Cardiff Metropolitan University

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Final Year Project

Level of Burnout in Employed and Unemployed University Students

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of Cardiff Metropolitan University for the

degree of Bachelor of Science
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own independent investigation under the supervision of my tutor. The various sources to which I am indebted are clearly indicated. This dissertation has not been accepted in substance for any other degree, and is not being submitted concurrently for any other degree.

__________________________, Candidate
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Abstract

Burnout syndrome is a phenomenon which lacks a universal definition due to researchers holding different opinions on what exactly burnout is. However many agree that burnout consists of three dimensions which are; emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment. The cause of burnout appears to be workplace stressors which lead to symptoms and burnout developing in stages. There are numerous suggestions for the order of each stage yet Freudenberger and North (1992) state that the order and duration of each stage is dependent on each individual. During the early development and research into burnout syndrome it was proposed that only professionals within the human services experienced burnout. Yet over the years it has been found that, despite not being classed as a job, students also experience burnout this became known as academic burnout. Therefore if those within work and education experience burnout then it is proposed that those who are students and employed are more likely to report higher levels of burnout dimensions than students who are unemployed. As a result this study required participants from a South Wales university to complete the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey (Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996). The results were then analysed using three two-way ANOVAs. The results showed that there were no correlations between the employed and unemployed students. However the results did suggest that all students are experiencing the three dimensions of burnout to some degree once again highlighting the prevalence of this phenomenon amongst students.
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 What is burnout?
Burnout syndrome has likely been present in humans for centuries, as symptoms of the syndrome have been identified in literature and religious texts (Kaschka, Korczak, & Broich, 2011). However, it was not until 1974 that burnout syndrome was identified and researched. In 1974 Herbert J. Freudenberger, an American psychoanalyst, noticed a pattern of symptoms in volunteers working with vulnerable individuals in environments such as free clinics and crisis intervention centres (Kaschka, Korczak, & Broich, 2011). After conducting research into this pattern, Freudenberger coined the term burnout syndrome. In short, burnout syndrome can be defined as a lack of energy, enthusiasm, and confidence in oneself (Nguyen, 2011). Despite burnout syndrome being identified over forty years ago there is still no universal definition for this phenomenon and there is often a misunderstanding of the term. Many recurrently confuse burnout syndrome with depression, yet the symptoms of burnout often present themselves solely in the workplace compared to depressive symptoms presenting in numerous environments (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). Burnout syndrome is seen as a pattern of responses to emotional and interpersonal workplace stressors (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). This phenomenon can also be defined as a psychological syndrome caused by prolonged exposure to chronic workplace and emotional stressors, and an inability to cope with these stressors (Montero-Marín, Skapinakis, Araya, Gili, & García-Campayo, 2011; Swider & Zimmerman, 2010; Carod-Artal & Vázquez-Cabrera, 2013).

1.2 Components and Types of Burnout
Burnout is predominantly characterised by three components, which were identified by Maslach (1982) as emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment (Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008). Emotional exhaustion can be defined as feelings of high emotional demand from work, and the inability to cope with the demands (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Hakanen et al, 2008). Depersonalisation can be defined as becoming detached from service users and taking a cynical approach to the job (Demerouti et al, 2001; Hakanen et al, 2008). Reduced personal accomplishment is the feeling that the individual is not valuable to their
company and do not contribute anything useful, as well as feeling that they are not fulfilling their role within the organisation. In other words, the individual feels like they are useless and cannot do their job properly (Demerouti et al, 2001; Hakanen, 2008). It is likely that individuals begin to experience burnout syndrome as a way of coping with the stressors around them. By becoming disengaged individuals are less likely to be disappointed by any potential future failures that could arise (Demerouti et al, 2008).

Alongside the three dimensions of burnout there has also been three subtypes of burnout proposed by Farber (2000) who felt that viewing burnout syndrome as a single phenomenon was too simplistic (Farber 2000 cited in Montero-Marín et al, 2014; Montero-Marín et al, 2011). Instead, Farber suggested that individuals could experience different types of burnout depending on their level of dedication to their job (Montero-Marín et al, 2014). Farber’s three types of burnout are; frenetic, worn-out, and under-challenged (Montero-Marín et al, 2014; Montero-Marín et al, 2011). Individuals who are highly ambitious, dedicated to their job and often overload themselves whilst neglecting their own needs are seen as frenetic. Those who find their job to be very monotonous and mechanical often lack enthusiasm and motivation towards their work and lack opportunities for personal development within their role are seen as under-challenged. Finally, there are those who give up on tasks and responsibilities easily if they find them stressful and believe they have no control or input within their company are seen as worn-out (Montero-Marín et al, 2011; Montero-Marín et al, 2014).

1.3 Stages of Burnout Syndrome

1.3.1 Five Stage Model (1981)
There are numerous models for burnout and the way in which it develops. One of the first models of burnout stages proposed was the Five Stage Model by Veninga and Spradley (1981). The first stage, known as the “honeymoon” stage is when individuals begin to exert high levels of energy and enthusiasm to try to achieve their professional tasks. Once the individual begins to lack the energy to keep up with the demands of their job, professional inefficiency, fatigue, sleep disturbances, and other physical
symptoms begin to present themselves. Individuals may also turn to unhealthy activities such as drinking and taking drugs to help cope with the demands. This is known as stage two “fuel shortage”. Stage three, “chronic symptoms” is when the individual begins to experience stronger physical symptoms as well as beginning to suffer emotionally. Fourth is the “crisis” stage in which the physical symptoms may develop into more severe symptoms that require medical treatment. At this point the individual is likely to begin to feel helpless and as if there is no point to life. Finally stage five, “hitting the wall”, is when the individual has finally reached their limit as they can no longer cope and they have suffered complete professional deterioration (Melendez & De Guzman, 1983; Sharma & Cooper, 2016).

