

The relationship between personality, areas of work and burnout among social care workers in Ireland.

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2. Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between personality factors, work satisfaction and burnout in the profession of social care workers in Ireland. The study was a cross-sectional design using an online survey completed by 85 Social Care Workers. Questions were asked which measured personality factors, work satisfaction and burnout levels. Correlation tests showed that total scores for work satisfaction was related to emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment. Neuroticism related to emotional exhaustion; agreeableness and conscientiousness to depersonalisation; and extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness to personal accomplishment. In regression analysis, specific work domains and personality factors accounted for 62.9% of the variance in emotional exhaustion; 32.1% variance in depersonalisation; and 31.4% variance in personal accomplishment. Therefore, a combination of work-factors and personality-factors are predictive antecedents to burnout.

3. Introduction

Staff burnout is a critical problem for the human services professions; it is debilitating to workers, costly to agencies, and detrimental to clients. The importance of the topic is evident in the spate of recent research on the topic. The consequences of burnout for the organisation includes absenteeism, performance, citizenship behaviors, and turnover (e.g., Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Swider & Zimmerman, 2010; Taris, 2006). Burnout consequences for individuals results in a negative impact on quality of life and mental health difficulties including depression, anxiety and somatic complaints (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998), and it is implicated in several disease states (Melamed, Shirom, Toker, Berliner, et al., 2006). Burnout is unanimously regarded as a consequence of chronic work-related stress (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). This study will begin by providing an overview of social care working in Ireland. Literature on burnout will then be examined, with reference made to personality types, demographics and also to organizational factors associated with stress and burnout. This will be specific to those working in the human services.

The purpose of this study is to explore the literature on burnout with particular reference to Social Care Workers (SCW) as a population. Correlates of burnout including demographic details, personality types and work/organisational factors will be discussed.

The author of this study works for a disability service provider in a policy development capacity. She comes in to regular contact with those employed in a social care work capacity and has a sound knowledge of the structures and functions that the job entails.

3.1 Social Care Work in Ireland

Members of the Irish Association for Social Care Workers in Ireland are bound by their ethical guidelines to “present themselves for duty in a fit state mentally and physically” (2012, *para. 7*). The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) have produced standards to drive quality across a number of areas including social care settings. These standards have made explicit references to ‘continuity of care’ (HIQA, 2009, p. 41). Swider and Zimmerman (2010) note that organisations are affected by employees experiencing burnout because of increased turnover, absenteeism, decreased client and coworker interactions, and reduced job performance. Researching the relationship of burnout to personality and work organisational factors may in turn lead to identifying strategies for decreasing burnout amongst social care workers; thus improving continuity of care for people supported and also enabling fulfilment of the social care worker’s ethical obligation.

Social Care Work (SCW) in Ireland does not have a standardised definition. The legislative basis for defining SCW, namely the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005, has not been fully implemented. Both a consequence and an enabler of this is that the notion of the professionalisation of the service remains contested. Share and Lalor (2009) note there is a difficulty in defining social care practice because of the lack of clear professional grouping on what social care practicing might be.

Social care work in Ireland is a rapidly growing field and the impending legislation has seen an increase in the number of dedicated college courses related to this practice, thus,

the increase in 'qualified' social care workers. There are a number of people who have been working in the services for many years without any recognised qualification and this continues. Entry to the field is not subject to formal qualification although a review of recent job advertisements shows an increase in requests for qualification as a minimum criterion to progression.

Although there is no standardised definition of the social care worker role, it is important for the purposes of research that there are some defining features that participants can identify with. The joint committee on Social Care Practitioners, set up in 2001, agreed on the following definition of SCW:

'Social Care is the professional provision of care, protection, support, welfare and advocacy for vulnerable or dependent clients, individually or in groups. This is achieved through the planning and evaluation of individualised and group programmes of care, which are based on needs, identified in consultation with the client and delivered through day-to-day shared life experiences. All interventions are based on established best practice and in-depth knowledge of life-span development' (Joint committee, 2001, p. 10).

The Joint Committee discusses cessation of non-qualified practitioners (2001, p. 12). Lalor (2009) noted in an audit of SCW student numbers and programme providers in Ireland an increase from 500 graduates at HETAC level 7 and level 8 in 2002 to 1303 in 2009 (p. 1). Lack of data resulted in Lalor (2009) suggesting that there was between 5000 and 8000 persons employed in the SCW profession.

For the purposes of this research, SCW will be understood as encompassing the facets defined by the Joint Committee. A limitation noted in the review of literature in this area

related to the lack of both definition of job structure and lack of synonymous terms for the same role internationally.

Share and Lalor (2009) note that the practice of social care work has many common elements across contemporary developed societies but has different nuances and emphasis that reflect the different political, ideological and social systems experienced across the globe. Education and practice in social care work in Ireland is largely drawn from experiences in other countries.

3.2 Burnout

Maslach and Schaufeli (1993, p.3) suggest burnout was evident, although not named, as far back as 1920's. They reference Thomas Mann's book 'Buddenbrooks', published in 1922, where the central character displays 'extreme fatigue and loss of idealism and passion for one's job'. In terms of human services and vocation, Freudenberger (1974) coined the term "burn-out". Shortly afterwards and independent of Freudenberger, in 1976, Maslach began exploring emotions in the workplace and has since become one of the most influential researchers in the area of burnout.

Meier's (1983) discussed the rapid growth of burnout as a phenomenon that was widely acknowledged as an important issue across many diverse human services sectors.

Shirom and Melamed (2005) noted the continued growth in the area with 150 articles on burnout published annually between 1995 and 2002 in journals covered by PsychInfo. Their

review of the area of burnout found about 5,500 entries with 'burnout' as a key word between 1975 and 1995.

Meier's (1983) reported the lack of good theoretical and empirical research to provide suitable support for burnout. Meier's noted that, "methods of examining burnout have often been descriptive reports that lack substantial empirical support and precise theoretical foundations" (Meier, 1983, p. 900).

Although not theoretically underpinned, a commonly cited definition of burnout, as proposed by Maslach, was derived using data from interviews with people working in human services. This suggests that the burnout phenomenon had some consistencies across individuals (Maslach et al., 2001). The three overarching factors were labeled following analysis of 50 items that emerged from those initial interviews (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998, p.51).

Employee burnout is a progressive psychological response to chronic work stress involving emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

The three dimensions are expanded presently:

1. Emotional exhaustion (EE) refers to feelings of lack of energy, being emotionally overloaded and being drained of emotional resources (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). It reflects the stress dimension of burnout and is correspondingly the most widely reported aspect of the construct. Maslach et al. (2001) argues that it alone fails to

capture all the important aspects of the relationship people have with their jobs. This requires two additional attitudinal components.

2. Depersonalisation (DP) represents the interpersonal aspect of burnout. It refers to the distancing of the professional from the client and is manifested in an overly detached or callous response to other people that can result in dehumanization of the clients (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).
3. Reduced personal accomplishment (PA) is the self-evaluation aspect of burnout. It is related to feelings of decreased professional competence, thus a loss of a sense of self efficacy (Heubner, Gilligan & Cobb, 1998, p. 174).

Maslach and Goldberg (1998) suggest a model of burnout that is developmental. EE occurs initially, followed by DP, and PA results separately. Taken together, these dimensions reflect a developmental transition from a positive problem-solving approach towards job responsibilities to a negative, avoidant approach (Heubner et al., 1998, 174).

