



## **Impact of Academic Pressure on Emotional Exhaustion: Mediated by Perfectionism**

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<b>ARTICLE INFO</b>	<b>ABSTRACT</b>
<b>Keywords:</b> Academic Pressure, Emotional Exhaustion, Perfectionism, Student Burnout, Mediation.	The current investigation focused on how academic pressure manifests as emotional exhaustion in students and the extent to which perfectionism had a mediating effect. In all, 300 students completed standardised measures of academic pressure, perfectionism and emotional exhaustion. A correlational analysis found a positive correlation between academic pressure and both perfectionism and emotional exhaustion. Using a regression analysis, it was demonstrated that academic pressure is a strong predictor of emotional exhaustion, and through the mediation analysis, perfectionism was found to only partially mediate the relationship between academic pressure and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, it appears that maladaptive perfectionism serves to increase the negative effect of academic stress and as such should be treated as part of any program aimed at reducing burnout in an academic setting. The study presents implications for educational policy, stress management initiatives and directions for further research.
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### **Introduction**

Academic pressure characterizes today's educational systems; especially in competitive academic systems, in which students must achieve high marks, are assessed continually, and compared against one another. Students are expected to manage not only their academics, but also their family, social, and personal lives. The continuous pressure on students makes them more likely to experience negative psychological effects than other populations, which has caused it to become an important area of research within mental health and education (Pascoe et al., 2024) (Liu & Chen, 2024).

One of the main psychological effects of ongoing academic pressure is emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion describes feelings of being emotionally fatigued, drained, and depleted from being exposed to demanding academic environments for an extended period of time (Maslach et al., 2023). Within student populations, emotional exhaustion is the foundation of academic burnout, and typically occurs before students experience disengagement, decreased motivation for academics, and lower academic performance (Zhang et al., 2024).

The evidence from numerous studies indicates that there is a strong link between emotional exhaustion and the pressures that students are under related to school. As students are subjected to an increasing amount of work, frequent tests, and high expectations, their level of stress increases over time, possibly resulting in emotional depletion (Kim & Lee, 2024). When students are exposed for any significant amount of time to these kinds of stressors, they may begin to exceed their ability to cope, resulting in chronic exhaustion and decreased psychological well-being (Rania et al., 2024).

It is also worth noting that while all students face academic pressures, they do not experience the pressures in the same way. There are a number of individual differences that affect how a student responds to academic pressure; among them, personality traits have been shown to have a substantial impact on how a student will interpret and react to academic pressures. Among the personality traits, perfectionism has been identified as a major vulnerability factor for students to feel as though they have increased stress levels when it comes to their academic performance (Smith et al., 2024). Students who are perfectionists often feel that their success in school determines their self-worth and therefore are more sensitive to failure, and how/when they will be evaluated.

Perfectionism is a multifaceted construct and includes excessively high personal standards, being overly concerned about making mistakes, and being overly critical of themselves (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Although adaptive perfectionism may be motivating to some, maladaptive perfectionism has been shown to correlate with anxiety, psychological distress, and burnout among students (Curran & Hill, 2023). Within an academic environment, maladaptive perfectionism enhances perceived pressure because of the creation of unattainable expectations and fear of negative evaluations (Flett & Hewitt, 2024).

The demand-resource model and the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory are viable theoretical frameworks that may prove beneficial in better understanding how academic stress leads to the experience of emotional fatigue. According to the aforementioned theoretical basis, academic stress creates a depletion of both emotional and cognitive resources; whereas perfectionism contributes to a speedier depletion of both emotional and cognitive resources via the creation of excessive effort, ruminating over mistakes, and critical self-evaluation (Hobfoll et al., 2023). As a result, students with high perfectionism engage in an imbalanced expenditure of their emotional resources in pursuit of being perfect and therefore are more likely to experience an emotional depletion than students without high perfectionism.

Studies conducted within the last couple of years, as well as the study outlined earlier, have confirmed that perfectionism is a mediator of the academic pressure/emotional exhaustion relationship. In addition, the studies illustrate that higher academic pressure leads to an increase of maladaptive perfectionism, which in turn contributes to an increase of emotional exhaustion and burnout (Wang et al., 2024). Therefore, those areas of perfectionism that exhibit maladaptive characteristics can be considered as a psychological pathway through which academic stress causes an emotional drain.

