INFLUENCE OF CONTEXTUAL WORK FACTORS ON BURNOUT AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG MENTAL HEALTH SOCIAL WORKERS IN MYANMAR

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the direct and indirect influence of six contextual work factors (workload, control, reward, community, fairness and value) on job satisfaction, mediated by three dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and negative personal accomplishment) among Myanmar mental health social workers. A national sample of 205 mental health social workers various local and international organizations across Myanmar participated. The results showed that for mental health social workers in Myanmar, the factors of workload, control over their work environment, and perceived fairness in how they are treated in their job have direct influences on their level of job satisfaction. Workload exerted both direct and indirect influences on job satisfaction, being mediated by depersonalization and negative personal accomplishment. Fairness indirectly influenced job satisfaction, being mediated by depersonalization. The results also revealed that workload was positively associated with emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion, however, was not significantly associated with the participants' level of job satisfaction. The results of the current study highlight the importance of workload and fairness in creating and maintaining healthy work environments that can prevent burnout and increase job satisfaction among mental health social workers in Myanmar.

Introduction

Myanmar, also known as Burma, has had oppressive military government since 1962, and most developed nations shunned the country for more than a decade (Blake, 2005). Several decades of civil war between the military and ethnic armed groups and the resultant political instability have impacted the economic and educational development and, even more so, the psychological well-being of people in Myanmar. Since Myanmar is an underdeveloped country and government facilities cannot meet the needs of people, many international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work for Myanmar people in different sectors. Although there are many local

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and international NGOs working towards community development, very few organizations notice the importance of mental health in the community.

Social workers enter the mental health field for different reasons. Since the nature of the job is highly stressful and demanding, the psychological well-being of mental health social workers has to be considered important, both in terms of the individual and the organization. Mental health social workers in Myanmar, work with different NGOs in the capacity of psychosocial workers, counselors, case managers, or peer counselors. In Myanmar, these helping professionals work in two mental health social work fields – primary health care and community psychosocial support. In primary health care-based organizations, mental health social workers perform 'voluntary counseling and testing' (VCT) on HIV for anyone, particularly for those most at risk such as drug users, sex workers, and family members living with HIV and TB sufferers. They also provide motivational counseling on adherence to medication, to help those trying to quit various addictions, as well as pre- and post-counseling for HIV blood testing. In the community, mental health social workers help people who have endured different challenges such as natural and man-made disasters, as well as other issues particular to Myanmar, such as assisting political prisoners and their families.

The nature of social work is highly demanding and stressful. Social workers have previously been identified as being at risk of experiencing stress and burnout (Acker, 1999; Egan, 1993). Since Myanmar is an underdeveloped country, many social workers struggle as a result of the unstable political and economic changes, communication and transportation difficulties, as well as basic safety and technical support for their fields of work. Social workers are at risk for experiencing stress and/or burnout primarily due to client-related issues and assisting patients with their difficult life situation (Lloyd, King, & Chenoweth, 2002). This study attempted to describe the relationships among the following: (1) contextual work factors (workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and value), (2) burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment) and (3) job satisfaction among mental health social workers in Myanmar.

Literature Review

Burnout
Burnout is a serious issue in all professions. Burnout occurs in jobs that require wide-ranging care of other people. In the human services professions, workers are required to care for their patients/clients, assist them in learning about their difficulties and problems, and provide them with some sort of professional assistance (Etzion & Pines, 1986). It is well known that mental health professionals work in an emotionally demanding work setting, making them vulnerable to burnout (Rabin et.al, 1999).

Burnout has been defined as "a loss of energy for one's work or profession, and that it is accompanied by a sense of being used up and of one's vitality being depleted" (Shelton, 2007, p. 8). The Maslach burnout model incorporates three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. *Emotional exhaustion* refers to the consuming or draining of emotional resources. Individuals experiencing emotional exhaustion describe

feelings of fatigue, frustration, tension, lack of energy (Maslach et al., 2001). *Depersonalization* refers to feelings of detachment within the self or towards others. It includes pessimism, cynicism, emotional detachment, and dehumanization (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993)). The third dimension of burnout – *reduced personal accomplishment* – the component of inefficacy, refers to reduced feelings of competence or lack of achievement in one's work with clients and productivity in work.

