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Strategies to Overcome Burnout in Women in Behavioral Health Leadership

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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MS, Walden University, 2019

BS, University of Maryland, College Park, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Psychology in Behavioral Health Leadership

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Abstract

The global mental health landscape is currently facing a significant crisis, characterized by an unprecedented surge in patient demand and a concurrent shortage of therapists. This imbalance has led to overwhelmed mental health facilities, prolonged access and wait times for patients, and diminished quality of care. Several factors contribute to this crisis, including the increased prevalence of mental health issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing stigma surrounding mental health treatment, and systemic problems, such as the lack of training programs, leaders not feeling supported, and low retention rates. This study explored significant burnout levels among women behavioral health leaders, primarily driven by high workloads, emotional demands, and a lack of presence from executive leadership. Six female behavioral health leaders were recruited from a behavioral health department at a large mental health organization to examine their experiences in leadership. The behavioral health leaders consisted of two regional directors, two behavioral health managers, and two lead psychotherapists. The findings of this study reveal that addressing burnout amongst women requires institutional change such as offering flexible work schedules to encourage work-life balance and promote autonomy. The implications for social change include promoting a healthy work environment, normalizing self-care in high-stress environments, and creating policies that prioritize mental well-being. Addressing burnout, organizations can retain talented women leaders, improve job satisfaction, and enhance the overall quality of care in the behavioral health sector.

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Dedication

To my son, Paul. I had a dream that you asked me one day what my biggest regret was, and I responded, "Not going back to school to obtain my doctorate degree." I knew right then and there what needed to be done. I am doing this for you, son, because I want you to know that there is nothing you cannot accomplish, no matter how young or old; the sky is literally the limit. Having you was the best thing that ever happened to me. I love you, PJ.

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To my mom Juliana, thank you for lifting me up during my most difficult times and encouraging and supporting me unconditionally. You always remind me to keep God first and be confident in who I am. Thank you, mommy.

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To my sisters Bernadette and Joyce, thank you all for always checking on me, inquiring about my progress, and your continuous support. I am grateful to have smart and loving sisters who care. I am grateful.

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To my chairs, Dr. Chesser and Dr. Simms, thank you for being a great chair and cochair. Thank you for your dedicated time, patience, and support, which helped me to complete a body of work that I am proud of. I could not have done this without you.

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Section 1a: The Behavioral Health Organization

Introduction

In 2019, the world experienced a global pandemic known as COVID-19. The pandemic, caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, has had a profound and long-lasting effect, with over 200 million confirmed cases and millions of lives lost (Emanuel & Navathe, 2020). The pandemic caused a global crisis that forced governments worldwide to implement public lockdowns, social distancing, and mask mandates to slow the virus's spread. On May 11, 2023, the Biden Administration announced the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency (Emanuel & Navathe, 2020). The pandemic had a profound impact on the population's mental health. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a dramatic increase in mental health issues worldwide. This is due to the trauma of being isolated, feelings of loneliness during the lockdown, and drastic changes in daily routine—including educational routines such as virtual learning and remote work (Razai et al., 2023). Additionally, individuals experienced grief and loss from the pandemic and loss of routine, employment, etc. (Emanuel & Navathe, 2020).

More than ever, behavioral health professionals are in high demand and play a pivotal role in addressing the complex and evolving mental health needs of the population. The demand for mental health clinicians exceeds what the country can provide, causing a threat to client care. Women continue to dominate the mental health field and advance to leadership roles. However, they are doing this at the cost of the multiple personal roles they serve (Aafjes-van Doorn et al., 2022). However, this upward trajectory in leadership roles also exposes women to a unique set of challenges, one of the

most prominent being burnout. Burnout can be defined as a complex, multifaceted syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Sullivan et al., 2023). While burnout affects both men and women, the experiences of women leaders in behavioral health may be shaped by gender-specific factors, societal expectations, and workplace dynamics. Research indicates that women in leadership often face greater scrutiny, higher workloads, and increased expectations for emotional labor (Papanikolaou et al., 2021). Experiencing burnout has been identified as a significant concern among healthcare professionals, including those in behavioral health leadership roles (Wang & Zhang, 2021). These stressors are uniquely specific to women and can contribute to burnout, thus impacting the quality of patient care and the overall functioning of healthcare organizations. Given the pivotal role that women leaders in behavioral health play in addressing the mental health crisis and ensuring the well-being of their teams, it is imperative to understand the factors contributing to burnout in this specific population and to identify effective strategies for its prevention and management. Therefore, it was imperative to partner with a behavioral health organization with women in leadership roles to explore burnout and propose evidence-based strategies to mitigate its impact.

Behavioral Health Organization (BHO) is an entity that operates within the largest private nonprofit healthcare organization in the United States. The BHO serves 12.7 million people in California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Oregon, Virginia, and Washington. Though the BHO operates as a nonprofit entity, it generates billions of dollars in profit. During the first 6 months of the year, its

website listed a total net income of $3.3 billion. Within the BHO is a behavioral health department with which I have partnered. The department has various mid-Atlantic centers, including Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The organization is licensed through its state's behavioral health and developmental service. It also requires all its clinicians to be licensed in all three states and the District of Columbia.

The department services patients that have access to a broad range of mental health and addiction care treatment options, including anxiety, stress, depression, postpartum, and personality disorders (Participant 1, personal communication, September 16, 2023). Furthermore, BHO offers a comprehensive array of services, including clinical evaluations, assessments, crisis stabilization, and psychiatric treatment. The BHO's mission statement emphasizes its commitment to providing high-quality, affordable healthcare services and improving the health of its patients and the community (Participant 1, personal communication, September 16, 2023). According to the BHO website (2023), the vision is to lead total health by improving lives. For example, the organization has a medical school and provides various training to staff and the community. The BHO also claims that their health plans are rated among the nation's best for overall treatment, prevention, and patient experience by the National Committee for Quality Assurance. The BHO promotes a culture of embracing the patients as family and consistently aims to improve their wellness and quality of life (Participant 1, personal communication, September 16, 2023).

Practice Problem

The BHO has been experiencing high employee turnover due to burnout experienced by therapists. As reported by a behavioral health leader (BHL), therapists have been retiring early, resigning suddenly, and calling out of work. This creates an overwhelming amount of stress on its leaders. The leaders are also licensed clinicians; therefore, to not disrupt patient care, they often take on a caseload of counseling clients in addition to their leadership duties. This creates increased stress, poor work/life balance, and low morale (Participant 1, personal communication, September 16, 2023). Research conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in 2021 indicates that high turnover rates can lead to increased training costs, decreased productivity, and a negative impact on team morale. When therapists consistently leave, it disrupts workflow and often results in poor patient care (Werbart et al., 2023). It is important to have a consistent therapist so that clients feel stable and supportive, which aids in therapy engagement. Aafjes-van Doorn et al. (2022) assert that having consistent therapy can lead to more effective and successful therapeutic outcomes.

Purpose

The purpose of this capstone project was to examine burnout experienced by women in behavioral health leadership and identify strategies to address it. The Baldrige Excellence Framework provides a structured approach for organizations to assess and enhance their operations in various areas, such as leadership, strategy, customer focus, workforce management, and results (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2023). This framework was applied to this study to help the BHO explore strategies to improve

the department's organizational dynamics. Using the Baldrige Excellence Framework provides a roadmap for organizations to enhance their performance, drive innovation, and achieve long-term success. Data collected for this study include semi-structured leader interviews, an in-depth review of the organization website and documents, as well as secondary data sources. Reviewing organization documents is an essential process when consulting with an organization as it provides a foundation of understanding and insight into the organization's operations, culture, and challenges (Kabeyi, 2019).

