The effect of Ethical Leadership on Burnout via mediating role of Perceived Supervisor Support and Trust in Leader

Muhammad Nouman Akhtar[1], Ali Sajid[2], Arslan Imtiaz[3]

Institute of Business Administration, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan,

Corresponding author email:noman63000@gmail.com

Abstract

This study is conducted to investigate the impact of ethical leadership (EL) on burnout (BO) among resident nurses using perceived supervisor support (PSS) and trust in leader (TL) as mediators. The authors used survey based on questionnaires to collect data from 310 resident nurses in teaching hospitals in the Pakistan. The data were analyzed using hierarchal regression technique. The results show that ethical leadership has impact on burnout through PSS. However, Trust in leader (TL) also mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and burnout. The data for this study was collected at one point of time (Cross Sectional Data) and it has more practical implications for the supervisors in hospitals and other organizations. The study adds the information on the effect of ethical leadership on burnout. In addition, this is the first study to consider trust in leader and PSS as intervening variables to the ethical leadership and burnout relationship.

Keywords: *Ethical leadership, burnout, perceived supervisor support and trust in leader*

Introduction

Exhaustion is emotional deterioration (a persistent state of physical and mental deterioration), physical discomfort (when symptoms of tension, emotion and impulses are introduced into the body) and mental depression (anyone with excessive pressure will be subjected to it) produced by continuous activity (Bianchi, Schonfeld, & Laurent, 2015, p. 31). Finds to be present, when you feel upset, emotionally disturbed, and unable to meet the demands of work or work in the routine of life. Burnout results in poor performance at work and effects physical health that results in worst relationships with family members and friends. Also causes employees poor coordination with subordinates and bosses. There are many other issues associated with burnout such as stress, high risk of tension and anxiety condition. These issues will have negative impact on physical and mental health (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 507).

Previous literature shows that ethical leadership have high level of effect on burnout in the field of resident physicians who were still medical students and doing house job training in a specialized areas (Dyrbye et al., 2010; Shanafelt et al., 2010). Literature gives permission to continue this study in other profession rather than resident physicians. Further studies come in mind to increase the number of participants and shift to other institution from medicines to nursing profession. Residency is to be considered annoying and overpowering time duration because of working longer hours and others person lives are at stake and totally depends on them, as they enhance their knowledge of study epidemically (Thomas, 2004). They have been approved or authorized to be performed by regulatory authorities, but are simply not independent of the patient's treatment. (Coats & Burd, 2002, p. 43). Resident is dependent on knowledge and support from seniors, who has granted permission and completed certification through proper channel for improvement of skills. Geurts et al. (1999) pointed out that residents had not given full empowerment during work, as their tasks are fully observed by the seniors. This is understood that resident always demand a supportive environment from seniors. Indeed, large dependency on a senior member who persistently evaluates the movements of residents were lead towards the direction of burnout situation (Thomas, 2004).

Many studies linked different styles of leadership to prevent burnout constructs. For example, few studies suggest significant interrelationships and projections between the different dimensions of leadership e.g. transformational leadership (Hetland et al., 2007; Gong et al., 2013; Kanste et al., 2007) and theories of authentic leadership with exhaustion. The most discussed studies have not taken

into account the impact of ethical leaders on the actions of peers in the organization (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011). Ethical leadership represents the qualities and character of the individual (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Integrity is the key element that plays vital role in the fame of leaders, they have in organizations. The qualities of ethical leaders, such as devotion, justice, altruism and the capacity to become real and just principles, are good for choosing this type of leadership to explain exhaustion. Ethics is the type of moral values that an individual or society as a whole considers fair. Ethics also show the true image of leaders, who they are and what they really do (Northouse, 2013). These leaders care socially about the ethical standards and values of the company. Social responsibilities include the code of conduct, internal responsibility, discussion of other values and results (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2010).

An important positive correlation among social responsibility as well as ethical management is recorded in the previous research (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2010). The principles and actions of members can be measured (Yukl, 2009, p. 52). Ethical leadership have much important role because this style of leadership is intended to achieve ethical environment at the workplace (Brown & Mitchell, 2010, p. 606). Ethics management is important. Ethical leaders encourage workers lift their voice and roles and demonstrate that workers are consistent about the needs and desires of society and the organization (Brown et al. 2004) and those resident nurses who are monitored by members of this sort will have less burnout symptoms. Studies by the numerous authors suggest that ethical leadership has a strong and supportive connection to workplace happiness, corporate engagement and work efficiency, as well as a detrimental association with burnout and attrition (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Yang, 2011; Northouse, 2013; Zheng et al., 2015). The goal of this study was, therefore, to develop ethical leadership in the academia by analyzing and developing the relationships between ethical leadership and burnout among resident nurses.

