



Coping with School Burnout

Okul Tükenmişliğiyle Başa Çıkma

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ABSTRACT

School burnout has been the subject of research as the form of professional burnout seen in students who continue their education life. In the relevant literature, it is seen that the factors that increase or decrease school burnout and the negativities caused by school burnout are examined. However, it is noteworthy that the issue of coping with school burnout, which is a common problem that almost every student experiences at certain times in their education life, is not addressed. In this review study, the concept of school burnout was first explained, and then the concepts of coping and coping with school burnout were discussed.

Keywords: School burnout, coping, educational process, school

ÖZ

Okul tükenmişliği, mesleki tükenmişliğin eğitim yaşamına devam etmekte olan öğrencilerde görülen şekli olarak araştırma konusu yapılmıştır. İlgili literatürde okul tükenmişliğini artıran ya da azaltan faktörlerin, okul tükenmişliğinin yol açtığı olumsuzlukların inceleme konusu yapıldığı görülmektedir. Ancak yaygın olarak ortaya çıkan ve hemen hemen her öğrencinin eğitim yaşamında belli zamanlarda yaşadığı bir problem durumu olan okul tükenmişliğiyle başa çıkma konusuna değinilmediği dikkat çekmektedir. Bu bağlamda bu çalışmada okul tükenmişliği kavramı açıklanmış, sonrasında başa çıkma ve okul tükenmişliğiyle başa çıkma kavramları ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Okul tükenmişliği, başa çıkma, eğitim süreci, okul

Introduction

Burnout is one of the serious problems commonly seen in individuals who continue their business life. The concept of burnout has been the subject of research on individuals who have been working in the workplace for many years (Maslach et al. 2001). Burnout is a condition that reduces the job performance of individuals and causes psychological and physical disorders (Maslach and Jackson 1981). In recent years, it has been stated that the concept of burnout should be examined not only in individuals in business life, but also in students in school (Schaufeli et al. 2002, Salmela-Aro et al. 2008, Aypay and Eryılmaz 2011, Gündüz et al. 2012). Thus, the concept of school burnout has been the subject of research. It is noteworthy that school burnout is a common problem among students and that it affects students negatively in many aspects, including psychological, academic and social aspects (Aypay 2011, Seçer and Gençdoğan 2013). In literature, the relationship between the concept of school

burnout and both individual and social variables has been handled multidimensionally. However, it is noteworthy that the issue of coping with school burnout has not been a research topic in both national and international literature and has not been examined in a multifaceted way. In this regard, it is aimed to focus on the issue of coping with school burnout in this compilation study. In this context, the concepts of school burnout, coping and coping with school burnout are discussed respectively.

School Burnout

School burnout is defined as the student's indifferent and cynical attitude towards school as a result of the intense demands of the school (Salmela-Aro et al. 2009). According to Aypay (2011) school burnout is defined as the burnout syndrome caused by the excessive demands of school and education in students. In addition, it has been stated that school burnout is a multidimensional concept that not only has an academic basis, but also affects students

multidimensionally and has negative reflections on students' lives outside of their education processes (Madigan and Curran 2021).

When the literature is examined, school burnout has many negative reflections on students' social, individual and educational life. Since school burnout is a challenging situation for individuals, one of its negative consequences is low academic performance (Evers et al. 2020). In addition, it is claimed that school burnout seriously reduces students' satisfaction with school and their participation in school (Lee et al. 2003). In addition to the negative effects of school burnout on students' academic and school life, it can also cause negative effects on their psychological health. Studies have found that school burnout significantly increases students' depression (Salmela-Aro et al. 2009), anxiety (Çapulcuoğlu and Gündüz 2013), stress (Yan et al. 2018), and sleep problems (May et al. 2020). The increase in students' absenteeism during the school process or their further dropout is among the situations in which school burnout affects (Yang and Farn 2005). Moreover, the self-efficacy that students need in academic processes (Rahmati 2015) and the emergence of relationship problems with family, friends and teachers (Aypay and Eryılmaz 2011) are other negative consequences of school burnout.

