

## Research Article

Cite this article: Almutairi, S. N. E. A., Aldabous, R. S., & Alazemi, A. D. (2026). Burnout as a Predictor of Psychological Alienation Components among Students of Basic Education in Kuwait. *Educational Process: International Journal*, 22, e2026053. <https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2026.22.53>

Received August 9, 2025

Accepted October 14, 2025

**Keywords:** Burnout, Psychological Alienation, University Students, Emotional Exhaustion, Meaninglessness, Kuwait.

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## Burnout as a Predictor of Psychological Alienation Components among Students of Basic Education in Kuwait

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**Abstract**

**Background/purpose.** The present study aimed to investigate the correlation between burnout and psychological alienation among Students of the College of Basic Education in Kuwait, identify whether there are statistically significant differences in burnout levels and its dimensions between students with high and low levels of psychological alienation, and examine the extent to which burnout can predict psychological alienation among university students.

**Materials/methods.** The study adopted a descriptive correlational design and was conducted on a sample of 320 male and female students from various university faculties. Two standardized instruments were used: the Burnout Scale and the Psychological Alienation Scale.

**Results.** The findings revealed high levels of burnout symptoms among the participants, particularly in the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment. Moreover, statistically significant positive correlations were found between burnout and the dimensions of psychological alienation, including meaninglessness, isolation, and powerlessness.

**Conclusion.** The results also indicated that burnout significantly predicts psychological alienation. Based on these findings, the study recommended implementing psychological support programs and stress management interventions within universities to alleviate the effects of burnout and reduce levels of alienation among students.

## 1. Introduction

University students in the modern era are confronted with escalating challenges stemming from the rapid pace of societal and technological transformations, accompanied by increasing complexity in both educational and life contexts. These dynamic shifts have imposed intertwined academic, social, and psychological pressures that have contributed to the emergence of numerous mental health issues. Foremost among these is burnout, a prevalent form of chronic stress characterized by the depletion of psychological resources, diminished motivation, lack of drive, and a decreased sense of self-efficacy.

Burnout is no longer confined to professional environments; it has become a salient issue within academic settings. Recent studies have highlighted its growing prevalence among university students, driven by intensified academic demands, personal challenges, and a perceived loss of control over educational trajectories. Salmela-Aro and Read (2021) emphasized that academic burnout in university students manifests as emotional exhaustion, detachment from studies, and feelings of inadequacy—symptoms that can lead to severe psychological and social repercussions.

Among the most significant psychological outcomes associated with burnout is psychological alienation, a multifaceted emotional state in which students experience a diminished sense of belonging and a disconnection from both the self and their social and cultural surroundings. This construct encompasses several dimensions, including normlessness, meaninglessness, powerlessness, social isolation, and self-alienation. The university phase, marked by identity formation and cognitive transformation, presents fertile ground for the emergence of such experiences.

Empirical literature has consistently demonstrated a significant relationship between burnout and psychological alienation. For instance, Akin et al. (2023) found that higher levels of burnout among university students are associated with intensified feelings of meaninglessness, powerlessness, and diminished belonging—factors that collectively heighten the risk of alienation. Similarly, Çelik and Deniz (2022) reported that recurrent experiences of exhaustion, stress, and unfulfilled self-actualization are linked to increased tendencies toward social withdrawal and internal isolation.

In the Arab context, Abdelrahman et al. (2022) revealed that students at Gulf universities—particularly in Kuwait—exhibit notable levels of psychological alienation, directly linked to academic, familial, and societal stressors. These findings underscore the need to investigate the underlying psychological determinants of this phenomenon, with burnout being a primary candidate.

Accordingly, the present study examines the predictive role of burnout in explaining the dimensions of psychological alienation among university students in Kuwait—a context marked by unique cultural and educational characteristics that may influence the nature of this relationship. This research aims to contribute to the field of educational psychology by elucidating the extent to which burnout predicts manifestations of alienation, thereby informing the development of targeted psychological support and academic counseling programs to enhance the well-being of this critical student population.

### Research Problem

In contemporary academic contexts, university students are increasingly confronted with complex psychological and social challenges that threaten their psychological stability and overall well-being. These challenges stem from escalating academic demands, competitive pressures, and the necessity to adapt to rapidly changing societal and technological transformations. Among the most pressing psychological difficulties is burnout, which manifests as emotional, physical, and

cognitive exhaustion, ultimately undermining students' motivation, persistence, and emotional engagement with both their studies and personal development (Salmela-Aro & Read, 2021).

Parallel to this, psychological alienation has emerged as a growing concern within higher education. It is characterized by feelings of meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, powerlessness, and self-alienation (Akin et al., 2023). The severity of alienation lies in its detrimental outcomes, including weakened social interactions, reduced academic belonging, and psychological withdrawal from the university environment—factors that may significantly impair students' academic performance and adaptive functioning (Çelik & Deniz, 2022).

Recent empirical evidence indicates a strong correlation between burnout and psychological alienation among university students. For example, Akin et al. (2023) demonstrated that high levels of burnout are associated with intensified experiences of meaninglessness and reduced belonging. Similarly, Abdelrahman et al. (2022), in a study conducted in Gulf universities, emphasized that cultural and familial stressors exacerbate students' alienation. Despite these findings, most studies have investigated this relationship in general terms without systematically addressing the predictive role of burnout in explaining the specific dimensions of alienation.

