

Review Article

Effect and causes of burnout on mental health among healthcare professionals

Yaser Yahya Qattan^{1*}, Faisal Ahmed Rashed², Amaal Omar Hanani³,
Ali Mohammed Alasmari⁴, Hussain Ali Al Eid⁵, Zahraa Fouad Al-Sunni⁶,
Hayfa Ahmed Hassan⁷, Ahmed Mohammed Alsahli⁸, Mshary Ali Altuwaijri⁹,
Salma Abdulrahman Albrak¹⁰, Hashem Ahmed Kholedi³, Sulafah Tariq Shaker¹¹

¹Department of Psychiatry, Al-Amal Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Hospital, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

²College of Medicine, Shaqra University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

³Department of Psychiatry, Eradah Mental Health Complex, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

⁴Primary Healthcare Center, Al-Sharayie 7 Healthcare Center, Mecca, Saudi Arabia

⁵Department of Intensive Care Unit, Qatif Central Hospital, Qatif, Saudi Arabia

⁶Department of Neurology, Dammam Medical Complex, Dammam, Saudi Arabia

⁷Department of Internal Medicine, Prince Saud bin Jalawi Hospital, Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia

⁸Health Insurance, Ministry of Health, Medina, Saudi Arabia

⁹College of Medicine, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

¹⁰College of Medicine, Ibn Sina National College, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

¹¹Pharmacy Department, King Abdulaziz Hospital, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Received: 01 December 2023

Accepted: 16 December 2023

*Correspondence:

Dr. Yaser Yahya Qattan,

E-mail: yasserqattan@hotmail.com

Copyright: © the author(s), publisher and licensee Medip Academy. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

ABSTRACT

Burnout, which refers to workplace stress, poses a threat to the well-being of healthcare practitioners, affecting both their individual mental health and the overall functioning of the healthcare system. The demanding nature of the profession, cultural expectations, and organizational challenges all contribute significantly to the signs of burnout, such as exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal achievement. Research conducted in Saudi Arabia and GCC countries sheds light on the factors that contribute to burnout among healthcare professionals, emphasizing the need for a different approach to clinical management. The study explores the relationship between burnout and mental health, uncovering an interplay that undermines both individuals' well-being and patient care quality. It delves into how burnout extends beyond boundaries to impact lives and the broader healthcare system. The review highlights the importance of tailored interventions, stress management techniques, and organizational support in clinical management strategies that address the challenges faced by healthcare professionals in these regions. Furthermore, it emphasizes individualized support systems, team-based approaches to care provision, and policies promoting work-life balance as measures for mitigating burnout. To effectively address burnout, it is crucial to implement monitoring and evaluation systems while advocating for policy changes at both governmental levels. By taking an approach, we can ensure the prevention and management of burnout. As healthcare systems continue to evolve, prioritizing the well-being of healthcare professionals becomes increasingly important. This ensures healthcare delivery and maintains a high standard of quality care.

Keywords: Burnout, Mental health, Healthcare professionals, Occupational stress, Well-being

INTRODUCTION

The issue of burnout among healthcare professionals is a concern in Saudi Arabia and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. It poses a threat to their health and overall well-being.¹⁻³ Burnout refers to workplace stress that hasn't been effectively managed, resulting in exhaustion, depersonalization, and a sense of reduced accomplishment.⁴ This problem has gained attention due to its impact on healthcare providers and the quality of care. Various studies conducted in the Saudi Arabia and GCC context have identified factors contributing to burnout among healthcare professionals. The demanding nature of their work, high patient loads, long hours, and limited resources all contribute significantly to burnout.^{5,6}

Additionally, cultural expectations for work ethics can also create an environment that places demands on healthcare providers, leading to increased stress levels.^{7,8} The consequences of burnout on health are extensive and far-reaching. Research has found a prevalence of burnout among healthcare professionals, which impacts their mental well-being. Emotional exhaustion, which is at the core of burnout, has been associated with symptoms of depression and anxiety.⁹⁻¹¹ The chronic stress experienced by healthcare providers can result in health challenges that not only affect them personally but also impact the quality of care they deliver.^{12,13}

The connection between burnout and mental health works both ways. There is evidence from another study that shows healthcare professionals who have health problems are more prone to experiencing burnout.¹⁴ On the other hand, burnout has an impact on mental health, leading to a harmful cycle that affects both the well-being of individuals and the overall functionality of the healthcare system. To tackle burnout effectively, it is crucial to have an understanding of its causes and effects. In order to promote health among healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia and GCC countries, interventions should address both systemic factors. A recent study highlighted the significance of support, including managing workloads, cultivating a work environment, and implementing wellness programs.^{15,16}

Additionally, individual coping strategies like mindfulness and stress management techniques play a role in preventing and alleviating burnout. Therefore, it is evident that the relationship between burnout and mental health among healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia and GCC countries is intricate and interconnected. The demanding nature of their profession and organizational influences contribute to burnout, which impacts practitioners' mental well-being. A comprehensive approach encompassing both interventions and individual coping strategies is necessary to tackle this issue effectively. As healthcare systems in these regions continue to evolve, prioritizing the health of professionals becomes essential for ensuring the delivery of high-quality healthcare services. This study

aims to examine the effects and causes of burnout on health among healthcare professionals.

