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# Workplace Stressors and Coping Mechanisms Among Healthcare Employees

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**Abstract: Workplace stress is an inevitable concern in healthcare settings due to the demanding clinical responsibilities, organizational pressures and interpersonal dynamics. This study explored the workplace stressors experienced by healthcare employees and the coping mechanisms they employ to manage these challenges. Through the utilization of a qualitative method, the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences and perspectives.**

**Findings revealed that the healthcare employees experienced a range of stressors; their most experienced stressors are excessive workload, inadequate staffing, fatigue and insufficient rest, poor work-life balance due to tight schedules, interpersonal and emotional challenges, demanding patients and clients, resource limitations and organizational communication difficulties. These stressors negatively affected their work performance, leading to delays in timeliness and patient care, increased risk of error and compromised service quality, fatigue and exhaustion, reduced concentration and brain fog, inefficiencies and workflow disruptions and compromised quality of care and insufficient resources. To manage the stress, the participants employed coping mechanisms such as task prioritization and delegation, stress-relief and relaxation techniques, collaboration and seeking support, rest and physical recharge, resourcefulness and resilience, as well as calmness and communication. The participants further highlighted that these coping mechanisms were effective in restoring focus and mental clarity, regulating emotions, sustaining work performance, preventing medical errors, strengthening teamwork and protecting against burnout.**

**Based on the findings, the study proposed organizational support mechanisms including workload reduction and task sharing, recognition and appreciation engagement, mental health and wellness programs, flexible workload arrangements, rest and recovery initiatives and community-building activities.**

***Keywords:*** *Workplace Stressors, Coping Mechanisms, Healthcare Employees, Work Performance, Organizational Support.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Healthcare work is recognized widely as physically and emotionally demanding. Healthcare employees frequently face heavy workloads, time constraints, critical decisions and emotional labor and in crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic which increased infection risks and lack of resources. These factors increased the chance of workplace stress, burnout, decreased job satisfaction, absenteeism and turnover, and they could negatively impact patient safety and care quality (World Health Organization, 2022; International Labor Organization, 2022). Recognizing the nature and origins of workplace stress as well as the coping mechanisms that healthcare employees utilize is a critical issue for hospital administrators, human resource professionals and policy makers.

Internationally, consistent studies show that healthcare professionals face significantly higher stress levels compared to other occupational groups. In many developed countries, stress arises from increasing patient complexity, staff shortages and the emotional toll of caring for critically ill individuals. Shanafelt et al. (2019) found that physicians across the United States report high burnout rates due to long work hours, administrative burden and performance pressures. Similarly, nurses in the United Kingdom and Canada face heavy workloads and intense emotional labor which have been linked to compassion fatigue, reduced job satisfaction and increased turnover intention (Smith & Roberts, 2020).

In low- and middle-income countries, workplace stress is intensified by resource scarcity, limited access to equipment, inadequate staffing and exposure to occupational hazards. A study in India revealed that nurses frequently experience emotional exhaustion, role overload and psychological stress due to insufficient staffing patterns and overcrowded facilities (Kumar & Sinha, 2021). In African

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regions, healthcare workers reported high levels of work-related stress linked to poor working conditions, high patient-to-staff ratios and limited institutional support which significantly compromised their coping capacity (Ngeno & Wamalwa, 2020).

In addition, global studies emphasize the vital role of coping mechanisms in maintaining the mental health and performance of healthcare workers. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress theory remains widely applied internationally highlighting how problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies across cultures; healthcare workers in Japan and Korea lean towards structured teamwork and mindfulness-based interventions (Takai et al., 2020) while those in Europe often utilize formal psychological support services and resilience programs provided by hospitals (Richards & Bong, 2021).

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2021) recommends workload balancing, institutional support programs, mental health services and training on coping strategies as core components of health workplaces. These align with UN ILO's Workplace Stress Guidelines which emphasize organizational responsibility in preventing burnout, ensuring safe conditions and fostering psychosocial well-being (International Labour Organization, 2016).

In the Philippines, workplace stress among healthcare employees has become a public health and organizational concern. The Department of Health (DOH) has acknowledged that chronic stress, burnout and mental fatigue are widespread among Filipino healthcare workers due to high patient loads, role ambiguity, emotional demands and shortages in health workforce (DOH, 2021). The Philippine Health Human Resource (HHR) Master Plan emphasizes that the country continues to face uneven distribution of healthcare professionals, particularly nurses and physicians, creating excessive world pressure in both public and private hospitals (DOH, 2020).

Studies reveal that Filipino healthcare employees commonly experience stress related to excessive workloads, understaffing and long working hours. Dayrit et al. (2018), said that the country suffers from persistent shortages of healthcare professionals with many nurses and allied health workers opting to work abroad for better compensation and working conditions. This "brain drain" further intensifies stress among those who remain in local hospitals, as they take on heavier responsibilities and extended duties to compensate for workforce gaps.

Workplace stress in the Philippines is also linked to structural and systemic factors. Ong and Neri (2020) found that nurses working in public hospitals face stressors such as overcrowded emergency rooms, limited medical supplies, insufficient equipment and administrative inefficiencies. These increased emotional exhaustion and frustration, particularly when healthcare employees felt unsupported by hospital management or government institutions.

Compensation related concerns also amplify workplace stress. A study by Dator-Bercilla and Escueta (2021) found that many Filipino nurses experience financial stress due to wage disparities between regions, contractual employment schemes and delayed salary releases in some government hospitals. Such factors contribute to declining morale, job satisfaction and increased turnover intention among healthcare personnel.

Additionally, the Philippine culture of "alaga" and compassion in caregiving places emotional pressure on healthcare workers. They are expected to maintain empathy, patience and warmth despite high workloads and personal challenges. This contributes to emotional labor, a form of stress experienced by workers who must regulate their feelings while caring for patients (Almazan et al., 2019). Emotional labor has been associated with burnout, compassion fatigue and reduced job performance in Filipino healthcare institutions.

Despite these challenges, Filipino healthcare employees demonstrate strong coping mechanism rooted in family support, spirituality and social connectedness. Local studies show that many workers rely on prayer, peer support, humor and personal resilience to manage work stress (Labarda & Baconguis, 2020). Filipino workers commonly engaged in "venting sessions", teamwork and collaborative problem solving with colleagues which help buffer psychological strain and foster a sense of community within hospital units.

