

1 Evidence of Academic Self Efficacy, Perceived Teacher Support, 2 Age and Gender as Predictors of School Burnout

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6

7 **Abstract**

8 School burnout is an increasing area of research in the adolescent education literature. The
9 present study extended the literature by focusing on personal variables that can serve as a
10 protective factor against school burnout among students in a rural public university where
11 basic amenities and facilities are lacking. Therefore, the study investigated academic
12 self-efficacy, perceived teacher support, gender and age as factors that predict school
13 burnout. The study was a cross-sectional ex post facto survey that involved 300
14 undergraduates randomly selected from a public university in southwest Nigeria. The sample
15 comprised 143 males and 157 females, whose ages ranged between 14 years and 34 years
16 (Mean = 22.55; SD = 3.37). Data were collected with a questionnaire made up of four
17 sections that measured the variables of interest in the study. Demographic variables measured
18 were age, sex, and, level of study. Standardized scales that measured school burnout, general
19 self-efficacy perceived teacher support were used to administered on participants. Result
20 showed significant joint influence of academic self efficacy, perceived teacher support, gender
21 and age on school burnout. Academic self efficacy and perceived teacher support had
22 significant independent influence on school burnout.

23

24 **Index terms**— academic self-efficacy, perceived teacher support, school burnout.

25 **1 Introduction**

26 here is a growing trend towards deepening school academic curriculum with a view to equipping students with
27 cognitive and vocational skills that are relevant to the needs of modern society. The trend can be seen in the
28 periodic review of academic curriculum to incorporate new courses that can address evolving social, economic
29 and business challenges, and expanding scope of existing courses beyond traditional topics. Although functional
30 education is desirable and should be encouraged, unless it is systematically implemented, there is a high likelihood
31 for students who are supposed to benefit from such innovations to experience school burnout.

32 Burnout is a term mostly applied in organisational setting, and refers to a state of physical, emotional,
33 and mental exhaustion that may result from long-term involvement in work situations that are emotionally
34 demanding ??Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Burnout may be viewed as a syndrome that incorporates
35 emotive breakdown and sense of depersonalization, decreased effectiveness at work, and a poor evaluation of
36 one's performance. Conceptually similar to job/work burnout, school burnout is also threedimensional consisting
37 of exhaustion due to academic demands, pessimism and detached attitude toward one's school/studies, and
38 feelings of inadequacy/incompetency as a student (Kiuru, Aunola, Nurmi, & Salmela-Aro, in press; Salmela-Aro
39 & Nääätänen, 2005; Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002). Put simply therefore, school burnout
40 may be construed as a chronic school-related stress syndrome presenting as fatigue, experiences of cynicism about
41 school and a sense of inadequacy as a scholar.

42 Previously, the research community had believed that burnout was strictly a 'job-related' condition ??Maslach,
43 Jackson, & Leiter, 1996; ??chaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993) that affected only workers, and sustained a

1 INTRODUCTION

44 perception which promoted the idea that persons not directly involved in economic-oriented activities could not
45 experience burnout. However, emerging evidence from studies with samples drawn from student population has
46 shown that students can, and indeed, do experience burnout, ?? Schorn & Buchwald, 2007). Findings from these
47 studies suggested that burnout may be a psychological phenomenon related to any activity involving exertion of
48 mental and physical effort in pursuit of a goal of which academic pursuit is one.

49 Although studying to earn a degree at the tertiary institution may not be considered an economic endeavor
50 ('paid economic activity') in the strict sense of the word, however when viewed from a psychological perspective,
51 engagement in scholastic endeavor may qualify as work. This is because core scholastic activities involve lectures,
52 research work, term papers, group projects, field trips/excursions, and examinations, all of which involve certain
53 degree of physical, emotional, and mental exertion. The demanding nature of these undertakings may lead to
54 feelings of emotional and physical exhaustion, negative evaluation of one's ability to cope, and consequently
55 academic-related burnout among students.

56 Findings from past research establish motivation for empirically studying school burnout among undergraduates
57 in the contemporary era. One, findings have shown high levels of burnout in a significant percentage of
58 college student population (Jacobs & Dodd, 2003; Salmela-Aro & Näätänen, 2005); two, significant relationship
59 has been established between academic performance and measures of burnout in college students (Jacobs &
60 Dodd, 2003); three, a myriad of mental and psychological health issues such as depression has been linked to
61 burnout ??Glass & Mc Night, 1996); four, burnout can interfere with relationship among students, and between
62 other members of the academic community such as faculty, and finally, burnout can affect students enthusiasm
63 towards education, and this has serious implication for their employability. When the individual and interactive
64 effects of these motivations on the individual and societal levels of analysis are aggregated, the case for studying
65 burnout among students is compelling.

