



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation.

The correlation between homework load and academic burnout among college students

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2582-7138

Volume: 05

Issue: 01

January-February 2024

Received: 12-12-2023

Accepted: 13-01-2024

Page No: 703-710

Abstract

Academic burnout is characterized by stress and emotional exhaustion, which can affect not only students' physical and mental health but also their behavior, mindset, and academic performance. This study analyzes the correlation between college students' homework load and academic burnout. The correlational research design was used to measure the perceived burnout among college students, which aims to gain more objective comprehension of the subject matter. The researchers collected data from a sample of 60 college students with the use of simple random sampling from the different universities in Cebu City. By administering surveys that assessed homework load and levels of burnout using two standardized questionnaires: The Impact of Homework Assignments on Student's Learning Questionnaire and the Maslach Burnout Inventory- Student Survey. Inferential Analysis shows a p-value of 0.141, which indicates that there is no significant correlation between homework load and academic burnout. These findings suggest that the future researchers must explore more potential factors and its impact on student's well-being. The result recommends of using other factors that contribute to academic burnout, such as part-time jobs and extracurricular activities that will give a more comprehensive analysis. Further, the interventions that target time management skills and stress reduction techniques would be greatly beneficial in helping students to manage their homework and avoid burnout.

Keywords: academic burnout, college students, correlation, homework load, inferential analysis

1. Introduction

The word 'burnout' firstly known in the context of the workplace (Kim *et al.*, 2018) ^[12]. From a psychological point of view, the undergraduate courses are also considered as a 'job' because of the systematic concepts of class attendance, pile of homework assignments, and exams. Students may experience burnout due to the excessive amount of homework which can be represented as stress and emotional exhaustion claimed that research has shown that not everyone experiences burnout at the same level, ranging from "slight burnout" to "serious burnout." Since education as an academic discipline plays a crucial part in the development of people's scholastic lives (Cardillo, 2019) ^[6], adverse psychological environments should not even exist in schools. Therefore, it is essential to recognize that an overwhelming homework load can adversely affect students' physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Academic burnout is a widespread issue, particularly prevalent in Singapore, China, Japan, and South Korea, where educational pressure tends to be intense. In a study by Abenir *et al.* (2019) ^[2], school is a demanding environment where homework, tasks, and tests must be completed. Researchers primarily understand academic burnout as the challenging experience students face when adapting to their educational environment's demands, including the effort and time required for exams and homework (Song & Yang, 2014) ^[23]. In contrast, researchers in countries like the United States, Finland, and Britain, where a 'happy learning' approach is encouraged, mention academic burnout less frequently.

Instead, those countries tend to focus on the adverse effects of excessive homework and studying, including physical health problems, emotional fluctuations, anxiety, sadness, negative attitudes, personality disorders, confusion, and decreased productivity (Liu & Huang, 2021) ^[16]. Academic burnout is a phenomenon that students may encounter at various points in their educational journey. The physical, mental, behavioral, and emotional burnout are signs that contribute to burnout may not always be seen directly because of the individuals' coping mechanism and environment. Furthermore, the signs can affect the different aspects of individuals such as the attitude, behavior, and academic performance, where academic performance is the chief factor to a person's abilities, potential, and overall capacity. Carlos *et al.* (2013) ^[7] stated that the aforementioned burnout symptoms provide a catch in student learning development.

The contributing factors of burnout in the Philippines are thought that academic success and homework are one of those. Investigations discovered that the signs of burnout include lower enthusiasm, health problems, social unrest, and poverty (Velasco, 2019) ^[27]. Additionally, burnout has been associated with various pressures, including environmental, academic, and personal factors such as homework load, grades, and other requirements.

Christina Maslach's multidimensional theory of burnout acknowledged that burnout was a type of stress experienced on a personal level while navigating complex social interactions with their surroundings (Casipong, 2022) ^[8]. Moreover, the lifestyle patterns of students, such as staying up late, experiencing fatigue, maintaining disorganized daily schedules, and similar habits, may change. According to Tus *et al.* (2021) ^[26], academic burnout can lead to poor career achievements, academic failures, and a diminished overall sense of well-being. Some researchers have consistently linked burnout to factors like homework load and time constraints. On the other hand, variations in burnout levels exist among different countries, influenced by various factors (Vicente *et al.*, 2014) ^[28].