It is noteworthy that school burnout affects students negatively in many ways at school or outside of school. It is noteworthy that the results of school burnout or the factors that strengthen individuals against school burnout are discussed in literature. However, it is seen that students' coping with school burnout, which is a common problem area, has not been examined in both national and international literature. In the literature, coping with stress (Türküm 2002) and coping with professional burnout (Antoniou et al. 2013) are discussed. In this context, it is thought that it is important to include the issue of coping with school burnout in the literature and make it a research topic. In order to contribute to the literature and draw attention to the subject, the subject of "coping with school burnout" is discussed in this compilation study.

Coping Concept

Individuals face many challenging and solving problems throughout their lives. These problems bring up the issue of effective use of coping strategies and skills by individuals in order to find an effective solution and overcome the problems experienced or to overcome that problem with the least damage. The first origin of the concept of coping is based on the Greek word "kolahos" and means "to meet, encounter, bump" (Eryılmaz 2009).

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the concept of coping is defined as cognitive and behavioral strategies used for possible solutions to a problem or a negative event, or

to minimize the negative effects on the individual as much as possible. In line with this definition, it can be stated that it is important for the individual to engage his cognitive and behavioral skills as much as possible while coping with a problem. In another definition, coping is expressed as a reaction to stressful situations (Aldwin 2007). This definition also considers coping as a response development that is used more in stressful situations. On the other hand, Patterson and McCubbin (1987) define their desire to cope as a way of reducing expectations or developing cognitive or behavioral responses to these expectations. In summary, the common point of the definitions about coping is; It can be stated that when an individual is faced with a challenging situation, he/she engages in a struggle to overcome that situation and produce solutions and is able to use his/her current potential actively and effectively.

Coping strategies of individuals have been classified under different categories in the literature. It has been suggested that coping is in the form of problem-focused, avoidance, and emotion-focused coping (Lazarus and Folkman 1984).

- a) *Problem-focused coping*; It is considered as the individual's cognitive and behavioral effort to eliminate or overcome problematic situations (Folkman 1984). According to this view, it can be stated that problem-focused coping is the individual's focusing on positive thoughts for the solution of the problem encountered and engaging in a struggle to reveal something behaviorally.
- b) *Emotionally focused coping*; It has been discussed as regulating emotions against problematic situations or taking advantage of emotions (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Emotion-focused coping strategy is one in which the individual focuses on his emotions, becomes aware of his emotions, and focuses on which emotions will be more effective in solving the problem.
- c) *Avoidance*; it has been suggested that it is trying to find a solution by avoiding the problematic situation instead of dealing with it (Türküm 1999). Individuals with a dominant avoidance situation actually do not engage in an effort or struggle to solve the problematic situation and try not to face the problem as much as possible.

According to Lazarus (1976), coping is a general concept. Therefore, this general concept should be considered in two categories, direct action and mitigating actions. a) Direct actions are the individual's self-strengthening and preparation for the situations that occur in the individual's environment and that are challenging for the individual. It is necessary for the individual to struggle against the negative situation, to use different helping factors, to seek support, etc. Behaviors are direct actions. b) Mitigating behaviors include things that

the individual does to relax. By using the mitigating behavior, the individual feels emotionally comfortable in the face of the problem situation and feels good. Thus, she/he tries to overcome the problem situation in a relaxed way.

It is noteworthy that there is a distinction between coping in the literature as functional or dysfunctional coping (Spirito et al. 1988). It is observed that individuals who use functional coping strategy choose to use their own potential effectively to solve the problem they have experienced. These individuals generally analyze the problematic situation well, list possible solutions and try to choose and implement an effective solution. It is noteworthy that those who use the dysfunctional coping strategy focus on the non-solution rather than the solution, and they expect the solution from different sources, especially external factors. These individuals, unlike those who use the functional coping strategy, do not engage in a struggle or effort for a solution.

