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Burnout: “Lived Experience” Of Working Mothers- A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract:

Burnout is a stress related outcome that occurs due to prolonged exposure to chronic stressors. There are various causes of burnout; research has determined that aspects of the work-family interface, particularly in the work to family direction could be important contributors to burnout. Working mothers may be at greater risk of burnout compared with other working populations because of greater home demands, and demand on time and energy.

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to obtain a lived experience of working mothers regarding burnout.

Methods: A Qualitative, Phenomenological research design was used in this study. Ten working mothers were taken as a sample and data was collected by interview method. The interviews were audio recorded lasting from 25 to 30 minutes and all recordings were transcribed into word file. Analysis was done by Colaizzi’s Strategy.

Result and Discussion: By using phenomenological method several themes and sub themes emerged which provided a description of the experience of working mothers regarding burnout. Six themes such as Burnout, Affect, Time, Demand, Complaints, Strategies and several sub themes emerged from the data. This work explores the reasons of the burnout among working mothers and provides recommendations for further study. Interview results show that participants are going through the same level of burnout at the certain stage.

Summary & Conclusion: In summary, this research study used a qualitative, phenomenological method by which to gain a greater understanding of the lived experience of burnout among the working mothers. The various themes and sub themes were identified from the collected data. The specific circumstances associated with pivotal moment were different for each participant, but the clarity of the moment was universal. Although not exhaustive in their scope, the identified themes were reported to be a part of the burnout.

Keywords: Burnout, Lived Experience, Working mothers

Introduction

Burnout is a stress related outcome that occurs due to prolonged exposure to chronic stressors. There are three types of burnout such as personal burnout, work burnout and client-related burnout. Various studies indicate that burnout affects the physical and psychological health of employees, impairs the productivity and also related to lower job satisfaction.¹

In 1974, Herbert Freudenberger coined the term burnout for the first time. He has characterized burnout as a set of symptoms which includes exhaustion resulting from work's excessive demands as well as physical symptoms such as headaches and sleeplessness, "quickness to anger", and closed thinking. He also observed that the burned out worker "looks, acts and seems depressed".¹

Burnout is a state of chronic continuous stress. There are three dimensions of burnout such as; a) Physical and emotional exhaustion b) Cynicism and detachment c) Feelings of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment.²

According to Leiter, Jackson, & Shaughnessy, 2009; job burnout is a form of job stress in which workers become physically, mentally and emotionally depleted or exhausted. It is a result of steady and prolonged exposure of chronic job stress (Schaufeli&Enzmann, 1998). Characteristics of job burnout are like decrease in energy, Lack of motivation, negative feelings about self, cynical or detachment from work and interpersonal interactions (Maslach, Schaufeli, &Leiter, 2001; Maslach& Jackson, 1996).³

Bischoff, DeTienne, and Quick's (1999) study main focus were to find out the factors which affect the mental health of female staff in both private and public sectors. It was clearly understood from the studies that office politics and task clashes were major stressors which increased job burnout rate. The gaps of the researchers in these years were found that they only focused on a single profession of female employees such as teachers, doctors and industry workers rather than conducting a survey to find out the main stress factors faced by female employees regardless of their fields.⁴

In these modernize eras, due to increasing demand; it gets tremendous for women to work without being stressed. In this research main focus was on burnout among working mothers in private and public sector. The word stress generally represents the feeling when one is attached with a problem that is unable to handle. Various stress factors such as inter role distance, role overload, role ambiguity, role expectation conflict, role isolation, personal inadequacy and resource inadequacy. The employee feels suffocated and starts feeling pressured by that problem. So, stress can be defined as a threat or a challenge to one's well-being.⁵

Job stress causes job burnout. Job burnout refers that when one is unclear of one's ability to perform in their job, keeping in view the value of their job hopelessly. Research findings reveal that the jobholders at senior level face more workloads and more role-overload. Working mothers have a higher risk of having a burnout compared to other working populations. Higher burnout not only negatively affects individuals and organizations, but also family functioning and child welfare.