In addition to the area of maladaptive perfectionism, certain characteristics of perfectionism (e.g., socially prescribed perfectionism, concern over making mistakes) are particularly damaging in the area of academic stress-induced exhaustion. That is, the student who has an understanding that there are unrealistically high expectations placed upon him or her is at greater risk of experiencing increased levels of emotional fatigue under academic pressure than a student with lower socially prescribed perfectionism (Hill & Curran, 2024). These results lend credence to the importance of differentiating between adaptive and maladaptive qualities of perfectionism when considering student well-being.

The findings related to the role of perfectionism act as viable agents of change in the long-term, however, finding alternate solutions to manage the demands of academia, through the means of self-kindness, cognitive movement and goal setting would help counteract the feelings of fatigue and emotional exhaustion brought on by the academic pressures.

As highlighted in the literature, academic pressure may serve as a strong predictor of emotional exhaustion within the student population, while also providing a pathway for perfectionism to mediate these two experiences. As evidenced throughout the aforementioned literature, personality traits such as perfectionistic thinking influence the perception and internalization of the pressure to perform academically, resulting in increased levels of emotional strain resulting from ongoing exposure to the factors contributing to the process of burnout. Further studies examining this pathway of mediation may contribute to additional comprehensive preventative and interventionary methods to enhance both emotional well-being and sustainable academic involvement among the student population.

### **Literature Review**

Academic pressure has been studied extensively to be a main psychosocial stressor within educational environments. Research has shown that increasing academic demands from rigorous course demands, frequent assessments, and evaluations based on performance are main contributors to emotional distress for students (Pascoe et al., 2024). Prolonged exposure to academic pressure negatively affects students' emotional regulation and coping skills, resulting in increased vulnerability to burnout-related outcomes (Liu & Chen, 2024). Therefore, academic pressure is a leading contributor to emotional distress for students.

Emotional exhaustion, which has been defined as the core aspect of academic burnout, has consistently been linked with higher levels of academic stress. Research has demonstrated that students who report experiencing high academic pressure also report experiencing high levels of emotional fatigue, decreased motivational levels, and feeling overwhelmed by their academic responsibilities (Maslach et al., 2023). Emotional exhaustion tends to result when students believe that the level of academic demand on them exceeds their emotional and psychological resources; this leads to chronic stress and disengagement (Zhang et al., 2024).

Research has shown a link between academic stress and emotional exhaustion in a number of empirical studies. Longitudinal studies and cross-sectional studies have shown that academic stress over an extended period of time is a predictor of increased levels of emotional exhaustion for students enrolled in highly competitive educational programs (Kim & Lee, 2024). The relationship between academic stress and emotional exhaustion has been demonstrated with many different types of students, and therefore, academic stress is a universal risk factor for emotional exhaustion independent of culture or setting (Rania et al., 2024).

Perfectionism is being studied more and more as a significant personality characteristic that affects students' reactions to academic stress. Perfectionism is defined as setting unrealistic

expectations for oneself and evaluating oneself critically, and these types of perfectionism will influence how students will respond to academic challenges (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). The majority of perfectionistic students will interpret their academic setbacks as reflecting their own failings, thereby amplifying their emotional distress and inhibiting effective coping techniques (Smith et al., 2024). Research has delineated between adaptive and maladaptive forms of perfectionism. Adaptive perfectionism can encourage behaviours directed toward achieving objectives as a result of the successful attainment of objective goals based upon having met a standard of measuring up to that ideal; while maladaptive perfectionism is behaviour that describes an individual who has a high degree of concern with making a mistake as well as having Fear of Receiving Negative Evaluations (Curran & Hill, 2023). In an academic environment, maladaptive perfectionism increases the perception of academic stress by creating expectations that are unrealistic and continual self-criticism (Flett & Hewitt, 2024).

