Effectiveness of a Mentorship Program on Burnout in Distant Learning DNP Students
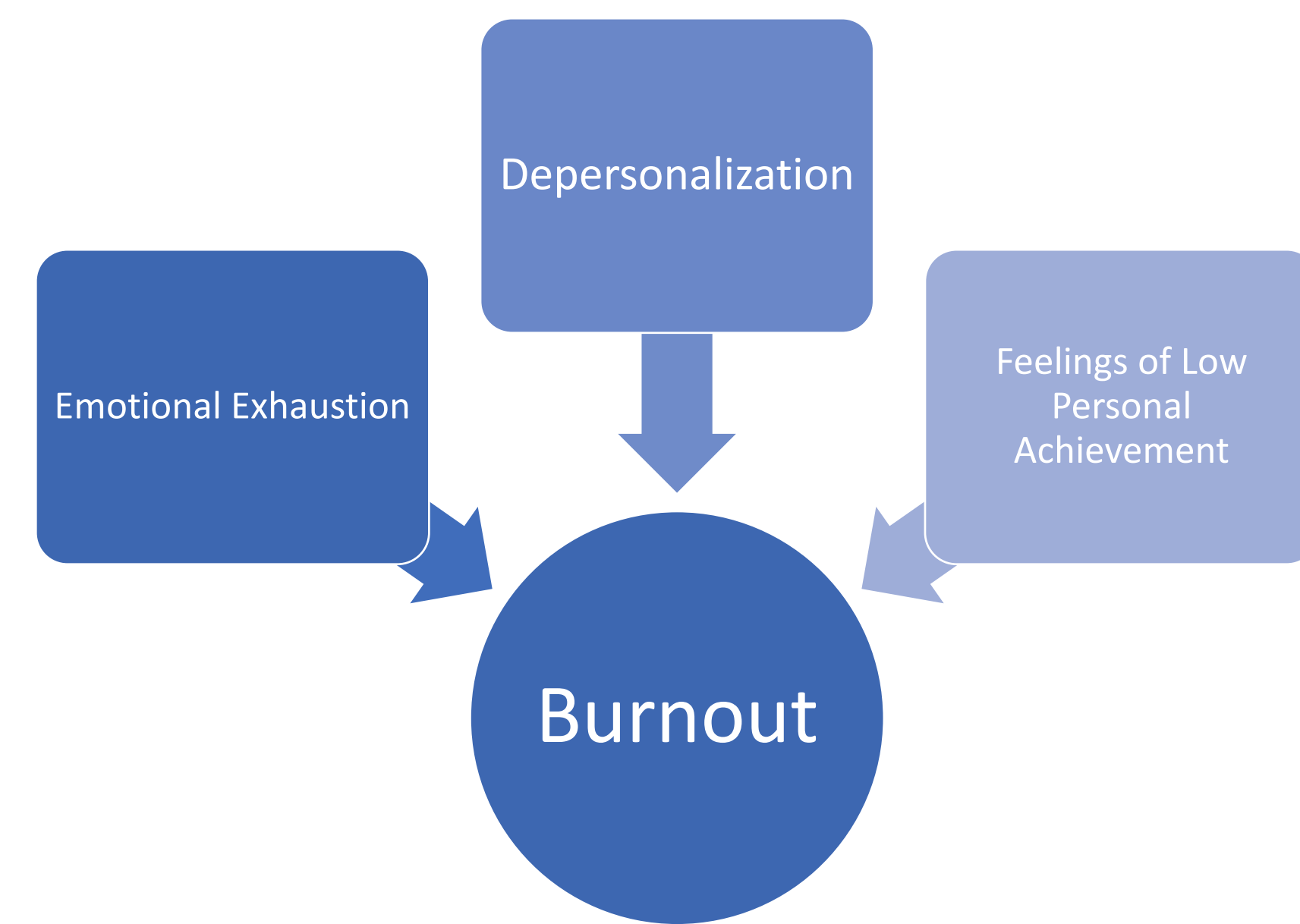
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Background and Purpose

- At least 11.6% of graduate healthcare students have signs of burnout[1]
- 348 DNP programs in the U.S. with 179 programs online[2]
- The high academic demands in DNP programs in conjunction with distant learning leave graduate nursing students with fewer peer and faculty interactions, work-family role conflict, and increased stress.

