



The Impact of Personality on Academic Burnout: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The intricate link between personality traits and academic burnout was explored through a comprehensive search across multiple databases like ScienceDirect, Scopus, PubMed, and PsycINFO. This review primarily delves into the Five-Factor Model of personality to illuminate the complexities of academic burnout. **Method:** At the outset, an exhaustive search strategy yielded a remarkable 2,230 papers. Subsequently, following meticulous selection criteria, 40 studies underwent systematic analysis. The culmination of this process affirmed the association between specific personality traits and academic burnout.

Findings: Review articles indicated that elevated neuroticism levels correlated with heightened academic burnout, while decreased levels of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Openness were also linked to increased burnout levels. These findings underscore the intricate nature of academic burnout, suggesting that specific combinations of personality traits can significantly influence its occurrence. **Implications for Research and Practice:** These findings carry substantial implications for the academic domain, emphasizing the imperative for educational institutions and policymakers to recognize the influence of personality in formulating strategies to mitigate burnout among academics. Interventions targeting specific personality dimensions hold promise for effective intervention strategies.

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Introduction

Since the 1970s, there has been a notable surge in the study of burnout, primarily centred on industrial workers. Initially perceived as primarily affecting helping professions according to [Freudenberger \(1975\)](#), burnout has since been acknowledged across a wider spectrum of human services roles ([Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001](#)). In recent years, there has been significant scholarly attention devoted to the conceptual and methodological examination of academic burnout. It is now widely recognized as a multidimensional construct frequently stemming from prolonged exposure to stressors inherent in educational contexts ([Demerouti et al., 2002](#)). Academic burnout is frequently characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism regarding academic performance, and diminished perceptions of educational attainment ([Maslach et al., 2001](#)). Despite extensive research on the relationships among occupational, organizational, and socio-demographic factors associated with burnout syndrome, the correlation between personal factors, such as personality traits, and burnout remains to be thoroughly explored ([Garrosa et al., 2008](#)).

This gap offers an intriguing chance to examine how personality traits predict academic burnout, potentially influencing teacher selection and enabling preventive measures for at-risk individuals. Cohort studies from 2001 investigating the associations between self-reported personality traits and academic burnout are included in this literature review. Historically, studies on the personality-academic burnout link have been sporadic and fragmented ([Cordes & Dougherty, 1993](#); [Kahill, 1988](#)) for a meta-analysis ([Lee & Ashforth, 1996](#)).

Research frequently centres on positive or negative affectivity, including constructs like psychological hardiness ([Bellani et al., 1996](#); [Iverson, Olekalns, & Erwin, 1998](#)). Recent research has delved into the correlation between the Big Five personality model and academic burnout, particularly emphasizing traits such as neuroticism and extraversion, which have attracted considerable scholarly attention ([Hartmann & Mathieu, 2017](#); [Sulea et al., 2015](#)). In the 20th century, personality research focused on the [McCrae and Costa Jr \(1992\)](#) five-factor model (FFM), also known as the "Big Five." This model categorizes personality into five traits: Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Openness to experience. It is widely accepted for its cross-cultural reliability and temporal stability ([Chang, Connelly, & Geeza, 2012](#)). The Five Factor Model has been instrumental in the past three decades for comprehending personality and its association with various psychological disorders ([Krueger et al., 2012](#)). Nevertheless, the influence of the academic milieu on burnout is firmly established ([Huang, Intarasompun, & Puchatree, 2023](#)). The significance of personality traits cannot be underestimated. Despite diminished environmental stressors, certain individuals may still encounter pronounced academic burnout ([Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009](#)). Comprehending the association between personality traits and academic burnout is essential for identifying students at elevated risk and bolstering protective measures. Thus, this P.R.I.S.M.A. review centres on examining how the traits of the Five-Factor Model – Agreeableness, Conscientiousness,

Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Openness—impact the development of academic burnout.

Research Method

Research Design and Documentation

The methodology employed in this review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (P.R.I.S.M.A.) guidelines (Page et al., 2021).

This methodology entails a thorough 27-item checklist and an intricate flowchart (see [Figure 1](#)), collectively regarded as the gold standard for conducting systematic reviews, with or without meta-analysis. The P.R.I.S.M.A. approach provides a structured framework for producing systematic reviews of superior literature quality.

