



Core Competencies Evaluation Project Direct Support Worker Survey

Initial Report Developmental Services HR Strategy Forum February 2013

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Executive summary

This report presents the preliminary findings for the first stage of the evaluation of the implementation of core competencies in the developmental services sector. In 2010, sixteen agencies across Ontario piloted the core competencies model for direct support professionals. In 2011 and 2012 over 90 additional agencies have participated in the voluntary provincial implementation of core competencies in the sector. Researchers plan to conduct a post-implementation survey in 2015.

Researchers at Queen's University formed a partnership with the Provincial Network Human Resources Sub-Committee to evaluate and provide feedback on this initiative. This report builds on the findings from the survey that was conducted at the pilot sites between May and June 2010 and presents data collected from participating agencies in 2012.

The evaluation of the impact of the core competencies model is a part of a larger study by researchers at Queen's University of strategic human resource initiatives in the developmental services sector. The study focuses on the perspectives and work experiences of direct support employees in the sector.

The survey includes questions about job satisfaction, experiences of burnout and occupational stress, organizational commitment, perceptions of organizational support, and prosocial motivation, as well as a range of demographic information and personal characteristics.

Key findings include:

- The most striking finding in this initial review is how much people enjoy working with people with developmental disabilities. Direct support workers reported high satisfaction levels with the nature of work in the sector. Over 96 percent of all survey respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the nature of work. Results for pilot agencies were similar with 94 percent of respondents satisfied or very satisfied with the nature of work.
- While satisfaction with the nature of work and interpersonal relations (supervisors and coworkers) were strongly positive, satisfaction with labour market outcomes (pay and benefits) were neutral at best. There were significant differences in satisfaction ratings between full-time and part-time workers.
- Part-time employees represented nearly 52 percent of survey respondents. Over 17 percent of survey respondents worked on a relief or casual basis.
- Mean rates for burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment) were very similar to pilot agencies and lower than other human service fields.
- Perceived organizational support (POS) is an important factor in the work experiences of direct support professionals. Stronger feelings of POS are associated with less burnout and stress and more organizational commitment.
- Some 6 percent of survey respondents indicated that they frequently thought of quitting. This rate was much lower among employees with high ratings for organizational trust and engagement.
- Feelings of prosocial motivation and positive contribution from the people receiving supports has a powerful buffering effect against feelings of depersonalization. However, the desire to do good can result in employees feeling emotionally exhausted when service idealism conflicts with the reality of service constraints.

Introduction

Everyday, thousands of developmental service workers provide supports that help people in Ontario live more inclusive and independent lives. Previous research in the field of developmental services has found that workers have rewarding but challenging jobs. These experiences reflect critical challenges facing the sector. Ontario continues to transform the sector to promote greater inclusion, dignity, and choice for people accessing developmental services and supports. In order to ensure that this transformation is sustainable, stakeholders have recognized the importance of workforce development and strategic human resource planning.

This report provides the initial results of a study that evaluates the work experiences of developmental service workers in Ontario. The data are based on a survey that was conducted in 2012. The survey is part of a larger study to evaluate strategic human resource initiatives in the sector. The survey was designed to evaluate work experiences during the introduction of a model of behavioural core competencies for direct support employees in the sector.

The survey instrument includes well-established measurements of burnout, occupational stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, prosocial motivation, emotional feelings, and a range of demographic and personal characteristics.

The report's comparison group is based on a similar survey of direct support employees at sixteen (16) agencies across Ontario in 2010. The Human Resource Strategy Committee selected these agencies as pilot implementation sites for the behavioural core competencies model. These sixteen agencies may not be representative of all agencies in the sector. Selection criteria did target

a representative cross-section of large and small, union and non-union, urban and rural, as well as regional representation.

Agencies which participated in the provincial implementation of core competencies were invited to take part in the survey. The selection criteria were not designed to be representative, but a diverse cross section of agencies did volunteer.

Joint implementation teams at local agencies were responsible for distributing and promoting participation in the survey. The teams distributed survey packets which included a cover letter with information about the purpose of the survey, the survey itself, and a sealable envelope so that participants could return the survey to Queen's University to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

A total of nearly 2,800 completed direct support surveys have been collected. A total of 1,570 completed and usable surveys were returned during the pilot phase. An additional 1,151 completed surveys have been collected in 2012. The Queen's research team is continuing to collect surveys from agencies participating in the 2012 survey. This represents a response rate of about 40 percent of the direct support workforce at the participating agencies.

This high level of participation has created one of the largest data sets of job satisfaction and work experiences of direct support workers in the human services sector globally. Such a broad representation of the workforce provides critical information regarding current work experiences.

Researchers plan to conduct a post-implementation survey in 2015. Agencies which would still like to participate in the pre-implementation phase of the study are invited to contact the researchers.

Section 1: Characteristics of respondents

In 2012, direct support workers at participating agencies returned a total of 1,151 completed surveys to researchers at Queen's University. This section provides a brief profile of the characteristics of the survey respondents.

Women comprised the vast majority (84 percent) of direct support workers among pilot agency survey respondents. The proportion of 2012 respondents was slightly higher (89 percent). Average tenure in the sector by 2012 had increased slightly compared to the pilot agencies, 12.3 years to 11.2 years respectively. Likewise, agency tenure in the 2012 survey averaged 9.9 years, slightly higher than the 2010 survey, 8.8 years.

A majority of the 2012 survey respondents were part-time workers (52 percent) compared to full-time workers (48 percent). Given the variation in the use of the designation 'contract/casual' in the pilot agency surveys, a comparison was not possible. Some 17.4 percent of the 2012 respondents reported working as a relief or casual employee.

Survey respondents reported working an average of 30.3 hours per week. The average hourly pay rate (\$19.14) was slightly less than the pilot group (\$19.78). Multi-agency work is less prevalent in this survey compared to other pilot agencies (12.6 percent and 18.3 percent respectively). Nearly 22 percent of the survey respondents indicated that they had worked outside the

Table 1: Personal characteristics of respondents

Characteristic	2010 Mean or percent	2012 Mean or percent
Survey respondents	1,570	1,151
Gender		
Women	84%	89%
Men	16%	11%
Tenure in sector	11.21	12.3
Tenure at agency	8.82	9.9
Employment status		
Full time	55%	48.4%
Part time	41%	51.6%
(Relief/Casual)		17.4%
Hours worked avg wk.	31.8	30.3
Hourly pay rate	\$19.78	\$19.14
Multi-agency work	18.3%	12.6%
Work outside sector		21.7%
Age	39.5	40.5
Marital status		
Married	58.8%	62%
Never married	20.7%	19.5%
Separated/divorced	16.6%	13.8%
Dependents	61.2%	56%
Youth	43.6%	36.5%
Adult	28.7%	26.6%
Training hours	25.9	16.8
Illness	64%	55.2%
Avg. # sick days	4.8	4.5
Work-related injury	5%	4.7%
Avg. # days lost	9.6	9.3
Intention to quit		6.4%
Job search	21%	23%
Self identification		
Aboriginal	4.6%	4.0%
Visible minority	13%	7.5%
Person with disability	14.6%	15.4%
Foreign born	25%	13.4%
Years in Canada	22.75	26.3

sector in the past month. (The pilot survey did not ask this question and this may explain the higher number for multi-agency work.)

The proportion of workers with dependents at home (56 percent) was similar to the reports from the pilot agencies. The reported average number of training hours (16.8) was less than the pilot site average (26).

A majority of respondents (61 percent) reported taking some sick days in the previous six months. The average number of sick days used by those taking time off was approximately 3.17 days. The work-related injury rate was 4.7 percent of survey respondents. Work-related injuries resulted in an average of 9.3 days lost, similar to the pilot group.

The level of work-related injuries in the sector was high compared to rates in other sectors. The federal Ministry of Labour reports national work-related injury rates of 18.8 per 1,000 workers. In the 2010 and 2012 surveys, the work-related injury rate was between 45 to 47 per 1,000. However, these comparisons may not be accurate because of concerns with the reliability of governmental work-related injury rates.

Over 6 percent of survey respondents reported that they frequently thought of quitting. Thirty percent reported that they occasionally thought of quitting. Over 23 percent of survey respondents reported applying for another job in the past six months. This rate may not reflect an intent to quit the organization.

Responses concerning self-identification of being a member of an equity seeking group may not be reliable and may significantly under-report the actual demographics for Aboriginal people (4 percent), visible minorities (7.5 percent) and persons with a disability (15.4 percent).

The proportion of foreign born workers in the 2012 survey was much lower (13 percent) than the average among pilot agencies (25 percent). Most foreign born respondents are not “new” Canadians. On average, immigrants working in the sector have lived in Canada for decades.

Educational attainment of survey respondents

Table 2 compares the educational attainment rates among the 2012 survey respondents to those at pilot agencies and for the Ontario workforce as a whole. At the key indicator level for the sector (college graduate) the educational profile of direct support employees was consistent with the pilot sites (51 percent) and nearly twice the rate of the Ontario workforce (29 percent). The survey did not ask if college graduates had a DSW or a diploma from another field.

