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Burnout in Social Work Case Managers in Urban Northeast Ohio

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Daniel Colegrove

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Walden University

2018

Abstract

Burnout in Social Work Case Managers in Urban Northeast Ohio

by

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MSSA, Case Western Reserve University, 2013

BA, Malone University, 2009

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Social Work

Walden University

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Abstract

Burnout in case managers is a social problem affecting the field of social work. This research project explored the causes and effects of burnout on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work practice. The research study focused on how social work case workers coped with stress in urban northeastern Ohio, and how case work managers addressed burnout. The Maslach multidimensional theory on burnout was applied to gain an understanding of the causes and effects of social work case manager burnout. The qualitative research study involved interviewing 8 Ohio social work case managers working in community mental health who scored moderate burnout on the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Human Service Survey in either emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, or personal accomplishment. The study involved 11 social worker case manager participants, 8 of which who scored with at least a moderate risk of burnout and participated in the interview process. Study findings identified systemic issues on the macro level of practice, including limited resources that put stress on organizations to produce. Microlevel forces unique to this study include transportation stress, bed bugs, and working with violent offenders, which created added stress for social work case managers. The implications of this study for positive change include supporting case managers in understanding that effective supervision and requiring continuing education units on burnout could assist in reducing social work case manager burnout and lead to positive social change.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study and Literature Review

Introduction

Professional burnout is a social problem that affects individuals and organization on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work practice. This study focuses on practicing social work case managers in urban northeast Ohio. The goal of this study was to better understand the social problem of burnout in professional social work case managers. Studying the way professional social workers practice may lead to positive social changes to better enhance clinical practices, increase practitioner health, reduce turnover, and reduce healthcare costs (Steinlin et al., 2017).

The research and focus of this project is divided into two major sections. The first section includes the following: Problem Statement, Purpose and Research Questions, Nature of Doctoral Project, Significance of the Study, Theoretical/Conceptual Framework, Values and Ethics, Review of the Professional and Academic Literature. The second section focuses on the results of the research project. The second section includes the following sections: Research Design, Methodology, Data Analysis, Ethical Procedures, and a Summary.

Problem Statement

Burnout is a major problem in caregiving professions (Hombrados-Mendieta & Cosano-Rivas, 2013). The social problem of burnout affects professional social workers engaging in practice (Diaconescu, 2015). Burnout in social worker case managers leads

to increased stress (Chiller & Crisp, 2012), lower self-esteem, and lower production (Fenton & Miller, 2014).

Quinn-Lee, Olson-McBride, and Unterberger (2014) reported that healthcare practitioners are subjected to high levels of stress. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015) identified 386,600 social workers in practice. In addition, the National Association of Social Workers (2017) recognized that social workers provide 60% of mental health services. Social workers constitute an important element in mental health services being delivered.

Researchers continue to study the social problem of burnout in helping professions in hopes to better understand the causes and effects of professional burnout. Studying professional social workers practicing in the field offer researchers a lens to view and understand the social problem of burnout. Among these professional social workers, nursing home social workers (Shinan-Altman, Werner, & Cohen, 2016), and hospital social workers have been studied to better understand the social problem of burnout in social workers. Additionally, Quinn-Lee et al. (2014) studied burnout in social workers practicing in hospice social workers. Yet, the social problem continues to persist in the field of social work.

Social work burnout affects a variety of social workers in various settings. In a recent study, Moore et al. (2017) utilized micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice as a framework to study burnout among social workers practicing in an emergency department. Studying burnout on the various levels of practice allows for a greater understanding of the complex nature of social work burnout. A better understanding of

social work burnout may lead to stronger clinical practices, healthier individuals, more efficient companies, and lower healthcare costs. Additionally, studying northeast Ohio social case managers practicing in the field on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice will allow for further information that may help solve the social problem of burnout.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

Burnout in case manager social workers in urban northeastern Ohio leads to poor client care (Hoffarth, 2017), practitioner's health risks (Pelon, 2017), higher organization costs due to turnover (McFadden, Campbell, & Taylor, 2015), and increased healthcare costs (Salize et al., 2013). This study focused on the experiences of social worker case managers who have experienced the effects of burnout. Burnout affects several helping professions. Burnout affects social worker case managers because the emotional stress that occurs from working with clients and low reward (Pelon, 2017). There are no clear statistics that point to the prevalence of social burnout. Although, exhaustion, detachment, and failure have been linked to burnout. Acker (2012) explained that 56% of social workers have experienced emotional exhaustion, and 73% work stress. Sullivan, Kondrat, and Floyd (2015) reported that burnout out in social work case managers is derived from low pay, case load size, and client stress.

The following research questions will be examined to better understand the social problem of burnout in urban northeast Ohio social work case managers:

Research Question One - How do social work case managers in urban northeast Ohio cope with stress?

Research Question Two - What are the causes and effects of burnout on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work practice?

Research Question Three - What do social work case managers in Urban Northeast Ohio see their organizations doing to address burnout?

Definition of Key Terms

Burnout: An individual's response to over work and stress that can affect a individual both physically and mentally (Crowder & Sears, 2017).

Case manager: A profession in healthcare that works to coordinate and facilitate a client's services. Case managers advocate, plan, provide resources, and provide communication to all services to enhance quality health care outcomes (Sullivan et al., 2015).

Macro: Social work practice and interventions on large scale practice (Moore et al., 2017).

Mezzo: Social work practice on the intermediate level of social work practice and often includes small organizations (Moore et al., 2017).

Micro: Social work practice directly with the individual or family (Moore et al., 2017).

Organization: An organized group of individuals who share a purpose working toward a collective outcome (Turgut et al., 2016).

Social problem: A condition used to describe an unfavorable situation felt by a group of individuals in a community (Eversman & Bird, 2017).

Stress: An individual emotional or psychological response to pressure that results in chemical change in the human body (Diaconescu, 2015).

Effective research and new insights can lead to a better understanding of burnout in social workers. Case managers assist clients with housing, medication, social service needs, and employment (Stanhope et al., 2016). Understanding the social problem can assist practitioners in Ohio and provide potential insight for future studies. The goal of this research project was to develop a better understanding of the social problem of burnout through a qualitative study, interviewing social workers who have experienced burnout in Ohio.

Nature of the Doctoral Project

This research study was designed to learn from social work case managers practicing in the field of social work in urban northeast Ohio. The utilization of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) can indicate social work case managers who are at risk for burnout (Quinn-Lee et al., 2014). Understanding an individual's experiences is important in fully understanding the problem of social work case manager burnout. This aligns with the purpose of developing an understanding on why burnout continues to occur and affects practice on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work. Furthermore, the study works to examine ways social work case managers cope, and what organizations do to address burnout.

Local community mental health agencies will be asked permission to allow social work case managers to complete a MBI-HSS. The social worker case managers with the highest burnout scores on the survey will be asked to participate in the research study.

An interview will be conducted between the researcher and each social work case manager to determine their willingness to participate in the study.

A challenge for conducting qualitative data research involves the ability of the researcher to organize meaningful information (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). According to Fugard and Potts (2015), thematic analysis is a data analysis utilized in social research. Thematic analysis involves a six-step process that organizes multiple themes into a higher order of distinct main themes (Hall & Ivaldi, 2017). Thematic analysis is ideal for a qualitative research project that utilizes semistructured interview questions to obtain data.

Significance of the Study

Professional burnout is a major problem that continues to plague the field of social work. Social work case managers are a vital component in the service delivery of mental health services. A qualitative study interviewing social work case managers allows for an in-depth understanding of the social problem. Research can influence progressive changes to alter the problem of burnout in social work case managers in northeastern Ohio. The knowledge obtained from the research study will be shared with the participating social work case managers, organizations, and local stakeholders. The goal is to develop a better understanding of the social problem of burnout in social work case managers in northeastern Ohio and its effects on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice. A better understanding will lead to positive, healthier outcomes in a highly stressful occupation.

Studies have shown that social worker case managers practice on the micro level are at risk for burnout (Hombrados-Mendieta & Cosano-Rivas, 2013). Lizano (2015)

reported that individuals who experience burnout are at risk for quitting their job and poor performance. This study will lead to a better understanding of the issues social work case managers experience, and recommend strategies for prevention. Researchers have suggested that caseload size (Quinn-Lee et al., 2014), isolation (Ben-Porat, & Itzhaky, 2015), and health care changes (Turgut et al., 2016) all influence burnout. This study will contribute to the development of a better understanding of the specific causes and effects of social work case managers burnout in northeast Ohio.

This study may lead to better practices on the mezzo level of social work practice. Burnout is a multifaceted, changing problem that needs continual research investment. The researcher's and practitioner's ability to understand the social problem, may lead to better outcomes on the various levels of social work practice. In sum, this project will build off previous research done and develop new research to gain a better understanding of the social problem of burnout in social work case managers.

Stier-Jamer et al. (2016) explained that burnout is a macro level problem that affects society. Information that exists on prevention and treatment of burnout is minimal and lacking (Quinn-Lee et al., 2014). Researchers have shown that burnout affects several positions in social work. Additionally, burnout effects social policies and increases healthcare costs (Stier-Jamer et al., 2016). Understanding burnout on the macro level of practice may lead to a healthier society by gathering new data that can help foster change through policy change and development. Information obtained from the study will benefit social worker case managers, agencies, and programs operating on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

To better understand this issue, I proposed utilizing The Maslach multidimensional theory on burnout (Maslach, 1976) to understand how social worker case managers in northeast Ohio view their experiences with burnout. Hombrados-Mendieta and Cosano-Rivas (2013) described burnout as a developmental and multidimensional phenomenon that affects professionals differently. The Maslach multidimensional theory on burnout is widely regarded and has been utilized in multiple fields to examine burnout. The utilization of Maslach multidimensional theory on burnout will assist in providing structure to the research study.

Maslach (1976) created a burnout inventory based on similarities found in research on occupational burnout among professionals experiencing work place stress. The Maslach burnout inventory has been validated through several research studies. Maslach's research focuses on the similarities found in professionals experiencing stress and the connection with burnout. Maslach multidimensional theory led to the creation of the Maslach burnout inventory. The burnout inventory consists of 22 items connecting to occupational burnout. The Maslach burnout inventory has three major elements of focus: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1976). Individuals who are at most risk for occupational burnout score higher on the inventory. Indicators for burnout is 27 or above for emotional exhaustion, 13 or higher for depersonalization, and or a score of 39 for personal accomplishment (Quinn-Lee, Olson-Mcbride, & et al., 2014). Crowder and Sears, (2017) further explained that the subscales have been found to be reliable at .90 emotional exhaustion, .79 for

depersonalization, and .71 for personal accomplishment. Schneider et al.(2017) explained that burnout is an accumulation of both emotional exhaustion and fatigue. Diaconescu (2015) indicated the risks of burnout and challenges of practicing social work case managers. The Maslach multidimensional theory on burnout further provides a lens to view the social problem of burnout in social worker case managers in northeast Ohio.

