

Current Status, Influencing Factors and Intervention Paths of College Students' Academic Burnout from the Perspective of Positive Education

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Abstract. Against the backdrop of popularized higher education and intensified academic competition, academic burnout among college students has become a critical issue impairing learning engagement and mental health. From a positive education perspective, this study adopts questionnaire surveys to conduct statistical analysis on 150 valid samples. The results reveal that the overall average score of college students' academic burnout lands at the medium level of the measurement scale, with close scores across three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, improper learning behaviors and low personal accomplishment. Academic stress exhibits a significantly positive correlation with academic burnout and serves as a prominent positive predictor in the regression model. However, the expected negative predictive effects of individuals' positive psychological resources, school-based positive educational support and family social support are not supported by sample data. Academic burnout levels differ significantly across groups with varying academic stress, and students under high academic stress report markedly higher burnout than those under moderate and low stress. Based on empirical findings and students' intervention demands, this study proposes prevention and intervention approaches covering individual, school, family and social dimensions. This research concludes that interventions targeting college students' academic burnout should directly start with mitigating academic stress. Meanwhile, universities must improve the matching degree, accessibility and practical transformation efficiency of positive educational resources.

Keywords: Positive education; college students; academic burnout; mental health; prevention mechanism.

1. Introduction

The Guidelines for Mental Health Education of Students in Institutions of Higher Learning issued by the Party Leadership Group of the Ministry of Education clearly mandate constructing a four-in-one mental health education working framework. The Special Action Plan for Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Students' Mental Health Work in the New Era (2023–2025), jointly released by the Ministry of Education and sixteen other government departments, further requires universities to promote mental health via holistic education encompassing morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics and labor education, and integrate student mental health work into institutional reform and development plans. Policy orientations have clearly shifted from problem-focused correction to integrated developmental and preventive intervention, providing top-level policy support for mental health education in colleges and universities.

Nevertheless, academic burnout remains a severe challenge for college students. Academic burnout refers to a comprehensive set of negative symptoms including depleted psychological resources, detached learning attitudes and diminished personal accomplishment, which arise from long-term exposure to intense academic pressure. It has evolved into a prominent obstacle to students' academic performance and mental wellbeing. Existing surveys report that the detection rate of academic burnout among college students ranges from 23.4% to 38% [1]. A survey covering 9,806 vocational college students finds 23.5% of respondents experience severe academic burnout, mainly manifested as emotional exhaustion and a lack of perceived learning significance. [2] Academic burnout not only reduces students' grades and learning efficiency, but also triggers negative emotions such as anxiety and depression, and may even lead to extreme behaviors. Traditional intervention

models center on post-hoc problem correction and merely relieve negative symptoms, which cannot fundamentally resolve psychological exhaustion, learning detachment and low personal accomplishment.

As an innovative paradigm integrating positive psychology and modern educational concepts, positive education takes Seligman's positive psychology theory as its core. It abandons the traditional logic of problem identification and defect remediation and prioritizes cultivating students' positive psychological traits and unlocking their internal potential. Preliminary empirical studies have verified the intervention value of positive education for college students' academic burnout, yet systematic research deeply integrating positive education with burnout interventions remains insufficient.

Based on questionnaire data, this study examines the overall severity of academic burnout among college students, its correlations with academic stress, individual positive psychological resources, school positive educational support and family social support, and analyzes group differences across stress levels as well as students' intervention demands. The findings deliver empirical evidence for constructing targeted prevention and intervention mechanisms.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Research on the Relationship between Positive Education and Academic Burnout

Scholars have formed mature frameworks defining and dimensionalizing academic burnout, a prevalent negative learning state among college students. Pines and Kafry first proposed the concept of learning burnout in 1980, describing it as faded learning enthusiasm and interpersonal alienation stemming from multiple academic pressures. Maslach's three-dimensional theory of occupational burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment), published in 1981, lays a classic analytical framework for academic burnout research. Targeting the learning characteristics of Chinese college students, Sun Xiaoli (2007) [3] subdivides academic burnout into three core dimensions: emotional exhaustion, improper learning behaviors and low personal accomplishment, covering the emotional, behavioral and cognitive layers of burnout comprehensively. This study adopts this three-dimensional framework for measurement and evaluation.

