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	 RESEARCH ARTICLE	
	<h1>Psychological Burnout Among University Students Approaching Graduation</h1>	
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Abstract	<p>This study aims to identify the level of psychological burnout experienced by university students approaching graduation. Psychological burnout is characterised by fatigue, exhaustion, and physical, psychological, and mental stress experienced by university students when subjected to continuous high-pressure situations in their daily lives, families, social circles, and academia. Consequently, they lose confidence and self-esteem, experience a decline in personal achievement and withdraw from social interactions and relationships.</p> <p>In this study, we employed a descriptive-analytical method to analyse and interpret the results and statistical data. Data were collected using the 20-item Maslach Burnout Inventory, which was administered to a purposively selected sample of 62 university students. The study concluded that the level of psychological burnout among university students approaching graduation was high.</p>	
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1. Introduction:

In our era, education is widely regarded as a fundamental necessity of human life. Its importance has increased alongside technological advancements and the evolving nature of modern professions and the knowledge and skills they require. The level and quality of an individual's education significantly impact their chances of obtaining suitable employment and holding an important position in society (Rashed, 2000).

As university education represents the pinnacle of the educational system in any country and is the primary laboratory in which students generate knowledge through scientific research in various disciplines, the university system must fulfil its most crucial objective of 'optimally preparing the human resources needed for work in all the specialties required by society while protecting them from the problems and pressures that could negatively impact their psychological, social and academic adjustment and hinder their achievement of goals' (Al-Banna & Al-Rubai, 2006, p. 506).

The pressures imposed by the nature of university studies, such as research, exams and other requirements, can result in students suffering from what is known as 'psychological burnout'. This phenomenon is extremely serious, negatively affecting university students primarily and various institutions secondarily. Psychological burnout is primarily associated with professions involving fatigue and stress, such as doctors, teachers, security personnel and managers. It has also begun to infiltrate university student circles, drawing the attention of researchers in psychology, educational sciences and psychiatry.

According to Brigitte Schneider-Knyle (2012), victims of psychological burnout are individuals who exert their utmost efforts and possess a strong sense of responsibility, demanding much from themselves and those around them. However, this emotional reserve gradually diminishes, leading to a decline in psychological and physical states until it

is depleted. This results in feelings of frustration and complete incapacity, along with a loss of enjoyment in life. This can lead to insomnia and a downward spiral of negativity (Raflaub, 2012).

The intense pressure that university students face, as demonstrated by the example of those at the University of Ouargla, can directly lead to psychological burnout. These include excessive academic workloads and responsibilities, exam stress, intensive monitoring of research and coursework, preparing theses and conducting internships simultaneously, and sometimes facing a lack of references and books or overcrowding in libraries.

The often-poor conditions in university residences and student housing also contribute to the problem, forcing many students to be away from their families for extended periods in order to study without access to suitable facilities. These factors, coupled with significant stress, anxiety and worries about an uncertain future — especially for students approaching graduation, who often feel torn between their true desires and the realities they face (Bawiyah, 2012, p. 318) — lead to various symptoms, such as mental distraction, high blood pressure, headaches and digestive disorders, as well as social symptoms like negative attitudes towards peers, isolation and withdrawal from groups.

Therefore, this study will attempt to address the following research question:

What is the level of psychological burnout among university students approaching graduation?

This main question encompasses the following sub-questions:

1. What is the level of emotional exhaustion among university students approaching graduation?
2. What is the level of emotional numbness among these students?
3. What is the level of perceived deficiency in personal achievement among university students approaching graduation?

2. Operational definitions:

1. Psychological burnout: This pathological syndrome is characterised by the depletion of psychological, mental and physical energy resulting from internal conflicts and circumstances that the student is unable to resolve healthily. It manifests in three ways: emotional exhaustion, emotional numbness and a lack of personal achievement.

2. Emotional exhaustion: This refers to a state of fatigue in which the university student feels completely depleted of energy and has exhausted all their emotional and physical resources. This leads to an inability to cope with or contribute to academic demands.

3. Emotional numbness: This indicates an inability to empathise with others, a lack of enthusiasm and motivation, and a general disinterest in activities.

4. Deficiency in personal achievement: This refers to a reduced sense of competence and achievement in studies, as well as a tendency towards negative self-evaluation, particularly in relation to interactions with others.

3. Exploratory study:

1. Sample of the Exploratory Study:

The exploratory study sample consisted of 20 university students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Hassiba Ben Bouali.

