
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I LIBRARY

A STUDY OF BURNOUT IN SPECIAL TREATMENT FACILITY

DIRECT -SERVICE PROVIDERS

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Abstract

Role conflict, role ambiguity, and demographic variables were evaluated for their relationship to the subscales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI) in youth counselors and other direct-service providers of a special treatment facility. The findings in this study indicated that role ambiguity was a predictor in all subscales of the MBI. Furthermore, depersonalization may in fact be a coping strategy utilized by direct-service providers to deal with the stressors of working in a high-stress environment. Finally, age and length of employment in the field were also predictors of role conflict.

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Introduction

For several decades there has been a surge in research that seeks to provide insight into the cause of “burnout” among employees in different occupations. The reason for the increased attention is because the condition of burnout can be found in nearly every career imaginable and results in the loss of good employees and millions of dollars in training. From office clerks to administrators to mental health professionals, all have been subjects of burnout research. Recently the focus of research has been on the mental health field, specifically, direct-service providers. Burnout in direct-service providers became more evident with the increase in demand for these types of services during periods of economic constraints.

Many variables have been evaluated for their potential role in the burnout of good employees. Examples of the variables analyzed in previous research included economic factors, social factors, home-life, job autonomy, job satisfaction, and organizational factors. Despite the importance of finding solutions to alleviate the burnout of good employees, little is known about how an individual’s beliefs, characteristics of the job, and organization affect the experience of burnout. However, many have found strong correlations between some variables and the resulting consequence of burnout. The purpose of this study is to determine if direct-service providers at a mental health treatment facility that report high levels of “role conflict” and “role ambiguity” also report high levels of indicators associated with burnout.

Burnout, Role Conflict, and Role Ambiguity

Since the surge in research of burnout, its definition has undergone many changes. This has created difficulties in establishing relationships between suspected variables of burnout. Generally, burnout is a maladaptive reaction to high levels of chronic work-related stress. It refers to the individual workers' inability to respond adequately to perceived demands, and is usually accompanied by the anticipation of negative consequences for inadequate responses. Another variable related to burnout is "stress." Stress is a negative feature of the environment that impinges on the individual. More specifically, "occupational stress," a condition in which certain variables in the work place cause high levels of anxiety and concern that negatively affects an individual's normal behavior or performance on the job. Occupational stress can be caused by a personal conflict with the practices of an organization, poor understanding of their role, little or no job autonomy, etc. Similarly, "strain" is the psychological or physiological response of the individual (e.g., job dissatisfaction, anxiety, increased heart rate, etc.) (Wallace & Brinkerhoff, 1991).

For the helping professional who works continuously with people under such circumstances (such as intense involvement with clients), the chronic stress can be emotionally draining and pose a high-risk of burnout. Burnout is a syndrome of being emotionally exhausted and involves cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do "people-work" of some kind.

For the purposes of this study, burnout was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct and not a unidimensional entity. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981)

burnout encompasses three general dimensions that include: (1) “emotional exhaustion;” (2) “depersonalization;” and (3) lack of “personal accomplishment.” Emotional exhaustion is described as “feelings of being emotionally extended and exhausted by one’s work.” Studies show that emotional exhaustion is usually accompanied by physical exhaustion and is related to stress arising on the job (Wallace & Brinkerhoff, 1991).

The concept of depersonalization has been characterized by a number of authors as having the following attributes: (1) negative and cynical attitudes towards clients; (2) loss of concern and feelings towards clients; (3) intellectualization; (4) stereotyping clients; (5) physically and emotionally distancing one’s self; and (6) over-depersonalization (Wallace & Brinkerhoff, 1991).

The third dimension, lack of personal accomplishment refers to a lack of feelings of competence and successful accomplishment in one’s work. A low sense of personal accomplishment is typically defined in terms of: (1) a negative evaluation and attitudes towards one’s self; (2) a sense of personal devaluation; (3) lowered job productivity; and (4) feelings of an inability to handle the job competently (Wallace & Brinkerhoff, 1991). Indicators of burnout can include, but are not limited to, poor job attitude, low morale, high rates of turnover, and chronic absenteeism (McNeely, 1983).

In this study “role conflict” refers to the degree to which expectations of an individual’s role is incompatible with one’s own beliefs, conflicts between obligations to several different people, and the “reality” of the role, or the accuracy of the position description in comparison to the actual duties performed. However, “role ambiguity” is

defined as the extent that an individual is unclear about the expectations of others placed upon him, as well as the degree of uncertainty associated with one's performance in doing a job (Rizzo, 1970).

Findings of Previous Research

Koeske and Kirk (1995) conducted a study to determine if an individual's locus of control has an effect on demonstrating or experiencing indicators of burnout. Briefly, an internal locus of control is described as having a sense of personal control over a situation or being responsible for a situation. However, an external locus of control is described as believing that the situation is controlled from a source that is not within your control. Their findings suggested that counselors with an internal locus of control experienced and demonstrated less indicators of burnout. More specifically, those with an internal locus of control reported higher job and life satisfaction, less emotional exhaustion, a greater sense of success, and more favorable attitudes towards the clients they served. However, workers who had an external locus of control demonstrated job strain and negative work attitudes, which resulted in a diminished feeling of life satisfaction and intentions to quit their job (Koeske & Kirk, 1995).

In a study of female human service workers conducted by Brookings, Bolton, Brown, and McEvoy (1985) indicated that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, role stress, and dissatisfaction were central to their subjects experiencing burnout. Their findings also indicated a correlation between job-related feelings of fatigue and cynicism and more general feelings of low self-esteem and a lack of meaning in their lives. They found that feelings of personal accomplishment are strongly related to their own relations

with their clients. Moreover, emotional exhaustion, cynicism, role stress, and dissatisfaction were highly correlated to organizational factors (i.e., relations with co-workers, work schedules and conditions, and rates of compensation) (Brookings, et al, 1985).