There have been many studies on the effects of academic burnout on students' general well-being. However, few studies have examined the correlation between college students' homework loads and academic burnout. Existing studies frequently focus on particular effects of academic burnout while ignoring details of how the amount of homework students must complete contributes to their level of burnout. This gap must be addressed to create a more inclusive and culturally sensitive understanding of the relationship between these two variables. The primary objectives of this research are twofold: first, to assess the difficulty associated with homework assignments as it relates to how homework impacts students' stress levels and overall well-being. Second, the study will measure the perceived burnout experienced by college students, also This study is anchored on the Cognitive Load Theory by and the Multidimensional Theory of Burnout by Maslach and is supported by Yerkes-Dodson Law by Yerkes, Robert, and Dodson wing the study to analyze whether a correlation exists between homework load and academic burnout.

Theoretical Framework

The Cognitive Load Theory by centers on the acquisition of demanding cognitive tasks, where learners could become overloaded by the number of dynamic knowledge pieces that must be processed at once for worthwhile education to start.

Cognitive load theory, whose central tenets are that learning should be facilitated by designing instruction to be as complex as possible (intrinsic load), minimize the burden on working memory imposed by procedures that do not aid in learning (unrelated load), and maximize the load caused by processes that encouraged education or sometimes called relevant load.

Given that Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) investigates how the brain absorbs data and the effects of cognitive load on learning, this theory is also related to the homework load study. According to Cognitive Load Theory, a student's cognitive resources may be overloaded for having a large quantity of homework. Excessive homework loads can raise the intrinsic cognitive load and make it more difficult for learners to learn effectively since they are overloaded with assignments.

The next theory is the Multidimensional Theory of Burnout by Maslach (1981) ^[17], which is the foundation for the present study. In research, burnout is frequently depicted as a three-dimensional structure. According to Maslach *et al.* (2018) ^[17], these dimensions include depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and a perception of poor personal achievement or lack of personal accomplishment. Academic burnout is considered a type of reaction that arises when students, particularly those in long-term education, cannot cope with the stress of their studies. It is acknowledged in this context that academic burnout also has a three-dimensional framework. These features include feeling inadequate, tired, and cynical about the school's purpose. The state of matters that these students find themselves in has detrimental effects on their development, particularly since academic failure, anxiety, stress, depression, psychological issues, truancy, and school dropout are all associated with academic burnout (Yang, 2004) ^[23].

This specific theory relates to the subject of the study—academic burnout. Three elements comprise the Multidimensional Theory of Burnout: diminished personal accomplishment, depersonalization, and emotional weariness. Lower individual achievement might appear as emotions of inefficacy in school achievement, depersonalization can be shown in distant attitudes toward courses or colleagues, and excessive stress from academic obligations can all be signs of emotional weariness. As a result, Maslach's approach offers a prism through which to view and manage burnout among educators and students in academic contexts. Lastly, the suggests that this moderate tension, or arousal, allows learners to function at their highest level. Performance suffers when arousal levels are too high or too low. "Arousal" refers to anxiety and inspiration in the context of the Yerkes-Dodson law. Yerkes and Dodson postulated that when arousal rises, so does the capacity to develop habits or carry out tasks well. It provides the students with adequate motivation. However, that is only effective to an ideal level, which is a specific point. When arousal rises above that threshold, stress and anxiety lead learners' performance to decline.

In terms of homework load and academic burnout, it suggests that learning and motivation are enhanced by a modest degree of challenge. However, too much homework can drive children over their stress threshold, leading to burnout and impairing academic performance.

Figure 1 shows the different theories and laws that support this research. They were also linked to the following variables, as shown in the diagram below.

