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## BURNOUT MEDIATED BY MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK ENROLLMENT STATUS

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BURNOUT MEDIATED BY MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK  
ENROLLMENT STATUS

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

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by  
Vanessa Lopez  
Donna Andrea Villaseñor

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## ABSTRACT

The social work profession is widely known to be fulfilling, yet demanding. Burnout has been found to begin during the academic career in pursuit of social work profession. Therefore, addressing burnout in the academic setting can later impact job retention. This study was significant because it allowed for the identification, understanding, and recognition of burnout as a student which then could in turn delay the onset and alleviate the amount of burnout in the transition from student to professional. A cross sectional methods approach was applied by surveying Master of Social Work students from a local Southern California Master of Social Work program. A t-test for independent samples was utilized to determine whether there was a significant difference in the mean burnout scores for full-time and part-time students. Results indicated that participants in the study were not burnt out, however significant findings were found between the full-time and part-time cohorts for potential contributing factors of burnout. Nonetheless, it is important for schools of social work to emphasize the importance of self-care in their MSW programs.

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to all past, present, and future Master of Social Work students.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Problem Formulation

The social work profession is widely known to be fulfilling, yet demanding. Aspects of social work such as helping others can result in distress and developing burnout (Le Roux, Steyn, & Hall, 2017). Throughout substantial research, burnout was identified as being a main obstacle in the social work profession. Maslach (1982) defined burnout as having a three-tier structure: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Subsequently, burnout was expanded to include different professions and groups of people. One specific group was students. In addressing students, the components were changed to address the student experience. Burnout is now recognized in students as being exhausted because of study demands, having a cynical and detached attitude toward one's study, and feeling incompetent as a student (Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002). It is imperative to understand that burnout does not only present itself in the professional career, but can begin earlier in a student's academic career. The degree of burnout experienced as a student needs to be monitored because it can continue into the professional career having negative impacts on future job retention, client services, and life satisfaction (Gair & Baglow, 2018). Benner & Curl (2018) further supported this concept as their study concluded that those with high burnout as students could result in harmful consequences as

social work professionals and for clients. This leads to several ramifications at the macro level as the U.S. Department of Labor predicts the social work profession will increase more than any other occupation; the anticipated rate is 16% from 2016 to 2026 (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). Consequently, it is vital for job retention to be established during educational programs.

Generally, students electing a full-time program are not employed, but a good portion of those in a part-time program are employed. Ryan, Barns, and McAuliffe (2011) affirmed that the lack of financial support led students to a part-time program while maintaining employment. Although deemed necessary, employment added another layer of demands from the student, potentially affecting student burnout. The study's results culminated recommendations such as more accommodating university hours, more flexible and shorter field placements, and academic staff who were more understanding of the need of students to work and its demands (Ryan, Barns, & McAuliffe, 2011). Benner and Curl (2018) study identified that the employed students experienced limited time, negative academic consequences, impacts on health, and time and logistic conflicts between school and employment.

Part-time students experience additional barriers in comparison to full-time students such as limited time and availability of resources. Some barriers recognized were campus services not corresponding with employed student schedules, limited counseling services, and not having health insurance to afford

private behavioral health services (Ting, 2011). Although it is realized full-time students face similar or different obstacles, there is limited research available on full-time student barriers compared to part-time students.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to ascertain whether the enrollment status of a Master of Social Work program impacted a student's burnout and identify the contributing factors among full-time and part-time students. The high prevalence of burnout among social workers has already been empirically established (Kim, Ji, & Kao, 2011); therefore, this research study intended to focus on burnout present during a social worker's academic career.

The research method utilized for this study was a quantitative method, more specifically a survey. The survey encompassed a variety of tools to gather differential statistics, to measure burnout, and to identify contributing factors. A quantitative approach was chosen because a survey required less energy, resources, and was cost-effective. For example, by using a quantitative approach, the researchers were able to survey a greater number of participants whereas a qualitative method limits the number of participants due to the required substantial amount of time to interview and transcribe the interviews. A survey was also appropriate for the sample population and provided an ease of administration. For example, a qualitative method required face to face interaction whereas a survey was administered online or in-person. Furthermore,

by having the capability of surveying a greater number of participants allowed the researchers to survey students from multiple cohorts, thereby allowing for generalizability.

### Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

The findings from this study had implications on the micro and macro level for social work practice. On the macro level, the findings may highlight areas of adjustment in access to resource and/or faculty outside of typical business hours to accommodate all students. For example, on-campus counseling resources are generally open during normal business hours. However, employed students or students with multiple roles may encounter time restrictions to attend counseling services on-campus. Another possibility is addressing the lack of financial aid or widening the distribution of financial aid, as a result a student can elect to decrease the necessity to work and/or remain in part-time or full-time employment (Collins, Coffey, & Morris, 2010). On the micro level, these findings may contribute to the development and implementation of student tools for managing burnout. For instance, schools could mandate time management or burnout classes as part of the curriculum.

Burnout appears to be inevitable part of the social work profession, therefore identifying, understanding, and recognizing burnout as a student could delay the onset and alleviate the amount of burnout in the transition from student to professional. Does enrollment status at a Master of Social Work Program

impact burnout among students? If so, what are the contributing factors to burnout?