Contextual Work Factors
The six areas of work life (workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and value) which assess disharmony between employees and organization and the employees' level of experienced burnout or engagement. *Workload* is defined as the amount of work to be done in a given time period. For mental health social workers, workload mostly consists of their caseload, which can be both quantitative (amount of work) and qualitative (nature of contact). *Control* refers to "employees' perceived capacity to influence decisions that affect their work, exercise professional autonomy, and gain access to the resources necessary to do an effective job" (Leiter & Maslach, 2004, p. 96). Control is based on employees' perceptions that they can influence decisions about their work, have access to the resources they need to be effective at their job, and exercise professional autonomy (Leiter & Maslach, 2004). *Reward* is the recognition from other people as well as the personal satisfaction that employees experience in the course of solving problems, providing services, or developing a product. *Community* involves the range of personal relationships at work, including colleagues, supervisors, subordinates, and service recipients. *Fairness* refers to the employees' perceptions of organizational justice, especially as they pertain to decisions of personal importance. Workplace fairness is perceived when respect, trust, and openness are practiced (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). *Value* is the extent to which an employee perceives the fit of their personal values with those of the organization.

Job Satisfaction
Locke (1976) defined it as a positive or pleasurable emotional feeling which results from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences as well as a perception which a job allows for the fulfillment of an individual's job values, provided that those values are congruent with the individual's needs. Balloch, Pahl and McLean (1998) found that job satisfaction increased when staff worked as team and felt challenged in their work. The aforementioned studies showed that one of the contextual work factors – a sense of community with supervisors and coworkers is related to job satisfaction. It was also found that opportunity for promotion and issues surrounding compensation appear to impact job satisfaction.

The Relationship between Contextual Work Factors, Burnout and Job Satisfaction
The sources of burnout are a major mismatch between the person's expectations and the work context, specifically in terms of workload, control, reward, community,
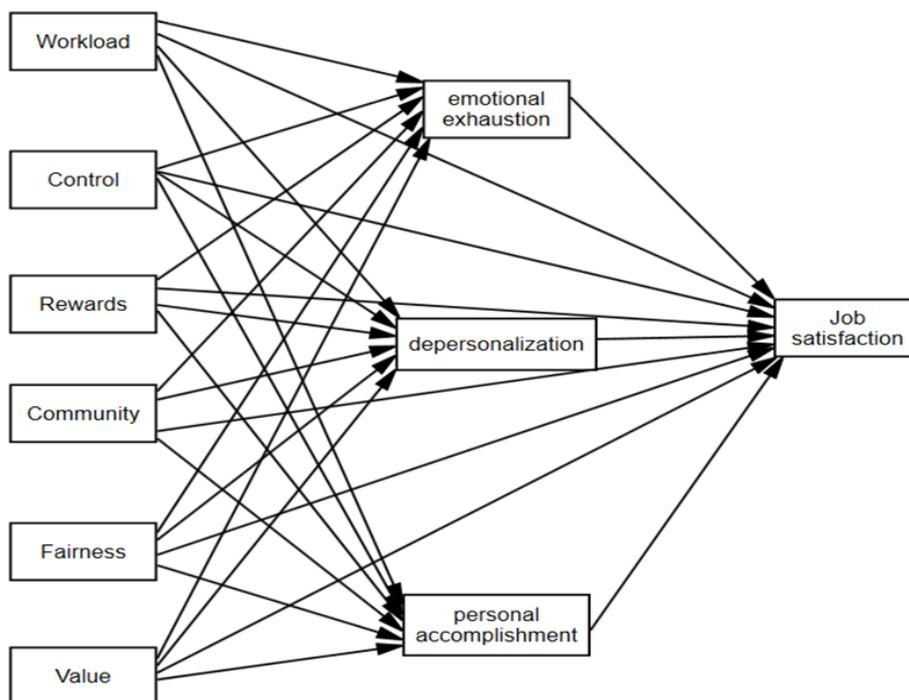
Figure 1: 'The Direct and Indirect Influences of Contextual Work Factors on the Reported Job Satisfaction of Mental Health Social Workers in Myanmar, Being Mediated by the Burnout Factor