Carver et al. (1989; cited in Ağargün et al. 2005), on the other hand, dealt with coping in a broader framework in 15 different categories. These 15 coping categories are:

1. Confronting the problem directly for a solution (active coping)
2. Determining a roadmap for solving the problem (planning)
3. Quitting other matters (suppressing other preoccupations)
4. Stop doing something about the problem (behaviorally dismissive)
5. Reinterpreting the event (positive reinterpretation and improvement)
6. Ignore the problem (mental dismissal)
7. Preoccupation with the problem (focusing on the problem and revealing emotions)
8. Seeking support (useful use of social support)
9. Ignoring the problem situation (denial)
10. Resorting to faith-related strategies (religious coping)
11. Using humor (joking)
12. Getting away from the problem (holding back)
13. Struggling emotionally, getting support (use of emotional social support)
14. Alcohol, drugs, etc. intake (substance use)
15. To accept the situation and act accordingly (acceptance)

Consequently, it is seen that many coping strategies have been suggested in the literature. It has been suggested that the most effective coping strategy is active coping (Folkman

1984, Lazarus and Folkman 1984, Folkman et al. 1986). In addition, it was stated that avoidance is a negative coping method, in other words, a dysfunctional coping strategy (Folkman 1984, Folkman et al. 1986). Therefore, the more effective use of active coping strategies allows individuals to produce permanent solutions when faced with a problem or a challenging event. It is seen that individuals who use avoidance a lot do not face the problem, on the contrary, they stay away from the solution of the problem, and in other words, they choose the ways of giving up (Lazarus and Folkman 1984).

Individuals in the educational environment also face very different problems both in their education processes and in their lives outside of school (Aypay 2011). Since school processes are challenging, it is an important issue for students to use their coping skills effectively in the education process. When considered in this context, students who use active and effective coping skills reach a solution more quickly and effectively. Students' awareness of their strengths, their ability to confront the problems they encounter, and their ability to produce solutions are directly related to their coping skills (Bedel and Ulubey 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to focus on coping with school burnout, which has been the subject of research in recent years and that almost every student has experienced in certain periods in the education process. While it is noteworthy that the factors that trigger school burnout and the psychological and social negative consequences of school burnout are examined in the literature, it is seen that there is not much focus on coping with school burnout (Salmela-Aro et al. 2009, Aypay 2011).

Coping with School Burnout

The concept of coping with school burnout; it can be defined as the ability of the student to use their current potential effectively and to overcome this negative situation in order to overcome the symptoms of school burnout in students due to school, lessons and homework. In addition, the ability to cope with school burnout; It can also be considered as the ability of the student to use his/her current coping skills against school burnout in order to effectively overcome the school burnout situation he is experiencing, to reduce its possible negative effects and to continue his education life more efficiently.

Considering that the foundations and dimensions of the concept of school burnout are shaped on the basis of the concept of professional burnout (Salmela-Aro et al. 2009), it can be thought that coping strategies used to cope with professional burnout may also be effective in coping with school burnout. At this point, it can be stated that the strategies followed to cope with burnout can also be followed in coping with school burnout.

Use of Strategies Used to Cope with Professional Burnout

Methods for coping with professional burnout have been suggested (Maslach et al. 2001, Ardiç and Polatçı 2008, İlbay 2014). These coping strategies can be summarized as follows:

- To question the causes of burnout, to have information about the causes,
- Activating mental coping skills
- To be in contact with people more, to receive social support from the environment when necessary
- Doing sports activities such as walking
- Participating in different cultural and artistic activities from time to time
- Taking a break from work and dealing with different hobbies
- Making a regular work and study plan and complying with the plan
- Knowledge of effective time management
- Avoiding bad habits
- Paying attention to regular sleep and nutrition
- Learning breathing and relaxation exercises
- Keeping expectations realistic, avoiding high expectations
- Reducing monotony in work and normal life
- Adopting a stress-free and calm lifestyle
- Being aware of your own strengths and positives
- Knowing their limitations and not taking on tasks above their current potential
- Participating in trainings, conferences, group work etc. to increase coping skills

The foundations and sub-dimensions of the concept of school burnout were shaped according to the concept of professional burnout (Salmela-Aro et al. 2008., Salmela-Aro et al. 2009). Therefore, the above-mentioned coping strategies used in professional burnout can also be used to cope with school burnout. In this context, the strategies for coping with school burnout that individuals can use to cope with school burnout can be listed as the following items:

- To question the causes of school burnout during the education process and to list the factors that lead to this situation.

