



# INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC BURNOUT ON GOAL ADJUSTMENT IN WORKING AND NONWORKING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: MODERATING ROLE OF COPING STRATEGIES

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship among Academic Burnout, Coping Strategies and Goal adjustment in working and nonworking University Students. It was hypothesized that there is likely to be a significant relationship among Academic Burnout, Coping Strategies and Goal adjustment in working and nonworking University Students. The correlational research design and purposive sampling technique has been implied and the sample size was (n=200). Students from Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) were taken. For this purpose, Multidimensional assessment of Academic Burnout Scale (ABS), Coping Strategies Scale (CSS) and Goal Adjustment Scale (GAS) were utilized to collect data from participants. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the relationship between demographics and study variables. Furthermore, Moderation Analysis was used to investigate the moderating role of coping strategies. In an additional analysis, independent sample T-test was used to investigate the significant gender differences between study variables. The findings shows that there was a significant relationship among Academic Burnout, Coping Strategies and Goal adjustment in working and nonworking University Students. The study also depicted those coping strategies played a moderating role in relation between Academic Burnout and Goal Adjustment.

**Keywords:** Academic Burnout, Coping Strategies, Goal Adjustment, working & Non-working Students

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

University life often presents students with a range of academic, personal, and professional challenges. Balancing academic responsibilities with part-time or full-time employment can significantly increase stress levels, making students vulnerable to academic burnout—a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion

caused by prolonged academic demands. (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schaufeli et al., 2002) Academic burnout can negatively affect motivation, performance, mental health, and the ability to pursue academic and personal goals. In this context, goal adjustment becomes a crucial psychological process. It refers to an

individual's ability to either disengage from unattainable goals or re-engage with new, meaningful alternatives. The ability to adapt one's goals is essential for maintaining psychological well-being, especially in high-stress environments like universities. However, the extent to which students are able to adjust their goals may differ based on their experiences with burnout and other personal resources, such as their use of coping strategies.

Coping strategies—the behaviours and thoughts individuals use to manage internal and external stressors—can play a protective role in mitigating the negative effects of academic burnout. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). These strategies can be problem-focused (actively addressing the cause of stress) or emotion-focused (managing the emotional response). The effectiveness of these strategies can influence how well students manage burnout and whether they can adapt their goals in a healthy and constructive way.

Furthermore, the experience of burnout and the ability to adjust goals may vary between working and non-working university students. Students who work while studying often face additional pressures such as time constraints, financial stress, and competing priorities. (Salamonson et al., 2012). These factors may increase their risk of burnout and affect how they adjust their goals and utilize coping mechanisms compared to their non-working peers. (Creed et al., 2015) This study aims to explore the influence of academic burnout on goal adjustment among university students, with a specific focus on comparing working and non-working students. It also investigates the moderating role of coping strategies, seeking to understand how different ways of coping can buffer or intensify the impact of burnout on students' ability to adapt their goals. Understanding these relationships can help inform interventions to support students' mental health, goal-setting behaviors, and academic success.

University students are often expected to excel academically while navigating various personal and social challenges. For some, the pressure increases when they take on part-time or full-time jobs alongside their studies. The combination of academic demands, employment responsibilities, and personal

commitments can lead to high levels of stress and eventually result in academic burnout. Academic burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism toward studies, and a reduced sense of academic accomplishment. It can negatively impact students' mental health, academic performance, and future aspirations. (Dyrbye et al., 2008).

Academic burnout is not merely a temporary feeling of tiredness; it is a serious psychological condition that can affect a student's motivation, self-efficacy, and long-term academic goals. Students experiencing burnout may struggle with concentration, feel detached from their studies, and question the value of their educational efforts. Over time, this can lead to disengagement, academic failure, or even dropping out of school. (Schaufeli et al., 2009)

In such situations, a student's ability to adjust or realign their goals becomes a vital coping mechanism. This process, known as goal adjustment, includes two key aspects:

1. Goal disengagement – the ability to let go of goals that are no longer realistic or attainable.
2. Goal re-engagement – the ability to find and commit to new, meaningful goals that are achievable within current circumstances.

Goal adjustment helps students maintain psychological well-being, even in the face of setbacks and failures. However, the ability to adjust goals may be influenced by the level of burnout they experience and by how well they manage stress. This is where coping strategies play a critical role. Coping strategies refer to the cognitive and behavioral efforts used by individuals to manage stressful situations. They are typically categorized into:

Problem-focused coping: attempts to directly address or solve the source of stress (e.g., making a study schedule, seeking help).

Emotion-focused coping: efforts to regulate emotional responses to stress (e.g., relaxation, denial, or seeking emotional support).

Coping strategies can either buffer the negative effects of burnout or, if maladaptive, may worsen its impact. For example, a student using healthy coping strategies may be more resilient, better at adjusting their goals, and less affected by burnout, whereas another who uses avoidance or denial may struggle more. (Park & Folkman, 1997).

Moreover, the employment status of students adds another layer to this complex relationship. Working students face time constraints, workload pressure, and often financial responsibilities that their non-working peers may not encounter. These added responsibilities may make working students more prone to burnout.

At the same time, working students may develop better time management and coping skills, potentially influencing their ability to adjust goals. Therefore, it becomes essential to study how academic burnout affects goal adjustment among university students, and how this relationship may differ between working and non-working students. Additionally, exploring how different coping strategies moderate this relationship can provide insights into the protective factors that help students manage burnout and remain goal-directed. (Park & Folkman, 1997).

### 1.1 Academic Burnout

Academic burnout is a psychological syndrome resulting from prolonged exposure to academic stress and pressure. It is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or detachment from academic work, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

#### 1.1.1 Components of Academic Burnout:

**1.1.1.2 Emotional Exhaustion:** Feeling drained, fatigued, or overwhelmed by academic responsibilities. (Maslach et al., 2001).

**1.1.1.3 Cynicism/Depersonalization:** Developing a detached or negative attitude toward studies, professors, or academic tasks. (Maslach et al., 2001).

**1.1.1.4 Reduced Academic Efficacy:** Experiencing a decline in academic performance or believing one is no longer capable of achieving academic goals. (Leiter & Maslach, 2005).

#### 1.1.2 Theoretical Background:

Based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS), academic burnout is an extension of occupational burnout theory

applied in educational settings. It emerges when demands exceed coping resources for an extended period. (Bakker et al., 2014).

#### 1.1.3 Relevance to the Study:

In the current research, academic burnout is examined as the predictor variable, influencing students' ability to adjust their goals when overwhelmed by academic demands. It may affect motivation, decision-making, and the overall academic journey. (Yang, 2004; Salmela-Aro et al., 2009).

### 1.2 Goal Adjustment

Goal adjustment refers to the capacity of individuals to respond adaptively to unattainable or challenging goals. It consists of two key processes:

**1.2.1 Goal Disengagement:** The ability to let go of goals that are no longer achievable or beneficial.

**1.2.2 Goal Re-engagement:** The ability to identify, commit to, and pursue new, meaningful goals after abandoning an old one.

#### 1.2.3 Theoretical Background:

The concept of goal adjustment stems from Self-Regulation Theory and Goal Disengagement and Re-engagement Theory (Wrosch et al., 2003), which suggest that adaptive goal regulation is essential for emotional well-being and resilience in the face of setbacks.

#### 1.2.4 Relevance to the Study:

Goal adjustment is the outcome variable in this study. Students experiencing high academic burnout may struggle to maintain or shift goals appropriately, which can affect academic persistence and mental health. Understanding how well students adjust their goals can reveal how they cope with academic stress.

### 1.3 Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are the cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals use to manage the internal and external demands of stressful situations. These strategies can either reduce or increase the psychological impact of stress.

### 1.3.1 Types of Coping Strategies:

**1.3.1.2 Emotion-Focused Coping:** Managing emotional reactions rather than changing the situation (e.g., relaxation, acceptance, denial).

**1.3.1.3 Avoidant Coping:** Ignoring the problem or withdrawing (e.g., substance use, procrastination) - often considered maladaptive.

### 1.3.3 Relevance to the Study:

Coping strategies serve as the moderating variable in this research. They are expected to influence how academic burnout affects goal

### 1.3.4 Working and Non-Working University Students

Working Students are those enrolled in a university program while also engaged in part-time or full-time employment. Non-Working Students are those enrolled in a university program but not currently employed.

### 1.3.5 Contextual Differences:

Working Students often face time constraints, financial stress, fatigue, and reduced study time, which may heighten academic burnout.

**1.3.1.1 Problem-Focused Coping:** Directly addressing the source of stress (e.g., planning, time management, seeking help).

### 1.3.2 Theoretical Background:

Based on Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (1984), coping strategies are seen as dynamic responses that mediate between the stressor and the individual's response.

adjustment. Effective coping may reduce the negative impact of burnout, while ineffective coping may worsen it. (Park & Folkman, 1997; Endler & Parker, 1990).

Non-Working Students may have more time for academic engagement but can still face stress from other sources (family pressure, academic expectations, etc.).

### 1.3.6 Relevance to the Study:

The study compares these two groups to understand how employment status may influence the relationship between burnout, goal adjustment, and coping strategies. Differences in stress levels and coping resources between these groups may lead to varied outcomes.

Term	Role in Study	Brief Explanation
Academic Burnout	(Independent Variable)	A state of emotional, mental, and academic exhaustion.
Goal Adjustment	(Dependent variable)	The ability to let go of unattainable goals and set new ones.
Coping Strategies	(Moderating Variable)	Strategies to manage stress (problem-focused or emotion-focused).
Working/Non-Working Status	(Grouping/Comparison Factor)	Employment status to compare experiences and coping differences

### 1.3.7 Summary Table

#### 1.4 Academic Burnout

Academic burnout is a psychological condition that results from chronic academic stress,

typically arising from prolonged study demands, high expectations, and limited resources to cope. It is considered an educational counterpart to

occupational burnout, often observed among students experiencing overwhelming pressure,

lack of control, and diminished motivation. Academic burnout negatively affects a student's emotional well-being, academic performance, and ability to pursue personal and professional goals.