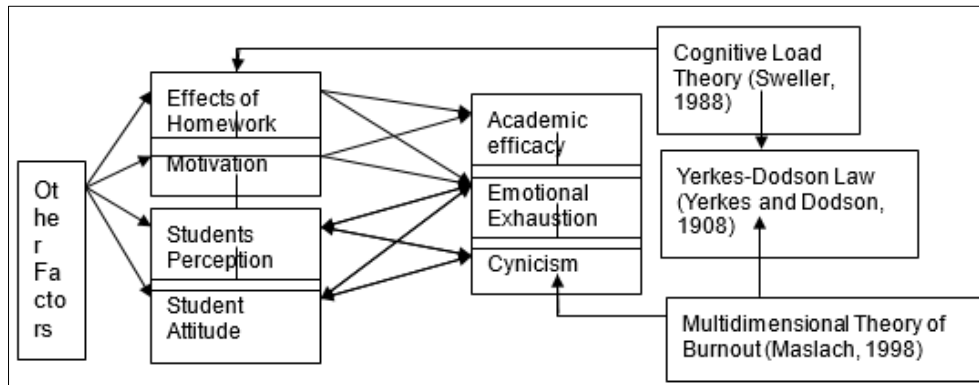


Fig 1: Framework of the Study

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employs correlational design, a non-experimental research that makes it easier to anticipate and explain how different variables relate to one another. According to Bhandari (2023) ^[4], correlational research design is used to explore the direction and degree of relationships among factors in a particular population either positive or negative. The researchers chose this research design to better understand the correlation between college students' homework loads and academic burnout, aiming for a more objective comprehension of the subject matter.

2.2. Sampling Design, Research Respondents, and Environments

Employing simple random sampling shows a great potential of internal and external validity and avoids the probability of research biases (Thomas, 2020) ^[25]. The respondents of the study are drawn from the different state universities in Cebu City that consist of 60 students both male and female. It aims to collect a different view of students towards homework load due to excessive homework load.

2.3. Research Instrument

The survey used a two standardized questionnaire that measures the impact of homework load and academic burnout from the college students. The first questionnaire consists of 35-item Likert Scale and was divided into 5 parts that assessed the student's homework was adopted from the study "Impact of Homework Assignments on Students' Learning" by Jitpranee and Songsirisak (2019) ^[24]. The scale ranges from 1 to 6, where 1 labeled as strongly disagree and 6 as strongly agree. The second questionnaire consists of a 15-item Likert Scale that assesses students academic burnout is the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey. It ranges from 1 to 6, where 1 as strongly disagree and 6 as strongly agree. Through these questionnaires the researchers could understand the impact of homework load and its contribution to academic burnout.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

First and foremost, the researchers take prior permission to each participant through presenting a consent letter for

collecting the necessary data from the participants. Then the researchers discussed in detail about the purpose of the study and the study itself. In giving the responses to the question, the researchers made an awareness that there are no right or wrong answers, and the responses would be kept strictly confidential. The researchers used the google form platform in order to collect adequate and relevant data.

2.5. Data Analysis

The researchers used Inferential Analysis through correlation in analyzing the gathered data. According to Calvello (2020) ^[5], Inferential analysis is the process of assessing the dependability of inferences which concerns a larger population after collecting data from a sample. Inferential Analysis is a foundational method of analysis that examines a relationship between variables and provides accurate conclusions. It is used to test the relationship of each variable and draws a meaningful understanding within the presented data.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

The study ensures an ethical consideration to give rights to the participants, it includes informed consent that maintains confidentiality and anonymity of the collected data from the respondents. Additionally, a letter of intent was also presented which explains the purpose of the study and how the data used and protected. A token will be given to the participants, such as a small amount of money after submitting the survey form as a reward for participating in the research. Participants may opt to withdraw from the study at any time without any sanctions. The study will adhere to ethical guidelines and regulations set by the institutional review board, and potential conflicts of interest will be addressed and managed appropriately. The research protocol will be forwarded to the ethics committee to ensure it meets ethical standards and safeguards, upholding the rights and well-being of participants involved in the study.

3. Result and Discussion

Hypothesis

At the level of significance, the hypothesis below was tested: There is no significant relationship between Homework Load and Academic Burnout.

Effectiveness of Homework Load

Table 1: Students Perception towards Homework

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I know that homework is very important and necessary for me.	4.85	8.97	Agree
2. I know the purpose of homework.	5	10.81	Agree
3. I know that homework is a part of my grade score.	5.42	13.81	Strongly Agree
4. I think homework is not helpful for me.	3.03	5.14	Slightly Agree
5. I think homework is just busy work.	3.31	4.86	Slightly Disagree
6. I like to do individual homework.	4.6	8.10	Agree
7. I like to do pair homework.	4.22	7.67	Slightly Agree
8. I like to do group homework.	4.28	6.26	Slightly Agree
9. I like to have a lot of homework.	2.03	11.24	Disagree
10. I have enough time to do my homework.	3.15	6.93	Slightly Disagree
Total	3.99	8.38	Slightly Agree