Following the Baldrige criteria helped the BHO identify their strengths and weaknesses objectively. This helped pinpoint areas for improvement and areas where the BHO excels. In summary, the Baldrige Framework is a valuable tool for organizations to systematically assess and improve their performance. It fosters a culture of excellence, customer focus, and continuous improvement, ultimately helping organizations succeed and compete in their respective industries.

Significance

This study was significant because there is less research focused specifically on women in behavioral health leadership. Therefore, this study helps to close the research gap and assist other women leaders who experience burnout, thus negatively impacting client care. The study is valuable to future behavioral health organizations looking to gain the knowledge and tools to implement strategies to improve leadership and employee mental health. Additionally, this study will aid in providing effective leadership to employees, improve organizational performance, and ultimately provide quality care to clients.

When the quality of work-life is stable, productivity and employee retention are expected to increase (Gravestock, 2022). This study also provides a blueprint that can guide other BHOs to gain strategies to implement work-life balance, increase employee morale, and improve employee retention. This study may also help women in leadership who may experience shame about experiencing feelings of stress, feeling overwhelmed and poor mental health be more open to receiving help.

Summary

The BHO leaders have expressed feeling stressed, overwhelmed with their multiple roles, and burdened with high employee turnover. This is due to the recent pandemic and the high need for mental health clinicians. The women in leadership at the BHO have been dealing with the stress of this high demand and the clinicians leaving the organization. The mental health of women in behavioral leadership is a vital component of the functioning of a BHO. Leaders who have positive mental health, high emotional intelligence, and can model healthy work-life balance are more likely to encourage employees to achieve positive mental health (Charlton, 2022). This will contribute to the success of the organization. The BHO business website promotes leadership, creating a psychologically healthy workforce where employees feel safe, respected, and empowered. However, it does not specifically target how leadership can achieve positive mental health.

In Section 1b, the organizational profile, key factors, organization background, and context are explored. This section will examine the organization's structure, strategic

vision, and regulatory requirements. Lastly, the organization's mission, vision, and value will be discussed.

Section 1b: Organizational Profile

This qualitative study explored strategies to address burnout in women in behavioral health leadership. Women in behavioral health leadership are experiencing multiple challenges since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Emanuel & Navathe, 2020). These challenges include work and family conflict, elevated stress levels, increased occurrences of anxiety, depression, and physical health issues, as well as feelings of guilt stemming from the inability to balance multiple roles (Smith & Johnson, 2022). A leader's health and well-being are essential for the organization's success as it promotes better physical and mental health, productivity, innovation, and ethical leadership. It also sets a positive example for employees and contributes to a healthier, more engaged workforce, thus, contributing to positive employee morale and longevity of staff.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues facing the organization, the organization's profile must be examined. The Baldridge Performance Framework (2023) mentions that the organization profile should include its mission and vision, organizational structure, and strategic context operations. The organization profile provides valuable insight which will aid in identifying future goals and strategies for performance improvement systems.

Organizational Profile and Key Factors

Information on the organization profile was obtained from the organization's website, as well as a review of internal documents and publications. Some of these publications included organizational leadership newsletters, exit interviews from former leadership, and evaluation of the organization's hiring practices. It is important to note that 75% of the organization's employees are women, and in most of their regions, female executive directors lead the organization. Furthermore, according to the organization's website, the organization was listed on Forbes' Best Places to Work for Women (Forbes, 2023). This accolade is worth mentioning, as it can incentivize women to work there. Subsequently, the president of the organization can be quoted as stating, "This organization has a long history of empowering and supporting women, both in and out of the workplace" (Participant 2, personal communication, September 16, 2023). The organization has also made note that it is intentional about career satisfaction and advancement for women, evidenced by the leadership roles women play throughout the organization. If the majority of the leadership teams are led by women, it is critical that there are efforts to ensure their wellbeing to continue to contribute to the success of the organization.

The organization uses its mission and vision as guiding principles to make important decisions and to develop a roadmap on providing quality care to its patients. The organization's mission is to provide high-quality, affordable, health care services and to improve the health of the patient and the communities it serves (Participant 2, personal communication, September 16, 2023). The organization explains its vision to drastically

improve the health and lives of the patients to consistently advance its healthcare practices. This is accomplished by pioneering preventive medicine, conducting comprehensive research, and driving innovative care (Participant 2 personal communication, September 16, 2023).

Organizational Background and Context

The organization has a long history of providing healthcare in the United States. The organization was founded in 1942, providing exclusive health services to World War II soldiers and their families. In 1945, it opened its services to the public (). During the 1970s and 1980s, the BHO implemented initiatives to bridge the gap between physical and mental health, recognizing the interconnected nature of these aspects of well-being. This integration aimed to provide a more integrated approach to patient care. This created a comprehensive and accurate treatment of the patient.

Currently, it has three entities: the nonprofit Health Plan, Inc., hospitals, and medical groups. All entities collaborate to provide patient-centered, accessible, and affordable care to the community. The BHO has also proven to be innovative in how health information is communicated and received. In 2010, the organization implemented an electronic health portal; the software provides 24/7 secure, up-to-date patient records among providers (Participant 2, personal communication, September 16, 2023). This helped providers receive a full comprehensive understanding of a patient's health. Electronic health records also allow therapists to access not only health records but also those of other medical providers.

The organization has consistently recognized and addressed the importance of behavioral health in its integrated healthcare model. The organization's commitment to comprehensive care has evolved over several decades due to consistent research and data. In the early years, mental health services were often separate from traditional healthcare, reflecting the historical stigma associated with mental health issues. However, understanding the holistic correlation between health and mental health, the BHO made significant efforts to integrate behavioral health services into its practice model, contributing to the broader evolution of healthcare (Participant 2, personal communication, September 16, 2023). Furthermore, the organization has expanded its behavioral health services and incorporated innovative programs and treatments to address various mental health conditions. Lastly, the BHO has established a goal of reducing the stigma of mental health and providing comprehensive, patient-centered care that addresses both the physical and mental aspects of health. However, in an effort to change societal views on mental health, the organization began integrating behavioral health education as a part of their outreach efforts to reduce the stigma within the community.

Due to the increased need for mental health services, the BHO organization has implemented technological advancements to enhance mental health services. When the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in 2020, services such as telemedicine and digital platforms were initiated to give access to remote counseling and therapy. Providing such access has increased the attendance rates of patients. In a patient survey conducted in 2021 to determine patient satisfaction, 80% of patients reported that telehealth therapy

sessions are more convenient to attend (Participant 1, personal communication, September 16, 2023).

