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MINDFULNESS AND BURNOUT AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS

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MINDFULNESS AND BURNOUT AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS

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

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

by
Erick Ulysses Hernandez

June 2020

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ABSTRACT

Burnout is a negative psychological response to workplace stress, and it manifest as emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a decrease in personal accomplishment. Experiencing burnout leads to physical health problems such as headaches, gastrointestinal issues, and respiratory problems. Social workers have been identified at high risk for developing burnout due to a high number of caseloads, limited supervisory support, and because they often work with clients with complex social situations. Burnout among social workers leads to high turnover rates, negatively impacts quality of services, and adversely affects therapeutic relationships. Previous studies have examined the efficacy of mindfulness interventions on burnout among health care workers, and the results of those studies indicate that mindfulness reduces burnout. However, among that literature, there is a shortage of studies that have examined the relationship between mindfulness and burnout, specifically among social workers. This study explored correlations between levels of mindfulness and levels of burnout among social workers. It was hypothesized that higher scores of mindfulness would negatively correlate with lower burnout scores among social workers. Using a quantitative, non-experimental research design, this study surveyed only social workers (N=90) and found moderate negative relationships between higher mindfulness scores and lower burnout scores, supporting the hypothesis of the study. Implications of the findings for the field of social work are explained.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my family. This program was a lot of work, and I could not have done it by myself. Thank you Andrea for your support and for all the sacrifices you made for our family during these last two years. I will forever be grateful to you for that. I would like to thank my son Benicio, who brings me pure joy and laughter every single day. I hope that through this project we have set an example to you that anything is possible if you dedicate yourself to something worthy. Be the blessed defender of man that the world needs.

I would also like to thank my parents for their hard work and endless sacrifices throughout the years. You have shown me what hard work can accomplish and without you, this avocado tree would have never sprouted. I would also like to dedicate this project to the other two avocados of the Hernandez family. Congratulations on your own accomplishments and may us forever be a house of learned doctors. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this project to everyone that has had a positive impact on my education, career, and life. You know who you are.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Formulation

Burnout is a negative psychological response to workplace stress. According to Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001), burnout presents itself as emotional drainage, negative thinking, and a reduction in the motivation for personal growth. Burnout results from high work demands, intense emotional relationships with clients, and results in the inability to perform basic personal and occupational duties (Boyas, Wind, & Kang, 2012). Experiencing high levels of burnout also negatively impact a person's physical health, as symptoms of burnout manifest as headaches, intestinal issues, and respiratory problems (Kim, Ji, & Kao, 2011).

Social workers have been identified as a group that is at high risk for developing burnout, due to the fact that they work with clients that are in crisis, are in distress, or are dealing with some type of psychological suffering (Sánchez-Moreno, Gallardo-Peralta, & Barrón-López, 2014). In addition, social workers report having a high number of client caseloads, significant report writing tasks, and receive limited supervisory clinical support, which have been identified as factors that contribute to burnout among social workers (Whitaker, Weismiller, & Clark, 2006).

Burnout among social workers has various detrimental effects. Burnout has been identified to lead to high turnover rates among child welfare social

workers, which limits the ability of child welfare agencies to provide services to clients that they serve (Cyphers, 2001). Burnout also negatively affect therapeutic relationships between social workers and clients, as burnout causes a social worker to develop a sense of disengagement from clients, and to the development of poor views towards clients (Maslach et al., 2001; Rupert, Miller, & Dorociak, 2015). Siebert (2005), found that 75% of social workers in his study reported burnout. Due to high prevalence of burnout among social workers, and the detrimental impact that burnout has on the social worker and the clients that they serve, it is imperative to develop interventions that reduce burnout among social workers. Possible interventions for reducing burnout among social workers are mindfulness practices.

In the last two decades, the benefits of mindfulness practices and interventions have been extensively researched. In 1998, a search of scholarly peer reviewed articles on mindfulness would have yielded zero results, but in 2009 mindfulness search would have yielded over 134,000 results (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). The term mindfulness has various definitions and has been explained in various ways. Shapiro (2009), described mindfulness as intentional awareness to present stimuli without judgement. Additionally, being mindful has been described as being present in the moment and paying attention on purpose to oneself (Cullen, 2011; Kemper, Mo, & Khayat, 2015). In essence, being mindful refers to a person's ability to become aware of their thoughts and bodily experiences without judgement, and to be able to return their awareness back to

the present moment. Studies have shown that practices that aim to increase mindfulness have a multitude of benefits including a reduction of stress, anxiety, and improved immunology (Cohen, & Miller, 2009; Raab, Sogge, Parker, & Flament). Furthermore, McKim (2008) found that after an 8-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course, participants scored lower on rumination, psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and physical illness.

