these demands and reduce the likelihood of burnout. Conversely, insufficient resources increase vulnerability to emotional exhaustion and academic disengagement. The JD–R model therefore emphasizes that burnout is not solely an individual problem but also reflects characteristics of the educational environment. A complementary perspective is offered by Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which proposes that individuals strive to obtain, preserve, and protect valuable personal, social, and material resources. Burnout occurs when these resources are threatened, depleted, or lost without adequate replenishment. Within higher education, students invest considerable time, energy, motivation, and emotional effort in meeting academic expectations. When these investments fail to produce desired academic outcomes or are accompanied by persistent stress, students may experience emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and declining academic engagement. The COR framework therefore explains burnout as a consequence of prolonged resource depletion and highlights the importance of supportive educational environments that enable students to restore their psychological resources. Academic burnout has been consistently linked to numerous educational and psychological outcomes. Students experiencing high burnout frequently demonstrate reduced academic engagement, poor concentration, declining academic performance, absenteeism, diminished motivation, and an increased likelihood of withdrawing from educational activities. Schaufeli et al. (2002) reported that students with higher levels of exhaustion and cynicism exhibit lower academic commitment and reduced satisfaction with their studies. Similarly, Salmela-Aro and Upadaya (2014) argued that burnout negatively influences students' learning trajectories by reducing engagement, persistence, and educational achievement. These findings indicate that burnout affects not only students' emotional well-being but also their long-term academic success and professional development. Growing empirical evidence also demonstrates that

academic burnout is closely associated with students' mental health. Prolonged burnout has been linked to anxiety, depressive symptoms, emotional instability, low self-esteem, sleep disturbances, and reduced life satisfaction. Dyrbye, Thomas, and Shanafelt (2006) observed that persistent academic pressure significantly increases psychological distress among university students, thereby affecting both their educational performance and overall quality of life. Likewise, Lin and Huang (2014) found that ineffective coping strategies and excessive academic demands contribute substantially to burnout among college students. These findings reinforce the view that academic burnout should be understood as both an educational and a mental health concern requiring comprehensive institutional attention. Research has identified several personal characteristics that influence students' susceptibility to academic burnout. Gender has received considerable attention, although findings remain inconsistent across studies. Some investigations have reported higher burnout among female students due to greater emotional involvement and academic pressure, whereas others have found higher burnout among male students, often attributing these differences to coping styles, social expectations, and help-seeking behaviour. These inconsistencies suggest that the relationship between gender and burnout is shaped by cultural, institutional, and contextual factors rather than biological differences alone. Consequently, gender continues to be an important variable in academic burnout research. Age has also been examined as a potential determinant of academic burnout, although evidence remains mixed. Some studies suggest that younger students experience greater burnout because they are still adjusting to university life and developing effective coping strategies. Others have reported little or no relationship between age and burnout, particularly among university students within relatively narrow age ranges. These inconsistent findings imply that age alone may not adequately explain burnout and that academic experiences, learning environments, and available support systems may be more influential than chronological age. Family environment represents another important determinant of students' academic adjustment. Positive family relationships, emotional encouragement, parental involvement, and effective communication have been shown to protect students from prolonged academic stress. Conversely, limited family support, family conflict, or excessive parental expectations may increase students' vulnerability to burnout. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, researchers have emphasized that family constitutes the immediate social environment within which students develop coping skills, emotional resilience, and attitudes toward education. Consequently, differences in family structure and family support may influence students' experiences of academic burnout. Socio-cultural and economic factors also contribute significantly to burnout among

