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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE ACADEMIC BURNOUT AND PROFESSIONAL SELF-CONCEPT AMONG UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

The relationship between academic burnout and professional self-concept is complex and often influenced by multiple academic, personal, and environmental factors. Generally, higher levels of academic burnout characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a reduced sense of academic efficacy are associated with a lower professional self-concept, as prolonged stress and disengagement can negatively impact a student's confidence and perception of their professional role. This study investigated academic burnout and professional self-concept among 229 undergraduate nursing students at MGM Muthoot College of Nursing, Kozhencherry, using a quantitative, descriptive design. Convenience sampling was used, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising demographic details, a modified Maslach Burnout Inventory, and a modified Nurses' Self-Concept Instrument. Most students were from Semesters II, IV, and VI (26.2% each), while 21.4% were from Semester VII. The majority of participants were aged 18-20 years (74.7%), and most were females (90.8%). More than three-fourth of the students (76.9%) were hostel residents. With regard to enthusiasm for the nursing profession, 69.9% reported moderate interest, and 24.5% reported high interest. Almost all students (95.2%) experienced stress, predominantly due to a combination of academics, clinical duties, pending work, and recurrent examinations (73.4%). Assessment of academic burnout revealed that cynicism was the most prevalent dimension (74.7%), followed by emotional exhaustion (24.5%), while only 0.9% demonstrated academic efficacy. Regarding professional self-concept, the majority of students (93%) exhibited a positive professional self-concept, with only 7% reporting a negative self-concept. Analysis using ANOVA showed no statistically significant difference in academic burnout across semesters ($F = 1.15$, $p = 0.329$). In contrast, professional self-concept differed significantly across semesters ($F = 42.22$, $p < 0.001$). Post-hoc multiple comparison analysis revealed significant differences in professional self-concept between most semester groups, particularly involving Semester VII, indicating an improvement in professional self-concept with academic progression. Chi-square analysis demonstrated a significant association between academic burnout and academic factors such as semester and intensity of enthusiasm for the nursing field ($p < 0.001$). Students with lower enthusiasm levels reported higher levels of cynicism and emotional exhaustion. Similarly, professional self-concept showed significant associations with semester, age, intensity of enthusiasm for nursing, and motives for choosing the nursing profession ($p < 0.05$). Pearson correlation analysis indicated a weak positive and statistically non-significant correlation between academic burnout and professional self-concept ($r = 0.075$, $p = 0.258$), suggesting that academic burnout and professional self-concept were not significantly related in the present study. The findings suggest that while most students maintain a positive view of their professional identity, academic burnout especially in later semesters remains a concern. The study highlights the need for institutional interventions to manage academic stress and promote sustained motivation and professional development throughout the nursing curriculum.

Keywords : Assess, Academic burnout, Professional self concept.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing students are the future of the healthcare workforce, trained to replace retiring professionals and meet growing healthcare demands. With up-to-date knowledge and skills, they bring fresh perspectives that can enhance patient care and drive innovation. However, nursing education is demanding, often leading to academic burnout. This includes emotional exhaustion, detachment from studies, and a sense of reduced academic effectiveness. Burnout can harm students' performance, well-being, and ability to succeed in their future roles. A strong professional self-concept, how students view themselves as future nurses, can help prevent burnout. It develops through education, clinical experiences, and social support, and is linked to greater confidence, competence, and job satisfaction.

Need and Significance in nursing

This study aims to assess the levels of academic burnout and professional self-concept among undergraduate nursing students. Academic burnout is a growing concern, driven by factors such as heavy academic workload, clinical stress, and personal challenges. Understanding the prevalence and causes of burnout can help shape strategies to improve students' academic performance and mental well-being. The study also explores how professional self-concept can buffer against burnout. A strong sense of professional identity may enhance resilience, boost career satisfaction, and help students better cope with stress. Insights from this research can guide educators and policymakers in creating supportive environments that foster both academic success and long term professional development. Ultimately, this research is significant in promoting nursing students' well-being and success. By identifying key stressors and enhancing professional self-concept, nursing programs can target interventions like stress management workshops and mental health support. These efforts can reduce burnout, improve academic outcomes, and strengthen the future nursing workforce.