D.K.Creedy, M.Sidebotham, J.Gamble, Julie Pallant, J.Fenwick conducted a study to assess the prevalence of burnout, depression, anxiety, & stress in Australian midwives. The identified burnout prevalence was 64.9% reported personal burnout; 43.8% reported work-related burnout; and 10.4% reported client-related burnout⁶.

YashikaNegi, RajniBagga, conducted a study on Burnout among Nursing Professionals in Tertiary Care Hospitals of Delhi, India burnout prevalence rate was declared in three dimensions of burnout such as emotional exhaustion (14.39 ± 6.87) and depersonalization (4.84 ± 3.34), and an average score (34.72 ± 6.33) for personal accomplishment⁷.

Innstrand, S. T, MelbyeLangbelle, E., ArildEspnes, G. and GjerlowAasland, O., identified the Positive and negative work-family interaction and burnout among working mothers. Researcher identified that Working mothers may be at greater risk of burnout compared with other working populations because of greater home demands, and demand on time and energy. Higher burnout not only negatively affects individuals and organizations, but also family functioning and child welfare⁸.

Materials and methods

- **Research approach** : Qualitative Research
- **Research design** : Phenomenological research design
Interpretative phenomenological research design
- **Inclusion Criteria:**
 - a. Mothers who are working in public or private hospitals.
 - b. Mothers who having at least two children.
 - c. Mothers who can speak Hindi or English.
 - d. Mothers who are living in nuclear family or separated.
- **Exclusion Criteria:**
 - a. Mothers who are not willing to participate.
 - b. Mothers who are not available at the time of data collection.
 - c. Mothers who have working experienced more than five years.
- **Research Setting:** Selected private hospital of Pune.
- **Population** : Primary source (staff nurse)
- **Sample** : Staff Nurse
- **Sample Size** : 10
- **Sampling Method** : Non probability sampling
Purposive Sampling Method
- **Tools For Data Collection:** Open Ended Questionnaire
- **Techniques of Data Collection** : Interview Method(semi structured & in depth interview)
- **Data analysis** : After collecting data,
 - Creating a meaning/theme from collected information.
 - Formulating meaning into several themes and sub themes.
 - Description given regarding the particular theme.

Results:

Table- 1 Frequency and Percentage wise distribution of working mothers among selected organisation

N=10

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
• 25-30 years	04	40%
• 30-35 years	06	60%

Educational status		
• Certified course	01	10%
• Diploma	01	10%
• Under graduate	05	50%
• Post graduate	03	30%
Occupation		
• Nursing faculty	02	20%
• Accountant	02	20%
• Staff nurse	02	20%
• HR	02	20%
• Police women	02	20%
Work experience		
• <5 years	02	20%
• 5-10 years	08	80%

❖ **Burnout Characteristics by Semi-Structured Questionnaire of working mother's among selected organisation (N=10)**

- Research findings shows that most of the working mothers having stress and burnout due to different circumstances such as working environment, family responsibility, work overload, sick baby, Inspection etc. findings also revealed that mothers was affected by work burnout physically such as vomiting., headache, fatigue and emotionally affect such as irritation, frustration and anxiety.
- Most of the working mother reported that they having difficulty in managing time between work and home. From ten working mothers only two mothers have reported that they can manage it due to supportive family and caring, understanding husband. Mostly mothers have reported that they having some physical complaints such as sleep disturbances, headache, backache, mood swings etc. from that only 1 mother reported that she have chest pain when she stressed out. Most of the working mother uses some coping strategies to manage stress and burnout such as Yoga, Meditation, Deep Breathing Exercise and Physical exercise, sharing(talk it out), maintain silence but they were not doing regularly.

❖ **Themes and Subthemes According To Interview Questionnaire (N=10)**

- Researcher has identified six themes such as Burnout, Affect, Time, Demand, Complaints and Strategies and also identified various subthemes.

