Perceived Burnout Among URM PA Educators in the United States

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PURPOSE

There is a keen interest regarding burnout in academic medicine with an existing need for more studies.[1] The priority population were underrepresented minority (URM) PA educators in the United States. The purpose was to determine external and internal contributors leading to perceived burnout; investigate if primary/secondary appraisal inform coping strategies; and determine if there was an existing relationship between demographic factors and emotional exhaustion (EE).

Research Questions:

> How do demographic factors (age, gender, self-identified race, faculty role, and "years in faculty position") relate to U.S. URM PA educators' Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) subscale score for emotional exhaustion?

> How do demographic factors (age, gender, self-identified race, faculty role, and "years in faculty position") predict emotional exhaustion in U.S. URM PA educators?

> How do URM PA educators in the United States perceive burnout?
- What, if anything, do URM PA educators in the United States describe as contributing aspects to burnout?
- What burnout coping strategies, if any, do URM PA educators in the United States employ?

METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods design using a convenience sample (*n* = 101). For the quantitative portion, the participants completed a demographics survey and the MBI – Educators Survey[2,3] from which their average EE score was calculated. For the qualitative portion, 11 participants were interviewed identifying burnout perception, contributors, and coping strategies. Statistical analyses (ANOVA, Pearson's r, *t*-Test, Multiple Linear Regression) were used to determine the relationship between demographic variables and EE. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Review Copy: MBI for Educators Survey

How often:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

How often 0-6 | **Statements:**

1. _____ I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. _____ I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. _____ I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. _____ I can easily understand how my students feel about things.
5. _____ I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects.
6. _____ Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
7. _____ I deal very effectively with the problems of my students.
8. _____ I feel burned out from my work.
9. _____ I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.
10. _____ I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.
11. _____ I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
12. _____ I feel very energetic.
13. _____ I feel frustrated by my job.
14. _____ I feel I'm working too hard on my job.
15. _____ I don't really care what happens to some students.
16. _____ Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.
17. _____ I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students.
18. _____ I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students.
19. _____ I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
20. _____ I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.
21. _____ In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
22. _____ I feel students blame me for some of their problems.

(Administrative use only)

EE Total score: _____   DP Total score: _____   PA Total score: _____
EE Average score: _____   DP Average score: _____   PA Average score: _____

Semistructured Interview Questions

1. What does burnout mean to you?
2. What, if anything, contributes to burnout for you?
3. How does your current program help you address burnout, if at all?
   a. If not, what strategies would you like to see implemented?
4. How does your current institution help you address burnout, if at all?
   a. If not, what strategies would you like to see implemented?
5. I want you to name a common work-related stress trigger. If you're comfortable, what is your usual initial response when the stress trigger occurs?
6. After your initial response to a stressful situation, what type of coping strategy or strategies, if any, do you usually use to make yourself feel better? Please explain.
7. Is there anything that you would like to add about your experience as a URM PA educator?

RESULTS

There was a statistically significant relationship between gender and EE ($t(100)$ = -2.42, $p < .05$, d = -0.54), demonstrating that women URM PA educators experience burnout at increased rates compared to their men counterparts. There were no statistically significant relationships between age (r = .015, R^2 = .000225, p = .883), race ($F(1, 98)$ = .108, p = .744, η^2 = .001), faculty role ($F(1, 97)$ = 3.09, p = .082, η^2 = .031), and "years in faculty position" and EE ($F(1, 99)$ = .271, p = .604, η^2 = .003). The overall predictive model was not statistically significant ($F(5, 92)$ = 1.859, p = .109, $R2$ = .092, adjusted $R2$ = 0.042). The qualitative data offered insight into burnout perception, contributors, coping strategies, current institutional/programmatic burnout strategies, suggested institutional/programmatic burnout strategies, common occupational stressors, initial responses to occupational stressors, and overall experiences of URM PA educators.

Qualitative Data Themes:

Defining burnout: decreased satisfaction, emotional toll, exhaustion

Burnout contributors: institutional issues, work-related stressors, social isolation, occupational pressures

Programmatic burnout prevention strategies: faculty-facing activities, valuing faculty, no specific programming

Desired programmatic strategies: faculty resources, equitable workload distribution

Institutional burnout prevention strategies: EDI prioritization, incentives, relaxation techniques, no specific programming

Desired institutional strategies: faculty resources

Common work-related stressor/initial response: faculty issues, social issues → emotional response, physical response

Coping Strategies: calming techniques, cognitive/behavioral techniques, distancing techniques

URM PA educator experiences: interpersonal/intrapersonal experiences, JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, inclusion)

Sample Quotes:

> "I guess for me, burnout is more almost when you're working so much, so hard with so much interference that you no longer enjoy the work you do. It's hard to continue the work. There's no joy in it."

> "Our program director does a good job asking how are we doing, encouraging us to take personal time, encouraging us to sort of re-center ourselves."

> "I really want [my colleagues] to know that you can't do DEI work or JEDI work without linking that to wellness because if I am a Black faculty, Black student, Black staff, and I am having an uncomfortable experience because of my Blackness, because of my womanhood; that is not wellness in that program. And, so, I really want our colleagues to see how this links together. This isn't, oh, wellness over here and DEI, JEDI work over there. This is entrenched together."

DISCUSSION

The quantitative data demonstrated a significant difference between EE score and gender; no correlation between EE and age; and nonsignificant differences between EE and race, EE and "years in faculty position," and EE and faculty role; as well as demographics as a predictor for EE. These findings are supplemented by the qualitative data with the interviewees relating social isolation secondary to gender and lack of diversity as burnout contributors. Regarding URM PA educator experiences, the participants related their minority status, URM faculty allyship, and being a Black woman in academia as important topics for consideration. These triangulated data can be used to inform future burnout health interventions and research.