- Using mental coping skills. In this context, focusing on positive thoughts, recognizing positive thoughts to get out of school burnout, and putting these positive thoughts in writing, if necessary, in the form of a list.
- Seeking support from social support factors such as teachers, school counselors and family when school burnout is experienced and cannot find a way to cope with it.
- Considering that the education process is sometimes overwhelmed by intense demands; In these situations and times, taking a break from working and taking a walk in the fresh air, taking a breather and reducing the negativity of this situation with sports activities.
- When the school process increases the school burnout in the individual due to intense homework and responsibilities, taking care of hobbies and participating in artistic / cultural activities in order to relax and cope with this situation.
- Considering that one of the situations that triggers school burnout is irregular and unsystematic work; learn planned and systematic ways of working to deal with this situation effectively
- To increase efficiency and desire in the school process by avoiding harmful habits, eating regularly and paying attention to the sleep process.
- Keeping expectations realistic, as both the student and his/her environment have high expectations from the student, which increases the frequency of school burnout and negatively affects coping skills.
- When school burnout wears out the student and causes tension, it is possible to cope with this problem by doing breathing exercises and relaxation exercises.
- The monotony in the school process also paves the way for students to experience intense school burnout. For this reason, it is sometimes necessary to leave the monotonous activities and lessons and turn to different activities that will attract attention and extraordinary.
- To make a very active or bumpy education life a little calmer.
- To make students aware of their strengths and weaknesses and to reveal their current potential
- To ensure that students participate in programs, group activities and conferences that provide information on how to take steps for solutions when faced with a problem situation.

Use of Strategies Used to Cope with Stress in Coping

The fact that one of the most important indicators of burnout is stress (Maslach and Jackson 1981). It can be argued that the strategies used in coping with stress are also an effective strategy in dealing with burnout (İlbaş 2014) and therefore school burnout.

Different methods and strategies have been proposed to cope with stress (Okutan and Tengilimoğlu 2002):

1. *Bodily Coping Ways*: The individual who is experiencing a stressful situation, doing relaxation exercises, breathing control, diaphragmatic breathing or trying to relax by doing sports activities are the ways of coping in this context.
2. *Ways of Mental Coping*: It includes work on focusing on positive thoughts, making a list of irrational thoughts, and reorganizing the mind, instead of focusing on negative thoughts about the situation, which is a response to the stressful situation.
3. *Behavioral Techniques*: It includes studies to change the type A behavior (behavior that occurs as a result of hastiness and impatience).
4. *Ways of coping with faith*: It is about motivating oneself spiritually and obeying norms and universal moral principles.

Students can also use the above four methods to cope with school burnout. At this point, it can be thought that the above techniques can also be effective in coping with school burnout. In this context, when students experience school burnout, ways of coping with physical, mental, behavioral and belief should be activated. When evaluated in this context, four strategies can be used to cope with school burnout as follows:

a) Bodily coping with school burnout: In a situation where the school process strains the student or pushes them into a depressed mood, deep breathing, breathing exercises and relaxation can play an important role in coping with this problem. When evaluated in this context, teaching students breathing exercises or teaching breathing techniques, as well as providing information on relaxation/relaxation can contribute to coping with school burnout during the school process.

b) Coping with school burnout mentally: When the student feels bored during the school process and has negative thoughts such as that the school has now put him in a dead end, exceeding his potential, it is important for the student to know how to focus on positive thoughts as an alternative to these negative thoughts, in order to find a way out of

this negative situation. In this context, raising awareness of individuals about the methods of cognitive behavioral theory focusing on positive thoughts instead of negative thoughts plays an important role (Türkçapar 2009). In this context, the ABCDE model used in the cognitive approach can also be used to cope with school burnout. A [the event that triggers school burnout], B [beliefs resulting from experiencing school burnout], C [result of beliefs], D [examination and questioning of beliefs that cause school burnout], E [formation of positive new beliefs] in coping with school burnout this model can be used.

c) Coping with school burnout with behavioral techniques: Among the factors that increase the student's school burnout, factors such as irregular work, collecting homework, and not knowing efficient study methods are effective (Seçer and Gençdoğan, 2012). When considered in this context, it can be stated that increasing the self-regulation skills of the student, learning to be systematic, and applying efficient working methods can be effective in coping with school burnout behaviorally.

d) Coping with school burnout with faith: It is considered important for the individual to motivate himself spiritually or to gain strength from universal moral principles in solving problems (Emmons 2000, Şimşir et al. 2020). When evaluated in this context, self-motivation of the student, the use of a motivating language by the environment, or the student's gaining strength from universal principles will play an important role in overcoming school burnout.