In the Bicol Region including the province of Sorsogon, healthcare employees face unique workplace stressors shaped by regional health demands, resource constraints and frequent exposure to natural hazards. Local studies highlight that hospitals in Bicol often operate with limited staffing and uneven workforce distribution which increase the workload of remaining health personnel (Garcia & Olaguer, 2020). These staffing shortages contribute to longer shifts, multitasking and increased physical and emotional exhaustion among nurses, medical technologists, midwives and support staff across provincial and district hospitals.

Resources limitations are another major factor affecting workplace stress in Sorsogon hospitals. Mendoza and Balverde (2022), stated that healthcare employees in rural facilities reported insufficient medical supplies, outdated equipment and limited support staff. These constraints force workers to improvise and extend their roles beyond standard responsibilities, leading to frustration, moral distress and fatigue. Local hospitals also struggle with infrastructure challenges including overcrowded wards, inadequate isolation areas which amplify stress during peak patient seasons such as dengue outbreaks or respiratory infection surges.

Despite these challenges, Bicolano healthcare workers demonstrate strong coping strategies deeply rooted in local culture. Faith-based coping is especially prevalent with many workers engaging in prayer, spiritual reflection or attending religious gatherings to alleviate stress (Ortega & Reyes, 2020). Social bonding with coworkers, known locally as

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"kasurug support," also serves as an important coping mechanism which includes sharing meals, group conversations during breaks, humorous and informal debriefing that supports resilience and sense of camaraderie within hospital teams.

Moreover, healthcare employees in Sorsogon often rely on family support networks to maintain emotional stability. Some institutions have implemented wellness activities such as stress debriefing sessions, peer support groups and employee recognition programs, though local studies suggest that these initiatives remain limited and inconsistent across facilities (Villalobos & De Claro, 2021).

Several factors justify this study. First, understanding the sources of stress among healthcare employees can inform hospital administrators, policymakers and human resource managers about the areas requiring intervention. Second, exploring the coping mechanisms utilized by staff allows identification of effective strategies that can be formalized or enhanced to improve employee resilience and mental health outcomes (Labarda & Baconguis, 2020). Finally, highlighting the experience of GSAC healthcare employees contributes to the body of knowledge on provincial hospital stressors in the Philippines, where research is limited compared to urban centers.

This study addressed the gap in understanding how workplace stress manifests in healthcare employees and how coping mechanisms can buffer these effects, creating a healthier more resilient workforce capable of delivering sustainable quality care.

➢ *Research Objectives*

This study undertaking has the following objectives:

- To identify the different stressors experienced by healthcare employees at GSAC General Hospital, Inc.
- To determine the effects of workplace stressors on the work performance of healthcare employees.
- To assess how coping mechanisms, influence the stress management of healthcare employees.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the coping mechanisms employed by healthcare employees in dealing with workplace stress.
- To propose organizational support mechanisms that may help reduce workplace stress and strengthen healthy coping mechanisms among GSAC General Hospital, Inc. healthcare employees.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed a qualitative research approach to explore the workplace stressors experienced by healthcare employees at GSAC General Hospital, Inc. and to identify the coping mechanisms they employ in managing such stress.

The participants of this study consisted of thirty (30) healthcare employees of GSAC General Hospital, Inc. including nurses, nursing attendants and other frontline healthcare professionals who are directly involved in patient care and daily hospital operations. These respondents were selected because they are regularly exposed to a variety of workplace stressors, ranging from high patient loads and time pressures to complex interpersonal and organizational challenges. Their firsthand experience provides valuable insights into the coping strategies employed to manage stress and maintain professional effectiveness.

## III. RESULTS

This provides the results of this research work. The qualitative data were treated and explored through themed presentations.

### *A. Different Stressors Experienced by Healthcare Employees*

➢ *Workload and Staffing Pressures*

The health workforce is essentially exposed to labor-intensive tasks. As the frontline in delivering varied services such as preventive care, curative care, rehabilitative services, and other forms of health care, they are consistently exposed to multiple stressors.

A common stressor confronted by the health workforce is their exposure to rigorous assignments. In the workplace where the research participants were drawn, issues related to workload and staffing pressures were the stressors most frequently reported. In fact, the sharing made by Participant 2 contained such an idea when he said, "When there are many patients but not enough staff-on-duty, this circumstance stresses me." Meanwhile, Participant 6 echoed this concern, stating, "The source of stress for me as a nurse is having high patient ratios and workload managing multiple patients with complex needs." This highlights how inadequate staffing levels intensify the burden of care, forcing personnel to stretch their capacity beyond safe limits.

Participant 7 reinforced this idea by noting, "There are times that we have high patient load, limited staff and some doctors' orders create stress in my daily work environment." Similarly, Participant 10 emphasized, "The greatest challenge that causes stress is the long working hours as well as the non-standard nurse-to-patient ratio." Participant 18 further supported these accounts, pointing out, "Unit understaffing/short staffing" as a persistent source of stress. These narratives reveal that staffing shortages and excessive workloads not only compromise the quality of patient care but also contribute to fatigue, burnout, and diminished morale among health workers.

➢ *Multiple Tasks and Tight Deadlines*

Participant 3 found performing multiple tasks as a stressor when this statement was uttered: "When multiple different tasks require being done at the same time, I felt stressed." This claim was vouched for by Participant 13, who explained, "Managing a high workload while ensuring medication accuracy and patient safety is a major source of stress. Balancing administrative duties, staff supervision and

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clinical responsibilities under time pressure also adds to daily challenges." Their accounts highlight how overlapping responsibilities under strict deadlines create anxiety and compromise both focus and patient safety.

Participant 14 reinforced this claim by stating, "Management changing priorities when multiple tasks are marked as urgent." Similarly, Participant 16 shared, "Tight deadlines, handling multiple tasks at the same time and delays with unexpected problems that need quick solutions." Together, these narratives emphasize that multitasking under time pressure not only heightens stress but also undermines efficiency, accuracy, and overall wellbeing in the workplace.

