

RESEARCH ARTICLE

GENDER BASED DIFFERENCES OF BURNOUT AMONG CLINICAL AND ACADEMIC PHYSICAL THERAPISTS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Burnout can develop due to various risk factors including socio-economic, conventional and personal, for both men and women. Some studies suggest increased prevalence of burnout in female individuals, which may be due to actual aspects like how the assessment tools are used or the way burnout manifests in both genders, including levels of emotional exhaustion, feelings of decrease in personal effectiveness in the work environment. **Objective:** To determine the gender based differences of burnout among clinical and academic physical therapist. **Methodology:** This cross-sectional comparative study was conducted at major various educational institutes, hospitals and private clinical setups of twin cities Rawalpindi and Islamabad from January to June 2021 (6 months) The total sample was n= 324 participants enlisted using non-probability purposive sampling. The adults aged 25-40 years, with at least 1 year of working experience, both male and female were included. The data was collected using Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) tool. The data analysis was done by SPSS 21 version. **Results:** The mean age of participant was 29.69±4.34 years. The level of burnout among the physical therapist on the basis of gender (p<0.001) and occupational differences (p=0.001), both showed statistically significant association. **Conclusion:** Level of burnout in physical therapists was found to be low. Female physical therapists exhibited greater level of burnout as compared to their male counterparts and also academicians tended to have greater burnout as compared to those working in clinical settings

Keywords: Academic training, burnout, gender, health care delivery, physical therapist.

INTRODUCTION

Burnout is a long-drawn-out reaction to constant enthusiastic and relational stressors at work and is characterized by the three basics of depletion, negativity and inefficacy¹. People who are experiencing burnout typically show mental issues, obsessive issues, disposition issues and social issues among different issues².

A burnt-out individual experiences additional exhaustion and incapability to carry out on the occupation. Burnout can impact all occupations particularly healthcare professionals³. Professional burnouts are a significant issue in social services defined as healthcare professionals' reaction to long-term stress⁴. Employees in the health-care industry are at a significant risk of burnout⁵. Burnout also impacts the job, goals and mental health of one. Burnout is not a severe condition, according to Friedenberger, instead, it is a persistent stress state⁶.

Many relate their burnout experiences to workplace conditions⁷. Medical care experts have been portrayed as especially, defenseless against burnout⁸. Rehabilitation professionals had a high

risk of burnout, specially occupational therapists and physical therapists^{8,9}.

Physical therapists work with people for physical stress management and to enhance their ability to perform everyday activities and functioning to make patients independent in life. The responsibility may likewise be the reason for work related pressure¹⁰. Physical therapists are in everyday contact with the physical and mental stress of patients as they face different conditions of incapacity. This may lead clinicians to safeguard themselves by removing themselves from associations with their patients. As they spend most of the work day profoundly associated with their patients, the treatment they give is inwardly, emotionally, and mentally testing. Burnout is caused by similar mechanisms in the many professional groups studied⁸.

Among male, low burnout was attributed to fulfillment with one's work and occupation, companions, family members and colleagues. Burnout among women decreased in conjunction with increasing satisfaction with one's health, spare energy, and companions, family members, and colleagues, and increased as a result of working in a

location other than a medical care unit or educational center³.

Burnout related studies have been performed worldwide, but no data was found in Pakistan related to physical therapist burnout where both gender and occupation were observed. The current study determined the gender-based disparity in the likelihood of burnout in physical therapists working in academia or clinical settings which could determine the need for future researches exploring the factors which lead up to this condition.

METHODOLOGY

This comparative cross-sectional study was conducted on $n=324$ physical therapist from Jan to June, 2021, working at various hospitals, clinical settings and institutions of Islamabad. The Physical Therapists enrolled in the study belonged to either clinical practice or academia, both genders ranging from 25-40 years of age with at least 1 year of working experience. Those unwilling to participate were excluded from the study.

The data was collected after taking ethical approval from Ethical Committee of Riphah International University, as well as written informed consent from the subjects enlisted using non-probability purposive sampling. The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) was applied to assess Level of Burnout among Physical Therapists. The degree of physical and psychological fatigue experienced in the questionnaire consisted of three sub components; Personal burnout, Work-related burnout and Client-related burnout. Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) is a 19-item scale

measuring burnout in three domains: personal burnout (6 items: questions 1–6), work-related burnout (WRB) (7 items: questions 7–13), and client-related burnout (CRB) (6 items: questions 14–19)¹¹. In reliability analysis, Cronbach's alpha exceed 0.7 for all subscales indicating a high level of internal consistency¹².

It was applied on a sample participants calculated via Epitool. The data on demographics including age in years, gender, and type of job of the Physical therapists was acquired after taking permissions from their respective heads and written informed consent from participants.

The demographic data was presented as mean \pm SD, n (%), while the frequency distribution responses of CBI individual items were presented in the table. The comparison was made between the genders as well as job type regarding CBI subdomain and total score, with independent t-test.

The level of significance was set at $p<0.05$. The data collected was analyzed using SPSS 21.

RESULTS

The overall mean age of $n=324$ physical therapist was 29.69 ± 4.35 years with range between 25-40 years. A total $n=162$ males and $n=162$ females were also equally obtained from academic ($n=81$ female, $n=81$ male) and clinical setting ($n=81$ female, $n=81$ male).

The detailed frequency distribution regarding academic and clinical physical therapist's score on individual items of Copenhagen Burnout Inventory and for its total are shown in (Table.1).

