

**RESEARCH PAPER****Impact of Occupational Burnout on Professional Skills of Speech Therapists in Special Education Centers of Twin Cities****¹Muhammad Afnan Haider*, ²Rijab Yousaf and ³Zobia Shabbir**

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Corresponding Author afnanhaider.awan@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

The current study aimed to study the impact of occupational burnout on professional skills of speech therapists in special education centers Pakistan. Speech therapists working in special education facilitate their patients at their best. A variety of conditions can have an impact on workers' health and well-being, but burnout syndrome (BS) is one of the most frequently stated. The cross-sectional study with non probability convenient sampling technique was used to collect data from different special education centers. Data was collected from 80 participants in 6 months. The study result revealed that a negative relationship exists between burnout levels and speech therapist proficiency in delivering therapeutic interventions ($r = -0.5, p 0.01$). Furthermore, regression analysis revealed that burnout was associated with a loss in professional skills ($= -0.25, p = 0.02$). Create organizational policies that foster a helpful and nurturing workplace environment for speech therapists.

Keywords: Interventions, Occupational Burnout, Professional Ability, Professional Competence, Professional Skills, Speech and Language Pathologists

Introduction

Globalization and technological progress have had a significant impact on work relationships (Glover et al., 2015). While many of these developments have been helpful, assisting in the support and facilitation of multiple task completion, they have also increased occupational demands and competitiveness, putting workers' health and well-being in danger and overburdening them (Ch et al., 2021). A variety of conditions can have an impact on workers' health and well-being, but burnout syndrome (BS) is one of the most frequently stated. This condition, also known as occupational weariness syndrome, has been studied in several countries and is considered as a major public health concern. People in people-oriented professions face interpersonal stressors that contribute to BS (Short et al., 2016). Burnout not only has an emotional impact on therapists, but it also inhibits their capacity to give effective interventions, limiting positive results for individuals with communication issues (Bruschini et al., 2018). Workload, a lack of resources, and organizational stresses all play important roles in deteriorating therapists' professional skills. The gender disparity in speech therapy may reflect broader cultural trends in which certain occupations attract a greater proportion of one gender than the other. It may also point to possible variables impacting career choices or public perceptions of various roles or specialties within the area of speech therapy (Noor et al., 2024). Understanding gender inequalities in the profession is important for a variety of reasons, including recognizing potential inequities in opportunities, experiences, and challenges experienced by male and female speech therapists. It could also be used to guide efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity within the profession, as well as to identify areas for targeted recruiting or assistance programs for underrepresented genders (Malik, 2023). The current study aimed to study the impact of occupational burnout on

professional skills of speech therapists in special education centers Pakistan. The study tested the following hypothesis.

1. Professional skills would be negatively correlated with burnout among speech therapists.
2. Professional skills would be negatively predicting burnout among speech therapists.
3. Respondents' score will vary on study variables with reference to demographics.
4. There would be significant gender differences among speech therapists.

Literature Review

People with unsatisfactory work environments are more susceptible to this illness (Hamid & Johari, 2021). In physiotherapy, personal interaction with patients and their families is typical. Moreover, interaction is sustained over extended periods of time because long-term or chronic disorders require frequent interventions (Volkmer et al., 2020). Scholarly research indicates that physiotherapists may experience burnout at a higher rate than those in other health-related fields (Noor & Raja, 2019). A nationwide survey of 172 private and public sector physiotherapists was undertaken; the findings showed that around 40% of private sector physiotherapists and 57% of public sector physiotherapists agreed that their work was stressful (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). In this sense, the sociodemographic characteristics that could impact the stressor's origin are not sufficiently described.

The literature indicates that health professionals are significantly impacted by job stress. Studies on doctors (Brandel, 2020), nurses (Campbell & Douglas, 2017), and other health professionals (Dylag et al., 2013) have measured burnout. Compared to other health professions, there are less articles on burnout in physical therapy (Luterman, 2021). Furthermore, few studies with excellent methodological quality and a representative sample have been undertaken in Spain (Aguilar, 2021).