➢ *Interpersonal and Emotional Challenges*

Another kind of stressor was on relationships, particularly along interpersonal and emotional issues, emphasized by the words of Participant 1: "Absorbing the emotional stress of patients and their watchers which often lingers even after work," reflecting sympathetic stress as a challenge. Participant 4 supported this by sharing experiences with "demanding and over-titled patients/clients," which often create tension in the workplace. Similarly, Participant 5 noted, "When there are patients who are difficult to talk to and like to argue," highlighting how confrontational interactions add emotional strain. These accounts show that health workers face not only physical workload but also emotional burdens that extend beyond their shifts.

Participant 8 reinforced this scenario by stating, "Watchers who insist they know better than the doctors," which illustrates how undermining professional authority can cause frustration and stress. Participant 9 added, "Toxic/unruly relatives and participants," pointing to the disruptive impact of difficult interpersonal encounters. Meanwhile, Participant 11 explained that while teamwork can make the environment fulfilling, "gaps within the team, lack of cooperation or unresolved issues can be stressful and affect communication and overall performance." These shared ideas reveal that emotional absorption, patient-family conflicts, and strained team dynamics are significant stressors that compromise both wellbeing and workplace harmony.

➢ *Demanding Patients and Clients*

Another stressor faced by health workers relates to demanding patients and their relatives, which often creates tension and emotional strain in the workplace. Participant 9 expressed this challenge by stating, "When the relatives think they know better than me," showing how undermining professional expertise can be frustrating and stressful. Participant 10 added to this idea, explaining, "There are different scenarios that can serve as a hindrance or barrier in utilizing my utmost capacity and capability and that is troublesome access, hard to manage patients as well as patients who are difficult to establish rapport with." These accounts reveal that confrontational attitudes and difficult patient interactions not only disrupt workflow but also erode confidence and morale among health personnel. Together, they highlight how interpersonal challenges with patients and relatives become significant stressors that compromise both emotional wellbeing and the quality of care.

➢ *Resource Limitations*

Resource limitations emerged as a significant stressor for health workers, as they directly hinder the delivery of effective patient care. Participant 8 emphasized this challenge by stating, "Unavailability of supplies/instruments," which reflects how the lack of essential materials disrupts workflow and increases frustration. Participant 11 added that "equipment limitations and gaps in teamwork or communication among staff" are among the factors that heighten stress during a typical shift, showing how resource constraints extend beyond physical tools to organizational systems. Similarly, Participant 18 explained, "Having a slow/no internet connection is one simple problem that creates a big impact to providing patient care because we rely so much on it," highlighting the role of technological resources in modern healthcare. Collectively, these accounts reveal that shortages in supplies, equipment, and reliable infrastructure significantly contribute to stress, undermining efficiency and the quality of patient services.

➢ *Organizational and Communication Challenges*

Organizational and communication challenges emerged as significant stressors for health workers, particularly when priorities and schedules were unclear or constantly shifting. Participant 14 emphasized this by stating, "Unclear priorities last minute changes," which reflects how poor communication and sudden adjustments disrupt workflow and create confusion. Participant 16 supported this theme, sharing, "When there are last minute changes, heavy workload and limited time to complete tasks," highlighting the compounded stress caused by unpredictable directives and time pressure. These accounts reveal that unclear organizational priorities and abrupt changes not only heighten stress but also undermine efficiency, accuracy, and morale among health personnel. They show how communication gaps and organizational unpredictability are critical stressors that affect the discharge of health worker responsibilities.

Supplementary accounts further reinforce this, as Participant 12 explained, "Familiarizing OR procedures and doctor's preference during OR and anticipate what doctors would need," which illustrates the stress of adapting to unclear expectations. Participant 15 added, "If meetings or DOH visits conflict with my personal commitments," pointing to organizational scheduling issues that affect both professional and personal balance. Similarly, Participant 17 shared, "In terms of medicines, the part where we check our document in order for us to be compliant to various policy," showing how communication gaps and policy demands add pressure. Together, these accounts highlight that organizational unpredictability, unclear communication, and conflicting priorities are critical stressors that affect both performance and wellbeing in the workplace.

*B. How Stressors Affect Work Performance*

➢ *Delays in Timeliness and Patient Care*

Workload and staffing issues were consistently identified as stressors that directly delay timeliness and patient care. Participant 2 expressed this simply by stating, "Work becomes slow," which reflects how excessive tasks

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reduce efficiency and hinder prompt service delivery. Participant 6 added, "Rushed care I might feel pressured to rush through tasks which can lead to errors," showing that inadequate staffing forces health workers to compromise both speed and accuracy. Similarly, Participant 7 explained, "Emergency cases and understaffing," highlighting how limited manpower during critical situations slows down interventions and increases stress. These accounts affirm that insufficient staffing and heavy workloads create bottlenecks that delay patient care and compromise quality.

Participant 10 reinforced this theme by stating, "It does greatly affect everything especially the quality of care that you render to the patients. It can also delay and cause pending workloads which is inevitable," pointing to the unavoidable delays caused by long shifts and non-standard nurse-to-patient ratios. Participant 18 further supported this by sharing, "There is a delay in providing care and process of documents," which illustrates how multitasking and excessive responsibilities slow down both clinical and administrative tasks. Together, these narratives emphasize that staffing shortages and workload pressures not only delay timeliness but also increase the risk of errors and reduce the overall effectiveness of healthcare delivery. Collectively, they show that addressing staffing and workload concerns is essential to improving patient care outcomes and workplace efficiency.

- *Risk of Errors and Compromised Quality*

Participant 3 stated, "We'd rather sacrifice timeliness for a bit but never the quality of work," which reflects the tension between speed and accuracy. This is echoed by Participant 1, who explained, "Excessive workloads can affect the accuracy of laboratory results and make it difficult to meet the turnaround time, leading to delays in diagnoses and treatment." Similarly, Participant 5 shared, "The release of results may be delayed to ensure the quality of results because excessive tasks can lead to mistakes so it can take longer in terms of timeliness." Participant 6 reinforced this by saying, "Rushed care I might feel pressured to rush through tasks which can lead to errors," showing how workload stressors compromise both timeliness and quality.

