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 coping strategies have any relationship to the demographic variables, and to determine if there was an existing relationship between demographic factors and emotional exhaustion (EE).

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 Survey² 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.

RESULTS

There was a statistically significant relationship between gender and EE (r(100) = .242, p < .05, d = -0.54), demonstrating that women URM PA educators experience burnout at increased rates compared to their counterparts. There were no statistically significant relationships between age (r = .015, R^2 = .000225, p = .883), race (F(1, 98) = .108, p = .744, n^2 = .001), faculty role (F(1, 97) = 3.09, p = .082, n^2 = .031), and “years in faculty position” and EE (F(1, 99) = .271, p = .604, n^2 = .003). The overall predictive model was not statistically significant (F(3, 92) = 1.859, p = .109, R^2 = .092, adjusted R^2 = 0.042). The qualitative data offered insight into burnout perception, contributors, coping strategies, current institutional/programmatic burnout strategies, common occupational stressors, initial responses to occupational stressors, and overall experiences of URM PA educators.

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 supported by the qualitative data from 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.

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 URM US 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?

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?