

Assessing staff attitudes and needs in a trauma-informed organization: a mixed-methods study

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Background

- Prior research has found that high burnout rates are prevalent in organizations that work with individuals who have experienced trauma.
- Furthermore, high burnout is associated with secondary traumatic stress, which can affect staff's ability to provide care to clients.
- The purpose of the current study was to identify staff satisfaction and departmental needs at an organization specializing in family services for those who have experienced trauma.

Methods

- A mixed-methods approach was used, with an assessment that included both quantitative and qualitative questions.
- The assessment was delivered via an online survey developed in Qualtrics and emailed to employees at one non-profit organization.
- The final sample size included data from 20 employees.

Results

- Overall, the participants rated their organization favorably.
- The average burnout and secondary traumatic stress levels were low, which indicates no issues present in these categories.
- Burnout significantly predicted secondary traumatic stress ($\beta = .57, p = .001$).
- Results were corroborated by qualitative data from staff, where staff demonstrated a general positive experience within their work environment. However, when prompted staff identified aspects of the organization that could be improved.

Quantitative Results

Construct	Number of Responses	Minimum; Maximum	Mean
Cohesion	19	25; 48.33	35.44
Autonomy	19	24; 44	34.63
Communication	20	14; 44	30.90
Change	20	20; 46	32.20
Influence	20	21.67; 43.33	37.08
Adaptability	20	25; 50	38.88
Compassion Satisfaction	17	32; 45	39.29
Burnout	18	12; 27	19.17
Secondary Traumatic Stress	17	14; 31	20.82

Note: The possible score range of Cohesion-Adaptability can range from 10-50; a score below 23 for Compassion Satisfaction indicates an issue; a score below 23 for Burnout indicates low risk for Burnout; a Secondary Traumatic Stress score above 41 is an indication that staff may need to examine how they feel about their work.

Burnout



Secondary Traumatic Stress

Qualitative Themes

- The following themes emerged from the qualitative data:
 1. Staff coordination and training
 2. Number of staff employed
 3. Open communication between coworkers and supervisors
 4. Reinstating staff events
 5. Increased access to mental health services

Qualitative Results

Staff Coordination and Training

"Working with kids from hard places is difficult enough, but to feel as if there is not a clear direction on how TBRI should be used makes [it] that much harder."

Number of Staff Employed

"Recruiting and onboarding high quality candidates for each position...not enough staff currently."

Communication

"Become more attuned with staff and clients needs."

"Create a digital platform for suggestions that can be made without fear of retaliation from leadership."

Staff Events

"[Reinstate]employee activities [with emphasis on] fun, health emphasis. This was lost during worst of COVID."

Access to Mental Health Services

"If you need to see a professional, you can't afford it with our insurance plan. Copays for therapy are \$70 for each visit. EAP is available but it only covers 6 visits."

Conclusion

- Burnout is a predictor of secondary traumatic stress
- Overall, staff rated their organization as a positive work environment, but identified several areas for improvement
- Addressing staff concerns could reduce staff burnout and increase satisfaction
- Ensuring staff needs are met could benefit clients, as staff and organizational factors are related to the quality of services
- The current study may not be generalizable to other organizations, due to the assessment of only one organization and the small sample size of 20 employees.