The BHO's organizational structure utilizes a top-down communication approach (BHO Organizational Chart, 2023). The Behavioral Health department within this large organization has approximately 200 psychotherapists, including social workers and licensed clinical professional counselors. The clinicians are spread out in various locations within the state of Maryland; more specifically, there are approximately 10–12 clinicians per center. The department serves children and adults, 5 years old and up. The clinicians meet approximately once a month via Zoom video call to review clinical cases, and the behavioral health manager often facilitates the meetings. The clinicians consist of approximately 85% women and 15% men. The behavioral health leadership team consists of 100% women. A behavioral health manager manages at least three centers as well as sees clients, and a behavioral health director oversees the managers. Overall, within the organization, 77% of the executive leadership members and 67% of the board of directors are women. Additionally, nearly 80% of the total workforce are women. There is also a regional president responsible for the operations of all the behavioral health entities.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders play a pivotal role in any organization's success, sustainability, and ethical operation (Sein Myint et al., 2021). At the BHO, the leadership team is engaged with stakeholders to gain valuable insights, build trust, and foster collaborative relationships. The BHO stakeholders also encompass a diverse group of individuals, organizations, and communities that are integral to the success and impact of this

healthcare consortium. Most importantly, stakeholders often have a vested interest in the outcomes of decisions and policies of the organization. Involving stakeholders in the decision-making process can lead to more informed and inclusive decisions considering a broader range of interests and potential impacts (Vito, 2020). The BHO consistently communicates with patients to understand and address their needs and concerns. Healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and support staff, play a crucial role as stakeholders, contributing to delivering high-quality care. Additionally, employees and administrators within the organization are stakeholders with a vested interest in its operational efficiency and overall performance. The BHO leadership often has town hall meetings to obtain feedback from staff and establish long-term goals for the department. Lastly, managed care organizations, health insurance brokers, and social services also hold a stake in the organization's success. In addition, the state licensing body, accreditation, and Joint Commission served by the BHO is a significant stakeholder, as the BHO heavily relies on these entities to operate. Lastly, the BHO collaborates with various vendors for medical, office, and sanitation supplies; these vendors would be considered important stakeholders for the department's operation. These various stakeholders collectively shape and are shaped by the BHO's mission to provide accessible, coordinated, and patient-centered care.

Partners and Suppliers

The BHO partners and suppliers that provide goods and services are extensive and integral to an organization's ecosystem. The BHO aims to build and maintain strong relationships with these external entities as they are essential for sustained growth and

resilience. The BHO also conducts employee surveys to ensure they have the necessary resources and equipment to perform their jobs effectively (BHO Service Description Manual., 2019). The surveys allow employees to provide input on how they feel vendors perform.

Summary

The BHO is a large entity that is headed by women. The BHO sets ambitious standards for administration and staff to operate at its highest ethical standard. This is evident throughout the mission and vision of the organization. The stakeholders—including patients, board members, community organizations, and political groups—have a personal stake in the organization's success. Additional stakeholders include government agencies, regulators, and policymakers who influence the healthcare landscape within which the department operates. This study examines the leadership team and strategies to deal with burnout.

Section 2: Background and Approach—Leadership Strategy and Assessment

Introduction

In the dynamic behavioral health landscape, where compassion, empathy, and resilience are paramount, women have emerged as influential leaders driving positive change. As the torchbearers of behavioral health leadership, women bring a unique perspective, often characterized by a deep understanding of the intricate web of human emotions and mental well-being (Sullivan et al., 2023). However, beneath the surface of their commendable contributions lies a growing concern: the pervasive and challenging issue of burnout. Despite their resilience, this introduction delves into women's nuanced challenges in behavioral health leadership, shedding light on the factors contributing to burnout and stress (Gravestock, 2022).

The behavioral health field has been in high demand, creating a surge of behavioral health leaders, especially women. More than ever, women have emerged as the torchbearers in the field while juggling multiple roles to meet the community's needs. However, this has come at a cost to the women leaders in the form of burnout. Hippel et al. (2019) explain that burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress, often related to work or caregiving responsibilities. It is characterized by cynicism, detachment, and a sense of inefficacy or reduced personal accomplishment. Burnout can manifest in various ways, including fatigue, irritability, decreased productivity, and a lack of motivation. It can result from chronic work-related stress, unrealistic workload expectations, lack of support, or a mismatch between an individual's values and job demands (Razai et al., 2023). Burnout affects one's work

performance and quality of life and can have significant consequences for physical health and mental well-being if not addressed.

Women in behavioral health leadership have been experiencing increased burnout, which has a negative trickle effect (Senreich et al., 2020). This includes impact on mental health, physical health, lack of personal fulfillment and impact on career trajectory. Experiencing burnout can diminish a woman leader's sense of personal fulfillment and fulfillment in her career. Chronic stress and exhaustion can erode passion, purpose, and satisfaction in one's work, leading women to question their career choices and aspirations. Burnout can impede a woman leader's career trajectory by limiting opportunities for advancement and professional growth. Persistent burnout may result in missed promotions, stalled career progression, or even career changes as women seek roles with less stress and responsibility.

Women in leadership often face various challenges, many of which stem from systemic biases and societal expectations. Some of these challenges include balancing leadership responsibilities with family and caregiving duties. This balance can be challenging, particularly in cultures where women are expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities (Pette & Dempsey, 2020). Women also face societal expectations of how they should behave or lead. Women leaders may find themselves caught in a "double bind," where they are expected to demonstrate both assertiveness and nurturing qualities to be successful (Razai et al., 2023). Straying too far in either direction can result in criticism or negative evaluations. This can create a dilemma for women leaders as they navigate balancing these conflicting expectations. It is a pressure that women leaders

experience frequently conform to traditional gender roles, thus limiting their ability to express their authentic leadership style (Schaub et al., 2022). This can create feelings of inadequacy, isolation, and self-criticism. Women in behavioral health leadership are confronting the relentless demands of their roles, grappling with the emotional toll of their responsibilities, and navigating a complex professional terrain that can leave them vulnerable to burnout. This phenomenon not only jeopardizes the well-being of these leaders but also raises questions about the sustainability of a system that relies heavily on their dedication and expertise.

This study aimed to address the sources of such burnout and provide effective strategies to address it. Studying burnout in women leaders contributes to the broader understanding of burnout. It provides insights into the intersectionality of factors such as gender, leadership, and organizational culture, which can inform future research and interventions to prevent and address burnout across diverse populations.

In summary, studying burnout in women in behavioral health leadership is essential for promoting gender equality, optimizing workplace policies, fostering inclusive cultures, and ultimately creating healthier and more successful organizations. By understanding and addressing the challenges women face in behavioral health leadership, there can be efforts toward building more equitable and sustainable workplaces.

Supporting Literature

The potential implications for burnout on women in leadership can have long-lasting effects, including poor mental health, health implications, career trajectory, and

lack of personal fulfillment. Prolonged burnout can have serious physical and mental health consequences. Women leaders may experience chronic stress, fatigue, anxiety, depression, and other health issues that can impair their ability to perform effectively in their roles and negatively impact their overall well-being. Additionally, experiencing burnout can cause fatigue and high levels of stress, which contribute to health issues such as high blood pressure and weight issues (Liao et al., 2021). A woman leader's career trajectory can be impeded by experiencing limited opportunities for advancement and professional growth. Persistent burnout may result in missed promotions, stalled career progression, or even career changes as women seek roles with less stress and responsibility. Smith and Topp (2021) explain that, ultimately, burnout can diminish a woman leader's sense of personal fulfillment. Chronic stress and exhaustion can erode passion, purpose, and satisfaction in one's work, leading women to question their career choices and personal aspirations.

