

## Relationship of Emotional Intelligence and Burnout among MBBS Doctors of Himachal Pradesh

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### Abstract

*The objective of the study is to strengthen the role of EI in the professional setting as it is well accepted that in present times every job has its own certain demands and fulfilling these demands can be very nerve-racking eventually leading to job stress. Numerous studies conducted worldwide have emphasized the importance of EI in various spheres of life and healthcare is no exception. Healthcare is a field that is filled with lots of uncertainties as far as human life is concerned. The people working in healthcare have to deal with extreme human emotions on a daily basis. So we can understand that a person having low EI can have a difficult time in dealing with these emotions erupting situations. Emotional Intelligence is an umbrella term that captures how we perceive, regulate, use and understand our own emotions and the emotions of others (Zeidner et al., 2009).*

*Emotional intelligence has been associated with decreased burnout but in reference to Himachal Pradesh not many studies have been done with regard to MBBS doctors. The present study was undertaken with the purpose of studying burnout and emotional intelligence among MBBS doctors of Himachal Pradesh. A purposive sample of a total of 190 MBBS doctors from government hospitals participated in the study. Only full time working MBBS doctors were taken for the present study. Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) was used (also called the MBI) to assess burnout and Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale was used to assess emotional intelligence. The study aimed to study the relationship of emotional intelligence with sub- scales of burnout i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Statistical analysis was carried out using Pearson's Correlation. The findings showed a negative significant relationship between Emotional intelligence and two subscales of burnout i.e. emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and a significant positive relationship with the subscale personal accomplishment.*

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, Burnout, Medical doctors, Stress, Coping strategies

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### Introduction

The concept of burnout was first introduced by Freudenberger (1974) and Maslach (1976) (Maslach et al., 2001). Freudenberger (1977) defines the concept of "burnout" as a person's state of lacking personal accomplishments, being fragile and exhausted as a result of excessive demand on energy, power and resources. According to Maslach (1976) burnout has three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and low personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1982). Prolonged exposure to stress is usually the main cause of emotional exhaustion and it happens due to loss of enthusiasm for work, feeling hopeless, trapped and defeated. Depersonalization occurs when physicians treat patients indifferently, objectify them, and develop a negative attitude towards their colleagues and profession. Inefficiency, or lack of a sense of personal achievement, is characterized by the individuals' withdrawal from

responsibilities and detachment from job. Employees with high levels of burnout are more likely to report a range of psychological and physical health problems, including anxiety, depression, sleep disturbance, memory impairment and neck pain (Peterson et al., 2008). In a study done by Ahola (2007) the results were shocking as most of the employees were using unhealthy coping mechanisms such as use of alcohol to lessen their burnout symptoms. Also the employees developed depression and anxiety. Kim et al. (2011) in a study revealed that the social workers who scored high on burnout showed physical health complaints such as insomnia, headaches, respiratory infections, gastrointestinal infections. Higher levels of burnout lead to faster deterioration of health. A recent study in 2020 in the U.S shows how horrible the situation has become when talking about burnout in Physicians. More than 15000 physicians in over 29 specialties told Medscape

about their degree of burnout and depression, how they cope and whether they have had any suicidal thoughts.

Burnout among physicians is a serious entity with devastating personal and professional consequences and so is a topic of concern not only in India but worldwide. Christina Maslach was the one who described the term burnout in terms of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment. According to a study done recently, 45 percent of Indian physicians scored high on emotional exhaustion, 66 percent showed significant depersonalisation while 87 percent of physicians did not feel accomplished by their work. A study also shows that about 80 percent of Indian doctors face risk of Burnout. A statistical body of literature reveals that Physicians jobs are more stressful as compared to any other profession and also, that doctors are 15 times more likely to burnout than professionals in any other line of work. A lot of studies have shown that emotional intelligence helps combat physician burnout. The objective behind writing this paper is to strengthen the role of EI in professional setting as it is well accepted that in present times every job has its own certain demands and fulfilling these demands can be very nerve-racking eventually leading to Job burnout. As far as health sector is concerned we have seen that among all health care professionals especially physicians go through lots of job stress which eventually leads to burnout because their work is critical and the role of EI here becomes even more pivotal. Emotional intelligence is of utmost importance for the physicians and so many important factors such as developing empathy, managing and understanding ones and other's emotions etc. become momentous for a physician.