This concept is rooted in the broader framework of burnout theory, originally introduced by Maslach and Jackson (1981) in the context of workplace stress. It was later adapted for academic settings, leading to the development of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS).

According to Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker (2002), academic burnout is defined as:

A three-dimensional syndrome comprising emotional exhaustion, cynicism toward one's studies, and a sense of reduced academic efficacy, resulting from prolonged academic stress."

This condition can lead to disengagement from studies, reduced motivation, emotional instability, and eventually academic failure or dropout if not addressed.

#### 1.4.1 Components of Academic Burnout

Academic burnout is typically composed of three interrelated dimensions, as outlined below:

##### 1.4.1.1 Emotional Exhaustion

This refers to the feeling of being emotionally and physically drained due to academic responsibilities. Students experiencing emotional exhaustion feel they can no longer give their best effort, often describing themselves as "mentally tired" or "burned out."

##### 1.4.1.2 Cynicism (Depersonalization or Detachment)

Cynicism in academic burnout refers to a student's detached attitude toward studies. It involves feelings of indifference, loss of interest, or negative thoughts about one's academic work.

##### 1.4.1.3 Reduced Academic Efficacy (Lack of Personal Accomplishment)

This dimension reflects a student's reduced belief in their ability to perform academic tasks

successfully. The individual may feel incompetent or perceive a lack of achievement despite efforts.

##### 1.4.1.4. Factors Contributing to Academic Burnout

Several factors may contribute to the development of academic burnout:

**Academic workload:** High expectations, long hours, and multiple assignments.

**Time pressure:** Particularly severe in students balancing work and study.

**Lack of support:** From peers, instructors, or family.

**Perfectionism:** Setting unrealistically high academic goals.

**Poor coping strategies:** Ineffective handling of stress and time.

##### 1.4.1.5 Consequences of Academic Burnout

Academic burnout has wide-ranging consequences:

**Psychological:** Depression, anxiety, low self-esteem.

**Behavioral:** Poor academic performance, absenteeism, procrastination.

**Physical:** Fatigue, sleep disturbances, headaches.

**Social:** Withdrawal from peers, reduced participation in academic life.

##### 1.4.1.6. Academic Burnout in Working vs. Non-Working Students

Working students are more prone to burnout due to divided attention, time constraints, and work-related stress. On-working students may still experience burnout due to academic competitiveness, internal pressure, or family expectations.

Understanding this distinction is critical for your study, as employment status may intensify or change the burnout experience and its impact on students' academic life.

#### 1.4.1.7 Measurement of Academic Burnout

The most widely used instrument is the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Student Survey (MBI-SS), which measures the three components:

Emotional Exhaustion

Cynicism

Academic Efficacy (reverse scored)

Other scales include the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory for Students (OLBIS) and Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT-S), depending on context and population

### 1.5 Goal Adjustment

Goal adjustment is a self-regulatory process that reflects how individuals respond to challenges, obstacles, or the unavailability of desired outcomes. It plays a critical role in maintaining emotional well-being, especially in demanding contexts such as academic environments. When students experience failure, burnout, or significant stress, their ability to adapt their goals determines whether they remain psychologically resilient or experience emotional and motivational decline. Goal adjustment is considered a key adaptive mechanism in coping, motivation, and self-regulation theories, and is strongly linked to psychological well-being and academic persistence. (Wrosch et al., 2003)

#### 1.5.1 Definition of Goal Adjustment

According to Wrosch, Scheier, Carver, and Schulz (2003):

Goal adjustment refers to the individual's capacity to disengage from unattainable goals and re-engage in alternative, meaningful goals." This capacity helps people avoid frustration, maintain a sense of purpose, and recover from setbacks. In academic settings, goal adjustment can be essential when students face failure, overwhelming demands, or changing priorities.

#### 1.5.2 Theoretical Background

Goal adjustment is grounded in self-regulation and control theory, which emphasizes that humans monitor and regulate their behaviors in relation to goals. When individuals encounter obstacles that render a goal unattainable, continuing to pursue that goal can lead to distress. Instead, disengaging from the unattainable goal and re-engaging with a new, attainable one restores purpose and emotional

balance. (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Heckhausen et al., 2010).

Two critical theories are central to this construct:

Goal Disengagement and Re-engagement Theory (Wrosch et al., 2003)

Motivational Theory of Life-Span Development (Heckhausen et al., 2010)

#### 1.5.3 Factors Influencing Goal Adjustment

**Personality traits:** Flexibility, optimism, and emotional resilience aid in adjusting goals.

**Coping strategies:** Adaptive coping (e.g., problem-solving, acceptance) promotes better goal adjustment.

**Support systems:** Encouragement from peers, family, or mentors can ease the transition from old to new goals.

**Burnout levels:** High burnout may reduce goal flexibility unless moderated by effective coping.

#### 1.5.4 Relevance to University Students

University students often encounter academic challenges, shifting career interests, or mental health struggles. In such cases, the ability to disengage from overly ambitious or unrealistic academic goals and re-engage with healthier, more attainable ones becomes crucial. For example:

A student struggling in a pre-med program may choose to pursue psychology instead.

A student aiming for top grades in every subject may instead prioritize mental health and overall balance. (Wrosch et al., 2007; Jobin & Wrosch, 2016).

#### 1.5.5 Effective goal adjustment:

Prevents psychological harm

Maintains academic motivation

Promotes long-term success and satisfaction

#### 1.5.6 Measurement of Goal Adjustment

Goal adjustment is often assessed using the Goal Adjustment Scale (GAS) developed by Wrosch et al. (2003), which includes items measuring:

Goal Disengagement (e.g., "I find it difficult to stop trying to achieve a goal that is no longer feasible.")

Goal Re-engagement (e.g., “When I have to stop pursuing an important goal, I actively look for meaningful alternatives.”)

Goal adjustment is a vital psychological process that supports emotional and academic resilience. It helps individuals maintain well-being in the face of stress, especially when original goals become unattainable. In the context of your study, goal adjustment functions as the dependent variable, influenced by academic burnout and moderated by the effectiveness of coping strategies. Understanding how students adapt their goals can inform better support strategies within universities.

### 1.5.7 Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are fundamental psychological mechanisms that individuals use to manage internal and external stressors in challenging situations. In the context of academic life, students often face stress from heavy workloads, examinations, time pressures, and in some cases, the dual burden of employment. How they cope with such stressors significantly influences their mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. Coping strategies not only shape the impact of stress (such as academic burnout) but also influence how well students adapt their goals, manage change, and recover from setbacks. In this study, coping strategies are viewed as a moderating variable—that is, they may strengthen or weaken the relationship between academic burnout and goal adjustment. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)

### 1.5.8 Definition of Coping Strategies

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984):

Coping is the constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person." This definition highlights coping as a dynamic process, not a fixed trait, emphasizing the strategies individuals adopt based on context and perceived control over the stressor.

### 1.5.9 Theoretical Background

The concept of coping strategies is grounded in the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman. This model views stress as a transaction between the

individual and their environment, where coping is the mediator between the stressful experience and the psychological outcome.

Stress occurs when perceived demands exceed perceived resources.

Coping strategies are activated in response to this imbalance.

The effectiveness of coping affects emotional and behavioral responses, including goal regulation. (Compas et al., 2001).

### 1.6 Types of Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are generally classified into three major categories, based on the nature of the individual’s response:

#### 1.6.1 Problem-Focused Coping

This strategy involves actively trying to solve the problem that is causing stress. It focuses on changing or eliminating the source of the stress.

##### Examples:

Time management and planning

Seeking academic help or clarification from instructors

Prioritizing tasks and setting realistic goals

Creating structured study routines

##### Effectiveness:

Problem-focused coping is considered effective when the individual has control over the situation. It is associated with better academic outcomes and reduced burnout.

#### 1.6.2 Emotion-Focused Coping

This strategy aims to regulate the emotional response to a stressful situation rather than changing the situation itself.

##### Examples:

Seeking emotional support from friends or family

Practicing mindfulness, meditation, or relaxation techniques

Engaging in hobbies or recreational activities

Reframing negative thoughts (positive thinking)

##### Effectiveness:

Emotion-focused coping is helpful when the stressor cannot be changed (e.g., exam schedules or external demands). It helps maintain

emotional balance but may not solve the underlying problem.

### 1.6.3 Avoidant or Maladaptive Coping

This type includes behaviors or thoughts that avoid the problem or deny its existence. Often short-term in relief, these strategies can be harmful if used excessively.

#### Examples:

Procrastination

Excessive sleeping or withdrawal from responsibilities

Substance use (e.g., smoking, alcohol)

Denial or distraction through excessive screen time

#### Effectiveness:

Avoidant coping is generally considered maladaptive, as it does not address the problem and can increase stress, leading to poorer academic and mental health outcomes.

### 1.6.7 Factors Influencing Coping Strategy Use

Several factors determine which coping strategy an individual adopts:

Personality traits (e.g., optimism, resilience, neuroticism)

Perceived control over the stressor

Past experiences and coping success

Social support systems

Cultural and religious beliefs

Academic and work responsibilities

### 1.6.8 Coping Strategies in University Students

In academic settings, coping strategies significantly influence how students respond to academic stress, including:

Academic burnout (emotional exhaustion, cynicism)

Goal adjustment (disengagement from unattainable goals, and re-engagement with new goals)

Working students, in particular, may develop more problem-focused strategies due to time and role management demands, while non-working students may rely more on emotion-focused or avoidant strategies.

Adaptive coping strategies (problem-solving, support-seeking) help buffer against the negative effects of burnout and improve goal flexibility.

Conversely, maladaptive strategies (avoidance, denial) can intensify burnout and reduce the capacity for healthy goal adjustment.

### 1.6.9 Measurement of Coping Strategies

Common tools to assess coping strategies include:

COPE Inventory (Carver, 1989): Measures a wide range of coping responses across problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant categories.