Statement of the problem

A descriptive study to assess the academic burnout and professional self-concept among undergraduate nursing students at selected colleges of nursing in Pathanamthitta.

Objectives

1. To assess the level of academic burnout among undergraduate nursing students.

2. To assess the level of professional self concept among undergraduate nursing students.
3. To compare the level of academic burnout and professional self-concept among undergraduate nursing students.
4. To find out the association between selected demographic variables and level of academic burnout among undergraduate nursing students.
5. To find out the association between selected demographic variables and level of professional self-concept among undergraduate nursing students.
6. To find the correlation between the level of academic burnout and professional self-concept among undergraduate nursing students.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Research approach

The research approach used in the study was Quantitative Research Approach.

Research design

The research design used in the study was descriptive design.

Setting of the study

Setting is the physical location and condition in which data collection takes place. The present study was conducted at MGM Muthoot College of Nursing, Kozhencherry.

Population

In the present study the accessible population was Undergraduate Nursing students.

Sample

The sample consisted of 229 undergraduate nursing students of MGM Muthoot College of Nursing ,Kozhencherry.

Sample technique

The sampling technique used in the study was Convenient sampling technique.

Inclusion criteria

1. Undergraduate student nurses of age 18-25 years.
2. Students who have completed atleast one semester of study.

Exclusion criteria

1. Students who are not willing to participate in data collection.
2. Students who were absent during data collection period.
3. Students who are studying post graduation or diploma in nursing.

Tool / instruments

Section A - Demographic proforma

Section B - Modified Maslach Burnout Inventory

Section C - Modified Nurses Self concept Instrument

Description of the tool

Section A: Consisted of information regarding demographic variables such as age, gender, year of study, type of stay, Motives behind selecting nursing profession etc.

Section B: Modified Maslach Burnout Inventory is a five-point Likert scale, consisted of 12 statements to assess the academic burnout among nursing students.

Scoring:

1-20 - Academic efficacy, 21-40 - Cynicism,

41-60 - Emotional exhaustion

Section C: Modified Nurses Self concept Instrument. is a five-point Likert scale, consisted of 8 statements to assess the professional self concept among nursing students.

Scoring:

Positive Professional Self-Concept (21-40)

Negative Professional Self-Concept (1-20)

Data collection process

Data collection is a precise, systematic gathering of data relevant to the research through objective questions for the purpose of validating the hypotheses of the study. A convenient sampling technique was used to select the participants. Data collection was done from 21.05.2025 to 23.05.2025. The participants who fulfilled the inclusion and exclusion criteria were included in the study. Questionnaire and five-Point Likert scales were administered to the participants. Approximate 10-15 minutes were taken by participants to complete the data. The subjects were co-operative during the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was planned based on the objectives of study. Data was analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics Chi square test for finding out the association of academic burnout and professional self-concept with the selected demographic variables. For comparison between the level of academic burnout and professional self concept among undergraduate nursing students, ANOVA was used.

RESULT

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of nursing students according to their socio- demographic variables.

Variables		f	%
Semester	Sem. VII	49	21.4%
	Sem. VI	60	26.2%
	Sem. IV	60	26.2%
	Sem. II	60	26.2%
Age	18 - 20 years	171	74.7%
	21 - 22 year	57	24.9%
	23 years and above	1	0.4%
Gender	Male	21	9.2%
	Female	208	90.8%
Type of stay	Hostel	176	76.9%
	Home	39	17.0%
	Paying guest	14	6.1%
Intensity of enthusiasm towards nursing profession	Very interested	56	24.5%
	Moderately interested	160	69.9%
	Not interested at all	13	5.7%
Motives behind selecting nursing profession	Job security	71	31.0%
	Employment guarantee	46	20.1%
	Public perception of nursing	3	1.3%
	Money	91	39.7%
	Encouragement of parents	13	5.7%
	Appropriate with school grade	5	2.2%
Do you feel stressed?	Yes	218	95.2%
	No	11	4.8%
What do you think are the reasons for your stress?	Academics	21	9.2%
	Clinical duty hours	6	2.6%
	Pending works	5	2.2%
	Recurrent examinations	17	7.4%
	All of the above	168	73.4%
	Nil	12	5.2%

Table 2: Description of level of academic burnout among under graduated nursing students (N=229)

Academic burnout	Frequency	Percentage
Academic efficacy	2	0.9%
Cynicism	171	74.7%
Emotional exhaustion	56	24.5%
Total	229	100%

The present study revealed that the majority of nursing students experienced a high level of academic burnout, predominantly characterized by cynicism (74.70%), while the least burnout was observed in academic efficacy (0.90%), indicating a marked negative attitude toward academic activities despite preserved feelings of competence.

