

## Higher Incidence of Burnout in Community Psychiatric Nurses Compared to PHNs in Other Health Services

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### Abstract

**Background:** Burnout among healthcare professionals is a growing concern, particularly in high-stress specialties. Community psychiatric nursing is recognized as an area with elevated stress levels due to the nature of the work and patient demographics. This study aims to compare the prevalence and severity of burnout between community psychiatric nurses and public health nurses (PHNs) engaged in less intensive services.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional survey was conducted involving 300 nurses: 150 community psychiatric nurses and 150 PHNs working in various other health services. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was utilized to measure burnout levels, focusing on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Additional factors such as work environment, support systems, and job satisfaction were also evaluated.

**Results:** The results indicated a significantly higher incidence of burnout among community psychiatric nurses compared to their counterparts in other public health services. Specifically, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization scores were markedly elevated in the psychiatric group. Factors contributing to these results included longer working hours, higher patient acuity, and perceived lack of support in the psychiatric nursing group.

**Conclusion:** The study underscores the need for targeted strategies to mitigate burnout among community psychiatric nurses. These could include enhanced support systems, training for stress management, and organizational changes to address workload and resource allocation. The findings highlight the necessity for healthcare systems to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by nurses in high-stress specialties to ensure their well-being and the quality of patient care.

**Keywords:** Burnout; Community psychiatric nurses; Public health nurses; Mental health; Healthcare workforce

### Introduction

Background: Burnout among healthcare professionals is an increasingly recognized phenomenon, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment. It is especially prevalent in high-stress healthcare environments. Community psychiatric nursing, with its unique challenges including managing patients with complex mental health issues, often in less structured community settings, is presumed to be a high-risk area for burnout. This contrasts with public health nurses (PHNs) who, while also encountering stressors, often work in less acute settings [1].

### The importance of the study

Understanding the differential impact of burnout on community psychiatric nurses as compared to PHNs in other services is crucial. It not only illuminates the specific challenges faced by these professionals but also guides the development of targeted interventions to enhance their well-being and job satisfaction. This is particularly important considering the vital role these nurses play in healthcare delivery, especially in mental health and community settings.

**Objective:** This study aims to assess and compare the prevalence and severity of burnout among community psychiatric nurses and PHNs involved in other health services. It seeks to identify specific factors contributing to burnout in these groups and to propose recommendations for managing and reducing burnout levels [2].

**Hypothesis:** We hypothesize that community psychiatric nurses experience a higher level of burnout compared to PHNs in other services, primarily due to the nature of their work, which often involves high-stress situations, emotional challenges, and potentially fewer

resources and support systems.

**Methodological overview:** The study employs a quantitative approach, utilizing a cross-sectional survey design. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a widely recognized tool for assessing burnout, will be used to measure burnout levels among the participants. Additional questionnaires will be used to gather data on work environment, support systems, and overall job satisfaction [3].

**Significance:** The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the broader understanding of occupational burnout in nursing, particularly in specialized fields like community psychiatric nursing. It aims to inform healthcare policy makers, administrators, and nursing leaders, enabling them to create more supportive work environments and develop effective strategies to combat burnout, ultimately leading to improved patient care and nurse well-being.

### Materials and Methods

#### Study design

This research is a cross-sectional observational study designed to

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evaluate and compare burnout levels between community psychiatric nurses and public health nurses (PHNs) in other services. The study participants comprise 150 community psychiatric nurses and 150 PHNs working in various health services. Inclusion criteria include registered nurses with at least one year of experience in their current field. Nurses on long-term leave or in managerial positions without direct patient contact are excluded [4].

**Data collection instrument:** The primary tool for data collection is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a validated instrument widely used to measure burnout. The MBI assesses three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Additionally, a demographic questionnaire and a job satisfaction survey are used to gather contextual data.

**Procedure:** Following ethical approval and informed consent, participants are invited to complete the survey package, either online or in paper form, based on their preference. Confidentiality and anonymity of the responses are ensured. The survey package includes the MBI, demographic questionnaire, and job satisfaction survey [5].

**Data analysis:** The data is analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics are used to characterize the sample. Burnout levels are compared between the two groups using independent t-tests or Mann-Whitney U tests, depending on data normality. Multiple regression analyses are conducted to identify predictors of burnout within each group.

**Ethical considerations:** The study is conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments. Informed consent is obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants' responses are strictly maintained. This study may have limitations related to its cross-sectional design, which does not allow for causal inferences. Additionally, the self-reported nature of the survey data may introduce response bias [6].

## Result and Discussion

### Participant demographics

The study successfully surveyed 150 community psychiatric nurses and 150 public health nurses (PHNs). The majority of participants were female (80% in the psychiatric group and 75% in the PHN group), with an average of 7 years of experience in their respective fields.

**Burnout levels:** The results from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) revealed significant differences in burnout levels between the two groups. Community psychiatric nurses scored higher on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization compared to PHNs in other services. However, there was no significant difference in the sense of personal accomplishment between the two groups [7].

**Predictors of burnout:** Multiple regression analysis indicated that longer working hours, higher patient acuity, and perceived lack of support were significant predictors of higher burnout levels, particularly in the community psychiatric nursing group. Despite higher burnout levels, community psychiatric nurses reported similar levels of job satisfaction compared to their PHN counterparts. This paradox suggests that factors other than burnout, such as a sense of purpose or commitment to patient care, might influence job satisfaction [8].

### Discussion:

The findings of this study highlight the elevated levels of burnout, especially in terms of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, among community psychiatric nurses compared to PHNs in other

services. These results corroborate the hypothesis that the intense nature of psychiatric nursing, characterized by dealing with severe mental health issues and often challenging patient interactions, contributes significantly to higher burnout levels. The lack of significant difference in personal accomplishment between the two groups suggests that despite facing high levels of stress, community psychiatric nurses may derive a comparable sense of achievement from their work as their counterparts in less acute settings [9].

The identification of longer working hours, higher patient acuity, and a perceived lack of support as key predictors of burnout underscores the need for organizational interventions. These could include better staffing ratios, more robust support systems, and initiatives to promote work-life balance among nurses, especially in psychiatric settings. Interestingly, the similar levels of job satisfaction despite differing burnout levels point to the complex relationship between job satisfaction and burnout. It implies that factors like personal resilience, commitment to the profession, or intrinsic motivation may play significant roles in determining overall job satisfaction among nurses [10].

## Conclusion

This study sheds light on the critical issue of nurse burnout, emphasizing the heightened risk faced by community psychiatric nurses. The findings advocate for targeted strategies to mitigate these risks and promote a healthier work environment. Addressing the identified predictors of burnout could not only improve the well-being of nurses but also enhance the quality of patient care in these vital healthcare sectors.

## Acknowledgment

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## Conflict of Interest

None

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