

DETERMINANTS OF BURNOUT AMONG BACHELOR OF ACCOUNTANCY STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY AT UITM KELANTAN

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Abstract: *Burnout among university students is a growing concern, with various factors contributing to its prevalence. This qualitative case study investigates the key drivers of burnout specifically among Bachelor of Accountancy students at Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan (UiTMCK). Through focus group interviews, the study explores the relationship between learners' drive and burnout levels within this target population. The findings reveal that academic pressures, interpersonal dynamics, financial concerns, and job exploration are significant contributors to burnout among students. Additionally, the study highlights how learners' drive, encompassing motivation and interest in learning, can influence burnout levels. Students with high intrinsic motivation tend to experience less burnout, while those with external motivation or motivation are more prone to burnout. The insights gained from this research provide valuable implications for supporting the well-being and academic success of accounting students. The study recommends the development of targeted interventions to mitigate burnout, such as enhancing academic support, strengthening peer-to-peer connections, and fostering a more nurturing learning environment. By addressing the factors underlying burnout, universities can better equip their students to navigate the challenges of higher education and thrive in their academic and personal pursuits.*

Keywords: *burnout, accounting students, learners' drive, academic performance, student's wellbeing*

Introduction

University students often experience high levels of stress and burnout due to various reasons, including academic pressures, relationships with others, and adapting to new environments. As students go through their studies, they face difficult coursework, tight deadlines, and the need to balance social lives and personal responsibilities. This stress can lead to academic burnout, which includes feeling very tired, becoming negative or detached, and having a lower sense of achievement (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Gili & Rojas, 2023). Understanding burnout among university students is important for creating ways to support their mental health and academic success.

This study focuses on the growing recognition of academic burnout as a major issue among higher education students. Research shows that burnout can negatively affect students' academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being (Fiorilli et al., 2017; Chen & Liu, 2023). Specifically, Bachelor of Accountancy students at UiTMCK face special pressures related to their field of study. The difficult nature of accounting programs, along with expectations from family and society, can lead to burnout (Ali & Hamdy, 2005). Thus, this study aims to explore the specific factors causing burnout in these students.

This study emphasizes the need to address burnout among students because it can lead to serious consequences for their well-being and academic performance if not properly managed. Despite the growing research on academic burnout, there is a lack of studies specifically focused on Bachelor of Accountancy students in UiTMCK (Boada-Grau et al., 2023). This gap shows the importance of studying the unique experiences of these students to create specific interventions.

The main goals of this research are: first, to investigate the factors causing burnout among Bachelor of Accountancy students at UiTMCK; second, to examine the relationship between students' motivation and interest in learning and their burnout levels; and third, to suggest strategies to reduce burnout and improve students' well-being and academic performance (Dev et al., 2019). By achieving these goals, the study aims to provide insights to help develop support measures for accounting students.

This study is limited to Bachelor of Accountancy students at UiTMCK, which may limit the findings to other student groups. However, the importance of this research lies in its potential to increase understanding of burnout among accounting students. The insights gained from this study will help develop targeted interventions to support the mental health and academic success of these students, helping them deal with the challenges of higher education more effectively (Rahmatpour et al., 2023).

Literature Review

Burnout among University Students

Burnout among university students is becoming a serious concern around the world. Many studies have shown how common it is and the negative effects it can have. Academic burnout, which includes feeling very tired, becoming negative, and having less sense of achievement, can greatly affect students' motivation, performance, and overall well-being (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Gili & Rojas, 2023). A review by Madigan et al. (2023) found that burnout is common among students and can hurt their motivation, performance, and quality of life.

In Malaysia, burnout among university students is also receiving attention. A study by Ali and Hamdy (2005) found that burnout in Malaysian university students was linked to a lack of support from supervisors and negative work results. Similarly, a review by Boada-Grau et al. (2023) noted that academic burnout can be a problem and barrier for students in Malaysia.

The reasons for burnout among university students are complex. Academic pressures, such as heavy coursework, tight deadlines, and high expectations, can lead to emotional exhaustion (Chen & Liu, 2023). Interpersonal issues, financial worries, and the difficulties of adjusting to new environments can also worsen burnout (Dev et al., 2019). A study by Rahmatpour et al. (2023) found that Malaysian undergraduates are especially at risk of experiencing academic burnout due to these factors.