Based on data from the Labour Force Survey, 24 percent of all Ontario workers have a university degree or higher. The 2012 rate was 21 percent. While having a more educated workforce has positive implications for the sector, previous analyses found that pilot sites with a large proportion of employees with advanced degrees reported higher rates of dissatisfaction with opportunities for advancement and recognition.

Table 2: Educational attainment

Highest education level completed	Ontario workforce	Pilot agencies	2012
High school or less	39%	5.7%	6.3%
Trade diploma/certificate		4.5%	6.0%
DSW apprenticeship		2.9%	3.9%
Some college	7.4%	9.4%	11.4%
College graduate	29%	50.8%	51.2%
University graduate	16%	22.7%	17.1%
Advanced degree	8%	4.1%	4.1%

Section 2: Job satisfaction measures

Measures of job satisfaction

The survey measured nine domains of job satisfaction using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 4 (very satisfied). The survey questions are drawn from the Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1985) and the Job Satisfaction Index (Schriesheim and Tsui, 1980).

Findings

Satisfaction ratings from the 2012 survey were very similar to the general results from the pilot agencies (Figure 1). Survey respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the nature of work (mean = 3.28) and relations with coworkers (3.02). Positive satisfaction ratings were also indicated for supervisors (2.91), pay (2.11) training (2.76), and communications (2.22). Direct support workers on average reported negative

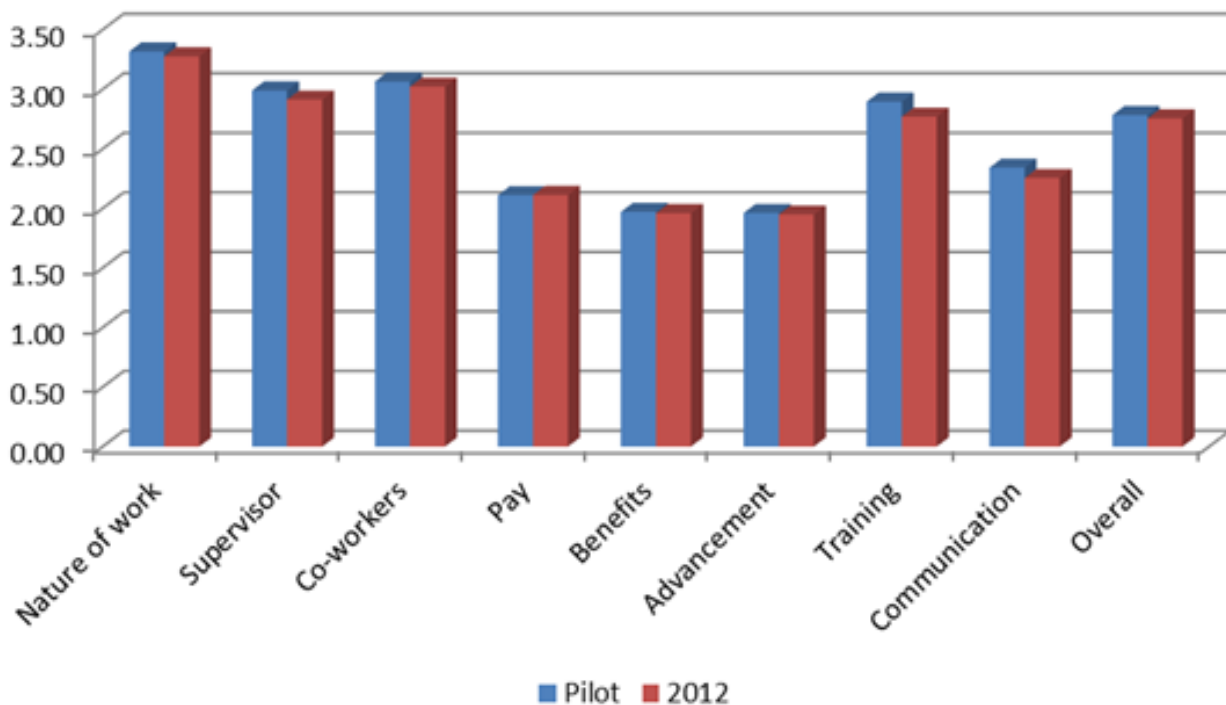
average satisfaction with benefits (1.96) and opportunities for advancement (1.95). Overall job satisfaction ratings were positive (2.76).

Discussion

The most striking findings indicate that direct support workers are very satisfied with the nature of their work. Direct support professionals truly enjoy working with people with developmental disabilities and appear deeply committed to the nature of direct support work. Previous research has indicated that support from coworkers and supervisors are important for mitigating stress and improving the quality of services. Therefore, finding general satisfaction among these two domains is an important initial finding.

Previous studies (KPMG 2000) have identified concerns over pay and benefit levels of direct

Figure 1: Mean job satisfaction ratings (0 = very dissatisfied, 4 = very satisfied)



support workers in Ontario. Compensation in the sector remains a concern.

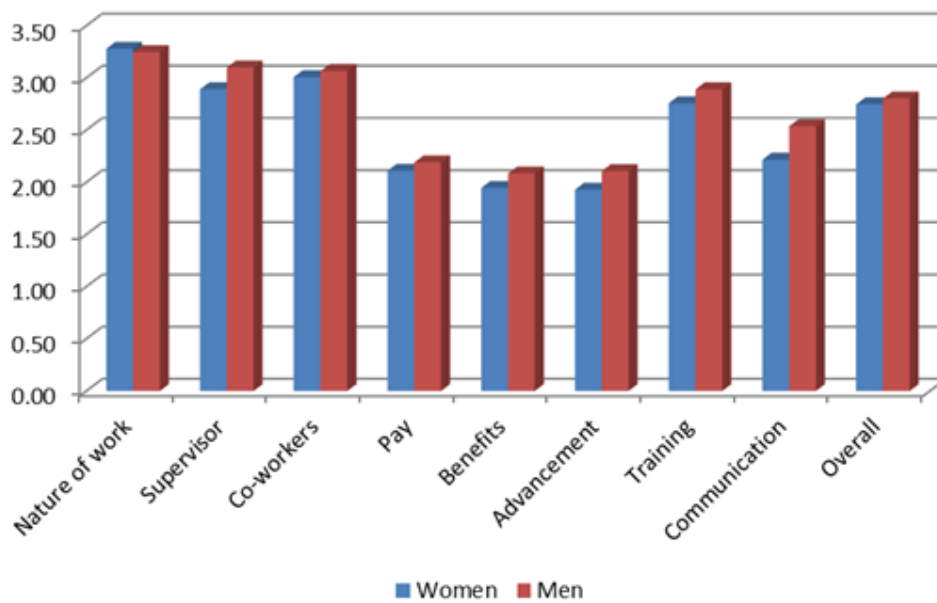
Satisfaction with opportunities for advancement has consistently been the domain with the lowest job satisfaction ratings. Multivariate regression analysis of the 2010 pilot data revealed that strategies to address the lack of satisfaction in this area will require organizations in the developmental services sector to re-think the traditional approach

to career ladders. (See page 17, ‘Re-thinking traditional career ladders.’)

Job satisfaction: Women and men

Figure 2 presents a comparison of job satisfaction ratings between women and men. Men generally reported higher satisfaction ratings except in the nature of work domain. Most differences were not statistically significant except for the differences in satisfaction with supervisor relations (mean for women = 2.89, mean for men = 3.10) and satisfaction with communication, (mean for women = 2.22, mean for men = 2.54).

Figure 2: Comparison of job satisfaction ratings - Women and men

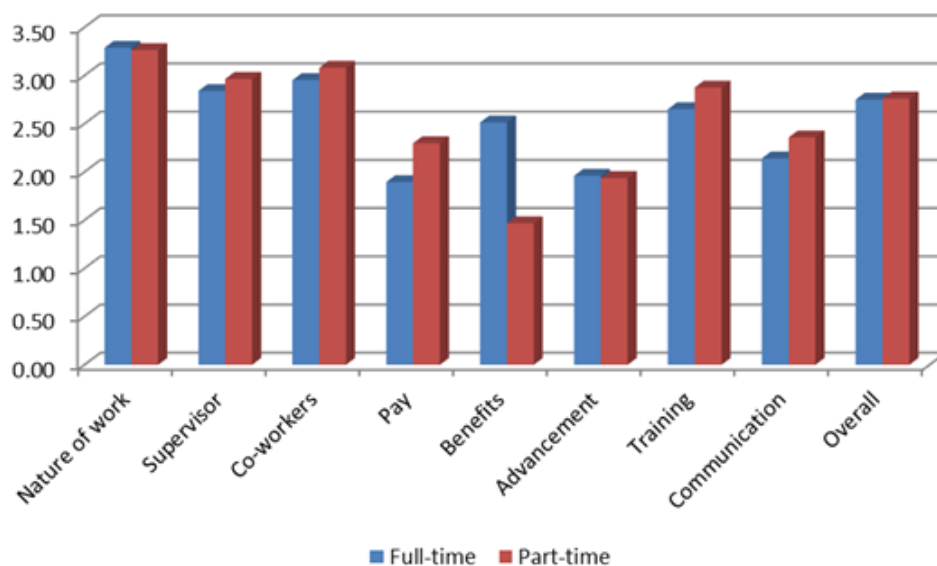


(mean for women = 2.89, mean for men = 3.10) and satisfaction with communication, (mean for women = 2.22, mean for men = 2.54).