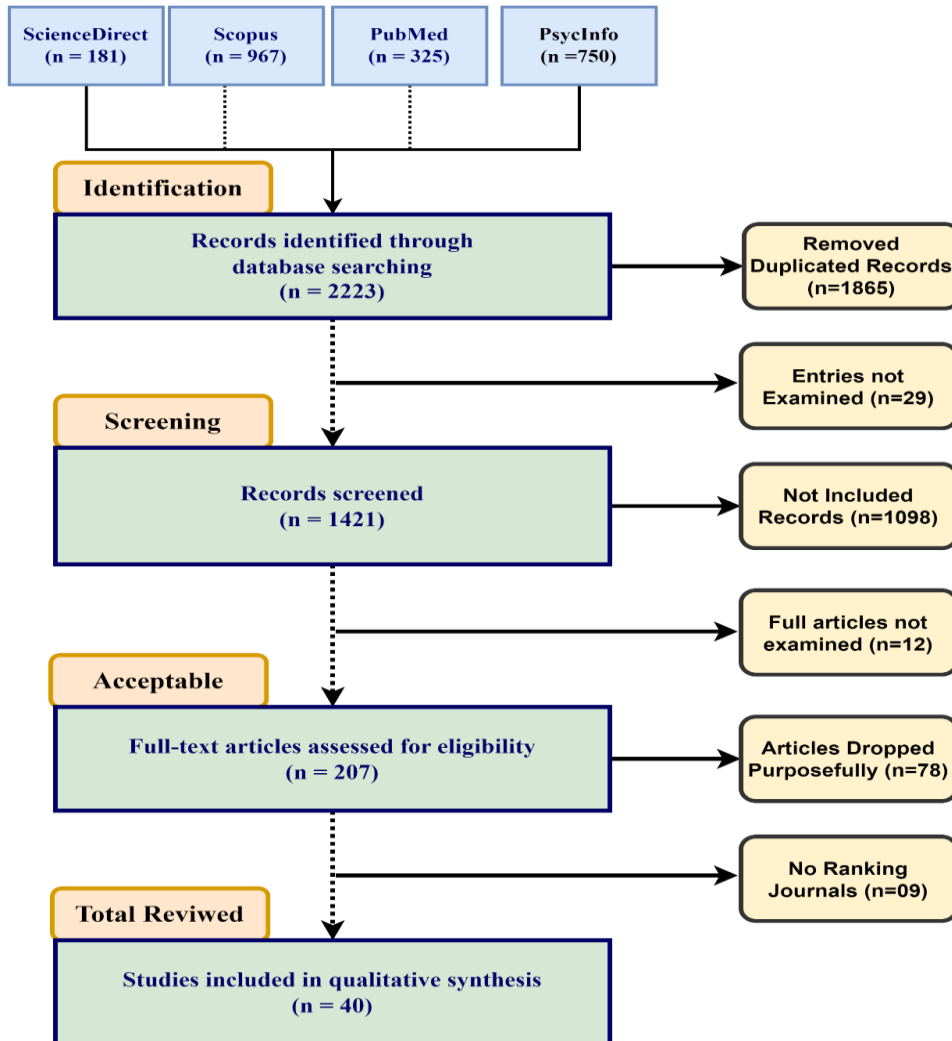


Figure 1: Literature Review Flow During Different Phases.

Eligibility Criteria

This study conducted a thorough examination of academic burnout literature, concentrating on English-language articles published in academic journals until December 31st, 2022. Excluded were meta-analyses, review articles, conference papers, and book chapters. The investigation specifically targeted research exploring the relationship between personality traits and academic burnout across diverse academic domains, excluding athletic and religious vocations.

Information Sources

The study utilized databases including ScienceDirect, Scopus, PubMed, and PsycINFO, employing keywords such as "Personality and Academic Burnout" and "Personality Traits and Academic Burnout." The initial search yielded 2230 articles, with crucial details (authors, publication year, title, and journal) catalogued in an Excel sheet. Following deduplication, title review, and abstract assessment (refer to [Figure 1](#)), 157 articles underwent comprehensive review. Ultimately, 75 studies aligning with the Big Five-Factor model ([Wiggins, 1996](#)) were chosen for inclusion in this review.

Study Selection

The P.R.I.S.M.A. flow diagram depicted in [Figure 1](#) unveiled 40 studies included in this review. Initially, 2230 studies were identified (ScienceDirect, n=181; Scopus, n=967; PsycINFO, n=750; PubMed, n=325). Following the elimination of duplicates, 1230 studies remained. Among these, 1200 underwent analysis, with 1035 studies discarded after abstract review due to not meeting the criteria. Out of the 195 full-text articles assessed, 120 still needed to fulfil the inclusion criteria. Subsequently, after conducting quality checks utilizing the SCImago Journal Rank (S.J.R.), 12 additional studies were excluded. Ultimately, 40 studies met the inclusion criteria for the systematic review, with 60% of these published in Q1 journals, 28% in Q2, 5% in Q3, and 7% in Q4.