Table 3: Description of level of professional self concept among under graduated nursing students. (N=229)

Professional self-concept	Frequency	Percentage
Negative	16	7.0%
Positive	213	93.0%
Total	229	100%

The present study revealed that a substantial majority of nursing students demonstrated a positive professional self-concept (93%), with only a small proportion exhibiting a negative professional self-concept (7%), indicating a generally strong professional identity among the participants.

Table 4: Comparison between the level of academic burn out and professional self concept among undergraduate nursing students using ANOVA

ANOVA – Academic burnout					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	120.12	3	40.04	1.15	0.329
Within Groups	7821.0	8	225	34.76	

ANOVA – Professional self-concept					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	2206.48	3	735.49	42.22	<0.001*
Within Groups	3920.1	225	17.42		

In the study, one-way ANOVA was performed to compare

academic burnout and professional self-concept across different semesters of undergraduate nursing students. For academic burnout, the ANOVA result showed no statistically significant difference between semesters ($F = 1.15$, $p = 0.329$). This indicates that the level of academic burnout remained relatively similar across all semesters, suggesting that students experience comparable burnout regardless of their academic progression. In contrast, for professional self-concept, the ANOVA revealed a highly significant difference between semesters ($F = 42.22$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that professional self-concept changes significantly as students advance through their nursing program, showing a clear semester-based variation. Further post-hoc multiple comparison analysis demonstrated that significant differences were mainly observed between Semester VII and other semesters. Semester VII students showed significantly higher professional self-concept compared to Semester II, IV, and VI ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, Semester IV also differed significantly from Semester VI ($p < 0.01$). However, no significant difference was found between Semester II and Semester VI ($p = 0.879$). Overall, the findings suggest that while academic burnout does not significantly vary across semesters, professional self-concept improves significantly with academic progression, especially in the final semester.

Table 5: Analyze of significant differences between separate semesters using multiple comparisons

Multiple Comparisons: Professional self-concept			
Groups	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Sem. II vs Sem. IV	3.05	0.76	< 0.001*
Sem. II vs Sem. VI	0.57	0.76	0.879
Sem. II vs Sem. VII	8.21	0.80	< 0.001*
Sem. IV vs Sem. VI	2.48	0.76	< 0.01*
Sem. IV vs Sem. VII	5.16	0.80	< 0.001*
Sem. VI vs Sem. VII	7.64	0.80	< 0.001*

Table 6: Association between academic factors and academic burnout

Academic factors		Academic burnout			χ^2	p-value
		Academic efficacy	Cynicism	Emotional exhaustion		
Semester	Sem. VII	2	32	15	27.38	<0.001*
	Sem. VI	0	45	15		
	Sem. IV	0	37	23		
	Sem. II	0	57	3		
	Very interested	0	40	16	34.27	<0.001*
Intensity of enthusiasm towards nursing profession	Moderately interested	0	122	38		
	Not interested at all	2	9	2		

Table7: Association between academic factors and professional self-concept

Academic factors		Professional self-concept		χ^2	p-value
		Negative	Positive		
Semester	Sem. VII	12	37	30.07	< 0.001*
	Sem. VI	2	58		
	Sem. IV	2	58		
	Sem. II	0	60		

Age	18 – 20 years	4	167	23.11	< 0.001*
	21 – 22 year	12	45		
	23 years and above	0	1		
Intensity of enthusiasm towards nursing profession	Very interested	10	46	13.87	< 0.001*
	Moderately interested	5	155		
	Not interested at all	1	12		
Motives behind selecting nursing profession	Job security	8	63	13.02	< 0.05*
	Employment guarantee	2	44		
	Public perception of nursing	0	3		
	Money	3	88		
	Encouragement of parents	1	12		
	Appropriate with school grade	2	3		

Table7: Association between academic factors and professional self-concept

Association between academic factors and professional self-concept was obtained using chi-square test and it revealed that academic factors such as year of study, age, Intensity of enthusiasm for the nursing field and motives behind selecting nursing profession had significant association with professional self-concept and there was no significant association with gender, type of stay and reasons behind stress.