higher education students. Bourdieu's (1986) Theory of Cultural Capital suggests that differences in social and cultural resources shape students' educational opportunities, learning experiences, and academic expectations. Students from different social backgrounds may therefore encounter unequal access to educational support, financial resources, academic guidance, and social networks. These disparities may influence academic pressure, educational engagement, and ultimately the experience of burnout. Although empirical findings remain inconsistent regarding the direct influence of social category, existing literature suggests that broader socio-economic conditions and institutional support systems play important roles in determining students' academic well-being. Within the Indian context, higher education students face multiple academic and social challenges, including intense competition, demanding curricula, employment uncertainty, parental expectations, and financial constraints. These pressures often coexist with limited access to professional counselling services and mental health support within educational institutions. As a result, many students experience sustained psychological stress that may gradually develop into academic burnout. Recent studies conducted in Indian universities have highlighted increasing concerns regarding students' emotional exhaustion, declining academic motivation, and reduced engagement, emphasizing the need for systematic interventions to promote student well-being. The educational context of West Bengal presents additional considerations. The state includes universities and colleges that serve students from diverse social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Differences in institutional resources, family circumstances, locality, and educational opportunities may influence how students experience academic demands. While higher education institutions continue to expand access to learning, comparatively limited empirical research has specifically examined academic burnout among higher education students in West Bengal while simultaneously considering demographic variables such as gender, age, family type, and social category. Most available studies have focused on academic stress, mental health, or student adjustment rather than academic burnout as a multidimensional psychological construct.

Overall, the existing literature establishes academic burnout as a complex phenomenon influenced by the interaction of individual characteristics, family environments, institutional factors, and broader socio-cultural conditions. It significantly affects students' psychological health, academic engagement, motivation, and educational achievement. Despite the expanding body of international and national research, relatively few empirical studies have investigated academic burnout among higher education students in West Bengal using standardized measurement tools while examining the influence of demographic

characteristics such as gender, age, family type, and social category. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by assessing the level of academic burnout among higher education students in West Bengal and examining its relationship with selected demographic variables. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of students' academic well-being and provide useful evidence for educators, institutional leaders, counsellors, and policymakers in developing effective strategies to prevent burnout and promote healthy educational environments.

2.1 Research Objectives

- 1 To assess the current status of academic burnout among higher education students in West Bengal.
- 2 To examine differences in academic burnout among higher education students in West Bengal with respect to demographic factors (such as gender, age, Family type and social category).
- 3 To find out is there any relationship between Age and Academic burnout among Higher Education students in West Bengal.

2.2 Hypotheses

- 1 **H₀₁:** Academic burnout does not significantly differ among higher education students in West Bengal with respect to gender.
- 2 **H₀₂:** Academic burnout does not significantly differ among higher education students in West Bengal with respect to Family type.
- 3 **H₀₃:** Academic burnout does not significantly differ among higher education students in West Bengal with respect to social category
- 4 **H₀₄:** Age is not significantly correlated with Academic burnout among Higher Education students in West Bengal.

2.3 Delimitations of the Study

This study is subject to the following delimitations:

- 1 **Sample Size:** The study is limited to a total of 386 Higher Education students in West Bengal.
- 2 **Institutions Covered:** The study sample consists of students from selected Higher education Institutions i.e. University of Calcutta, Jadavpur University, Bijoy Krishna Girl's College, Uluberia College, Diamond Harbour Women's University, Fakir Chand

College, University of North Bengal, Ananda Chandra College, Coochbehar Panchanan Barma University, A.B.N Seal College, Falakata College across six districts of West Bengal: Kolkata, Howrah, South 24 Parganas, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, and Alipurduar.

- 3 **Geographical Scope:** The study is limited to six selected districts of West Bengal and does not encompass any other districts within the state or regions outside West Bengal.
- 4 **Participant Criteria:** The participants of the study are higher education students who are currently enrolled in different levels of higher education.
- 5 **Variables Considered:** The study focuses on academic burnout with reference to selected background characteristics, including gender, age, family type, and social category.
- 6 **Time Frame:** The data were collected during a specific period and reflect the prevailing conditions at the time of data collection.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design: The present study employed a cross-sectional survey design to achieve its research objectives. This design was considered suitable because it enabled the researcher to assess the current level of academic burnout among higher education students in West Bengal at a specific point in time. In addition, the cross-sectional approach made it possible to examine variations in academic burnout across selected demographic and background characteristics, including gender, age, social category, and family type.

Population and Sample: The target population of the study comprised higher education students from six selected districts of West Bengal: Kolkata, Howrah, South 24 Parganas, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, and Cooch Behar. A simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants, ensuring that each student had an equal chance of being included in the study. Using this method, a total of 386 students were selected as the sample for the investigation.

Variables: The study primarily focused on academic burnout as the key variable of investigation. In addition, it examined differences in academic burnout across selected background characteristics, including gender, age, social category, and family type. This approach provided a deeper understanding of how academic burnout varies among higher education students in relation to these demographic factors.