In the Kuwaiti higher education context, where distinctive cultural and educational dynamics prevail, this gap becomes particularly salient. Few studies have explored how burnout predicts alienation within this setting. Accordingly, the current study seeks to address the following central research question: To what extent can burnout predict the dimensions of psychological alienation among students of the College of Basic Education in Kuwait?

From this central question, several sub-questions emerge:

Is there a statistically significant correlation between burnout and psychological alienation among university students in Kuwait?

Are there statistically significant differences in the levels of burnout and its dimensions between university students with high and low levels of psychological alienation?

To what extent can burnout predict psychological alienation among students of the College of Basic Education in Kuwait?

## **Research Significance**

### **A. Theoretical Significance**

1. This study contributes to the body of literature in educational psychology by exploring the relationship between two critical psychological constructs—burnout and psychological alienation—within the Gulf and Kuwaiti context, which has been relatively underexplored.

2. It highlights the importance of understanding both the nature and dimensions of burnout, as well as the manifestations of psychological alienation, due to their profound impact on university students' psychological adjustment and academic/social success.

3. The study emphasizes the significance of its target population—university students—who represent a vital and dynamic segment of society and are central to future development. Supporting their mental well-being is essential for fostering resilience and personal effectiveness.

4. The research aims to identify the psychological underpinnings of psychological alienation and analyze the role of burnout as a potential contributing factor, thereby laying the groundwork for effective preventive and therapeutic interventions.

5. It provides a scientific foundation that can assist higher education institutions in enhancing the academic climate and psychological support systems to help students face challenges, build self-efficacy, and engage positively with themselves and their communities.

## B. Practical Significance

1. Practical tools for universities: The study's findings may offer university administrations and psychological counseling units valuable insights into the relationship between burnout and alienation, enabling them to devise strategic plans for prevention and intervention.

2. Designing counseling and therapeutic programs: The results could inform the development of psychological counseling programs targeting students who exhibit high levels of burnout or alienation, aiming to enhance their adaptability and psychological flexibility.

3. Policy implications for educational decision-makers: The anticipated findings may guide educational policies to prioritize the emotional and psychological well-being of university students, thereby improving the academic environment and the quality of university life.

4. Early detection and preventive intervention: By identifying predictive indicators of burnout-related alienation, the study could contribute to the development of early assessment tools to detect at-risk students and offer timely psychological support.

5. Opening new research avenues: This research may pave the way for future studies focusing on cognitive-behavioral interventions aimed at reducing burnout and alienation, and evaluating the effectiveness of psychological programs in supporting university youth.

Research Objectives: The current study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the correlation between burnout and psychological alienation among Students of the College of Basic Education in Kuwait.

2. To identify whether there are statistically significant differences in burnout levels and its dimensions between students with high and low levels of psychological alienation.

3. To examine the extent to which burnout can predict psychological alienation among university students.

## Definition of Terms

### Psychological Burnout

Lexical Definition: According to the *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (2023), psychological burnout is defined as *a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to stressors, whether psychological or occupational.*

Operational Definition: In this study, psychological burnout is defined as a negative pattern of responses to life events, representing an internal psychological condition experienced by an individual under persistent stress. It is measured by the degree to which students score on the Psychological Burnout Scale, which includes three key dimensions:

1. Emotional Detachment: A lack of responsiveness to surrounding stimuli, marked by emotional numbness, apathy, difficulty in identifying and expressing feelings, persistent anxiety, and dissatisfaction.

2. Reduced Personal Accomplishment: A tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, accompanied by feelings of inefficacy and low personal achievement.

3. Emotional Exhaustion: A cluster of symptoms involving emotional fatigue and depletion caused by accumulated stress from personal or academic sources, or both.

Burnout is operationally defined by scores on the psychological burnout instrument used in the current study.

### **Psychological Alienation**

Lexical Definition: The *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* (2023) defines alienation as *a feeling of estrangement or disconnection from oneself or society*.

Operational Definition: Psychological alienation in this study refers to a mental state in which the university student experiences various symptoms, including social isolation, powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness, rebellion, and self-alienation. It is quantified by the degree to which the student scores on the Psychological Alienation Scale used in this research.

### **University Students**

Lexical Definition: According to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, a university student is *a person enrolled in an institution of higher education*.

Operational Definition: In this study, university students are defined as male and female students officially enrolled in various colleges across the State of Kuwait during the academic year in which the study was conducted, aged 18 to 25.

### **Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature**

In the Kuwaiti context, cultural, social, and educational factors play a pivotal role in shaping students' experiences of burnout and psychological alienation. The strong role of the family as the primary source of socialization, coupled with the influence of religious and cultural values, creates both protective and risk factors. On the one hand, family cohesion and the emphasis on collective belonging can buffer against feelings of isolation and alienation. On the other hand, high expectations from families regarding academic success, often linked to social status and economic security, may intensify stress and contribute to burnout (Al-Sabah, 2022).

Moreover, the Kuwaiti educational system—characterized by centralized curricula, high reliance on traditional teaching methods, and limited focus on psychological counseling—may exacerbate the gap between students' academic demands and their adaptive capacities (Al-Kandari & Al-Qattan, 2021). The rigid assessment system and the pressure to pursue specific disciplines (e.g., science, technology, or education) further increase the likelihood of emotional exhaustion and academic disengagement.