With the increasing amount of published research confirming the mediating effect of perfectionism on the link between academic pressure to some extent and emotional exhaustion, a number of empirical investigations support this view as well. The literature indicates that academic pressure increases maladaptive perfectionism and leads to greater levels of emotional exhaustion, suggesting that perfectionism serves as a mediating factor by which academic pressures negatively impact students at an emotional level (Sung, 2024). Perfectionism as a mediator can therefore be described using the Conservation of Resources Model, which explains how individuals experience stress when they feel their cognitive or emotional resources are threatened (Hobfoll et al., 2023). Since perfectionists are more likely to put forth excessive emotional resources into meeting academic expectations, they deplete their resources at a rapid rate and become exhausted. By enhancing the negative effects of academic pressure on emotional well-being, perfectionism serves to increase students' susceptibility to academic stressors. Although there is an increasing amount of evidence to suggest this type of relationship between perfectionism and emotional exhaustion based on academic pressures, little research has been undertaken to determine the ways in which perfectionism, specifically, acts as a mediator or facilitates the link between these two variables across different student groups. Most of the literature has examined either perfectionism or emotional exhaustion as separate variables, therefore revealing a need to develop integrated models that include both in order to elucidate the combined impact of both perfectionism and academic pressure on emotional exhaustion. The development of better integrated models to evaluate the way academic pressures and perfectionism impact students' emotional wellbeing can provide valuable information in support of the design of remediation efforts that tackle both academic stressors and maladaptive perfectionism.

## **Method**

### **Objectives of the Study**

The present study:

Assess the link between academic pressure and the emotional fatigue of students.

Assess how academic pressure is related to the perfectionism of students.

Assess how perfectionism is related to the emotional fatigue of students.

Find out whether academic pressure predicts emotional fatigue.

Determine if perfectionism is a mediator of the link between academic pressure and emotional fatigue.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

H1: Academic pressure will be positively associated with emotional exhaustion among students.

H2: Academic pressure will be positively associated with perfectionism among students.  
H3: Perfectionism will be positively associated with emotional exhaustion among students.  
H4: Academic pressure will significantly predict emotional exhaustion among students.  
H5: Perfectionism will mediate the relationship between academic pressure and emotional exhaustion among students.

### **Research Design**

This study has used a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design to investigate how academic pressure affects emotional exhaustion; however, it is important to note that perfectionism may act as a mediator. Therefore, the current design is suitable for examining the relationships between various variables and testing mediation effects at one point in time. The mediation framework was used to investigate both direct and indirect effects of academic pressure on emotional exhaustion from perfectionism.

### **Study Participants**

The sample for this study was comprised of students enrolled in higher education institutions. A convenience sampling method was utilized for convenience and feasibility. In addition, a variety of universities were sampled in order to provide greater variation in academic experiences. All participants voluntarily chose to participate and were only accepted into this research study if they provided informed consent.

### **Measures**

#### **Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA)**

Academic pressure was measured using the Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA) developed by Sun et al. (2011). The scale assesses students' perceived academic demands, workload, examination stress, pressure from study expectations, and worry about academic performance. The ESSA consists of **16 items** rated on a **5-point Likert-type scale** ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate greater perceived academic pressure. The scale comprises five dimensions: pressure from study, workload, worry about grades, self-expectation, and despondency. Previous research has demonstrated good internal consistency and construct validity of the ESSA in student populations.

#### **Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS)**

The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) developed by Frost et al. (1990) was used to evaluate perfectionism. The FMPS consists of 35 Likert-type items rated from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), measuring multiple dimensions of perfectionism including concern about mistakes, personal standards, parental expectations, parental criticism, doubt about actions and organisation. A higher score is indicative of greater levels of perfectionistic tendencies (especially maladaptive) and higher levels of concern about making mistakes or having self-doubt. The FMPS appears to have good reliability and validity in the context of various samples of students.

#### **Emotional Exhaustion / Academic Burnout**

##### **Copenhagen Burnout Inventory – Student Version (CBI-S)**

The level of emotional exhaustion for all participants in this sample was determined through the use of the CBI-S (student-adapted version of the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory). The CBI-S was originally developed by Kristensen et al. (2005) to measure emotional and physical exhaustion due to academic-related activities, including feelings of exhaustion, being drained of energy, and an inability to manage the demands of study time. The student version of the CBI-S includes six measuring items relating to an individual's state of study-related exhaustion. Each item is rated on a five-level Likert-type scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*), where higher scores

represent greater degrees of emotional exhaustion. The validity and reliability of the CBI has been well established in various European educational settings.