Understanding the factors contributing to burnout in women leaders helps foster more inclusive leadership cultures. By promoting awareness and addressing biases, organizations can create environments where women feel valued, supported, and empowered to thrive in leadership roles. A thorough review and extensive topic search conducted regarding the research problem. Utilizing various databases to identify research regarding burnout amongst women in behavioral health leadership was critical. Schaub et al. (2022) state that when conducting research within a broader context, various relevant peer-reviewed journal articles within the last five years should be accessed to gain insight into the problem presented. Databases included SAGE

Publications, ProQuest Central, Academia Edu, Springer Link, Google Scholar, and Research Gate. Using the Walden Library's search engine, Thoreau, and the Boolean Operators, the following descriptors were used for the research queries: *women and work-life balance, stressors and clinicians, mental health professional, employee assistance program, staff motivation, work culture, leadership impact*, and *workforce motivation*. The central theme in understanding the research problem is examining how women in behavioral leadership manage work/life balance. When women in leadership can effectively manage work/life balance, it allows them to fully participate in the workforce, contributing to a successful organization (Rollins et al., 2021). Therefore, the topic of managing work-life balance in leadership was examined. Research has shown that diverse and inclusive workplaces that accommodate the needs of women tend to be more innovative and successful. By implementing policies and practices that support work/life balance, companies can attract and retain talented women, enhancing their overall productivity and competitiveness (Liao et al., 2021).

Ultimately, organizations benefit from supporting women in managing work/life balance. When organizations support women in managing work/life balance, it leads to higher job satisfaction and happiness among female employees. Satisfied employees are more likely to stay with the organization, reducing turnover costs and maintaining continuity in expertise and productivity (Brue, 2018). Organizations known for prioritizing work/life balance are more attractive to top female talent. By offering flexible work arrangements, supportive policies, and a positive work culture, organizations can

attract a diverse pool of highly qualified women leaders, enhancing their talent pool and competitiveness in the market.

Overall, when organizations support women in managing work/life balance, it promotes a positive and inclusive work environment, attracts and retains top talent, enhances productivity and performance, and builds a strong reputation as an employer of choice. By prioritizing work/life balance, organizations support the well-being and success of women leaders and foster a culture of respect, flexibility, and innovation that benefits all employees.

Sources of Evidence

Sources of evidence are the backbone of research (Linfield & Posavac, 2019). They lend credibility, provide context, guide methodology, and support the arguments and claims made in a study. A well-researched paper is built on a foundation of sound evidence, contributing to the overall quality and reliability of the research endeavor. The sources of evidence and strategies utilized in the current study will include open-ended interviews with BHOA's executive leadership team members and a review of organizational literature and other secondary data sources. Other secondary data sources include data collected through employee surveys, Gallup polls, and organizational literature including stakeholder and staff meeting minutes and organizational newsletters.

Lindfield and Posavac (2019) explain that secondary data sources in research refer to information previously collected, processed, and published by someone else for a purpose other than the current research study. Secondary sources obtained for this study included the BHO's strategic plan, organizational policy and procedures handbook,

meeting minutes, and employee survey data results. Having access to this breadth of information helped to gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research subject. Lastly, secondary data sources create an opportunity to develop future strategic plans for the organization.

Leadership Strategy and Assessment

According to Kabeyi (2019), leaders inspire and motivate employees by fostering a sense of purpose and recognition. A motivated workforce is more likely to be productive, innovative, and committed to the organization's success. However, if the leadership team is experiencing low morale and burnout, it can ultimately lead to the demise of an organization. The BHO is a top-heavy organization with of the leadership team being women. Often, information is communicated to employees via a top-down approach. For example, suppose management needs employees to implement policy and procedures. In that case, it is decided by the BHO operations director, communicated to the BHO manager, and then communicated to the BHO supervisor. The BHO supervisor then presents this information to employees via team meetings. The BHO implements strategies by conducting quarterly meetings with stakeholders to determine goals and benchmarks. Additionally, the BHO conducts annual employee surveys to determine the organization's needs. The results of the survey are shared with stakeholders and if agreed by the board, are incorporated into organization goals. Leaders are often required to make critical decisions that impact the organization's trajectory (Liao et al., 2021). Strategic decision-making involves considering long-term consequences, risks, and benefits.

Therefore, having a focused and dedicated leadership team is essential for organizational success.

In summary, leadership is a powerful force that shapes the character and trajectory of an organization. Effective leadership fosters a positive culture, engages employees, and navigates the organization toward its goals with vision, adaptability, and ethical standards. On the other hand, poor leadership can lead to disengagement, low morale, and a lack of direction, potentially jeopardizing the organization's success and sustainability.

Population Served

Pette and Dempsey (2020) stress that mental health organizations play a crucial role in promoting mental well-being, providing support and treatment for individuals with mental illness, and advocating for policies and practices that prioritize mental health and reduce stigma. Data retrieved from the BHO's annual financial report revealed that the organization is responsible for over 825,000 patients in the community (BHO website). The mental health organization serves a broad and diverse population of children and adults aged 5–100 years, delivering a wide range of therapeutic services to meet the healthcare needs of individuals and communities. The mental health needs of patients range from mild to severe mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and substance abuse disorders. According to the BHO's patient analysis, the most common diagnoses seen are depression and anxiety. Treatment for these services may include inpatient psychiatric care, outpatient counseling services, and crisis intervention. Furthermore, the BHO emphasizes promoting mental well-being,

preventing mental health problems, and providing support for individuals experiencing mental illness. This is shown through patient engagement via community outreach, wellness events, and education materials to promote positive mental health. Table 1 summarizes the services provided by the BHO.

Table 1

BHO Services

24-hour medical services	Mental Health Services	Medication Management
Urgent Care Centers	Evidence-based treatment	Multi-Disciplinary Discharge Planning
Comprehensive Clinical Assessments	Group Therapy	Psychiatric and Psychological Evaluations
Crisis Stabilization & Assessment	Individual & Specialized Therapy	Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)

Analytical Strategy

Kabeyi (2019) indicates that interviewing the leadership team about organizational issues is valuable for diagnosing challenges, generating insights, fostering collaboration, and driving positive organizational change. Five interviews with BHO leadership members were conducted to obtain pertinent information about the BHO. The interview included the behavioral health operations director, behavioral health manager, program director, human resources manager, and lead psychotherapist. Semi-structured interviews with the leadership team members revealed that the increase of burnout among the leadership team was causing high pressure and low morale. Additionally, the interview helped the participants provide knowledge and feedback about current and past strategies and identify barriers leaders have encountered in their plight to reduce stress levels and address leadership fatigue.

Summary

A leadership team is ineffective when there are high stress and burnout issues. Leaders who experience burnout symptoms develop cynicism, detachment, and a sense of inefficacy or reduced personal accomplishment. Burnout can manifest in various ways, including fatigue, irritability, decreased productivity, and a lack of motivation (Sullivan et al., 2023). Predictors of burnout can include pressures at work and excessive work demands, including long hours, tight deadlines, and heavy workloads. Feeling overwhelmed by the volume or intensity of work can contribute to emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion. Unaddressed burnout can negatively impact an organization resulting in poor results and low productivity (Gravestock, 2022). The leadership team interviewed acknowledged that they were experiencing burnout due to the high demands of the job. The goal of this study is to develop strategies to address these issues.

In Section 3, I analyzed workforce operations and engagement strategies to determine how BHO creates an effective and supportive workforce environment conducive to a high-performance work environment. Further information will be provided regarding how the BHO designs, manages, and improves its critical services and work processes. Furthermore, the section includes evaluation of BHO's utilization of knowledge assets, information, and information technology related to utilizing strategies to address burnout among women leaders in behavioral health.