Brief COPE Scale: A shorter version of the COPE inventory, widely used among student populations.

Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WCQ): Developed by Lazarus and Folkman, focused on cognitive and behavioral coping.

Coping strategies are essential psychological tools that shape how students deal with academic stress and burnout. The way students cope influences whether they can let go of unworkable goals and redirect their energy toward new, more achievable goals. In this study, coping strategies serve as a moderator, helping explain why some students are better able to adjust their goals under academic stress than others. Understanding coping patterns in both working and non-working students can inform interventions and student support systems in higher education.

### Goal Adjustment and Coping Strategies in Working and Non-Working University Students

University students are a diverse population, often facing significant academic and personal challenges. Among them, a growing number of students are employed while pursuing their studies, creating a distinction between working and non-working university students. Both groups face academic stress, but the nature, intensity, and coping mechanisms used may differ. This distinction can directly influence students' ability to adjust their goals when under pressure, especially in the presence of academic burnout.

In this context, two psychological constructs become especially relevant:

#### 1.7 Goal Adjustment:

The ability to adapt one's goals in the face of obstacles.

**Coping Strategies:** The methods used to manage stress and emotional responses.

Understanding how coping strategies influence goal adjustment in these two groups can offer valuable insights into student well-being, academic persistence, and mental health outcomes

#### 1.7.1 Working Students and Goal Adjustment

Working university students often face dual roles—managing job responsibilities and academic requirements. This situation can lead to:

Increased time pressure

Physical and mental fatigue

Conflict between academic and job-related goals  
These challenges may result in greater need for goal adjustment. For example, a working student might shift from aiming for perfect grades to aiming for passable grades with maintained mental health. If they possess adaptive goal adjustment abilities, they can maintain motivation and well-being despite these stressors.

However, excessive demands can also impair their ability to re-engage with new goals, especially if their coping strategies are maladaptive.

#### 1.7.2 Non-Working Students and Goal Adjustment

Non-working students may not have employment-related time pressures, allowing them to:

Invest more energy in academics

Set higher or more rigid academic goals

However, their limited exposure to external stressors may make them less flexible in adjusting goals. If burnout occurs, these students may experience greater frustration due to over-investment in singular academic goals, making disengagement difficult.

Thus, while non-working students may face fewer external demands, they may also lack the adaptive flexibility that working students are often forced to develop.

#### 1.7.3 Coping Strategies in Working vs. Non-Working Students

##### 1.7.4 Role of Coping Strategies

Coping strategies determine how effectively a student deals with academic stress. They moderate the relationship between stressors (like burnout) and outcomes (like goal adjustment).

Three major types of coping strategies:

**Problem-focused** (e.g., time management, seeking help)

**Emotion-focused** (e.g., relaxation, emotional expression)

**Avoidant/maladaptive** (e.g., procrastination, denial)

##### 1.7.5 Working Students and Coping

Working students may be more likely to use:

Problem-focused strategies, out of necessity, such as effective time management, planning, and multitasking.

Emotion-focused strategies, such as reframing or emotional support, to manage job-academic stress.

These students often develop higher levels of resilience and adaptability, which supports better goal re-engagement. However, the risk is also high for burnout, which may push some students toward maladaptive strategies like avoidance or excessive stress eating, especially if they lack support.

##### 1.7.6 Non-Working Students and Coping

Non-working students may rely more on:

Emotion-focused or avoidant strategies, such as venting, self-blame, or procrastination, especially when they encounter academic difficulties.

They may have more time but less external structure, which can lead to disorganization and delayed goal disengagement. While they might have more time to focus on studies, they can become overly fixated on specific academic outcomes (e.g., top grades or scholarships), making it harder to let go of failing goals, especially without strong coping mechanisms.

### 1.7.6 Interaction between Coping Strategies and Goal Adjustment

### 1.7.7 Adaptive Coping and Effective Goal Adjustment

Students who use adaptive coping strategies—whether they are working or not—are better able to:

Recognize when a goal is no longer achievable (disengagement)

Redirect their energy toward new, meaningful goals (re-engagement)

This leads to:

Reduced burnout

Higher academic persistence

Improved emotional well-being

### 1.7.8 Maladaptive Coping and Poor Goal Adjustment

Students relying on maladaptive coping (e.g., denial, self-blame, avoidance) tend to:

Hold onto unrealistic goals longer

Struggle with motivation and mental health

Fail to engage in meaningful alternatives

This is more common in students who lack support systems, whether due to isolation (common among non-working students) or overwhelming demands (as with overburdened working students).

### 1.7.9 Practical Implications

Understanding the differences between working and non-working students in terms of goal adjustment and coping strategies can inform:

University counseling services, which can offer tailored support

Time-management training for working students

Resilience-building programs for non-working students. Preventive interventions targeting burnout, coping, and academic goal-setting

Both working and non-working students face unique challenges that influence how they experience academic burnout, adjust their goals, and cope with stress. Working students may face higher stress levels but can develop stronger problem-solving and time-management skills, aiding in goal re-engagement. Non-working students may have more time and academic focus but can be more vulnerable to rigid goal-setting and emotional distress when faced with failure.

Coping strategies whether adaptive or maladaptive play a crucial moderating role in this process. When students use healthy coping methods, they are more likely to maintain psychological flexibility and academic motivation. Thus, the intersection of goal adjustment and coping must be understood within the context of students' employment status, academic environment, and personal coping resources.

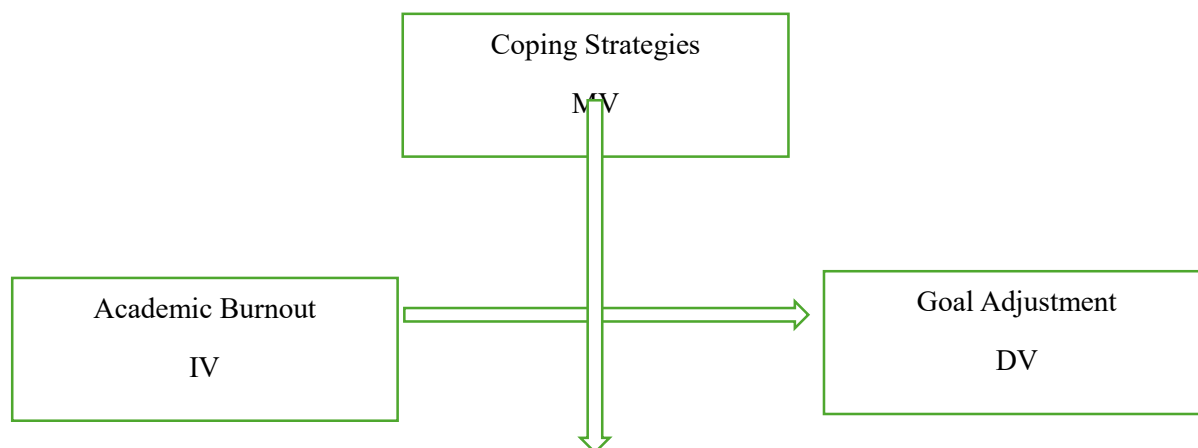
### 1.8 Objectives:

- To examine how academic burnout affects goal adjustment in university students.
- To compare goal adjustment between working and non-working students experiencing academic burnout.
- To explore the moderating role of coping strategies in the relationship between academic burnout and goal adjustment.
- To identify which types of coping strategies (adaptive vs. maladaptive) help buffer the negative effects of academic burnout.
- To provide insights for developing better support systems for students managing academic stress and personal responsibilities.

### 1.9 Hypotheses:

- H1: Academic burnout is negatively associated with goal adjustment among university students.
- H2: Working university students experience higher levels of academic burnout compared to non-working students.
- H3: Coping strategies moderate the relationship between academic burnout and goal adjustment.
  - H3a: Students who use adaptive coping strategies (e.g., problem-focused coping) will show less negative impact of academic burnout on goal adjustment.
  - H3b: Students who use maladaptive coping strategies (e.g., avoidance) will show a stronger negative impact of academic burnout on goal adjustment.
- H4: The moderating effect of coping strategies differs between working and non-working students.

### 1.10 Conceptual Model



### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of academic burnout on goal adjustment among university students, with a particular focus on comparing working and non-working students. Additionally, the study aims to explore the moderating role of coping strategies in this relationship. By identifying how different coping mechanisms impact the connection between burnout and goal adjustment, the research seeks to provide deeper insights into how students adapt to academic stress and manage their goals under pressure. This understanding can contribute to the development of targeted interventions and support systems to promote academic resilience and mental well-being among diverse student populations.

#### 2.1 International Researches:

(E Selin Özkan, 2023) University students are dealing with a variety of challenges, triggering exhaustion.