Landsbergis (1988) included in his research the variable of control over the environment, as well as job socialization in shaping personality characteristics and coping behaviors in health care workers. His findings suggested that the correlation of known indicators of burnout (e.g., job dissatisfaction, depression, and psychosomatic indicators), are significantly higher in jobs that combine a high workload demand and low decision making latitude. Landsbergis (1988) also found a high correlation of burnout with variables of job insecurity, physical exertion, lack of social support, and hazard exposure.

LeCroy and Rank (1987), also studied factors in burnout among male and female social workers. In their study, they found several variables related to job structure within the social service organization as potentially important determinants of burnout. Their findings indicated that females had significantly less negative feelings towards their clients than did males. They also found that salary range had a significant effect on the emotional exhaustion index. More specifically, emotional exhaustion decreased as salary increased. Interestingly, as the amount of time spent with clients increased emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and closeness to recipients did not increase (LeCroy & Rank, 1987).

Additional analysis of LeCroy and Rank's (1987) study indicated a significant negative correlation between the variables of job satisfaction and burnout. They also

found significant correlations between burnout and emotional exhaustion, negative feelings, and negative job evaluation. Hence, the more satisfied a worker felt with their job, the less likely he/she is to experience indicators of burnout. Their findings further indicated that job autonomy to be closely related to professional self-esteem. This finding indicated that a positive professional self-esteem is negatively related to all factors of burnout. There was also a significant negative relationship with both emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment. Likewise, an increase in job autonomy was negatively correlated to all factors of burnout. Hence, workers who report greater job autonomy and professional self-esteem were likely to have greater job competency (LeCroy & Rank, 1987).

Leiter and Meechan (1986) conducted a study that investigated burnout as a function of role structure for individuals working in the help field. Their findings indicated that emotional exhaustion could be lessened if their social support network was not solely from their working environment. In other words, the more an individual's social contacts are concentrated within a formally defined work area, the more the participant is to report higher levels of emotional exhaustion. They also reported a significant relationship between self-efficacy, or the ability to determine what steps to take to assist their client on their own, and social interactions with clients. This indicated that with fewer guidelines and greater autonomy a worker could tailor their work roles in ways that are compatible with their own individual talents and inclinations (Leiter & Meechan, 1986).

Leiter and Meechan (1986) also found a negative relationship between depersonalization and motivational hierarchy. They believed this finding reflect the value orientation of workers. Those who value personal relationships with their colleagues are less likely to treat their clients as mere objects. However, workers who subjected clients to depersonalization are ambiguous about their social interactions with other staff members and tend to concentrate their interactions on members of their own social support group. This finding indicated the importance of being able to discuss broad issues pertaining to work with a range of individuals. Furthermore, if a workers support group is limited, depersonalization of a client is necessary in order to protect themselves from the pressures of their work roles (Leiter & Meechan, 1986).

Only a limited amount of literature was found that pertains to variables of burnout and gender differences. However, more research is called for, due to the fact that women dominate in the help field. It is clear that gender differences in the types of social support and roles that men and women play in daily life differs greatly. Women generally try to integrate their professional and personal lives, while men generally concentrate on their professional lives (Ray & Miller, 1994).

Himle, Jayaratne, and Chess (1987) examined the effects of selected job-related stress variables as predictors of burnout and selected psychological strains. Their study found that the best predictor of depression in both males and females was sex discrimination on the job. Males also reported an increase in depression when time spent in direct contact with clients increased. Similarly, females reported higher levels of irritation when there are low levels of worker support, job comfort, and higher levels of

work challenge. For males alone, the best predictor of irritation was an increased workload and the intent to quit their jobs. The best predictor of emotional exhaustion for both males and females was intent to quit, in which an increased likelihood to quit was associated with increased emotional exhaustion (Himle, et al., 1987).

Some important differences between males and females also emerged: for males, the most important predictor of emotional exhaustion was increased amount of client contact, but for females, the most important predictors of emotional exhaustion was decreased supervisor support, worker support, and job comfort. For both males and females, an increased likelihood to quit was associated with increased depersonalization. For males a decreased likelihood of role ambiguity was associated with increased depersonalization, but for females the best predictors were a decreased amount of worker support and a lack of challenge on the job, that was also associated with increased depersonalization (Himle, et al., 1987).

The best predictors of personal accomplishment for males and females was increased client contact and job challenge. An increase in job challenge was also found to be associated with increased personal accomplishment for both sexes. For females alone, the best predictors of personal accomplishment were a greater likelihood of job comfort and less role ambiguity (Himle, et al., 1987).

Hiscott and Connop (1989) conducted research seeking to find gender differences among mental health professionals. Their findings suggested differences in the beliefs of male and female practitioners. One difference noted is that males believed they created a relaxed atmosphere with patients, while females believed they positively influenced the

patient's lives through their work. Males were much more likely to suffer from emotional exhaustion than females. More specifically, males were more likely to demonstrate indicators of emotional exhaustion (Hiscott & Connop, 1989).

Furthermore, Hiscott and Connop (1989) expected to find a positive correlation between job stressors and burnout, and a negative correlation for sense of accomplishment. Upon examination of this theorized relationships they found a clear relationship between job stressors for males, however, this relationship was virtually absent in female subjects. Similarly, strong, statistically significant relationships were found between the number of stressors and burnout components for males, and no correlations found for females (Hiscott & Connop, 1989).

Ray and Miller (1994) studied the nature of a combination of home and work stress and investigated the role of social support from both intra-organizational and extra-organizational sources and its impact burnout. They sought to more clearly define the stress in women and men as they attempt to balance the different roles they play in both the "workplace" and "life," and how one's different types of social support affect stress and burnout. Their findings indicated that females with children perceived significantly more home and work stress than non-mothers. It further indicated men and women who were unmarried, but cohabitating, were more likely to perceive home and work stress than any other marital group (Ray & Miller, 1994).

When examining the sources of social support, Ray and Miller (1994) found a strong burnout effect when there was a high level of stress at home and work. However, they also noted a significant positive correlation between family support and an increased

level of emotional exhaustion. More specifically, as family support increased so did emotional exhaustion. Similarly, they also found a positive correlation in the relation of low to moderate levels of stress and low to moderate levels of support from co-workers. In other words, support at low to moderate levels of stress had little effect on burnout. However, at high levels of stress, co-worker support was positively related to burnout. In considering that both types of support may have a positive correlation, it suggested that social support may not always have a buffering effect on burnout (Ray & Miller, 1994).