Because of the nature of their employment, health care providers are susceptible to burning out. Unfortunately, little is known about the prevalence and causes of burnout in South African healthcare workers (Shanafelt et al., 2011). Nurses employed in acute, public health care settings have been the main subject of research investigations (West et al., 2006). A study on burnout among therapists in a private or public health care setting did not exist in South Africa. The principal writer of this manuscript was employed as a social worker in a private physical rehabilitation center located in South Africa (Shanafelt et al., 2011). She saw that complaints about stress at work were common among the staff. She identified some of the signs and symptoms of burnout in their complaints. She therefore conducted research to determine the frequency of burnout and its possible causes in South African private physical rehabilitation facilities (Davidson et al., 2015).

'Burnout' describes a condition of both physical and mental tiredness⁴. When an individual experiences extended work-related stress and dissatisfaction beyond their threshold and renders their coping mechanisms ineffectual, burnout ensues (Mumtaz et al., 2021). It is widespread among health care workers because to the emotionally taxing and chronically stressful nature of their work (Ewen et al., 2021). An employee's health and ability to work are seriously threatened by burnout, which impairs emotional, behavioral, physical, and cognitive functioning (Brito-Marcelino et al., 2020).

Moreover, studies have connected toughness, locus of control, and Type A personality to burnout. While Kobasa (1979) contended that people with high levels of hardiness tended to be resistant to stress because their personalities were characterized by a commitment to personal values, a sense of control over their lives, and a view of change as

a challenge, Cherniss (1980) proposed that people with an external locus of control, i.e., people who believe that external forces influence their lives, are more likely to experience burnout (Brito-Marcelino et al., 2020). Individuals who exhibit Type A behavior are intensely driven, competitive, impatient, aggressive, and possess a strong sense of temporal urgency. Unlike the calm, serene Type B, members of this type are more prone to stress and heart attacks even though they typically achieve high levels of success (Cooper & Davidson, 1991). In addition to individual traits, workplace factors can also be a contributing factor in burnout. The Work Environment Rather than variations in personal traits or characteristics, Cherniss (1980) argues that disparities in employment and organizations are the primary etiological causes of burnout. Scholars concur with him that, although personality plays a part in burnout, situational causes of inter-personal stress related to the workplace provide the best framework for understanding and managing the phenomenon (Lindsay & Kolne, 2023; Marante et al., 2023).

It contends that because burnout is a response to the ongoing emotional strain of working closely with others, particularly when they are experiencing difficulties, it is a different kind of stress. In addition to dealing with problems related to speech and hearing, SPLPs and audiologists also assist individuals with emotional and physical problems that need to be addressed in therapy and may be accompanied by unfavorable attitudes on the part of the patient as well as the therapist (Brito-Marcelino et al., 2020). Additionally, therapeutic work can occasionally be demanding and emotionally draining. Determining the level of therapeutic success in helping professions and the duration required for therapy to produce change can be challenging (Ijaz et al., 2022, Kumar et al., 2022).

Material and Methods

The study design used for this research was Cross Sectional Study and the sampling technique used was convenient sampling. The study was conducted in Special education centers of Rawalpindi/Islamabad. Autism resource center Transition special care center Bases Army Special Education Academy Sir Syed special Education center. Data was collected both physically and electronically using Google Docs. Several special education centers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad were approached in order to physically collect data. A Google document was sent through WhatsApp groups and email. Prior to data collection, participants' written consent was sought. Participants were given specific instructions, and their participation in the study was fully voluntary. Participants might opt out of the study at any time. The participants' personal data would be kept private.