1.3.2 Twelve Stage Model of Burnout, Freudenberger and North (1992)
A more in depth model was proposed by the founder of burnout syndrome Freudenberger and his colleague North. Freudenberger and North (2006) developed the Twelve Stage Model of Burnout, which they claim can happen in any sequence and each stage can vary in how long it lasts based on the individual. Stage one is the compulsion to prove oneself, this entails excessive ambition, attempting to prove oneself as being better than colleagues, and high determination to succeed. Stage two, working harder, ties in with stage one as the individual attempts to take on a workload bigger than they can manage to try to prove themselves. They often refuse help, as they want to be able to prove they are capable of doing the work alone and in large quantities. Third, neglecting needs, the individual begins to neglect their own personal needs and their work becomes their priority. Fourth, displacement of conflicts, the individual is aware that their behaviour and actions are unhealthy; however, they cannot understand why they are behaving in such a way, which can lead to an internal conflict and the development of physical symptoms. Fifth, revision of values, this is where the individual begins to shift their beliefs and values system to focus on work and they begin to isolate themselves and become emotionally blunt. Sixth, denial of emerging problems, this is where work is completely taking over the individual and they develop a high level of intolerance for socialising with those around them, perceiving them as aggressive and sarcastic. The individual blames the pressures they are experiencing
from work, as the cause of their behaviour instead of realising it is their change in values that is the issue. Seventh, *withdrawal*, due to the increasing level of intolerance and irritability the individual experiences, they try to minimise social contact as much as possible and may turn to substance abuse or other unhealthy activities to cope with their negative symptoms. At this point, the individual is starting to feel like they are lacking direction in life and are insufficient. Eighth, *obvious behavioural changes*, for those who had not noticed changes within the individual, it is at this point that it will be clear there are negative changes within the individual's attitude and behaviour. Ninth, *depersonalisation*, the individual now views themselves and those around them as not being valuable, they have completely lost track of their own needs, and they can only focus on the present, as they cannot think about the future due to their lack of direction. Tenth, *inner emptiness*, at this point the individual feels empty internally and is struggling to cope with their work greatly. Eleventh, *depression*, although depression and burnout are not the same, the individual may show some symptoms of depression including feelings of meaningfulness, exhaustion, and feel completely detached. Finally, *burnout*, the individual is now severely exhausted both physically and emotionally and is likely to require medical attention. The individual may also experience suicidal ideation, however very few actually commit suicide (Lodhi, 2015; Gandhi, Wai, Karick, & Daguna, 2011).

1.3.3 *Four Stage Model of Burnout Syndrome, Bursich (2006)*

A more recent model is the four-stage model that was developed by Burisch (2006) and adapted by Korunka, Tement, Zdrehus, and Borza (2010). The first stage of the model involves high workload and stressful expectations. The individual has high job demands compared to the amount of job resources they have, and are therefore unable to meet their professional expectations. This stage is similar to the Jobs Demands-Resource model which suggests individuals begin to experience burnout when demands are high and resources are low (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). The second stage is when the individual begins to experience emotional and physical exhaustion from the high amount of energy they have had to invest in their work. Stage three sees the development of depersonalisation and cynicism, with the individual becoming
withdrawn from their job. Finally, the individual begins to feel helpless, insufficient, and guilty (Bursich 2006 taken from Korunka et al, 2010).

Overall these models support the idea that burnout is a process rather than a state, that goes around in a cycle until the individual can break the cycle. The three models also highlight the development of similar symptoms such as withdrawal, attitude changes, and the need to prove oneself (Veninga & Spradley, 1981; Freudenberger & North, 1992; Burisch, 2006). However, the order in which the symptoms and dimensions of burnout develop does not seem to be consistent between the three models as many researchers cannot seem to agree a universal pattern of development (Korunka et al, 2010). The Twelve Stage Model (Freudenberger & North, 1992) provides flexibility for individual differences as it explains that the stages can occur in a different order for each individual. This is beneficial as gender and personality types have been found to impact on the severity and the way burnout develops (Houkes, Winants, Twellaar, & Verdonk, 2011; Malik, 2017; Langbelle, Innstrand, Aasland, & Falkum, 2011; Purvanova, & Muros, 2010). For example, males are more likely to begin to develop burnout when they experience depersonalisation, whereas women are more likely to begin to develop burnout when they experience emotional exhaustion (Houkes et al., 2011). The Five Stage Model (Veninga & Spradley, 1981) seems to suggest that professional inefficacy develops first as the individual begins to feel a lack of motivation and worthlessness within their role. However it then becomes unclear as to which dimension develops next as depersonalisation or cynicism does not seem to be highlighted clearly within this model. The four stage model (Burisch, 2006 adapted by Korunka et al, 2010) suggests that exhaustion develops first, followed by depersonalisation or cynicism, and finally professional inefficacy (Korunka et al, 2010). If women are more likely to develop burnout once they begin to experience exhaustion then it may be likely that this model is more suited to females.
1.4 Cause of Burnout Syndrome

