

MLA Style Literature Review

Burnout among nursing students has become a sustained concern within nursing education due to its impact on academic performance, mental health, and long-term professional retention. Nursing students are required to balance intensive coursework with emotionally demanding clinical experiences, often under strict time constraints. Burnout is commonly understood as a response to prolonged stress and is associated with emotional exhaustion, detachment, and reduced personal efficacy (Maslach and Jackson 100). Within nursing education, scholars have examined how academic workload and the availability of support systems influence students' experiences of burnout. This literature review synthesizes research on burnout among nursing students, focusing on the relationship between academic workload and faculty, peer, and institutional support.

Academic workload is consistently identified as a primary contributor to burnout among nursing students. Studies link heavy course loads, frequent assessments, and extended clinical hours to elevated stress and emotional exhaustion. Labrague et al. report that students experiencing high academic pressure demonstrate significantly higher burnout levels, particularly in emotional exhaustion (1299). Similarly, Rudman and Gustavsson found that sustained academic stress during nursing education predicted burnout symptoms that extended into early professional practice (994).

Research also suggests that burnout is shaped by how academic demands are structured rather than by workload volume alone. Gibbons notes that unclear expectations, overlapping deadlines, and competing academic and clinical responsibilities increase students' perceptions of overload and reduce opportunities for recovery (1304). These findings indicate that poorly coordinated workload design intensifies burnout risk, even when total workload remains constant.

Support systems play a critical role in moderating the effects of academic workload. Faculty support has been repeatedly associated with lower burnout levels. Studies show that accessible instructors, constructive feedback, and mentorship contribute to students' sense of academic control and emotional stability.

Labrague et al. found that perceived faculty support reduced burnout and strengthened students' confidence in managing academic stress (e12638).

Peer support further influences burnout outcomes. Nursing students often rely on classmates to navigate clinical demands and share coping strategies. Rudman and Gustavsson observed that strong peer connections reduced depersonalization and helped students remain engaged during periods of high stress (997).

These relationships appear to buffer emotional exhaustion by fostering shared understanding and collective problem-solving.

Institutional support systems, including advising services and mental health resources, also affect burnout experiences. Students who perceive their institutions as supportive report lower emotional exhaustion and stronger intentions to persist in their programs (Labrague et al. 1302). However, limited access to support services or stigma surrounding help-seeking can weaken these protective effects, leaving students more vulnerable during periods of academic intensity.

Despite general agreement on the influence of workload and support, some inconsistencies remain in the literature. Gibbons notes that highly motivated or high-achieving students may experience burnout even when support systems are present, suggesting that personal expectations and perfectionism interact with academic demands (1307). These findings point to the need for research that considers individual differences alongside institutional factors.

The literature demonstrates a clear relationship between burnout among nursing students, academic workload, and the presence of effective support systems. Heavy and poorly structured workloads consistently contribute to emotional exhaustion, while faculty, peer, and institutional support mitigate burnout risk. However, gaps remain in understanding how burnout develops across different stages of nursing education and how individual characteristics influence vulnerability. Future research should adopt longitudinal approaches to examine how workload design and targeted support interventions can reduce burnout and promote sustainable academic and professional outcomes.

Works Cited

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3. Maslach, Christina, and Susan E. Jackson. "The Measurement of Experienced Burnout." *Journal of Occupational Behavior*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1981, pp. 99–113.
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