5-8-2024

Investigating Burnout and Compassion Fatigue Among Dog Trainers and Behaviorists

Alexandra Malone
Walden University

Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Alexandra Malone

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Donna Heretick, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Matthew Howren, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2024

Abstract

Investigating Burnout and Compassion Fatigue Among Dog Trainers and Behaviorists

by

Alexandra Malone

MS, Anthrozoology, 2023

MS, Walden University, 2008

BS, Northwestern State University, 2006

MBA, Instituto de Novas Profissões, 1991

BSBA, Instituto de Novas Profissões, 1989

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Health Psychology

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

The prevalence of dog trainers and behaviorists experiencing burnout and compassion fatigue is a growing concern within the profession. These professionals face various challenges, such as exposure to traumatic cases and emotional pressures from clients, leading to emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction. The lack of literature addressing this issue necessitates investigating specific actions contributing to burnout and compassion fatigue within the profession. This study explored the influence of years of experience on burnout and the potential relationship between burnout and the aggression levels of dogs being trained, and how compassion fatigue moderates the relationship between years of experience and burnout and the relationship between dog aggression levels and burnout were examined. Eighty-six professional dog trainers/behaviorists completed the Professional Quality of Life Measure. Although in the predicted direction, the results of this study did not significantly support the prediction that compassion fatigue moderates the relationship between either the bite level of dog or years of experience of the trainer with burnout among dog trainers. Recognizing these professionals' unique challenges and implementing strategies to reduce burnout will create a healthier and more sustainable environment for dog trainers, ultimately enhancing positive social change through the well-being of humans and their canine companions.

Investigating Burnout and Compassion Fatigue Among Dog Trainers and Behaviorists

by

Alexandra Malone

MS, Anthrozoology, 2023

MS, Walden University, 2008

BS, Northwestern State University, 2006

MBA, Instituto de Novas Profissões, 1991

BSBA, Instituto de Novas Profissões, 1989

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Health Psychology

Walden University

May 2024

Acknowledgments

I want to express my profound gratitude to Dr. Heretick and Dr. Howren for their invaluable guidance and support throughout my doctoral research journey. Their unwavering dedication and expertise steered me through the complexities of this academic endeavor and significantly contributed to reaching this pivotal milestone.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my husband for his unshakeable support, patience, and encouragement throughout this academic journey. His steadfast belief in my abilities has been a constant source of inspiration.

I sincerely appreciate my beloved canine companions, who have gracefully endured the reduction in our playtime together as I dedicated countless hours to completing this dissertation. Their constant companionship and unconditional love provided solace and motivation during moments of academic challenge. I am profoundly grateful for their patience throughout this journey.

Additionally, I appreciate Walden University for providing the platform and resources that enabled me to pursue and advance my studies. Their commitment to academic excellence and dedication to fostering scholarly growth have shaped my research goals.

Table of Contents

In Chapter 5, I will discuss the findings and limitations of this study and provide

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background

A day in the life of a dog trainer includes many emotional states, from satisfaction from helping a dog at risk for behavioral euthanasia to disappointment over the inability to help another dog escape a life of neglect. The work of a dog trainer involves providing behavioral services to animals in need of training and coaching humans on the most humane ways to train and care for the welfare of their dogs. In many cases, the satisfaction of providing help to the dog and their human is the reward that fulfills the day; in some cases, the result could be more positive, leaving the dog trainer with a void that can linger for a while. This rollercoaster of emotions, if not balanced, can lead to work stress and compassion fatigue (Rohlf, 2018).

Over several decades, extensive research on trauma has focused on the distress experienced by professionals engaged in providing care for humans. This body of literature explores the various health implications associated with human service work and employs a range of concepts to address these effects. These concepts include vicarious traumatization, secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout (Abendroth & Figley, 2013; Aronsson et al., 2017; Bride et al., 2007; Cieslak et al., 2014; Maslach et al., 2001). Figley (1995) introduced the term "compassion fatigue" to describe the stress experienced by individuals in caring professions, defining it as a combination of the symptoms of burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Burnout, a term coined by Freudenberger (1974), is described as a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to emotionally demanding situations. This

exhaustion often results from chronic interpersonal stressors in the workplace (Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2008) and encompasses three dimensions: exhaustion, cynicism, and a sense of inefficacy (Maslach, 2003).

Research has recently shed light on compassion fatigue among animal care professionals, including veterinarians, veterinary nurses, veterinary technicians, and animal shelter employees (Figley & Roop, 2006; Monaghan et al., 2020; Rohlf, 2018). Expanding this line of research to dog trainers and behaviorists is crucial to understanding the effect of burnout and compassion fatigue in this area of animal care. I investigated whether compassion fatigue moderates the connection between two key factors: the aggression levels of dogs undergoing training and the trainers' years of experience. Specifically, I sought to understand how compassion fatigue impacts the relationship between these predictors and the experience of burnout among trainers and behaviorists who specialize in providing obedience and aggression training for dogs.

I begin the chapter by introducing the problem statement, the study's purpose, and the research hypotheses. Additionally, I provide an overview of the theoretical framework and the study's scope and elucidate the defining principles. Finally, I address the study's assumptions and delimitations, limitations, and social importance.

Problem Statement

The situation or issue that prompted me to search the literature is the prevalence of dog trainers requesting moral support or confiding with other trainers about their difficulties in addressing specific issues in professional groups to which I belong. These professionals divulge that they have difficulty coping with exposure to traumatic cases, long working hours and high workloads, lack of support and recognition, emotional demands, client expectations, and even lack of boundaries and self-care. Dog trainers frequently encounter traumatic cases involving abused, neglected, or aggressive dogs. Constant exposure to such distressing situations can gradually erode trainers' emotional resilience, leading to compassion fatigue. They often face long working hours and high workloads, which can be physically and mentally draining.

The pressure to meet clients' expectations and achieve training goals within tight schedules can contribute to burnout. A lack of support and recognition within the profession can contribute to feelings of isolation and disengagement, further exacerbating compassion fatigue and burnout. Trainers may not receive the support they need from colleagues, supervisors, or employers, leading to emotional exhaustion. Dog trainers often face high emotional demands from clients, who may be experiencing frustration, anxiety, or distress related to their dogs' behavior. These emotional pressures, combined with clients' sometimes unrealistic expectations, can lead to emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction.

Many dog trainers are passionate about their work, but this dedication can lead to a lack of personal boundaries and neglect of self-care. Constantly prioritizing the needs of dogs and clients over their well-being can lead to burnout. The subject has become unique because, as a behavior consultant and dog trainer, I have experienced some of the challenges these other trainers have faced. After conducting online research on the subject, I found little to no literature addressing it. It is imperative to address specific actions that can contribute to compassion fatigue and burnout within the profession. By recognizing the impact of exposure to traumatic cases, managing workloads, providing support and recognition, addressing emotional demands, and promoting self-care, a healthier and more sustainable environment for dog trainers can be fostered, which in turn, will enable them to continue positively impacting the lives of dogs and their owners.

Purpose of the Study

I investigated compassion fatigue as a moderator between years in service and the behavior level of dogs (aggressive/not aggressive) and burnout among dog trainers and behaviorists. The independent variables are years of service and the behavior level of dogs. The dependent variable is burnout. Compassion fatigue serves as the moderating variable. This study offers a different perspective from the current research on animal care professions by expanding the research to an overlooked professional group that extensively works with animals.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In this study, I answered the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between burnout and years of experience on the job

among trainers and behaviorists who offer training services for dogs, specifically in obedience training and aggression training?

$H_0 1$: Burnout will not vary with years of experience on the job among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

$H_a 1$: Burnout will vary with years of experience on the job among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs, being higher for those with more years of experience.

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the level of burnout and the aggression levels of target dogs among trainers and behaviorists who offer training services for dogs, specifically in obedience training and dog aggression training?

$H_0 2$: Burnout will not vary among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and dog aggression training for dogs in relation to the aggression levels of target dogs.

$H_a 2$: Burnout will vary among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and dog aggression training for dogs in relation to the aggression levels of target dogs.

RQ3: Does compassion fatigue moderate the relationship between years of experience on the job and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and dog aggression training?

$H_0 3$: Compassion fatigue does not moderate the relationship between years of experience and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and

aggression training for dogs.

H_a3: Compassion fatigue does moderate the relationship between years of experience and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

RQ4:   Does compassion fatigue moderate the relationship between the aggression level of dogs to be trained and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs?

H_04: Compassion fatigue does not moderate the relationship between the aggression level of dogs to be trained and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

H_a4: Compassion fatigue does moderate the relationship between the aggression level of dogs to be trained and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

RQ5:   Does compassion fatigue moderate the relationship between two predictors, aggression level of dogs being trained and years of experience of the trainers, and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs?

H_05: Compassion fatigue does not moderate the relationship between two predictors, aggression level of dogs being trained and years of experience of the trainers, and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

H_a5: Compassion fatigue does moderate the relationship between two predictors: aggression level of dogs being trained and years of experience of the trainers, and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

Conceptual Framework

Figley's (1995) model of compassion fatigue is the framework for this study. The model focuses on the experiences of mental health professionals and trauma workers exposed to the emotional content of individuals who have endured traumatic events. Figley discovered that professionals who maintain empathy when working with traumatized individuals are particularly susceptible to compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue can diminish one's capacity to empathize with others' suffering, leading to adverse psychological outcomes like depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and insomnia (Figley, 2002).

Nature of the Study

This study employed a randomized experimental design with correlational elements and an emphasis on quantitative analysis. I used a quantitative approach through an internet survey distributed to professional dog training associations and groups and convenience sampling methods, ensuring a sufficient sample size for variable measurement. I also employed a correlational design for Research Questions 1 and 2. For the first research question, I conducted a Pearson correlation to assess the association between burnout and years of job experience among dog trainers and behavior consultants. Similarly, for the second question, a Pearson correlation was used to explore

the connection between burnout and the aggression level of the dogs targeted by dog trainers and behavior consultants. The third and fourth questions investigated compassion fatigue as a moderating factor in the relationships examined in the first two questions. The fifth question investigated if compassion fatigue moderates the connection between two key factors: the aggression levels of dogs undergoing training and the years of experience of the trainers, and the experience of burnout among trainers and behaviorists specializing in obedience and aggression training for dogs.

Definitions

Burnout: Reaction to extended exposure to challenging interpersonal circumstances, marked by symptoms of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (cynicism), and diminished personal achievement or disengagement from work (Maslach et al., 2001).

Compassion Fatigue: Refers to a formal caregiver's diminished capacity or inclination to be empathetic or to share in the emotional burden of their clients, and it includes the behavioral and emotional responses that naturally arise when one is exposed to or aware of a traumatic event experienced or endured by another person (Figley, 1995a).

Compassion Satisfaction: Social workers experience Positive and fulfilling feelings when genuinely caring and empathizing with those in distress. The key is maintaining a positive attitude, building resources for managing stress, including compassion stress, and prioritizing self-care (Radey & Figley, 2007).

Secondary Traumatic Stress: Inherent behavioral and emotional outcomes stemming from an awareness of a traumatic event experienced by someone close. It represents the stress that arises from assisting or desiring to assist an individual who has undergone trauma or is suffering (Figley, 1995b, 1995a).

Stress: The body's predictable and nonspecific reaction to the demands imposed upon it (Goodnite, 2014).

Assumptions

The first assumption is that dog trainers and behaviorists experience burnout and compassion fatigue from working with dogs with behavioral problems. Another assumption is that working with aggressive dogs can increase burnout in dog trainers and behavior consultants. I assumed that participants provided honest and accurate responses. Furthermore, there will likely be a satisfactory response rate that aligns with the chosen power analysis. An extra assumption entailed that the instruments used accurately measure the intended attributes.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused on positive reinforcement dog trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience and aggressive dog training. The results of this study may expand knowledge on the effects of burnout on dog trainers and behaviorists and the moderating effect of compassion fatigue on the aggression levels of dogs trained and experience level of trainers and burnout. I used convenience sampling, which excludes dog trainers and behaviorists who use methods other than positive reinforcement.

Limitations

This study has limitations. By using convenience sampling, I exclude part of the dog training community that uses methods other than positive reinforcement, which may lead to only generalizable results for some dog trainers and behaviorists. Another potential limitation is the difficulty of recruiting participants for the data collection. The dog training community is predominantly female; therefore, the study may be limited by the participants' gender, which may also lead to a lack of generalization to all genders.

Significance of the Study

This study can increase awareness of how burnout and compassion fatigue affect the well-being of dog trainers and behaviorists. These professionals interact not only with other animals but also with the humans who care for them. These challenges include dealing with traumatic cases, long working hours, high workloads, a lack of support and recognition, emotional demands from clients, and neglect of self-care. This study is unique because it stems from the need for more existing literature. Addressing these issues is crucial for the well-being of dog trainers and the welfare of the animals they work with and the clients they serve. By identifying specific actions and strategies to mitigate compassion fatigue and burnout, such as managing workloads, providing support, and promoting self-care, the study aims to create a healthier and more sustainable environment for dog trainers, enabling them to continue positively impacting the lives of dogs and their owners.

Summary

In this chapter, I identify the study's significance and provide background information on the articles' findings that, although not directly focused on compassion fatigue and burnout in dog trainers and behaviorists, laid a foundation for my study design. I investigated the potential impact of compassion fatigue on the relationship between two critical factors: The aggression levels of dogs undergoing training and the trainers' years of experience. The nature of the study is characterized by a quantitative approach, relying on an internet survey distributed to relevant professional groups and associations.

The chapter also includes the definitions, assumptions, scope, and delimitations of the study, along with the study's limitations and significance. In Chapter 2, I focus on the outcomes of my examination of peer-reviewed research and identify the research gap that motivated my study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this study, I aimed to explore the role of workload in dog trainers' abilities to cope with burnout and compassion fatigue. Within dog trainers' professional groups, there is a noticeable trend where dog trainers seek moral support or engage in conversations with their peers to discuss their challenges when dealing with specific issues. These professionals confide that they have difficulty coping with exposure to traumatic cases, long working hours and high workloads, lack of support and recognition, emotional demands, client expectations, and even lack of boundaries and self-care. Dog trainers frequently encounter traumatic cases involving abused, neglected, or aggressive dogs. Constant exposure to such distressing situations can gradually erode trainers' emotional resilience, leading to compassion fatigue. They often face long working hours and high workloads, which can be physically and mentally draining.

The pressure to meet clients' expectations and achieve training goals within tight schedules can contribute to burnout. A lack of support and recognition within the profession can contribute to feelings of isolation and disengagement, further exacerbating compassion fatigue and burnout. Trainers may not receive the support they need from colleagues, supervisors, or employers, leading to emotional exhaustion. Dog trainers often face high emotional demands from clients, who may be experiencing frustration, anxiety, or distress related to their dogs' behavior. These emotional pressures, combined with clients' sometimes unrealistic expectations, can lead to emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction.