Theory and hypothesis development

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is described as "evidence of individual action and interpersonal interaction that is normally acceptable and that such behavior is encouraged through contact, confirmation and mutual decision-making," according to (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leadership consists of

two primary components. First one is known as ethical person and second one is ethical manager. Ethical practitioners strive to be virtuous in their life by using their tools with the support of incentives to fines of fostering the ethical and climate of their practice to ensure the observance of these stringent principles (Brown & Trevino; 2006). Eisenbeib and Brodbeck (2013) stated that leadership qualities like honesty and faith contribute to "moral principles." Ethical leaders become an integral part of their identity, ethical or spiritual ideals such as altruism, which helps to become more positive personalities. Mayer et al. (2012)

Ethical leadership and burnout

Maslach and Goldberg (1998) defined that burnout is indeed a significant problem that is a kind of delayed reaction to emotional fatigue and tension at work. For a person who is depressed on the job, several reports have identified burnout. It has been noted from previous studies that ethical leadership plays significant role in achieving positive outcomes for workers such as engagement, productivity and corporate commitment (Brown and Treviño, 2006), till now no study is conducted on the potential influence of ethical leadership and burnout.

Schwepker and Ingram (2016) figured out negative relationship between ethical leadership and burnout that was significant enough to be considered. Employees believe that ethical leaders are supportive because they create a work ethic for employees, open communication, freedom of expression, and compensation for employee obligations. Zheng et al. (2015) worked on the relationship between ethical leadership and group cohesion exhaustion using a sample of 338 soldiers. Previous studies have shown that the behavior of ethical leaders gives emotions to colleagues. The research focused on immediate understanding, without recognizing certain aspects of exhaustion, such as emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. It is noted from the previous study conducted by Mo and Shi (2017) that there is no direct relationship present between burnout and ethical leadership among employees using the data collected from different leaders and employees of a pharmaceutical industry. They considered only one direction, ignoring several dimensions, and trust in the leader can be a good indicator of ethical leadership and exhaustion. Another study conducted in Taiwan consisting on two different samples from the same college shows two different results. First one was clearly positive while second one shows significant negative relationship between ethical leadership and burnout (Yang; 2014).

Ethical leaders create ethical values in decision making that can convince their supporters of clear responsibilities and explain to them how important their contributions will be in achieving

the goals (DeHoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). In addition, the theory of social exchange will arouse the interest of fans and listen to their ideas and provide a safe and ethical working climate (Walumbwa et al., 2011). Therefore, the case is proposed as follows:

H1: Ethical leadership of resident training nurses will lead to lower burnout syndrome.

Ethical leadership and perceived supervisor support

Supervisor support concept is basically derived from the organizational support theory. Supervisory support has been studied widely in previous studies as a way to prevent burnout in employees (Okpozo, Gong, Ennis, & Adenuga, 2017, p. 1141). Many other sources of organizational support can be concluded from the previous studies which include employees support , manger support and administrator support (Greenglass et al., 1996; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Halbesleben, 2006). It has noted by the researcher that supervisor support is the degree of anticipation by the supervisors to help and offer confidence to employees that can lead to reduce burnout (Scandura & Williams, 2004). It is well known phenomena that supervisors usually act as agents for the organizations and have most probably main duties of monitoring performance of the business to achieve the objectives of the organizations. Due to the induction of the organizational support, employees may view supervisors as favorable or unfavorable (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 2002).

The orientation of justice in decision-making makes them leaders of the resistance. Most of the time, moral leaders are human and oriented towards nature and respect, helping and supporting their colleagues and peers to ensure that their demands are met. (Kalshoven & Boon, 2012; Brown & Treviño, 2013). The ethical leadership directions make leaders so supportive at work. If there is an employee voice in the appraisal process and it is treated as true and fair in the reward system, then a level of trust develops between them, which will create positive outcomes for the employees (DeConinck, 2010). Based on these positive statements, the case suggested:

H2: Ethical leadership is significantly and positively related to perceived supervisor support.