Rooted in Martin E.P. Seligman's positive psychology, positive education originated in the United States in the late 20th century [4]. Seligman et al. (2009) defines it as an educational model that balances traditional skill instruction with wellbeing cultivation. White and Waters (2015) further clarify positive education as a framework applying positive psychology to educational practice to facilitate mutual promotion of wellbeing and academic performance.[5] Domestic Chinese research on positive education began in 2001, when Miao Yuanjiang published *On the Starting Point, Core and Goal of Happiness Education* [6]. In 2003, Miao further emphasized the value of nurturing individuals' positive character and supporting human development [7]. Zhang Yin (2020) highlights positive education courses as a key platform for fostering sound personalities and improving wellbeing.[8] Accordingly, this study defines positive education as an educational practice that integrates positive psychological concepts into all teaching and learning procedures to cultivate students' positive psychological traits and tap their internal potential.

Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions states that positive emotions expand attentional scope and cognitive flexibility, buffering emotional exhaustion and cognitive rigidity. The ABC theory of emotion reveals that stressful academic events do not directly cause burnout; irrational personal beliefs about learning events act as a mediating factor, and cognitive reappraisal effectively alleviates burnout [9]. Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory identifies satisfaction of autonomy, competence and relatedness as prerequisites for intrinsic learning motivation. Academic burnout essentially emerges from long-term frustration of these three basic psychological needs. By building supportive interpersonal relationships, delivering positive feedback and setting appropriate academic challenges, positive education helps restore these unmet needs. Liu Weixia argues that positive emotions, positive interpersonal relationships and positive organizational design improve classroom

engagement, perceived learning significance and achievement experience, reducing cumulative negative emotions [10]. Practical cases from Geelong Grammar School in Australia and Wellington College in the United Kingdom demonstrate that positive education significantly boosts students' psychological resilience, growth mindset, hopeful thinking and wellbeing, offering references for college interventions against academic burnout [11]

Current research carries two prominent limitations. First, most studies on academic burnout adopt a problem-correction orientation, focusing on passive post-burnout interventions instead of forward-looking prevention strategies built on strength cultivation. Second, research on positive education rarely integrates with the specific context of college academic burnout, and empirical evidence supporting targeted prevention and intervention mechanisms remains scarce. To fill these gaps, this study draws on relevant theoretical frameworks from a positive education perspective and explores customized prevention and intervention mechanisms for college students based on survey data, providing practical references for higher education management.

2.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study matches theoretical analysis, variable measurement and empirical testing through three core research questions:

RQ1: What is the overall severity of academic burnout among college students, and what characteristics do the three dimensions (emotional exhaustion, improper learning behaviors, low personal accomplishment) display?

RQ2: What correlations exist between academic burnout and four variables (academic stress, individual positive psychological resources, school positive educational support, family social support), and which variables exert stable predictive effects?

RQ3: Do college students with different academic stress levels report significantly different academic burnout levels, and what intervention approaches do students demand most?

Based on the stress-resource model, self-determination theory and core tenets of positive education, this study proposes four research hypotheses:

H1: Academic stress has a significant positive correlation with college students' academic burnout and positively predicts burnout significantly.

H2: Individual positive psychological resources have a significant negative correlation with college students' academic burnout and negatively predict burnout significantly.

H3: School positive educational support has a significant negative correlation with college students' academic burnout and negatively predict burnout significantly.

H4: Family social support has a significant negative correlation with college students' academic burnout and negatively predict burnout significantly.

3. Research Design

3.1. Sample and Data Collection

This research distributed 152 questionnaires in total. After screening out 2 questionnaires with response durations shorter than 60 seconds due to incomplete and careless answers, 150 valid questionnaires were retained, corresponding to an effective response rate of 98.68%. Among valid samples, 49 respondents were male (32.67%) and 101 were female (67.33%). Sophomores constituted the largest group with 92 participants (61.33%), while students from other academic years were also moderately represented.

3.2. Variable Measurement

The questionnaire consists of three sections: respondents' demographic information, core variable measurement items, and subjective attribution of academic burnout plus intervention demand questions. All categorical and multiple-choice questions aside, core items adopt a 5-point Likert scale, where higher scores represent stronger corresponding traits. The academic burnout scale includes 15

items covering three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, improper learning behaviors and low personal accomplishment. Individual positive psychological resources, school positive educational support and family social support are measured via 6, 6 and 5 items respectively. Academic stress is measured by a single 5-point Likert item. The average score of all items within each dimension is calculated as the dimension score.