Many dog trainers are passionate about their work, but this dedication can lead to a lack of personal boundaries and neglect of self-care. Constantly prioritizing the needs of dogs and clients over their well-being can lead to burnout. The subject has become unique because, as a behavior consultant and dog trainer, I have experienced some of the challenges these other trainers have faced. After conducting online research on the subject, I found little to no literature addressing it. It is crucial to address specific actions that have the potential to foster compassion fatigue and burnout within the profession. By recognizing the impact of exposure to traumatic cases, managing workloads, providing support and recognition, addressing emotional demands, and promoting self-care, we can foster a healthier and more sustainable environment for dog trainers. These actions, in turn, will enable them to continue positively impacting the lives of dogs and their owners.

Compassion fatigue and burnout within helping professionals are not recent; nevertheless, a non-existent body of research examines compassion fatigue and burnout, specifically among dog trainers. Consequently, this literature review seeks to incorporate relevant studies conducted within the broader context of compassion fatigue and its relationship with other helping professions. In this chapter

 In this chapter, I will explore the methods employed to acquire research and data about the subject, examine suitable theoretical frameworks to underpin this research and explore burnout and compassion fatigue in various caregiving occupations.

Literature Search Strategy

I first searched Google Scholar utilizing a combination of the following keywords: *compassion fatigue, burnout, compassion satisfaction, secondary traumatic*

stress, occupational stress, job stress, vicarious trauma, work stress in animal professions, animal welfare, veterinarians, veterinary personnel, dog trainers, animal care workers, animal rescuers, volunteers, and *animal care professionals*. For this review, I compiled a selection of papers, dissertations, and books based on criteria such as their relevance, peer-reviewed status, and significance as seminal works in the field. I employed citation chaining within relevant articles. I used Google Scholar to identify additional research from other studies, ensuring comprehensive topic coverage with a robust collection of articles, dissertations, and textbooks.

Conceptual Framework

Compassion fatigue is not a recent concept; coined in 1992 by Joinson while studying nurse burnout, it has been discussed and reviewed by many researchers. The author emphasized four reasons to be aware of the exacerbated state of stress: (a) compassion fatigue can have a profound emotional impact, (b) the personalities of caregivers can predispose them to experience compassion fatigue, (c) external factors that contribute to compassion fatigue may be challenging to avoid, and (d) identifying compassion fatigue can be quite challenging without a heightened awareness of its signs and symptoms. The term has since evolved to be of significant concern in the helping professions, affecting individuals who work closely with those in need, including veterinarians, dog rescue professionals, and dog trainers.

Just as compassion fatigue, burnout was identified in 1974 by Freundenberger; in his original article, the author defined *burnout* as the result of the overexertion of energy, strength, or resources in the workplace. He identified physical symptoms like exhaustion,

fatigue, frequent headaches, gastrointestinal issues, sleep problems, and shortness of breath as indicators of burnout. Additionally, behavioral signs encompassed frustration, anger, suspicion, overconfidence, increased use of tranquilizers and barbiturates, cynicism, and depression. Freudenberger noted that burnout was more likely to affect individuals who were highly dedicated and committed to their work.

This literature review explores the concept of compassion fatigue and burnout, its prevalence, causes, consequences, and potential mitigation strategies within these professions. Understanding and addressing compassion fatigue and burnout is essential to ensure the well-being of professionals and the animals under their care.

Understanding Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue includes the gradual emotional and physical exhaustion that can result from prolonged exposure to the suffering and distress of others (Figley, 1995b, 1995a). In professions where individuals provide support, care, or intervention to those in crisis or need, compassion fatigue shares similarities with burnout. However, it is distinct because it relates explicitly to the empathetic response to others' suffering. It can manifest suddenly, with minimal forewarning, leading to immediate alterations in behavior (Figley, 1995b). Figley observed the lack of literature on the phenomenon of compassion fatigue within the domain of psychotherapy practitioners. In 1995, Figley proposed that *compassion fatigue* and *compassion stress* accurately describe the *cost of caring* for those who assist others. Figley (1995a) explored the compassion fatigue experienced by professionals, particularly therapists, who listen to their clients' trauma stories. Within this work, Figley (1995) introduced the notion of secondary traumatic

stress (STS) and its evolution into secondary traumatic stress disorder (STSD) as a reconceptualization of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This conceptual shift underscores the importance of personal support for those who work with trauma victims and emphasizes the need for a precise understanding of traumatic stress for those directly affected and those who provide support (Figley, 1995a). The author also contrasted STS and other related concepts, such as countertransference and burnout.

Prevalence of Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is not limited to any helping profession but is prevalent among veterinarians, veterinary support personnel, and dog rescue professionals due to their regular exposure to animals in distress (Figley & Roop, 2006; Hill et al., 2020; Monaghan et al., 2020; Rohlf, 2018; R. Scotney, 2017; R. Scotney et al., 2019). Veterinarians frequently encounter pet owners dealing with their beloved animals' illness, injury, or death. They also have to make difficult decisions regarding euthanasia. Tomasi et al. (2019) reported that both male and female veterinarians have higher suicide rates compared to the general population, with female veterinarians, in particular, being 3.4 to 5 times more likely to die by suicide.

Those involved in dog rescue organizations experience exposure to abandoned, abused, or neglected animals. Constant exposure to such cases can lead to compassion fatigue. Animal shelter workers are particularly at risk of compassion fatigue due to exposure to traumatized animals and euthanasia-related stress (Levitt & Gezinski, 2020).

While a substantial body of research exists on compassion fatigue among professionals working with humans, there remains a critical need for further investigation

into individuals within animal-related professions and the risk factors associated with this context (R. Scotney et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the available research does indicate that these professionals face a heightened susceptibility to occupational stress and compassion fatigue.

Dog trainers often work with dogs exhibiting behavioral issues, which may stem from mistreatment or neglect and can evoke emotional strain. While there is limited specific data on compassion fatigue in dog trainers, it is a potential concern given their interactions with troubled dogs.

Causes of Compassion Fatigue

Professionals in these fields are deeply empathetic and emotionally invested in their work. This emotional engagement can lead to the absorption of clients' and animals' distress (Figley & Roop, 2006; Levitt & Gezinski, 2020). Euthanasia-related stress is a prominent concern, with various factors influencing its impact on workers, including attitudes toward euthanasia (Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005). Frequent exposure to animals in pain, distress, or traumatic situations can affect professionals' mental and emotional well-being. Long hours, heavy workloads, and high-pressure situations can contribute to chronic stress, exacerbating compassion fatigue. Many animal shelter workers harbor unrealistic expectations about their roles at the outset of their careers and receive limited training in stress management or grief counseling; consequently, they may be ill-prepared to confront the challenging aspects of their work, which contributes to high turnover rates (Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005).

Consequences of Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue can have severe consequences for professionals and the quality of care they provide. Consistent exposure to stressful work situations can harm physical and psychological health, resulting in reduced job satisfaction and commitment; as compassion fatigue progresses, professionals may become less effective in their roles, potentially compromising the well-being of the animals they care for (Chachula, 2022). Various studies on compassion fatigue in nursing suggest a link between self-compassion and compassion fatigue. In contrast, others mention potential negative behaviors and health issues associated with depleted well-being, such as depression and anxiety. Symptoms include hopelessness, sadness, and emotional detachment, making it challenging to connect with the client (Chachula, 2022). Compassion fatigue can manifest physically as fatigue, sleep disturbances, and other stress-related health issues.

Mitigation Strategies

Addressing compassion fatigue is crucial to maintaining the well-being of professionals in helping professions. It is essential to recognize the factors that increase or decrease the risk of compassion fatigue to formulate effective interventions and reduce attrition rates, especially in light of the reliance on volunteers within animal rescue organizations and shelters (Neumann, 2010).

The job demands and resources model provides a valuable framework for comprehending compassion fatigue risk and protective factors. According to this model, (a) job demands or (b) job resources are work categories. Job demands encompass work's cognitive and emotional pressures and challenges like meeting deadlines and dealing with

conflicting role expectations. On the other hand, job resources consist of characteristics

that assist individuals in achieving their work-related goals, reducing job demands, and

fostering personal development (Bakker et al., 2014). Examples of job resources include

autonomy, social support, feedback, coaching, and opportunities for professional growth

(Demerouti et al., 2001). Job demands deplete individuals, rendering them more

susceptible to burnout (Bakker et al., 2014). Research In the Netherlands indicated that

job demands such as conflicts between work and home life, workload, job insecurity, and

role conflicts were predictive of burnout among recently graduated veterinarians

(Mastenbroek et al., 2014). In contrast, job resources rejuvenate and motivate employees,

potentially mitigating the adverse effects of job demands (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

These resources were associated with a reduced risk of burnout among recent veterinary

graduates and were linked to enhanced job performance and engagement among Dutch

veterinary professionals and colleagues (Mastenbroek et al., 2014).

Encouraging self-awareness is a first step, but prioritizing well-being may not be

sufficient (Stevens & Al-Abbadey, 2023). Self-care practices such as exercise,

mindfulness, and seeking support through therapy or peer groups can help mitigate

compassion fatigue. The research focused on the various aspects influencing individual

responses to euthanasia within the animal care sector and found that social support plays

a crucial role in assisting people in managing demanding work situations, even those as

emotionally taxing as animal euthanasia (Reeve et al., 2004). A substantial portion of the

participants highlighted the positive impact of receiving support from their family and

friends. This support significantly enhanced their capacity to cope with the emotional

challenges associated with their involvement in euthanasia procedures. Establishing boundaries in interactions with clients and animals and creating work-life balance can prevent emotional over-involvement (Stevens & Al-Abbadey, 2023). Employers can provide supervision, peer support, and access to mental health resources to help professionals cope with compassion fatigue.

Compassion fatigue is a pressing issue within the helping professions of veterinarians, dog rescue professionals, and dog trainers. Understanding its prevalence, causes, consequences, and mitigation strategies is crucial to ensuring the well-being of professionals and the animals they serve. By acknowledging and addressing compassion fatigue, these professionals can continue providing effective care while safeguarding their mental and emotional health.

Burnout: Definition and Components

Burnout is pervasive in numerous professions, including the helping professions, impacting veterinarians, dog rescue professionals, and dog trainers. Recognizing and addressing burnout is vital to ensure the well-being of professionals and the quality of care provided to animals and their owners. Freudenberger (1974) coined the term burnout to describe the effects of prolonged exposure to occupational stress.

Understanding Burnout

Burnout is a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, primarily occurring in individuals who work in professions that require consistent emotional investment and caregiving (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). It is often associated with the helping professions, where individuals

experience chronic stress and emotional fatigue due to work demands. Unlike the abrupt emergence of compassion fatigue, burnout can manifest as gradual shifts in character, outlook, principles, and conduct (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). As time progresses, the disparity between job requirements and accessible resources grows, accompanied by the perception that actuality diverges from the envisioned, often operating with depleted energy.

Prevalence of Burnout

Burnout is a widespread issue among professionals in the helping professions, affecting veterinarians, dog rescue professionals, and dog trainers due to their continuous exposure to the emotional and physical challenges of their roles. Veterinarians face emotionally charged situations, including end-of-life decisions, complex diagnoses, and distraught pet owners. Studies have indicated that veterinary surgeons have a significantly higher risk of suicide, with a ratio of four times that of the general population and twice that of other healthcare professions (Bartram & Baldwin, 2010). Various factors in a veterinary career contribute to this increased risk.

Individuals working in dog rescue organizations often encounter distressing situations, such as abandoned or abused animals. While specific statistics on burnout in this profession are limited, A study of 1,000 animal shelter and animal control employees indicated that over 50% were susceptible to burnout (Figley & Roop, 2006). Dog trainers, especially those focusing on behavioral issues, experience stress and emotional exhaustion. While comprehensive data on burnout in dog trainers are lacking, the profession's emotional demands make them susceptible to emotional exhaustion.

Contributing Factors to Burnout

Stressors associated with one's job have been recognized as substantial factors that play a pivotal role in the development of burnout (Aronsson et al., 2017). These stressors encompass various factors that can trigger burnout in individuals. These factors currently recognized as antecedents of burnout are as follows:

1. Goal-Oriented Mindset: Individuals who experience burnout exhibit a strong focus on achievement. They derive immense satisfaction from their professional endeavors and often exhibit characteristics associated with a meticulous approach to their tasks (van Mol et al., 2015). The strong drive for achievement can result in self-imposed expectations of flawlessness, frustration due to the perception of being professionally stuck, and decreased collaborative efforts as individuals tend to withdraw.

2. Excessive Workload: Another significant contributor to burnout is the burden of excessive workload (Baier et al., 2018). This workload can manifest in various forms, including a substantial influx of patients or clients seeking services, demanding timeframes and strict deadlines, a continuous and swift rotation of patients or clients, and an extensive and burdensome caseload that necessitates attention and expertise. The sheer weight of these work demands can wear individuals down and contribute to burnout.

3. Hostile Work Environment and Occupational Factors: The work environment is the ultimate factor contributing to burnout; it encompasses

teamwork and leadership dynamic alterations that foster a hostile

atmosphere (van Mol et al., 2015). Hostile work environments can

additionally entail a decrease in autonomy, an inequality in the availability

of resources or acknowledgment, and a buildup of tasks and

responsibilities throughout a shift (Baier et al., 2018).

When present in a person's professional life, these factors can significantly

increase the risk of burnout, highlighting the importance of recognizing and addressing

job-related stressors to promote well-being in the workplace.

Consequences of Burnout

Burnout can have significant and far-reaching implications for professionals

across various fields. It can profoundly impact the quality of care these individuals offer

in their respective roles. Burnout is a condition that individuals frequently encounter, and

its consequences encompass absenteeism, job discontentment, and a diminished sense of

self-assurance regarding their job performance (van Mol et al., 2015). This state of

burnout exerts adverse effects on the well-being of nurses, affecting them both physically

and emotionally. Consequently, it reduces patient or client satisfaction, influencing

patient outcomes and mortality rates. Job burnout is associated with negative impacts on

both physical and mental health, with the exhaustion component being the most

predictive of stress-related consequences (Lubbadeh, 2020). These consequences include

physical health issues like headaches, exhaustion, Type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular

problems. In extreme cases, job burnout can even lead to death. Furthermore, employees

suffering from burnout tend to distance themselves from their coworkers or even contemplate moving away (Baier et al., 2018).

Prevention and Intervention Strategies

Addressing burnout is essential for the well-being of professionals and the animals they serve. Two distinct categories of interventions address burnout, focusing on the individual and the organization. Individual-level interventions focus on enhancing an individual ability to deal with the stressors present in the workplace. On the other hand, organizational-level interventions seek to reduce organizational discrepancies and sources of stress (Le Blanc et al., 2009; Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

Individual-level strategies focus on mitigating the early signs of job burnout among employees. According to Maslach and Goldberg (1998), these strategies encompass a range of approaches. It includes adjustments to one's work patterns, such as reducing working hours and incorporating regular breaks, as well as the development of coping skills, such as effective time management. Additionally, individuals can bolster their resources by fostering supportive relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and family members, fortifying their connection to work.

Recommendations extend to enhancing an individual resilience in work-related stressors. It involves the implementation of leisure activities, the promotion of overall well-being, and the cultivation of self-awareness (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). Widely recognized individual strategies like relaxation techniques, cognitive-behavioral techniques (CBT), and the advocacy of healthy lifestyles have garnered substantial research support (Le Blanc et al., 2009).