Data Collection Tools: Standardized scales and structured questionnaires were used to assess academic burnout and gather relevant demographic and background information from the participants.

Data Analysis: The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques, including descriptive statistics, the independent samples *t*-test, one-way ANOVA, and correlation analysis. These statistical methods were employed to examine differences, identify relationships, and explore patterns of academic burnout among higher education students. The analysis provided a systematic interpretation of the data and contributed to a comprehensive understanding of academic burnout among higher education students in West Bengal.

3.2 Instrument for Data Collection

To assess the principal variable of the study, a standardized and scientifically validated psychological instrument was employed to ensure accuracy, consistency, and credibility in measurement. The present study utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Student Survey (MBI-SS) as the primary instrument for measuring academic burnout among higher education students. The MBI-SS was developed by Schaufeli, Martínez, Marques Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker (2002) by adapting the Maslach Burnout Inventory–General Survey (MBI-GS) specifically for university students. The instrument is grounded in the theoretical framework of burnout proposed by Maslach and colleagues, which conceptualizes burnout as a multidimensional psychological syndrome resulting from prolonged exposure to academic demands and stress.

The MBI-SS conceptualizes academic burnout through three interrelated dimensions: Exhaustion, Cynicism, and Professional Efficacy. Exhaustion refers to feelings of physical and emotional fatigue caused by continuous academic demands. Cynicism reflects a detached, indifferent, or negative attitude toward one's studies, whereas Professional Efficacy represents students' perceptions of their competence, achievement, and effectiveness in academic activities. Together, these three dimensions provide a comprehensive assessment of students' experiences of academic burnout.

For the present investigation, the 15-item version of the MBI-SS was administered. The instrument comprises 5 items measuring Exhaustion, 4 items assessing Cynicism, and 6 items evaluating Professional Efficacy. Participants respond to each statement using a seven-point Likert-type frequency scale, ranging from 0 (Never) to 6 (Always), indicating how frequently they experience each situation during their academic life.

The scoring procedure reflects the multidimensional nature of academic burnout. Higher scores on the Exhaustion and Cynicism dimensions indicate greater levels of burnout. In contrast, Professional Efficacy is positively worded and therefore requires reverse scoring when calculating the overall burnout score. Consequently, lower levels of professional

efficacy are interpreted as higher academic burnout. This scoring procedure enables a comprehensive evaluation of students' burnout experiences across its three core dimensions. An important strength of the MBI-SS lies in its balanced composition of positively and negatively worded statements. This structure minimizes response bias and enhances the accuracy and dependability of participants' responses. Moreover, the instrument was specifically developed for university students by modifying the original occupational burnout measure to suit the academic context, making it particularly appropriate for assessing burnout in higher education settings.

Regarding reliability, previous studies have reported satisfactory internal consistency for the MBI-SS. The three subscales demonstrated acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficients across different student populations, indicating that the instrument produces reliable and consistent measurements of academic burnout. The multidimensional structure of the scale further contributes to its stability and consistency in assessing various aspects of students' burnout experiences.

With respect to validity, the MBI-SS has demonstrated strong construct validity through confirmatory factor analysis, which consistently supports its three-factor structure of Exhaustion, Cynicism, and Professional Efficacy. In addition, the instrument has shown satisfactory cross-cultural applicability and has been successfully validated among university students from different countries. Its widespread use in educational and psychological research further supports its suitability for measuring academic burnout among higher education students.

The selection of the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Student Survey for the present study is therefore justified by its strong theoretical foundation, well-established psychometric properties, and comprehensive assessment of academic burnout. Since the present investigation focuses on higher education students in West Bengal, the MBI-SS was considered an appropriate instrument for evaluating students' experiences of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy within the academic environment. Accordingly, the use of this standardized instrument ensured a systematic, reliable, and valid assessment of academic burnout among the participants.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to examine the level of academic burnout among higher education students in West Bengal across different demographic and socio-educational

characteristics. The analysis presents the mean and standard deviation for each category, allowing for a comparison of burnout levels and helping to identify patterns and variations among the selected groups.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics regarding Academic Burnout Among Higher Education students in West Bengal.

