The situation of burnout among young social workers

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by

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CONTENTS

Abstract

In recent years, burnout has become a more common problem among social workers. However, just less research studied about this topic and there is less research particularly discuss the burnout among young social workers. Therefore, the research is going to study the situation of burnout among young social workers. The experience, factors, impacts and coping strategies would also be explored. Informants would be sampled by the Maslach Burnout Inventory. After the sampling, 6 informants would have interviews.

According to the interviews and verified data, the author found that informants with burnout would have physical health problems, emotional problems and behavioural problems. Besides, helplessness and secondary traumatic stress, interpersonal relationships between colleagues, lack of support from supervisors, inadequate reward, lack of understanding, work-life balance, work content, traits and workload are the factors of burnout. Impacts can be divided into macron level and micro level. At the macro level, burnout causes damage to agencies' image. At the micro level, burnout would affect social workers' work performance and affect the relationship between them and family. About coping strategies, informants would develop hobbies, talk to friends and family, have the division of labour, pray and keep working. At the end, the author gave some recommendations to social workers, social work training course, agencies and the government.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Explanation
IC	Centre in-charge
MBI	Maslach Burnout Inventory

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Some agencies, especially elderly service units, are lack of social workers. The covid-19 in recent years also exacerbates the impact. Meanwhile, most research about burnout shows that there was a strong relationship between burnout and resignation. The manpower issue of social workers and burnout are worth to be concerned. And people usually think that young people are easier to have burnout. A survey reported that young people, like men between 20-35, are particularly susceptible to have burnout(Marchand et al., 2018). The high risk of burnout in the social work profession is well established but little is known about the relationship between burnout and age. That is important because the young social workers will become management staff to manage the agency. Therefore, The author want to study the situation of burnout among young social workers in order to give the government and agencies some suggestions.

1.2 Background information

Many research view factors connected with social workers burnout as perpetual all through their vocation. This supposition might be unwarranted, as there is an impressive variety in degrees of ability and need for help among social workers throughout the span of a vocation. Burnout, as it applies to social labourers, is by and large conceptualized as a progressive process that seldom happens out of nowhere or with one event. However, rather works over the long haul as solid safeguards are worn out from a surge of emotional requests, disappointing working setbacks, tough spots or people (Jacobson, Rothschild, Mirza, and Shapiro, 2013). It is trusted that "the

single largest risk factor for developing professional burnout is human service work in general" (Newell and MacNeil, 2010, p. 59).

1.3 Research objectives

I. To describe the experience, factors, impacts and coping strategies of burnout among young social workers.

II. To find out the common elements of burnout among young social workers.

III. To give advice and suggestions to the government and agencies to do improvement.

1.4 Research questions

I. What is the experience of burnout among young social workers?

II. What factors affect burnout among young social workers?

III. What are the impacts of burnout on young social workers?

IV. What are the coping strategies for burnout of young social workers?

1.5 Summary

Since the problem of burnout has become common, the author is going to find out the experience, factors, impacts and coping strategies of burnout among the young social workers.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, there are some previous local and overseas research about the situation of burnout. The literature mentioned the situation of burnout among social workers in Hong Kong and some western countries. Also, the research analyzed the factors and impacts of burnout. Also, the research recommended some coping strategies for the people with burnout.

2.2 Review of previous studies and literature

There are five parts about the previous studies and literature including definition, situation of burnout, factors of burnout, impacts of burnout and coping strategies of burnout.

2.2.1 Definition

Burnout is a persistent response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors in the workplace (Maslach, 1982). As with many terms in humanities research, there is not complete agreement on the definition of burnout, but Maslach's definition is ubiquitous in the literature on the topic and has been used by 93% of journals and studies since the late 1990s (Hombrados-Mendieta, & Cosano-Rivas, 2011). Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that occurs in response to chronic stress in occupations where one works with people (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Burnout often manifests itself in the form of mild psychosomatic illnesses such as insomnia, emotional problems such as increased anxiety, attitudinal problems such as hostility or apathy, especially

toward customers, and behavioural problems such as aggressive behaviour (Adriaenssens et al, 2012; Cañadas-De la Fuente et al, 2015; Jansson-Froejmark & Lindblom, 2010).

Emotional exhaustion refers to the feeling that one's emotional resources are exhausted and that one has nothing more to give on a psychological level (Maslach et al., 2001). It is the central characteristic of burnout.

Depersonalisation refers to the development of a negative or apathetic attitude towards clients, which may lead providers to view their clients as causing their problems (Lerner, 1980; Maslach, 1982).

Reduced personal accomplishment refers to a diminished sense of competence and successful achievement in work(Maslach, 1982).

Young social workers refer to people who have registered as social workers in Hong Kong and aged 35 or below. Their education level can be higher diploma, associate degree or bachelor's degree.

