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# Preventing Burnout in Nursing Staff: Strategies and Best Practices for a Healthy Workplace

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
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Executive Summary: Staff Education Project

Preventing Burnout in Nursing Staff:

Strategies and Best Practices for a Healthy Workplace

by

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**Summary**

This doctoral project is a staff education initiative focused on improving nursing resilience and mental health through mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs). The project was informed by a practice-focused question: To what extent does the implementation of MBI training reduce stress and burnout among nursing staff in a clinical setting? The purpose of this project was to establish whether MBIs can be implemented as a support strategy in mitigating burnout and stress among nurses. The quantitative evaluation strategy used to determine the effectiveness of MBIs in reducing stress and burnout among nurses was a pretest and a posttest. The project targeted nursing staff, with 20 participants completing the questionnaires. The pretest and posttest scores (counts and percentages) were compared to demonstrate differences in stress and burnout management from pre-training to post-training. After the implementation of the educational intervention, participants demonstrated an improved understanding of early warning signs for burnout. The percentage of participants who "strongly agreed" and "agreed" that they could identify early warning signs for burnout increased from 30% to 65%. Moreover, post-training results indicated a higher level of confidence in the management of stress (30% to 75%) and 16 of 20 participants reported they were likely to apply the practices learned during the session. The project may result in positive social change by increasing staff awareness of and ability to identify the symptoms of stress and burnout. The organization's framework of diversity, equity, and inclusion provided a platform for offering every nursing staff member education and resources to decrease stress and burnout in the high-pressure environment of general nursing practice.

## Background

There has been a high rate of stress and burnout, not only in nursing practice in general, but also where I work. Gaps exist in identifying and recognizing stress and burnout signs. Although counselling and support services exists, they are underutilized. Absenteeism is a current problem as the organization continues to grapple with high-turnover rates and nurse intentions to leave employment (Bianchini & Copeland, 2020). The reason for this practice change is to improve nurses' knowledge and awareness on burnout and stress signs and how to manage them proactively. MBIs for the reduction of nurse stress and burnout will affect nursing practice by improving the well-being of nurses, increasing job satisfaction and retention, and bringing forth better patient care and safer working environments with reduced turnover (Dall'Ora et al., 2020). Developing a supportive culture that ensures mental health awareness promotes positive social change by reducing the root causes of burnout. The framework of diversity, equity, and inclusion provides a platform where every staff member, from any walk of life, will be supported equally and given equal resources to combat stress and burnout on the job.

Quality patient care and nurse retention are deeply affected by the growing crisis of nurse's stress and burnout (Duarte & Pinto-Gouveia, 2016). Nurses work in a high-stress atmosphere that requires constant attention, emotional stability, and effectiveness. This constant high-pressure environment results in chronic stress, emotional depletion, and finally burnout among staff members (Dall'Ora et al., 2020). Physical and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment are signs of burnout (Bianchini & Copeland, 2020). This condition not only negatively

affects the wellbeing of nurses but also diminishes job satisfaction and increases the likelihood of turnover. For the protection of patient care quality standards, steps must be taken to mitigate nurses' stress and burnout and address the need to establish a healthier and supportive work environment for nursing practice. Reduction in burnout helps meet the goals of many healthcare organizations in their focus on quality and patient-centered care (Goodman & Schorling, 2012). The interventions expected to address the problem of nurse stress and burnout in the organization include mindfulness meditation practices, breathing exercises, and mindful movement that help nurses build better emotional resilience, self-awareness, and effective ways of coping with the challenging work situations (Oliveira et al., 2019).

The guiding project question was: Does the application of mindfulness-based interventions reduce the level of stress and burnout among nurses in a clinical setting? This question was based on a need to address increased levels of stress and burnout in the clinical setting, which negatively impacted patient care, nurse retention, and overall job satisfaction (Ramachandran et al., 2022). This project determined whether MBI training was effective in helping nurses to recognize the signs of stress and burnout and apply techniques for managing them that were aimed at enhancing resilience, mental well-being, and the provision of quality care (Ramachandran et al., 2022). By emphasizing the reduction of stress techniques that enable nurses to detect early signs of burnout, the expected project outcome was a reduction in adverse organizational impacts that come with stress and burnout in the nursing profession.

