



A Study of the Relation between Social Workers' Burnout and Job Satisfaction

Dr. Stavros Parlalis^{1*}, Dr. Demetris Hadjicharalambous²

¹Assistant Professor, Psychology and Social Sciences Department, Frederick University, Cyprus

²Lecturer, Psychology and Social Sciences Department, Frederick University, Cyprus

*Corresponding Author

Dr. Stavros Parlalis

Assistant Professor, Psychology and Social Sciences Department, Frederick University, Cyprus

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Abstract: Summary: The present study aims to examine whether Cypriot professional social workers are satisfied with their job and whether they have been affected by their work and/or have suffered from burnout symptoms. Participants were 134 professional social workers, who consist about 25% of all professional social workers who reside and work in Cyprus. Participants completed a) the Maslach Burnout Inventory-MBI (Maslach and Jackson, 1986), which examines the existence of burnout symptoms and b) the Job Satisfaction survey (Spector, 1985), which examines the degree to which employees are satisfied with various aspects of their work. **Findings:** Research findings indicate that 34.3% of the participants were emotionally exhausted from their work, 85.8% showed a lack of personal achievements, 52.6% had a high depersonalization from their work, 76.1% experienced burnout symptoms from their work and 38.1% of the participants were satisfied with their work. Based on the research findings, social workers' sociodemographic characteristics are significant factors in experienced burnout symptoms and job satisfaction. Particularly, women social workers are more prone and more experienced of burnout symptoms. Married participants, younger age participants, and social workers with higher monthly income feel more satisfaction from their work, less depersonalization, and less experienced burnout. **Applications:** Professional social work bodies should seriously consider strategies and methods for addressing and minimising burnout factors in the workplace, which have serious impact in the quality of the provided services.

Keywords: Burnout, Depersonalization, Emotional Exhaustion, Job Satisfaction, Personal Accomplishment, Social Workers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Burnout

Job burnout, as a concept, emerged in the 1970s when it was appeared to human services such as health care, social work, and psychotherapy. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), who took the lead on the study of burnout amongst human service professionals, burnout can be the result of emotional drain emanating from chronic stress; also, burnout is defined as "a syndrome with dimensions

of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment" (Maslach *et al.*, 1996, cited in Lloyd *et al.*, 2002). Various studies have suggested that social workers are more prone to experience both work stress and burnout in comparison with other professions (Lloyd *et al.*, 2002; Arrington, 2008; Travis *et al.*, 2015; Sanchez-Moreno *et al.*, 2014).

Hansung and Stoner (2008) found that burnout is influenced mostly by two critical job

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conditions: (a) job demands such as high role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload; and (b) job resources such as social support and job autonomy. Furthermore, burnout is also highly correlated with not only work stress but also with job dissatisfaction, especially in professions that are people-oriented such as social work (Matthews, 1990).

Most of the people who choose to become social workers are people who feel the need to be helpful. In addition, there is an emotionally charged relationship between the social worker and the client caused by the direct and continuous contact with clients in need (Sanchez-Moreno *et al.*, 2014). However, the emotionally charged relationship social workers have with their clients, which is created by their need to help others, could lead them to become over-involved and emotionally exhausted, consequently placing them at higher risk of burnout (Matthews, 1990; Smith, 2003; Sanchez-Moreno *et al.*, 2014). Also, it has to be stressed that stress appears in cases of heavy workloads, difficult work relationships, lack of resources, lack of time, staff shortage and huge administrative duties (Parry-Jones *et al.*, 1998).

Based on an extensive literature review, Borzaga and Tortia (2006) report generally higher levels of job satisfaction and motivation in non-profit organizations than in for-profit organizations despite lower salaries, personnel shortages and high levels of workload.

Some reasons they may experience work stress and burnout concern conflicting roles, status, function, and contexts (Lloyd *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, Fans Beck (1981) associated burnout with lack of support from supervisors, and Koeske and Koeske's study (1989) supported similar findings, adding that overload acts as a risk factor to burnout only if there is low support from supervisors (cited in Lloyd *et al.*, 2002). Other stress-related hazards which, if not handled appropriately, could easily lead to burnout are: job content, workload and work pace, working hours, participation and control, career development, status and pay, role clarity in the organisation, interpersonal relationships, organisational culture, and the home-work interface (Leka *et al.*, 2003; MacKay *et al.*, 2004).

