ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Risk of burnout among radiographers in a large tertiary care hospital in Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Radiographers are known to be at increased risk of burnout due to the emotionally taxing interactions that they have with their patients on a daily basis. The aim of this study was to assess the risk of burnout among radiographers in a large tertiary care hospital in Saudi Arabia.

Methods: This was an observational, cross-sectional study using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS). This tool has been extensively tested and validated. 150 full-time radiographers at King Abdulaziz Medical City (KAMC), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia were invited. Trainees, interns and on job trainees (OJT) were excluded to ensure sample homogeneity.

Results: 150 participants were invited to participate in the questionnaire with response rate 142 (95%). 70 participants (49%) were male and 72 (51%) female. Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey subscale results: The mean (\pm *SD*) score for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment were 21.44 (\pm 13.0), 8.12 (\pm 6.99) and 35.63 (\pm 8.59) respectively. Moderate to high risk of burnout for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal exhaustion, depersonalization and personal exhaustion and personal accomplishment were reported in 67%, 52% and 58% of participants respectively.

Conclusions: 67% of radiographers were at moderate to high risk of burnout for emotional exhaustion, 52% for depersonalization and 58% for personal accomplishment. Policymakers should take necessary steps to recognize factors contributing to staff burnout and take appropriate steps to improve the work environment.

Key Words: Burnout, Radiographer, Work environment, Stress

1. INTRODUCTION

Burnout can be defined as the impact of unrelieved stress on individuals' reactions.^[1] Its consequences may contribute to the deterioration of psychological and physiological functions, reduce morale, productivity and increase absenteeism, job turnover, alcohol or drug abuse.^[2–7] Burnout may directly or indirectly affect patient outcomes. A study found a significant association between high burnout scores and poor culture of safety scores.^[8] Multiple studies showed

that rotating shift assignment workers were more prone to burnout and may risk the safety of both health care providers and patients.^[9–16] The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) is a validated tool to assess the prevalence of burnout in three sequential subscales, namely: emotional exhaustion (reduction in emotional resources and energy), depersonalization (negative feelings and insensitivity towards service recipients) and lack of personal accomplishment (negative impression of person's work).^[17]

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There are many factors that have been shown to contribute to burnout among health care providers, including gender, stage of life, work-life relationships, age group and workplace environment.^[18-31] Years of experience can make health care providers less susceptible to burnout.^[32,33] A significant correlation has been shown between burnout and working condition.^[33–43] Individuals who care about other people, performing ideal service to others, who work with high expectations, and who deal with other people's problems are more susceptible to burnout.^[44] Prevalence of burnout and the effect of public's point of view has been shown to be closely correlated.^[45] Radiographers who have many responsibilities toward patients, colleagues, referring physicians, and radiologists are exposed to chronic stress and occupational burnout.^[46,47] Moreover, radiographers are expected to do more with fewer resources which increase susceptibility to acquiring burnout.^[46] Staff turnover at King Abdulaziz Medical City (KAMC) has been increasing recently as reported by manpower status reports. This could be very well attributed to staff burnout. Burnout among health care providers has been the subject of many studies. However, there is lack of data reporting burnout among radiographers in Saudi Arabia. This study is the first to assess the risk of burnout in a large tertiary care hospital in Saudi Arabia.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted at KAMC, a large tertiary care hospital with a bed capacity of 1,500 including the largest trauma care center in Saudi Arabia. It employs more than 150 radiographers. Full time radiographers are required to work a total of 45 hours per week with 2 days off. The radiology department at KAMC is a very large and busy department, performing more than 300,000 procedures per year. An observational, cross-sectional study using the MBI-HSS was conducted. The MBI-HSS tool has been extensively tested and validated.^[17,48] A license was purchased from Mind Garden Incorporation to administer the survey tool. The tool