fairness, and values (Leiter & Maslach, 2004; Maslach et al., 2001). These organizational predictors play more of a fundamental role in burnout than personal factors (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998; Maslach et al., 2001). Petrazzi-Woods (2005) conducted a study to measure the degree of burnout and its relationship to contextual work factors of 81 community mental health counselors at a rural mental health center located in a medically underserved area that has a shortage of mental health professionals. It was found that all the participants met the criteria for burnout syndrome. Specifically, more than 70% of the participants experienced high or moderate degree of emotional exhaustion; approximately half of the participants acknowledged high or moderate degree of depersonalization; and more than 80% of the participants indicated low or moderate degree of feelings of reduced personal accomplishment. A range of 42% to 74% of the participants reported job incongruence in the six contextual work factors. When emotional exhaustion and personalization increase, satisfaction with work decreases and, likewise, when reduced personal accomplishment increases, satisfaction with work decreases (Boston, 2009). Contemporary organizations need energetic and dedicated employees who engage with their work. A mismatch between people and their work environment reduces job satisfaction whereas a match enhances it (Leiter & Laschinger, 2006). Butler (1990) explored job satisfaction among 404 master's degree social workers in

which job satisfaction was categorized into three groups that included work context, job design, and individual characteristics. Furthermore, different types of job satisfaction were examined including kind of work, agency identification, supervision, coworkers, career future, and financial rewards. It was later revealed that social workers were most satisfied with the type of work they were engaged in and with coworkers. The participants were least satisfied with financial rewards and amount of work. Additionally, subjects who scored high on 'burden' and who had high numbers of clients were less satisfied. A study by Shinn et.al, (1984) involving mental health professionals found that a job stressor frequently identified across various institutions was poor work design/setting, including conditions such as excessive workload and role conflict.

Method

Participants
The sample consisted of 205 participants with 2 participants who did not state their gender. Therefore91 (44.8%) were males and 112 (55.2%) were females out of 205 participants. They worked in 19 non-governmental organizations in Myanmar. Their ages ranged from 19 years to 60 years, with a mean age 35.27 years.

Instrumentations

Part I: Personal Information
The first part of the research instrument aimed to gather relevant personal information about the respondents which corresponded to the five demographic variables identified in the study: gender, age, years of experience in mental health services, years of experience in the organization, and position title.

Part II: Contextual Work Factors
The *Areas of Worklife Survey* (AWS) was developed by Leiter and Maslach (2004) and grounded in the perspective put forth by Maslach and Leiter (1997) to assess organizational environment. The survey aimed to capture the main features of a work environment; however, due to the complexities of work environments, an exhaustive description of work environment is impractical (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). The six areas of work life assessed in the survey were referred to collectively as *contextual work factors*. Broken down into the main six factors, they comprised workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values (Leiter & Maslach, 2004).

The AWS is a self-report survey that consists of 29 items exploring different areas of work environment, categorized into the following: 6 items of workload, 3 items of control, 4 items of reward, 5 items of community, 6 items of fairness and 5 items of values which provide distinct scores for each of the six areas of worklife (Leiter & Maslach, 2004).

Part III: Job Burnout Measure: MBI Human Services Survey
The *Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey* (MBI-HSS) (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) is recognized as the most widely and repeatedly used instrument

associated with research on burnout. This instrument was introduced in the early 1980s (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The second edition of the test was published five years later (Maslach & Jackson, 1986), and the third and most recent edition was published in 1996 (Maslach et al., 1996).

The MBI-HSS is a 22-item self-report questionnaire designed to evaluate three dimensions of the burnout phenomenon (exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment). Items are scored on a 7-point Likert scale with fixed anchors that range from 0 = *Never* to 6 = *Every day*.

Part IV: Job Satisfaction Measure: Abridged Job Descriptive Index (AJDI)
Abridged Job Descriptive Index (AJDI) which contains a total of 25 items in five domains: work, present pay, promotion opportunities, supervision, and coworkers, and 8 items in sixth domain, job in general Stanton et al. (2002). The abridged version was created in order to reduce administration time, item count, and required survey space while still maintaining many of the same characteristics of the full-length version of Job Descriptive Index (JDI) to save time (Stanton et al., 2002).