Religious and cultural values also intersect with students' perceptions of alienation. While Islamic principles emphasize community, meaning, and purpose, students experiencing burnout may perceive a contradiction between these values and their academic struggles, leading to heightened feelings of meaninglessness or normlessness (Al-Mutairi, 2023). Additionally, economic changes in Kuwait—such as competition in the job market and the rising demand for technologically skilled graduates—create uncertainty that may intensify powerlessness and self-alienation among university students. Thus, any exploration of burnout and psychological alienation in Kuwait must take into account the socio-cultural matrix, including family dynamics, religious norms, social expectations, and economic pressures, as these contextual factors uniquely shape students' psychological adjustment in higher education.

### **Academic Burnout**

Academic burnout is considered one of the most prevalent psychological difficulties among university students, resulting from continuous exposure to academic, social, and personal stressors that exceed their coping capacities. Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined burnout as a psychological syndrome composed of three interrelated dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and

reduced personal accomplishment. While initially conceptualized in professional settings, burnout has increasingly been recognized as a critical issue within higher education.

Recent studies confirm that university students experience significant levels of burnout due to escalating academic pressures and insufficient institutional support. For example, Salmela-Aro and Read (2021) highlighted that burnout among students manifests primarily as emotional fatigue, detachment from academic tasks, and reduced academic efficacy. Similarly, Schaufeli et al. (2020) emphasized that emotional exhaustion is the most widespread dimension of burnout, followed by depersonalization and disengagement, indicating the need for structured intervention programs within universities.

Empirical evidence demonstrates that burnout not only undermines students' academic satisfaction but also negatively impacts their psychological well-being. In a study of Irish university students, Deasy et al. (2021) found that those balancing part-time work with their academic responsibilities exhibited higher levels of burnout, particularly among female students. In the Arab context, Sheikh (2022) reported that Saudi university students experiencing high burnout levels demonstrated lower academic achievement, confirming the negative correlation between burnout and academic performance. Furthermore, Lin and Huang (2023) showed that strong social and familial support mitigates burnout, improving resilience and adaptation among Taiwanese students.

In the Kuwaiti context, Saleh (2021) identified high levels of academic burnout among university students, attributed to the demanding nature of scientific disciplines and the limited availability of psychological support services. These findings collectively indicate that burnout is not a temporary stress response but a chronic condition that can significantly compromise students' academic functioning and long-term psychological stability.

### **Psychological Alienation**

Psychological alienation has emerged as a critical concern in educational psychology, particularly within higher education contexts. It is broadly defined as a state of estrangement from oneself, others, or broader social and academic environments, often manifesting through feelings of detachment, purposelessness, and reduced belonging. Seeman (1959) conceptualized alienation as a multidimensional construct encompassing powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement. These dimensions remain central to contemporary research, as they capture the psychological experiences of students struggling with integration and adaptation.

Recent research has highlighted the growing prevalence of alienation among university students due to increasing academic, social, and cultural pressures. For instance, Han (2019) found that students with higher levels of burnout reported significantly greater tendencies toward social withdrawal and internal isolation, indicating a strong association between the two constructs. Hussein et al. (2022) similarly reported heightened alienation among students exposed to intensified academic demands, with alienation linked to diminished academic identity and belonging.

International studies also support the multifaceted consequences of alienation. Sharma (2021) demonstrated that alienation negatively correlates with psychological adjustment, life satisfaction, and academic performance, while Khan and Malik (2020) emphasized the exacerbating role of insufficient social and family support. Furthermore, Zahra and Tariq (2023) identified loss of academic meaning and purpose as a key determinant of alienation among undergraduates.

In Arab contexts, Abdeljawad (2021) identified five dominant dimensions of alienation among Egyptian students—powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement—all significantly correlated with reduced psychological well-being and academic disengagement. Mohamed (2022) extended these findings to the Kuwaiti context, showing that levels

of alienation vary by social background and family support, underscoring the influence of cultural and structural factors.

Collectively, these studies suggest that alienation is not merely a transient emotional state but rather a persistent psychological condition that undermines students' academic integration and psychosocial well-being. Given its multifaceted nature, alienation requires systematic investigation, particularly in relation to other stress-related variables such as burnout, which may serve as both a predictor and an amplifier of alienation in higher education contexts.

#### The Relationship Between Burnout and Psychological Alienation

The literature provides substantial evidence supporting a robust association between psychological burnout and alienation among university students. Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), not only impairs students' academic performance but also fosters a sense of estrangement from the academic environment. This estrangement aligns closely with the dimensions of alienation identified by Seeman (1959)—powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement.

#### 1. Emotional Exhaustion and Meaninglessness / Social Isolation

Emotional exhaustion, the central dimension of burnout, has consistently been linked to heightened feelings of meaninglessness and social withdrawal. For instance, Tran et al. (2021) reported that students experiencing high emotional exhaustion were more likely to disengage academically and socially, reflecting the alienation components of meaninglessness and isolation. Similarly, Han (2019) found that exhaustion strongly predicted students' tendencies toward internal withdrawal, signaling the loss of academic purpose and interpersonal connectedness.

#### 2. Depersonalization and Powerlessness / Self-Alienation

The second dimension of burnout, depersonalization, often leads students to perceive their academic tasks and relationships as impersonal and detached. This experience directly corresponds with powerlessness and self-estrangement. Akin et al. (2023) found that depersonalization significantly increased feelings of helplessness and alienation from the self, as students struggled to maintain a sense of agency and academic identity.

