



## Social Support and Psychological Well-Being in Relation to Burnout among Postgraduate University Students

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| ARTICLE INFO                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | ABSTRACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| <p><b>Submission:</b><br/>June 28, 2026</p> <p><b>Revised:</b><br/>July 10, 2026</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b><br/>July 25, 2026</p> <p><b>Available Online:</b><br/>August 08, 2026</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b><br/>Social support;<br/>psychological well-being;<br/>burnout; postgraduate<br/>students; university<br/>students; Pakistan</p> <p><b>Corresponding author:</b><br/>Arooba Shakeel<br/><b>Email:</b><br/><a href="mailto:aroobashakeel6179@gmail.com">aroobashakeel6179@gmail.com</a></p> | <p>This study examined the relationships among perceived social support, psychological well-being, and burnout among postgraduate university students. A quantitative cross-sectional design was used with 300 postgraduate students from educational institutions in Faisalabad, Pakistan, recruited through convenience sampling. Perceived social support was assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, psychological well-being using Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale, and burnout using the burnout measure reported in the thesis. Data were analyzed in SPSS version 27 using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlations, simple linear regression, and an independent-samples t test. Perceived social support was positively associated with psychological well-being (<math>r = .93, p &lt; .01</math>) and negatively associated with burnout (<math>r = -.12, p &lt; .05</math>). Psychological well-being was also negatively associated with burnout (<math>r = -.14, p &lt; .05</math>). Social support negatively predicted burnout (<math>\beta = -.129, p = .02, R^2 = .01</math>), while psychological well-being negatively predicted burnout (<math>\beta = -.145, p = .01, R^2 = .02</math>). Gender differences were not statistically significant for social support, psychological well-being, or burnout. The findings suggest that supportive interpersonal environments and positive psychological functioning may be relevant protective factors against burnout among postgraduate students. Because the thesis contains an internally inconsistent mediation section, that analysis is not used as a confirmatory finding in this manuscript and should be re-run from the original dataset before journal submission.</p> |

### Background of the Study

Postgraduate education can involve sustained academic demands, research responsibilities, financial concerns, performance expectations, and uncertainty about future careers. These demands may contribute to psychological strain and burnout, particularly when students have limited coping resources or inadequate support. The present study focuses on three closely related constructs: perceived social support, psychological well-being, and burnout.

Social support refers to emotional, informational, and practical resources available through relationships with family, friends, peers, teachers, and other members of a social network. The thesis conceptualizes support as including perceived support, received support, and social-network resources. Supportive relationships can provide reassurance, belonging, guidance, and practical assistance, which may help students cope with academic stress and maintain psychological health. Previous literature cited in the thesis has linked stronger perceived social support with better mental health and lower stress and burnout among university students.

Psychological well-being encompasses positive functioning and includes dimensions such as self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Higher well-being may help students manage demanding academic circumstances, maintain motivation, and recover from setbacks. In contrast, persistent stress and emotional exhaustion may undermine well-being and contribute to burnout.

Burnout in academic settings is commonly characterized by emotional exhaustion, disengagement or cynicism, and reduced academic efficacy. Postgraduate students may be particularly vulnerable because they must manage independent study, research deadlines, academic evaluation, and future career concerns. Social support and psychological well-being may therefore function as protective resources.

The present study examined whether social support was related to burnout and psychological well-being, whether psychological well-being was related to burnout, and whether social support and psychological well-being predicted burnout. The study also examined whether levels of the three variables differed by gender.

### **Objectives**

- To examine the relationship between perceived social support and burnout among postgraduate students.
- To examine the relationship between psychological well-being and burnout among postgraduate students.
- To examine the relationship between perceived social support and psychological well-being among postgraduate students.
- To determine whether perceived social support predicts burnout.
- To determine whether psychological well-being predicts burnout.
- To examine gender differences in perceived social support, psychological well-being, and burnout.

### **Hypotheses**

- Perceived social support will be negatively related to burnout.
- Psychological well-being will be negatively related to burnout.
- Perceived social support will be positively related to psychological well-being.
- Perceived social support and psychological well-being will predict burnout.
- There will be gender differences in perceived social support, psychological well-being, and burnout.

## Methodology

### Sampling Technique

#### Participants and Sample

**Design and participants.** A quantitative, cross-sectional design was used. The sample consisted of 300 postgraduate students from Faisalabad-based educational institutions. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling. The thesis reports that participants were young adults and that students outside the required age category or those with insufficient command of the questionnaire language were excluded. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained.