Research findings have also suggested that mindfulness based interventions improve clinical skills, and improve client relationships by helping clinicians stay present with clients, be less discomforted by silences that arises in sessions, improve awareness of experiences, and increase overall wellbeing (Greason, & Cashwell, 2009). Past research has also found that mindfulness interventions reduce burnout among health care workers (Goodman, & Schorling, 2012). However, within the mindfulness and burnout literature, there is a shortage of studies that have examined the relationship between mindfulness and burnout specifically among social workers. Therefore, further research was needed to determine if relationships between mindfulness and burnout exist among social workers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore correlations between mindfulness and burnout among social workers. This study was needed in order to address the shortage of literature that has focused on the efficacy of mindfulness on reducing burnout, specifically among social workers. Social workers have been

identified as a high-risk group for developing burnout, due the nature of their work (Sánchez-Moreno et al., 2014). Burnout impairs a social workers ability to provide quality services to the clients that they serve (Maslach et al., 2001; Rupert, Miller, & Dorociak, 2015). Research has also indicated that burnout impacts a provider's physical health and results in more frequent headaches, intestinal complications, and respiratory issues (Kim, Ji, & Kao, 2011). Furthermore, Siebert's (2005), study found that 75% of the social workers (N=751) reported burnout.

Due to the high prevalence of burnout among social workers and the detrimental effects burnout has on both social workers and the clients that they serve, this study sought to explore the relationship between levels of mindfulness and levels of burnout among social workers. This study hypothesized that higher scores of mindfulness would negatively correlate with lower scores of burnout among social workers. As a way to study such correlations, this study utilized a quantitative methodology to survey only social workers (N= 90), to assess their scores on a mindfulness inventory, and to also assess their scores on a burnout inventory. A bivariate analysis was used to determine significant findings between the variables.

Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

This study was necessary as it contributed to the shortage of literature on the topic of mindfulness and burnout among social workers. The study sought to explore correlations between mindfulness and burnout among social workers, as

further research is required in order to develop effective interventions for burnout among social workers. The results from this study serve as a platform for future research that could expound on the efficacy of mindfulness on reducing and preventing burnout among social workers.

The field of social work would benefit from having additional interventions that reduce burnout among social workers. Less burnout among social workers would reduce high turnover rates at agencies where high turnover rates reduce the availability of services. Less burnout among social workers would also benefit clients who would have greater access to care, and also receive higher quality services from social workers. Additionally, less burnout would yield fewer physical ailments among social workers, due to the association between burnout and negative health outcomes. In addition, finding significant correlations between mindfulness and burnout among social workers, would promote the implementation of mindfulness trainings throughout social work agencies, as a way to reduce and prevent burnout among staff. Therefore, the question guiding this study is: do higher levels mindfulness negatively correlate with lower levels of burnout among social workers?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, current literature on mindfulness and burnout among social workers will be reviewed. A subsection will be dedicated to a short history of burnout, the way burnout is currently defined, and the consequences of burnout among social workers. Additional subsections will discuss literature pertaining to ways in which burnout has been previously addressed, and current literature on mindfulness and how it pertains to social work. Lastly, this chapter will discuss the theories of conceptualization of the proposed research project.

Burnout

The term burnout gained popularity in the mid the 1970's, as it was first used to describe negative reactions to work, specifically within the human service sector (Freudenberger, 1974). Since then, the term burnout has undergone various definitions. The most universally used definition of burnout comes from Maslach, et al., (2001) who defined burnout as a psychological response to workplace stress that manifest as emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a decrease in personal accomplishment. Maslach et al. (2001), characterized emotional exhaustion by a worker's inability to invest oneself fully on a psychological level, described cynicism as the development of negative attitudes

and feelings towards clients, and defined personal accomplishments as the propensity to evaluate oneself negatively while performing work duties.

Burnout and Social Work

Social work has gained the professional reputation of having high work demands. Given the population that they serve, social workers frequently encounter and deal with distress and suffering (Sánchez-Moreno, et al., 2014). Social work also entails working with difficult clients from various socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, social workers are reported to have high caseloads, heavy paperwork duties, and limited supervisory support, factors that have been identified to lead to high turnover rates (Whitaker, Weismiller, & Clark, 2006). As a consequence to such occupational demands, social workers are more receptive for burnout. The results from Siebert (2005), study found that 75% of the social work participants (N = 751), reported experiencing burnout at some point during their social work career.

Burnout among social workers has various detrimental effects. A high turnover rate is one of the most prevalent consequences of burnout in relation to social workers, particularly among child welfare social workers. Cyphers (2001), found a yearly average of 22% turnover rate among child welfare social workers across 43 states. Consequently, high turnover rates increase the cost of services, and prove ineffective in establishing a work force of social workers (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006).