Procedure
A non-experimental descriptive, multiple regression, correlational research design using non-random sampling was employed to explore the influence of the contextual work factors on job burnout and satisfaction among mental health social workers in Myanmar.

The questionnaire was distributed by post or e-mail, instead, to key officers of selected mental health services organizations who were also requested to assist in the printing, distribution, and collection process, occasionally assisting participants who may have some difficulty in comprehending some item statements. After collecting the completed questionnaires, the officers in charge from 19 organizations from 12 Divisions and States were requested to send these back to their respective head offices in Yangon. Subsequently, this researcher proceeded to collect the completed questionnaire parcels accordingly (personally or by post/e-mail). The whole process of distribution and collection of the survey questionnaires took about seven weeks.

Findings
The reliability analysis indicated that a number of the items representing the factors of workload, control, reward, community, fairness, value, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment, and job satisfaction have corrected item-total correlations (I-T) $<.33$, and their deletion would increase the scale's overall Cronbach's alpha. The computed Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all 10 scales were adequate and ranged from .58 to .88. This finding of Cronbach's alpha in emotional exhaustion for 0.883, depersonalization for 0.740 and reduced personal accomplishment for 0.65, are similar to the study of Maslach et al. (1996) which reported 0.90 for emotional exhaustion, 0.79 for depersonalization, and 0.71 for reduced personal accomplishment.

The following Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the ten computed factors.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for the Ten Computed Factors

	Mean	*S.D.*
• Workload	2.52	0.68
• Control	3.18	0.77
• Rewards	3.56	0.57
• Community	3.94	0.55
• Fairness	3.58	0.63
• Value	3.66	0.53
• Emotional exhaustion	1.67	1.10
• Depersonalization	0.80	0.92
• Personal accomplishment	3.43	1.11
• Job satisfaction	1.79	0.18

Path Analysis

In order to test the hypothesized direct and indirect relationships represented by the path model depicted in Figure 1, path analysis via regression analysis was conducted. The analysis involved: (1) regressing the dependent variable of job satisfaction on the predictor variables of workload, control, reward, community, fairness, value, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment; and (2) regressing the mediator variables of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment on the predictor variables of workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and value. The results of this path analysis are presented in Figure 2.
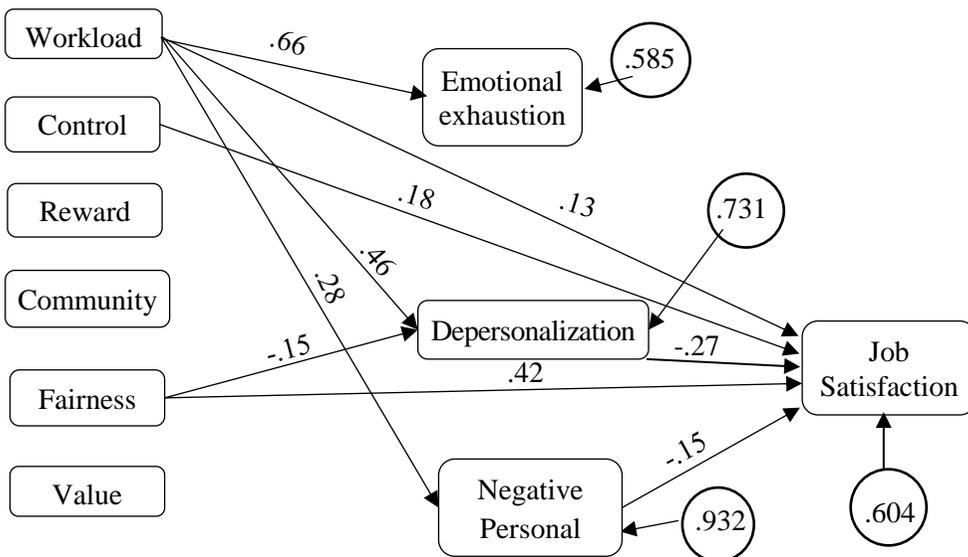

Figure 2: Path Model of Myanmar Mental Health Social Workers' Job Satisfaction as a Function of Work Factors, Mediated By Burnout