The Maslach multidimensional theory on burnout has been applied the field of education (Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014), and nursing (Iecovich, & Avivi, 2017) to illustrate the effects of exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced satisfaction (Maslach, 1976). The social work researcher will develop a clearer understanding of the social problem of burnout by utilizing qualitative measures within the structure of the Maslach multidimensional theory on burnout.

Values and Ethics

The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2008) explained that all social work principles are equally important. Social workers are held to the values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of a person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. Ethical principles delineate aspiring social work practice. All social work values and principles are important and necessary in social work practice. Service, integrity and competence are values that most align with this research project. Service focuses on the social worker's ability to practice at a clinical level and place the client's interest above the professional's self-interest (NASW, 2008). Integrity is a value that focuses on the professional's ability to practice as a trustworthy professional that embodies the ethical standards set forth in the NASW Code of Ethics (NASW, 2008).

Competence describes the social worker's ability to provide professional expertise and continually enhance social work practice (NASW, 2008).

The NASW Code of Ethics is a document that was initially developed on October 13, 1960. Since that time, the NASW Code of Ethics has been revised to continually meet the service needs of clients. The NASW Code of Ethics guides clinical social work practice creating ethical standards and guidelines. The NASW principles and values assist both professionals and organizations in providing structure to practice and client care.

Mental health agencies strive to follow and abide by the NASW Code of Ethics. Social workers strive to embody the NASW Code of Ethics in practice. The NASW Code of Ethics (2008) describes social workers' responsibility to promote and enhance organization to meet the needs of clients.

This project supports the NASW Code of Ethics by exemplifying values/principles and furthering the development of social work practice. The NASW Code of Ethics (2008) is described as an ethical guide for social workers at all levels of practice. This project works to promote ethical responsibility to the client, colleagues, practice, profession, and society (NASW, 2008).

Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The researcher utilized the Social Index database to research articles on the topic of burnout. Key search terms included *social work burnout*, *resilience*, and *effects of burnout*. The literature review consists information published by scholars within the last

five years. This information allows for the researcher to accumulate and analyze the most current evidence-based practice information on the topic of burnout.

Micro Practice Problem

Social work case manager burnout is a social problem that is affected by several variables. Hombrados-Mendieta and Cosano-Rivas (2013) explain that social work case managers facing burnout experience emotional exhaustion, isolation, and guilt. In addition, researchers report that burnout results in loss of purpose (Hardiman & Simmonds, 2013). Burnout is a frustrating response in one's inability to process stressful interactions successfully.

A significant amount of stress and inability to successfully cope affects social work case manager's performance. Research studies show that stress-related tasks result in higher levels of burnout (Amponsah-Tawiah, Annor, & Arthur, 2016). Additionally, researchers have found that personal stress increases the possibility of emotional exhaustion (Woodhead, Northrop & Edelstein, 2016). Tartakovsky (2016) indicated that burnout is a result of intense client contact and poor coping skills. The inability to successfully cope and process stress increases the chances of case manager burnout in social work practice.

Social work case managers work in many situations that increase stress. Researchers have reported that perceived stress is as impactful as actual stress (Dollard & Nesar, 2013). Dollard and Nesar (2013) reported that work stress affects energy, which has a direct influence on performance. Working with clients can require more energy and result in higher levels of stress experienced by the social work case manager.

Client Care

A practicing professional's first responsibility is to the client. Researchers have found that burnout affects both the social work case managers and clients (Hardiman & Simmonds, 2013; Woodhead et al., 2016); (Steinlin et al., 2017) further indicated that burnout can lead to a negative attitude by the social work case manager. Burnout affects social work case managers through fatigue, depleted physical and mental health (Tartakovsky, 2016). The increase in fatigue decreases the social work case manager's motivation and abilities to solve conflict (Jinfeng & Jianxin, 2016). The social work case manager's inability to provide self-care leads to potential poor treatment. Moreover, burnout can affect the social work case manager's ability to accurately treat the client (Hardiman, & Simmonds, 2013). Amponsah-Tawia et al. (2016) agreed and further explained that stress can have a negative impact on performance. Furthermore, burnout negatively impacts health care professionals' behavior and hinders their ability to care (Hombrados-Mendieta & Cosano-Rivas, 2013). In sum, a burned-out social work case manager risks both their health and the health of the client.

Case Managers' Health

Burnout has an adverse effect on a social work case manager's health and functioning. Young (2015) reported that burnout affects the overall health of an individual experiencing burnout. Sánchez-Moreno et al. (2015) further explained that social work as a profession is at high risk for burnout, and a detrimental impact on one's mental health. Social work case managers suffering from burnout may experience a number of physical and mental health problems. Researchers explained that burnout

affects emotional stress (Hardiman & Simmonds, 2013), energy (Ohrt et al., 2015), and performance (Young, 2015). Furthermore, burnout can affect the clinician's ability to effectively be present and empathetic towards the client (Ohrt et al., 2015). Burnout on the micro level affects the social work case manager's ability to focus and provide the needed care for the individual presenting for services.

Transporting Clients

Driving may be one of the most stressful experiences a social work case manager will complete as part of their responsibilities. Researchers have shown that the way one views their transportation of clients has a direct impact on their mental health disposition (Olsson et al., 2013). Researchers have recognized commuting as a stressful undertaking (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2016). Researchers have found that people who are predominantly stressed will view the responsibility of transportation assistance as stressful (Olsson et al., 2013). The unpredictability and lack of control increase the driver's stress level (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2016). Furthermore, driving stress results in feelings of being overwhelmed and reduces the employee's job satisfaction (Amponsah-Tawiah, et al., 2016). Social work case managers are required to balance the practicableness of driving with high need and demands of clients.

Transportation is a service offered by community mental health agencies to assist with client barriers. Researchers report that 3.6 million Americans have difficulties receiving care because of transportations barriers (Long, 2017). Researchers identify that poor transportation leads to missed appointments, and poor client outcomes (Long, 2017). Transportation to appointments is a significant need of clients. Thus, social work case

managers work to assist client to appointments to avoid lapse in care and poor treatment outcomes.

Social work case managers assist clients to mental health appointments, to pay utility bills and secure necessities for daily living. These functions are part of their responsibility in their mental health agency (Long, 2017). The commute provides time for the social work case manager to provide both practical assistance to the appointment, and time to talk to the client about the client's presenting problems. Providing transportation and mental health engagement is a significant responsibility of a social work case manager.

Bed bugs

Bed bugs are a major problem in northeast Ohio. According to Orkin Pest Control, the State of Ohio ranks as one of the worst states for bed bug infestations. Orkin Pest Control reports that the City of Cleveland ranks 13th worst city for bed bugs in America. Bed bugs can be found anywhere humans occupy and can be transported in people clothes.

Bed bugs are found in the places social worker case managers practice. Bed bugs can be found in hotels, stores, apartments, and libraries (Carr, 2015). Treating bed bugs is time intensive, and costly for individuals and organizations. Estimates vary for treatment and cost. Orkin estimates that treatment cost between 500 and 1,500 dollars. Working in the area's homes make underpaid professionals worry about the potential to infect their homes and families.

Bed bugs are initially hard to detect and can transfer without the knowledge of an individual. Bed bugs can easily go undetected and are small enough to fit through the fabric of a mattress or a couch (Carr, 2015). Sheele et al. (2017) reported that clients who suffer from bed bug infestation often spread the infestation without knowing. Bed bugs are commonly found in a client's clothes by treating healthcare professionals (Steele et al. 2017). Healthcare professionals agree that there is an abundance of bed bugs found in EMS vehicles and emergency rooms (Sheele et al., 2017). Bed bugs create significant stress for social work case managers who transport and treat clients with bed bugs.

The potential harm of a bite, and the cost to treat a bed bug infestation creates alarm for many social work case managers. Bed bugs are a real threat to individuals working with clients in infested areas. Carr (2015) reported that social worker case managers are faced with the realization of performing care with the risk of bed bugs. Researchers report that individuals are haunted with the potential of being infested and current solutions offer no potential end to the problem (Carr, 2015).

Mezzo Practice Problem

Burnout affects both social work case managers and mental health organizations. Researchers agree that organizations are affected by the health of their workers (Dollard & Naser, 2013). Young (2015) further explains that burnout is an unfortunate experience for both the clinician and the organization. Researchers have documented that stressful conditions result in the turnover, loss in production, and additional costs (Dollard & Naser, 2013). Burnout is a negative component that leads to organizational difficulties in employee retention and recruitment (Jacobson et al., 2013). It produces economic strain

on mental health agencies and negotiates the organization's ability to operate (Young, 2015). The loss of trained personnel affects an organization by losing money and lowering moral (Young, 2015). Mental health agencies are significantly affected by the social problem of burnout in social work case managers, experiencing high turnover.

Community mental health agencies are responsible for providing social work case managers with the tools to succeed in providing treatment to clients. Researchers explain that burnout in staff is a risk for both employers and employees (Woodhead, Northrop, & Edelstein, 2016). Burnout has an adverse effect on organizations on multiple levels (Hombrados-Mendieta, & Cosano-Rivas, 2013). Organizations that fail to recognize and treat burnout place clinicians at risk. Examples are seen in an organization's failure to clarify the social worker's role and responsibilities, which heightened the likelihood of burnout (Hombrados-Mendieta, & Cosano-Rivas, 2013). Additionally, the lack of resources increases an individual's chances of burnout (Hombrados-Mendieta, & Cosano-Rivas, 2013).

Organizational Problems

Burnout is an accumulation of factors that result in the disconnect and fatigue experienced by a social work case manager. Researchers report that environmental factors such as caseload size (Travis, Lizano, & Mor Barak, 2016), lower salaries (Sánchez-Moreno et al., 2015), inadequate support and supervision lead to increased chances of burnout (Ohrt et al., 2015). Social work case managers working in community mental health agencies are faced with high demands, lower salaries and less supervision than other fields. Ohrt et al. (2015) explains that private practice social

worker's have a lower percentage of burnout than community mental health agencies.

Social work case managers need to be managed efficiently and offered the support necessary to grow and provide care in community mental health practice.

