



Examining the psychometric properties of the Maslach Burnout Inventory with a sample of child protective service workers in Korea

Seung-Hwan Oh ^{a,*}, Minhong Lee ^b

^a Department of Social Science, University of Ulsan, PO Box 18, Ulsan 680-794, South Korea

^b Department of Social Welfare, Dong-Eui University, Busan 614-714, South Korea

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 4 January 2008

Received in revised form 26 June 2008

Accepted 22 July 2008

Available online 27 July 2008

Keywords:

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

Reliability

Validity

CPS workers

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the psychometric properties of a revised Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) for child protective service (CPS) workers. The psychometric properties of this revised measure were verified using item analyses, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). For cross-validity, a total of 249 CPS workers in South Korea were randomly divided into two groups: one group for the EFA ($n=124/249$) and the other group for the CFA ($n=125/249$). The final version of the 15-item MBI showed a good internal consistency. In addition, a CFA verified the acceptability of the model fit. The results confirmed that the 15-item revised MBI was both reliable and valid. In conclusion, the MBI currently used for CPS workers may also be useful in clinical and research settings.

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1. Introduction

There is increasing evidence that Child Protective Service (CPS) workers are at risk for experiencing burnout (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006; Regehr, Hemsworth, Leslie, Howe, & Chau, 2004; Savicki & Cooley, 1994; Stevenson, 1992; Yoon & Park, 2004; Winefield & Barlow, 1995). Although burnout can occur in any occupational group, CPS workers are particularly vulnerable to burnout due to their poor working conditions, such as low pay, excessive paperwork, long working hours, little opportunity for advancement, and ineffective bureaucratic structures (Anderson, 2000; Fryer, Miyoshi, & Thomas, 1989; Guterman & Jayaratne, 1994). In addition, CPS workers are often engaged in complex situations and develop strong emotional interpersonal relationships with their clients (Savicki & Cooley, 1994). Empirical studies analyzing burnout in social work professionals in Korea showed that CPS workers suffered from high levels of burnout due to poor working environments, including inadequate pay, heavy caseloads, long working hours, and a lack of recognition (Kong, 2005; Yoon & Park, 2004).

CPS worker burnout is problematic in that it leads to various negative consequences, including client derogation, decline in the quality of service, depression, low morale, absenteeism, increased drug abuse, and high turnover rates (Shannon & Saleebey, 1980; Yadama & Drake 1995). When it occurs in programs dealing with children, burnout can result in the decreased effectiveness of child protective programs (Savicki & Cooley, 1994; Tam & Mong, 2005).

Therefore, CPS worker burnout is a serious threat for both their clients and child protection agencies. As research focusing on CPS worker burnout is still in the beginning stages in Korea, little is known about more specific negative consequences of burnout. However, child welfare professionals in Korea have suggested that the high levels of burnout experienced by Korean CPS workers negatively affect their clients and organizations, which are findings similar to what has been documented in Western countries (Yoon & Park, 2004).

Due to the negative results for both workers and clients, CPS worker burnout is a predominant concern in child welfare, and an abundance of research has focused directly on burnout in CPS workers (Anderson, 2000; Yadama & Drake 1995; Yoon & Park, 2004). Most of this literature analyzes the predictors of burnout and/or the consequences of burnout in social service settings for maltreated children (Regehr et al., 2004). The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is the most commonly used index for addressing burnout among CPS workers (Anderson, 2000; Day & Chambers, 1991; Savicki & Cooley, 1994; Winefield & Barlow, 1995; Yadama & Drake, 1995).

Although the MBI is the most widely used scale to measure burnout in social service organizations, there have been few studies that aimed to identify the psychometric properties and the factor structure of the MBI for CPS workers (Yadama & Drake, 1995). Due to a lack of psychometric research, examining the validity of the MBI scale as it may be applied to CPS workers, such a verification of the reliability and validity of the MBI for working professionals, is needed, particularly as it applies to CPS workers in Korea. Therefore, this paper aims to address the psychometric properties and the factor structure of the MBI in order to verify the reliability and validity of the scale as it applies specifically to Korean CPS workers.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: hwelfare21@ulsan.ac.kr (S.-H. Oh), minhong@deu.ac.kr (M. Lee).

2. Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

In 1981, Maslach and Jackson developed the MBI, which is currently the most frequently used method for measuring burnout in human service organizations (Yadama & Drake, 1995). Based on previous studies relating to burnout, they defined burnout as a syndrome consisting of three components: emotional exhaustion (a feeling of being emotionally or physically drained), depersonalization (a negative attitude toward the clients), and lack of professional accomplishment (a tendency to be unwilling to perform assigned duties). Although conceptually distinct, these three factors are empirically correlated with one another (Kokkinos, 2006).

The MBI consists of 22 items with three subscales in order to assess emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and professional accomplishment (Hallberg & Sverke, 2004). Previous studies determining the burnout among CPS workers have judged the three subscales of the MBI to have acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha range between .70 and .90 (Anderson, 2000; Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006). Kong (2005) confirmed that the overall scale reliability could be applied to a Korean population, which was rated as being .85 for emotional exhaustion, .66 for depersonalization, and .72 for professional accomplishment.