2.2.2 The situation of burnout

There are two parts about burnout among social workers in western countries and Hong Kong.

2.2.2.1 Burnout among social workers in western countries

Since Freudenberger first proposed the concept of "burnout" in 1974, research on burnout has gained increasing attention. The United States National Occupational Safety and Health Agency has compiled statistics on the incidence of work stress-related illness by occupation and found that social service occupations are among the 40 occupations with higher than average prevalence and mortality (Sulsky & Smith, 2005). In recent years, the number of studies on burnout among social workers has increased internationally. Social work relies on workers and no social work intervention works by itself. However, the shortage of social workers is widespread, so social workers often suffer from work overload, are full of uncertainty about their future and feel exhausted. Social workers are a high-risk group, vulnerable to pressure and burnout (Chris & Lesley, 2002). For example, when social workers complete their training, they hope to use what they have learned to help clients and look forward to the client's validation and appreciation. But usually, only a few clients will make easy progress. For most clients, there is not much change and they even show an indifferent and hostile attitude. As a result, social workers have little success. While there is no definitive data on the prevalence of burnout among social workers, which is a problem in itself, it has been found that social workers and health workers are more likely to experience burnout than the general population (Hombrados-Mendieta, & Cosano-Rivas, 2011; Lloyd et al., 2002; Travis et al., 2016).

In addition, the last construct of burnout involves an undervaluation or negative evaluation of one's own achievements, performance and impact on the lives of clients (Leiter & Maslach, 2005). Burnout and job performance are negatively correlated (Sudiardithaa, 2020). Available empirical research suggests that social workers experience higher levels of stress and resulting

burnout than comparable occupational groups. Factors identified as contributing to stress and burnout include the nature of social work practise, particularly the tension between philosophy and work demands, and the organisation of the work environment(Lloyd et al, 2002).

In the United Kingdom, there were 81% of organisations having the problem of recruitment of social workers(Evans et al, 2006). The staffing problem for social workers was more serious than for other professions. Social workers had higher job vacancies ratio and demission rate that makes the lack of social workers. It was difficult to carry out social work practises due to overloaded workload and high dependence on temporary employees. Eventually, the stress at work leads to burnout.

Some researchers have done some studies about burnout among medical social workers and mental health social workers. They found that the mental health social workers were the most stressful and medical social workers, particularly those who serve HIV / AIDS patients, were the second most(Evans et al., 2006; Lloyd et al., 2004). The studies also showed that these two types of social workers were more likely to experience burnout.

It is found that social workers are at high risk of burnout and that burnout affects the work efficiency and mental health of social workers. Therefore, burnout is an important issue in the field of social work.

2.2.2.2 Burnout of social workers in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, a study found that sampled outreaching social workers interviewed experienced low levels of emotional exhaustion, lack of personal accomplishment and depersonalisation of clients (Ngai, 1986). Thus, overall, the respondents felt that they had achieved a lot in their profession. They also experienced mild emotional exhaustion and displayed a very slightly negative, impersonal attitude towards their clients. As Maslach and Jackson noted, higher levels of burnout are reflected in higher scores on the Emotional Exhaustion, Lack of Personal Achievement and Depersonalisation of Clients subscales. Therefore, it can be assumed that the outreaching social workers in this study have low levels of burnout.

In addition, Tam and Mong distributed self-administered questionnaires to 190 school social workers in 32 institutions in Hong Kong in 2002. The responses showed that just over half of the respondents were comfortable in their jobs and only a small proportion clearly identified as having 'burnout'. However, a significant proportion was found to have high levels of emotional exhaustion or depersonalisation, even they were delivering high levels of personal performance. The findings suggest that authorities and schools should take appropriate measures to prevent school social workers from experiencing burnout. As it is a developmental phenomenon, they suggested that early signs of burnout should be seriously investigated, otherwise, they would counteract the intended impact of changes designed to improve service effectiveness.

In 2005, Tam and Mong conducted another study on burnout and found that work stress and perceived injustice emerged as correlates of burnout among school social workers in Hong Kong.

The findings of the study do not support the expectation that burnout is common, despite government reforms in social welfare services. A sense of personal accomplishment may serve as a mediator. However, respondents suffer from identity confusion and role strain due to the lack of communication between school authorities, parents and students.

2.2.3 Factors of burnout

Burnout includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment. There are different factors to affect these three components respectively.

2.2.3.1 Factors affecting emotional exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion was significantly related to the sample characteristics of age, marital status, social work training institution and experience in their work(Ngai, 1986).

2.2.3.1.1 Gender: female

The literature on the differences between men and women in relation to burnout has produced conflicting results regarding the strength and direction of this relationship (Purvanova & Muros, 2010). But after analysing 183 studies, the results challenge the widely held assumption that female employees are more likely to experience burnout than male employees. Women were found to be slightly more emotionally exhausted than men.

