Understanding Burnout in High-Achieving Students: An Achievement Goal Theory Perspective

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Background

- Students in professional education programs are experiencing burnout before entering the workforce.1
- In careers such as medicine, burnout can compromise professionalism, negatively impact patient care, and lead to dropout.2
- Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) = relationship between achievement goals + personal/professional outcomes.3
- Few studies have used AGT to examine burnout specifically among high-achieving students.

Method

- Quantitative data collected from 257 1st through 4th year medical students.
- Used an online questionnaire with existing scales to measure achievement goals and academic burnout.6
- Correlation coefficients and regression analyses used to examine relationships between/among variables.

Results

**Correlation Coefficients**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Burnout</td>
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<td>2. MAP goals</td>
<td>-.21**</td>
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<td>3. PAP goals</td>
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<td>4. PAV goals</td>
<td>.24**</td>
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Scale Reliabilities: Burnout (α = .73), MAP goals (α = .79), PAP goals (α = .78), PAV goals (α = .81), MAV goals (α = .45)

**Regression analyses showed that only performance-avoidance goals significantly predicted academic burnout (β=.18, p=.02)**

Ex. PAV Item: “I prefer to avoid situations in my program where I might perform poorly”

Ex. Burnout Item: “When I am studying or doing school work, I often feel emotionally drained”

Discussion

- Fascinating population to study: high-achieving students have obtained academic success regardless of goals, but achievement goals may now distinguish those who burn out from those who do not.

Findings:

- Provide support for the maladaptive nature of PAV goals.
- Suggest that MAP goals alone may not protect students from academic burnout.
- Highlight the importance of motivation for the wellbeing of high-achieving students.
- Can be used to gain a better understanding of academic burnout and to inform the preparation of resilient professionals.

Future research:

- Include additional outcome measures (e.g. academic achievement)
- Look at other factors (e.g. peer relatedness) that may work with achievement goals to protect from burnout.

References


Questions?

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