consists of 22 questions. An additional 4 multiple choice questions were added to the tool. These 4 questions covered gender, coping techniques, factors that affect the relationship to the work and what the participants have considered in the past 12 months. MBI-HSS questions measure the 3 stages of burnout syndrome in terms of emotional exhaustion (9 items), depersonalization (5 items) and lack of personal accomplishment (8 items). The manual scoring key was used to classify participants into low, moderate, or high risk of burnout (see Table 1). The MBI-HSS questions were written as personal feelings about the subjects. The answers were as how often the participants experienced these feelings on a 7-point Likert type scale starting from never (0) to every day (6). A higher mean score indicated greater burnout for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. On the other hand, in personal accomplishment, higher burnout is associated with less mean score. We administered the MBI-HSS as an online survey using Mind Garden's Transform System(R).^[49] 150 full time radiographers were invited to participate in this study. Trainees, interns and on job trainees (OJT) were excluded to ensure sample homogeneity. The participants were assigned in different areas within the department such as General X-ray, Computed Tomography (CT), Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Vascular Imaging Radiology (VIR), Ultrasound (US) and Nuclear Medicine (NM). Participation was voluntary and all personal information was anonymous. Participants were told that the study was about their personal experience in relation to their work in the radiology department, without using burnout term to avoid their sensation to the topic. Data collection was performed between 28 February to 16 April 2018 (48 days). The collected data were entered in MS Excel and was transferred to SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 25 SPSS, Inc., Armonk, NY) for statistical analysis. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was acquired from King Abdullah International Medical Research Center (KAIMRC). Mean and standard deviation (SD) for the three stages were obtained.

MBI Overall Sample	Number of items	Max. Score	Low	Moderate	High	
Emotional exhaustion	9	54	≤16	17-26	≥ 27	
Depersonalization	5	30	≤ 6	7-12	≥ 13	
Personal Accomplishment	8	48	\geq 39	32-38	\leq 31	

Table 1. Categorization of MBI-HSS scores

3. RESULTS

150 full time radiographers working at KAMC were invited via e-mail to participate in our survey. 142 radiographers completed the survey with a response rate of 95%. Seventy participants (49%) were male and 72 (51%) were female.

The mean $(\pm SD)$ score for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment were 21.44 $(\pm$ 13.0), 8.12 $(\pm$ 6.99) and 35.63 $(\pm$ 8.59) respectively. Our results showed slightly higher mean of emotional exhaustion (21.44) comparing with MBI norms (21.0), personal accomplishment (35.63) comparing with MBI norms (34.6) and slightly lower mean of depersonalization (8.12) comparing with MBI norms (8.7) (see Table 2). However, the differences were not significant for all three stages. The percentage of radiographers who were at moderate to high risk of burnout for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment were 67%, 52% and 58% respectively (see Table 3). The mean score for male was 22.2 (± 11.71) , 9.5 (± 7.04) , and 35.6 (± 7.85) for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment respectively. Also, female scores were 20.6 (\pm 11.00), 6.75 (± 6.13) , and 35.6 (± 8.66) for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment respectively. In emotional exhaustion subscale, all radiographers working in US section were at moderate to high risk of burnout (100%) which was the highest percentage comparing with the other sections. In depersonalization subscale, radiographers working in CT section represented the highest proportion with approximately 74% who were moderate to high risk of burnout. The greatest percentage of moderate to high risk of burnout for personal accomplishment were among radiographers within VIR section with 73% (see Tables 4-6). By comparing the mean of MBI-HSS subscale scores among sections, US radiographers had the highest risk of burnout for emotional exhaustion with 28.8. CT radiographers showed the greatest risk of burnout for both depersonalization and personal accomplishment with 10.8 and 33.5 respectively (see Figures 1-3). In response to the question about relationship towards workplace, work overload was chosen as the most negative effect toward work by 64 participants (45%). Other reasons included unfairness between employees (29%) and insufficient rewards (24%) (see Table 7). 52% of participants have considered changing specialty, changing hospital or both during the past 12 months (see Table 8). Majority of participants (63%) cope with exhaustion feelings by taking a vacation (see Figure 4). The perception of participants about their feelings of burnout was measured by asking them how often they feel burned out from work. 55% of participants have the feeling of being burned out from work at least once a month. On the other hand, 26% had that feeling a few times a year or less. Only 19% of the participants had never felt burned out from work (see Figure 5).

