

Be Well: Qualitative Evaluation of Factors Influencing Students Pharmacists' Wellbeing

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BACKGROUND

- Literature identifies **concerning rates of burnout and decreased wellbeing** across the health professions, **including student pharmacists**.¹⁻³
- Unaddressed burnout** in pharmacy school leads to **decreased mental health and increased burnout**.³
- While **prior studies have quantified** the degree of burnout and wellbeing in various populations, **more information is needed to understand factors** influencing these constructs and guide support resources.

The purpose of this study was to identify factors contributing towards PharmD student burnout, and solicit recommendations from participants on strategies to promote and support student pharmacist well-being.

METHODS

Student volunteers enrolled in the PY1-PY3 didactic curriculum participated in a 60-minute semi-structured focus group in Fall 2021. Students were prompted to discuss factors influencing student burnout, fulfillment, and strategies to improve well-being.

Twelve volunteers participated in six focus groups/interviews, with participants organized by class year (ie, PY1, PY2, PY3) to explore experiences unique to each cohort.

Data Analysis

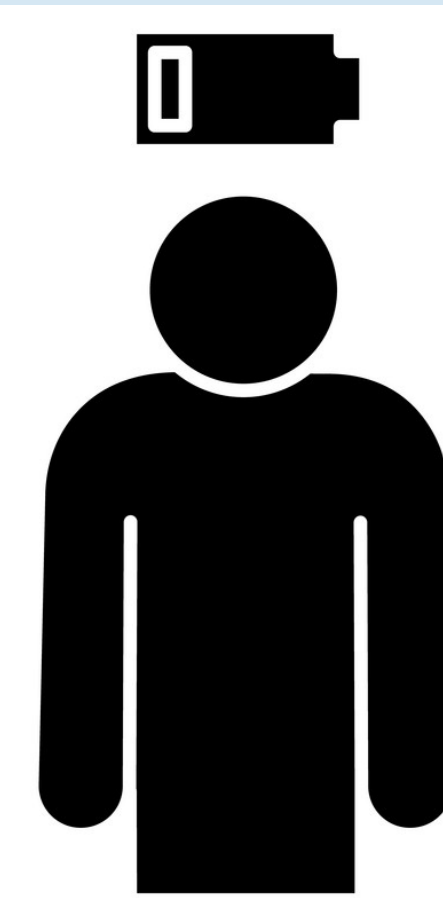
- Inductive coding was used to identify themes and **codes were summarized by cohort**.
- Each transcript was coded independently by two researchers. All codes were reviewed and any discrepancies were discussed until consensus was reached.

RESULTS

BURNOUT

Top Themes:

- Competitive culture
- Workload
- Non-coursework commitments



PY1: Too Little Time

"[Everything] is nonstop. I juggle school, the co-curriculum, finding a job, and student debt. Then, I must also find time for self-care, exercise, cooking, and sleeping."

PY2: Commitments

"Commitments cause burnout because I don't have time to even feel fulfilled by my hard work because it's a cycle of completing tasks and moving on to the next"

PY3: Peer Competition

"We get exam scores back with a ranking so I see my score and realize there are many students doing better than me. It's impossible not to compare yourself"

FULFILLMENT

Top Themes:

- Community and friendships
- Career goals
- University resources



PY1: Career Goals

"I try to learn as much as I can and push through the stress knowing this will all be for a reason and I will be improving patient lives one day"

PY2: Sense of Community

"The sense of community I've gotten from the fact my classmates and I are all going through the same challenges & tribulations together... it's brought me my closest friends"

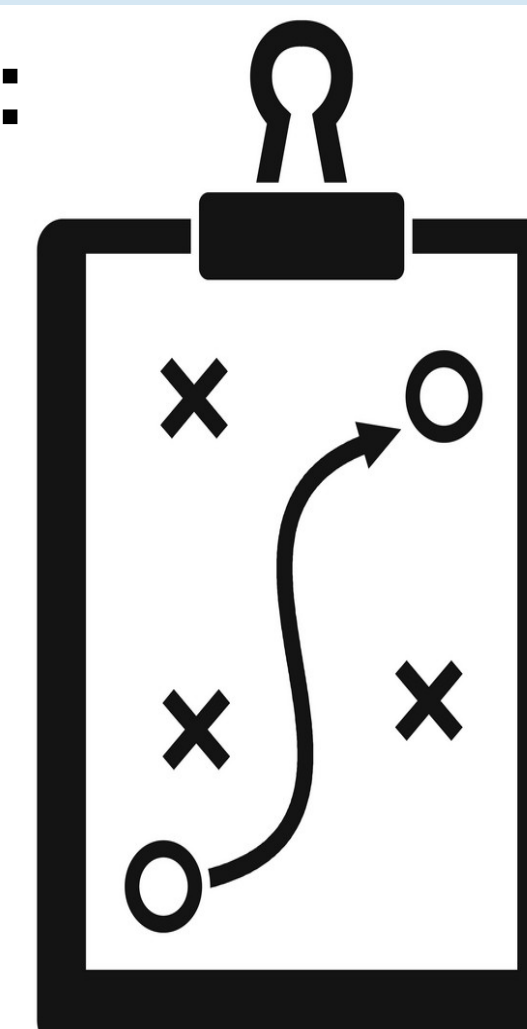
PY3: Positive Boundaries

"After PY1 year, I made a bigger effort to keep in touch with family & friends outside of pharmacy school and having experiences with friends that are not school related."