Macro Practice Problem

Healthcare is significantly affected by workplace stress. Researchers agree that burnout is a significant public health issue (Stier-Jamer et al., 2016). Furthermore, work stress is globally recognized as a social and economic problem (Dollard, & Neser, 2013). Researchers agree that work stress increases financial costs (Stier-Jamer et al., 2016), and lowers productivity (Dollard, & Neser, 2013). In addition, organizational burnout negatively affects and weakens client care (Young, 2015). Organizations make decisions that affect work flow and safety based on macro-level social policy.

Social work is a demanding job that is affected by policy changes that increase stress for organizations and for social workers (Blomberg et al., 2015). Dollard and Neser (2013) explains that management and organizational design have an impact on job stress. For instance, job safety and protection factors allow the worker to feel safe and productive (Dollard, & Neser, 2013). Organizations have the ability to manage and structure responsibilities to decrease burnout.

Social work policy is affected by the state and federal governments that regulate funding. Researchers explain that stress arises in social worker case managers when environmental demands change and the social worker case manager's ability to cope is challenged (Blomberg et al., 2014). Researchers agree that macro-level factors like national policies significantly affect workplace stress (Dollard, & Neser, 2013). State

funding through Medicaid changes the way organizations can function. More funding allows for organizations to manage freely and provides more support to social work case managers.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

Social work case managers are resilient professionals who can work for a better self by utilizing self and education. Social worker case managers utilize coping strategies to assist in practice and resilience (Diaconescu, 2015). Resilience is the ability to be resourceful and adapt to internal and external stressors (Crowder & Sears, 2017). Continuing to develop the ability to be resilient is a major component in decreasing burnout. Researchers agree that developing coping skills and social supports assist in developing resilience (Crowder & Sears, 2017). Social work case managers can utilize their understanding of self and resilience training to better cope with work stress.

A social work case manager possesses knowledge, behavioral, and emotional coping skills that benefit against burnout (Diaconescu, 2015). However, researchers report that social work case managers often utilize negative coping mechanisms when stressed (Amponsah-Tawiah, Annor, & Arthur, 2016). Social work case managers need to develop a strong sense of self to manage stress. Ben-Porat and Itzhaky (2015) explain that one's self-esteem is an integral component to avoiding burnout. One's self-esteem impacts their ability to set firm boundaries and creates separation between work and their personal lives (Ben-Porat, & Itzhaky, 2015). Social work researchers have considered

the ways formal and informal supports impacts a professional's ability to cope. One's self-esteem affects the way they will process and cope with stress.

Weaknesses

Burnout can be challenging to treat because of the variety of presentations that may manifest from individual to individual. Researchers agree that being able to quantify and clearly indicate burnout syndrome is complicated for a clinician (Stier-Jarmer et al., 2016). A significant reason why burnout presents differently from individual to individual is the number of variables that affect burnout. Young (2015) explains that one's personality and personal characteristics have an impact on the potential for burnout. Researchers have yet to identify or develop a specific treatment to reduce symptoms. Researchers have identified one's personality as having a significant impact on their perception of burnout. Steinlin (2017) explains that optimism and flexibility influence one's understanding of control. Crowder, & Sears (2017) further reports that one's ability to be resourceful has a major impact on the prevalence of burnout. A social worker case manager's personality is a variable that dramatically influences the effect of burnout.

Interventions

The social problem of burnout has been researched, and while interventions have been designed to assist in reducing burnout, Ohrt et al. (2015) suggest that no one intervention reduces burnout. Researchers agree that a mix of strategies are needed to reduce burnout in social work case managers (Ohrt et al., 2015). Tartakovsky (2016) explains that interventions that incorporate a social work case manager's values lead to better outcomes. Additionally, effective coping strategies and positive support offer the

most reduced forms of stress (Ohrt et al., 2015). Furthermore, the presence of self-compassion may enhance a social worker case managers coping skills (Iacono, 2017). Proper interventions create ways to assist a social work case managers in their ability to cope effectively. Additionally, proper interventions can be useful in lowering burnout in social work case managers.

Eliminating exposure to burnout maybe daunting and impossible. Ohrt et al. (2015) reports that supervisors have the responsibility of educating supervisees on effective coping skills. Supervisors are essential in educating social work case managers on recognition and treatment of burnout and researchers agree that information on effectively managing burnout is lacking (Ohrt et al., 2015). Supervisors can utilize their practice and education to promote a healthier clinician through the development of supports.

Social work case managers and their supervisor's need to work together and set a time that is beneficial for supervision. Researchers discuss the importance of supervision in being able to lower the social work case manager's chances of burnout (Steinlin et al., 2017). Travis, Lizano and Mor Barak (2016) explains that a social work case manager needs quality supervision. Supervision is needed to be scheduled to allow the social work case manager the amount of time to process, learn, and develop skills to avoid social work burnout.

Social work case managers are practicing with limited ability to identify systems to help with coping. There is a vast amount of information emphasizing the need for both formal and informal supports (Sánchez-Moreno et al., 2015). Furthermore, a clinician's

perception of support is just as important as the support (Sánchez-Moreno et al., 2015). The ability of a social worker to identify and create balance is crucial to successfully cope with stress.

Developing coping strategies have been held as the most effective approach to combating social work burnout. Coping strategies help promote one's resilience (Steinlin et al., 2017). Davis (2014) explains that resilience is one's ability to withstand adverse outcomes. Resilience focuses on internal changes and environmental changes (Davis, 2014). Social worker case managers need to continue to develop coping strategies that incorporate resilience. This approach is critical due to the social work case managers close work with individuals in their environment.

Another strategy is for social work case managers to identify symptoms and signs of stress before burnout occurs. Preventive measures are approaches that work to stop burnout from developing. Better wellness leads to stronger mental health, which works to prevent burnout (Ohrt et al., 2015). Identifying chronic stress and burnout before it fully develops is an approach to solving the problem (Stier-Jamer et al., 2016). Problem solving skills are prevention methods that work to solve problems before they manifest into greater problems. The key to burnout prevention is the development and utilization of stress management skills (Stier-Jamer et al., 2016). Researchers report stress management, relaxation techniques, and physical exercise are interventions to assist in lowering stress levels (Stier-Jamer et al., 2016). Training aimed to curb stress and develop social work case manager skills have reduced burnout (Crowder & Sears, 2017). Reducing burnout also involves the ability of the social work case managers to develop a

stronger mindset to continually develop coping skills. A social work case manager's ability to utilize mindfulness to identify, problem solve, and utilize stress relief interventions allows for a decreased chance of burnout (Crowder & Sears, 2017).

Variables

Personality

Many components affect one's ability to function in a stressful job. Personality is a trait that has an impact on one's ability to manage stress but receives little attention by researchers (Haines et al., 2013). Ben-Porat and Itzhaky (2015) report that a social work case manager's personality has a major impact on the ability to provide services to clients. Furthermore, Tartakovsky (2016) explains that one's personality affects the way they process information and work in stressful situations.

Being a social work case manager can be a stressful career that requires constant processing and coping of stressful situations. Professionals are influenced by stressful situations that require strong coping skills (Ben-Porat & Itzhaky, 2015). A social work case manager's ability to process information has an impact on their work and the way they perceive their work. High-level work stress is more difficult to process for less seasoned professionals (Ben-Porat & Itzhaky, 2015). Researchers report that individuals that can adapt and change are more likely to display a positive attitude (Turgut et al., 2016). Working with people is a difficult task that requires both skill and resilience. Researchers agree that resilient employees can handle change better than individuals who lack resilience skills (Turgut et al., 2016). Social work case managers who develop coping and resilience skills can adapt more effectively to the needs of clients.

Empirical Studies

Burnout is a phenomenon that affects individuals working under pressure in a number of ways. Compassion fatigue is an element of burnout that has been used to describe chronic fatigue in health care professionals (Diaconescu, 2015). Researchers report that helping professions are at a high risk of burnout (Yu et al., 2015). The Maslach multidimensional theory on burnout has been applied to other fields to illustrate the effects of exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced satisfaction, and can be applied and studied through the lenses of other professions to better understand the effects of burnout on professionals (Maslach, 1976).

Burnout is a phenomenon that has attracted large amounts of research in attempts to understand the risks and consequences (McFadden, Campbell, & Taylor, 2015). Finzi-Dottan & Kormosh, (2016) explain that social workers who work in compassionate positions are highly susceptible to burnout. Savaya (2014) further notes that research has identified the causes and predictors that make social work case managers most vulnerable to burnout. However, burnout continues to exist and is prominent in social service fields, without any feasible solution.

Transportation and Violent Offenders

Providing transportation services for a client creates many stressors for the social work case managers. The wear on a personal vehicle can add stress to the social work case manager's ability to maintain the vehicle for both professional and personal reasons. Social work case managers work with high-risk clients involved with a history of violence, drugs, and sickness (Quinney, 2016). Additional research is needed to better understand the stressors of transporting and working with violent offenders. Savaya

(2014) explains that working with individuals with a history of violence creates additional stress for a practitioner. Violence from patients affects both social work case managers and organizations (Winstanley & Hales, 2015). Providing services to violent offenders add an additional stressor to the social worker's responsibilities. There is a need to be more exploration on the connection between working with violent offenders and burnout (Winstanley & Hales, 2015).

Responsibilities

Organizations support and design social worker responsibilities differently. Social work education is a common denominator for addressing social work burnout and is fundamental in reducing the risk of professional burnout. The development of a professional increases one's ability to process stress and cope with stressful situations (Ben-Porat & Itzhaky, 2015). Furthermore, high-level work stress is more difficult to handle for less seasoned professionals (Ben-Porat & Itzhaky, 2015). Educational leadership is fundamental in educating practitioners and future organizational leaders on the risks of burnout. The social work profession need component, educated, and reliable professionals (Travis, Lizano & Mor Barak, 2016). Education provides practitioners working in the field with an understanding of ways to adjust to stress in the workplace.

Practice Gaps

Social worker burnout is well examined, yet the social problem of burnout continues to persist in practice. Savaya (2014) explains that few studies look into the specific stressors affected by the social work case managers during practice. There are no definitive measures to determine the amount of stress and burnout in social workers

(Travis, Lizano & Mor Barak, 2016). However, previous research on social work burnout is a reliable indicator of the profession being linked to burnout (Travis, Lizano & Mor Barak, 2016). Social work case manager's stressors vary from location and position. Nevertheless, social work case manager coping skills remained generalized. A practice need is to develop an appropriate understanding of burnout specific by position and geographical area.

Finzi-Dottan and Kormosh, (2016) explain that more research needs to be completed to examine the spillover effects of burnout into one's personal life. Stress management needs to be researched outside of clinical practice to better understand the connection between personal stress and work stress. Queri (2016) explains that self-management includes one's ability to self-monitor and self-control. Social work is in need of specific coping skills that consider one's personal life and one's ability to provide self-management.