1.4.1 Although it may be beneficial to understand the process of how burnout syndrome develops, it is also necessary to understand the possible causes of burnout syndrome. According to Maslach (1982) burnout is a syndrome that may only present itself in those working within the human services, for example, doctors, nurses, and carers (Demerouti et al 2001). Yet Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli (2001) proposed that burnout is not a syndrome that occurred in only those who work in human services and the cause of this assumption was due to research being based solely on the human services professions (Demerouti et al, 2001). Instead Demerouti et al (2001) suggested that burnout syndrome could occur in anyone who experiences high job demand and has low job resources; this is known as the Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R). Job demands include factors such as time pressure, shift work, work environment, and physical workload. Whereas job resources include factors such as job security, supervisor support, rewards, and job control (Demerouti et al, 2001; Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008). These factors can be seen as stressors if they have the potential to have a negative impact on a number of individuals and decrease motivation (Demerouti et al, 2001). Job resources can have an impact on job demands, achieving work goals, personal growth, and learning. Access to the necessary job resources is important for extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, as this allows individuals to achieve their workplace goals that are extrinsically and intrinsically rewarding. However, a lack of job resources can be highly problematic as individuals can then lack motivation and therefore cannot achieve their workplace goals (Demerouti et al, 2001; Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008). The JD-R model suggests that those who are experiencing high job demands are likely to suffer from exhaustion, whereas those with poor job resources were more likely to become disengaged. This could support the stages of burnout development as it could provide an explanation as to why each model presents burnout differently. This model has been supported by numerous studies, especially longitudinal studies that have found job resources impacted upon engagement and motivation towards work, whereas job demands could predict future burnout and depression (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). However this model fails to take into account
personal resources and individual differences which may impact upon the way an individual responds to stressors (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

1.4.2 Adams’ Equity Theory (1963) was originally developed to explain job motivation at an interpersonal level (Schaufeli, 2006). Adams’ Equity Theory (1963) suggests that an imbalance between the investments an individual makes, and the outputs they receive within their job can lead to an effort-reward imbalance (Schaufeli, 2006; Oren & Littman-Ovadia, 2013; Sharma & Cooper, 2016). Individuals have a psychological contract or expectations of their social relationships and organisation, when these expectations are not fulfilled the individual may perceive there to be inequity within their professional relationships (Schaufeli, 2006; Oren & Littman-Ovadia, 2013). The idea of inequity impacting upon the development of burnout led to the development of the Dual-Level Social Exchange Model which proposed that burnout occurs at not just an interpersonal level but also an organisational level (Schaufeli, Van Dierendonck, & Van Gorp, 1996). Just like the Twelve Stage Model (2006) and the Five Stage Model (1981), the Dual-Level Social Exchange Model (1996) suggests that the individual may increase their investments in their interpersonal relationships and their organisation to try and increase their output. This increased input then leads to a decrease in emotional resources causing emotional exhaustion (Schaufeli, 2006). As the individual cannot restore equity through increasing their investments, they begin to decrease their investments until they feel they are balanced with the outputs (Schaufeli et al, 1996; Schaufeli, 2006). This is when the individual begins to withdraw and develop a cynical attitude, which can be seen as depersonalisation (Schaufeli et al, 1996; Schaufeli, 2006). However Tanis, Schaufeli, Van Horn, and Schreurs (2004) proposed that there was also a third level to social exchange processes that could impact on the development of burnout. The third factor added to the model was inequity at the team level (Tanis et al, 2004; Schaufeli, 2006; Oren & Littman-Ovadia, 2013).
1.5 Measures of Burnout

There are numerous measures of burnout including; the Maslach Burnout Inventories (MBI), Burnout Measure (BM), and the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI). The MBIs have been the most widely used measures of burnout since the late 90’s making up for over ninety percent of research measuring burnout. Five percent of research has then used the BM to measure burnout (Qiao & Schaufeli, 2011). The MBI surveys assume that burnout is multidimensional and is made up of three dimensions; emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and professional inefficacy. The MBI-HSS is the original measure that was developed to be administered to those working within the human services. This was then developed further to provide a survey tailored towards those working specifically in a medical profession which is the MBI-HSS-Medical Personnel Survey (MBI-HSS-MPS; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Five years later and the survey was developed again to create a survey tailored to those working within the education sector which is the MBI-Educators Survey (MBI-ES; Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986). However there has been criticism of these surveys as some researchers believe that professional inefficacy should not be included due to its lack of correlation with the other two dimensions (Qiao & Schaufeli, 2011). Another criticism of these surveys is lack of variety in terms of positive and negative statements as all statements aimed at measuring exhaustion and cynicism are phrased negatively, yet all statements aimed at measuring professional inefficacy are phrased positively. As a result the OLBI (Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou & Kantas, 2003) was proposed to minimise the answer bias and also removed the professional inefficacy dimension (Qiao & Schaufeli, 2011). The BO (Pines & Aronson, 1988) was also proposed as an alternative to the multidimensional approach, as it was believed by some that exhaustion was the main component of burnout (Qiao & Schaufeli, 2011). This was then broken down into three subcomponents; physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and cognitive weariness (Qiao & Schaufeli, 2011). Although all aforementioned measures allow the assessment of burnout, all have been criticised for numerous reasons. The OLBI has been found to lack discriminant validity, and the BM single dimension approach has been found to be
lesser than the multidimensional approaches (Qiao & Schaufeli, 2011; Lundkvist, Stenling, Gustafsson, & Hassmén, 2014).