2.2.3.1.2 Personal traits

Most research has shown that workers at younger ages, especially those under 30, are more prone to burnout than older workers (Bar-Zaselvisky, 2003; Lauderdale, 1982; Maslach, 1982;McNeely, 1992). These researchers suggest that older workers are more stable, mature and balanced in their perspectives about work and life in general. They often have a better financial situation, stronger family support and more life experience, which increases their sense of strength and security. In contrast, young workers generally have lower emotional support, financial security, self-confidence, sense of self-identity and mental strength. They also tend to develop unrealistically high expectations of the workplace.

2.2.3.1.3 Role ambiguity

The research of Siebert and Siebert(2007) found that role identification has an impact on emotional exhaustion and low role identification is more likely to cause emotional exhaustion of social workers. Role ambiguity is a psychosocial risk factor that affects workers' well-being by lowering motivation levels, leading to emotional exhaustion(Panari et al., 2019).

Also, it was found that high role conflict, low job challenge and emotional exhaustion of social workers are significant Relevant(Jawahar et al., 2007). Employees who suffer from role conflict may come to believe that they cannot do their jobs successfully. As a result, they may be forced to invest additional resources in their work role because they fear losing their job status. This additional investment of resources in the work role represents a loss of resources that can lead to negative states such as dissatisfaction and psychological distress.

2.2.3.1.4 Long working hours

Furthermore, long working hours and services to patients with chronic diseases can also cause social worker emotional exhaustion(Coady et al., 1990). Long working hours correlate with burnout if people work more than 40 hours a week, and are even stronger if people work more than 60 hours a week(Hu et al., 2016). That could lead to tiredness, fatigue, and lack of attentiveness. Moreover, if the clinical course is stormy, refuse treatment or commit suicide, the sense of despair and professional isolation can be very strong.

2.2.3.2 Factors affecting depersonalization

Depersonalization of clients was significantly related to the sample characteristics of age, length of service in social work, marital status, social work training institution and experience in their work(Ngai, 1986).

2.2.3.2.1 Gender: male

On personal level, Purvanova & Muros'(2010) analysis found that men are somewhat more depersonalized than women. Bargal and Guterman (1996) also found that older workers showed a greater sense of depersonalization than younger workers. With older age, increased experience and longer professional knowledge learning time, depersonalisation exhaustion becomes lower. Older workers have more experience, higher professional knowledge, and a stronger ability to judge and solve problems.

2.2.3.2.2 High education level

Besides, high education level can also cause depersonalization. High education level means workers have more professional knowledge and theories. Mastery of knowledge can indeed contribute to increased burnout, particularly when that knowledge is at odds with agency practise, policy or service delivery(Himle. & Jayaratne, 1990).

2.2.3.2.3 Job tenure

Some studies have found that when job tenure increases, risk of burnout increase and job satisfaction decreases (Schulz et al., 1995; Lambert et al. 2001) while others have found that length of employment has statistically significant positive relationships with feelings of personal accomplishment (Acker, 2003).

2.2.3.2.4 Job proficiency

Haj-Yahia (2000) found that job proficiency is positively correlated with the degree of depersonalization. The lower the levels of job challenge and job mastery among social workers, the higher the level of depersonalization.

2.2.3.2.5 Lack of effective supervision

Coady et al.(1990) found that lack of effective supervision can also cause depersonalization. The more was informational, emotional, instrumental and appraisal support from supervisors, the lower was the depersonalization exhaustion.

2.2.3.3 Factors affecting reduced personal accomplishment

Lack of personal accomplishment was significantly related to the sample characteristics of age, length of service in social work, gender, job level and experience in their work(Ngai, 1986).

2.2.3.3.1 low level of job challenges & high level of job proficiency

Haj-Yahia et al. (2000) found that low level of job challenges and high level of job proficiency are negatively correlated with personal accomplishment. That means the workers have lower level of role ambiguity and the higher levels of job challenge, job autonomy, job mastery and empowerment. As workers know what to do in different conditions, they do not think solving a difficulty successfully can show that they are capable or talented.

2.2.3.3.2 Lack of team support

Lack of team support and working in the public domain will also reduce personal accomplishment(Jayaratne et al., 1991). Furthermore, seniority in social work correlates to the cumulative experience and knowledge acquired from clients and employers (Navaro, 1999). According to BarZaselvisky and Navaro (2003), senior social workers experienced less burnout because they face more challenging roles and are exposed to more rewards than less senior social workers.

2.2.4 Impacts of burnout

Burnout has been shown to have negative effects not only on the employees directly but also on the clients they serve and the agencies that employ them. The impact can be divided into service and policy level and personal level.