Full-time and part-time workers

Figure 3 displays the differences in satisfaction ratings between full-time and part-time survey respondents. We found that a number of the differences in satisfaction ratings between these two groups were statistically significant.

Figure 3: Comparison of job satisfaction ratings - Full-time and part-time



In particular, mean satisfaction ratings for pay was significantly less for full-time (1.90) compared to part-time workers (2.30). In contrast, mean ratings for satisfaction with benefits were significantly higher for full-time employees (2.51) compared to part-time workers (1.47).

Section 3: Perceived Organizational Support

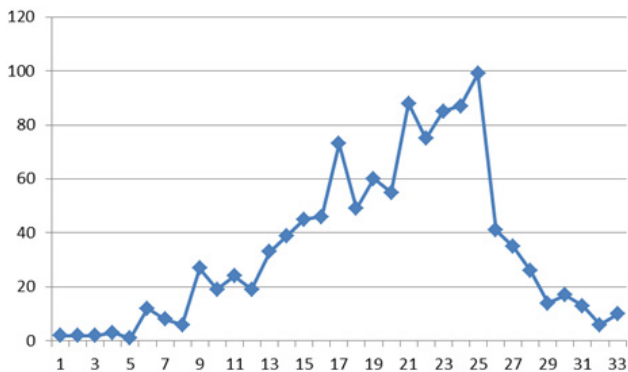
Employees who experience a supportive work environment are generally found to be more engaged (Saks, 2006) and experience less burn-out (Maslach et al., 2001). Research has also shown that perceptions of organizational support facilitate greater attachment to the organization, a lower tendency to quit, higher job satisfaction, and positive effects on work performance (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

The survey included a measure for perceived organizational support (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Perceived organizational support (POS) measures the degree to which employees believe that their work organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. POS was not included in the pilot survey of direct support workers, so a comparison group is not available at this time. The survey also included a measure for perceived supervisor support (PSS).

Findings

Figure 4 shows the distribution of feelings of perceived organizational support. These data reflect the “raw” scores and depict the distribution among survey respondents. The higher scores on the horizontal axis reflect higher levels of perceived organizational support. The distribution is skewed to the right, indicating higher POS.

Figure 4: Perceived Organizational Support

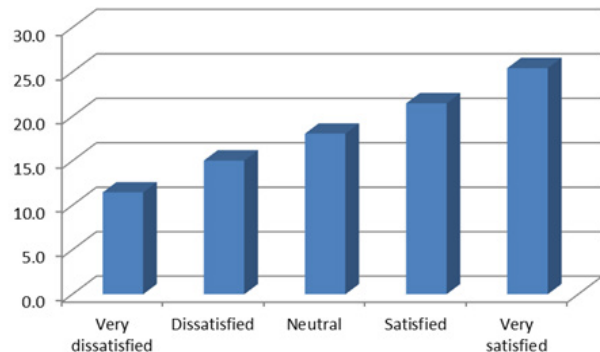


POS and job satisfaction

The survey data showed important correlations between job satisfaction measures and perceived organizational support. Satisfaction with organizational communication had the strongest association with POS. Not surprisingly, satisfaction with the relationship with one’s supervisor is highly correlated with perceptions of supervisor support.

Figure 5 displays the relationship between satisfaction with communication and POS. Employees who feel more satisfied with communication on their job, tend to perceive greater organizational support.

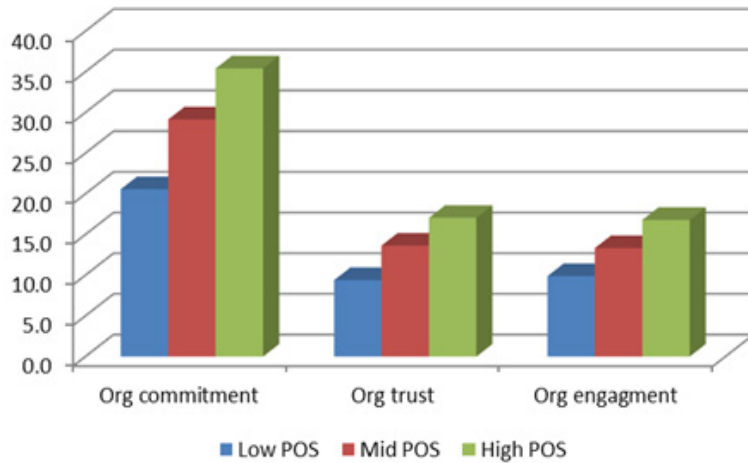
Figure 5: Satisfaction with communication and perceived organizational support



POS, commitment, trust, and engagement

We found that POS has positive correlations with other important measures such as organizational commitment, trust and engagement. In Figure 6, respondents were grouped into low, medium and high values for POS. We then compared the average feelings of organizational commitment, trust and engagement across the three groups. Higher feelings of POS were consistently associated with higher levels of organizational commitment, trust and engagement.

Figure 6: Organizational commitment, trust and engagement



Lessons from previous research

Previous research conducted during the pilot phase of core competencies found that communication has significant effects on employee work experiences when controlling for other factors. Initial findings in this study suggest that improving organizational communication is key to improving perceptions of organizational support, addressing stress, and improving retention.

POS, stress, and burnout

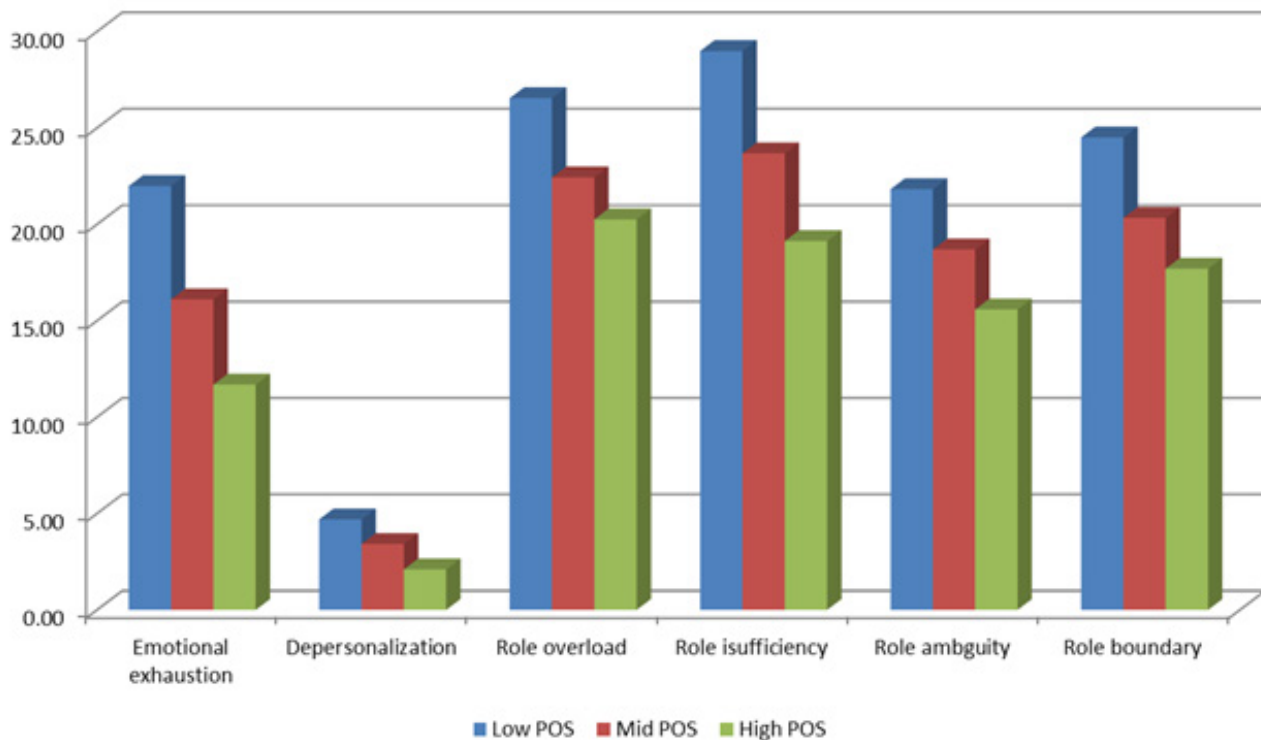
Similarly, we examined the relationships between the three levels of POS with work stress and burnout. We found that the groups of employees who reported higher feelings of POS, also reported lower feelings of burnout and stress.

Figure 7 displays these trends for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and four types of

work stress: role overload, role insufficiency, role ambiguity and role boundary.

Interestingly, the trends appear strongest in the areas of emotional exhaustion and role insufficiency. This makes sense since POS measures the extent to which employees feel the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being.