Variables	Category	N (Frequency)	Mean	Sd
Gender	MALE	190	61.08	10.971
	FEMALE	196	55.69	9.591
Family type	JOINT	144	56.80	10.833
	NUCLEAR	242	59.27	10.418
Social Category	ST	31	56.40	11.247
	SC	140	59.84	11.922
	GENERAL	136	60.09	9.227
	OBC	79	58.22	10.821

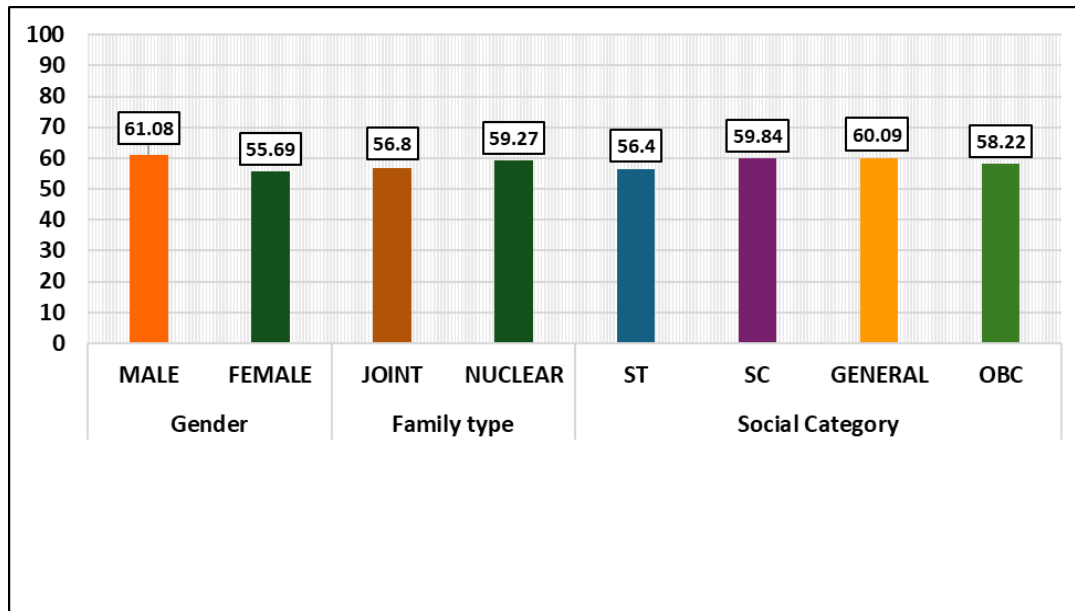


Figure 1. Presenting Mean score distribution of Academic Burnout Among Higher Education students in West Bengal.

From the above table, it can be observed that with respect to gender, male students ($M = 61.08$, $SD = 10.971$) reported comparatively higher levels of academic burnout than female students ($M = 55.69$, $SD = 9.591$). This indicates a noticeable gender-based variation in academic burnout, with male students experiencing relatively greater burnout.

Regarding family type, students belonging to nuclear families ($M = 59.27$, $SD = 10.418$) demonstrated higher academic burnout compared to those from joint families ($M = 56.80$, SD

= 10.833). Although the difference is moderate, the findings suggest that students living in nuclear families tend to experience comparatively greater academic burnout.

Across different social categories, students from the General category ($M = 60.09$, $SD = 9.227$) reported the highest level of academic burnout, followed closely by SC students ($M = 59.84$, $SD = 11.922$). OBC students ($M = 58.22$, $SD = 10.821$) exhibited comparatively lower burnout levels, while ST students ($M = 56.40$, $SD = 11.247$) reported the lowest academic burnout among all the social groups. These findings indicate variations in academic burnout across different social categories.

Overall, the descriptive findings suggest that academic burnout among higher education students varies across demographic characteristics such as gender, family type, and social category. Comparatively higher burnout levels were observed among male students, students from nuclear families, and those belonging to the General social category. These variations may reflect differences in academic experiences, personal circumstances, and socio-contextual factors, which can be explored further through inferential statistical analyses.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

4.2.1 H₀₁: Academic Burnout and Gender

The analysis reveals that the computed t-value for academic burnout based on gender is $t(384) = 5.144$ with a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance ($p < 0.05$), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant difference in academic burnout between male and female students.