Ethical leadership and trust in leader

Theory of social exchange emphasis on building trust between partners or coworkers and this relationship is well directed and enhanced by leadership (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The fair and equitable treatment of ethical leaders gives a signal of confidence. The ethical leader always gives the best for the benefit of his peers and fair treatment in each decision-making and active resolution of tasks should lead to the justice of the leader as a model. There is an element of fair treatment in individuals that will enhance the experience of leaders whom their colleagues trust (Cho & Dansereau, 2010; Eisenbeiss, 2012). It has been discovered that emotional and cognitive confidence are predictions of ethical leadership (Dadhich & Bhal., 2008). Walumbwa et al. (2011) emphasis that ethical leadership is more closely linked to the employee's level of trust in the leader. However, Engelbrecht et al. (2017) examines a positive relationship between ethical leadership and trust. Using a sample of 87 MBA students, it was concluded that ethical leadership is positively linked to employee emotional confidence (Brown et al., 2005). Thus, given these results, we argue that the prediction of employees for ethical leadership positively increases the level of confidence. So, the underlying case can develop.

H3: Ethical leadership has significant and positive effect on the trust in leader.

Mediating effect of perceived supervisor support

It is indicated by the previous studies that support for supervision is closely linked to the aspects of burnout among resident nurses (Okpozo, Gong, Ennis, & Adenuga, 2017b; Rossiter Sochos, 2018). A cross-sectional study found that the rate of burnout was much higher among residents working in the United States who were not satisfied with their education (Converso, Loera, Viotti, & Martini, 2015). Therefore, ethical leadership motivates and produces positive work behavior through perceived supervisor support to reduce the burnout. Ethical leadership is an effective tool for creating and improving communication channels with colleagues, as feedback of leaders is a pathway for the improvements in their productivity for employees. (Hughes et al. (2018) discovered that ethical leaders are always ready to motivate and guide, that increase a person's creativity in the business activities of the company. This is because of confidence given by the ethical leaders to their employees that creates healthy working environment that allows them to make their voices heard in the decision-making process. The PSS is reinforced by the ethical climate of ethical leaders which will lead to a reduction in the level of exhaustion. According to them, researcher suggested:

H4: Perceived supervisor support (PSS) will mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and burnout positively.

Mediating effect of trust in leader

Resource conservation theory (Hobfoll, 1989) advises people to try to obtain, maintain and secure resources and to reduce any threat of resource loss. People may feel anxious when emotional resources cannot be maintained(Bobbio, Bellan, & Manganelli, 2012; Hildenbrand, Sacramento, & Binnewies, 2018). However, employees become completely depressed and emotionally upset when they anticipate a loss of confidence in their leaders. These negative emotions can lead to prolonged work stress and exhaustion (Bechtoldt et al. 2007). The risk of burnout may actually be lower for those who are encouraged, covered and helped by their leaders (Dirks, 2000, p. 1010). They do not try to engage in other practices that have a negative effect on organizations ((Elçi, Şener, Aksoy, & Alpkan, 2012; Neubert, Wu, & Roberts, 2013). In fact, employees who have developed reliable relationships with their supervisor have a clear sense of corporate identity. They were also more able to exert greater effort and produce positive results in the workforce (Wieklund & Gollwitzer 1982; Dirks et al., 2002). Schaubroeck et al. (2013) find that managers' trust is closely linked to success and behavior at work. It is also implied that an employee's trust in managers is negatively linked to the level of exhaustion.