#### 3. Reduced Personal Accomplishment and Normlessness

The third dimension, reduced personal accomplishment, reflects students' belief that they are not achieving academic success or fulfilling expectations. This fosters normlessness, where students perceive institutional or social norms as irrelevant or unattainable. Jammal (2023) emphasized that students with low perceived accomplishment reported greater alienation, particularly academic disengagement and loss of direction.

#### 4. Cultural and Contextual Moderators

Cultural and contextual factors also moderate the relationship between burnout and alienation. Mohamed (2022) showed that in Kuwait, familial and social support reduced alienation despite high levels of burnout, whereas Abdelrahman et al. (2022) reported that Gulf students facing academic and societal pressures exhibited stronger links between burnout and alienation dimensions. These findings highlight the importance of situating the burnout–alienation relationship within socio-cultural contexts, such as those in Kuwaiti higher education.

### Synthesis

Taken together, the evidence indicates that burnout functions as both a predictor and an amplifier of psychological alienation. Specifically:

Emotional exhaustion → Meaninglessness / Social isolation

Depersonalization → Powerlessness / Self-estrangement

Reduced accomplishment → Normlessness

This structured mapping of burnout dimensions to alienation dimensions provides a more systematic theoretical understanding of their relationship and lays the foundation for constructing a conceptual model.

Academic burnout refers to a state of emotional exhaustion, loss of motivation, and reduced sense of accomplishment resulting from prolonged academic stress. The literature identifies three core dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, cynicism (or depersonalization), and reduced academic efficacy. On the other hand, psychological alienation is a condition of disconnection from oneself or the surrounding environment, manifested in several components: normlessness, meaninglessness, powerlessness, and, in some cases, social isolation.

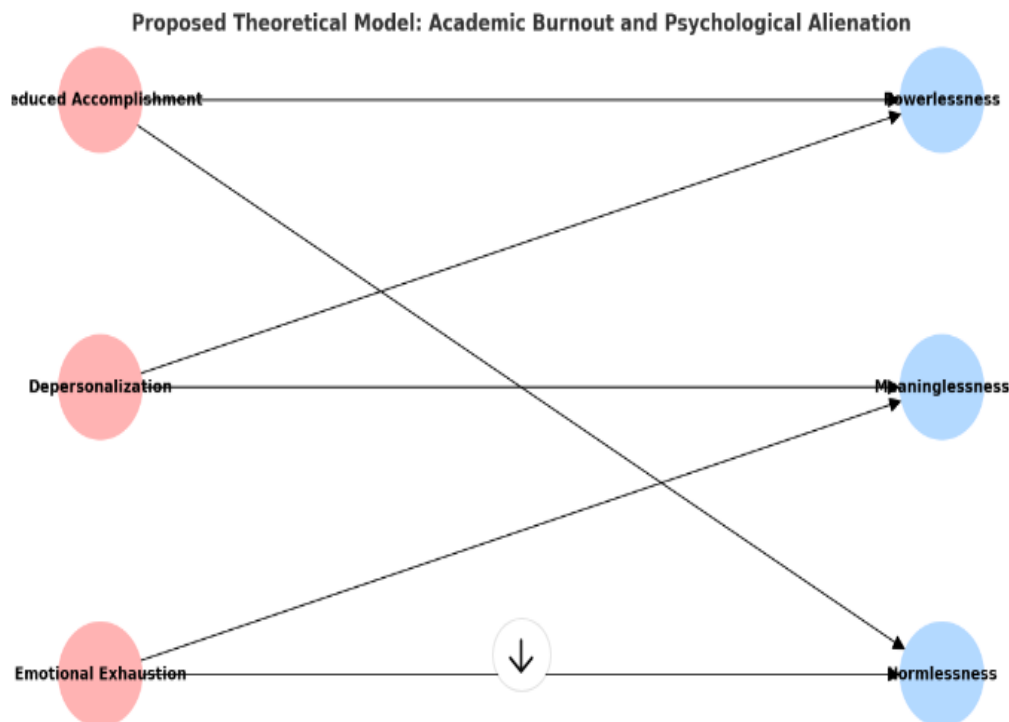
Drawing on prior studies, it can be assumed that the relationship between burnout and alienation is strongly interlinked:

Emotional exhaustion contributes to a sense of meaninglessness, as continuous strain reduces students' perception of the value of their academic efforts.

Cynicism is associated with normlessness, where students become indifferent to academic and social standards.

Reduced academic efficacy intensifies feelings of powerlessness, as students perceive themselves as unable to influence or control their academic outcomes. Thus, the proposed theoretical model conceptualizes the three dimensions of academic burnout as independent variables that systematically and interactively predict the components of psychological alienation as dependent variables.

Proposed Theoretical Model (Diagram Description)



**Figure 1.** Proposed Theoretical Model of the Influence of Academic Burnout Dimensions on Components of Psychological Alienation

Here's the Proposed Theoretical Model (in English) showing how the three dimensions of Academic Burnout (Emotional Exhaustion – Depersonalization – Reduced Accomplishment) directly influence the components of Psychological Alienation (Normlessness – Meaninglessness – Powerlessness).