2.2.4.1 Service and policy level

At the service and policy level level, burnout is a problem with broad implications. For both ethical and practical reasons, private and public organizations employing social workers should be interested in reducing stress and burnout. In practical terms, the turnover, absenteeism and poor job performance associated with the disorders represent opportunity costs (Maslach, 2005; Taris, 2006). Work behaviours that may signal burnout include chronic tardiness, missing work, poor completion rates or low performance, work errors, or isolation from others (Newell & MacNeil, 2010). Burnout also increases the number of sick days' employees take(Maslach et al., 1996; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). It increases the chances of workers turning over which reduces the efficacy of services provided to clients too(Collings & Murray, 1996) and leads to a loss of continuity of services to users (Winefield & Barlow, 1994). The departure of the stressed staff represents a loss to the agency of that person's training and experience, as well as consequent time and money spent training a replacement. Money is wasted on training costs, which are associated with higher turnover.

2.2.4.2 Personal level

At the personal level, burnout affects the level of care that social workers can provide and also the client-provider relationship, especially in the areas of rapport building and empathy (Fuente

et al., 2001; Lizano & Mor Barak, 2013). to 10 years of work experience, helping people who had become migrants as a result of the hostilities in eastern Ukraine. Sometimes negative emotional states of a burnout social worker can cause difficulties in the adjustment of migrants from the war zone in eastern Ukraine. Burnout social workers also experience various difficulties in communicating with their clients and helping them overcome problems (NOVYK & MAZUR, 2021). It also shows that agencies that employ happy, satisfied social workers will have less service waiting time than agencies that do not since they can process the cases faster.

Additionally, burnout is linked with physical illness (Powell, 1994; Rohland, 2000; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Burnout was found to negatively influence not only social workers' self-development, family life and job satisfaction, but also their physical and mental health(Vyas & Luk, 2011). The symptoms most commonly present in the case of social workers who experience burnout were: emotional and physical exhaustion, feeling overwhelmed, sleep disorders, impatience, giving up leisure activities, diminished motivation and job satisfaction(Marc & Oşvat, 2013). Social workers who know how to reduce stress can improve their quality of life and reduce their risk for different illnesses (Maslach et al., 1996; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). In a Korean study, social workers who had higher degrees of burnout at the start reported having more physical health issues later on (Kim & Kao, 2011). And higher degrees of burnout resulted with a faster rate of physical health decline over a one-year period.

Moreover, the findings of a study suggested that each dimension of occupational stress had a differential effect on burnout(Ngai, 1986). Of the seven dimensions of occupational stress,

excessive workload showed the highest correlation with emotional exhaustion, role ambiguity showed the highest correlation with lack of personal accomplishment, and job and non-Job conflict showed the highest correlation with depersonalization of clients.

2.2.5 Coping strategies of burnout

There are few studies that contain the part of social workers' coping strategies when facing burnout. The researchers usually give some advice and suggestions at the end of the study.

Many researches on burnout stressed the importance of prevention. For example, Cherniss(1980) has mentioned that once burnout is developed in an agency, it is highly contagious. Also, even only one staff person gets burnout, the agency requires a sustained effort to reverse the condition often. In other words, burnout have a tendency to be self- perpetuating and is difficult to reverse it. Hence, prevention is less costly and more effective than treatment. And preventive interventions ought to be emphasized.

2.2.5.1 Psychological capital

Psychological capital(PsyCap) is one of the most important individual resources that could be a coping strategy against burnout(Li et al., 2015; Rehman et al., 2017). Luthans et al. (2007) define psychological capital as an individual's positive psychological condition of development, which is characterized by high levels of HERO: Hope, (Self-)Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism. According to Snyder et al. (1991), hopeful thought is the conviction that one may find and get motivated to employ pathways to desired goals. As a result, hope is a cognitive process that

encourages people to find willpower (goal-directed determination) and way power (planning strategies to achieve goals), resulting in positive emotions (the expectation of meeting desired goals). Self-efficacy is described by Bandura (1997) as people's views about their ability to produce effects. How people feel, think, and motivate themselves is determined by whether they have the confidence to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at difficult activities. Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back from adversity and grow stronger as a result of overcoming unfavourable occurrences(Luthans, 2002; Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Optimism is described as making a positive attribution about one's ability to succeed now and in the future (Luthans et al., 2007). Optimists believe that no matter what happens in the future, good things will happen to them.

PsyCap is positively correlated with personal accomplishment and negatively correlated with emotional exhaustion (Metwaly et al., 2018; Laschinger & Fida, 2014). And the four components of PsyCap have a deep effect on reducing burnout and increasing mental and physical well-being. Previous research showed that PsyCap could be a positive resource to cope with job burnout(Laschinger & Fida, 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). PsyCap helps people to have a positive psychological state of development like improving self-efficacy. They will have the confidence to put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks. People will also be optimistic. They can make a positive attribution about succeeding now and in the future. Furthermore, people with PsyCap will persevere towards objectives and redirect paths to objectives for success. Moreover, when they are beset by adversity and problems, they would sustain and bounce back to attain success(Luthans et al., 2017).