**Measures.** Perceived social support was assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), which assesses support from family, friends, and significant others. Psychological well-being was assessed using Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale; the thesis reports use of a 42-item version covering six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Burnout was assessed using the burnout measure reported in the thesis. The exact scale name and citation for the burnout instrument should be confirmed against the original questionnaire/manual before submission.

**Procedure.** After institutional approval, eligible postgraduate students were invited to participate. The study materials included an informed consent form, demographic form, and standardized questionnaires. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary, unpaid, confidential, and that they could withdraw without consequences. The thesis reports that data were analyzed using SPSS version 27.

**Data analysis.** Frequencies and percentages were calculated for demographic characteristics. Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha, skewness, and kurtosis were used to summarize the study variables and assess internal consistency and distributional characteristics. Pearson product-moment correlations examined associations among social support, psychological well-being, and burnout. Simple linear regressions examined whether social support and psychological well-being predicted burnout. An independent-samples t test examined gender differences. The thesis states that analyses were conducted at a significance level of .01, although some reported results use  $p < .05$ ; the journal version should adopt one prespecified significance level consistently.

## Results

### Participant characteristics

| Variable       | Category    | n (%)       |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Age            | 23–26       | 240 (80.0%) |
| Age            | 33–37       | 60 (20.0%)  |
| Gender         | Female      | 102 (34.0%) |
| Gender         | Male        | 198 (66.0%) |
| Monthly income | 20k–50k     | 58 (19.3%)  |
| Monthly income | 50k–1 lac   | 170 (56.7%) |
| Monthly income | 1 lac above | 72 (24.0%)  |
| Marital status | Married     | 87 (29.0%)  |
| Marital status | Unmarried   | 213 (71.0%) |
| Residence      | Urban       | 119 (39.7%) |
| Residence      | Rural       | 181 (60.3%) |

### Descriptive statistics and reliability

| Measure                  | M     | SD   | $\alpha$ | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|--------------------------|-------|------|----------|----------|----------|
| Perceived Social Support | 45.98 | 6.78 | .69      | -.147    | .437     |
| Psychological Well-Being | 51.81 | 7.08 | .70      | -.195    | .516     |
| Burnout                  | 15.82 | 3.89 | .75      | .340     | -.123    |

The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .69 to .75. The thesis describes these values as acceptable or marginally acceptable and reports skewness and kurtosis within  $\pm 1$ .

### Correlations

| Variable                 | Social Support | Psychological Well-Being | Burnout |
|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|---------|
| Social Support           | —              | .93**                    | -.12*   |
| Psychological Well-Being | .93**          | —                        | -.14*   |
| Burnout                  | -.12*          | -.14*                    | —       |

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Regression analyses

| Predictor                | Outcome | B     | $\beta$ | t     | p   | R <sup>2</sup> |
|--------------------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|-----|----------------|
| Social Support           | Burnout | -.074 | -.129   | -2.24 | .02 | .01            |
| Psychological Well-Being | Burnout | -.080 | -.145   | -2.52 | .01 | .02            |

### Gender differences

| Variable                 | Female M | Female SD | Male M | Male SD | t     | p   | d   |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------|--------|---------|-------|-----|-----|
| Social Support           | 45.29    | 6.58      | 46.33  | 6.87    | -1.25 | .20 | .06 |
| Psychological Well-Being | 51.40    | 7.33      | 52.03  | 6.96    | -.727 | .46 | .21 |
| Burnout                  | 15.53    | 3.76      | 15.96  | 3.95    | -.896 | .37 | .31 |

**Table 1: Participant Characteristics (N = 300)**

| Variable       | Category    | n   | %    |
|----------------|-------------|-----|------|
| Age            | 23–26       | 240 | 80.0 |
|                | 33–37       | 60  | 20.0 |
| Gender         | Female      | 102 | 34.0 |
|                | Male        | 198 | 66.0 |
| Monthly income | 20k–50k     | 58  | 19.3 |
|                | 50k–1 lac   | 170 | 56.7 |
|                | 1 lac above | 72  | 24.0 |
| Marital status | Married     | 87  | 29.0 |
|                | Unmarried   | 213 | 71.0 |
| Residence      | Urban       | 119 | 39.7 |
|                | Rural       | 181 | 60.3 |

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency of Study Variables**

| Variable                 | M     | SD   | $\alpha$ | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|--------------------------|-------|------|----------|----------|----------|
| Perceived social support | 45.98 | 6.78 | .69      | -.147    | .437     |
| Psychological well-being | 51.81 | 7.08 | .70      | -.195    | .516     |
| Burnout                  | 15.82 | 3.89 | .75      | .340     | -.123    |

Note.  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha.