Table 2. Inferential statistics (Independent sample t-test and ANOVA) based on H₀₁ to H₀₃.

Dependent variables	Independent variables	t/F value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean differences	Remarks	Hypotheses testing
Academic Burnout	Gender	5.144	384	.000	5.390	Significant	Rejected
Academic Burnout	Family type	2.219	384	.027	2.470	Significant	Rejected
Academic Burnout	Social category	3.038	3	.029	-	Significant	Rejected

4.2.2 H₀₂: Academic Burnout and Family type

The computed t-value for academic burnout based on family type is $t(384) = 2.219$ with a p-value of 0.027. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance ($p < 0.05$), the

result is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant difference in academic burnout between students belonging to different family types.

4.2.3 H_{03} : Academic Burnout and Social category

The computed F-value for academic burnout across different social categories is $F(3, 382) = 3.038$ with a p-value of 0.029. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance ($p < 0.05$), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This suggests that academic burnout differs significantly across different social categories.

Table 3. Correlation table based on H_{04} .

Correlations			
		Age	Academic Burnout
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.027
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.594
	N	386	386
Academic Burnout	Pearson Correlation	.027	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.594	
	N	386	386

**Correlation is not significant*

4.2.4 H_{04} : Age and Academic Burnout

The computed r-value for the relationship between age and academic burnout is $r = 0.027$ with a p-value of 0.594. Since the p-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance ($p > 0.05$), the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) cannot be rejected. This indicates that there is no significant relationship between age and academic burnout among students, suggesting that age is not significantly associated with the level of academic burnout.

4.3 Major Findings

The analysis revealed a significant difference in academic burnout between male and female students, indicating that gender plays an important role in influencing students' experience of academic burnout. The descriptive findings further showed that male students reported higher levels of academic burnout than female students. This finding suggests that male and female students may differ in their academic experiences, stress management strategies, or responses to academic demands, which may contribute to variations in burnout.

The findings also indicated a significant difference in academic burnout based on family type. Students belonging to nuclear families reported comparatively higher levels of academic

burnout than those from joint families. This suggests that family structure may influence students' academic experiences, emotional support systems, and ability to cope with academic stress, thereby affecting their level of burnout.

The analysis further demonstrated a significant difference in academic burnout across different social categories. Among the social groups, students belonging to the General category reported the highest level of academic burnout, followed by SC students, whereas OBC and ST students reported comparatively lower burnout levels. These findings suggest that academic burnout varies across social categories, possibly reflecting differences in academic expectations, socio-economic conditions, educational opportunities, or contextual experiences.

The correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between age and academic burnout. This indicates that age is not significantly associated with students' level of academic burnout, suggesting that academic burnout is experienced similarly across different age groups within the selected sample.

Overall, the findings suggest that academic burnout among higher education students is influenced primarily by demographic and socio-contextual factors such as gender, family type, and social category, whereas age does not appear to have a significant influence. These findings highlight the importance of developing targeted interventions that consider students' demographic backgrounds and family contexts to reduce academic burnout and promote psychological resilience and academic well-being among higher education students.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study found a significant difference in academic burnout between male and female students, indicating that gender plays an important role in shaping students' experience of academic burnout. The descriptive findings further revealed that male students reported higher levels of burnout than female students. This difference may be attributed to variations in academic expectations, coping strategies, emotional regulation, and help-seeking behaviour between male and female students. Male students may experience greater pressure related to academic achievement, career aspirations, or social responsibilities while being less likely to seek emotional support, thereby increasing their susceptibility to burnout. This finding is consistent with the work of Maslach and Leiter (2016), who argued that burnout develops through prolonged exposure to academic or occupational stress when individuals perceive an imbalance between demands and available coping resources. Similar findings have also been reported by Salmela-Aro and colleagues (2009), who observed that burnout