2.2.5.2 Social support

Reducing emotional exhaustion and enhancing social support can have a direct impact on the anxiety symptoms and depressive symptoms of burnout(Zhang et al., 2021). In the Stress-Support-Strain Model, social support can buffer or mitigate the impact of occupational stress. Therefore, people with strong soclal support should be able to cope with occupational stress better while people with líttle or no social support might be vulnerable to occupational stress and prone to burnout. Cobb (1976) described social support as information that enables people to believe they are cared for, loved, respected, and valued. Besides, they also believe that they are part of a communication and mutual obligation network. Supportive interactions among people could effectively immunize them against the detrimental health consequences of pressure. Social support can also protect people in crisis from a wide varlety of pathological states. People may receive support from their social support systems, which consist of "enduring interpersonal ties to groups of people who can be relied upon to provide emotional sustenance, assistance, and resources in times of need, who provide feedback, and who share standards and values"(Caplan, 1974). Supportive others assist people with emotional problems by offering emotional sustenance. Additionally, by providing these people with tangible aid, information and guidance, the supporters further enahance the people's ability to deal with stressful situations. As a result, social support aids in the long-term maintenance of physical and psychological well-being.

2.3 Therotical framework

According to the studies stated above, social workers experience burnout at elevated rates. However, little research has been done on burnout among young social workers, and qualitative

research on the topic is scarce. Besides, in Hong Kong, the researches in the past did not show the relationship between the young social workers' features and burnout. The factors and effects of burnout to young social workers are very important too. Also, I have observed that this has been a neglected area of study of how young social workers deal with burnout. Because age and working experience do affect the factors of burnout, especially personal accomplishment, it is better to study more about the situation of burnout among young social workers so that proper precaution can be taken. However, young social workers will be the mainstream in the future. Although some researches showed that most social workers did not be proved as burnout, precaution is needed. Just a few quantitative researches have been conducted on young social workers to figure out how different factors might impact the young social workers' performance. There is a need for evidence-based empirical findings to facilitate improvement in young social workers' mental health.

The following table is the theoretical framework which concluded the related literatures.

	Burnout		
	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Reduced personal accomplishment
Factors	• Gender: women • Young age • Low level of role identification • High role conflict • Low job challenge • long working hours • Service target: patients with chronic diseases	• Gender: men • High education level • Increasing job tenure • Low job proficiency • Lack of effective supervision	• Low level of job challenges • High level of job proficiency • Lack of team support
Impacts	Micro Level • Affecting social workers' service performance and level of care provided • Affecting client-provider relationship • Harm physical and mental health		Macro Level • Increase opportunity cost • Affect the operation of the agency • Loss of resources(e.g. money and time) that is put on ex-employees and training new staff
Coping Strategies		• Psychological capital(PsyCap) • Enhancements in social support	