Consequently, the methods and strategies used to cope with stress and burnout can be applied in a format that can also be used to cope with school burnout, as stated above. In addition, it has been revealed in the literature that there are some factors that strengthen students against school burnout.

Factors Empowering Students to Cope with School Burnout

In the literature, certain factors that reduce the negative effects of school burnout, which is commonly seen in students, strengthen students at the point of experiencing school burnout, and reduce the negative situations caused by school burnout are stated (Walburg 2014). Some of the factors mentioned are as follows:

a) It has been suggested that social support empowers students to experience school burnout, and individuals with more social support experience less school burnout (Kim et al 2018, Güngör 2019, Gündoğan 2019). Considered in this context, social support plays an important role in helping students cope with school burnout.

b) It was stated that students who perceive their school life quality as high overcome school burnout more easily

(Gündoğan and Özgen 2020). Therefore, it can be stated that increasing students' perception of school life quality will directly increase their ability to cope with school burnout.

c) Students with a good level of regular and planned study skills are faced with a lower level of school burnout (Şeker and Yavuzer 2017). Therefore, the studies to be carried out in order to provide students with the skills of regular and planned study will also have a positive effect on their ability to cope with school burnout.

d) It has been suggested that students with a good perception of positive school climate also experience less school burnout (Durmuş et al. 2017, Molinari and Grazia 2021). Considering in this context, school administrators, teachers and school personnel have important roles in helping students overcome school burnout easily and effectively.

d) It has been stated that psychological resilience strengthens students in the face of many negative situations, as well as in school burnout (Fiorilli et al. 2020). Having a good level of psychological resilience in the student will directly reflect positively on coping with school burnout.

e) Since cognitive flexibility directly contributes to the awareness of alternative ways in a negative situation, it will also contribute to students who experience school burnout and will be effective in coping with this problem (Gan et al. 2007).

f) It has been suggested that students with high self-regulation skills overcome school burnout more easily (Dubuc-Charbonneau and Durand-Bush 2015). When considered in this context, it can be stated that increasing students' self-regulation skills will increase their ability to cope with school burnout.

g) It has been suggested that motivation is another factor that strengthens students against school burnout (Zhang et al. 2013, Özdemir 2015, Seçer 2015). Therefore, increasing motivation and using a motivating language are important in overcoming the student's school burnout.

The factors that strengthen students against school burnout and positively affect their coping skills are discussed above. In summary, it is seen that there are both individual and environmental factors that strengthen students' ability to cope with school burnout.

Use of Theory Techniques to Cope with School Burnout

It has been argued that many techniques of both classical and modern theories have serious contributions to individuals' ability to overcome negative situations and to use coping skills effectively (Sharf 2015). In this context, it can be

stated that the techniques of certain theories can be used by students to cope with school burnout. In this context, how some techniques of cognitive behavioral and solution-focused therapy, which have been tested in experimental studies in coping with school burnout, can be used to cope with school burnout are given below:

a) Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT): CBT has techniques that individuals use to solve problems. In an experimental study conducted to reduce the negative effects of school burnout, it was concluded that the techniques of CBT strengthened students against school burnout and cope more easily (Ulaş 2018). In this context, in case of school burnout, in order to cope with this negative situation, the techniques of CBT, which include doing some activities and focusing on positive thoughts instead of negative thoughts, can be used (Murdock 2004). At this point, in order to cope with school burnout, the student can use the activity chart technique to prepare task lists on a piece of paper, including what tasks he will do in which time frame and what he will do in daily and weekly periods for the solution of school burnout. Thus, effective steps will be taken to overcome school burnout. Again, the student will take effective steps to overcome this situation by using the technique of creating gradual tasks in order to cope with the school burnout situation. At this point, he can overcome his school burnout by gradually listing some tasks. In addition, students can start to take the first step towards a solution by using visualization, one of the techniques of CBT, to cope with school burnout. Thus, positive thoughts will appear for the solution and will activate the individual.

