

One in five girls in upper secondary school suffers from school burnout

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The transition from basic education to upper secondary school is a challenge for many young people. According to a study of school burnout at different stages of school and higher education, upper secondary school is a particularly challenging stage for many young people. Success-oriented female upper secondary school pupils are at the greatest risk: up to 20 cent of them suffer from school burnout. Burnout is a phenomenon to be taken seriously, as it can lead to depression.

"These [girls](#) are high achievers but they also develop burnout. They tend to develop feelings of inadequacy, in particular, in upper secondary school. By contrast, boys who enter upper secondary school tend to develop more of a cynical, negative stance towards school," says Professor Katariina Salmela-Aro of the University of Jyväskylä, who is in charge of the research. The study was carried out at the Academy of Finland's Centre of Excellence in Learning and Motivation Research, and comprised 1,800 young people.

The study focused particularly on students' trajectories to well-being or problems during transitional stages in their education. "Transitions from one stage of education to the next have an impact on the well-being of young people and they need support during these life stages. A healthy level of self-esteem is a protective factor," Salmela-Aro says.

According to Salmela-Aro, school burnout in upper secondary school tends to complicate the transition to further studies, while an enthusiasm for school tends to predict a successful transition to the next education

level. "This research finding has considerable importance for the efforts to encourage [young people](#) to make a faster transition into further studies and working life."

Medical students are the keenest

For the first time in Finland, research was also conducted on burnout and academic engagement among students in higher education. The material was provided by the Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS) and comprised 5,200 students. Results show that one in ten students in higher education suffers from burnout and one in three is at risk. However, the good news is that one in four students in higher education feel enthusiasm for their studies. Medical students were most likely to be enthusiastic about their studies and least likely to suffer from burnout.

"Students' engagement for their studies declines over time, which raises the question of what happens to the highly motivated students who enter [higher education](#). A sense of optimism during university studies along with high self-esteem tend to predict job engagement ten years later on, while an avoidance strategy tends to predict work-related burnout," Katariina Salmela-Aro says.

School burnout is a chronic school-related stress syndrome which manifests as exhaustion, cynicism about school and feelings of inadequacy. Engagement about school is characterised by energy, dedication and an ability to become absorbed in the work.

In basic education, school burnout is caused by a negative atmosphere in school, usually in the form of a stressful and restless working environment. Support from the adult staff of the school, especially the school healthcare services, helps reduce school burnout. Teachers who have a positive attitude and an ability to motivate students are extremely helpful for upper secondary school students. The more encouragement

the [students](#) got from their teachers, the less likely they were to experience school burnout.

Source: Academy of Finland

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