Table 1 Theoretical Framework
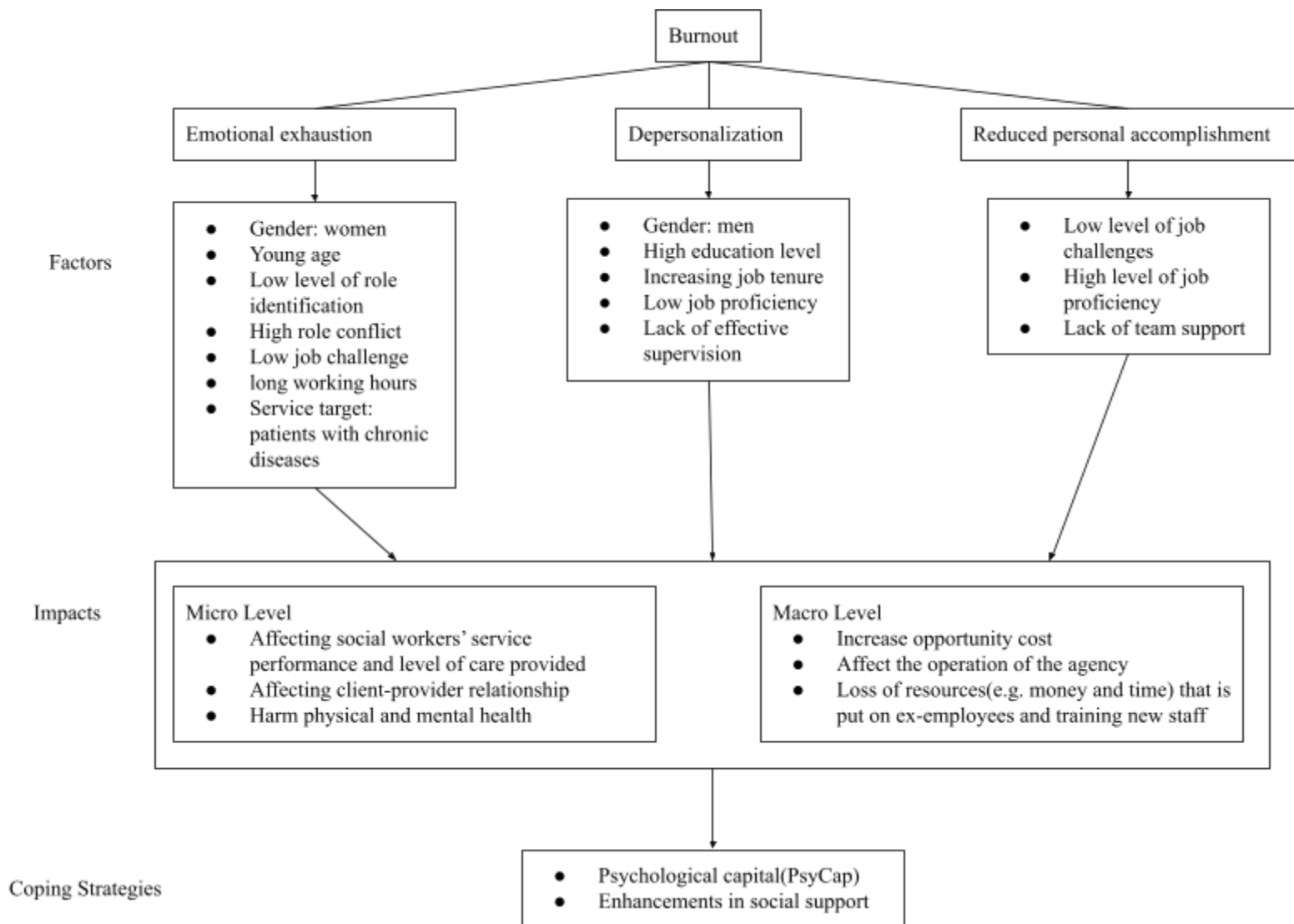
2.4 Summary

Burnout includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment. Both research from Hong Kong and western countries reported that social workers are in high risk of burnout. Factors affecting emotional exhaustion includes gender: female, personal traits, role ambiguity and long working hours. Factors affecting depersonalization includes gender:

male, high education level, increasing Job tenure, job proficiency and lack of effective supervision. Factors affecting reduced personal accomplishment includes low level of job challenges, high level of job proficiency and lack of team support. Impacts of burnout are divided into service and policy level and personal level. Besides, some research recommended coping strategies of burnout including Psychological capital and social support.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, there are the details of the research design, target informants, sampling, data collection, data analysis and confidentiality and ethical issues.

3.2 Research design

In this study, qualitative research was the research method. Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research. Qualitative research is used to understand how people experience the world. While there are many approaches to qualitative research, they tend to be flexible and focus on retaining rich meaning when interpreting data. This study will use a phenomenological research approach. Researchers will investigate the experience, factors, impacts and coping strategies by describing and interpreting respondents' lived experiences. Interviews will be used to get more information from the respondents. Interviews allow the researcher to know about respondents' thought deeper and more flexible. Therefore, the researcher can explore and have analysis completely.

3.3 Target informants

The target group of this research are young social workers who have registered as social workers in Hong Kong and aged 35 or below. Their education level can be higher diploma, associate degree or bachelor's degree.

3.4 Sampling

Informants took the Maslach Burnout Inventory(MBI)(Appendix 1) at the beginning for purposive sampling. Coker & Omoluabi (2009) established the psychometric properties of MBI. A total of 100 doctors and nurses and 50 students consisting of 101 males and 49 females in the age range 23 to 50 (Mean = 33.85) years completed the MBThe author and Psychophysiological Symptoms Checklist (PSC). Psychometric properties of the MBI including its reliability and validity were assessed. The normative scores were: emotional exhaustion = 7.52, dehumanization = 2.52 and reduced personal accomplishment =12.12. The reliability coefficients were: Cronbach's Alpha = .86, Split-half = .57 and Odd-Even = .92. By correlating MBI with PSC concurrent validity coefficients in the range .01-.36 were obtained. Because of its reliability, validity, brevity and ease of administration, the MBI is considered a reliable instrument in sampling for measuring burnout among young social workers.

