

# The Impact of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS) on Burnout in the Direct Support Professional (DSP) Population

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## BACKGROUND

- Burnout is defined as a syndrome of three dimensions, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. It is characterized as a continuous variable, with no definitive score indicating that a person is "burned out" (Maslach et al., 2016)
- Research suggests that burnout can be negatively associated with the frequency and quality of interactions between staff and patients, staff health (e.g., physical, emotional, cognitive, etc.), staff engagement, and turnover intention (Deligkaris et al., 2014; Friedman, 2018; Jenkins and Allen, 1988; Maslach et al., 2016; Oosterholt et al., 2015)
- Burnout can occur across various work settings, populations, and occupations, including direct support professionals (DSPs). DSPs play a pivotal role in the rehabilitation team, in which they are often the intermediary between the patient and other team members. DSP continuity in particular has been found to be central to the quality of life experienced by individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (Friedman, 2018; Maslach et al., 2016)
- Research indicates that both individual and organizational-environmental factors can impact burnout, and suggests a complex interplay of variables (Demerouti et al., 2001; Hobfoll, 1989; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Yeatts et al., 2018)
- Perceived supervisor support (PSS) and perceived organizational support (POS) are two modifiable variables that can impact burnout. Research suggests that PSS and POS are correlated (Alarcón, 2011; Boyer et al., 2014; Eisenberger et al., 2002; Eisenberger et al., 2016; Rose et al., 2010)
- Minimal research has been conducted in terms of investigating what contributes to burnout in DSPs who specifically work with children and adults with brain related disorders/injuries, and subsequently, what interventions may be most effective in reducing burnout within this population.

## OBJECTIVE

- PURPOSE:** To explore the impact of POS and PSS on burnout in DSPs, which can allow for improved understanding regarding what interventions may be most effective in terms of reducing levels of burnout in DSPs.
- HYPOTHESIS:** DSPs who report High levels of POS and PSS will experience lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and higher levels personal accomplishment

## METHOD

- DESIGN:** Cross-sectional
- PARTICIPANTS:** Adults employed as DSPs at an interdisciplinary and multi-site post-acute rehabilitation (PAR) facility in New Jersey, which serves children and adults with brain related disorders/injuries
- MEASURES:**
  - Maslach Burnout Inventory - Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS)
    - Three Index Scores: Emotional Exhaustion ( $\alpha=.88$ ), Personal Accomplishment ( $\alpha=.75$ ), Depersonalization ( $\alpha=.75$ )
  - 8-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (POS)
  - 8-item Survey of Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS)
    - Participants were grouped into High (Scores of 32-48), Medium (Scores of 17-31), and Low (Scores of 0-16) based on their responses on the POS and PSS
- PROCEDURES:** Participants were employed by the present organization and recruited in person over a five month time period, and compensated for their time.

## RESULTS

### Sample Characteristics

- Part time and full time employees of Bancroft
- Ninety adults (68 women, 22 men) aged 20 to 62 years old ( $M = 30.48$ ,  $SD = 9.86$ )
- 18.9% identified as White, 17.8% identified as Black/African American, 5.6% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 4.4% identified as Asian, 2.2% identified as Other, and 51.1% provided no response
- Participants averaged four years of employment within the occupational field ( $SD = 3.57$ ), and 2.5 years with their current employer ( $SD = 3.57$ )
- Approximately 40% of the sample ( $n = 35$ ) reported having a mental health diagnosis

**Table 1**  
Regressions of Associations Between Perceived Support Sources and Features of Burnout

	B	SE	$\beta$	t	CI 95%
Emotional Exhaustion					
Constant	48.07	5.20		9.186	[37.45, 58.16]
PSS	0.095	0.17	0.063	0.562	[-.240, .430]
POS	-0.877	0.16	-0.629	-5.655**	[-1.19, -0.57]
Depersonalization					
Constant	12.66	2.17		5.838	[8.34, 16.97]
PSS	-0.282	0.07	0.063	0.523	[-4.10, -1.53]
POS	0.037	0.07	-5.250	-4.363**	[-1.03, -1.76]
Personal Accomplishment					
Constant	26.731	2.41		9.186	[21.94, 31.53]
PSS	0.025	0.08	0.038	0.323	[-.130, .180]
POS	0.319	0.07	0.516	4.434**	[.176, .461]