Table 8: Correlation between academic burnout and professional self-concept

Variables	n	Correlation coefficient	Significance (p-value)
Academic burnout & Professional self-concept	229	0.075	0.258

The present study found a weak and non-significant correlation between academic burnout and professional self-concept ($r = 0.075$, $p > 0.05$), indicating that levels of burnout were not meaningfully associated with students' perception of their professional identity

DISCUSSION

1. Discussion on the level of academic burnout among nursing students

The present study revealed that the majority of nursing students experienced a high level of academic burnout, predominantly characterized by cynicism (74.70%), while the least burnout was observed in academic efficacy (0.90%), indicating a marked negative attitude toward academic activities despite preserved feelings of competence. In contrast, a cross-sectional study conducted in Victoria, Australia among 1,630 undergraduate nursing students using the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Student Survey reported moderate levels of burnout, with emotional exhaustion slightly above average (Mean = 3.5 ± 1.3), cynicism close to average (Mean = 2.4 ± 1.4), and professional efficacy above average (Mean = 4.1 ± 1.1). Compared with the Australian study, the current findings demonstrate a substantially higher level of cynicism, suggesting greater academic disengagement among the students, while both studies indicate relatively better academic or professional efficacy, highlighting students' continued confidence in their abilities despite burnout symptoms.

2. Discussion on the level of professional self concept among nursing students

The present study revealed that a substantial majority of nursing students demonstrated a positive professional self-concept (93%), with only a small proportion exhibiting a negative professional self-concept (7%), indicating a generally strong professional identity among the participants. Similarly, a cross-sectional study conducted among 619 senior nursing students in the Inner Anatolia Region reported moderately high levels of professional self-concept and professional values, particularly among female students and those who voluntarily chose the nursing profession and perceived the profession positively. In comparison, the findings of the present study reflect a higher proportion of positive professional self-concept, suggesting stronger professional confidence and identity among the students, which aligns with previous evidence highlighting the influence of voluntary career choice and positive professional perception on professional self-concept. A cross-sectional study on nursing students' professional self-concept and academic burnout. In the east-central Chinese province of Anhui, the survey was conducted at a four-year undergraduate medical college and a three-year vocational medical college. Participants Convenient sample was used to examine 1139 full-time nursing students between March and May 2018, and 1083 valid questionnaires were found for this study. Students' professional self-concept and academic burnout were assessed using the Nurses' Self-Concept Instrument (NSCI) and the Academic Burnout Scale (ABS). Findings on the Academic Burnout Scale, the average total score was 2.77 ± 0.53 ; this was close to the scale's median (median = 3). Whether students are class leaders has a big impact on pupils. Academic burnout among nursing students was negatively impacted by their professional self-concept. On the Academic Burnout Scale, nursing students' academic burnout level was near the median, and their inappropriate behaviour was the worst. Academic burnout can be lessened by having a positive professional self-concept. It makes sense for nursing educators to take action to improve nursing students' professional self-concept and reduce academic burnout.

3. Discussion on the comparison of the level of academic burnout across different year of nursing education

In the study, one-way ANOVA was performed to compare academic burnout and professional self-concept across different semesters of undergraduate nursing students. For

academic burnout, the ANOVA result showed no statistically significant difference between semesters ($F = 1.15$, $p = 0.329$). This indicates that the level of academic burnout remained relatively similar across all semesters, suggesting that students experience comparable burnout regardless of their academic progression. In contrast, for professional self-concept, the ANOVA revealed a highly significant difference between semesters ($F = 42.22$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that professional self-concept changes significantly as students advance through their nursing program, showing a clear semester-based variation. Further post-hoc multiple comparison analysis demonstrated that significant differences were mainly observed between Semester VII and other semesters. Semester VII students showed significantly higher professional self-concept compared with Semesters II, IV, and VI ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, Semester IV also differed significantly from Semester VI ($p < 0.01$). However, no significant difference was found between Semester II and Semester VI ($p = 0.879$). Overall, the findings suggest that while academic burnout does not significantly vary across semesters, professional self-concept improves significantly with academic progression, especially in the final semester.