Ray and Miller (1994) also found that high levels of depersonalization of clients by workers were associated with high levels of home and work stress and low levels of support from the organization in which they worked. Another relationship reported indicated that a high level of support from the organization was found to have a positive relationship with levels of personal accomplishment. More specifically, when employees reported feeling supported by their employer, they also reported a greater sense of personal accomplishment (Ray & Miller, 1994)

Contrary to these studies, Eisenstat and Felner (1984) conducted a study that examined the relationships between the characteristics of the human service work environment, workers' attitudes towards their jobs, and workers' attitudes and behaviors toward clients. They found that "job-enriching" characteristics were related to a worker's level of job involvement, job satisfaction, and personal accomplishment. However, no significant relationship was found between those factors and a worker's emotional

exhaustion. They also noted that job stressors were associated with higher levels of emotional exhaustion, but were not related to levels of work involvement or accomplishment (Eisenstat & Felner, 1984).

In another study, Wallace and Brinkerhoff (1991) examined the relationship of work characteristics (i.e., autonomy, role conflict, role ambiguity, and workload), professionalism (i.e., job involvement, intrinsic motivation, and higher order needs satisfaction), and burnout. Their results indicated a strong positive relationship between stress and emotional exhaustion. More specifically, workers who found their work to be very stressful experienced high levels of emotional exhaustion. However, stress was not found to be strongly associated with depersonalization. Depersonalization scores were found to be highest for those who experienced moderate or no stress at all. Thus, they suggest that depersonalization may be a learned stress coping skill. Finally, they found that stress was not highly associated with personal accomplishment. However, slightly higher levels of personal accomplishment were associated with lower levels of stress. Their findings indicated a lack of correlation between burnout and depersonalization, and burnout and personal accomplishment (Wallace & Brinkerhoff, 1991).

Statement of Purpose

The present study examined the relationships between role conflict, role ambiguity, and the sub-scales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory: 1) emotional exhaustion; 2) depersonalization; and 3) personal accomplishment. Based on the literature reviewed, it was hypothesized that role conflict and role ambiguity will

correlate positively with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. However, it was also hypothesized that role conflict and role ambiguity will correlate negatively with personal accomplishment.

It was also expected that demographics would have an effect on the relationships of role conflict, role ambiguity, and the sub-scales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. It was hypothesized that “age” will correlate negatively with role conflict, role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization. However, it was also hypothesized that age will correlate positively with personal accomplishment. It was further hypothesized that males will report experiencing higher levels of role conflict, role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, than females.

Participant’s level of education was hypothesized to have a negative relationship to role conflict, role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization but education will have a positive relationship to the variable of personal accomplishment. Marital status and having children was hypothesized to have a negative relationship to role conflict, role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization. However, education was hypothesized to have a positive relationship with personal accomplishment. Finally, it was hypothesized that youth counselors will experience higher levels of role conflict, role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, than other direct-service providers (i.e., clinical staff).

Methods

Participants

In the state of Hawai‘i, there are different levels of care or special education services that students with special needs can receive. Students in out-of-home placement (i.e., residential facilities) are those assessed to be “high-end” cases or the most severe cases. These students are in out-of-home placement for a variety of reasons. For example, many have a long history of chronic substance abuse, law violations, are wards of the State, violent offences, or dual diagnoses (i.e., diagnosed as a substance abuser or addict and have a psychiatric disorder). Such students are often placed in Therapeutic Living Programs (TLP) or Special Treatment Facilities (STF). It is important to note, that students placed in TLPs or STFs are assessed to not require hospitalization, but to require out-of-home placement in a highly structured facility. Some may even be “stepping-down” from a more secure facility, such as a hospital or a juvenile detention facility.

The participants of this study were youth counselors and other direct-care service providers from the Marimed Foundation. The Marimed Foundation is a private, non-profit organization providing therapeutic services to youth aged 14-18, and determined to be at high risk of hospitalization or incarceration due to psychiatric and behavioral disorders.

The role of youth counselors in their day-to-day activities are very broad in the types of services that they provide to the clients they serve. Generally, a youth counselor ensures the safety of the youth assigned for their care through the exercising of

independent judgment based on their professional training, to effect crisis prevention or intervention on a case-by-case basis, in the absence of the therapist. They also provide therapeutic support to the client through the initiation and administration of interventions conforming to the client's individual treatment plan. They establish rapport and provide supportive counseling, feedback, and redirection. They also participate in program activities and provide instruction and role modeling. In addition to this, they also are required to provide written reports of youth's behavior daily.

On the other hand other direct-service providers have a more clearly defined description of their duties. For example, therapists facilitate individual, family, and group therapy sessions. Therapists also provide crisis counseling as needed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as necessary. They also provide case management services to clients that will help to facilitate family reunification, reentry into the public school systems and community at large. Finally, they too are required to complete reports that provide clinical up-dates of the client's progress within the program.

There were 48 participants in this study with a range in age from 19 - 52 years with a mean of 31.8 years. Table 1 shows a description of the participants' personal characteristics. The participants' length of employment in their current position ranged from three months to 10 years with a mean of two years and four months. The participants' also reported various lengths of employment as a direct-service provider. It ranged from three months to 25 years with a mean of four years and nine months.

Table 1.