The MBI-HSS and MBI-ES were found to provide inaccurate results when used on professionals outside of the human services. The results suggested that the three dimensions could be identified within other professions. For example, emotional exhaustion is similar to a normal reaction to stress resulting in mental health illnesses, fatigue, and psychosomatic problems (Demerouti et al, 2001). Depersonalisation can be seen in all professions as individuals no longer have enthusiasm towards their job and begin to lack motivation and detach from their work and their colleagues (Demerouti et al, 2001). Lack of personal development can also be seen in those who are unable to meet targets in work or feel they are no longer able to complete their work to a high standard if at all (Demerouti et al, 2001).

After research had been conducted internationally over numerous years, Leiter and Maslach (2005) reassessed their three dimensions of burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2005; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). The outcome of this resulted in the original three dimensions being critiqued as being too restrictive and instead were modified so they could be applied to all occupations. As a result, emotional exhaustion became exhaustion, depersonalisation became cynicism, and decreased personal accomplishment became lack of professional efficacy (Leiter & Maslach, 2005; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). The MBI-General Survey (MBI-GS; Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996), and the MBI-GS for Students (MBI-GSS; Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996) allow these new dimensions of burnout to be measured in occupations outside of the human services. The MBI-GS has been applied to a variety of job types and employees of different backgrounds and yet no variance was found, suggesting this survey is good for measuring burnout throughout a range of occupations (Bria, Spânu, Băban, Dumitraşcu, 2014).

1.6 Burnout in Students

Even though burnout syndrome was eventually recognised as an occupational disorder that develops as a result of workplace stressors, students are also identified as being a
vulnerable group at risk of developing burnout syndrome (Adie & Wakefield, 2011; Backović, Ilić Živojinović, Maskinović, & Maskinović, 2012; Cazan & Năstasă, 2015; Moran & De Bruin, 2010; Hamaideh, 2011; Rostami, Abedi, & Schaufeli, 2012). Although academic burnout has received very little interest until recently, there were some signs of academic burnout in research as far back as the 1980’s (Lian, Sun, Ji, Li, & Peng, 2014; Kafry & Pines, 1980). Despite not being directly studied burnout in students is discussed by Kafry and Pines (1980) in relation to tedium (Kafry & Pines, 1980). Within their study Kafry and Pines define tedium as:

“...a general experience of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. It is characterized by feelings of strain and burnout, by one’s self, one’s environment, and one’s life. It is the experience of distress and discontent with one’s work and way of life, the sense of failure ... In its extreme form, tedium is the breaking point of the individual, a point beyond which endurance and the ability to cope with the environment are severely hampered. At this point tedium overlaps with levels of depression.”

(Kafry & Pines, 1980, p. 478)

Kafry and Pines’ (1980) definition of tedium displays a similar symptomatology as burnout. Within the study they found that students reported lower positive features such as relationships, significance, and autonomy, and higher negative features such as stressors and work overload than those working within a paid profession (Kafry & Pines, 1980; Lian et al, 2014). Although studying is not seen as a profession, nor is being a student classed as a job, the same stressors that can be found in the workplace can also be found within academic environments (Capri, Ozkendir, Ozkurt, & Karakus, 2012; Rostami et al, 2012). Students face many stressors such as time pressures, financial concerns, competition with fellow students, pressure to achieve high grades, and lack free time (Cazan & Năstasă, 2015; Adie & Wakefield, 2011; Backovic et al, 2012; Hamaideh, 2011). Along with these stressors, a lack of interest and passion towards their course can result in a lack of motivation to attend lectures and complete assignments (Galbraith & Merrill, 2015; Adie & Wakefield, 2011; Cazan & Năstasă, 2015; Stoeber, Childs, Hayward, & Feast, 2011). This may then lead to students
missing classes; experience reduced functioning, and eventually dropping out of university (Cazan & Năstasă, 2015).

Academic burnout appears to be a universal issue. However individual difference such as emotional intelligence, perception of self, and trait anxiety have been shown to influence the chances of an individual developing academic burnout (Lian et al, 2014). Emotional intelligence can determined an individual’s ability to cope with daily stressors (Cazan & Năstasă, 2015). Those with higher levels of emotional intelligence have been found to remain calm and have strong problem solving abilities compared to those with lower levels of emotional intelligence (Cazan & Năstasă, 2015). Those with lower levels begin to panic and believe that their problems cannot be resolved, as a result they enter into the cycle of burnout (Cazan & Năstasă, 2015).

1.6.1 Types of academic burnout

Individual differences may also impact on the way each individual experiences academic burnout. Just like Farber’s subtypes of burnout (2000) there has also been a similar suggestion of types of burnout groups amongst students (Lee, Duig, Kim, Shin, Lee, & Lee, 2010). Four types of groups were identified amongst students; distressed, laissez-faire, persevering, and well-functioning (Lee et al, 2010). Students within the distressed group display high levels of the three dimensions, often feel incompetent, have low self-esteem, and low academic grades. Students within the laissez-faire group reported low levels of exhaustion, cynicism, and academic grades, but had high levels of professional inefficacy as well as surprisingly similar self-esteem scores as those within the persevering group. The persevering group had high levels of cynicism, exhaustion, self-esteem, academic grades, and professional inefficacy. Whereas the well-functioning group had low levels of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional inefficacy, but had high levels of self-esteem and academic grades (Lee et al, 2010).


