Research question: Is death anxiety associated with formation of burnout among hospice social workers?

- Mailed out 400 surveys, mailed out a reminder postcard 10 days later
- Received 290 surveys back, for a response rate of 72.5%

Abstract

There needs to be more research to increase the knowledge about how many hospice social workers experience death anxiety and burnout. The more we know about these topics, the more we can begin to help professionals who work in this field. A mixed methods approach was used for this study. In order to assess burnout, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was utilized. The Death Anxiety Questionnaire (DAQ) was used to measure death anxiety. Qualitative data was gathered by asking several open ended questions about participants’ experiences.

Dependent Variables

(1) Burnout – measured by Maslach Burnout Inventory, 22 items summated into 3 dimensions:

(a) emotional exhaustion
   Mean score 19.09
   Range of scores 0-48
   Standard deviation 8.731

   Low emotional exhaustion is considered to be 0-16
   Moderate emotional exhaustion is considered to be 17-26
   High emotional exhaustion is considered to be 27 and higher

(b) depersonalization
   Mean score 3.87
   Range of scores 0-16
   Standard deviation 3.209

   Low depersonalization is considered to be 0-6
   Moderate depersonalization is considered to be 7-12
   High depersonalization is considered to be 13 or higher

(c) personal accomplishment
   Mean score 41.16
   Range of scores 0-48
   Standard deviation 10.66

   Low personal accomplishment is considered to be 39 or higher
   Moderate personal accomplishment is considered to be 32-38
   High personal accomplishment is considered to be 0-31

Qualitative Findings

We are still analyzing our qualitative data.

Independent Variables

Main predictor variable of interest:

(1) Death anxiety (summated 15 items) – measured by the Death Anxiety Questionnaire

   Fear of the unknown mean 2.92
   Fear of suffering mean 1.84
   Fear of loneliness mean .66
   Fear of personal extinction mean .45

   Mean total score was 7.54
   Range of scores was 0-24
   Total maximum score is 30
   Standard deviation is 4.4

   The average total score for most people, regardless of age, is 8.5.

Demographic variables/control variables:

(1) age: Average age was 44.31 years, with a range of 23-64 years
(2) gender: 13 were male and 277 were female
(3) experience: Average years of experience was 6.9, with a range of 1-21 years
(4) average caseload: Average caseload was 25.9 cases, with a range of 5-80 cases
(5) education: 71 participants had a Bachelor of Social Work degree (BSW), 195 participants had a Master of Social Work degree (MSW), and 24 participants had a degree in the category of “other”

We thank the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for supporting and funding this research, and Learning & Technology Services for printing this poster.