

Resilience and Burnout in Child Protection Social Work

Paula Mc Fadden, Dr Anne Campbell
and Dr Brian Taylor

University of Ulster

Northern Ireland

Email: mcfadden-p1@email.ulster.ac.uk



Overview of Presentation

1. Introduction – Why is this topic important?
2. Methodology of current study
3. Early Indicators of Job Engagement or Burnout
4. Current empirical study Northern Ireland
5. Systematic Literature Review

Why is this topic important? Three Issues

1. Retention and Turnover

Retention and turnover are major national and international issues in child protection Social Work with “burnout” and “occupational stress” being strongly associated with job exit. (Healy 2009, Hansung 2009, Burns 2009, Conrad 2006, and Anderson 2000).

“The well-being of children served by the child welfare system are put at risk by the difficulties child welfare agencies experience in recruiting and retaining competent staff as turnover results in staff shortages and high caseloads that impair workers’ abilities to perform critical case management functions.” (Levy 2005)

2. Inexperience in Child Protection Workforce

Due to high levels of workforce turnover, vacancies result in high numbers of graduates taking their first post in child protection Social Work (Healy 2009, NISCC 2009). The level of inexperience in child protection teams is therefore a concerning consequence (Healy 2007, Healy 2009, Weaver 2007, McGowan 2009).

3

What sustains some staff while others “burn out”?

Despite this it is acknowledged that some workers are “committed survivors” and appear resilient and able to sustain the pressure of this occupation (Ellett and Ellett 1997, Ellett 2009, Westbrook 2006).

Some of these factors include respite opportunities; management flexibility and supportive supervision; valuing “people” over “bureaucracy”; camaraderie, teamwork and peer support; educating novices – mentoring and support (Westbrook 2006)

Burnout → Engagement (Resilience) Continuum

- Peoples psychological relationship to their jobs can be conceptualised as a continuum between burnout and job engagement. Three interrelated dimensions
 - Exhaustion → Energy
 - Cynicism → Involvement
 - Inefficacy → Efficacy

Maslach Burnout Inventory

- Psychometric test designed to establish the subjects self perception of experienced emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalisation (D) with service users and personal accomplishment (PA).
- A series of 22 questions measure these three dimensions and subjects are asked to report frequency of experienced feelings and thoughts using a Likert scale ranging from (0) Never to (6) Every Day. This scale is measuring the individuals experience on the continuum between burnout and job engagement.

Maslach Burnout Inventory

- The exhaustion component is linked to the psychological strain associated with individual experience of burnout.
- The cynicism is the interpersonal context and refers to an emotional detachment or negative feelings towards service users and other aspects of the job.
- The efficacy dimension is related to the self evaluation dimension of burnout and is experienced when an individual has feelings of incompetence or a lack of achievement in relation to their job.

Organizational Risk Factors

Areas of Work life Scale (Maslach and Leiter 2008)

1. Workload – job demands exceeding human limits
2. Control – role conflict and exhaustion
3. Reward – Insufficient reward; lack of reciprocal satisfaction
4. Community – Quality of social interaction. Supervisor support and exhaustion. Peer support linked to efficacy. Social support and greater engagement
5. Fairness – perceived equity in decision making
6. Values – motivating connection between worker and workplace. That which originally attracted people to their job. Personal versus organizational goals. Value conflict linked to inefficacy

Area of Work Life Scale

(Maslach and Leiter 2008)

- This scale measures 29 items that have distinct scores for each area of work life. Manageable workload (6), control (3), reward (4), community (5), fairness (6) and values (5).
- The items are worded in terms of perceived congruence or incongruence between self and workplace.



Applied Area of Work Life Scale

- This tool defines congruence as a high score which indicates a high degree of “fit” between self and work place. The reverse is true for incongruence. In this instance the score is low which suggests a “misfit” between the person and workplace.



Meaning of the Scores

- Leiter and Maslach 2008, state that job-person incongruity such as these have been found to be directly related to burnout.
- Maslach and Leiter (1997) constructed a model of burnout that gives specific attention to the perceived congruency between the employee and key aspects of their working environment.