According to Maslach and Goldberg (1998) and Le Blanc et al. (2009), combining individual and organizational intervention strategies is likely the most effective approach to mitigate job burnout. Nevertheless, most studies have predominantly focused on personal approaches despite research suggesting that institutional factors often play a more substantial role in burnout than individual factors (Maslach et al., 2001). This perspective is grounded in the belief that altering organizations is more challenging and costly than modifying individuals (Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

Burnout and Compassion Fatigue in Mental Health Staff

Burnout and compassion fatigue are two significant challenges that mental health professionals, including therapists, counselors, and psychiatrists, often face. These issues can profoundly impact the well-being of those dedicated to helping others manage their mental health concerns. In this section, I will explore the factors contributing to burnout and compassion fatigue in mental health staff, their potential consequences, and, most importantly, strategies and interventions to mitigate these challenges.

Self-Compassion

Beaumont et al. (2016) examined the relationships between self-compassion, burnout, compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction, well-being, and compassion for others in student therapists. The authors found that higher levels of self-compassion were associated with improved well-being and reduced burnout and compassion fatigue. Students with greater compassion for others reported less burnout, compassion fatigue, and higher well-being and compassion satisfaction. The findings highlight the importance of cultivating self-compassion and implementing self-care strategies to protect counseling

students from burnout and compassion fatigue (Beaumont et al., 2016). Interventions such as Compassionate Mind Training (CMT) could be beneficial in developing self-compassion and improving the overall health and effectiveness of future counselors and psychotherapists. The authors emphasize the importance of compassion satisfaction as a buffer to burnout.

Work-Life Balance and Supportive Environment

Fye et al. (2021) examined the relationship between demographic variables, professional quality of life, and affective distress among pre-licensed counselors. The authors found that age was negatively related to all latent variables, while the number of weekly client hours was positively related to burnout and secondary traumatic stress. There was a significant correlation between burnout and depression and a negative relationship between compassion satisfaction and depression (Fye et al., 2021). However, supervision was unrelated to professional quality of life or affective distress levels. The study suggested that counselor supervisors should create a supportive environment for pre-licensed counselors to discuss their professional quality of life and promote their well-being. It also emphasized the importance of monitoring and addressing affective distress in pre-licensed counselors to ensure quality care for clients. Work-life balance is a critical aspect of professional quality of life.

Wardle and Mayorga (2016) examined the prevalence of burnout among student counselors and its potential impact on their well-being, highlighting various factors contributing to counselor burnout, including work overload and unsupportive work environments. The results of the burnout assessment revealed that a significant portion of

respondents were either candidates for burnout or already experiencing burnout, posing a threat to their physical and mental well-being (Wardle & Mayorga, 2016). It is essential to emphasize the high prevalence of burnout among counselors and the importance of support systems; students must learn to recognize signs and symptoms and understand the significance of addressing their mental health needs and practicing self-care. Counselor educators should incorporate wellness modules into their curriculum and recommend the establishment of counseling and wellness centers on campuses to provide beneficial services (Wardle & Mayorga, 2016).

Robino (2019) focused on the concept of compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress (STSD) experienced by professionals who work with traumatized individuals. The author highlighted the need for professionals to effectively recognize and cope with the challenges of compassion, stress, and fatigue. The paper discussed the impact of traumatizing experiences on victims and their supporters, emphasizing the importance of understanding trauma's contextual and circumstantial factors. In addition, the author explored concepts such as secondary victimization, co-victimization, vicarious traumatization, burnout, and countertransference with compassion fatigue. Finally, the author also addressed the self-care issues faced by clinicians, researchers, and educators working in trauma-related fields and emphasized the importance of training and educating the next generation of professionals about compassion fatigue and its implications.

Burnout and compassion fatigue are critical challenges that mental health professionals confront during their demanding work. These issues affect the well-being of

therapists, counselors, and psychiatrists and potentially impact the quality of care they provide to individuals managing mental health concerns. Beaumont et al. (2016) underscored the significance of self-compassion in mitigating burnout and compassion fatigue among student therapists. Their findings illuminate the positive relationship between self-compassion, improved well-being, and reduced burnout and compassion fatigue. The association between compassion for others and lower burnout and compassion fatigue levels emphasizes the importance of nurturing empathy and self-care strategies in counseling students. Interventions like Compassionate Mind Training (CMT) hold promise in fostering self-compassion and enhancing future mental health professionals' overall health and effectiveness.

Fye et al. (2021) contribute valuable insights into the impact of demographic variables on professional quality of life among pre-licensed counselors. Their study highlights the complex interplay between age, client workload, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. It emphasizes the need for supportive environments within counseling practice and the crucial role of supervisor guidance. Moreover, the significant correlations between burnout, depression, and compassion satisfaction emphasize the delicate balance required to provide quality care while safeguarding mental health.

Wardle and Mayorga (2016) shed light on the pervasive issue of burnout among student counselors, emphasizing its detrimental effects on well-being. Their findings underscore the importance of addressing burnout through education and support systems, which can equip future counselors to recognize signs of burnout and prioritize self-care. Incorporating wellness modules into counselor education programs and establishing on-

campus counseling and wellness centers are practical recommendations to tackle this issue.

Robino's (2019) exploration of compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress underscores the multifaceted challenges faced by professionals working with traumatized individuals. The paper emphasizes the need for comprehensive understanding and coping strategies related to compassion, stress, and fatigue. Recognizing the implications of vicarious traumatization, burnout, and countertransference in compassion fatigue is crucial. It also stresses the importance of self-care initiatives and the imperative role of training and education in preparing the next generation of professionals to navigate the complexities of compassion fatigue. Addressing burnout and compassion fatigue in mental health staff is a multifaceted endeavor that requires a combination of individual resilience, supportive environments, and comprehensive education. By recognizing the importance of self-compassion, supportive supervision, and wellness initiatives, the mental health field can enhance the well-being of its professionals and, in turn, provide more effective care to those in need.

Burnout and compassion fatigue pose significant challenges to mental health professionals, including therapists, counselors, and psychiatrists, impacting their well-being and effectiveness in helping individuals with mental health concerns. This literature review has explored various factors contributing to these challenges and proposed strategies for mitigation. Addressing burnout and compassion fatigue among mental health staff necessitates a multifaceted approach, including self-compassion cultivation, supportive environments, awareness of demographic factors, and education on

recognizing and managing these challenges. These strategies are crucial for maintaining mental health professionals' well-being and ensuring high-quality care to individuals seeking mental health support.

Burnout and Compassion Fatigue in Special Education Teachers

Yu et al. (2022) explored the concept of compassion fatigue in teachers and its relevance to sustainable development in education. Compassion fatigue, a form of burnout resulting from empathizing with traumatic events, is particularly prevalent among teachers due to the pressures they face. The text identifies personal traits and organizational factors contributing to compassion fatigue, including perfectionism, low social support, and high personal stress. It emphasizes the significance of self-compassion to improve teachers' psychological well-being. The text discusses a study conducted in China to examine compassion fatigue levels among primary and secondary school teachers. The majority of teachers experienced mild to moderate levels of compassion fatigue. The text also examines differences in compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary trauma based on teaching experience and position. Results indicated that more experienced teachers had higher compassion satisfaction and lower burnout. Middle- and school-level school leaders reported higher compassion satisfaction than classroom teachers and headteachers. The text underscores the importance of addressing compassion fatigue to enhance education quality and prevent moral anomie. The study further explored the impact of teaching titles, educational backgrounds, school types, and demographic factors on compassion fatigue among Chinese teachers. Findings revealed variations in compassion satisfaction and burnout based on these factors. The

text highlights the need to prioritize teachers' well-being and address compassion fatigue to ensure high-quality education.

Hoffman et al. (2007) focused on the issue of teacher attrition, specifically in the field of special education in the American school system. The study revealed a high attrition rate among special education teachers, resulting in a chronic shortage of educators and negative consequences for both finances and education quality. The factors contributing to this attrition rate are demographics, lack of support, and job design, leading to teacher stress and burnout. The authors explored its relevance to special education teachers by introducing the concept of compassion fatigue as a form of burnout that impacts caregiving professions. The study aimed to understand if novice special education teachers experience compassion fatigue due to their students' disability needs. The methodology involves interviews with middle school special education teachers, and the results highlight themes of loss of control, responsibility, and empathy among the participants. The discussion emphasized the importance of studying compassion fatigue and suggested interventions and further research to address the issue of teacher attrition in special education. The authors underlined the significance of using a compassion fatigue framework to understand the experiences of special education teachers and the implications for academia and practitioners in the field.

Bozgeyikli (2018) examined the correlation between psychological needs and professional life quality among special education teachers, explicitly focusing on compassion satisfaction, burnout, and compassion fatigue. Bozgeyikli used self-report assessment scales to measure these variables, including the ProQoL Version 5 and the

New Psychological Needs Scale (NPNS). The data analysis revealed a negative

correlation between success, relationship, autonomy, dominance, and compassion

satisfaction, while burnout and compassion fatigue showed a positive correlation.

Autonomy was the strongest negative predictor of compassion satisfaction and burnout,

while the relationship was the strongest positive predictor of compassion fatigue. The

sub-dimensions of psychological needs accounted for significant percentages of the

variance in compassion satisfaction, burnout, and compassion fatigue. The study

suggested that meeting the psychological needs of special education teachers, particularly

in terms of autonomy and relationship, can enhance their professional life quality by

increasing compassion satisfaction and reducing burnout levels.

The research conducted by Yu et al. (2022), Hoffman et al. (2007), and

Bozgeyikli (2018) sheds important light on the issue of burnout and compassion fatigue

among special education teachers. Hoffman et al. addressed teacher attrition in special

education, emphasizing its high rate and negative repercussions. The study introduced the

concept of compassion fatigue as a form of burnout among special education teachers and

explored its relevance, particularly among novice educators. Their findings, derived from

interviews with middle school special education teachers, unveiled themes related to

losing control, responsibility, and empathy. This research highlighted the need to study

compassion fatigue and suggested interventions and further investigation to mitigate

teacher attrition. Bozgeyikli examined the correlation between psychological needs and

the professional quality of life among special education teachers. This study illuminated

the negative correlation between specific psychological needs, such as autonomy and

dominance, and compassion satisfaction while revealing positive correlations with burnout and compassion fatigue. Autonomy emerged as a powerful predictor of compassion satisfaction and burnout, while the relationship factor significantly predicted compassion fatigue. These findings underscore the importance of addressing the psychological needs of special education teachers, particularly in terms of autonomy and relationships, to enhance their professional quality of life by increasing compassion satisfaction and reducing burnout levels. Collectively, these studies provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by special education teachers in terms of burnout and compassion fatigue. They underscore the multifaceted nature of these issues, emphasizing the importance of individual and systemic interventions to support the well-being of these dedicated educators.

Burnout and Compassion Fatigue in Animal Care Professionals

Monaghan et al. (2020) investigated the risk of compassion fatigue among animal caregivers, explored differences in compassion fatigue between paid and volunteer caregivers, determined if job demands predict compassion fatigue, and assessed whether various factors like job resources, personal resources, compassion satisfaction, social support, emotional intelligence, and self-compassion moderate the relationship between job demands and compassion fatigue (Monaghan et al., 2020).

The study did not support the hypothesis that most participants would report high-risk scores for burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS). Instead, most participants scored at the average risk level. The hypothesis of significant differences between paid and volunteer caregivers in burnout and STS was also not supported. Job demands predict

compassion fatigue somewhat, with work pressure, cognitive demands, emotional demands, role conflict, and hassles being essential factors (Monaghan et al., 2020). However, the study did not find significant moderation by job resources, personal resources, or other elements in the relationship between job demands and compassion fatigue. The findings suggest that job demands play a role in compassion fatigue among animal caregivers, but other factors may also be involved. The study recommends further research to explore the role of variables like self-compassion and emotional intelligence as mediators and better understand protective factors against STS in this population (Monaghan et al., 2020). Additionally, addressing job demands, such as reducing work pressure and emotional demands, may help decrease the risk of compassion fatigue in animal caregivers.

Rank et al. (2009) investigated the effectiveness of a compassion fatigue training module on nonhuman-animal care professionals. The training had a significant positive impact on reducing compassion fatigue symptoms, including anxiety, in the participants. Burnout scores remained unchanged, compassion satisfaction increased, and traumatic stress scores decreased. The results suggest that the Accelerated Recovery Program (ARP) positively impacts the respondents' subjective experiences regarding compassion satisfaction, burnout, trauma recovery, and trait anxiety. Integrating treatment elements within a training curriculum to enhance professional skills and resilience while mitigating symptoms of compassion fatigue offers several advantages. The potential to reduce employee burnout and compassion fatigue while bolstering resilience and effectiveness through non-threatening and cost-effective group training deserves further exploration.

Compassion fatigue training programs for nonhuman animal care professionals have the potential to provide both preventive and curative measures for this symptom-laden population.

Rohlf (2018) systematically reviewed intervention programs to address occupational stress among animal care professionals. There is a limited amount of research on this topic, with the studies varying in design and outcome measures, making it challenging to draw meaningful comparisons or establish best practices. Despite the limitations, the review suggested that therapeutic interventions for occupational stress in animal care professionals have shown some preliminary benefits. These programs focus on psychoeducation and improving individual resources and coping skills through various techniques, including relational skills, relaxation, self-awareness, and reflection.

There is a need for further research, particularly studies with controlled and randomized designs and follow-up components. The author recommended detailed reporting of program contents and participants' demographic information to assess interventions' effectiveness for diverse individuals. Animal care administrators, managers, and mental health professionals should consider using empirically supported interventions from research in other occupational sectors with well-studied stress interventions (Rohlf, 2018). Cognitive-behavioral therapy and mindfulness-based approaches have effectively reduced stress in various professions, including those involving trauma and suffering. Rohlf (2018) underscores the importance of continued research to develop and evaluate interventions tailored to the unique challenges faced by animal care professionals in managing occupational stress. Combining psychoeducation,

coping skills training, and relaxation techniques within a cognitive-behavioral framework could be a promising approach for future interventions in this field.

In a study of animal rescue workers in Australia, Signal et al. (2022) found differences in symptoms between high and low-compassion fatigue groups. Not all anticipated compassion fatigue symptoms were evident in the highest compassion fatigue group, suggesting differences in compassion fatigue manifestation in animal rescuers. The study emphasized the need for interventions addressing depressive, dissociative, and arousal symptoms in animal rescuers. It also highlighted organizational factors for compassion fatigue prevention and management. The study had limitations, such as a predominantly female sample.

Compassion fatigue is a significant issue in the veterinary profession, leading to stress and burnout among veterinary professionals (Thompson-Hughes, 2019). Veterinary surgeons and Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) face similar stressors, including unpredictable and uncontrollable situations, high workloads, and emotional demands. Many RVNs may experience trait perfectionism, which adds stress when they cannot meet high care standards due to busy workloads and staff shortages (Thompson-Hughes, 2019). Stress is a common experience in veterinary hospitals due to long hours, client expectations, inadequate support, and emotional exhaustion. Staff shortages contribute to the pressure on RVNs, who often need to work extra shifts (Thompson-Hughes, 2019). Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, is prevalent among veterinary professionals. Occupational stress can lead to adverse outcomes, such as intentions to leave the profession, staff turnover,

accidents, and suicide risk. Veterinary professionals face unique stressors, including drug access, isolation, financial pressures, and subconscious expectations (Thompson-Hughes, 2019).

