A STUDY ON THE PREVALENCE OF BURNOUT AMONG MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN KOTTAYAM DISTRICT OF KERALA
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ABSTRACT
Burnout is common in many professions especially when people work in demanding and stressful environments. It is important to examine whether people in the helping profession, in particular mental health professionals are prone to burnout and to identify the factors contributing to burnout. The study has been carried out in Kottayam district of Kerala using a descriptive research design. A total of 60 mental health professionals were contacted using snowball sampling technique. Data was collected using the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The study revealed that majority of the respondents experienced a moderate level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, while most experienced a low level of personal accomplishment. Psychiatric nurses and psychiatric social workers were more susceptible to burnout in comparison to other mental health professionals. Based on the findings, the study suggests developing policies and initiatives to address issues leading to burnout among mental health professionals.

Keywords: Burnout, Mental Health Professional, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, Personal Accomplishment.

I. INTRODUCTION
Burnout is a psychological syndrome characterized by persistent fatigue, cynicism, and diminished effectiveness in tasks related to the workplace. The term “burnout” was coined in 1974 by Herbert Freudenberger, who defined it as a state of physical and emotional weariness brought on by a sustained exposure to pressures at work. It has now received substantial research in several disciplines, including psychology, medicine, and organisational behaviour. According to the 11th Edition of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), the World Health Organization (WHO) characterizes burnout as an occupational phenomenon that arises from enduring stress in the workplace that has not been effectively addressed, rather than a medical condition. It can be an outcome of long-term exposure to occupational stress (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). According to Maslach, there are three dimensions of burnout which are emotional exhaustion, Personal Accomplishment and Depersonalization ((PDF) On the Meaning of Maslach’s Three Dimensions of Burnout, n.d.).

Mental health professionals are specialists in the diagnosis, treatment, and support of people with mental health conditions. They are essential in meeting the mental health needs of the Indian population, which suffers from a high prevalence of mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and drug addiction disorders. They consist of psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric social workers, psychiatric nurses, occupational therapists, and counsellors.

Kerala is a southern state in India, with a population of over 33 million people. Over the past few decades, the state has achieved major advancements in the field of mental health, with an increase in the number of trained mental health professionals striving to enhance the population’s mental health. Mental health services are crucial for both preventing and treating mental disease because Kerala has a high suicide rate and a high incidence of mental illness. However, due to Kerala’s lack of a sufficient mental health workforce, existing mental health practitioners have a heavy workload. Despite the progress made in the field of mental health in Kerala, there are still significant challenges that are faced by mental health professionals.

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Some studies suggest that the mental health professionals have more possibly shown even more negative risk profile for burnout than do other health care employees. (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). There may be a number of contributing variables, including an excessive quantity of work, long hours, ongoing employee shortages, a hostile work environment, a lack of management support, high workload, poor salaries, little recognition, and constrained resources. Burnout can also be influenced by the stigma and discrimination that surround mental illness and those who provide mental health services.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Donohoe et al., (1993) the physical therapists who participated in the study demonstrated moderate burnout. They found that high workload and low social support, were significant predictors of burnout among physical therapists, whereas age and coping strategies, were not significant predictors of burnout in this population. Lloyd et al., (2002) conducted a study which provides a comprehensive review of the literature on social work, stress, and burnout. The result of the study suggests that social workers may experience higher levels of stress and resulting burnout than comparable occupational groups. Painter et al., (2003) conducted a study to examine burnout among full-time staff occupational therapists including the extent of their burnout using Maslach's Burnout Inventory (MBI). The study concluded that the occupational therapists working in chronic care health care settings demonstrated higher levels of burnout than those working in other health care settings. According to Lloyd & King (2004) burnout was prevalent among mental health occupational therapists and social workers in Australia. Also, it was evident that both the groups experienced high emotional exhaustion, moderate depersonalization, and high personal accomplishment.

Evans et al. (2006) in their study concluded that high job satisfaction was associated with lower levels of burnout and better mental health. A significant amount of mental health social workers were overstressed, emotionally exhausted and felt undervalued. Sahraian et al. (2008) conducted a study in Iran and used a cross-sectional design with a sample of 140 nurses from four different hospital wards: internal, surgery, psychiatry, and burns. The results showed that nurses assigned to psychiatry wards exhibited markedly elevated levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, when compared to those working in other wards, while burn ward nurses displayed notably greater levels of personal accomplishment. According to Yang et al. (2015) healthcare professionals working in mental health settings in Singapore were experiencing high levels of stress and burnout. Berjot et al. (2017) carried out a study with a total of 664 French psychologists. It was evident from the study that about 1/3rd of the population was at risk on each of the three dimensions of the Maslach burnout inventory.

According to a study conducted by O’Connor et al. (2018) increasing age was associated with an increased risk of depersonalization but also a heightened sense of personal accomplishment. Workload and workplace relationships were important predictors of burnout, while role clarity, professional autonomy, a sense of fairness, and access to regular clinical supervision appeared to be protective. Rodriguez & Carlotto (2017) in their study indicate that younger age, longer work hours, higher workload, low job control, and low social support were significant predictors of burnout syndrome among psychologists. Furthermore, the study revealed that female psychologists experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than their male counterparts. Grover et al. (2018) in their study revealed that more than 90% of the medical professionals reported some level of burnout.

