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Job Frustration in Substance Abuse Counselors Working with Offenders in Prisons Versus Community Settings

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Abstract

Substance abuse counselors who work with offenders are facing increasing caseloads which puts them at higher risk for job frustration. The purpose of this study was to explore differences between substance abuse counselors employed in prison versus community settings in terms of level of organizational support and job frustration. This study also investigated whether organizational support was associated with job frustration after controlling for counselor characteristics and workplace setting. This was accomplished utilizing data that was collected from 267 counselors as part of the Criminal Justice Drug Abuse Treatment Studies (CJ-DATS) research cooperative. Results indicated that counselors employed in community settings, as compared to those employed in prisons, are more likely to report higher levels of perceived organizational support. In addition, ordinal logistic regression results reveal that counselors who are non-white and have greater levels of organizational support have less job frustration, after controlling for counselor characteristics and workplace setting. The research to practice implications are discussed.

Keywords

substance abuse counselors; job frustration; organizational support

Introduction

According to the National Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors, the impending substance abuse treatment counselor shortage verges on crisis level (NAADAC, 2007). The high turnover rate, a lack of new people entering the field, and an increasing need for substance abuse treatment has led us to this point. Studies have suggested the high turnover rate for substance abuse counselors has been linked in great part to poor compensation and counselor “burnout” (Fahy, 2007; Knudsen, Ducharme, & Roman, 2006). Burnout is a common term in the human service fields used to describe the three-dimensional aspects of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Shoptaw, Stein, & Rawson, 2000). In addition, there is a lack of

professional prestige substance abuse counselors are afforded, due in part to the clientele they serve (Fahy, 2007). When this is combined with the emotional drain of engaging in empathetic work with clients who many times relapse, it is no surprise substance abuse counselors are left feeling frustrated, “burnt-out,” and in search of another career.

The purpose of this study is to explore potential differences in job frustration and organizational support for substance abuse counselors working with offenders in prisons and offenders in the community. Due to the increase in substance abuse counseling for offenders, whether in a correctional institution or as part of their probation or diversion stipulations while remaining in the community, it is important to recognize the extent of job frustration, and possible subsequent burnout, for counselors and to identify which variables increase a counselor’s susceptibility to the condition.

Job Frustration

The term job frustration is important to the greater understanding of burnout since self-reporting of burnout is frequently labeled as feelings of frustration and it is commonly considered a precursor to burnout (Lewandowski, 2003). While there may be a limited amount of literature available explaining job frustration, especially among substance abuse treatment counselors, there are many consistencies between job frustration and burnout. Therefore, job frustration is linked to conditions that interfere with an individual’s job performance (Spector, 1997). Employees with higher job frustration also tend to have higher work anxiety and lower job satisfaction. High job frustration has been linked to more physical health problems, the intent to quit, and employee withdrawal (Liu, Spector, & Jex, 2005; Spector, 1997).

For those counselors who stay in their job while experiencing frustration or burnout, the consequences can be detrimental to not only the counselor personally, but also their co-workers, management, and clients. A mental health counselor experiencing job frustration and/or burnout has been shown to provide reduced job performance including lower productivity (Mor Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001; Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003; Smith, 2005; Taris, 2006). Furthermore, counselors suffering from frustration and/or burnout have been shown to be ineffective in their work, and tend to have higher rates of absenteeism and turnover (Gallon, Gabriel & Knudsen, 2003; McLellan, Carise, & Kleber, 2003). Counselors suffering from burnout also typically experience negative health conditions, such as higher rates of illness and depression (Melamed, Shirom, Toker, Berliner, & Shapira, 2006). These conditions are also thought to impact other areas of the counselors’ personal life, such as their marital satisfaction (Burke & Greenglass, 2001). In addition to coping with the poorer job performance from the effected counselor, the treatment facility must also manage the high costs of hiring and training new staff, and the potential “contagious” nature of counselor job frustration and burnout (Ducharme, Knudsen, & Roman, 2008). Not surprisingly, clients have been shown to feel less satisfied with counselors who are suffering from burnout (Ducharme et al., 2008).