Research has indicated that MBIs may be used to reduce stress and burnout among health professionals, especially nurses. Evidence has also revealed that MBIs improve mental well-being and build resilience while increasing job satisfaction, showing the reduction of stress and emotional exhaustion in participants (Zhang et al., 2020). Some meta-analyses of randomized control trials showed statistically significant effects of MBIs in reducing burnout and markers of stress (Dall'Ora et al., 2020; Goodman & Schorling, 2012; Shah et al., 2021). Because of the rigorous design of such studies, these studies provided a high level of evidence in support of the project. Other studies have indicated that MBIs improved emotional regulation and reduced turnover rates, thereby improving the general environment of workplaces (McGovern et al., 2021; Ramachandran et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023).

It was important to undertake an assessment of organizational readiness regarding the successful implementation of this project on preventing burnout. The current status showed a high level of stress among the nurses, and this finding indicated an area for urgent intervention. Leadership support was crucial; management's endorsement of initiatives on mental health provided a foundation for these efforts. Resources were available, such as counseling services and wellness programs, to help staff. The organization's safety culture and commitment to providing a supportive environment further facilitated staff participation. A key foundation and insight from the organization is that the current resources were not being used. Therefore, the leadership had considered other approaches to improving stress and burnout management or prevention.

**Staff Education Project Development**

The target participants for this project were registered nurses in general practice. A comprehensive analysis of the existing situation was used as the procedure in developing and implementing the project. First, the problem and gap or change in practice was identified. I then created a pre- and post-training questionnaire to collect and analyze data (quantitative analysis) and present findings related to the practice intervention, comparing pre-and post-training scores. The success of the project was also evaluated by considering secondary measures including turnover rates, job satisfaction, nurse absenteeism, and overall quality of patient care. Also, healthcare costs associated with turnover and absenteeism were used to evaluate and report to the organization on changes after implementing the project.

Data collection for the "Preventing Burnout in Nursing Staff" program consisted of a pre-training and post-training questionnaire with the aim of measuring performance of the program. The questionnaires tested knowledge, confidence, and attitudes that participants had about stress and burnout. Each participant completed both questionnaires by responding to questions on a Likert scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The pre-training questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the program to establish a baseline on knowledge and skills related to the ability to identify early signs of burnout, confidence in managing stressors, and current coping strategies. The participants completed the same questionnaire at the end of the training. Their responses allowed evaluators to show the degree of change in attitudes, skills, and knowledge of participants on different items such as being confident in managing the stressors, identifying poor

coping techniques, and the apparent importance of work-life balance. Responses after training were compared against the pre-training results to show changes in perception and confidence of participants in managing burnout. The evaluation included quantitative analysis by the response to the questionnaires. The number and percent of participants indicating each of the five ratings on the Likert scale are reported. Other questions assessed whether the course met participants' expectations and the chances of implementing what they learned in their work.
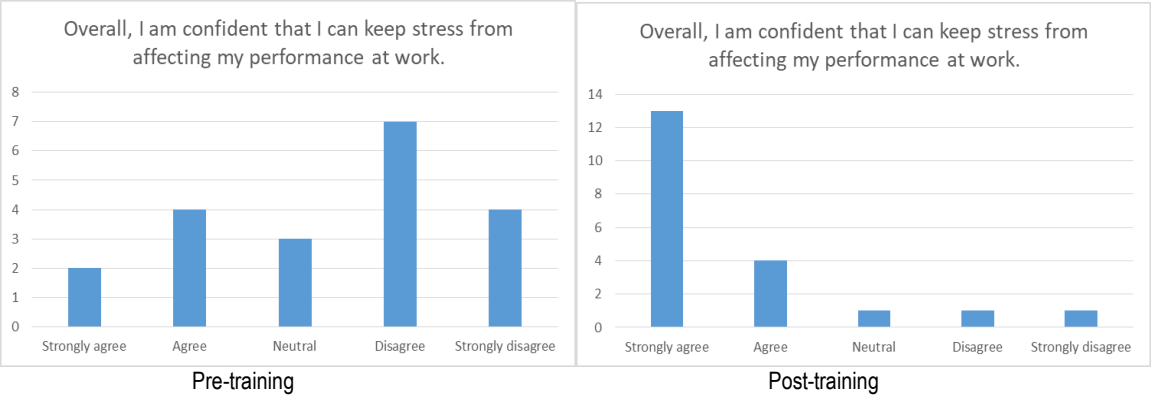
## Results