Mindful interventions have been found to assist in managing stress. However, there is a lack of research in developing new ways to improve mindfulness-based interventions to decrease burnout (Crowder & Sears, 2017). There also are gaps in research involving developing mindfulness-based interventions (Crowder & Sears, 2017). Dorian and Killebrew, (2014) indicate that mindfulness training has been shown to assist with burnout prevention. In addition, mindfulness assists in developing coping skills and reducing stress (Dorian & Killebrew, 2014). Developing new interventions to assist with unique stressors can help to reduce professional burnout and stress.

Organizational Gaps

Organizations need to develop new ways to lower costs associated with burnout. Researchers explain that developing effective practices is needed due to the increase in economic costs (Hussein et al., 2014). The social work profession is continually seeking to improve systems and clinical practice (Gibson, 2014). An ever-changing economic environment requires continual research to develop effective cost-based solutions.

Organizations are at risk of losing social work case managers due to the lack of economic resources and support to manage burnout. Empirical research indicates that emotional exhaustion leads to depersonalization, which affects jobs loss (Hussein et al., 2014). Furthermore, research links high amounts of emotional exhaustion to burnout (Hussein et al., 2014). Organizations are responsible to effectively manage mental health agencies, yet have major barriers.

Mental health agencies are affected by retention and recruitment of qualified social work professionals. Barck-Holst et al. (2017) explains that stress is linked to organizational problems with retention. Hussein et al. (2014) further reports that a challenge is the ability to recruit future students to the practice of social work. Mental health agencies are under pressure to hire and retain highly qualified professionals. Gibson (2014) suggests that social work students entering the profession struggle to transition to practice. Gaps persist in the way social workers are learning to cope with stress, which affects turnover and retention in mental health agencies.

Further examination is needed to determine ways mental health agencies can assist social worker case managers with effective healthy practices. Social work case management is a profession that incurs more stress than other professions due to the

demands and environment (Barck-Holst et al., 2017). Gibson (2014) indicated that social work case managers become stressed because of pressure from management for results. Unprocessed organizational stress can negatively affect a professional's personal life (Queri, 2016). Supervision and support has been seen as a deterrent to stress. Blanch (2016) reports that social support has a positive impact on burnout outcomes. In addition, supervisors and support staff work to ease a social work case manager's stress and enhance their skills (Blanch, 2016). Mental health agencies are responsible to supporting social work case managers and encouraging healthy practice.

Macro Gaps

Mental health agencies are affected by macro level forces that govern funding and health care reform. Gibson (2014) explains a continual challenge in mental health is improving social work practice with continual change in political reform. Researchers explain that societies cultural expectations drive the way social work systems perform (Gibson, 2014). Gaps between policy and practice continue to provide a challenge for stakeholders and professionals.

Summary

The Maslach multidimensional theory of burnout has been widely accepted by social work researchers as an appropriate theory in understanding burnout. Burnout continues to persist in social work practice. Humble et al. (2013) explains that geographic location has an impact on the services and stressors social worker case managers experience. Examination of the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work practice in northeast Ohio allows for a better understanding of what is causing and

affecting social work case manager burnout. This study examines how social work case managers cope with stress as well as what organizations are doing to support social work case managers. Interviewing case managers who work for mental health agencies allows for a better understanding of the problem of burnout in social work case managers in northeast Ohio.

Section 2: Research Design and Data Collection

Despite all the information and interventions to address social work burnout, the social problem persists. Soto and Ramos (2013) reported that social work case managers provide mental health services to those who experience trauma, and poverty. Social work case managers in northeast Ohio experience different causes of burnout on the micro, mezzo, and macro level of practice. Social work case managers need support and better-coping skills to assist in the effects of burnout. Furthermore, research is needed to understand what organizations are doing to help social work case managers with burnout (Rosada et al., 2013). Practice problems are unique to responsibilities and geographic locations. Research is needed to understand the impacts of social work case manager burnout in Ohio.

The second section will include the following: Research Design, Methodology, Data Analysis, Ethical Procedures, and Summary. In addition, the methodology section will be subdivided into participants, instrumentation, and existing data. Research will be utilized to better understand the social problem of burnout in social work case managers in northeast Ohio.

Research Design

Social work case managers are at high risk for practice burnout. Research is needed to understand what the causes and effects of burnout on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work are on practice. Additionally, how do social work case managers in northeast Ohio cope with stress? Finally, research is needed to understand

what social work case managers in northeast Ohio see their organizations doing to address burnout.

The nature of this study is consumed with developing an understanding of burnout with social work case managers. Action research allows for the researcher to better understand the social problem through the experiences of participant. Research will be focused on the experiences of 8-12 social work case managers. The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey will be sent out to social work case managers at participating local mental health agency. The MBI-HSS is being utilized as a method of inclusion to determine the most appropriate candidates for the study. The highest scores will be asked to participate in the interview portion of the research study. In the event, more than 12 social work case managers are responding to the study, the highest scores on the MBI-HSS will be utilized. The participants will be asked to be part of the study and complete an interview to better understand the social problem of burnout in social work case managers. The researcher will employ both open-ended and closed-ended questions to develop data. The data will be examined to understand themes and information important with the problem better.

MBI-HSS is a tool that allows for a researcher to develop qualified individuals who have experienced burnout. The MBI-HSS is a validated tool (Voto & Ramos, 2013) being utilized in this study to develop inclusion into the research study. The MBI-HSS assists social work researchers with identifying individuals who are at risk for burnout. Social work case managers practicing in community mental health agencies who have experienced burnout offer the most expertise for a research study.

Setia (2017) explained that qualitative research designs have been beneficial in behavioral science research. In qualitative studies, researchers utilize an interview format to develop an understanding of the subject's experiences. Qualitative measures are useful in understanding one's experiences with treatment and systems (Setia, 2017). The combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions allows a researcher a better understanding of the problem. Social work case managers working at a mental health agency are the subjects in the qualitative research study.

Methodology

Prospective Data

Data will be collected through interviews between the researcher and social work case managers working in community mental health. Setia (2017) explains that interviews consist of mostly open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow the subject to tell their view of the problem. Researchers can add additional appropriate questions to the assessment depending on the respondent's response (Setia, 2017). Interviewing 8-12 social work case managers in community mental health agencies can lead to a better understanding of social work burnout.

Data will be derived from interview responses from case manager social workers working in community mental health agencies. The interview structured with the same questions with the ability to ask additional questions based on the subject response. Qualitative measures allow for the subjects to speak freely about their experiences within the study.

Participants

The researcher will partner with community mental health agencies to solicit social work case managers for the research study. An email will be sent out to the social worker case managers in the agency outlining the research study. As part of the selection process, the MBI-HSS will be requested to be completed and returned to the researcher. Social workers case managers that score the highest on the MBI-HSS will be asked to participate in the study.

Researchers have found the MBI-HSS to be both dependable and transferable. MBI-HSS is viewed as externally valid and has been applied to several healthcare professions. The MBI-HSS is a self-reportable scale that ensures objectivity between the subjects utilizing the tool. The MBI-HSS consists of three subscales: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment (Quinn-Lee, Olson-McBride & Unterberger, 2014). Additionally, explain that sub-score for emotional exhaustion of 27 or more, depersonalization 13 or more, and personal accomplishment 39 or more are trustworthy indicators of burnout (Quinn-Lee, Olson-McBride & Unterberger, 2014).

The research will consist of systematic sampling. Gentles et al. (2016) reported that systematic sampling is a statistical process of selecting of various forms of research rigor, methodologies, abstraction, and analysis. Systematic sampling may allow for a more participants. A significant difficulty with systematic sampling is selection bias (Wolbring & Treischl, 2016). Systematic sampling in qualitative studies is potentially unbiased without randomization in the selection process (Wolbring & Treischl, 2016).

The strengths in systematic sampling allow for high participation. Additional research controls allow for an unbiased selection process.

The study is focused on the social problem of social work case manager's burnout in urban northeast Ohio. The participants are individuals who have experienced burnout. Social work case manager's experiences allow for an avenue to learn and research. The research study will focus on the experiences of 8-12 social worker case managers in urban northeast Ohio. The studies goal is to take the most affected social work case managers from urban northeast Ohio and learn from their experiences. A sample size of 8-12 allows the researcher to obtain quality data focusing on experiences of the subjects without risking data saturation.

Instrumentation

Participants will be established through participating community mental health agencies. The MBI-HSS will be sent out via email social work case managers practicing within a community mental health agency. MBI-HSS examples:

- I feel emotionally drained from my work?
- I feel used up at the end of the workday?
- I feel burned out from my work?

The highest scores will be asked to participate in the research study. An interview with open-ended and closed-ended questions will be utilized to understand the social problem of burnout better. Examples of the interview protocol:

- What stresses you out about being a social work case manager?
- How long have you been a case manager social worker?

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed in the text to be analyzed. The MBI-HSS is the intellectual property of Mind Garden Incorporated. The MBI-HSS is a valid and reliable method utilized to determine burnout in health workers. Previous research includes study prevalence of burnout in and anxiety in hospice social workers (Quinn-Lee, Olson-Mcbride & Unterberger, 2014). The MBI-HSS has been utilized in research to determine burnout in professionals. Rosada et al. (2013) utilized the MBI-HSS to measure the significance in community mental health clinicians. Lee, Chien & Yen (2013) utilized the MBI-HSS to measure burnout in healthcare professionals.

Utilizing the MBI-HSS allows for the researcher to interview individuals who have experienced burnout. In addition, the 12 highest burnout scores will be reviewed for the research study. Evidence-based practice supports the usage of the MBI-HSS. The Maslach multidimensional theory on burnout has been widely recognized as a respected form of practice.

Existing Data

This doctoral project involves new data collected from social work case managers working at a community mental health agency in urban northeast Ohio. Organizational data was not utilized during this project. Although, social work case managers were asked to share previous experiences and information that led to their experience in burnout. The qualitative data was collected in real time by social work case managers.

Data Analysis

Microsoft Word computer software will be utilized to record the data obtained from participants. The researcher will create a transcription from the interviews. In

addition, the researcher will utilize Nvivo as a tool to analyze the data obtained from the subjects. Robin and Eisen (2017) utilized Nvivo in a recent study due to the programs ability to process large amounts of data in a short amount of time. Nvivo is recognized as the premier software to analyze qualitative data. In addition, Nvivo offers easy coding and several options for data (Robin & Eisen, 2017). Nvivo provides the best solution to analyzing the qualitative data to ensure accurate results.