### **Procedure**

Prior to collecting the data, permission for the project was sought from the appropriate academic authorities. Participants were recruited in both classroom settings and via online platforms. Participants received information about the intent of the research, guaranteeing that their identity would remain confidential and anonymous. Data collection was performed after participants agreed to participate in this study by signing an informed consent form. Following completion of the questionnaire packet for demographic information, the study measures were included. On average, it took participants about 15 to 20 minutes to complete the study questionnaire packet.

The research study adhered to ethical standards for research with human subjects. Participants were given information about their ability to opt-out from the study at any time without penalty, and all information provided by the respondents was kept strictly confidential, with no identifying information collected. All data collected were used for research purposes only.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Statistical software was used to analyze the data in the present study. In order to complete these analyses, missing values, outliers, and assumption of normality were assessed. Descriptive statistics (i.e., mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis) were provided for each variable included in the study. Internal consistency was determined through analyses of the reliability of the scales used in the present research. Using a Pearson correlation analysis, we examined the associations between academic pressure, perfectionism, and emotional exhaustion. In order to determine whether perfectionism mediated the relationship between academic pressure and emotional exhaustion, we performed mediation analyses using regression-based techniques. Bootstrap confidence intervals were computed to assess whether there was a significant indirect effect of academic pressure on emotional exhaustion through perfectionism. A significant indirect effect would mean that perfectionism does mediate the relationship between academic stressors and emotional exhaustion.

### **Hypothesized Model**

The study's proposed mediation model will examine the effects of academic pressure (the independent variable) on Students and the potential effects of perfectionism (the mediating variable) on emotional exhaustion (the dependent variable). It was hypothesized that students in high levels of academic pressure would show greater levels of emotional exhaustion. Academic pressures would have a direct, positive effect on perfectionism. Perfectionism would then positively affect an individual's level of emotional exhaustion.

### **Results**

Before running the hypothesis tests, the data was checked for missing values, outliers and normality via Descriptive Statistics (Means and Standard Deviations). Reliability Analyses showed that data regarding Academic Pressure, Perfectionism, and Emotional Exhaustion Scales were reliable; all scales exceeded the recommended Cronbach's Alpha level of .70.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

Variable		n	%
<b>Gender</b>	Men	164	54.5
	Women	136	45.5

<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	150	50
	Unmarried	150	50
<b>Family System</b>	Nuclear	139	46.2
	Joint	162	53.8

The characteristics of the people taking part in this study are captured in Table 1. There were a total of 300 individuals who participated. In terms of gender, 164 were male (54.5%) and 136 were female (45.5%). When it came to marital status, the results indicated a balanced split, with 150 participants (50%) married and 150 participants (50%) single. Participants reported their family type as: 162 (53.8%) joint family systems and 139 participants (46.2%) nuclear family systems.

**Table 2**

***Psychometric Properties for Scales***

Scale	M	SD	Range	$\alpha$	Skewness	Kurtosis
<b>ESSA</b>	28.92	13.38	16-80	.89	.06	-.12
<b>CBI-S</b>	20.10	4.80	6-30	.82	.05	-.18
<b>FMPS</b>	89.28	10.97	35-175	.93	.04	-.11

Note. *ESSA*= *Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents*; *CBI-S* = *Copenhagen Burnout Inventory – Student Version*; *FMPS*= *Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale*

The psychometric characteristics of the main scales in this study are summarised in Table 2. The mean score for the Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA) was  $M = 28.92$  ( $SD = 13.38$ ) and the range of scores observed was between 16 and 80, indicating that the ESSA has a very good level of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .89$ ). The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory - Student Version (CBI-S) had a mean score of  $M = 20.10$  ( $SD = 4.80$ ), and the observed range was 6-30, which indicated the CBI-S has a fairly good level of reliability ( $\alpha = .82$ ). The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) had a mean score of  $M = 89.28$  ( $SD = 10.97$ ), and the range of observed scores on the FMPS was between 35 and 175, indicating that the FMPS has a very good level of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .93$ ). The skewness and kurtosis values of all the scales indicated that the distributions of scores were approximately normal (values between  $-.18$  and  $.06$ ), which allowed parametric analyses to be performed using this data.