H5: Employee's trust in leaders is negatively related to experienced burnout.
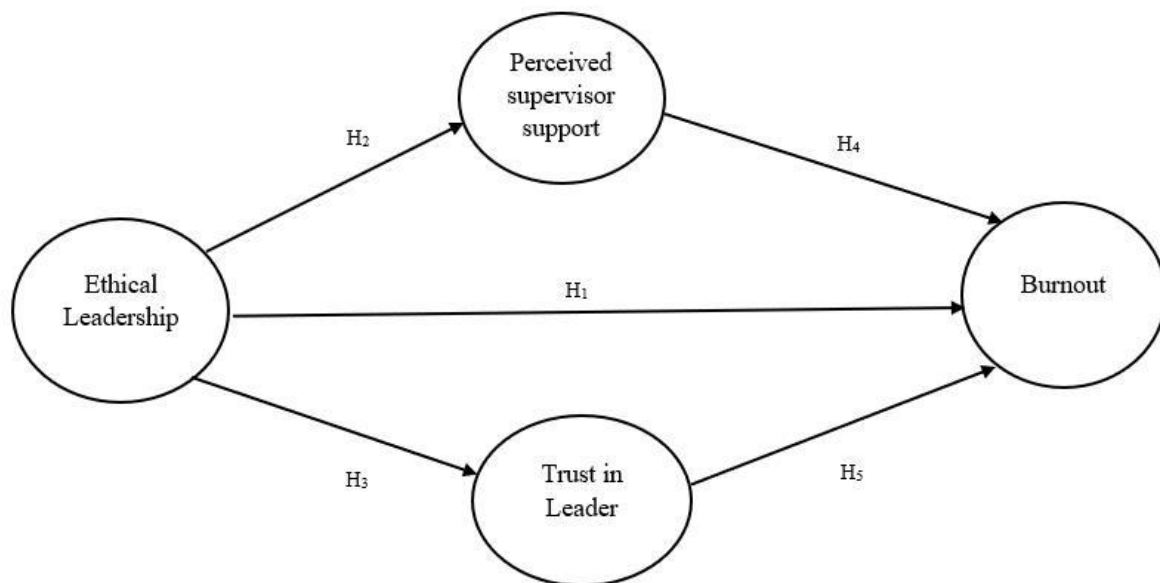
Research Model

This part of the study is mainly divided into two parts. In the first part, the participants and the process are discussed and in the second part, the measurement scales are discussed.

Participants and procedure

This study is conducted on resident nurses working in hospitals in Lahore, Pakistan. All participants were almost specialized graduates from a medical college / university. Before participating in the study, all of the residents were well informed of the purpose of the study . Prior to data collection, authorization was obtained from authorized personnel and questionnaires were then sent to respondents. They have guaranteed that their answers will only be used for research purposes and are intended to remain confidential. A total of 310 questionnaires were selected, of which 284 were received again (response rate = 91.6%). Respondents were also assessed on the basis of sex, age and qualifications. By gender, the majority of respondents were men (N = 159.57 percent). Depending on age, the majority of respondents were between 20 and 25 years old (N = 113, 40.5%). Based on qualifications, the majority of respondents had a master's degree (N = 102, 36.6%).

Measures

A questionnaire consisting of five-point Likert scale "1 strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree" was adapted from the previous studies for the collection of responses from respondents.

Ethical leadership

A ten-point scale was used to analyze the role of supervisor's ethical leadership behavior among nurses. This scale was adapted from an earlier study by Brown et al. (2005). Cronbach alpha is reported as 0.92 that shows internal consistency of scale. Examples include "My boss listens to what employees say" and "My boss discusses ethics or business values with employees".

Perceived supervisor support

This study adapted a six-item scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) to measure the responses of nurses about the perceived supervisor support. The internal consistency (α) is reported as 0.89. Sample survey items include "My leader cares about my opinions".

Trust in leader

Cook et al. (1980) developed a scale to measure trust in leader at workplace and scale is therefore named as Work-Place Trust Survey (WTS). This study adapted the this nine-item scale to collect the responses of resident nurses. The Cronbach alpha (α) is reported as 0.90 that means scale is best fit for use. Sample survey items include "I feel that my leader listens to what I have to say".

Burnout

Maslach (1986) developed a six-item scale to measure the burnout and named it as Maslach Burnout Inventory- MBI. This study adapted Maslach scale for the collection of responses by the resident nurses. Sample items include "I feel emotionally drained by my work" and "I feel like I'm at the end of my rope". Respondents were asked to evaluate the degree of burnout on five-point Likert scale. The reliability is reported as (α) 0.84 which reflects higher level of internal consistency of scale.

Results

The study begins with a preliminary analysis. (1) preparation of data on missing values. (2) Normality of the data. (3) Reliability (4) Analysis. Results are created using descriptive analysis and hierarchical regression. The results showed that the majority of respondents had a bell-shaped curve and most of the frequencies were on the regression line. Therefore, the data from this study was normally distributed.

Table I shows the means, correlations, internal consistencies and standard deviations between the observed variables. According to (Tavakol, 2011), reliability can be checked by examining Cronbach's alpha values and these values must be greater than or equal to 0.70. In accordance with these recommendations, the reliability values in Table 1 varied between 0.84 and 0.92, which are within the acceptable range. This means that the variables were reliable. In addition, the average values showed that the respondents were neutral in terms of ethical leadership, exhaustion, perceived support from supervisors and trust in the leader, which is a good sign. The values in the table show that ethical leadership (EL) is negatively linked to exhaustion (r-0.52, p <0.01) but is positively linked to the leader's confidence (r = 0.84, p <0.01) and the perceived support of the supervisor (r = 0.68, p <0.01).

