

Student Burnout: A Lasting Impact of COVID-19

Senior Project

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By

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Abstract

The following written work is a research study regarding the lasting impact student burnout as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic within the campus of University of North Carolina at Pembroke. This study utilized a unique confidential survey distributed to the students of the University of North Carolina Pembroke via the Qualtrics platform. Data from this survey concluded that the students at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke presented with high levels of academic discord and moderate levels of academic impact and shifts personal assessments in academic persception.

Student Burnout: A Lasting Impact of COVID-19

It is no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic took the world by storm. Beginning in December of 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic swept the nations making its noticeable impact within the United States March of 2020. Since March of 2020, the the United States educational system has experienced several foundational changes resulting in the dismantling and rebuilding of the traditional education system. This building began as extended spring breaks for students and staff that swiftly transformed into the immediate transition to remote online education. For many students, remote online education persisted an estimated six to twelve months and was then followed by or combined with hybrid educational opportunities for an additional estimated six to twelve months. In addition to accommodating the changes in the distribution of educational material, students were confronted with obstacles to effective education such as “isolation from peers and lecturers, the difficulty of using the online platforms, the lack of guidance and counseling, and the high levels of distractions” (Akpinar, E., 2021, p. 3300). Such obstacles paired with the fundamental change in the education system have generated increased levels of anxiety and subsequent burnout as students have sought to meet the seemingly everchanging educational expectations and requirements. As stated by Katarzyna Tomaszek and Agnieszka Muchacka-Cymerman (2022)

Burnout by students consists of exhaustion resulting from the high study demands placed on them by the family or teachers, a cynical and uninvolved approach to study and academic institution, or a sense of inefficiency that are related to negative beliefs about educational competencies or opportunities. (p. 1)

Such feelings continue to be felt by students within the American education system as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to play a role in our society.

The University of North Carolina at Pembroke was not excluded from the capsize of the United States educational system; therefore, neither were its students. The aim of this research project was to gauge the levels of burnout felt by the students at The University of North Carolina at Pembroke as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to understand the effects the pandemic has had on education on the students of UNCP. In doing so, this research study compared levels of burnout between the various year classifications and majors present in the UNCP undergraduate population. Additionally, this research project aimed to educate the students at The University of North Carolina at Pembroke on available relief resources and techniques on the university’s campus.

**Materials and Methodology**

The approach of this research project included the use of a unique confidential questionnaire based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey for Students (Maslach et al., 2018). The questionannre was to be answered by the undergraduate students at The University of North Carolina at Pembroke via the Qualtrics patform. This questionnaire included demographic data (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, major, year classification, etc.) and various items in which student responses were coded using a combination of likert scales, dichotomous yes and no options, and free responses. Data analyzed from the questionnaire utilized a respective burnout scale to determine the students’ levels of burnout.

The scale generated for the survey included three categories: Academic Discord, Personal Assessment of Academic Impact, and Personal Assessment of Shift in Academic Perception. Academic Discord is the measurement of degree to which perceives their academic studies as tiresome or anxiety inducing. This is modeled after Maslach’s Academic Exhaustion (Maslach et al., 2018) category. Academic Impact is the measurement of how the subject perceives their academic accomplishments, or lack thereof, as they relate to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is modeled after Maslach’s Personal Accomplishments Assessment (Maslach et al., 2018). Personal Assessment of Shift in Academic Perception is the measurement of how the subject perceives themselves as a student and their education as whole following/as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This category was not modeled after Maslach, this adaptation was made to reflect the unique nature of the study. This measurement serves as the bridge the Academic Exhaustion and Academic Impact categories. Particiant responses to survery items were categorized according to the three areas off assessment and scored accordingly. Scoring of items reflected that higher final scores within the categories indicated elevations in negative beliefs held by students and higher instances of student burnout. Tables 1-3 display scoring scales genertated and utilized for this survey.

Recruitment emails to the students were to be sent each Monday following the initial email until the end of the survey’s time period. A maximum of 4 emails were to be sent to students, one for each week of the survey’s availability. The survey was set to end later than 11/18/2022 to allow for sufficient data analysis regarding honors college presentation.

**Results**

**Demographic Data**

Over the 4-week collection period a total of 225 responses of UNCP students were collected. Demographic data for the sample are presented in the following categories: gender, age, race, ethnicity, student classification and major/department. The sample was predominantly female 77.47% of participants identify as such. The remaining portions of the sample identified as follows; 17.58% as male, 4.4% as nonbinary, and 0.55% as other gender not listed but did not specify. Age of participants ranged from 18 to 27 years-old and older with the largest portions within the 18-20 years-old category comprising 34.25% and the 27 years-old and older gategory at 30.39%. Figure 2 presents age distribution data of the entire sample. Distribution of the race of participants displayed a large quantitiy belonging to the White/Caucasian race at 58.01%. The second largest group being Black/African American group comprised 17.13%. Figure 3 contains the results of the samples entire racial distribution. In addition to racial distribution data, data regarding the ethnicities of participans stated that 87.78% identified as non-Hispancic. Student classification of the sample ranged from freshman/first year students to graduate student with the largest percentage being the senior/fourth year category at 30%. Figure 5 displays the sample’s distribution of student classification.Lastly, the sample presented with 31 distinct majors/departments with the greatest percentage being biology at 13.33%. The entirey of the samples major/department distribution are displayed in Figure 6.