**Table 3: Correlation matrix between Study Variables**

Variables	N	ESSA	CBI-S	FMPS
<b>ESSA</b>	300	-		
<b>CBI-S</b>	300	.47**	-	
<b>FMPS</b>	300	.42**	.38**	-

Note. *ESSA= Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents; CBI-S = Copenhagen Burnout Inventory – Student Version; FMPS= Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale*

In Table 3, Pearson's correlation analysis reveals a positive correlation between academic pressure as measured by the ESSA and emotional exhaustion as measured by the CBI-S,  $r = .47$ ,  $p < .01$ . This suggests that academic pressures are related to increased levels of emotional exhaustion in students. Academic pressure also significantly correlates with perfectionism as measured by the FMPS,  $r = .42$ ,  $p < .01$ . Therefore, students who experience high levels of academic pressure are likely to demonstrate increased perfectionist traits. Interestingly, there was also a significant positive correlation between perfectionism and emotional exhaustion,  $r = .38$ ,  $p < .01$ . This result is consistent with the previous findings that perfectionistic traits are a contributing factor to burnout in the student population (Frost et al., 1990; Flett & Hewitt, 2024; Pascoe et al., 2024). This study provides preliminary evidence for the hypothesized mediation model that perfectionism may act as a partial mediator between academic pressure and emotional exhaustion.

**Table 4*****Regression Coefficients of Academic Pressure and Perfectionism on Emotional Exhaustion***

Variable	B	SE	t	p	95%CI
Constant	10.51	2.87	3.64	< .001	74.85-16.16
ESSA	.31	.03	8.91	< .001	0.24-0.38
FMPS	.15	.04	3.82	< .001	0.07-0.23

Note:  $N=300$ , \*\*\* $p<.001$  ESSA= Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents FMPS=Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale

In order to determine if either Academic Pressure (ESSA) or Perfectionism (FMPS) would serve as positive predictors of whether or not a student would experience Emotional Exhaustion, multiple regression analyses were performed on the amount of Emotional Exhaustion experienced by students. The results showed that Academic Pressure (ESSA), as measured by



B(0.31;SE(0.03)t(8.91);p<.001), was positively related to Emotional Exhaustion. In other words, students who feel that they have more academic demands have higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion than other students. Likewise, there was a positive correlation between Perfectionism (FMPS), as measured by B(0.15;SE(0.04)t(3.82);p<.001), and Emotional Exhaustion. Therefore, students experiencing more perfectionistic tendencies will experience more than average amounts of Emotional Exhaustion. As a result of these two findings, it can be concluded that both Academic Pressure (ESSA) and Perfectionism (FMPS) are each positively correlated with Emotional Exhaustion, providing a basis for testing the mediating relationship between Perfectionism and Emotional Exhaustion.

**Table 5**

Mediating role of Perfectionism between Academic Pressure and Emotional Exhaustion (N = 300)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	
					<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Total effect ESSA---CBI-S(c)	.28	.47***	.03	8.91	.41	.53
Direct effect						
ESSA---FMPS (a)		.31**	.03	5.78	.25	.37
FMPS—CBI-S (b)		.42***	.04	7.50	.34	.50
ESSA---CBI-S (c')		.18***	.04	4.50	.10	.26
Indirect effect						
ESSA--FMPS— CBI-S	.18	.08***	.02		.05	.12

**Note.** ESSA= *Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents*; FMPS=*Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale*; CBI-S= *ESSA= Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents*

$p < .01^{**}$ ,  $p < .001^{***}$

Mediation analysis was conducted to examine the role of perfectionism (FMPS) in the relationship between academic pressure (ESSA) and emotional exhaustion (CBI-S). Results indicated that academic pressure had a significant total effect on emotional exhaustion ( $B = 0.47$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ). When perfectionism was included in the model, ESSA significantly predicted FMPS ( $B = 0.31$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ), and FMPS significantly predicted emotional exhaustion ( $B = 0.42$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ). The direct effect of ESSA on CBI-S remained significant ( $B = 0.18$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ), indicating partial mediation. The indirect effect through perfectionism was significant ( $B = 0.08$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ), confirming that perfectionism partially mediates the relationship between academic pressure and emotional exhaustion. Overall, the model accounted for 28% of the variance in emotional exhaustion ( $R^2 = .28$ ), suggesting that both academic pressure and perfectionism play significant roles in predicting emotional fatigue among students.