among students is associated with individual differences in coping, motivation, and academic stress. However, the present finding differs from several previous studies that reported either higher burnout among female students or no significant gender difference. Such inconsistencies may be explained by differences in cultural context, educational settings, academic programmes, and the characteristics of the study samples. These variations suggest that the influence of gender on academic burnout is context-dependent rather than universal. The study also revealed a significant difference in academic burnout based on family type, with students from nuclear families reporting comparatively higher burnout than those from joint families. Family represents one of the primary sources of emotional, social, and practical support during higher education. Students living in joint families may benefit from stronger interpersonal relationships, shared responsibilities, and greater emotional encouragement, which can reduce the impact of academic stress. In contrast, students from nuclear families may experience greater individual responsibility and comparatively limited support while dealing with academic demands. This finding is consistent with the principles of Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes that family constitutes an important microsystem influencing an individual's psychological development and adaptation. Previous studies have similarly highlighted that supportive family environments act as protective factors against stress and burnout by enhancing emotional resilience and effective coping. Nevertheless, some earlier investigations have reported no significant influence of family structure on academic burnout, suggesting that the quality of family relationships and parental support may be more influential than family type itself. Therefore, the present finding indicates that family context should be considered an important factor while designing interventions to reduce student burnout. The analysis further demonstrated significant differences in academic burnout across different social categories. Students belonging to the General category reported the highest level of burnout, followed by SC students, whereas OBC and ST students reported comparatively lower levels. These differences may reflect variations in socio-economic conditions, educational opportunities, academic expectations, competitive pressures, and access to institutional support. Students from different social categories often experience distinct educational realities, which may influence how they perceive and respond to academic demands. This finding is supported by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of Cultural Capital (1986), which suggests that unequal access to social and cultural resources can shape educational experiences and outcomes. The result also aligns with studies indicating that contextual and socio-economic factors contribute to differences in academic stress and burnout among university students. However, some

previous investigations have found no significant differences across social groups after controlling for institutional and economic factors. Such contrasting findings indicate that the relationship between social category and academic burnout is likely influenced by broader educational and socio-cultural contexts rather than social category alone. The correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between age and academic burnout. This finding suggests that academic burnout is experienced relatively similarly across different age groups within the present sample. Since the participants were higher education students whose ages fell within a relatively narrow developmental range, they were likely exposed to similar academic expectations, assessment systems, and educational challenges. Consequently, age alone may not be a sufficient predictor of burnout. This finding is consistent with the Student Burnout Model proposed by Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya (2014), which emphasizes that academic workload, study engagement, learning environment, and available support are stronger determinants of burnout than chronological age. Several previous studies have likewise reported weak or non-significant associations between age and academic burnout among university students. Nevertheless, a few investigations have identified modest age-related differences, particularly when participants represented broader educational levels or different stages of higher education. These inconsistencies suggest that age may influence burnout only under specific educational and developmental circumstances.

Taken together, the findings indicate that academic burnout among higher education students is shaped by a combination of personal, familial, and socio-contextual factors. Gender, family type, and social category emerged as significant determinants, whereas age did not show a significant association with burnout. These findings support the broader perspective that academic burnout develops through the interaction of individual characteristics and environmental influences rather than through any single demographic factor. Consistent with the educational burnout framework developed by Maslach and Leiter (2016), reducing burnout requires balancing academic demands with adequate personal and social resources. Therefore, higher education institutions should strengthen student support systems by providing accessible counselling services, stress management and resilience-building programmes, peer mentoring opportunities, and family engagement initiatives. Faculty members should also be encouraged to adopt supportive teaching practices, identify students experiencing excessive academic stress, and promote a positive learning environment. Collaborative efforts involving educational institutions, teachers, families, and policymakers will be essential for reducing academic burnout and fostering students' psychological

resilience, academic engagement, and overall well-being in higher education institutions across West Bengal.