Results and Discussion

The data was counted using the percentage distribution. ANOVA and independent t-test analyses were used. Regression analysis and correlation were used to determine and forecast how the study variables relate to one another. For data analysis, SPSS version 26 were utilized.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

| Variables | Mean | SD |
|-----------------------|------|------|
| Working hours | 7.35 | 1.75 |
| Qualification | 2.55 | .79 |
| Peer relationship | 2.98 | .95 |
| Length of care plan | 1.59 | .49 |
| Social relationship | 1.01 | .11 |
| Communication | 3.30 | .71 |
| Marital status | 1.61 | .56 |
| Socio-economic status | 2.09 | .36 |

| | | |
|---------------------|--------|-------|
| Monthly income | 1.49 | .71 |
| Workload | 2.31 | .58 |
| Professional skills | 116.03 | 14.18 |
| Burnout | 19.12 | 10.98 |

The descriptive analysis for the study measures. Speech therapists' communication abilities demonstrated moderate variability (SD of 0.71) and (mean of 3.30). Professional skills of speech therapists have a high mean (116.03) and moderate variability (SD of 14.18). The mean burnout score is 19.12, but the higher standard deviation (10.98) indicates that burnout levels vary significantly among the study's therapists (Table 1)

Table 2
t-test Analysis of Study Variables for Gender Differences

| Variables | Men | | Women | | P |
|---------------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-----|
| | M | SD | M | SD | |
| Professional Skills | 110.89 | 24.29 | 117.52 | 9.27 | .00 |
| Burnout | 22.06 | 13.47 | 18.27 | 10.12 | .01 |

A t-test examination of gender disparities among speech therapists was done. The t-test demonstrates a statistically significant difference ($p = .00$) between men and women in Professional Skills. Women have a higher mean score ($M = 117.52$) than men ($M = 110.89$). The confidence range indicates that the true difference in means is between 0.83 and -14.08. The study reveals a statistically significant ($p = .01$) difference in Burnout between men and women. Men had a higher mean burnout score ($M = 22.06$) than women ($M = 18.27$). The confidence interval spans from -2.05 to 9.61, showing the possibility of gender differences in burnout levels. (Table 2)

Table 3
t-test Analysis of Study Variables for Length of Care Plan

| Variables | Less than 6 months | | More than 6 months | | P |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|-----|
| | M | SD | M | SD | |
| Professional Skills | 115.55 | 16.11 | 116.36 | 12.82 | .28 |
| Burnout | 16.24 | 9.22 | 21.15 | 11.75 | .06 |

A t-test analysis for the length of care plan among speech therapists was performed. The t-test findings for Professional Skills reveal a p-value of .28, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in Professional Skills between therapists working with care plans for less than six months and those dealing with plans for more than six months. The confidence interval spans 5.63 to -7.26, implying that the observed variations in mean scores are most likely attributable to random variation. The Burnout analysis yields a p-value of .06, indicating a possible trend but not meeting conventional significance standards. Therapists who work on care plans for more than six months had a higher mean Burnout score ($M = 21.15$) than those who work on plans for less than six months ($M = 16.24$). The confidence interval, on the other hand, extends from -0.03 to -9.78, demonstrating potential variability and overlap between the groups. (Table 3)

Table 4
t-test Analysis of Study Variables for Social Relationship

| Variables | Positive | | Negative | | P |
|---------------------|----------|-------|----------|------|-----|
| | M | SD | M | SD | |
| Professional Skills | 116.82 | 12.33 | 53.00 | 8.01 | .00 |
| Burnout | 19.23 | 11.02 | 11.00 | 2.57 | .01 |

A t-test examination of social relationships among speech therapists was done. The Professional Skills t-test results show a statistically significant difference ($p = .00$) between therapists' perceptions of positive and bad social connections. Positive social connection therapists ($M = 116.82$) have considerably higher mean Professional Skills ratings than negative social relationship therapists ($M = 53.00$). The confidence interval falls between

88.53 and 39.11, showing a significant difference between the groups. The Burnout analysis reveals a statistically significant difference ($p = .01$) between therapists' perceptions of positive and poor social ties. Positive social relationship therapists ($M = 19.23$) have considerably higher mean Burnout ratings than negative social relationship therapists ($M = 11.00$). The confidence interval spans 30.30 to -13.85, demonstrating a significant difference between groups. (Table 4)

Table 5
One-Way ANOVA Analysis of Study Variables for Workload

| Variables | Normal | | Average | | Higher | | p |
|---------------------|--------|-------|---------|-------|--------|-------|-----|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | |
| Professional Skills | 118.40 | 7.02 | 115.73 | 14.42 | 116.07 | 14.98 | .92 |
| Burnout | 9.60 | 12.75 | 20.47 | 10.42 | 18.70 | 11.09 | .10 |