The effects of burnout on university students can be serious. It can lead to poorer academic performance, more absences, and even dropping out (Chue & Cheung, 2021). Additionally, burnout can harm students' mental health, causing increased stress, anxiety, and depression (Fiorilli et al., 2017). A review by Vizoso et al. (2019) found that academic burnout can have significant negative effects on students' well-being and performance.

To tackle burnout among university students, specific interventions are needed. These should focus on reducing the factors that cause burnout and supporting students' mental health and well-being. A meta-analysis by Madigan et al. (2023) found that interventions like mindfulness, rational emotive behavior therapy, and cognitive behavioral therapy can help reduce burnout. However, more research is needed to develop and assess the effectiveness of these interventions, especially in the Malaysian context.

Factors contributing to burnout among University Students in Malaysia

Burnout among university students in Malaysia has become a major issue, attracting attention from researchers and educators. Academic burnout, which includes feeling very tired, becoming negative, and having less sense of achievement, is linked to several factors such as academic pressures, social dynamics, and personal issues. Understanding these factors is important for creating effective ways to reduce burnout and improve student well-being.

One major factor causing burnout among Malaysian university students is the heavy academic pressure they face. Students often deal with large workloads, tight deadlines, and high expectations from themselves and their institutions (Daud et al., 2020). This constant pressure can lead to feelings of inadequacy and being overwhelmed, which are key signs of burnout (Hwang & Kim, 2022). A study at Universiti Malaysia Sabah found that students reported high levels of exhaustion and negativity, showing a strong link between academic demands and burnout (Chen, 2022). Additionally, Malaysia's focus on exams increases this issue, as students frequently prepare for major exams, which raises stress levels (El Barusi & Kurniawati, 2024).

Social factors also play a big role in burnout among university students. Poor relationships with others, lack of social support, and feelings of being alone can greatly add to students' emotional exhaustion (Rosales-Ricardo et al., 2021). Daud et al. (2020) found that students with few social interactions and support are more likely to experience burnout. Dissatisfaction with academic supervision and mentorship can also lead to feelings of disconnection and frustration, making burnout worse (Chue & Cheung, 2021).

Financial issues are another important factor affecting burnout among Malaysian university students. Many students face financial difficulties, which can increase stress and anxiety,

adding to their burnout levels (Fariborz et al., 2019). Balancing academic work with part-time jobs to support their studies can create a conflict between academic responsibilities and financial needs, leading to emotional tiredness (Gili & Rojas, 2023).

Finally, personal factors like lifestyle choices and coping methods affect how likely students are to experience burnout. Students who take part in self-care activities, such as exercising and hobbies, usually report lower levels of burnout (Hwang & Kim, 2022). On the other hand, those who neglect their mental and physical health for academic work are at higher risk of burnout (El Barusi & Kurniawati, 2024). This shows the importance of promoting a balanced lifestyle to help reduce academic stress.

In conclusion, burnout among university students in Malaysia is caused by various factors, including academic pressures, social issues, financial problems, and personal lifestyle choices. Addressing these factors with targeted solutions is important for improving student well-being and academic success.

Leaners' Drive

Students' motivation and interest in learning are very important in affecting burnout levels among university students in Malaysia. Academic burnout, which includes feeling very tired, becoming negative, and having less sense of achievement, is recognized as a major issue that impacts students' well-being and academic performance (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Gili & Rojas, 2023). Understanding how students' motivation and interest affect burnout is crucial for creating effective ways to support them.

Motivation is a key factor that can either worsen or reduce burnout. Intrinsic motivation, which means doing activities because they are enjoyable and satisfying, is often linked to lower levels of burnout (Fariborz et al., 2019). Intrinsically motivated students usually show higher levels of engagement and persistence in their studies, which can help protect against academic stress (Hwang & Kim, 2022). On the other hand, students who are motivated by external rewards, like grades, parental approval, or job opportunities, may experience higher burnout due to the pressure to meet these expectations (Daud et al., 2020). This shows why it's important to encourage intrinsic motivation to help reduce burnout.

Interest in learning also affects burnout levels. Students who find their coursework interesting and relevant are less likely to experience burnout (Chen, 2022). Research shows that when students see their studies as meaningful and connected to their personal goals, they are more likely to stay motivated and resilient during academic challenges (Rosales-Ricardo et al., 2021). On the other hand, lack of interest in learning can lead to disengagement, which is a big predictor of burnout (El Barusi & Kurniawati, 2024). This highlights the need for teachers to create engaging learning environments that spark curiosity and passion.