## Discussion

The purpose of this research was to assess how academic stress affects a student's ability to feel emotional exhaustion as well as to look at whether or not perfectionism can mediate this relationship. The first hypothesis was supported (H1) by the results showing a strong positive correlation between stress and emotional exhaustion; the greater the amount of stress, the more overwhelming the feeling of emotional exhaustion for students. The results corroborate what previous studies have shown about academic stress being a leading contributor to a student's emotional fatigue, burnout, and overall decrease in a student's sense of well-being (Pascoe et al. , 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). Additionally, the results showed that students who reported

experiencing a great deal of academic stress are likely to have higher levels of feeling overwhelmed, reinforcing the negative impacts of prolonged educational stress on a student's psychological well-being.

The second hypothesis (H2) was therefore supported with the positive relationship found between academic stress and perfectionism. In other words, students who face high levels of academic stress tend to have more personal standards and a greater degree of concern about making a mistake, which is consistent with what past research has found, namely that academic stress is a catalyst for developing maladaptive perfectionist tendencies (Frost et al. 1990; Curran & Hill, 2023). This study highlights how pressure from outside, in this case, the educational environment, can lead to the development of cognitive-behavioral patterns that increase the level of response to stress.

Supporting H3, perfectionism was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion, indicating that the maladaptive perfectionist traits experienced increased levels of fatigue while feeling overwhelmed by academic demands (Flett & Hewitt, 2024). Thus, perfectionism serves as a mediating mechanism for internal cognitive-emotional determinants of student stress responses; therefore, perfectionism is more than merely a personality trait - it serves to increase the negative effects of stress-related outcomes.

Regression analysis supported H4 as academic pressure was demonstrated significantly to predict emotional exhaustion. This demonstrates that beyond merely correlational data, the stress of being an academic has a significant direct impact on the emotional wellbeing of the student; this finding reiterates the important need for intervening in ways that provide some relief from excessive workloads and performance-related stressors.

Lastly, mediation analysis provided evidence for H5: Perfectionism acted as a partial mediator between academic pressure and emotional exhaustion. This moderation provides evidence of the indirect relationship existing between emotional exhaustion and academic pressure via maladaptive perfectionism; thereby demonstrating that there is an interplay of environmental stressors along with one's own cognitive-behavioural characteristics in determining student well-being. The current results corroborate the findings of previous studies that support perfectionism provides a psychological link between stress and burn-out (Stoeber & Damian, 2016; Flett & Hewitt, 2024).

## **Conclusion**

According to the current research, emotional exhaustion in students is significantly influenced by academic stress (linear regression), as well as by maladaptive perfectionism, which mediates that relationship (mediation analyses). Additionally, the results of this study highlight how both the environments that create stress for students and the cognitive-behavioral characteristics that result from those stresses influence emotional well-being.

By demonstrating that maladaptive aspects of perfectionism act as a "magnifier" to the negative effects of academic demands on emotional exhaustion, these results illustrate the necessity for more extensive attention to environmental and personal influences on student mental health.

Thus, this research supports a more in-depth understanding of how academic stress affects students psychologically, though there are many limitations to this study and future research is needed to address them.

## **Limitations**

This study is limited in a few respects. First, the cross-sectional design precludes us from making statements about causation, meaning we cannot draw conclusions about the temporal ordering of academic pressure, perfectionism, and emotional exhaustion. Second, we relied on self-reported

data, which is typically subject to social desirability biases and response biases. Third, the sample used for this study was limited to students who were part of one educational system, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other settings and cultures. Finally, this research focused only on maladaptive perfectionism and did not examine any potential protective or adaptive components that may help inform student coping strategies.

### **Suggestions**

Educational agencies should assist schools and colleges in establishing programs that reduce excessive academic demands on students by helping them develop more adaptive coping responses. Programs to address perfectionistic inclinations (e.g., cognitive-behavioral workshop; stress management training) may help alleviate emotional exhaustion. In addition, administrators and policymakers should provide schools with resources to help them design a system for managing workload responsibilities; to offer students more flexible methods for assessment; and to create positive and supportive environments for students when experiencing academic stressors. Future studies could examine the following: (1) the use of longitudinal designs; (2) samples of pupils from various backgrounds; and (3) adaptive forms of perfectionism or resiliency factors that act to protect against the harmful effects of academic stress on students.

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