The Levels and Correlates of Burnout Amongst Direct Care Workers of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities


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Abstract

Psychological stress has been highlighted as a significant problem amongst individuals working with adults with intellectual disabilities (Dyer & Quine, 1998). The prevalence of burnout amongst this population, together with its hypothesised causes, are likely to be of considerable interest to commissioners, providers and users alike- both because of the legal and moral duty to ensure the psychological well-being of staff as employees, and because of the potential implications of high stress levels for providing quality services (Hastings et al., 2004). While previous research in this field has been hampered by the lack of consensus as to how to conceptualise and measure staff distress (Rose, 1997), there has been growing interest in the concept of ‘burnout’ as a model for understanding both feelings of distress and its relationship to actual staff behaviour (e.g. Hastings et al., 2004). The present thesis offers an exploration of the prevalence and correlates of burnout amongst direct care workers.
supporting adults with significant intellectual disabilities. A systematic review of the literature, together with an empirical analysis, suggested that burnout is somewhat lowered in this population when compared with normative samples (Maslach et al., 1996) and that reported prevalence rates have decreased steadily over time. An empirical analysis of a recently proposed ‘two-factor’ model of caregiving (Hastings & Horne, 2004) was undertaken with 63 direct care workers from the North West of England, with mixed results. These findings are discussed with reference to the wider literature on stress, burnout and job satisfaction amongst workers in the intellectual disabilities field.