Moreover, Sanchez-Moreno *et al.*, (2014) in their study found that burnout levels amongst social workers were higher than those found in previous research, and that emotional exhaustion was a factor found in more than half of the participants, which was highly associated with psychological distress caused by burnout. In addition, a recent study (Travis *et al.*, 2015) revealed that burnout plays a central role to

disengagement among social workers and social work supervisors working in child welfare settings.

For example, the social services have been identified as stressful for social workers because the resources provided are fewer than the multiple social issues with which their clients are faced (Lloyd *et al.*, 2002). These practices might provoke or encourage an environment (or situations) that could affect the employees and place them at higher risk of burnout.

Sanchez-Moreno *et al.*, (2014) found that informal social support is negatively associated with burnout, meaning that social workers with adequate informal social support could have less psychological distress and fewer symptoms of burnout.

Arrington (2008) reported that social workers face health problems deriving from stress, with a prevalence of fatigue, psychological problems, and sleep disorders. In addition, Smith (2001) found that social workers who are more aware of stress have more frequent minor physical symptoms, more mental health problems, and negative health-related behaviour.

Moreover, the social workers that managed to cope with stress report that the methods they used were mostly exercise, followed by meditation and therapy. When people possess the ability to manage their time and energy well, they tend to have better control over their work, which in turn leads to less work stress (Luria & Torjman, 2009).

1.2. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a nebulous concept (Mumford, 1972). Herzberg was one of the first psychologists to establish the link between job satisfaction to the organizational effectiveness (Howarth, 1984). There are a number of theories of job satisfaction, which focus on certain factors related to feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction in work. The psychological needs school (represented by Maslow, Herzberg, Likert) considers the development of motivation as the central factor in job satisfaction, such as the needs of individuals for achievement, recognition, responsibility and status (Mumford, 1972). Gouldner and Crozier (Mumford, 1972) represent a different school, as they believe that management ideology and values can affect employees' job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction in social work practice is vital and empower social workers to face their work's fields difficulties and barriers. Smith and Shields (2013), reported that a motivation variable (variety and creativity) and a motivation variable (experiences with supervisors) might have predictive value for social workers' job satisfaction. In addition,

there are references according to which social workers' job satisfaction mediated the relationship between professional identity and their turnover intentions (Jiang *et al.*, 2019); the same study suggests that more work needs to be done on social work education. Moreover, Geisler *et al.*, (2019) revealed that the psychosocial safety climate is responsible for social workers' job satisfaction. Finally, Kalliath *et al.*, (2019), found that social workers who experienced work-family enrichment also experienced job well-being and subsequently job satisfaction, particularly at higher levels of family support.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Aims of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore whether Cypriot professional social workers are satisfied with their job and whether they have been affected by their work and they have suffered from burnout symptoms. In this context, we postulated the following research questions:

1. Are there differences between Social Workers' age, gender, level of education, income, occupational sector and family status which impact on their job satisfaction and burnout.
2. Is there correlation (negative or positive) between social workers' job satisfaction and burnout.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

In this study, a survey was chosen for the collection of the data. Questionnaire and survey measures are probably the most widely used research tools within the social sciences (Fife-Shaw, 1995, as cited in Brewerton and Millward, 2001). A survey was chosen as this method enable the researchers to evaluate what people think and what they do (Bie, 1993). Cartwright presented a range of subjects suitable for applying a survey method in the health field, one of which is the investigation of an organization of care. In this study, the factor of job satisfaction was investigated. Also, a survey allows the study of a population at a relatively low cost (Hakim, 1987).

Specifically, a web survey was employed, since web surveys and computerized questionnaires become one of the most used modes of self-administered surveys. The advantages of web-surveys in comparison to other modes are well-known: web surveys are less expensive, easier to administer, can give the researcher the ability to modify, correct and act during the entire process of the survey in order to increase response or adjust the questionnaire (Couper, 2000; Dillman, 2000; Tourangeau, Dillman, Smyth and Christian, 2014). In addition, web surveys can assure anonymity and

confidentiality of the respondents and finally they can create a new form of data ("paradata"), which adds value to survey methodology (Cooper, 1998).