Compassion fatigue and burnout affect the veterinary profession, affecting attendance, job satisfaction, patient safety, and team dynamics. It is advisable to recommend health promotion initiatives, self-care interventions, and measures to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Employers have a role in supporting their staff's mental well-being and offering training to manage stress effectively. Encouraging a culture where employees can express their emotions and seek support is essential. Furthermore, promoting mental health awareness and making counseling services available are critical strategies to reduce the prevalence of burnout, compassion fatigue, and stress-related illnesses among employees. Addressing compassion fatigue and burnout is crucial for the well-being of veterinary professionals and the quality of care they provide.

Scotney et al. (2015) examined studies on occupational stress in caregivers in animal-related fields, focusing on the impact on workers in animal shelters, veterinary clinics, and research facilities. The literature revealed that working with animals, including euthanasia, can result in traumatic stress reactions and jeopardize employee well-being. Nevertheless, these studies lacked standardized terminology and methodologies, posing challenges for result comparisons (Scotney et al., 2015). The authors stressed the need for further research to establish structured, validated programs for managing occupational stress in animal care providers. The review noted that societal

opinion and stigma associated with "dirty work," such as euthanasia, can contribute to stress among animal care workers. Social support networks are crucial in minimizing job stress and developing effective programs to address occupational stress in animal-related professions.

From 1979 to 2015, male and female US veterinarians had higher suicide rates than the general population (Tomasi et al., 2019). Female veterinarians in clinical and nonclinical roles were 3.4 and 5.0 times more likely to die by suicide than the general population. Female veterinarians seem to have a higher risk of suicide than their male counterparts, and various factors within the veterinary profession contribute to this elevated risk (Tomasi et al., 2019). Male and female veterinarians in clinical positions have higher suicide rates, possibly due to occupational stressors such as long working hours, client expectations, and poor work-life balance. Unmanaged stressors can lead to burnout, psychological distress, and depression, increasing suicide risk (Tomasi et al., 2019).

Van Hooser et al. (2021) delineated the imperative of animal research and the ramifications of compassion fatigue within the laboratory animal science sphere. Animal research is an indispensable facet of scientific progression, spanning investigations from rudimentary biological inquiries to translational research pertinent to human and nonhuman entities. Emphasis is placed upon the ethical dimensions governing the utilization of research animals, including regulatory frameworks overseeing their utilization and the ethical scrutinous process (Van Hooser et al., 2021). The authors

underscored the necessity for a meticulous weighing of benefits against detriments to justify research involving animals ethically.

Within laboratory animal professionals (LAPs), compassion fatigue ensues from caring for animals utilized in research, engendering manifestations such as despondency, anxiety, and social withdrawal (Van Hooser et al., 2021). The authors also mentioned that stakeholders occupying diverse roles within laboratory animal science may encounter compassion fatigue, impinging upon their psychosocial welfare and occupational efficacy.

Despite the salience of recognizing and ameliorating compassion fatigue, extant societal taboos surrounding animal research often obstruct candid dialogues about the emotional demands confronting laboratory animal professionals (Van Hooser et al., 2021). Remedial measures advocated encompassing the implementation of self-care regimens and compassion resiliency training to bolster the well-being of practitioners in this arena. Finally, the authors underscore the imperative of evaluating stressors underpinning compassion fatigue and emphasize integrating mental health training within safety protocols for laboratory animal professionals.

The studies reviewed in this comprehensive examination of compassion fatigue among animal caregivers have yielded several key findings and recommendations. Job demands, including work pressure, cognitive demands, emotional demands, role conflict, and hassles, predicted compassion fatigue to some extent. There were no significant moderation effects by job resources, personal resources, or other factors in the relationship between job demands and compassion fatigue. While job demands play a

role in compassion fatigue among animal caregivers, further exploration may be needed to identify additional contributing factors. There is a need for additional studies to investigate variables like self-compassion and emotional intelligence as potential mediators and protective factors against STS in this population. Mitigate the risk of compassion fatigue among animal caregivers by addressing job demands and reducing work pressure and emotional demands. Integrating treatment elements within training programs could be a promising approach to enhancing professional skills and resilience while reducing compassion fatigue symptoms.

A systematic review of intervention programs to address occupational stress in animal care professionals highlighted the need for more research with controlled, randomized designs and follow-up components. While the reviewed studies suggested some preliminary benefits of therapeutic interventions, conducting more robust research to establish best practices in this field is essential. Furthermore, the veterinary profession faces unique stressors, including long hours, high workloads, and emotional demands. These stressors can lead to burnout, significantly affecting job satisfaction, patient safety, and team dynamics. To comprehensively address these issues, recommending the implementation of health promotion initiatives, self-care interventions, and the promotion of a work-life balance is advisable. It is essential to underscore the crucial role of employers in offering support for the mental well-being of their staff. Lastly, studies on occupational stress in animal-related fields emphasized the traumatic nature of working with animals, particularly in roles involving euthanasia. However, this lack of

standardized terminology and methodologies presents research and program development challenges.

These studies underscore the complex interplay of factors contributing to compassion fatigue among animal caregivers and offer valuable insights and recommendations for addressing this critical issue in animal care and welfare. Further research, targeted interventions, and supportive workplace policies are essential steps toward mitigating compassion fatigue and promoting the well-being of those dedicated to caring for animals. Although researchers have investigated this issue, the study of compassion fatigue and burnout has focused on human health care providers, veterinarians, veterinary staff, and, to a minor extent, animal shelter staff. The impact of compassion fatigue and burnout has yet to be investigated by dog trainers or behavior consultants, even though this population handles severe cases involving animal behavior that impact animals and humans. Dog trainers and behaviorists work with domesticated dogs and their owners to help improve their behavior and train them in different areas, such as obedience, agility, and search and rescue. These professionals also work in behavior modification, including cases of anxiety, fear, and aggression. They often work long hours, deal with challenging cases and clients, encounter behavioral cases where behavioral euthanasia is a reality, are exposed to dog bites, and face other difficult working conditions, which can lead to burnout and compassion fatigue.

The existing literature on compassion fatigue and burnout within animal care and welfare has made significant strides in shedding light on the challenges animal caregivers face. These studies have unveiled a range of factors contributing to compassion fatigue,

including job demands like work pressure, emotional demands, and role conflict. However, there is a noticeable gap in this body of research regarding dog trainers and behavior consultants. These dedicated professionals are crucial in addressing severe behavioral issues in dogs that impact both animals and humans. They navigate intricate cases involving anxiety, fear, and aggression, often working long hours and encountering emotionally taxing situations. Despite the demanding nature of their work, the specific experiences of burnout and compassion fatigue among dog trainers still need to be studied. This gap in the literature underscores the pressing need for investigations into the unique challenges dog trainers and behavior consultants face, considering their pivotal role in improving the lives of dogs and their human companions. To support these professionals effectively and enhance the well-being of all involved, future research must extend its focus to include this vital group within the animal care community.

Summary

In this chapter, I have provided an exhaustive review of the existing literature, detailing my strategies for the literature search and laying the theoretical groundwork for my study. Additionally, I have offered an in-depth discussion on burnout and compassion fatigue among special education teachers, mental health staff, and animal care professionals, culminating in a succinct summary. In Chapter 3, I will introduce the quantitative correlational study, outlining the research design and my rationale for pursuing this particular study. This will include an explanation of the methodology, the instruments selected for data collection, and the data analysis techniques. Furthermore, I

will address potential validity threats to my research and the ethical guidelines I followed

to ensure my study's integrity and ethical rigor.

Chapter 3: Research Method

I investigated compassion fatigue as a moderator between years in service and the behavior level of dogs (aggressive/not aggressive) and burnout among dog trainers and behaviorists. The independent variables are years of service and the behavior level of dogs. The dependent variable is burnout. Compassion fatigue serves as the moderating variable. In this chapter, I restate the research questions and review the research design, rationale, methodology, threats to validity, and ethical considerations.

Research Design and Rationale

I aimed to determine whether there is a relationship between burnout and years of experience and burnout and aggression levels, leading to choosing a correlational study. According to Queirós et al. (2017), correlational research is an exploratory method to determine potential relationships between two or more variables. It does not involve the manipulation of variables but instead focuses on investigating the extent of their associations. Two critical aspects examined in correlational studies are the strength and direction of these relationships (Queirós et al., 2017). By examining the correlation coefficient, I was able to quantitatively assess observational data. Correlational research enables the simultaneous collection of diverse information from multiple domains, allowing for the study of interrelations among these variables. However, it is essential to note that correlation does not imply causation, as in this study, compassion fatigue as a moderating variable could potentially account for the observed associations between the other variables (Queirós et al., 2017).

This study is quantitative, using a correlational design for RQ1 and RQ2 in which I performed a Pearson correlation to determine the relationship between burnout and years of experience on the job among dog trainers and behavior consultants; I also performed a Pearson correlation to determine the relationship between burnout and the aggression level of target dogs among dog trainers and behavior consultants. RQ3 and RQ4 examine compassion fatigue as a moderator of the relationships examined in RQ1 and RQ2. RQ5 examines compassion fatigue as a moderator in the connection between two key factors: the aggression levels of dogs undergoing training and the years of experience of the trainers, and the experience of burnout among trainers and behaviorists specializing in obedience and aggression training for dogs.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between burnout and years of experience on the job among trainers and behaviorists who offer training services for dogs, specifically in obedience training and aggression training?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the level of burnout and the aggression levels of target dogs among trainers and behaviorists who offer training services for dogs, specifically in obedience training and dog aggression training?

RQ3: Does compassion fatigue moderate the relationship between years of experience on the job and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and dog aggression training?

RQ4: Does compassion fatigue moderate the relationship between the

aggression level of dogs trained and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs?

RQ5: Does compassion fatigue moderate the relationship between two predictors, aggression level of dogs being trained and years of experience of the trainers, and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs?

Methodology

Population

The population of interest for this study is professional dog trainers and behavior consultants who use positive reinforcement training techniques and reside in the United States. The participants were recruited from professional dog training groups and professional associations as follows:

- APDT – Association of Professional Dog Trainers

- IAABC – International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants

- CSAT – Certified Separation Anxiety Trainers

- Thrive – Positive Reinforcement Business Group

- Aggression in Dogs Master Course Facebook group

Participants provide obedience and reactivity training as part of their training services.

Sampling and Sampling Strategy

I used convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a nonprobabilistic sampling technique in which researchers select participants based on their ease of access or availability. It involves selecting readily available individuals to participate in the study (Given, 2008). While this sampling technique can save time and resources during recruitment, it has limitations. However, given that this study was focused on a specific group rather than broad population generalizations, the limitations will be less significant.

I conducted an a priori power analysis with G-power to determine the sample size for each research question. The sample size was calculated for a Pearson Correlation with a medium effect size of 0.3, alpha 0.05, and power 0.80, which was 84 (Faul et al., 2009). The sample size calculated for linear regression with three predictors, a medium effect size of 0.15, alpha 0.05, and power 0.80, was 85. The present study aggregates and incorporates a cohort comprising 86 participants into the research analysis.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I began data collection after receiving Walden University IRB approval (approval No. 01-08-24-0056135). I recruited participants using different methods: (a) a digital flyer to announce the proposed study and (b) social media invitations within the groups' and associations' bulletin boards and private Facebook pages. I obtained permission from the administrators for the APDT, IAABC, CSAT, Thrive, and Aggression in Dogs Master Course groups. Both digital flyers and social media invitations included an active link to the anonymous survey and an active link to my school email for further questions. Both

digital flyers and social media invitations included an active link to the anonymous

survey and an active link to my school email for further questions.

After consent was received through a completed electronic consent form, each

assessment portion was presented electronically to the participants with instructions. The

first part of the assessment included a demographic survey, and the second part consisted

of the ProQoL version 5 scale questionnaire (Stamm, 2010). Data were collected via the

Internet survey service FreeOnlineSurveys.

Instrumentation

I used the Professional Quality of Life Scale Version 5 ProQoL Version 5 scale

(Stamm, 2010) for this study. The ProQoL Version 5 encompasses three distinct

subscales to assess compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue within caregiving or

helping professions (Stamm, 2010). These subscales include compassion satisfaction,

secondary traumatic stress, and burnout, the latter two of which collectively constitute the

components of the compassion fatigue construct. Stamm (2010) has previously

substantiated the validity and reliability of these scales as follows: alpha reliabilities for

the burnout ($\alpha = 0.75$), secondary traumatic stress ($\alpha = 0.81$), and compassion satisfaction

($\alpha = 0.88$) scales.

The construct validity of ProQoL Version 5 is well-established and supported by a

substantial body of evidence, including over 200 published papers and an extensive

online presence of more than 100,000 articles (Stamm, 2010). The three scales of ProQoL

Version 5 distinctly evaluate separate psychological constructs. The Compassion Fatigue

scale is a unique and independent measure, emphasizing its capacity to gauge a particular

facet of professional quality of life. The inter-scale correlations reveal relatively modest shared variance: 2% shared variance ($r = -0.23$; co-σ = 5%; $n = 1187$) with Secondary Traumatic Stress and 5% shared variance ($r = -0.14$; co-σ = 2%; $n = 1187$) with Burnout (Stamm, 2010). For this study, I contacted the author via their website at https://ProQoL.org/use-the-ProQoL to request permission to use the scale.

Data Analysis Plan

I attempted to answer the following research questions:

*R*Q1: Is there a relationship between burnout and years of experience on the job among trainers and behaviorists who offer training services for dogs, specifically in obedience training and aggression training?

$H_0$1: Burnout will not vary with years of experience on the job among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

H_a1: Burnout will vary with years of experience on the job among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs, being higher for those with more years of experience.

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the level of burnout and the aggression levels of target dogs among trainers and behaviorists who offer training services for dogs, specifically in obedience training and dog aggression training?

$H_0$2: Burnout will not vary among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and dog aggression training for dogs in relation to the aggression levels of target dogs.

H_a2: Burnout will vary among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and dog aggression training for dogs in relation to the aggression levels of target dogs.

RQ3: Does compassion fatigue moderate the relationship between years of experience on the job and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and dog aggression training?

H_03: Compassion fatigue does not moderate the relationship between years of experience and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

H_a3: Compassion fatigue does moderate the relationship between years of experience and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

RQ4: Does compassion fatigue moderate the relationship between the aggression level of dogs to be trained and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs?

H_04: Compassion fatigue does not moderate the relationship between the aggression level of dogs to be trained and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

H_a4: Compassion fatigue does moderate the relationship between the aggression level of dogs to be trained and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

RQ5: Does compassion fatigue moderate the relationship between two predictors, aggression level of dogs being trained and years of experience of the trainers, and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs?

