

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.

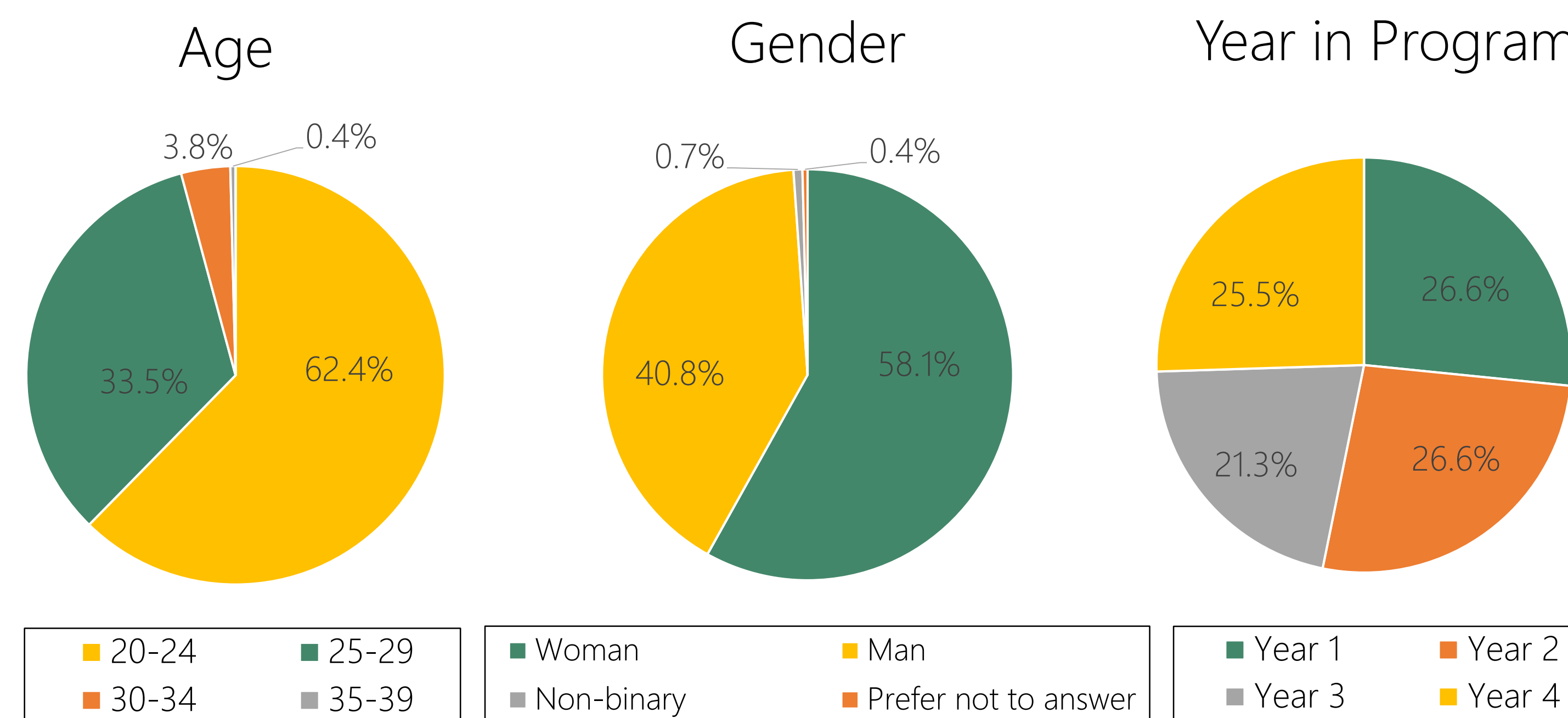
	APPROACH	AVOIDANCE
MASTERY	Goals to develop competence (MAP)	Goals to avoid feeling incompetent (MAV)
PERFORMANCE	Goals to demonstrate competence to others (PAP)	Goals to avoid demonstrating incompetence to others (PAV)

Research Question: What are the relationships between different achievement goals and academic burnout 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 goals⁵ and academic burnout.⁶
- Correlation coefficients and regression analyses used to examine relationships between/among variables.