Figure 7: Perceived organizational support, stress and burnout



Section 4: Organizational commitment and trust

Measures of organizational commitment

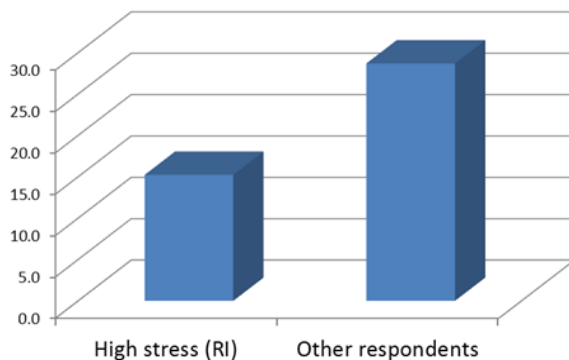
In addition to POS, the survey explored other facets of the employment relationship. The survey measured affective organizational commitment, organizational trust, and organizational engagement. Affective organizational commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1990) refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Organizational trust measures the extent to which an employee feels she can trust the organization.

The survey measures affective organizational commitment (AOC) using an 8-item scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). Organizational trust is measured with a five-item scale. While there are many ways to measure organizational engagement, the survey uses a six-item scale.

Organizational commitment and stress

Feelings of organizational commitment are strongly associated with experiences of work stress. Figure 8 compares the average reported levels of organizational commitment among employees experiencing high levels of role insufficiency stress and all other respondents. Those experiencing high levels of stress reported organizational commitment levels 50 percent less than other respondents.

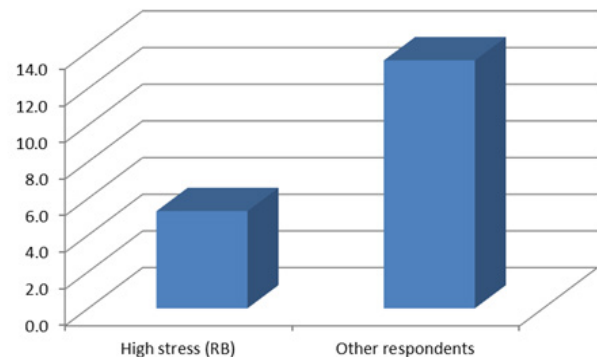
Figure 8: Organizational commitment and stress



Organizational trust and work stress

Figure 9 compares employees experiencing high levels of role boundary stress, the extent to which an employee is experiencing conflicting role demands, and all other survey respondents.

Figure 9: Organizational trust and stress



In this domain of the employment relationship, we again find that employees experiencing high levels of work stress report much lower levels of organizational trust.

We explored what factors contributed to stronger feelings of organizational trust. We found that satisfaction with communication was strongly and positively correlated with feelings of organizational trust. Figure 10 displays this trend from very dissatisfied (VD) with communication to very satisfied (VS).

Figure 10: Communication and trust

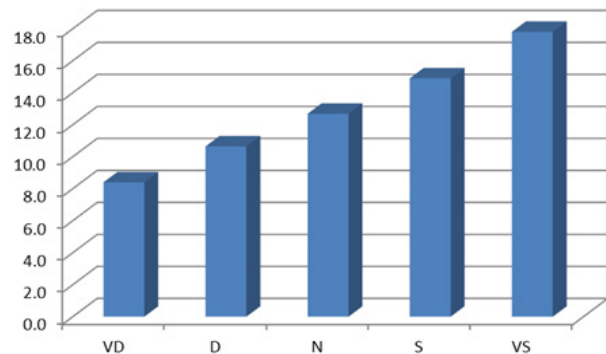
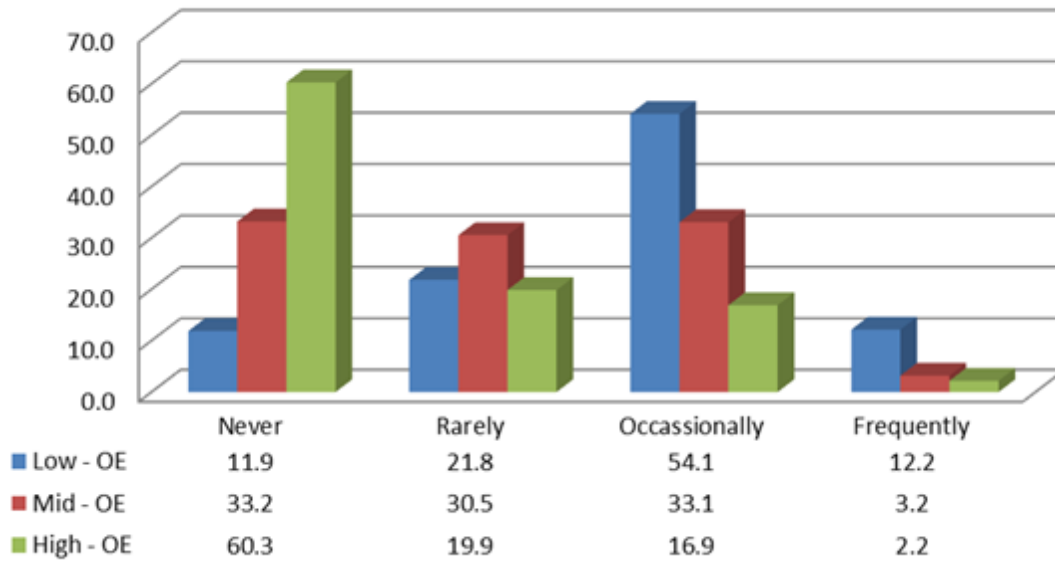


Figure 11: Organizational engagement and intentions to quit



Engagement and intention to quit

Figure 11 compares the survey responses regarding intentions to quit broken down by low, middle, and high levels of organizational engagement. Direct support workers who reported high levels of organizational engagement never (60.3 percent) or rarely (19.9 percent) thought of quitting

In contrast, employees who reported low levels of organizational engagement thought about quitting occasionally (54.1 percent) or frequently (12.2 percent). Respondents in the mid-range of organizational engagement were fairly evenly distributed across the never, rarely and occasionally categories with few (3.2 percent) reporting

that they frequently thought of quitting their job.

Improving trust and engagement

We examined which factors are positively associated with organizational trust and engagement. Figure 12 displays how increasing satisfaction with supervisors tends to be correlated with increasing levels of organizational trust.

Figure 13 displays the association between satisfaction with co-worker relations and organizational engagement. Taken together, satisfaction with the social relations in the workplace have an important impact on organizational trust and engagement.

Figure 12: Trust & satisfaction with supervisors

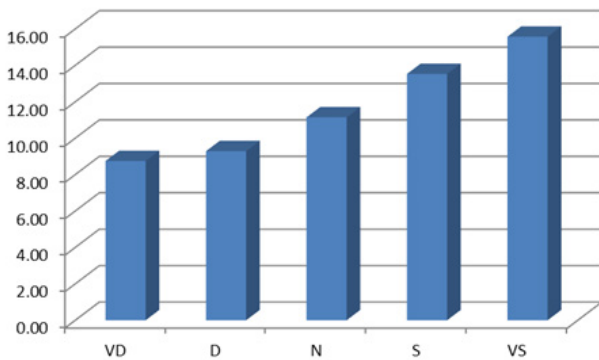
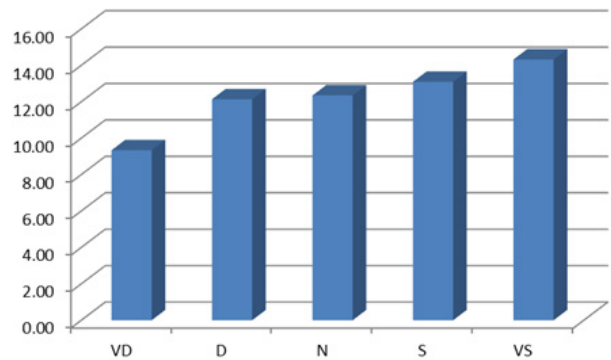


Figure 13: Engagement & relations with coworkers



Section 5: Prevalence of burnout

Measures of burnout

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is a well-tested survey tool for measuring three distinct characteristics of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. Maslach and Jackson (1996) adapted the original survey construct for use in the human services sector (MBI-HSS).

The emotional exhaustion scale is measured by feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. The depersonalization scale measures the extent to which direct support workers have developed an unfeeling and impersonal attitude towards the people whom they support. Feelings of confidence and beneficial impact of one's work is reflected in the personal accomplishment scale.

The survey questions measure a spectrum of feelings associated with burnout. Conceptually, burnout can range from low to high, meaning there is not a definitive threshold indicating the presence or absence of burnout.

Findings

On average, developmental service employees reported medium to low rates of burnout across all three measures. Figure 14 shows the spectrum of reported levels of emotional exhaustion from low to high. Most respondents (57 percent) experienced low levels based on the benchmark measures of the survey instrument. Some 25 percent of respondents experienced a mid-range while some 18 percent experienced high levels of emotional exhaustion.