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

In this chapter, a critical review of recent literature was examined to address burnout among social work students. Specifically, this section took a closer look at employment and time limitations as they contributed to burnout among social work students. The second section identified the gaps and limitations of the literature. Lastly, this chapter addressed the theory guiding conceptualization. The theory examined in relation to the research topic was Role Conflict Theory.

#### Burnout Among Students

Social workers are known to wear many hats in their employment. The roles social workers play can include an advocate, counselor, mediator, researcher, educator, case manager, facilitator, broker, and various other roles when working with individuals, groups, or the community (Brueggemann, 2014). Similarly, social work students have various roles in their lives. Students can be a caregiver, parent, employee, daughter/son, or any significant role. Unfortunately, many of the roles held by social work students cannot be put on hold and continue parallel to their new role as a student. Students must then learn to manage many facets. Consequently, this can lead to burnout among social work students.

## Employment

The shocking cost of living in California can make it a very demanding place to live financially. In 2015, to purchase or rent a home in California was twice the typical U.S. home in comparison to nationwide (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2015). The real cost to college students is the living expense in California. In order to focus on school, students naturally have to sacrifice work hours in order to support themselves and their families which adds another stressor for the student (Trends in College Rising, 2017). For this reason, it is imperative to recognize employment is not only desired, but obligatory for students.

Employment is one of the many roles social work students normally must learn to balance. The adverse effects of maintaining employment while balancing personal and school life is assumed to cause distress. Financial struggles or students who are working while attending school have reported higher levels of psychological distress in contrast to their peers who are not working while attending school (Hawkins, Smith, Hawkins, & Grant, 2005). Employment can play such a significant factor to distress that it has even resulted in students that have opted to take time off from the social work program or completely drop out from the program unanimously (Hemy, Boddy, Chee, & Sauvage, 2016). A previous study concluded that students who worked more hours, for instance thirty hours or more per week, conveyed adverse effects in their educational development and had fewer opportunities to participate in school activities or meet with professors. In contrast, students who did not work were able to partake

in school activities and more likely to create vital relationships with professors which aided the student in continuing the program (Furr & Elling, 2000).

Additionally, another consequence of employment status is limited field placement experience attributable to choosing placement that is close to the student's workplace or child care responsibilities that do not allow students to fully choose a field placement they are truly interested in. Eventually, this could hinder a student's learning and future practice. (Ryan, Barns, & McAuliffe, 2011).

### Limited Time

Graduate students are characterized as being highly committed, detail and achievement oriented, tenacious, dedicated to maintaining high standards, and exhibiting passion and perfectionism (Offstein, Larson, McNeil, & Mwale, 2004). These qualities were described to result in frustration, over-commitment, and burnout. In addressing personality traits, Offstein, Larson, McNeil, and Mwale (2004) revealed that limited time emerged not only as an internal and external casual condition, but also as a contextual element. Often more than not, a graduate student has multiple roles. Limited time was recognized as increasing the level of stress from these competing demands. Additionally, time limits were found to be dictated by program requirements, environment, or self-elicited goals, finances, and spousal and/or child(ren)'s expectations or needs.

Similarly, lack of time was an identified theme to why graduate students who experienced depression did not seek out mental health services. The graduate students expressed sentiments such as not having enough hours in the



day, available hours conflicting with therapist's business hours, and feeling too busy to add another item to an already busy day (Ting, 2011). An Australian national study further reinforced lack of time as a barrier faced by employed graduate students. Lack of time affected the graduate student's studies by decreasing the available time to study, lowering expectations from high standard to just obtaining a passing grade, diminishing focus on weekly readings and attendance, prioritizing focus to only assessments, and compromising on household duties, and not addressing physical needs (Ryan, Barns, & McAuliffe, 2011).

#### Studies Identifying Gaps and Limitations

Generally, all studies face limitations and gaps in previous literature or its current study. A limitation commonly faced by previous research was that data was collected from only one school. Although this collection technique allowed for control of factors such as school size and type, this presented limitations to external validity and generalizability (Wyland, Winkel, Lester, & Hanson-Rasmussen, 2015). Moreover, previous research focused on two life domains, such as the work-family relationship, work-student relationship, or family-student relationship. As this being the case, the challenge demands and resources are limited to those life domains. It has been proposed to explore the challenge demands and resources to more than two domains and further evaluate the interaction between family, work, and student life domains (Wyland, Winkel, Lester, & Hanson-Rasmussen, 2015).

While the focus has mostly surrounded the negative impacts around the work-school relationship, the positive impacts must also be acknowledged. Some students discovered that while being employed in the hospitality and retail sectors cultivated opportunities of practicing and learning social work skills. For example, employment elicited the use of teamwork skills, enhanced the understanding of organizational behavior, boosted the understanding of social issues, revealed insight to other's lived experiences, and experienced theory-as-practice (Ryan, Barns, & McAuliffe, 2011).