Section 3: Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management Components of

the Organization

Introduction

According to a survey of the nation's hospital leaders, the BHO has been

recognized as the top healthcare organization overall for leadership, innovation, and cost

of high-quality care (Participant 1, personal communication, September 16, 2023). The

BHO newsletter also reported that its behavioral health entity has been named among the

highest-rated services in the nation, according to the National Committee for Quality

Assurance's (NCQA) 2022 Health Plan Ratings report (NCQA, 2022). In addition, the

organization earned a 5 out of 5-star rating for its Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial

health plans. Having such a stellar reputation creates an expectation to uphold such

standards consistently. Though the organization has such a stellar reputation, there are

challenges that can impede future progress. The organization has also been experiencing

high levels of burnout among the leadership team. This burnout has further increased due

to the increased need for mental health services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic had significant impacts on mental health globally,

leading to an increased need for mental health services (Emanuel & Navathe, 2020). This

increased need has placed a high demand on leaders to produce results with limited

resources, staff shortages, and an overwhelmed healthcare system. Leaders are

experiencing intense anxiety about delivering results and maintaining high-performance

levels. The fear of failure or underperformance can lead to chronic stress and anxiety,

increasing the risk of burnout. The leadership team has recognized these signs of burnout

and is committed to taking proactive steps to address it, such as prioritizing self-care, setting boundaries, seeking support, and delegating tasks. These approaches are crucial for leaders to maintain their well-being and effectiveness in the workplace. Additionally, organizations play a vital role in fostering a supportive work culture that prioritizes leadership well-being and recognizes the importance of addressing burnout among staff.

Analysis of the Organization

Workforce Environment

According to Pette and Dempsey (2020), building an effective and supportive workforce environment is essential for organizational success and employee well-being. The BHO is comprised mainly of women on the leadership team. The team consists of 12 psychotherapists, led by a lead psychotherapist, a behavioral health manager, a behavioral health director, and the director of operations. The leadership proactively makes efforts to connect with team meetings via staff meetings, luncheons, and town hall meetings.

Regular meetings ensure everyone is aligned with the organization's goals, vision, and priorities. Additionally, staff meetings allow clarifying roles, responsibilities, and expectations, thus reducing misunderstandings and conflicts (Vito, 2020). The organization conducts regular employee engagement surveys to gather feedback, identify areas for improvement, and measure staff satisfaction. The leadership team gathers employee's input by generating surveys and polls to help employees to feel comfortable discussing issues within the organization. Actively soliciting employee input demonstrates a commitment to listening to their needs and addressing concerns. Furthermore, the leadership team communicates openly and transparently with

employees, providing clear expectations, goals, and feedback. This fosters trust and ensures that employees understand their roles and how their work contributes to the organization's goals and overall mission. Lastly, effective operations management is crucial for organizations to achieve their goals efficiently and sustainably. The BHO collaborates with staff to set clear objectives, develop strategies, and plan goals to support the organization's overall mission. The leadership also establishes direct workflows and standard operating procedures to enhance productivity and minimize risks. The BHO also consistently builds an effective, supportive workforce environment through team-building activities. Once a year, the leadership conducts staff retreats to foster a sense of belonging, camaraderie, and mutual support among team members. The staff retreats also highlight employee recognition, appreciation, and encouragement. Sein-Myint et al. (2021) found that team-building activities are connected to low employee turnover and high employee morale.

Workforce Engagement

After the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization experienced a surge in therapist resignations and retirements. The COVID-19 pandemic put a strain on the mental health field in various ways. Mental health professionals, including therapists, faced unprecedented levels of stress and burnout during the pandemic. The demanding nature of their work, including increased caseloads and emotional toll, led some professionals to leave the field or reduce their working hours (Aafjes-van et al., 2022). This strain on staff forced the organization to strategize on ways to engage therapists in their work. The

leadership team tried to create a work environment where employees are motivated, committed, and connected to their work and the organization's goals.

Positive workforce engagement requires a holistic approach focusing on communication, recognition, development, inclusivity, leadership, and continuous improvement to maximize employee engagement and drive organizational success (Rollins et al., 2021). The leadership team has bi-monthly collaboration meetings with the lead psychotherapist to brainstorm and operationalize strategies to improve employee engagement. A strategy utilized to incentivize employees is through their employee referral program. The BHO employee referral bonus program is a structured initiative implemented by the leadership team to encourage their existing employees to refer qualified candidates for job openings. Employee referral bonus programs typically involve offering rewards or bonuses to employees who successfully refer candidates who are hired and meet specific criteria (Rollins et al., 2021). Due to the shortage of therapists, the organization established a bonus incentive of $1,000 for every employee referral. If the potential employee remained at the organization for at least 6 months, the employee would receive the bonus. This incentive boosted referrals, leading to quicker hiring cycles as referred candidates were motivated and had a shorter onboarding process. Employees self-reported feeling more engaged and invested in the organization's success when they could contribute to the recruitment process and receive rewards for successful referrals. Another strategy the organization has implemented to promote employee engagement is through its peer nomination program. Peer recognition consists of employees publicly recognizing each other's contributions, skills, and talent or going

above what their role requires (Participant 4, personal communication, November 6, 2023).

Razai et al. (2023) emphasize that consistent positive recognition of employees fosters a positive work environment and work ethic. Employees who feel appreciated are more likely to be engaged, productive, and satisfied (Rollins et al., 2020). Lastly, the organization has implemented a survey called Pulse, administered quarterly to assess employee satisfaction and engagement. Pulse is a self-reporting tool used by the leadership team to gather employee feedback, opinions, and perceptions about various aspects of their work environment, job satisfaction, organizational culture, policies, and effectiveness (Participant 1, personal communication, September 16, 2023). These surveys are designed to collect anonymous responses from employees, allowing them to express their views openly and honestly. The data from employee surveys can be used to make essential data-driven decisions, prioritize initiatives, allocate resources effectively, and address key areas of concern. Most importantly, the survey also assesses employee's assessment of the management of operations. Effective operations management is crucial for an organization to achieve its goals, deliver value to customers, and maintain a competitive edge. In order for operations management to be effective and successful, in-depth strategic planning must be implemented. Effective operations management involves strategic planning to anticipate future trends, organizational demands, and opportunities (Scandura & Meuser, 2022). The BHO meets quarterly to conduct regular reviews of their operational strategies, processes, and systems to adapt to changing business environments, technological advancements, and patient preferences. Kabeyi

(2019) posits that strategic planning enables organizations to stay agile, innovative, and anticipate future opportunities. Successful organizations must embrace a culture of continuous improvement within their operations. This should involve regularly monitoring of performance metrics, conducting root cause analysis, identifying areas for enhancement, and implementing corrective actions or process improvements (Brown et al., 2020). The behavioral health department intentionally partners with various departments to align strategies, share information, break down silos, and address complex challenges that impact operations. Collaborative efforts promote synergy, innovation, and holistic approaches to achieving organizational objectives (Linfield & Posavac, 2019).