STRATEGIES

Top Themes:

- Pass/Fail
- Well-being resources
- Faculty coordinate academic deliverables



PY1: Value Mental Health

"I am worried I will get penalized for missing class if I am having a hard day dealing with my depression. I don't want to pretend to be sick just to have a day to recollect from class stress."

PY2: Academic Schedule

"Our [academic] schedule layout should ensure deliverables and exams between classes do not overlap. This will help students feel less overwhelmed by the curriculum."

PY3: Pass/Fail Grading

"I think stratification - grades, GPA - causes burnout. Some students don't test well ... [pass/fail] would make us less inclined to count the number of questions wrong afterwards."

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides insight into factors that influence student pharmacist burnout and well-being, as well as recommendations and strategies to support their well-being.

All cohorts highlighted many factors that contribute to **burnout**, including:

- Competition amongst peers
- Academic workload
- Non-coursework commitments (eg, co-curriculum, leadership positions, job)

Factors identified as contributing towards **fulfillment** include:

- Community and friendships
- Aligning tasks and/or experiences with one's career goals
- School/University resources

Recommendations ranged and included:

- Pass/Fail grading
- More well-being resources (eg, counselor)
- Faculty coordinate academic deliverables

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Identifying Structures that Influence Pharmacy Faculty Well-Being

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BACKGROUND

- Literature identifies pharmacy faculty are susceptible to **emotional exhaustion**, a key contributor to burnout.^{1,2}
 - Burnout** impacts the **healthcare provider** and leads to increased risk of **negative patient outcomes and decreased productivity and job satisfactions**.^{3,4,5}
 - While **prior studies quantified** the degree of burnout in clinicians and pharmacists, there are **limited studies evaluating factors** influencing burnout and well-being in pharmacy faculty.
- The purpose of this study was to identify factors that contribute to faculty well-being and burnout as well as identify recommendations for improving faculty well-being.*

METHODS

- 60 minute focus groups** were held in Fall 2021 using a **semi-structured interview format** focused on burnout, fulfillment, and suggestions for well-being.
 - Eleven faculty participated in four focus groups, organized by faculty rank (ie, assistant, associate, full professor)
- ### Data Analysis
- Zoom transcripts were reviewed and inductive coding applied. **Codes were summarized by faculty rank** to explore the experiences that may be unique to each group.
 - Two researchers independently coded each transcript where all codes were reviewed All codes were reviewed, and any discrepancies were discussed until consensus was reached.

RESULTS

BURNOUT



Top Themes:

1. Overwhelming Workload
2. Workplace Inefficiencies
3. Unexpected factors

Full Professor: Quick Turnaround

"Since the new curriculum, it's been hard on the students, but it's really hard on the faculty because of the planning that consumes the [winter] holiday."

Associate Professor: Unclear Direction

"I feel stress every time I talk to somebody because I don't know [what] to really be focused on."

Assistant Professor: Lack of Autonomy

"I feel like I don't have much choice or control at all over what's coming on to my plate"

FULFILLMENT



Top Themes:

1. Impact
2. Passion for Work
3. Connecting with Others

Full Professor: Passion for Work

"You just need to do what you love. You need to do your passion and that's what fills my bucket."

Associate Professor: Impacting Others

"I love teaching. I love working with trainees. That's something I know I wouldn't be able to do if I left academia."

Assistant Professor: Comradery

"People just value how others are doing. [There's] definitely more of a sense of comradery than other places I've worked."

STRATEGIES



Top Themes:

1. Leadership Practices to Improve Well-being
2. Individual Practices to Improve Well-being
3. Well-Being Initiatives and Resources

Full Professor: Focused Goals

"Let's pick a couple of big topics and let's focus and contribute what we can to that.. I think that would help with some ... of our efficiencies."

Associate Professor: Less Focus on Ranking

"it was very high intensity to move up in the rankings... It makes me wonder if we might be happier [if] we were back to 12 or 17 or 20."

Assistant Professor: Modeling Well-Being

"Recently there's been a lot of trying to model behaviors that are supported by our leadership...That has been helpful."

SUMMARY

This study explored workplace factors associated with faculty burnout and faculty fulfillment. Findings can inform employers of areas to focus strategies to improve faculty well-being.

- Participants highlighted many factors that contribute to **burnout**, including
 - overwhelming workload*
 - *workplace inefficiencies*, and
 - *unexpected factors (eg, COVID-19, layoffs/resignations, budget)*
- Factors Identified as contributing to **fulfillment** included:
 - having an *impact* on others,
 - *connecting with others*, and
 - *having a passion for work*.
- Suggestions** ranged and included:
 - *well-being initiatives* from leadership
 - practicing *individual well-being strategies (eg, work-life balance)*, and
 - having *well thought out well-being* initiatives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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