### **Physician Burnout**

Physician Burnout has become very common be it India or be it on an international level and there are a lot of factors responsible for it. Some of them are as follows:

1. Work- Professional life imbalance – The doctor-population in India is 1:1456 against the WHO recommendation of 1:1000 which makes the doctor's job even more hectic. Long working hours, not being able to take enough leaves, shortage of doctors, too much

administrative work, difficult colleagues, inability to cope with patient's death, unrealistic expectations of the society. This all adds up to their pressure and so they are neither able to give time to themselves or are able to take care of themselves nor their families which also may lead to work home conflict at times.

2. Violence by Mobs - In Spite of doctors working day and night and giving their best, if the patient is critical, and the doctor has done his best to save the patient, not realizing this the common crowd attacks the doctor ignorantly, which leaves the doctor emotionally exhausted This is just one example where violence comes into existence place, there are more such incidents. Recently a lot of them have been seen in the country. Such incidents make it very evident that doctors are at all respected in the country.
3. New information – The technology is advancing at a rapid pace and so it becomes more challenging as the doctor is expected to be updated with the latest knowledge and so it builds enough pressure.
4. GDP – According to the World Health Organization, countries should spend at least five percent of their GDP on public healthcare and when we talk about India the results are shocking , as India spends only around 1.28 percent , which is even lower than its neighboring countries. Lack of spending on healthcare leads to lack of infrastructure, not proper medical facilities, lack of proper equipment and resources.
5. Financial factor - The workload on a single doctor is more in the country, as also seen in the figures given by WHO. The doctors work at a stretch for very long and the salary of the doctors is not satisfactory when compared to the number of hours they spend in hospitals.

### **Emotional Intelligence**

The concept of Emotional Intelligence is quite a recent one .The concept of Emotional Intelligence started in the 1990's by Daniel Goleman. This happened when he was trying to find out why some people succeed despite low IQ scores and why some with high IQ scores were not able to succeed in life and business. Goleman

coined the term EQ and defined it as, “the ability to recognize and manage your own emotions and those of others.” According to Goleman (2011), stated simply, Emotional Intelligence includes self-mastery (self-awareness and self-regulation) and social intelligence (social awareness and social skills). The conceptualization of Emotional Intelligence consists of the following dimensions (Goleman, 2000):

1. Self-awareness. This refers to emotional self-confidence, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence. It includes knowledge about one's internal states, resources, intuitions, etc.
2. Self-regulation. It refers to the ability to manage one's internal states, impulses, and resources. It includes self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, achievement drive, adaptability, and innovation.
3. Social awareness. Many experts consider this the dimension of empathy. It includes concepts like understanding others, having a service orientation, leveraging diversity and political or organizational awareness.
4. Social skills. It refers to the ability to induce desirable responses in others and includes concepts like influence, communication, conflict management skills, leadership, being a change catalyst, building bonds, collaboration, and cooperation.

Apart from Goleman, many other psychologists have talked about emotional intelligence. Bar-on (1997) has considered Emotional Intelligence (EI) as skills and capabilities that help a person cope with a variety of demands put by the environment. Research has confirmed that Emotional Intelligence is an important set of psychological abilities related to success in life in general. Empathy, good communication skills, social and leadership skills all have roots in this concept. Employees with a high level of EI have the self-awareness that helps them understand co-workers besides having a low level of stress, anxiety, depression (Gardner & Stough, 2002) and abundant positive thoughts (Seligman, 2002).

Mayer and Salovey (1997) considered Emotional Intelligence as the ability to observe and keep a watch on one's and others feelings to

make a distinction between them and use this information to guide one's thought process and actions. Later the researchers put emphasis on perception, recognition, and assessment of emotions so that individuals can act wisely and reason intelligently. Today the prominent themes of this conceptualization of EI include the capacity to think constructively, do intelligent reasoning, handle emotional behavior appropriately, etc.

### **Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace**

Multiple studies have shown that EI is positively correlated with performance at the workplace. In one study, McClelland (1998) studied employees in a multinational company and found that those recruited on the basis of emotional competencies had a much lower turnover rate than those employees whose recruitment was based on traditional ways (which did not emphasize on emotional competencies) of selecting employees for the company. Another finding of the study was that those employees who had high EI exceeded annual earnings goals by 20 percent while other employees with lower EI did not even touch the targets and fell short of it.

In another study, Lusch and Serpkenci (1990) studied performance at the job of store managers and found that it had a positive correlation with emotional competency of stress management. In yet another study, Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004) did a meta-analysis and found that emotional intelligence was indeed a valid predictor of performance in jobs. Also, Jordan et al. (2002) studied the functioning of groups and the role of emotional intelligence in it. They found that while the low EI group functioned at a lower level and rise, later on, to the higher level of performance of the high EI group, the high EI group functioned at a higher level from the beginning.