### Theory Guiding Conceptualization

Role conflict theory originally focused on organizational stress. Role conflict is identified as being the result of role expectations imposing pressure on an individual toward different types of behavior. The conflict can be categorized as: intra-sender, inter-sender, inter-role, or person-role. Previous research utilized this theory, focusing on inter-role conflict, to explore the student and work relationship. Inter-role conflict occurs when role pressures from one role conflicts with another role. For example, conflict can occur when an employee is pressured to work over-time or bring work home, but the spouse desires attention at home after work hours. The role of employee conflicts with role of spouse or parent (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Through time, the theory's application expanded to other roles and relationships.

Competing roles and its demands tend to force students to prioritize one role over the other causing the other to suffer. For instance, when an employee

role placed above a student role, the student role suffered by not having sufficient time to read, study, or complete assignments. This conflict further lowered priority of other facets of life. For example, self-care, sleep, and other necessary health requirements were overlooked when the focus was placed on finding a balance between the employee and student role. By neglecting self-care, it was predicted to lead to burnout in the classroom before even starting a career in the social work field (Lingard, 2007).

### Summary

Chapter two addressed the discussion of previously written relevant literature as it pertained to burnout among social work students. Employment and time limitations were found to have adverse effects among social work students and contributed to higher levels of burnout. Similarly, this presented as social work students not seeking help for mental health services and diminished motivation of school work. Furthermore, the literature also identified gaps and limitations. A common theme found in the gaps and limitations of the literature review was the data collection technique of only surveying one school which led to external validity and generalizability limitations. Additionally, the opposed perspective of the work-school relationship was examined and found to have positive impacts on the social work student. The theoretical framework used in this study was Role Conflict Theory. In this study, Role Conflict Theory demonstrated how students naturally have competing roles which caused other roles to suffer.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Introduction

In this chapter, the methodology of the proposed study was described. Specifically, this chapter delved into the purpose and exact research method selected and why, followed by the explanation of the sampling criteria and justification. Next, data collection and instrument were highlighted. For example, the strengths along with the limitations of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBIS-SS) were addressed. Lastly, the chapter elaborated on the procedures of the study and the protection of human subjects.

#### Study Design

The purpose of this research study was to determine whether the enrollment status of a Master of Social Work program impacted a student's burnout and identify any contributing factors among full-time and part-time students. This study best resonated with a descriptive study. Previous research explored burnout, factors to burnout, and interventions to reduce burnout. However, this study delved into the comparison between enrollment status and its influence on burnout.

The study design that best addresses the differentiation of burnout among part-time and full-time Master of Social Work (MSW) program students was a cross-sectional study. A quantitative method was selected to quantify the

variation of enrollment status on burnout, the ability to test the strength of the relationship between enrollment status and burnout, and the higher ability to generalize the study's results. However, by using a quantitative study limits the possibility of acquiring an in-depth comprehensive understanding of the proposed question (Grinnell & Unrau, 2018).

### Sampling

The sample from which data was obtained was MSW students. To be a participant, the MSW student had to be currently enrolled in an MSW program as either a part-time or full-time student. The MSW program needed to be accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The MSW program was required to meet the CSWE criteria because the students attending different programs were exposed and trained to the same fundamental components mandated by CSWE. Nine cohorts of the Master of Social Work program from a local university in Southern California was surveyed. This study obtained 194 surveys completed by MSW full-time or part-time students.

### Data Collection and Instrument

In conducting the quantitative study, the dependent variable was burnout and the independent variable was MSW student enrollment status. The level of measurement for burnout was interval because burnout was measured by the score on the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS). The level of

measurement for the independent variable of MSW student enrollment status was nominal-dichotomous with the values of full-time or part-time.

As previously mentioned, the MBI-SS was the instrument used to collect data for the purpose of this study. The MBI-SS is an instrument that contains three domains: exhaustion, cynicism, and efficacy. Of the 15 items, there are five items related to exhaustion, four items related to cynicism, and 6 items for efficacy with each ranging from 0 = *never* to 6 = *always* on a six-point Likert scale. High scores on exhaustion and cynicism with low scores on efficacy is indicative of burnout (Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002). In addition to utilizing the MBI-SS, the survey included questions to gather differential statistics and ranking questions to identify leading contributing factors to burnout.

One of the strengths identified for the MBI instrument is that the instrument is the most commonly used instrument to measure burnout. In addition, this instrument is user friendly, and no special training or credentials are necessary to administer the instrument. The instrument can be effortlessly administered by a neutral person which minimizes the response bias. Equally important, the MBI has been translated into numerous languages and used on various populations or professions. For example, the MBI has been altered from the original MBI to MBI- Human Services Survey, MBI- Educators Survey, MBI- General Survey, and MBI- Student Survey to name a few. In essence, the MBI

instrument has been the most consistent instrument used to measure burnout (Maslach, Jackson, Leiter, Schaufeli, & Schwab, 1986).

Although this tool has several strengths, the tool also has limitations. For instance, people have diverse views about burnout and naturally avoid admitting to burnout in their place of employment. If a participant is aware burnout is being measured, the participant may answer questions in a socially desirable way. Additionally, the instrument cannot be extremely lengthy, or it can cause acquiescence bias (Grinnell & Unrau, 2018). For this reason, the researchers remained aware of the time predicted to take the survey and made an effort to keep the survey under ten to fifteen minutes. Furthermore, the instrument is unconcerned about burnout fluctuations and it can be challenging to measure relationships. Hence, the researchers did not conduct a longitudinal study.