$H_0$5: Compassion fatigue does not moderate the relationship between two predictors, aggression level of dogs being trained and years of experience of the trainers, and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

H_a5: Compassion fatigue does moderate the relationship between two predictors: aggression level of dogs being trained and years of experience of the trainers, and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

To answer RQ1, I performed a Pearson correlation to determine if there was a relationship between burnout and years of experience on the job among trainers and behaviorists who offer dog training services, specifically in obedience and aggression training. The independent variable is years of experience, and the dependent variable is burnout. The first step for the ProQoL Version 5 burnout subscale scoring is to reverse some items. The second step is to sum the items in the subscale, and the third step is to convert the raw score to a t-score. I then correlated ProQoL Version 5 burnout scores with years of experience.

To answer RQ2, I performed a Pearson correlation to determine if there was a relationship between the level of burnout and the aggression levels of target dogs among

trainers and behaviorists who offer training services for dogs, specifically in obedience training and dog aggression training. The independent variable is the service provided (aggression/obedience), and the dependent variable is burnout. I then correlated the ProQoL Version 5 burnout scores with the number and percentage of cases of dogs with higher aggression issues each month.

To answer RQ3, I performed linear regression to investigate whether compassion fatigue moderates the relationship between years of experience and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience and aggression training for dogs. The independent variable is the years of experience, the dependent variable is burnout, and the moderating variable is compassion fatigue.

To Answer RQ4, I performed linear regression to investigate whether compassion fatigue moderates the relationship between the aggression level of dogs and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience and aggression training for dogs. The independent variable is the service offered (aggression/obedience), the dependent variable is burnout, and the moderating variable is compassion fatigue.

To answer RQ5, I performed a multiple linear regression, with both trainers' years of experience and aggression levels of dogs trained as the independent variables, compassion fatigue as the moderating variable, and burnout as the dependent variable.

Threats to Validity

Internal Validity

Internal validity pertains to the extent to which a study's design, implementation, and analysis facilitate the generation of reliable and credible responses to the research

inquiries under investigation (Andrade, 2018). Threats to internal validity include attrition by loss of participants after the study starts. In addition, participants not understanding the questions or how to respond to them may threaten internal validity.

External Validity

External validity involves assessing whether the conclusions drawn from a study possess the capacity for broader generalization to alternative contexts (Andrade, 2018). Threats to external validity include the participant selection process, stemming from the self-selection procedure, can engender threats to external validity. An atypical or non-representative sample may compromise the broader applicability of research findings. In addition, selection bias (only choosing professional dog trainers using positive reinforcement techniques) may lead to results different from those of the general dog trainer population.

Ethical Considerations

The procurement of IRB approval was executed before the commencement of this study. The indispensable role of IRB approval lies in safeguarding human subjects' protection, safety, and welfare throughout the research endeavor. Furthermore, it affords participants access to an established ethics board, which remains readily available for any inquiries. Adhering to critical procedural steps and protocols is imperative for realizing the IRB's overarching data collection and analysis objectives.

Each participant in this study must provide their voluntary consent for survey participation and undergo the electronic informed consent procedure. Participants can electronically complete the survey questionnaire if they provide consensual participation

in the online process, as expounded in the section outlining data collection procedures. To facilitate this, skip logic was employed within the informed consent framework, ensuring that individuals who opted not to participate were promptly redirected to the final page of the survey, where they were thanked for their consideration.

Under no circumstances are participants subjected to coercion or undue pressure to furnish responses to survey queries, nor are they entreated to modify the substance of their responses. I upheld confidentiality at all study junctures, wherein participants' identities and corresponding responses will remain shielded from disclosure. The study ensures anonymity, precluding any identifiable information collection or retention. The study's associated risks are minimal and encompass potential emotional reactions or the possibility of experiencing distress, among other conceivable outcomes. Access to the data utilized for this study will be rigorously restricted to the researcher alone, ensuring the highest level of data security. I will securely archive the data employed in this study within a password-protected external hard drive domiciled within my office for a maximum of five years, after which it will be deleted.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlines the research questions, research design, rationale, methodology, threats to validity, and ethical considerations. I propose a correlational design to investigate selected predictors of burnout among a convenience sample of professional dog trainers and behavior consultants in the United States who use positive reinforcement techniques. I used convenience sampling, choosing participants based on accessibility due to the specific focus of the study. The minimum sample size of 84 was

determined using a priori power analysis for the Pearson Correlation and 84 for linear

regression. I operationalized the variables through responses to a questionnaire related to

the respondents' experiences as trainers and responses to the ProQoL version 5. The

validity and reliability of ProQoL version 5 are well-documented in the literature. I

provided details on the administration and scoring of the instruments. Data collection

involves digital flyers and social media invitations. Participants provided informed

consent before completing a demographic survey and the ProQoL scale questionnaire.

Chapter 4: Results

I investigated compassion fatigue as a moderator between years in service and the behavior level of dogs and burnout among dog trainers and behaviorists:

1. This study determined if there was a correlation between years of experience and burnout as well as aggression level of dogs and burnout in professional dog trainers.

2. This study analyzed the moderating effect of compassion fatigue on the relationship between level of aggression of dogs and burnout, as well as the moderating effect of compassion fatigue on the relationship between years of experience and burnout.

3. This study examined if compassion fatigue moderated the relationship between the aggression level of dogs and years of experience on the job.

This chapter describes the data collection process, sample demographics, research design, instrument utilized, and statistical analysis.

Data Collection

I was granted IRB approval to conduct the study on January 8th, 2024. Following the IRB approval, I obtained approval from the Facebook group owners to post my participant recruitment request, and my survey flyer was posted to CSAT – Certified Separation Anxiety Trainers; Thrive – Positive Reinforcement Business Group; Aggression in Dogs Master Course Facebook group on January 10 and 11. By January 25th, the number of responses plateaued, and I had 83 responses. I added a reminder post on the Facebook groups. By February 1st, there were 119 respondents. After

downloading the data, I found that 33 participants either only completed the demographic questions or had partially completed the whole survey. I decided to exclude any incomplete survey participation. After exclusions, I could use 86 entries, giving me just above the minimum number of participants to complete the study.

Sample Demographics

Of the 86 completed surveys, 81.4% (*n* = 70) of the respondents identified as women, 7% (*n* = 6) identified as men, 3.5% (*n* = 3) identified as transgender, 5.8% (*n* = 5) identified as nonbinary, 1.2% (*n* = 1) identified as other, and 1.2% (*n* = 1) preferred not to answer. A complete 70.9% of the respondents did enter their age, and 29.1% did not respond. A total of 51.2% of the respondents had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 88% had at least one professional dog training certification. Professional trainers with two certifications account for 32.5%, and 4.7% had three certifications. A complete 73.3% of the trainers provide both reactivity and obedience training, whereas 11.6% provide only obedience training and 8.1% provide reactivity training only. No trainers used aversive methods (e-collar or dominance), 95% used positive reinforcement, 51% used clicker training, and 20% used other non-aversive training methods. Most trainers use more than one training method.

Complete demographic data can be found in Table 1. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the various training methods used. Table 3 provides the frequency of trainers with more than one training method. Figure 1 shows the age frequency, and Figure 2 shows the frequency of years of experience.

Table 1

Frequency of Sample Demographics

Variable	Variable category	Respondent percent
Gender identity	Man	7.0 ($n = 6$)
	Woman	81.4 ($n = 70$)
	Transgender	3.5 ($n = 3$)
	Non-binary	5.8 ($n = 5$)
	Prefer not to answer	1.2 ($n = 1$)
	Other	1.2 ($n = 1$)
Education level	Some college, no degree	5.8 ($n = 5$)
	Associate degree	9.3 ($n = 8$)
	Bachelor's degree	51.2 ($n = 44$)
	Master's degree	27.9 ($n = 24$)
	Doctorate	1.2 ($n = 1$)
	Other	4.7 ($n = 1$)
Dog training certification	CPDT-KA	56 (n = 48)
	KPT-CTP	17 ($n = 15$)
	CTC	12 ($n = 10$)
	IAABC-ADT	17 ($n = 15$)
	CBCC-KA	23 ($n = 20$)
	No Certifications	12 ($n = 10$)
Training type	Obedience only	11.6 ($n = 10$)
	Reactivity only	8.1 ($n = 7$)
	Both reactivity and obedience	73.3 ($n = 63$)
	Other	7.0 ($n = 6$)

		Table 1 (cont'd)
Variable	Variable category	Respondent percent
Training method	R+	95 ($n = 82$)
	Clicker	51 ($n = 44$)
	E-collar	0 ($n = 0$)
	Dominance	0 ($n = 0$)
	Other (see table 2)	20 ($n = 17$)

Note: N = 86.

Table 2

Other Training Methods

Training method	Frequency	Percent
BAT	3	3.5
BAT, Predation Substitute Training, Control Unleashed, Classical Conditioning & Desensitization	1	1.2
Beh modification techniques esp sds/cc, also use of start buttons	1	1.2
Control Unleashed	1	1.2
CSAT	1	1.2
FDM	1	1.2
Fear Free certified	1	1.2
For consequences I do time outs or limit free range depending on the dog's need	1	1.2
force free training	1	1.2
Force Free Training	1	1.2
Force free, LIMA, LIFE	1	1.2
I use circular enclosures of my own design.	1	1.2
Reward-based techniques: R+, desensitization, classical conditioning/counter-conditioning, etc.	1	1.2
systematic desensitization	1	1.2
Systematic desensitization	1	1.2

Table 3

Frequency of Trainers Using More Than One Training Method

Training method	Frequency	Percent
Positive reinforcement + Clicker	41	47.7
Positive reinforcement + other training	6	7
Positive reinforcement + Clicker + other training	11	12.8

Figure 1

Age of Respondents
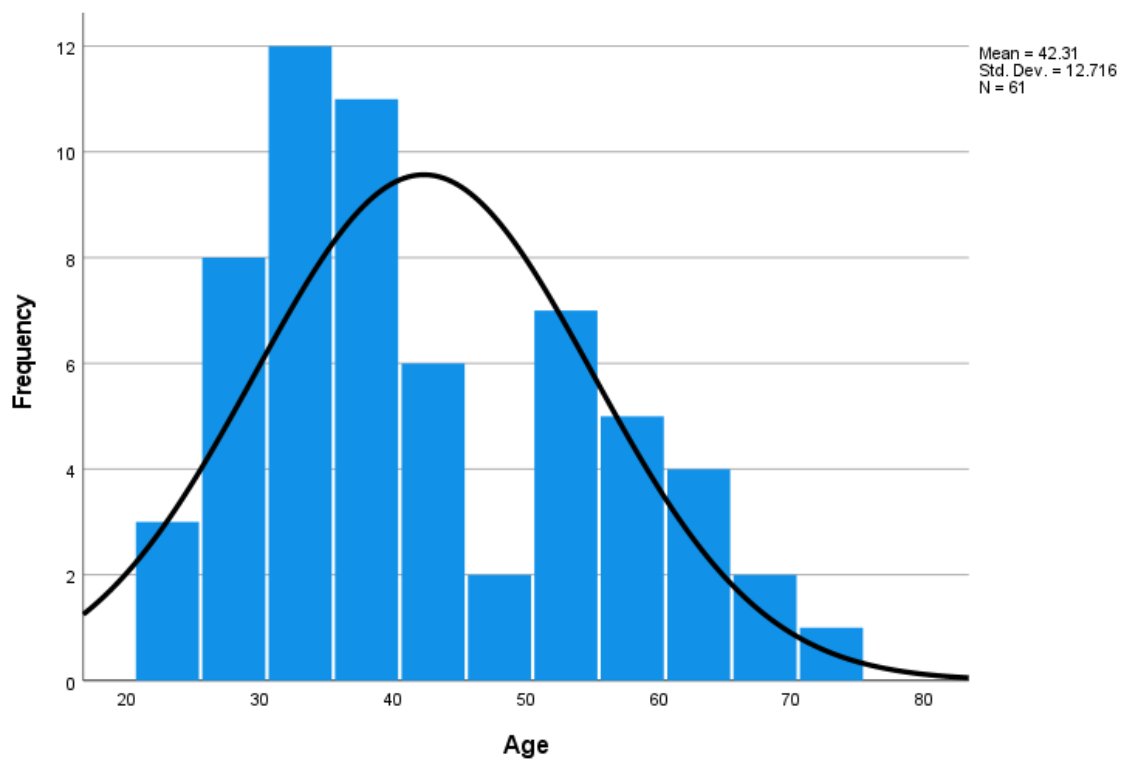
Note. Minimum age = 20 years, maximum age = 76 years

Figure 2

Years of Experience
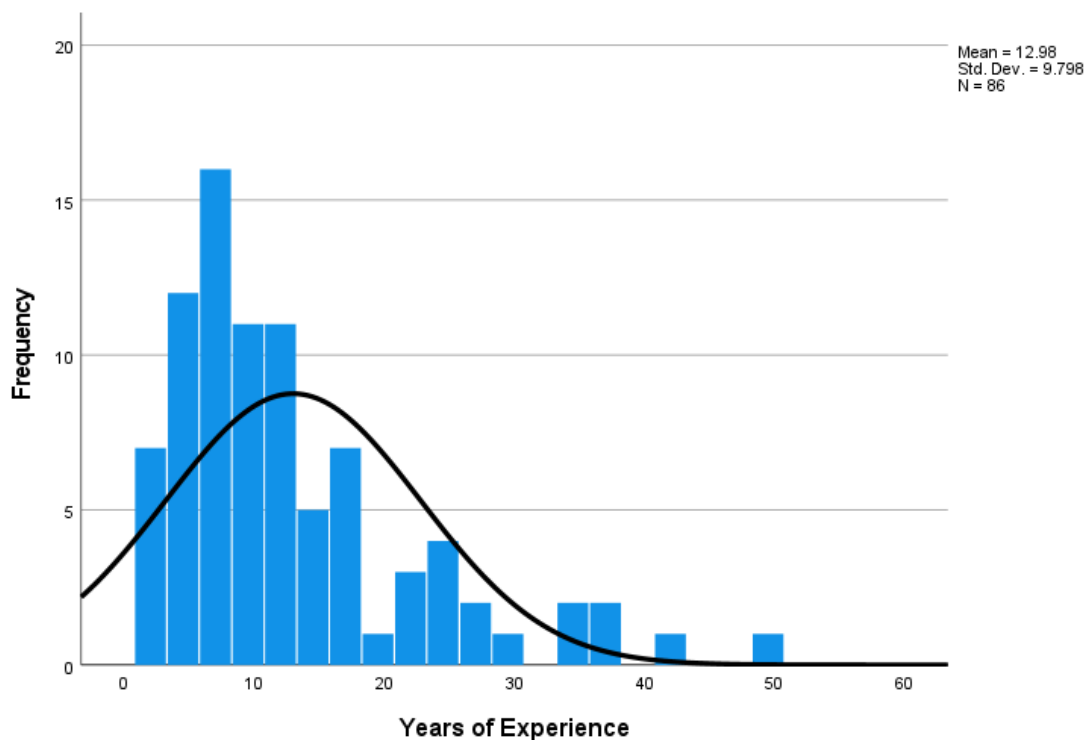
Note. Minimum years of experience = 2 years, maximum years of experience = 49 years

The Dunbar's bite scale is divided into six levels as follows:

Level 1. Obnoxious or aggressive behavior but no skin-contact by teeth.