Alternative definitions of burnout exist. While Maslach's definition describes a psychological syndrome, other definitions name burnout as a state or process (Cherniss, 1980). There is commonality between all definitions and based on a review of symptoms and definitions, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) proposed the following,

“burnout is a persistent, negative, work-related state of mind in ‘normal’ individuals that is primarily characterized by exhaustion, which is accompanied by distress, a

sense of reduced effectiveness, decreased motivation and the development of dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours at work...It results from a misfit between intentions and reality in the job. This psychological condition develops gradually but may remain unnoticed for a long time by the individual involved. Often burnout is self-perpetuating because of inadequate coping strategies that are associated with the syndrome” (p.36).

This definition lists additional symptoms and highlights the misfit between the person and the reality of their job, and specifies that it occurs in ‘normal’ individuals.

The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory was developed by researchers who aimed to report on burnout across various sectors of human services, including administrative functions (Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, & Christensen, 2007). They noted the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was rejected after the pilot study due to lack of suitability for the participants based on the question type; or the use of it for those outside of those involved in direct client work; and that the categories included a consequence of burnout (reduced personal accomplishment) and a coping strategy (depersonalisation). They developed the CBI that focuses mainly on exhaustion and distinguishes between three different types of exhaustion namely, personal burnout (applicable to all persons regardless of workforce type and includes 6 items), work-related burnout (applicable to all persons regardless of workforce type and includes 7 items), and client-related burnout (based on six items on symptoms of exhaustion related to working with recipients in human services and is applicable only to people who work with clients), including such things as emotional demands and demands for hiding emotions at work (2006, p. 50).

The (MBI) has however become the most popular instrument for measuring burnout in “helping professions” (Della-Valle, 2006, p. 171) The MBI (Human Services) is used in this research.

Della-Valle (2006) notes the coherence of many studies’ results on helping professions in different countries, leads to the conclusion that basically burnout is a psychosocial phenomenon of international relevance (p. 171).

3.2.2 Burnout and job stress

Although researchers have studied job burnout for over three decades, there is still some confusion as to what exactly the construct entails. For instance, some have mistakenly considered burnout as simply stress or depression (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991; Leiter & Durup, 1994 cited in Zimmerman and Swider, p. 488).

Burnout represents a form of general job stress; however, there are notable distinctions between the two. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) note the temporal dimension of burnout in that it is developed over time and therefore in response to prolonged stress; this contrasts with general work stress which can occur temporarily in response to immediate stressors. While the EE component of burnout represents the stress dimension of the construct the DP and PA elements are equally important.

Shinn, Rosario, Morch and Chestnut (1984) attempted to link research on burnout to previous work on job stress, strain and coping in the human services. They used terms from occupational literature which noted stress as a negative feature of the work environment that impinges on the individual (e.g. role conflict) and strain in the psychological or physiological response of the individual (e.g. job dissatisfaction, anxiety). They noted burnout then as a psychological strain associated with work in the human services.

The interchangeable nature within the literature of the words 'stress', 'burnout', 'distress' and 'impairment' can cause confusion for understanding the differences and indeed the relationship between all constructs.

3.3 Personality

Factors that contribute to burnout have been widely discussed and researchers have focused predominantly on the Maslach burnout paradigm (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, 1999), in which burnout is seen as a consequence of environmental conditions. Ghorpade, Lackritz and Singh (2011) note that this paradigm does not include a full explanation for burnout. They state increasing attention is being afforded to the role of personality as a correlation of burnout (2011). Buhler and Land's (2003, cited in Ghorpade et. al. 2011) queried why, under the same working conditions, one individual burns out, whereas another shows no symptoms at all and that it seems appropriate to extend this line of inquiry to include both work environment and personality as determinants of burnout. Personality is a moderator of relation between work and burnout (Ghorpade, 2011, p. 1275).

Swider and Zimmerman (2010) discuss the antecedents of job burnout are generally grouped into three distinct levels: organisational, occupational, and individual (Maslach et al., 2001; Shirom, 2003 in Swider and Zimmerman, 2010). They criticise the myopic focus on organisational factors and the exclusion of individual level causes such as personality.

Personality refers to psychological qualities that contribute to an individual's enduring and distinctive patterns of feeling, thinking and behaving (Cervone & Pervin, 2010, p. 8). Swider and Zimmerman (2010, p. 488) list personality as a major individual-level antecedent of job burnout and state that because personality is relatively stable compared to unstable situational predictors such as workload, that it should be a factor in research to augment existing findings.

The criterion-related validity of personality has received the most widespread research support, that is essentially the accuracy of scores on a job measurement instrument towards predicting job success such as work output or work quality (Riggio, 2009, p.92).

The Five Factor Model of personality of Costa & McCrae (1995) is one of the most influential models today (Dijkstra & Barelds, 2009; Maltby, Day & Macaskill, 2010). The Five Factor Model (FFM) is the approach that is increasingly favoured by psychologists. There are three main evidential sources for the five-factor model. These are, according to Maltby et al. (2010, p.154), the lexical approach; factor analysis evidence and 'other' evidence.

Costa and McCrae (1992) measured personality with their Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R). The factors they discuss are Neuroticism vs. Emotional Stability, Extraversion vs. Introversion, Agreeableness vs. Hostility, Conscientiousness vs. Lack of Conscientiousness, and Openness vs. a Lack of openness. It is often referred to as the OCEAN model. Each factor represents a continuum and within each of the five main dimensions there are more specific personality attributes that cluster together to contribute to the category score (Maltby et al., 2010, p. 155).

Openness refers to the individual's openness to new experiences. Individuals scoring highly on openness are unconventional and independent thinkers; those with low scores are more conventional and prefer the familiar to the new.

Conscientiousness relates to the individual's degree of self-discipline and control. Those with high scores are determined, organised and plan events in their lives; those with low scores tend to be careless, easily distracted and undependable.

Extraversion measures the individual's sociability. High scorers are sociable, energetic and optimistic. Low scorers are labelled introverts – reserved, independent rather than followers socially and even-paced.

Agreeableness show characteristics of the individual that are relevant to social interaction. High scorers are trusting, helpful and sympathetic. Low scorers are suspicious and antagonistic.

Neuroticism measures the individual's emotional stability and personal adjustment. In psychological terms, the various emotional states are highly correlated. The individual who scores highly on neuroticism experiences wide swings in their mood and they are volatile in their emotions. They are often described as worriers. Individuals with low scores on the neuroticism factor are calm, well-adjusted and not prone to extreme maladaptive emotional states (Maltby et al., 2010, p. 178).

Riggio (2009) cites research that shows that the OCEAN factors of personality have predicted job performance and training performance well: openness best predicted training

performance; conscientiousness best predicted job performance; with extraversion, agreeableness and emotional stability having predicted job performance well in specific jobs.

Strong correlations have been noted between the neuroticism trait within the Five Factor Model (FFM) traits and burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Bakker, Van der Zee, Lewig, and Dollard (2006) noted that neuroticism was the only FFM trait that showed some variance in all three of the dimensions, EE, PA and DP, of burnout. In addition they reported emotional exhaustion was uniquely predicted by neuroticism. This is corroborated by Swider and Zimmerman (2010) where they reported neuroticism to have the strongest relationship with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than any of the other traits (p. 494).

Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) reported other personality correlates of burnout to be low levels of hardiness, an avoidant coping style, poor self-esteem and an external locus of control.