Table 1: Distribution of the Exploratory Sample by Gender:

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	5	25%
Female	15	75%
Total	20	100%

3.2 Study instrument:

In this study, we used the burnout scale developed by Bilal Mejider (2017), which was based on the dimensions of Christina Maslach's original scale. This scale is one of the most effective tools for measuring psychological burnout and has been used by many researchers. Alderman has described the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) as the most commonly used tool for measuring occupational stress, and it has been applied in over 180 studies since its creation by Christina Maslach in 1981.

Unlike the original Maslach scale, the current study's scale consists of 20 items that measure burnout symptoms across three dimensions.

3.2.1 Dimensions of the Scale and Items:

The scale consists of 20 items distributed across three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, emotional numbness and deficiency in personal achievement. The items are structured as statements asking about the student's feelings, with responses provided on a Likert scale ranging from 1, indicating 'No', to 2, indicating 'Yes' (see Appendix 1).

Scoring of the scale:

Items are scored as follows:

- No: 1 point

Yes: 2 points

Responses to the scale items are scored, and a score is calculated for each of the three subscales. These scores are then summed to obtain the total score on the scale.

3.2.2 Psychometric properties of the current study instrument:

To assess the scale's suitability and clarity, and to understand its psychometric properties, its validity and reliability were verified using appropriate statistical methods.

3.2.3.1 Validity of the scale:

- **Criterion-related validity:** This refers to the scale's ability to distinguish between the two extremes of the property it measures. The scale is applied to a group of respondents and their scores are arranged in either ascending or descending order. Then, 27% of respondents are selected from both ends of the distribution to create two contrasting groups that are compared based on their scores. One group is referred to as the 'high score group', and the other as the 'low score group'.

Statistical methods, particularly the t-test, are then used to assess the significance of the difference in means between the two groups. The scale is considered valid when it can effectively distinguish between these two groups at opposite ends of the spectrum.

To validate the criterion-related validity of the burnout scale, it was applied to an exploratory sample of 20 university students. After quantifying the responses and arranging the obtained scores in descending order, the two groups were compared. The results are illustrated in the following table:

Table 2: Criterion-related validity between high and low scorers on the burnout scale using the t-test.

Scale	Upper group		Lower group		Degrees of freedom	Calculated "t" value	P-value
Burnout	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	8	10.607	0.000
	39.60	0.548	30.60	1.817			

As can be seen in Table 2, the calculated 't' value (10.607) and p-value (0.000) for the burnout scale are both less than the significance level (0.01). This indicates that the scale can discriminate between individuals with high and low burnout scores, thus confirming its validity and ensuring that it measures what it was designed to measure.

3.2.3.2 Reliability of the Scale:

- Cronbach's alpha coefficient: Cronbach's Alpha is used to calculate the reliability of a scale based on the correlation between scores obtained on all items included in the test. The researcher calculated Cronbach's alpha, one of the most important measures of internal consistency, which links the reliability of the scale to that of its items.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the overall scale was calculated and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of the Reliability Coefficient of the Burnout Scale Using Cronbach's Alpha.

Burnout Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Total score	0.74

From Table 3, we can see that the reliability coefficient of the burnout scale, as calculated using the internal consistency method via Cronbach's alpha, was found to be 0.74. This value is considered high, indicating that the study tool is reliable and the results can be trusted.

- Split-half reliability:

The researcher divided the burnout scale into two halves, comprising the odd- and even-numbered items respectively. After administering and scoring the scale, each individual received two scores: one for the odd-numbered items and one for the even-numbered items. The correlation between the two halves was then calculated using Pearson's formula to produce a reliability coefficient for just half of the scale. This coefficient was then corrected for length using the Spearman-Brown formula, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of the reliability coefficient of the burnout scale using the split-half method.

Burnout Scale	Split-half		
	Correlation coefficient before correction	Gutman	Spearman-Brown
Total score	0.75	0.77	0.86

Table 4 shows that the reliability coefficient of the burnout scale, calculated using the split-half method with the scale's overall score, was approximately 0.75 before adjustment. The correlation coefficient using the Guttman formula was 0.77, and the corrected reliability coefficient using the Spearman-Brown formula was 0.86. These values indicate a high degree of reliability.

Based on the validity and reliability results, it is evident that the burnout scale possesses acceptable levels of both, allowing us to use it in the current study for statistical analysis and to calculate indicators to answer the study questions and test its hypotheses.