Figure 2 depicts the path model of Myanmar mental health social workers' level of job satisfaction as a function of the direct and indirect influences of their contextual work factors, being mediated by their level of burnout. Only significant paths ($p<0.05$) were displayed. The results showed that for the Myanmar mental health social workers in the present study, their reported workload, perceived control over their work environment, and perceived fairness in how they are treated in their job have direct influences on their perceived level of job satisfaction. Thus, the higher their reported workload, the greater their perceived control over their work environment; and the higher their perceived fairness in how they are treated in their job, the higher their perceived level of job satisfaction (Beta=0.13, Beta=.18, Beta=0.42, respectively).

The results also showed that the Myanmar mental health social workers' reported workload has indirect influences on their perceived level of job satisfaction, being mediated by their perceived burnout factors of depersonalization and negative/reduced personal accomplishment. Thus, the higher they reported their workload to be, the higher their reported levels of depersonalization (Beta=.46) and negative personal accomplishment (Beta=0.26) and, subsequently, the lower their reported level of job satisfaction (Beta=-0.27 and Beta=-.17, respectively). The contextual work factor of fairness was also found to have an indirect influence on their perceived level of job satisfaction, being mediated by their perceived burnout factor of depersonalization. Thus, the higher their perceived fairness in how they are treated in their job, the lower their reported level of depersonalization (Beta=-.15) and, subsequently, the higher their reported level of job satisfaction (Beta=-.27).

The results also showed that the Myanmar mental health social workers' reported workload is positively associated with the burnout factor of emotional exhaustion (Beta=.66). Thus, the higher the participants' reported workload, the greater they reported being emotionally exhausted. Emotional exhaustion, however, was not found to be significantly associated with the participants' reported level of job satisfaction.

Figure 2 also reports the standardized residual for each dependent variable for the path model. These coefficients provide an estimate of the proportion of variance in each dependent variable not predicted by the model. Alternatively, subtracting these values from 1.00 indicates the proportion of variance predicted by the model. Table 4 showed that these coefficients indicated that the path model accounted for 43.5% of the variance in the burnout factor of emotional exhaustion, 26.9% of the variance in the burnout factor of depersonalization, 6.8% of the variance in the burnout factor of negative personal accomplishment, and 39.6% of the variance in job satisfaction.

Discussion
The current research aimed to explore the direct and indirect influences of six contextual work factors on the level of job satisfaction among Myanmar mental health social workers, mediated by three dimensions of burnout. Overall, the result showed that workload, control, and fairness were the work factors with the greatest impact on the three dimensions of burnout and job satisfaction in direct and indirect ways.

Direct Relationship

In terms of significant direct relationship, the result of path analysis indicated that for mental health social workers in Myanmar, their reported workload has positively but weakly correlated (1.3) with job satisfaction. A possible explanation of this particular finding is that the level of job satisfaction of the participants was influenced by workload along with other factors. This finding is in line with that obtained by Bulter (1990) who explored job satisfaction among social workers and found that participants reported being satisfied with the content of work they engaged in but reported being least satisfied with the degree of workload. The present finding is also consistent with that reported by Onyett et al. (1997) who conducted a study among 445 team members in 57 community mental health teams. The authors established that despite having high level of emotional exhaustion, the health providers reported having higher level of job satisfaction, higher sense of personal achievement, and lower level of depersonalization.

Another current finding as a result of path analysis showed that control has direct positive relationship with job satisfaction (.18) in that the greater the participants' perceived control over their work environment, the higher was their level of perceived job satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the statement of Leiter and Maslach (2004) in that congruence in control occurs when employees feel that they have enough, if not more, influence over decisions that affect their work. In the context of this study, the mental health social workers may feel that they have enough opportunities to get involved actively in work-related decision making and positive relationship with their organization which may, subsequently, lead to an increase in their level of job satisfaction.