METHODS

On 26 November 2023, I conducted an analysis of articles sourced from Cochrane library, Pubmed, and Scopus. The focus was on investigating the impact and reasons behind burnout among healthcare professionals and its effects on health. Specifically, I honed in on studies conducted in English since 2008 that prioritize the well-being of these professionals. The objective of this study was to gain insights into assessment methods and early warning systems that can aid healthcare professionals in managing burnout and fostering mental health.

DISCUSSION

The issue of burnout among healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia and GCC countries is receiving attention, highlighting the need for action. The symptoms of burnout reveal an interaction between experiences and systemic factors, emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive approach to managing clinical situations. Key manifestations of burnout include feeling emotionally drained, detached from patients, and experiencing a reduced sense of accomplishment. These symptoms are intertwined with personal aspects of healthcare practice. The profession's demanding nature, expectations, and organizational obstacles contribute significantly to burnout. It is vital to provide support and implement stress management strategies as part of clinical management for burnout.¹⁷ Recognizing the challenges faced by healthcare professionals is crucial in developing tailored interventions. This includes offering access to counseling services and equipping individuals with coping mechanisms and resilience-building skills to help them navigate the high-pressure environment successfully. The relationship between burnout and mental health is bidirectional, underscoring the importance of taking measures such as integrating intelligence training into professional development programs. Organizational culture and leadership play a role in preventing and managing burnout. Creating a work environment that values work-life balance, encourages communication, and prioritizes employee well-being is essential. Adopting team-based approaches fosters a sense of community among healthcare professionals, allowing them to share experiences and support one another.

Having a schedule. Implementing policies that consider the workload can greatly contribute to achieving a better balance between work and personal life. Regularly monitoring and evaluating interventions ensures their continued relevance and effectiveness. Gathering assessments and feedback from healthcare professionals allows organizations to tune their strategies, leading to ongoing improvements. Advocating for policy changes at organizational and governmental levels establishes a systemic approach to prevent and manage burnout.

Clinical manifestation

The impact of burnout on healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries is extensive, affecting both their well-being and various aspects of their professional lives. One prominent sign of burnout among healthcare professionals is exhaustion. This can be described as feeling drained, depleted, and emotionally fatigued. When clinicians experience exhaustion, they often struggle to empathize with patients, colleagues, and even their own families.¹⁸ This depletion of resources can lead to a sense of detachment and cynicism, which starkly contrasts the compassionate and empathetic approach that is crucial in healthcare settings.

Depersonalization is another aspect of burnout. It manifests as attitudes and feelings towards patients and one's job. Clinicians who experience depersonalization may develop an indifferent demeanor as a way to protect themselves from the toll of their work. This damages the relationship between healthcare providers and patients and contributes to a decline in job satisfaction- the third element of burnout's reduced personal accomplishment, which has clinical implications.^{19,20} Healthcare professionals who experience reduced accomplishment often strive to regain a sense of competence and successful achievement in their work with people. This situation can result in individuals feeling inadequate and a decrease in the perception of healthcare professional's effectiveness. The consequences of burnout in a setting can lead to a decrease in self-confidence and motivation, potentially compromising the quality of care. Burnout doesn't just affect individuals; it also has implications for the healthcare system. It contributes to increased absenteeism, reduced productivity and higher turnover rates among healthcare staff. This puts strain on the remaining workforce and jeopardizes the continuity and quality of patient care. Burnout is pronounced in Saudi Arabia and GCC countries due to cultural and organizational factors. The societal expectations placed on healthcare professionals and structures within healthcare institutions add pressure on individuals.

Gender roles can also play a role in intensifying burnout among healthcare practitioners. Burnout doesn't stay within the realm; it also spills over into lives. Mood disorders, anxiety and disrupted sleep patterns are commonly seen among those experiencing burnout. The blurred boundaries between professional life and the demanding nature of healthcare roles contribute to a manifestation of burnout that affects both mental health and overall well-being. The symptoms of burnout in healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia and GCC countries are complex. Have an impact. Feeling emotionally exhausted, detached from their work, and experiencing a decrease in fulfilment are all aspects that affect the mental well-being of individuals and have repercussions on the entire healthcare system. It is essential to acknowledge and tackle these symptoms as they play a role in ensuring the overall welfare of healthcare workers

and maintaining a sustainable provision of top-notch patient care within these areas.