4. Discussion on the association between the level of academic burnout and socio demographic variables

In the present study, chi-square analysis revealed a significant association between academic burnout and year of study as well as intensity of enthusiasm for the nursing profession, while no significant association was found with age, gender, type of stay, motives for selecting nursing, or reasons for stress. In contrast, a large cross-sectional study conducted among 22,983 Chinese college students reported a high prevalence of academic burnout (59.9%), with significantly higher burnout scores observed among male students and those in upper academic years. Compared with the Chinese study, the present findings indicate a more limited set of associated factors, emphasizing academic progression and professional enthusiasm rather than demographic characteristics, suggesting that contextual and program-specific influences may play a stronger role in academic burnout among nursing students.

5. Discussion on the association between the level of professional self-concept and socio demographic variables

Association between academic factors and professional self-concept was obtained using chi-square test and it revealed

that academic factors such as year of study, age, intensity of enthusiasm for the nursing field and motives behind selecting nursing profession had significant association with professional self-concept and there was no significant association with gender, type of stay and reasons behind stress. A comparative study was conducted of the relationship between Saudi Arabian nurses' professionalism and socio-demographic characteristics. Three key Saudi Arabian regions were studied using a quantitative cross-sectional approach. With 305 respondents, a basic random sample procedure was used, yielding a 95.9% response rate. The information was gathered between January and April 2021 via a Google Form survey.

Findings: Nurses believed in self-regulation (Mean = 3.97, SD = 0.08), professional organization (Mean = 3.94, SD = 0.17), public service (Mean = 3.91, SD = 0.22), feeling of calling (Mean = 4.01, SD = 0.13), and autonomy (Mean = 3.71, SD = 0.15). The belief in autonomy, self-regulation, public duty, and professional organization did not significantly change based on gender. However, the sense of calling ($t = 4.290$; $p = 0.001$) and belief in public duty ($t = 2.794$; $p = 0.006$) differed significantly. Only the belief in self-regulation was significant in relation to age ($t = 5.984$; $p = 0.003$). Furthermore, there was a negligible professional difference in the educational qualifications. On the other hand, the type of facility was found to have reached significant differences with respect to a professional organization ($F = 3.057$; $p = 0.029$), belief in autonomy ($F = 5.995$; $p = 0.001$), belief in public service ($F = 4.130$; $p = 0.007$), belief in regulation ($F = 3.452$; $p = 0.017$), sense of calling ($F = 3.211$; $p = 0.023$), and belief in regulation ($F = 3.452$; $p = 0.007$). Lastly, the current position found no significant difference in professionalism.

6. Discussion on the correlation between academic burnout and professional self-concept

The present study found a weak and non-significant correlation between academic burnout and professional self-concept ($r = 0.075$, $p > 0.05$), indicating that levels of burnout were not meaningfully associated with students' perception of their professional identity. In contrast, a cross-sectional study conducted among 1,630 undergraduate nursing students in Victoria, Australia reported a significant inverse relationship between cynicism and overall nurse professional self-concept, along with a significant positive relationship between professional efficacy and professional self-concept. Compared with the Australian study, the present findings

suggest a lack of measurable association between academic burnout and professional self-concept, which may be attributable to differences in sample characteristics, academic environments, or measurement sensitivity.

CONCLUSION

The study evaluated the professional self-concept and academic burnout of undergraduate nursing students at MGM Muthoot College of Nursing, Kozhencherry. The results showed that while academic efficacy was reported at a relatively low level, most students had high levels of academic burnout, especially in the dimension of cynicism. The majority of students showed a favorable professional self-concept despite the high prevalence of burnout. Additionally, the study found no statistically significant association between professional self-concept and academic fatigue. Despite their generally optimistic view of themselves as future professionals, these findings show that nursing students experience significant academic fatigue.

Declaration by Authors :

This is our original work

Ethical Approval: Approved

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