**Post Implementation Results**

The post-implementation results of the training program "Preventing Burnout in Nursing Staff" indicated an improvement in knowledge and awareness related to stress and burnout among the participants. This improvement contributed toward measurable benefits in minimizing negative impacts of burnout on staff wellness, patient care, and the organization in general (see Figures 1, 2, and 3).

### *Well-Being of Staff*

Confidence among nurses regarding early warning signs of burnout and healthy coping strategies was increased. Post-training responses showed a significant increase in participants' confidence to identify and manage stressors appropriately (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Confidence in Keeping Stress From Affecting Work Performance*



Overall, I am confident that I can keep stress from affecting my performance at work. (Pre-training)

Overall, I am confident that I can keep stress from affecting my performance at work. (Post-training)

*Patient Care*

The increased self-awareness and control of burnout indirectly contributed to the higher quality of care given to patients. Figure 2 shows the increased awareness and recognition of stress and burnout among nurses in the post-training.

**Figure 2**

*Recognizing Early Signs of Burnout*



I can recognize the early warning signs of burnout (Pre-training)

I can recognize the early warning signs of burnout (Post-training)
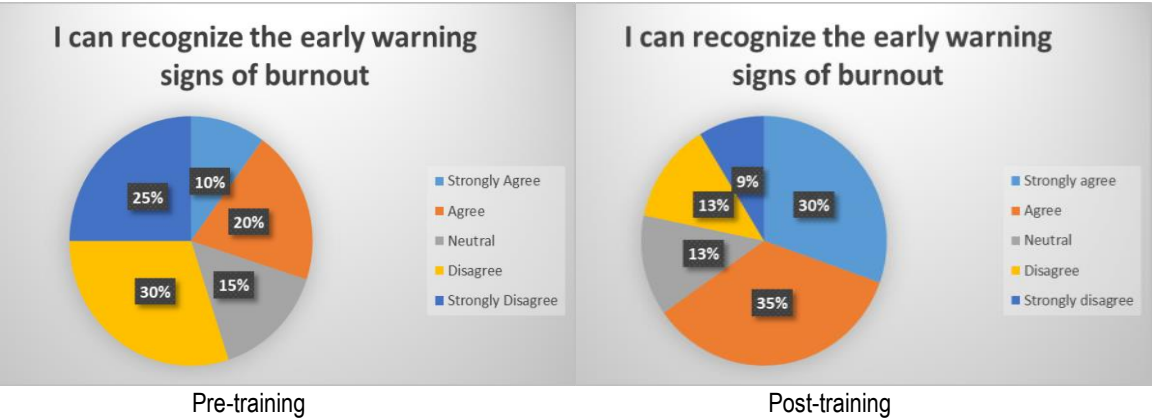
*Organizational Impact*

Equipping nurses to prevent burnout could potentially reduce absenteeism and turnover. The morale of staff improved since the nurses felt they were being supported in managing work-related stress and were better equipped to do so. Post-implementation results showed that the training program was highly effective not only in mitigating the adverse impacts of burnout among individual nurses themselves but also in ensuring improvement in patient outcomes and overall organizational performance (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