Research has shown that in the field of social work, a significant portion of job frustration comes from organizational factors that affect workers’ delivery of services to their clients (Garner, & Hunter, 2012; Lewandowski, 2003; Melnick, Wexler, Chaple & Cleland, 2009).

For example, the perception that social service workers spend more time on paperwork than with their clients was positively associated with frustration (Gomez & Michaelis, 1995). Supervisors also play a role in employee frustration, not only with regards to the quality of their supervision, but also with their feedback which can determine merit raises and promotions. Geddes (1994) found that employees who received negative feedback from their supervisors on their performance appraisals were more frustrated and more likely to engage in antisocial behaviors such as sabotage and withdrawal. Additional organizational factors found to increase job frustration are increased regulation, high client load, role conflict, and role ambiguity (Lewandowski, 2003).

Counselor Characteristics and Job Frustration

Previous research has shown that there are several substance abuse counselor demographic characteristics that can be related to job frustration, such as years of experience, educational attainment, gender, and race (see Ducharme et al., 2008; McNulty, Oser, Johnson, Knudsen, & Roman, 2007). For example, years in the field have been found to predict burnout. Specifically, research has shown that counselors with more experience suffer less burnout (Farber, 2000; Farmer, Clancy, Oyefeso, & Rassool, 2002; Garland, 2004). It is thought that those with more experience in the field develop healthier mechanisms to cope with the more stressful aspects of the job. Similarly, age has also been found to predict burnout and frustration, with younger counselors being more susceptible to the condition (Garner, Knight, & Simpson, 2007).

Additionally, research has shown that counselors with higher educational attainment tend to experience increased rates of burnout compared to those with lower levels of educational attainment (Ducharme et al., 2008; Garland, 2004). Perhaps this is due to higher expectations of fulfillment when entering the field. Substance abuse counselors with higher educational degrees also tend to have higher rates of turnover, which some believe is due to their increased marketability, in that they have the ability to move from one treatment center to another in search of a more satisfying position or workplace, as opposed to leaving the field altogether (Ducharme et al., 2008).

Davis (2008) found that male counselors reported higher levels of burnout than female counselors. Perhaps females discuss work problems and frustrations with co-workers more than males, therefore developing greater social support which has been shown to decrease burnout and other related concepts (Stevanovic & Rupert, 2004). However, Lambert, Hogan, and Griffin (2007) found women working in a correctional environment report higher levels of stress than their male counterparts.

Studies on job frustration and race have been contradictory, with Prosser and colleagues (1997) finding that non-white respondents had more stress about their future while others studies have determined that whites reported experiencing more occupational stress and higher levels of turnover than non-whites (McNulty et al., 2007; Ross, Altmaier & Russell, 1989). Non-whites are over-represented among offender populations (non-whites account for about 68% of prisoners and 45% of those under community supervision) (Glaze & Bonzcar, 2011; Guerino, Harrison, & Sabol, 2011), whereas the majority of substance abuse counselors (estimates at 70 to 90%) are white (Kaplan, 2003). Little research has been

conducted on racial/ethnic matching in the addictions field, but it may be important in developing counselor/client rapport (CITE) which could reduce job frustration.

Finally, studies show mixed findings for counselors who are in recovery. Rubington (1984) found that counselors in recovery report higher rates of burnout while Elman and Dowd (1997) did not. Interestingly, Elman and Dowd (1997) suggested that counselors in recovery were less likely to burn out because of the social support they receive through their own recovery process as well as the sense of personal accomplishment they obtain from their continued sobriety.

Workplace Setting and Job Frustration

Substance abuse counselors may work with offenders in either prisons or in the community. In general, counselors working with offenders are at an even higher risk for job frustration since they are working with what are commonly viewed as marginal members of society, which may increase the chance of onset of depersonalization (Shoptaw et al., 2000). They are charged with treating clients who many times deny their problems, lack motivation to change, have frequent relapses, and are criminally involved (Garland, 2004). Substance abuse treatment clients involved in the criminal justice system are also often homeless, have significant health problems such as HIV/AIDS, and many times have co-occurring mental health disorders, therefore substance abuse counselors working with offenders may frequently face complex and frustrating clinical cases (Covington, 2007; Ducharme, Mello, Roman, Knudsen, & Johnson, 2007; McNulty et al., 2007; Shoptaw et al., 2000). Counselors working with offenders must also address “criminal thinking” with their clients, which includes failure to take responsibility for their actions, justification of their criminal behavior, and having a lack of appreciation for the consequences for their actions (NIDA, 2006).