Swider and Zimmerman (2010) in a meta-analysis summarised the relationship between the FFM personality traits and job burnout dimensions (EE, DP, PA) along with other job variables. They criticised research undertaken on the relationship between personality (most notably the Five-Factor Model) and job burnout as haphazard and scattered with focus quite often only a limited number of personality traits (p. 487).

3.4 Demographic factors

Much research on burnout aims to identify the demographic correlates of burnout. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) in a meta-analysis of over 250 studies of correlates of burnout, reported that age was observed to be the most consistent correlate of burnout, with younger people having higher rates of burnout. They also noted a correlation between less years of experience and increased burnout. There is a possibility of 'survival bias' in these results; wherein individuals who have been saturated to burnout exit their profession leaving the more experienced workers with fewer in the burnt out subgroup among their population. Schaufeli and Buunk (2003) reported that these findings were primarily in samples from the United States and that higher levels of burnout have been reported among older people in European samples. They suggested that this may be due to a European tendency to remain in jobs longer. Gender has not been consistently related to burnout, but Schaufeli and Buunk (2003) noted that the literature tends to indicate higher levels of depersonalization among men. Single men tend to be more prone to burnout than men who are married (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Generally however there appears to be little consistent demographic correlates to burnout.

3.5 Work and Organisational Factors

In a meta-analysis of over 250 studies, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) noted workload, time pressure, role conflict and ambiguity, direct client contact, low levels of social support from colleagues and supervisors, lack of feedback, and decreased participation in decisions, all have moderate to high correlations with burnout.

There are general job related stressors and then there are stressors unique to specific work types. Research related to the unique stressors of working with people found that the more general job related stressors of poor management of workload, lack of control, lack of reward etc. had a stronger relationships with burnout than did the client-related stressors (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

In a five year prospective intervention study of those working in the human services in Denmark, Borritz et al. (2006) reported workplace factors that increased the risk of burnout included factors such as high demands and low influence, low social support, and low role-clarity increase the risk of burnout.

Hallsten (1993, cited in Innstrand, Langballe & Falkrum, 2011) proposed three key individual factors that may have either protective effects, or constitute risk factors in the burnout-process: job performance-based self-esteem, goal orientation, and value congruency.

The Areas of Worklife Survey examines individual's perceptions of their workload, control, rewards, community, fairness and values. These areas according to Maslach and Leiter (2004) have resonated throughout the literature on burnout (p. 91). The first two areas are reflected in the Demand-Control Model of Job stress. Reward refers to the power of reinforcement to shape behaviour; Community captures all the work on social support and interpersonal conflicts; fairness represents equity and social justice; and finally values denotes the cognitive-emotional power of job goals and expectations (2004, p. 95).

3.6 Model of Burnout

Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) note that while several individual characteristics, including personality and work-related attitudes, are found to be related to burnout, that the relationships are not as great in size as those for burnout and situational factors.

There are several frameworks or theories that have attempted to integrate the person-related aspects of burnout and the environmental aspects. Commonly cited in the literature is the theoretical framework of the 'job-person fit' model. In the job – person fit model of burnout, Maslach and Leiter (1997) argued that burnout results from a mismatch between a person and their job. It also focuses on the enduring working relationship people have with their job. It suggests that a mismatch arises when people are left feeling that the job does not fit with their expectations, or when aspects of the job change in a manner that the person finds unacceptable.

The model has ordered situational correlates by introducing six domains of potential job-person mismatch. These domains will inform much of this current study. These domains are: workload, control, reward, community, fairness and values. Burnout arises from chronic mismatches between people and their work setting in terms of some or all of these six areas. A weakness of this model to the current study is that it does not explain how personal factors, such as personality characteristics, may contribute to burnout prevention or development.

3.7 Model of Stress

Devereux, Hastings and Noone (2009) note that there is no comprehensive theoretical framework to explain staff stresses in intellectual disability services. This is where large portion of SCW staff are employed. There have, however, been many models of stress developed in the last century. These mostly allude to the role of key moderators of stress such as control, personality characteristics and coping styles. These factors play an important role in the experience of stress and its effect on health and well-being outcomes for the individual. Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) Transactional Model of Stress provides a useful model for amalgamating the information for this current study.

In transactional models of stress, stress is viewed as a stimulus, a response or an on-going interaction between an individual and its environment (Passer and Smith, 2004). Lazarus (1966, cited in Lazarus and Folkman, 1987) developed a cognitive theory of psychological stress and coping that is transactional. The person and the environment are in a dynamic, mutually reciprocal, bidirectional relationship. The theory identifies cognitive appraisal and coping as mediators in the stressful person-environment relationships and their immediate and long-term outcomes. Primary appraisal is where the individual initially appraises the event itself and determines if it is irrelevant; benign and positive; or harmful and negative. Secondary appraisal occurs when the individual evaluates the benefits and harms of their own coping strategy. It is the form of appraisals that indicate if the individual shows a stress response or not.

Stress then results from the interaction between those stressors and the individual's perception and reaction to them (Romano, 1992, cited in Ross et al., 1999). Different SCW therefore deal with demands of work in different ways; some may interpret an identical stressor in very different respects or differently at different occasions. Coping is not restricted to successful attempts only at alleviating stress (Lazarus et al., 1987).

The amount of stress experienced may be influenced by the individual's ability to effectively cope with stressful events and situations (D'Zurilla & Sheedy, 1991, cited in Ross et al., 1999). There is also considerable debate in the literature about the influence of personality on coping mechanisms for stress. Barry (2012) notes the links between personality and stress have been under scrutiny for half a century with research generally hypothesising relationships between particular personality types and harmful stress. Some discuss characteristics of personality that may be antecedents of coping; for example, Wheaton's fatalism and inflexibility; or Kobasa's hardiness. The underlying assumption however is that the individual is predisposed to cope in certain ways that either impair or facilitate the various components of adaptational status (Ross et al., 1989) suggesting an individual will not approach each stressor afresh but rather will respond consistently using their preferred set of coping strategies.

Coping styles have been categorised as either problem-solving or emotion-focused in much of the research, based on the utilisation of Lazarus and Folkman's *Ways of Coping Inventory* (cited in Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989). Ogden (2000) expands on other coping mechanisms and includes problem avoidance, wishful thinking, emotional social support, instrumental social support, cognitive restructuring, and distraction.

Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) transactional model of stress can be divided into three basic elements: antecedents; mediators; and outcomes of stress. Antecedents include personality factors such as neuroticism, openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness and extraversion. They can also include organisational demands and stressors including the areas of worklife factors that are the management of workload; control; reward; work satisfaction; fairness; and values. Mediators are the psychological processes that may influence the stress response between the antecedent and the outcome. While there may be many antecedents of the stress model there may also be many outcomes. These outcomes may manifest themselves differently both physically and psychologically in different individuals. They may be measured as objective indices through health and social indices such as burnout through the variables of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment.

Thus, Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) transactional model and other related research underpins the assumptions made in this study.

3.8 Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: People who have longer length of service will have higher degrees of burnout than those with less length of service.

Hypothesis 2: It is hypothesised that people who demonstrate poorer overall worklife satisfaction will have a higher degree of burnout.

Hypothesis 3: Neuroticism will be positively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation. It will be negatively related to personal accomplishment.

Hypothesis 4: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Openness will be negatively related to emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and positively related to personal accomplishment.

