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., 2001).
- 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 (Belgians et al., 2016; Eastman et al., 2016; Avons and Allen, 1985; Maslach et al., 2016).
- 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 (White et al., 2016; Maslach et al., 2016).
- Research indicates that both individual and organizational environmental factors can impact burnout, and suggests a complex interplay of variables (Dew et al., 2001; Hoppell, 1998; Kornblum et al., 2015; York et al., 2016).
- Perceived supervisor support (PSS) and perceived organizational support (POS) are two modifiable variables that can impact burnout. Research suggests that POS and PSS are correlated (Khan et al., 2015; Dyer et al., 2016; Csumak et al., 2019; Dew et al., 2019; Roos et al., 2019).
- 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/infants, and subsequently, what interventions may be most effective in reducing burnout within this population.

OBJECTIVE

- The objective is 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.
  - MEASURES:
    - 1. HSBC Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (HSBC-HSS)
    - 2. Five Index Scores: Emotional Exhaustion (r = .86), Personal Accomplishment (r = .71), Depersonalization (r = .72)
    - 3. Item-Level Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (PSS)
    - 4. Item-Level Survey of Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS)
    - 5. Participants were grouped into High (Scores of 12–20 or Medium (Scores of 9–11), Low (Scores of 7–8) based on their responses on the PSS and HSBC-HSS.
  - 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 NeuroRehab
  - Ninety adults (68 women, 22 men) aged 20 to 62 years old (M = 30.48, SD = 9.66)
  - 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 51.3% 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 | t | p |
  - | --- | --- | --- | --- |
  - Emotional Exhaustion
    - Constant: 40.07
    - PSS: 0.095
    - POS: -0.077
  - Depersonalization
    - Constant: 12.66
    - PSS: -0.282
    - POS: 0.037
  - Personal Accomplishment
    - Constant: 26.731
    - PSS: 0.025
    - POS: 0.319

- Table 2: Analysis of Variance for Burnout Indices and Perceived Organizational Support
  - | F (2, 48) | p |
  - Emotional Exhaustion: 21.712 | .04 |
  - Personal Accomplishment: 3.08 ** | .02 |
  - Depersonalization: 11.93 ** | .02 |

- Note: *p < .05, **p < .01

- Multiple regressions revealed perceived organizational support to be a significant positive predictor of DSP personal accomplishment, and a significant negative predictor of DSP depersonalization and emotional exhaustion.
- Small to moderate effect sizes (r = .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 steep decline 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 < .00) and Low (p < .00) groups.

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 (r = .33). 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.

REFERENCES