1.6.2 Working Students

The pressures students face are similar to those working who may have issues with their colleagues and feel they have to compete to be the best at their job, have time pressures to complete work and meet targets, pressure to provide their best work, and begin to experience the stages of burnout (Capri et al, 2012). University students are also seen as a vulnerable group that are at risk of developing mental health illnesses, bad habits such as substance abuse, and in turn having a negative impact on those around them (Tosevski, Milovancevic, & Gajic, 2010). On top of these pressures some students also have to work part time leading to further time restraints for completing coursework and leisure time. Over half of second and third year undergraduate students within the UK are employed part time whilst studying (Galbraith, & Merrill, 2015). Unsurprisingly this can often have a negative impact on students’ academic performance and attendance, especially when students believe that they are unlikely to perform well academically anyway (Wenz & Yu, 2010; Craig et al, 2014). As a result of this self-doubt students begin to work more and spend less time focusing on their studies (Weng & Yu, 2010). However this negative impact can be dependent on the reason for employment. Those who have chosen to work for financial gain are likely to suffer from greater negative effects on their academics compared to those who have chosen to work to improve their career skills (Weng & Yu, 2010). With students feeling pressured by time constraints of work and university it is no surprise that they become stressed. Students often respond to stress in one of four ways; emotional, cognitive, behavioural, or physiological (Craig et al, 2014). Emotional responses include feelings of anxiety, worry, or fear; cognitive responses include appraisal of the situation; behavioural responses include self-harm or harm to other; and physiological responses include changes in weight and physical pains such as headaches (Craig et al, 2014). If students are becoming stressed and responding to stress in such ways then it is no surprise that students are an at risk group for developing academic burnout.

1.7 Aims and Hypothesis

Despite students being identified as a vulnerable group and there being a growing interest in academic burnout, very little research has been conducted around burnout in
working students and comparing this to unemployed students. If burnout can be caused through a high level of demands, time pressures, and other stressors, then it is likely that having academic and professional stressors at the same time is highly overwhelming for working students. Therefore it is hypothesised that working students will report higher level of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional inefficacy, than students who are not employed. However this is not to say that unemployed students will not report any experience of the burnout dimensions as academic burnout appears to be a universal issue for all types of students. Overall it is likely that all students will report some level of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional inefficacy. The aim of this study is to provide insight into a phenomenon that has received very little interest, and as a result provide research and findings that could help promote the phenomenon of burnout in employed students.
2.0 Method

2.1 Design

The study adopted a questionnaire design to assess burnout levels in a student population. The study consisted of three independent variables. The three independent variables were employment status (employed or unemployed), level of burnout (high or low), and university level (year 1, 2, or 3). The dependent variable was the participants’ response to the questionnaire, which consisted of a burnout measure and a demographic form.

2.2 Participants

55 undergraduate psychology students in year one (56.4%), two (29.1%), and three (14.5%) participated in the study. The participants were an opportunity sample recruited from a South Wales university’s online participants panel. The mean age category of participants was 18-24 years old (18-24, 90.8%; 25-34, 9.1%). The participant sample consisted of 85.5% females and 14.5% males. Of the 55 participants, 35 (63.6%) were employed and 20 (36.4%) were unemployed.

2.3 Materials

The materials used for this study were the Maslach Burnout Inventory - General Survey (MBI-GS) (Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, and Jackson, 1996), a demographic form, the university’s online participant panel, Qualtrics, an information sheet, a debrief sheet, and SPSS. The MBI-GS and demographic form were compiled into one for participants to complete, with the demographic form coming before the MBI-GS.

2.3.1. Psychometric Test: MBI-GS (Schaufeli et al, 1996):

The MBI-GS was developed from the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory -
Educators Survey (MBI - ES) (Maslach and Jackson, 1986). The MBI-HSS measured burnout specifically in those working in human services and was not a universal measure for those in all job sectors. The MBI-ES was then developed from the MBI-HSS to allow the survey to be applied to those working in education sectors. However, both of these surveys were limited to certain types of professions meaning it could not be generalised. As a result the MBI-GS was developed, to be used universally in all job sectors. The MBI-GS is a self-report questionnaire consisting of sixteen questions, which measure emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy. Emotional exhaustion refers to both physical and mental exhaustion and professional efficacy, refers to feelings of achievement in the workplace. The questions are answered by participants using a six-point likert scale with one being “never”, two being “a few times a year or less”, three being “once a month or less”, four being “a few times a month”, five being “once a week”, and six being “a few times a week”. The types of questions included in this inventory include; “I feel emotionally drained from my work” which measures exhaustion, “I have become less interested in my work since I started this job” which measures cynicism, and “In my opinion, I am good at my job” which measures professional efficacy.”

Numerous studies have examined the internal consistency of the MBI-GS with Cronbach’s alpha value being .67 for exhaustion, .77 for professional efficacy, and .74 for cynicism once question eleven had been removed in dominican teachers, .88 for exhaustion, .78 for professional efficacy, and .67 for cynicism in romanian healthcare professionals, and .72 for exhaustion, .69 for professional efficacy, and .78 for cynicism in an Iranian population (Bria, Spânu, Băban, Dumitrașcu, 2014; Tomás, de los Santos, Alonso-Andres and Fernández, 2016; Shamloo, Hashemian, Khoshsima, Shahverdi, 2017).

2.3.2 Other Materials
The demographic form was designed by the researcher, which consisted of five questions regarding age, gender, university year, employment status, and employment type.
The online Participant Panel was used to advertise the study and recruit students from a specific university within South Wales. A participant inclusion criteria was clearly stated in the information sheet requiring participants to be an undergraduate psychology student within the university. If students met the criteria for the study then they are able to sign up and arrange a time to complete the study. Qualtrics was used to create the survey and participants were provided with a link from the Participants Panel that took them directly to the survey.