3.3. Data Analysis Methods

Statistical analysis proceeds in sequential steps: reliability and validity tests, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, hierarchical multiple linear regression, and inter-group difference tests across academic stress subgroups. Regression analysis adopts HC3 heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors to mitigate estimation bias caused by heteroskedasticity. For inter-group difference tests, Levene's test is first applied to examine homogeneity of variance. When variance homogeneity fails, Welch's ANOVA is implemented, followed by pairwise comparisons via Welch's independent samples t-test with the Holm method to correct significance levels for multiple tests.

4. Data Analysis Results

4.1. Reliability and Validity Analysis

Cronbach's α coefficient is first calculated to test internal consistency of each scale. As shown in Table 1, the overall Cronbach's α of the academic burnout scale reaches 0.944, and α coefficients of its three sub-dimensions range from 0.842 to 0.918. The α coefficients of individual positive psychological resources, school positive educational support and family social support scales are 0.878, 0.885 and 0.850 respectively. All values exceed 0.80, indicating satisfactory internal consistency of all measurement scales.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity Test Results of Core Measurement Scales.

Measurement Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's α	KMO	Bartlett's χ^2	df	p
Academic Burnout	15	0.944	0.933	1586.697	1050	0.000
Individual Positive Psychological Resources	6	0.878	0.836	454.236	15	0.000
School Positive Educational Support	6	0.885	0.892	431.329	15	0.000
Family Social Support	5	0.850	0.837	315.724	10	0.000

As presented in Table 1, validity test results show KMO values of all scales range from 0.836 to 0.933, and Bartlett's sphericity test achieves statistical significance at the 0.001 level for all scales. These results confirm the item correlation structures are suitable for factor analysis, and all scales possess sound construct validity foundations. Harman's single-factor test is conducted on all 32 Likert items to test common method bias. Five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 are extracted, and the first unrotated factor explains only 30.68% of total variance, below the 40% empirical threshold for severe common method bias. Thus, severe common method bias does not exist in this dataset.

4.2. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

4.2.1. Basic Sample Characteristics

Valid samples include 49 male students (32.67%) and 101 female students (67.33%). Sophomores account for the largest proportion with 92 respondents (61.33%), while students from other academic years are moderately distributed. Table 2 presents the gender and academic year distribution of samples in detail.

Table 2. Basic Demographic Characteristics of Samples

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	49	32.67
Gender	Female	101	67.33
Academic Year	Freshman	16	10.67

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Academic Year	Sophomore	92	61.33
Academic Year	Junior	11	7.33
Academic Year	Senior	14	9.33
Academic Year	Postgraduate	17	11.33

4.2.2. Descriptive Statistics of Core Variables

Table 3 displays descriptive statistics of all core research variables. The overall average score of academic burnout is 2.966, close to the theoretical midpoint of the 5-point scale (3), which means the sample overall reports moderate academic burnout. The average scores of emotional exhaustion, improper learning behaviors and low personal accomplishment are 2.988, 2.949 and 2.960 respectively, with negligible gaps between dimensions, so no single dimension dominates burnout symptoms in this sample. The average scores of three positive educational resource variables slightly exceed the scale midpoint, among which family social support has the highest mean value.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Core Variables.

Variable	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
Academic Stress	3.173	1.122
Emotional Exhaustion	2.988	0.919
Improper Learning Behaviors	2.949	0.840
Low Personal Accomplishment	2.960	0.854
Overall Academic Burnout	2.966	0.793
Individual Positive Psychological Resources	3.103	0.779
School Positive Educational Support	3.168	0.769
Family Social Support	3.265	0.771

4.2.3. Subjective Attributions of Academic Burnout and Student Intervention Demands

Multiple-choice survey results identify primary subjective attributions of academic burnout: insufficient professional interest and unclear learning goals, anxiety induced by future employment pressure, heavy academic tasks and strict assessment requirements, and inefficient learning methods, as shown in Table 4 and Figure 1. Students' most demanded intervention measures include innovative classroom teaching modes, outdoor and physical stress relief activities, systematic guidance on learning capacity and goal management, and one-on-one mentor support systems (see Table 4 and Figure 2). Since this section uses multiple response questions, the sum of percentage values exceeds 100%.

