

Postdoc Pressures: Identifying Factors that Influence Burnout and Wellbeing in Postdoctoral Fellows at Pharmacy Programs

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INTRODUCTION

- Recently published literature has **explored factors influencing wellbeing** among healthcare practitioners, faculty, clinical residents, and students.¹⁻³
- Although scarce, literature among **postdoctoral fellows** have resulted in similar findings of **reduced wellbeing** as seen in clinicians.⁴
- **A critical gap exists** in the literature concerning factors which influence wellbeing among postdoctoral fellows in pharmacy programs.

This study aims to identify factors influencing wellbeing and burnout among postdoctoral fellows in pharmacy and identify recommendations to improve wellbeing.

METHODS

Focus Group Design

- Online **60-minute semi-structured focus groups**.
- **Seven enrollees** participated in **three focus groups**, stratified as **academic** (non-industry) (n=5) or **industry-sponsored** (n=2) postdoctoral fellows to explore experiences which may be unique to these groups.
- Participants were prompted to identify:
 - **Factors negatively influencing postdoc burnout**
 - **Factors positively influencing postdoc wellbeing**
 - **Recommendations to improve postdoc wellbeing**

Data Analysis

- **Inductive thematic coding** of focus group transcripts was utilized to analyze participant responses.
- **Each transcript was coded independently** by two researchers; any discrepancies were discussed by the team until consensus was reached.

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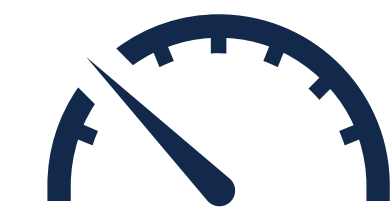
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RESULTS

Burnout

Top Themes:

1. Insufficient Resources
2. Difficult Transition
3. Workload and Program Structure



Academic Postdoctoral Fellows: Lack of Belonging or Inclusion[^]

“When I look at the University as a whole, I feel out of place. I think that's why I do feel more comfortable at home or with family, because no one wants to feel like an outsider at the place that they work.”

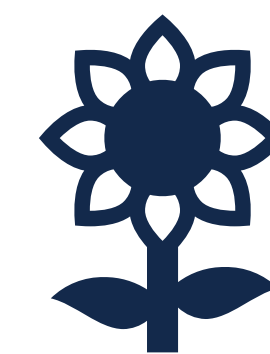
Industry Postdoctoral Fellows: Workload or Program Structure: Position's Unreasonable Workload

“We have to listen to recording[s] and try to teach ourselves. So I feel also overwhelmed to the point where I even did not listen to all those.”

Wellbeing

Top Themes:

1. Reasonable Supervisor Expectations
2. Personal & Professional Support
3. Resource Support



Academic Postdoctoral Fellows: Respect or Value by Others[^]

“They had invited students and postdocs to go sit at the seminar and have lunch with the candidate, and then they sent out a survey. In it, they actually asked for feedback.”

Industry Postdoctoral Fellows: Reasonable Supervisor Expectations: Supervisor Flexibility

“[My] mentor was very flexible in terms of when I have to submit, when I have to meet with them, if I'm available or not to meet with them, [or] if I can record any meeting.”

Recommendations

Top Themes:

1. Institutional Initiatives and Resources
2. Additional Non-Supervisor Support
3. Workload Strategies



Academic Postdoctoral Fellows: Supervisor Support[^]: Supervisor Managerial Training[^]

“There needs to be [a] class that people who have postdocs take. When I think about becoming a postdoc, I had to sit through so many trainings. [...] I feel like the same responsibility should be held for the PI's.”

Industry Postdoctoral Fellows: Institutional Initiatives and Resources: Resources for Parents

“I think the resources for parents could definitely be improved, particularly parents who are postdocs [...] I had no idea who to talk to, to try to find those things.”

[^]Unique to academic postdoctoral fellows

CONCLUSIONS

- This research provides insight into the **factors influencing burnout & wellbeing among postdoctoral fellows** in pharmacy programs **and recommendations to improve wellbeing**.
- Factors identified as influencing **postdoc burnout** included
 - **insufficient resources** including challenges accessing resources,
 - **difficult transition** to a postdoc position and/or institution, and
 - **workload & program structure**.

- **Recommendations** to support **postdoc wellbeing** included:
 - **institutional resources**, such as onboarding & parental support,
 - **additional non-supervisor support**, including peer connections and non-supervisor mentoring, and
 - **workload strategies**, such as additional days off or opportunities to work from home.

Study findings will inform the **School's wellbeing initiatives** and provide a **foundation for additional research**.