While academic stress and exhaustion revealed a strong positive relationship, avoidance coping was found to act as a moderator between academic stress and cynicism. Generally, academic stress and avoidance coping were related to higher levels in all burnout dimensions. Reducing students' engagement in avoidant coping can prevent academic symptoms of burnout symptoms. In line with the relevant role of maladaptive coping in relation to academic stress and burnout symptoms, it is recommended to promote less

academic stress and promoting the risk of suffering from burnout symptoms. The present study aimed to examine the moderating effect of coping strategies on the relationship between academic stress and burnout symptoms. 130 university students participated in this online survey study. The Student Life Challenges Scale (SLCS) was used to get an overall score of academic stress, while the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS) investigated burnout symptoms in three dimensions, including exhaustion, cynicism, and personal inefficacy. The Brief-COPE assessed different coping strategies categorized into the three broader coping styles problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance coping. While problem-focused coping is seen as adaptive and avoidance coping as maladaptive, such classification is not clearly made for emotion-focused coping. The results suggested a lower moderate level of academic stress and a high burnout level only for

use of these coping strategies and thus, increase well-being and academic success among students. (E Selin Özkan University of Twente, 2023)

Richard Merhi, Ángeles Sánchez-Elvira Paniagua, Francisco José Palací Descals (2018) these researchers conducted a research in which two of the most significant challenges that higher education institutions are currently addressing are students' failure and drop-out prevention, as well as the promotion of students' retention and success. The present study aimed

at analyzing the role that different variables play in the prediction of Academic Engagement and Burnout in first-year university students, under a multivariate perspective. The contribution of relevant psychological strengths in academic environments (Resilience, Personal initiative, and Academic Motivation), Procrastination and different coping strategies facing studies (Persistence, Avoidance and Anxiety) was explored. Also, the perception of academic demands and stress, students' affect (positive and negative) and the academic satisfaction was considered. Finally, an analysis of different engaged and burnt-out profiles of students was carried out. The contribution of the Efficacy subscale of Academic Burnout as an independent personal resource, and the consideration of the so-called Core Burnout, were subject of analysis. A sample of 172 first-year students of face-to-face universities, 68.8% women with a mean age of 22.99 years ( $SD=7.62$ ) volunteered to participate online in this study. The results showed, on the one hand, that Academic Engagement consisted mainly on a positive and intrinsic motivational construct, also characterized by academic efficacy, persistence as an active coping strategy, positive affect and satisfaction. On the other hand Core Burnout was mainly characterized by the perception of higher demands (e.g. academic overload), maladaptive learning behaviors and coping strategies such as procrastination and avoidance of difficulties, negative affect and dissatisfaction. Different profiles of engaged and burnt-out students were also analyzed showing strong differences regarding personal strengths, coping with learning strategies, well-being and satisfaction with studies.

Kati Vinter (2021) conducted a similar research in which he stated that Academic burnout is a severe problem among adolescents, and coping skills are becoming more crucial. The current study identified the latent profiles of Estonian middle school students, who were reporting different levels of burnout at three measurement points, during one academic year and examined the differences between identified profiles in the context of academic buoyancy and cognitive emotion regulation strategies. The final sample consisted of 148 students (71 girls, 77 boys), and two burnout profiles were identified: "above-

average" (40%) and "below-average" (60%). The study confirmed buoyancy acting as the strongest protective factor against burnout. Rumination, self-blame, catastrophizing and positive reappraisal were also strong differentiators between the profiles, suggesting that burnout follows the analogue pattern previously identified in known psychopathologies. The extension of Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire to academic burnout was also supported by the study. Results suggest the need for implementing a proactive, sustainable approach to burnout prevention in schools.

In another investigation, Eunbi Chang, Sang Min Lee, (2020) examined of the present study was to investigate the relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism, goal adjustment, and academic burnout. A total of 279 undergraduate students completed an online survey. Structural equation modeling was conducted to examine the mediating effect of goal adjustment on the relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and academic burnout. The results showed that socially prescribed perfectionism was unrelated to goal disengagement; however, goal reengagement mediated the positive relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and academic burnout. In other words, higher levels of socially prescribed perfectionism predicted lower levels of goal reengagement; conversely, lower levels of goal reengagement predicted higher levels of academic burnout. The implications of these findings and the limitations of the present study are discussed.

Farzad Poorgholamy, Soltanali Kazemi, Majid Barzegar, Nadere Sohrabi (2020) investigates the role of self-regulated learning and achievement goals in predicting academic burnout among 384 male and female students of Payam-e-Noor University of Shiraz in the 2018. The research method was correlational. Multi-stage random cluster sampling was used to select the sample. Finally, 204 female students and 180 male students were included in the study sample. Data collection was performed using the Pentrich and De Groot Self-regulated Learning Strategies Questionnaire, Middleton and Midgley Goal-Oriented Questionnaire, and Maslach Burnout Inventory. Structural Equation Modeling confirmed the good fit of

the initial theoretical model with the data, and after modifying the model, excellent fit of the final model to the data was obtained. The results indicated self-regulated learning leads to students' motivational orientation and this can lead to long-term academic achievement and success or stress and burnout in students. In addition, the achievement goals have a critical role in predicting academic burnout because of its impact on the right or wrong approach of learning.

In addition Stress and burnout are present in every aspect of an individual's life, and the growing number of employed students raises certain concerns about their engagement in academic tasks and finishing their studies. Students' decision to work during their university years can be explained by the requirement of paying a high scholarship fee and meeting the living conditions. The inability to cope effectively with the challenges of the professional and academic life can have severe repercussions on a student's mental health and well-being (Youssef and Luthans, 2007), with depression and suicide attempts being the two reactions to stress that are of concern to the society (Oswalt and Riddock, 2007). At the international level, student stress and burnout are seen as important health issues, with students being the population at risk of experiencing psychological distress and psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and panic disorder (Larcombe et al., 2016). Burnout among employed students is even higher, with studies showing that the stress caused by juggling the demands of work and academic life could potentially lead to burnout (Dyrbye et al., 2008) and depression (Njim et al., 2019), these negative effects being more prevalent among students who work for 20 or more hours per week (Larcombe et al., 2016).

The potential stressors for a student are represented by the adaptation to the new status, accommodation with high academic requirements, financial and personal independence, and the establishment of a new social network (Hicks and Heastie, 2008). Burnout in students is related to both employment and academic domains; however, most studies on this topic consider employment as a major burnout factor, without exploring also

additional individual characteristics that may impact burnout (Schramer et al., 2019). Higher levels of burnout can negatively impact academic adjustment. Academic adjustment refers to effectively regulating study behavior, being intrinsically motivated to learn, and satisfaction toward the chosen degree program and academic performance (van Rooij et al., 2018). In another research, Xiaozhou Zhang, Robert M Klassen, Yun Wang(2013) purposed of this study was to identify patterns of academic burnout in 730 Chinese middle school students, and to link the burnout patterns with academic motivation. Using cluster analysis, we identified four motivation groups: (a) distressed group,(b) persevering group,(c) laissez-faire group, and (d) well-functioning group. The results of optimal scaling procedures indicated that grade level and motivation variables (intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) were good discriminators among the four clusters. Specifically, variation on self-determination motivation characteristics was demonstrated among different academic burnout profiles: distressed students had the highest scores on a motivation and external motivation. In contrast, well-functioning students had the highest scores on intrinsic motivation. For persevering and laissez-faire students, there was no significant difference on intrinsic motivation. However, persevering students reported higher scores on a motivation and external motivation than laissez-faire students.

This literature review study is motivated by a phenomenon that shows that students are very vulnerable to experiencing academic burnout. The purpose of this article is to review academic burnout research, to find out the definition of academic burnout and the factors that influence it. The review in this article is carried out on 18 research results from international journals starting in 2017-2020. The results of the review show that most academic burnouts are influenced by internal or personal factors. That's because personal factors focus more on the characteristics that exist in individuals. External factors focus on the environmental conditions of the organization or around and the workload (Risa Nur Amelia, 2022).

Another related study aimed to examine the relationship of academic burnout and academic

stress with academic self-efficacy among graduate students. 307 graduate students at the University of Sistan and Baluchistan (140 female and 167 male students) were selected as a sample using the stratified random sampling method. The subjects were evaluated by questionnaires on academic burnout, academic stress, and academic self-efficacy. Data was analyzed using one-sample  $t$ -test, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and simultaneous regression analysis. Results revealed that academic burnout was significantly related to academic self-efficacy among the students, in the way that an increase in academic burnout among the students led to a decrease in their academic self-efficacy. Moreover, academic stress was significantly related to academic self-efficacy, in the way that an increase in academic stress among the students led to a decrease in their self-efficacy (Hamideh Safarzaie, Naser Nastiezaie, Hossein Jenaabadi, 2017).

According to ThinZar Win (2024), Academic burnout and depression are prevalent mental health challenges impacting high school and college students, characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and diminished academic efficacy. These issues are exacerbated by high academic demands, limited autonomy, and inadequate support, leading to a detrimental cycle affecting students' well-being and performance. This review explores the intricate relationship between academic burnout and depression, highlighting how these conditions often co-occur and influence each other. By integrating theoretical frameworks such as Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory, the Conservation of Resources Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, the review explained the mechanisms underlying these phenomena and their impact on students. Key factors contributing to burnout and depression include excessive workloads, lack of autonomy, poor time management, and insufficient social support. The review also examines effective strategies for mitigating these challenges, including improved time management, realistic goal setting, self-care practices, and supportive academic environments. Recommendations for future research emphasize the need for tailored interventions and comprehensive support

systems to enhance student well-being and academic success.

Gabriela-Lăcrămioara Drăghici, Ana-Maria Cazan (2022) predicted that Stress and burnout are present in every aspect of an individual's life, and the growing number of employed students raises certain concerns about their engagement in academic tasks and finishing their studies. Our study aims to analyze the differences between student burnout in different contexts, work- and academic-related burnout, and examine the predictive role of burnout in academic maladjustment, including test anxiety as a mediator and occupational status as a moderator. The sample consisted of 151 students from different universities in Romania. Consistent with previous studies, the results showed that academic burnout is higher than work-related burnout. High levels of test anxiety explain high levels of academic burnout, which in turn explains low levels of academic adjustment. The results highlight the mediating role of anxiety in the relationship between academic burnout and academic maladjustment with occupational status as a moderator. Future research should focus on the type of students' job, the mediating relationship between self-efficacy and academic burnout, and the relationship between burnout and personality traits.

Sarwer, Abid, Chao, Siming and Dukhaykh (2025) stated that positive psychological attributes, such as mindfulness, grit, and adaptability, have been increasingly recognized for their role in promoting mental health and academic success among students. However, the extent to which these traits influence emotional stability and protect against academic burnout remains understudied, particularly in undergraduate populations. This cross-sectional study aimed to address a gap in literature by examining the impact of positive psychological attributes on emotional stability, and academic burnout among undergraduate students. A sample of 275 undergraduate students from various disciplines across two public and two private universities in Lahore, Pakistan, completed validated self-report questionnaire. Data were analyzed employing descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Study findings showed that positive

psychological attributes has significant associations with higher emotional stability and lower levels of academic burnout. Specifically, mindfulness and grit emerged as the strongest predictors of reduced academic burnout. Additionally, emotional stability partially mediated the relationship between positive psychological traits and academic burnout, highlighting its critical role in student well-being. These findings not only enrich the theoretical understanding of psychological resilience in academic contexts but also offer practical implications. Specifically, they suggest that enhancing emotional stability could be an effective strategy to reduce academic burnout and improve students' sense of personal accomplishment. These insights hold implications for educational policies and mental health promotion programs in higher education settings.