*Effectiveness in Evaluating Stress*



Pre-training                    Post-training
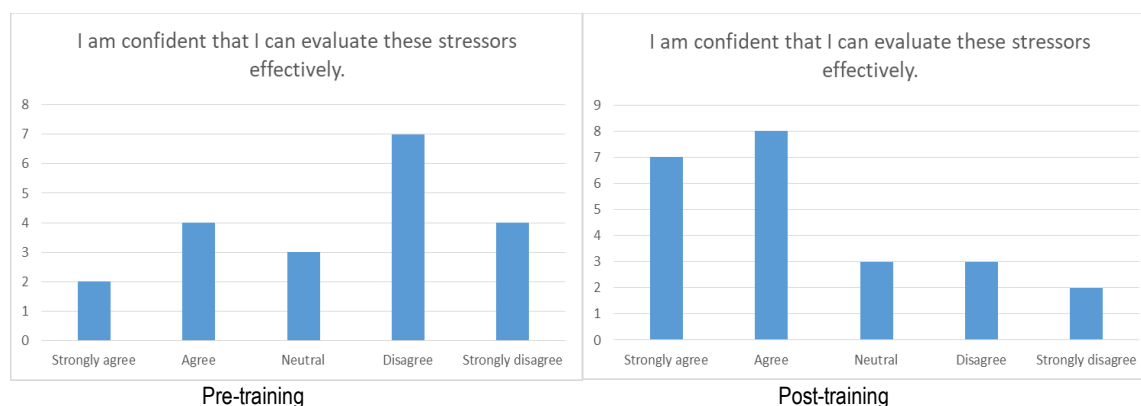
**Impact on the Organization**

This training program for preventing burnout among nursing staff has gone a long way in enhancing staff wellbeing and quality of patient care provided in the organization, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability. Impacts include the following:

- *Improved staff retention and reduced turnover costs*: The organization has improved morale and retention rates among staff by better equipping nurses with the tools to recognize and manage burnout. Reduced turnover minimizes

significant costs associated with the recruitment, hiring, and training of new staff and saves both time and resources.

- *Improved quality of care*: Fewer burnt-out nurses are more focused, empathetic, and interested in their job. This reduction in burnout will directly relate to the quality of care for the patients since it is well documented that stress-related fatigue and emotional exhaustion impairs the quality of care.

- *Increased staff productivity and efficiency*: Less-stressed nurses mean greater ability to accomplish work efficiently. This, in turn, has led to improved productivity within the organization, where staff are performing duties with fewer errors and absenteeism, with a better ability to collaborate and respond to patient needs.

- *Improved organizational culture*: A burnout prevention training program sends a message with regard to the organization's concern for the welfare of its employees, thereby fostering an organizational culture that truly cares. This approach toward job-related stress has built trust and further created a positive atmosphere where communication, empathy, and teamwork within management and staff would flourish.

- *Long-term viability*: By investing in burnout prevention, the organization has built the foundation for a healthier workforce capable of managing the high demands of healthcare (see Figure 4). The impact of the program will lead to more resilience in the nursing staff, hence improving organizational stability

and sustainability in an industry that has persistent burnout and turnover

problems.

**Figure 4**

*Understanding the Importance of Managing Stress*



Pre-training          Post-training

**Table 1**

*Pretest on Staff Awareness of Stress and Burnout*

|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I can recognize the early warning signs of burnout | 2 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 5 |
| I am confident that I can recognize these signs before I experience too much stress. | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| It is important to me to slow down, stop, and evaluate the stressors in my life. | 3 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 6 |
| I am confident that I can evaluate these stressors effectively. | 2 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 5 |
| I can recognize when I am engaging in unhealthy coping and correct the situation. | 3 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Overall, I am confident that I can keep stress from affecting my performance at work. | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| Overall, did the course meet your expectations? | 4 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| How likely are you to implement what you've learned? | 2 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 5 |