Qualitative research leads to large amounts of transcribed data (Setia, 2017). A challenge for conducting qualitative data research involves the ability of the researcher to organize meaningful information (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Researchers explain that thematic analysis is a data analysis utilized in social research (Fugard & Potts, 2015). Thematic analysis involves a six-step process the that organizes multiple themes into a higher order of distinct main themes (Hall & Ivaldi, 2017).

Thematic analysis is ideal for a qualitative a research project the utilizes semi-structured interview questions to obtain data. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) outlines thematic analysis:

- What is happening?
- Who are the people and roles?
- When is it event and the reaction to the event?
- Where is it occurring?
- What are the explicit and implicit reasons why it is happening?
- How is it process or strategy?

Qualitative data analysis involves a chronological process. Content analysis is a qualitative technique that consists of a researcher's ability to draw inferences from collected material (Stroud et al., 2017). A researcher can turn qualitative data into quantitative data. Conventional analysis is a form of content analysis and is used to code directly from the data (Lezzoni et al., 2015). Qualitative data is a process that allows a subject to explain their view of a social problem. Systems allow a researcher can take that information and draw conclusions and inferences.

Krippendorff and Craggs (2016) outlined the content analysis process:

1. Collecting and assessing data – Collecting data is the first step in the conventional analysis. The utilization of the MBI-HSS allows for the researcher to select appropriate candidates for the research study. The subjects will complete a qualitative study involving an interview with open-ended and closed-ended questions. The information received services as the data for the research study.
2. Remove and reduce data – After the data is collected the researcher works to discover themes throughout the data. The goal of the researcher is to reduce the data.
3. Discover patterns – The researchers review the data and explores the key themes and trends.
4. Evaluate new patterns – The researcher evaluates the alternative patterns.
5. Draw conclusions – The research takes the information to formulate and draw conclusions.

The research rigor will lead to validated experiences shared between the participants and researcher. Action Research involves a partnership between the researcher and participant (Ungar et al., 2015). A principle behind action research is shifting the power of the researcher to the participant (Wagaman & Sanchez, 2017). Ungar et al. (2015) explained that action research can lead to changes in communication. Action research is ideal for boundary work and works to lead to a common language between tensions (Schuiling & Vermaak, 2017). The utilization of action research with community mental health focus groups will lead to a better understanding of the social problem of burnout in case manager social workers.

Action research will be conducted with social work case managers who are actively working or have worked professionally in the last 3 years. Action research focuses on obtaining quality information to assist in change (Wagaman & Sanchez, 2017). Research rigor consists of ways to determine who has the best information to assist in understanding the social problem.

Selected criteria included:

- Social work case managers must possess experience working at a community mental health agency.
- Social work case managers are required to have provided care for least 1 year at community mental health agency.
- The social work case managers cannot be in current management or served in management during their experience as a social work case manager.

- Complete a MBI-HSS and return to researcher.

Ethical Procedures

The researcher has worked to secure the approval from the appropriate boards to ensure ethical procedures are put in place. Walden University Institutional Review Board has approved this research (approval number - 06-28-18-0659718). Additionally, Mind Garden approved the usage of the MBI-HSS and a copy of the approval is located in the Appendix B.

Before any information is collected from the subject informed consent to participate in the research. The researcher will go through the study thoroughly explaining the purpose, process, and benefits of the research. The subject has the right to quit the interview at any time, and their participation is strictly voluntary.

The interview will be completed between the researcher and participant in a private place. All information collected will be confidential and stored in a secure cabinet. The report will only be accessible by the researcher. All information collected from the interview will be confidential. Participants will grant the research written consent to participate in the study. The researcher will guarantee the confidentiality of participants and information. To ensure proper protection of data, the researcher will follow Walden University IRB information on storage and discarding of data.

The information received and analyzed from the study will be secured in a locked cabinet accessible by only the researcher. The information will be kept under lock and held for five years. The information obtained from this study will only be utilized for this

study. Paper records will be shredded and recycled after five years. Computer records will be deleted by the use of software applications.

Summary

The research design involves selecting 8-12 social work case managers who are actively working or have worked at a community mental health agency. Participants will be required to have experienced burnout in the last three years. The MBI-HSS tool will be utilized to select the most appropriate candidates for the research study. Data will be collected through the utilization of recorded interviews. The interviews will be transcribed and analyzed using Nvivo to understand themes in the research better. Information from the study will be protected for five years in a secure cabinet. The paper records will be shredded and recycled following the five years. Electronic files will be deleted by computer software applications to ensure confidentiality.

Section 3: Presentation of Findings

Introduction

Social work case manager burnout is a social problem affecting practice in urban northeast Ohio. Bressi and Vaden (2017) further explained that burnout is a threat to the field of social services. Researching social work case manager burnout allows researchers to develop new forms of practice that may improve quality of care (Trzeciak, Roberts & Mazzairelli, 2017), lower organizational costs (Hassard et al., 2018), and create healthier outcomes for both clients and practitioners (Taylor, 2011). Social work case manager burnout is a major problem that needs to be further researched to ensure the viability and strength of practice for both clients and professionals.

I conducted the study at a community mental health leader in urban northeast Ohio. A recruitment letter was emailed to potential participants with the goal to attract 8-12 social work case managers that have experience social work case manager burnout. To participate in this study, social work case managers needed to meet the following criteria: one year of practice as a social work case manager and not currently working in the capacity of a supervisor. Participants may have previous supervisor experience for this study. The Maslach Burnout Inventory –Human Services Survey was used as a method of inclusive rigor to identify qualified participants for the research study. To be eligible for study, participants needed to score at least a moderate risk in one of the following risk factors: emotional exhaustion, detachment, and personal accomplishment. Eligible participants were asked to complete interviews to further the understanding of the social problem. The researcher completed one-on-one interviews and transcribed

audio into text documents. The researcher used a systematic coding process through Nvivo to isolate research codes.

The third section of the research project is focused on findings from the investigation of social work case management. The third section includes the following: data analysis techniques, findings, and summary. The research will go into great depths to explain the analysis and results from the study. Section three concludes a summarization of findings and transition to the application to professional practice.

Data Analysis Techniques

A recruitment email was sent out to several departments asking for participation in the study. The recruitment for the research study lasted two weeks. In that time, the researcher obtained eleven completed MBI-HSS forms. Of the eleven replies, nine social work case managers presented with a score of moderate burnout in either emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, or personal accomplishment. One participant elected not to go through the interview phase. The interview process took two weeks, and an average interview was approximately fifteen minutes. The research goal of eight interviewed social work case managers was successfully obtained.

Survey

The MBI-HSS was used to identify qualified social work case managers that experienced moderate burnout in at least one of the measurable categories: Emotional Exhaustion, Detachment, Personal Accomplishment (Maslach, 1976). The survey was used as a method of inclusion and the primary use was to develop a sample size of the

most qualified candidates for the interview process. Participants needed to score at least moderate risk in one of the three risk factors

Interviews

The research utilized informal one-on-one interviews with the participants who were qualified based on inclusion for the study. The researcher used an interview protocol with open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were utilized to develop a better understanding of the social problem of social work case manager burnout in urban northeast Ohio. A transcript was produced from the interview and processed through Nvivo; a program specialized in qualitative research.

Nvivo

Statistical software is essential in coding qualitative data. Houghton et al. (2017) report that qualitative data makes up for a significant amount of data that can be grouped and coded through Nvivo. The researcher utilized the software Nvivo to search for codes.

I categorized codes based on:

- ↪ Search based on the research question
- ↪ Search based on themes in the literature
- ↪ Search based on emerging themes
- ↪ Search based on phrase search
- ↪ Search based on clinical observation

I utilized member checking in the interview phase of the research project. I focused on the length of work, employee position/credentials, and work responsibilities.

Birt et al. (2016) explained that member checking is a form of validation utilized in

qualitative studies. Participating social work case managers are active employees at the agency, and their credentials were confirmed during the interview process to ensure both eligibility and credibility.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a method utilized in qualitative research to validate findings. Amankwaa (2016) explained the triangulation is a process that utilizes multiple sources of data to investigate and develop an understanding of a problem. Johnson et al. (2018) noted that triangulation may involve obtaining data from multiple levels such as interviews, observations, digital diaries, and focus groups for assisting in validating research studies. The method of triangulation involved comparing interview data with information from academic journals. Pitre and Kushner (2015) explained that triangulation is a practical process that draws from explanations, theoretical perspective to develop understandings of research questions. The research utilized the same research interview research questions to collect and study data. To ensure comfortability, the researcher used the same research question template for the participates with the ability to ask more elaborate questions based on the participant response.

Limitations

The study was limited in the sample size. The researcher conducted eight interviews and received eleven MBI-HSS surveys. The eight participants completed the researchers goal. The small sample size makes it difficult to draw generalizations.

This data is limited to the social work case managers who participated in the study and was therefore subject to any social work case manager bias that may exist.

Additionally, the research study was focused primarily on social work case managers practicing in urban northeast Ohio, limiting the understanding of the problem to urban northeast Ohio.

This study was completed at one agency that works primarily with mental illness and the homeless population. The results are associated with interactions with social work case managers practicing in one community mental health agency. To be more diverse, the data would need to be more rounded and incorporate several agencies practicing in urban areas in Cuyahoga County. Furthermore, data collected was focused solely on the experience of social work case managers practicing in community mental health.

Findings

The following results are based on interviews conducted between 7/10/2018 to 8/10/2018. The information was obtained through structured interviews with a goal of 8-12 social work case managers who have worked in community mental health for at least one year and is not in management. To participate in the study, participants would need to score at least a moderate risk in one of the categories on the MBI-HSS. Maslach outlines emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishments as categories for burnout (Maslach 1976). The longest-tenured social work case manager worked thirty-three years in mental health, and the shortest amount of work in community mental health was two years. The recruitment email was sent out 7/10/2018. The researcher received eleven participants for the study for consideration for the interview process. Two participants did not meet the criteria for burnout. One

participants met criteria but chose not to participate in the research study and started a new job. Eight participants were selected for the research interview process. The researcher utilized a systematic coding process through Nvivo and developed categories, subcategories, and concepts to better understand the social problem of social work case manager burnout in urban northeast Ohio. Information obtained helps to better understand the causes and effects of social work case manager burnout in urban northeast Ohio.

Research Question One

To approach each question, the researcher examined the literature, course notes, and participant interviews. The first research question reviewed: How do social work case manager in urban northeast Ohio cope with stress? The literature review assisted in creating the interview template that was used to gain a better understanding of the social problem among social work case managers. The interview template utilized open-ended questions as a method to learn more about how social work case managers cope with stress in urban northeast Ohio.