Counselors working in the community with offenders must coordinate with their clients’ correctional supervisors and other community-based organizations. This includes knowing their clients’ requirements and communicating with courts, probation, or parole officers to insure the needs of the client are being met (e.g., housing, employment, etc.). This communication is positive because it necessitates collaboration with criminal justice personnel and community-based organizations to plan and evaluate the correctional clients’ treatment plan to make sure it fits their personal needs as well as meets the supervision requirements. Thus, counselors in community settings may have greater access to resources via their collaborations with other organizations (Taxman, Young, & Fletcher, 2007). These relationships could be facilitated by greater organizational support, and result in less job frustration, when counselors in community settings are compared to counselors employed in prison settings.

Substance abuse counselors who treat offenders in prison may have additional challenges when compared to their community-based counterparts, which could lead to perceptions of less organizational support and more job frustration. For example, counselors working in prisons must typically work with fewer resources and less wraparound services than their colleagues working in the community (Taxman et al., 2007). This is due in part to the fact that treatment is not the primary goal of a prison; therefore, treatment counselors are often

expected to work under extremely limited budgets and this can lead to a perception of low administrative support (Garland, 2004). Grella and colleagues (2007) suggest that counselors who work with offenders in prison-based programs have less influence on treatment improvement than their counterparts who work in community-based programs. Prisons tend to be organized as bureaucratically run organizations, which can make the employee feel alienated (Resig & Lovrich, 1998) and translate to feelings of limited organizational support. Furthermore, counselors working in prisons must work under surveillance, in confined workspaces, all the while cognizant of the threat to their safety (Garland, 2004; Lambert et al., 2007).

Organizational Support

Organizational social support, also known as support from supervisors and coworkers, can be both formal and informal. Formal organizational social support is often suggested in the mental health field as a way to protect therapists from developing job frustration and burnout. Substance abuse treatment organizations with constructive conflict resolution policies have been shown to increase consensus compared to those who did not have such policies in place (Melnick et al., 2009). Supervision and peer consultation have both been found to assist counselors with especially difficult cases, including those clients with PTSD, allowing the counselor to share the burden of carrying the weight of the clients' trauma accounts (Figley, 1995; Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). Supervision and peer support can also provide the counselor with an outside perspective on a therapeutic relationship, which may provide insight into over-identification and suggestions for treatment (Cerney, 1995). Informal organizational support typically involves co-workers bonding over non-work related events (e.g., the celebration of an office mate's birthday or a holiday allows coworkers to socialize without the intent of discussing work-related issues). This can enable the staff to feel as though they belong to a group where there is mutual respect and support (Bell, Kulkarni, & Dalton, 2003). Recent research illustrates the importance of positive work attitudes on reducing turnover intentions (Garner & Hunter, 2012; Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000).

Organizational support may be particularly important for counselors working with offenders. In fact, organizational support from supervisors and co-workers has been shown to protect counselors from the negative consequences of frustration and burnout (Shoptaw et al., 2000; Wee & Myers, 2003). Supervisor and co-worker support in substance abuse counseling has also been found to increase counselors' feelings of personal accomplishment and reduce emotional exhaustion and turnover (Ducharme et al., 2008; Knudsen, Ducharme, & Roman, 2008). This study proposes that organizational support, such as information sharing, brainstorming, advising, assistance with tasks, feedback, and emotional support, reduces the negative effects of job frustration among substance abuse counselors working with offenders.

The current study contributes to the substance abuse counselor literature using data from 267 counselors employed in both prison and community-based settings. Specifically, two research questions about substance abuse counselors' level of job frustration while working with offenders were examined. The first research question asked "Are there any differences

between counselors employed in prison versus community settings in terms of level of organizational support and job frustration?” It was hypothesized that counselors working in community settings would report higher levels of organizational support and lower levels of job frustration. This study also examined a second research question, “Is organizational support associated with job frustration, after controlling for counselor characteristics and workplace setting?” It is hypothesized that counselors who perceive higher levels of organizational support would report lower levels of frustration.