In addition to high turnover rates, burnout impairs the quality of services that social workers provide. Freudenberger, (1974) elaborated that burnout includes a loss of motivation and commitment. Moreover, Maslach et al. (2001) defined burnout as a general sense of disengagement from clients. Such attributes in social workers leads to impaired professional functioning, thus negatively impacting the quality of services that they provide (Rupert, Miller, & Dorociak, 2015).

Lastly, burnout also has detrimental effects on a social workers psychological well-being, as well as on physical health. Social workers that experience burnout have been found to be diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder at higher rates than social workers that do not experience burnout (Evans et al., 2006). Furthermore, some research findings have indicated that social workers experiencing burnout will report more medical issues pertaining to headaches, intestinal problems, and respiratory infections (Kim, Ji, and Kao 2011). Consequently, poor physical health has been associated with decreased job functioning, including more absences from work and higher staff turnover rates (Darr & Johns, 2008). As it pertains to the field of social work, the existing findings in the literature on the effects of burnout are suggestive of a need to discover preventive and recovery interventions for burnout.

Prevention of Burnout

Burnout research has primarily focused on identifying work environment factors that contribute to burnout. Such factors include substantial caseloads,

time constraints, population of clients served, lack of gratification and praise, and lack of supervisory support (Marc & Osvat, 2013). Therefore, current preventive burnout interventions have focused on making changes on an organizational level and addressing the various factors that lead to burnout within the workplace. However, based on a literature review of burnout, interventions that aim to address burnout on an individual basis is limited. Furthermore, there is a lack of literature that focuses on interventions that aim at reducing burnout, specifically among social workers. Mindfulness interventions and practices could serve as interventions for preventing and coping burnout among social workers.

Mindfulness

Within the last two decades, there has been an increase in attention on mindfulness research. In 1990, there were fewer than 80 scholarly articles on mindfulness, and by 2006 that number grew to over 600 (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, Shapiro and Carlson (2009), found that in 1998 a mindfulness search yielded zero scholarly articles, compared to 2008 in which there were 44 ongoing mindfulness studies.

The benefits to psychological well-being and physical well-being from mindfulness has been the focus of research. Benefits of mindfulness practice include a reduction of stress, anxiety, and improved immunology (Cohen, & Miller, 2009). Consequently, there has also been an increase in clinics that offer mindfulness-based interventions to aid both medical patients and mental health clients (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007).

Background and Definitions

Mindfulness is a concept that stems from eastern traditions. Specifically, mindfulness derives from Buddhist philosophy, but has been further developed by various philosophical (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007). Shapiro (2009), defined mindfulness as intentional awareness to the present without judgement. The most simplistic and encompassing definition comes from Brown and Ryan (2003), whose definition entails intentional awareness to the present moment including external and internal experiences. The prominent mechanism of mindfulness is learning to become aware of present stimuli without automatically imposing concepts, labels, ideas, and judgments (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999).

Mindfulness and Social Work

Due to its properties and mechanisms, mindfulness has been researched for its effects on improving the quality of therapeutic services among clinicians. Greason and Cashwell (2009), identified correlations between high levels of mindfulness and traits that enhance therapeutic relationship such as; being more attentive to clients, being more comfortable with silences that arise between therapist and clients, having increased awareness of the personal experiences that arise during the course of therapy, and being more empathic towards clients. These findings suggest that mindfulness could help prevent the detrimental effects that burnout has on the quality of services that social workers provide.

Furthermore, Goodman and Schorling (2012), documented the benefits of a mindfulness stress reduction course on mental health, physical well-being, and

work-related burnout, among doctors, nurses, and social workers. Participants in Goodman and Schorlings' (2012) study were tested before and after the mindfulness stress reduction course. The mindfulness course consisted of meeting for 2.5 hours a week, along with a 7-hour retreat, and participants were educated on four different types of mindfulness practices (Goodman & Schorlings, 2012). Posttest scores indicated that participants significantly increased scores on mental well-being and significantly decreased scores on work related burnout (Goodman & Schorlings, 2012). From the results of these researchers, it can be inferred that mindfulness helps combat the effects from work-related burnout. However, there is a shortage and gap in research that has exclusively focused on the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in preventing burnout among social workers.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Debates on the exact school of thought behind mindfulness are constant. However, conceptualized theories for this proposed research project is best attributed to those found within the cognitive-behavioral psychology paradigms. Elements of mindfulness, specifically those that emphasize attention, emotion, cognition, and awareness to one's own thoughts and experiences, parallel the skills that are developed through various cognitive based therapies such as Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (Linehan, 1993). In addition, awareness to one's cognitive thought process is a key feature in the Cognitive Behavioral Therapies (CBT). CBT centralizes in teaching clients in bringing awareness to their

automatic thought processes and discriminating those thoughts as either adaptive or maladaptive and behaving accordingly (Ellis, 1991; Meichenbaum, 1979). Finally, the component of awareness is also a central theme in Self-determination theory (SDT), in which clients learn to become aware of all stimuli that may influence their functioning (Deci & Ryan, 1980).