### Procedures

Participants were recruited from California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) Master of Social Work (MSW) program. First, the researchers requested permission from CSUSB School of Social Work professors to enter their classrooms and administer an anonymous survey. Prior to the survey, the researchers provided the MSW students with a brief description of the study and addressed confidentiality. Informed consent was distributed and collected by the researchers whereupon the consents and surveys were transported and stored in a secure locked bag in a confidential

location. A debriefing statement was provided at the end of the survey and participants will be thanked.

### Protection of Human Subjects

Participants each read and signed an informed consent prior to participating in the study. At the end of the anonymous survey, the MSW students were provided with a debriefing statement. The anonymous surveys, informed consents, and demographic information were kept in a password encrypted computer file until they are deleted in October 2020.

### Data Analysis

For this study, the independent variable was enrollment status. The assigned values were full-time and part-time with the level of measurement being nominal-dichotomous. The dependent variable was level of burnout. The variable was the score on the Maslow Burnout Inventory-Student Survey with the level of measurement being interval. The independent and dependent variables were statistically analyzed with an independent samples t-test. This specific statistical analysis was utilized to determine whether there was a significant difference in the mean burnout scores for full-time and part-time students. For descriptive analyses, the variables collected included age, gender (male, female, transgender, or other), ethnicity (Caucasian, African American, Latino, Asian Pacific Islander, Native American, or more than one), marital status (single, committed relationship, cohabitating, married, divorced, widow), employment



status (not employed, 0-20 hours, 20-30 hours, 30-40 hours, or 40+ hours), enrollment status (1<sup>st</sup> year FT, 2<sup>nd</sup> year FT, 1<sup>st</sup> year PT, 2<sup>nd</sup> year PT, or 3<sup>rd</sup> PT), and parental status (0 children, 1 child, 2 child, or 3+ children).

### Summary

This chapter discussed how the study examined the correlation between enrollment status of a MSW student and the impact on burnout. Moreover, the study investigated the contributing factors to burnout. A quantitative method will be used to gather data and increase generalizability for the study. Data collection was acquired from MSW students who are enrolled in a MSW program that was accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The data gathered has provided awareness about burnout among MSW students.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Demographics

The study comprised of a combined total of 194 full-time and part-time MSW students. Table 1 demonstrates the specific demographic characteristics of all participants. The average age of the participants was 31 years old with a range of 22 to 64 years old. Of the 194 participants, 85.6% of participants identified as female, 13.9% identified as male, and 0.5% identified as transgender. Of the MSW students, 54.1% of participants identified as a full-time student whereas 45.9% of participants identified as a part-time student. The full-time and part-time status was further broken down. Of those who identified with full-time, 29.4% identified as a 1<sup>st</sup> year full-time student and 27.4% identified as a 2<sup>nd</sup> year full-time student. Of those who identified as part-time, 11.9% identified being a 1<sup>st</sup> year part-time student, 22.7% identified as being a 2<sup>nd</sup> year part-time student, and 11.3% identified as being a 3<sup>rd</sup> year part-time student.

In addition to the previous demographics, marital status, ethnicity, and employment status were captured and examined. For marital status, 36.6% of participants identified as being single, 19.1% were in a committed relationship, 7.7% were cohabitating, 31.4% were married, and 5.2% were divorced. No participants identified being a widow/widower. For ethnicity, majority of participants identified as Latino with 59.3%. This was followed by 16.5% identifying as Caucasian, 11.9% of participants as more than one ethnicity, 8.2%

of participants as African American, 3.1% of participants as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.5% of participant as Native American. For employment, the largest group identified as not employed with 32.5%. Next, 28.4% of participants identified as employed working 0 to 20 hours per week followed by 16.0% working 40+ hours per week. Another 13.9% of participants identified as employed working 30 to 40 hours per week. The remaining 9.3% of participants identified as employed working 20 to 30 hours per week.

### Burnout Key Findings

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the MBI-SS exhaustion score, the MBI-SS cynicism score, and the MBI-SS efficacy score between full-time and part-time enrollment status. For the MBI-SS exhaustion score, there was no significant difference in scores for full-time enrollment ( $M = 16.98$ ,  $SD = 6.36$ ) and part-time enrollment ( $M = 15.85$ ,  $SD = 7.60$ );  $t(192) = 1.12$ ,  $p = 0.26$ , two-tailed). For the MBI-SS cynicism score, there was no significant difference in scores for full-time enrollment ( $M = 4.99$ ,  $SD = 5.41$ ) and part-time enrollment ( $M = 5.91$ ,  $SD = 5.81$ );  $t(192) = -1.14$ ,  $p = 0.26$ , two-tailed). For the MBI-SS efficacy score, there was no significant difference in scores for full-time enrollment ( $M = 8.04$ ,  $SD = 5.71$ ) and part-time enrollment ( $M = 8.76$ ,  $SD = 6.09$ );  $t(192) = -0.86$ ,  $p = 0.39$ , two-tailed). While no significant difference was found, other areas were explored such as ethnicity, marital status, and enrollment status (see Table 2).

