

## Dose interest predicts academic burnout?

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** the main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between interest and academic burnout. **Method:** 238 female students from university of Isfahan were selected by random simple sampling and were assessed with Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS) and Self Directed Search (short form). Data analysis ran by product-moment Pearson correlation matrix and linear regression. **Results:** step-wise Multiple Regression Analysis revealed that investigative interest negatively is predictor of academic burnout. **Conclusion:** Counselors should help students engage in Investigative activities for prevent from academic burnout.

**Keywords:** Academic burnout, Interest, Female university students.

### 1. Introduction:

Burnout is a problem affecting many college and university students (Jacobs & Dodd, 2003; Schaufeli, et al., 2002) and in this case of students, burnout refer to feelings of exhaustion due to study demands, cynical attitudes toward one's studies, and feelings of ineptness as a student (Schaufeli, et al., 2002).

However, it is now recognized that, although students are not formally employed by the university, their studies encompass structured and often coercive activities (e.g., attending class and submitting assignments) that can be considered work (Hu et al., 2009). Lingard (2007) was reported that university students are a high risk group for burnout. Further, Boudreau et al. (2004) found that burnout was assessed with numerous stressors, including long hours engaged in practicum work, concern about academic grades, uncertainly about the future, low levels of control, lees satisfaction with the balance between personal and professional life and low levels of support from peers and friends.

Burnout is related to various variable and Features one of these variable is personality characteristics that have generally been related to burnout (Jacobs & Dodd, 2003). Some

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researcher have found extraversion to be correlated only with emotional exhaustion and reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Morgan, 2008). Zellars et al., (2000) also believed that extraversion to be correlated only with depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Momberg (2004) asserted that interest is as one aspect of personality and define it as preference some activity and not preference other activities.

About structure of interest was proposed many models (Tracey & Rounds, 1996b; prediger et al, 1993) but Holland's interest model is the most popular and famous model. According to Holland theory, there are six interest types: Realistic(R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social(S), Enterprising (E) and Conventional(C) (Holland,1992).

People have combinations of these six types, although most people can be describe by a single most prominent type, with other types providing moderating influences on their behavior and preferences. In brief, people with Realistic personalities tend to prefer working with machines, tools, planet, or animals. The investigative person is likely to enjoy puzzles and challenges that require the use of intellect. People with Artistic personalities tend to have artistic, innovational, intuitional, and aesthetic interests. People with social personalities tend to be motivated by altruism across the variety of contexts that make up their lives. People with Enterprising personalities tend to enjoy influencing, leading, managing and persuading. People with Conventional personalities like to work with data and numbers (Sharf, 2006).

People with specific interest are attracted to activities and occupations associated with those types, and they demonstrate behavioral repertoires, patterns of likes and dislikes, and concordant attitudes and values that support their developing interests (Haghshenas et al, 2011). Although many researches about academic burnout are done but up to now no research is done about the relationship between academic burnout and interest. The aim of the present study is to examine the relationship between academic burnout and interest among female university student in university of Isfahan.

## **2. Method:**

### *2.1. Participants*

The participants were 238 female university students that were selected with simple random sampling.

## **3. Measures**

The *Maslach Burnout Inventory (Student-Survey)* (MBI-SS; Schaufeli et al, 2002): This scale, designed to measure the burnout level of students, contains of 15 items which evaluate the dimensions of Emotional Exhaustion (EX) (5 items, for example: I feel exhausted at the

end of university day), Cynicism (CY) (4 items, for example: I feel more cynic about applying my lessons ), Academic Efficacy (EF) (6 items, for example: In my opinion I am a good student). Student must indicate the level of agreement with every item, which were scored on a 7-point frequency rating scale ranging from 0: Never to 6: Always. High scores on EX, CY and low scores on EF are indicative of burnout (Academic Efficacy items are reversed scored). In the first form of MBI-SS reliability of this inventory through the method of internal consistency in sample of Dutch, Portugal and Spanish has been reported:

Spanish sample (EX 0/74, CY 0/79, EF 0/76).

Portugal sample (EX 0/79, CY 0/82, EF 0/69).

Dutch sample (EX 0/80, CY 0/86, EF 0/67). In Iran Rostami et al. (2011) examined reliability of this scale with methods: internal consistency method and test-retest. Coefficient Cronbach's alpha for the EX, CY and EF respectively was 88, 90, 84 and show good internal consistency and (0/78) for. test-retest reliability about 4 weeks later, obtaining a reliability coefficient of 0/89, 0/84 and 0/67 respectively for EX, CY and EF, which result show the good stability of the tool. The Concurrent validity of this tool also with the University Depression Inventory (USDI) is confirmed.

The *measure used was the Self-Directed Search (SDS), Short Form* (Holland, 1994b). This instrument measures participants' interests in activities and interests in occupations as well as solicits ratings of self-estimated abilities and ratings of self-competencies. The six Interests in Activities Scales measure whether participants are attracted to individual activities associated with each personality type. Sample items from the Interests in Activities Scales (rated 1= *I like this activity* or 0 = *I dislike this activity*) are "Fix electrical things" (R) and "Read scientific books or magazines" (I).