Summary

Due to the prevalence of burnout among social work, it was necessary to explore possible interventions to help combat the negative effects of burnout among social workers. Burnout has many detrimental effects on both social workers and the clients that they serve. Work conditions that facilitate burnout are documented in past research. In addition, past research has also elaborated on the positive impact that mindfulness stress reduction courses have on mental health and burnout among health care providers. However, there is a shortage of literature that has specifically targeted the effects of mindfulness on preventing and reducing burnout among social works. Therefore, the goal of this proposed research was two-fold; to address the gap in the literature, and to explore the relationship between mindfulness and burnout among social workers. The proposed research project attempted to explore the correlations between mindfulness and burnout among social workers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore correlations between levels of mindfulness and levels of burnout among social workers. It was hypothesized that the data would reveal a negative inverse relationship between the independent variable (mindfulness) and the dependent variable (burnout). This research study implemented a quantitative methodology to explore correlations between the two variables. This chapter will review in detail the specifics on how the study was conducted including the study design, sampling methods, data collection and instruments, procedures, protection of human subjects, and data analysis.

Study Design

This study utilized a quantitative non-experimental design to explore correlations between levels of mindfulness and levels of burnout among social workers. It was hypothesized that an inverse correlation would be found between scores on a mindfulness inventory and scores on a burnout inventory. A quantitative non- experimental design was chosen for this study due to time constraints on data collection, and also there was a gap in current literature that focused on the efficacy of mindfulness as a tool for preventing burnout among social workers.

A methodological strength of the study was a that large number of social workers were surveyed (N=90) due to the utilization of a convenience sampling method. A secondary strength of the study is that the results are generalizable and serve to promote further research in the area of mindfulness and burnout among social workers.

A limitation of the study was that the study set out to find correlations between mindfulness and burnout therefore, any significant findings between the two variables cannot be established as causation. Another limitation of the methodology stems from the nature of utilizing a convenience sampling technique, in which the population that was surveyed in this study may not be representative of the population of social workers.

Sampling

This study utilized a convenience sampling method to collect data from participating social workers (N=90). The data was attained using an online survey questionnaire created on Qualtrics. Social workers with any degree in Social Work were eligible to participate in the survey. The online survey consisted of a recruitment statement, an informed consent page, six demographic questions, 14 questions from the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory, and 19 questions from the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory. The online survey was posted on two social media platforms, Facebook and Reddit, and specifically on pages dedicated to social work topics.

Data Collection and Instruments

The researcher adhered to all ethical guidelines required by California State University San Bernardino's IRB regarding the data collection procedure and process. This study began its quantitative data collection procedure after approval had been granted by California State University San Bernardino's Institutional Review Board (IRB). A site authorization was not needed due to the survey being conducted online and not at physical location site.

The sample population of the study was comprised of social workers ($N=90$). The online survey was posted online through Qualtrics. The survey was comprised of three sections: demographic questions, mindfulness questions, and burnout questions. The first section included six demographic questions created by the researcher. The demographic questions collected data on age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, type of social work degree, and years in service as a social worker.

The second section of the survey consisted of questions regarding mindfulness, as mindfulness was identified to be the independent variable of the study. The Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI) was used to measure mindfulness scores as it is both a reliable and valid inventory. (Walach, Buchheld, Buttenmüller, Kleinknecht, & Schmidt, 2006). It consists of 14 questions that capture different aspects of mindfulness, and it has been assessed to have a Cronbach Alpha of .86.

The third section of the survey consisted of questions regarding burnout, as burnout was identified to be the dependent variable. Burnout was measured using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), as it is both a valid and reliable instrument (Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, & Christensen, 2005). The CBI consists of 19 questions that capture three dimensions of burnout (personal, work, client) and the three dimensions have demonstrated to have high Cronbach's Alpha scores (.84-.87).

