

School burnout

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Recent research indicates that school burnout among adolescents is shared with parental work burnout. Children of parents suffering from burnout are more likely than others to experience school burnout. Funding from the Academy of Finland has supported the first ever scientific study into the associations between adolescents' and parents' burnout. School burnout is a chronic school-related stress syndrome that is manifested in fatigue, experiences of cynicism about school and a sense of inadequacy as a student.

For this study estimates of school [burnout](#) were obtained from 515 ninth-grade [schoolchildren](#) aged 15. Estimates of work burnout were obtained from 595 parents of these adolescents. The results showed that experiences of burnout were shared in families. "Experiences of burnout were shared most particularly between adolescents and parents of the same gender, i.e. between daughters and mothers and between sons and fathers. The parent of the same gender seems to serve as a role model for the development of burnout," says Professor Katariina Salmela-Aro who led the research. The study was conducted as part of the FinEdu project at the Academy's Centre of Excellence in Learning and Motivation Research.

According to Professor Salmela-Aro parental burnout may also show up as a negative style of upbringing and as a lowered interest and involvement in adolescents' lives. The results indicated that family finances were also reflected in the level of shared burnout. "The greater the family's financial worries, the higher the level of experienced burnout. This is an important result in view of the potential impact of the

ongoing recession on the well-being of families and young people."

Transition across school changes a major challenge for adolescents

The research conducted under this project has also examined trajectories of well-being and ill-being in connection with transitional stages at school. In particular, it seems that moving up from comprehensive school to the secondary level is a very challenging stage for many young people, and seems to expose them to changes in motivation and well-being.

In connection with the FinEdu project, 687 schoolchildren annually rated their overall life satisfaction over the span of four years, starting in the ninth grade. Some two-thirds of the respondents said they were happy with their life, and this well-being was constant throughout the study. However, around one-third of the adolescents showed shifts in their life satisfaction, with the changes occurring at the point of transition from one stage of schooling to another. Among these [adolescents](#) about one in five reported a decrease in their well-being. At the same time, however, roughly the same number reported increased well-being following a stage transition at school.

"It's an important result that a successful transition at school is reflected in increased well-being, which in turn predicts higher levels of school engagement later on," Professor Katariina Salmela-Aro says.

More information: Journal articles from the project: Salmela-Aro, K., Tynkkynen, L. & Vuori, J. (in press): Parents' work burnout and adolescents' school burnout: Are they shared. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*.

Katariina Salmela-Aro & Lotta Tynkkynen (in press): Trajectories of Life Satisfaction Across the Transition to Post-Compulsory Education: Do Adolescents Follow Different Pathways? *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.

Salmela-Aro, K. & Tuominen-Soini, H. (in press). Adolescents' life satisfaction during the transition to post-comprehensive education: antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Happiness Studies*.

Provided by Academy of Finland

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