Table.1. Comparison and frequency distribution of CBI regarding Gender & Job type

Domain of Burnout	Group	Mean \pm Sd	p-value	Low n(%)	Moderate n(%)	High n(%)
Personal Burnout	Male	8.38 \pm 4.870	0.000***	140(85.9)	17(10.4)	6(3.7)
	Female	11.99 \pm 5.42		105(64.4)	37(22.7)	21(12.9)
	Academics	11.21 \pm 5.45	0.001**	109(66.5)	41(25.0)	14(25.0)
	Clinical	9.14 \pm 5.27		136(84)	13(8)	13(8)
Work-related Burnout	Male	9.19 \pm 5.39	0.000***	143(87.7)	16(9.8)	4(2.5)
	Female	11.77 \pm 5.87		129(79.1)	24(14.2)	10(6.1)
	Academics	11.56 \pm 5.62	0.001**	133(81.1)	25(15.2)	6(3.7)
	Clinical	9.38 \pm 5.74		139(85.8)	15(9.3)	8(4.9)
Client-related Burnout	Male	6.39 \pm 5.61	0.165	142(87.1)	16(9.8)	5(3.1)
	Female	7.21 \pm 4.96		144(88.3)	14(8.4)	5(3.1)
	Academics	7.51 \pm 5.46	0.016**	136(82.9)	23(14)	6(3)
	Clinical	6.09 \pm 5.05		142(87.1)	16(9.8)	5(3.1)
Total CBI Score	Male	24.98 \pm 14.10	0.000***	138(84.7)	15(9.2)	10(6.1)
	Female	30.95 \pm 13.78		112(68.7)	20(12.3)	31(19.0)
	Academics	30.47 \pm 14.50	0.001**	120(73.2)	23(14.0)	21(12.8)
	Clinical	25.46 \pm 13.55		130(80.2)	12(7.4)	20(12.3)

Significance level: $p<0.05^*$, $p<0.01^{**}$, $p<0.001^{***}$

Independent t-test was used to analyze and compare the groups and statistically significant difference was observed in level of burnout between the two genders ($p=0.000$) with females (30.95 ± 13.78) having a higher level of burnout as compared to males (24.98 ± 14.10). Similarly, significant difference ($p=0.001$) was found in level of burnout when comparison was done between academic physical therapists (30.47 ± 14.50) and clinicians (25.46 ± 13.55).

DISCUSSION

To the best of our knowledge, the present study is the first to investigate level of burnout in both genders and different types of job occupancies which could affect the efficiency and work capacity of physical therapists.

Females associated with academia had high level of burnout, emotional fatigue and neuroticism than males¹³. Another study observing the height of burnout, individual intolerance skill, and work pressure on the basis of gender differences for therapists they find out that female therapist had high level of burnout than male therapists⁸. Female therapists at the age of 20s working in small sized hospitals are at high level of burnout due to work pressure⁵. Similar relationship was demonstrated in the present study where the level of burnout was not found to be associated with gender disparities which may be associated with physical vulnerability of the female gender.

Factual investigations revealed no significant differences between female and male physiotherapists in terms of the BSI (Burnout Syndrome Inventory) scores, the overall burnout record, or the assessment of life satisfaction³. High level of burnout was examined in all three domains of Copenhagen Burnout Inventory¹⁴. Another study reported that degree of burnout was low-grade among physical therapists and the association between job stressors and burnout were also measured¹⁵. Differences are seen across literature owed to the type, duration and varying reflections upon one's own level of exhaustion. In the present study the physical therapists have low degree of burnout probably owed to the majority of participants in the study of being young age and having low levels of perceived exertion but females

exhibited greater degree of burnout as compared to their male counterparts.

A study determined that gender difference was a cause in the practice of job burnout among academic employees. This study accomplished that female and male had high level of burnout whereas not gender nor type of job affected the degree of burnout among physical therapists¹⁶. In hospitals emotional fatigue was extensively elevated among physiotherapists working with adults and workers in hospitals¹⁷. Present study showed evident association of type of job or activity with degree of burnout among physical therapists but most of the therapists reported low degree of burnout which was not affecting their personal well-being and relationships.

The occurrence of burnout disorder in intensive care units was seen between health care professionals who were working there. This study highlighted that it was achievable to examine the low occurrence of burnout disorders, among professional physical therapists, on the other hand an elevated threat for its increment existed due to elevated job demands and stressors¹⁵. The physiotherapists who participated in present study however did not report greater levels of burnout nor did they seem to be exposed to high stressors at most as they were likely to be at comfort with their working environment and the job demands expected of them. However, academicians reported greater level of burnout probably owed to the multitude of tasks and continuously evolving job demands.

The current study was a multi-center study where physiotherapists of both gender working in clinical locations and academia were questioned. Validated questionnaire enabled us to compare our results with previous studies. However, it was a comparative study that utilized a self-reporting questionnaire and has a chance of respondent bias. The perceptions of physical therapists and associated risk factors were not assessed which are limitations of the current study.

On the basis of findings from the present study, we recommend that physical activity levels should be accounted for which could determine its effect upon the level of burnout among physical therapists.

CONCLUSION

Level of burnout in physical therapists was found to be low. Female physical therapists exhibited greater level of burnout as compared to their male counterparts and also academicians tended to have greater burnout as compared to those working in clinical settings.

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