Table 1. indicates that the students have the knowledge about homework was part of their grade score (item 3). Most students know the purpose of homework and its importance in their learning (items 1 and 2). Some students disagreed slightly on having too much homework and enough time to do homework (items 9 and 10). It suggests that students had different perceptions of homework. This highlights the importance of considering individual differences and subjective experiences when studying the effects of homework. The study's results are consistent with those of who found a complex relationship between students' perceptions of homework and the quantity of homework

needed to finish to get academically burned out. It was indicated that there are differences in motivational beliefs that significantly affect academic performance. These findings could be attributed to various factors, such as individual learning styles, personal motivation, and the quality of homework assignments. In some instances, where homework was deemed engaging and pertinent, it did not lead to student fatigue. Educators must consider these different perceptions and tailor homework assignments accordingly to maximize their effectiveness in promoting student learning.

Table 2: Student's attitude towards the ways of teachers' giving homework

Statement	Means	SD	Interpretation
1. Teachers explain the purpose of homework clearly.	4.43	9.40	Agree
2. Some teachers give homework without explaining the purposes of homework.	4.43	8.99	Agree
3. Teachers give relevant homework of the courses for students.	4.98	11.78	Agree
4. Teachers follow up homework.	4.63	10.56	Agree
5. Teachers check homework and give it back to students quickly.	4.13	7.32	Slightly Agree
6. Teachers are concerned about student's feelings about doing homework.	3.8	4.98	Slightly Agree
Over all mean	4.40	8.84	Agree

In Table 2, the result shows that the teachers assigned the relevant homework to each student's course (item 3). The students believed that the teachers explained the purpose of the homework and followed up accordingly (Items 1 and 4). Some students agreed that some teachers give them unexplained homework (Item 2). It denotes that students approve of how teachers use strategies in giving homework. Furthermore, the study also revealed that students believed homework helped reinforce their understanding of the topics discussed in class (item 5). The results are consistent with the study which found that students had a positive attitude towards homework and teachers felt that homework had a

significant impact on students' development. These findings highlight the importance of effective communication between teachers and students regarding the purpose and expectations of homework assignments, as it can enhance students' engagement and positive attitude towards academic tasks. This suggests that students perceive homework as a valuable tool for deepening their knowledge and skills. It implies that teachers must acknowledge this good perception, continue to provide clear explanations, and guidance on homework assignments to ensure the effectiveness of the students.

Table 3: Effects of homework on students' learning achievement

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. When I do homework, it improves my learning achievement.	4.67	9.34	Agree
2. When I do homework, my learning achievements will be low.	2.23	10.12	Disagree
3. When I do homework, I can do the test and get high marks.	4.3	7.46	Slightly Agree
4. When I do not do homework, I cannot do the test well and get low marks.	3.22	6.26	Slightly Disagree
5. When I do homework, it has no effects on my learning achievements.	2.38	8.29	Disagree
Over all mean	3.36	10.06	Slightly Disagree

In Table 3, the result shows that when they do homework, it improves their learning achievement (item 1). Almost all students disagreed that their learning achievements would be

low when they did homework, which did not affect their learning achievement (items 2 and 5). When they do homework, they slightly agree that they can do the test and

get high marks (item 3). The result indicates that the students have different points of view towards having homework regarding their learning achievement. (Item 4), students cannot do well on the test and receive low marks if they fail to finish their homework. The study also reveals that doing homework aids in developing critical abilities in learners, including discipline and time management, which are essential for their general academic performance. According to Murillo, Martínez-Garrido, and García-Sinova (2014) ^[19], the study investigated relationships between homework and academic achievement. The study discovered a positive

correlation between students' academic achievement and their time spent on homework. This shows that students tend to get higher scores in their academic areas when they spend more time on their homework. The study made evident how important it is for teachers to provide students with precise instructions and direction on completing homework assignments since this can significantly impact their learning results. The diverse perspectives on homework's impact on learning achievement highlight the need for individualized approaches to cater to students' unique learning styles and preferences.