Burnout: Circumstances which create burnout among working mothers were overwork, inspection, sick baby, long working hours, family responsibility and working environment. Below I have mentioned some participants' comments related to it:

I have to do daily routine work and after that NABH work also because hospital is going to be NABH so too much work load creates stress or burnout in me.

During time of inspection I have to do extra work and managing everything creates stress in me.

When my kids are sick that time I feel stressed out because they were under 5 and more prone to get infection.

Affect: Almost all participants said that burnout affect them by physically such as headache, fatigue, vomiting and emotionally such as anxiety, frustration and irritation. Below I have mentioned some participants comments related to it:

When I get frustrated or tiered I shout on the person

I usually get frustrated due to hectic routine at work as well as home.

Yes, I use to have headache and when it is severe then I take pain killer.

Time: All participants mentioned that they having difficulty in managing time between work and home. Only 2 participants stated that;

They are able to manage time between work and home (family) due to supportive family.

Other all participants stated that,

Yes, facing difficulty to manage time between work and home.

Demand: Most of the participants said that they having difficulty in fulfilling occupational demand to work with client/employees. Most of the participants mentioned that during audit work or too much workload and due to miscommunication they experiences of stress and burnout. Below I have mentioned some participants comments related to it:

During inspection due to too much work arguing with co-workers affect me a lot.

Due to miscommunication between employees created delay in work and get scolding from superiors affect me.

Complaints: Almost all participants mentioned that due to stress and burnout having physical complaints such as headache, sleep disturbances, backache etc. All participants stated that,

Yes, I use to have headache and backache.

Yes, I do not sleep properly because my younger son is ten month old so he teases a lot like he wakeup in the midnight and cry for milk.

Strategies: Most of the participants mentioned about strategies which used by them were yoga, deep breathing exercise, physical exercise and maintain silence but they were not doing it regularly. Below I have mentioned some participants comments related to it:

Not daily but sometime I use to do deep breathing exercise and after that I feel so good so now my planning is to do deep breathing exercise daily.

I use to maintain silence. I do not talk to any person till my anger comes down. Mostly I maintain silence up to 4-5 hours.

Discussion

The finding of the study shows that working mothers was experiencing stress and burnout due to different circumstances or factors such as work overload, family responsibility, working environment in either public or private sector. To explain this study finding in the light of some previous studies, the researcher found it was partially related to the study of Kumar S. which found that Occupational stress is a problem of great concern for working women. The main sources of stress which were identified were sex determination, household responsibilities, and lack of funding, resources and support services, lack of knowledge and experience, task overload, job insecurity, lack of promotion, reward and recognition⁹.

Present studies also found that working mothers was facing difficulty in managing time between home and work. Researcher was found that due to work overload, long working hours mothers not able to give spend time with their family. In addition, Maryam Zarra-Nezhad, Ali Moazami-Goodarzi, suggest that Balancing work and family roles has become a key personal and family issue for women. Employers and family studies specialists find that the changing family structure is a major source of stress and role strain in both the work place and the home. Women usually have a feeling of guilt for sparing less time for their maternal responsibilities and family. This dual responsibility proves the double burden on her and that makes her to fight concurrently on two fronts. Sources of work stress, including role ambiguity, relationships, tools and equipment, lack of autonomy, career advancement, job security, workload and work/home interface have been implicated in affecting family functioning.¹⁰

Study findings also found that due to long working hours they face difficulties in managing time between work, home and family. The study of Sirpa Weckström, it can be concluded that, besides time spent at work, strain related to work may also prevent mothers from giving time to family members. Due to long working hours, working conditions Finland mothers feels that they cannot spend time with their family and family was fed up with these work-time interferences.¹¹

Conclusion: The results obtained from this study indicated that there are various factors influencing burnout among working mothers in Pune, India. Findings also revealed that working mothers were physically and emotionally affect due to burnout and also having some physical complaints. In addition study result shows that most of the working mothers having under five years of age children, so due to role overload, family responsibility, working responsibility, working hours are major influencing factors of burnout.

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