## Research Hypotheses

### General Hypotheses

H1. There are significant levels of academic burnout among university students in Kuwait.

H2. There are statistically significant differences in the levels of psychological alienation components (normlessness, meaninglessness, powerlessness, social isolation, and self-alienation) among university students.

H3. Academic burnout is significantly associated with the components of psychological alienation among university students.

#### Dimension-Level Hypotheses

H3a. Emotional exhaustion is significantly associated with normlessness, meaninglessness, powerlessness, social isolation, and self-alienation among students.

H3b. Cynicism is significantly associated with normlessness, meaninglessness, powerlessness, social isolation, and self-alienation among students.

H3c. Reduced academic efficacy is significantly associated with normlessness, meaninglessness, powerlessness, social isolation, and self-alienation among students.

#### Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive, correlational-comparative research design to examine the relationships between psychological burnout and psychological alienation and to explore differences across their dimensions among university students in Kuwait.

#### Study Sample

**Psychometric Sample.** A standardization sample consisting of 50 university students was used to establish the psychometric properties of the study instruments. The main sample of the study consisted of 228 students (111 males and 117 females) from the College of Basic Education in Kuwait. This sample was drawn from a larger population of 945 students enrolled in the same college. The choice of one college was methodologically justified, as it allowed the researcher to control for contextual variables (such as the structure of the curriculum, training requirements, and educational environment) and to ensure accessibility and feasibility of data collection. Moreover, the College of Basic Education is a key institution in Kuwait's higher education system, making its students an appropriate target group for examining academic burnout and psychological alienation.

To select the sample, a stratified random sampling technique with proportional allocation was employed. Students were stratified by year of study (and gender, when applicable), and the number of participants in each stratum was proportionally allocated to reflect their representation in the population. Random selection within each stratum was then conducted to reach the target of 228 participants, representing approximately 24.1% of the total student population (228/945). This sample size is considered statistically adequate, yielding a margin of error of approximately  $\pm 5.7\%$  at the 95% confidence level, ensuring sufficient statistical power for the analyses employed in this study.

While limiting the sample to one college enhances internal validity by controlling for institutional variation, it also restricts the generalizability of the findings to other colleges and universities in Kuwait. Therefore, the results should be interpreted within the context of the College of Basic

Education, and future studies are recommended to include multiple institutions to improve external validity.

## Study Instruments

### 1. Burnout Scale (Prepared by Researcher)

Based on a comprehensive review of the relevant literature and prior instruments measuring burnout—including the Maslach Burnout Inventory, Matthews' Scale, Pines' Scale, and Aronson's Scale—the researcher developed a multidimensional burnout scale. The final version of the scale included 36 items distributed across the following three dimensions (Emotional Exhaustion-Depersonalization (Emotional Detachment)\*Reduced Personal Accomplishment). Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from: (5 = Strongly applies-4 = Applies to a large extent-3 = Applies to some extent-2 = Applies to a small extent-1 = Does not apply at all)

## Psychometric Properties

### A. Validity

Criterion-Related Validity: To verify criterion validity, the current scale was correlated with the Maslach Burnout Inventory, resulting in a statistically significant and high correlation coefficient of 0.79, indicating strong external validity.

### Construct Validity (Item and Factor Analysis)

To establish the construct validity of the burnout scale, item analysis was first conducted to examine each item's discriminatory power and its correlation with the total score. The analysis revealed that all items demonstrated satisfactory item-total correlations, indicating that each item contributed meaningfully to the overall construct.

Subsequently, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed on the psychometric sample ( $n = 50$ ) using principal component extraction with varimax rotation. The results supported a three-factor structure consistent with the theoretical dimensions of academic burnout: emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced academic efficacy. To further verify this structure, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted on the main sample ( $n = 228$ ). The model fit indices were within acceptable ranges (e.g., CFI  $> .90$ , RMSEA  $< .08$ ), thereby confirming the adequacy of the three-factor model. These findings collectively provide robust evidence for the construct validity of the burnout scale.

### B. Reliability

Test-Retest Reliability: To examine temporal stability, the scale was re-administered to the same psychometric standardization sample ( $n = 50$ ) after a 2-week interval under similar classroom conditions and without any additional training or intervention. The results indicated high test-retest reliability across all subscales, confirming the instrument's stability over time. Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha): Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each subscale and the total scale. The results are shown in Table 1:

**Table 1.** Reliability Coefficients (Test-Retest and Cronbach's Alpha)

Dimension	Test-Retest Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Emotional Detachment	0.87	0.78
Reduced Accomplishment	0.84	0.79
Emotional Exhaustion	0.87	0.74
Total Score	0.89	0.88

## Burnout Scale (Continued)

The obtained correlation value was statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating high validity.

### C. Internal Consistency

The researcher also computed the internal consistency reliability of the scale, calculating the inter-correlations among subscales and with the total score. Results are presented in Table 2:

**Table 2.** Internal Consistency of the Burnout Scale

Dimensions	Emotional Detachment	Reduced Personal Accomplishment	Emotional Exhaustion	Total Score
Emotional Detachment	0.74	-	-	-
Reduced Accomplishment	0.75	0.79	-	-
Emotional Exhaustion	0.68	0.76	0.69	-
Total Score	0.89	0.88	0.93	0.90

*All correlation coefficients were statistically significant.*

Thus, the researcher ensured the scale's validity, reliability, and internal consistency using multiple rigorous methods, confirming its appropriateness for the study sample.