Management

Addressing burnout among healthcare professionals is a task that necessitates a strategy. It is essential to comprehend the causes and implement interventions to mitigate burnout and prioritize the overall well-being of healthcare providers. The clinical management procedure entails identifying and evaluating burnout.^{21,22} Healthcare institutions employ validated tools and surveys to assess the prevalence and intensity of burnout among their workforce with a focus on exhaustion depersonalization. Diminished fulfilment. This collected data serves as a foundation for targeted interventions allowing organizations to customize their approaches based on needs. Providing support is an aspect of clinical management. By tailoring interventions according to the needs of healthcare professionals we acknowledge that burnout can manifest differently in each individual. Offering access to counselling services whether through employee assistance programs or external mental health providers gives individuals an opportunity to address the toll of their work. This individualized approach recognizes that there is more than one size fits all solution for addressing the challenges faced by healthcare professionals.

Implementing stress management techniques and coping strategies is also crucial, in management. Equipping healthcare professionals with tools to navigate high pressure environments is essential. Training programs that educate individuals on strategies, for coping with stress developing resilience and practicing mindfulness can empower people to manage challenging situations and avoid burnout. The culture within an organization and the leadership it provides are crucial, in preventing and addressing burnout. Leadership plays a role, in fostering a work environment that values the balance between work and personal life. It is important to prioritize transparent communication channels where healthcare professionals feel comfortable expressing their concerns without any fear of consequences. By creating a sense of community and teamwork we can effectively address burnout among healthcare professionals. This can be achieved by promoting team building activities, fostering camaraderie, and providing opportunities for debriefing sessions where healthcare professionals can share their experiences and support one another. Taking a team-based approach helps create an environment that mitigates the impact of burnout on individuals.

In order to manage situations effectively, it is essential to integrate resilience and emotional intelligence training into healthcare education and professional development programs. These skills empower healthcare professionals to navigate situations, manage dynamics effectively, and cultivate emotional well-being. By building resilience through training we can combat burnout more effectively.

Clinical management should also address factors that contribute to burnout, such as workload and inflexible schedules. Implementing policies that allow for working hours, breaks, and time off helps healthcare professionals achieve a work-life balance. Additionally, offering flexibility in scheduling acknowledges the diverse needs of these professionals, given the demanding nature of their roles. Lastly, encouraging self-care practices should be a part of clinical management strategies.

Healthcare institutions have the ability to offer resources and programs that encourage well-being. These can include fitness programs, guidance on nutrition and access to activities that promote wellness. By prioritizing self-care, healthcare professionals are empowered to take care of their physical health. It is important to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions for clinical management. Regularly assessing the work environment and gathering feedback from healthcare experts allows organizations to refine their strategies.

Continuous improvement is crucial to ensure that interventions remain relevant and effective in addressing the evolving challenges. It is essential for organizations at both governmental levels to advocate for policy changes that address workload, provide health resources, and prioritize the well-being of healthcare professionals. This systemic approach plays a role in preventing and managing burnout among healthcare professionals. Effectively managing burnout requires a proactive approach that considers systemic factors, promotes a supportive workplace culture, and implements targeted interventions. Recognizing burnout as an issue requiring attention and commitment is vital for sustainable clinical management while enhancing the quality of patient care.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is crucial to adopt a comprehensive and proactive clinical management approach to address the challenge of burnout among healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia and GCC countries. The intertwined nature of systemic factors highlights the significance of tailored interventions, stress management, and organizational support. Collaborative efforts from healthcare organizations, leaders, and practitioners are necessary to tackle the signs of burnout, such as exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Considering the organizational context of healthcare in these regions magnifies the impact of burnout on well-being. Recognizing burnout as an issue that demands attention and commitment is highly important. Integrating intelligence training team-based approaches and policies promoting a work-life balance can contribute to sustainable clinical management practices. Prioritizing the well-being of healthcare professionals is optional for them individually but also critical for maintaining high-quality patient care. As healthcare systems in Saudi Arabia and GCC countries progress, proactive measures to manage burnout become increasingly imperative. This study

strongly advocates for a dedication to addressing burnout in order to foster a resilient healthcare environment that benefits both professionals and the patients they serve