Procedures

A recruitment statement was created (Appendix D) and posted on two social media platforms, Facebook and Reddit. The recruitment statement gave a brief synopsis of the study, and asked participants to voluntarily take part in the research study by completing the survey questionnaire online through Qualtrics. Participants who responded to the recruitment statement and met the criteria for the study, were prompted to click on the link that routed them to the online survey. Once they clicked on the link, the survey opened to the informed consent form (Appendix E) which explained that their participation was completely voluntary. The participants were then prompted to mark an X on the signature line to give their consent. The estimated time of completion of the survey was approximately 10 minutes. The online survey was open from January to February on Qualtrics.

Protection of Human Subjects

The data and information collected from the participants of this study remained anonymous. Responses to the questionnaires were only viewed by the researcher of the study and by the research advisor. The study did not require the disclosure of personal identifiable information. Subjects were informed of confidentiality prior to taking part in the study.

Social workers participating in the research also received an informed consent detailing the nature of the study. Data was collected electronically via Qualtrics. No one other than the researcher of the study had access to the information attained. Passwords were created in order to protect the data that was collected, and no one other than the researcher of the study had access to passwords. The data was deleted at the time of completion of the research project.

Data Analysis

All data collected from this study was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS). The data collected during this study was analyzed for correlations between the independent variable (mindfulness) and the dependent variable (burnout) using a bivariate analysis. Data collected from the demographic questionnaire was also analyzed. Lastly, SPSS was used to run descriptive statistics on the collected data.

Summary

Due to a shortage of literature on the effects of mindfulness on preventing burnout among social workers, the following study was conducted. This study explored the correlations between mindfulness and burnout among social workers. It was hypothesized that higher scores on the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory would negatively correlate with lower scores on the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory.

The use of quantitative research methods best facilitated the objective of this study, which was to explore correlations between the independent variable (mindfulness) and the dependent variable (burnout). Data was collected from social workers that responded to an online survey created on Qualtrics. The information attained from this study will serve as a launching point for future research in the area of mindfulness and burnout among social workers.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

For the purpose of this quantitative study, social workers were used as the sole data source to assess the relationship between mindfulness and burnout. It was hypothesized that higher scores on the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory would negatively correlate with lower scores on the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory. This chapter described the demographic information of the study sample and explained the results of the analyzed data attained from the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory and the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory, from the 90 social workers who participated in the study.

Frequency Distributions of Demographics

A total of 111 social workers participated in this study. 90 study participants fully completed key study questionnaires. Participants with missing values for these questionnaires were excluded from final data analyzes using pairwise deletion. Table 1 below illustrates the demographic characteristics of the study participants as it pertains to age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, current degree, and years employed as a social worker.

Table 1. Participants Demographic Characteristics (N=90)

Variable	N	%
Age	90	100
18-24	4	4.4
25-34	46	51.1
35-44	23	25.6
45-54	9	10
Over 55	8	8.9
Gender	90	100
Male	10	11.1
Female	78	86.7
Other	2	2.2
Ethnicity	90	100
White	50	55.6
Black or African American	8	8.9
Hispanic or Latino	25	27.8
Asian or Pacific Islander	4	4.4
Other	3	3.3
Marital Status	90	100
Single	42	46.7
Married	39	43.3
Divorced	5	5.6
Separated	5	5.6
Other	3	3.3
Current Degree	90	100
Bachelor of Social Work	11	12.2
Master of Social Work	78	86.7
Doctor of Social Work	1	1.1
Number of years employed as a Social Worker	90	100
0-3	37	41.1
4-6	20	22.2
7-10	15	16.7
11+	18	20

As revealed in Table 1, a majority of the participants (51%) were between the ages of 25-34. The vast majority of participants (87%) were female, while only a small percentage (11%) were males. The most common response to the questions on ethnicity was White (55%) followed by Hispanic or Latino (28%). A majority of the participants (47%) identified as being single. In terms of type of social worker degree, a vast majority of the participants (87%) indicated having a Master of Social Work degree. A majority of the participants (41%) had worked between 0-3 years as a social worker. Table 2 below illustrates the average scores from participants on the FMI, and average scores on personal burnout, work-related burnout, and client-related burnout from the CBI.

Table 2. Mean Scores on Mindfulness and Burnout

Variable	N	Mean	Max.	Min.
Mindfulness scores	90	36.64	56	14
Personal burnout scores	90	54.49	100	0
Work-related burnout scores	90	53.09	100	0
Client-related burnout scores	90	34.95	100	0

A total score on the FMI was calculated, with a possible maximum score of 56 and a minimum score 14. Higher scores on the FMI are indicative of being more mindful, and lower scores are indicative of being less mindful (Walach et al., 2006). As revealed in Table 2, the average mindfulness score for participants in the study (N=90) was 36.64. An average total score was calculated for each type of burnout measured on the CBI (personal burnout, work-related burnout, and client-related burnout), with a possible maximum score of 100 and minimum score of 0. Higher scores on the CBI are indicative of more burnout, whereas lower scores indicate less burnout (Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, & Christensen, 2005). The average scores for each of the three types of burnout were as follows; personal burnout (N=90) was 54.49, work-related burnout (N=90) was 53.09, and client-related burnout (N=90) was 34.95.