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the MBI-SS exhaustion score, the MBI-SS cynicism score, and the MBI-SS efficacy score between ethnicities of Latino and non-Latino. For the MBI-SS exhaustion score, there was no significant difference in scores for Latino ( $M = 16.31$ ,  $SD = 7.00$ ) and non-Latino ( $M = 16.59$ ,  $SD = 6.92$ );  $t(191) = 0.27$ ,  $p = 0.79$ , two-tailed). For the MBI-SS cynicism score, there was no significant difference in scores for Latino ( $M = 5.03$ ,  $SD = 5.87$ ) and non-Latino ( $M = 6.00$ ,  $SD = 5.20$ );  $t(191) = 1.17$ ,  $p = 0.24$ , two-tailed). For the MBI-SS efficacy score, there was no significant difference in scores for Latino ( $M = 8.24$ ,  $SD = 5.19$ ) and non-Latino ( $M = 8.59$ ,  $SD = 6.84$ );  $t(191) = 0.40$ ,  $p = 0.69$ , two-tailed).

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the MBI-SS exhaustion score, the MBI-SS cynicism score, and the MBI-SS efficacy score between single and committed relationship. For the MBI-SS exhaustion score, there was no significant difference in scores for single ( $M = 15.86$ ,  $SD = 6.96$ ) and committed relationship ( $M = 17.97$ ,  $SD = 6.92$ );  $t(106) = -1.50$ ,  $p = 0.14$ , two-tailed). For the MBI-SS cynicism score, there was no significant difference in scores for single ( $M = 5.14$ ,  $SD = 5.58$ ) and committed relationship ( $M = 6.38$ ,  $SD = 6.29$ );  $t(106) = -1.05$ ,  $p = 0.30$ , two-tailed). For the MBI-SS efficacy score, there was no significant difference in scores for single ( $M = 8.92$ ,  $SD = 6.14$ ) and committed relationship ( $M = 8.22$ ,  $SD = 6.43$ );  $t(106) = 0.55$ ,  $p = 0.58$ , two-tailed).

To identify the existence of a positive relationship, negative relationship, or no relationship between the three domains of the MBI-SS and age, Pearson correlations were conducted. A Pearson correlation coefficient found no positive relationship between age and MBI exhaustion score,  $r = .08$ ,  $n = 194$ ,  $p = 0.27$ , with age associated with exhaustion score. A Pearson correlation coefficient found no positive relationship between age and MBI cynicism score,  $r = .041$ ,  $n = 194$ ,  $p = 0.57$ , with age associated with exhaustion score. A Pearson correlation coefficient found no negative relationship between age and MBI efficacy score,  $r = -0.06$ ,  $n = 194$ ,  $p = 0.39$ , with age associated with exhaustion score.

A one-way between-groups ANOVAs were conducted to explore the impact of employment status on the MBI-SS exhaustion score, MBI-SS cynicism score, and the MBI-SS efficacy score. Participants were divided into three groups (e.g., not employed, part-time employment, and full-time employment) according to their employment status. For the MBI-SS exhaustion score, there was no significant difference in the exhaustion score for the three groups according to their employment status:  $F(2, 191) = 1.67$ ,  $p = 0.19$ . For the MBI-SS cynicism score, there was no significant difference in the exhaustion score for the three groups according to their employment status:  $F(2, 191) = 1.70$ ,  $p = 0.19$ . For the MBI-SS efficacy score, there was no significant difference in the exhaustion score for the three groups according to their employment status:  $F(2, 191) = 1.88$ ,  $p = 0.16$ .

## Contributing Factors Key Findings

Analysis was conducted to identify possible contributing factors to burnout. Independent samples t-tests were completed for each statement, finding that all, but three, to be significantly different between full-time and part-time students for adverse impact on employment, family life, and school life (see Table 3). The three statements which resulted in no significant findings include the following: *Life events (i.e., divorce, death, relocation, marriage, new child, change in employment) occurred since beginning the MSW program and impacted my studies, My school load had impacted my family life (i.e., less hours spent with family or friends, missing family gatherings, ended relationships, increase in child care), and I have received school-based counseling services without impacting my school or employment schedule.*

Statements 8A and 8B addressed adverse impact on employment. For Question 8A: *Work has been affected by school (i.e., requesting time off for school schedule, mandatory school events, meetings with professor, etc.),* the part-time group experienced a more significant adverse impact on employment compared to their counterpart of full-time students. With a mean of 3.92, the part-time students agreed to the statement whereas the full-time students felt neutral with a mean of 3.00 to their work being negatively impacted. For Question 8B: *My workload was negatively impacted and had to speak to my employer since starting my MSW program,* the part-time students experienced a more significant adverse impact on workload compared to their counterpart of full-time students.

The part-time students ( $M = 3.13$ ) neither agreed nor disagreed (neutral) about the adverse impact whereas the full-time students ( $M = 2.70$ ) disagreed to an adverse impact existing.