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

The participants in this study were 85 individuals who agreed that their work could fall into the category of ‘Social Care Worker’ as defined earlier. Figure 1 below shows demographic details of participant based on gender, age, length of service, role responsibility and qualification in social care work. In addition, 45.9% of individuals had a higher level degree and a further 34.1% had gone on to do postgraduate level studies and 45.9% of respondents worked in a full time capacity. 23.4% of respondents have worked for 2 years or less as a SCW. 57.6% reported working in residential services; 25.9% in Day services, 5.9% in Community Inclusion and 10.6% classified their main working area as ‘other’. 61.2% of respondents work with people with intellectual disabilities; 24.7% with people with autism; 11.8% for people with physical disabilities; 34.2 work in services for adults, with 11.8% of those working with the older adult cohort; 21.1% work specifically with children and adolescents.

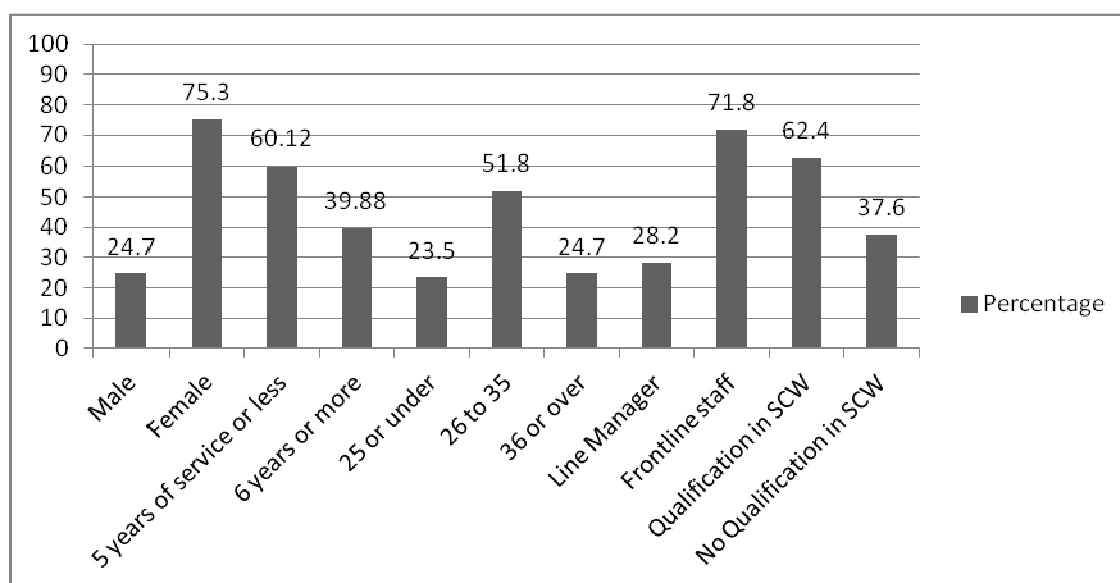


Figure 1 Demographic Details of Participants

4.2 Design

To test the research questions, a cross-sectional design was undertaken using quantitative measures. The following variables were measured using self-reporting questionnaires with accompanying instructions for completion. The predictive variables included demographic information; areas of worklife including Control, Reward, Workload, Community, Fairness and Values; and Personality factors including Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism. The criterion variables were those burnout variables of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment.

4.3 Materials

4.3.1 Demographics – Researcher’s own questionnaire

Information was collated on age, gender, marital status, education level attained, nationality, length of service, service user group, hours worked per week, social care work education, level of management responsibility (see appendix A)

4.3.2 Personality – NEO-PI-R Costa and McCrae (1992)

The Big Five Inventory was designed as a brief instrument to assess the following aspects of personality. The instrument divided into the following domains, with 10 items in each: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. Participants were asked to rate on a five point Likert scale, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, the extent to which they agreed the statements applied to them and how they related to others generally. Items were then scored using five positively and five negatively keyed

items for each subscale that were then summed and divided by 5. The lowest score is one and the highest score is five. Higher numbers indicate stronger scores for each subscale.

Reliabilities using Cronbach's alpha were good for conscientiousness .865, acceptable for neuroticism .796; extraversion .790; openness .670; agreeableness .685.

4.3.3 Work Stressors – Areas of Worklife Scale (Leiter & Maslach, 2000)

Participants completed 29 items that indicates their agreement with statements of their perceived congruence or incongruence between themselves and their job using a 5 point Likert scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. There are positively and negatively worded items. Scoring for negatively worded items is reversed. There are seven domains that include: Workload (6 items), Control (3 items), Reward (4 items), Community (5 items), Fairness (6 items) and values (5 items). The overall stress score is obtained by summing the items and dividing by the number of items in that scale. Scores over 3 in each domain are indicative of congruence, or a fit between a person and their workplace.

Reliabilities obtained within this sample using Cronbach's Alpha showed good reliabilities in all areas with Workload .815; Control .745; Reward .920; Community .889; Fairness .825 and Values .775

4.3.4 Burnout – Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996)

Participants completed 22 statements on how often they feel specific job-related feelings. There are three domains including emotional exhaustion (9 items), depersonalisation (5 items); and personal accomplishment (8 items). Participants rated using

a 7 point likert scale, ranging from never to everyday. The items in each scale are summed to provide a scale score. Higher scores equate with higher feelings associated with that domain.

The alpha reliabilities with this sample were assessed as adequate and showed emotional exhaustion .934, depersonalisation .741, and personal accomplishment .775.

4.4 Procedure

On 11th November 2012 a research proposal was submitted to the Ethics Board of Dublin Business School for approval. This approval was attained on 30th November 2012. Following approval, an extensive review of literature was undertaken to inform further the research questions.

Participants were selected using various methods. The researcher works in a service provider for adults with intellectual disabilities and contacted all staff via their work email with a link to the survey. Although work email addresses were used, it was made clear from the outset that this was an independent project and that participation was wholly voluntary (see appendix A for battery of tests). The researcher used her contacts in other agencies to gain access to submitting the questionnaire. The researcher also used social media as a reference point to gain access to participants. The link to the questionnaire was embedded in the researcher's facebook page with a request for those with friends/family working in the human services sector to 'like' and 'share' the link to the survey.

Contact was made to the Irish Association of Social Care Workers in Ireland on 20.02.13 but due to data protection legislation the Association were unable to use contact details of their members to distribute the survey.

After failed attempts to send a group email to the 'Assistant Psychology of Ireland google group', the researcher joined the group on 25.02.13 in an attempt to gain access to additional respondents. An email from the researcher then issued on 26.02.13 with the link to the survey embedded. Again, participants were requested to forward it on to their colleagues.

The survey was also emailed to course directors of various Social Care Work areas with a request that they would forward to relevant students and alumni. It is unknown if this request was supported.

Information that was provided to the participant was relatively minimal. All surveys were issued electronically and took between 10 – 15 minutes to complete. Participants were invited specifically to take part in a study to show the relationship between burnout, work stressors, and personality factors. Participants were told that all responses were anonymous and that withdrawal at any point during completion of the questionnaire was optional. It was noted that following completion of the questionnaire that withdrawal would not be possible due to the anonymity of responses. Contact details were provided for the researcher and also for the researcher's supervisor at Dublin Business School (DBS). In the event that negative feelings were roused during completion of the tests the number for the Samaritans was provided. Participants were informed that they could obtain a copy of the analysis of the results by emailing the researcher. There were no additional incentives for people to complete the tests.