Figure 14: Feelings of emotional exhaustion

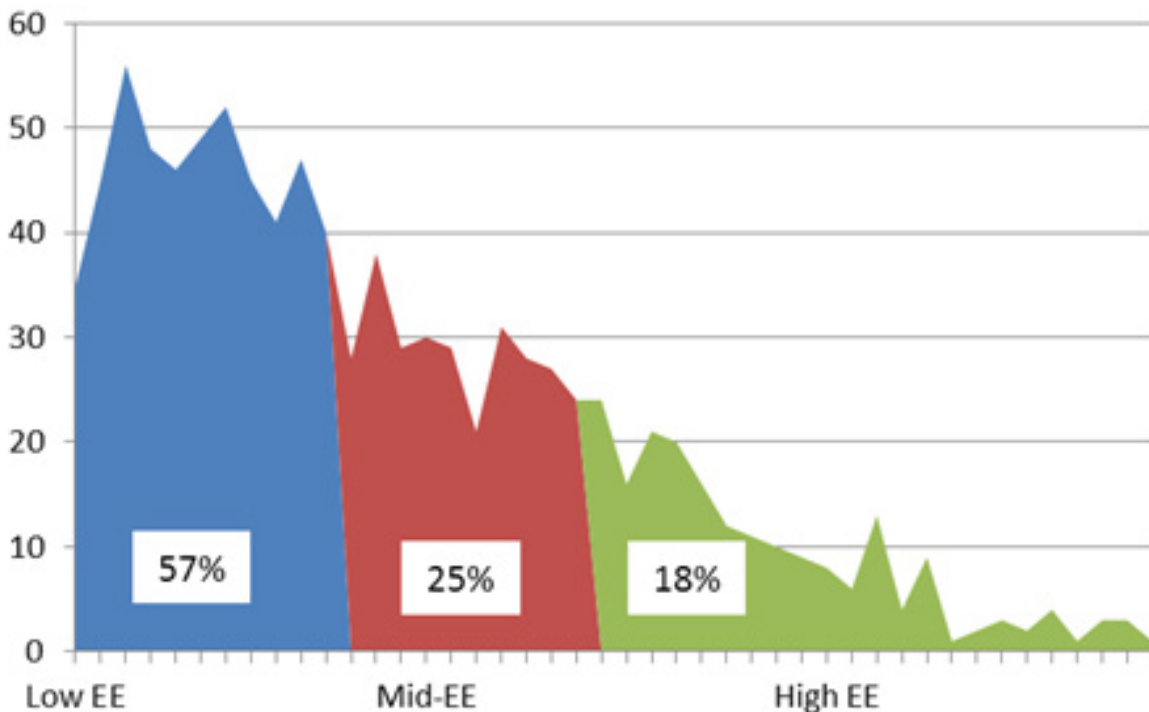


Figure 15 shows the proportion of respondents who reported high levels of burnout in the 2010 and 2012 surveys for each component of burnout. The levels of burnout appear fairly consistent across the two rounds of surveys.

Consistent with previous research (Skirrow & Hatton, 2007), the level of burnout amongst direct support workers as measured by the MBI scale is lower compared with other health and human services fields, especially in the area of depersonalization. Nevertheless, it is important to scrutinize burnout data in more detail.

Stress and burnout

Analyses of the survey data has found that higher levels of workload stress were associated with higher levels of emotional exhaustion, but not with depersonalization. Figure 16 compares the reported levels of emotional exhaustion among respondents who reported high levels of role overload and all other respondents. Feelings of emotional exhaustion were twice the rate among employees feeling high stress.

Role insufficiency stress, (feeling one's career is not progressing), and role boundary stress, (experiencing conflicting work demands), were associated with depersonalization. Figure 17 compares feelings of depersonalization among direct support workers who experienced high levels of role insufficiency stress and all other respondents.

Figure 15: Prevalence of high levels of burnout, 2010 & 2012

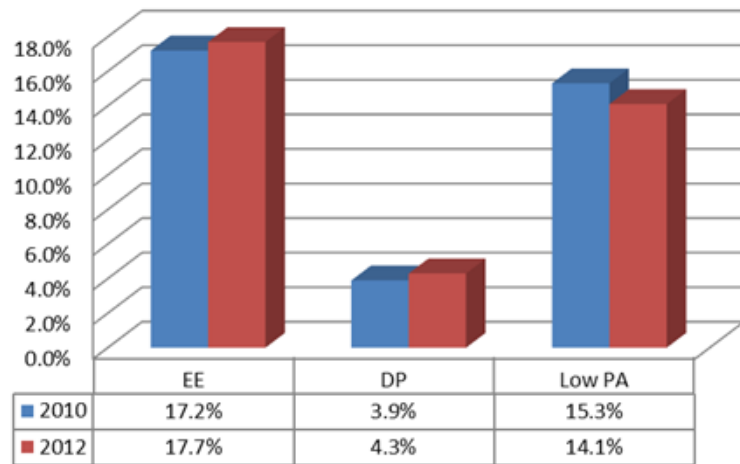


Figure 16: Role overload stress and emotional exhaustion

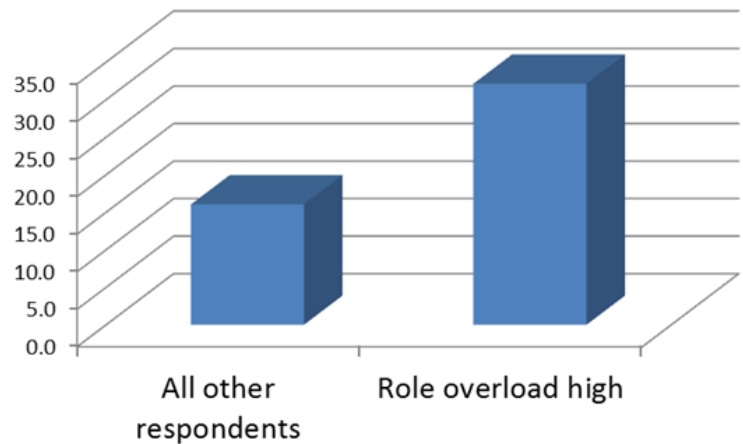
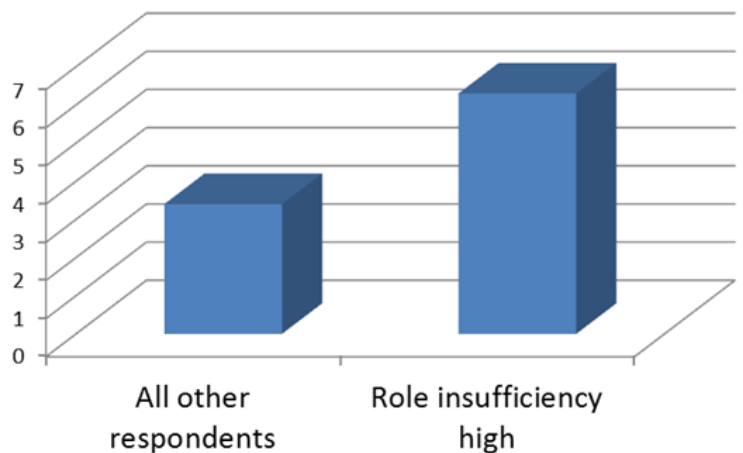


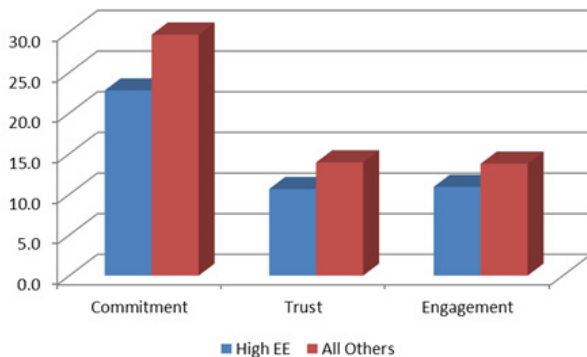
Figure 17: Role insufficiency stress and depersonalization



Impact of burnout on relationships

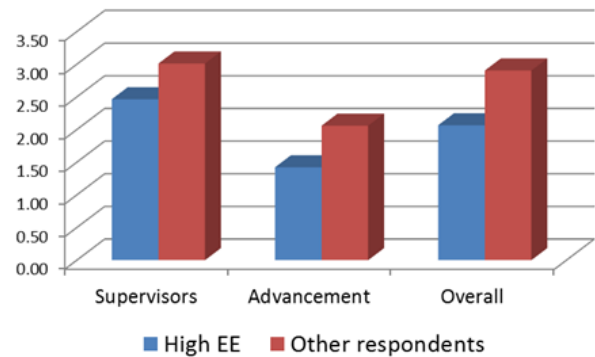
The prevalence of emotional exhaustion has important implications, especially its negative impact on an employee's relationship with the organization. Figure 18 compares the average scores for organizational commitment, trust, and engagement between employees experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion and all other respondents.

Figure 18: High emotional exhaustion, commitment, trust and engagement



Burnout has a similar effect on job satisfaction. Figure 19 compares the satisfaction rates of respondents with high emotional exhaustion with all other respondents. Workers who reported high levels of emotional exhaustion had overall satisfaction rates 28 percent lower than other respondents. Employees reporting high levels of emotional exhaustion also reported thinking about quitting their job more frequently.

