Burnout refers to the state of tiredness, exhaustion, or weariness in a person with underlying root causes primarily associated with professional factors. This condition could also be described as a psychological disorder (depicted as burnout syndrome) that might occur due to stress associated with occupation-related elements. Burnout is prevalent among the professionals that specifically require dealing with public services such as educational departments, police services, and medical profession. Major risk factors associated with burnout among physicians in Saudi Arabia were also reported in multiple studies. Furthermore, sleep deprivation, negative impact on family life, medical ailment, e.g., back pain, being in residency, young age, Saudi nationality, low salary, tobacco smoking, psychotropic medication, mismanagement of patient flow, pressure or violence from patients, exhaustive paperwork, lack of cooperation from colleagues were some of the observed factors associated with burnout among physicians serving in the healthcare sector in Saudi Arabia.

**Keywords:** Burnout, physicians, Saudi Arabia.

**ABSTRACT**

Burnout refers to the state of tiredness, exhaustion, or weariness in a person with underlying root causes primarily associated with professional factors. This condition could also be described as a psychological disorder (depicted as burnout syndrome) that might occur due to stress associated with occupation-related elements. Burnout is prevalent among the professionals that specifically require dealing with public services such as educational departments, police services, and medical profession. Major risk factors associated with burnout among physicians in Saudi Arabia were also reported in multiple studies. Furthermore, sleep deprivation, negative impact on family life, medical ailment, e.g., back pain, being in residency, young age, Saudi nationality, low salary, tobacco smoking, psychotropic medication, mismanagement of patient flow, pressure or violence from patients, exhaustive paperwork, lack of cooperation from colleagues were some of the observed factors associated with burnout among physicians serving in the healthcare sector in Saudi Arabia.

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**Materials and Methods**

Various keywords were used for the search about burnout among physicians, and search was conducted in PubMed, Google Scholar, and other scientific databases.

**Correspondence to:** Abdelaziz Mohamed Elamin Abdelaziz Ziena
*Family Medicine Consultant, Armed Forces Hospital, Jazan, Saudi Arabia.

**Email:** abdelazizzena@yahoo.com

**Full list of author information is available at the end of the article.**

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Burnout among physicians is prevalent all around the globe; however, the rates of prevalence vary greatly in different regions. For instance, a systematic review was carried out analyzing more than 100 studies carried out in 45 different countries to assess the burnout prevalence among studied groups. The data analysis revealed that prevalence varied from 0% to 80.5% where studies also varied considerably based on the quality, methods of assessing burnout and defining burnout [6]. Similar findings were observed when a systematic review was carried out to analyze studies reporting physicians’ burnout in Arab countries including Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Bahrain, and Lebanon. The outcomes of the study indicated highly variable prevalence rates in these countries for the three MBI scales including EE (20%-81%), DP (9.2%-80%) and reduced PA (13.3%-85.8%). Moreover, variation in prevalence of burnout among healthcare professionals serving in Saudi Arabia was also observed as revealed by the prevalence of EE ranging from 29.5% to 54%, DP prevalence to be (15.7%-48.6%) and reduction in PA was found varying from 17% to 71.5% [7]. Furthermore, 25.2% physicians serving in primary healthcare centers of Jeddah city in Saudi Arabia were indicated with burnout where EE was observed to be 69.5% [8]. Another study was carried out at national scale in Saudi Arabia to assess burnout prevalence among the residents serving in plastic surgery. The findings of the study suggested that 18% of the studied physicians had a high score of burnout, where EE was found high in 71%, DP was high in 50% and PA was high in 34% physicians [9]. Moreover, the prevalence of burnout among the residents working at King Abdulaziz Medical City (Riyadh) and King Fahad Specialist Hospital Buraidah (Qassim) was found to be 81% [10]. Later, 51% residents practicing at King Abdulaziz Medical City (Riyadh) were found with high levels of DP, 31.5% residents were reported with diminished PA while 12.5% residents were found emotionally exhausted [11]. In addition, more than 70% pediatric residents enrolled in the Saudi Pediatric Board program at King Abdulaziz University Hospital, located in the Western region of Saudi Arabia, were found affected with burnout. Among the surveyed pediatric residents, EE was found prevalent in 43% of the residents, DP was observed to be high in 71.8% and reduced PA was noted in 40.6% of the residents [12]. Likewise, a national survey revealed high prevalence (41%) of burnout among the residents practicing in ophthalmology [13]. Another study observed 16.3% burnout prevalence among healthcare professionals including emergency physicians practicing in different cities of Aseer region including Abha, Mushait and Khamis, located in the Southwestern part of Saudi Arabia [14]. In Makkah city, 51% physicians practicing in six government hospitals were found to be affected with burnout [15]. Recently, a study indicated that burnout prevails among more than two-third of the physicians serving in the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation field during the COVID-19 pandemic [16]. Moreover, a national survey in Saudi Arabia revealed that the use of electronic health records was associated with increased stress (50.5%) and burden leading to increased prevalence of burnout (40.1%) among healthcare professionals [17]. Major risk factors associated with burnout among physicians in Saudi Arabia were also reported in multiple studies. A study from Madina city revealed that burnout among family medicine residents was significantly related to parameters including stress of tests/examinations, extensive syllabus, fear of unfair assessment, maintenance of work/family life balance and lack of support from the seniors [18]. Positive correlation was noted between high EE score and number of calls per month [13]. Among the physicians, risk of burnout is significantly associated with male gender, smoking, and history of medications for sleep disorders [14]. In another multi-center study, gender was not found associated with burnout while EE was found lower in single physicians (25.6) compared to married (31.2) and divorced (31.3) [19]. Furthermore, sleep deprivation, negative impact on family life, medical ailment, e.g., back pain, being in residency, young age, Saudi nationality, low salary, tobacco smoking, psychotropic medication, mismanagement of patient flow, pressure or violence from patients, exhaustive paperwork, lack of cooperation from colleagues were some of the observed factors associated with burnout among physicians serving in the healthcare sector in Saudi Arabia [8,20-22].