### **Emotional Intelligence in Medicine**

To be successful as medical practitioners, it is believed that perceiving and managing emotions is crucial. Physicians and surgeons often find themselves in emotionally charged situations where they must properly deal with their own emotions as well as the emotions of patients and other team members. According to Stewart (2001), The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) considers six core

competencies that good doctors should have. They are patient care, professionalism, systems-based practice, interpersonal and communication skills, medical knowledge, and practice-based learning and improvement. A literature review of emotional intelligence in healthcare settings demonstrated the broad relevance of EI to medicine, including domains related to the competencies of interpersonal skills and communication, patient care, professionalism, medical knowledge and practice-based learning and improvement (Arora et al., 2010). Taylor et al. (2011) explored the issue of whether emotional intelligence training can serve as an alternative approach to teaching professionalism to residents and suggested that incorporating the development of emotional intelligence into medical training is a very good and a much-needed idea.

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Exhaustion**

Vaezi and Fallah (2011) studied the relationship between burnout and emotional intelligence among Iranian teachers and found out a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and burnout which means more the ability of a person to understand his/her emotions and the other individual's emotions, the lesser the individual would feel exhausted and fatigued towards his/her job which ultimately would lead to less burnout. The inventories that were used were the Bar-On test for emotional intelligence and the teachers' burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey.

In a study, Geng et al. (2011) investigated the relationship among emotional exhaustion, emotional intelligence and occupational identity in China. A total of 3 questionnaires were used in this study. The sample included 88 male and 158 female social workers. The results displayed that there is a significant negative correlation between emotional exhaustion and emotional intelligence, and also between emotional intelligence and occupational identity. A positive significant correlation was found between emotional exhaustion and occupational identity.

Merve and Unal (2014) with an aim to study the role of Emotional intelligence on three components of burnout i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced self

accomplishment in healthcare sector Professionals used the Emotional intelligence scale and the Maslach Burnout Inventory on the participants. There were a total of 136 participants (78 men, 58 women). The results clearly indicated that emotional intelligence has a great role in reducing burnout and hence it was found out that the health professionals who were more emotionally intelligent experienced less emotional exhaustion which also showed a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and emotional exhaustion.

Kwom and Kim (2016) aimed to study the effects of emotional labour and emotional intelligence on burnout in psychological nurses'. The results revealed a negative correlation between burnout and emotional intelligence. Also, emotional intelligence was found out to be a significant explanatory variable of burnout. Wong and Law emotional intelligence scale was used to assess the burnout in the participants and for burnout, Maslach Burnout Inventory. The sample size included 200 psychological nurses and the data was analyzed using Spss.

In a study Moraes et al. (2015) studied the influence of emotional intelligence on burnout syndrome, professional satisfaction, and compassion and communication skills among the trainees. The trainees were placed in Intensive Care Units. A total sample of 26 trainees took part in this study. The results showed clearly that more the emotional intelligence, less the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Also, higher emotional intelligence correlated with higher professional satisfaction.

#### **Emotional Intelligence and Depersonalization**

Pishghadam and Sahebjam (2012) conducted a study to see the link between a teacher's personality, emotional intelligence and burnout. A total of 147 teachers participated in the study. The study was conducted in Iran. The inventories that were used in this study were Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), NEO Five-Factor Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-On, 2004). The statistical analysis that was used to analyze the data was the homogeneity analysis and multiple linear regressions. The results of the current study revealed that the relationship was significant between the sub-variables of burnout, personality types and

emotional intelligence. The results also revealed that for the variable emotional intelligence, one of the sub variables of burnout was considered to be the best predictor which was depersonalization.

Esmaili et al. (2018) aimed to investigate the EFL teachers 'emotional intelligence and burnout and its three dimensions in private language institutes in Iran. The sample included 63 Iranian teachers of English language in 11 private institutes of EFL. The measures that were used for this study were the Bar-On EQ-I self report questionnaire and the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Multi variable regression analysis, Pearson correlation and two independent sample t tests were the statistical analysis used. The findings of the study showed a relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout in three dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment) that was found to be a significant one.

Yaghoubi et al. (2012) studied the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational burnout among nurses in Bojnurd teaching hospitals. The study was a correlational one which included a sample of 110 nurses. Bar-on emotional intelligence questionnaire and Maslach Burnout inventory questionnaire were used. The results indicated a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and depersonalization.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Personal Accomplishment**

Durán et al. (2004) in a study tried to find if there was some relationship between emotional intelligence and one of the sub-variables of burnout which was personal accomplishment. The inventory that was used was the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (Salovey et al., 1995). One of the dimensions, emotional clarity was significantly related to personal accomplishment, and also a significant correlation was found between another dimension, by the name of 'repair to moods 'with one of the sub-variables of burnout which was personal accomplishment.