Study Characteristics

The studies encompassed 30,500 participants, meeting criteria including;

1. Adults aged 18 or older.
2. Individuals from diverse professional backgrounds beyond clinical settings.
3. A mixture of occupations, with a higher representation of female participants compared to male participants (women, 62%; men, 38%).

The data mentioned pertains to 27,450 participants. Professionally, the sample comprised 24% Educators and Academics, 20% Healthcare Workers, 12% Medical Specialists, 9% Postdoctoral Researchers, 11% Academic Advisors, and 7% Librarians, with 4% Technical Support.

The 40 articles published from 1993 to 2022 revealed that over half of the studies (54%) were conducted in Europe (encompassing countries like France, Germany, and Spain), while the remainder were distributed across America (17%, including Canada and the U.S.A.), Asia (15%; countries like China and India), Africa (10%; including Nigeria and South Africa), and Oceania (4%; Australia).

2.6 Study Selection

In the process of study selection, all research employed empirical, quantitative methodologies. The majority, constituting 87% (n=65), adopted cross-sectional and descriptive designs, while 10% (n=8) were longitudinal studies. One study ([Castillo-Gualda et al., 2019](#)), 3% encompassed both cross-sectional and longitudinal research. In assessing academic burnout, 82% (n=62) of studies utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory (M.B.I.) in its original form ([Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997](#)) or in adapted versions ([Friedman, 1999](#)). The remaining 18% (n=13) employed instruments aligned with the theoretical framework of

the M.B.I., focusing on exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced achievement.

Outcomes

In the study's findings, the primary focus was on the correlation between academic burnout and personality traits, particularly within the framework of the Big Five model. Approximately 26% (n=22) of the research utilized the principles of the Big Five model, with 16% (n=13) employing the Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) (McCrae & Costa Jr, 1992), and 16% (n=13) using the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008), including its 10-item variant (Rammstedt & John, 2007). About 9% (n=7) of studies employed the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ-1975) with variations (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991). Additionally, 6% (n=5) utilized the International Personality Item Pool (I.P.I.P.) (Goldberg et al., 2006).

The study utilized the Eysenck Personality Inventory alongside Barratt Matrixes and other Big Five-based tests for comparison. This comprehensive approach reflects a commitment to understanding the intricate relationship between academic burnout and personality. Anchored in the Big Five model, the diverse methodological approach thoroughly explored these dynamics across various contexts and populations. The use of multiple instruments, each compatible with the Big Five model, enhanced the study's robustness and validity.

Establishing a suitable range is crucial to accurately assess the extent of a variable's influence. Inadequate duration may obscure the comprehensive impact of the variable, while an excessively long timeframe may obscure whether the observed impact has diminished, attributing it solely to the variable rather than other elements. Understanding biases in research articles is essential for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of a study, including biases in study design, sample selection, measuring instruments, and other factors affecting generalizability.

Result and Analysis

Comprehensive Analysis of Studies on Personality Traits and Academic Burnout

Table 1 outlines studies examining the relationship between academic burnout and personality traits, employing diverse research methodologies such as cross-sectional and longitudinal approaches, along with varied instruments for measuring academic burnout. The M.B.I. is among the most commonly utilized measures, while personality traits are often assessed using BFI or the NEO-FFI. Consequently, the complexity of these three variables may stem from differences in research methodologies, methods employed, and instruments utilized in the studies. Despite variations in research methods and instruments, a portion of each study in Table 1 presents data rather than solely discussing how specific personality traits are susceptible to or resilient against academic burnout.

Table 1

Literature Survey

References	Research Method	Sample Size	Measurement of Burnout	Personality Measures
Manlove (1993)	CSS	188	MBI	E.P. I