Table 1 Mean, Standard Deviation, α and Correlation among variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Chronbach Alpha	EL	BO	TL	PSS
EL	3.37	0.90	0.92	1			
BO	3.06	0.90	0.84	-0.52**	1		
TL	3.42	0.84	0.90	0.84**	-0.49**	1	
PSS	3.34	0.95	0.89	0.68**	-0.47**	0.78**	1

Note: EL= Ethical Leadership, BO= Burnout, TL= Trust in Leader, PSS= Perceived Supervisor Support

In addition, burnout is negatively related to trust in leader (*r* = -0.49, *p* < 0.01) and perceived supervisor support (*r* = -0.47, *p* < 0.01). Furthermore, trust in

leader is positively related with perceived supervisor support ($r = 0.78$, *p* < 0.01).

Hypotheses testing

Model was tested to examine the hypothesis of the study. First, ethical leadership (independent) was regressed with burnout (dependent) and results (β= -0.52, p < 0.01) show that ethical leadership have significant impact on burnout therefore H1 is accepted. Ethical leadership was regressed with perceived supervisor support and results for H2 show that ethical leadership also have significant impact on perceived supervisor support (β= 0.71, p < 0.01). For testing the H3 ethical leadership was regressed with trust in leader and the result (β= 0.79, p< 0.01) supported the hypothesis. Ethical leadership has declined with confidence in the leader and the results are sustained for H3. To calculate the indirect impact of ethical leadership on burnout via mediating role of perceived supervisor support in H4, analysis was run and the results (β= -0.44, p<0.01) were significant that means ethical leadership indirectly effect burnout while having perceived supervisor support as a mediator. Hence, H4 is supported. To test the H5, the indirect effect of ethical leadership on burnout via trust in leaders was estimated and reported in the table as supported. The results showed that these are significant (β= -0.52, p<0.01).

Table 2 Structure path estimates

Parameters	coefficient (β)	R^2	p-value	Results
EL→ BO	-0.52	0.26	0.000	Supported
EL→PSS	0.72	0.46	0.000	Supported
EL→TL	0.79	0.71	0.000	Supported
TL→BO	-0.52	0.24	0.000	Supported
PSS→BO	-0.44	0.22	0.000	Supported

Note: EL= Ethical Leadership, BO= Burnout, TL= Trust in Leader, PSS= Perceived Supervisor Support

In order to examine the mediating role of perceived supervisor support and trust in leader between ethical leadership and burnout, researcher have used the hierarchical regression technique The model was tested for three mediation hypotheses: "(a) the independent and dependent variable must be significant, (b) the independent and intermediate variable must be relative and (c) the mediator and the dependent variable must be essentially linked" (Baron, RM and Kenny, DA, 1986). In hierarchical regression first ethical leadership was regressed with burnout to note the direct impact of variables according to Baron & Keeny (1986) model. A significant impact was present between the dependent and independent variables therefore researcher moved to second step. Ethical leadership was regressed with perceived supervisor support and trust in leader and a significant association was noted. In third step, trust in leader and perceived supervisor support was regressed with dependent variable (burnout) to note its significance. All basic assumptions of the Baron & Keeny (1986) model was hence fulfilled.

Discussion

The study tested a model using perceived supervisor support and trust in leader as a mediating variable for the relationship of ethical leadership and burnout. Ethical leadership behavior has an indirect effect through perceived supervisor support and trust in leader on burnout among resident nurses in this study. Categorically, perceived supervisor support and trust in leader mediated the relationships between ethical leadership and burnout. However, ethical leadership has an indirect effect on burnout among nurses. In the first hierarchal regression process, in the first step, demographical variables were added as controlled variables. In the second step, ethical leadership was added to note its significant impact ($\beta= -0.53$, $p < 0.05$). In third step, perceived supervisor support was added as mediating variable then the value of ethical leadership in the third step becomes significant again ($\beta= -0.38$, $p < 0.05$). However, the value of perceived supervisor support in third step noted as significant ($\beta= -0.21$, $p < 0.05$) that shows

perceived supervisor support partially mediates the association between ethical leadership and burnout.