## 2.2 Indigenous Research:

Amna Noureen, Asghar Ali Shah, Muhammad Ali Shah (2019) the current study was aimed to observe the moderating role of coping strategies in occupational stress and burnout among mental health practitioners. It was also aimed to examine the relationship of demographic factors with occupational stress, burnout and coping strategies. Data was collected from 200 mental health practitioners (clinical psychologists and psychiatrists) from different government and private hospitals and rehabilitation centers situated in different cities of Pakistan. Three scales were used in the research, that is, Mental Health Professional Stress Scale to measure occupational stress, Brief Cope to measure coping strategies and Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey to assess burnout. The results indicated that there is a strong positive correlation between occupational stress, burnout and emotion focused coping strategies. The analyses showed that coping strategies did not moderate the relation between occupational stress and burnout. In demographic variables, the variables of age, education, experience and work hours were significant. Younger mental health practitioners scored high on occupational stress, burnout and use of emotion focused coping strategies than older ones. In qualification and experience, less

qualified and less experienced practitioners had more occupational stress, burnout and used emotion focused coping strategies than more qualified and more experienced practitioners. Those practitioners whose working hours were less had low occupational stress and burnout and used problem focused coping strategies.

Hafiza Maryam Naz, Azhar Majeed Qureshi (2024) Academic burnout is one of the biggest issues of the modern period. Academic burnout is depicted by a prolonged lack of interest in the student's studies and a loss in output. This study set out to measure the degree of academic burnout experienced by university students, examine differences in their academic burnout levels, and ascertain whether academic burnout and CER Strategies are related. This survey study included a quantitative analysis of the three campuses of the University of Education Lahore. A correlation design was used. The target population consisted of both male and female students enrolled in the three campuses of university. The multistage sampling was used to collect sample of 300 students, with an equal representation of 150 males and 150 females. Two scales were included in a closed-ended questionnaire of survey. The study's findings indicate that academic stress leads to academic burnout among university students. The study also found that students in the Science and Education divisions report the same level of cynicism, but students in the Arts and Social Sciences division differ significantly. Adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies had a significant negative correlation, in contrast to the high positive association observed with maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies. Future teacher educators and policy maker can adopt such strategies to reduced academic burns out in higher educational institutions.

Akber Ali, Nazia Naseer, Mehvish Murtaza (2024) annually, thousands of Pakistani students move to China to pursue higher education at Chinese universities. Despite the plethora of academic literature on China-Pakistan relations, it remains to examine what challenges these new entrants face in their process of cross-cultural adaptation. Taking the students of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) as sojourners, the study examines the cultural adaptation challenges these students

encountered and the coping strategies employed to overcome them. Kim's integrative communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation is applied as a theoretical lens for this study. Thirteen international students of GB who studied in Chinese universities were recruited for in-depth interviews. The semi-structured interviews were conducted regarding the respondents' intercultural adaptation experiences in China and their coping strategies. The data were transcribed and thematically analyzed. Three main themes were extracted from the transcribed data; the first theme focuses on preferences in choosing Chinese universities. The second theme focuses on socio-cultural and psychological barriers in the adaptation process. The final theme concentrates on supporting mechanisms and coping strategies available to overcome the challenges. The findings elaborate these major themes in detail with theoretical and practical implications and recommendations for further research.

Humira Mirza (2023) Mindfulness can be a way to create an understanding of one's self. The current study gives an insight into students who deploy coping strategies and mindfulness as prevailing techniques when they face difficulties along with the indication that can make them able to disengage or reengage from unattainable careers. Moreover, the research study adds to a growing body of research highlighting the relationship between mindfulness and coping strategies in terms of career orientation among university students in Lahore, Pakistan. For this purpose, a sample size of 377 students was gathered through a survey method. The responses were analyzed by using 25 versions of the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Usually, SPSS is used for measuring relationships by conducting a regression analysis, descriptive analysis, model summary, and ANOVA. The findings of this study reveal that mindfulness and coping strategies significantly impact career orientation without a doubt the more mindful students could be the more likely they are to disengage from failures or unattainable goals in making career decision and be hopeful about future. It suggests that mindfulness ability can improve the student goal adjustment abilities confronted challenges in

future. So as to align their effects and drive themselves towards realistic goal As a result, mindfulness and coping strategies can be considered as key strategies towards building a successful career orientation. Additionally, these developmental strategies are recommended to the universities for a developed student career orientation.

Shan Zhang, Shazia Rehman, Yali Zhao, Erum Rehman, Bushra Yaqoob (2024) Students in higher education often encounter significant academic pressure, which can have profound implications for their mental health and academic performance. The current study employs a two-wave longitudinal design to investigate the dynamic interrelationships among academic stress, academic motivation, emotional intelligence, and mindfulness. The study employed a cross-lagged panel model to investigate the temporal interactions among these four constructs and their influence on the academic experiences of doctoral students.

The sample consisted of 643 individuals at Time 1 (September/October 2022), followed by a subsequent assessment involving 413 participants (July/August 2023). Notably, there was an overlap of 373 participants who were evaluated at both time points. The results indicated the presence of substantial reciprocal relationships among the constructs under investigation. The outcomes indicated that elevated emotional intelligence and mindfulness levels are associated with reduced academic stress and enhanced motivation. The implications of this analysis underscore the necessity of facilitating interventions aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence and mindfulness. These components are instrumental in promoting resilience and supporting academic success among students. These longitudinal insights hold significant importance within the academic literature as they elucidate the various stressors doctoral students encounter. Furthermore, this research provides practical implications for educators and policymakers in formulating targeted strategies to enhance student well-being and improve educational outcomes

### 2.3 Rationale

University students often face academic pressure, time constraints, and personal challenges that can lead to academic burnout—a state of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced academic efficacy. This burnout may hinder students' ability to pursue and adjust their goals effectively. Goal adjustment, which includes the abilities to disengage from unattainable goals and re-engage with new ones, is crucial for maintaining psychological well-being and academic success. Moreover, university students are not a homogeneous group. Working students often experience additional stressors due to juggling employment and academic responsibilities, while non-working students may face different stress-related challenges, such as financial dependency or lack of time management pressure. These differences could influence how burnout impacts their goal adjustment processes.

In this context, coping strategies play a vital moderating role. The way students cope—whether through problem-solving, emotional regulation, or avoidance—can either buffer or exacerbate the effects of burnout on their ability to adjust goals. Understanding this moderating role can offer deeper insights into effective intervention planning.

This study was designed to analyze the relationship between academic burnout dimensions, academic performance and their dependence on coping strategies and optimism.

**This research is significant for several reasons:**

It highlights the mental health challenges university students face. It addresses the growing number of students who balance work and study, a trend that is becoming more common globally. It identifies the role of coping strategies in promoting healthy goal-setting behavior despite stress. The findings can guide universities, counselors, and educators in designing support systems and interventions for at-risk students

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research design

Co-relational research methods have been employed for the present study. The present study was carried out to explore the association Academic Burnout, Coping Strategies Goal

adjustment in working and nonworking University Students

### 3.2 Sampling strategy

Non-probability purposive sampling technique was used for the recruitment of sample to explore Academic Burnout on Goal adjustment in working and nonworking University Students

### 3.3 Sample

200 participants were selected through purposive sampling strategy. 114 male students and 86 female students were included in this research. The data was collected from the students of KUST University. The age range will be 18-30 years old.

#### 3.3.1 Inclusion Criteria

- Participants who are from different cities of Pakistan studying in Kohat university of Science and Technology with age range 18 to 30 years were included.
- Both male and female participants were part of research.
- Working and Non-working students was included in this research.
- Participants related to all religions will be included.
- Participants belonging to all socioeconomic classes will be included.

#### 3.3.2 Exclusion Criteria

- Participants with any physical disability were not included.
- Participants with diagnosed mental disability were excluded.
- Participants other than university students were excluded.

### 3.4 Operational Definitions

The operational definitions of population and study variables are given below

**3.4.1 Academic Burnout.** Academic burnout is a state of chronic physical and emotional exhaustion, accompanied by feelings of frustration, cynicism, and a reduced sense of accomplishment in academic tasks, caused by prolonged academic demands and stress.

**3.4.2 Coping Strategies.** Coping strategies refer to the conscious and unconscious methods individuals use to deal with stress, conflict, or trauma in order to maintain psychological well-being and restore emotional balance.

**3.4.3 Goal adjustment.** The adjustment process involves maintaining a balance between conditions and needs in a living organism. Kulshrestha (1979) said that the cycle of adjustment is a way for the person to resolve and meet stress, pressures, conflicts, etc.

### 3.5 Assessment Measures

In the current study, the following tools are used for assessment purposes.

- Academic Burnout Scale (ABS)
- Coping Strategy Scale (CSS)
- Goal adjustment scale (GAS)
- Demographic Information Sheet and informed consent.

### 3.5.4 Demographic information sheet

This demographic sheet includes the age of the students, education, participant's birth order, no of siblings, socioeconomic status, Family background, fathers and mother's education and their occupation. This demographic sheet has been used for further analysis and study variable discussion.