Meaning of Scores (continued)

- This model contends that the greater degree of mismatch is directly related to the high potential for burnout.
- The opposite is also found to be true. The higher degree of job-person congruity, the higher chance of job engagement.
- This gives valuable insight into early indicators of job engagement or burnout (Maslach and Leiter 2008)

Wagnild and Young Resilience Scale – RS14 (shortened version)

- 14 item likert scale measuring personal reflections relating to resilience
- Application to range of populations including adults
- Measures resilience over two broad factor constructs
 - “Attitude to life and self” and
 - “personal competence”
- Theoretical definition – characterised by self reliance; perseverance; meaningfulness; existential aloneness and equanimity
- Not just resilience but “Thriving” (Carver 1998)
- Not just resilience but maintaining compassion and commitment (Cherniss 1980, 1995)



Wagnild 2009

- The validity of the RS was supported with many hypothesised and statistically significant associations with morale, life satisfaction, self esteem, depression and perceived stress.

(Wagnild 2009)

Sir Michael Rutter (2010)

- “Resilience is an interactive concept that can only be studied if one looks at risk or protective factors” (Rutter 2010)
- Rutter draws an example from medicine and the introduction of vaccinations as a method of preventing further disease.
- This suggests that it is the experience of adversity that builds resilience
- Develop this concept further and one could conclude that child protection social work, within the context of “managed risk” or “protective factors” could be a positive breeding ground for building resilience

“Snap shot” - Current Northern Ireland Study

Child Protection Social Workers

- 5 Health and Social Care Trusts
- 1 Voluntary Sector Organization
- 162 Social Workers completed questionnaires
- 32 social workers interviewed
- Regional response rate 39%
- Organizational variations
- 140 female, 22 males
- Unique Features of Social Work in NI
 - AYE
 - Post Qualifying Award System

Research Methods

Phase 1

- Quantitative Survey
- N = 162
- Response Rate 39%
- Tools – Demographic Variable Form, Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach 1996), Area of Work Life Scale (Maslach and Leiter 2008) and RS 14 Resilience Scale (Wagnild and Young 1993)

Phase 2

(Those still in post)

Qualitative Interviews

N = 18

Phase 3

(“Leavers”)

Qualitative Interview

N = 14

Systematic Literature

Review

Database	Total Hits Retrieved	Agreed Relevant Hits	% Inter Rater Agreement	Sensitivity %	Precision %
Psych Info	87	16	88%	10 %	18 %
Medline	563	9	100%	6 %	2 %
ASSIA	493	37	84%	23 %	8 %
Social Services Abstracts	685	36	84%	22 %	5 %
SSCI	834	34	91%	22%	4 %
CINAHL	144	16	76%	10%	11 %
Cochrane Library	0	0	100%	0	0 %
Index to Theses	30	0	100%	0	0 %
Social Care Online	14	1	100%	1 %	7 %
ZETOC	5	0	100%	0	0
GS300	23	13	73%	8 %	57 %
Total	2878	162			

Systematic Literature Review – Overview of 11 database searches for relevant empirical studies.

“Resilience and Burnout in Child Protection Social Work”

Sensitivity has been calculated by dividing the relevant hits on each data base by the total number of relevant hits. Precision has been calculated by dividing the relevant hits on each data base by the total hits retrieved on that same data base.

Conclusion

- Important to see “resilience” and “burnout” in the context in which they arise
- Organizational factors need to be examined
- Be mindful of protective and risk factors, organizational and individual
- Develop methods of building personal resilience and highlighting to management organizational factors that impact on either burnout or resilience
- Knowledge and evidence base necessary to formulate changes to existing policy and procedures for recruitment and retention in child protection social work.