Within the cultural context of Myanmar, it is possible that some cultural factors may have affected the relationship between perception of control and job satisfaction. In this country, power *distance* or strength of social hierarchy in communication may have played a role. Most Myanmar people grow up with little control in their families and school and even less chances to participate in decision making processes on a community level. In terms of social norms, most of the people tend to listen to what elders say and do what they asked to do, as a show of respect. Hence, if there is little control over decisions affecting their work, the health workers' satisfaction with their jobs is adversely affected. On the other hand, if they are given the chance to participate in or influence decision making processes at work, this may lead to a higher level of job satisfaction.

Path analysis revealed that the factor of fairness (-.15) has a direct positive relationship with job satisfaction. AL-Hussami (2008) posited that job satisfaction depends either on the nature of the job or on employees' expectations about the job. Based on this position, fairness plays an important role in the Myanmar mental health social work setting in terms of fair rewards, fair involvement in decision making, fair work practices and working conditions, and fair treatment by superiors and coworkers, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and education.

Indirect Relationship

The result of path analysis showed that workload has an indirect significant positive relationship with emotional exhaustion; however, no association was found between

emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction. Maslach et al. (2001) supported this particular finding in that workload is the factor which is most directly associated with emotional exhaustion that results from a heavy workload that demands continuous exertion for days. A possible explanation for there wasn't found the significance relationship between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction in this study may have to do with Myanmar people being used to experiencing emotional depletion by surviving the perennially difficult situation in the country; that is, a chronically difficult life in Myanmar makes people more resilient. Mental health social workers might be emotionally overextended and exhausted due to their highly taxing workload; however, this may not necessarily impact on their satisfaction at work. In other words, emotional exhaustion is taken for granted and may not matter much for them because their overall life situation is already difficult as it is.

Another path relationship showed that workload has an indirect relationship with job satisfaction, being mediated by depersonalization and negative personal accomplishment. According to the burnout model, emotional exhaustion is the first reaction of burnout; after that, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment develop over time. It is possible that some participants in this research may have reported feelings of emotional exhaustion which might only be an early stage of burnout. They may soon start experiencing feelings of depersonalization which may, subsequently, impact on their level of job satisfaction.

In the current investigation, mental health social workers who have high level of negative personal accomplishment may already experience emotional exhaustion or depersonalization, or both. Misshauk (1970) pointed out that level of job satisfaction differs between one highly trained and the other less well-trained in handling their workload. A possible explanation is that the capacity of mental health social workers to engage with their workload influences their level of negative personal accomplishment and job satisfaction. The current finding, however, showed very low level of reported negative personal accomplishment. This means that mental health social workers in Myanmar have feelings of competence and achievement, based on their performance.

The contextual work factor of fairness was also found to have an indirect influence on the participants' level of perceived job satisfaction, being mediated by the burnout dimension of depersonalization. This finding is in agreement with that of Leiter and Shaughnessy (2006) who reported that fairness has a strong relationship with depersonalization. Maslach and Leiter (2008) explored predictors of burnout in the workplace and reported that fairness turned out to be the tipping point and critical incongruity of burnout.

Within the context of Myanmar, human services differ from counterpart organizations in other countries. For example, Western and European countries have rules and laws about fairness within the organization. However, Myanmar does not have proper rules and laws for this. International NGOs operating in Myanmar may apply international workers' rights and labor laws within their organization, but this may not apply in local CBOs and NGOs. Thus, perceived fairness by mental health social workers may not correspond to the policies of the organization they work for. Furthermore, mental health social workers who already suffer from emotional

exhaustion because of work overload might experience depersonalization with the addition of feelings of unfair treatment.

Conclusion

This study showed that workload, control, and fairness are significantly related to burnout and job satisfaction among mental health workers. This suggests that similar organizations should foster a favorable work environment for their health services providers to ensure a productive workforce. Such environment should foster a reasonable and manageable workload for its service providers, allow them a realistic level of control over their work processes and workable level of participation in decision making that would affect their work, and ensure a sense of fairness in the way the professionals are treated by their superiors and coworkers.

With regard to training, several studies have reported that human service workers who were trained in and practiced a variety of skills in their work reported less stress and burnout (Sarata, 1972). Furthermore, increasing level of training (from simple to advance) would be beneficial to mental health social workers to develop their level of knowledge and to build their confidence. Periodic stress management workshops or training programs should be developed and implemented for use by mental health social workers and allied professionals for more effective and efficient service delivery.

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