Figure 19: High emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction measures

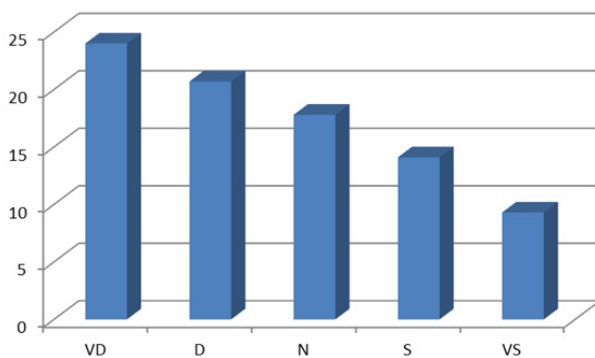


Communication, training, and burnout

Analyses of the survey data suggest that satisfaction with organizational communication and training is associated with reduced feelings of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

Figure 20 shows the average scale scores for emotional exhaustion broken down by satisfaction with communications ranging from very dissatisfied (VD) to very satisfied (VS). Respondents who were very satisfied with communication also

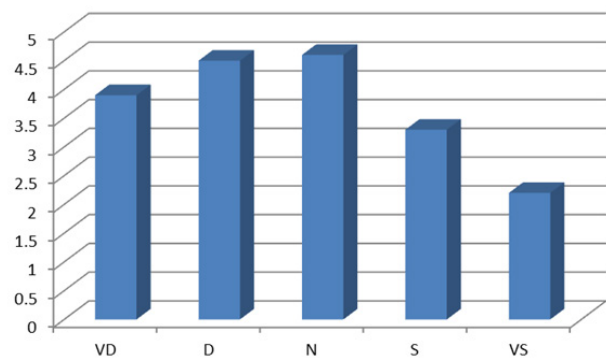
Figure 20: Satisfaction with communication and feelings of emotional exhaustion



experienced much less emotional exhaustion on average.

Figure 21 shows the average scores on the depersonalization index broken down by levels of satisfaction with training. One interpretation of this association is that when agencies are able to provide training which goes beyond the mandatory health and safety training to include value-based or other types of person-centered training, the incidence of depersonalization is lower.

Figure 21: Satisfaction with training and feelings of depersonalization



Section 6: Experiences of occupational stress

Measures of occupational stress

The survey measures occupational stress using the Occupational Role Questionnaire (ORQ) developed by Osipow (1998). The ORQ measures several distinct types of occupational stress. Four measures of occupational stress are included in this survey: Role overload, role insufficiency, role ambiguity, and role boundary.

A detailed description of these forms of occupational stress are included in Table 3. Possible interpretations of high scores are presented in Table 4. We estimate the proportion of direct support workers experiencing high levels of occupational stress by using generic normative data reported by Osipow (1998: p. 48). The incidence of high stress was approximately 2 percent in the development of the survey instrument benchmarks

Findings

Figure 22 shows that the experiences of occupational stress were generally lower among survey respondents in 2012 compared to 2010. The inci-

dence of high stress from role insufficiency was significantly lower in the 2012 survey data.

Discussion

While the incidence of high levels of stress are relatively low, work stress has very important implications for the work experiences and employment outcomes for direct support employees. As reported in the earlier sections, occupational stress was found to be an important factor in burnout and organizational commitment.

More rigorous statistical analyses of the 2010 data found that role overload stress had a significant impact on emotional exhaustion, but not on depersonalization when controlling for other factors. Role boundary stress had a statistically significant association with depersonalization. These distinctions reflect the different ways in which direct support professionals experience employment relations compared to support relations. Human resource strategies the distinct factors to enhance professional relationships in both of these domains.

Table 3: Descriptions of occupational stress measures Osipow (1998: p. 2)

Occupational role scale	Description
Role overload	Measures the extent to which job demands exceed resources (personal and workplace) and the extent to which the individual is able to accomplish workloads.
Role insufficiency	Measures the extent to which the individual's training, education, skills, and experience are appropriate to job requirements.
Role ambiguity	Measures the extent to which priorities, expectations, and evaluation criteria are clear to the individual.
Role boundary	Measures the extent to which the individual is experiencing conflicting role demands and loyalties in the work setting.

Figure 15: Comparison of the incidence of high occupational stress among direct support workers

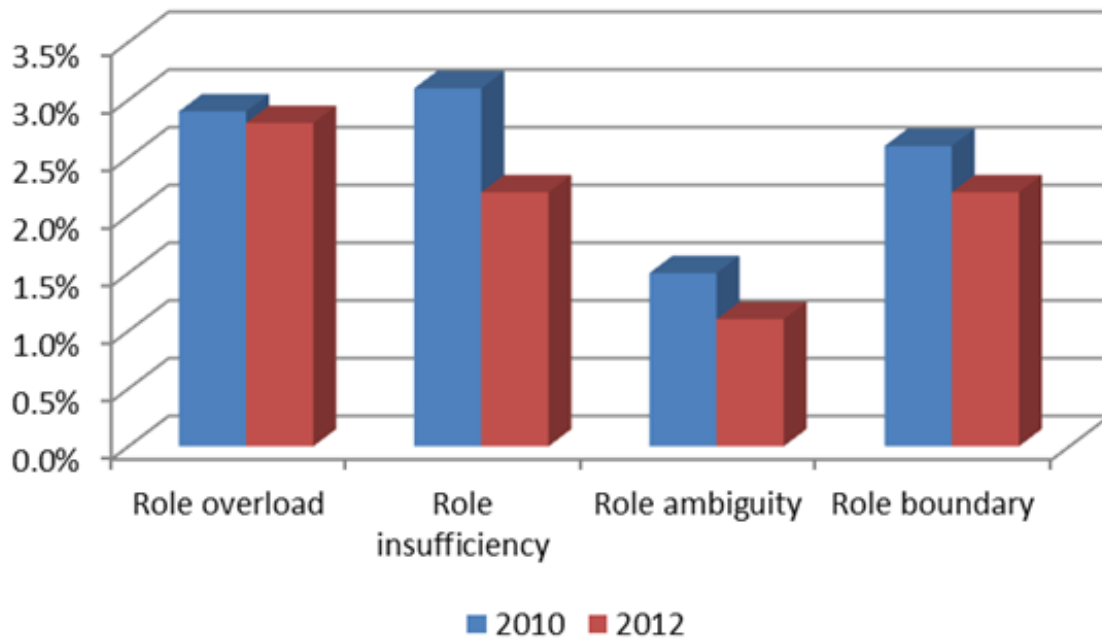
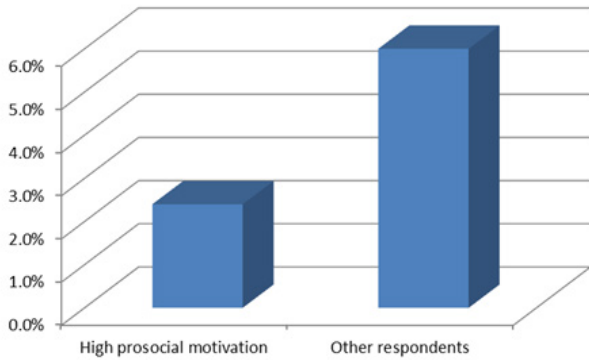


Table 4: Descriptions of possible interpretations of high scores. Osipow (1998: p. 12)

Occupational role scale	Interpretation
Role overload	High scorers may describe their work load as increasing, unreasonable, and unsupported by needed resources. They may describe themselves as not feeling well trained or competent for the job at hand, needing more help, and/or working under tight deadlines.
Role insufficiency	High scorers may report a poor fit between their skills and the job they are performing. They may also report that their career is not progressing and has little future. Needs for recognition and success may not be met. They may report boredom and/or under utilization.
Role ambiguity	High scorers may report an unclear sense of what they are expected to do, how they should be spending their time, and how they will be evaluated. They seem not to know where to begin on new projects and experience conflicting demands from supervisors. They also may report no clear sense of what they should do to “get ahead.”
Role boundary	High scorers may report feeling caught between conflicting supervisory demands and factions. They may report not feeling proud of what they do, or not having a stake in the enterprise. They also may report being unclear about authority lines and having more than one person telling them what to do.

Section 7: Relationships with People Supported

Figure 23: Prosocial motivation and feelings of high levels of depersonalization

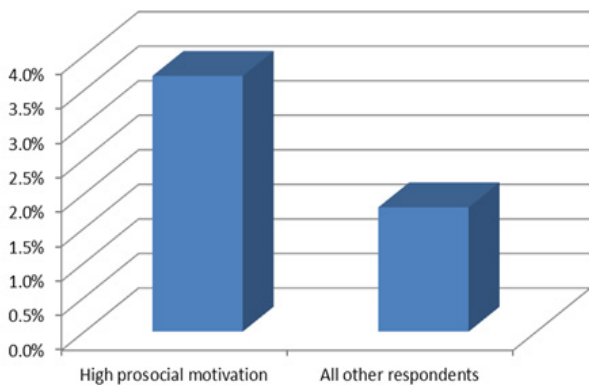


Prosocial Motivation

Prosocial motivation (PSM) is characterized by the desire to engage in work that is beneficial to others (Grant, 2007). Scholars have described prosocial motivation as an enduring personal characteristic of empathy and concern for others (Penner, et al., 2005). However, prosocial motivation is not simply a fixed personal trait, rather it is also shaped by organizational design and the interpersonal nature of work (Grant, 2007). Prosocial motivation, and the Positive Staff Contribution Questionnaire (PSCQ) in the next section, reflect the dimension of support relations.