Table 4. Primary Attributions of Academic Burnout and Student Intervention Demands.

Category	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Subjective Burnout Attributions	Lack of professional interest and ambiguous learning goals	84	56.00
Subjective Burnout Attributions	Severe employment pressure triggering academic anxiety	81	54.00
Subjective Burnout Attributions	Heavy academic workload and strict assessment pressure	79	52.67
Subjective Burnout Attributions	Poor learning methods and low learning efficiency	71	47.33
Intervention Demands	Build relaxing classroom atmosphere and innovate teaching modes	77	51.33
Intervention Demands	Organize outward bound training, mindfulness meditation and sports stress relief activities	72	48.00
Intervention Demands	Offer training on learning ability, time management and goal planning	67	44.67
Intervention Demands	Establish one-on-one academic and psychological mentor support systems	65	43.33

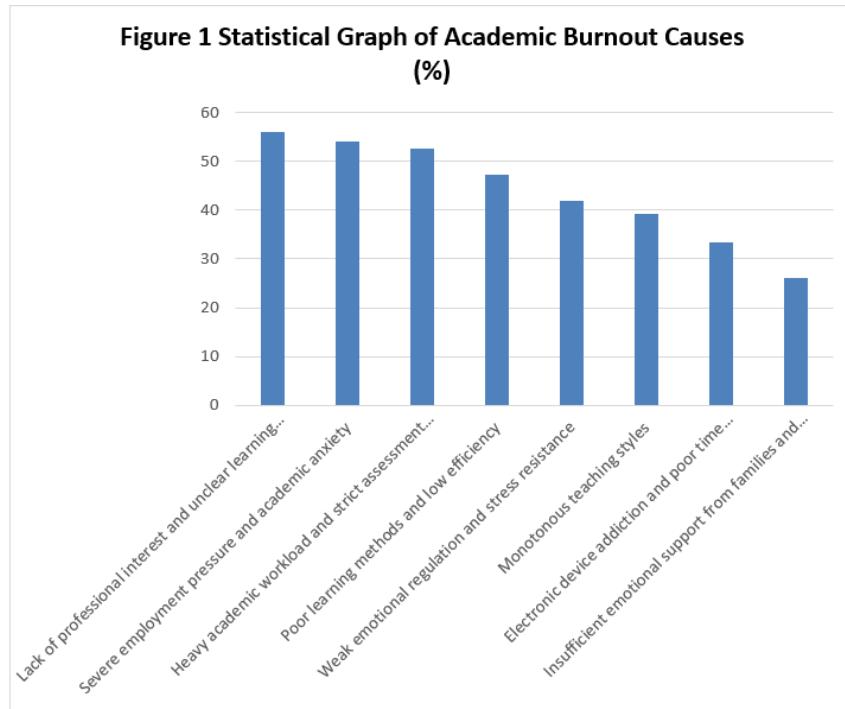


Figure 1. Statistical Graph of Academic Burnout Causes (Percentage).

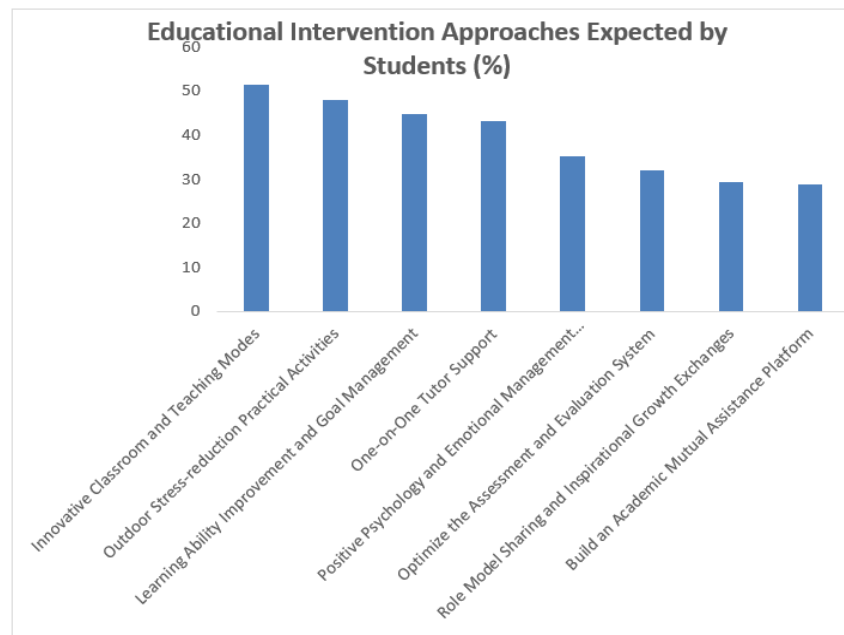


Figure 2. Statistical Graph of Educational Intervention Approaches Expected by Students.