Self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to succeed, is also important in burnout. High self-efficacy is linked to greater motivation and persistence, helping students handle academic pressures (Gili & Rojas, 2023). In contrast, low self-efficacy can lead to feelings of helplessness and higher burnout (Chue & Cheung, 2021). Therefore, improving students' self-efficacy through supportive teaching and positive feedback can be an effective way to reduce burnout.

Social support systems are also crucial. Students who have strong support from peers, family, and faculty are more likely to stay motivated and interested in learning, which helps reduce

burnout (Daud et al., 2020). A lack of support can increase feelings of isolation and stress, leading to higher burnout rates (Fariborz et al., 2019). This emphasizes the need to build a supportive academic community to help students deal with burnout.

In conclusion, students' motivation and interest in learning play a critical role in influencing burnout levels among university students in Malaysia. By promoting intrinsic motivation, creating engaging learning experiences, boosting self-efficacy, and building strong support systems, educational institutions can help reduce burnout and improve students' well-being.

Gaps in the Literature and Present Studies

The issue of burnout among university students in Malaysia has gained more attention recently, but there are still major gaps in understanding its causes and how to effectively address it. While many studies have looked at different aspects of burnout, such as feeling very tired, becoming negative, and having less sense of achievement, there is still not enough comprehensive knowledge about how these issues affect different student groups and situations (El Barusi & Kurniawati, 2024; Gili & Rojas, 2023).

One significant gap is the lack of focus on different academic fields. Most research has concentrated on specific areas, like medical and health-related programs, leaving students in other fields less studied (Rosales-Ricardo et al., 2021). This is important because burnout can look different in various academic settings due to unique stressors and demands. For example, medical students might face burnout from high-stakes exams and clinical placements, while students in arts or humanities might deal with creative blocks or lack of engagement (Chen, 2022). Thus, a broader approach that looks at burnout across different disciplines is needed to develop effective support systems.

Additionally, while intrinsic motivation and engagement are known to help reduce burnout, there is not enough research on how these factors can be encouraged within Malaysian higher education (Hwang & Kim, 2022). Studies show that intrinsically motivated students often experience lower burnout levels, but how motivation affects burnout needs more exploration (Fariborz et al., 2019). Understanding these mechanisms could provide useful information for educators and policymakers aiming to create better learning environments.

Another important gap is the role of social support in reducing burnout. Although some studies have recognized the importance of support from peers and faculty, there is a lack of research on how these support systems work in Malaysian universities (Daud et al., 2020). Additionally, cultural factors may affect students' willingness to seek help and the effectiveness of support systems. Cultural stigmas about mental health may prevent students from using available resources, which can worsen their feelings of isolation and burnout (Chue & Cheung, 2021).

Furthermore, most existing research uses quantitative methods, which might miss the detailed experiences of students dealing with burnout. Qualitative studies that explore students' personal experiences can provide deeper insights into the factors contributing to burnout (Salmela-Aro et al., 2009). Including qualitative approaches in future research can help capture the complexities of burnout and lead to more tailored interventions.

In conclusion, while research on burnout among university students in Malaysia has grown, there are still important gaps. Addressing these gaps with research that includes different academic disciplines, explores how to build intrinsic motivation, examines social support, and

uses qualitative methods is essential for creating effective strategies to reduce burnout and improve student well-being.

Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach to explore the factors causing burnout among Bachelor of Accountancy students at UiTMCK. By using focus group interviews, the research aims to gather detailed insights into the students' experiences, views, and feelings about burnout and how motivation affects burnout levels. This method is good for understanding complex issues because it lets researchers explore participants' thoughts and feelings in a supportive group setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Participants for the focus group interviews were selected using purposive sampling. Eight students were chosen, each from one of the eight groups of students studying AC220 courses in their semester 4 at UiTMCK. This sampling method is suitable because it helps the researcher pick individuals who have relevant characteristics for the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Participants were chosen from the Bachelor of Accountancy program at UiTMCK, ensuring they have direct experience with the academic pressures and challenges in their field. The criteria for selection included students currently enrolled in the program who have experienced symptoms of burnout or stress related to their academic workload.