The MBI is made up of 22 items, which splits up into three subscales which are: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2006). The items of the survey are set up in the form of statements regarding an individual's personal feelings and attitudes about their work (Maslach et al., 2006). The participant's answers will be based on how often he or she experiences these feelings, on a seven-point scale, which ranges from a zero- which means never, to a six - which means every day (Maslach et al., 2006). The emotional exhaustion subscale (questions 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16 and 20) examines the feelings of being overextended emotionally and worn out by the individual's work. The depersonalization subscale (questions 5, 10, 11, 15 and 22) measures the impersonal and unfeeling responses

toward the individuals who receive their service, treatment, instruction, or care (Maslach et al., 2006). The subscale of personal accomplishment (questions 4, 7, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19 and 21) examines individual's feelings of capability and prosperous accomplishment in their work dealing with people

The inclusion criteria for the study is getting 19 marks or above in emotional exhaustion subscale, 6 marks or above in depersonalization subscale and 39 marks or below in personal accomplishment subscale. That is because people who get the above results in MBI means they are in an elevated level of burnout experienced degree (Maslach et al., 2006). Finally, 6 respondents, 3 male and 3 female, were selected. Informants who cannot meet the above requirement are exclusive.

3.5 Data collection

The in-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher. An interview lasted for 30 minutes to 2 hours in Cantonese and is recorded by a tape recorder. Transcripts were prepared by data analysis.

3.6 Data analysis

The data were analyzed basically by means of thematic analysis according to the research questions. The researcher studied the transcripts of interviews and found the common points. Then the researcher integrated the points and further elaborated on them.

3.7 Confidentiality and ethical issues

The researcher ensured confidentiality and that written informed consent is obtained from the participants. The participants can withdraw at any time during the interview process. An information sheet was designed so that the participants know exactly what they have consented to. They also have a choice of venue for the interview.

3.8 Summary

This research is a qualitative research with thematic analysis. The research let the informants do the MBI to choose 6 informants who can fulfill the requirements and had interviews.

Chapter 4 Findings and analysis

4.1 introduction

The researcher got 20 informants through snow ball and found 6 informants after MBI. This chapter would talk about the analysis of the experience, factors, impacts and coping strategies.

4.2 Informants background

	Amy	Billy	Carman	Donald	Evan	Fion	G	H	I	J	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
Gender	F	M	F	M	M	F	F	F	M	F	M	F	F	F	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	F	F	F
Age	26	29	31	28	29	30	25	23	25	29	25	25	26	27	30	24	28	24	23	26	27	27	25	27	25
Service Targets	Students Parents	Elderly Carers	Students Parents	Students Parents	Children Youth Family	Students Parents	Students Parents	Students Parents	Disabilities	Disabilities	Children Youth Family	Disabilities	Disabilities	Children Youth Family	Disabilities	Children Youth Family	Elderly Carers	Students Parents	Children Youth Family	Children Youth Family	Children Youth Family	Children Youth Family	Children Youth Family	Elderly Carers	Elderly Carers
Job tenure	2 years	4 years	3 years	1.5 years	0.5 year	1.5 years	1.5 years	3 years	1.5 years	4 years	1.5 years	2 years	2.5 years	1 year		1.5 years	5 years	1 year	0.5 year	3 years	3 years	5 years	1 year	3.5 years	2 years
Results of MBI:																									
Emotional Exhaustion	31	53	38	39	20	28	25	20	15	23	21	27	32	50	22	35	28	37	22	27	47	33	25	33	36
Depersonalisation	14	13	17	13	6	6	5	0	9	1	5	5	4	5	1	0	3	5	5	5	6	5	0	1	1
Reduced personal accomplishment	19	23	29	32	31	38	36	35	39	23	31	29	32	39	22	40	37	32	34	38	40	27	37	35	44

Table 2 Sampling background

	Amy	Billy	Carman	Donald	Evan	Fion
Gender	F	M	F	M	M	F
Age	26	29	31	28	29	30
Service Targets	Students Parents	Elderly Carers	Students Parents	Students Parents	Children Youth Family	Students Parents
Job tenure	2 years	4 years	3 years	1.5 years	0.5 year	1.5 years
Results of MBI:						
Emotional	31	53	38	39	20	28

Exhaustion						
Depersonalisation	14	13	17	13	6	6
Reduced personal accpmplishment	19	23	29	32	31	38

Table 3 Background of informants

4.3 Findings

4.3.1 Experience of burnout among young social workers

There are the summary of the experience of burnout among the informants.