Description of the Sample

Demographic	N	% of Sample
Gender		
Male	32	66.7
Female	16	33.3
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	15	31.3
Korean	1	2.1
Filipino	2	4.2
Hawaiian/Part-Hawaiian	16	33.3
Hispanic	2	4.2
Portuguese	1	2.1
Pacific Islander	1	2.1
Mixed (2 or more ethnicities)	10	20.8
Marital Status		
Single	27	26.3
Married	11	22.9
Separated	2	4.2
Divorced	7	14.6
Widowed	1	2.1
Have Children?		
Yes	19	39.6
No	29	60.4
Education Level		
High School	2	4.2
Some College	14	29.2
Associates Degree	6	12.5
Bachelor Degree	19	39.6
Post-Baccalaureate or Greater	7	14.6
Job Title		
Youth Counselor	33	68.8
Other Direct-Service Provider	15	31.3
Provided Services Elsewhere?		
Yes	31	64.6
No	17	35.4
Salary		
\$0 - \$9,999	1	2.1
\$10,000 - \$15,000	3	6.3
\$15,001 - \$20,000	5	10.4
\$20,001 - \$25,000	15	31.3
\$25,001 - \$30,000	9	18.8
\$30,001 - \$35,000	5	10.4
\$35,001 - +	9	18.8
Did not answer	1	2.1

Data Collection Procedures

Participants of this study were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, a researcher-modified Role Conflict/Role Ambiguity Questionnaire (RCRA) (See Appendix C), and the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Human Services Survey (MBI). Participant consent was obtained through an oral procedure. Participants were also provided with a brief description of the project. Participants were also informed that they could cease participation in this study by not completing or submitting the completed survey without consequence (See Appendix A). The demographic questionnaire (See Appendix B) solicited their age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, education level, job title, number of years at current place of employment, number of years working in direct client contact, if they provided similar services at another facility, and their annual salary.

The RCRA is a researcher-modified questionnaire consisting of 30 Likert-type items. The questionnaire was modified as a result of factor analysis in previous research showing that certain questions were not factors related to role conflict and role ambiguity. Participants were asked to select an answer on a scale of 1 (“None of the time”) to 5 (“All of the time”) that best described their experiences at their current position. In the researcher-modified version only 14 of the 30 items were scored. Items 5, 11, 13, 19, 21, 23, 25, and 27 were scored as items pertaining to Role Conflict. Items 2, 4, 10, 12, 20, and 26 were scored as items pertaining to Role Ambiguity. Scores on the Role Conflict

scale ranged from 8 to 40, an increasing score indicates a higher level of role conflict. Scores on the Role Ambiguity scale ranged from 6 to 30, an increasing score indicates a lower level of role ambiguity (See Appendix C).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI) is intended to assess the three aspects of burnout: 1) Emotional Exhaustion; 2) Depersonalization; and 3) lack of Personal Accomplishment. The MBI consists of 22 Likert-type items. Participants were asked to select an answer on a scale of 1 (“Never”) to 6 (“Every Day”). Scores are judged to be “high” if they are in the upper third of the normative distribution, “average” if they are in the middle third, and “low” if they are in the lower third. The “Emotional Exhaustion” subscale measures an individual’s feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by their work. Scores on the Emotional Exhaustion subscale ranged from 0 (“Low” level of emotional exhaustion) to 54 (“High” level of emotional exhaustion). The Depersonalization subscale determines if an individual is unfeeling and impersonal toward recipients of one’s service, care, treatment, or instruction. Scores on the Depersonalization subscale ranged from 0 (“Low” level of depersonalization) to 30 (“High” level of depersonalization). Finally, the Personal Accomplishment subscale measures an individual’s feelings of competence and successful accomplishments in one’s work with others. Scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale ranged from 0 (“High” level of personal accomplishment) to 48 (“Low” level of personal accomplishment).

Procedures

A stapled set of the measures was hand-distributed to all participants in this study. They were asked to complete the survey in its entirety, and return it to the researcher. Participants were also informed that the researcher was a student of the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, conducting research to complete the requirements of the Master’s Degree in sociology. Both scales were scored according to the instructions of the author. Pearson’s “*r*” correlation and one-way ANOVA procedures were used to analyze the data.

Measurement

Table 2 shows the summary of the workplace variables Role Conflict (RC), Role Ambiguity (RA), Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA) subscales for both males and females. The range of scores on all scales was adequate for measurement.

Table 2.

Summary of Workplace Variables

Workplace Variables	N	M	Standard Deviation	Theoretical Range	Actual Range	Scale Category
RC	48	21.46	4.063	8-40	10-34	Mod
RA	48	22.98	3.424	6-30	16-30	Low
EE	48	19.48	11.132	0-49	0-54	Mod
DP	48	8.63	5.782	0-30	0-22	Mod
PA	48	38.02	7.725	0-30	17-52	Mod

Results

Statistical Analysis

Pearson’s *r* was used to measure the relationships between the workplace variables Role Conflict (RC), Role Ambiguity (RA), Emotional Exhaustion (EE),

Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA) sub-scales for both males and females. Table 3 shows the results of the analysis.

Table 3.

Summary of Pearson's *r* Correlation for Workplace Variables

Workplace Variables	RA	EE	DP	PA
RC	-0.108	0.241	0.507**	-0.312*
RA	~	-0.444**	-0.436**	0.467**
EE	~	~	0.546**	-0.150
DP	~	~	~	-0.387**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

Pearson's *r* correlation procedure was used to measure the relationship age, time employed in current position, and time employed in the field. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4.

Summary of Pearson's *r* Correlation for Personal Characteristics

Personal Characteristics	RC	RA	EE	DP	PA
Age	-0.290*	0.216	0.079	-0.203	0.172
Length of Time Employed In Current Position	-0.210	0.093	0.167	0.092	0.046
Length of Time Employed In Field	-0.335*	0.0156	0.025	-0.119	0.090

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows the mean scores and scale categories for the workplace variables based on the participants' personal characteristics. A one-way ANOVA was used to measure the differences between the means. No significant differences were found.

Table 5.