Statements 8E, 8F, and 8G addressed adverse impact of school. For Question 8E: *Faculty hours match with my availability/schedule*, the full-time students experienced a significantly higher score. The full-time students ( $M = 3.05$ ) felt neutral regarding faculty hours whereas the part-time students ( $M = 2.35$ ) disagreed to the faculty hours being fitting their own availability/schedule. For Question 8F: *I feel my professors and school faculty are supportive and understanding*, the full-time students significantly higher score compared to their counterpart part-time students. The full-time students ( $M = 4.26$ ) significantly agreed more than the part-time students ( $M = 3.91$ ) in feeling supported and understood by their professors and school faculty. For Question 8G: *I am able to attend and participate in school-based groups or counseling services without impacting any other facet in my life*, the full-time students reported a significantly higher score. The part-time students ( $M = 2.06$ ) disagreed more than the full-time cohort ( $M = 2.50$ ) in being able to attend and participate school-based services without adverse impact other life facets.

### Summary

This chapter reported on the descriptive and inferential statistics as a result of the study. Descriptive statistics highlighted the differences between the participants by gender, marital status, ethnicity, employment status, and

enrollment status. The inferential statistical analysis resulted in no significant findings between the independent and dependent variables of the study.

However, significant findings were identified in possible contributing factors.

While burnout was not identified as occurring in either cohort, areas of concern were highlighted.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

In this chapter, the study's findings were discussed. The literature review was re-examined in correlation to the findings of the study. The limitations of the study were explored such as social desirability and purposive sampling. Recommendations were made for future research intended for generalizability and exploration of MSW curriculum. In conclusion, a summarization of the study was provided.

#### Discussion

While this study did not discover significant findings in the research conducted, it can be comforting to know that these MSW students are not burnt out during their academic career. Moreover, the study did not support the literature review described. The adversity of balancing employment along with other roles such as academic and personal roles did not lead to psychological distress on students who were found to work during the academic year versus non-working students (Hawkins, Smith, Hawkins, & Grant, 2005). In fact, employment was a vital influence on distress that resulted in students dropping out of social work programs (Hemy, Boddy, Chee, & Sauvage, 2016) which was not found in this sample. Ryan, Barns, and McAuliffe (2011) findings of time as an impediment on employed graduate students revealed a decrease in

educational standards, devalued duties pertaining to the household and neglecting one's physical needs which was not found in this study sample.

The unsupported findings can be contributed to various reasons. Han, Lee, and Lee (2012) argued that many MSW programs in the United States stressed the importance of post baccalaureate experience in the human services field prior to admission into the MSW program. Prior experience was found to better prepare MSW students for professional and educational requirements. With this in mind, one can theorize that many employed students were better equipped to handle the educational requirements and roles during the MSW program.

Another study claimed that certain personality traits such as conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness are developed while studying social work which can lead to an increase in resilience. As a result, students became resilient and could face difficult situations met in their careers (De Las Olas Palma-Garcia & Hombrados-Mendieta, 2017). Consequently, one can speculate the adversities faced among the full-time and part-time cohorts during the social work program has fostered resiliency among students that could help the students in their current and future professional careers and mitigated burnout levels.

Despite the insignificant findings regarding burnout, there were contributing factors that could potentially lead to burnout in the future if not closely monitored. Furr and Elling (2000) findings were reflected in this study

which indicated students who worked over thirty hours or more per week had harmful consequences in their education and reduced opportunities with school related activities and accessibility to professors. The part-time students experienced higher significant adversity on employment and their workload was negatively impacted which caused a discussion to occur between them and their employer. The full-time students experienced a significantly higher score in availability/schedule of faculty hours and in ability to attend school-based group or counseling services without impact to other facets of life in comparison to their part-time cohort. Additionally, full-time students felt significantly more supported and understood by their professors and school faculty. All things considered, it is suggested that further research be conducted based on this study's results.

#### Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research

In spite of the study's findings further research is recommended due to the limitations of this study. This study focused on one specific school in Southern California, which cannot be generalized to other MSW programs in the country. It is recommended to future researchers to include several MSW school of social work programs in order to obtain a generalized quantitative approach. Additionally, the sample was a purposive sample and randomization is encouraged to reflect a non-probability purposive sampling. The number of participants could entail over 200 students. This would provide diverse results among the MSW school of social work as opposed to results of one specific school. Another limitation of this study was social desirability. According to

Grinnell and Unrau (2018) if a participant is aware burnout is being measured, they are more likely to answer the question posed in a socially desirable way. Prior to the survey in this study, the MSW participants were provided with a brief description of the study where burnout was conveyed to be a measure of the research. Future recommendations propose for the instrument to be categorized as school-related attitudes as opposed to burnout.

The last proposed area of research is to examine the MSW curriculum to consider if the topics of self-care and burnout were explored to mitigate burnout levels in MSW students. This finding can explain the insignificant levels of burnout among this study's participants. The most compelling evidence found is that burnout, whether found or not, does not discriminate against age, ethnicity, marital status, enrollment status, or employment status. Burnout can occur to anyone; therefore, it is important for schools of social work to emphasize the importance of self-care in their MSW programs.

### Conclusion

This cross-sectional study used a quantitative approach to ascertain whether the enrollment status of a Master of Social Work program impacted a student's burnout and identify the contributing factors among full-time and part-time students. More specifically, the study focused on burnout during a social worker's academic career. The independent samples t-test analysis found various insignificant findings for the MBI-SS exhaustion score, the MBI-SS cynicism score, and the MBI-SS efficacy score. Results indicated that

participants in the study were not found to be burnt out. Given these points, the study's hypothesis was not supported. Nevertheless, significant findings were found between the full-time and part-time cohorts regarding potential contributing factors of burnout. Ultimately, social work students should always be educated on self-care and learn to monitor their burnout levels in order to prevent burnout to be carried into their careers.