6. Educational Implications

The findings of the present study offer several important implications for higher education institutions, educators, student support services, and educational policymakers in West Bengal. The significant difference in academic burnout between male and female students indicates that burnout is not experienced uniformly across genders. This highlights the need for institutions to develop gender-responsive support mechanisms that acknowledge the different academic pressures, emotional experiences, and coping patterns of male and female students. Colleges and universities should strengthen counselling services, organize stress management workshops, and promote mental health awareness programmes that encourage students to seek support whenever they experience prolonged academic stress. Faculty members should also be sensitized to recognize early signs of burnout and respond with appropriate academic guidance and emotional support. The significant variation in academic burnout according to family type suggests that students' home environments play an important role in their ability to manage academic demands. Students from nuclear families may have comparatively fewer opportunities for emotional encouragement and shared responsibilities, making them more vulnerable to academic stress. Educational institutions should therefore provide additional mentoring and peer-support programmes, particularly for students who may have limited family support. Orientation programmes for parents and guardians can also increase awareness of the importance of providing a supportive home environment that encourages healthy study habits, emotional well-being, and effective stress management. The finding that academic burnout differs significantly across social categories emphasizes the importance of creating equitable and inclusive learning environments. Although higher education institutions strive to provide equal opportunities, students from different social backgrounds may experience varying academic expectations, financial pressures, and access to educational resources. Institutions should strengthen academic support systems by offering mentoring, remedial assistance, career guidance, and financial support wherever necessary. Encouraging inclusive classroom practices and fostering a culture of mutual respect can help reduce unnecessary academic pressure while promoting a greater sense of belonging among students from diverse backgrounds. The absence of a significant relationship between age and academic burnout suggests that burnout is not determined by age alone within the higher education context. Instead, students across

different age groups may encounter similar academic workloads, examination pressures, and institutional expectations. Therefore, burnout prevention programmes should be designed for the entire student community rather than targeting specific age groups. Regular screening for burnout, resilience-building activities, time-management training, mindfulness practices, and psychological counselling should be made available to all students throughout their academic journey.

Overall, the findings highlight the need for a comprehensive institutional approach to preventing academic burnout. Higher education institutions should move beyond an exclusive focus on academic achievement and place equal emphasis on students' psychological health and overall well-being. Establishing student wellness centres, peer mentoring networks, academic advising systems, and accessible counselling services can significantly reduce the negative effects of prolonged academic stress. Teachers should receive professional development on identifying burnout symptoms, adopting supportive pedagogical practices, and maintaining positive teacher–student relationships. Collaboration among educational institutions, families, mental health professionals, and policymakers is essential for developing sustainable strategies that promote resilience, academic engagement, and healthy learning environments.

At the policy level, educational authorities should recognize academic burnout as an important issue affecting students' learning, motivation, and long-term educational outcomes. Policies should encourage the integration of mental health promotion, stress management education, and student well-being initiatives within higher education institutions. Adequate investment in counselling infrastructure, faculty training, student support services, and evidence-based intervention programmes will contribute to reducing burnout while fostering academic success, psychological resilience, and holistic development among higher education students in West Bengal.

7. CONCLUSION

The present study was undertaken to examine the influence of selected demographic characteristics on academic burnout among higher education students in West Bengal. The findings provide valuable insights into the factors associated with students' experience of academic burnout within the higher education context. The study revealed significant differences in academic burnout based on gender, family type, and social category. Male students reported comparatively higher levels of academic burnout than female students, suggesting that gender-related differences in academic experiences, coping strategies, and

perceived responsibilities may influence students' susceptibility to burnout. Similarly, students belonging to nuclear families experienced higher levels of burnout than those from joint families, highlighting the importance of family support and the home environment in helping students manage academic stress. Significant differences were also observed across social categories, indicating that variations in social and educational contexts may contribute to differences in students' burnout experiences. In contrast, the study found no significant relationship between age and academic burnout. This suggests that students across different age groups within higher education are exposed to comparable academic demands and challenges, resulting in relatively similar levels of burnout. The finding indicates that demographic and socio-contextual characteristics appear to exert a greater influence on academic burnout than chronological age. Overall, the study demonstrates that academic burnout is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction of individual, family, and social factors. The findings reinforce the importance of addressing students' psychological well-being alongside their academic development. Academic success cannot be sustained without adequate attention to students' mental health, emotional resilience, and capacity to cope with academic demands. The study further emphasizes the need for higher education institutions to adopt proactive strategies that promote student well-being through counselling services, stress management programmes, mentoring systems, inclusive educational practices, and supportive teaching approaches. Creating learning environments that encourage academic engagement while reducing unnecessary stress can contribute significantly to preventing burnout and enhancing students' overall educational experience. In conclusion, reducing academic burnout requires a collaborative effort involving higher education institutions, teachers, families, mental health professionals, and policymakers. By recognizing the diverse factors that contribute to burnout and implementing comprehensive support systems, stakeholders can foster resilient, motivated, and psychologically healthy students who are better equipped to achieve both academic success and personal well-being.

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