4.3. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis is conducted to test pairwise relationships between core research variables. The results show academic stress has a moderate positive correlation with academic burnout ($r=0.405$, $p<0.001$). No significant correlation is detected between individual positive psychological resources and academic burnout ($r=0.087$, $p=0.290$), nor between family social support and academic burnout ($r=0.108$, $p=0.186$). School positive educational support presents a weak positive correlation with academic burnout ($r=0.177$, $p=0.031$), which contradicts theoretical expectations. The three positive educational resource variables show strong mutual correlations (r ranges from 0.662 to 0.812), meaning these support resources tend to co-occur for individual students. (see Table 5.)

Table 5. Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation Coefficients of Core Variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Academic Stress	3.1731	1.122	1				
2. Individual Positive Psychological Resources	3.1030	0.779	0.001	1			
3. School Positive Educational Support	3.1680	0.769	-0.013	0.662***	1		
4. Family Social Support	3.2650	0.771	-0.050	0.678***	0.812***	1	
5. Academic Burnout	2.9660	0.793	0.405***	0.087	0.177*	0.1081	1

4.4. Regression Analysis

Hierarchical multiple linear regression with HC3 heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors is applied to examine the predictive power of independent variables on academic burnout. (see Table 6) Model 1 only includes academic stress as the predictor, while Model 2 adds individual positive psychological resources, school positive educational support and family social support on the basis of Model 1. Model 1 is statistically significant overall, and academic stress explains 16.4% of the total variance in academic burnout. After adding three positive educational resource variables, Model 2 achieves an adjusted R^2 of 0.199, yet the incremental explanatory power lacks statistical significance ($\Delta R^2=0.035$, $\Delta F=2.141$, $p=0.098$).

Table 6. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Burnout.

Variable	Model 1 B	Robust SE	β	p	Model 2 B	Robust SE	β	p
Constant	2.058	0.202	—	<0.001	1.536	0.382	—	<0.001
Academic Stress	0.286	0.064	0.405	<0.001	0.287	0.065	0.406	<0.001
Individual Positive Psychological Resources	—	—	—	—	-0.053	0.139	-0.052	0.705
School Positive Educational Support	—	—	—	—	0.251	0.144	0.243	0.081
Family Social Support	—	—	—	—	-0.034	0.146	-0.033	0.814
R^2	0.164				0.199			
Adjusted R^2	0.158				0.177			
F Statistic	20.283			<0.001	7.299			<0.001

Notes: Dependent variable: academic burnout; HC3 robust standard errors are adopted for regression coefficients. Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) of all independent variables in Model 2 range from 1.006 to 3.286, all below the threshold of 5, which excludes severe multicollinearity.

In Model 2, academic stress still positively predicts academic burnout significantly ($\beta=0.406$, $p<0.001$), which fully supports Hypothesis H1 (see Table 6). The regression coefficients of individual positive psychological resources and family social support are negative but lack statistical significance. The coefficient of school positive educational support is positive and fails to reach the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, Hypotheses H2, H3 and H4 are not supported by sample data. This result does not mean positive educational resources increase academic burnout. Instead, it indicates this cross-sectional dataset cannot confirm stable direct protective effects of these resources against burnout. Three potential reasons explain this finding: mismatch between resource supply and student demand, low accessibility and utilization willingness of resources, and insufficient transformation efficiency of positive support resources. Longitudinal research tracking resource utilization frequency and intervention quality is required to verify these relationships in future studies.