Method

Sample

The Criminal Justice Drug Abuse Treatment Studies (CJ-DATS) research cooperative was established by the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) in 2002. It consisted of ten research centers collaborating on various research protocols to build a better understanding of both adult and youth treatment services within the criminal justice system (Taxman et al., 2007). This study uses data from the National Criminal Justice Treatment Practices (NCJTP) Survey. The NCJTP Survey was conducted by all CJ-DATS research centers in 2005 in order to gather baseline data on the range of correctional settings and the populations they serve. The NCJTP Survey is the most comprehensive survey conducted to date on organizational factors and addiction treatment services serving criminal justice populations. The NCJTP Survey collected data from prisons, jails, probation and parole, and community treatment providers. Four separate instruments were utilized in the data collection efforts: 1) Correctional administrators or executives in charge of programs and services at the state level; 2) Program and services administrators; 3) Treatment administrators; and 4) Line staff, including a sub survey for corrections staff and a separate survey for treatment staff. This study only utilized data from the 281 counselors in Survey 4.

Procedures

The self-administered paper-and-pencil survey for correctional and line staff was twenty-two pages long, which may partially account for the 35% response rate. Other reasons that were provided for no response included not being allowed to complete the survey during work-time and administrative restrictions (Taxman et al., 2007). The surveys were administered in a variety of ways as each research center devised its own procedures for gaining the best possible response rate (i.e. some were distributed in person, while others were mailed directly to the individual, and some provided snacks or lunch) (Taxman et al., 2007). However, no incentives were provided for survey respondents beyond the aforementioned snacks/lunch. Please see Taxman et al. (2007) or the CJ-DATS website, www.cjdats.org for additional information on the NCJTP survey and its' methodology.

Measures

Independent variables: Counselor characteristics, workplace setting, and organizational support—This study focuses on the level of reported job frustration by substance abuse counselors working with offenders in prisons and community care. The NCJTP Survey 4, which was analyzed for this study, contains five counselor demographic variables that were of importance. The survey asked, in open-ended form, how many years a

counselor had been in their current job. Dichotomous measures were included for education (Bachelor's Degree or less=0, Master's Degree or higher=1) as well as the respondent's gender (Female=0, Male=1), race (Non-White=0, White=1), and recovery status (Not in Recovery=0, In Recovery=1).

Workplace setting was measured by a dichotomous variable where counselors who were employed in community based settings were coded "0," and counselors who were employed by correctional institutions were coded "1." Organizational support was determined by the manner in which individuals responded to statements about organizational support and commitment. The items used to determine organizational support were based on an instrument developed by Balfour and Wechsler (1996) that identifies the degree to which the employee felt committed to, supported by, and attached to their employer. These statements were anchored by a five-item Likert scale with the choices of: Strongly disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neither disagree nor agree=3, Agree=4, or Strongly agree=5. This scale is comprised of six items including: 1) I feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization; 2) I feel like "part of the family" at this organization; 3) The people I work for do not care about what happens to me; 4) This organization appreciates my accomplishments on the job; 5) This organization does all that it can to recognize employees for good performance; and 6) My efforts on the job are largely ignored or overlooked by this organization. Two of the above statements (3 & 6) were reverse scored. This scale has a reliability of .91 for this survey.

Dependent variable: Job frustration—Data relevant to the dependent variable was found in an item that asks the respondent about their frustration on the job on a five-item Likert scale with the choices of: Strongly disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neither disagree nor agree=3, Agree=4, or Strongly agree=5. Specifically, the question stated "Trying to get this job done is a very frustrating experience" and was adapted from an instrument by Peters, O'Connor, and Rudolf (1980).

Statistical Analysis

To understand the characteristics of the sample, descriptive statistics were presented on all variables. Depending on the level of measurement, group differences on the variables of interest (i.e., counselor characteristics, workplace setting, organizational support, and job frustration) between substance abuse treatment counselors employed in prison settings and community-based settings were examined using chi-squares and t-tests (Mertler and Vennatta, 2009). The original sample included 281 participants; however, cases with missing data were excluded and the analyses were conducted on the final sample which includes 77 prison counselors and 190 community counselors (N=267). There was one missing case on the dependent variable, job frustration, and less than 5% missing data on the independent variables of interest. All data analyses were computed utilizing the Stata/SE software package for Windows, version 12.0.