The focus group interviews aimed to discuss participants' experiences with burnout and factors affecting their motivation and interest in learning. Each focus group included eight participants from the AC220 course, allowing for a lively exchange of ideas while making sure all voices were heard (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The interviews were semi-structured and guided by open-ended questions to get detailed and rich responses. Topics included academic pressures, social dynamics, financial concerns, and the role of motivation in their academic experiences.

The interviews were held in a comfortable and neutral setting to encourage open discussion. Each session was audio-recorded with the participant's consent, and detailed notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and group interactions. The recordings were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Thematic analysis was used to examine the data from the focus group interviews. This method involves finding, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis followed a six-step process: getting familiar with the data, creating initial codes, finding themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the final report. This approach helps to understand the factors causing burnout and how motivation relates to burnout levels among the participants.

Results and Discussions

The focus group interviews conducted with 8 Bachelor of Accountancy students at UiTMCK revealed several key factors contributing to burnout and the relationship between learners' drive and burnout levels.

Academic Pressure

The participants in this study all agreed that academic pressures, such as heavy workloads, tight deadlines, and high expectations, are major factors causing burnout among Bachelor of Accountancy students at UiTMCK. Many students talked about feeling overwhelmed by the large amount of coursework and assignments. One student said, "The amount of coursework

and assignments we have to complete is overwhelming. It feels like there's always something due, and it's hard to keep up." Others shared similar feelings, mentioning that the constant pressure to keep good grades was taking a significant toll on their mental health. These findings match previous research, which also points to excessive academic demands as a key cause of burnout among university students in Malaysia, showing that this is a widespread issue affecting many fields.

The focus group interviews reveal the urgent need for universities to review the academic demands on students and create strategies to balance challenging coursework with manageable workloads. Universities could help by providing clear deadlines, offering academic support services, and teaching effective time management skills. The mental health impact of these academic pressures is also important; universities should focus on mental health support, such as counseling and stress management workshops, to help students deal with burnout. By creating a supportive learning environment that addresses both academic and mental health needs, institutions can improve student well-being and academic performance.

Interpersonal Dynamics

The participants in this study highlighted that interpersonal dynamics play a significant role in their experiences of burnout, especially concerning academic support and collaboration. Many students mentioned feeling isolated because of a lack of support from lecturers. One student said, "The lack of support from some lecturers can be demotivating. We feel like we're on our own sometimes." This reflects a broader concern about the availability and responsiveness of faculty. When students feel unsupported, their stress and burnout can worsen as they struggle to get help or clarification on difficult course material. This finding matches previous research showing that inadequate support from faculty can lead to higher levels of burnout among students (Daud et al., 2020).

Additionally, conflicts within group projects were mentioned as another source of stress that contributes to burnout. One participant noted, "Conflicts with group members during group projects add to the stress we already face." Although group assignments are meant to promote teamwork and learning, they can often lead to frustration and anxiety, especially if the group dynamics are poor. Problems such as unequal participation, different work ethics, and communication issues can add extra pressure on students who are already dealing with academic demands. This is consistent with research by Rosales-Ricardo et al. (2021), which found that negative relationships and group conflicts are significant factors in student burnout. Addressing these interpersonal issues is crucial for creating a supportive academic environment where students feel comfortable seeking help and working together. By improving these dynamics, universities can help reduce burnout and enhance the overall student experience.

Financial Concerns

Participants in this study consistently identified financial concerns as a major factor contributing to their burnout. Many students talked about the stress of managing tuition fees and living expenses, which creates ongoing anxiety. One student said, "Worrying about tuition fees and living expenses adds to the stress we already face academically." This reflects a common reality for many students who must balance their studies with financial responsibilities. The pressure to stay financially stable can be overwhelming, adding to the stress from academic challenges.

Additionally, the need for many students to work part-time jobs to support themselves further increases their burnout. As one participant noted, "Having to work part-time jobs to support ourselves takes away time from our studies and contributes to burnout." Juggling both academic responsibilities and employment can lead to feelings of exhaustion and frustration, as students often feel stretched thin between their jobs and coursework. Research shows that financial stress is a significant predictor of burnout among university students, as it leads to higher anxiety and lower academic performance (Fariborz et al., 2019; Gili & Rojas, 2023).

These findings highlight the need for universities to recognize and address students' financial challenges. Institutions might consider offering financial aid programs, scholarships, or flexible payment plans to ease students' financial burdens. Providing resources on financial literacy and budgeting could also help students manage their finances better and reduce financial stress. By addressing these financial issues, universities can create a more supportive environment that supports student well-being and academic success.