Direct support workers who reported higher levels of prosocial motivation were significantly less likely to experience high levels of depersonalization.

Figure 24: Prosocial motivation and prevalence of high workload stress



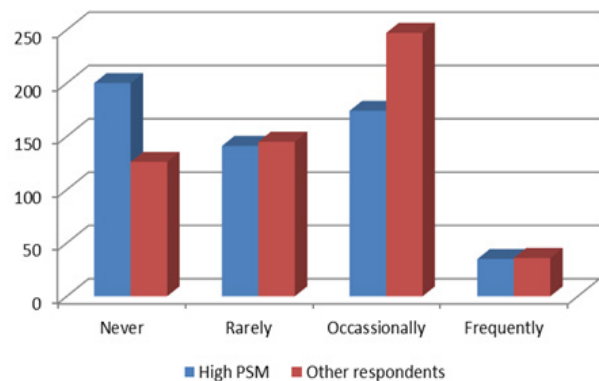
tion (Figure 23). However, the desire to make a prosocial difference does not appear to mitigate occupational stress. In fact, analysis of the pilot survey data suggests that PSM exacerbates feelings of emotional exhaustion.

Figure 24 compares the prevalence of high stress in the form of role overload among employees with high levels of prosocial motivation and all other respondents. High levels of workload stress are more than twice as common among prosocially motivated employees. Direct support workers experience distress as they confront the limitations of a service system that does not achieve the ideal prosocial benefit for people supported (see next page).

PSM and intent to quit

Prosocial motivation is a key factor to better understanding the relationship between direct support professionals and the people they support. PSM appears less strongly associated with retention. Figure 25 shows the average intent to quit comparing high feelings of PSM with other respondents. Respondents reporting high PSM thought of quitting “rarely” on average. However, frequent thoughts of quitting were just as prevalent among high PSM employees as all other respondents.

Figure 25: Prosocial motivation and intent to quit



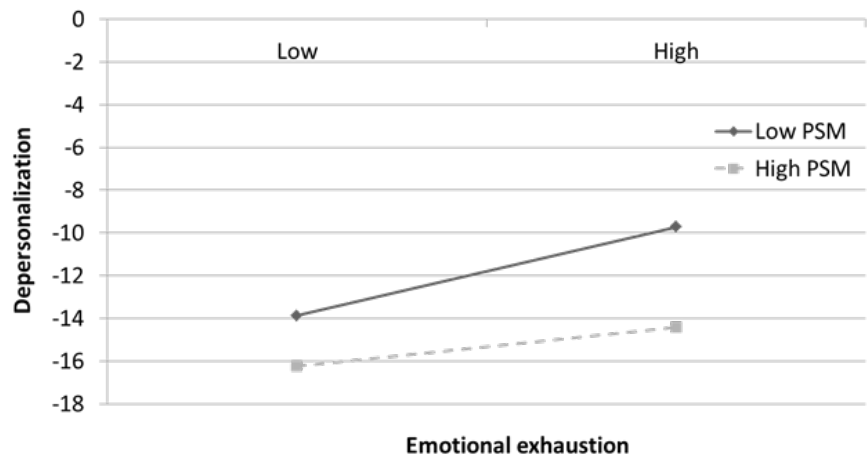
Prosocial motivation buffers against depersonalization...

To explore how the development of core competencies will impact work experiences and support relationships in the sector, researchers used questions about prosocial motivation because they reflect the value-based, person-centred orientation of several items in the core competencies model:

- Advocating for others
- Fostering independence
- Interpersonal relations and respect

Researchers conducted statistical analyses which tested the moderating effects of prosocial motivation on depersonalization when it is interacted with emotional exhaustion. Figure 26 provides a graphical display of the findings. The line on top reflects the respondents who scored low on the PSM scale. The lower line reflects respondents

Figure 26: Prosocial motivation moderates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and depersonalization

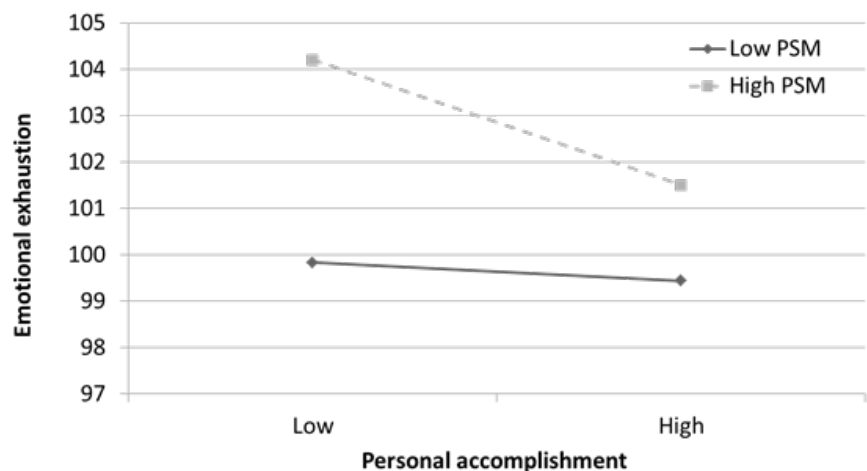


reporting high PSM. Even when experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion, direct support professionals with high PSM experienced much lower ratings of depersonalization. The gap between the two lines reflects the moderating or buffering effect of PSM on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

...but prosocial motivation exacerbates emotional exhaustion

However, these statistical analyses also found that PSM exacerbates feelings of emotional exhaustion when interacted with feelings of personal accomplishment. Figure 27 shows that respondents with high ratings of PSM who had a low opinion of their personal accomplishment experienced much more intense feelings of emotional exhaustion compared to survey respondents with low ratings of PSM.

Figure 27: Prosocial motivation exacerbates the relationship between feelings of personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion



Staff Positive Contribution Questionnaire

The Staff Positive Contribution Questionnaire has been used to study how staff experience positive contributions from working with people with developmental disabilities. The survey included a variety of questions related to the well-being of direct support employees and their relationships with people supported (Hensel et al., 2012).

The survey uses a short form of the survey developed by Hensel and her colleagues which measures two aspects of the relationship. Two aspects of positive contributions are measured by this survey tool: 1) Positive impact on work skills, and 2) Positive work motivation.

Figure 28: Depersonalization by SPCQ- Motivation Scale

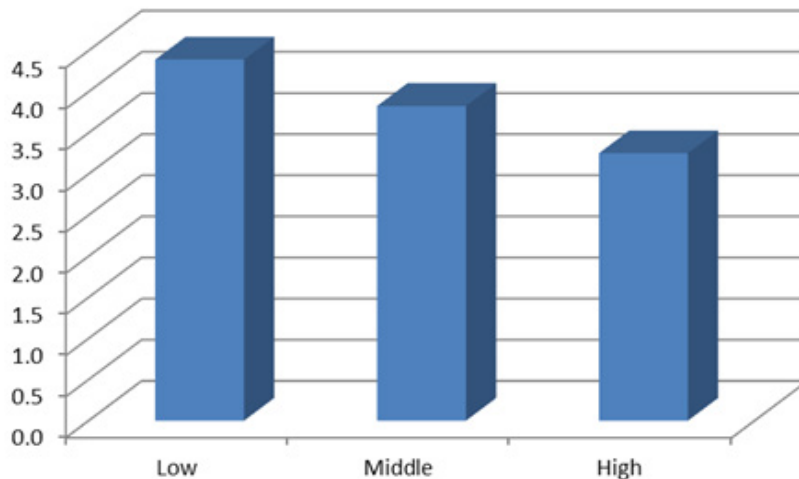


Figure 29: Personal accomplishment by SPCQ - Work Skills Scale

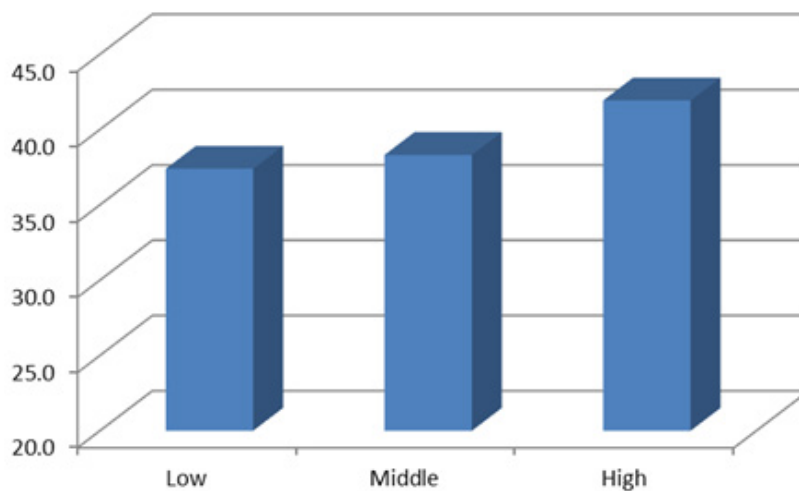


Figure 28 breaks down the responses on the SPCQ- Motivation scale into low, middle, and high categories. Respondents who feel strongly that working with people with disabilities is very motivating experience much lower levels of acute depersonalization.