Knowledge Management

The BHO recognizes the negative impact of the increase in burnout among the leadership team. Therefore, many strategies are operationalized to improve mental health within the leadership team and reduce symptoms of burnout. These strategies include implementing flexible work schedules, such as telecommuting or flexible work hours (Participant 1, personal communication, September 16, 2023). This helps to provide women leaders with autonomy over their work schedules and aids in having a better balance of work and personal responsibilities. In addition, fostering a more supportive work environment where women leaders feel valued, respected, and empowered helps to promote a culture of inclusivity and open communication. Effective organizational performance management involves a culture of continuous learning, adaptation, and agility (Pette & Dempsey, 2020). The BHO utilizes various methods to ensure enhanced organizational performance, including employee and patient surveys, employee

performance reviews, and analyzing organizational future growth. The BHO encourages

feedback, promotes knowledge sharing, fosters innovation, and remains responsive to

changing patient and staff needs, regulatory requirements, and industry trends. The BHO

also holds quarterly meetings to set clear and relevant key performance indicators (KPIs)

that align with their strategic goals and objectives (Participant 1, personal

communication, September 16, 2023). These KPIs can vary across financial

performance, customer satisfaction, employee engagement, operational efficiency,

quality standards, and innovation. Most importantly, the BHO recognizes that open

communication is essential to organizational performance. Effective communication

plays a crucial role in organizational performance. Open and transparent communication

channels foster trust, collaboration, and a sense that when employees experience a

healthy work environment and can provide feedback without judgment, they are likely to

perform better (Sullivan et al., 2023).

Summary

When an organization's leadership team is experiencing burnout, fatigue, and

stress, it can spread throughout the team, negatively affecting morale and productivity

(Sullivan et al., 2023). When women leaders experience burnout, it can manifest in their

demeanor, communication, and overall attitude. For example, a symptom of burnout can

present itself as a leader's inability to focus, leading to a decrease in overall productivity,

inability to meet deadlines, or inability to deliver high-quality work. Furthermore, the

leader can feel overwhelmed, anxious, and exhausted, causing them to take more sick

days or time off work. A leader having frequent absences can cause employees to feel

unsupported and resentful. This can lead to decreased morale among employees who

may perceive their leaders as disengaged, uninterested, or irritable. Low employee

morale can negatively impact team cohesion, productivity, and job satisfaction (Sullivan

et al., 2023). Strategies are often implemented to address burnout among women leaders

and promote a more inclusive and supportive work environment where employees and

leaders can thrive. Section 4 delves into the analysis of various components relevant to

the practice

problem. The BHO's client and workforce are examined while data is interpreted,

including implications, strengths, and limitations of the study presented.

Section 4: Results—Analysis, Implications, and Preparation of Findings

Introduction

The study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding and focus on burnout among women in behavioral health leadership. Learning about burnout and how to address it can profoundly impact an organization's success. Learning about burnout in leadership is critical because it helps leaders recognize its impact on performance, employee well-being, retention, organizational culture, and personal health (Hippel et al., 2019). By understanding the signs and symptoms of burnout and taking proactive steps to address it, leaders can mitigate its negative effects and foster a more resilient and sustainable work environment for themselves and their teams. I collected various data to gain an in-depth understanding of the problem study. Data are essential to research because they are the raw material for analysis, validation, decision-making, and discovery across various disciplines and sectors (Rollins et al., 2021). Data on the practice problem were gathered from academic and professional literature, public data sources, related websites, and academic sources. I conducted a literature review of scholarly sources to contextualize the practice problem and identify causes of burnout amongst women in behavioral health leadership. My data collection included employee exit interviews, the program service manual, department policies and procedures, leadership meeting minutes, recruitment and staffing training manual, client and employee survey results, performance improvement plan, employee staff meeting minutes, and job descriptions and personnel policies.

Five BHO women leaders were interviewed as a part of the data collection. The interviews were semistructured, using open-ended questions to address the complexities

of burnout. Open-ended questions play a critical role in qualitative research by allowing

researchers to explore complex topics in depth, build rapport with participants, generate

hypotheses, and gain a deeper understanding of the research context (Westland, 2022).

The interviews were 45–60 minutes long, recorded, and transcribed. Four interviews were

conducted via Zoom, while one was conducted in person. The in-person interview was

conducted at the medical facility, which allowed access to various organization data.

Open-ended questions can complement other data collection methods, such as surveys or

observational studies, by providing qualitative data that can be triangulated with

quantitative findings. This triangulation enhances the validity and reliability of the

research by offering multiple perspectives on the same phenomenon (Rollins et al.,

2021).

The interviews with the BHO leaders were transcribed into a Microsoft Word

document and reviewed for accuracy. I also coded the interview to reflect themes and

categories. Human resources documents were also reviewed better to understand

employee performance, retention, and resignations. Human resources data allow

organizations to identify trends related to employee turnover, such as common reasons

for leaving, patterns among certain demographics or departments, and potential retention

challenges (Pette & Dempsey, 2020). The BHO provided important documents such as

performance reviews, performance improvement plans, and exit interviews. Furthermore,

the BHO was able to provide results from its People Pulse employee survey. The

department would often conduct employee surveys and collect feedback to assess

employee satisfaction, experience, and quality of care. The same data are also provided

to

the leadership team as well. These data help to provide insight into preferences, concerns, and areas for improvement within the organization.

Performance reviews typically include assessments of an employee's engagement and commitment to their role and the organization. Patterns in feedback, such as consistently positive or negative remarks, can indicate levels of engagement. While not directly related to current employee engagement, exit interviews can provide valuable feedback on why employees chose to leave the organization, including factors related to engagement. Companies can conduct root cause analysis by analyzing HR data to understand the underlying factors contributing to turnover. This insight helps in developing targeted retention strategies to address specific issues. Analyzing these HR documents and data points helped stakeholders and the leadership team gain an understanding of staff engagement levels, identify areas for improvement, and implement targeted strategies to enhance overall employee satisfaction and productivity. Due to the results of the data collected, I suggested that more employee assistance programs (EAP) be put in place to aid in leadership wellness. The programs implemented were leadership retreats, flexible workdays, financial incentives, and therapy services for leadership.

The leadership team reported feeling a lack of cohesion and disconnection from their counterparts (Behavioral health director, personal communication, September 3, 2023). Therefore, the department implemented quarterly leadership retreats outside the office to promote engagement and collaboration and foster healthy communication. According to Senreich et al. (2020), retreats allow staff to bond and develop relationships outside of the usual work environment. Having retreats gives a break for the team to

reset, strengthen camaraderie, and build collaboration, which is a critical component for effective leadership and teamwork. Retreats also create a focused environment for strategic planning, brainstorming, and planning without the constant distractions of the office. This can involve setting future goals, initiatives, and policies.

Data also revealed that the leadership team reported an increase in burnout due to rigid work schedules (Behavioral Health Director, personal communication, September 3, 2023). Therefore, flexible workdays were offered to leadership. This issue reported gave an opportunity for changes to be made to leadership work schedules. Flexible workdays were offered to the leadership team, where they had the freedom to determine their own schedules. A hybrid work schedule was offered, which involved working from home at least three times a week. Leaders were given control over which days they would prefer to come to the office. This approach promotes work-life balance and potentially increases productivity and job satisfaction. Additionally, the organization recognized that the leadership team felt their current pay did not reflect their level of work. Therefore, there have been attempts to retain the leadership team by offering bonuses for performance and meeting yearly goals. For example, the organization provided financial initiatives for performance, such as low billing errors. Lastly, evidence gathered from various surveys indicated that BHOA leaders are experiencing low morale and high stress. This promoted the organization to implement contracted therapy services through a third-party, non- affiliated company specifically for leadership. The leadership team may hesitate to utilize therapy services for fear of being seen as weak or facing judgment. Therefore, providing the leadership team access to customized therapy helps them feel comfortable in being

vulnerable and transparent in a safe place to communicate without the fear of repercussions. Having a leader with healthy mental health can ultimately positively impact the team and organization.