APPENDIX A:  
DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

## Student Survey

---

1. Please indicate your age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Please indicate your gender:
  - Male
  - Female
  - Transgender
  - Other
3. Please indicate your ethnicity:
  - Caucasian
  - African American
  - Asian / Pacific Islander
  - Latino
  - Native American
  - More than one ethnicity
4. Please indicate your marital status:
  - Single
  - Committed relationship
  - Cohabiting
  - Married
  - Divorced
  - Widowed
5. Please indicate your enrollment status:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> year full-time
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> year full-time
  - 1<sup>st</sup> year part-time
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> year part-time
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> year part-time
6. Please indicate your employment status:
  - Not employed
  - Employed – 0 to 20 hours per week
  - Employed – 20 to 30 hours per week
  - Employed – 30 to 40 hours per week
  - Employed – 40+ hours per week

7. Please read each statement below and circle number that best resonates with you on a scale of 0 = *never* to 6 = *always*:

**0 = never**

**6 = always**

I feel emotionally drained by my studies.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
I feel used up at the end of a day at university.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
I feel tired when I get up in the morning and I have to face another day at the university.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Studying or attending a class is really a strain for me.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
I feel burnout from my studies.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
I have become less interested in my studies since my enrollment at the university.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
I have become less enthusiastic about my studies.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
I have become more cynical about the potential usefulness of my studies.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
I doubt the significance of my studies.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
I can effectively solve the problems that arise in my studies.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
I believe that I make an effective contribution to the classes that I attend.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
In my opinion, I am a good student.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
I feel stimulated when I achieve my study goals.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
I have learned many interesting things during the course of my studies.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
During class I feel confident that I am effective in getting things done.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>



8. Please read each statement below and circle the number that best resonates with you based on a scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*:

1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *agree*, and 5 = *strongly agree*

Work has been affected by school (i.e., requesting time off for school schedule, , mandatory school events, meetings professors, etc.)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
My workload was negatively impacted and had to speak to my employer since starting my MSW program.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Life events (i.e. divorce, death, relocation, marriage, new child, change in employment) occurred since beginning the MSW program and impacted my studies.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
My school load has impacted your family life (i.e. less hours spent with family or friends, missing family gatherings, ended relationships, increase in child care).	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Faculty hours match with my availability/schedule.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
I feel my professors and school faculty are supportive and understanding.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
I am able to attend and participate in school-based groups or counseling services without impacting any other facet in my life.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
I have received school-based counseling services without impacting my school or employment schedule.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

APPENDIX B:  
INFORMED CONSENT

### INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to ascertain whether the enrollment status of a Master of Social Work program impacts a student's burnout. The study is being conducted by Donna Villaseñor and Vanessa Lopez, graduate students, under the supervision of Dr. Armando Barragán, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-committee at CSUSB.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the study is to ascertain whether the enrollment status of a Master of Social Work program impacts a student's burnout.

**DESCRIPTION:** Participants will be asked a few questions on the current status of enrollment, students' school-related attitudes, and some demographics.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your responses will remain confidential and data will be reported in group form only.

**DURATION:** It will take 10 to 15 minutes to complete the survey.

**RISKS:** Although not anticipated, there may be some discomfort in answering some of the questions. You are not required to answer and can skip the question or end your participation.

**BENEFITS:** There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

**CONTACT:** If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Barragán at (909) 537-3501.

**RESULTS:** Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2020.

\*\*\*\*\*

This is to certify that I read the above and I am 18 years or older.

\_\_\_\_\_   
Place an X mark here

\_\_\_\_\_   
Date

California State University, San Bernardino  
Social Work Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee  
APPROVED 5/16/20 VOID AFTER 5/15/22  
IRB# SW 1928 CHAIR [Signature]

APPENDIX C:

TABLE 1

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variable Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	166	85.6
	Male	27	13.9
	Transgender	1	0.5
	Total	194	100
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	71	36.6
	Committed relationship	37	19.1
	Cohabiting	15	7.7
	Married	61	31.4
	Divorced	10	5.2
	Widow	0	0
	Total	194	100
	<b>Ethnicity</b>	Caucasian	32
African American	16	8.2	
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	3.1	
Latino	115	59.3	
Native American	1	0.5	
More than one ethnicity	23	11.9	
Total	194	100	
<b>Employment Status</b>	Not employed	63	32.5
	Employed – 0 to 20 hours per week	55	28.4
	Employed – 20 to 30 hours per week	18	9.3
	Employed – 30 to 40 hours per week	27	13.9
	Employed – 40+ hours	31	16.0
	Total	194	100
	<b>Enrollment Status</b>	Full-time (1 <sup>st</sup> year)	57
Full-time (2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	48	24.7	
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>54.1</i>
	Part-time (1 <sup>st</sup> year)	23	11.9
	Part-time (2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	44	22.7
	Part-time (3 <sup>rd</sup> year)	22	11.3
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>45.9</i>
	Total	194	100

APPENDIX D:

TABLE 2

Table 2. Independent T-Tests for MBI-SS Domains by Enrollment Status

	<b>Enrollment Status</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Std. Error Mean</b>
<b>Efficacy Score</b>	Full-time	105	16.98	6.36	0.62
	Part-time	89	15.85	7.63	0.81
<b>Cynicism Score</b>	Full-time	105	4.99	5.41	0.53
	Part-time	89	5.91	5.81	0.62
<b>Efficacy Score</b>	Full-time	105	8.04	5.71	0.56
	Part-time	89	8.76	6.10	0.65

t(192) = 1.12, p = 0.26, there was no significant difference between full-time and part-time for the exhaustion domain

t(192) = -1.14, p = 0.26, there was no significant difference between full-time and part-time for the cynicism domain

t(192) = -0.86, p = 0.39, there was no significant difference between full-time and part-time for the efficacy domain

APPENDIX E:

TABLE 3



Table 3. Independent T-Tests for Contributing Factors by Enrollment Status

	Enrollment Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>Work has been affected by school (i.e., requesting time off for school schedule, mandatory school events, meetings with professor, etc.)</b>	Full-time	105	3.00	1.55	0.15
	Part-time	89	3.92	1.25	0.13
<b>My workload was negatively impacted and had to speak to my employer since starting my MSW program.</b>	Full-time	105	2.70	1.45	0.14
	Part-time	88	3.13	1.45	0.15
<b>Life events (i.e., divorce, death, relocation, marriage, new child, change in employment) occurred since beginning the MSW program and impacted my studies.</b>	Full-time	105	3.16	1.30	0.13
	Part-time	89	3.35	1.40	0.15
<b>My school load has impacted my family life (i.e., less hours spent with family or friends, missing family gatherings, ended relationships, increase in childcare).</b>	Full-time	105	4.12	1.07	0.11
	Part-time	89	4.17	0.97	0.10
<b>Faculty hours match with my availability/schedule.</b>	Full-time	105	3.05	1.20	.012
	Part-time	89	2.35	1.29	0.14
<b>I fell my professors and school faculty are supportive and understanding.</b>	Full-time	105	4.26	0.87	0.09
	Part-time	89	3.91	1.00	0.09
<b>I am able to attend and participate in school-based groups or counseling services without impacting any other facet in my life.</b>	Full-time	105	2.50	1.19	0.12
	Part-time	89	2.06	1.18	0.13
<b>I have received school-based counseling services without impacting my school or employment schedule.</b>	Full-time	105	2.18	1.16	0.11
	Part-time	89	2.01	1.21	0.13

t(192) = -4.51, p = 0.00, there was significant difference between full-time and part-time for the adverse impact on employment

t(191) = -2.01, p = 0.05, there was significant difference between full-time and part-time for the adverse impact on workload

t(192) = -0.96, p = 0.34, there was no significant difference between full-time and part-time for life events impact on studies

t(191) = -0.36, p = 0.72, there was no significant difference between full-time and part-time for adverse impact of school load on family life

t(192) = 3.90, p = 0.00, there was significant difference between full-time and part-time for faculty hours to meet availability/schedule

t(192) = 2.60, p = 0.01, there was significant difference between full-time and part-time for the perceived support and understanding by professors and faculty

t(192) = 2.67, p = 0.01, there was significant difference between full-time and part-time for ability to attend school-based counseling/services without impact to other life facets.

t(192) = 1.00, p = 0.32, there was no significant difference between full-time and part-time for ability to attend school-based counseling without impact to school or employment

APPENDIX F:  
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee

Researcher(s) Vanessa Lopez & Donna Villaseñor  
Proposal Title Burnout Mediated Social Work Enrollment Status  
# SW1938

Your proposal has been reviewed by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board. The decisions and advice of those faculty are given below.

-----  
Proposal is:

- approved  
 to be resubmitted with revisions listed below  
 to be forwarded to the campus IRB for review

Revisions that must be made before proposal can be approved:

- faculty signature missing  
 missing informed consent  debriefing statement  
 revisions needed in informed consent  debriefing  
 data collection instruments missing  
 agency approval letter missing  
 CITI missing  
 revisions in design needed (specified below)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Chair Signature

5/16/2019  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Distribution: White-Coordinator; Yellow-Supervisor; Pink-Student

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## ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

This was a collaborative effort of two authors. The authors collaborated on each chapter. Each author was involved in the pre-planning to the conceptualization of the study. The authors maintained the same cohesiveness through the survey distribution, data collection, data analysis, and finalization of the remaining chapters. The study responsibilities included the following:

1. Survey Distribution/Data Collection

Equal Collaboration: Vanessa Lopez and Donna Andrea Villaseñor

2. Data Analysis

Equal Collaboration: Vanessa Lopez and Donna Andrea Villaseñor

3. Report Writing

- a. Introduction and Literature Review:

Equal Collaboration: Vanessa Lopez and Donna Andrea Villaseñor

- b. Methods:

Equal Collaboration: Vanessa Lopez and Donna Andrea Villaseñor

- c. Results:

Equal Collaboration: Vanessa Lopez and Donna Andrea Villaseñor

- d. Discussion:

Equal Collaboration: Vanessa Lopez and Donna Andrea Villaseñor