Table 4: Effects of homework on students' emotions, motivation, and free time management

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I know that homework motivates me to learn.	4.28	6.16	Slightly Agree
2. I think homework develops my sense of responsibility.	5.03	10.60	Agree
3. I think homework makes me feel stressed.	4.15	7.13	Slightly Agree
4. I think homework makes me unable to manage my free time.	3.67	5.06	Slightly Agree
5. I think homework restricts me from joining social activities.	3.53	3.85	Slightly Agree
Over all mean	4.13	6.56	Slightly Agree

Table 4 examines the effects of homework on students' emotions, motivation, and free time management. Students agreed and slightly agreed that homework makes them feel stressed, unable to manage free time, and restricts them from social activities (items 3, 4, and 5). However, several students believe homework motivates them to learn and develop sense of responsibility (items 1 and 2). The result revealed that the impact of homework on students' emotions and motivation was mixed. While some students feel stressed and find it challenging to manage their free time, others are motivated by homework and see it as an opportunity to develop sense of responsibility. In the study of Lewis (2023) ^[15], they agreed that some kids have an innate desire to do their assignments and are self-regulated learners. Despite this, some students

were driven by external factors to finish their schoolwork because they feared going to detention. The fear of detention was a solid external motivator for most students to complete their schoolwork. However, it is essential to note that relying solely on external factors for motivation may not foster a genuine love for learning and personal growth; instead, they are more likely to experience higher stress levels and difficulty managing their free time. These findings suggest that the effects of homework on students can vary greatly depending on individual factors such as learning style and personal preferences. Further research is needed to understand these differences better and develop strategies to support all students in managing homework effectively.

Table 5: Students' abilities in handling with homework

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I do homework by myself.	5.32	13.45	Strongly Agree
2. Another person does my homeworks completely.	1.75	13.73	Strongly Disagree
3. I complete and submit homework to my teachers on time.	5.28	12.55	Strongly Agree
4. I consult my teachers for help in case homework is too difficult.	3.75	5.25	Slightly Agree
5. If homework is difficult, I copy directly from the internet without summarizing and submit it to my teachers.	2.6	6.45	Disagree
6. If homework is difficult, I read and summarize from the internet before submitting to my teachers.	4.07	6.10	Slightly Agree
7. If homework is difficult, I copy from my friends and submit to my teachers.	2.78	6.03	Slightly Disagree
8. If homework is difficult, I ask help and work with my friends to complete homework.	4.33	7.04	Agree
Over all mean	5.8	8.83	Strongly Agree

The findings in Table 5 present several students who claim that they do their homework by themselves, as seen in item 1. Few participants disagreed and slightly agreed that if homework was difficult, they copied it directly from the internet or their friends (items 5 and 7). They also strongly disagreed about another person doing their homework (item 2). The rest of the participants are confident that they consult for help, summarize homework online, and submit homework on time (items 4, 6, and 3). The findings means that, students are determined in completing the homework with integrity

but there are times that they need to copy answers from the external sources to finish the tasks, such as classmates or from the internet. It is inclined from the research of Kontur (2015) ^[13], which found out that copying is not mainly for cheating but it is a method to save time and effort. Students are not used in having a lot of complex homework that is why students tend to copy from other sources to complete the task quickly. These suggest that educators must propose some tools that helps students to assist in overcoming problems and motivate them to be productive.

Level of Academic Burnout

Table 6: Emotional Exhaustion

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I feel emotionally drained by my studies.	4.57	9.61	Agree
2. I feel used up at the end of a day at school.	4.8	9.30	Agree
3. I feel burned out from my studies.	4.65	9.70	Agree
4. I feel tired when I get up in the morning and I have to face another day at school.	4.68	9.19	Agree
5. Studying or attending a class is really a strain for me.	3.52	4.86	Slightly Agree
Over all mean	4.44	8.53	Agree

According to the findings in Table 1, it is apparent that students undergo an amount of fatigue as a result of their academic responsibilities. This can be observed in items 1, to 4 as all participants express agreement. Additionally, attending classes and engaging in their studies seems to deplete students' energy levels as indicated by item 5. This indicates that students are emotionally and physically exhausted from their studies and are being affected overall. Koropets *et al.* (2019) ^[14] claim that poor academic performance results from burnout, physical and emotional

weariness, a decreased desire to study, and a negative attitude toward professors and other students. Academic burnout is characterized by emotional depletion brought on by the demands of academic work (Farisandy *et al.*, 2023) ^[9]. Individuals experiencing burnout may also exhibit increased irritability, difficulty concentrating, and a decline in overall well-being. It is essential to address burnout to promote a healthy learning environment and support students' academic success.