66 There are personal and social factors that are predictive of burnout. One personal variable that may predict
67 school burnout is academic self-efficacy. Selfefficacy is defined as the belief that an individual can do something
68 successfully (Woolfolk, 2004). It generally makes reference to an individual's "subjective belief about their
69 capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance"
70 ??Bandura, 1977b). People with high selfefficacy tend to analyze situations to ascertain the requirements for
71 success, and develop strategies that may guarantee success. They also tend to keep striving and maintain high
72 level of motivation until they have attained full accomplishment of their set goals.

73 Some early studies have linked self-efficacy with scholastic success (Ashton & Webb, 1986;Ross, 1998), and
74 motivation (Multon, Brown & Lent, 1991). Highly efficacious students' generally belief in their capacity to
75 attain their academic goals. Such belief would reflect in their cognition and behavioural tendencies manifesting
76 as positive attitude towards school work, requesting for assistance from teachers, and preparing well for
77 examinations. Academic responsible behaviours such as these would reduce the likelihood of experiencing
78 academic stress which in turn may decrease the likelihood of burnout ??Schaufeli, et al. 1993).

79 An empirical study using sample drawn from college students found that self-efficacy was negatively associated
80 with depersonalization and emotional exhaustion (Evers, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2002). The same study also
81 showed that self efficacy had positive relationship with decreased personal accomplishments. The findings signify
82 that highly efficacious students were more likelihood to believe that they would do well academically. They
83 were also less likely to experience feelings of detachment and emotional exhaustion as a result of academic
84 work. Interestingly, the positive relationship between self-efficacy and decreased personal accomplishment was an
85 indication that efficacious students experienced a higher sense of accomplishment with their current performance.

86 Owing to the strong positive association between self-efficacy and self esteem, studies were designed to explore
87 how both factors related to academic success. One of such studies was conducted in the United States among
88 secondary school students and found a significant relationship between selfesteem and academic achievement for
89 seventh-graders (Alves-Martins., Peixoto, Gouveia-Pereira, Amaral, & Pedro, 2002). Similarly, the result of a
90 longitudinal study that tested the interrelationships among self esteem, self-concept and academic achievement
91 among seventh-graders showed that self-concept beliefs predicted later achievement (Trautwein et al. 2006). After
92 analyzing data obtained from the National Educational Longitudinal Study, Ross & Broh (2000) noted that a
93 sense of personal control was found to be related to self-efficacy (Schunk, 1995;Pajares, 1996), which in turn
94 predicted subsequent academic achievement. These findings are significant because they suggest that selfconcept
95 and self esteem may moderate the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement. It may also help
96 in explaining the buffering effect of selfefficacy against school burnout.

97 The availability of social support within the school community is another factor that may influence school
98 burnout. Social support is defined as the existence or availability of people on whom one can depend on for
99 care and love (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983). Perceived availability of support is believed to give
100 people the confidence that they can deal with stress as well as a feeling that others care for them. One form of
101 social support network in school setting that may influence school burnout is perceived teacher support. Teacher
102 support is a critical psychosocial resource that can help students cope with stress and may serve as a remedy
103 against burnout.

104 Investigation of the relationship between teacher support and academic burnout is considered critical because
105 students tend to engage in intense relationships with teaching staff throughout the duration of their studies
106 in school. Students view their teachers as learning resources, mentors, and may also depend on them for

107 psychological support to successfully meander the challenges posed by the complex nature of life in school.
108 Therefore, it is natural for them to seek assistance with academic issues, and other personal challenges from
109 teachers. Based on their evaluation of teacher behaviour as demonstrated by teachers' sensitivity to their feelings
110 and willingness to assist, students who perceive their teachers as supportive are more likely to report lower level
111 of school burnout (Naami, 2009).