**Discussion**

Burnout among physicians is prevalent all around the globe; however, the rates of prevalence vary greatly in different regions. For instance, a systematic review was carried out analyzing more than 100 studies carried out in 45 different countries to assess the burnout prevalence among studied groups. The data analysis revealed that prevalence varied from 0% to 80.5% where studies also varied considerably based on the quality, methods of assessing burnout and defining burnout [6]. Similar findings were observed when a systematic review was carried out to analyze studies reporting physicians’ burnout in Arab countries including Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Bahrain, and Lebanon. The outcomes of the study indicated highly variable prevalence rates in these countries for the three MBI scales including EE (20%-81%), DP (9.2%-80%) and reduced PA (13.3%-85.8%). Moreover, variation in prevalence of burnout among healthcare professionals serving in Saudi Arabia was also observed as revealed by the prevalence of EE ranging from 29.5% to 54%, DP prevalence to be (15.7%-48.6%) and reduction in PA was found varying from 17% to 71.5% [7]. Furthermore, 25.2% physicians serving in primary healthcare centers of Jeddah city in Saudi Arabia were indicated with burnout where EE was observed to be 69.5% [8]. Another study was carried out at national scale in Saudi Arabia to assess burnout prevalence among the residents serving in plastic surgery. The findings of the study suggested that 18% of the studied physicians had a high score of burnout, where EE was found high in 71%, DP was high in 50% and PA was high in 34% physicians [9]. Moreover, the prevalence of burnout among the residents working at King Abdulaziz Medical City (Riyadh) and King Fahad Specialist Hospital Buraidah (Qassim) was found to be 81% [10]. Later, 51% residents practicing at King Abdulaziz Medical City (Riyadh) were found with high levels of DP, 31.5% residents were reported with diminished PA while 12.5% residents were found emotionally exhausted [11]. In addition, more than 70% pediatric residents enrolled in the Saudi Pediatric Board program at King Abdulaziz University Hospital, located in the Western region of Saudi Arabia, were found affected with burnout. Among the surveyed pediatric residents, EE was found prevalent in 43% of the residents, DP was observed to be high in 71.8% and reduced PA was noted in 40.6% of the residents [12]. Likewise, a national survey revealed high prevalence (41%) of burnout among the residents practicing in ophthalmology [13]. Another study observed 16.3% burnout prevalence among healthcare professionals including emergency physicians practicing in different cities of Aseer region including Abha, Mushait and Khamis, located in the Southwestern part of Saudi Arabia [14]. In Makkah city, 51% physicians practicing in six government hospitals were found to be affected with burnout [15]. Recently, a study indicated that burnout prevails among more than two-third of the physicians serving in the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation field during the COVID-19 pandemic [16]. Moreover, a national survey in Saudi Arabia revealed that the use of electronic health records was associated with increased stress (50.5%) and burden leading to increased prevalence of burnout (40.1%) among healthcare professionals [17]. Major risk factors associated with burnout among physicians in Saudi Arabia were also reported in multiple studies. A study from Madina city revealed that burnout among family medicine residents was significantly related to parameters including stress of tests/examinations, extensive syllabus, fear of unfair assessment, maintenance of work/family life balance and lack of support from the seniors [18]. Positive correlation was noted between high EE score and number of calls per month [13]. Among the physicians, risk of burnout is significantly associated with male gender, smoking, and history of medications for sleep disorders [14]. In another multi-center study, gender was not found associated with burnout while EE was found lower in single physicians (25.6) compared to married (31.2) and divorced (31.3) [19]. Furthermore, sleep deprivation, negative impact on family life, medical ailment, e.g., back pain, being in residency, young age, Saudi nationality, low salary, tobacco smoking, psychotropic medication, mismanagement of patient flow, pressure or violence from patients, exhaustive paperwork, lack of cooperation from colleagues were some of the observed factors associated with burnout among physicians serving in the healthcare sector in Saudi Arabia [8,20-22].

**Conclusion**

Burnout is prevalent among the professionals that specifically require dealing with public services such as educational departments, police services, and medical profession. Major risk factors associated with burnout among physicians in Saudi Arabia were also reported in multiple studies. Furthermore, sleep deprivation, negative impact on family life, medical ailment, e.g., back pain, being in residency, young age, Saudi nationality, low salary, tobacco smoking, psychotropic medication, mismanagement of patient flow, pressure or violence from patients, exhaustive paperwork, lack of cooperation from colleagues were some of the observed factors associated with burnout among physicians serving in the healthcare sector in Saudi Arabia.

**List of Abbreviations**

- DP Depersonalization
- EE Emotional exhaustion
- MBI Maslach Burnout Inventory
- PA Personal accomplishment

**Conflict of interest**

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.
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181 Author details
182 Abdelaziz Mohamed Elamin Abdelaziz Ziena
183 1. Family Medicine Consultant, Armed Forces Hospital, Jazan, Saudi Arabia
184
185 REFERENCES