A Quantitative Analysis of Job Satisfaction and Burnout Among Rural and Urban Social Workers

Paul Force-Emerly MSAW, PhD.
Minnesota State University, Mankato – Department of Social Work


data analysis

Bivariate and Ordinary Least Squares Regression statistics were used to examine: 1. Differences between rural and urban social workers on levels of burnout and job satisfaction. 2. Individual, educational, and employment characteristics associated with burnout and job satisfaction.

RESULTS

No statistical differences were found between rural and urban social workers’ general levels of burnout or job dissatisfaction (see graphs 1 & 2). On a three-point scale of high, average, and low, both groups show average levels of EE, low levels of PN, and low levels of SF. However, OLS-regression analysis of eight predictor variables for burnout and job satisfaction revealed significant differences (see tables 3 & 4).

1. Differences between rural and urban social workers on levels of burnout and job satisfaction.
2. Individual, educational, and employment characteristics associated with burnout and job satisfaction.

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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Rural R Square</th>
<th>Urban R Square</th>
<th>Δ</th>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Satisfaction</td>
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<td>Work Group Climate</td>
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Table 3. Significant MBI Outcomes

Table 4. Significant Job Satisfaction Outcomes

CONCLUSION

Based on these data, burnout among rural and urban social workers was measured at the average level on the subscale EE and low on PN and SF. While no significant differences were found on general burnout or job satisfaction constructs (graphs 1 & 2), differences were identified among predictors across subscale indicators (Δ). The study can be expanded to include rural social workers, number of hours worked per week, months degree program length, location where burnout and satisfaction was included, and undergraduate coursework with rural content was all found to predict the likelihood of burnout or job dissatisfaction. However, it is important to note that while statistically significant differences were found, the amount of variance explained by the R square statistics were slight. Suggestions for future research include conducting a longitudinal investigation on burnout and job satisfaction among both groups.

References available upon request. Contact paul.mackie@mnsu.edu

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BACKGROUND

Issues concerning burnout and job satisfaction among social workers received considerable attention 25 – 30 years ago, with the literature tapering off in recent years. From the empirical studies available, the majority were based on findings from urban areas with less scrutiny about rural care providers. Evidence suggests that problems associated with recruitment and retention of social workers can often be attributed to burnout and job dissatisfaction (Rosenbaum & Baun, 1984, LeTour & Rank, 1987). Maslach, 1976, 1982). Recent research suggests rural social workers show significantly higher levels of burnout and job dissatisfaction compared to norm sample groups (Dillman et al., 2008a, Dillman et al., 2008b). Other findings support the notion that differences exist between rural and urban social workers perceptions of workplace challenges and joys (Mack, & Birk, 2005).

Jerril (1983) found that among rural social service staff, those who moved when they grew up were more likely to be satisfied than those not doing this characteristic. Other predictors to rural social service-based job dissatisfaction were low salary and conflict with supervisors (Kelly & Hulsehusan, 1986). Human service workers were found to be permanently exiting employment in both rural and urban areas, often because of issues associated with burnout and job satisfaction (Jerril, 1985). Mar (Rank et al., 2001). The lack of social service due to burnout and job dissatisfaction were believed to contribute to the lack of adequate staffing, ineffective and inefficient treatment, and the reduced quality of care to consumers (Mar Rank et al., 2003).

While some information about rural social work burnout and job satisfaction exists, little is known about specific differences between groups. Therefore, this study was developed to further investigate these differences and other related questions.

STUDY PURPOSE, GOALS, AND HYPOTHESES

Purpose

To examine levels of burnout and job satisfaction among rural and urban social workers.

Goals

1. Develop a better understanding of workplace burnout and job satisfaction, especially rural social workers.
2. Compare levels of burnout and job satisfaction between groups.
3. Compare levels of burnout and job satisfaction between specific employment focus.
4. Seek influences and explanations regarding individual, social, and employment factors related to burnout and job satisfaction.

Hypotheses

1. There is a difference in levels of burnout between groups.
2. There is a difference in levels of job satisfaction between groups.
3. A combination of individual, educational, and occupational characteristics are associated with job burnout and job satisfaction.

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

Burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach, et al., 1996) and job satisfaction with an inventory adapted from Jerril (1983). Probability sampling was used to increase scientific rigor. Population samples were from four predominantly low-income counties in Minnesota (MN), ND, South Dakota (SD), and Wisconsin (WI). Two respondents were selected based on their rural nature. All but one (i.e., 99% of the counties) counties with ≥ 2 percent per square mile standard framing from the eight states included ≥ 750 members of the NASW. Approximately 3,000 randomly sampled names from NAWM list were rented from private vendor. PI reduced number in half by using every other name on the list. Sampling frame from the eight states included 7,700 members of the NASW. Approximately 3,000 randomly sampled from the NASW list were rented from private vendor.

Q-reductions included in the study included the survey packet, the second was a reminder postcard. Appur power analysis was used to identify minimum needed number of respondents (811 subjects). Calculated as medium effect size of 15, alpha = .05, power = .95. The response rate was 78% (35%).

REFERENCES

Dillman, D. A. (2000). Tailored Design Method of Survey Development was used. Two

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Hypotheses

1. There are no differences in levels of burnout between groups.
2. Number of hours worked per week.
3. Level of time as a social service provider.
4. Length of time as a social service provider.

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