The six Self-Estimated Competencies Scales measure whether participants believe they can competently engage in various activities associated with each personality type. Sample items from the Self- Estimated Competencies Scales (rated 1 = *Yes, I can do this activity well* or 0 = *No, I cannot do this activity well*) are "I can do a painting, watercolor, or sculpture" (A) and "I am good at helping people who are upset or troubled" (S). The six Occupational Interests Scales measure whether occupations associated with each vocational personality type are interesting or appealing to participants. Sample items from the Occupational Interests Scales (rated 1 = *Yes, I am interested in this occupation* or 0 = *No, I am not interested in this occupation*) are "airplane mechanic" (R), "sales manager" (E), and "bank teller" (C). The six Self- Estimated Abilities Scales measure the extent to which participants believe they possess

the abilities to learn tasks related to specific vocational types. Sample items from the Self-Estimated Abilities Scales (rated 1 to 7, with 1 = *low ability*, 4 = *average ability*, and 7 = *high ability*) are “artistic ability” (A) and “teaching ability” (S). (The Occupational Daydreams activity, which is part of the SDS, was not scored for use in this study because of the variability in completion rates among the participants).

Summing of all scales corresponding to each Holland type creates a vocational personality score representing that type (e.g., summing all R scales creates the R Vocational Personality Score). Vocational personality scores then are compared to determine an individual’s Holland vocational personality type, with a higher vocational personality score indicating a tendency to more frequently express characteristics indicative of that type of personality. The scales from the Self-Directed Search have shown high reliability and validity across a variety of populations. For example, SDS scores have been found to relate to other vocational personality variables such as self-efficacy expectations among high school students (Feehan & Johnston, 1999), and extraversion, openness to experience, and conscientiousness among Navy trainees (Gottfredson, Jones, & Holland, 1993). In Iran Taghizadeh (2000) examined reliability of this inventory with split half method. He reported (. /61) coefficient for realistic interest upto (. /83) for social interest. Validity of this form with correlation with original form was between (. /74) upto (. /92).

#### 4. Results

To study the relation of interest with academic burnout, only investigative interest and social interest (only with cynicism subscale) were correlated. Results are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlation between academic burnout and interests

	Realistic	investigative	Artistic	Social	Enterprising	Conventional
Exhaustion	-./1	-./23**	./04	-./1	./02	-./13
cynicism	-./03	-./29**	-./03	-./18*	./001	-./05
Academic efficacy	-./04	-./24**	-./04	-./07	-./06	-./07

P<0/01\*\* P<0/05\*

It is evident from Table 1 that investigative interest has significant negative correlation with all dimensions of academic burnout and also social interest has negative correlation only with cynicism subscale of burnout.

A Step-Wise Multiple Regression Analysis was performed to determine the amount of variance in the dependent variable (academic burnout) that could be accounted for by the

interest variable and the impact of each independent variable in prediction of the dependent variable. Result of the regression analysis reveal that totally 20. % of the variance is explained by the selected variable. Table 2 displays the Results.

Table 2

Regression coefficients and F-ratios for subscales of academic burnout

academic burnout	Variable added	R.C	R <sup>2</sup>	r	F
<b>Subscales</b>					
Exhaustion	Investigative interest	./05	./05	-./23**	10/7
Cynicism	Investigative interest	./09	./09	-./29**	17/63
Academic Efficacy	Investigative interest	./06	./06	-./24**	11/36

Table 3 gives information for the predictor variable that is included in the model. Enterprising, Conventional, Artistic, Social and Realistic interest were excluded.

Table 3

Regression coefficients, F-ratio, unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients for the variable included in the model

Academic burnout	variable	B	SEB	$\beta$
<b>subscales</b>				
Exhaustion	Investigative interest	-./32	-./1	-./23
Cynicism	Investigative interest	./37	.088	./3
Academic Efficacy	Investigative interest	-./4	.11	-./24

## 5. Discussion

The result showed that investigative interest has reverse relation with academic burnout. The result was consistent with the finding of Sharf (2006) that believe these people is apt to enjoy learning and to feel confident about his or her ability to solve mathematical and scientific problems. Such people often enjoy reading about science and discussing scientific issues. They are likely to enjoy courses in math, physics, chemistry, biology, geology and other physical or biological sciences. They are enjoy analyzing or searching for solutions to psychological problems. People with investigative personalities tend to have interest in math and science.

Also Holland (1992) asserted that these people are characterized by a preference for scientific activities. The work environment would emphasize the creation and use of

knowledge through investigation and problem solving. Disciplines that would be considered Investigative would be biology, mathematics, and economics.

In supporting from result of other researchers, Petrovay (2008) and Donnay et al., (1996) also believed that The Investigative type has a preference for activities that involve observational, symbolic, or systematic examination of physical, biological, or cultural events. These preferences typically result in advancing abilities in mathematics and sciences. This type of individual can be described as being curious, analytical, intellectual, and introspective. Thus because of severity interest of investigative types to learning and study and their interest to challenge they are less given academic burnout.

According to Holland's theory individuals have an Investigative personality interest type; they will display the most congruence and satisfaction in Investigative work environments. However, if they are placed in an enterprising work environment, they will display low congruence and satisfaction (Holland, 1992) thus the investigative environment of university is consonant with them, humor them and prevent from academic burnout for these people. Also Miller (2010) asserted that people who had Investigative as their highest code type were more successful in school than those that did not.

Finally, we suggest that both boys and girls students be intentionally engaged in Investigative activities. Opportunities to engage young people in math and science activities, for example, could be provided through participation in university-based math camps, community-sponsored math and science events, visits to city-sponsored science museums, or practice activities such as creating math and science puzzles during university break-time. Helping young men and women consider math and science as an integral part of their vocational personality can decrease their math anxiety and academic burnout and give them confidence to pursue Investigative careers as well as to use math in their everyday lives (Turner, Steward, & Lapan, 2004). As demonstrated by the results of this current study, both boys and girls for prevent from given academic burnout are more likely to develop Investigative personality characteristics by engaging in Investigative activities.

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