Using confirmatory factor analyses, Yadama and Drake (1995) verified that MBI for CPS workers included the same three factors that exist in other occupational groups: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of professional accomplishment (e.g., Kokkinos, 2006; Kalliath, O'Driscoll, Gillespie, & Bluedorn, 2000). However, because this research employed only confirmatory factor analysis, Yadama and Drake (1995) did not take into consideration the fundamental occupational differences between CPS workers and other professions (e.g. teachers, nurses, therapists), which may lead to different research conclusions. In addition, the study conducted by Yadama and Drake (1995) focused on the statistical considerations for revising the items found in the original MBI, rather than discussing both statistical and conceptual grounds.

In keeping with the significance of the MBI, much of research focusing on burnout in various professional groups has addressed the psychometric properties of the MBI. However, there are few studies that employ both exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis in order to address both the reliability and validity of the MBI for CPS workers. Thus, this study aims to identify the psychometric properties of the MBI using a sample of Korean CPS workers through a series of statistical analyses, then verifying the reliability and validity of the MBI for CPS workers.

3. Methods

3.1. Sample and procedure

To investigate the psychometric properties of the MBI for CPS workers, this study surveyed employees of child protective services in South Korea who had been working for at least 6 months at the time of the survey (2006). A survey was sent, via regular mail, to 328 employees of the Ministry of Health and Welfare. A total of 249 of the CPS workers completed and returned the questionnaire, which corresponded to an overall response rate of 75.9%.

The sample of CPS workers was 39.4% male and 60.6% female. The average age was 30.04 (SD = 5.98) years, ranging from 22 to 55 years old ("20 to 29" = 58.2%, "30 to 39" = 32.1%, and "over 40" = 9.6%). The mean number of months of working experience was 37.88 (SD = 37.78) and ranged from 6 to 243 months. In addition, the respondents reported that they worked approximately 9 h a day on average (SD = 1.62).

3.2. Instrument

The original 22-item version of the MBI (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) was used to assess the level of burnout among CPS workers. The MBI

includes nine items detailing emotional exhaustion, five items pertaining to depersonalization, and eight items for personal accomplishment (Kokkinos, 2006). Table 1 shows the three dimensions and item statements used in the original MBI (Hallberg & Sverke, 2004; Hastings, Horne, & Mitchell, 2004; Tam & Mong, 2005). CPS workers are asked to use a seven-point response scale to score each of the 22 MBI items, indicating whether the feeling described has never been experienced (thus resulting in a score of zero) to if the feeling occurs on a daily basis (a score of six) (Yadama & Drake, 1995). Higher mean MBI subscale scores indicate higher feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and/or personal accomplishment. Therefore, high scores relating to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization correspond to a higher degree of burnout; however, a high score of personal accomplishment corresponds to a low degree of burnout.

3.3. Data analysis

The psychometric properties of the MBI with CPS workers were verified using a series of statistical analyses, such as item analyses, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Both the item analyses and the EFA were conducted using SPSS 13.0, and the CFA was conducted using the LISREL 8.30. The item analyses were performed first in order to provide insight into the internal consistency of the MBI within the sample population. The EFA of the MBI was then conducted in order to identify the underlying dimensions of the variables and to produce a revised MBI for CPS workers. The CFA of the revised MBI was performed last in order to confirm the extent of the construct validity. Performing an EFA and a subsequent CFA on the same respondents tends to capitalize on chance (Raykov & Widaman, 1995); thus, the data set was randomly divided into two groups for this study. One group consisted of samples for only the EFA ($n=124, 249/2$), and the other group consisted of samples for only the CFA ($n=125, 249/2$). Sample sizes between 100 and 200 are considered to be of medium size for the estimation methods (Kline, 1998). Accordingly, the reliability of the revised MBI for CPS workers was also verified with the item analyses.

Prior to conducting the EFA and CFA on their respective groups, a chi-square analysis was used to address the presence of the sample-

Table 1
Dimensions and items to measure the MBI

Dimension	Item statement
Emotional exhaustion	1. I feel emotionally drained from my work (E1).
	2. I feel used up at the end of the workday (E2).
	3. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning because I have to face another day on the job (E3).
	6. Working with people all day is really a strain for me (E4).
	8. I feel burned out from my work (E5).
	13. I feel frustrated by my job (E6).
	14. I feel I am working too hard at my job (E7).
	16. Working directly with people puts too much stress on me (E8).
	20. I feel like I am at the end of my rope (E9).
Depersonalization	5. I feel that I treat some of my clients as if they were impersonal objects (D1).
	10. I have become more unsympathetic toward people since I took this job (D2).
	11. I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally (D3).
	15. I don't really care what happens to some of my clients (D4).
	22. I feel my clients blame me for some of their problems (D5).
Personal accomplishment	4. I can easily understand how my clients feel about things (P1).
	7. I very effectively deal with the problems of my client (P2).
	9. I feel I am positively influencing other people's lives through my work (P3).
	12. I feel very energetic (P4).
	17. I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my client (P5).
	18. I feel exhilarated after working closely with my clients (P6).
	19. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job (P7).
21. In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly (P8).	

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