Participant 13 noted, "It may delay medication processing and limit the time for double-checking," while Participant 14 emphasized, "This causes delays which compromise both quality and timeliness of my work." These concerns are supported by Participant 7, who explained, "Can delay patient care, increase the risk of errors and reduce the quality and timeliness of nursing interventions." Participant 10 added, "It does greatly affect everything, especially the quality of care that you render to the patients. It can also delay and cause pending workloads which is inevitable." Participant 11 further illustrated the strain, saying, "It can make it challenging to manage during a shift, to manage time effectively and maintain focus, which may affect the timeliness and thoroughness of my work." Together with Participant 12's account, "If I'm overwhelmed, documentation might get rushed and less efficient," and Participant 15's warning, "It can increase the risk of errors, as tasks may be completed under pressure," these narratives strongly support the idea that excessive workloads are stressors that compromise quality and increase risks of errors.

- *Fatigue and Exhaustion*

Stressors such as extended duty hours and irregular schedules clearly cause fatigue and exhaustion among healthcare workers. Participant 6 shared, "It can make exhausting that I can't perform my tasks well," showing how physical tiredness directly impacts performance. Participant 7 added, "Can cause fatigue, decreased concentration, slower decision-making and difficulty maintaining consistent performance," highlighting the cognitive strain that comes with exhaustion. Similarly, Participant 11 explained, "Irregular or extended duty hours can significantly affect my concentration, decision-making and ability to maintain consistent performance, fatigue and mental strain from long hours may make me feel drained or 'lutang' at times, slowing my reactions and increasing the risks of errors." These accounts demonstrate that fatigue is not only physical but also mental, reducing alertness and increasing the risk of mistakes.

Participant 13 reinforced this theme by stating, "Extended duty hours lead to fatigue which affects concentration and decision-making and makes it challenging to maintain consistent performance over time." Participant 16 echoed this, saying, "Can cause fatigue and stress which can lead to reduced alertness, slower processing of information and a higher chance of making mistakes during admissions." Participant 17 further emphasized, "It leads to fatigue due to overwork which can reduce one's concentration and decision-making and leads to possible errors that cannot maintain consistent performance." Together, these narratives illustrate how exhaustion undermines both the quality and consistency of healthcare delivery. The cumulative effect of stressors is a cycle of fatigue, reduced focus, and compromised patient safety.

- *Reduced Concentration and Brain Fog*

Stressors in healthcare settings often lead to reduced concentration and brain fog, making it difficult for professionals to perform consistently. Participant 12 explained, "Less efficient at work, foggy mind during slow/sluggish movement," which shows how exhaustion clouds focus and slows productivity. Participant 14 reinforced this by saying, "It decreases my concentration and disrupts consistent performance," emphasizing the challenge of maintaining steady output under strain. Participant 15 added, "The lack of rest hours can affect my concentration and decision-making as rest is essential for a medical professional to function well at work." These accounts highlight how mental fatigue undermines clarity and decision-making in healthcare practice.

Together, these points of view illustrate that stressors such as long hours, insufficient rest, and overwhelming workloads not only cause physical exhaustion but also impair cognitive functioning. Reduced concentration, sluggishness, and disrupted performance create a cycle where healthcare workers struggle to maintain accuracy and efficiency. The inability to sustain focus, as described by Participants 12, 14, and 15, increases the risk of errors and compromises patient

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care. These experiences show that cognitive strain is a critical consequence of stressors in healthcare environments.

➢ *Inefficiency and Workflow Disruptions*

Participant 4 stated, "Extended or irregular work hours tend to compromise the overall work flow and processes." This directly shows how prolonged schedules disrupt efficiency and create workflow challenges. Similarly, Participant 1 shared, "Chronic understaffing and prolonged duty hours gradually reduce focus, breaking my work-life balance, affecting overall performance leading to inconsistent and poor quality of care." Both narratives emphasize that stressors such as understaffing and extended hours weaken concentration and performance. Together, they highlight how systemic pressures undermine consistent care and disrupt organizational processes.

Participant 10 reinforced this by saying, "Working in an extreme period of time is very detrimental and dangerous as it can affect staff's health and well-being. If you are not working to your full potential, it is very harmful because it can cause negligence, mistakes and even malpractice in the field of nursing." This account underscores the risks of inefficiency caused by exhaustion, linking workflow disruptions to serious consequences like errors and malpractice. When combined with Participants 1 and 4, the statements illustrate how stressors not only reduce efficiency but also compromise safety and quality of care. These revelations affirm that stressors cause inefficiency and workflow disruptions.

➢ *Compromised Quality of Care and Insufficient Resources*

Participant 8 shared, "There were times that supplies were not enough or facilities were lacking, to the point we need to adapt on the spot just to deliver the services," which directly reflects how insufficiency compromises care and forces staff to adapt. Similarly, Participant 9 stated, "My delivery of care becomes delayed or incomplete although I tend to improvise just to meet the standard of care." Both narratives emphasize that stressors such as lack of resources lead to delays and incomplete care, requiring adaptive measures to uphold patient safety. These accounts highlight how frontline staff must compensate for gaps to maintain service delivery.

Participant 10, who is a nurse, affirmed the insufficiency but considered this incident as an opportunity by saying, "It does greatly decrease the efficiency of the team but fortunately, nurses are born to be resourceful. Even though insufficiency exists, they can still manage to solve the problems and deliver quality care to patients." Meanwhile, Participant 11 explained, "When equipment, supplies or facilities are insufficient, it slows down my work, forces me to find alternatives and can delay patient care. It may also make it more challenging to maintain the standard of care, requiring extra caution and problem-solving to ensure patient safety and quality treatment are still upheld." Their chronicles showed that stressors compromise efficiency and quality of care, but also highlight the need for improvisation and resourcefulness to sustain patient outcomes.

*C. Coping Mechanisms in Response to Stressors and their Influence on Stress Management*

➢ *Task Prioritization and Delegation*

Health workers often rely on prioritization strategies to manage heavy workloads effectively. Participant 1 shared, "When faced with heavy workloads, I do rigid prioritization and do batching or grouping of tasks." Similarly, Participant 2 emphasized urgency, stating, "I will still prioritize those who need an emergency first." Participant 6 reinforced this approach by noting, "By organizing all the tasks that should be done for each patient." These narratives highlight how structured prioritization and organization help maintain control and ensure patient safety under pressure.