112 Related to this are studies which found that teacher disposition influences development of positive sense of
113 self among students (Helm, 2007). Additional studies have equally confirmed the significance of teacher support
114 on students' academic engagement (Garcia-Reid, Reid, & Peterson, 2005). Support for the positive influence
115 of teacher support in reducing school burn was provided by Salmela-Aro, Kiuru, Pietikainen & Jokela (2008)
116 who found a negative relationship between faculty climate, availability of positive motivation from teachers
117 and academic burnout. In a study that highlighted the importance of teacher support in promoting academic
118 achievement, Gregory & Weinstein (2004) found that student-perceived teacher connection was the factor most
119 closely associated with growth in achievement from 8th to 12th grade. The finding suggests that the quality of
120 student-teacher interaction at secondary school may have significant implication for performance in college.

121 Similarly, according to data from National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, students who had robust,
122 warm relationship with teachers were found to exhibit lower rates of emotional distress, suicidal ideation, suicidal
123 behavior, violence, substance abuse, and early sexual activity (Resnick et al., 1997). The finding is a confirmation
124 of the positive role that teacher support can play in assisting students complete their programs, and also limit
125 their involvement in risky behaviours in order to escape life's difficulties.

126 Also, fair treatment and support have been found to be key factors protecting from burnout in the work
127 context ??Maslach & Leiter, 2000). In the school context, positive motivation as a pedagogical goal by teachers,
128 including fairness, encouragement toward pupils, and pupil-teacher bonding (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004)
129 on the one hand, and the availability of support from school on the other (Aunola, Leskinen, & Nurmi, 2006)
130 are believed to serve as protective factors against school burnout. The finding implies that a supportive school
131 environment (provision of conducive learning environment, and other facilities) and interest in students' academic
132 progress may protect against burnout.

133 Salmela-Aro et al. ??2008) found that positive motivation received from teachers typical of the school was
134 related to a low level of school-related burnout in a sample of upper secondary school students in Finland. They
135 also found that in school that promoted intergenerational pupil-teacher bonding, students reported low level of
136 school burnout. The authors reported that negative school climate related to burnout.

137 The association between adolescents' school burnout and parents' work burnout was the focus of a study
138 conducted in Finland. The finding showed that school burnout was more likely among children of parents who
139 themselves were suffering from burnout (Academy of Finland). The finding highlighted the role of parents in
140 promoting or ameliorating academic burnout among their children and bringing to the fore, the need for parents
141 to effectively manage work burnout.

142 The studies reviewed showed that a supportive environment at home and school are significant in the
143 investigation of school burnout. When students perceive that they can rely on significant others such as teachers
144 for scholastic guidance, academic mentoring, and to clarify personal issues, they are more likely to feel competent
145 about achieving their academic goals. Hence, it is argued that perceived teacher support will be negatively related
146 to school burnout.

147 Although gender difference is believed to be common in every sphere of human endeavor, Beer & Beer (1992)
148 maintained that this may not be the case with the experience of burnout. The authors found that men and women
149 were comparable in their experience of burnout, explaining that the outcome may be as a result of differences in
150 the perception of stressors among both sexes. Other studies noted that differences only existed in the dimension
151 of burnout experienced by males and females. The finding that female tend to be higher on emotional exhaustion,
152 while males were higher on depersonalization (Purvanova & Muros, 2010;Smit, 2007) provided further support
153 for the finding.

154 Lee, Puig, Lea & Lee (2013) explored age differences in academic burnout among Korean adolescents', and
155 reported that all four sub-scales of academic burnout (exhaustion, antipathy, cynicism, and inefficacy) were
156 positively related with age. This signified that academic burnout was more likely to occur among older students.
157 Also, the authors observed a progressive increase in stress with subsequent school transitions for most students,
158 suggesting that burnout increased as learning demand increased also. However, other studies which examined this
159 relationship have found nonsignificant influence of age on burnout. One such study was conducted by Bianch, &
160 Schonfeld (2014), and involved 5575 participants who supplied personal information such as age and job tenure
161 while they completed burnout measure. Among their findings, the authors reported that age and job tenure did
162 not predict burnout.

163 2 II.

164 3 Hypotheses

165 i. Academic self efficacy, perceived teacher support, gender, and age will have significant independent
166 Year 2015

13 TABLE 2 :

167 Evidence of Academic Self Efficacy, Perceived Teacher Support, Age and Gender as Predictors of School
168 Burnout

169 4 A

170 and joint influence on school burnout among undergraduates. ii. Male undergraduates will be significantly
171 higher on school burnout than female undergraduates iii. Age will significantly predict school burnout among
172 undergraduates III.