Presentation of the Findings

The results of a bivariate correlation analysis between the independent variable mindfulness, and the dependent variable burnout revealed a statistically significant moderate negative correlation between higher scores of mindfulness and lower scores of personal burnout ($r = -.52, p = .000$). A statistically significant negative correlation was also found between higher scores of mindfulness, and lower scores on work-related burnout ($r = -.44, p = .000$). Lastly, a statistically significant moderate negative correlation was found between higher scores of mindfulness and lower scores on client-related burnout ($r = -.39, p = .000$). These

findings supported the hypothesis of the study. Table 3 below illustrates the findings.

Table 3. Correlations Between Mindfulness and Burnout

Three subtypes of burnout, as measured on the CBI		Personal burnout avg. score	Work-related burnout avg. score	Client-related burnout avg. score
Mindfulness total score	Pearson Correlation	-.528**	-.448*	-.397**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	90	90	90

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

Summary

This chapter detailed and explained the results of the quantitative study to understand the relationship between mindfulness and burnout among social workers. The study hypothesized that the data would reveal a negative correlation between higher scores on mindfulness and lower burnout scores among social workers. The results indicated that statistically significant negative moderate correlations were found between higher scores on mindfulness and all three types of burnout (personal, work-related, and client-related).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study explored correlations between mindfulness and burnout among social workers. Due to the shortage in literature regarding the topic of mindfulness and burnout among social workers, this study implemented a non-experimental quantitative design to examine the relationship between mindfulness and burnout among social workers. This chapter will discuss the results of the study and the implications of the results to the field of social work, detail the limitations of the study, and make recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between mindfulness and burnout among social workers. It was hypothesized that the data would reveal an inverse negative correlation between higher mindfulness scores and lower burnout scores among social workers. This hypothesis was formulated based on past findings in the research literature that indicated that mindfulness stress reduction courses reduce burnout among health care workers (Raab et al., 2015). However, the current literature lacked research on the efficacy of mindfulness interventions on reducing burnout among social workers.

The results from this study helped address the shortage in literature regarding mindfulness and burnout among social workers.

The results of the study revealed that levels of mindfulness negatively correlate with levels of burnout among social workers. This study showed that moderate inverse relationships exist between mindfulness and burnout among social workers. Social workers that scored higher on mindfulness inventories, also scored lower on burnout inventories. Additionally, this study found that mindfulness negatively correlated with three different types of burnout. The data from this study revealed that higher mindfulness scores negatively correlated with all three subtypes of burnout. These findings suggest that mindfulness interventions that promote higher levels of mindfulness, serve as successful tools to mitigate the negative effects of burnout among social workers.

These findings support the hypothesis of this study and are consistent with previous studies that have shown when health care workers engage in mindfulness stress reduction courses, there is a significant reduction in reported burnout (Raab et al., 2015). In addition, the results of this study are consistent with research studies that have shown mindfulness has various positive effects on the psychological wellbeing of individuals (Brown, & Ryan, 2003). Finally, the results of this study are in conjunction with research that has shown when participants receive mindfulness training, their level of emotional exhaustion decreases and levels of emotional regulation and job satisfaction increases,

compared to control groups who do not receive any mindfulness trainings (Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt, Lang, 2013).

Implications for Social Work Practice

As previously mentioned, burnout among social workers occurs in high prevalence. Sibert (2006), found that 75% of social workers studied (N=547) reported experiencing burnout at some point in their career. Burnout among social workers has negative influence on the quality of services that they provide to clients, in large part due to the negative effects that burnout has on the social worker. Therefore, the findings from this study promote the development of mindfulness interventions as tools to combat the ill effects of burnout among social workers. Mindfulness interventions could be embedded within the self-care discussions, and social workers could begin to incorporate mindfulness practices as part of self-care routines, as a way to reduce burnout.

Implications for Social Work Policy

The findings of this study serve to influence social work policy, specifically at agencies that employ social workers. The results of this study indicated that there were negative correlations between mindfulness and burnout among social workers. These correlations suggest that being mindful serves as a buffer against burnout. If mindfulness interventions are developed based on these findings, agencies that employ social workers could begin to implement mindfulness trainings in the workplace, as attempts to implement early intervention strategies

to reduce burnout. Furthermore, these findings could influence policy changes regarding clinical supervision, in which mindfulness trainings could become routine topics of discussion within clinical supervision, in order to protect social workers from experiencing burnout.

