

Causes of Nurse Burnout and Strategies to Promote Mental Health

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Nurse burnout is a widespread concern in medical work environments, significantly affecting professionals emotionally and impacting patient care quality. Burnout consists of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and loss of self-efficacy. For nurses, the multifactorial causes include heavy shifts, emotional drain, inadequate availability of resources, and workplace violence. This essay focuses on these causes and identifies ways to reduce burnout by promoting nurses' mental health.

Staffing shortages and heavy workloads are among the primary factors contributing to burnout. Nurses often care for multiple patients, and the problem escalates when staff are in short supply (Nakweenda et al., 2022). The increasing demand for patients requires working more hours and negatively impacts wellbeing and quality of care. There is increasing evidence and documentation that the shortage of staff remains a significant contributor to nurse burnout. Nurses experience more burnout and exhaustion after working hours due to insufficient breaks, insufficient rest, and a limited time to recover personally.

The psychological ramifications of patient care are another contributing factor to the phenomenon known as burnout. Nurses are the professionals who encounter patients the most, particularly those who are gravely ill, suffering through pain, or are bedridden and transitioning near the end of their lives (Jun et al., 2021). One reason for burnout is the psychological aspect of patient care. Among all healthcare professionals, nurses spend the most time with patients, especially those who are gravely ill, in pain, bed-bound, and in the final stages of life (Jun et al., 2021). Such interactions, while rewarding, are emotionally taxing. The profession of nursing involves the emotional challenge of providing care and compassion to those who are suffering.

Over time, a phenomenon known as compassion fatigue can result from prolonged suffering. The nurse emotionally detaches to the point of indifference, but they are not emotionally, psychologically, or mentally affected, and they feel satisfied with their jobs and fulfilled.

The fatigue and exhaustion nurses face are also a result of their long hours, which are often unscheduled and inconsistent. The working hours may include a 12-hour day or a night shift and are a cause of burnout in employees due to their inability to cause sleep problems, overall exhaustion, and fatigue (Benzo et al., 2022). Also sleep deprivation, particularly the working of shifts in a rotational manner, has a strong relation to the loss of sleep, which result in a decline in the mental and psychological state as well as an increase in the levels of stress. Burnout arises in this situation due to long hours, lack of sleep, and the mental, emotional, and physical fatigue inherent to the nursing profession. Extreme fatigue and a noticeable absence of energy are defining features of burnout.

The lack of acknowledgment and support worsens the problems. Understaffed and busy hospitals can be situations where the hard work of employees goes unappreciated. (Surendran et al., 2025). The lack of praise or acknowledgment can lead to unexpressed feelings of underappreciation and job dissatisfaction. When nurses start feeling like they are the only ones filling their positions and there is no one to help them, the boundaries of their jobs stretch beyond what had been assigned as their work. The lack of boundaries also does not allow for any mentoring to take place or for there to be any new opportunities to be gained through professional development, and that only adds to the existing frustration. It also contributes to high workplace dissatisfaction.

To mitigate nurse burnout, there needs to be a shift in support systems that promote nurses' mental wellbeing. The most effective way to avoid burnout is to change how nurses are assigned to tasks and how heavy their workloads are. The work should not be overstressed. (Nakweenda et al., 2022). By focusing and controlling the patient volume assigned to nurses, burnout can be avoided, and nurse responsibilities can be aligned with those of quality patient care.

A positive work culture that encourages nurses' collaboration with supervisors to establish a cooperative partnership within a teamwork cell will benefit nurses' mental health and reduce burnout (Abujaber et al., 2024). Recognition and appreciation received by nurses acts as a positive feedback mechanism to uplift and sustain their morale. Support programs that mentor nurses by guiding them through various challenges and extending emotional and professional support are beneficial for protecting nurses' mental health.

Nurses' work-life balance must be a top priority and a key strategy. Nurses should be encouraged to take time off, have breaks, and schedule vacations. It should be noted that there must be some flexibility in the work schedule (Benzo et al., 2022). Mental health support resources are essential in nursing due to the emotional demands of the work. Self-care practices that improve mindfulness, reduce stress, and overall resilience are beneficial in addressing burnout.

Nurse burnout is a complex issue that requires thoughtful attention and immediate action, as it is critical to balancing the needs of the sector and the needs of the individual nurses. The problem that nurses face in mental health advocacy is understanding and addressing the impacts of excessive workload, emotional strain, long working hours, and insufficient support when attempting to combat the burnout phenomenon. There is a pressing need to implement a set of

interventions to reduce burnout, including enhanced recruitment, a favorable organizational climate, a balance between work and leisure, and education on stress management techniques. In this manner, healthcare systems would effectively ease nurse burnout and develop a more productive and sustainable nurse workforce.

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