2.3. Procedure – Data collection

The survey took place in March 2020 and focused on a sample of Cypriot professionals' social workers. The participants completed two questionnaires, both in their native language, namely the Greek version of the Burnout Inventory-MBI (Maslach and Jaskson, 1986) and the Questionnaire of Job Satisfaction survey (Spector, 1985). Also, participants answered a short demographic questionnaire to collect information about their gender, age, income, working experience, working sector, educational level and family status. Study obtained the approval from the Psychology and Social Sciences Department at Frederick University. Participation in the present study was voluntary, anonymous, and confidentiality of information was assured.

2.4. Sample

The web survey was addressed to Greek-speaking social workers across the controlled area of the Republic of Cyprus. The questionnaire was distributed through the following means: a) through emails which were sent to register professional social workers of the Registration Board of Social Workers in Cyprus, and b) through emails, which were sent to social workers being members of the Cyprus Association of Social Workers. The participants answered the questionnaires anonymously on the Google forms platform; therefore, web-based survey methods have been used and the sampling for the purposes of our study has been taken online.

2.5. Instruments

2.5.1. Maslach Burnout Inventory-MBI (Maslach and Jaskson, 1986)

The MBI includes 22 questions and examines the existence of burnout symptoms based on three factors: emotional exhaustion (9 questions), depersonalization (5 questions) and personal accomplishment (8 questions). The first factor concerns the emotional exhaustion, which estimates the frequency of employee's emotional overload and depression due to his or her work, the second factor considers depersonalization, which reflects the employee's reactions of indifference and impersonal treatment of clients and the third factor assesses the lack of achievements, which refers to the sense of personal accomplishment, efficiency and achievement in the professional field. Answers are given on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = never to 6 = every day (0 = never, 1 = a few times a year, 2 = once a month or less, 3 = two - three times a month, 4 = once a week, 5 = several times a week, 6 = every day). (Maslach and Jaskson, 1986).

Instrument's reliability was calculated using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which was found for the first factor emotional exhaustion $\alpha = 0.84$, for the second factor depersonalization $\alpha = 0.78$ and for the third factor personal accomplishment $\alpha = 0.74$.

The high scores for the subscales of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, correspond to a high degree of burnout, while the low values of the subscale for lack of personal accomplishment correspond to a high degree of burnout. The table below shows the burnout levels rating range (Maslach and Jackson, 1986).

Table 1

| Sub-scales | Low | Medium | High |
|-------------------------|------|--------|------|
| Emotional Exhaustion | 0-16 | 17-26 | 27+ |
| Depersonalization | 0-6 | 7-12 | 13+ |
| Personal Accomplishment | 39+ | 32-38 | 0-31 |

2.5.2. Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1985)

The questionnaire Job Satisfaction includes 36 questions and examines the degree to which the employee is satisfied with various aspects of his or her work. Answers are given on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 6 = Strongly agree. Specifically, this instrument assesses employee satisfaction in the following dimensions: Satisfaction with the job object, Variety in job duties, Initiative, Responsibility, Justice, Recognition, Ethical reward, Cooperation - Teamwork, Leadership, Organizational Structure, Income, Promotions, Recruitment, Education, Information Flow - Communication, Competition (Spector, 1985).

Instrument's reliability was calculated using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which was found for the job satisfaction $\alpha = 0.87$. The high scores for the subscales correspond to a high degree of job satisfaction.