Data was collected (n= 93) via a google docs survey template designed by the researcher. The results from this were then transposed in to Excel Version 2010 before being further transposed in to SPSS, version 18.0 software.

Of the 93 responses, eight subjects were removed from the study, resulting in data reported on from 85 participants. Six respondents ticked the box to say that their role did not meet with the criteria of a SCW as outlined in the definition. The remaining two participants (participants 51 and 52) selected the same response to all questions regardless of scoring, for example, they answered 'never' to all items on the Maslach Burnout Inventory, so therefore the quality of this data was questionable to the author and was therefore removed.

5. Results

The results of the current study consist of an analysis of the relationships between the measured variables of work stressors, personality, length of service and burnout among the sample. This is done through a series of descriptive and inferential statistics based on the outcomes of the hypothesis discussed earlier.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 (see page 33) outlines both the descriptive statistics from the demographic, work-related and education-related responses of the participants. Of the total of 85 participants, the majority of participants were female (n=64). Participants were mainly single (n = 36).

Table 1 also shows the breakdown of work related factors. Participants mainly worked in a full time capacity 45.9%. Front line staff (n=61) made up the majority of responses with the remainder being in a direct line management position. The length of employment tenure in the area was low with the majority working in the profession for 5 years or less.

Table 1 *Descriptive statistics of basic demographic information and of Work-Related Factors*

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Male	21	24.7
Female	64	75.3
Age		
18 – 25	20	23.5
26 – 35	44	51.8
36 – 45	17	20
46 - 55	4	4.7
Marital Status		
Single	36	42.4
In a long term relationship	17	20
Married	30	35.3
Divorced	2	2.4
Dependents		
Yes	62	72.9
No	23	27.1
Number of Hours Worked		
10 – 19 Hours per week	7	8.2
20 – 29 Hours per week	9	10.6
30 – 38 Hours per week	30	35.3
39 Hours per week or more	39	45.9
Length of Service		
Two years or under*	19	22.4
3 – 5 Years	33	38.8
6 – 10 Years	16	18.8
11 – 15 years	9	10.6
16 – 20 Years	3	3.5
Over 20 Years	5	5.9
Staffing		
Level/Responsibility		
Frontline Staff	61	71.8
Management	24	28.2
Social Care Worker		
Qualification		
Yes	53	62.4
No	32	37.6

*collapsed into smaller categories for reporting purposes

5.2 Hypothesis Testing using Inferential Statistics

This section looks at the overall scoring for both predictor and criterion variables. This is followed by a selection of independent samples t-tests, one way anovas and correlations coefficients. From those tests, those that were determined to be statistically significant were entered in to a regression model to further test for significance of predictive variables. This is done in an effort to show results related to the original hypotheses.

5.2.1 Overall Scoring

Table 2 (see page 35) presents the minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation scores on each of the scored items: Burnout (consisting of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment); Areas of Work (consisting of workload, control, reward, community, fairness, values and the overall score called Work Satisfaction) and Personality factors (consisting of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness).

None of the variables examined violated the assumptions of normality. Independent samples t-tests were undertaken to check for significance in the areas of gender, level of responsibility and also qualifications in social care work. A one way anova was conducted to test for the assumptions of hypothesis one – that people who have longer length of service will have higher degrees of burnout than those with less length of service. Pearson's correlations were conducted to examine hypotheses two, three and four. Hypothesis two, states that people who demonstrate overall worklife satisfaction will have higher degrees of burnout. Hypothesis three states that neuroticism will be positively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and negatively related to personal accomplishment.

Hypothesis four states that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness will be negatively related to emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and positively related to personal accomplishment.

Table 2 *Mean and standard deviation of burnout, areas of worklife and personality factors*

Measure	Possible Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Burnout Subscales						
Emotional Exhaustion	0 – 54	1	52	21.41	12.43	85
Depersonalisation	0 – 30	0	19	4.33	4.58	85
Personal Accomplishment	0 – 48	14	48	35.82	7.21	85
Areas of Work Subscales						
Workload	1 – 5	1	4.33	2.73	.86	85
Control	1 – 5	1	5	3.08	.92	85
Reward	1 – 5	1	5	3.39	1.10	85
Community	1 – 5	1.40	5	3.63	.87	85
Fairness	1 – 5	1	4.83	2.94	.89	85
Values	1 – 5	2	5	3.70	.71	85
Work satisfaction	1 – 5	1.59	4.55	3.22	.64	85
Personality Subscales						
Neuroticism	1 – 5	1.2	4.3	2.54	.73	85
Extraversion	1 – 5	2.9	4.8	3.67	.63	85
Openness	1 – 5	1.3	4.9	3.85	.54	85
Agreeableness	1 – 5	2.9	5	4.24	.46	85
Conscientiousness	1 – 5	1.6	5	4.03	.72	85

5.2.2 Relationships of Burnout to Demographic groupings

Employee burnout is a progressive psychological response to chronic work stress involving emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). In the current study it is measured using the three subscales of, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment.

5.2.2.1 Burnout and Gender

Table 3 below shows the comparison of burnout levels among males and females. There was no statistical significant difference in terms of mean scores based on gender for any of the burnout correlates.

Table 3 *Comparison of burnout correlates among males and females*

	Male	Female	One sample t-test comparison
Emotional Exhaustion	$M = 19.77, SD = 12.16$	$M = 21.95, SD = 12.57$	$t(83) = -.699, p > 0.05$ (2-tailed)
Depersonalisation	$M = 4.67, SD = 5.30$	$M = 4.22, SD = 5.29$	$t(83) = .387, p > 0.05$ (2-tailed)
Personal Accomplishment	$M = 36.33, SD = 6.51$	$M = 35.65, SD = 7.46$	$t(83) = .372, p > 0.05$ (2-tailed)

5.2.2.2 Burnout and Role Superiority

Table 4 (on page 37) shows the comparison of burnout levels among those working as line managers and those working directly on the front line. There was no statistical significant difference in terms of mean scores based on role seniority of line managers to frontline staff.

5.2.2.3 Burnout and Social Care Qualification

Table 5 (on page 37) shows there was no statistical significant difference in terms of mean scores based on whether an individual had a qualification in social care work or if they did not have a qualification in social care work.

Table 4 *Comparison of burnout correlates among those in direct line management roles and those working directly in frontline.*

	Line Manager	Frontline	One sample t-test comparison
Emotional Exhaustion	$M = 21.54, SD = 12.84$	$M = 21.36, SD = 12.38$	$t(83) = .060, p > 0.05$ (2-tailed)
Depersonalisation	$M = 4.08, SD = 3.98$	$M = 4.42, SD = 4.83$	$t(83) = -.309, p > 0.05$ (2-tailed)
Personal Accomplishment	$M = 36.00, SD = 6.75$	$M = 35.65, SD = 7.43$	$t(83) = .141, p > 0.05$ (2-tailed)

Table 5 *Comparison of burnout correlates among those with a Social Care Qualification and those with no Social Care Qualification.*

	Qualification in Social Care Work	No Qualification in Social Care Work	One sample t-test comparison
Emotional Exhaustion	$M = 21.77, SD = 12.82$	$M = 20.81, SD = 11.92$	$t(83) = .343, p > 0.05$ (2-tailed)
Depersonalisation	$M = 4.87, SD = 5.07$	$M = 3.43, SD = 3.51$	$t(83) = 1.402, p > 0.05$ (2-tailed)
Personal Accomplishment	$M = 34.84, SD = 7.86$	$M = 37.43, SD = 5.74$	$t(79.90) = -1.748, p > 0.05$ (2-tailed)

5.2.2.4 Relationship between Length of Service and Burnout Correlates

It was hypothesised that there would be higher levels of burnout amongst those with longer length of service. Length of service for data collection was done through various groups. The findings of one-way analysis of variance do not support the hypothesis. It showed that there was no significant difference between the seven age groups in terms of the

emotional exhaustion, ($F(6,78) = 1.20 = p > 0.05$) depersonalisation ($F(6,78) = 0.67 = p > 0.05$) or personal accomplishment ($F(6,78) = 1.94 = p > 0.05$).