As the dependent variable of interest was a ranked categorical outcome with more than two responses, ordinal logistic regression was used (Long & Freese, 2006). Specifically, two ordinal logistic regression models were estimated to identify the correlates of substance

abuse treatment counselors' job frustration, with organizational support being the key variable of interest. Model 1 used an ordinal logistic regression model to examine counselor characteristics and workplace setting as correlates of job frustration. Model 2 included the same independent variables as Model 1, but also included organizational support. A brant test, which is a likelihood ratio test, was conducted with both models to determine if the parallel regression assumption had been violated (i.e., to see if the ordinal logistic regression model was more appropriate than binary logistic regression). The "fitstat" command was used to compare the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) statistics on Model 1 and Model 2 to select the best fitting model. For the ordinal logistic regression models analyzing job frustration on workplace setting, counselor characteristics, and organizational support, the following statistics are noted in the table: odds ratios, 95% confidence intervals, McKelvey and Zavoina R^2 , and LR χ^2 .

Results

The descriptive statistics for the participants' demographics are listed in Table 1. Less than one third of the sample was employed in a prison setting (29.00%). Just over half of the participants were male (54.00%), two-third of the participants were white (67.00%), and slightly less than one-third reported having a master's degree or higher (30.00%). Just under a quarter (24.0%) of the participants indicated that they were in recovery. The average participant had worked at their current job for over five years ($SD = 4.87$). The mean reported value for organizational support was 3.51 ($SD = 0.92$) which was above the mid-point of the scale. Also, the mean value for the dependent variable, job frustration, was below the mid-point at 2.77, with a standard deviation of 1.11.

Table 1 also displays the results of the t-tests and chi-square analyses examining differences between counselors who work with offenders in prison settings versus community settings. Only one variable was significantly different between the two groups of substance abuse treatment counselors. Specifically, counselors employed in the community reported significantly more organizational support than their prison-based counterparts.

Model 1 in Table 2 displays the model in which counselor characteristics and workplace setting were regressed on job frustration. In this ordinal logistic regression model, the odds of being in a high category of job frustration are 1.80 for whites relative to non-whites, holding all covariates constant. The $\chi^2 = 21.33$ and is not significant ($p = .26$) in the brant test (results not shown in Table 2), providing evidence that the parallel regression assumption has not been violated and it is appropriate to proceed with the ordinal logistic regression model. The model as a whole was statistically significant. The McKelvey and Zavoina's R^2 was .06, which is a small amount of explained variance.

Model 2 included the same variables as Model 1, but also includes the organizational support variable. In this full model, the odds of being in a higher category of job frustration are more than two times higher for whites as compared to non-whites ($OR = 2.07$; 95% C.I. = 1.26–3.38). The organizational support variable was also significant in that the odds of being in a higher category of job frustration decreases by 66% for each unit increase in organizational support. In other words, as organizational support increases, job frustration

decreases. According to the brant test ($\chi^2 = 31.71$; $p = .06$) (results not shown in Table 2), the parallel regression assumption has not been violated and the ordinal logistic regression model is statistically appropriate. Model 2 was statistically significant and the McKelvey and Zavoina's R^2 was .26. The BIC for Model 1 is 813.23 and the BIC for Model 2 is 759.48; thus, the difference of 53.75 in BIC provides very strong support for Model 2. Model 2, which included the organizational support variable, provides a better model fit.

Discussion

This study contributes to the substance abuse treatment field because it is the first known study to examine the differences between substance abuse counselors employed by prisons and those employed by community-based treatment centers working with offenders. The hypothesis that substance abuse counselors working in community settings would report higher levels of organizational support and less job frustration was partially supported. In addition, this study explored whether organizational support was associated with job frustration for this sample, after controlling for counselor characteristics and workplace setting. The hypothesis that counselors with greater levels of organizational support would have less job frustration, even after controlling for counselor characteristics and workplace, was supported.