Funding: No funding sources

Conflict of interest: None declared

Ethical approval: Not required

REFERENCES

1. Aldhamin RA, Al Saif AZ. The mental health of healthcare workers in GCC countries during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Taibah Univ Med Sci*. 2023;18(1):45-60.
2. Chemali Z, Ezzeddine FL, Gelaye B, Dossett ML, Salameh J, Bizri M, et al. Burnout among healthcare providers in the complex environment of the Middle East: a systematic review. *BMC Public Health*. 2019;19(1):1337.
3. Altwaijri Y, Bilal L, Almeharish A, BinMuammar A, DeVol E, Hyder S, et al. Psychological distress reported by healthcare workers in Saudi Arabia during the COVID-19 pandemic: A cross-sectional study. *PLoS One*. 2022;17(6):e0268976.
4. Valsania S, Laguía A, Moriano JA. Burnout: A Review of Theory and Measurement. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2022;19(3):1780.
5. Alenezi N, Hamad Alyami A, Omar Alrehaili B, Adnan Arruhaily A, Kareem Alenazi N, Abdo Radman Al-Dubai S. Prevalence and Associated Factors of Burnout Among Saudi Resident Doctors: A Multicenter Cross-Sectional Study. *Alpha Psychiatry*. 2022;23(4):173-83.
6. Elbarazi I, Loney T, Yousef S, Elias A. Prevalence of and factors associated with burnout among health care professionals in Arab countries: a systematic review. *BMC Health Serv Res*. 2017;17(1):491.
7. Koinis A, Giannou V, Drantaki V, Angelaina S, Stratou E, Saridi M. The Impact of Healthcare Workers Job Environment on Their Mental-emotional Health. Coping Strategies: The Case of a Local General Hospital. *Health Psychol Res*. 2015;3(1):1984.
8. Kaihlanen AM, Hietapakka L, Heponiemi T. Increasing cultural awareness: qualitative study of nurses' perceptions about cultural competence training. *BMC Nurs*. 2019;18:38.
9. Alwhaibi M, Alhawassi TM, Balkhi B, Al Aloola N, Almomen AA, Alhossan A, et al. Burnout and Depressive Symptoms in Healthcare Professionals: A Cross-Sectional Study in Saudi Arabia. *Healthcare (Basel)*. 2022;10(12):2447.
10. Stodolska A, Wójcik G, Barańska I, Kijowska V, Szczerbińska K. Prevalence of burnout among healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic and associated factors - a scoping review. *Int J Occup Med Environ Health*. 2023;36(1):21-58.
11. Koutsimani P, Montgomery A, Georganta K. The Relationship Between Burnout, Depression, and

- Anxiety: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Front Psychol*. 2019;10:284.
12. Rink LC, Oyesanya TO, Adair KC, Humphreys JC, Silva SG, Sexton JB. Stressors Among Healthcare Workers: A Summative Content Analysis. *Glob Qual Nurs Res*. 2023;10:23333936231161127.
 13. Hert S. Burnout in Healthcare Workers: Prevalence, Impact and Preventative Strategies. *Local Reg Anesth*. 2020;13:171-83.
 14. Dabbah NA, Elhadi YAM. High levels of burnout among health professionals treating COVID-19 patients in two Nile basin countries with limited resources. *Sci Rep*. 2023;13(1):6455.
 15. Sheikh JI, Cheema S, Chaabna K, Lowenfels AB, Mamtani R. Capacity building in health care professions within the Gulf cooperation council countries: paving the way forward. *BMC Med Educ*. 2019;19(1):83.
 16. Hanawi MK, Khan SA, Al-Borie HM. Healthcare human resource development in Saudi Arabia: emerging challenges and opportunities-a critical review. *Public Health Rev*. 2019;40:1.
 17. Maslach C, Leiter MP. Understanding the burnout experience: recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World Psychiatry*. 2016;15(2):103-11.
 18. Khammissa RA, Nemutandani S, Shangase SL, Feller G, Lemmer J, Feller L. The burnout construct with reference to healthcare providers: A narrative review. *SAGE Open Med*. 2022;10:20503121221083080.
 19. Khammissa RA, Nemutandani S, Shangase SL, Feller G, Lemmer J, Feller L. The burnout construct with reference to healthcare providers: A narrative review. *SAGE Open Med*. 2022;10:20503121221083080.
 20. Spieler B, Baum N. Burnout: A Mindful Framework for the Radiologist. *Curr Probl Diagn Radiol*. 2022;51(2):155-61.
 21. Søvold LE, Naslund JA, Kousoulis AA, Saxena S, Qoronfleh MW, Grobler C, et al. Prioritizing the Mental Health and Well-Being of Healthcare Workers: An Urgent Global Public Health Priority. *Front Public Health*. 2021;9:679397.
 22. Figueiredo S, Koch U, Oliveira E, Ennis-Durstine K. Implementing complex interventions to mitigate burnout among qualified healthcare professionals: a realist review protocol. *BMJ Open*. 2023;13(1):e067577.

Cite this article as: Qattan YY, Rashed FA, Hanani AO, Alasmari AM, Eid HAA, Al-Sunni ZF, et al. Effect and causes of burnout on mental health among healthcare professionals. *Int J Community Med Public Health* 2024;11:496-500.