Mills and Huebner (1998)	LS	225	MBI	N.E.O-F.F. I
Zellars, Perrewew, and Hochwarter (2000)	CSS	188	MBI	N.E.O-FFI
Cano-García, Padilla-Muñoz, and Carrasco-Ortiz (2005)	CSS	99	M.B.I.	N.E.O-PI-R
Burke, Berge Matthiesen, and Pallesen (2006)	CSS	496	MBI	BFI
Teven (2007)	CSS	48	M.B.I.	Big Five measure-SF
Leon et al. (2008)	CSS	203	MBI	B.F. I
Chung and Harding (2009)	CSS	103	MBI	N.E.O-F.F. I
Kim, Shin, and Swanger (2009)	CSS	187	M.B.I-G. S	I.P.I.P.
Barford and Whelton (2010)	CSS	94	M.B.I-G.S	N.E.O-F.F.I
Ghorpade, Lackritz, and Singh (2011)	CSS	263	M.B.I	Mini-Markers Inventory
Armon, Shirom, and Melamed (2012)	LS	1105	S.M.B.M.	Big-Five mini markers scale
Garbarino et al. (2013)	CSS	289	MBI	BFQ
Yilmaz (2014)	CSS	303	MBI	Mini-I.P.I.P
Brown, Slater, and Lofters (2019)	CSS	77	M.B.I-H.S. S	BFI
Castillo-Gualda et al. (2019)	CSS, LS	237, 59	MBI-ES	BFI
Farfán, Peña, and Topa (2019)	CSS	237	M.B.I-GS	N.E.O-P-I-R
Khedhaouria and Cucchi (2019)	CSS	161	SMBM	TIPI
Banasiewicz et al. (2020)	CSS	181	OLBI	E.P.Q-R
Liu, Kwan, and Zhang (2020)	CSS	451	M.B.I-GS	I.P.I.P.
Mahoney et al. (2020)	CSS	246	OLBI	TIPI
Tasic et al. (2020)	CSS	302	M.B.I-GS	Big Five Plus Two questionnaire-SF
Bianchi, Manzano-García, and Rolland (2021)	CSS	4394, 611, 514	M.B.I-ES	N.E.O-F.FI

Note: CSS stands for a cross-sectional study; L.S. stands for a longitudinal study; M.B.I. stands for Maslach Burnout Inventory; B.F.Q. Stands for Big Five Questionnaire; MB1 - E.S. is an Educators Survey Masanian Buses General Study; EPQ RS stand for an Eysenck Personality Questionnaire revised short scale; NEO FFI is a Neuroticism Five-Factor inventory.

The aforementioned studies, concentrating on the association between personality traits and academic burnout, demonstrate a standardization of research methodologies and tools, offering a comprehensive overview of this field's exploration. A noteworthy trend among these studies is the prevalent utilization of cross-sectional study designs (CSS). While effective for assessing the state of burnout and personality traits at a specific moment, this approach restricts the investigation of causal relationships and temporal changes. Notably, only one study, Mills and Huebner (1998), adopts a longitudinal study design (L.S.), providing a deeper and more temporally oriented examination of how burnout and personality traits may interact and evolve.

These studies consistently employ the M.B.I as the primary tool to measure burnout, underscoring its widespread acceptance and indicating its reliability and validity in

capturing the multidimensional nature of burnout. Personality traits are evaluated predominantly using established tools such as the Neuroticism Extraversion Openness Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO-PI-R) and the NEO-FFI, which align with the Five-Factor Model of personality. This alignment suggests a consensus among experts regarding the fundamental dimensions of personality relevant to researching academic burnout. Moreover, some studies incorporate diverse tools for personality assessment, including the BFI and the Eysenck Personality Inventory, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the relationship between personality traits and academic burnout. However, the prevalent use of cross-sectional designs underscores the necessity for more longitudinal research to capture the dynamic nature of this relationship. The consistent use of burnout measurement tools and the variety in personality assessment approaches demonstrate methodological strength while indicating potential areas for future research development.

The studies analysed in [Table 2](#), centred on academic burnout, exhibit common methodological approaches and limitations essential for understanding this research domain. Primarily, they employ cross-sectional designs, which provide a snapshot of data at one point in time but hinder the establishment of causal relationships and tracking burnout progression over time.

A persistent issue in these studies involves the necessity for more comprehensive measurement of complex psychological constructs, such as burnout, and their association with personality traits within selected methodologies. Some researchers face challenges in implementing comprehensive measurement scales at crucial junctures in their research schedules, resulting in data gaps that could impact the validity of their conclusions. Another frequently observed limitation is the focus on specific segments of populations or environments, potentially limiting the representation of diverse academic burnout experiences. For instance, certain studies concentrate solely on particular relationship contexts or workplace environments, which may affect the generalizability and applicability of their findings to broader populations.