All data was inputted to SPSS 24, which was used to analyse and present the data collected. Results from SPSS 24 were then entered into Microsoft Excel in order to present the data in graphs and tables.

The information sheet informed the participants of the purpose of the study, what the participants would be required to do, potential risks and benefits from participating, their right to withdraw from the study before submitting their survey, and the presence of confidentiality and anonymity. They were also informed on the information sheet, that due to it being an online research project there would not be a consent form to complete, but that if after reading the information sheet, they decided to proceed with the study, their submission of the questionnaire would be interpreted as their indication of consent. They were provided with contact details of relevant support agencies if they felt the research had caused them any distress.

At the end of the study a debrief sheet was provided for the participants. The debrief sheet thanked the participants for completing the survey, and they were again provided with contact details of relevant support agencies if they felt the research had caused them any distress or concern.

2.4 Procedure

Information about the study was uploaded on the university’s participant panel where the students could view the participant criteria and procedure for the study and sign up if they wished to do so. Once the participants had signed up they were instructed to choose a time slot to complete the study individually and were sent a link to the survey
which was presented on Qualtrics. The participants were then provided with an information sheet, that informed them about the study. The participants were prompted to read this document carefully, so that they could make an informed choice to take part or not. If participants agreed to participate they proceeded to a website where they could complete the survey. However if the participants did not wish to participate, they were redirected to the end of the survey and thanked for their time.

Those who agreed to participate were presented with a demographic form followed by the MBI-GS, which they were given a time slot of fifteen minutes to complete them in. During this time participants had the right to withdraw from the survey without completing it and any data already gathered would be deleted. Upon completion the participants were thanked for their participation and provided with a debrief sheet, which provided contact details of services, should they feel they needed further support as a result of participating in the study. Once the deadline for participating in the study had been reached, each participants' data was scored to provide an overall score and a mean score for the three factors: exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy. The data was then entered into SPSS and three two way ANOVAs and a correlations test was conducted to analyse and present the data. The data was then presented via a table of results and details were presented in graphs.

2.5 Method of Analysis

The type of data collected in this study was nominal and interval. The independent variables were employment status (employed or unemployed) and academic year (one, two, or three). The dependent variable was the mean scores from completing the MBI-GS. As a result a two-way ANOVA was used to analyse the data from the survey. A correlations analysis was also conducted to determine any correlation between the mean scores of the three dimensions.
3.0. Results

3.1. Table 1 presents correlations between exhaustion, cynicism, and professional inefficacy mean scores. The table shows that there is a positive correlation between exhaustion and cynicism, meaning those who are exhausted are also likely to be cynicism. However, there are no correlations between exhaustion and professional inefficacy and exhaustion and professional inefficacy, suggesting these variables are independent.

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<td>.182</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Inefficacy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. P<.01

3.2. Exhaustion

Figure 1 below presents the mean score of exhaustion for employed and unemployed students in year one, two, and three. The figure shows that in year those who are unemployed scored lower on exhaustion than those who are employed. This remains the same in the second year of university. However, in year three there is very little difference between the mean scores of exhaustion in students. The figure also shows that exhaustion seems to decrease in year two but increase in year three.
For exhaustion the variance were equal $F(5,49), 1.199, p > .05$.

There was no main effect of employment status on exhaustion, $F(1, 49) = .770, MSE = 1.793, \eta^2 = .015, p > .05$. There was no main effect of level of study on exhaustion, $F(2, 49) = .751, MSE = 1.793, \eta^2 = .030, p > .05$. There was no interaction between employment status and year of study, $F(2, 49) = .193, MSE = 1.793, \eta^2 = .008, p > .05$.

3.3. Cynicism

Figure 2 below presents the mean score of cynicism in employed and unemployed students in year one, two, and three. The figure shows that the mean score of cynicism appears to be slightly higher in those who are employed regardless of university year. However cynicism seems to decrease between year one and year three.
Figure 2. Level of cynicism for year 1, 2 and 3 students and for those who are employed or not.

For cynicism the variances were equal, $F(5, 49) = 1.192, P > .05$.

There was no main effect of employment status on cynicism, $F(1, 49) = .702, MSE = 1.295, \eta^2 = .014, p > .05$. There was no main effect of level of study on cynicism, $F(2, 49) = .534, MSE = 1.295, \eta^2 = .021, p > .05$. There was no interaction between employment status and year of study, $F(2, 49) = .016, MSE = 1.793, \eta^2 = .001, p > .05$.

3.4. Professional Efficacy

Figure 3 presents the mean score of professional efficacy in students in year one, two, and three in university. The figure shows that the mean score of professional efficacy appears to remain at a similar level in employed students throughout the three years of university. However the mean score of professional efficacy increases in unemployed students in year two, but decreases in year three below that of year two and three. Meaning unemployed students feel less valuable within the university in year three.
For professional efficacy, the variances were equal, $F(5,49), 1.005. P > .05$.

There was no main effect of employment status on professional efficacy, $F(1, 49) = 2.607$, $MSE = .701$, $\eta^2 = .051$, $p > .05$. There was no main effect of level of study on , $F(2, 49) = .605$, $MSE = .701$, $\eta^2 = .024$, $p > .05$. There was no interaction between employment status and year of study , $F(2, 49) = .665$, $MSE = 1.295$, $\eta^2 = .026$, $p > .05$.