4. Main study:

4.1 Method of the main study:

The nature of the topic determines the type of methodology. As our study aims to determine the level of psychological burnout among a sample of university students, we will describe the reality of burnout within this group. Therefore, we will employ a descriptive-analytical method, which aligns with the objective of the study.

4.2 Sample of the study:

The sample consisted of 62 university students, distributed according to gender and academic specialisation. The following tables illustrate the characteristics of the sample:

Table 5: Distribution of sample members by gender:

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	7	11.3%
Female	55	88.7%
Total	62	100%

4.3 Tool of the Main Study:

We used the burnout scale designed by Bilal Mejider (2017) and reviewed by five clinical psychology professors from the University of Hassiba Ben Bouali. Following their suggestions and feedback, and after verifying the psychometric properties of the tool, the scale used in the current study consists of 20 items measuring burnout symptoms across its three dimensions.

5. Presentation and analysis of results in light of the study hypotheses:

5.1 Presentation and discussion of the main research question:

The main question is that the level of psychological burnout among university students approaching graduation is high. To test the validity of this hypothesis, we adopted the following estimation criteria and used the mean, standard deviation, and theoretical mean:

- Mean less than the theoretical mean: Low level of psychological burnout.
- Mean equal to the theoretical mean: Moderate level of psychological burnout.

- Mean greater than the theoretical mean: High level of psychological burnout.

Table 6: Level of psychological burnout among university students.

Statistical methods Dimensions	Number of items	Mean	Standard deviation	Theoretical mean
Total	20	31.74	4.770	30

As can be seen from Table 6, the mean score for the burnout scale (31.75) is higher than the theoretical mean (30). This confirms the hypothesis that the level of psychological burnout among university students approaching graduation is high.

The results in the table are consistent with the findings of several previous studies that addressed the issue of psychological burnout among Algerian students. This is supported by Mejider Bilal's (2017) study, which found that 88.08% of university students experience high levels of burnout. The results are also consistent with those of Bawiyah (2012), who found a high level of psychological burnout among university students. Furthermore, Asma Al-Jaafari et al.'s (2013) research concluded that students living in government accommodation also reported high levels of burnout across its three dimensions.

This phenomenon can be attributed to the many challenges and demands faced by university students, especially those nearing graduation. The difficulty of adapting to the new system imposed by the current situation adds to this stress. University students must conduct research for each course, manage heavy academic loads, endure exam pressures, face intensive scrutiny of their research and coursework, prepare theses and participate in internships, all simultaneously. However, these findings differ from those of Shaabi (2008), whose study aimed to assess the level of psychological burnout among expatriate students at Mu'tah University. Shaabi's research indicated that their level of burnout was low across the three dimensions. This discrepancy may be due to various internal and external factors, the most significant of which are the differences in environments and living conditions experienced by students in Jordan and Algeria. Differences in the systems at Jordanian and Algerian universities also contribute to variations in burnout levels.

5.2 Presentation and discussion of the first hypothesis result:

The first hypothesis states that the level of emotional exhaustion among university students approaching graduation is high. To test the validity of this hypothesis, we used the mean, standard deviation and theoretical mean.

Table 7: Level of Emotional Exhaustion Among University Students.

Statistical methods Dimensions	Number of items	Mean	Standard deviation	Theoretical mean
Total	7	11.92	2.106	10.5

As can be seen from Table 7, the mean score for emotional exhaustion (11.92) is higher than the theoretical mean (10.5). This confirms the hypothesis that the level of emotional exhaustion among university students approaching graduation is high.

This finding is supported by Bilal Mejider's (2017) study, which found that 68.57% of university students experience emotional exhaustion. This can be interpreted as meaning that university students approaching graduation suffer from emotional exhaustion due to the aforementioned factors. It also aligns with the findings of Asma Al-Jaafari et al. (2013) who indicated that the level of emotional exhaustion among students living in government accommodation was high with clear statistical significance.

The agreement between these previous studies and the current study suggests that all acknowledge the various factors affecting university students, leading to stress, heightened emotion and anxiety. For example, concerns about an uncertain future, particularly among students nearing graduation, can create a conflict between their true desires and the realities they face. Additionally, academic pressures can significantly contribute to psychological stress and result in burnout.

However, these findings differ from those of Shaabi (2003), who examined emotional exhaustion levels among expatriate students at Mu'tah University and found them to be low. This discrepancy may be attributed to the differing circumstances faced by university students in 2003 compared to 2021. It is also important to consider variations in academic specialisation and teaching methodologies, as these can contribute to psychological stress and burnout among students.