Emotional Exhaustion → Burnout
Depersonalization → Burnout
Feelings of Low Personal Achievement → Burnout

The purpose of this study was to reduce burnout in a large academic school of nursing's distant learning Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students by instituting a 12 week student-to-student mentorship program.

Objectives

Distant learning DNP students in their first year at a school of nursing will:

Aim 1: Show an improvement in at least 1 of the 3 Maslach Burnout Inventory Student Survey (MBI-SS) areas: emotional exhaustion, cynicism, or professional efficacy

Aim 2: Report an improved peer networking experience after involvement with the 12-week mentorship program

Methods

- Quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group with a pretest-posttest design
- Inclusion criteria
  - DNP program enrollment with previous master's degree; Dual program enrollment; and, > Age of 18
- MBI-SS is a 16 item Likert scale ranging from 0 to 6
- Pre- and Post- course evaluation for attendance, enjoyment, and connection to peers

Intervention

- Mentees met with their identified mentor every week for 12 weeks for at least thirty minutes via a remote platform
- Mentors listened to mentee course challenges, provided support and encouragement to students by offering suggestions and sharing knowledge based on their experience.
- Mentors provided resources to address mentees' feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, and educational satisfaction.

Week	Topic	Week	Topic
1	Overview & Relationships	7	Perspective (Part II)
2	Building Resilience to Beat Stress	8	Healthy Habits
3	Self-Care Strategies	9	Healthy Movement
4	Healthy Mind Platter (Part I)	10	Listening
5	Healthy Mind Platter (Part II)	11	Optimizing Free Time
6	Perspective (Part I)	12	Long Term Health Habits

Sample Characteristics

Demographic characteristics	(N = 11)
Age (years), mean (SD)	40.7 (7.6)
Sex, n (%)	
Male	1 (9.1)
Female	10 (90.9)
Race, n (%)	
Caucasian	6 (54.5)
Asian	3 (27.3)
African American	1 (9.1)
Native American	1 (9.1)
Employment Status, n (%)	
Full-Time	9 (81.8)
Part-Time	2 (18.2)
Personal Relationship Status, n (%)	
Married	9 (81.8)
Single	1 (9.1)
Engaged	1 (9.1)
Educational Program of Enrollment, n (%)	
MBA/DNP	5 (45.5)
DNP Executive	6 (54.5)

Results

The emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy scores appeared to decrease after the initiation of the mentorship program, but the change was not statistically significant.

- Emotional exhaustion and cynicism: higher scores indicate increased burnout
- Professional efficacy: lower scores correlate to increased burnout

	Pre-Intervention (Median (IQR))	Post-Intervention (Median (IQR))	P-Value
Emotional Exhaustion	18 (7, 24)	11 (6, 13)	0.14
Cynicism	8 (4, 18)	8 (1, 11)	0.19
Professional Efficacy	23 (21, 29)	30 (22, 33)	0.20

Frequency and Percentage of Connection to Peers

	Frequency (Percent)
Yes	9 (81.9%)
Uncertain	2 (18.2%)
Total	11 (100.0%)