### 3.6 Procedure

Permission was taken from the Director of the Institute of the Department of psychology, Kohat University of science and technology, Kohat in respect to data collection. Then permission will be taken to conduct the research from the respective places from which sample will be taken. The researchers identified the inclusion and exclusion criteria before collecting the sample. The researchers ensured the participants about the complete confidentiality and privacy of the study. The purpose of research was explained. The respondents were given the respective scales with brief instructions. No incentive was given to the participants. All the queries were answered during the procedure. Participants took the time they needed and filled in the responses that corresponded with them the most. They were

given the right to withdraw. After completing the questionnaires participants will be thanked for their cooperation. It took 10 to 15 minutes to respond to all items of the questionnaire. Data was analysed by using SPSS. Pearson Product Moment Correlation, *t* Test and Mediation Analysis were used for the analysis of data. After the analyses, the findings were made useful for clinical settings.

### 3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical guidelines were adopted for study by the American Psychological Association (APA). Upon ethical consideration, the code of ethics includes.

- Prior permission of the tool being used from the respective author. Letters for permission were sent.
- Permissions were taken from the concerned authorities for data collection from the students of KUST by providing them a letter, issued by the Department of psychology, Kohat University of science and technology, Kohat
- Consent was taken from the person concerned and the study was briefed.
- Participants were told that their relevant details would be kept confidential and would not be used for purposes other than this study.
- The participants were allowed to withdraw and terminate at any point of the study, if desired.
- Contact number and email address for the future queries were given to participants.
- Results were reported accurately.
- 

### 3.8 Statistical Analysis

SPSS 20.0 was used to analyse the data.

- Descriptive statistics were calculated and reliabilities of tools were accessed.
- To figure out the relationship between Academic Burnout on Goal adjustment in working and nonworking University Students
- And demographic variables, the Pearson product moment correlation was used.

- Mediation analysis was applied to assess the role of coping strategies in academic Burnout and goal adjustment.
- Independent Sample t-Test to assess gender difference will also be used to study the relationship Academic Burnout on Goal adjustment in working and nonworking University Students.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

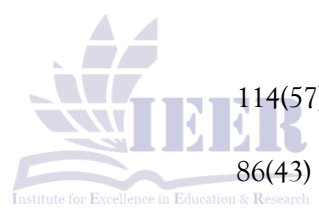
The aim of this chapter was to investigate the relationship between Academic Burnout, Coping Strategies and Goal Adjustment an Among Working and Non-Working University

Students. The analyses used in this research were as follows (I) Cronbach’s Alpha reliability analysis was used to assess the reliability of the scales used in this current study (II) Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to assess the relationship between Academic Burnout, Coping Strategies and Goal Adjustment and demographic variables (III) To check the moderating role of Coping Strategies in Academic Burnout and Goal Adjustment in students ‘Moderation Analysis’ was used. (IV) Independent sample t-test was carried out to determine gender differences between variables of study. (V) ANOVA test is used to compare the mean of three or more groups (BA, BS, and MS/MPHIL)

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables of the Sample (200)*

Variables	M(SD)	F (%)	Min	Max
Age	21.33(2.06)		18	30
Gender				
Male		114(57)		
Female		86(43)		
Employment Status				
Working		56(28)		
Non-Working		144(72)		
Education				
B. A		8(4)		
BS		186(93)		
MS/M.Phil.		6(3)		
Family Type				
Nuclear		112(56)		
Joint		88(44)		
Family Background				
Urban		92(46)		



Rural	108(54)
Socioeconomic Status	
Low	7(3.5)
Middle	178(89)
High	15(7.5)

Note. SD = Standard Deviation, M = Mean, f= frequency, % = Percentage

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients for Research Variables (N = 200)*

Variables	M	SD	k	$\alpha$	Potential Range (Min-max)	Actual Range (Min-max)
Academic Burnout	35.76	7.72	13	.76	13-65	18-61
Coping strategies	66.38	9.93	28	.74	28-112	43-99
Goal Adjustment	31.94	6.72	10	.76	10-50	18-43
Goal Disengagement	12.06	2.72	4	.29	6-30	7-24
Goal Reengagement	19.90	4.76	6	.76	4-20	6-18

Note. M=Mean; S.D=Standard deviation;  $\alpha$ = Cronbach alpha; k= no. of items

The Cronbach alpha reliability values of Academic Burnout and Coping Strategies is .76 and .74 respectively which indicates very good reliability. Goal Adjustment Scale's overall reliability is .76 which is good and its subscales reliabilities are as follows: Goal Disengagement .29 and Goal reengagement .76 all subscales of Goal adjustment has reliabilities above .5 which indicates good reliability.

### Main Analysis

It was hypothesized that Academic Burnout and Coping Strategies is likely to have relationship with Goal Adjustment. Moreover, there is likely to be a relationship between Academic Burnout, Coping Strategies and Goal Adjustment. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was applied to determine such relationship, as shown in Table 3



**Table 3**

*Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis assessing the relationship among Academic Burnout, Coping Strategies and Goal Adjustment in working and non-working students (N=200).*

S.#	Variables	1	2	3
1.	Academic Burnout	-	.17*	-.11*
2.	Coping Strategies	-	-	.46**
3.	Goal Adjustment	-	-	-

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ,

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among Academic Burnout, Coping Strategies, and Goal Adjustment. Academic Burnout shows a significant positive correlation with Coping Strategies ( $r = .17^*$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that students experiencing higher levels of burnout tend to use more coping strategies. It also shows a significant negative correlation with Goal Adjustment ( $r = -.11^*$ ,  $p < .05$ ), suggesting that students with higher academic burnout tend to have lower goal adjustment. Furthermore, Coping Strategies are strongly and positively correlated with Goal Adjustment ( $r = .46^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that students who use effective coping strategies are more likely to adjust their goals successfully.

**Table 4**

*Moderating Role of Coping Strategies for Academic Burnout in predicting Goal Adjustment (N=200)*

Variables	B	SE	T	P
Constant	20.273	8.224	2.465	.001
Academic Burnout	-.147	.217	-.676	.015
Coping Strategies	.144	.123	1.171	.033
Interaction: AB*CS	.003	.003	.031	.021

Note. AB=Academic Burnout CS=Coping Strategies  $p$ =Significant SE=Standard Error

Process by Hayes (2022) Moderation Analysis was used to assess the moderating role of Coping Strategies in the relationship between Academic

Burnout and Goal Adjustment. The above table shows that academic burnout had a significant positive effect on goal adjustment (Beta = 20.27,  $p = .015$ ). The interaction effect, which is the

product of Academic Burnout and Coping strategies (AB x CS) was statistically significant

(Beta = 0.003,  $p = 0.03$ ), indicating that the relationship between Academic Burnout and Goal Adjustment was moderated by Coping Strategies.

**Table 5**

*Independent Sample t test representing employment status in Academic burnout, coping strategies and goal adjustment (N=200)*

Variables	Working (n=56)		Non-Working (n=144)		T	p	95 % CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
Academic Burnout	38.85	7.3	34.54	7.52	3.66	.02	1.99	6.63
Coping Strategies	71.57	9.14	64.35	9.36	4.92	.01	4.32	10.10
Goal Adjustment	31.69	4.95	30.30	5.24	1.71	.28	-.21	2.99

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation; CI=Confidence Interval; LL=Lower Limit; UL= Upper Limit.

The independent sample t-test compared working and non-working students on academic burnout, coping strategies, and goal adjustment. Results show that working students experience significantly higher academic burnout than non-working ones ( $p = .02$ ). They also use more coping strategies ( $p = .01$ ). However, there is no significant

These findings of moderation analysis disclose that coping strategies moderates the relationship between Academic burnout and goal adjustment. In short at higher levels of coping strategies the relationship between academic burnout and goal adjustment is increases.

difference between the two groups in goal adjustment ( $p = .28$ ). This suggests employment status impacts stress and coping but not how students adjust their goals.

**Table 6**

*Independent Sample t test representing gender differences in Academic burnout, coping strategies and goal adjustment (N=200)*

Variables	Male (n=114)		Female (n=86)		T	p	95 % CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
Academic Burnout	36.99	7.47	34.75	7.95	-1.61	.02	-3.92	.39
Coping Strategies	66.50	10.28	66.19	9.25	.221	.15	-2.46	3.08
Goal Adjustment	31.14	5.13	30.09	5.23	1.43	.62	-.40	2.51

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation; CI=Confidence Interval; LL=Lower Limit; UL= Upper Limit.

The independent sample t-test examined gender differences in academic burnout, coping strategies, and goal adjustment among students. Results show a significant difference in academic burnout, with males reporting higher burnout than females ( $p = .02$ ). However, no significant gender differences

were found in coping strategies ( $p = .15$ ) or goal adjustment ( $p = .62$ ). This means both males and females use similar coping methods and adjust their goals similarly. Overall, gender mainly affects burnout levels but not coping or adjustment strategies.

**Table 7**

*One way ANOVA representing Education level in academic burnout, coping strategies and goal adjustment (N=200).*



Variables	BA (n=8)		BS (n=186)		MS/MPhil (n=6)		F	p	Post-Hoc
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
AB	35.75	4.16	35.65	7.91	38.83	3.60	.4932	.012	3>1,2
CS	58.25	10.83	66.47	9.5	74.0	11.86	4.71	.010	3>2>1
GA	31.12	2.94	30.61	5.28	32.66	4.63	.481	.621	3>1>2

The one-way ANOVA compared education levels (BA, BS, and MS/MPhil) on academic burnout, coping strategies, and goal adjustment. Results show significant differences in academic burnout ( $p = .012$ ) and coping strategies ( $p = .010$ ), with MS/MPhil students reporting the highest levels in both. Post-hoc results indicate MS/MPhil students experience more burnout and use more coping strategies than BA and BS students. However, no significant difference was found in goal adjustment across education levels ( $p = .621$ ). This suggests that higher education is linked to more stress and stronger coping but not necessarily better goal adjustment.