Summary of Mean Scores and Scale Category for Workplace Variables Based on Personal Characteristics

Personal Characteristics	RC	RC Cat.	RA	RA Cat.	EE	EE Cat.	DP	DP Cat.	PA	PA Cat.
Sex										
Male	21.41	Mod	23.28	Low	17.34	Mod	8.53	Mod	37.63	High
Female	21.56	Mod	22.38	Low	23.75	Mod	8.81	Mod	38.81	High
Have a BA/BS?										
Yes	21.62	Mod	22.19	Low	20.81	Mod	9.31	Mod	36.15	High
No	21.27	Mod	23.91	Low	17.91	Mod	7.82	Mod	40.23	High
Married?										
Yes	21.74	Mod	22.74	Low	19.15	Mod	7.85	Mod	37.11	High
No	21.10	Mod	23.29	Low	19.90	Mod	9.62	Mod	39.19	High
Have Children?										
Yes	21.95	Mod	23.84	Low	20.42	Mod	9.68	Mod	37.89	High
No	21.14	Mod	22.41	Low	18.86	Mod	7.93	Mod	38.10	High
Title										
YC	21.61	Mod	22.79	Low	17.36	Mod	8.03	Mod	37.30	High
Other	21.13	Mod	23.40	Low	24.13	Mod	9.93	Mod	39.60	High
Age?										
≤ 29 years old	22.16	Mod	22.28	Low	18.88	Mod	9.56	Mod	37.64	High
≥ 30 years old	20.70	Mod	23.74	Low	20.13	Mod	7.61	Mod	38.43	High
Work Elsewhere?										
Yes	21.23	Mod	22.71	Low	19.52	Mod	8.00	Mod	38.06	High
No	21.88	Mod	23.47	Low	19.41	Mod	9.76	Mod	37.94	High
Salary										
≤ \$25,000/year	21.96	Mod	23.25	Low	17.17	Mod	8.04	Mod	38.25	High
≥ \$25,000/year	21.00	Mod	22.70	Low	21.91	Mod	9.35	Mod	37.48	High

Legend: RC = Role Conflict DP = Depersonalization
 RA = Role Ambiguity PA = Personal Accomplishment
 EE = Emotional Exhaustion

Discussion

This study attempted to establish relationships between role conflict, role ambiguity, and the three sub-scales of the MBI: 1) emotional exhaustion; 2) depersonalization; and 3) personal accomplishment, all assumed predictors of burnout. This study also attempted to determine if demographic variables had an effect on the variables of burnout. Finally, this study attempted to determine if there were differences in reported experiences of burn out in males and females, having at least a bachelor's degree, single or married, have children, and youth counselors and other direct-service providers.

The findings of this study supported some of the hypotheses sought. First, the relationship of role conflict and role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment was examined (See Table 3.). Role conflict was found to have a significant relationship with depersonalization [$r(48) = 0.507, p < 0.01$]. The finding of a positive relationship between role conflict and depersonalization indicated that the greater an individual's personal beliefs conflicted with those of his/her employer, the greater the likelihood the individual reported providing services to the client in an unfeeling and impersonal way. Role conflict also had a significant relationship with personal accomplishment [$r(48) = -0.312, p < 0.05$]. The finding of a negative relationship between role conflict and personal accomplishment indicated that when an individual's personal beliefs conflict less with the practices of his/her employer, they reported an increase in feelings of competence and success in working with their clients (See Table 3.).

These findings supported the hypothesis that role conflict has a positive correlation to depersonalization and a negative correlation with personal accomplishment. This finding also supported the finding of Brookings, et al. (1985), who found that job-related feelings of cynicism were directly related to experiencing factors related to burnout, and a negative relationship between role conflict and personal accomplishment (Brookings, et al., 1985). The findings also did not support those of Wallace and Brinkerhoff (1991), who found that stress partly caused by role conflict also had a positive relationship with emotional exhaustion. The findings of a significant relationship between role conflict and personal accomplishment in this study did not coincide with their lack of finding a significant relationship. Significant findings were not achieved in correlating role conflict with role ambiguity, and emotional exhaustion.

Second, statistical significance was found in the relationships of role ambiguity and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. For the variable of role ambiguity, a high score indicated a more clearly defined job role. The results of the correlation between role ambiguity and emotional exhaustion indicated a strong negative relationship [$r(48) = -0.444, p < 0.01$]. This finding indicated that individuals who reported that their duties and expectations were unclear similarly reported an increase of feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by their work (See Table 4.). This finding supported the hypothesis that role ambiguity will correlate negatively with emotional exhaustion.

Role ambiguity also had a significant negative correlation with depersonalization [$r(48) = -0.436, p < 0.01$]. This correlation indicated that individuals who reported

clearly defined roles in providing services to clients also reported providing service, care, treatment, and/or instruction in a personal and caring way (See Table 4.). This finding supported the hypothesis that role ambiguity is a contributing factor in feelings of depersonalization.

Finally, role ambiguity had a significant positive correlation with personal accomplishment [$r(48) = 0.467, p < 0.01$]. This finding indicated that the greater the clarity and understanding an individual reported having in the performance of their duties, the greater their reported feelings of competence and success in doing their jobs (See Table 3.). This finding supported the hypothesis that role ambiguity is positively correlated to an individual's feelings of personal accomplishment, supporting the findings of LeCroy and Rank (1987) who found that the more satisfied a worker feels with their job the less likely he/she is to experience the indicators of burnout. Furthermore, that job autonomy, closely related to their professional self-esteem as did low levels of ambiguity (LeCroy & Rank, 1987). These findings also supported the findings of Eisenstat and Felner (1984) who found that "job enriching" characteristics, such as those related to decreasing role ambiguity, increased job involvement, job satisfaction, and personal accomplishment.

Third, this study further examined the relationship between the variables emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. A statistically significant positive relationship was observed for the variables emotional exhaustion and depersonalization [$r(48) = 0.546, p < 0.01$]. As expected, individuals reporting an increase in feeling emotionally overextended, their reported level of depersonalization in

relating to their clients also increased (See Table 3.). This relationship supported the hypothesis that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are factors associated with each other. This finding also supported the assumption of Maslach and Jackson (1981), developers of this measure. However, the lack of a significantly negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment was not expected. In fact, in this analysis only a very small negative relationship was observed.

Fourth, this study examined the relationship between the variables depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The findings of this analysis indicated a significantly negative relationship between these two variables [$r(48) = -0.387, p < 0.01$]. The strength of this relationship indicated that individuals that reported lower levels of depersonalization also reported an increase in feelings of success and accomplishment in working with their clients (See Table 3.). This finding supported the hypothesis that depersonalization and personal accomplishment are directly related. This finding is similar to the findings of Leiter and Meechan (1986) who reported a negative relationship between depersonalization and motivational hierarchy. In other words, the happier an individual is with their job, the less likely they are to treat clients as mere objects (Leiter & Meechan, 1986).