Results



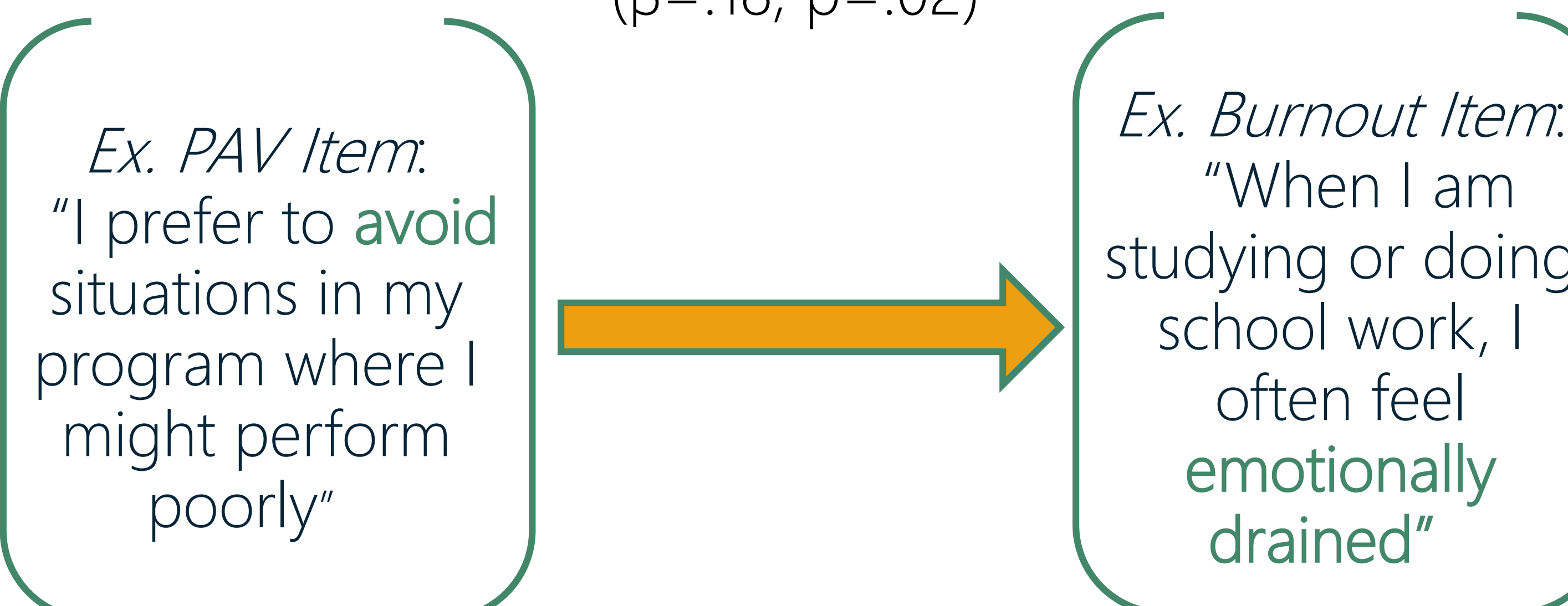
Correlation Coefficients

VARIABLES	1	2	3
1. Burnout	--		
2. MAP goals	-.21**	--	
3. PAP goals	.01	.12	--
4. PAV goals	.24**	-.53**	.21

Scale Reliabilities: Burnout ($\alpha = .73$), MAP goals ($\alpha = .79$), PAP goals ($\alpha = .78$), PAV goals ($\alpha = .81$), MAV goals ($\alpha = .45$)

** $p \leq .01$

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



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

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