#### Summary of the Findings

- Academic Burnout and Coping Strategies had a significant relationship with Goal Adjustment in working and non-working students.
- Coping Strategies had a moderating role in understanding the relationship of Academic Burnout and Goal Adjustment in working and non-working students
- Male and female had different scores on Academic Burnout, Coping Strategies and Goal Adjustment in working and non-working students
- Working and non-working students had different scores Academic Burnout, Coping Strategies and Goal Adjustment in working and non-working students

#### DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the influence of academic burnout on goal adjustment in working and non-working university students, with a particular focus on the moderating role of coping strategies. The findings revealed that academic burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a reduced sense of accomplishment, negatively impacts students' ability to disengage from unattainable goals and reengage with new, meaningful ones. This negative relationship suggests that burnout impairs motivation and cognitive flexibility, which are essential for adaptive goal regulation. Moreover, the comparison between working and non-working students showed that working students experienced higher burnout levels due to the dual demands of academics and employment, yet in some cases, they demonstrated better goal reengagement skills—possibly due to exposure to real-world stress management and problem-solving situations. Non-working students, while under less external pressure, sometimes struggled more with adjusting their goals when faced with academic challenges, likely due to less practical coping experience. Importantly, coping strategies significantly moderated the relationship between burnout and goal adjustment. Students employing adaptive coping strategies, such as problem-solving, seeking support, and positive reframing, managed the effects of burnout more effectively and showed greater flexibility in adjusting their goals. In contrast, those using maladaptive strategies like avoidance and denial exhibited worsened outcomes. These findings emphasize the critical role of coping in buffering the harmful effects of burnout and enhancing goal adjustment,



highlighting the need for universities to implement mental health programs, promote stress management training, and offer tailored support to students based on their work status and coping styles to foster resilience and academic success.

The relationship between academic burnout, goal adjustment, and coping strategies is interconnected and dynamic, with each variable influencing the others in meaningful ways. Academic burnout, which includes emotional exhaustion, cynicism toward studies, and a reduced sense of academic efficacy, tends to impair students' ability to engage in goal adjustment processes—specifically their capacity to disengage from unattainable goals and reengage with new, achievable ones. When students are overwhelmed and mentally drained, they are less likely to exhibit the flexibility, motivation, and psychological resilience required for healthy goal regulation. However, coping strategies serve as a crucial moderating factor in this relationship.

Intensify the negative impact of burnout, making it even harder for students to adapt to academic setbacks or modify. Students who utilize adaptive coping strategies, such as problem-focused coping, seeking social support, and positive reframing, are more likely to buffer the adverse effects of burnout and maintain the ability to adjust their goals effectively. On the other hand, maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance, denial, or self-blame, tend to hinder their goals constructively. Furthermore, working and non-working students may experience these relationships differently, with working students often facing higher burnout levels due to multiple responsibilities but also potentially having stronger coping skills that support goal adjustment. Overall, academic burnout reduces goal adjustment ability, but the presence of effective coping strategies can significantly weaken this negative relationship and promote better academic and psychological outcomes.

The findings of this research indicate a significant and negative relationship between academic burnout and goal adjustment among university students, suggesting that higher levels of burnout are associated with a reduced ability to disengage from unattainable goals and reengage in new, meaningful ones. This supports previous literature, such as that by Wrosch et al. (2003), which emphasizes the importance of goal adjustment for psychological well-being, particularly in stressful

academic contexts. The study also revealed that working students tend to experience higher levels of burnout due to the dual pressures of academic and occupational responsibilities, yet they sometimes demonstrate better goal reengagement, possibly due to developed time management and coping skills acquired from their work experiences. In contrast, non-working students, though facing fewer external stressors, may lack the practical coping strategies needed to navigate academic burnout effectively. Crucially, the study found that coping strategies significantly moderated the relationship between burnout and goal adjustment. Students who employed adaptive coping strategies—such as problem-solving, seeking social support, and positive reframing—showed a stronger capacity for goal adjustment despite high levels of burnout. This finding is consistent with the work of Folkman and Lazarus (1985), who highlighted the protective role of coping in stress-related outcomes. Conversely, maladaptive coping strategies like avoidance, denial, and self-blame were associated with poorer goal adjustment and exacerbated the negative impact of burnout. These findings underscore the importance of promoting adaptive coping mechanisms in university settings to help students manage academic burnout and enhance their ability to regulate goals effectively, ultimately improving academic performance and mental health.

Another key finding of this research highlights that coping strategies not only moderate but also mediate the impact of academic burnout on goal adjustment, suggesting that the way students respond to stress can either buffer or intensify the negative consequences of burnout on their goal-directed behavior. Specifically, students who utilized adaptive coping mechanisms—such as active problem-solving, planning, and emotional regulation—were better able to maintain psychological resilience, which in turn allowed them to adjust their academic and personal goals more effectively despite experiencing high levels of burnout. This aligns with the findings of Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989), who emphasized that adaptive coping styles enhance individuals' ability to manage stress and maintain goal-directed motivation. In contrast, students relying on maladaptive coping strategies, such as behavioral disengagement, denial, or substance use, exhibited a marked decline in goal flexibility and persistence,



suggesting a compounding effect of poor coping on already depleted emotional and cognitive resources due to burnout. These findings reinforce the model proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which posits that stress outcomes are not solely determined by the stressor itself (in this case, academic burnout), but by the individual's coping responses. Additionally, the study observed that students with stronger adaptive coping strategies were more likely to reengage with alternative or adjusted goals when original academic goals became unattainable, supporting Wrosch and Miller's (2009) assertion that goal reengagement serves as a protective factor for well-being. Therefore, the findings suggest that fostering adaptive coping strategies through counseling, workshops, and stress management interventions could serve as an effective means to reduce the harmful effects of academic burnout and improve students' ability to navigate academic and life challenges with greater psychological flexibility and resilience.

The hypothesis formulated for this research posits that academic burnout negatively affects goal adjustment among university students and that this relationship is significantly moderated by coping strategies. Specifically, it was hypothesized that higher levels of academic burnout—characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981)—would be associated with lower levels of goal adjustment, including difficulties in both goal disengagement and goal reengagement. However, the presence of adaptive coping strategies was expected to weaken this negative relationship, allowing students to better manage the emotional and cognitive demands of burnout and maintain flexibility in adjusting their goals. This hypothesis is grounded in the stress and coping theory proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which emphasizes that the impact of stressors on psychological outcomes depends largely on the individual's coping resources. Additionally, it draws from Wrosch et al.'s (2003) framework on goal adjustment capacities, which highlights that individuals with strong goal reengagement and disengagement skills are more likely to maintain well-being in the face of persistent stress. It was also anticipated that maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance or denial, would exacerbate the negative effects of burnout on goal adjustment,

further impairing students' ability to adapt to academic challenges. Therefore, the central hypothesis integrated both direct and moderating effects, suggesting that while academic burnout generally hinders students' ability to adaptively regulate their goals, effective coping strategies can serve as a psychological buffer that preserves or enhances this capacity, especially in high-stress environments such as universities.

Another hypothesis proposed in this research is that the relationship between academic burnout and goal adjustment differs significantly between working and non-working university students, with coping strategies playing a distinct role in each group. It was hypothesized that working students, despite experiencing higher levels of academic burnout due to the dual burden of academic and job responsibilities, would demonstrate relatively better goal adjustment if they employ adaptive coping strategies, such as planning, time management, and problem-focused coping. This is supported by the findings of Kinman (2001), who observed that students engaged in part-time work often develop enhanced stress management skills, which may contribute to greater resilience in balancing multiple life demands. In contrast, non-working students, who may not face the same external stressors, might still struggle with goal adjustment if they lack effective coping strategies or exposure to real-life stress management situations. This hypothesis builds upon the coping resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which suggests that individuals with greater coping resources (e.g., structured routines, self-regulation, and external support systems) are better equipped to manage stress and maintain goal-directed behaviors. Furthermore, according to Wrosch and Miller (2009), the ability to disengage from unattainable goals and reengage with new ones is vital for emotional well-being, especially when faced with chronic stress such as academic burnout. The hypothesis also implies that coping strategies serve not only as moderators but also as potential mechanisms through which work status impacts the burnout-goal adjustment relationship. Therefore, it is anticipated that the protective role of coping strategies will be more pronounced among working students, while non-working students may require targeted support and training to build these coping resources and enhance their capacity for goal adjustment in academic settings.

A third hypothesis of this research posits that adaptive coping strategies mediate the relationship between academic burnout and goal adjustment, suggesting that students experiencing high levels of academic burnout are more likely to exhibit poor goal adjustment if they lack effective coping mechanisms, whereas those who engage in adaptive coping can maintain or even improve their ability to adjust goals despite the presence of burnout. This hypothesis aligns with the transactional model of stress and coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which emphasizes that individuals' responses to stress are largely determined by their appraisal of the stressor and the coping strategies they employ. Academic burnout, as described by Maslach and Jackson (1981), tends to drain students emotionally and cognitively, reducing their ability to remain motivated and flexible in pursuing academic goals. However, when students adopt adaptive coping methods such as seeking emotional support, using problem-solving skills, and engaging in positive reframing, they are more capable of regulating negative emotions and sustaining their capacity for goal disengagement and reengagement. This mediating role of coping is also supported by Carver et al. (1989), who found that students who use problem-focused coping are more successful in managing academic challenges and maintaining motivation. Moreover, research by Wrosch et al. (2003) confirms that goal adjustment capacities are not fixed traits but can be supported and strengthened through psychological resources like coping. Thus, the hypothesis suggests that coping strategies do not merely buffer the effects of burnout but act as a critical psychological pathway through which burnout influences goal adjustment outcomes. This highlights the need for universities to promote coping skill development as an integral part of academic support programs aimed at reducing the negative impact of burnout on student functioning.