Client Results

Positive client results are considered a best practice strategy and indicative of quality of care within the BHO. One way to accurately obtain information about client information and results is through an electronic health record (EHR). An Electronic Health Record (EHR) is a digital version of a patient's healthcare chart. The portal contains a patient's medical history, medications, treatment plans, laboratory results and images as well as other relevant health information (Burr & Morley, 2020). Most importantly, patients have access to their provider's information and can communicate with them regarding their healthcare. The BHL report that they find the EHR a useful tool as it provides an opportunity for providers to communicate and enables secure sharing of patient data among authorized healthcare providers, improving care coordination and continuity.

According to LaMonica et al. (2022), EHRs are also designed to streamline healthcare delivery, improve information accessibility, enhance patient safety, support evidence-based practice, and contribute to better health outcomes for patients. After every healthcare appointment, patients automatically receive a self-survey through the portal to gather data regarding patient experience. Upon gathering evidence, gap analysis was used to obtain information regarding client-focused results. A gap analysis is a strategic tool designed to assess the discrepancy between the current issues in an

organization and its desired future goal (Smith & Johnson, 2022). One issue the gap analysis revealed is that patients reported a lack of follow-up from upper management upon a reported concern (behavioral health director, personal communication, September 3, 2023). This created an opportunity for leadership to examine their process of addressing patients request for follow up and concerns.

Workforce Focused Results

This section provides information obtained from leadership interviews, organizational documents, staff surveys and peer reviewed literature. BHO leaders perceive high leadership burnout as an ongoing organizational problem that negatively impacts various aspects of organizational performance. They also recognize that their burnout creates a low morale amongst the team thus transferring to staff. The following quotes demonstrate the BHO leadership perception of the issue of burnout amongst the team.

"We are very short staffed; everyone is stretched thin" (Participant 1).

"It's a challenge, trying to get access for patients" (Participant 2).

"We have had 4 therapists resign in 3 months, it's a lot" (Participant 3).

"The stress is high because we are getting pressure from the executive team" (Participant 4).

"I think there is room improvement, we need to focus on leadership wellness in addition to performance" (Participant 5).

According to data provided by a BHO leader, the rate of staff resignation since 2020 has increased to 30%. Between 2020 and 2023, the organization has experienced

significant turnover in leadership. Leaders' retention rates have consistently decreased within the Behavioral Health Department. BHO leaders described issues experienced with burnout including staffing challenges, high patient demand with lack of access. This pressure has caused leadership to feel overwhelmed and burdened causing significant challenges that impede the organizational goals, quality care, and safety for patients and staff. These circumstances adversely impact BHOA's overall organizational performance (Participant 3).

Leadership and Governance Results

To provide a comprehensive understanding of an organization's leadership and governance results, it is crucial to evaluate a range of key performance indicators and outcomes. A crucial component of organization performance is patient's access to mental health care. Due to the shortage of therapists, patient's access to mental health services has dropped from an average of 7 days from initial referral to 30 days. This has caused enrollment to significantly drop, reflecting poorly on leadership. The BHL often expressed difficulty with feeling pressure to provide services with limited staff. This contributes to burnout the leadership team may experience. Furthermore, leadership engagement is a critical component of increasing employee moral (Alegria & O'Malley, 2020). Employees are provided a survey every quarter called the "People Pulse Survey." A portion of the survey includes employees' assessment of leadership. According to Participant 3, from 2020–2022, trust in leadership has decreased by 40%, and it continues to decline. Results from the People Pulse Survey reveals employees describe the leadership as "disorganized." However, employees also report that they observe the

leadership team as "hardworking" and "dedicated." It appears that although employees report dissatisfaction with the leadership team, they also recognize that they are attempting to resolve the issue. Lastly, the leadership team are aware of the issue and its impact on patient care and employee morale. Leadership reports a strong desire to improve services and provide quality care to its patients and regain trust amongst the employees. The quotes below illustrate this:

"Leadership seems all over the place, they are going day by day, seems disorganized."

"The leadership are hardworking and dedicated despite the issues in patient care."

"It is hard to trust leadership, I am dissatisfied with them."

Leadership governance results refer to the outcomes and impacts that arise from the leadership and governance practices within an organization (Gravestock, 2022). The governance system within the organization operates from the top down. The president and vice president make significant decisions, and it is communicated to the executive leadership team. The BHL overseas all psychotherapists, psychiatrists, and nurse therapists. The BHL meets quarterly to review goals and strategic direction for the department. The leadership also incorporates line staff to obtain feedback on policy changes and operational effectiveness. The department also provides financial assistance to patients that are experiencing financial hardship to pay for mental health care and medications. The organization partners with key stakeholders to sponsor various community events to promote healthy living and positive mental wellness. The BHL often rely on the quality of relationships and feedback from key stakeholders, including

investors, customers, and the community to ensure performance aligns with organizational mission and vision to accomplish goals. The organization focuses its efforts to provide alternatives to mental health care if patients are not able to immediately access individual mental health care. Group therapy and educational workshops are also offered to patients while they are awaiting starting therapy services.

Financial and Marketplace Performance Results

The organization's finances are a fundamental aspect of effective management and strategic planning. As one of the top healthcare organizations in the state of Maryland, it is important that the organization has a stable ensures financial health and most importantly, having proper budgeting and forecasting ensures compliance, and enhances stakeholder confidence (Brown et al., 2020). The BHOA is considered a large non-profit healthcare organization, thus they are committed to providing quality affordable healthcare services to the community.

Upon review of public financial statement summary, the organization posted an operating income of $329 million for the year 2023 compared to an operating loss of $1.3 billion in 2022. Operating revenues for 2023 were $100.8 billion compared to $95.4 billion in 2022. Operating expenses were $100.5 billion compared to $96.7 billion in the prior year (BHL, Website). The organization had more than 12.5 million members as of December 31, 2023, a decline of nearly 51,000 members over the prior year.

Financial Review

The organization lists a net loss in 2020 and a spike in profit 2021–2023. However, the net profit in 2021–2023 was significantly lower than 2019. My interview

with the BHL revealed that the pandemic contributed to the loss as patients were not able to receive in-person payments, thus eliminating copays, which is a contributing financial factor to the organization. Regular financial examination with stakeholders helps organizations allocate resources efficiently, improve operational efficiency, plan for growth, and manage crises effectively (Brown et al., 2020).

BHO Financial Performance

Organizations can identify inefficiencies and opportunities for cost savings by examining costs and expenditures. This contributes to overall operational efficiency and profitability. Stakeholders rely on accurate financial information to assess the viability and profitability of their investments (Scandura & Meuser, 2022). Transparent and honest financial reporting enhances trust and credibility. Investors, creditors, and other stakeholders rely on accurate financial information to assess the viability and profitability of their investments. Transparent and honest financial reporting enhances trust and credibility.