Table 7: Cynicism

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I have become less interested in my studies since my enrollment at the school.	2.95	5.33	Slightly Disagree
2. I have become less enthusiastic about my studies.	3.07	4.73	Slightly Disagree
3. I have become more cynical about the potential usefulness of my studies.	3.27	5.76	Slightly Disagree
4. I doubt the significance of my studies.	2.72	6.23	Disagree
Over all mean	3	5.51	Slightly Disagree

Table 2. Shows that students slightly disagreed the inclination to believe they are motivated purely by self-interest. This is supported by statements 2 and 3, in which students disagreed that they become less enthusiastic and more cynical about the potential usefulness of their studies. The result shows that students disagreed the idea that motivation comes from external reinforcements or rewards. The number of homework is not a factor that affects academic burnout, but instead the quality and relevance of homework plays a vital role in academic burnout. These findings was related from the study of Jha *et al.*, (2012) ^[10], that in general, burnout affects

academic achievement negatively and is not limited to any factors because it influences the various aspects of academic burnout. With the heavy work load of assignments, students experience burnout and feel that assignments are irrelevant. To avoid academic burnout and promote students' well-being, it is important to look for the relevance of the assignments to its purpose. It suggests that the importance of fostering an intrinsic motivation and engagement helps students to reduce the risk of academic burnout and promotes personal growth.

Table 8: Academic Efficacy

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I can effectively solve the problems that arise in my studies.	4.37	10.43	Agree
2. I believe that I make an effective contribution to the classes that I attend.	4.5	9.21	Agree
3. In my opinion, I am a good student.	5	10.49	Agree
4. I have learned many interesting things during the course of my studies.	5.17	11.61	Strongly Agree
5. I feel stimulated when I achieve my study goals.	5	10.55	Agree
6. During class I feel confident that I am effective in getting things done.	4.58	8.37	Agree
Over all mean	4.77	10.11	Agree

In Table 3, it had shown for items 3 and 4 that students felt that they were exceptional learners since they had discovered a lot of fascinating things with their studies. With items 2, 5, and 6, the results are clearly shown as agreed, in which students who can contribute effectively to the class felt motivated and secure in their ability to complete tasks. This puts emphasis that students are driven to succeed, have a positive attitude about their academic development, and understand the importance of of education. These results emphasize how critical it is to develop an engaging learning environment for students in order to increase their motivation

and self-assurance in their academic aspects. Students who have academic efficacy are more likely to take charge of their academic performance and participate in proactive learning practices, according to the research study conducted by Oyoo *et al.* (2020) ^[20]. The study highlights the importance of parents and educators in fostering learners' self-belief and offers them the support and guidance they need to overcome their dragons. These findings signify that the ability of students to actively achieve their study and participate in class discussions is highly related to their judgement of their learning and competence.

Table 9: Correlation Matrix

Correlation Matrix			
		Homework Load	Burnout
Homework Load	Pearson's r	—	
	p-value	—	
Burnout	Pearson's r	0.192	—
	p-value	0.141	—

The result of the correlation between the homework load and academic burnout shown that the P-value has a lesser value than the level of significance, which concludes that clearly there is no significant relationship between the effectiveness of homework load and the level of academic burnout among college students. As stated by the outcomes, homework is not the factor that contributes to academic burnout of the students. This result replicates the study, which also found the correlation between homework load and academic burnout not correlation with each other. Considering other factors that possibly contributes to academic burnout would really help to understand how students suffer from academic burnout, such as the environment, management skills, and etc. These consistent result propose that there are other factors that greatly contributes to the academic burnout of the students and it needs to be more studied to explore all factors.

Limitation of the Study

This study has limitations. According to Simon and Goes (2013) ^[22], limitations in research are issues and situations that come up during the study and are beyond the researcher's control. Although the study has its strength, which is the large sample size, certain limitations must be acknowledged. One limitation of the study was that it was limited to a specific demographic, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations. Furthermore, the study only focused on a single variable and did not consider other potential factors that could influence the results. Therefore, future research should address these limitations by including a more diverse sample and utilizing objective measures to gather data.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

In light of the preceding findings, the study showed a negative correlation between homework load and academic burnout among college students. Then, it concludes that college students' academic burnout is unrelated to their homework loads. Moreover, students have a variety of feats when it comes to homework load, which does not contribute to academic burnout. The study suggests that future researchers explore and deepen the different factors in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the causes of academic burnout. Additionally, the study recommends that students practice time management and stress reduction techniques to avoid academic burnout. Students must learn to balance everything, such as studying and leisure time, to prevent mental breakdowns.

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