**Table 3: Pearson Correlations Among Study Variables**

| Variable                    | 1     | 2     | 3     |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Perceived social support | —     | .93** | -.12* |
| 2. Psychological well-being | .93** | —     | -.14* |
| 3. Burnout                  | -.12* | -.14* | —     |

Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 4: Simple Linear Regression Predicting Burnout From Perceived Social Support**

| Predictor                | B     | $\beta$ | t     | p   | R <sup>2</sup> |
|--------------------------|-------|---------|-------|-----|----------------|
| Perceived social support | -.074 | -.129   | -2.24 | .02 | .01            |

Note. Outcome variable = burnout.

**Table 5: Simple Linear Regression Predicting Burnout From Psychological Well-Being**

| Predictor                | B     | $\beta$ | t     | p   | R <sup>2</sup> |
|--------------------------|-------|---------|-------|-----|----------------|
| Psychological well-being | -.080 | -.145   | -2.52 | .01 | .02            |

Note. Outcome variable = burnout.

**Table 6: Gender Differences in Perceived Social Support, Psychological Well-Being, and Burnout**

| Variable                 | Female M | Female SD | Male M | Male SD | t     | p   | d   |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------|--------|---------|-------|-----|-----|
| Perceived social support | 45.29    | 6.58      | 46.33  | 6.87    | -1.25 | .20 | .06 |
| Psychological well-being | 51.40    | 7.33      | 52.03  | 6.96    | -.727 | .46 | .21 |
| Burnout                  | 15.53    | 3.76      | 15.96  | 3.95    | -.896 | .37 | .31 |

## Discussion

The findings generally support the proposed relationships among social support, psychological well-being, and burnout. The strong positive association between social support and psychological well-being suggests that postgraduate students who perceive greater support from family, friends, and significant others may also report more positive psychological functioning. This pattern is consistent with the literature reviewed in the thesis, which emphasizes the protective role of supportive interpersonal relationships in student mental health.

The negative associations of social support and psychological well-being with burnout indicate that students with greater support and better psychological functioning tend to report lower burnout. The regression findings further suggest that both variables have independent negative associations with burnout, although their individual explanatory power was small. This is important because burnout is likely influenced by multiple academic, personal, financial, and institutional factors that were not included in the present models.

The absence of significant gender differences suggests that, within this sample, burnout and the two protective factors were not strongly differentiated by gender. The small effect sizes further indicate that academic and environmental conditions may be more relevant than gender alone in explaining variation in these outcomes.

An important issue must be resolved before publication. The thesis contains a mediation section describing burnout as a mediator of the social support–psychological well-being relationship, but the reported coefficients and interpretation are not internally consistent. In addition, the thesis labels an earlier section as 'Hypothetical Results.' For ethical and scientific reasons, the mediation finding should not be presented as a confirmed empirical result unless it is reproduced from the original SPSS dataset using an appropriate mediation model. The present manuscript therefore treats the correlation, regression, reliability, descriptive, and gender-comparison findings as the reported results and excludes the questionable mediation claim from the main conclusions.

## Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations. Convenience sampling limits generalizability beyond the participating postgraduate students and institutions. The cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions. The data were self-reported and may therefore be influenced by response bias. The study was conducted in Faisalabad, so findings may not generalize to other regions of Pakistan. Finally, the relatively small R<sup>2</sup> values indicate that important determinants of burnout were not captured by the two-predictor models. Future research should use larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, and multivariable models incorporating academic workload, financial stress, coping, resilience, and institutional support.

## Conclusion

Among postgraduate university students, perceived social support was positively associated with psychological well-being and negatively associated with burnout, while psychological well-being was also negatively associated with burnout. Social support and psychological well-being each showed a small but significant negative predictive relationship with burnout, and no significant gender differences were observed. The findings highlight the potential value of strengthening supportive relationships and student well-being within postgraduate education. Before submission to a journal, the original SPSS data should be rechecked, particularly the mediation analysis, significance-level inconsistencies, and the exact burnout instrument.

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### **Publication Verification Checklist**

- Re-run all analyses from the original SPSS dataset and confirm every coefficient, p value,  $R^2$ , and effect size.
- Resolve the mediation-analysis inconsistency before reporting any mediation result.
- Confirm the exact burnout instrument name, version, scoring, and original citation.
- Use one prespecified significance level consistently throughout the manuscript.
- Check every reference, DOI, journal title, year, volume, issue, and page range against the original source.
- Add the journal's required author statement, ethics/approval information, funding, conflict-of-interest statement, and data-availability statement if required.
- Do not submit the manuscript to a journal claiming Y-category status until the journal's current HEC recognition/status is independently verified.



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