4.5. Inter-group Difference Analysis across Academic Stress Subgroups

This study divides respondents into three subgroups to test burnout differences across stress levels: low stress group (score 1–2), moderate stress group (score 3), high stress group (score 4–5). Levene's test yields a significant result ($p=0.032$), violating the homogeneity of variance assumption, so Welch's ANOVA is adopted. The results reveal significant differences in academic burnout across three stress subgroups (Welch $F(2, 73.323)=8.277$, $p=0.001$), as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Academic Burnout Differences across Academic Stress Subgroups.

Stress Subgroup	N	Mean Burnout Score	Standard Deviation	Welch F	p
Low Stress Group (Score 1–2)	33	2.543	0.817	8.277	0.001
Moderate Stress Group (Score 3)	66	2.917	0.591		
High Stress Group (Score 4–5)	51	3.302	0.869		

Welch independent samples t-tests with Holm correction for multiple comparisons are conducted for pairwise group comparisons. The results show students in the high stress group report significantly higher academic burnout than those in the low stress group ($p < 0.001$) and moderate stress group ($p = 0.016$). The moderate stress group also exhibits significantly higher burnout than the low stress group ($p = 0.023$). Overall academic burnout rises as academic stress intensifies, consistent with findings from correlation and regression analysis.

5. Prevention and Intervention Strategies for College Students' Academic Burnout from a Positive Education Perspective

Empirical results confirm academic stress acts as the most stable risk factor for academic burnout. Meanwhile, three types of positive educational resources fail to deliver expected direct protective effects, which proves objective resource provision cannot automatically translate into accessible and effective supportive outcomes for students. Accordingly, positive education-based interventions should prioritize academic stress reduction as a core entry point. Universities must simultaneously improve resource matching degree, student participation quality and resource transformation efficiency, forming a collaborative prevention and intervention system covering individual, school, family and social layers.

5.1. Individual-level Intervention Strategies

Results from subjective attribution surveys show that there are three basic individual risk factors: insufficient professional interest and unclear learning goals, inefficient learning methods, and a weak capacity for emotional regulation. Based on self-determination theory, autonomy, competence and relatedness needs must be satisfied for the maintenance of intrinsic learning motivation. For prevention interventions, cognitive restructuring and learning strategy optimization and emotional regulation training should be targeted at an individual level.

The ABC (emotion) theory of cognitive restructuring posits that academic events do not directly cause burnout, but rather that individual's belief systems mediate the relationship between stress and burnout. Many college students have unproductive and irrational thoughts such as making absolute demands for perfection in their studies and making overgeneralized judgments about themselves that if they fail an exam, they are personally incompetent. These beliefs contribute to increased emotional fatigue. In cognitive reappraisal training, students are taught to develop standards that they can flexibly apply to themselves, and to think about their progress in learning rather than their final grades. Positive education is based on a positive experience cultivation, and it believes in cultivating the growth value of completing learning experiences. Universities can help students to break down their general long-term academic objectives into successive short-term steps. Small goal achievement is ongoing, allowing students to develop a sense of competence and experience flow states, thus interrupting the learned helplessness cycle and restoring the value of learning. Emotional management training is recommended for students who have poor emotional regulation to increase their emotional awareness for early signs of stress and to learn basic coping skills, hence increasing psychological resilience towards setbacks in school.

5.2. School-level Intervention Strategies

Schools are the most important place to prevent and intervene academic burnout. There are four measures that students most look forward to seeing in the school based on survey responses:

innovative classroom teaching modes, systematic learning set conducted on the capacity of learning and goal management, practical stress relief activities and personalized one-on-one mentoring. Positive education calls for the integration of wellbeing into knowledge and skill education; it means moving the school from a general provision of resources to a specific provision based on the needs of the students and their levels of stress.

Firstly, schools need to shift their teaching paradigm from remediation of deficiencies to development of strengths [5]. Fixing what students are weak at in traditional education easily promotes fixed mindsets and reduces students' motivation to deal with difficulties in studying. Positive education puts the emphasis on developing growth mindsets. The focus of course design should be to build on solid knowledge and to delve into the strengths and interests of the students. Problem-based learning and project-based learning can be applied to the curriculum, so that students can gain deep learning satisfaction and ability recognition in solving real world problems. Secondly, there was a need to increase emotional support in teacher-student interaction in schools. Teachers should listen to students' anxiety and powerlessness; positive feedback should be given to affirm students' learning efforts and teachers should not only be teachers of knowledge. To minimize students' learning detachment, classrooms should have a balance of academic challenge and emotional safety. Thirdly, it is necessary to optimize the systems of students' support service in universities. Low satisfaction with existing support services and low coverage present issues. Support systems must evolve to proactive outreach, increased coverage, decreased barriers to access, and improved professionalism so that students with varying levels of burnout can be offered support that is a good fit for each student. Fourthly, optimization of classroom teaching mode is needed. It is important for universities to give up the traditional teaching model with lectures as the main teaching method and establish diversified classrooms with positive emotional experience and stimulate students' learning initiative [12].