A similar breakdown of the SPCQ-Work skills scale found that respondents who feel strongly that working with people with disabilities improves their work skills tend to have higher feelings of personal accomplishment (Figure 29).

The trends were not as clear for other measures of occupational stress. For example, feelings of positive contributions were associated with higher feelings of emotional exhaustion, similar to what

was found with prosocial motivation. Once again, like prosocial motivation, the positive contributions scale appears to have more of a role in the support relationship than in the employment relationship.

Challenging behaviours

Working with people who may frequently exhibit challenging behaviours does not seem to be related to whether or not staff feel that working with people with disabilities positively contributes to their work skills and motivation. (The correlations are not statistically significant.)

Exposure to challenging behaviours is correlated with emotional exhaustion and workload stress (see also Hensel et al., 2012). However, the current study did not find a correlation between challenging behaviours and depersonalization.

Section 8: Positive & negative feelings

Measures of positive and negative feelings

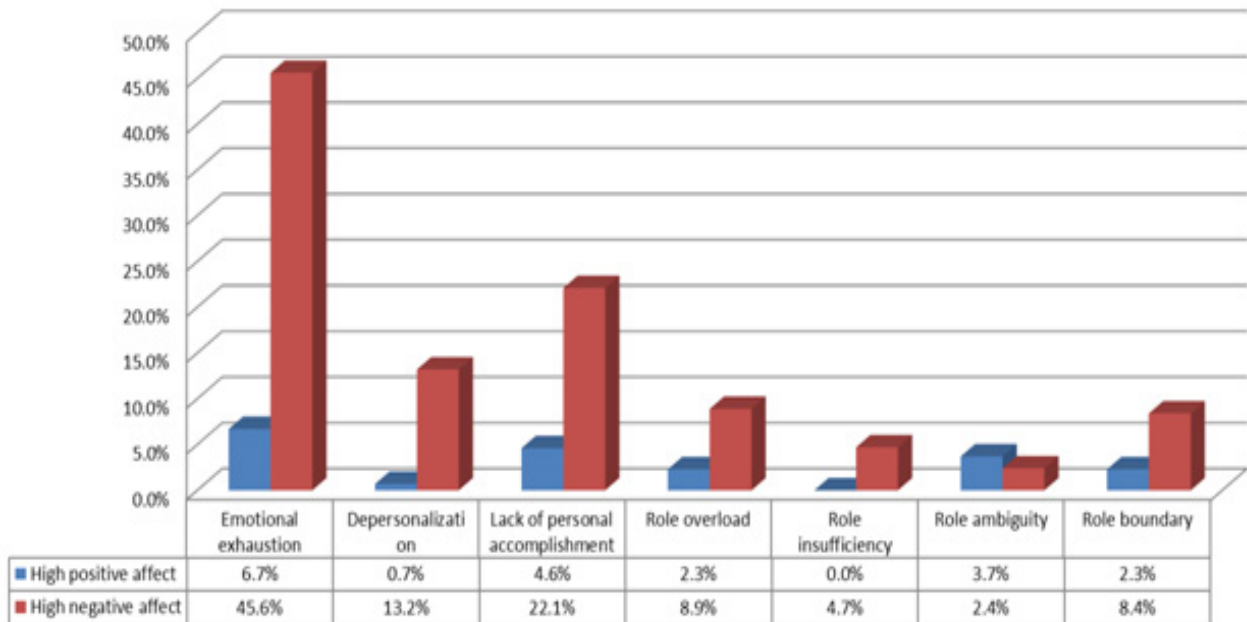
The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) is a 20-item self-report measure developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988). The scale measurement reflects the positive or negative disposition of individuals. Individuals scoring high in the negative affect measures, experience sadness, distress and unpleasurable engagement with the environment. In contrast, the positive affect scale measures the extent to which an individual experiences enthusiasm and a pleasurable engagement with the environment.

These personal characteristics may influence how people experience stress, satisfaction, organizational commitment and other employment outcome measures. This initial report only explores the general correlations of positive and negative dispositions among the survey respondents.

Findings

The proportion of survey responses from the 2012

Figure 30: Prevalence of high stress and high burnout among respondents with high positive affect and high negative affect scores



surveys with high indicators of positive or negative affect is similar to the pilot agencies.

Figure 30 compares the experiences of burnout and stress between people with high negative affect and high positive affect. Respondents indicating high negative affect tend to experience higher levels of occupational stress and burnout. Such stress and burnout is most acutely felt in the areas of emotional exhaustion (45.6 percent) and lack of personal accomplishment (22.1 percent).

In contrast, employees expressing high levels of positive affect tend to experience lower levels of occupational stress and burnout. High levels of emotional exhaustion and lack of personal accomplishment are significantly reduced. Stress from role insufficiency and boundary are virtually non-existent among employees with high levels of positive affect.

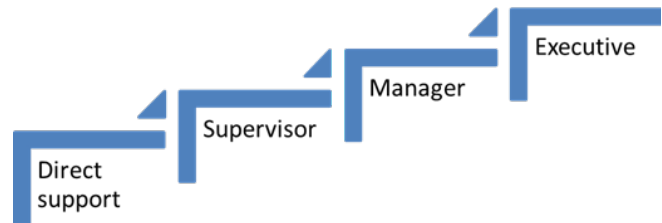
Section 9: Re-thinking career ladders

Satisfaction & opportunities for advancement

Limited opportunities for advancement have been considered a major challenge for retention in the field of developmental services. Of the nine domains of job satisfaction, satisfaction with opportunities for advancement had the lowest rating in both sets of direct support surveys.

On the surface, dissatisfaction with advancement opportunities might appear rather predictable. Organizations run lean operations with little administrative overhead. Managerial structures

Figure 31: Traditional career ladder



among developmental service providers are horizontally flat and resources are focused at the level of direct service provision.

However, statistical analyses of the 2010 survey data suggest that this simple explanation is not supported by the evidence from the survey data. Instead, the nature of the problem is the disconnect between traditional career ladders, as shown in Figure 31, and the prosocial motivation and high satisfaction with the nature of the work among direct support professionals. Traditional career ladders are not necessarily designed to enhance direct support work. Traditional career ladders tend to promote greater responsibility in managing the organization rather than growth in the direct support role. Indeed, among the 2010 survey respondents, those who reported higher satisfaction with opportunities for advancement also reported higher levels of depersonalization on average when controlling for other factors (Hickey, In press).

These findings suggest that organizations need to re-think traditional career ladders as the primary model for professional growth and career advancement. Direct support professionals want better opportunities to advance and grow in developmental services as a career or choice. However, traditional career ladders not only provide few opportunities for career growth, such career ladders may also be the wrong model.

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Ray began his course at the local college and I get to help him with his post secondary dream!

Ontario Developmental Services Professional
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Section 10: Conclusions

Researchers at Queen's University conducted this survey as part of an evaluation of the provincial implementation of core competencies in the developmental services sector. The current study forms part of a larger program of research into human resource practices in the sector.

Local implementation teams distributed the surveys to direct support employees at each agency. While the participation rate varied across agencies, the overall survey return rate was 40 percent.

The survey measures a variety of employee outcomes including job satisfaction, burnout, occupational stress, and organizational commitment. The survey also measures certain employee characteristics such as positive and negative affect, and prosocial motivation to better understand how these may influence work experiences.

The most striking finding of this initial analysis of the survey data is the high satisfaction rates with the nature of work. More than 96 percent of direct support workers indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the nature of the work. Direct support workers love the work despite dissatisfaction with pay, benefits, and opportunities for advancement.

The data do not suggest that direct support workers simply trade pay and benefits for the opportunity for socially meaningful work. Instead, this initial analysis confirms that these are two distinct areas of employment experiences for direct support workers. Human resource professionals need to be sensitive to both the employment relationship and the support relationship.

The ongoing financial constraints in Ontario in general and in social services in particular will require attention to key job quality indicators.

The impact of fiscal pressures on pay and benefits, as well as the growth of part-time and casual employment require ongoing attention.

The survey findings suggest that focusing on fundamental human resource practices including organizational communication and training have a variety of positive effects on both the employment relationship and the support relationship.

Likewise, perceptions of organizational support were positively associated with employee commitment, trust and engagement. Employees who indicated higher levels of organizational engagement thought about quitting much less frequently.

Prosocial motivation and related value-based behaviours at work were found to buffer the support relationship from stress and emotional exhaustion. At the same time, the desire to do good was found to also be related to employees feeling more emotionally drained as they experienced the conflict between service idealism and service reality.

Future Research

These initial findings raise many questions that require additional analyses of the survey data. For example, some groups of employees appear to experience burnout more acutely than others. What can organizations do to enhance perceptions of organizational support and reduce stress? What organizational characteristics and practices might mitigate stress and burnout amongst direct support employees?

Finally, this study will link with the on-going research at Queen's University to understand the impact of transformation on direct support workers, its implications for organizations, and the personal outcomes for people supported.

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