Other respondents described combining prioritization with stress management techniques. Participant 7 explained, "I prioritize tasks, stay organized and asks help from co-workers. This helps reduce stress." Respondent 11 elaborated, "I cope by prioritizing urgent and critical task, staying organized and keeping myself calm and focused. I also remind myself to pace by work and take brief mental paused when possible which help reduce stress and allows me to continue providing safe and effective care." Participant 12 added, "Prioritizing on which task/patient needs urgent focus and which one can be taken at a later time, this helps me feel in control." Together, these accounts show that prioritization not only organizes workload but also reduces stress and fosters resilience.

Several participants linked prioritization with delegation and efficiency. Participant 13 stated, "I prioritize tasks, organize my workload, delegate when appropriate and focus on one task at a time to reduce stress." Participant 15 echoed this, "I cope by organizing tasks, setting priorities and staying focused on one task at a time I also communicate with colleagues when assistance is needed. These strategies help reduce stress by preventing overwhelm and allowing to work more efficiently." Participant 16 shared, "I prioritize tasks, stay organized and take short mental breaks when possible. These strategies help me stay focused, prevent errors and reduce stress while ensuring smooth patient admissions." Meanwhile, Participant 17 reflected, "My coping strategy is to take a break for a small time and re-arrange my thoughts as well as list my tasks from priority to least priority in order for me to reduce my stress levels." Finally, Participant 18 emphasized, "Proper task management for safe and quality care delivery and sometimes I ask for help (on-call RNs) during different cases." These responses illustrate how prioritization, when combined with delegation and pacing, becomes a comprehensive coping mechanism that sustains both efficiency and wellbeing.

Delegation emerged as a vital coping mechanism among health workers when faced with understaffing. Participant 3 explained, "We disseminate the workload, it works well," showing how sharing responsibilities among colleagues helps balance tasks and prevent burnout. Similarly, Participant 9 highlighted, "Division of labor and sometimes asking for help from OR staff or head nurse and chief nurse. This lessens my workload so that every patient is attended and cared for and

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also we triage the patients." These verbatim accounts illustrate that delegation not only distributes workload more evenly but also ensures that patient care remains consistent and safe despite staffing challenges. Together, they reinforce the theme that collaborative task-sharing is a practical and effective strategy for coping with workforce stressors.

➢ *Stress Relief and Relaxation Techniques*

Stress relief and relaxation techniques are highlighted by several health workers as essential coping mechanisms in managing workplace stress. Participant 8 shared, "Coffee and foods. It helps me perform my duty well," while Respondent 9 added, "Coffee and humor." These simple practices show how small comforts and lightheartedness can sustain energy and morale during demanding shifts. Participant 11 elaborated further, "Outside of work, I also take short trips or spend time in relaxing, pleasant environments to unwind, recharge and relieve stress which helps me return to work more refreshed and able to maintain good performance." Together, these accounts emphasize that both immediate comforts and external relaxation activities contribute to resilience in healthcare settings.

Other participants described intentional pauses and structured routines as ways to relieve stress. Participant 12 explained, "Microbreaks, taking a drink of water/ coffee, this helps me maintain sharp and focused." Participant 14 shared, "I've developed targeted coping mechanisms like short intentional pauses for deep breathing." Meanwhile, Participant 16 stated, "I maintain a consistent routine, manage my time carefully and ensure proper rest whenever possible. These coping mechanisms help me stay alert, reduce stress and maintain accuracy and efficiency in my work." These narratives demonstrate that relaxation techniques such as microbreaks, breathing exercises, and consistent routines are vital in sustaining performance and reducing fatigue. Collectively, they reinforce the theme that health workers rely on both physical and mental strategies to cope with workplace stressors.

➢ *Collaboration and Seeking Support*

Collaboration and seeking support are central coping mechanisms that health workers rely on when stressors arise in the facility. Participant 3 emphasized teamwork by stating "Distributing tasks among colleagues is effective in managing demands." Meanwhile, Participant 7 reinforced "Soliciting for help from co-workers, which not only reduces stress but also ensures tasks are completed efficiently." In addition, Participant 9 illustrated, "collaboration by explaining how division of labor and borrowing supplies or assistance from other staff members helps balance responsibilities." These accounts show that shared responsibility and mutual support are vital strategies in coping with workplace pressures.

Other respondents highlighted communication and coordination as essential aspects of collaboration. Participant 15 explained, "Organizing tasks, setting priorities, and communicating with colleagues when assistance is needed prevents overwhelm and allows for more efficient work." Participant 18 added, "Proper task management combined with asking for help from on-call nurses ensures safe and quality care delivery." These claims demonstrate that collaboration is not only about sharing workload but also about fostering open communication and support networks. Collectively, they reinforce the concept that health workers cope with stressors by working together, seeking assistance, and maintaining a collaborative environment that sustains patient care and staff wellbeing.

➢ *Rest and Physical Recharge*

Stress relief and physical recharge are important coping mechanisms for health workers when faced with workplace stressors. Participant 3 shared, "I try to sleep a little," while Participant 4 added, "Take a short break." These simple actions reflect the value of rest in maintaining energy and focus during demanding shifts. Participant 5 emphasized, "Resting when there are no patients. It recharges me to work again," showing how even short periods of downtime can restore strength. Participant 7 also noted, "Rest when possible," reinforcing the idea that intentional pauses are essential for sustaining performance.

Other health workers highlighted the importance of combining rest with structured routines. Participant 15 explained, "During extended of irregular duty hours, I practice proper time management, take short breaks when possible, and ensure I rest adequately after duty. These coping mechanisms help me stay alert, manage stress better and maintain consistent performance at work." This narrative shows how rest, when paired with time management, becomes a proactive strategy for resilience. Together, these accounts illustrate that sleep, breaks, and adequate rest are not just physical refreshment but also vital tools for stress relief. Collectively, they support the theme that health workers rely on rest and physical recovery to cope with the pressures of their roles.

➢ *Resourcefulness and Resilience*

Health workers demonstrate resourcefulness and resilience as coping mechanisms when faced with supply or equipment insufficiency. Participant 1 explained, "In cases of equipment breakdown or supplies insufficiency, I rely on resource optimizing and prioritization (triaging). Making sure that most critical needs are met first." Participant 5 added, "We use what we have for manual testing and we do our best to give accurate results. We also prepare to avoid insufficiencies for next time to avoid stress." Similarly, Participant 6 shared, "I always think of the supply that I can use," showing the importance of maximizing available resources.

