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Underappreciation of Nurses in Pakistan: A Silent Catalyst for Burnout

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Underappreciation of nurses in Pakistan is one of the major causes of their burnout experiences every day. This lack of recognition in the workplace exacerbates their difficulties and emphasizes the need to transform systems. Nursing is often perceived in a demeaning manner in most developing countries like Pakistan, and if their skills are not appreciated, dissatisfaction, apathy, and resentment prevail. Appreciation has much to do with self-identity, which also seems to be the issue with many female nurses. They often feel powerless, courtesy of the ever-evolving self-image constructed within the patriarchal health organizations. Contrary to expectations, the position of nurses is not highly regarded in our society, and as a result, they are subject to disappointment and humiliation¹. Mental exhaustion and loss of ambition are some of the issues that most Pakistani nurses go through, as they are constantly asked to play second or even third fiddle. In Pakistan, nurses grapple with issues of self-identity and a cultural mindset that reduces nursing to menial work. It is not unusual for nursing care to be regarded as an extension of household chores, which explains why nurses have been socially portrayed as stereotypically low-skilled caregivers who belong to the low status. This perception is quite dangerous as it puts within reach the historical and false idea in Pakistan that nurses are poor women seeking to earn a living out of a respectable profession². Public lack of acknowledgment not only devalues nurses in the eyes of society but also affects their motivation and job satisfaction, leading to increased chances of burnout and stress. The professional image of nurses is also one of the factors. In the hierarchy of the healthcare system, nurses are always placed at the bottom and made to perform tasks handed down to them by doctors, which is why they feel overshadowed³. Nurses are often perceived as merely listening and following orders without showcasing their intelligence, which is why they have no value in nursing. It dehumanizes their professional identity, deflating nurses' morale and prompting more stress and weakness. The compounded effect of these issues – disempowerment, societal undervaluation, and professional devaluation – brings about a situation in which nurses are distanced between themselves and their work and co-workers. Burnout is somewhat understandable because, with no acknowledgment of their efforts across self-role and professional roles, the nurses experience emotional and physical fatigue without support or justification. To eliminate structural shortcomings that lead to a sense of underappreciation, some strategies may help. Focus, emphasis, and appreciation of the contributions nurses make, be it emotional, intellectual, or physical, must be made within the organization as well as outside of it. This can be done through awards, appreciation programs, or public announcements. Another one is fair pay, which is expected of a nurse. Courses or programs in leadership, education, and specialization may be offered to nurses to boost their confidence and increase their job satisfaction. Moreover, harmonizing nurses' participation in decision-making within the healthcare institution is vital in raising nurses' status in patient care and management so that they do not feel irrelevant within the team of healthcare service providers.

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