2.6. Data Analysis

Data were conducted and analysed with the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. Data summarized and analysed through descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages, to describe the participants' demographic characteristics. Distributions of frequencies and percentages were calculated in order to analyse data obtained from the participants' personal information form. The level of significance (p-value) in questionnaires was set at $p < 0.05$. In order to examine research hypotheses applied the following data analysis methods: t-test, two-way ANOVA, and the multivariate ANOVA (MANOVA) to compare the means between social workers' demographic characteristics (gender, age, family status, income, occupational sector, level of education and working experience) and their impact on their overall burnout, and job satisfaction scores. Also, applied Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine whether correlations (positive or negative) could be found between social workers' burnout and job satisfaction.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample

The participants were 134 professionals' social workers. One hundred thirty-four social workers who participated in the survey are about 25% of all professional social workers who reside and work in Cyprus. 80% were women and 20% were men. The average age of the participants was 33 ± 7 years old. 54.5% were married and 45.5% were non-married. 42.5% obtain a bachelor degree (SW), 50.8% obtain a master's degree and 6.7% obtain a PhD. 24.6% are working in a public sector and 75.6% are working in the private sector and NGOs organizations. Regarding participants' monthly income, 62.7% earn 1000-2000 euros, 31.3% have an income 2001-3500 euros and 6% have an income 3501 - 5000 euros. 52.2% are working up to 2 years in the specific position, 14.9% are working from 2 to 5 years in the specific position, 10.4% are working from 6 to 10 years in the specific position and 22.4% are working from 11 years and over in the specific position. 34.3% have working experience as a social worker up to 2 years, 20.1% have working experience from 2 to 5 years, 14.9% have working experience from 6 to 10 years and 30.6% have working experience 11 years or more.

3.2 Differences between the Sample

There is a statistically significant difference between men and women in the variable Depersonalization [$F(2,131) = 2.847, p < 0.05$]. It is observed that the female participants (13.77 ± 5.44) had a higher average in the variable depersonalization than the male participants (11.45 ± 5.30). 22.9% of men and 77.1% of women had a high depersonalization from their work. Also, there is a statistically significant difference between men and women in the variable lack of personal achievement [$F(2,131) = 3.652, p < 0.02$]. It is observed that female participants (47.18 ± 5.64) had a higher average in the variable lack of personal achievement than male participants (43.77 ± 6.80). 83.5% of women and 16.5% of men showed a lack of personal achievements.

The marital status was found to be significant regarding Job Satisfaction [$F(2,131) = 4.655, p < 0.02$]. It is observed that married participants (138.49 ± 10.11) received more job satisfaction than nonmarried participants (134.39 ± 10.23). 45.1% of nonmarried participants and 54.9% of married participants were satisfied with their work. Also, there is significant difference between married and nonmarried participants in the variable depersonalization [$F(2,131) = 2.790, p < 0.05$]. Nonmarried participants (12.67 ± 5.58) had a higher average in the variable depersonalization than married participants (10.98 ± 5.04). 61.4% of nonmarried participants and 38.6% of married participants had depersonalization from their work. Additionally, there is significant difference that [$F(2,131) = 2.224, p < 0.05$] nonmarried participants (88.42 ± 14.84) felt more burnout symptoms from their work than the married participants (83.72 ± 12.73). 57.8% of nonmarried participants and 42.2% of married participants felt burnout symptoms from their work.

There is a significant difference between participants' age in the variable emotional exhaustion [$F(2,131) = 4.990, p < 0.008$]. It is observed that older participants (32.45 ± 5.25) felt more emotionally exhausted from their work than younger participants (24.36 ± 4.88). 84.8% of older participants and 15.2% of younger participants had emotional exhaustion from their work. Analysis showed significant difference between younger and older participants in the variable burnout [$F(2,131) = 4.234, p < 0.017$]. It is observed that older participants (89.48 ± 7.85) felt more burnout symptoms from their work than younger participants (80.97 ± 6.98). 68.2% of older participants and 31.8% of younger participants experienced burnout symptoms from their work. There is a significant difference between younger and older participants in the variable Job Satisfaction [$F(2,131) = 4.480, p < 0.01$]. It is observed that older participants (133.10 ± 10.45) felt less satisfaction with their job than younger participants (139 ± 11.12). 74.6% of younger participants and 23.4% of older participants felt satisfied with their work.

Occupational sector was found to be significant regarding emotional exhaustion [$F(3,130) = 2.236, p < 0.05$]. It is observed that participants who worked in the public sector (29.15 ± 4.28) felt more emotionally exhausted from their job than participants who worked as private employees (20.11 ± 5.44). 68.2% of participants who worked in a public organization and 21.8% of participants who worked as a private employee were emotionally exhausted from their work. There is a significant difference between the occupational sector of the participants in the variable lack of personal achievement [$F(3,130) = 2.141, p < 0.05$].