5.3. Family-level Intervention Strategies

Parental characteristics of parenting styles and expectations of student achievement have a significant impact on students' coping pattern. According to self-determination theory, autonomy support is a precondition to the process of intrinsic motivation generation. Family based prevention should focus on the needs of students for autonomy. Parents need to lessen command and take on an open-ended approach to communication to find out about their children's school experiences and struggles. Parents should be understanding and accepting of students' academic struggles, and serve as emotional buffers rather than coming across as critical and pressuring students. Families should also consider one-dimensional notions of academic achievement and turn some of the emphasis on academic achievement into the nurturing of children's sense of meaning and mental wellbeing. With family members no longer acting as stress generators and becoming psychological shelters, students are able to have enough psychological tolerance to prevent the development of severe self-doubt following academic failures.

5.4. Social-level Intervention Strategies

There is a strong connection between academic burnout and value orientations under the general umbrella of social environment. The employment pressure results in academic anxiety and the single social evaluation standards has a negative impact on this factor. Social intervention measures include a diversified talent evaluation system and a robust multi-subject social support network. The policy advocacy and guidance of public opinion should encourage the diversification of talent evaluation standards, step by step relax the rigid binding of academic qualification and personal employment, and give full play to the market mechanism. On the other hand, policy advocacy and public opinion guidance should promote inclusive diversified talent evaluation methods, gradually loosen the rigid binding of academic qualification and personal employment, and give full play to the market mechanism. These measures help to minimize unnecessary competition and anxiety among college students. However, government, enterprises and communities need to coordinate to offer ample

opportunities and platforms for career exploration for the college students. Positive education pays attention to positive social organizational system as the nucleus of positive education, which can effectively enable the students to get the sense of social value from learning and give their future career clear direction and solve the problem of learning meaninglessness brought by the lack of social participation, thus effectively avoid the learning burnout. In this aspect, multi-stakeholder social support networks serve not only as stress buffers, but also as important external resources to promote the cultivation of college students' positive psychological capital.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

6.1. Main Research Findings

Based on 150 valid questionnaires, this study empirically analyzes the status and influencing factors of college students' academic burnout from the perspective of positive education. The results show that the overall academic burnout of surveyed college students is at a moderate level (as shown in Table 3). Academic stress exerts a significant positive predictive effect on academic burnout, and Hypothesis H1 is supported (see Table 5 and Table 6). By contrast, individual positive psychological resources, school positive educational support and family social support all fail to present the expected negative predictive effects, and Hypotheses H2 to H4 are not validated by the sample data (see Table 6). Intergroup analysis further confirms that academic burnout level rises significantly with increasing academic stress (as shown in Table 7). Students' subjective attributions and intervention demand reflect the practical necessity of multi-level prevention and intervention measures (as shown in Table 4, Figure 1 and Figure 2).

The absence of a direct protective effect from positive educational resources does not negate their theoretical value. Instead, it indicates that resource supply cannot be automatically converted into actual protective outcomes, and its efficacy is constrained by supply-demand matching, resource accessibility and transformation efficiency. Accordingly, academic burnout interventions should take alleviating academic stress as the core entry point, and build a collaborative intervention system integrating individual, school, family and social dimensions

6.2. Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design makes it difficult to establish causal relationships among variables. The sample size is relatively limited, and sampling is concentrated in a single institution. Self-report measurement is subject to subjective response bias and mediating as well as moderating mechanisms have not been further explored.

Future research may adopt longitudinal tracking or quasi-experimental designs to clarify causal pathways, expand multi-university sampling to enhance the generalizability of conclusions, introduce variables such as resource accessibility and stress coping styles to identify boundary conditions of effects, and evaluate the efficacy of targeted intervention programs, so as to provide more robust empirical evidence for mental health education in higher education.

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