**Assessment Categories Data**

Collective data of the three assessment categories are presented in Tables 4-6.Table 4 presents the sample’s colletive data of theacademic discord assessment category. Notable data of this category include the range of 0 to 20 , mean of 14.25, standard deviation of 6.09. Table 5 dislay the sample’s data regarding the personal assessment of academic impact. Significant data of this category include the range of 0 to 14, mean of 6.58, and standard deviation of 3.85. Table 6 presents the sample’s consolidated data of the personal assessment of shift in academic perception category. Likewise, considerable data for this category include the range of 0-13, a mean of 7.76, and a standard deviation of 3.69.

**Relief Resources Data**

The choice to receive information regarding on-campus relief resources was provided to participants as an item of the survey. Of the 182 responses to this survey item, 41.76% (76 participants) responded yes and 58.24 (106 participants) responded no.

**Discussion**

Utilizing the mean values of sample collective data respective to the three assessment categories identified earlier in comparison with the categories’ respective scales it was determined that the students of UNCP presented with a high degree of academic discord, a moderate degree shift in the personal assessment of academic, and a moderate degree of shift in academic perception. A high level of Academic discord indicate that the sample perceives academic studies highly tiresome and anxiety inducing. A moderate level of Academic Impact suggests that a noted negative shift in the perception of the sample’s academic accomplishments has occurred. A moderate degree of Shift in Academic Perception implies that a noted negative shift in sample’s perception of themselves as students has occurred. It can be determined that the students of UNCP as a collective are experiencing moderate to high levels of student burnout as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the novel nature of this research topic and the research cordinator two limitations to the study have been identified including erranous recruitment, incomplete submission of surverys by participants. The intended recruitment of participant was to send weekly emails to the undergraduate students of UNCP by the resigtrar of the university. Instead, a singular mass email was distributed the enirity of the university’s student email list, comprising both undergraduate and graduate students. This error was not identified by the coordinator before receiving participant responses. While this error does change the demogaphics of the sample, it is important to note that instances of student burnout is a widespread issue that affects the entirety of the campus’ student body. Upon analysis of statical data it was discovered that 45 participants did not fully complete the survey, this can be noted in figures 5-6. While incomplete survey submissions do alter the distribution survey data, 80% of respondents completed the survey to its entire, which is statistically significant to the sample as a whole.

**Implications**

Uses of the data generated from this study include the creation of futher relief options for students experiencing academic burnout. While the majority of participants of the study did not elect to receive information regarding on-campus services, this study may bring about new methods of addressing the noted prevalence of the impact that COVID-19 has had on the academic mental health of UNCP student. Additionally, the significane of this preliminary research study may generate an increase in research of lasting psychological and secondary academic effects of COVID-19.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the face of education in the United States and research such as the Student Burnout: A Lasting Impact of COVID-19 is the first step in addressing this change. This research survery served as a quantification of the presence of student burmout as result of the COVID-19 pandemic among the University of North Carolina at Pembroke ccampus. This study found that the students of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke have remarkably negative perceptions regarding themselves and their academics since the start of the pandemic in March of 2020. Future research and implementation of restorative measures are projected elements of the effective restoration of the educational system at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

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Figures

Figure 1

*Distribution of Genders Within the Sample*

Figure 2

*Distribution of Ages Within the Sample*

Figure 3

*Distribution of Races Within the Sample*



Figure 4

*Distribution of Ethnicities Within the Sample*

Figure 5

*Distribution of Student Classifications Within the Sample*

Figure 6

*Distribution of Reported Majors/Departments Within the Sample*

 

Figure 7

*Distribution of Sample’s Academic Discord Scores*



Figure 8

*Distribution of Sample’s Personal Assessment of Academic Impact Scores*



Figure 9

*Distribution of Sample’s Personal Assessment of Academic Perception Scores*



Tables

Table 1

*Scoring for Academic Discord:*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Academic Discord Score  |  AD < 6.66  | AD 6.67-13.33 | AD 13.34 -20  |
| Level of Degree | Low Degree  | Moderate Degree | High Degree  |

Table 2

*Scoring for Academic Impact:*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Personal Assessment of Academic Impact Score  | AI < 4.66 | AI 4.67 – 9.33  | AI 9.34 -14 |
| Level of Degree | Low Degree  | Moderate Degree | High Degree  |

Table 3

*Scoring for Personal Assessment of Shift in Academic Perception:*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Personal Assessment of Shift in Academic Perception  | SAP: <5 | SAP 6-10  | SAP: 11-15  |
| Level of degree  | Low degree | Moderate Degree | High Degree |

Table 4

*Collective Data of Academic Discord Category*



Table 5

*Collective Data of Acacdemin Impact*

Table 6

*Collective Data of Personal Assessment of Shift in Academic Perception*