## 2. Psychological Alienation Scale (Prepared by Zeinab Shaqir)

This scale, developed by Zeinab Mahmoud Shaqir, consists of 32 items rated on a three-point Likert scale: 1 = Disagree, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Agree. The researcher validated and standardized the scale on the study sample.

### Psychometric Properties

#### A. Validity

A sample of 50 university students was used to assess validity:

Criterion-Related Validity: The scale was correlated with the Psychological Alienation Scale by *Amal Bazah*, yielding a high and significant correlation of 0.77, indicating strong criterion-related validity.

#### B. Reliability

Test-Retest Method: The scale was administered twice to the same standardization sample with a two-week interval, and reliability coefficients were calculated.

Cronbach's Alpha: Internal consistency was also calculated using Cronbach's alpha. Results are presented in Table 3:

**Table 3.** Reliability of the Psychological Alienation Scale (Cronbach's Alpha)

Dimension	Test-Retest	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Isolation	0.82	0.75
Powerlessness	0.75	0.77
Normlessness	0.83	0.72
Meaninglessness	0.88	0.71
Rebellion	0.82	0.79
Total Score	0.87	0.69

*All coefficients were statistically significant at the 0.01 level.*

### C. Internal Consistency

Interco relations among the dimensions and the total score were calculated to assess internal consistency. Results are presented in Table 4:

**Table 4.** Internal Consistency of the Psychological Alienation Scale

	Social Isolation	Powerlessness	Normlessness	Meaninglessness	Rebellion	Total Score
Social Isolation	0.71	-	-	-	-	-
Powerlessness	0.62	0.72	-	-	-	-
Normlessness	0.82	0.84	0.75	-	-	-
Meaninglessness	0.77	0.73	0.75	0.79	-	-
Rebellion	0.83	0.73	0.78	0.72	0.67	-
Total Score	0.88	0.69	0.79	0.77	0.83	0.79

*All correlation coefficients were statistically significant.*

These results confirm the construct validity, reliability, and internal consistency of the Psychological Alienation Scale, making it a reliable tool for use with the current sample.

### Results and Discussion

Prior to conducting the statistical analyses, the basic assumptions were tested:

**Normality:** Data distribution was examined using skewness and kurtosis values as well as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results indicated that the data fell within the acceptable thresholds for normal distribution.

**Homogeneity of Variance:** Levene's test was performed to assess homogeneity across groups. The findings showed no significant violations of variance equality, thereby confirming the assumption.

Accordingly, the fundamental statistical assumptions were satisfied, ensuring the appropriateness and reliability of the subsequent analyses.

#### 1. Testing the first Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1. There are significant levels of academic burnout among university students in Kuwait.

To test this hypothesis, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used. The results are shown in Table 5:

**Table 5.** Correlation Between Burnout and Psychological Alienation

Dimension	Emotional Detachment	Reduced Accomplishment	Emotional Exhaustion	Total Burnout Score
Social Isolation	0.61	0.63	0.77	0.81
Powerlessness	0.55	0.84	0.57	0.65
Normlessness	0.66	0.69	0.68	0.31
Meaninglessness	0.87	0.83	0.81	0.72
Rebellion	0.76	0.79	0.92	0.93
Total Alienation Score	0.61	0.63	0.77	0.81

The correlation coefficients presented in the table indicate varying degrees of positive relationships between the components of psychological burnout and psychological alienation among university students. The key findings can be summarized as follows:

**Overall Relationships:** The Total Burnout Score shows a strong positive correlation with the Total Alienation Score ( $r = 0.81$ ), suggesting that higher levels of burnout are significantly associated with higher levels of psychological alienation.

Emotional Exhaustion shows the strongest correlations with most components of alienation, particularly Rebellion ( $r = 0.92$ ), Meaninglessness ( $r = 0.81$ ), and Social Isolation ( $r = 0.77$ ).

This suggests that emotional exhaustion may be the most predictive dimension of burnout with respect to alienation.

**Reduced Accomplishment:** Shows strong correlations with: Powerlessness ( $r = 0.84$ ), Meaninglessness ( $r = 0.83$ ), Rebellion ( $r = 0.79$ ).

This suggests that a diminished sense of achievement is strongly associated with feelings of loss of control and lack of purpose.

**Emotional Detachment:** Has its highest correlation with Meaninglessness ( $r = 0.87$ ), followed by Rebellion ( $r = 0.76$ ) and Normlessness ( $r = 0.66$ ).

This may reflect that students who emotionally withdraw from academic and social roles often experience a deep sense of disconnection and existential emptiness.

**Low Correlation Note:** The weakest observed correlation is between Normlessness and the Total Burnout Score ( $r = 0.31$ ), indicating a relatively weak association between these variables.

**Interpretation Summary:** These results suggest that psychological burnout is strongly associated with various dimensions of psychological alienation, particularly emotional exhaustion and reduced accomplishment. The findings highlight the need for psychological and academic support for students showing signs of burnout to prevent deeper forms of alienation.

## 2. Testing the Second Hypothesis

Hypothesis 2 There are statistically significant differences in the levels of psychological alienation components (normlessness, meaninglessness, powerlessness, social isolation, and self-alienation) among university students.