This study also examined the relationship of the demographic information provided by the participants in this study and role conflict, role ambiguity, and the subscales of the MBI. In conducting this analysis, a significant negative correlation was found between age and role conflict [$r(48) = -0.290, p < 0.05$]. This finding indicated that older employees reported a decrease in conflict between their personal beliefs and those

of the organization they are employed by. However, no additional significant findings were determined to be associated with an individual's age (See Table 4.). This finding did not support the hypotheses that age is correlated to role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization.

This study further examined the relationship of the number of months at the current job to role conflict, role ambiguity, and the subscales of the MBI. The findings of this analysis indicated no significant relationships between number of months at the current job to role conflict, role ambiguity or any of the MBI subscales. However, when examining the number of months employed in the field with the same variables, a significant negative relationship was found with role conflict [$r(48) = -0.335, p < 0.05$]. This finding indicated that individuals who reported working in their field for an extended period of time, also reported feeling less in conflict with the job that they were hired to do (See Table 4.).

In addition, this study examined the differences in role conflict, role ambiguity, and the MBI subscales in the variables of gender, having a bachelor's degree, being married, having children, title, age, work elsewhere, and salary. When analyzing each of these variables, no significant differences were found (See Table 5.). These findings did not support the hypotheses that there are differences between the variables of gender, having a bachelor's degree, being married, having children, and title and role conflict, role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishments.

The lack of finding a significant difference between males and females did not support the findings of LeCroy and Rank (1987) who found that females reported

significantly less depersonalization in working with their clients than did males. These findings also did not support the findings of Himle et al. (1987) who found that for males an increase in client contact and emotional exhaustion led to burnout. Similarly, females that reported an increase in burnout indicators also reported decreased supervisor support, worker support, and job comfort, more specifically, role ambiguity. These findings also did not support the findings of Hiscott and Connop (1989) who found that males are more likely to suffer from emotional exhaustion than females. Finally, The lack of significant findings for a relationship of the participants Job Title with their role conflict, role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, and personal achievement scores did not support the findings of Wallace and Brinkerhoff (1991) who found that depersonalization may be a learned coping skill to deal with high levels of perceived stress (See Table 5.).

Furthermore, there was no finding of a significant difference between those who have less than a bachelor's degree and those having at least a bachelor's degree, on an individual's experience of role conflict, role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, or personal accomplishment (See Table 5.).

The results of this study also indicated that there was no significant difference between being married or single and the scores obtained on the role conflict, role ambiguity, and the MBI subscales. The finding of no significant difference between being married or single (See Table 5.) did not support the findings of Ray and Miller (1994) who found those who reported having increased levels of family support also reported increased levels of emotional exhaustion. There was also no significant difference found between having children and not having children and the scores

obtained on the scales (See Table 5.). The finding of no significant difference between having children and any of the variables did not support the findings of Ray and Miller (1994) who found that females with children perceived significantly more work stress than non-mothers.

Results of the analysis testing the hypothesis that youth counselors, in their roles that are generally broader than other direct-service providers will report higher levels of role conflict, role ambiguity, and the MBI subscales (See Table 5.) were not significant. In fact, the differences between youth counselors and other direct-service providers were minimal.

Because of earlier significant correlation found between age and role conflict, and length of time employed in the field and role conflict, the researcher attempted to determine if there was a significant difference between employees aged 29 years and younger and employees aged 30 years and older and the role conflict they reported. The resulting one-way ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences between the means of the two groups (See Table 5.). The researcher also examined the differences between employees who have worked at other facilities providing similar services and those who have not. Again, the results indicated no statistically significant difference between the two groups' means (See Table 5.).

Also noted earlier was a significant correlation was obtained with length of employment in the field as a direct-service provider, as a result, an attempt to determine if an employee having experience providing services at another facility also had an effect on reports of role conflict, role ambiguity, and the subscales of the MBI. The results of

the analysis indicated no significant differences between those who have had the experience of providing services at another facility and those who have not (See Table 5.).

Finally, LeCroy and Rank (1987) reported a significant correlation between salary and effects of emotional exhaustion, a symptom of burnout. The salaries of employees were recoded into two groups, those who earned less than \$25,000 per year and those who earned more than \$25,000 per year. The results of the one-way ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences between the two groups (See Table 5.). This finding did not support the findings of LeCroy and Rank (1987).

Conclusion

This study identified several significant relationships that are important to furthering the knowledge and understanding of burnout. From these results several implications for organizational actions, and future research can be made. As noted earlier a significant positive correlation was achieved in the analysis of role conflict and depersonalization, and a significant negative relationship was achieved in the analysis of role conflict and personal accomplishment. These findings imply that employees reporting that they hold personal beliefs that are in concurrence with the philosophy and practice of the organization also reported providing services that are personal and caring. This finding points to the importance of selecting individuals who have similar philosophies to the organization in the treatment of clients. Poor candidates for working in a high stress environment can also be “weeded-out” during the interview processes.

Through appropriate questioning of potential employees an employer is able to gather information on the candidates personal beliefs and philosophy.

New employee orientation provides the employer another opportunity to learn about their new hires as they learn the philosophy and practices of an organization and how they service clients. Moreover, the greater the belief an employee has in the organization's philosophy and practices, the greater the likelihood that they will report feelings of success and accomplishments in doing their jobs, even under high levels of stress.

Interestingly, the findings indicated that role ambiguity was a major predictor of individuals experiencing indicators of burnout. Role ambiguity related significantly to all subscales of the MBI. The findings of this analysis point out the importance of an individual knowing his/her role as an employee of an organization, their day-to-day goals, and how to successfully achieve those goals. This finding implied that an organization also plays a role in alleviating indicators of burnout. Organizations can, through the provision of a clear position description of their employees' role alleviate reported indicators of burnout. Decreasing reports of role ambiguity by employees can also be achieved in employees through regular and frequent evaluations and feedback of their performance by their supervisors, and training programs that help the individual to improve their skills to meet the needs, goals, and objectives of their clients. However, role ambiguity was not significantly related to role conflict. This finding implied that role ambiguity and role conflict are separate constructs. Even though role ambiguity is not a predictor of role conflict, both are factors related to burnout.