Table 6 shows information pertaining to the correlation between burnout and length of service. The present results showed there was no significant relationship found between any of the burnout outputs, EE, DP and PA when a correlation test was run with the length of service ($r = .175, p > 0.05$, 2-tailed).

Table 6 *Correlations between Burnout and Length of service.*

Predictor	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalisation	Personal Accomplishment
Length of Service	.138	.118	-.105

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

5.2.3 Relationships of Burnout to Areas of Work

Table 7 (see page 40) shows results of tests for Pearson's correlations for all burnout correlates (emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment) and areas of worklife.

5.2.3.1 Emotional Exhaustion and Areas of Work

Work satisfaction is the total score for areas of worklife. A test for correlation (see table 5) shows that there were significant relationships in each of the individual domains for emotional exhaustion and areas of work. This showed a strong negative significant relationship with EE ($r = .645, p < 0.05$, 2-tailed).

5.2.3.2 *Depersonalisation and Areas of Work*

In a Pearson's correlation coefficient test (see table 5) there was a weak negative significant relationship between DP and workload ($r = -.215, p < 0.01, 2\text{-tailed}$), a weak negative significant relationship between DP and reward ($r = -.238, p < 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$), and a weak negative significant relationship between DP and fairness ($r = -.253, p < 0.01, 2\text{-tailed}$).

There was a moderate negative significant relationship between DP and the total work satisfaction score ($r = -.305, p < 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$).

However, the relationship between DP and control and values were not found to be significant with results of the correlation between DP and control ($r = .155, p > 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$) and values ($r = -.180, p > 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$).

5.2.3.3 *Personal Accomplishment and Areas of Work*

In a test of correlations there was a weak positive significant relationship between PA and control ($r = .290, p < 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$), a moderate positive significant relationship between PA and reward ($r = .335, p < 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$), a moderate positive significant relationship between PA and community ($r = .344, p < 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$), a weak positive significant relationship between PA and fairness ($r = .286, p < 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$), and a moderate positive significant relationship between PA and values ($r = .322, p < 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$).

The overall total score for worklife, 'work satisfaction', showed a moderate positive significant relationship between PA and work satisfaction ($r = .366, p < 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$).

There was no significant relationship found between Personal Accomplishment and workload ($r = .080, p > 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$).

Table 7 *Correlations between Burnout and Worklife Areas*

Predictor	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalisation	Personal Accomplishment
Areas of worklife			
Subscale			
Workload	-.745**	-.215*	.080
Control	-.368**	-.155	.290**
Reward	-.394**	-.238**	.335**
Community	-.396**	-.261*	.344**
Fairness	-.482**	-.253*	.286**
Values	-.330**	-.180	.322**
Work Satisfaction	-.645**	-.305**	.366**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

5.2.4 *Correlates of Burnout and Personality Factors*

Table 8 (see page 41) shows results of tests for correlations for all burnout correlates and personality factors.

5.2.4.1 *Emotional Exhaustion and Personality Factors*

In a test of correlations it was found that there was a strong positive significant relationship between EE and neuroticism ($r = .522$, $p < 0.05$, 2-tailed).

The relationship between EE and the other areas of personality were not found to be significant where extraversion ($r = -.210$, $p > 0.05$, 2-tailed), openness ($r = 0.057$, $p > 0.05$, 2-tailed), agreeableness ($r = -.181$, $p > 0.05$, 2-tailed), and conscientiousness ($r = -.128$, $p > 0.05$, 2-tailed).

Thus, those who scored high in neuroticism also scored high in emotional exhaustion.

5.2.4.2 Depersonalisation and Personality factors

In a test of correlations with respect to personality and depersonalisation, there was a moderate negative significant relationship between DP and agreeableness ($r = -.433$, $p < 0.05$, 2-tailed) and also with conscientiousness ($r = -.461$, $p < 0.05$, 2-tailed).

This shows that amongst the social care worker population that when the stable personality factors of agreeableness and conscientiousness are high then they are less likely to depersonalise their clients.

5.2.4.3 Personal Accomplishment and Personality factors

In a test of correlations there was a weak positive significant relationship between PA and extraversion ($r = .279$, $p < 0.05$, 2-tailed), a moderate positive significant relationship, a moderate positive significant relationship between PA and agreeableness ($r = .327$, $p < 0.05$, 2-tailed), and a moderate positive significant relationship between PA and conscientiousness ($r = .371$, $p < 0.05$, 2-tailed)

Table 8 *Correlations between Burnout and Personality Factors*

Predictor	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalisation	Personal Accomplishment
Personality Subscales			
Neuroticism	.522**	.175	-.141
Extraversion	-.210	-.037	.279**
Openness	.057	.089	.134
Agreeableness	-.181	-.433**	.327**
Conscientiousness	-.128	-.461**	.371**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

5.2.5 Regression Models for Significant Correlates

As identified above, independent samples t-tests did not show any significance in the areas of gender, management position or indeed qualification in social care work and burnout. A one way anova showed that there was not statistical significance pertaining to length of service and burnout. Therefore, these were not given consideration for the regression process.

A regression model was undertaken for each component of burnout that was identified as significant through the Pearson's Correlations tests.

The regression coefficients table for the final models are presented below. The assumptions for using regression were checked and confirmed i.e. the criterion variable was always continuous; the Mahalanobis' distance values indicated there were no substantial outliers; the residual scores were normally distributed and not related to the predicted values; and tolerance values did not exceed 0.2, indicating that there was no multi-collinearity.

5.2.5.1 Emotional Exhaustion

A linear regression (see table 9 on page 43) was undertaken between eight predictor variables that were shown to be significant when correlated with emotional exhaustion. This was to establish if there was any effect on emotional exhaustion. Following four regressions, the final regression model explained 62.9% of the variance in EE scores. The variance is explained in the Beta values.

However, only workload and values show a significant relationship to account for the most variance in EE. The largest variance in emotional exhaustion scores was explained by

better management of workload. As a workload management strategy increased scores on emotional exhaustion decreased. While not quite as strong, a similar situation was noted with values. This indicates that if the person's values are deemed to be incongruent to the work/organisational strategy then emotional exhaustion will increase.

Table 9 *Regression Model with Emotional Exhaustion*

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients		
4	(Constant)	55.314	7.712		7.172	.0001
	Workload	-8.698	1.180	-.603	-7.372	.0001
	Community	-1.822	1.072	-.128	-1.700	.093
	Values	-2.711	1.289	-.154	-2.104	.039
	Neuroticism	2.554	1.367	.150	1.868	.065

a. Dependent Variable Emotional Exhaustion
R squared = .629, Adjusted R squared = .611

5.2.5.2 *Depersonalisation*

A linear regression (see table 10 on page 44) was undertaken between six predictor variables that were shown to be significant when correlated with depersonalisation. This was to establish if there was any effect on depersonalisation (DP). Following three regressions, the final model explained 32.1% of the variance in DP scores. However, only the area of conscientiousness was shown to be significant.