Resilience was also emphasized as a practical solution to shortages. Participant 7 stated, "I improvise when possible and report the shortage to supervisors to manage stress." Participant 9 explained, "I first ask other areas if the equipment/supplies I need is available and I borrow it, if not, I tend to improvise." Participant 10 highlighted the value of adaptability, saying, "One of the best traits of nurses are being resourceful. Amidst the lack of materials and supplies, we can still manage to cope and deliver high quality of care." Participant 11 reinforced this by noting, "In situations where

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equipment of supplies are insufficient, I cope by staying calm, using available resources and seeking appropriate alternatives or assistance when needed."

Other participants stressed calmness and efficiency in resource use. Participant 13 shared, "I remain calm, utilize available resources efficiently, communicate with the management and focus on resolving concerns calmly." Participant 14 added, "I lean on improvisation and maximizing the materials that are already have in the department. This can tone down stress by turning frustration into problem-solving action." Participant 15 explained, "When supplies and equipment are insufficient, I remain calm and make use of the available resources efficiently while coordinating with the appropriate department for support." Meanwhile, Participants 16, 17, and 18 emphasized adaptabilities, with Participant 16 stating, "I prioritize tasks, find alternative solution and communicate needs which help me stay calm and manage stress," Participant 17 noting, "I will use any available resources in the facility so that we can provide the quality healthcare that patients seek from us," and Participant 18 concluding, "Acceptance and to utilize those available." These accounts collectively illustrate how resourcefulness and improvisation sustain care delivery despite limitations.

➢ *Calmness and Communication*

Calmness and communication are consistently emphasized by health workers as coping techniques when confronted with stressors in the health facility. Participant1 explained, "I rely on a mix of emotion regulation, clear structure/policy-driven mentality and perspective-taking while staying calm, professional and effective." Participant 2 added, "Need to be calm and extent patience." Participant 3 reinforced this by saying, "We talk to them nicely and address their needs." Participant 5 shared, "I keep my cool, try to understand that patients are also in distress so I try to extend my patience and be more understanding.

Other participants highlighted the importance of clear communication paired with patience. Respondent 6 stated, "By talking to them properly." Participant 7 explained, "I stay calm, communicate clearly and show empathy to manage stress." Participant 9 emphasized, "A very very long string of patience and trying to explain to them about limitations of the staff and the institution and sometimes I let the doctors talk to them." Participant 10 added, "Like what I've mentioned, destressing and having calm mind is very essential in order to function effectively and deliver quality care to patients."

Calmness was also linked to prioritization and professionalism in stressful encounters. Participant 11 shared, "When patients become highly demanding, I stay calm, communicate clearly and prioritize urgent needs which helps me manage stress and maintain quality care." Participant 12 explained, "I use active listening, empathy and try not to take it personally." Participant 13 reinforced this by saying, "Maintaining professionalism, practice emotional control, communicate clearly and focus on resolving concerns calmly." Participant 15 added, "I cope by practicing patience, active listening and maintaining a calm and respectful attitude. Understanding the patient's concerns helps de-escalate the situation, allowing to manage stress while maintaining professionalism and quality care."

Finally, several participants emphasized relaxation techniques to sustain calmness. Participant 16 shared, "I stay patient, listen actively and communicate clearly which helps me remain calm and manage stress effectively." Participant 17 explained, "The coping techniques I apply are taking a short break before continuing working and relaxing by deep breaths because it helps me think more clearly as well as stay calm to focus on my work." Participant 18 concluded, "Remaining calm, staying professional." These narratives collectively show that health workers rely on patience, communication, empathy, and emotional regulation to cope with stressors while maintaining professionalism and quality care.

### *D. Effectiveness of Coping Mechanisms Employed by the Healthcare Employees in Dealing with Stress*

➢ *Restore Focus and Mental Clarity*

Coping strategies such as short breaks, prioritization and mental pacing help employees regain concentration during overwhelming shifts. Participants consistently emphasized the effectiveness of these approaches in maintaining focus and performance.

Participant 11 shared that "taking short breaks during my shift is very effective in helping me regain focus," while Participant 12 similarly described these pauses as "very effective" because they allow for a mental reset.

In addition, Participant 1 highlighted the importance of "breaking down overwhelming workloads into manageable steps" in order to maintain clinical accuracy. These findings suggest that short breaks and deliberate task organizations serve as practical self-regulation strategies in high-pressure healthcare environments.

➢ *Regulate Emotions*

Emotional regulation strategies are essential for minimizing distress and maintaining composure during difficult patient interactions. Participants highlighted that patience, calm communication and self-control allow them to manage stressful encounters without escalating conflict.

Participant 7 described these techniques as "effective in reducing my stress and helping me stay calm and focused," while Participant 15 noted that their coping mechanisms help them "stay composed". Likewise, Participant 12 emphasized the importance of active listening, empathy and consciously avoiding personalizing situations as approaches to handling emotionally charged exchanges.

Collectively, these participants demonstrate how emotional self-regulation serves as a protective buffer in a high-pressure healthcare environment. They preserve professionalism, foster therapeutic communication and ensure patient care remains safe and respectful despite

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external stressors through stabilizing their emotions and responding thoughtfully rather than reactively.

➢ *Sustain Work Performance*

Healthcare employees emphasized that coping strategies enable them to sustain work performance even under heavy workloads. Participants described these mechanisms as essential in maintaining efficiency and composure despite high demands.

For instance, Participant 10 stated that "The coping mechanisms…are very effective because I am still continuing my profession," while Participant 18 affirmed, "Effective that I can still perform my responsibilities." Similarly, Participant 16 stated that these strategies are "effective in reducing stress and helping me stay composed at work."

These narratives emphasized that coping mechanisms foster consistency in productivity and task completion, allowing healthcare professionals to meet responsibilities without compromising the quality of care.

➢ *Prevent Clinical Errors*

The participants stated that their coping strategies contribute significantly to preventing errors and promoting patient safety. Several participants linked these techniques to improved accuracy and reduced mistakes, noting that stress management directly supports sound decision-making.

Participant 1 explained, "It prevents mental fatigue that leads to errors," while Respondent 14 shared that taking "a quick pause… return calmer, be more decisive" enhances their performance. Similarly, Participant 13 emphasized the ability to "remain calm, composed and functional at work."