T-tests analyses illuminated differences in the level of perceived organizational support depending on workplace setting. It was determined that substance abuse counselors working in the community report higher levels of organizational support than their counterparts in prison settings. This could be due in part to prison substance abuse counselors typically having fewer resources and wraparound services at their disposal than their peers who work for community-based treatment programs (Taxman et al., 2007). In addition, prisons are bureaucratic institutions which are typically hierarchical in nature, a characteristic known to make workers feel alienated (Resig & Lovrich, 1998; Tewksbury & Higgins, 2006). Also, prisons are commonly described as depressing environments, with goals of the institution being focused on incapacitation and the safety of the staff and inmates as opposed to rehabilitation (Resig & Lovrich, 1998). These competing missions can cause a great amount of stress and frustration for prison treatment counselors, especially if there is lack of clarity in the organization's mission (Garner et al., 2007). This combined with reduced resources can have a significant impact on a counselor's work frustration level.

In the multivariate analyses, this study also determined that white substance abuse counselors reported higher rates of job frustration than non-white counselors, which may be due to white counselors having difficulties dealing with their non-white clients. Current research shows that 70–90 percent of substance abuse counselors are white, while approximately 50 percent of their clients are non-white (Kaplan, 2003). Several other studies have also found that white counselors reported experiencing more on the job stress than non-whites (see McNulty et al. 2003; Lambert et al., 2007). And in a study on rehabilitation counselors, Templeton and Satcher (2007) found that white counselors experienced more emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than their non-white peers.

Unfortunately, there does not seem to be any strong understanding of why race is associated with job frustration, which suggests it is an area ripe for further research. However, it is possible that cultural empathy plays a role, as the literature suggests, social and cultural factors influence how emotions are expressed and perceived (Stebnicki, 2000). These same factors are also thought to influence the empathetic response of counselors to their clients. This can cause misunderstanding and communication problems, where the counselor may be imposing their personal cultural values on their clients, which may encumber the working relationship between the counselor and client. Perhaps cultural sensitivity training that focuses on both communication variances as well as behavioral norms might enable counselors to be less frustrated when treating clients who are of a different race/culture than their own (Stebnicki, 2000; Ulrich et al., 2007). Additionally, since culture impacts not only the way we perceive stress, but also the resources we use to cope with stress (Glazer & Beehr, 2005), cultural sensitivity training along with workplace policies that address diversity in the workplace could provide counselors with the tools to be culturally responsive to their clients (Ulrich et al., 2007).

It was important to determine whether workplace setting was associated with higher levels of reported job frustration because there could be important implications. High levels of staff members' job frustration typically results in the workers being less effective in the workplace and feeling less satisfied with their jobs (Spector & Fox, 2005). The consequences of job frustration to the organization typically include higher rates of absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover (Gallon et al., 2003; McLellan et al., 2003). Findings from this study revealed that higher levels of organizational social support were significantly associated with lower levels of job frustration, even when controlling for counselor characteristics and workplace setting.

Organizational social support has been shown to protect workers from burnout, job frustration, and stress (Eby & Rothrauff-Laschober, 2012; Enzmann, Schaufeli, Janssen, & Rozeman, 1998). For an individual to feel committed to an organization, they must be provided adequate support and be made to feel as though their time and efforts are appreciated (Balfour & Wechsler, 1996). An employee needs to feel as though their supervisor cares about their well-being and is confident in their abilities. Furthermore, it is more likely that a worker will feel committed to their organization if there is a "socially cohesive work group" (Balfour & Wechsler, 1996, p. 271). Additionally, having access to supportive co-workers has been shown to have more influence on burnout and its related concepts than does support from friends and family members (Brown, Prashantham, & Abbott, 2003). Ducharme and colleagues (2008) found that social support positively affected substance abuse counselors' well-being and retention, level of exhaustion, and discouraged turnover. Therefore, feeling valued and appreciated by the organization protects the worker from job frustration.