Level 2. Skin-contact by teeth but no skin-puncture.

Level 3. One to four punctures from a single bite with no puncture deeper than

half the length of the dog's canine teeth.

Level 4. One to four punctures from a single bite with at least one puncture deeper

than half the length of the dog's canine teeth.

Level 5. Multiple-bite incident with at least two Level 4 bites or multiple-attack

incident with at least one Level 4 bite in each.

Level 6. Victim dead.

For ease of data analysis, I recoded the variable bite level of dogs into three

categories:

- I coded participants who did not handle aggression cases as 0.

- I coded participants handling 50% or more of level 1 cases as 1.

- Participants handling 50% or more of level 2 through 6 cases as 2.

A full 58.1% of trainers handle cases where dogs display aggressive behavior

without bite incidents. Of the 86 participants, 19.8% do not handle aggression cases, and

22.1% handle cases with at least one bite incident. Table 4 provides the frequency of

trainers handling bite cases by severity. Figure 3 displays the distribution of participants

per level.

Table 4

Bite Level Cases Grouped by Severity

Bite Level Cases	Frequency	Percent
No bite cases	17	19.8
Level 1 bite cases	50	58.1
Level 2 – 6 bite cases	19	22.1

Figure 3

Bite Level Cases Grouped by Severity
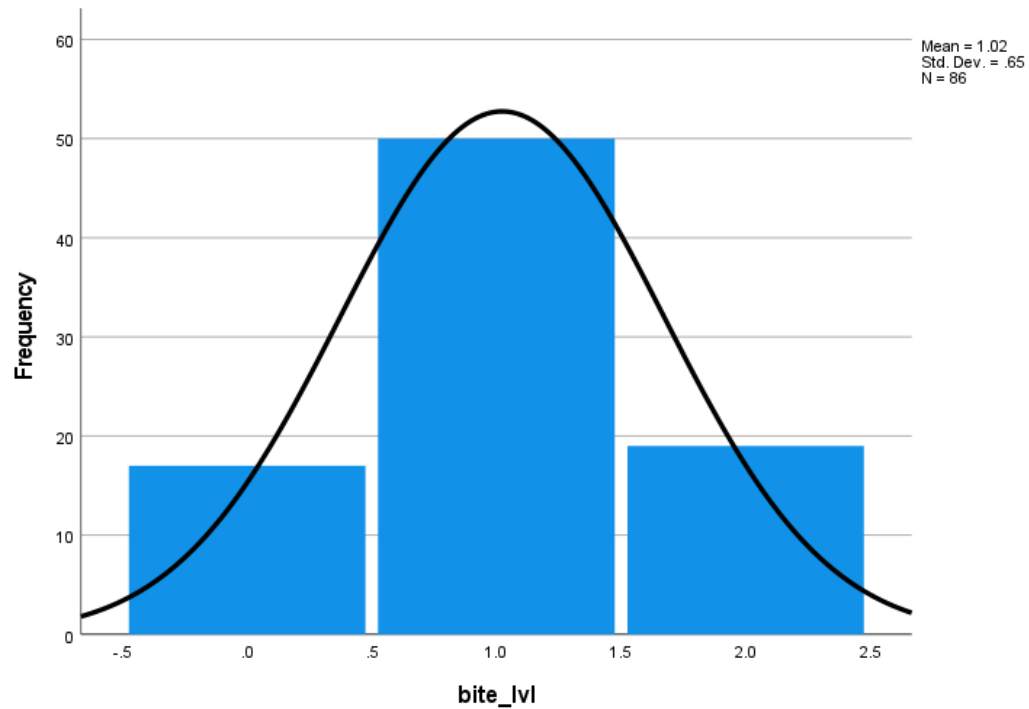
Findings

Test for Assumptions

In this study, I analyzed data using the SPSS 29.0 software (IBM Corporation, 2022). I conducted an initial exploratory data analysis incorporating the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test to evaluate univariate normality for the variables burnout (BO), secondary traumatic stress (STS), and compassion fatigue (CF). The results from the K-S test suggested that these variables are normally distributed, as indicated by p-values greater than .05. I performed a Mahalanobis distances analysis. I identified no significant outliers for all the variables at a 1% significance level.

I assessed and ruled out collinearity between the predictor variables compassion fatigue, years of experience, and bite level based on the variance inflation factor (VIF) and the tolerance statistic. The VIF's values are 1.042, 1.020, and 1.028, respectively, which means there is no correlation between predictor variables; the tolerance statistics are .960, .981, and .973, respectively, which also means there is no correlation between predictor variables (Micheal & Abiodun, 2014). I confirmed homoscedasticity by examining the scatterplots of the standardized residuals for BO.

Major Findings

I computed a Pearson correlation coefficient to evaluate the relationship between burnout and years of experience. The results indicated that the relationship between burnout and years of experience was not significant $r(86) = -.080$, $p = .463$. Table 5 displays a summary of the results.

Table 5

Summary Statistics With Years of Experience as IV

Variables	*M*	*ST*	*Pearson*	*p*
Years of Experience	12.98	9.798	-.080	.463
BO	25.41	4.983		.463

Note. BO = burnout

I computed a Pearson correlation coefficient to evaluate the relationship between burnout and aggression levels of dogs. The results indicated that the relationship between burnout and aggression level of dogs was not significant, $r(86) = .055$, $p = .614$. Table 6 displays a summary of the results.

Table 6

Summary Statistics With Bite Level as IV

Variables	*M*	*ST*	*Pearson*	*p*
Bite level	1.02	.650	.055	.614
BO	25.41	4.983		.614

Note. BO = burnout

I executed a multiple regression analysis to examine the moderating effects within the proposed model. BO was designated as the dependent variable, and the predictor variables of CF and years of experience (YE) and their interaction term were concurrently entered into the regression model. The regression model achieved statistical significance, accounting for a substantial portion of the variance in BO (R^2 = .924, $F(3, 82)$ = 160.226, p < .001; see Table 7 for regression analysis results). The direct effect of CF on BO was significant (B = 005, p <.001, sr^2 = .2313), positive, and accounted for approximately 23% of the variability. The direct effect of YE on BO was not significant (B = 049, p = .450, sr^2 = .0021). After controlling for the significant main effects of YE and CF, the interaction of CF and YE was not significant (B = 2.910E^{-5}, p = .278, sr^2 = .0021). These findings suggest that CF does not significantly moderate the relationship between YE and BO in dog trainers.

Table 7

Multiple Regression Analysis Results With YE as IV

	Coefficients					95% CI			Collinearity	
	B	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*	For B		*sr²*	*T*	*VIF*
Constant	13.184	1.068		12.343	<.001	11.059	15.309			
YE	.049	.065	-.096	-.759	.450	-.178	.079	.0021	.110	9.077
CF	.005	.000	.859	11.413	<.001	.709	1.009	.2313	.314	3.186
CFxYE	$2.910E^{-5}$	.000	.147	1.093	.278	.000	.000	.0021	.098	10.199

Note. YE = years of experience, CF = compassion fatigue, CFxYE = interaction between compassion fatigue and years of experience.

I executed a multiple regression analysis to examine the moderating effects within the proposed model. BO was designated as the dependent variable, and the predictor variables of CF and BL and their interaction term were concurrently entered into the regression model. The regression model achieved statistical significance, accounting for a substantial portion of the variance in BO (R^2 = .858, $F(3, 82)$ = 165.809, $p < .001$; refer to Table 8 for regression analysis results). I found the direct effect of CF on BO to be significant (B = .005, $p < .001$, sr^2 = .2948), positive, accounting for approximately 29% of the variability. The direct effect of BL on BO was not significant (B = -.716 p =.445, sr^2 = .0010). After controlling for the significant main effects of BL and CF, the interaction of CF and BL was found not to be significant (B = $2.910E^{-5}$, p = .278, sr^2 = .0021). These findings suggest that CF does not play a significant moderating role in the relationship between BL and BO in dog trainers.

Table 8

Multiple Regression Analysis Results With BL ad IV

	Coefficients					95% CI			Collinearity	
	B	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*	For B		*sr²*	*T*	*VIF*
Constant	13.143	1.009		13.025	<.001	11.135	15.150			
BL	.716	.932	-.093	-.768	.445	-2.570	1.139	.0010	.117	8.575
CF	.005	.000	.933	13.061	<.001	.004	.006	.2948	.338	2.956
CFxBL	$2.910E^{-5}$	.000	.147	1.093	.278	.000	.000	.0021	.098	10.199

Note. BL = bite level, CF = compassion fatigue, CFxBL = interaction between compassion fatigue and bite level.

I executed a multiple regression analysis to examine the moderating effects within the proposed model. BO was designated as the dependent variable, and the predictor variables of CF, YE, and BL and their interaction term were concurrently entered into the regression model. The regression model achieved statistical significance, accounting for a large proportion of the variability in BO (R^2 = .862, $F(4, 81)$ = 126.927, $p < .001$; see Table 9 for regression analysis results). The direct effect of CF on BO was significant (B = .005, $p < .001$, sr^2 = .5595), positive, accounted for approximately 56% of the variability. The direct effect of BL on BO was significant (B = -1.044, p =.020, sr^2 = .0096), negative, and accounted for approximately 0.96% of the variability. The direct effect of YE on BO was not significant (B = -.010, p =.762, sr^2 = .0001. After controlling for the significant main effects of BL, YE, and CF, the interaction of CF, BL, and YE was not significant (B = $1.053E^{-5}$, p = .242, sr^2 = .0024). These findings suggest that CF does not play a significant moderating role in the relationship between BL, YE, and BO in dog trainers.

Table 9

Multiple Regression Analysis Results With YE and BL as IV

	Coefficients					95% CI			Collinearity	
	B	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*For B*		*sr²*	*T*	*VIF*
Constant	13.609	1.012		13.451	<.001	11.596	15.662			
BL	-1.044	.439	-.136	-2.380	.020	-1.917	-.171	.0096	.518	1.930
YE	-.010	.033	-.020	-.304	.762	-.077	.056	.0001	.392	2.549
CF	.005	.000	.909	18.160	<.001	.004	.005	.5595	.678	1.476
CFxBLxYE	1.053E⁻⁵	.000	.097	1.179	.242	.000	.000	.0024	.253	3.957

Note. BL = bite level, CF = compassion fatigue, YE = years of experience, CFxBLxYE = interaction between compassion fatigue, bite level, and years of experience.

According to Stamm (2010), each scale is summed up and analyzed at three levels: low, moderate, and high. For each scale, when the sum of the scores is 22 or less, the level of that scale is low; when the sum of the scores is between 23 and 41, the level of that scale is moderate; and when the sum of the scores is above 42, the level of that scale is high. Table 10 displays the median for all three scales in the ProQoL5 for the studied sample and the level for each scale. In this sample, I found that no participant scored at a low level of CS, 34.8% of participants scored at a high level of CS, and 65.2% scored at a moderate level of CS. In terms of BO, 30.2% of participants scored at a low level of BO, whereas 69.8% scored at a moderate level of BO. Finally, 24.4% of participants scored at a low level of STS, and 75.6% scored at a moderate level of STS. The participants reported moderate levels of BO, CS, and STS.

Table 10

Mean and Levels of Each Scale in ProQoL5

ProQoL scale	Mean	Level
BO	25.41	Moderate
CS	40.12	Moderate
STS	26.66	Moderate

Additionally, I computed Pearson correlation coefficients to evaluate the relationship between CS and years of experience, as well as STS and years of experience. The results indicated that the relationship between CS and years of experience was not significant $r(86) = .074$, $p = .496$.

Table 11

Summary Statistics With Years of Experience as IV (Correlation With CS)

Variables	*M*	*ST*	*Pearson*	*p*
Years of Experience	12.98	9.798	.074	.496
CS	40.12	5.221		.496

The results also indicated that the relationship between STS and years of experience was not significant $r(86) = -.159$, $p = .144$. Table 11 displays a summary of the results.

Table 12

Summary Statistics With Years of Experience as IV (Correlation With STS)

Variables	*M*	*ST*	*Pearson*	*p*
Years of Experience	12.98	9.798	-.159	.144
STS	26.66	6.507		.144

Hypothesis Testing

RQ1: Is there a relationship between burnout and years of experience on the job among trainers and behaviorists who offer training services for dogs, specifically in obedience training and aggression training?

$H_0 1$: Burnout will not vary with years of experience on the job among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

$H_a 1$: Burnout will vary with years of experience on the job among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs, being higher for those with more years of experience.

Findings suggest no correlation between years of experience on the job and burnout. Therefore, I retain the null hypothesis.

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the level of burnout and the aggression levels of target dogs among trainers and behaviorists who offer training services for dogs, specifically in obedience training and dog aggression training?

$H_0 2$: Burnout will not vary among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and dog aggression training for dogs in relation to the aggression levels of target

dogs.

H_a2: Burnout will vary among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and dog aggression training for dogs in relation to the aggression levels of target dogs.

Findings suggest no relationship exists between aggression level of dogs and burnout in dog trainers. Therefore, I retain the null hypothesis.

RQ3: Does compassion fatigue moderate the relationship between years of experience on the job and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and dog aggression training?

H_03: Compassion fatigue does not moderate the relationship between years of experience and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

H_a3: Compassion fatigue does moderate the relationship between years of experience and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

Findings suggest that compassion fatigue does not moderate the effect of years of experience in burnout among dog trainers. Therefore, I retain the null hypothesis.

RQ4: Does compassion fatigue moderate the relationship between the aggression level of dogs to be trained and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs?

H_04: Compassion fatigue does not moderate the relationship between the aggression level of dogs to be trained and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who

offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

H_a4: Compassion fatigue does moderate the relationship between the aggression level of dogs to be trained and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who offer obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

Findings suggest that compassion fatigue does not moderate the effect of bite level of dog on burnout among dog trainers. Therefore, I retain the null hypothesis.

RQ5: Does compassion fatigue moderate the relationship between two predictors, aggression level of dogs being trained and years of experience of the trainers, and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs?

H_05: Compassion fatigue does not moderate the relationship between two predictors, aggression level of dogs being trained and years of experience of the trainers, and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

H_a5: Compassion fatigue does moderate the relationship between two predictors: aggression level of dogs being trained and years of experience of the trainers, and burnout among trainers and behaviorists who provide obedience training and aggression training for dogs.

Findings suggest that compassion fatigue does not moderate the relationship between the bite level of dog and years of experience on burnout among dog trainers. Therefore, I retain the null hypothesis.

Summary of Finding

This study aimed to investigate compassion fatigue as a moderator between two predictor variables, years of job experience and the behavior level of dogs (aggressive/not aggressive), and burnout among dog trainers and behaviorists. Data were collected from 86 professional dog trainers and behaviorists, who completed a questionnaire on their training activities and the Professional QoL (Version 5). Findings suggest that compassion fatigue did not moderate the relationship between predictors, bite level of dog and years of experience, and burnout because there was no direct relationship between the IVs and the DV.