Participants who worked in the public sector (47.39 ± 5.12) felt more lack of personal achievements from their job than the participants who worked as private employees (41.15 ± 5.68). 65.5% public employees and 34.5% private employees showed a lack of personal achievements. Analysis revealed significant difference between the occupational sector of the participants in the variable burnout [$F(3,130) = 3.375, p < 0.02$]. Participants who worked in the public sector (88.26 ± 7.90) felt more burnout symptoms from their job than participants who worked as private employees (81.60 ± 7.44). 66.7% public employees and 23.3% private employees felt more burnout symptoms from their job. There is a significant difference between the occupational sector of the participants in the variable Job Satisfaction [$F(3,130) = 5.440, p < 0.001$]. Participants who worked in the public sector (131.12 ± 11.44) felt less satisfaction from their job than the participants who worked as private employees (139.90 ± 10.88). 61.2% participants who worked in a private organization and 38.8% participants who worked in a public organization were satisfied with their job. There is a significant difference in the dimensions of Job Satisfaction and the occupational sector. Private sector workers felt more satisfied with their job than public employees in terms of the supervision that offered by their organization [$F(3,130) = 2.317, p < 0.05$] they had more benefits [$F(3,130) = 2.789, p < 0.043$] and rewards [$F(3,130) = 5.905, p < 0.001$], they were more satisfied from their job environment [$F(3,130) = 5.086, p < 0.002$] and they had more communication in their job environment [$F(3,130) = 3.409, p < 0.020$].

Monthly income was found significant difference regarding burnout [$F(3,130) = 3.767, p < 0.05$]. Participants who earned a monthly income 3501-5000 euros (67.00 ± 8.58) felt less burnout symptoms from their job than participants who had a monthly income 1000-2000 euros (85.52 ± 10.44). 70% of participants with a monthly income 1000-2000 euros felt more burnout symptoms from their job. There is a significant difference between participants' monthly income in the variable Job Satisfaction [$F(3,130) = 4.234, p < 0.01$]. It is observed that the participants who earned a monthly income of 3501-5000 (139 ± 12.18) felt more satisfaction from their job than the participants who had a monthly income of 1000-2000 euros (129.10 ± 10.34). 38.1% felt satisfied with their job, of which 78.8% were participants who are paid from 3501-5000 euros per month.

There is a significant difference between participants' monthly income and occupational sector in the variable Job Satisfaction [$F(8,125) = 2.896, p < 0.05$], Job's Benefits [$F(8,125) = 2.904, p$

<0.05], organization’s conditions [F (8,125) = 5.125, p <0.007], fellowship in the workplace [F (8,125) = 9.020, p <0.001], job environment [F (8,125) = 5.965, p <0.003]. 48.5% who worked in the public sector and 67.3% who worked in private sector had a monthly income 1000-2000, 39.4% who worked in the public sector and 28.7% who worked in private sector had a monthly income of 2001 - 3500, 12.1% who worked in the public sector and the 2% who worked in private sector had a monthly income of 2001 - 3500. It is observed that public sector’s employees were less satisfied with their job despite of the fact that they were paid more than social workers who worked in the private sector or to NGOs.

Working experience in the specific position was found significant regarding emotional exhaustion [F (3,130) = 2.236, p <0.05]. Participants who had less than 10 years of working experience in the specific position (24.26±5.34) felt less emotional exhaustion from their job than participants who had more than 11 years of working experience in the specific position (32.12±5.90). 57% of participants with more than 11 years of working experience in the specific position felt emotionally exhausted. There is a significant difference between participants’ working experience in the specific position in the variable lack of personal achievement [F (3,130) = 2.236, p <0.05]. It is observed that participants who had less than 10 years of working experience in the specific position (44.24±4.22) felt less lack of personal achievement from their job than participants who had more than 11 years of working experience in the specific position (48.90±5.25). 68.7% of participants with more than 11 years of working experience in the specific position showed a lack of personal achievements. There is a significant difference between participants’ working experience in the specific position in the variable Job Satisfaction [F (3,130) = 4.332, p <0.012]. It is observed that participants who had less than 10 years of working

experience in the specific position (138.88±10.11) felt more satisfaction from their job than participants who had more than 11 years of working experience in the specific position (130.90±11.25). 57% of participants with more than 11 years of working experience in the specific position were satisfied with their job.