173 5 Method a) Design and participants

174 The design of the study was a cross-sectional ex post facto survey. A total of three hundred (300) respondents
175 comprising 143 males and 157 females, whose age ranged between 14 years and 34 years (Mean = 22.55; SD =
176 3.37). Participants were randomly selected among undergraduates in a public university in southwest Nigeria.
177 The geographical location of the university which is situated one hour drive from the capital city, and the
178 inadequacy of facilities such as accommodation, electricity, and other amenities all make learning a daunting
179 task.

180 6 IV.

181 7 Instruments

182 Material for data collection was a questionnaire comprising four sections. Age, sex, and, level of study were the
183 demographic information measured in the study.

184 8 a) School burnout

185 This was measured with school burnout scale developed by Salmela -Aro, Kiuru, Leskinen & Nurmi (2009). The
186 9-item scale is divided into three subscales that measured components of school burnout in higher education.
187 Four of the items measured exhaustion, 2 measured cynicism while three measured sense of inadequacy as a
188 student. Items on the scale are rated on a 6-point Likert format with options that ranged between completely
189 disagree (1) to completely agree (6). Scores in the scale are interpreted such that those above the mean indicated
190 high school burnout, while scores below the mean indicated low school burnout. The Cronbach Alpha of the
191 scale in this study is .64. ??Ferguson, 2012). The 12 items evaluated the extent to which students felt teaching
192 method adopted by the teacher enhanced learning. Items on the scale were rated on a 5point Likert format with
193 options that ranged from strongly agree (5), to strongly disagree (5). Scores above the mean is interpreted as an
194 indication of high teacher support, while scores below the mean signified low teacher support.

195 V.

196 9 Procedure

197 Questionnaires were distributed to a random sample of undergraduates in a state-government managed university.
198 Two strategies were adopted in the distribution of the questionnaires. In the first strategy, simple balloting was
199 used to randomly select students during lecture with the permission of the lecturer in the class during that
200 period. The second method involved random distribution of questionnaires to students who were resting at the
201 Relaxation Centre (RC) on campus. In both cases, only those who gave oral consent to participate were given
202 the study material to complete. It took less than 10minutes to complete a pack of questionnaire. Three hundred
203 and forty-seven (347) questionnaires were distributed in all, however only 300 were eventually found usable for
204 further analysis, thus given a response rate of more than 86%. Evidence of Academic Self Efficacy, Perceived
205 Teacher Support, Age and Gender as Predictors of School Burnout

206 10 VI.

207 11 Results

208 12 Multiple

209 13 Table 2 :

210 A Table ?? indicated that sex, age, ASE and PTS predicted school burnout $F(4, 294) = 2.43; p < .05$ and jointly
211 accounted for 5% of the variation in school burnout. ASE ($? = -.16, t = -2.80; p < .05$) and PTS ($? = .12, t =$
212 $2.21; p < .05$) had significant independent influence on school burnout.

213 ASE had negative relationship with school burnout indicating that school burnout decreased with higher ASE.
214 Similarly, the result showed positive relationship between PTS and school burnout, such that favourable PTS
215 led to increased school burnout. However, gender and age respectively had no significant independent influence
216 on school burnout. The hypothesis was partially confirmed. Table 2 indicated that gender had no significant
217 influence on school burnout, $t(298) = .25; p > .05$. The result showed that male and female undergraduates alike
218 were comparable on school burnout. Also, there was no significant influence of age on school burnout, $t(296) =$

219 - .29; $p > .05$. This signified that old and young undergraduates were comparable on school burnout. Therefore,
220 hypotheses 2 and 3 were not supported.

221 **14 VII.**

222 **15 Discussion**

223 The study explored academic self-efficacy, perceived teacher support, gender and age as factors of school burnout.
224 Influenced by findings in extant literature reviewed, it was hypothesized that academic self-efficacy, perceived
225 teacher support, gender and age would have significant independent and joint influence on school burnout. The
226 result indicated significant joint influence of academic self-efficacy, perceived teacher support, gender and age on
227 school burnout ($< .05$). At the level of independent influence to the variance in school burnout, the result showed
228 that academic self-efficacy and perceived teacher support predicted burnout.

