



Improving the Psychological Well-Being of Tour Guides Through a Stress and Burnout Management Workshop

Alya Salsabilla¹, Putri Gumala Sari², Silfa Anggraini³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Prima Nusantara Bukittinggi

Submitted : December 26, 2025 ; Reviewed : January 17, 2026 ; Accepted : March 31, 2026

Abstract

Tour guides play a strategic role in the tourism industry, yet they are highly vulnerable to occupational stress and burnout due to demanding workloads, unpredictable working conditions, and high service expectations. Chronic psychological pressure, if left unaddressed, can deteriorate mental health, reduce work quality, and harm the overall tourism sector. This community service program aimed to improve the psychological well-being of tour guides in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, Indonesia, through a two-day stress and burnout management workshop. The workshop employed a participatory and educative approach, combining theoretical instruction with practical exercises including deep breathing, mindfulness meditation, group discussions, case study simulations, and role-playing. Participants completed pre- and post-tests to assess knowledge gains, and qualitative feedback was gathered through structured reflection and personal action plans. Results demonstrated significant improvements in participants' understanding of stress and burnout, enhanced coping skills, increased motivation, and greater openness in sharing psychological challenges. Participants also developed personal action plans and formed a peer support network. This workshop model presents a replicable and scalable intervention for the tourism and public service sectors to systematically support workforce psychological well-being.

Keywords: psychological well-being; tour guides; occupational health; stress management; burnout; workshop intervention

1. Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the most economically significant sectors globally, particularly in countries rich in cultural heritage and natural beauty such as Indonesia (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2022). Within this sector, tour guides represent the frontline workforce responsible for delivering direct services to tourists. They function not only as information providers but also as cultural ambassadors, destination image custodians, and mediators between visitors and local communities (Pizam, 2010). The quality of the tourist experience is therefore substantially dependent on the professionalism and psychological state of tour guides. Despite this strategic importance, the psychological dimension of tour guide work remains largely overlooked. Tour guides routinely encounter high workloads, diverse tourist demands, cultural mediation challenges, and unpredictable field situations. Irregular working hours, extended travel, limited rest, and inadequate social support at the workplace compound these pressures (Li & Chen, 2013). When these stressors accumulate and remain unmanaged, they can progress into chronic stress and ultimately lead to burnout. Burnout, as conceptualized by Maslach and Leiter (2016b), is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment arising from prolonged workplace stress. In the context of service-oriented professions such as tour guiding, burnout is particularly consequential because it directly impairs service quality, reduces empathetic engagement with tourists, and increases the risk of interpersonal conflict (Teng, 2018). Moreover, burnout has well-documented negative effects on physical and mental health, including elevated risk of depression, anxiety disorders, and cardiovascular disease (World Health Organization, 2022).

Stress management workshops represent a well-established preventive and therapeutic intervention modality. Such programs have demonstrated effectiveness in increasing stress awareness, building coping competencies, and fostering supportive peer networks (Yuliana, 2020). Workshop-based interventions are particularly advantageous because they



are participatory, practically oriented, and enable immediate skill application. They also create structured opportunities for reflection, experience-sharing, and collective problem-solving among participants facing similar occupational challenges (Sonnetag & Frese, 2003). The present community service program, conducted in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra in 2023, was designed specifically to address the psychological well-being of tour guides through a structured two-day stress and burnout management workshop. This article describes the program design, implementation methodology, outcomes, and implications for scalable psychological health interventions in the tourism and public service sectors.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Occupational Stress in Tourism

Occupational stress is defined as the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when the demands of a job do not match the resources, capabilities, or needs of the worker (Selye, 1976). In the tourism industry, several structural factors amplify this risk. Tour guides operate in environments characterized by high emotional labor requirements, meaning they are expected to display positive affect and manage their emotional expressions continuously throughout client interactions, regardless of personal state (Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009).

Empirical research has confirmed elevated stress levels among tourism workers. Li and Chen (2013) documented that Chinese tour guides experience significant stressors related to time pressure, tourist complaints, logistical complications, and language barriers. Karatepe and Aleshinloye (2009) demonstrated that emotional dissonance—the discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions—substantially predicts emotional exhaustion in hospitality workers. These findings are consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model proposed by Schaufeli and Taris (2014), which posits that excessive job demands combined with insufficient resources generate strain leading to burnout.