Limitations

While this study makes positive contributions to the field of substance abuse treatment research, the results should be regarded in light of several limitations. First, secondary data was utilized which may not provide the most appropriate measures of key concepts. A

second limitation of the study is the low response rate. It is possible those who chose not to complete the survey were more “frustrated” than those who did complete the survey, thus affecting the findings. Or, it is possible that a few workplace sites may be influencing the relationship between organizational support and job frustration; however, it is not feasible to examine these relationships because of statistical power issues. Self-report surveys always leave a question of truthfulness, as well as the potential impact of negative affectivity. Brennan and Barnett (1998) found that there is a great deal of variation of self-reporting of psychological distress due to the impact of negative affectivity. Additionally, organizational surveys, such as the NCJTP Survey, tend to have lower response rates than surveys of the general population, with an average response rate of 35.7% (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Furthermore, mailed self-administered surveys typically result in a lower response rate than other modes (Hager, Wilson, Pollak, & Rooney, 2003). Therefore, the response rate for the NCJTP Survey 4 is consistent with similar surveys. Also, the NCJTP survey was based on a convenience sample and thus, it is not a nationally representative sample. And finally, we measured job frustration by utilizing a single item. Since job frustration is a fairly comprehensive construct, this is a limitation of the present study.

Despite these limitations, this study makes a contribution to the substance abuse literature. Due to the increasing demand for substance abuse treatment services for offenders, both in prisons and in the community, it is important to be familiar with those providing the clinical care. This study provided a current snapshot of the substance abuse treatment workforce in both prisons and the community. It is interesting to note that there are no significant differences between the samples with regards to counselor characteristics or job frustration.

The key finding from this study was that substance abuse counselors with greater levels of organizational support have less job frustration, after controlling for counselor characteristics and workplace setting. Therefore, organizational support does seem to offer substance abuse counselors working with offenders some protection from the negative consequences of job frustration. This study suggests human service organizations would be well served by encouraging their supervisors and the organization to be supportive of the workers under their care. This can be done by providing ample opportunities for continuing education, clinical supervision, debriefings, and team building. In addition, substance abuse treatment facilities should provide an organizational climate where the worker can feel comfortable approaching their supervisor and/or co-worker with any concerns or requests for assistance with clinical care provisions. This type of supportive organizational climate can reduce substance abuse treatment counselors’ job frustration, and possibly the associated negative effects such as burnout and job turnover.

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Table 1

Descriptive statistics for substance abuse treatment counselors employed in prisons, the community, and the total sample

	Prison Counselors % (n) or Mean (S.D.)	Community Counselors % (n) or Mean (S.D.)	Total Sample % (n) or Mean (S.D.)
Workplace Setting			
Prison	--	--	29.00% (77)
Counselor Characteristics			
Male	48.00% (37)	56.00% (106)	54.00% (143)
White	69.00% (53)	66.00% (125)	67.00% (178)
In Recovery	21.00% (16)	25.00% (48)	24.00% (64)
Master's Degree or Higher	29.00% (22)	31.00% (59)	30.00% (81)
Current Job Experience in Years	6.20 (6.00)	5.15 (4.30)	5.45 (4.87)
Organizational Support^{a***}	3.21 (.80)	3.64 (.93)	3.51 (.92)
Job Frustration^a	2.95 (1.05)	2.70 (1.13)	2.77 (1.11)
N	77	190	267

Notes:

* p<.05;

** p<.01;

*** p<.001

^a Scale ranges from 1 (low) to 5 (high)

Table 2

Ordinal logistic regression analysis of job frustration on workplace setting, counselor characteristics, and organizational support (N=267)

	Model 1 O.R. (95% C.I)	Model 2 O.R. (95% C.I)
<i>Counselor Characteristics</i>		
Male	.78 (.50–1.22)	.70 (.44–1.11)
White	1.80 (1.11–2.90)**	2.07 (1.26–3.38)**
In Recovery	.61 (.36–1.03)	.69 (.40–1.17)
Master's Degree or Higher	1.31 (.80–2.15)	1.06 (.63–1.76)
Current Job Experience in Years	1.01 (.96–1.05)	1.00 (.96–1.05)
<i>Workplace Setting</i>		
Prison	1.45 (.89–2.34)	.93 (.56–1.54)
<i>Organizational Support</i>		
	--	.34 (.26–.46)***
McKelvey & Zavoina R ²	.06	.26
LR χ^2	15.91*	75.25***

*
p<.05;

**
p<.01;

p<.001 (two-tailed)