b) Solution-focused therapy: It has been concluded that experimental studies based on solution-focused therapy approach, like CBT, strengthen students against school burnout and increase their coping skills (İlbay 2014, Ateş 2016, Nedim-Bal and Kaya 2017). Solution-focused therapy is an approach that focuses on solutions and suggests that finding a small solution is an important step towards a solution (Sharf 2015). In order to cope with school burnout, it is an important issue for the student to take a step, discover the solution, albeit small, and then make an effort to find a solution. When considered in this context, solution-focused therapy can be an effective approach to deal with school burnout, as it focuses on the solution rather than the problem. As a matter of fact, this has also been demonstrated in experimental studies. The use of solution-focused therapy's rating question and generic task (Murdock 2004) techniques in coping with school burnout may be effective. When the student experiences school burnout, the effectiveness of the rating question in revealing his/her coping skills can be evaluated by asking what grade he/she gives himself in the current problem and what he/she should do to reach higher grades. It will also be beneficial to use the generic task technique by giving small tasks for a week to the student.

Characteristics of Students Using Functional (Active) And Dysfunctional (Avoidant) Coping Strategies with School Burnout

It is noteworthy that to cope with school burnout, students use functional or dysfunctional coping methods as well as coping with normal problems. In the literature, the characteristics of individuals who use functional [active] (Lazarus and Folkman 1984, Patterson and McCubbin 1987, Aldwin 2007) and dysfunctional [avoidant] (Folkman 1984, Spirito et al. 1988, Türküm 1999) coping skills are expressed. Based on this information in the literature, the general characteristics of students who use functional (active) and dysfunctional (avoidant) coping to cope with school burnout can be summarized as in table-1.

Conclusion

School burnout, as the reflection of the concept of professional burnout in educational environments, has started to be a research topic in recent years. School burnout affects not only the school processes of individuals but also their individual and social lives, in many aspects, negatively. In the literature, the factors that reduce/protect or increase/cause school burnout and the negative consequences of school burnout have been the subject of research. It is noteworthy that the issue of coping with school burnout is incomplete. Therefore, in this compilation study, the issue of coping with school burnout is discussed.

First of all, general information about school burnout and the concept of coping was given in this study. Then, the concept of coping with school burnout is discussed. In the related literature, the concept of school burnout is a concept that has been built on the concept of professional burnout and stress and has been the subject of research. Considering this,

it can be argued that coping strategies used to cope with both professional burnout and stress can also be used to cope with school burnout. In this study, how students can use coping strategies used in stress and professional burnout in school burnout is included. In addition, based on the experimental studies carried out to increase students' coping with school burnout, information on how some of the techniques of the theories used in experimental studies can be used to cope with school burnout is given. Finally, information was given about the characteristics of students who use functional (active) or dysfunctional (avoidant) coping skills to cope with school burnout.

This compilation study focuses on coping with school burnout, which has not been addressed before and is a unique issue. In this context, the following suggestions can be made for new researchers and practitioners:

1. Considering that the concept of school burnout is mostly focused on in the literature and the issue of coping with this situation is not at the forefront, it is thought that it is important for new researchers to examine especially the issue of coping with school burnout. In this context, different studies can be carried out by using qualitative, quantitative and mixed method research on coping with school burnout in new studies.
2. Schools or organizations providing mental health services outside the school can carry out individual or group work for individuals who experience school burnout and who have different psychological or social problems due to this problem situation.
3. Practitioners or field workers can prepare psycho education or intervention programs for individuals who experience intense school burnout and carry out group work on this issue.

Table 1. General characteristics of students who use functional (active) and dysfunctional (avoidant) coping to cope with school burnout

<i>General characteristics of students using functional (active) coping</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -They make alternative plans when they get tired of the lessons. -They constantly review their working strategies. -They do not hesitate to get support when they have difficulties in academic matters. -They focus on their positive feelings and thoughts when the school process and exams force them. -They cooperate with family, friends and teachers to solve the problems they have experienced during the education process. -Determine alternative study methods for challenging courses. -When they feel academically exhausted and tired, they prefer to rest and do different activities to overcome this situation.
<i>General characteristics of students using dysfunctional (avoidant) coping</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -When the lessons and homework force them, they choose to give up quickly. -When they feel that the school process is wearing them down, they blame external factors such as family, school, and teachers. -When challenging lessons tire them out, they focus on other options rather than a way to act for a solution. -They do not make an extra effort for the courses they failed. -In general, they postpone their responsibilities such as homework delivery and exam work. -They are not aware of their strengths.

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