Implications for Social Work Research

The results of this correlational study served as a foundation for future research on mindfulness and burnout among social workers. Further research regarding mindfulness and burnout among social workers is required, specifically research that could establish the efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions as a means of preventing and reducing burnout among social workers. Utilizing random sampling methods, combined with experimental designs with control groups and experimental groups, are needed in order to validate mindfulness as an intervention for burnout among social workers. In addition, further research in social work could attempt to define the exact measurable unit of mindfulness that produces therapeutic effects against burnout. Lastly, social work research is needed in order to determine if mindfulness helps reduce burnout among the different fields of social work.

Limitations

A limitation of the study was the utilization of a convenience sampling method. A convenience sampling method increases the likelihood that the sample of the study is not an accurate representation of the population studied,

thus the results are difficult to generalize to the total population. Future studies looking into the topic of mindfulness and burnout among social workers could benefit from utilizing a simple random sampling method instead.

Another limitation of the study was the use of a non-experimental design. The study utilized a correlational, non-experimental design and data gathered from this method cannot be interpreted as causation, but rather establish that correlations between mindfulness and burnout exist among social workers. Future research in the area of mindfulness and burnout among social workers, could benefit from the use of a quantitative experimental design, allowing for the results to be interpreted as causation and providing more detailed explanation on the participants responses.

Lastly, a limitation of the study came from the use of inventories to measure mindfulness and burnout. The utilization of inventories as the primary modality of collecting data, limits the amount of information that can be gathered from participants regarding the studied variables. Open-ended questioning could potentially be used to improve the quality of research in the area of mindfulness and burnout.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to explore correlations between mindfulness and burnout among social workers. This study was required in order to address the shortage of literature on the topic of mindfulness and burnout among social workers. This study utilized a quantitative correlational design and

used inventories on mindfulness and burnout to collect data from social workers (N=90). The results from this study found moderate negative correlations between high scores of mindfulness, with lower burnout scores, suggesting that mindfulness could serve as an intervention for burnout among social workers. Results from this study could help formulate new policies regarding the importance of implementing mindfulness interventions at a micro level and a macro level. On a micro level, mindfulness could be discussed in clinical supervision and encouraged to be used as a social worker's self-care routine, in order to prevent burnout. From a macro perspective, results from this study could be used to influence policies at social work agencies, which could begin to implement agency wide mindfulness trainings as a way of preventing burnout among staff.

APPENDIX A
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1) What is your age?

- a) 18-24
- b) 25-34
- c) 35-44
- d) 45-54
- c) Over 55

2) What is your identified gender?

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Other
- d) Prefer not to disclose

3) What is the ethnicity that you identify as?

- a) White
- b) Black or African American
- c) Hispanic or Latino
- d) Native American or American Indian
- e) Asian or Pacific Islander
- f) Other

4) What is your Marital Status?

- a) Single
- b) Married
- c) Divorced
- d) Separated
- e) Widowed
- f) Other

5) What is your highest level of education?

- a) Bachelor of Social Work
- b) Master of Social Work
- c) Doctor of Social Work

6) How many years have you been employed as a Social Worker?

- a) 0-3
- b) 4-6
- c) 7-10
- d) 11+

APPENDIX B
FREIBURG MINDFULNESS INVENTORY

Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory

Please use the last 14 days as the time-frame to consider each item. Provide an answer for every statement as best you can. Please answer as honestly and spontaneously as possible. There are neither 'right' nor 'wrong' answers, nor 'good' or 'bad' responses. What is important is your own personal experience

1= Rarely 2= Occasionally 3= Fairly often 4= Almost always

I am open to the experience of the present moment. 1 2 3 4

I sense my body, whether eating, cooking, cleaning, or talking. 1 2 3 4

When I notice an absence of mind, I gently return to the experience of the here and now. 1 2 3 4

I am able to appreciate myself. 1 2 3 4

I pay attention to what's behind my actions. 1 2 3 4

I see my mistakes and difficulties without judging them. 1 2 3 4

I feel connected to my experience in the here-and-now. 1 2 3 4

I accept unpleasant experiences. 1 2 3 4

I am friendly to myself when things go wrong. 1 2 3 4

I watch my feelings without getting lost in them. 1 2 3 4

In difficult situations, I can pause without immediately reacting. 1 2 3 4

I experience moments of inner peace and ease, even when things get hectic and stressful. 1 2 3 4

I am impatient with myself and with others. 1 2 3 4

I am able to smile when I notice how I sometimes make life difficult. 1 2 3 4

Walach, H., Buchheld, N., Buttenmüller, V., Kleinknecht, N., & Schmidt, S. (2006). Measuring mindfulness—the Freiburg mindfulness inventory (FMI). *Personality and Individual Differences, 40*(8), 1543-1555.