**Table 2**

*Posttest Results on Burnout and Stress Awareness*

|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I can recognize the early warning signs of burnout | 8 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| I am confident that I can recognize these signs before I experience too much stress. | 5 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| It is important to me to slow down, stop, and evaluate the stressors in my life. | 6 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| I am confident that I can evaluate these stressors effectively. | 10 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| I can recognize when I am engaging in unhealthy coping and correct the situation. | 7 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| Overall, I am confident that I can keep stress from affecting my performance at work. | 4 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Overall, did the course meet your expectations? | 8 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| How likely are you to implement what you've learned? | 6 | 10 | 3 | 1 | 0 |

## Limitations of the Project

Limitations of the project include the following:

- *Sample size*: The relatively small number of participants in the training itself

  limited the generalizability of the findings, collecting data from 20

  participants from a possible 27 participants.

- *Short duration of follow-up*: The follow-up period was limited to the

  immediate post-training, and no actual long-term effect of the program on

  stress and burnout could be measured as part of the DNP project. The

  organization plans to collect data using unidentified data from the Maslach

  Burnout Inventory as a future measure of project effect and sustainability.

  Additional follow-up data could include patient satisfaction scores, nurse job

satisfaction scores, staff turnover rates, and rates of errors (especially

medication errors).

- *Self-reporting bias*: The study relies on self-reported measures through

  questionnaires, which may be burdened by potential biases in the way

  participants estimated their level of burnout, recognition of stress, or coping.

**Importance Beyond the Site**

This project is important, as it pertains not only to the site of the implementation

of the nurse stress and burnout program but also to improving healthcare outcomes across

healthcare systems (McGovern et al., 2021). Nurse burnout is a problem that has been

realized on a global scale and affects many variables: decreased quality patient care,

increased mistakes, and higher turnover rates, thereby burdening healthcare facilities and

compromising patient safety (Shah et al., 2021). The project, therefore, presented an

intervention that may be implemented and adapted into similar healthcare settings. The

project also contributed to a small but growing body of evidence related to the

interventions for effective stress management in healthcare settings.

<div align="center">**Conclusions**</div>

The nurse burnout prevention project contributed to organizational development

by addressing critical problems in the context of the well-being of staff and service

provisions to patients. The training program effectively helped nurses to identify early

signs of burnout, manage stress, and adopt healthier coping behavior. This increased

resilience among staff reduced the occurrence of negative consequences related to

burnout, leading to fewer cases of absenteeism, low morale, and decreased productivity,

leading to a more engaged and efficient workforce. Consequently, nurses developed a sense of confidence in dealing with stress, which translated into good work performance and, by extension, a more caring environment for patients.

**Recommendations**

Beyond the current project intervention, other suggestions to reduce nurse stress and burnout were regular training to enhance stress management skills, establish peer counseling support groups, and add training for managers to enable them to identify signs of burnout and take active steps for prevention. The institutionalization of such measures may render a healthier more supportive environment that will ensure consistent outcomes in improving the well-being of the nurses and the quality of patient care.

Implications for the nursing practice of MBIs for the reduction of nurse stress and burnout are improved well-being of nurses, increased job satisfaction and retention, better patient care, and a safe working environment with reduced turnover. Developing a supportive culture that ensures mental health awareness creates positive social change by reducing the root causes of burnout. The organization's framework of diversity, equity, and inclusion provided a platform where every staff member, from any walk of life, was supported and offered resources to decrease stress and burnout in the high pressure environment of general nursing practice.

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# Appendix

Pretest-Posttest Questionnaire

| SN | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I can recognize the early warning signs of burnout | | | | | |
| 2 | I am confident that I can recognize these signs before I experience too much stress. | | | | | |
| 3 | It is important to me to slow down, stop, and evaluate the stressors in my life. | | | | | |
| 4 | I am confident that I can evaluate these stressors effectively. | | | | | |
| 5 | I can recognize when I am engaging in unhealthy coping and correct the situation. | | | | | |
| 6 | Overall, I am confident that I can keep stress from affecting my performance at work. | | | | | |
| 7 | Overall, did the course meet your expectations? | | | | | |
| 8 | How likely are you to implement what you've learned? | | | | | |