In Chapter 5, I will discuss the findings and limitations of this study and provide recommendations for future research. It remains relevant for positive social change that we expand our understanding of the experiences of those who work with dogs with aggression and other behavioral risks.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

I investigated the prevalence of burnout and compassion fatigue among dog

trainers and behaviorists, focusing on how these conditions are influenced by the years of

experience and the aggression levels of the dogs they train. Additionally, I explored

whether compassion fatigue moderates the relationships between the trainers' years of

experience and burnout and between the aggression levels of dogs and burnout.

In this chapter, I examine the study's findings, critically evaluate its limitations,

and offer guidance on applying this research's outcomes for future inquiries. I propose

recommendations aiming to foster advancements in related scholarly endeavors. I

contemplate the potential implications of these findings for effectuating positive social

change, emphasizing the importance of applying this knowledge in practical and

impactful ways.

Interpretation of the Findings

The exploration of occupational stress, compassion, fatigue, and burnout in

professions associated with animal care is increasingly recognized as a critical area of

research. Historically, the emphasis has predominantly been placed on veterinary and

animal rescue vocations, with a focus on professionals engaged in direct interactions with

animals undergoing or having undergone distress, as well as euthanasia. The body of

research on compassion fatigue among animal caregivers presents a comprehensive

examination of the psychological stresses and occupational hazards faced by those in

animal care and veterinary professions. The key findings across these studies highlight the nuanced understanding of compassion fatigue, its predictors, and the effectiveness of various interventions to mitigate its impact. Monaghan et al. (2020) highlighted the critical role of job demands in predicting compassion fatigue among animal caregivers, challenging prior assumptions about the high-risk levels of burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) in this group. This finding suggests that while job demands are indeed predictive of compassion fatigue, the impact may be less severe than anticipated, underscoring the necessity for nuanced approaches in addressing these occupational hazards.

Relationship Between Burnout and Years of Experience

The hypothesis that burnout varies with the years of experience among dog trainers and behaviorists was explored. The results did not significantly support this prediction. The analysis indicated that the relationship did not reach statistical significance while there was a trend in the expected direction - suggesting that burnout might increase with years of experience.

Burnout can accumulate over time due to sustained exposure to stressors without adequate coping mechanisms or support systems in professions characterized by high emotional labor, such as healthcare and education (Bartram & Baldwin, 2010; Van Mol et al., 2015). This suggests that years of experience might not linearly relate to burnout; instead, the accumulation of unresolved stress and lack of effective coping strategies over time may elevate the risk of burnout.

Another theme emerging from the literature is the phenomenon of self-selection, where individuals less suited to the emotional and physical demands of a profession may leave it earlier in their careers (Levitt & Gezinski, 2020; Robino, 2019). This could mean those who remain in the profession for years have developed resilience or coping strategies that buffer them against burnout. Thus, the relationship between years of experience and burnout is complex and can be influenced by individual differences in resilience and coping abilities.

Relationship Between Burnout and Dog Aggression Levels

Similarly, the study investigated if burnout varies with the aggression levels of dogs being trained. Again, the findings did not significantly support the hypothesis that higher aggression levels in dogs correlate with increased burnout among trainers. This suggests that the aggression level of dogs, as a standalone factor, may not significantly contribute to burnout in this professional group.

Professionals working in high-stress environments with inadequate peer or organizational support are more prone to burnout (Mastenbroek et al., 2014; Reeve et al., 2004; Stevens & Al-Abbadey, 2023; Wardle & Mayorga, 2016). Dog trainers dealing with aggressive dogs may experience professional isolation, mainly if they operate independently or their work environment lacks understanding of the challenges involved. This isolation can exacerbate stress and contribute to burnout. Research within related fields indicates that personal feelings of efficacy and skill level can mitigate the impact of job stressors on burnout (Stevens & Al-Abbadey, 2023; Thompson-Hughes, 2019). For dog trainers, proficiency in managing aggression and successful outcomes may buffer

against burnout. Conversely, trainers who feel less competent or face repeated challenges without success may be more vulnerable to burnout.

Moderating the Role of Compassion Fatigue

I also aimed to determine whether compassion fatigue moderates the relationship between years of experience and burnout and between dog aggression levels and burnout. The results did not significantly support the moderation hypotheses. This indicates that compassion fatigue, as measured in this study, does not significantly alter the relationship between the independent variables (years of experience and dog aggression levels) and burnout among dog trainers and behaviorists.

The findings suggest that the hypothesized relationships between the study variables and burnout are more complex than anticipated. The lack of significant results could imply that factors beyond years of experience and dog aggression levels might play crucial roles in the development of burnout among dog trainers and behaviorists. Moreover, the nonsignificant moderation effect of compassion fatigue suggests that its impact might be similar across different levels of experience and dog aggression or that other moderating factors might be at play.

The literature underscores the importance of moderating factors influencing the relationship between years of experience and burnout. Factors such as work-life balance, social support, and job satisfaction play critical roles in mitigating or exacerbating the impact of long-term exposure to job stressors (Fye et al., 2021; Stevens & Al-Abbadey, 2023). For dog trainers and behaviorists, the presence or absence of these moderating

factors could explain the variability in burnout experiences across individuals with similar years of experience.

Comparison With Other Animal-Related Professions and Healthcare Providers

Cavanagh et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review of compassion fatigue among healthcare practitioners, exploring its prevalence and relationship with demographic variables. The study reviewed 71 articles meeting inclusion criteria and found that compassion fatigue was reported across various healthcare practitioner groups, with varying prevalence rates. However, its relationship with demographic variables like years of experience and specialty was inconsistent or unclear. The authors found that from all the studies utilizing version 5 of the ProQoL ($n = 28$), the combined mean CS score stood at 41.8, with a mean BO score of 28.4 and a mean STS score of 25.8. These results suggest moderate levels of BO and STS and relatively high levels of CS (see Figure 4). These findings are on par with the results found in the current study.

Scotney et al. (2019) investigated aspects of professional quality of life among various professionals within the animal care industry, focusing on compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. Key findings revealed that veterinarians and animal research technicians exhibit the lowest levels of compassion satisfaction, underscoring the emotional challenges inherent in these roles. Despite this, occupation alone does not significantly influence the risk of burnout or STS, suggesting that other factors within the occupational environment play a pivotal role in these outcomes. The authors analyzed results from a sample of 229 participants and found the combined mean CS score to be 39.2, with a mean BO score of 24.8 and a mean STS

score of 24.6. These results suggest moderate levels of BO and STS and relatively high levels of CS (see Figure 4). These findings are also on par with the results found in the current study.

A notable discovery is the significant impact of years of experience and gender on professional quality of life (Scotney et al., 2019). Specifically, the authors found that the variable years of experience are associated with a greater risk of burnout, while women face a higher risk of STS compared to men. The study also underscores the limited opportunity for veterinarians to engage in nurturing behaviors with their patients, which could contribute to higher compassion satisfaction. This lack of intimate patient interaction is contrasted with the roles of veterinary nurses, who perform the majority of direct care and nurturing tasks, potentially allowing them greater compassion satisfaction (Scotney et al., 2019). This finding is not supported by the current study, which found no correlation between years of experience and burnout. In the present study, 18 participants had five or fewer years of experience, which could influence the outcomes. As noted by Stamm (2010), there is a prevailing inclination to assume that individuals with more experience exhibit superior performance; however, it is plausible that individuals with heightened exposure and diminished resilience may have exited the profession, leaving behind a cohort characterized by varying degrees of resilience.

Jensvold (2022) examined chimpanzee caregivers' levels of compassion fatigue using the ProQoL-V survey. Findings revealed that while these caregivers demonstrate elevated levels of compassion satisfaction in comparison to cohorts in other animal care vocations, they also manifest moderate levels of burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

Notably, these levels surpass those observed in other animal care roles and numerous medical professions (Jensvold, 2022). Consequently, the ramifications of compassion fatigue influence caregivers' subjective experience and hold implications for the welfare of the animals under their care. The author analyzed results from a sample of 61 participants and found the combined mean CS score to be 39.26, with a mean BO score of 27.46 and a mean STS score of 27.56. These results suggest moderate levels of BO and STS and relatively high levels of CS (see Figure 4). The study found no correlation between years of experience and BO, much like the current study.

Hill et al. (2020) identified high levels of compassion fatigue, as evidenced by burnout, CF-STS scores, and perceived stress among animal care professionals. Notably, the CF-STS scores for animal care workers in this sample were substantially high, underscoring the severity of compassion fatigue compared to human service workers reported in the existing literature. The authors analyzed results from a sample of 2,878 participants and found the combined mean CS score to be 39.16, with a mean BO score of 26.83 and a mean STS score of 25.61 (see Figure 4). Contrary to initial expectations, the study revealed that levels of CF-STS and BO did not significantly differ among veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and animal control staff, challenging the hypothesis that compassion fatigue would vary substantially across different occupational roles within animal care (Hill et al., 2020). The study explored the relationship between compassion fatigue and several demographic and job-related factors. A notable protective factor against compassion fatigue was the personal perception of one's work with animals as fulfilling a dream, highlighting the significance of job satisfaction. Other factors, such

as years of experience, age, and living situation, showed varying degrees of correlation

with burnout and CF-STS, indicating the potential moderating effects of social support

and job satisfaction on compassion fatigue levels (Hill et al., 2020).

Figure 4

ProQoL Scales Comparison for Mean Scores Between Dog Trainers, Veterinary

Personnel, Chimpanzee Caregivers, and Human Medical Professionals.
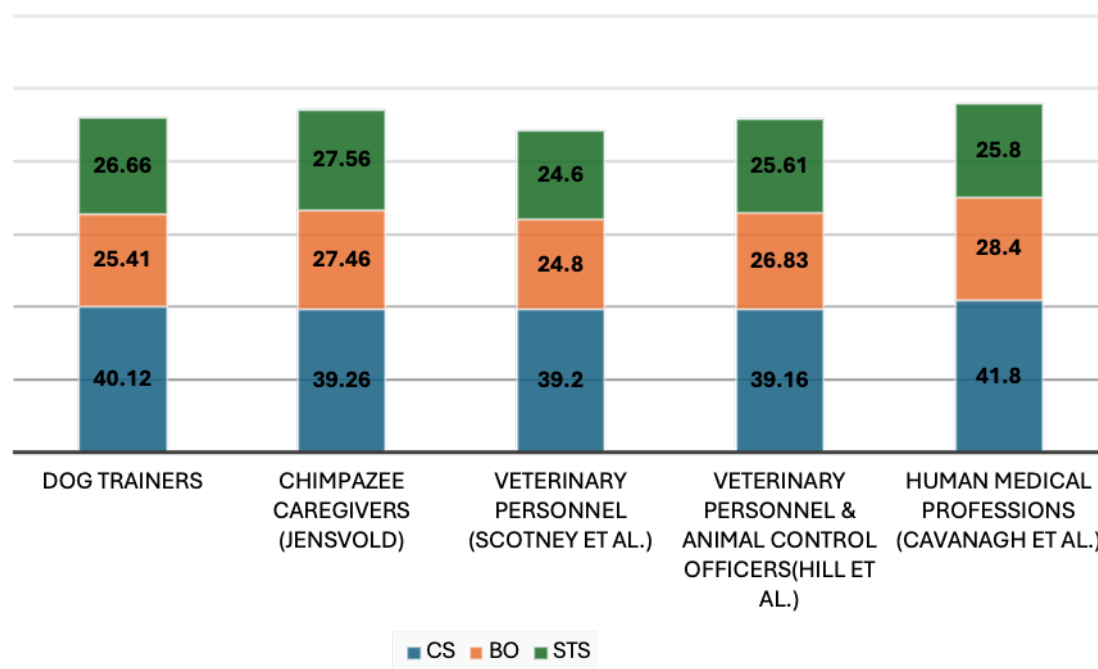
Research specific to dog trainers and behaviorists is nonexistent. This dissertation

is the first study addressing burnout and compassion fatigue in this population. Hence,

the comparison with other animal-related professions is based on the assumption that,

like other animal-related professions, professional dog trainers handle cases where the

animal's welfare may be at stake. Specifically, professional dog trainers handling cases of

dog bites may potentially be at higher risk of experiencing symptoms of burnout. This

study's results suggest that even though compassion fatigue plays an overall role in burnout among dog trainers and behaviorists, it does not seem to act as a moderator between years of experience and burnout or bite level of dogs and burnout. In comparison to research focusing on the dimensions of the ProQoL instrument, it appears that dog trainers exhibit similar levels of CS, BO, and STS when compared to counterparts in other fields within the realm of animal-related professions. The nature of work within the animal care professions offers intrinsic rewards derived from aiding those in vulnerable states, which may serve as a protective factor against the onset of CF, STS, and BO. Unlike Hill et al. (2020) and Scotney et al. (2020), the results of this study did not find a correlation between years of experience and burnout. Overall, compassion fatigue seems to affect burnout in all models.

Limitations of the Study

In conducting this research, I encountered several limitations that merit consideration. The employment of convenience sampling and the specific focus on trainers and behaviorists adhering to positive reinforcement techniques introduced a selection bias, inherently excluding a segment of the dog training community that employs alternative methodologies. This approach may need to be revised to generalize the findings to the broader dog trainers and behaviorists population. Recruiting participants posed challenges, as the survey relied on individuals' voluntary and anonymous participation without offering compensation or incentives. This absence of direct motivation may have contributed to a notable attrition rate, with approximately 25.86% of participants not completing the questionnaire. This phenomenon of incomplete

participation manifested through various forms, including partial responses and the omission of entire sections within the ProQoL survey. Such patterns of engagement further complicated follow-up efforts, primarily due to the anonymity maintained by respondents. Factors such as technical issues or personal discretion, particularly given the sensitive nature of the topics discussed, cannot be discounted.

Additionally, the demographic composition of the study sample, predominantly female, reflects the gender distribution within the dog training community but limits the generalizability of the findings across all genders. It is imperative to acknowledge the inherent limitation within the study regarding the inability to ascertain whether individuals experiencing burnout or compassion fatigue were included as participants. Focusing primarily on years of experience and dog aggression levels may overlook other critical factors influencing burnout and compassion fatigue, such as workplace support, personal life stressors, and the presence of coping mechanisms. Lastly, the reliance on self-reported data necessitated an assumption of honesty among participants, introducing a potential bias in the reported outcomes. These limitations underscore the need for a cautious interpretation of the results and suggest areas for methodological improvements in future research.

Recommendations

This study represents an inaugural exploration into burnout and compassion fatigue among dog trainers and behaviorists. Given its pioneering nature, this research traverses previously uncharted territory, precluding direct comparisons with existing literature. Consequently, the inherent limitations associated with this initial investigation

may affect the interpretability of the results and restrict their applicability to the broader population of dog trainers and behaviorists. However, it significantly contributes to the foundational knowledge in this field, laying the groundwork for subsequent research endeavors to explain these issues within this specific professional cohort. Building upon the initial exploration of burnout and compassion fatigue among dog trainers and behaviorists, we must extend the scope of research in this area to refine our understanding and develop effective interventions. Rohlf (2018) conducted a comprehensive systematic review of intervention programs to mitigate occupational stress within the domain of animal care professionals. The body of literature in this area is notably sparse, characterized by diverse research designs and outcome metrics, which complicates synthesizing findings or delineating evidence-based best practices. Despite these methodological heterogeneities, the review discerns a tentative yet positive trend: therapeutic interventions tailored to the occupational stressors encountered by animal care professionals exhibit initial signs of efficacy.

