

**PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF PERFECTIONISM, ACADEMIC  
COMPETITION ANXIETY, AND EMOTIONAL BURNOUT AMONG STUDENTS  
AND YOUNG ADULTS: A NARRATIVE REVIEW**

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20295049>

**Abstract.** Emotional burnout and anxiety-related symptoms among students have become increasingly common in modern educational environments. Competitive academic systems, perfectionistic expectations, and post-pandemic stress contribute significantly to psychological exhaustion in young adults. This narrative review examines the relationship between maladaptive perfectionism, academic competition anxiety, and emotional burnout among students. Contemporary literature published between 2020 and 2025 was analyzed to identify major psychological patterns associated with academic stress and burnout vulnerability. The reviewed studies indicate that maladaptive perfectionism is strongly associated with anxiety symptoms, emotional exhaustion, chronic stress, and reduced psychological flexibility. Academic competition anxiety further intensifies emotional pressure through continuous evaluation, social comparison, and unrealistic achievement expectations. Post-pandemic educational conditions and digital comparison culture appear to increase psychological vulnerability among students. The findings suggest that emotional regulation training, self-compassion approaches, cognitive behavioral interventions, and institutional mental health support may help reduce burnout risk and improve student well-being.

**Keywords:** Perfectionism; academic competition anxiety; emotional burnout; students; mental health; academic stress

### **Introduction**

Mental health difficulties among university students have attracted increasing attention in recent years. Emotional exhaustion, anxiety symptoms, and academic burnout are reported more frequently, especially in highly competitive educational settings. According to the World Health Organization, anxiety and depressive disorders increased significantly after the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among adolescents and young adults.

Modern educational systems often emphasize productivity, achievement, and constant performance evaluation. While such expectations may motivate students, they may also create long-term psychological pressure. Many students experience fear of failure, chronic self-comparison, and anxiety related to academic success.

Perfectionism has become one of the most widely discussed psychological factors associated with student burnout. Adaptive perfectionism may support organization and persistence, whereas maladaptive perfectionism is linked to excessive self-criticism, unrealistic standards, and emotional distress. Academic competition anxiety may intensify these tendencies through constant comparison and performance-related pressure.

This review examines the relationship between perfectionism, academic competition

anxiety, and emotional burnout among students and young adults in contemporary educational environments.

**Methods.** This article was conducted as a narrative review of psychological and psychiatric literature published between 2020 and 2025. Relevant peer-reviewed articles, educational psychology studies, and international mental health reports related to perfectionism, burnout syndrome, academic stress, and anxiety among students were analyzed.

The literature was selected from contemporary academic databases, including PubMed, Frontiers, Elsevier, and Springer. Particular attention was given to studies involving university students and young adults exposed to competitive educational environments. Due to the narrative design of the review, no quantitative meta-analysis was performed.

**Results.** The reviewed literature demonstrates a strong relationship between maladaptive perfectionism and emotional burnout among students. Students with elevated perfectionistic tendencies frequently report anxiety symptoms, chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced academic satisfaction.

Academic competition anxiety appears to reinforce perfectionistic cognitive patterns through continuous evaluation and social comparison. Educational systems that prioritize ranking, productivity, and achievement may unintentionally contribute to psychological distress.

Several studies also suggest that digital culture and social media contribute to unrealistic achievement expectations. Students are continuously exposed to idealized representations of academic success, which may intensify feelings of inadequacy and emotional fatigue.

Post-pandemic educational conditions further increased psychological vulnerability among students. Online learning, emotional isolation, uncertainty regarding future opportunities, and reduced social interaction contributed to emotional instability and burnout symptoms.

**Discussion.** The findings of this review suggest that maladaptive perfectionism and academic competition anxiety are important psychological risk factors for emotional burnout among students and young adults. Although perfectionism is sometimes associated with motivation and achievement, maladaptive perfectionism is more consistently connected with anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and reduced psychological flexibility.

Students who associate self-worth with academic success often experience persistent fear of failure and heightened sensitivity to evaluation. Over time, these tendencies may contribute to chronic emotional stress and psychological exhaustion.

Social media appears to play an important role in strengthening perfectionistic beliefs. Constant exposure to carefully curated academic achievements may increase dissatisfaction and self-criticism among students.

Recent psychological literature indicates that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy interventions, emotional regulation training, and self-compassion approaches may help reduce maladaptive perfectionistic thinking and improve emotional resilience. Universities should recognize emotional burnout as an important psychological and public health concern rather than an individual weakness.

### **Conclusion**

This narrative review demonstrates that maladaptive perfectionism and academic competition anxiety are strongly associated with emotional burnout among students and young adults. Contemporary educational systems increasingly expose students to unrealistic achievement expectations, social comparison, and chronic performance pressure.

Preventive psychological strategies, including emotional regulation training, institutional mental health support, and self-compassion interventions, may help reduce burnout risk and improve psychological well-being among students. Future educational approaches should prioritize psychological health alongside academic achievement.

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