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Investigating Compassion Fatigue and Burnout Rates Among Mental Health Professionals at Sioux Trails Mental Health Center

Lora Schoewe

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Investigating Compassion Fatigue and Burnout Rates Among Mental Health Professionals at Sioux Trails Mental Health Center

Lora Schoewe LSW

Statement of Purpose
The purpose of this research is to explore the existence of compassion fatigue and burnout among mental health professionals at Sioux Trails Mental Health Center, which is a community based mental health center in located in various rural communities in Southern Minnesota. The research also sought to identify what the professional and agency can do to reduce burnout rates.

Research Questions
Does compassion fatigue and burnout exist among the mental health professionals at Sioux Trails Mental Health Center?
What professional and personal resources do the mental health professionals use to reduce the risk of compassion fatigue an burnout?

Literature Review
A literature search using key subject words was performed using the library database and retrieving full text articles. The literature review identified some of the occupational health ramifications from burnout, employee coping strategies, and possible preventive measures which can be taken by employers and employees to reduce the likelihood of burnout formation or progression. Sprang et.al (2007), demonstrates the relationship between compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, and burnout. Through their research of mental health providers in a rural state, they found that trainings created peer support and protection against fatigue. A study done by Kraus (2005) showed a positive correlation between self care and compassion fatigue among clinicians working with sex offenders. Kraus also noted that compassion satisfaction impacts burnout.

Methodology
This research employed an exploratory cross-sectional survey design. The sample was determined by counting the outpatient clinical staff at Sioux Trails Mental Health Center, which is a Master's level degree or higher (N=20). The survey and informed consent were distributed via interoffice mail. A multiple contact strategy was employed to increase response rate by sending a thank you/reminder approximately 2 weeks after the initial dispersal. The survey consisted of 30 questions that were rated by the MHPs. The scores were added and fell into categories of low (22 or less), medium (23-41), and high (42 and more). The qualitative questions were written as:
1. As a mental health professional at Sioux Trails Mental Health Center, what do you think the agency does well to reduce your risk of compassion fatigue and burnout?
2. As a mental health professional at Sioux Trails Mental Health Center, what do you think you do at the present time to practice self care?
3. What could the agency do in the future to increase your professional well-being?
4. What could you do as a mental health professional to increase your professional well-being?

Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compassion Satisfaction</td>
<td>38.38</td>
<td>4.745</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>23.81</td>
<td>4.764</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue/STS</td>
<td>19.56</td>
<td>3.366</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Compassion Satisfaction</th>
<th>Burnout</th>
<th>Fatigue/STS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.779</td>
<td>0.274</td>
<td>0.305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strengths and Limitations
This research was able to provide specific information to the sample and to this organization. The research provided a means by which the professionals in this organization a means by which to identify their need for increased self care. This study was limited to self report information within one area of the state of Minnesota. No information was obtained from the respondents in terms of their actual plans for remaining in their positions. Also information in regards to age and sex of professionals would be useful. Further information regarding the organizational climate and other factors within each offices would be useful to identify factors that contribute to decreased distress of workers. Given the important role of compassion satisfaction, further understanding regarding ways to support this is important.

Implications for Practice
When a professional is at risk of compassion fatigue and/or burnout, they are compromising their professional positions and themselves, while also compromising the care they are giving their clients. Compassion satisfaction has been found to be positively associated with reduced levels of burnout. Mental health professionals who practice self care on a regular basis are less likely to suffer burnout and therefore are more able to provide ethical and quality services to the clients they serve.

References
References will be provided upon request.