Table 3.1 Mediation Analysis of PSS

Variables	Model 1 (β)	Model 2 (β)	Model 3 (β)
Controlled Variable			
Gender	0.14	0.06	-0.06
Age	0.00	-0.06	-0.07
Qualification	-0.05	-0.05	-0.04
Independent Variable			
EL	-	-0.53**	-0.38**
Mediating Variable			
PSS	-	-	-0.21*
R^2	0.08	0.28	0.30
ΔR^2	-	0.20	0.02

In the Second hierarchal regression process, in the first step, again the demographical variables were added as controlled variables. In the second step, ethical leadership was added to note its significant impact (β= -0.53, p < 0.05). In third step, trust in leader was added as mediating variable then the value of ethical leadership in the third step becomes significant again (β= - 0.36, p < 0.05). However, the value of trust in leader in third step noted as significant (β= -

0.22, p < 0.05). This represents that trust in leader partially mediates the association between ethical leadership and burnout.

Table 3.2 Mediation Analysis of TL

Variables	Model 1 (β)	Model 2 (β)	Model 3 (β)
Controlled Variables			
Gender	0.14	0.06	0.06
Age	0.04	-0.06	-0.07
Qualification	-0.05	-0.05	-0.06
Independent Variable			
EL	-	-0.53**	-0.36**
Mediating Variable			
TL	-	-	-0.22*
R^2	0.08	0.28	0.29
ΔR^2	-	0.20	0.01

Implications

Ethics discussions are more popular because of the scandals that occur in organizations. To prevent burnout, the philosophy of ethical leadership is important to be considered. Based on previous ethical leadership research and the selection of additional mediators for whom ethical leadership is correlated for employees success (Walumbwa et al., 2011). Therefore, in this analysis two mediators were tested. The research took into account perceived supervisor support and trust in leader as intervening factors in the ethical management and burnout relationship. This was the first time. Ethical leadership reduces burnout by increasing supervisory support and confidence in different teaching scenarios for nurses.

The results of the research pointed out that ethical leadership upgraded the trust in leaders and PSS of the residents and results in lowering the impact of burnout. Furthermore, supervisors who exhibited an ethical leadership attitude in

health centers enhance the ability of resident nurses to raise their voices in decision making to get entertain. Through verbal communication under the umbrella of social cognitive theory, supervisors give confidence to strengthen the resident nurses' abilities by giving proper support and feedbacks. Ethical leadership is the main key point to predict perceived supervisor support and trust in leader. So, when supervisors present ethical leadership behaviors to resident nurses, they become confident and take their supervisors as being positive and feel supportive. Ethical leaders followers are confident about themselves regarding the exchange of multiple ideas to their leaders by trust on them due to the equal rights dealings and encouraging behavior. Our findings generated by regression analysis underpinned theoretical predictions (Halbesleben, 2006; Prins et al., 2007; Sochos et al., 2012).

When people receive constructive and encouraging comments from others, more motivation and less stress at work can be expected (Mulki et al., 2007). A behavior of moral leaders was found to be encouraging and the exhaustion of nurses affected these behaviors. In addition, resident nurses need to connect with their patients. According to the report's findings, residents say that they are more interested in recognizing their clients' health problems, strengthening their professional skills and improving their clinical experience than in building relationships with patients. The programs by resident nurses of the medical field can use our research guide for a better understanding of cardinal constituent, which is obligatory in mitigating and controlling burnout syndrome. Moreover, this research increases interest to trust in leader in-house jobs programs, and it must consider as a sensitive key element in the training programs of resident nurses. This research comes up with sustenance to previous reports regarding healthcare institutions which proved perceived supervisor support and trust in leader, was a necessary resource for reducing burnout among nurses.

Recommendations for future research

The novelty of the judgments can be developed by enlarging the sample size. Further researches in multiple health centers, as well as any diverse systems (Uber), can be used. In this study, it is observed that the strong impact of trust in leaders and perceived supervisor support has proved important mediators between ethical leadership and burnout. Moreover, this study will help researchers to enhance their research about how ethical leadership will have an impact on burnout by adding up more mediators such as role ambiguity, altruism and turnover intention. The dimension of trust in leaders (TL) has discussed in this study. A prospective

researcher might choose other aspects of trust for their research purposes to create novelty. In such a way, the outcomes witnessed from this research can expand by listing new variables like hardy personality and undue pressure.

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