Enjoyment of Participation in Mentorship Program
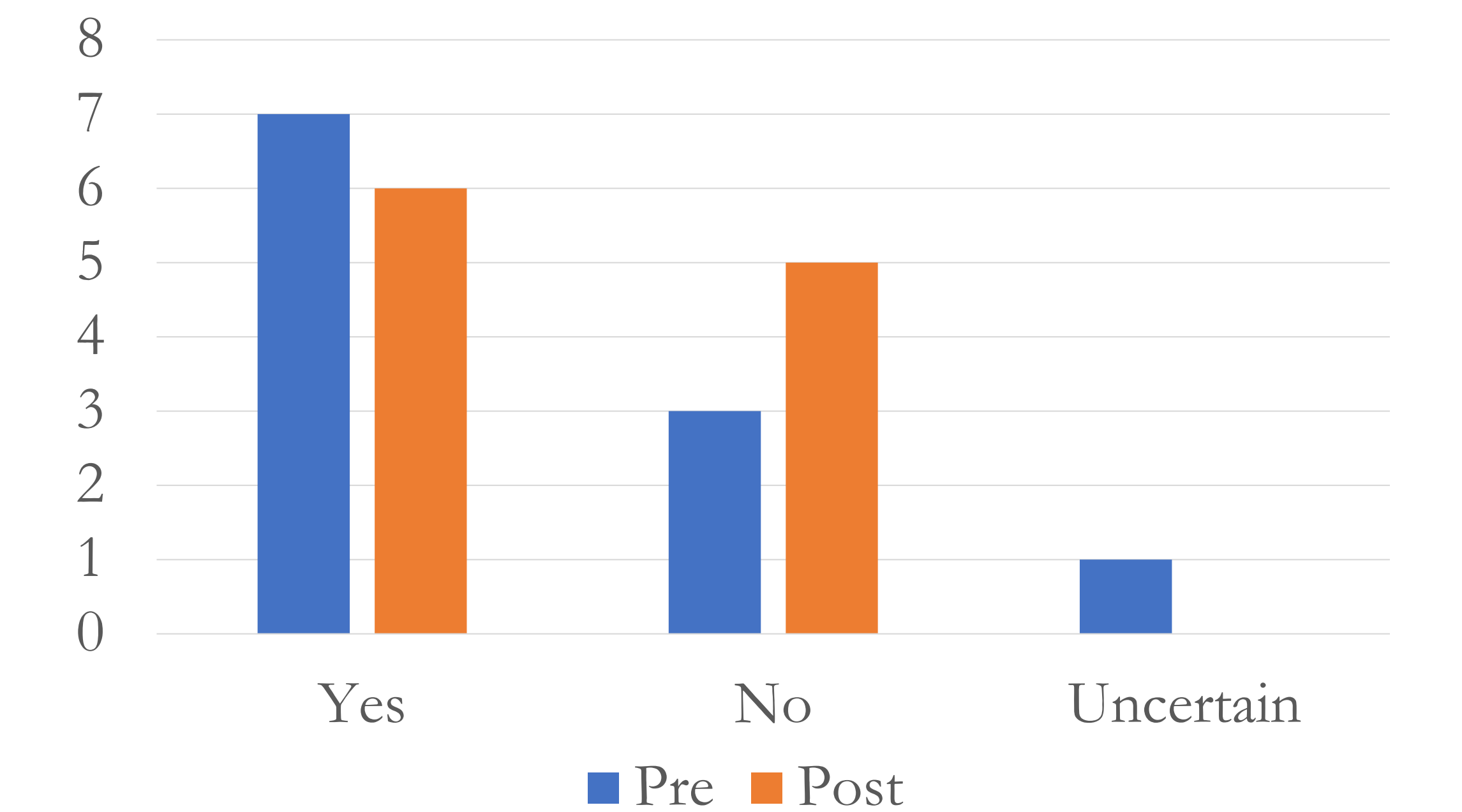
Conclusion

- Despite lack of statistically significant findings, we report the first of its kind study evaluating burnout via the MBI-SS scale in distant-learning DNP students through a student-student mentorship program.
- Even though the burnout scores were low post mentorship program, one could hypothesize that the burnout scores in this particular group of students would have been higher during this pandemic if it weren't for the mentorship program.
- Future studies should expand upon this study by evaluating students over a longer period of time, including all students in the cohort, inclusion of Masters or PhD students, and implementation of alternative burnout reduction strategies.
- Sustainability recommendations are for a current stent to build off of this study to further incorporate burnout reduction strategies in the curriculum.