To test this hypothesis, an independent-samples t-test was used to examine differences in burnout levels (and its dimensions) between students with high and low levels of psychological alienation. The results are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Means, Standard Deviations, and t-values Based on Alienation Level

Dimension	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig. Level
Emotional Detachment	High	58	39.03	5.51	18.37	0.01
	Low	58	23.55	3.18		
Reduced Accomplishment	High	58	43.89	7.57	19.97	0.01
	Low	58	22.93	2.35		
Emotional Exhaustion	High	58	37.72	7.23	13.82	0.01
	Low	58	23.75	2.42		
Total Score	High	58	120.65	13.25	24.58	0.01
	Low	58	70.24	7.99		

*Critical t-value at  $\alpha \leq 0.05 = 1.96$ , at  $\alpha \leq 0.01 = 2.58$*

### Interpretation

The analysis revealed that all computed t-values exceeded the critical threshold, indicating statistically significant differences in burnout levels between students with high versus low levels of psychological alienation. These differences consistently favored the high-alienation group, suggesting that alienation is closely associated with elevated experiences of burnout.

This finding is in line with previous literature. For instance, Sheikh's study reported that individuals suffering from burnout often experience social withdrawal, depressive symptoms, and negative affective states. Similarly, Selcuk (2018) conceptualized burnout as a state of emotional exhaustion, self-directed frustration, and loss of intrinsic motivation. Carter (2004) further linked burnout to behavioral, cognitive, and physical manifestations, including emotional fatigue and reduced personal achievement. Additionally, Folkman and Moskowitz (2000) documented chronic fatigue, addictive behaviors, persistent feelings of guilt, and long-term frustration as common correlates of burnout.

Taken together, the present results reinforce the proposition that higher psychological alienation significantly exacerbates burnout. Alienated students often report feelings of existential disconnection, powerlessness, and diminished capacity to complete academic and social tasks. Such a psychological state is accompanied by anxiety, instability, pessimism, apathy, and guilt—factors that undermine psychological well-being and academic functioning.

### Verification of the Third Hypothesis

Hypothesis 3: Academic burnout is significantly associated with the components of psychological alienation among university students.

Dimension-Level Hypotheses

H3a. Emotional exhaustion is significantly associated with normlessness, meaninglessness, powerlessness, social isolation, and self-alienation among students.

H3b. Cynicism is significantly associated with normlessness, meaninglessness, powerlessness, social isolation, and self-alienation among students.

H3c. Reduced academic efficacy is significantly associated with normlessness, meaninglessness, powerlessness, social isolation, and self-alienation among students.

To test this hypothesis, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted. The results are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Psychological Alienation from Burnout Dimensions

Predictor Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	% Contribution	B	Beta	t-value	Sig. Level
Emotional Detachment	0.629	0.396	39.3%	2.732	0.629	12.163	0.01
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	0.667	0.135	13.1%	2.725	0.367	5.935	0.01
Emotional Exhaustion	0.624	0.389	38.7%	5.195	0.624	12.004	0.01
Total Burnout Score	0.745	0.369	45.7%	5.697	0.486	16.311	0.01

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis indicated that the three central dimensions of academic burnout—emotional detachment, emotional exhaustion, and reduced personal accomplishment—were significant predictors of psychological alienation among university students. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), which ranged from 0.369 to 0.457, indicates that a considerable proportion of the variance in alienation can be explained by burnout dimensions, underscoring the robustness of the observed relationship.

These findings are consistent with the theoretical model of Maslach et al. (2001), which posits that emotional exhaustion and detachment weaken an individual's emotional and social engagement, thus facilitating disconnection from both the self and external environment—processes central to the experience of alienation. Likewise, diminished personal accomplishment reinforces feelings of helplessness and marginalization, reflecting Seeman's (1975) classical dimensions of alienation (powerlessness, meaninglessness, and social isolation).

Support for these results can also be found in prior empirical work. For instance, Abdullah (2022) reported that higher levels of burnout correlated strongly with social withdrawal and existential emptiness. Similarly, Saeed and Abdel-Halim (2021) revealed that students with heightened emotional detachment and diminished academic efficacy were more vulnerable to alienation, reduced social motivation, and academic disengagement. Together, these studies reinforce the current findings and highlight the stability of the burnout–alienation link across different student populations.

What distinguishes the present study, however, is its focus on Kuwaiti university students, a cultural and educational context that has not been extensively examined in the burnout–alienation literature. The findings suggest that within Kuwait's higher education system—shaped by strong familial ties, collectivist cultural values, and high academic expectations—burnout may carry particularly pronounced consequences for students' psychological well-being. The identification of burnout as a significant predictor of alienation thus not only aligns with international findings but also

provides culturally specific evidence that extends the generalizability of existing theoretical models to Middle Eastern educational contexts.

In summary, the study underscores the pivotal role of academic burnout in shaping students' psychological experiences, particularly their sense of disconnection, meaninglessness, and social isolation. This contribution is unique in situating these dynamics within the Kuwaiti educational and cultural framework, thereby adding both empirical depth and contextual relevance to the broader literature on student mental health.

## Discussion and Interpretation

The results demonstrated that all computed *t*-values exceeded the critical threshold, confirming significant differences in burnout levels between students with high versus low psychological alienation. These differences consistently favored the high-alienation group, underscoring that alienation is strongly associated with heightened experiences of burnout.