There is a significant difference between participants’ working experience as a social worker in the variable emotional exhaustion [F (3,130) = 6.352, p <0.001]. Participants who had less than 10 years of working experience as a social worker (24.43±5.88) felt less emotional exhaustion from their job than participants who had more than 11 years of working experience as a social worker (35.21±5.54). 66.7% were participants with more than 11 years of working experience as a social worker felt emotionally exhausted. There is a significant difference between participants’ working experience as a social worker in the variable burnout [F (3,130) = 2,864, p <0.039]. It is observed that participants who had less than 10 years of working experience as a social worker (83.24±9.13) felt less personal achievement from their job than participants who had more than 11 years of working experience as a social worker (89.50±10.95). 78.7% of participants with more than 11 years of working experience as a social worker experienced more burnout symptoms. There is a significant difference between participants’ working experience as a social worker in the variable Job Satisfaction [F (3,130) = 4.772, p <0.01]. It is observed that participants who had less than 10 years of working experience as a social worker (137.45±10.44) felt more satisfaction from their job than participants who had more than 11 years of work as Social Workers (131.24±10.80). 59% of participants with less than 11 years of working experience as a social worker were satisfied with their work.

Table 2: Correlation between variables Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, Lack of personal achievement, Burnout and Job Satisfaction

| | Job Satisfaction | Emotional Exhaustion | Depersonalization | Lack of personal achievement | Burnout |
|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------|
| Job Satisfaction | - | -.679** | -.692** | -.532** | -.790**** |
| Emotional Exhaustion | | - | .541** | .632** | .910** |
| Depersonalization | | | - | .428** | .622** |
| Lack of personal achievement | | | | - | .490** |
| Burnout | | | | | - |

The correlation analysis was performed to determine the correlation between the variables’ burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, lack of personal achievement with the variable Job Satisfaction. The results showed a statistically significant negative correlation between the

dimension Job satisfaction with emotional exhaustion (r = -0.679 p <0.000), with depersonalization (r = -0.692 p <0.000), with lack of personal achievements (r = -0.532 p <0.000) and with burnout (r = -0.790 p <0.000). Also, the results showed a statistically significant positive correlation

between the dimension Emotional exhaustion with depersonalization ($r = 0.541$ $p < 0.000$), lack of personal achievement ($r = 0.632$ $p < 0.000$) and burnout ($r = 0.910$ $p < 0.000$). Additionally, the results showed a statistically significant positive correlation between the depersonalization dimension with lack of personal achievement ($r = 0.428$ $p < 0.000$) and burnout ($r = 0.622$ $p < 0.000$). The lack of personal achievement dimension showed a statistically significant positive correlation with burnout ($r = 0.490$ $p < 0.000$) (table 2).

4. DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of the present study, one third of the participants were emotionally exhausted from their work, the majority of social workers showed a lack of personal achievements, the half of participants had a high depersonalization from their work, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the sample experienced burnout symptoms from their work and only one third of the participants were satisfied with their work. These findings supported by Hombrados-Mendieta, & Cosano-Rivas (2011), Lloyd, King, & Chenoweth (2002), that burnout has been found to effect social workers and workers in the healthcare industry more frequently than the general population. Previous research Farber & Heifetz (1982) revealed that 73% of social workers experienced burnout. Jayaratne and Chess (1984) and Pines and Kafry (1978) stressed that social workers are at above-average risk of experiencing symptoms of burnout; also, social workers are more at risk for experiencing burnout due to they involved in difficult social situations (Lloyd, King, & Chenoweth, 2002). According to Prosser *et al.*, (1999) social work is associated with higher stress, lower job satisfaction and higher levels of emotional exhaustion. Also, Caringi *et al.*, (2017) stated that the high prevalence of stress in social workers is thought to be due to their everyday work, as well as high expectations and demands from their organisation. Tesi *et al.*, (2019) and Farinha *et al.*, (2020) demonstrated that social workers have burnout in subscales of emotional exhaustion and personal achievement; they also verified that the job climate influences the motivation of workers in the development of functions.

