

## Editorial

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### THE SILENT EPIDEMIC – ADDRESSING BURNOUT IN THE DENTAL COMMUNITY

Burnout among dental professionals is a growing concern worldwide, but in regions like Pakistan and particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it remains largely underrecognized and underreported. The dental profession demands high levels of concentration, manual dexterity, and continuous patient interaction, often in resource-limited and high-stress environments. In KP's public and teaching hospitals, dentists face large patient loads, outdated equipment, and administrative burdens that significantly contribute to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization key hallmarks of professional burnout. Coupled with the stigma around mental health and limited institutional support, this silent crisis continues to erode the wellbeing of our dental workforce.

The implications of burnout go beyond individual suffering. Studies have shown that it directly impacts quality of care, patient safety, and even academic productivity in teaching institutions. In the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where dental services are stretched thin across urban and rural divides, the consequences of an overburdened and disengaged dental workforce could lead to long-term public health repercussions. Young dentists, house officers, and postgraduates in particular often face unrealistic expectations, poor mentorship, and job insecurity all of which increase susceptibility to early career burnout.

It is imperative that academic institutions, hospital administrators, and policymakers prioritize the mental health of dental professionals. Preventive strategies such as workload redistribution, mental health literacy programs, institutional counselling support, and protected academic time must be urgently introduced. Furthermore, integrating burnout screening and resilience training into dental curricula could empower future professionals to recognize and manage stress proactively. If left unaddressed, burnout will continue to undermine not only the profession but also the trust and care we owe our communities.

**Dr. Farhad Ali Khattak**

Assistant Professor (Biostatistics) &  
Managing Editor,  
Journal of Khyber College of Dentistry  
(JKCD)