These participants demonstrate that coping mechanisms reduce stress, sharpen focus and safeguard the quality of care, thereby ensuring patient safety even in demanding clinical environments.

➢ *Strengthen Teamwork*

The participants emphasized that coping strategies strengthen teamwork and foster a sense of shared responsibility. Through seeking support and maintaining open communication with colleagues, individuals alleviate personal workload while fostering collaborative practice.

Participant 1 explained, "It converts individuals' burden to shared responsibility," while Participant 5 expressed, "I feel validated." Likewise, Participant 11 shared that "talking with colleagues helps reduce my stress and improves my work performance."

These narratives from the participants highlighted how collaborative coping provides emotional support, minimizes feelings of isolation, and promotes coordinated patient care, ultimately reinforcing both team cohesion and workplace effectiveness.

➢ *Prevent Against Burnout*

Findings indicate that coping mechanisms such as short breaks, rest and mental resets are significant in preventing burnout and promoting recovery among healthcare employees. These strategies were consistently described as protective measures against physical and emotional exhaustion.

For instance, Participant 1 emphasized that taking breaks "helps reduce the physical symptoms of stress and burnout," while Participant 14 noted that brief pauses "prevent burnout and keep me focused." Similarly, Participant 18 highlighted the restorative value of rest, stating that it is "very effective" because it allows the body and mind to recharge.

Collectively, these coping mechanisms contribute not only to immediate stress relief but also to longterm well-being and sustained professional endurance. Healthcare workers who take time to recharge during their shifts are better equipped to handle ongoing stress without compromising their performance or clinical judgement.

### *E. Proposed Organizational Support Mechanisms to Reduce Workplace Stress and Strengthen Healthy Coping Mechanisms Among Healthcare Employees*

To effectively reduce workplace stress and strengthen coping mechanisms among healthcare employees, the organization must implement comprehensive and responsive support mechanisms. These include strategies that create a healthier work environment for the healthcare employees.

➢ *Workload Reduction and Task-sharing*

Healthcare staff are often exposed to excessive workloads, which is a significant source of stress, often leading to burnout, reduced resilience and compromised patient outcomes. To mitigate these challenges, healthcare institutions can adopt workload reduction and task-sharing that promotes equal distribution of responsibilities, thereby strengthening collaborative practices and productivity.

This begins with systematic workload assessments such as audits of patient-to-staff ratios, overtime hours and task distribution to identify the areas of imbalance. Participant 1 emphasized the *"ideal patient: medical worker ratio"*, noting that this would maintain a standard quality of care while making work more effective. Similarly, Participant 11 argued that the organization must ensure *"adequate staffing and manageable workloads"* to minimize workplace stress and promote healthy coping. For some, including Participant 18, simply achieving *"proper and safe staffing"* would provide significant relief.

These concerns are most critical in triage settings, where patient inflow is not only heavy but also predictable. For instance, the patient volume is higher every Thursday and Saturday due to the preferred physician schedule, requiring proactive staff distribution. Healthcare institutions may strategically assign additional personnel to the triage during peak days to reduce stress, prevent delays and maintain the quality of patient assessment. Therefore, appropriate staffing

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is not just about numbers but about strategic allocation based on patient flow, supporting both organizational efficiency and employee well-being.

Task-sharing including delegating non-clinical tasks to support staff ensures that no single employee carries an inappropriate burden and fosters interpersonal collaboration among nurses, pharmacists and other personnel. These measures are reinforced by support mechanisms like peer-support groups and training in time management and prioritization.

Effective implementation requires resources such as institutional support and training materials focused on stress management and resilience. Success is measured through indicators including reduced stress levels, lower absenteeism and turnover rates, improved patient satisfaction and enhanced staff resilience. Therefore, this approach not only reduces stress among healthcare workers but also strengthens the institution's capacity to deliver safe and high-quality patient care.

- *Recognition and Appreciation Engagement*

In high-pressure healthcare environments, employees often experience emotional and physical exhaustion, particularly when their efforts go unnoticed or undervalued. When healthcare employees feel appreciated for their dedication and contributions, their motivation, morale and job satisfaction significantly improve, as Participant 11 noted that a *"cooperative and positive team where everyone works happily makes the environment more fulfilling".* This initiative aims to acknowledge and celebrate contributions of healthcare employees in reducing stress and enhancing morale.

Therefore, through the implementation of formal and informal recognition which can be achieved through awards such as "Healthcare Hero of the Month" and by emphasizing exceptional performance during meetings, in Facebook pages or on bulletin boards. While informal appreciation, including regular verbal or written commendations from supervisors and peer recognition opportunities like "Thank You Walls" or digital kudos boards, fosters a supportive environment. Moreover, celebratory events, such as Nurses' Day, further strengthen gratitude and collaboration. As a form of additional support, the management may also provide monetary incentives or performance-based bonus which further enhance employees' sense of value, increase motivation and reinforce positive coping, and strengthening morale, engagement and resilience in the workplace.

Additionally, to ensure inclusivity and fairness, utilizing feedback is important as it will allow the staff to refine recognition practices and balance criteria between clinical excellence and teamwork. These initiatives require a financial budget for awards and events and online platforms such as Facebook for announcements.

The success of this initiative is measured by improved staff satisfaction, reduced stress and burnout, stronger teamwork, higher retention rates and increased participation in recognition activities. Consequently, recognition and appreciation engagement serves as a highly effective management mechanism in strengthening employee engagement and encouraging healthier coping mechanisms in the workplace. To successfully implement a flexible work arrangement, it requires resources such as the HR staff, department heads and the hospital management. The effectiveness of these arrangements can be measured through decreased levels of burnout among healthcare employees, higher employee satisfaction and retention rates, improved patient satisfaction due to more engaged and rested staff and lastly, positive feedback from staff on the fairness and accessibility of flexible options.

- *Mental Health and Wellness Programs*

Given the high-pressure nature of healthcare institutions and mental strain, employees are frequently exposed to situations that may lead to anxiety, fatigue and burnout. This initiative aims to promote psychological well-being and resilience among healthcare employees and to create a supportive environment that normalizes mental health conversations.

Healthcare institutions can strengthen mental health and wellness initiatives by involving the management, HR department and committees. Through the implementation of mental health and wellness initiatives such as conducting regular seminars and wellness workshops on stress management and psychological debriefing sessions, to provide healthcare employees with appropriate avenues to process stress and develop adaptive coping mechanisms.