In another study, Năstasă and Fărcaș (2015) aimed to study the relationship between emotional and sub variables of burnout – emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and

personal accomplishment. The sample size of the doctors was 120 which included the doctors and the nurses. Maslach burnout inventory and an emotional intelligence scale was used in order to gather the required information. The results showed that one of the sub variables of burnout which is personal accomplishment had a great impact on the level of emotional intelligence of both doctors and nurses and so it was recommended that there is a need to develop training programs and interventions which are focused on enhancing the emotional intelligence of people associated with the healthcare system.

Tavan et al. (2016) studied the relationship between occupational exhaustion and emotional intelligence. A total of 240 nurses participated in the study. Randomized stratified sampling was used to select the participants. The measures that were used in the study were the Bar-On Emotional Intelligence and Maslach Burnout Inventory. In order to analyze the results, spearman correlation was used in order to analyze the data. The results showed a significant positive relation between emotional intelligence and personal accomplishment which is one of the sub-dimensions of burnout.

With an aim to study the link between emotional intelligence and burnout syndrome Vlachou, et al., (2016) did a study. The sample of the study included 148 healthcare professionals .Maslach Burnout Inventory and Trait emotional intelligence short form were used as questionnaires. The data was analyzed using simple linear regression and multiple regression analysis. The results showed a positive relationship between Emotional intelligence and Personal accomplishment.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the studies mentioned earlier, the following was hypothesized:

1. There will be a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and emotional exhaustion among MBBS doctors.
2. There will be a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and depersonalization among MBBS doctors.

3. There will be a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and personal accomplishment among MBBS doctors.

## Method

### Research Population

The research population for the present study included MBBS doctors of Himachal Pradesh .Only the doctors from government hospitals in Himachal were included. The study aimed to cover maximum districts of Himachal Pradesh based on the availability of doctors and inclusion criteria.

### Research Sample

Based on inclusion criteria and availability, a total of 190 MBBS doctors will be selected randomly for the study.

### Inclusion Criteria

1. Only MBBS doctors were included.
2. Both male and female doctors were considered, but not in definite proportion.
3. Only government hospitals were included.
4. Medical doctors of the age range 30 -45 were selected.

### Exclusion Criteria

1. B.A.M.S doctors were included.
2. B.D.S-M.D.S doctors were also not included in the study.
3. Homeopathy doctors were also be kept excluded from the study

### Tools for the Study

#### *Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale*

Emotional Intelligence in the study has been measured by this scale. The scale is based on the Mayer and Salovey theory. The reliability of the instrument has been reported as 0.90. Validation studies of this scale include

### Results and Discussion

#### Table 1

*Relationship of Emotional Intelligence with Sub-variables of Burnout - Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal accomplishment*

Variables	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal accomplishment
Emotional Intelligence	-.190**	-.318**	.575**

Note. N = 190. \*\*p < .01

establishing good correlations with theoretically related constructs (e.g. alexythimia, pessimism and depression) and establishing medium to high correlation with the Big Five (Petrides& Furnham, 2000). Scoring and interpretation of the scale are as follows: total scale scores are calculated by reverse coding items 5, 28 and 33, and then summing all items. Scores can range from 33 to 165, with higher scores indicating more characteristic emotional intelligence.

#### *Maslach Burnout Inventory*

Maslach Burnout Inventory was developed by Maslach and Jackson. The Maslach Burnout Inventory is by far the most widely used, accepted, valid and reliable measurement tool of stress and burnout. The 22 total items are broken up into three themes with nine items that relate to emotional exhaustion, five to depersonalization and eight to Personal accomplishment. The emotional exhaustion subscale measures feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. Depersonalization subscale measures an unfeeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one's service, care, treatment or instruction. Personal Accomplishment subscale measures feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work. Each item was rated on a frequency and intensity scale. The frequency ranges from 0 (never) to 6 (everyday) on the Likert scale. The items under emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment, are scored as it is. The interpretation of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization remains the same while the interpretation of personal accomplishment is considered to be the opposite. The split-half internal reliability coefficient has been reported at .74 for the combined intensity subscales (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

It is quite evident from table 1 that a highly negative correlation is found between emotional intelligence and emotional exhaustion ( $r=-.190$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). It implies that the more the doctor is able to manage his emotions and the other person's emotions, the less the doctor would feel tired or fatigued with his job, which clearly shows that the hypothesis I in the current study has been accepted.