2.2. Burnout: Definition and Dimensions

Burnout is a multidimensional construct comprising emotional exhaustion (depletion of emotional resources), depersonalization (cynical detachment from work recipients), and reduced personal accomplishment (diminished sense of competence and achievement) (Maslach & Leiter, 2016b). Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter describe these three dimensions as constituting a progressive syndrome, with emotional exhaustion typically emerging first and serving as the primary driver of subsequent depersonalization and diminished efficacy (Maslach & Leiter, 2016a).

Teng (2018) specifically investigated burnout among tour leaders and found that emotional labor serves as a partial mediator between attachment anxiety and job burnout. This underscores the centrality of emotional regulation in tour guide psychological health. The consequences of burnout extend beyond the individual to affect organizational performance, tourist satisfaction, and destination reputation (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

2.3. Stress Management Interventions

Workplace stress management interventions can be categorized into primary (reducing stressors), secondary (building individual coping capacity), and tertiary (treating existing problems) levels (Quick & Henderson, 2016). Workshop-based programs predominantly operate at the secondary level by equipping individuals with cognitive and behavioral tools to manage stress more effectively.

Evidence from diverse occupational groups supports the efficacy of workshop interventions in reducing stress and burnout. McCann et al. (2013) found that resilience-building programs in health professions were associated with improved psychological outcomes and professional sustainability. Folkman and Moskowitz (2000) emphasized the role of positive affect and meaning-making in the coping process, both of which can be cultivated through structured group learning experiences. Sonnetag (2018) highlighted the importance of recovery experiences—including psychological detachment from work—which workshop programs can facilitate through mindfulness and relaxation training.

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) techniques, including deep breathing and meditative practices, have been shown to reduce cortisol levels, decrease anxiety, and improve emotional regulation (Suwandi, 2020). Integration of



these techniques into workshop curricula for service workers provides evidence-based practical tools for daily stress management.

3. Methodology

3.1. Program design

This program employed a participatory and educative community service methodology, structured across three sequential phases: preparation, workshop implementation, and post-program evaluation. The design was informed by established stress management frameworks and adapted to the specific occupational context of tour guides in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, Indonesia. The program was conducted in February 2023 with institutional support from Universitas Prima Nusantara Bukittinggi and the local tourism authority.

3.2. Preparation Phase

The preparation phase involved an initial needs assessment through informal observations and brief structured interviews with tour guides to identify prevalent stress sources and training needs. The program team—comprising one faculty psychologist and two student members—coordinated with the Bukittinggi Tourism Office and relevant stakeholders to obtain permissions and logistical support.

A comprehensive two-day workshop module was developed, covering: (1) conceptual foundations of stress and burnout; (2) identification of occupational stressors in tourism contexts; (3) physiological and psychological symptom recognition; (4) relaxation and mindfulness techniques; (5) cognitive coping strategies and emotion regulation; (6) time management and communication skills; and (7) personal action planning. A licensed psychologist served as the primary facilitator.

3.3. Workshop Implementation

The workshop was conducted over two consecutive days at Grand Rocky Hotel, Bukittinggi, with approximately 25 to 30 tour guide participants. The daily schedule was structured from 09.00 to 15.30 WIB, incorporating both didactic and experiential learning components.

Day one focused on psychoeducation, covering the nature, causes, and consequences of stress and burnout in work contexts. This was followed by structured group discussions enabling participants to articulate and contextualize their personal stress experiences. Practical exercises included guided deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation. Day two addressed coping strategies, emotion management, and mindfulness practice. Applied sessions included case study simulation and role-playing exercises to strengthen problem-solving and assertive communication skills. Each participant concluded the workshop by completing a personalized action plan specifying targeted stress management behaviors.

3.4. Evaluation

Program evaluation employed a pre-test and post-test design to quantify knowledge gains related to stress, burnout, and coping strategies. Qualitative data were gathered through facilitator observation of participant engagement and a written feedback questionnaire. Post-program follow-up was facilitated through an online communication group established to sustain peer support and monitor adherence to personal action plans.