Organizations can also use feedback from employees experiencing role ambiguity to analyze and revise roles and supervision strategies to reduce the structural sources of role ambiguity. A strong positive correlation was observed between emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Individuals who reported feelings of being emotionally overextended also reported increased levels of depersonalization. The implication of this finding is that a solution to emotional exhaustion is needed. One of the consequences of not attending to employees' reporting high levels of emotional exhaustion is an increased level of depersonalization. Depersonalization of a client by an employee can manifest itself in several ways. They include, but are not limited to: negative and cynical attitudes toward clients; loss of concern and feelings towards clients; intellectualization; stereotyping clients; physically and emotionally distancing one's self; and over-depersonalization. In any event, the client, employee, and organization will suffer the consequences.

A strong negative relationship was noted between depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The strength of this relationship indicated that an individual's treatment of a client was directly related to their feelings of being able to successfully work with a client in achieving their goals. This finding points out the importance of employees knowing the goals of working with the client, and have the tools and skills necessary to accomplish those goals. Steps taken to decrease levels of role conflict and role ambiguity may result in reported feelings of personal accomplishment and buffer the effects of depersonalization.

It is also important to remember, however, that depersonalization also had significant positive correlations with role conflict, role ambiguity, and emotional exhaustion. These findings imply that depersonalization may, in fact, be a coping mechanism used by individuals to deal with the high levels of stress experienced in their day-to-day activities of their jobs, and have no other personal or professional skills available to help them deal with the stressors appropriately.

When analyzing age as a predictor of experiencing role conflict, role ambiguity, and indicators of burnout, only role conflict had a significant negative relationship. This finding, however, was important as it implied that older employees are less likely to report conflict with their roles in an organization than younger employees. Perhaps older employees have more personal and professional skills that allow them to do their jobs better and or adjust to their roles in an organization. Furthermore, older individuals were less likely to report feelings of defiance toward the philosophy and practices of the organization they are employed by.

As previously noted, no significant findings were associated with the variable of number of months at current job and role conflict, role ambiguity, and the subscales of the MBI. However, a significant negative relationship was found when analyzing the number of months in the field with the variable role conflict. This finding likely mirrors the significant negative relationship obtained when the analysis of age and role conflict was made. In essence, individuals that reported more experience in their roles or chosen professions also reported having personal beliefs and practices similar to those of the organization. This may also imply that younger employees may also be attempting to

explore a profession to which they may not be dedicated to or know very much about. They may even be attempting to put into practice what they have learned in an academic setting that might not be appropriate for their current place of employment. Simply stated, young and inexperienced employees are more likely to report higher levels of role conflict than their older counterparts.

Unfortunately, attempts to conduct one-way ANOVA analysis on the variables of age (29 years and younger and 30 years and older), gender, level of education (have at least a Bachelor's degree), marital status (single or married), have children, and title, and the modified RCRA and the MBI did not result in significant differences. It has already been determined that age had an effect on role conflict, however, attempts to provide a more clear definition of the variable of age did not prove significant. This finding may imply that age is not a construct that can be easily defined to determine its effects.

It was also anticipated that males and females would report differences in their experience of role conflict, role ambiguity, and the subscales of the MBI. The lack of finding significant differences in this analysis implies that there are no significant differences between males and females in their experiences. Moreover, their obtaining a bachelor's degree showed no significant differences. This finding implies that an individual's level of education also may not have an effect on an employee's experience of role conflict, role ambiguity, and indicators of burnout.

It was also hypothesized that youth counselors would report higher levels of role conflict, role ambiguity, and indicators of burnout than other direct-service providers. The description of the role of youth counselor and direct service provider was provided

earlier (See Page 13). Youth counselors in general, have a much broader role than do other direct-service providers who have more specific responsibilities. However, the findings in this analysis indicated that there were no differences in reports between youth counselors and other direct-service providers. This finding may imply that the differences between the two roles are not as different as was expected. Despite the other direct-service providers having a more clear description, the reality of the job may be as broad as a youth counselors.

A significant finding was noted earlier in the correlation of the variables length of time employed in the field and role conflict. This finding lead the researcher to ask if experience working at another organization and providing similar types of services would have an effect on role conflict, role ambiguity, and the MBI subscales. The analysis indicated no significant differences between those who have provided services elsewhere and the role conflict, role ambiguity, and the MBI subscales. This finding implies that having experience working at another facility does not have an effect on the reports of role conflict, role ambiguity or burnout in current employees.

Finally, this researcher attempted to find a significant difference between employees who earned less than \$25,000 per year and employees who earned more than \$25,000 per year and role conflict, role ambiguity, and the MBI subscales. The findings of this analysis indicated no differences in the reports of role conflict, role ambiguity, and the MBI subscales. There was an insignificant difference in emotional exhaustion and income.

There are several factors that may have contributed to the lack of significant findings in this study. First, the sample size used in this study was particularly small. Despite obtaining 86% of all eligible staff providing direct on-line services at the Marimed Foundation, this only amounted to 48 participants in this study. A restriction on range of scores was also noted in several of the demographic variables. A larger sample may have led to significant findings.

Another factor that may have obscured the relationships sought in this study is the Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Questionnaire. There are several studies that have challenged the validity of the scale created by Rizzo et al. (1970). Some of the arguments challenging the use of this measure included failure of the questionnaire to distinguish between job requirements and how those requirements are met, the negative versus positive wording of the items in the scale, too broad a definition for role conflict and role ambiguity, and that role conflict and role ambiguity are multidimensional constructs (Sawyer, 1992). The MBI was also used in this study. Differences in the measures used in this study may have contributed to the failure of supporting some of the previously cited results. Furthermore, future researchers should also consider using factor analysis procedures to determine if the measure used is actually measuring the constructs and not something else.

