

THE MULTIFACTORIAL NATURE OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS IN HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS: A SCOPING REVIEW

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Abstract

Occupational stress and burnout critically threaten healthcare professionals' (HCPs) well-being and patient care quality, a situation significantly exacerbated post-pandemic. Synthesizing contemporary risk factors is essential for effective interventions. This scoping review systematically maps empirical literature (January 2021-December 2025) identifying the multifactorial determinants of stress and/or burnout among doctors and nurses. Following PRISMA-ScR guidelines, PubMed and Wiley databases were searched. Data from 25 eligible primary research articles in English underwent narrative synthesis and thematic analysis. Analysis confirmed the complex, multifactorial nature of HCP stress/burnout. Four major interconnected themes of risk factors were identified: (1) Workload and Job Demands (quantitative overload like excessive hours, and qualitative pressures including high emotional/cognitive labor); (2) Organizational Factors and Resources (deficits like inadequate staffing/support, low job control, effort-reward imbalance, poor leadership/communication); (3) Individual Factors (demographics, health status, sleep quality, personality traits, coping strategies); and (4) Pandemic Context (unique stressors like infection fear, resource scarcity, ethical dilemmas). The findings highlight a critical interplay between demanding work conditions, inadequate organizational support, individual vulnerabilities, and crisis contexts, underscoring the need for multi-level interventions addressing systemic, organizational, and individual factors to mitigate HCP stress and burnout.

Keywords: Burnout, Healthcare Professionals, Occupational Stress

INTRODUCTION

Healthcare professionals, including physicians and nurses, constitute a fundamental pillar of the global healthcare delivery system, whose well-being is intrinsically linked to the quality of patient care, patient safety, and the overall stability of the health system (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Despite their essential roles, professionals in the health sector are consistently exposed to high-pressure work environments, rendering occupational stress and burnout persistent critical challenges (Hosseini et al., 2024; Hu et al., 2023). This phenomenon not only jeopardizes the physical and mental health of these professionals themselves but also precipitates detrimental systemic consequences, including an increased risk of medical errors,