APPENDIX C
COPENHAGEN BURNOUT INVENTORY

Copenhagen Burnout Inventory

Part one: Personal burnout

Definition: Personal burnout is a state of prolonged physical and psychological exhaustion.

Response categories: Always, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, Never/almost never.

Questions:

1. How often do you feel tired?
2. How often are you physically exhausted?
3. How often are you emotionally exhausted?
4. How often do you think: "I can't take it anymore"?
5. How often do you feel worn out?
6. How often do you feel weak and susceptible to illness?

Part two: Work-related burnout

Definition: Work-related burnout is a state of prolonged physical and psychological exhaustion, which is perceived as related to the person's work.

Response categories: To a very high degree, To a high degree, Somewhat, To a low degree, To a very low degree

Questions:

1. Is your work emotionally exhausting?
2. Do you feel burnt out because of your work?
3. Does your work frustrate you?

Response categories: Always, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, Never/almost never. Reversed score for last question

4. Do you feel worn out at the end of the working day?
5. Are you exhausted in the morning at the thought of another day at work?
6. Do you feel that every working hour is tiring for you?
7. Do you have enough energy for family and friends during leisure time?

Part three: Client-related burnout

Definition: Client-related burnout is a state of prolonged physical and psychological exhaustion, which is perceived as related to the person's work with clients*(Clients, patients, social service recipients, elderly citizens, or inmates)

Response categories: To a very high degree, To a high degree, Somewhat, To a low degree, To a very low degree.

Questions:

1. Do you find it hard to work with clients?
2. Do you find it frustrating to work with clients?
3. Does it drain your energy to work with clients?
4. Do you feel that you give more than you get back when you work with clients?

Response categories: Always, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, Never/almost never.

5. Are you tired of working with clients?
6. Do you sometimes wonder how long you will be able to continue working with clients?

Kristensen, T. S., Borritz, M., Villadsen, E., & Christensen, K. B. (2005). The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory: A new tool for the assessment of burnout. *Work & Stress, 19*(3), 192-207.

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine the correlations between levels of mindfulness and levels of burnout among social workers. The study is being conducted by Erick Hernandez, graduate student, under the supervision of Dr. Nicole Arkadie, adjunct professor in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at CSUSB.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to examine the correlations between levels of mindfulness and burnout among social workers.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked a few questions on demographics. Participants will be asked to answer questions on the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory and answer questions on the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory.

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

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your responses will be processed anonymously.

DURATION: It will take 5 to 10 minutes to complete the surveys.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.

BENEFITS: There will not be any direct benefits to the participants. Your participation will help improve the understanding on how mindfulness could potentially help reduce burnout among social workers.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Arkadie at (909) 537-5501

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.

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

_____ Place an X mark

_____ Date

APPENDIX E
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



January 28, 2020

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Administrative/Exempt Review Determination

Status: Determined Exempt

IRB-FY2020-110

Erick Hernandez Nicole Arkadie
CSBS - Social Work
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Erick Hernandez Nicole Arkadie

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Mindfulness and Burnout Among Social Workers" has been reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of California State University, San Bernardino has determined that your application meets the requirements for exemption from IRB review Federal requirements under 45 CFR 46. As the researcher under the exempt category you do not have to follow the requirements under 45 CFR 46 which requires annual renewal and documentation of written informed consent which are not required for the exempt category. However, exempt status still requires you to attain consent from participants before conducting your research as needed. Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee the following three requirements highlighted below. Please note failure of the investigator to notify the IRB of the below requirements may result in disciplinary action.

- Submit a protocol modification (change) form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before implemented in your study to ensure the risk level to participants has not increased,
- If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research, and
- Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system when your study has ended.

The protocol modification, adverse/unanticipated event, and closure forms are located in the Cayuse IRB System. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Donna Garcia

Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

DG/MG

APPENDIX F
RECRUITMENT STATEMENT

Recruitment Script

My name is Erick Hernandez and I am conducting a research project as part of my Masters of Social Work program at California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB), under the direction of Dr. Nicole Arkadie, adjunct professor at the School of Social Work at CSUSB.

My research project is looking to examine the possible correlations between levels of mindfulness and burnout among social workers.

I am recruiting individuals to participate in this study which will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participants must possess either a Bachelor of Social Work, Master of Social Work, or a Doctorate of Social Work degree.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you are interested in participating, please click the following link below to be directed to the online survey. If you have any questions concerning the research study please contact me at (760) 902-2568.

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