Sturzu et al. (2019) conducted a study which aimed to investigate the relationship between empathy and burnout among mental healthcare staff. The study concluded that empathic mental healthcare providers have lower levels of burnout. Alqahtani et al. (2020) in their study on burnout syndrome among psychiatric nurses revealed that most of the participants had burnout, ranging from mild to very severe. The study also found that younger age, longer working hours, and lack of social support were significantly associated with burnout. Khasne et al. (2020) in their study conducted among healthcare workers found that the personal burnout was 44.6% whereas work-related burnout was 26.9% and greater than half of the respondents had pandemic-related burnout. Avita Rose Johnson (2020) in her study found a significant positive correlation between burnout and both stress and low self-esteem. The study concluded that healthcare workers with low self-esteem were nearly thrice more likely to suffer high stress and moreover, those who were stressed had more than three times higher chance of experiencing burnout.
Nisha Kader (2021) in her study found out that the trainees were more burned out than senior psychiatrists. The lower levels of satisfaction with co-workers, work, supervision, opportunities for promotion, and the job in general were some factors which increased emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Alqarni et al. (2022) carried out a cross-sectional study in Jeddah between January 2017 and October 2018 to check the prevalence of stress, burnout, and job satisfaction among mental healthcare professionals. The findings showed that male participants had a significantly higher score for emotional exhaustion than females, indicating higher levels of burnout in male mental healthcare professionals. Khanngern et al. (2022) carried out a study among mental health professionals working in a tertiary hospital. The group aged 20-29 years displayed greater burnout than the others. Persons who had worked for less than five years experienced greater burnout than those in other groups.

### III. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the study is to determine the prevalence of burnout among mental health professionals in Kottayam district, Kerala and to identify the factors contributing to burnout.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive in nature, and is aimed at systematically describing the phenomenon. The researchers have selected Mental Health Professionals working in Kottayam, Kerala who comprised of Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Counselors, Psychiatric Nurses, and Psychiatric Social Workers. Since the size of the universe is unknown, non-probability sampling in the form of snowball sampling was adopted to select 60 respondents who constitute the sample in the present study. The researchers designed a questionnaire with two parts for collecting data from the respondents. The first part contains the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the second part contains the Maslach Burnout Inventory developed by Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson (1981).

### V. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The aim of the study was to determine whether mental health professionals from Kottayam district faced burnout and to find out factors that lead to burnout.

#### 1. Demographic Characteristics:

A little more than half of the respondents (51.7%) were between the age group of 25-30 years. The mean age of the respondents is found to be 29 years. Majority of the mental health professionals in this study were relatively young. A large majority (70%) of the respondents were female and 30% were males.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Profession of the Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
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<td>Psychiatrist</td>
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<td>Psychologist</td>
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<td>Counselor</td>
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<td>Psychiatric social worker</td>
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<td>Psychiatric nurse</td>
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<td>Occupational therapist</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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The table shows the profession of the respondents in the present study. From the table it is evident that 28.3% of the respondents were psychiatric social workers and 23.3% were psychiatric nurses. The other respondents were counsellors (18.3%), occupational therapists (16.8%), psychologists (8.3%) and psychiatrists (5%) respectively. Majority of the respondents (78.3%) had an experience of 3-5 years in their respective professions. A relative majority (36.7%) of the respondents earn an income between Rs. 15,000 and 25,000. Very few respondents in the study have a monthly income above Rs. 50,000. A vast majority (80%) of the respondents engage in work for 8-10 hours a day. The remaining 20% spend 10-12 hours a day in their respective hospitals/institutions.
Among the respondents, 59% get 6-7 hours of sleep.

2. Level of Burnout:

![Figure 1: Level of Burnout among Mental Health Professionals]

It is observed that majority of the respondents (83.4%) experienced moderate level of emotional exhaustion whereas 13.3% experienced low level of emotional exhaustion and 3.3% experienced high level of emotional exhaustion. Sixty one percent of the respondents experienced moderate level of depersonalization and 31.7% experienced high level of depersonalization. A vast majority of the respondents (90%) experienced high level of personal accomplishment and 5% experienced moderate and low level of personal accomplishment respectively. From the data, it was evident that majority of the psychiatric social workers, counsellors and psychiatric nurses experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion, which is a state of feeling drained as a result of stress from work or personal life. Some of the factors that caused emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were heavy workload, understaffing, exposure to high levels of stress and trauma, lack of social support and income disparity. Many of the respondents experienced personal accomplishment despite being exhausted which gave them the sense of competence even though their work was challenging.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study the below mentioned are few of the suggestions offered by the researchers.

- It is essential to develop policies and initiatives that support work-life balance for mental health professionals, especially those who work long hours or have high workloads.
- Mental health professionals need to be encouraged to prioritize their own health by promoting healthy sleep habits and work-life balance.
- It is important that institutions/hospitals consider implementing a more equitable salary structure for mental health professionals based on their years of experience and level of education.
- Institutions/hospitals could offer regular training and education programs to help mental health professionals manage stress and prevent burnout.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study has shed light on the prevalence of burnout among mental health professionals in Kottayam district of Kerala, India. It is essential to prioritize the mental health and well-being of mental health professionals to ensure that they can provide effective and high-quality care to their patients. The suggestions made can help institutions and employers to address burnout and promote the well-being of mental health professionals.
professionals. The findings of this study can serve as a basis for further research and policy development to prevent burnout and promote the overall well-being of mental health professionals.

VIII. REFERENCES