This outcome is consistent with prior research. Sheikh's study reported that individuals experiencing burnout tend to withdraw socially, feel depressed, and display negative emotions and behaviors. Selcuk (2018) described burnout as a state of emotional exhaustion, self-directed frustration, and diminished motivation. Carter (2004) further identified behavioral, cognitive, and physical correlates, such as emotional fatigue and decreased personal achievement. Similarly, Folkman and Moskowitz (2000) highlighted the prevalence of chronic fatigue, addictive tendencies, guilt, and prolonged frustration as burnout-related outcomes.

Collectively, these findings reinforce the proposition that psychological alienation contributes to the intensification of burnout among university students. Alienated students often feel disconnected from their human existence, powerless in achieving their goals, and incapable of fulfilling academic tasks. This alienated psychological state fosters anxiety, instability, pessimism, apathy, and guilt—factors that adversely affect mental health and reduce students' capacity for academic and social adjustment.

In conclusion, the study highlights the urgent need to address both burnout and alienation together, as their interaction creates a vicious cycle that undermines student well-being and academic success.

When interpreting these findings within the Kuwaiti cultural and educational context, several factors warrant attention. The strong influence of family structures and religious values in Kuwait creates both protective and risk conditions for students. On the one hand, close family ties and religious norms may serve as buffers against alienation by offering social support and meaning. On the other hand, high parental expectations and strict social standards can intensify stress, contributing to feelings of helplessness and detachment when students fail to meet academic or societal demands.

Moreover, the Kuwaiti higher education system—particularly in the College of Basic Education—emphasizes competitive achievement and conformity to institutional norms. Such pressures can exacerbate burnout, especially for students who perceive limited autonomy in shaping their academic paths. The economic context also plays a role, as students may experience pressure to secure stable employment in a rapidly changing labor market, further heightening their sense of uncertainty and alienation.

Taken together, these cultural, social, and economic dynamics suggest that the relationship between burnout and alienation may manifest with greater intensity in Kuwait than in other contexts, reinforcing the need for context-sensitive interventions that integrate psychological support with cultural awareness.

## Implications

These results underscore the importance of early psychological interventions aimed at reducing levels of burnout as a preventive measure against psychological alienation among university students. Enhancing students' psychological integration and self-appreciation is critical to their academic and emotional well-being.

## Educational Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, the researcher presents the following recommendations, arranged by priority and potential effectiveness:

1. Develop psychological counseling programs specifically targeting the reduction of burnout among university students, focusing on its three critical dimensions: *emotional exhaustion*, *emotional detachment*, and *reduced personal accomplishment*, as they have the most direct impact on psychological alienation.
2. Strengthen psychological counseling services within universities and enhance the role of mental health professionals by offering systematic monitoring, individual sessions, and group interventions for students at high risk of burnout and disengagement.
3. Integrate psychological adjustment and positive mental health concepts into university curricula, and train students in coping strategies for academic and social stress, serving as a proactive and preventive measure.
4. Conduct training workshops for faculty members and administrative staff to raise awareness of the symptoms of burnout and alienation among students, emphasizing early detection and timely psychological response strategies.
5. Promote students' sense of belonging and academic identity by encouraging participation in extracurricular activities and initiatives that foster purpose and reduce isolation and alienation.

## Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the current study's results and limitations, the researcher proposes the following future studies:

1. A comparative study of burnout and psychological alienation between students in public and private universities in Kuwait.
2. An investigation of the relationship between burnout and social support as a buffering mechanism against psychological alienation among university students.
3. The development of a cognitive-behavioral intervention program aimed at reducing burnout in university students and measuring its impact on their sense of belonging and psychological adjustment.
4. An exploration of the relationship between burnout and academic identity as a psychological determinant of alienation in university youth.
5. A study examining the mediating roles of psychological hardiness, emotional resilience, and self-esteem in the relationship between burnout and psychological alienation.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of a behavioral counseling program grounded in cognitive-behavioral therapy principles in reducing psychological problems among preschool children with visual impairment and misophonia, including significant decreases in anxiety, depression, aggression, and psychosomatic symptoms. The sustained improvements observed during

follow-up highlight the impact of the program's sensory-adapted structure and targeted cognitive-behavioral strategies. These results underscore the importance of developing and implementing evidence-based, specialized interventions tailored to the unique sensory and psychological needs of this population, thereby enhancing their psychological well-being, social adjustment, and overall quality of life within educational and rehabilitation settings.

## Declarations

**Ethics approval and consent to participate.** The study was approved by the Ethics and Scientific Research Committee in the State of Kuwait, approval number 22/141/2025. Permission to conduct the study was also obtained from the Department of Community Education in the State of Kuwait, approval number 4512/2025. All procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants (or their legal guardians).

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**Consent for publication.** Not applicable, as the manuscript does not contain any individual person's data in any form.

**Availability of data and materials.** The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

**Competing interests.** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

**Funding.** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. The funding body had no role in the design of the study, collection, analysis, interpretation of data, or writing of the manuscript.

**Authors' contributions.** TA conceived the study and was the primary investigator. ADA and RSA contributed to the study design, data collection, and interpretation of findings. All authors contributed to drafting and revising the manuscript and approved the final version.

**Acknowledgements.** The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to *BMC Psychology* for their valuable editorial support, to the study participants and their families for their cooperation, and to the State of Kuwait for facilitating the research and providing an enabling environment for data collection.

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