Conscientiousness was shown to have a negatively correlated relationship with depersonalisation showing that higher scores on conscientiousness will be indicative of lower levels of depersonalisation.

There were no statistically significant areas of the work life subscales shown to be related to depersonalisation.

Table 10 *Regression Model with Depersonalisation*

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
3	(Constant)	26.603	4.093		6.500	.000
	Community	-.605	.565	-.115	-1.071	.287
	Fairness	-.835	.565	-.161	-1.479	.143
	Agreeableness	-2.061	1.091	-.207	-1.890	.062
	Conscientiousness	-2.210	.686	-.348	-3.221	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Depersonalisation
R squared = .321, Adjusted R squared = .288

5.2.5.3 Personal Accomplishment

A linear regression (see table 11, page 45) was undertaken between eight predictor variables to establish the effect on Personal Accomplishment. The final regression model explained 31.4% of the variance in PA scores. As with depersonalisation, only the conscientiousness subscale was found to be significant. Conscientiousness was shown to have a strong positive relationship indicating that those with higher scores in conscientiousness are most like to also have feelings of personal accomplishment.

There were no statistically significant areas of the work life subscales shown to be related to personal accomplishment.

Table 11 *Regression Model with Personal Accomplishment*

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
2	(Constant)	-.267	7.284		-.037	.971
	Reward	.944	.889	.144	1.062	.292
	Control	.042	1.009	.005	.042	.967
	Community Values	1.177	.978	.143	1.204	.232
	Extraversion	1.342	1.113	.132	1.205	.232
	Agreeableness	1.847	1.137	.161	1.624	.108
	Conscientiousness	1.472	1.761	.094	.836	.406
		2.613	1.107	.262	2.361	.021

a. Dependent Variable: Personal Accomplishment

R squared = .314, Adjusted R squared = .252

6. Discussion

6.1 Aims

The current study sought to examine the relationships between personality, various specific work domains and burnout amongst the Social Care Worker population in Ireland. The transactional model of stress (Lazarus and Folkman, 1987) and research specifically associated to burnout in the human services was used to frame the specific research questions. These relate to the antecedent factors of the stress response and their outcomes.

These included:

1. Do people who have longer length of service in social care work have higher degrees of burnout than those with less length of service?
2. Do people who demonstrate poorer worklife satisfaction will have a higher degree of burnout?
3. Is the personality characteristic, neuroticism, positively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation?
4. Is the personality characteristic, neuroticism, negatively related to personal accomplishment?
5. Are the personality characteristics of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness negatively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation?
6. Are the personality characteristics of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness positively related to personal accomplishment?

The following section provides some observations on the context of the research and includes a discussion on each hypothesis and the implications of these results. The

penultimate section of the discussion outlines strengths and limitations of the research before a high level conclusion is formed.

6.2 Context of Research

This research was undertaken in an era of both change and great uncertainty for those in the social care work profession. These changes and uncertainties may account for some of the influences in the current study that may indeed cause heightened emotional feelings for those involved in this field at this time. Some changes relate to the higher rates of new staff entering the profession with qualifications specific to social care work. There are also many changes in the arena that are commonplace across many services in Ireland due to the recent downturn in the economy. This includes the terms of employment structures that now see fewer jobs advertised, shorter term contracts, less hours and lower wages than has been the case in previous years. There is also less opportunity for promotion with services. Without a definition or legal basis for social care worker qualifications in Ireland this trend is unlikely to change.

6.3 Summary of Main Findings

6.3.1 Hypothesis 1 - Length of service and burnout

The results do not support the hypothesis that those who have longer length of service will have higher degrees of burnout than those with less length of service. The results show that there was no significant difference between the seven different age categories recorded in terms of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation or personal accomplishment.

There are a number of possibilities as to why the hypothesis was not supported. A review of the data shows that the majority of respondents (60.12%) have been working in the services for up to five years and only 5.9% of the respondents for over 20 years. This implies an imbalance to highlight any significant relationships.

In addition, there is the concept of 'survival bias' discussed by Shaufeli and Enzmann (1998) whereby those who are burnt out actually retire from the services. This would leave only those not subject to burn out in the data collected.

6.3.2 Hypothesis 2 – Overall work satisfaction and burnout

It is hypothesised that people who demonstrate poorer overall work satisfaction will have a higher degree of burnout. This research supports this hypothesis in relation to all three burnout correlates. The findings for total score for work satisfaction indicate that as work satisfaction increases levels of emotional exhaustion decrease. Also, findings from this study show that as total work satisfaction increased depersonalisation of client group was less likely. The third correlate of burnout showed that as total work satisfaction increased so too did the feelings of personal accomplishment of the social care worker. This supports the findings of Penn, Romano and Font (1988) who reported that in human services job satisfaction was inversely related to experiences of burnout.

6.3.3 Hypotheses 3 and 4 – Personality Factors and Burnout

For discussion purposes hypotheses 3 and 4 shall be discussed in tandem. Based on the results of the regressions that were undertaken it is not sufficient to discuss any of these findings in a silo.

The results of the initial correlations support the hypothesis that neuroticism is positively related to emotional exhaustion but does not support the suggestion that it is related positively to depersonalisation or negatively to personal accomplishment.

The results also do not support the hypothesis that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness will be negatively related to emotional exhaustion. It does support that agreeableness and conscientiousness are negatively correlated to depersonalisation, and that extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness are positively related to personal accomplishment.

This contradicts the earlier findings of Bakker, Van der Zee, Lewig, and Dollard (2006) who stated neuroticism showed some variance in all three dimensions of burnout. Neuroticism here includes people who tend to worry about things and not those who are neurotic in the clinical sense of the word. The findings do however, in part, support the later findings of Swider and Zimmerman (2010) who reported that neuroticism has the strongest relationship with emotional exhaustion than any of the other traits. Swider and Zimmerman (2010) however, also reported that neuroticism had a strong relationship to depersonalisation than the other big five. This does not correspond with the findings of the current study.

At this juncture it is important to note the criticisms of Swider and Zimmerman (2010) weighted against those who undertake research into burnout with a sole focus on either personality areas or organisational factors. The findings from the regression models show significance in overall burnout against both personality and work area factors. There were some noteworthy trends also.

The regression model with emotional exhaustion revealed that as the successful management of workload increased, emotional exhaustion correspondingly decreased. This is by far the largest beta value and the most significant. Therefore, we can say that the single most important influence on emotional exhaustion is the employees' workload. However, there are other important ingredients that help buffer people against the effects of emotional exhaustion. The more a person's values, or beliefs and self efficacy, are congruent to that of the work they undertake, the less emotionally exhausted they will become.

Both neuroticism and community also identified trends worthy of mention as predictive variables of emotional exhaustion. As aforementioned, an individual who scores high in neuroticism is more likely to be predisposed to emotional exhaustion. The notion of community, that sense of social support among colleagues which is often at the fore of discussion in terms of human services, is shown in this sample to mediate against feelings of emotional exhaustion. This supports findings of Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) who noted strong correlations between neuroticism and burnout.