In conclusion, this study has identified several important relationships related to individuals experiencing indicators of burnout. This study has also identified actions that an organization, whether in the field of mental health or any other service that has high levels of stress and direct client contact, can take to improve the delivery of services the

organization provides, improve employee-client relationships, improve employee job satisfaction, alleviate employee burnout, and the loss of good employees.

Through continued research on the indicators of burnout and its effects on employees, a clearer picture of this obviously multidimensional construct could be achieved. Employees in all types of industries have the potential to be affected emotionally and physically by burnout. Methods and programs can, and need, to be developed that help employees alleviate and cope with the indicators of burnout they may experience. From the perspective of an employee, there is the great potential for them to be able to grow professionally in their roles as direct-service providers, learn how to cope with the daily stressors, and take pride and care in the services that they provide to their clients.

Organizations that implement programs and training that improve the professional skills of their employees, also help employees alleviate and cope with burnout. Most importantly to organizations, millions of dollars can be saved through the reduction in the need to train and orient new employees to replace employees lost to burnout. Ultimately, a happy and healthy employee is more productive and an asset to their employer and the organization for which they work.

Appendix A

Oral Consent to Participate in this Study:

This is an oral consent form for participation in this study of "burnout." Below is a short description of this study. Attached is a demographic questionnaire, a Role Conflict/Role Ambiguity Questionnaire, and a Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey, Third Edition. There is also a self-addressed stamped envelope in which the survey is to be returned to the investigator. By completing and submitting the attached surveys you are **GIVING CONSENT** to utilize the information provided by you in this study. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, you may contact the investigator or any of the committee members at the below listed numbers. Thank you for your participation.

Principle Investigator:

Dane Z. Y. Ganes
Graduate Student
University of Hawaii, Dept. of Sociology
Phone: (808) 235-3282

Graduate Committee Members:

Dr. David Chandler, Dept. of Sociology, Phone: (808) 956-7792
Dr. Eldon Wegner, Dept. of Sociology, Phone: (808) 956-8428
Dr. Dolores Foley, Dept. of Urban and Regional Planning, Phone: (808) 956-2780

Institute:

University of Hawaii
Department of Sociology
Social Sciences Building
2424 Maile Way
Honolulu, HI 96822

Project Description:

The purpose of this research study is to further the knowledge of "burnout" indicators experienced by mental health workers. More specifically, if role ambiguity and role conflict increases or decreases an employee's indicators of "burnout." The self-report questionnaires are designed to measure an individual's current experiences of "burnout" indicators, role ambiguity, and role conflict.

There are no foreseeable risks to your participation in this study. Although there may be no benefit to you, the results of this study can be used to assist administrators to lessen the effects of stress that may be caused by Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity. It is

further hoped that the results provide administrators with hints of possible interventions that may be used to assist in retaining good employees.

It is expected that approximately 100 Marimed Foundation Youth Counselors will complete the attached surveys. The completion of the survey is voluntary and anonymous. Your anonymity is insured through the non-solicitation of any identifiable information that can connect you with the survey you have completed. Only the Principal Investigator and the members of his Graduate Committee will have access to the completed measures. The time that it takes for you to complete the attached surveys is approximately 20-30 minutes. You may discontinue participation in this study at any time without consequence.

The time frame for this survey is through September 2002. However, for the surveys to be counted in this report, surveys must be received by September 1, 2002. Please complete the following five steps as soon as is practical for you:

1. Complete "Personal Information" section.
2. Complete both survey in its entirety.
3. Place the questionnaire sheets into the pre-addressed, stamped envelope provided.
4. Seal the envelope.
5. Place the envelope in the nearest mailbox.

If you have any "rights" related questions you may contact the Principal Investigator or any of his Graduate Committee Members at the above listed numbers. "If you cannot obtain satisfactory answers to your questions or have comments or complaints about your treatment in this study, contact:

Committee on Human Studies
University of Hawaii
2540 Maile Way
Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone: (808) 956-5007

Thank you for participating in this research project.

NOTE: Even if you are late in returning the survey please do so. The data you provide may be useful at a later date.

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON ANY OF THE SURVEY SHEETS

Please complete the following information as truthfully as is possible and in its entirety. Please keep in mind, it is impossible for anyone to identify you with the survey you have completed.

Personal Information:

Age: _____

Male: _____ Female: _____

Ethnicity: _____ (list all ethnic identities)

Marital status (Circle one): MARRIED SINGLE DIVORCED

 SEPARATED WIDOWED

Number of children: _____

Highest education level attained (High school; some college, AA; BA or BS; etc.):

Job Title: _____

Number of years at current place of employment: _____

Number of years working in direct client contact (at Marimed or any other facility): _____

Have you provided similar services with another company?: _____

What is your annual salary as an employee (Circle One):

- 1) \$0 - \$9,999
- 2) \$10,000 - \$15,000
- 2) \$15,001 - \$20,000
- 3) \$20,001 - \$25,000
- 4) \$25,001 - \$30,000
- 5) \$30,001 - \$35,000
- 6) \$35,001 +

Appendix C

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON ANY OF THE SURVEY SHEETS

Please complete the following information as truthfully as is possible and in its entirety. Please keep in mind, it is impossible for anyone to identify you with the survey you have completed.

Scoring Key:

- 1 = None of the time 4 = Most of the time
2 = Very rarely 5 = All of the time
3 = Some of the time

Items determined to be related to Role Conflict:

5. I have to do things that should be done differently.
1 2 3 4 5
11. I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it.
1 2 3 4 5
13. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.
1 2 3 4 5
19. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.
1 2 3 4 5
21. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.
1 2 3 4 5
23. I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not by others.
1 2 3 4 5
25. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials.
1 2 3 4 5
27. I work on unnecessary things.
1 2 3 4 5

Items determined to be related to Role Ambiguity:

2. I feel certain about how much authority I have.
1 2 3 4 5
4. Clear, planned goals and objectives for my job.
1 2 3 4 5
10. I know that I have divided my time properly.
1 2 3 4 5
12. I know what my responsibilities are.
1 2 3 4 5
20. I know exactly what is expected of me.
1 2 3 4 5
26. Explanation is clear of what has to be done.
1 2 3 4 5

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