

STUDY ENGAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC BURNOUT IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

James Kay - Kabarak University

Racheal N. Wanjohi – Mt Kenya University

Introduction

- University and college experiences result in distress for some students
 - structured coercive activities (e.g., attending classes and doing assignments),
 - aim toward a specific goal (i.e., passing exams and acquiring a degree)
- This may take
 - the more general form of anxiety or depression
 - the more specific form of study burnout

Consequences of academic burnout

- academic burnout is a significant problem associated with
 - poor academic performance
 - low self-efficacy
 - negative perceptions of the learning environment/available support
 - high levels of perceived workload
 - concern over mistakes and doubts about action and
 - low coping effectiveness
- Personal dysfunctions,
 - physical exhaustion,
 - insomnia,
 - increased ADA
 - lower motivation,
 - dissatisfaction,
 - social conflicts,

Study Engagement

- academic engagement as ‘a positive and fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption’.
- Vigour characterises the energy one invests in studying,
- dedication the meaning and purpose one experiences when studying and
- absorption the extent to which one is engrossed in one’s studies (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Study engagement is a variable of central interest to educational psychology today
- study engagement conceptualized as the outcome of a process in which the university provides a social context that makes students feel **competent, autonomous** and **related**
- Study engagement can be **behavioural** or **emotional**.
- Behavioural - indicators = effort, exertion, intensity and absorption and
- Emotional - indicators = interest, enjoyment, enthusiasm and vitality

- study engagement indicators
- how much students enjoy their studies (**academic orientation**),
- how consistently they work throughout the semester (**academic application**)
- how much time and energy they invest in their studies (e.g. **hours per week spent preparing for lectures**)

Methodology

- **Participants**
 - 105 students (male = 47; female = 58)
 - mean age was 20.0 years (SD = 2.4; range = 18 - 30 years).
 - 2nd 3rd 4th year regular undergraduate students.
- **Design and procedures**
 - This was a cross sectional survey
 - multi-stage sampling procedures were

Measures

- Study engagement - Work Engagement Scale for Students (WESS)
 - This scale has 14 items: vigour (5 items); dedication (5 items); absorption; (4 items)
- academic burnout - Maslach Burnout Inventory – Student Survey (MBI-SS)
 - MBI-SS consists of 15 items: exhaustion (5 items); cynicism (4 items); reduced efficacy (6 items)

Results

Descriptive statistics and internal reliability scores for the perceived indicators of study engagement and academic burnout symptoms

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>skew</i>	<i>kurt</i>	<i>α</i>
Vigour	3.69	.84	-.37	-.02	.70
Dedication	4.48	.90	-.26	-.02	.74
Absorption	3.52	.75	-.09	-.05	.63*
Overall Engagement	3.93	.77	-.20	-.19	.85
Exhaustion	3.92	1.10	.32	.10	.79
Cynicism	3.50	1.14	-.02	-.82	.73
Reduced Efficacy	3.41	.93	.09	.24	.79
Overall Burnout	3.60	.85	.85	-.16	.87

Pearson correlations among indicators of study engagement and academic burnout

	V	x	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Vi	3.69	.84	-						
2	De	4.48	.90	.57**	-					
3	Ab	3.52	.75	.42**	.33**	-				
4	O. E	3.93	.77	.86**	.87**	.53**	-			
5	Ex	3.92	1.10	-.39**	-.31*	.13	-.34**	-		
6	Cy	3.50	1.14	-.53**	-.62**	.12	-.61**	.53**	-	
7	r E	3.41	.93	-.52**	-.77**	-.25	-.73**	.5**	.65*	-
8	O. B	3.60	.85	-.59**	-.69**	-.01	-.68**	.77**	.87**	.82**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Discussion

- The study hypothesis that study engagement and academic burnout are negatively related, was confirmed.
- the relatively high correlation of EF with engagement is in accordance with Maslach and Leiter (1997), who argued that efficacy constitutes a part of the engagement construct itself.
- as expected in the current study, CY is strongly negatively correlated with DE.
- This finding confirms that CY and DE are at least to some extent each other's opposites.
- EX is strongly negatively related to its supposed opposite engagement variable, VI.
- Obviously, in this study, it can be averred that students who feel most dedicated to their study usually show the least cynicism and students who feel vigorous do also exhibit low scores on exhaustion.

Implications

- it was revealed that the respondents had an average score on the emotional exhaustion subscale, high degree of depersonalization, and low degree of personal accomplishment.
- The overall results of this study describe the students to be on the borderline of burnout showing signs of moving toward a high degree of academic burnout.
- Differences between female and male students' burnout levels provided an interesting comparison.
- Although no statistical significant was found, female students were found to have scored higher on all three burnout dimensions over their male counterparts.

- These results point to a significant need for further research related to gender and burnout in university students.
- This research established that study engagement and academic burnout are mutually negatively reinforcing and developing ways of boosting engagement in higher learning can be a powerful tool not only for combating academic burnout but also for promoting quality higher education products for the job market.
- Finally the findings of this study have an implication for Student Affairs professionals and Faculty Advisors in Kenyan Institutions of Higher Learning.
- In an effort to attract and retain students, improve student life, and integrate new student groups there is now clear recognition that universities must examine the bigger picture of student activities and how these activities interact with broader life experiences and successes