The present study indicated that women social workers are more prone and more experienced of burnout symptoms. It is found that women have high depersonalization and lack of personal achievements from their work. Similar results were found by Martin (2000) who argued that there is a difference between participants' gender in terms of fatigue and burnout, women are more prone to express their emotions. Furthermore, Arvay (2001) underlined that gender refers to individual risk factors and in particular fatigue is more common for women. Additionally, Alarcon *et al.*, (2009) and

Hamama (2012) stated that there is a difference between participants' gender and in particular women are more prone to compassion fatigue, as they have many roles to support, such as a worker, wife, and other social obligations which affect them psychologically and emotionally.

Regarding participants' marital status, it was identified that married participants feel more satisfaction from their work, less depersonalization from their work, less experienced burnout symptoms than nonmarried participants. It is observed that family support is very important to social workers. These findings supported by Kheswa (2019), who stated that participants showed that the only support that they get is from their families, mostly from their husbands or wives those who are married. The support that they receive by their spouses makes them to be able to face the job challenges. This finding reveals that family support is vital for professional social workers. Also, researches by Grant and Kinman (2011) and Lin *et al.*, (2009) revealed that support provided by family can be considered as a major predictor of stress resilience in the future.

Based on the findings of this study, it was identified that participants' age is an important element regarding how professional social workers experience burnout symptoms and job satisfaction. It was observed that older social workers showed higher level of burnout and emotional exhaustion, while younger participants seemed to feel more satisfied with their work. Pappas *et al.*, (2008) and Alacacioglu *et al.*, (2009), who argued that the level of exhaustion is proportional to age, have found similar results. It is easier for experienced professional workers to feel emotionally exhausted and experience burnout symptoms compared to younger colleagues. On the contrary, previous research has shown that experienced social workers expressed lower burnout symptoms. Maslach *et al.*, (2001) confirmed that younger people had higher rates of burnout; this condition is related to work experience and therefore younger workers can face stressful situation more intensely due to the lack of working experience. Furthermore, Arvay (2001) confirmed that the experienced social workers will be able to cope difficult situations due to their maturity, stability and experience.

Research has demonstrated that the participants' occupation plays an important role in experiencing burnout symptoms and job satisfaction. The current study indicated that social workers who worked in the public sector showed higher emotional exhaustion, lack of personal achievement and higher job burnout than social workers who worked in the private sector and/or NGOs. These findings are probably related to the fact that sector workers in the

public sector work with a great variety of issues such as domestic violence, child abuse, divorce, refugees, the homeless; on the contrary, professionals who are employed in the private sector mostly work with specific vulnerable groups of people, e.g. foster care families. It was also revealed that social workers who work in the public sector do not have either supervision or support by the state, while social workers in the private sector seem to be happier with the support and supervision which provided by their organization. Similar findings are provided by Yeunhee and Yoonjung (2017), who stated that social workers who worked with refugees, are exposed. Also, social workers who have to deal with these difficult situations, without the necessary support from the state, are likely to be emotionally discharged and to experience higher burnout symptoms (KrismanScott and McKorkle, 2002; McHolm, 2006). Also, according to Schiff & Lane (2019) those professionals who worked in homeless centres present higher levels of fatigue, due to the intense stress they experience from the difficult situations of their clients. Lynch & Lobo (2012) argue that social workers' job can lead to fatigue, physical, psychological, mental and social exhaustion. Also, Thompson (2003), Keidel (2002) and Kakaliaga (2012) indicate that social workers through their daily contact with clients who have physical and mental health problems, and difficult situations the combination of all these can cause fatigue and burnout. According to Chase (2005) and Hooper *et al.*, (2010) professionals who worked in Emergency Departments, psychiatric clinics, oncology clinics are at highly risk of developing emotional exhaustion, fatigue and burnout.