The regression model shows that depersonalisation is most prominently influenced by the personality construct of conscientiousness. This indicates that a person who is organised and plans things well is less likely to host feelings that may depersonalise the service users that they support. This may indeed reflect the specific nature of the role of the support worker in that often they have to organise things for the individuals they support. This is an interesting finding and corresponds with the work of Zellars, Perrewe, Hochwarter and Anderson (2006) who stated that the combination of high positive affect and high levels of conscientiousness were associated with lower levels of all strain variables of burnout, including depersonalisation. It must be remarked, however, that conscientiousness did not

feature as a significant correlate at any stage of this study in relation to emotional exhaustion. This is particularly relevant to the findings of the regression model in relation to personal accomplishment too, which will be discussed presently. Although two areas of work life, community and fairness, made the final regression model, it is noteworthy that only agreeableness provided any additional trend for the variance found in depersonalisation. Those who score high on agreeableness are generally trusting, helpful and empathetic in social interactions. Due to the nature of the role of the Social Care Worker and the constant level of interaction either directly with the client or on behalf of the client it is useful to note this trend in personality characteristic.

The final area for discussion is that of personal accomplishment. The final model of the regression showed that there is much larger variance found between social care workers who score high on conscientiousness than on any other factor in relation to having feelings of personal accomplishment. It is interesting that there are no significant factors from the areas of work that can explain the variance in personal accomplishment. This suggests, unlike the caution of Swider and Zimmermann (2010), that personality and predisposition plays a much larger role in development of feelings of personal accomplishment than do any of the work-related or demographic factors.

6.4 Limitations and implications for future research

There are a number of weaknesses to be acknowledged within the current study but it also provides a platform for further research in the area. Firstly, there was a relatively small sample size and the fact that participants come largely from a convenience sample drawn from organisations accessible to the researcher may have had some undue influence on the profile of the respondents. This is most obvious by the large number of respondents who provide services in the intellectual disability sector.

Other issues also pertain to the sample that was drawn. The age profile of the sample was relatively young in terms of overall career years and the majority of respondents were not in service for more than five years. This may be a reflection of the use of the ‘assistant psychology’ target group whose main focus is to enter in the realms of clinical psychology and are therefore generally at the start of their career. It may also be reflective of the fact that the survey was only issued electronically. Because of the nature of the survey, there was no control over the quality of the sample. It would be useful for future research to include an option of a paper and pen survey for those who do not use technology and to have a more targeted approach at attracting participants with longer years of service and also a wider range of organisations providing social care services.

In relation to demographic information, it would have been useful to split the question pertaining to area of service in to two different questions, one for service specific related to the needs of client, i.e. autism and one for the age range of the client i.e. child/adult. While the option was available for people to choose more than one item, people in many cases did not. For example, a person working with children with autism may have chosen the ‘autism’ category or the ‘children’ category but people in some instances did not choose both.

There were also some slight technical drawbacks associated with the online survey method. The email distribution to many participants did not go straight to the individual’s inbox but rather ended up in their spam email. This issue was not discovered until after the survey had closed. This could have had an impact on the sample size. It could have been avoided by using a different more authenticated approach to the use of email.

This study has however provided a good foundation for further work in terms of social care work and stressors. To expand upon it, research in to the area of coping strategies employed by social care workers could provide an interesting adjunct. A further area to consider also would be a comparison of the United Kingdom's equivalent of social care workers, known as support workers. Less emphasis is requested on job advertisements for a recognised qualification in social care work in the UK and also the pay is considerably less for comparable roles. In the UK support workers are expected to have the skills to work with the same kinds of challenging client groups as Irish social care workers. This could make for an interesting comparison.

6.5 Recommendations

Based on the research above, the single most influential factor pertaining to emotional exhaustion is that of management of the workload for the social care worker. There are practical implications here for organisations and human resources to heed this warning. Organisations aiming to reduce likelihood of burnout amongst their employees should consider what supports can be put in place both individually and organisationally to mitigate against this being a stressor. Any interventions put in place to decrease levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and to increase levels of personal accomplishment should be tested for impact through use of before and after surveys with social care workers.

6.6 Conclusions

Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) transactional model of stress notes that there are many antecedents to stress and following various cognitive appraisal techniques and mediations, there are many outcomes, including burnout. This study looked at specific areas of work and personality factors as antecedents to the burnout outcome. It has demonstrated that in social

care workers that the most significant antecedents relating to the emotional exhaustion outcome pertains to the values and expectations of the individual and its congruency with their work. This is closely followed in work terms by a strong sense of community. The personality trait of neuroticism is also influential in the emotional exhaustion process. Depersonalisation and personal accomplishment are both influenced by the levels of conscientiousness of the social care worker. These two correlates of burnout are not shown to be significantly predicted by any of the work-related variables. This study has also demonstrated that length of service does not correlate to levels of burnout on any of the outcome measures of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation or personal accomplishment.

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Appendix A Battery of tests

Please note that these appendices contain information that was presented to participants via a google document online survey.

Demographic Information

Gender

Age

Nationality

Average hours worked per week

Length of employment as Social Care Worker

Line Management or Frontline Staff

Marital Status

Number of Dependents

Social Care Work Qualification

Highest level of qualification in general

Highest level of qualification in Social Care Work

Main area of work e.g. Day service, residential service.

Main population of service users in area of work e.g. Intellectual Disability, Autism.

Areas of Worklife Survey

Please use the following rating scale to indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree (1) Disagree (2) Hard to Decide (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree (5)

		SD 1	D 2	Hard 3	A 4	SA 5
1	I do not have time					
2	I work intensely					
3	After work I come home					
4	I have so much work to do on the job					
5	I have enough					
6	I leave my work behind					
7	I have control					
8	I can influence management					
9	I have professional					
10	I receive my work					
11	My work					
12	My efforts					
13	I do not get					
14	People trust one another					
15	I am a member					
16	Members of my work					
17	Members of my work					
18	I don't feel					
19	Resources are here					
20	Opportunities are merit					
21	There are effective appeal					
22	Management treats all					
23	Favouritism determines					
24	It's not what you know					
25	My values					
26	The organization's					
27	My personal career goals					
28	This organization					
29	Working here forces					

Big Five Inventory.

The following items ask about you and how you relate to others. When you are responding to each item think about how you behave and respond in general. You may be able to think of specific examples of where you have behaved in different ways but try to respond by thinking about how, on balance, you would tend to respond.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I often feel blue. I feel comfortable around people. I believe in the importance of art. I have a good word for everyone. I am always prepared. I dislike myself. I make friends easily. I have a vivid imagination. I believe that others have good intentions. I pay attention to details. I am often down in the dumps. I am skilled in handling social situations. I tend to vote for liberal political candidates. I respect others. I get chores done right away. I have frequent mood swings. I am the life of the party. I carry the conversation to a higher level. I accept people as they are. I carry out my plans. I panic easily. I know how to captivate people. I enjoy hearing new ideas. I make people feel at ease. I make plans and stick to them. I rarely get irritated. I have little to say. I am not interested in abstract ideas. I have a sharp tongue. I waste my time. I seldom feel blue. I keep in the background. I do not like art. I cut others to pieces. I find it difficult to get down to work. I feel comfortable with myself. I would describe my experiences as somewhat dull. I avoid philosophical discussions. I suspect hidden motives in others. I do just enough work to get by. I am not easily bothered by things. I don't like to draw attention to myself. I do not enjoy going to art museums. I get back at others. I don't see things through. I am very pleased with myself. I don't talk a lot.					

I tend to vote for conservative political candidates.					
I insult people.					
I shirk my duties.					