References

- *Child Protection Workers*, Child Abuse and Neglect, Vol 24, No 6, pp 839-848
- Burns K, 2009. *Retention and Turnover i Child Welfare*. PhD Study, University College Cork.
- Eborall C, Garmeson K, 2001, *Desktop Research on Recruitment and Retention in Social Care and Social Work*, London: Business and Industrial Market Research
- Ellett A, 2007, *A Qualitative Study of 369 Child Welfare Professionals Perspectives about Factors Contributing to Employee Retention and Turnover*, Journal of Child and Youth Services Review. Vol 29 pp 264-281
- Ellett A, 2009, *Intention to Remain Employed in Child Welfare. The Role of Human Caring, Self Efficacy, Beliefs and Professional Organizational Culture*. Children and Youth Services Review, Vol 31 pp 78-88
- Gibson F, McGrath and Reid N, 1989, *Occupational Stress in Social Work*, British Journal of Social Work, Vol 19, No 1, pp 1-18
- Healy, K et al, 2009, *Retaining Novices to become Expert Child Protection Social Workers: Creating Career Pathways in Direct Practice*, BJSW 39:299-317
- Hurley D, 2008. Narratives of Resilience in Child Protection. Argentina, Canada & Ireland. Social Work Research Day, King's University College, London, Ontario, November 7, 2008.
- Levy J, 2005, Factors Influencing Retention of Child Welfare Staff: A Systematic Review of Research, A Report from the IASWR (Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research)
- Maslach C & Leiter M, 2008, Early Predictors of Job Burnout and Engagement, Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol 93, No 3, pp 498-512
- Munro, E (2005) *Effective Child Protection*, London, Routledge
- Politics.co.uk – Ed Balls Baby P Review, Thursday, 12, Mar 2009
- Pollack D, 2008, *Legal Implications of Staff Turnover in Social Work Organizations*, *Journal of International Social Work* Vol 51 (5) pp 705-711
- Report of the Independent Enquiry Panel to the Western and Eastern Health and Social Services Boards, Madeline and Lauren O Neill, March 2008
- Report of Agency Involvement (Independent Review) with Mr. A McElhill, Miss E McGovern and their children – the Toner Report, June 2008
- Rutter, Sir M, 2010, The Social Ecology of Resilience Conference: Pathways to Resilience II, 7-11th June 2010, Halifax, Canada
- Schaufeli W, Bakker A, et al, 2001, On The Clinical Validity of the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Burnout Measure, Journal of Psychology and Health, Vol 16, pp 565-582
- Schaufeli W, Leiter M and Maslach C, 2009, *Burnout: 35 years of Research and Practice*, Career Development International, Vol 14 (3), pp 204-220
- Tham P, 2007, *Why Are They Leaving? Factors Affecting Intention to Leave among Social Workers in Child Welfare*, British Journal of Social Work, October 2007; 37 (7): pp 1225-1246
- Wagnild G, 2009, *A Review of The Resilience Scale*, Journal of Nursing Management Vol 17 (2)
- Weaver, Dale, Chang, Janet, Clark, Sherrill and Rhee, Siyon (2007) 'Keeping Public Child Welfare Workers on the Job', *Administration in Social Work*, 31: 2, 5 — 25
- Westbrook, Tonya M. , Ellis, Jackie and Ellett, Alberta J.(2006) 'Improving Retention Among Public Child Welfare Workers', *Administration in Social Work*, 30: 4, 37 — 62
- http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/whatyoucando_354.htm

Literature Review

■ References

- Bryman, A (2008), *Social Research Methods*, (3rd Ed), Oxford University Press.
- Crombie, I, (1996), *The Pocket Guide to Critical Appraisal*, BMJ Publishing Group, Dundee, Scotland.
- Crotty, M, (1998), *The Foundation of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Sage Publication Ltd.
- Dempster, (2003), "Systematic Reviews" in Miller R & Brewster J (Eds), *The A-Z of Social Research*, London: Sage
- Fine, M. and Torre, M.E. (2006) *Intimate Details: Participatory Action Research in Prison*. *Action Research*, 4, 3. <http://ARJ.sagepub.com/content/vol4/issue3>
- Fisher, M, Qureshi, H, Hardyman, W, Homewood, J, (2006), *How Knowledge Works in Social Care Report 9: Using qualitative research in systematic reviews: Older people's views of hospital discharge*. SCIE.
- Norton, M, (2008), in a Review Essay by Petticrew, M, and Robers, H, (2005) *Systemic Reviews in the Social Sciences: A Practical Guide*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, pp 352, in *Qualitative Social Work 2008 7*, pp 386.
- Peterson, L, (2008), Review Essay, by Sandelowski, M and Barroso, J, *Handbook for Synthesizing Qualitative Research*. New York: Springer Publication Co., 2006. pp 284
- Rumsey, D, (2010), *Statistics Essentials for Dummies*, Wiley Publishing Inc. USA.
- Sarantakos, S, (2001), *Social Research*, Palgrave Publications Ltd, New York.
- Staller, K, (2008), Review Essay, *Systemic Reviews and Qualitative Enquiry: Oil and Water? Qualitative Social Work 2008 7* pp 380
- Taylor, B, Dempster, M, Donnelly, M. (2003), *Hidden Gems: Systematically Searching Electronic Data Bases for Research Publications for Social Work and Social Care*, *BJSW* (2003), 33, pp 423-429.
- Trochim, W, Donnelly, J, (2008), *The Research Methods Knowledge Base* (3rd Ed), Cengage Learning, USA.