Note. CI = confidence interval, PSS = perceived supervisor support, POS = perceived organizational support, \*\* $p < .01$

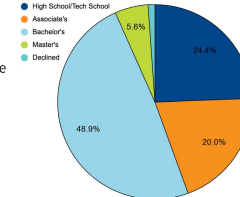
**Table 2**

Analysis of Variance for Burnout Indices and Perceived Organizational Support		
Maslach Burnout Inventory Index	F (2, 86)	Effect Size ( $\eta_p^2$ )
Emotional Exhaustion	21.71**	0.34
Personal Accomplishment	15.08**	0.26
Depersonalization	11.91**	0.22

Note.  $\eta^2$  = partial-eta squared, \*\* $p < .01$

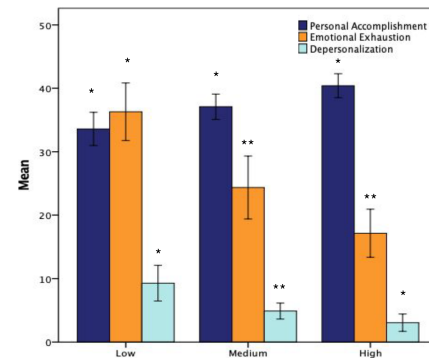
- Multiple regressions revealed perceived organizational support to be a significant positive predictor of DSP's personal accomplishment, and a significant negative predictor of DSP depersonalization and emotional exhaustion.
- Small to moderate effect sizes ( $\eta_p^2$ ) were calculated for the MBI indices.
- Post-hoc analyses revealed significant mean differences at nearly every organizational support level. DSPs with stronger feelings of depersonalization perceived significantly lower levels of organizational support compared to Medium ( $p = .013$ ) and High ( $p < .001$ ) levels of organizational support. Likewise, there was a stepwise relationship between emotional exhaustion mean differences and Low ( $p = .003$ ), Medium ( $p < .001$ ), and High ( $p < .001$ ) levels of perceived organizational support. DSPs who perceived High levels of support had significantly stronger feelings of personal accomplishment relative to Medium ( $p < .05$ ) and Low ( $p < .05$ ) groups.
- Perceived supervisor support was not a significant predictor of protective features against burnout.

**Figure 1**  
Participant Highest Level of Education



**Figure 2**

Mean Differences in MBI Index Scores based on Perceived Organizational Support



Note. Groups were divided based on perceived support scores. MBI = Maslach Burnout Inventory, \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

## DISCUSSION

- Overall, this study indicates that perceived organizational support has a strong predictive value and effect on feelings of burnout in DSPs, while perceived supervisor support does not.
- Consistent with previous research, perceived supervisor support and perceived organizational support were correlated ( $p < .01$ ). However, the current findings also suggest that perceived organizational support is more influential in terms of its relationship specifically to DSP burnout. Thus, other variables related to POS should be further explored.
- These findings indicate the importance of perceived organizational support in terms of understanding what contributes to burnout in DSPs, and further suggest that interventions focused on reducing burnout may be more effective if disseminated by the organization as opposed to direct intervention by the supervisor or other lower levels within the organization.
- The role of the rehabilitation psychologist may include exploring how organizational support perceptions by DSPs can be modified.
- Limitations: The design of this study was cross-sectional and thus cannot imply causality. Data was collected across various sites; thus, there may be mild variations in terms of environment and supervisors, which could impact findings. Although all DSPs were invited to participate, not all individuals took part in the study. Thus, this sample may not be fully representative of the DSPs at this location. These findings should also be interpreted within the context of research suggesting the complex interplay of multiple variables impacting burnout, which were not all explored within this current study.

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