

## Commentary

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# Correct use of the Maslach Burnout Inventory to develop evidence-based strategies against burnout syndrome during and post COVID-19 pandemic

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The paper by Kumaresan et al. showed a high prevalence of burnout syndrome (BOS) among Indian work-from-home information technology (IT) professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic. This issue is worthy being investigated, because IT is one of the most important sectors of the global economy [1] and represents a new and emerging risk factor in occupational health [2], leading to several ergonomic and mental health issues that occupational stakeholders have to deal with in the next future worldwide [3].

Nonetheless, we express concern about some findings reported in this work. The authors state: “Our findings show that 95% of the IT professionals who work from home experience high levels of personal and work-related burnout, while most had low rates of client-related burnout”, but they have adopted the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to measure BOS levels among work-from-home workers, which is a well-known instrument developed to measure the three BOS subdimensions, namely Emo-

tional Exhaustion (EE), Personal Accomplishment (PA), and Depersonalization (DP). On the contrary, personal, work, and client-related BOS are three subdimensions measured by the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), which is a 19-item survey based on a different BOS construct, having exhaustion and fatigue as the core symptoms [4]. Furthermore, the authors did not indicate which version of the MBI they used, though we suppose that it was the MBI-General Survey, which is for use with people in any type of occupation. Finally, in this descriptive study the slightly reported difference in BOS levels between men and women was not tested by any statistical tests and has been attributed by the authors to potential higher levels of work-life conflict in females during the COVID-19 pandemic. On the contrary, it would be interesting to relate the “six work life areas” (i.e. workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values) to the BOS subscales (EE, DP, and PA), as literature shows how workers affected by high levels of EE, DP and low levels of PA have major issues with multiple aspects of the workplace [5].

We believe this is another example of poor presentation of MBI scores that obscures important information [5]. For this reason, we call for good editorial practices on BOS [6], to avoid the use of “burnout” as umbrella term for whatever dis-

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tressed people at the workplace [5]. This is needed for producing evidence-based guidelines on BOS and mental well-being in the workplace [7, 8] and developing evidence-based strategies by policymakers during and post COVID-19 pandemic.

### Conflict of interest

None to report.

### References

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