There are various studies which have been done in the past which show significant negative correlation between emotional intelligence and emotional exhaustion. Some of them are as follows:

Swami et al. (2013) conducted a study between emotional intelligence and burnout in resident doctors in the departments of medicine and surgery. The questionnaires used in the study were Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure and Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form. Pearson's Correlation was used to analyze the data. The results of the study showed a significant negative correlation between trait emotional intelligence and emotional exhaustion.

In another study Blanchard et al. (2021) used the DRS-15 Scale and Reading the Mind in the Eyes Quiz. The DRS-15 is widely used in health psychology. This scale is known for measuring people's response in relation to adversity that they face in their daily lives. Reading the Mind in the eyes quiz measures empathy and how well an individual is able to understand interpersonal emotional interpretation. The targeted population was the medical students at a US medical school. The results clearly revealed that higher the burnout, much lower the empathy in medical students.

Table 1 also indicates a significant negative correlation between emotional intelligence and depersonalization ( $r= -.318$   $p<0.01$ ). It implies that more the doctor is able to manage his, and his patients emotions or his/her attendants emotions, better will be his ability to handle the interpersonal relations empathetically with them and lesser would be his cynical, negative and callous behaviour towards them, which clearly shows that the Hypothesis II in the current study has been accepted.

Some of the recent studies done which support the same are as follows:

Tiwari and Bhagat (2020) did a study on 257 nurses and 131 doctors that were working in hospitals including the ChC's, PhC's and various sub-centres from all the hospitals. The questionnaires that were used in the study were the Emotional Quotient test and the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory. The statistical analysis that was used was the Pearson Correlation. The results of the study clearly indicated a significant negative correlation between emotional intelligence and its subscales which are emotional sensitivity, emotional maturity and emotional competency with burnout which clearly tells us that lower the emotional intelligence, much higher the chances of burnout.

In order to see the relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout among the medical students, Yusoff et al. (2021) conducted a cross sectional study which included medical students. The inventory that was used for burnout was the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory and for emotional intelligence it was the USM Emotional Quotient Inventory. The data analysis was carried out using Structural Equation Modeling. The results in the study stated that Emotional intelligence had a significant direct effect in reducing burnout.

Deng et al. (2021) studied the relationship between burnout and its subscales with emotional intelligence. The sample included 146 special school teachers. The inventories that were used for the measure were the MBI-GS and EIS. The results of the study clearly revealed differences with respect to total score of burnout and the emotional intelligence level of each dimension. The results stated that higher the emotional intelligence less would be the burnout symptoms in an individual and vice versa.

Table 1 further indicated a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and personal accomplishment ( $r=.575$   $p<0.01$ ). It implies that higher the emotional intelligence of the doctor, more the doctor has feelings of competence in his work and more the doctor is proud of his successful achievements in his work. There are various studies done recently which indicates the same findings such as Altwijri et al. (2021) studied the relationship between Emotional intelligence and academic performance among the medical students. The inventories that

they used were the Schutte-Self report emotional intelligence test and the academic success inventory for college students. In addition to this a questionnaire was also included which gave the information of their demographic between January and April 2018. Academic achievement of the students was measured in the form of grades based on the most recent examination. The results of the study clearly depicted that there does exist a relationship between emotional intelligence and academic success.

In another study, Kashani et al. (2013) aimed to study the relationship between emotional intelligence and educational achievement. The sample included 100 individuals of Islamic Azad University. The measures that were used in the study were the Emotional Intelligence appraisal. The results concluded that there was a significant relationship found between emotional intelligence and educational achievement.

### Conclusion

The present study was a pioneering study to determine the relationship of emotional intelligence with sub-variables of burnout. Firstly hardly any study has been done with these variables in doctors, be it surgeons or just the MBBS ones in Himachal Pradesh and secondly, the study has covered all the districts of Himachal Pradesh as its targeted population and selected the sample according to the inclusion criteria. The review of literature very evidently shows the importance of emotional intelligence in the healthcare system in order to alleviate burnout. Therefore much focus should be given to enhance emotional intelligence in the healthcare system; more such kind of workshops, trainings related to emotional intelligence should be organized frequently which can help the doctors to get relief from their burnout. Also, as mentioned earlier that not many studies have been done in Himachal Pradesh with respect to doctors, so it is suggested that many such studies should be carried out in future in order to have a better clarity for the same.

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