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for subscale scores of radiographers compared to overall sample of Maslach burnout inventory norms

Sub scale	KAMC Sample N = 142		MBI Norms Sample N = 11,067	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Emotional Exhaustion	21.44	13.1	21.0	10.8
Depersonalization	8.12	6.99	8.7	5.9
Personal Accomplishment	35.63	8.59	34.6	7.1

Table 3. Interpretat	on of MBI-HSS	S subscale scores	for radiographers	(N = 142)
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Sub scale		N (%)	
Sub scale	High risk	Moderate risk	Low risk
Emotional exhaustion	51 (36)	44 (31)	47 (33)
Depersonalization	38 (27)	36 (25)	68 (48)
Personal Accomplishment	37 (26)	45 (32)	60 (42)

 Table 4. Interpretation of emotional exhaustion score for all sections

Section	High risk of burnout n (%)	Moderate risk of burnout n (%)	Low risk of burnout n (%)
US	7 (64)	4 (36)	0 (0)
NM	4 (29)	6 (42)	4 (29)
СТ	8 (42)	5 (26)	6 (32)
VIR	2 (13)	8 (54)	5 (33)
X-ray	25 (40)	16 (25)	22 (35)
MRI	5 (25)	5 (25)	10 (50)

Section	High risk of burnout n (%)	Moderate risk of burnout n (%)	Low risk of burnout n (%)
US	5 (46)	2 (18)	4 (36)
NM	2 (14)	6 (43)	6 (43)
CT	7 (37)	7 (37)	5 (26)
VIR	6 (40)	3 (20)	6 (40)
X-ray	17 (27)	13 (21)	33 (52)
MRI	1 (5)	5 (25)	14 (70)

 Table 5. Interpretation of depersonalization score for all sections

Table 6. Interpretation of personal accomplishment score for all sections

Section	High risk of burnout n (%)	Moderate risk of burnout n (%)	Low risk of burnout n (%)
US	3 (27)	3 (27)	5 (46)
NM	5 (36)	2 (14)	7 (50)
CT	7 (37)	5 (26)	7 (37)
VIR	4 (27)	7 (46)	4 (27)
X-ray	15 (24)	24 (38)	24 (38)
MRI	3 (15)	4 (20)	13 (65)







Figure 2. Mean score of depersonalization for all sections



Figure 3. Mean score of personal accomplishment for all sections



Figure 4. Coping with exhaustion feelings from work



Figure 5. Feeling burned out from work

Table 7. Factors that have the most negative effect onrelationship to work place

Answer	Frequency (%)
Work overload	64 (45)
Unfairness in dealing with different employees	40 (28)
Insufficient reward	34 (24)
Others	4 (3)

Table 8. Radiographers' responses to the question: Did youconsider changing specialty, hospital or both over the last 12months

Answer	Frequency (%)
Neither	68 (48)
Changing both	33 (23)
Changing the hospital	23 (16)
Changing the specialty	18 (13)

4. DISCUSSION

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study conducted in Saudi Arabia that assessed the prevalence of burnout and its risk factors among radiographers. The percentage of radiographers who were at moderate to high risk of burnout for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment were 67%, 52% and 58% respectively. The mean scores were higher than MBI norms for emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment and lower for depersonalization. The higher than normal score of emotional exhaustion is a key finding since it is considered the core manifestation of burnout.^[50] Our study found that US section had the highest percentage of radiographers who were at moderate to high risk of burnout for emotional exhaustion within the sections. We believe that this is because US is an operator-dependent modality that needs to be operated by sonographers which may put more load on sonographers than the other radiographers. A study was done in Australia and New Zealand showed that radiographers within US section had high burnout for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The mean emotional exhaustion and depersonalization score among our radiographers within US section were lower than Australia and New Zealand study.^[51] In term of depersonalization, CT section had the greatest percentage of radiographers who were at moderate to high risk of burnout within the sections. There are two possible explanations for this. First, CT section deals more with patients from mild to

severe injuries. Second, due to fast scanning of computed tomography machines, it increases demand load and patients on the radiographers. VIR radiographers represented the highest percentage of radiographers who were at moderate to high risk of burnout for personal accomplishment within the sections. Radiographers within VIR section work as aid to the radiologists who do the procedure. Nature of their work as being aid to the radiologist will make the radiographers feel their work was underappreciated and undervalued. The participants in our study identified work overload as the most negative effect towards work. The radiographers are at consistent pressure due to increased workload, limited resources and poor financial rewards. This is consistent with number of studies that have identified work overload as a major contributor to staff burnout.^[52–56]

Limitations

Although this study provided very useful information, it does have limitations that should be addressed in future studies. The main limitations of this study were a limited sample size and being done at a single site.

5. CONCLUSIONS

67% of radiographers were found to be at moderate to high risk of burnout for emotional exhaustion, 52% for depersonalization and 58% for personal accomplishment. Policymakers should take necessary steps to recognize factors contributing to staff burnout and take appropriate steps to improve the work environment.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

The authors declare they have no conflicts of interest.

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