Themes Based on Research Question One

Case managers' health. Case manager health is affected by workplace stress. The literature review led to an understanding that continual stress that is left untreated impacts social work case managers health. Participants highlighted many stressors that affect both their health and their ability to provide optimal care. Among the most noted, daily management was a reoccurring theme from the literature. Participants discussed the difficulties of managing their schedules and taking time for self-care. One social work

case manager explained, *Driving and running all day, sometimes I don't get a lunch break; we stress self-care but somedays I don't even have lunch, because I am running from the time I get here to the time I clock out.*

Participants reported being so busy that they are unable to take a break. The constant need for client care and time to drive from one client to another client causes stress. Participants explained that self-care is promoted, but not followed through by social work case managers.

Emerging Themes Based on Research Question One

Co-workers. Were found to be both positive and negative impacts. Participant interviews led to an understanding that co-workers can assist with teamwork and burnout. Interviewees explain that support from coworkers is highly valuable to clients.

My professional opinion is valued by my supervisors and coworkers. If I'm doing something that may be outside of the scope of what I need to be doing they are very supportive in reeling me back in and bringing it to my awareness.

In addition, co-workers were noted for being supportive, and at times catalysts for stress reduction. Participants spoke about power differentials and expectations being negatives among co-workers. Other participants talked about a variety of barriers, but sharing the common goal of supporting the client in treatment.

I would say having a lot of personalities and having different strategies to do things. So sometimes it can be hard to do things. Working together in the best interest in the client.

Phrase Searches Based on Research Question One

Self-care and supports. Were emerging themes that participants highlighted during the interviews. The discussion led to many coping strategies employed by the social work case managers. One participant explained

I have a couple friends that are supportive, and family and friends that don't get it, and that can be rough.

Participants spoke about the need to have friends who understand the field of social services and the demands. Participants further explained that exercise, hobbies, prayer, and supports are utilized to assist with lowering stress. Additionally, social work case managers utilize team bonding, taking breaks, and embracing positive outcomes as strategies to assist in lowering stressors. One participant explained:

Read, zone out in front of the TV; I like to get together with friends. I love to do yard work and garden, being outside and doing things. I love spending time with my dogs. That helps to release some of the frustration.

Social work case managers highlighted self-care and supports that assist with processing work place stress.

Clinical Observations Based on Research Question One

The individuals with the highest scores on the MBI-HSS possessed the least amount of coping skills. During the interviews, participants with the least amount of coping skills presented ready to move on to another position in the company or an outside profession. One participant spoke at length about her plans to move into teaching and leave social work case management due to stressors. The majority of the participants presented with some training or learning experience with burnout.

Research Question Two

The second research question reviewed: What are the causes and effects of burnout on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work practice? The literature review assisted in developing an understanding of barriers faced by social work case managers practicing at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work case manager practice.

Themes Based on Research Question Two

Transporting clients. A theme discovered in the literature as a stressor to professionals. The participants highlighted different stressors that occur around transporting clients. Among the stress was the potential for violence and uncertainty. Mostly, stress hovered around high mileage on the car, poor reimbursement and wear and tear on the vehicle. One of the participants explained that the benefits of driving your vehicle are far from beneficial, and the stress out weights the gain.

I feel that another thing within our agency [is that] you are expected to drive your car. But you are not paid well enough to maintain your car, you are given gas mileage reimbursement, but right now if I needed to do some huge maintenance to my vehicle which is the spine of my job, if I can't go out to the community and meet people then I am not working. If something would come up with my car then I could take it, whatever you need to do you have to take it, and that is a huge issue to me.

Bed bugs. Bed bugs were stressed by every participant. Bed bugs were found in the literature as an emerging stressor in the field of social services. Bed bugs presented

as an important issue with participants in Cuyahoga County. Bed bugs' presence causes major stress in social work case managers ability to treat effectively. One participant shared

That literally; I can't tell you how much that bothers me, and sometimes it comes across as rude, I know, but if a client discloses to me that they have bed bugs I won't pick them up. Social work case managers who are infested with bedbugs are forced to treat their house or cars on limited incomes. One participant explained

I hate it; I absolutely hate it, there have been times where I almost have bed bugs in my car and had to get the maintenance guy and I need bed bug spray, and all that fun stuff.

The potential for bed bugs heightens awareness and cause changes among professionals. Once participant explained:

It makes my skin itch all day every day, I even bought new sheets and blankets based on last week reports.

Violent offenders. A common theme found in the literature review revolved around violent offenders. Violent offenders create stress based on limited resources to assist in treatment. Violent offenders present with a history of uncertainty and risk. Social work case managers explain that not all violent offenders are dangerous, and each is different. A prevailing sentiment among social work case managers is that working with violent offenders changes one's approach to treatment. One participant explained: *[It] makes me very cautious and very hyper-vigilant, I've become so in my personal life. I am very aware of my surroundings.* The participants stressed that care isn't affected by

working with violent offenders; instead the case managers' awareness is heightened by any possibility.

Organizational Problems. A common theme highlighted by participants was demands placed on productivity. Productivity creates significant stress for social work case managers. Social work case managers highlighted systemic issues with caseloads and production needs. One participant explained their experience with their organization:

Case load size of forty-three, and I feel that I was told when I started that it was supposed to be between fifteen and twenty-five. It's always been between thirty-five-fifty. That's one of the things that has caused me to hit burnout. I want to care for my clients and give them the quality and care that I need, but because there are so many other people with needs, I think the high caseloads only stress me out, and the quality of care, something needs to be fixed.

Social worker case managers thought highly of structured caseloads. The participants spoke about caseloads assisting in adding structure to their position. A significant problem with caseloads were the effects of increased demands, due to outside forces. One participant talked about their experience with increased caseload sizes.

I average in the forty [total cases]; there was a time maybe two years ago where we experienced a plummet in staff and staff retention was super poor. I had sixty people, and it was a nightmare.

Among the many stressors for social work case managers, productivity was a central theme, highlighted throughout the research study. Social work case managers spoke about working within a team, and the expectations of corporate administration. The

participants explained that the need to provide billable services stress out professionals. *Psychological, stressful, making productivity, not letting your team down, you have the fact you are doing work, and you need to provide billable services. All of those factors cause mental stress for you.*

Client care is affected by the social work case manager's ability to employ self-care strategies. Furthermore, social work case managers rely on stability of their organization. Supervision is a need for processing demanding clients and interactions.

One participant explains:

As soon as I get one of my clients housed, or whatever, it's like "oh my gosh, I have to do this again," and there is no end, and it's horrible. It sounds horrible, and I'm callous, my clients would say I'm homeless well you are the other fifty people on my caseload, ok? It sounds really bad saying it out loud, but this is how I feel.

Client care is negatively affected by the professional's inability to process stress. Social work case managers are forced to work in stressful situations over and over again. This process causes significant stress and feelings of depersonalization in social work case managers.

Emerging Themes Based on Research Question Two

Personality Disorders. Several participants highlighted the theme of personality disorders. The participants explained that individuals suffering from personality disorders often are the most difficult individuals to treat. Participants described several situations where clients acted hostile toward the participant.

People in a bad cycle, personality disorders are hard, sometimes clients scream at you over the phone, and that doesn't start your day off very well. Clients that tend to be more verbally aggressive tend to be rough. There are the clients that can be manipulative, and learning to set boundaries can be difficult too.

Phrase Search Based on Research Question Two

Secondary Trauma. A significant stressor for social work case managers is secondary trauma. One participant shared their experience with secondary trauma, and how the inability to process caused major stress.

I guess another one would be, like secondary trauma. So, I will be with one client that is going through severe trauma, and that person is sharing that with me while I am driving a car, and I am trying to address that, and as soon as I drop them off or whatever it may be, I have to go on to another client. And there is no space to process that at all. That's where the depersonalization comes in when I don't have any space to process that so I try and pretend that it isn't happening.

Low Pay. Poor pay emerged as a struggle with many social work case managers. Participants shared some struggles they have with social work case managers pay. One participant explained

My income is not good, it's the biggest fail. Other participants shared. Honestly, I think I could do case management for the long haul if it paid a livable wage. But it doesn't afford a livable wage. So, I can't see myself long-term in this position. A major problem noted by social work case managers highlighted the closeness in care and pay

among social work case managers and clients. The participant explained that caregivers are not too far removed from being a client:

It really bothers me when you know the people are providing the support, literally live among the people you serve, just above that wage.

Systemic issues, Billing and Lack of Resources. A major theme among the professionals interviewed were systemic issues. The participants shared their experiences with billing and care.

The way the whole billing is set up, billing is one of the issues, it's not typically that noticeable, but it comes to a point where people aren't thinking about how they can help people, they are more invested in people getting the time. I've seen people where a person neglected to take a person to take a doctor's appointment, to take a person to get concert tickets, and it would be a long time with the person, and they knew that they could word it in the right way and it would be more time.

The social work case management system has significant flaws in the billing and care approach. Social work case managers are forced to consider which clients provide the most direct service billing hours verse the client who needs the most care. The biggest issue is based on the emphasis placed on social work case manager production in the form of billable hour's verse importance on optimal outcomes. Additionally, social work case managers explained the lack of resources makes their jobs even harder. The lack of support and resources creates for a stressful job. One participant explained

Lack of resources, lack of support from management, lack of teamwork, the clients are exactly who they are, consumers so we can always work to satisfy them. They are not the barriers. It's the resources and other professionals.

Clinical Observations Based on Research Question Three

Two types of participants emerged from the interview process. Participants who planned to work in some capacity in social work case management in the future, and those who were expecting a future career change. Individuals who planned on working in social work case management presented with more tolerance for micro level practice, and fewer frustrations with organizations. Additionally, interviews with people who were happier with being a social work case manager spoke less than those who thought about a change. Both types of participants viewed macro-level forces being an impact of burnout and frustration.

Research Question Three

The third research question reviewed - What do social work case managers in urban northeast Ohio see their organizations doing to address burnout? The answers are specific to one organization, although some of the participants have worked in different agencies during their career, bringing different experiences of support and knowledge on burnout.

Themes Based on Research Question Three

Supervision. The research led to the discovery that quality supervision is an intervention to reducing burnout in social work. Ohrt et al. (2015) explains that supervisors play an important role in identifying and treating social work case managers.