Field & Brown (2019) stated that supervision is a process which occurs in a wide variety of job roles, particularly within health and social care. Also, Beddoe & Howard (2012) suggested that supervision has always been an integral part of social work practice. Similar results are reported by Little *et al.*, (2018), Mor Barak *et al.*, (2009), Cohen & Gagin, (2005), who claimed that there is association between supportive supervision and a range of positive outcomes for social workers including increased job satisfaction, improved practice skills, and reduced emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, Saltiel, (2017), Boyas *et al.*, (2012) and Bambling *et al.*, (2006) suggested that when social workers received good quality supervision clients' wellbeing can be improved and that the therapeutic relationship can be strengthened. Lastly, Lister (2020), Ellis *et al.*, (2014) and Davys & Beddoe (2010) highlighted that supervision is useful and social workers receiving professional development, emotional support, direction, clear instructions and feedback. The study shown that social workers who worked in the private sector and in NGOs feel more

satisfied with their work; in particular, they are satisfied due to the supervision provided by their organization, the benefits and rewards they receive, the work environment and communication with their colleagues. In the contrary, Sweifach (2019), Little *et al.*, (2018) and Hunt *et al.*, (2016) found that poor supervisory support has been associated with feelings of isolation. Overall, Gómez-García *et al.*, (2020) suggested that public and private organizations, which are devoted to offer social services, should be aware of the need to prevent psychosocial risks to which social workers are exposed every day and this would help improve their health and quality of their lives and would enhance the effectiveness of the provided services.

Income was identified as a significant element connecting with the extent to which social workers experience burnout symptoms and job satisfaction. Social workers with lower monthly income (between €1000-2000) seemed to have higher burnout symptoms compared to social workers with a higher monthly salary (between €3501-5000), who actually underlined the satisfaction they received from their work. On the other hand, they study findings indicated that social workers who work in the public sector were less satisfied with their work despite the higher salaries they receive compared to social workers who work in the private sector or in NGOs. This is because public sector's employees felt that they received fewer benefits from their work, were less satisfied with their working conditions, were less satisfied with the colleagues' collaboration, as well as were less satisfied with their work environment. Lloyd *et al.*, (2002), who stated that lack of promotional opportunities, found similar results and lower income was related to staff burnout. However, it is evident that some of the participants' health has deteriorated because of workload and low salaries. Additionally, Brinkborg *et al.*, (2011) confirmed that social workers working under difficult circumstances with high job demands and limited resources are to a point faced with psychological effects of experiencing stress and burnout. This includes symptoms of emotional exhaustion and low levels of job satisfaction. According to Lizano and Barak (2015) work conditions and interpersonal relationships in the workplace have been found to have stronger relationship with job burnout. Also, Lonne & Cheers (2008) underlined that social workers who were socially, emotionally, and financially supported by their employers and co-workers were satisfied and remained in the same organisation for a longer period.

Based on research findings, social workers' work experience should be considered as a significant element on how they will perceive

burnout symptoms, emotional exhaustion and lack of personal achievement. Findings indicated that social workers who worked for more than 11 years shown symptoms of emotional exhaustion and lack of personal achievement and felt higher levels of burnout symptoms. Pappas *et al.*, (2008), who argued that work experience is associated with burnout, found similar findings, as professionals declared higher-level burnout symptoms. In contrast, Arvay (2001) argued that experienced professionals were more mature to cope with different situations effectively and without being affected.

5. LIMITATIONS

The main disadvantage of web surveys is that for non-probability-based web surveys the results obtained may fail to be generalised to the target population. Nevertheless, the following arguments show that the given sample can represent the target population of the survey, which is professional social workers. a) Internet household penetration in Cyprus in 2013 was 65% (Eurostat, 2013), and individual internet penetration level was 69% in 2014 (Eurostat, 2013), therefore, at least 65% of the target population could have access to the survey. b) The sample (134 persons) consists of almost 25% of registered professional social workers.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The present study is one of the first studies to explore the issues of job burnout and job satisfaction among social workers in Cyprus. Professional social work bodies should seriously consider the findings; they should consider strategies and methods for addressing and minimising burnout factors in the workplace, which have serious impact in the quality of the provided services. Failure to do so risks resulting in a high risk of staff burnout.

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