Thai psychiatrists and burnout: a national survey

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Background

Thailand was among countries facing with increasing number of patients with mental illness, the number of Thai psychiatrists is still limited compared to the amount of workload. Accordingly, Thai psychiatrists are highly prone to burnout, and this could lead to many other mental health problems.

Objective

To explore the prevalence of burnout among Thai psychiatrists and to study the association of possible factors and burnout levels.

Method

In this cross-sectional study, online questionnaires were sent out to all registered Thai psychiatrists and residents. We focused on four domains, i.e. demographic data, burnout (measured with the Maslach Burnout Inventory¹), coping mechanism (assessed with the Proactive Coping Inventory²), and strategies which Thai psychiatrists believed could help reduce their burnout.

Result

Demographic data and work characteristics

The response rate was 27% (n=227). The majority of participants were female (70%) and aged between 25-64 years (mean 36.84). Most of them were general psychiatrists (58.1%), single (55.9%) and had no children (72%). The average number of years of experience as a psychiatrist was 8.9 years, while the mean number of patients per day was 28. Their number of 'days off' per month was around 6-8 days.

Figure 1 Burnout rates by Maslach Burnout Inventory subscales

Proactive coping mechanism and burnout

There were significant correlations between each coping mechanism and burnout. Higher scores of proactive coping, strategic planning and emotional seeking were associated with less burnout ($r=-0.165$ to -0.410). On the other hand, higher avoidance coping scores were associated with more burnout ($r= 0.169$ to 0.296).

Table1 Association between burnout and possible factors

Emotional exhaustion	B	P-value
Working more than 50 hours per week	2.958	0.003
Support from families	-3.263	0.041
Having satisfaction with work	-3.035	<0.001
Emotional support seeking	-0.569	0.008
Depersonalization	B	P-value
Avoidance coping	0.634	0.005
Number of patients per day	0.092	<0.001
Having good support from colleagues	-1.468	0.033
Having more than one child	-1.301	0.018
Having satisfaction with work	-1.002	<0.001
Proactive coping	-0.150	0.047
Personal accomplishment	B	P-value
Having satisfaction with work	-1.092	<0.001
Proactive coping	-0.275	<0.001

B = Unstandardized coefficients

Conclusion

Compared to a previous study on burnout among Thai psychiatrists in 2011³, the prevalence of high level of burnout increased dramatically. Adjusted the associated factors may be beneficial in relieving burnout.

References

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