Organizations need to be proactive in their ability to strengthen the supervisor understanding of burnout. One participant shared their experience with burnout:

With age, I have learned to set more appropriate boundaries and having an awareness that I can't fix everything, and all I can do is do the best I can every day, and keep coming back, that's all I can do, and try and not to take things personally, I learned that over the years. You can only impact what you are going to impact, it's really up to the person to want to change. I can be a support but it's really up to them I will be there to walk with them and to help but I can't own their stuff.

This client further explained: *Support from the team, supervisors, taking time off at least trying to, I have accumulated a lot of vacation time. I need to really start chiseling at, even a day a week if I'm able, a couple days a couple weeks to regenerate.* Supervisors have the ability to educate social work case managers and promote self-care. Additionally, supervisors can advocate for their organization to promote a better understanding of burnout. Appropriate interventions can lead to reduced burnout in social work case managers.

Emerging Themes Based on Research Question Three

Productivity. Production was an emerging theme throughout the interview data collection phase. Social work case managers shared what is expected of them. The participants explained that productivity standards are unrealistic, and cause stress in their ability to perform care. One participant explained;

In case management where you need to make productivity, you have the barriers of a client not making appointments, the stress of making five hours of productivity, the stresses of unnecessary demands. Another participant explained:

Just the demands, there isn't enough support. Your teammates are your support; you don't get any support from upper management. Your kind of do, but I have to hit forty-seven percent productivity if you want me to do my job; but if you really want me to help people, I may only get ten percent. The people I service, are going to get that help, it's a business, people aren't business, but I have to treat them like that. And I am just tired.

Phrase Search Based on Research Question Three

Team bonding and supervision both were found to be vital in limiting workplace stress. The participants explained that bonding with team members is a significant component of dealing with workplace stress. One participant said: *Team bonding with team workers' help; it doesn't happen as much as it should, but when it does happen it's very helpful.* Team bonding was viewed by several social work case managers as an active coping skill to release stress.

The participants explained that the “right” kind of supervision was found to assist in lowering burnout. Participants spoke about how supervisors who process stress, and validate experiences assist in lowering burnout. Social workers who avoid logistical approaches and present with a clinical mindset help their team members cope and process the difficulties of social work case management. One participant explained:

Not so good supervisors, I've gone through four supervisors in the two years, and what makes it hard are the different types. The ones that are hard are when you go into supervision and you go over the logistical administrative things, like this needs to be done, this and that, verses where I have had supervisors where you go into supervision and process the events that are happening with clients and I leave feeling refreshed and well; just going over all the things that I don't have time to do, I just get very stressed.

Clinical Observations Based on Research Question Three

As a whole, participants mostly felt supported and encouraged by their organizational support. Participants who were focused on change spoke about support being positive, but also lacking. Most participants mainly felt inspired by the approach that their agency has taken on awareness of burnout. The primary stressors focused on production, poor management, and stressors that occur from social work case management, the grind. Bedbugs emerged as a real threat, and it was noted to cause stress in most participants.

The research findings uncovered a number of potential methods that work to solve the problem of social work case manager burnout. Some of the information was solidified during the interview process with the participants. New information was discovered that may lead to a better understanding of social work case manager burnout in urban northeast Ohio. The table below illustrates the complete findings to the research questions attempting to answer what are the causes and effects of social work case manager burnout in urban northeast Ohio.

Research Question Explored

| Research Question One | Research Question Two | Research Question Three |
|--|--|---|
| How do social work case managers in urban northeast Ohio cope with stress? | What are the causes and effects of burnout on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work practice? | What do social work case managers in urban northeast Ohio see their organizations doing to address burnout? |
| CM Health (Coping) Co-workers Self-Care Supports | Organization Problems Client Care Personality Disorders Transportation Bedbugs Violent Offenders Secondary Trauma Low Pay Systemic Issues Lack of Resources | Productivity Supervision Team Bonding |

Table 1.1

Expected / Unexpected Findings

The research included both expected and unexpected findings. The research review illustrated a variety of social work stressors. In addition, participants noted that transportation, bedbugs, and violent offenders were causes for social work case manager burnout. This information was relevant in the literature review and was reinforced during the interview.

Participants shared many stressors and experiences that lead to burnout. The participants explained that “lack of resources” is a significant element of burnout. They shared how resources allow them to do their job easier. Client resources assist social work case managers working with the most challenging clients. Demanding clients are a

significant stressor for social work case managers. Resources allow the social work case manager to assist in the care and to service the clients appropriately. Providing optimal care lowers stress and assist in reducing social work case manager burnout.

Summary

This research project sought to identify the specific unique stressors that affected social work case managers in urban northeast Ohio. The research protocol identified participants who has been affected directly by burnout. The information obtained solidified research identified in the literature review. Additionally, social work case managers' experiences led to an understanding of the problem of social work case manager burnout.

Systemic issues on the macro level of practice lead to limited resources that put stress on organizations to produce. Mental health organizations operating on the mezzo level of social work practice work to assist social work case managers with the necessary tools to manage challenging clients and workplace expectations. Micro-level forces unique to this study include transportation stress, bedbugs, and working with violent offenders create added stress to the social work case managers. Participant interviews led to a better understanding of how social work case managers in urban northeast Ohio cope with stress. Supervisors and team bonding are two significant stress reducers for social work case managers. Additionally, supports and self-care play a substantial role in reducing burnout in social work case managers.

Information collected from the literature review, research notes, and participant interviews confirm that social work case manager burnout dramatically impacts both new

and seasoned professionals. The data confirms that macro, mezzo, and micro forces influence burnout in social work case managers practicing in urban northeast Ohio. Likewise, information was gathered that can assist in addressing the problem of social work case manager burnout. Section 4 will review alternative approaches to solve the problem of social work case manager burnout.

Section 4: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Social Change

Introduction

The fourth and final section of the research project is focused on application to professional practice. Most importantly, the implications for social change in social work practice. The fourth section includes the following: application for professional ethics in social work practice, recommendations for social work practice, and implications for social change. Finally, a summary includes a message that sums up the purpose of the project.

The focus of this study was to learn more about the problem of burnout among social work case managers in urban northeast Ohio. Erbay (2017) noted that researching social problems helps to aid in better outcomes with the goal to produce scientific knowledge. Social work practice as an academic discipline is responsible for fostering and developing social change (Waloszek, 2017). The goal of this research project was to promote practice and social change on the various levels of micro, mezzo, and macro practice.

Social work case managers incur stress in direct practice by working with challenging clients. Coping skills, supports and self-care work to assist social work case managers with processing stress. Mezzo level stressors are often driven by macro level factors. Systemic issues, lack of resources and the need for high level production lead to social work case manager burnout. Clinically-based supervision and team bonding assist social work case managers with lowering work place stress.

These findings provide a lens to view the problem of burnout in social work case managers in urban northeast Ohio. A better understanding of the problem of burnout in social work may lead to interventions to assist in the reduction of burnout. Learning from social work case managers allows researchers to develop a more thorough understanding of the problem and approaches made by social work case managers to solve the problem. Additionally, information can extend knowledge in practice by developing specific interventions to combat the stressors affecting social work case managers.

Application for Professional Ethics in Social Work Practice

NASW Code of Ethics

The NASW Code of Ethics was established October 13, 1960. The NASW Code of Ethics holds social workers accountable and provides guidance (Voshel & Wesala, 2015). Otters (2013) explained that case manager social workers are responsible for adhering to the NASW Code of Ethics. Felderhoff, Hoefler and Watson (2016) agreed that social workers are responsible for promoting social work practice. The NASW outlines six core values: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (NASW, 2008). The core values make-up the primary responsibilities of social workers (Otter, 2013). Among these core principles, social justice works to promote social change, and human relationships work to enhance well-being of individuals (NASW, 2008). Dignity and worth of a person is a responsibility that aligns with this project in broadening society's ethical standards for the profession (NASW, 2008).

The NASW states that professional ethics is a responsibility of social workers (NASW, 2008). Otters (2013) explained that all social workers practicing in the field or educating in the field of social work are responsible for following the NASW Code of Ethics. This study's findings support the NASW Code of Ethics' mission to enhance human well-being (NASW, 2008). Specifically, this research identifies relationships and the professional's ability to care, which are part of professional ethics (Otters, 2013). This research both promotes the importance of self-care of case manager social workers and reinforces the need for educational changes in social work practice.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice

Based on the findings, there is evidence of the need to educate both future and current social workers on the risks associated with practice burnout. Social work education and awareness is currently the best avenue for lowering the potential of burnout in social worker case managers. Developing new social work education policies around burnout is essential in reducing social work burnout. Creating Continuing Education Units to educate current social workers and changing school curriculum to educate future social workers are two approaches that could enhance social work case manager practice and reduce the potential of burnout. Educators should develop curricula based on current knowledge of burnout as part of the undergraduate requirements to obtain a degree. Courses that explain the importance of identifying preliminary signs of burnout could assist in the education and practice of skills to lower burnout.

Continuing Education Units

Hastings (2018) reported a CEU is an educational measurement with one CEU equaling ten contact hours. CEUs are earned by participating in live classes or enduring course material approved by the accrediting body (Hastings, 2018). Diener (2016) reported that professionals need incentives to participate in forms of continuing education. Schreiber et al. (2015) CEUs presented opportunities to improve knowledge and skills in the professions. CEUs offer current professionals an avenue to learn and avoid burnout with the latest research.

Currently, the State of Ohio Licensing Board requires social workers to obtain thirty continuing education units toward renewal of their license every two years. In addition, the Counselor, Social Work and Marriage and Family Therapist Board requires social workers to obtain three CEUs of Ethics and those with a designation of supervisor to obtain a three CEUs of Supervision. The purpose of CEUs is to provide supplemental education to professionals. Social worker practitioners could benefit from continued education on practice burnout. Requiring social workers to obtain training on burnout can assist in educating current professionals on signs and risks. This requirement could change the way individuals approach the issue of burnout.

Effective Supervision

Social worker case managers are in need of effective supervision to assist with processing stress in real time. Gotea and Bódi (2017) explain that supervision is a process in which an individual assists one in developing a stronger practice. Otters (2013) explains that it is important that new social workers are presented with supervision. Gotea, and Bódi (2017) further describes supervision as a method of

professional development that should occur on a regular basis. Effective supervision is needed to assist professionals with ongoing guidance and support. Poor supervisors may engage students as either authoritarian, or as hands-off managers (Otters, 2013).

Effective supervision can reduce the potential for social work case manager burnout.

There appears to be a disconnect between academia and the professional world. The professional world and academic world are two separate places of practice, but both should be considered highly important in development (Otters, 2013). Fisher, Simmons and Allen (2016) explained that research supports positive outcomes with effective supervision. These findings support the researcher's understanding of the need to educate supervisors on the risks of burnout in practice, and ways to effectively cope. Professional supervision is essential for the development of future and current social workers (Fisher et al., 2016). Effective supervisors can educate, process, and promote social work case manager development.