3.5. Job Type

The following three figures present the mean score for exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy for each job type.
Figure 4. Level of exhaustion in each job type

Figure 5. Level of cynicism in each job type
3.6. Gender
The following figure presents the mean score for exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy for male and female participants.

**Figure 6. Level of professional efficacy in job type**

**Figure 7. Level of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy in male and females**
4.0. Discussion

4.1 With burnout becoming a widely researched phenomenon that is of high interest to occupational researchers, it is no surprise that over time it has been found to be a universal problem. Not only has burnout been found to impact those with a professional occupation, but it seems that burnout also has an impact on students. Beginning university can be quite daunting for students as they are required to become independent. Students must complete their academic work independently and submit this on time, they are responsible for their own attendance to lectures, and if they fail to meet the university’s standards they risk being removed from the course. On top of this students may also have to work to financially support themselves, leaving them trying to get an even balance between their academics, work, and their social life. As a result not only are employed students at risk of developing burnout from academic stressors, but they are also at risk from their occupational stressors. Therefore this study aimed to determine if employed students experienced the three dimensions of burnout more than students who are unemployed. This was carried out by undergraduate participants completing an online survey which included a demographic form and the MBI-GS (Maslach, Jackson, Leiter, and Schaufeli, 1996). Despite predictions that employed students would report experiencing higher levels of the three dimensions, this was not the case. No significant correlations were found between employed and unemployed students or academic year.

4.2. Further Findings

4.2.1 Although not part of the research aim, it was interesting to look at the mean scores for job types and for gender. Females, when compared to males, had a lower score for cynicism (3.5) but higher scores for professional efficacy (4.1) and exhaustion (4.1). Males had a higher score for cynicism (3.8) but a lower score for professional efficacy (4.0) and exhaustion (2.9). These findings support previous research that women experience higher levels of exhaustion, whereas males experience higher levels of cynicism or depersonalisation. However it is important to take into account the imbalance between male and female participants (8:47) when applying these findings.
4.2.2. As for job type healthcare had the highest level of exhaustion (4.8) and entertainment had the lowest level of exhaustion (2.2), hospitality and film reported the highest level of cynicism (3.8) and sports reported the lowest (1.2), healthcare reported the highest level of professional efficacy (4.9) and entertainment reported the lowest (3.8). The findings that those employed in healthcare reported the highest level of professional efficacy was surprising as they also reported high levels of exhaustion and cynicism. This also conflicts with the original findings that those employed within the human services are likely to suffer from higher levels of burnout. However it is important to note that of the participants only one was employed in entertainment, sports, and film, four were employed in healthcare, ten were employed in sales, eighteen in hospitality, and the remaining participants were unemployed.

4.3. Limitations

4.3.1. The size of the sample for the study was very small (56 participants) and there was an imbalance within each of the following categories; gender, employment type, and academic year. The majority of the sample were female (85.5%), in year one (56.4%), employed (63.6%), working within the hospitality sector (51.4%), and aged 18-24 (90.8%). First year students are likely to be going through many different changes as they adapt to living alone for the first time as well as having to financially support themselves. Therefore the findings do not reflect a balanced view of burnout within students throughout each level of university. The students were also undergraduates studying psychology, yet there are students in other types of education that could also be affected such as those in further education or postgraduate studies. As a result caution should be taken when interpreting this research and applying to other students. Another limitation to this study is the wording of the statements within the MBI-GS (Maslach et al, 1996). The statements about exhaustion and cynicism are worded negatively, whereas the statements for professional inefficacy are worded positively. Therefore results may be interpreted incorrectly due to this as results about professional efficacy may be automatically viewed as professional inefficacy as individuals assume since the other two dimensions are negative this one is too. However high results for
exhaustion and cynicism relate to possible higher levels of burnout, whereas higher levels of professional inefficacy results actually relate to possible lower levels of burnout.

Another issue that arises is the lack of positive and negative mixed statements for each dimension and the survey being relying on self-report which creates the possibility of response bias. The use of a self-report measure means researchers have to rely on participants being as truthful as possible when completing the survey. However some participants may display response bias. For example some participants may display acquiescence tendencies as they aim to provide positive responses, also known as the “yes bias”. Also participants may already have a firm view on the research topic or themselves leading to them providing inaccurate responses that are based on their beliefs. For example some participants may feel they have to prove themselves and are in denial that they may be experiencing stress as a result of academic and professional work. Therefore the participants then answer in a manner that scores them low on each dimension of burnout. Another response bias is demand characteristics as participants try to provide the researcher with the results they are looking for. In this case since the study aimed to identify high levels of burnout amongst employed students, participants may report feeling negatively and stressed regularly to provide results that support the research hypothesis.

4.4 Future Research

Despite the limitations identified this research has provided insight on the implications of university stressors and burnout on university students. Since the majority of students scored above three for each dimension, there is a risk that they could develop or have already be experiencing burnout. Therefore it may be beneficial to conduct further research into how to identify burnout amongst students and potentially identify those who may be more at risk of developing burnout due to individual differences so they can be monitored. Once identified support can be put in place to help students prevent development of burnout or break the cycle should they already be experiencing burnout. This way students feel they are receiving support through a highly stressful time as well
as preventing students from feeling they cannot cope and therefore result in them dropping out of university.