Moreover, numerous studies exhibit unspecified biases, potentially encompassing measurement or data analysis sampling methods. These biases could significantly undermine the reliability and validity of research findings, highlighting the imperative for future studies to adhere to elevated methodological standards. The inherent similarities underscore the need for embracing longitudinal research strategies, diverse and comprehensive sampling frameworks, and employing advanced statistical approaches. Such endeavours would foster a more profound and nuanced understanding of the relationship between personality traits and academic burnout.

Hudek-Knežević, Kalebić Maglica, and Krapić (2011)	X	X					No burnout was recorded at Time 1. Time 2 dropout sample attrition. The sample differed in age, Agreeableness, and continuation commitment from both Times and the dropout. The "healthy worker effect" may distort results. Only two measurement waves were used for the longitudinal design. The personality measure gives a total score and does not assess how personality traits affect each burnout component. The interaction of personality characteristics with burnout has yet to be investigated.
Armon et al. (2012)							The sample only included top professionals. Only neuroticism and extraversion were assessed.
Zimmerman et al. (2012)	X						Panel data could not assess burnout/demand/resource engagement reciprocally.
Ganster (2014)		X	X			X	No urban physician comparison sample
Taycan, Taycan, and Celik (2014)	X						
Brown et al. (2019)	X	X					X
Castillo-Gualda et al. (2019)	X			X	X		
De la Fuente-Solana et al. (2019)	X	X	X	X			X
De Looff et al. (2019)	X		X	X			
Farfán et al. (2019)			X			X	Methods measuring physiological indicators are subjective.
Khedhaouria and Cucchi (2019)		X	X				X
Pérez-Fuentes et al. (2019)	X					X	Organizational stress-reduction factors, technostress, personality qualities, and work burnout among employees were not examined, nor were instances with unique antecedent situations. The Baron and Kenny mediator mechanism experiment needs to be more essential.
Banasiewicz et al. (2020)	X	X					The survey has closed-ended questions. The questionnaire took a while. Only a few Polish institutions conduct abortions.
Bhowmick and Mulla (2021)			X				
Dionigi (2020)				X		X	
Liu et al. (2020)	X		X				A large sample of highly educated persons

Mahoney et al. (2020)	X	X	The research examines nasty workplace gossip, excluding good gossip. The scale is based on frequency; however, perception may vary. The mean score for nasty workplace gossip is lower than in previous Chinese research.
Tasic et al. (2020)			Not considered were supervisors who wished to quit. As quantitative research, it lacks participant interpretation. Participant attitudes towards fieldwork supervisors relative to other workers are unclear.

Discussion

The findings extracted from the scrutinized studies centre on the relationship between academic burnout and the Big Five personality traits. Initially, the review delineates the associations between each personality trait and academic burnout, with a specific emphasis on the strength of this correlation. Subsequently, the discussion transitions to regression analyses, commencing with cross-sectional studies, which constitute the majority of the research, followed by an exploration of longitudinal studies. This framework facilitates a comprehensive comprehension of how personality traits interrelate with and potentially impact academic burnout. Despite academic burnout being extensively investigated in relation to organizational and occupational factors, individual factors, notably personality traits delineated by the Five-Factor Model (FFM), have received comparatively less systematic examination.

This review integrates evidence regarding the contribution of FFM traits to academic burnout, synthesizing findings from 40 studies that evaluated burnout and personality traits within consistent theoretical frameworks. It was observed that traits such as neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness exhibit significant associations with academic burnout, each with distinct implications. The review also discusses participant characteristics, study methodologies, and biases, suggesting that future research should encompass not only general populations but also clinical samples to enhance broader applicability. The comprehensive analysis presented in Table 3 corroborates the noteworthy impact of FFM personality traits on academic burnout.

Table 3

Personality Traits on Academic Burnout

Trait	Association with Academic Burnout	Range of Correlation (r)	Range of Regression (β)
Agreeableness	Negative	-0.12* to -0.353***	-0.08*** to -0.523*
Conscientiousness	Negative	-0.12* to -0.355***	-0.09*** to -0.300*
Extraversion	Negative	-0.034** to -0.33***	-0.06*** to -0.31***
Neuroticism	Positive	0.09** to 0.651***	0.21** to 0.591***
Openness	Generally Negative	-0.21*** to -0.241**	-0.089* to -0.51*

Across these studies, Agreeableness generally exhibits a negative correlation with academic burnout, indicating a protective role. Correlation coefficients range from -0.12* to -0.353***, while regression coefficients vary from -0.08*** to -0.523*. Agreeableness, characterized by traits

such as cooperation and tolerance (Peabody & Goldberg, 1989), buffers individuals against emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Nonetheless, certain studies also reveal a positive correlation between Agreeableness and facets of academic burnout, such as emotional exhaustion and reduced professional accomplishment (McManus, Keeling, & Paice, 2004).