Several psychologists have conducted extensive research on the interrelated concepts of academic burnout, goal adjustment, and coping strategies, providing a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for the present study. One of the foundational contributors to burnout research is Christina Maslach, who, along with Jackson (1981), developed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a widely used tool that identifies emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced

personal accomplishment as the core dimensions of burnout. Although originally applied to occupational settings, Maslach's framework has been adapted to educational environments, highlighting how prolonged academic stress leads to burnout in students, negatively affecting motivation and performance. Wrosch et al. (2003) made significant contributions to the understanding of goal adjustment, emphasizing that the capacity to disengage from unattainable goals and reengage with new ones is crucial for maintaining well-being in the face of chronic stress, such as academic burnout. They proposed that flexible goal adjustment is a self-regulatory process that helps preserve mental health during adversity. In the area of coping, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) developed the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which underscores the role of individual cognitive appraisal and coping responses in determining the psychological outcome of stress. According to their model, how one copes with stress (e.g., using problem-focused or emotion-focused strategies) can significantly influence the consequences of academic burnout. Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) further advanced this work by creating the COPE Inventory, which categorizes coping into adaptive and maladaptive types and is frequently used in academic stress research. Additionally, Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources Theory suggests that individuals strive to acquire and protect resources (e.g., time, energy, coping skills), and when these resources are threatened or depleted—such as in academic burnout—coping becomes essential to prevent psychological harm. These psychological theories and empirical studies collectively support the investigation of how burnout affects students' ability to adjust goals, and how coping strategies can serve as either protective or risk factors, depending on their nature and application. The integration of these scholars' contributions underscores the importance of developing targeted interventions in academic settings to enhance students' coping capacities and promote psychological resilience.

In another study closely related to the current research, Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker (2002) investigated academic burnout among university students and its consequences on motivation, performance, and psychological well-being. Their findings revealed that academic

burnout, particularly emotional exhaustion and cynicism toward studies, significantly undermined students' engagement and self-regulatory capacities, ultimately affecting their academic goal management. This study reinforced the idea that chronic exposure to academic stress can lead to a depletion of psychological resources, making it more difficult for students to adjust their goals effectively. Building on this, Wrosch, Scheier, Carver, and Schulz (2003) found that individuals who are capable of goal disengagement and reengagement are more likely to maintain positive emotional states and reduce depressive symptoms, even under prolonged stress. Their work emphasizes the critical role of goal adjustment capacities in promoting resilience, especially when original goals become unachievable due to circumstances like academic overload. Furthermore, a study by Gan, Yang, and Zhou (2007) examined the role of coping strategies in mediating the effects of academic stress and burnout on mental health outcomes. They found that students who used adaptive coping strategies, such as planning and seeking support, were less negatively impacted by academic burnout and more capable of maintaining goal-directed behavior. In contrast, those relying on avoidance or emotion suppression experienced greater difficulty in academic persistence and goal adjustment. These findings are consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model, which posits that how individuals appraise and cope with stress directly influences their psychological functioning. Together, these studies demonstrate a consistent pattern: academic burnout negatively affects students' ability to regulate and pursue goals, but effective coping strategies can significantly mediate or buffer this impact, suggesting that both personal resilience and institutional support systems are essential for fostering academic and emotional success in higher education.

According to previous research, academic burnout has been consistently linked to a range of negative academic and psychological outcomes, particularly affecting students' ability to manage and adjust their goals effectively. Maslach and Jackson (1981) first conceptualized burnout as a multidimensional construct—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment—which has since been applied to

academic settings, where students under prolonged stress often exhibit decreased motivation, detachment from studies, and feelings of inefficacy. Studies such as Schaufeli et al. (2002) extended this framework to university students, demonstrating that academic burnout not only hinders academic performance but also weakens students' capacity to remain goal-focused and engaged. Additionally, Wrosch et al. (2003) introduced the concept of goal adjustment capacities—goal disengagement and reengagement—as essential self-regulatory mechanisms that promote psychological well-being during times of chronic stress. They found that individuals with high goal adjustment capacities were better protected against the emotional consequences of failure and better equipped to maintain motivation by shifting focus to more attainable goals.

The role of coping strategies in this relationship has also been emphasized in prior research. Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) developed the COPE inventory to assess a wide range of coping responses, finding that adaptive coping strategies, such as active coping, planning, and seeking support, are strongly associated with better academic outcomes and reduced psychological distress. In contrast, maladaptive coping strategies like denial or behavioral disengagement often exacerbate the impact of burnout, leading to poorer goal regulation. These findings are underpinned by the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which asserts that the impact of stress depends not just on the nature of the stressor, but also on how the individual appraises and responds to it. Together, previous research suggests that academic burnout undermines students' ability to adjust their goals, but the presence of adaptive coping mechanisms can serve as a protective factor, mitigating negative effects and fostering resilience.

### 5.1 Conclusion:

The present study concludes that academic burnout significantly undermines university students' ability to effectively adjust their goals, particularly in stressful academic environments. Students experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a reduced sense of academic efficacy find it increasingly difficult to disengage from unattainable goals and reengage with new, more realistic objectives. This impaired

goal adjustment can lead to decreased motivation, poor academic performance, and deteriorating psychological well-being. However, the findings strongly suggest that coping strategies play a crucial role in shaping how students respond to burnout. Those who utilize adaptive coping mechanisms—such as problem-focused strategies, seeking social support, and positive reframing—demonstrate greater resilience and are better able to maintain or even improve their goal adjustment capacities despite experiencing burnout. In contrast, reliance on maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance and denial, tends to intensify the harmful effects of burnout, making it more difficult for students to manage academic stress effectively.

Moreover, the study highlights important differences between working and non-working university students. While working students face additional stressors due to balancing job responsibilities alongside their studies, they may also develop stronger coping skills through real-life experiences, which can help them manage academic burnout more effectively. Non-working students, though facing fewer external pressures, may lack the same practical coping experience, making them more vulnerable to the negative effects of burnout if they do not possess strong internal coping resources. These findings underscore the importance of integrating stress management and coping skills training into university support services. Institutions should consider implementing counseling programs, workshops, and flexible academic policies that encourage students to develop healthy coping strategies and enhance their goal adjustment skills. Doing so will not only help reduce the impact of burnout but also empower students to navigate academic and life challenges with greater psychological resilience, ultimately promoting academic success and overall well-being.

## 5.2 Limitations and Suggestions

- The current study, while providing valuable insights into the relationship between academic burnout, goal adjustment, and coping strategies, is not without its limitations, which also offer directions for future research and practice.
- One key limitation is the reliance on self-report measures, which may introduce bias due to social desirability, inaccurate self-assessment, or

misunderstanding of the questionnaire items; future research could incorporate multi-method assessments such as behavioral observations, academic records, or peer/faculty evaluations to validate self-reported data.

- The cross-sectional nature of the study restricts conclusions about causality, as it captures only a snapshot of students' experiences at a single point in time; it is recommended that future studies adopt longitudinal designs to track changes in burnout, coping, and goal adjustment across semesters or academic years to better understand causal relationships.

- The sample size and geographic limitation—often restricted to students from one institution or region—reduces generalizability, so future research should include a more diverse sample across various academic disciplines, universities, and cultural contexts to increase the external validity of the findings.

- The study did not account for variations in job roles or workload among working students, which may influence the level of stress and coping differently; future studies should explore job characteristics, hours worked, and financial pressures as potential moderating variables.

- Lack of qualitative data is another limitation, as the study misses the rich, contextualized understanding of how students subjectively experience burnout and cope with academic demands; integrating interviews or open-ended survey questions could offer deeper insights into personal and cultural meanings attached to goal adjustment and coping.

- Coping strategies were examined in general terms, without considering culturally specific or context-sensitive coping styles that may be prevalent in particular student populations; it is suggested that future research explore the role of culturally relevant coping, including religious or familial support mechanisms.

- The influence of personal and psychological variables, such as personality traits (e.g., conscientiousness, neuroticism), mental health status, or existing support systems, was not controlled for, even though these factors likely play a significant role in how students experience and manage burnout; future research should consider including these variables in their models.

- Finally, institutional factors such as teaching styles, academic pressure, availability of

student counseling, and peer support systems were not assessed, despite their potential role in influencing student well-being; future studies should evaluate how institutional resources can buffer against burnout and enhance goal regulation.

- By addressing these limitations through more comprehensive, diverse, and longitudinal methodologies, future research can provide a deeper and more actionable understanding of how academic burnout affects students and what strategies can most effectively support their academic and psychological well-being.

### 5.3 Implications

- The study emphasizes the need for universities to enhance mental health and counseling services to address academic burnout and support students' emotional well-being.

- It suggests incorporating coping skills training and stress management programs into academic curricula to help students deal effectively with academic pressures.

- Institutions should offer flexible academic options such as part-time enrollment, extended deadlines, or reduced course loads, especially for students who are balancing work and studies.

- Academic advisors can use these findings to provide personalized guidance, helping students set and adjust academic goals in response to stress and burnout levels.

- Faculty members should be trained to recognize symptoms of burnout and offer appropriate academic accommodations or emotional support to students in distress.

- Universities can introduce peer mentoring programs where experienced students support others in managing stress, time, and goal setting, particularly for new or struggling students.

- The findings support the creation of policies that acknowledge the burden of working while studying, encouraging institutions to design systems that promote a healthier study-work balance.

- Awareness campaigns, burnout prevention workshops, and wellness seminars should be regularly conducted to create an informed and supportive campus culture.

- Institutions should implement regular assessments using tools like the Maslach Burnout Inventory and COPE Inventory to monitor

students' stress and coping levels and offer early interventions.

- The study calls for a proactive approach, focusing on prevention rather than just treatment, ensuring students have the resources to manage stress before it leads to severe burnout.

- There is a need to promote holistic development through programs that enhance emotional intelligence, goal flexibility, self-regulation, and personal growth.

- The research provides valuable insights for policy-makers to develop evidence-based academic policies that prioritize student well-being and reduce burnout-inducing academic structures.

- Educational systems should consider developing structured guidelines for balancing academic and work responsibilities, ensuring students' productivity without compromising their mental health.

- Institutions must foster an environment where coping strategies and goal adjustment are seen as strengths, not weaknesses, thus reducing stigma around seeking help.

- Finally, the findings offer a foundation for future researchers to explore longitudinal outcomes, cultural differences, and the long-term effects of burnout and coping on academic and career success.

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