Table 2

BHO Financial Performance

	2023	2022	Profit/Loss
Membership	12,500,000+	14,000,000+	Loss
Operating Income	329,0000.00	1300000000	Loss
Operating Revenue	100,800,000,000	954,000,000,000	Loss
Operating Expenses	100,000,000,000	96,700,000,000	Loss

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

When assessing a research study, it is essential to critically evaluate its strengths and limitations (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). This balanced approach provides a

comprehensive understanding of the study's contribution to the field and helps identify

areas for future research. By acknowledging and addressing limitations, researchers can

enhance the robustness and impact of their findings. A primary strength of this case

study the leaders' willingness to be interviewed and provide information and data to help

identify problem areas and strategies to address this. Hahn (2023) indicates that

participant cooperation is the foundation of ethical, valid, and impactful research.

Without it, the integrity and usefulness of research outcomes can be compromised.

When experiencing difficulty accessing staff for follow-up interviews, the leaders were

flexible in excusing staff to be available for an interview. This was extremely helpful, as

not

having access to staff can hinder the study timeline. This allowed me to follow up on

responses for clarity and to improve data accuracy. Furthermore, having the flexibility to

collect various data was a strength of the study. Data included interviews, surveys, and

observing staff meetings. This study utilized a rigorous and reliable methodology to

produce reliable results. This includes using valid measurement tools, employing proper

sampling techniques, and implementing reliable data collection. Lastly, another strength

is the flexibility of the qualitative design. A flexible qualitative research design enhances

the research's depth, richness, and overall quality (Smith & Johnson, 2022). The

flexibility of the design study allowed me to adjust questions as needed. This included

utilizing open-ended questions and probes to explore leadership experiences and

perspectives in depth. This approach can also uncover nuances and subtleties that fixed

designs might miss.

A limitation encountered was, at times, experiencing technical difficulties during interviews. Most of the interviews were conducted via Zoom. Due to technical difficulties, such as internet availability, there were instances when the interview was postponed, took longer than initially scheduled, or required follow-up questions due to the inability to acquire interview transcription. In addition, the organization experienced an unexpected leadership transition due to the unexpected passing of the CEO, resulting in a temporary halt in research. A new CEO was announced several months later, and permission was obtained from the new CEO to continue the studies, resulting in a delay before proceeding.

Summary

The BHO's clients, workforce, leadership and governance, and financial and marketplace results were explored. The analytic process and identified key findings from the research study were addressed. The analysis revealed findings related to strengths and opportunities for the BHO leadership burnout issue. The organization recognizes that burnout is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. However, there are opportunities to improve implementing leadership wellness programs to promote positive mental health and work/life balance. Additionally, strengths and limitations of the study design were noted, as well as the implications for social change. In section 5, the study concludes with recommendations based on these key findings in the study.
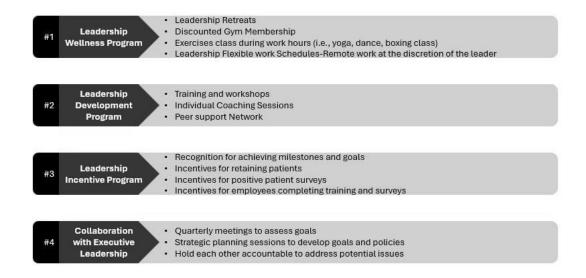
Section 5: Recommendations and Conclusions

In Section 5, the final chapter of this research study, recommended solutions are conveyed that can address the challenges I identified in Section 4. The following recommendations and ideas should be considered to help the organization strengthen the leadership team and reduce burnout within the team.

Figure 1

Leadership Strategies to Reduce Burnout

Employee Wellness Program

Sullivan et al. (2023) contend that organizations that implement leadership development programs help leaders feel valued and motivated, reducing feelings of stagnation and burnout. I recommended that the organization incorporate leadership

development opportunities into the wellness program to help leaders enhance their skills,

build resilience, and thrive in their roles. This can be done through workshops, coaching

sessions, and leadership retreats focused on personal and professional growth. An

example of a leadership development tool would be having leaders access a development

coach when they are experiencing issues with implementing policies, dealing with

resistant employees, and communicating with staff. Having a coach to process ideas and

issues can help a leader feel supported and validated (Jones & Patel, 2020). Additionally,

it is recommended that leadership have an opportunity to attend retreats with other

leaders. Leadership retreats provide a dedicated time and space for leaders to step back

from daily operations and focus on long-term strategic planning (Razai et al., 2023). The

retreat allows collaboration with other leaders to brainstorm and set future goals. The

retreats should also address physical, mental, and emotional health. This can include

fitness activities, mental health resources, stress management workshops, and work-life

balance initiatives.

Flexible Work Schedules

Work-life balance is the equilibrium employees strive to achieve between their

professional responsibilities and personal life activities (Gravestock, 2022). This balance

is crucial for overall well-being and productivity, as it allows individuals to manage

work demands without sacrificing personal time, health, and relationships. My second

recommendation to address the issue of leadership burnout is to offer flexible work

schedules. When leaders have autonomy over their work schedule, they are less likely to

feel as though their personal and work lives are competing (Lee et al., 2020). I

recommended that the organization promote work/life balance by offering flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting options, flexible hours, or compressed work weeks. This empowers leaders to manage their schedules in a way that allows them to prioritize their well-being and responsibilities. For example, a leader who feels they are neglecting their home life can choose to work from home three days a week. During breaks, the leader can engage in household activities or chores that have been neglected. Having a healthy work-life balance can promote healthy mental health by setting reasonable expectations for working hours and encouraging leaders to take personal time, vacations, or breaks as needed.

Leadership Assistance Program

I recommended that the organization create a culture of openly addressing leadership burnout. Having a safe space to process the stressors of work and personal life will empower leaders to handle difficult situations more effectively. Having an employment benefit separate from non-leadership employees allows for confidentiality and open communication. When leaders are healthy emotionally and mentally, they are more productive and efficient (Rollins et al., 2021). Wellness programs for leaders can reduce absenteeism and presenteeism, leading to higher output and longevity (Schaub, 2022). A leadership assistance program is essential for leaders to feel comfortable discussing their mental health challenges without fear of stigma or judgment. Similar to employee assistance programs, I recommended that women leaders have access to a hub of leadership resources, including unlimited therapy sessions.

Peer Support Networks

I highly recommend that the organization implement a peer support network where leaders are paired up with another colleague to conduct frequent check-ins and consultations. A peer support network can allow leaders to connect with their peers, share experiences, and provide mutual support. This helps them feel more supported, which Sullivan et al. (2023) contend promotes camaraderie among leaders to foster a sense of belonging and community.

A comprehensive dissemination plan is needed to communicate recommendations to organization leaders effectively. Therefore, my recommendations will be presented in person with the executive leadership, stakeholders, BHL participants, and Human Resources Directors. It will be presented via PowerPoint, and an opportunity will be provided for questions from the leadership. Creating a dissemination plan to present to organization leaders will help to ensure clarity, comprehensiveness, and alignment with organizational goals. By implementing these recommendations, the organization can create a comprehensive leadership wellness program that promotes the leadership team's health, happiness, and effectiveness. This, in turn, will have a positive impact on staff, patients, and the overall organization.

A recommendation for future studies is to go more in-depth and explore women leaders of color. In addition to feeling pressure as a leader, women leaders also expressed internal pressure as women of color due to not being the majority in the leadership team. It is recommended that studies be aimed at building on the current research by addressing its limitations, exploring new dimensions, and applying findings to broader contexts.

Research can advance knowledge, influence policy, and contribute to practical solutions in various fields.

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