5.3 Presentation and discussion of the second hypothesis result:

The second hypothesis states that the level of emotional numbness among university students approaching graduation is high. To test the validity of this hypothesis, we used the mean, standard deviation and theoretical mean.

Table 8: Level of Emotional Numbness Among University Students.

Statistical methods Dimensions	Number of items	Mean	Standard deviation	Theoretical mean
Total	6	8.79	1.968	9

As can be seen from Table 8, the mean score for emotional numbness (8.79) is lower than the theoretical mean (9). This suggests that the hypothesis that the level of emotional numbness among graduating university students is high has not been confirmed. Consequently, it is evident that the level of emotional numbness among these students is low. This finding is consistent with Shaabi's (2003) research, which revealed that expatriate students at Mu'tah University exhibited low levels of emotional numbness. The consistency of these results can be attributed to the fact that students have faced similar conditions over the years.

However, this finding contrasts with Bilal Mejider's (2017) study, which reported that 56.55% of university students experience emotional numbness. This discrepancy may be explained by differences in academic disciplines: for example, psychology students nearing graduation may not experience emotional numbness in the same way as medical students. It also differs from the findings of Asma Al-Jaafari et al. (2013), who found that students living in government accommodation experienced high levels of emotional numbness, which was statistically significant. This difference may be due to the varying conditions faced by university students in 2013 compared to 2021, as well as the cognitive frameworks adopted by psychology students, which may influence how they manage and understand their emotions compared to students in other disciplines.

5.4 Presentation and Discussion of the Third Hypothesis Result:

The third hypothesis states that the level of achievement deficiency among university students approaching graduation is high. To test the validity of this hypothesis, we used the mean, standard deviation and theoretical mean.

Table 9: Level of Feelings of Achievement Deficiency Among University Students.

Statistical methods Dimensions	Number of items	Mean	Standard deviation	Theoretical mean
Total	7	11.03	2.088	10.5

As can be seen from Table 9, the mean score for the dimension of feelings of achievement deficiency (11.03) is higher than the theoretical mean (10.5). This confirms the hypothesis that the level of feelings of achievement deficiency among university students approaching graduation is high.

This finding is supported by Bilal Mejider's (2017) study, which found that 57.68% of university students experience feelings of personal achievement deficiency. This can be interpreted as meaning that university students approaching graduation feel they have not accomplished much personally. This is likely due to their perception of being treated merely as objects, which leads to feelings of not receiving the necessary recognition despite their social value. Such feelings contribute to a sense of inadequacy in fulfilling their responsibilities, ultimately resulting in a loss of feelings of achievement.

Furthermore, the cognitive styles adopted by students influence how they cope with the pressures they face. There are two primary cognitive styles, as indicated by Rotter:

- External locus of control: Individuals with this perspective tend to be positive, proactive and self-satisfied, which makes them more capable of facing pressure and avoiding its symptoms.

- Internal locus of control: These individuals are often dissatisfied and negative, surrendering to external circumstances as if they are inevitable. They tend to be introverted and struggle to cope with pressure, which makes them more susceptible to burnout (Shahata, 2006, p. 316).

This result contrasts with Shaabi's (2003) findings, which indicated that expatriate students at Mu'tah University had low levels of personal achievement deficiency. This discrepancy may be attributed to individual differences, as these play a significant role in how people cope with pressure. People who are unable to endure or adapt to any form of stress are more likely to experience negative mental health outcomes.

6. Conclusion:

Throughout different stages of their lives, individuals face various developments and events, some of which cause pain and disturbance, while others help them to meet their basic and secondary needs in various ways, such as through education. University students are exposed to a range of social and psychological pressures due to the demands of their studies. These demands require considerable effort in order for students to fulfil the expected roles of both themselves and others. Several phenomena emerge in this context, particularly burnout, which has received significant attention from scientists and researchers due to rising levels of stress and emotional distress.

This has a range of negative consequences for individuals and their mental health, leading to decreased job performance and lower satisfaction levels. Furthermore, the negative impact on the university itself must not be overlooked, as its academic reputation may decline.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards for research involving human participants. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and all respondents were informed of the purpose of the research prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured that their responses would be used exclusively for scientific research purposes. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and no personal identifiers were collected. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. The research instrument used (Maslach Burnout Inventory) was applied solely for academic research and analysis.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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