4. Results and Discussion

After the text edit has been completed, the paper is ready for the template. Duplicate the template file by using the Save As command, and use the naming convention prescribed by your conference for the name of your paper. In this newly created file, highlight all of the contents and import your prepared text file. You are now ready to style your paper; use the scroll down window on the left of the MS Word Formatting toolbar.



4.1. Workshop Outcomes

The two-day workshop was attended by tour guides drawn from diverse work contexts across the Bukittinggi area, reflecting a broad cross-section of occupational experiences. Participants demonstrated consistently high levels of engagement throughout all program components, including group discussions, relaxation exercises, and case study simulations. This active participation is consistent with evidence indicating that participatory learning formats are particularly effective in service sector professional development (Sonntag & Frese, 2003).

Pre- and post-test comparisons revealed statistically meaningful improvements in participant knowledge of stress and burnout concepts, symptom recognition, and coping technique application. These gains align with findings from comparable workshop-based interventions in healthcare and service professions (McCann et al., 2013; Utami, 2017). Particularly notable was the improvement in participants' capacity to differentiate routine occupational stress from clinically significant burnout, a distinction critical for early self-monitoring and help-seeking.

4.2. Psychological and Attitudinal Changes

Qualitative data from facilitator observations and participant feedback documented significant attitudinal and emotional shifts during the program. Many participants who initially exhibited reluctance or emotional guardedness progressively demonstrated greater openness and willingness to engage with personal stress-related content. Participants reported feelings of relief and validation upon discovering that colleagues shared similar psychological challenges, a process consistent with the normalization and destigmatization function of group-based psychological interventions (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif Republik Indonesia, 2021).

Several participants noted that the workshop represented their first formal exposure to occupational psychological training, underscoring the significant gap in psychological support provision within the Indonesian tourism workforce. This finding corroborates broader evidence indicating that mental health and well-being remain inadequately addressed in tourism industry human resource development frameworks (Sopiah, 2008). Participants expressed strong interest in continuation of such programs on a regular basis, suggesting a positive reception and perceived utility.

4.3. Personal Action Plans and Peer Support

All participants successfully completed personal action plans specifying concrete, contextually adapted strategies for daily stress management. Plans commonly incorporated scheduled relaxation practice, improved sleep hygiene, time management strategies, and commitments to seeking colleague support. The practical, self-determined nature of these plans is theoretically grounded in self-determination theory, which posits that autonomy-supportive interventions produce more durable and intrinsically motivated behavioral change (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

The formation of an online peer support group at program conclusion provided an infrastructural extension of the workshop's social support functions. Such peer networks have been identified as significant moderators of occupational stress, particularly in isolated or geographically dispersed workforces typical of the tourism industry (Sonntag, 2018). The group serves as a platform for continued experience-sharing, reinforcement of learned coping strategies, and early identification of psychological distress requiring further intervention.

4.4. Implication For Practice and Policy

The successful outcomes of this program have several important practical implications. First, they demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of a short-duration, workshop-based psychological intervention tailored to the specific occupational context of tour guides. This model can be replicated across different tourism destinations and adapted to other service-oriented professions facing comparable psychosocial stressors.

Second, the program highlights the importance of institutional engagement in workforce psychological health. Tourism authorities, professional associations, and higher education institutions should collaborate to integrate systematic psychological health training into tour guide certification programs and continuing professional development frameworks. Such institutionalization would shift psychological well-being from a personal responsibility to a collective organizational and sectoral concern, consistent with the World Health Organization's guidance on mental health at work (World Health Organization, 2022).



Third, the documented gap in prior psychological training among participants signals an urgent need for policy attention. Workplace well-being initiatives in the tourism sector should be formally incorporated into national tourism human resource development strategies, with particular attention to tour guides, who serve as the primary interface between the tourism product and the visitor experience

5.1. Conclusion

This community service program demonstrated that a structured, two-day stress and burnout management workshop can produce meaningful improvements in the psychological knowledge, coping capacities, and professional outlook of tour guides in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, Indonesia. Participants showed enhanced understanding of stress and burnout dynamics, greater willingness to engage with psychological challenges, improved motivation, and concrete self-management plans. The workshop model employed—integrating psychoeducation, relaxation training, mindfulness practice, group discussion, case simulation, and personal action planning—offers a replicable and evidence-based framework for psychological well-being promotion in the tourism sector. The establishment of a post-program peer support network further extends the intervention's impact beyond the workshop context.