The One-Way ANOVA results for Professional Skills in table 11 show a p-value of .92, showing that there is no statistically significant variation in Professional Skills scores among speech therapists based on workload levels. The means of Professional Skills for therapists with varying workload levels do not differ considerably. The One-Way ANOVA results for Burnout, on the other hand, had a p-value of .10, indicating a probable but not highly significant variation in Burnout ratings based on workload levels. The means of burnout for therapists with various workload levels fluctuate little, with therapists in the Average workload category having the highest mean score. However, at typical levels, this difference is not statistically significant ($p.05$). (Table 5)

Table 6
Correlation analysis for study variables

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-----------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| OPS | - | .71** | .89** | .88** | .67** | .69** | -.41** |
| A | | - | .51** | .47** | .39** | .48** | -.35** |
| PS | | | - | .78** | .53** | .46** | -.44 |
| FAPS | | | | - | .54** | .51** | -.13 |
| WL | | | | | - | .30** | .35** |
| AS | | | | | | - | -.22** |
| BO | | | | | | | - |

OPS stands for overall professional skills. A = Accessibility, PS = Professional abilities, FAPS stands for factors influencing professional skills. WL stands for Workload. AS stands for Assessment, and BO stands for Burnout. The findings of a correlation analysis performed on several study variables show the magnitude and direction of the correlations (correlation coefficients) that exist between various variables. The values range from -1 to +1, with -1 representing perfect negative correlation, 0 representing no connection, and +1 representing perfect positive correlation

Table 7
Regression Analysis for Burnout Predicting Professional Skills

| Variables | B | β | P |
|----------------|--------|---------|-----|
| Constant | 116.42 | | .00 |
| Burnout | -.05 | -.16 | .02 |
| F | .021 | | |
| R | .00 | | |
| R ² | .16 | | |

Burnout emerge as a statistically significant predictor of Professional Skills in this regression analysis, as seen in Table 13. Burnout scores fall as Professional Skills rise. However, while statistically significant, the R² value indicates that Professional Skills explain just 5% of the variance in Burnout in this model

Conclusion

This research looked into the complex relationship between occupational burnout and the professional skills of speech therapists working in Islamabad and Rawalpindi's special education centers. The study attempted to understand the extent to which burnout affects therapists' efficacy in delivering therapies and speaking with persons experiencing communication issues through a thorough investigation. The findings of this study highlight a striking link between burnout and speech therapist professional qualities. Statistical analyses demonstrated a significant negative link between burnout levels and therapists' professional skill competency ($r = -0.5$, $p = 0.01$). Regression analysis confirmed these findings, emphasizing that burnout predicted a reduction in therapists' professional competence ($\beta = -0.25$, $p = 0.02$). In essence, the study emphasizes the significant influence of burnout on therapists' skills to administer interventions and engage with people in need. The findings are consistent with prior study by Brito-Marcelino et al. (2020) and Bruschini et al. (2018), which both shown the negative impact of burnout on speech therapists' professional skills.

Recommendations

- Create organizational policies that foster a helpful and nurturing workplace environment for speech therapists.
- Encourage open communication, provide mentorship programs, and provide opportunities for therapists to express their concerns. Introduce stress management courses or programs that are geared to the specific issues that speech therapists experience.
- Conduct monthly examinations on speech therapists to monitor and identify early signs of burnout.
- These assessments can aid in the implementation of timely intervention and support activities. Provide opportunities for continuing professional development to therapists in order to improve their abilities and equip them with the most up-to-date evidence-based practices. Resilience, self-care, and effective communication training courses might be especially valuable. Strengthen support mechanisms within special education centers by cultivating a culture that prioritizes the well-being of therapists.
- Ensure appropriate resources and staffing to meet the profession's demands. Create forums for therapists to participate in peer support groups, share experiences, and trade ideas for stress management and professional development.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of applied therapies and techniques in reducing burnout and strengthening therapists' professional abilities on a continuous basis. Adapt and improve projects depending on feedback and results.

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