Transferability

Transferability is a method in qualitative research. Transferability is a component grounded in research rigor utilized in validating qualitative research (Ginsburg et al., 2016). Validity is can be concluded if the same results of this research is applied to other contexts.

The MBI-HSS is an evidence-based tool found to be reliable at emotional exhaustion (.90), depersonalization (.79), and personal accomplishment (71) (Crowder & Sears, 2017). The method of an evidence-based practice leads to scientific reassurance (Peterson, & Olsson, 2015). The MBI-HSS is a tool used to improve research, and assist

in strengthening and enhancing research (Peterson, & Olsson, 2015). The MBI-HSS was used in this study as a method of scientific rigor to enhance the results by allowing the most qualified participants to participate in the study.

Waloszek (2017) explains that social work policy focuses on developing human potential. Constant research is needed in social science to stay current with practice and policy. Teater (2017) explains that social work research is needed to make and support changes in the field. This study's findings can serve to provide information that can lead to future changes in social services and in reducing the incidence and severity of burnout in social work practitioners.

Limitations of Study

Qualitative Design

There were two primary limitations of the research: the qualitative research design and sample size. Roberts (2014) explains that qualitative researchers want to understand the social problem from the perspective of the individual in their everyday life. Flick (2017) explains that a significant limitation of qualitative research is that sample sizes are often too small. This research study faced limitations in the sample sizes of 8-12 social work case managers. Roberts (2014) explains that quantitative and qualitative both have limitations in methods and results. Roulston and Shelton (2015) further explains the ongoing debate regarding subjectivity in qualitative methodology. Most importantly, qualitative studies are focused on subjectivity, whereas quantitative is concentrate on objectivity (Robert, 2014). Morse (2015) explains that trustworthiness comes from the researcher's ability to evaluate the creditability, transferability, and

dependability of the research. The small sample size and qualitative design allowed for a more thorough investigation of the problem of burnout in social work case managers.

Generalizability

A researcher's goal is to provide authentic research in its purest form. Ginsburg et al., (2016) explains that research is only as strong as the data that is collected through research rigor. Subbaraman et al. (2015) views the ideal sample size of a research project consisting of every individual in the target population. This goal is impossible for researchers to complete. Thus, researchers rely on sampling sizes to make generalizations about research (Subbaraman et al., 2015). Weil (2017) argues that generalizability is more than mathematic inferences and is connected with the tendency in research studies. A researcher's ability to generalize qualitative results is considered a method of external validity (Gheonda-Eladi, 2014). A problem with qualitative research is that one can generalize studies with small sample sizes (Weil, 2017). Gheonda-Eladi (2014) further argues that reliability and validity are two of the most critical standards in research. Morse (2015) argues that qualitative research is intertwined with both reliability and validity resulting in internal validity. Qualitative research allows a researcher an in-depth understanding of the problem, but can create difficulties for researchers to make generalizations, due to the small sample size.

Trustworthiness

Rodham, Fox & Doran (2015) report that the qualitative research is a data trustworthiness method of research. Trustworthiness is vital to quality research (Amankwaa, 2016). Credibility is an understood as information being viewed as

trustworthy and true (Sarabia-Sanchez & Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2016). Morse (2015) explains that triangulation, persistent observation, and prolonged engagement are all validated methods of proving research trustworthiness. Triangulation was utilized in this study for that purpose. Amankwaa (2016) explains that transferability is research that is able to be applied to other fields.

Dependability and reliability refers to research that can be repeated and is found to be consistent Morse (2015). Confirmability is a form of objectivity (Morse, 2015) used to describe unbiased research that is participant led (Amankwaa, 2016). This research study developed trustworthy information and data through the use of scientific rigor that focused on the experiences of social work case managers working in urban northeast Ohio.

Further Research

This research study can lead to future changes in addressing burnout in social work case managers, as well as having implications for other fields. Longhofer and Floersch (2014) explain the meaningful research needs to be grounded in theory and rigor. This research is grounded in practice with the NASW Code of Ethics, and in theory with the Multidimensional Theory of Burnout. Exploratory research allows a researcher to study specific social problem characteristics (Mühlhaus & Bouwmeester, 2016). The study explored information specific to social work case managers in urban northeast Ohio. Specific research has its strengths in being able to determine new practices for social problems. Further research in other geographic areas utilizing similar

research rigor can further validate the findings of this study and work towards change in the way social work case manager burnout is addressed.

Disseminating Research

Borah and Aguiniga (2013) explain the disseminating research is a challenge for social work researchers. Means of disseminating information includes workshops, face to face meetings with other social work case managers, and research publications (Borah & Aguiniga, 2013). Rusby et al. (2013) explains that educators utilize a combination of workshop sessions and coaching to strengthen professional development skills. Including information on burnout in an academic curriculum and requiring CEUs on burnout for social work practitioners can increase awareness of risk factors and outcomes associated with burnout.

The study will be shared with the participating community mental health stakeholders in the form of a one to a three-page written summary. In addition, the study will be published with the ability to be shared with stake-holders and researchers alike. The creation of future workshops with the goal of educating agency supervisors and direct service workers could serve as an effective way to spread information on the causes and effects of burnout in social work case managers in urban northeast Ohio, and may encourage agencies or counties to consider replicating this study in their area.

Implications for Social Change

This research study focused on the problem of burnout in social work case managers practicing in a urban community mental health agency. Burnout occurs from one's inability to balance a professional and personal's self-care (Bressi & Vaden, 2017).

Keenan (2016) explains that social work practice has developed into separated practices. This research was focused on learning about the impact of the problem in the various levels of practice. Social workers practice at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels of social work without the ability to integrate and realize the connection between social problems (Keenan, 2016). Social change is possible when practice barriers are eliminated. Kozan and Blustein (2018) reports that system barriers create problems for social work case managers in advocating for change. Social change is possible through a thorough understanding of the social problem and the way it impacts several elements of practice.

Micro Implications

An in-depth understanding of the problem of burnout may lead to positive changes in services delivery for clients and outcomes social work case managers. Bressi and Vaden (2017) frames self-care into two areas - the professional self and the personal self. The professional self is regarded as the individual in their work environment, and personal self is outside the workplace (Bressi & Vaden, 2017). Hotchkiss (2018) explains that self-care strategies that may lead to reduced burnout involve supportive structures, self-compassion and purpose, supportive relationships, and mindful self-awareness. Social work case managers who participate in resilient practices may have reduced chances of burnout.

Better self-care strategies and the development of coping skills can lead to healthier outcomes in practice. Hotchkiss (2018) explains that mindful self-care practices reduce burnout. Coaston (2017) outlines journaling as a mental health strategy,

exercising as a physical coping strategy and religion as a coping strategy for the spirit. Hotchkiss (2018) explains the mindful self-care strategies assist in reducing symptoms brought on by burnout, and can assist in improving production. Furthermore, mindful self-care helps manage the balance between one's job satisfaction and burnout (Hotchkiss, 2018). Teaching mindfulness, creating non-judgmental spaces, journaling (Grise-Owens et al., 2017). Positive changes can occur on the micro level of practice when social work case managers understand the risk of burnout and work to implement self-care strategies to combat burnout.

Mezzo Implications

Positive changes can occur on the mezzo level leading to a successful, happier operating agency and lowering organizational costs. Social work case managers can benefit from lower caseloads, support, and better benefits. Graham and Shier (2014) explains that social work case managers often leave their employment due to an unhealthy work environment. Coaston (2017) explains that the approach and understanding of burnout has changed from a focus on one's personality to one's relationship with their organization. Graham and Shier (2014) noted that social work organizations have few resources to assist with vicarious trauma. Resources and support can lead to positive outcomes for practicing social work case managers.

Understanding the impacts of social work case manager burnout can lead to different organizational strategies to prevent burnout. Organizations could periodically survey social work case managers with a burnout tool such as the MBI-HSS to evaluate the prevalence of burnout among staff. Furthermore, organizations could take a position

that burnout occurs in social work case managers and work to develop resiliency training and education on the risks.

Educational change can lead to an impact on future social workers entering practice. Otters (2013) reports that social work educators are focused on practice rather than education. Curriculum need to be designed to teach and further professional self-care (Grise-Owens et al., 2017). Bressi and Vaden (2017) noted that self-care change in social work depends on educational programs, curriculum, and supervision (Graham & Shier, 2014). Stronger standards need to be placed on social work education to incorporate burnout education into all curriculum. Community mental health agencies need to follow through with healthy occupational workloads.

Macro Implications, Research and Policy Implications

Social work case managers face different forms of burnout at all levels of practice (Grise-Owens et al., 2017). Macro level practice encapsulates both micro and mezzo practice, and offers the best impact for social change on all three levels. Macro-level practice offers the most significant impact of social change because of the ability to impact both mezzo and micro level practice through research and policy. Macro level practice can lead to new social policies that regulate and provide funding streams for mental health agencies. Graham and Shier (2014) viewed the field of social work as in need of lobby efforts to create programs that assist with social problems. Society can benefit from social change that can lead to a healthier community and lower healthcare costs.

Summary

Hoffarth (2017) described burnout as a result in helping professionals being unable to release stress. Social worker case managers are highly susceptible to burnout because of their close care and work with vulnerable, at-risk populations (Wilson, 2016). The NASW Code of Ethics (2008) views the primary mission of social workers as enhancing human well-being for all people. Social work case managers work to navigate care through their understanding of the NASW Code of Ethics and educational background. Wilson (2016) explains that social work case managers have to work harder at balancing self-care. Social work case managers are forced to manage micro, mezzo, and macro level stressors with appropriate interventions to avoid burnout.

Steketee, Ross and Wachman (2017) view social work as a profession that is in a vital position to assist future clients with a variety of services. Social work as a profession will struggle to meet the demands of clients without experienced social work case managers. As a whole, social workers are essential in advancing and promoting healthier outcomes (Browne et al., 2017). Rowe et al. (2017) further explain that investments in social services lead to healthier results.

In conclusion, Hoffarth (2017) explains that Christina Maslach's original goal was to help professionals with understanding emotional detachment with work. Likewise, this research study has been an attempt to educate professionals; but more importantly, develop a better understanding of burnout in social work case managers in urban northeast Ohio. Burnout has affected coworkers as well as the researcher while working on this research project. One worker experienced burned out to the point of leaving the agency for another field of practice. It is imperative that researchers and

professionals develop a better understanding of social worker case manager burnout if this specialized area within the social work profession is to be successful in the future.

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