Learners' Drive and Burnout

The participants' insights clearly show the strong connection between learners' drive—especially intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation—and their experiences of burnout. Students who felt a strong intrinsic motivation, meaning they had a genuine interest in their studies and saw a link to their future careers, said this motivation helped them handle the challenges of their academic journey. One student shared, "I find the course material engaging and relevant to my future career goals, which helps me stay motivated despite the challenges." This kind of intrinsic motivation not only leads to deeper engagement with the material but also helps students stay resilient in the face of academic stress. Another participant added, "When I'm interested in the subject matter, I'm more likely to push through difficult times." These findings are consistent with research showing that intrinsic motivation helps reduce burnout, as students who find personal meaning in their studies are better able to cope with stress (Hwang & Kim, 2022).

On the other hand, participants who were more extrinsically motivated reported higher levels of burnout, showing the negative effects of studying mainly for external rewards. One student said, "The pressure to get good grades for my parents' sake is overwhelming at times," pointing out the stress from external expectations. Another participant said, "I sometimes feel like I'm studying just for the degree, not because I'm really interested in the material." Relying on extrinsic motivators like grades or parental approval often makes studying feel like a transaction, where the enjoyment of learning is overshadowed by the pressure to perform. Research supports this view, indicating that extrinsic motivation is linked to higher burnout rates, as it can lead to feelings of inadequacy and disconnection from learning (Fariborz et al., 2019; Gili & Rojas, 2023).

These findings suggest that promoting intrinsic motivation in education could be a key strategy to reduce burnout. Educators and institutions should focus on creating engaging and relevant coursework that connects academic content to real-world applications, helping students find personal interest in their studies. Offering opportunities for self-directed learning and encouraging students to set personal academic goals can further strengthen intrinsic motivation, leading to better well-being and academic resilience. By addressing the motivational factors that influence burnout, universities can create a more supportive environment that fosters both academic success and mental health.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the complex nature of burnout among Bachelor of Accountancy students at UiTMCK. Key factors influencing burnout include academic pressures, interpersonal dynamics, financial concerns, and learners' drive. Participants described feeling overwhelmed by heavy academic workloads and the constant pressure to excel, which contributes to stress and emotional exhaustion. They also noted that insufficient support from lecturers and conflicts in group projects added to their feelings of isolation and frustration. Financial issues, especially balancing academic work with part-time jobs, were also significant stressors.

The study also emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivation. Students who found their coursework engaging and relevant to their career goals reported experiencing lower levels of burnout. This suggests that fostering intrinsic motivation could be a key strategy to help reduce burnout. To address burnout and improve student well-being, universities should consider several targeted interventions. These might include offering better academic support services, creating a more supportive learning environment, and designing engaging curricula that connect with students' career goals. Additionally, universities could implement programs to help with financial stress, such as scholarships or financial literacy workshops, to ease the financial burden on students.

Future Research Recommendations

Future research should build on the insights gained from this study to explore the complex nature of burnout among university students in Malaysia. One important direction is to study burnout across a broader range of academic disciplines beyond the Bachelor of Accountancy program. While this study focused on accounting students, understanding how burnout affects students in other fields, such as engineering, humanities, or sciences, is crucial. Expanding research to include different programs and institutions, including both public and private universities, will provide a more comprehensive picture of burnout and identify common and unique challenges faced by students.

Another key area for future research is the longitudinal study of motivation and burnout. This study highlighted the relationship between intrinsic motivation and lower burnout rates. Tracking changes in motivation and burnout over time could offer valuable insights into the long-term effects of these factors. Longitudinal research would help identify causal relationships and the impact of interventions aimed at enhancing motivation. Understanding how motivation evolves throughout students' academic journeys can inform the development of strategies that support sustained motivation and resilience.

In conclusion, this study has shed light on the multifaceted nature of burnout among Bachelor of Accountancy students at UiTMCK. By identifying the key factors contributing to burnout—academic pressures, interpersonal dynamics, financial concerns, and learners' drive—this research underscores the need for comprehensive interventions. Universities should address these factors with targeted strategies such as improved academic support, a supportive community, and initiatives that foster intrinsic motivation. Prioritizing student mental health and well-being is essential for developing resilient and successful graduates capable of navigating future challenges effectively.

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