This observation underscores the potential of targeted interventions in enhancing the well-being of this professional group, albeit highlighting the imperative for further empirical scrutiny to refine and substantiate these preliminary findings. I recommend longitudinal research to track changes in burnout and compassion fatigue among dog trainers and behaviorists. This approach would allow for the examination of causal relationships and the identification of potential fluctuating stressors. The data would be invaluable in helping design therapeutic interventions specifically designed to address the unique occupational stressors faced by professionals in animal care.

I recommend incorporating quantitative and qualitative research methods to capture the multifaceted nature of burnout and compassion fatigue. Qualitative methodologies, such as interviews and case studies, afford a nuanced exploration of individuals' lived experiences and the mechanisms they employ for coping, thereby enriching the depth of understanding of research findings. In contrast, quantitative approaches, exemplified by surveys, extend the scope of research by facilitating the extrapolation of results to a larger population, thus enhancing the generalizability of the findings. This dichotomy underscores each methodological approach's inherent strengths and limitations, highlighting the potential for a comprehensive research strategy that leverages both to provide a more holistic understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

While this study did not find a direct significant relationship between dog aggression levels and burnout among dog trainers and behaviorists, the literature review suggests a complex interplay of factors that could influence this relationship. Emotional labor, vicarious traumatization, professional isolation, feelings of efficacy, and the availability of coping strategies likely play critical roles in moderating the impact of working with aggressive dogs on burnout. These findings highlight the need for comprehensive support systems and resources to help dog trainers manage the unique challenges of their work, potentially reducing the risk of burnout. Further research could explore these moderating factors in greater detail, providing a deeper understanding of how to support dog trainers and behaviorists in their essential work with aggressive dogs.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The investigation into burnout and compassion fatigue among dog trainers and behaviorists carries profound social implications that extend beyond the confines of this specific professional cohort, touching on broader societal values, animal welfare considerations, and the mental health landscape of occupational settings. By foregrounding the nuanced interrelations between occupational stressors and professional well-being in the context of animal training and behavior modification, this study contributes to a critical discourse on the sustainability of caring professions and the imperative for a supportive occupational environment that fosters both human and animal well-being.

Societal Values and Animal Welfare

The study underscores a societal imperative to recognize and value individuals' emotional labor and psychological well-being dedicated to animal care and training. The findings highlight the emotional complexities and ethical dilemmas faced by dog trainers and behaviorists, reflecting broader societal questions about the value placed on animal welfare, the moral responsibilities of human-animal interactions, and the ethical considerations inherent in animal training practices. The implications for animal welfare are significant, as the well-being of animals is intricately linked to the emotional state and professional efficacy of those who train and care for them (Scotney, 2017). A societal acknowledgment of the importance of supporting animal care professionals can enhance animal welfare outcomes through more empathetic and informed training practices. Adopting strategies to manage stress benefits individual practitioners by enhancing their

professional satisfaction and well-being and improving the quality of care provided to animals, thereby indirectly supporting animal welfare and contributing to positive social change.

Occupational Mental Health

This study highlights the pressing need for systemic workplace changes to address occupational stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue. It underscores the importance of implementing organizational policies and interventions that prioritize mental health support, foster resilience, and promote work-life balance (Levitt & Gezinski, 2020). The positive social change implication of this focus on occupational mental health is far-reaching, advocating for a shift towards workplace cultures that recognize the intrinsic value of emotional well-being as critical to professional success and satisfaction. By highlighting the specific challenges dog trainers and behaviorists face, the study serves as a call to action for broader occupational sectors to reevaluate and enhance their support systems for mental health.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

</div>

It is essential to acknowledge that behaviorists and trainers similarly encounter animals whose welfare requirements may not be adequately addressed, albeit unintentionally. This perspective broadens the scope of consideration within the field, underscoring the necessity to extend research efforts to encompass these professionals who play a pivotal role in managing and improving animal well-being. This investigation into burnout and compassion fatigue among dog trainers and behaviorists is crucial to the scholarly understanding of occupational stress within animal care professions. By

elucidating the complex interplay between the aggression levels of dogs, the trainers' years of experience, and the overarching phenomenon of compassion fatigue, this study sheds light on the nuanced dimensions of emotional labor inherent in dog training and behavioral work. Despite its exploratory nature and the limitations inherent to its methodological approach, the research provides a foundation for further scholarly inquiry, emphasizing the critical need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms.

The findings of this study underscore the significant yet intricate role of compassion fatigue in the professional lives of dog trainers and behaviorists. Notably, the absence of compassion fatigue as a moderating factor in the relationships explored suggests a broader spectrum of occupational stressors and resilience factors, challenging existing paradigms and beckoning a more nuanced field exploration. The revelation that compassion fatigue influences burnout across various models further accentuates its pervasive impact on the well-being of professionals engaged in the emotionally charged work of dog training and behavior modification.

This research marks a significant step forward in the quest to understand and mitigate the occupational stressors unique to the realm of dog training and animal behavior. Future research should expand upon these findings, employing a diverse methodological approach to explore the broader implications of burnout and compassion fatigue within this field. Ultimately, this study contributes to the academic discourse on professional quality of life in animal care occupations and highlights the imperative for practical interventions designed to enhance the well-being and sustainability of careers in the dog training community. Doing so paves the way for a future where the emotional

and psychological needs of those dedicated to improving the lives of dogs through

training and behavior modification are fully acknowledged, understood, and supported.

References

Abendroth, M., & Figley, C. R. (2013). Vicarious traumatization and empathic discernment: Maintaining healthy boundaries. In D. Murphy, S. Joseph, & B. Harris (Eds.), *Trauma and the Therapeutic Relationship: Approaches to Process and Practice* (pp. 111–125). Springer.

Andrade, C. (2018). Internal, external, and ecological validity in research design, conduct, and evaluation. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, *40*(5), 498–499. https://doi.org/10.4103/IJPSYM.IJPSYM_334_18

Aronsson, G., Theorell, T., Grape, T., Hammarström, A., Hogstedt, C., Marteinsdottir, I., Skoog, I., Träskman-Bendz, L., & Hall, C. (2017). A systematic review including meta-analysis of work environment and burnout symptoms. *BMC Public Health*, *17*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-017-4153-7

Baier, N., Roth, K., Felgner, S., & Henschke, C. (2018). Burnout and safety outcomes—A cross-sectional nationwide survey of EMS-workers in Germany. *BMC Emergency Medicine*, *18*(1), N.PAG-N.PAG. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12873-018-0177-2

Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Sanz-Vergel, A. I. (2014). Burnout and work engagement: The JD–R approach. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *1*(1), 389–411. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091235

Bartram, D., & Baldwin, D. (2010). Veterinary surgeons and suicide: A structured review of possible influences on increased risk. *The Veterinary Record*, *166*, 388–397. https://doi.org/10.1136/vr.b4794

Beaumont, E., Durkin, M., Hollins Martin, C. J., & Carson, J. (2016). Measuring relationships between self-compassion, compassion fatigue, burnout and well-being in student counsellors and student cognitive behavioural psychotherapists: A quantitative survey. *Counselling & Psychotherapy Research*, *16*(1), 15–23. https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12054

Bride, B. E., Radey, M., & Figley, C. R. (2007). Measuring compassion fatigue. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, *35*(3), 155–163. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-007-0091-7

Chachula, K. M. (2022). A comprehensive review of compassion fatigue in pre-licensure health students: Antecedents, attributes, and consequences. *Current Psychology*, *41*(9), 6275–6287. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-020-01122-3

Cieslak, R., Shoji, K., Douglas, A., Melville, E., Luszczynska, A., & Benight, C. C. (2014). A meta-analysis of the relationship between job burnout and secondary traumatic stress among workers with indirect exposure to trauma. *Psychological Services*, *11*(1), 75–86. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033798

Demerouti, E., Nachreiner, F., Baker, A. B., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands-resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *86*(3), 499–512. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.499

Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., & Lang, A.-G. (2009). Statistical power analyses

    using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior*

    Research Methods, *41*(4), 1149–1160.

Figley, C. R. (1995a). Compassion fatigue as secondary traumatic stress disorder: An

    overview. *Compassion Fatigue*, *1*.

Figley, C. R. (1995b). *Compassion fatigue: Toward a new understanding of the costs of*

    caring.

Figley, C. R., & Roop, R. G. (2006). *Compassion fatigue in the animal-care community*.

    Humane Society Press.

Fye, H. J., Cook, R. M., Choi, Y., & Baltrinic, E. R. (2021). Professional quality of life

    and affective distress among prelicensed counselors. *Journal of Counseling &*

    Development, *99*(4), 429–439. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12395

Given, L. M. (2008). *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Sage

    publications.

Goodnite, P. M. (2014). Stress: A concept analysis. *Nursing Forum*, *49*(1), 71–74.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/nuf.12044

Hill, E. M., LaLonde, C. M., & Reese, L. A. (2020). Compassion fatigue in animal care

    workers. *Traumatology*, *26*(1), 96–108. https://doi.org/10.1037/trm0000218

IBM Corporation. (2022). *IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 29.0. IBM Corp.*

Le Blanc, P., Halbesleben, J. R. B., & Schaufeli, W. (2009). *Burnout interventions: An*

    overview and illustration (pp. 201–216). Nova Science Publishers; New York.

Levitt, A. L., & Gezinski, L. B. (2020). Compassion fatigue and resiliency factors in animal shelter workers. *Society & Animals*, *28*(5–6), 633–650. https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-12341554

Lubbadeh, T. (2020). Job burnout: A general literature review. *International Review of Management and Marketing*, *10*(3), 7–15.

Maslach, C. (2003). Job burnout: New directions in research and intervention. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *12*(5), 189. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.01258

Maslach, C., & Goldberg, J. (1998). Prevention of burnout: New perspectives. *Applied and Preventive Psychology*, *7*(1), 63–74. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-1849(98)80022-X

Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *2*(2), 99–113. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030020205

Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2008). Early predictors of job burnout and engagement. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *93*(3), 498–512. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.93.3.498

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 397. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.397

Mastenbroek, N. J. J. M., Jaarsma, A. D. C., Demerouti, E., Muijtjens, A. M. M., Scherpbier, A. J. J. A., & van Beukelen, P. (2014). Burnout and engagement, and

its predictors in young veterinary professionals: The influence of gender. *Veterinary Record*, *174*(6), 144–144. https://doi.org/10.1136/vr.101762

Micheal, V. A., & Abiodun, A. A. (2014). Estimation of regression coefficients in the presence of multicollinearity. *Social and Basic Sciences Research Review*, *2*(10), 404–415.

Monaghan, H., Rohlf, V., Scotney, R., & Bennett, P. (2020). Compassion fatigue in people who care for animals: An investigation of risk and protective factors. *Traumatology*. https://doi.org/10.1037/trm0000246

Neumann, S. L. (2010). Animal welfare volunteers: Who are they and why do they do what they do? *Anthrozoös*, *23*(4), 351–364. https://doi.org/10.2752/175303710X12750451259372

Queirós, A., Faria, D., & Almeida, F. (2017). Strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research methods. *European Journal of Education Studies*, *0*, Article 0. https://doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v0i0.1017

Radey, M., & Figley, C. R. (2007). The social psychology of compassion. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, *35*(3), 207–214. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-007-0087-3

Rank, M. G., Zaparanick, T. L., & Gentry, J. E. (2009). Nonhuman-animal care compassion fatigue: Training as treatment. *Best Practice in Mental Health*, *5*(2), 40–61.

Reeve, C. L., Rogelberg, S. G., Spitzmüller, C., & Digiacomo, N. (2005). The caring-killing paradox: Euthanasia-related strain among animal-shelter workers1.

Journal of Applied Social Psychology, *35*(1), 119–143.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2005.tb02096.x

Reeve, C. L., Spitzmuller, C., Rogelberg, S. G., Walker, A., Schultz, L., & Clark, O.

(2004). Employee Reactions and Adjustment to Euthanasia-Related Work:

Identifying Turning-Point Events Through Retrospective Narratives. *Journal of*

Applied Animal Welfare Science, *7*(1), 1–25.

https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327604jaws0701_1

Rohlf, V. (2018). Interventions for occupational stress and compassion fatigue in animal

care professionals—A systematic review. *Traumatology*, *24*(3), 186–192.

https://doi.org/10.1037/trm0000144

Rohlf, V., & Bennett, P. (2005). Perpetration-induced Traumatic Stress in Persons Who

Euthanize Nonhuman Animals in Surgeries, Animal Shelters, and Laboratories.

Society & Animals, *13*(3), 201–219. https://doi.org/10.1163/1568530054927753

Scotney, R. (2017). *Occupational Stress & Compassion Fatigue: The effects on workers*

in animal-related occupations [PhD Thesis, The University of Queensland].

https://doi.org/10.14264/uql.2017.502

Scotney, R. L., McLaughlin, D., & Keates, H. L. (2015). A systematic review of the

effects of euthanasia and occupational stress in personnel working with animals in

animal shelters, veterinary clinics, and biomedical research facilities. *Journal of*

the American Veterinary Medical Association, *247*(10), 1121–1130.

https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.247.10.1121

Scotney, R., McLaughlin, D., & Keates, H. (2019). An investigation of the prevalence of compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction and burnout in those working in animal-related occupations using the Professional Quality of Life (ProQoL) Scale. *The Veterinary Nurse*, *10*(5). https://doi.org/10.12968/vetn.2019.10.5.276

Stamm, B. (2010). *The Concise ProQoL Test Manual*. ProQoL.org. https://ProQoL.org/

Stevens, K., & Al-Abbadey, M. (2023). Compassion fatigue and global compassion fatigue in practitioner psychologists: A qualitative study. *Current Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04908-3

Thompson-Hughes, J. (2019). Burnout and compassion fatigue within veterinary nursing: A literature review. *Veterinary Nursing Journal*, *34*(10), 266–268. https://doi.org/10.1080/17415349.2019.1646620

Tomasi, S. E., Fechter-Leggett, E. D., Edwards, N. T., Reddish, A. D., Crosby, A. E., & Nett, R. J. (2019). Suicide among veterinarians in the United States from 1979 through 2015. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, *254*(1), 104–112. https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.254.1.104

van Mol, M. M. C., Kompanje, E. J. O., Benoit, D. D., Bakker, J., & Nijkamp, M. D. (2015). The Prevalence of Compassion Fatigue and Burnout among Healthcare Professionals in Intensive Care Units: A Systematic Review. *PLoS ONE*, *10*(9), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0136955

Wardle, E. A., & Mayorga, M. G. (2016). Burnout among the Counseling Profession: A Survey of Future Professional Counselors. *Journal on Educational Psychology*, *10*(1), 9–15.

Xanthopoulou, D., Bakker, A. B., Dollard, M. F., Demerouti, E., Schaufeli, W. B., Taris,
T. W., & Schreurs, P. J. G. (2007). When do job demands particularly predict
burnout? The moderating role of job resources. *Journal of Managerial
Psychology*, *22*(8), 766–786. https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710837714