In connection with this, the participants' feedback suggestions, particularly Participant 7, who suggested *"wellness programs and stress management seminars"* emphasized the importance for proactive measures to support employees' mental health. Also, Participant 2 mentioned that healthcare institutions should provide *"mental health support".* The healthcare institution can provide informational materials such as brochures or digital resources on mental health awareness which can serve as accessible references for staff and help foster a culture of openness and understanding of mental health. The participants emphasized the importance of adopting comprehensive approaches that integrate both preventive and responsive measures to strengthen the mental health support available to healthcare workers.

Furthermore, establishing confidential counseling services within the institution which was also mentioned by Participant 5, he suggested a *"once a month consultation"* with professionals to check on the mental health of the staff. This initiative not only supports emotional well-being but also helps normalize conversations about mental health within the organization, reducing stigma and encouraging help-seeking behavior.

Lastly, incorporating mental health days into leave policies offers healthcare employees the chance to prioritize self-care and maintain balance and overall supports a healthier workforce. Through sustained investment in mental

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health and wellness programs, healthcare institutions demonstrate organizational commitment to employee well-being fostering a healthier, more resilient workforce.

The effectiveness of these initiatives can be measured through success indicators such as increased participation in wellness activities and counselling sessions, reduced levels of stress, anxiety and burnout and positive feedback from healthcare employees on institutional support for mental health.

➢ *Rest and Recovery Initiatives*

Healthcare work is exhausting and without intentional recovery time, burnout is inevitable. This initiative aims to provide healthcare employees with feasible opportunities for rest and recovery and to reduce physical and mental fatigue, thereby reducing stress and burnout.

Implementation of this initiative includes the designation of quiet rest areas within the facility for staff relaxation. Complementary measures may involve equipping these spaces with comfortable seating and coffee vending machines to encourage genuine rest. Additionally, offering wellness activities such as guided meditation or breathing exercises during breaks can create a restorative environment that not only reduces fatigue but also reinforces a culture of care and well-being among healthcare employees.

Participants emphasized that physical rest is important for decision-making and safety. Participant 18 noted that "rest is very effective because it provides the body and mind time to recharge for the next shift". Participants suggested that organizations should proactively "offer regular breaks" and "scheduled breaks" as a standard workplace practice to mitigate fatigue. Participant 14 further explained that even a "quick pause resets the stress cycle". Ensuring healthcare employees have sufficient rest is viewed as essential for medical professionals to function well at work and maintain the concentration required for complex decision-making.

When healthcare workers are given intentional time for rest and recovery, they are better equipped to manage stressors effectively and maintain high-quality patient care. Thus, rest and recovery initiatives significantly contribute to enhancing resilience and supporting healthier coping mechanisms within healthcare institutions.

Success indicators include decrease in absenteeism and turnover rates and it also enhances patient satisfaction feedback resulting from improved staff performance. These measurable outcomes reflect the positive impact of organizational support mechanisms on both employee well-being and service delivery. Consequently, the improvement in workforce stability and patient feedback may serve as tangible evidence of the effectiveness of these strategies.

➢ *Community-Building Activities*

In high-demand healthcare environments, strong interpersonal relationships and social support systems buffer the negative effects of stress. Community-building activities aim to foster camaraderie and teamwork among healthcare workers and to reduce stress by creating supportive social networks within the institution.

Organizing team-building activities, peer support groups and collaborative workshops and social engagement activities can strengthen camaraderie, trust and open communication among healthcare employees. These strategies create a sense of belonging and shared purpose which enhances emotional support and group adaptability. As mentioned by Participant 9 "team-building once or twice a year" and as suggested by Participant 8, "team-building in order for everyone to decompress", such activities provide opportunities for staff to temporarily step away from workplace pressures and reconnect with colleagues in a more supportive environment.

Consequently, when employees feel connected to their colleagues and supported within their professional community, they are more likely to manage workplace challenges constructively. Therefore, community-building activities aren't just a social perk, it is the foundation of a supportive culture that empowers healthcare employees to stay resilient and adapt to stress.

## IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

➢ *Conclusions*

The healthcare employees at GSAC General Hospital, Inc. operate in a highly demanding environment where stressors are both frequent and multifaceted. This study yields the following conclusions:

- Healthcare employees are confronted with multifaceted stressors, ranging from workload and time pressures to interpersonal, resource and organizational challenges which intensify their risk of burnout and the need for comprehensive support systems.
- The stressors undermine healthcare employees' performance and well-being, manifesting in reduced quality of care, heightened risk of errors, and increased fatigue.
- The coping mechanisms strengthen healthcare employees' stress management capacity, enabling them to maintain resilience, emotional stability and effective performance even in high-pressure work environments.
- The effectiveness of these coping mechanisms lies in their ability to provide immediate emotional regulation, restore focus, prevent burnout and sustain professional functioning. Strategies such as rest and recovery, task prioritization, peer support and positive framing were found to promote long-term endurance and psychological resilience, although they become more effective when supported by organizational structures.
- The proposed organizational structure mechanisms which include wellness programs, regular debriefing sessions, accessible mental health resources and team-based community-building activities. Implementing these support mechanisms can reduce workplace stress, strengthen healthy coping mechanisms and promote a

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more resilient, motivated and well-functioning workforce at GGHI.

➢ *Recommendations*

In light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to help reduce workplace stress and strengthen healthy coping mechanisms among the healthcare staff of GSAC General Hospital, Inc.:

- Healthcare institutions be provided with structured support systems such as workload redistribution, peer support groups and regular stress management workshops that are practical, sustainable and directly responsive to employees' daily challenges.
- Healthcare institutions adopt practical interventions such as structured rest breaks, workload balancing and clear communication protocols to reduce fatigue, minimize errors and sustain care quality.
- Regular stress management training, peer support programs and scheduled rest breaks to strengthen coping mechanisms and promote well-being be provided.
- Workload management and task delegation guidelines to support the staff in maintaining focus and preventing overwhelm be implemented by healthcare institutions.
- A comprehensive and proactive approach to stress management to develop and implement a wellness program that integrates stress management training, resilience, workshops and team-based community activities that may be conducted annually to strengthen workplace relationships and foster a supportive organizational environment.

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