These findings underscore the importance of systematic psychological health support for frontline tourism workers. Future programs should consider longitudinal follow-up designs to assess the durability of behavioral changes, explore digital delivery modalities to increase accessibility, and engage institutional stakeholders to embed psychological well-being training within formal professional development systems. Investment in the psychological health of tour guides represents an investment in the quality, sustainability, and humanization of the tourism industry as a whole.

References

- Chen, H., & Gursoy, D. (2007). Preparing students for careers in the tourism and hospitality industry. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 7(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1300/J172v07n01_01
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Self-determination theory: A macrotheory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian Psychology*, 49(3), 182–185. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012801>
- Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J. T. (2000). Positive affect and the other side of coping. *American Psychologist*, 55(6), 647–654. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.6.647>
- Golembiewski, R. T., Munzenrider, R. F., & Stevenson, J. G. (2001). *Stress and burnout in health care*. CRC Press.
- Karatepe, O. M., & Aleshinloye, K. D. (2009). Emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion among hotel employees in Nigeria. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28(3), 349–358. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2008.12.002>
- Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif Republik Indonesia. (2021). *Pedoman kerja pemandu wisata profesional* [Professional tour guide work guidelines]. Kemendparekraf.
- Li, X., & Chen, Y. (2013). Stress management of tour guides: A case study from China. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 6, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2012.10.001>
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016a). Burnout: A multidimensional perspective. In C. L. Cooper & P. J. Dewe (Eds.), *Stress: Concepts, cognition, emotion, and behavior* (pp. 351–357). Academic Press.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016b). *Burnout: The cost of caring*. Malor Books.
- McCann, C. M., Beddoe, E., McCormick, K., Huggard, P., Kedge, S., Adamson, C., & Huggard, J. (2013). Resilience in the health professions: A review of recent literature. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 3(1), 60–81. <https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v3i1.4>
- Pizam, A. (2010). *International encyclopedia of hospitality management*. Elsevier.



- Quick, J. C., & Henderson, D. F. (2016). Occupational stress: Preventing suffering, enhancing wellbeing. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 13(5), Article 459. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph13050459>
- Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2019). *Organizational behavior* (18th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Taris, T. W. (2014). A critical review of the Job Demands-Resources Model: Implications for improving well-being and performance. In *Bridging occupational, organizational and public health* (pp. 43–68). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-5640-3_4
- Selye, H. (1976). *The stress of life*. McGraw-Hill.
- Sonnentag, S. (2018). The recovery paradox: Portraying the complex interplay between job stressors, lack of recovery, and poor well-being. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 38, 169–185. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2018.11.002>
- Sonnentag, S., & Frese, M. (2003). Stress in organizations. In W. C. Borman, D. R. Ilgen, & R. Klimoski (Eds.), *Handbook of psychology: Industrial and organizational psychology* (Vol. 12, pp. 453–491). Wiley.
- Sopiah. (2008). *Perilaku organisasi* [Organizational behavior]. Andi.
- Suwandi, T. (2020). Manajemen stres kerja dalam organisasi pariwisata [Work stress management in tourism organizations]. *Jurnal Pariwisata Hospitaliti*, 9(1), 55–62.
- Teng, C. C. (2018). Tour leader attachment and job burnout: The mediating role of emotional labor. *Tourism Management*, 65, 255–263. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.01.001>
- Utami, C. W. (2017). Manajemen stres kerja dan burnout pada karyawan [Work stress management and burnout among employees]. *Jurnal Psikologi*, 44(2), 150–162.
- Utami, N. W., & Prasetyo, A. R. (2021). Pengaruh stres kerja terhadap burnout pada pemandu wisata di Yogyakarta [The effect of work stress on burnout among tour guides in Yogyakarta]. *Jurnal Psikologi Terapan*, 7(2), 145–157.
- World Health Organization. (2022). *Mental health at work*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-at-work>
- World Travel & Tourism Council. (2022). *Economic impact reports*. <https://wttc.org/research/economic-impact>
- Yuliana, E. (2020). Peningkatan kesejahteraan kerja melalui pelatihan manajemen stres [Improving work well-being through stress management training]. *Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 5(3), 233–240.