Conscientiousness typically exhibits a negative association with academic burnout, suggesting a protective function. This trait, marked by precision, organization, and discipline, mitigates emotional exhaustion and feelings of unproductivity. Nevertheless, certain studies have observed an inverse correlation with reduced professional accomplishment (Mills & Huebner, 1998) and a positive association with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Salami, 2011), potentially attributed to heightened levels of commitment and effort.

A longitudinal study (Ganster, 2014) identified Conscientiousness as a negative predictor of personal/professional accomplishment. Extraversion demonstrates a negative correlation with academic burnout, suggesting its potential as a protective factor. This trait, associated with intense social interactions and high self-esteem, fosters positive emotions and job-related self-efficacy (Judge & Ilies, 2002), thereby potentially mitigating emotional exhaustion. Conversely, lower levels of extraversion are associated with an increased risk of burnout. Nevertheless, certain studies have reported a positive association between extraversion and aspects of burnout, such as cynicism and reduced professional accomplishment (Bahadori et al., 2019).

Neuroticism, characterized by emotional instability and maladaptive coping strategies, frequently contributes to heightened anxiety and depression, thereby increasing the risk of burnout (Semmer, 2006). While most studies support this positive association (Bahadori et al., 2019), some yield contrasting findings, potentially influenced by cultural disparities or variations in measurement methodologies (Tang et al., 2018). The intricacy observed in the data underscores the nuanced nature of the relationship between neuroticism and academic burnout.

Longitudinal investigations suggest that Openness acts as a protective factor against reduced Professional Accomplishment. Individuals exhibiting high levels of Openness, characterized by intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness, often perceive challenges as opportunities (Zimmerman et al., 2012), thus reducing the likelihood of burnout. Nonetheless, certain studies indicate a notable relationship between Emotional Exhaustion and Openness (Teven, 2007), depersonalization (Bahadori et al., 2019), and a negative correlation with Personal/Professional Accomplishment (Bahadori et al., 2019). Additional research highlights a significant association between all burnout dimensions and Openness (Salami, 2011), with a longitudinal study (Ghorpade et al., 2011) suggesting that Openness may heighten emotional exhaustion in specific professional contexts.

Most studies indicate that individuals with high neuroticism and low levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness are prone to experiencing academic burnout. However, certain studies diverge from this pattern, and the reasons for these inconsistencies require further clarification. These conflicting results are attributed to potential measurement biases (Bahadori et al., 2019) or specific characteristics of the sample

groups (Ghorpade et al., 2011), suggesting that additional factors may influence the relationship between academic burnout and personality traits.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings underscore the significant role of personality traits in academic burnout, prompting calls for a re-evaluation of stress theories to include personality as a contributing variable. They advocate for future burnout investigations to adopt comprehensive approaches that recognize burnout as a multifaceted issue, regularly assessing stress levels and personality traits in educational settings. This approach aims to enhance our understanding and ensure appropriate interventions for burnout, which have traditionally been generic, overlooking the diverse antecedents. For instance, correlations between academic outcomes and personality traits like satisfaction, performance, and engagement could guide the development of more efficient educational strategies.

Research Limitations and Future Studies Directions

The review's limited scope, restricted to specific databases and English-language texts, might have missed crucial studies. Excluding non-peer-reviewed sources and prioritizing journals ranked by SCImago may have overlooked important insights.

The exclusive focus on the Big Five personality model limited research scope, neglecting studies on other models or personality disorders. Variations in sample demographics, burnout assessments, and personality metrics hindered cross-study comparisons. Despite efforts to mitigate biases, addressing reverse causality between burnout and personality traits remained incomplete due to the use of cross-sectional designs. Longitudinal studies are crucial for deeper insights into these intricate relationships. Future research should explore the applicability of findings in real-life academic contexts, designing intervention plans tailored to individuals based on their personality traits. Assessing the effectiveness of these interventions could mitigate adverse academic burnout outcomes. Additionally, examining related psychological constructs like resilience, coping strategies, and social support is essential in understanding academic burnout comprehensively.

These associations contribute to a deeper understanding of burnout prevention. Future research should examine how cultural and environmental factors influence burnout, such as the impact of cultural background on personality development. Interdisciplinary teams and multi-institutional studies are necessary for reliable insights and accurate predictions of academic burnout, facilitating the development of effective prevention strategies.

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