Due to this study consisting of a small imbalanced sample, further research should collect data from a much larger sample. This includes recruiting more male students, students in their final year of university as this is a highly stressful time in university, and students in jobs other than hospitality and in larger amounts. Having a sample consisting of older students may also be of interest as previous research has suggested that older employees report lower levels of burnout. This could be due to older employees having developed healthy coping mechanisms to prevent becoming overwhelmed by stressors. It would be interesting to see if this is also the case amongst older students as well as comparing older students to younger students. Besides studying a larger and more diverse sample, it may also be beneficial to look further into the impact each job type could be having on working students of each gender, which could identify jobs that are better suited to students.

Since the measure used was aimed at those who work in a variety of occupations, it may be beneficial to also provide students with the opportunity to complete the students version of the MBI and then have employed students complete the MBI-GS as well. This is because the student version of the MBI may be better suited to those who are unemployed.

4.5 Conclusion

Although this study’s findings did not support the hypothesis and suffered from a small imbalanced sample, the findings still contribute to the field of burnout and provides a unique view that had not yet been explored. The findings suggest that burnout is a prevalent phenomenon amongst students and further research with a larger sample is necessary to try and identify and reduce triggers for burnout amongst students.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Level of Burnout in Employed and Unemployed University Students
Name of Researcher: [Redacted]

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box that you agree with.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw a week before the deadline of the study, without giving any reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

4. I do not wish to participate in this study

_______________________________________  ___________________
Signature of Participant  Date

_______________________________________  ____________________
Name of person taking consent  Date

___________________________________________________________
Signature of person taking consent  Date
Appendix 2: Information Sheet

Level of Burnout in University Students
Participant information sheet

The study

Burnout is “a state of mental and physical exhaustion caused by one’s professional life” which involves gradual energy depletion, and loss of motivation and commitment (Freudenberger, 1974, cited in Kraft, 2006, p. 30; Stoyanov, 2014). Although it is suggested that professionals and students working with human services are mainly affected by this phenomenon, it is likely that those in any form of stressful situation are at risk of experiencing burnout (Pines & Maslach, 1980; Cañadas-De la Fuente, Vargas, San Luis, García, Cañadas, & Emilia, 2015; Montero-Marín, García-Campayo, Mera, & del Hoyo, 2009; Skodova & Lajciakova, 2013). As a result this his study aims to identify the presence of burnout syndrome and burnout levels within the student population and identify if this differs in working and non-working students.

What would happen if you agree to participate?

Should you agree to participate you will be required to complete a short questionnaire involving a demographic form and the Maslach Burnout Inventory - General Survey (MBI - GS; Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996). The demographic form will involve questions about your age, gender, employment status, and university level. The MBI - GS is a questionnaire composed of sixteen questions that you will be required to answer on a scale of one to six, one being never and six being a few times a week. The answer given will allow the researcher to assess the presence and level of burnout. The entire questionnaire should take no more than twenty minutes to complete.

Potential Risk

You may become distressed or uncomfortable with some of the questions asked, however you can withdraw from the study prior to submitting the survey online or leave
questions unanswered should you not feel comfortable answering. There are also contact details of the university student support services, Samaritans, Citizens. Advice below and on the debrief form should you require further support on completing the survey. The project supervisor will be available after completion of the survey to help with any questions you may have about the research. If you have experienced any concerns or questions from completing this questionnaire please contact the project supervisor:- Leanne Watson via email: lwatson@cardiffmet.ac.uk There is a variety of support services available. The following link provides further detail and contact information within the University:
http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/study/studentservices/Pages/default.aspx

External services that may be able to provide support for you are:

Samaritans website: https://www.samaritans.org/
Samaritans Free 24 hour phone line: 116 123
Samaritans email: jo@samaritans.org

Citizens Advice: https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/

Potential benefits

Completing this survey will benefit an undergraduate study.

Survey Completion Deadline

Due to the importance of recruiting participants for this survey, if you sign up for the study, please note there will be a two-week deadline to complete the online survey, from the recruitment date on the participant panel.

Withdrawal, anonymity and confidentiality
You have the right to withdraw from the study prior to submitting the survey online. Once the survey has been submitted, the data will not be able to be withdrawn as there is no identifiable information available to locate your data. This is to ensure anonymity is provided. In terms of confidentiality, the information you provide will only be used for the purpose of this study and will be password protected on a PC and will only be accessible by the researcher and the project supervisor (Leanne Watson).
Appendix 3: Demographic Form

Demographic form

1. What is your gender?
   Male F Female

2. How old are you?
   18-24 25-34 35-44 45+

3. Do you have a job?
   Yes No

4. Which category best describes your job type?
   Health care (Human services)
   Education
   Hospitality
   Sales
   Finance
   Media
   Manual labour
   Charity

5. What year are you currently in?
   Year 1 Year 2 Year 3
Appendix 4: Debrief Sheet

**Debrief Sheet**

Thank you for taking part in this study, your input is very much appreciated.

The research was looking at burnout levels, and some of the questions may have triggered some thoughts or feelings that you find difficult to manage, or you may have some questions about the research and the survey used for the study.

If you have experienced any distress or have any concerns from completing this questionnaire please contact the project supervisor, Leanne Watson via email: lwatson@cardiffmet.ac.uk. There are a variety of student services available. The following link provides further detail and contact information: http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/study/studentservices/Pages/default.aspx

External services that may be able to provide support for you are:
Samaritans Free 24 hour phone line: 116 123
Samaritans email: jo@samaritans.org
Citizens Advice: https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/
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Signed: ________________________

Date: 20/04/2018