229 The finding showed significant negative influence of academic self-efficacy on school burnout with the negative
230 beta sign indicating that as academic self-efficacy increased, school burnout decreased also. In addition, the
231 finding showed that academic self-efficacy contributed the most to school burnout compared to the other predictors.
232 The finding is consistent with previous studies (Evers, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2002; Ross, 1998; ??chaufeli, et al.
233 1993) which indicated that efficacious students reported low level of school-related burnout compared to less
234 efficacious students. Efficacious students exude a high sense of self-concept which may have led them to believe
235 in their capacity to succeed in their academic undertaking. By believing in their ability to do well in school
236 work, efficacious students might have made adequate preparations to overcome all obstacles that might stand
237 between them and their goal. Such preparations include activities that reduced stress such as early preparations
238 for examination, timely submission of all homework/assignments, and regular attendance in class. Similarly,
239 efficacious students tend to have more social skills and are good at initiating interpersonal relationship. These
240 skills might have enabled them to form beneficial relationship with more academically endowed students, and
241 teachers who might have assisted to clarify difficult and unfamiliar concepts.

242 The finding showed that perceived teacher support had significant positive influence on school burnout, such
243 that school burnout tended to increase with more favourable teacher support. The finding contradicted a large
244 body of past research which reported that teacher support was an important buffer against school burnout
245 (Crosnoe et al. Elder, 2004; Naami, 2009; Resnick et al., 1997; Salmela-Aro et al. 2008). The fact that the
246 educational sector in developed countries is prioritized and adequately funded might have accounted for the
247 negative relationship between teacher support and school burnout reported by past studies.

248 The present study was conducted in a developing country where education is poorly funded and basic learning
249 facilities are lacking in most schools. Because the study was conducted in public a university tended to be poorly
250 funded, it is not unlikely that lecturers could not offer the students the type of support they expected from them.
251 This might account for higher level of burnout even when students actually received support from their lecturers.
252 It might mean weak teacher-student support such that the support received was not congruent with students'
253 most salient needs.

254 It was hypothesized that gender would significantly predict burnout among students. The finding showed no
255 significant gender influence on school burnout. It showed that male and female students reported similar level
256 on school burnout. Previous research found that male and female reported comparable level of burnout (Beer &
257 Beer, 1992). A possible reason behind this finding might be similarity in

258 **16 Year 2015**

259 Evidence of Academic Self Efficacy, Perceived Teacher Support, Age and Gender as Predictors of School Burnout
260 A reaction to factors that precipitated school burnout. In addition, it is possible that both sexes might have
261 had equal exposure to stressors that increased vulnerability to school burnout such as lectures, assignment, and
262 examinations. As a result, their level of school burnout might be similar. In this study, age did not have significant
263 influence on school burnout. The finding indicated that students reported similar level of burnout irrespective of
264 their age. The finding supported the research by Bianchi, & Schonfeld (2014) who found that age did not predict
265 burnout among participants cut across different age. Participants in this study were final year students, and
266 might have developed a similar pattern of coping with stress.

267 **17 VIII.**

268 **18 Conclusion**

269 In conclusion, the findings of this study contribute to our understanding of school burnout among students
270 studying in public university that are poorly funded, and highlight the significance of academic self efficacy, and
271 perceived teacher support in ameliorating burnout. Teacher behaviour that promotes strong relationship and
272 fosters a feeling of capability in students is recommended.

273 19 IX.

274 20 Limitation

275 The present study is not without some limitations. First, the findings were based on results collected from self-
276 report questionnaires. Self-report questionnaires are notorious for social desirability bias. Second, rather than
277 use pencil-paper test as was the case in this study, which allows for faking of responses, future studies might
278 try utilizing objective measures for burnout, such as measurement of heart rate. Objective measures are less
279 vulnerable to faking by respondents. Third, the study was cross-sectional, a factor that made it impossible to
280 analyse any causal relations between the variables. Fourth, the study was carried out in one public university
281 thus caution is advised in generalizing findings to other contexts such as to private schools which might differ in
282 philosophy and school policy.

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2

School burnout	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Male	143	28.27	6.76			
Female	157	28.07	7.06	298	.25	>.05
Age	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Old	134	28.02	7.28			
Young	164	28.26	6.65	296	-.29	>.05

Figure 1: Table 2 :

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20 LIMITATION

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