4.3.1.1Behavioural

Behavioural problems refers to Evan claimed: '*shut down*' himself for a period of time from several hours to some days. That means he had no motivation and was not able to finish his job during burnout. He said,

'I do not want to do anything or I just …… face to the computer but not doing jobs.(咁我咪唔想做任何嘢呀，或者變相直情係嗰日就變咗成個下晝喺度碌緊個 … …對住個電腦唔係做緊嘢嘅唔知做緊啲乜咁)'

Donald would fall asleep quickly after getting off. He mentioned,

'I sleep immediately after back home until very late and then have dinner.(一返到屋企就即刻瞓著咗， 瞓到好晏先至起身食飯咁樣)

Fion needed a lot of deep breaths since when she backed home, all emotion she has got at work emerged. As she said,

'It means I want to take a deep breath. I want to take a deep breath after backing home. Just stay alone and dont do antything.(即係勁想唞啖氣， 即係返到嚟呢要係咁抖氣呀， 好想"ban"埋自己一邊 … … 咩都唔係太想理呀)'

Carman wanted to escape from the pressure. She would be awake suddenly and have fast heart beat. As Carman said,

'I wanted to delude and give so much pressure to myself. I even have the feeling of giving a start. I would be awake suddenly while sleeping, having fast heart beat. I worried whether I did not finish the job of tomorrow. And I have the time of lacking motivation.(會好想逃避呀，甚至乎會比好大壓力自己，甚至乎會有突然間扎醒嘅感覺，瞓瞓下覺會突然之間扎醒咗，心跳得好快咁樣， 擔心聽日嘅工作係咪未完成 ？呢啲情況都會出現喇，咁同埋都會有缺乏動力嘅時候)'

Donald also said that,

'Job pressure cause me eating, It means eat much more.(工作壓力大會令到我食嘢， 即係食多咗好多嘢)'

4.3.1.2 Emotional

All informants have said that they felt very tired and do not want to do any jobs. Also, both of them reported they were stressed and depressed when they had burnout. Both informants felt anxious and stressed. Billy felt nervous and anxious every night and cannot sleep. Carman and Fion felt worried and stressed. As Carman said,

'When there were work handover or I needed to handle the urgent case suddenly. I may have a little bit cold sweat, stressful……It means anxiety manifestations like a little sweat on hands

would appear.(即係當有工作交接嘅時候或者突然之間有啲urgent嘅嘢要即刻做嘅時候，之後就會可能有少少冒冷汗呀，大壓力 …即係會有少少出手汗呢一啲 焦慮嘅情況都會有出現嘅)'

Evan was anger during burnout. He mentioned,

'I was a little bit angry. It means the emotion would come out slowly. I usually think that why would this situation happen? Sometimes I think about this person has a situation and where is the root? Once I think about the root, I felt angry at that moment and I am angry about I cannot do something.(會有一啲時候會有啲嬲呀， 即係啲情緒會慢慢出現囉， 嬲得嚟有 … 即係嬲嘅話呢通常係覺得：點解會係咁㗎呢個情況 ？ 有陣時會諗番呢個人有呢一個情況， 佢個源頭係邊度 ？即係畀一諗起嗰啲源頭嘅時候，你就會覺得有嬲嗰啲嘅情況呀 … 跟住又會嬲自己唔係好做到)'

Donald also became impatient. He said,

'I will feel annoyed and lack of patient.(會覺得唔係咁耐煩啦，冇乜耐性啦)'

4.3.1.3 Physical health

Informant B claimed that he kept losing hair when he had burnout. Informants B and C would break out in cold sweat. Informants D and E had stomach aches. Informant A even want to throw up and fast heartbeat when she had burnout.

4.3.2 Factors of burnout among young social workers

4.3.2.1 Lacking practice compentance

Lacking practice compentance makes informants felt helpless. Informants B, D, E and F also presented that they felt helpless, frustrated, powerless and depressed when they found that they cannot help their clients. They were responsible to their clients and had expectations of clients so when they failed to help clients change, they would be disappointed. As the following quotes:

'I found some clients would tell me about their unhappy experiences, especially about pandemics. For example, I received a case that a user give a phone call to the centre and said things were hard to do recently. I asked him how hard it is……In fact, I wanted to ask him to join some groups but the format of the group was changed. It means no face to face temporarily. I told him the format of the group is changed and some other group activities. Then we talked about his situation……They are a couple. He needed an escort for a follow-up consultation. It means his wife would go with him. But the situation of the follow-up consultation was bad. For example, we are couple and you bring me to see the doctor. But the doctor just said, "Oh! We do not have face-to-face follow-up consultation now." ……That's a doctor! The doctor said they can have a follow-up consultation by phone. I felt wired that how the doctor has a follow-up consultation by phone. He said they would ask questions like whether his blood pressure is in a normal range. If yes, then he just needs to take medicine as usual. And that's the end! I felt so powerless after listening to him.(呢排我會scan到啲client佢哋可能會講一啲佢哋嘅唔開心嘅經歷啦, 即係特別係而家疫情方面啦, 譬如話……我舉個例子咁樣, 就係琴日我收到個個案啦, 即係都係啲user打電話嚟咁樣：啊…其實我哋近排呢……我哋啲嘢啊都好難做咁樣。我問佢點解難做啊咁樣，咁事前呢我係諗住叫佢參加一啲小組活動嘅咁樣，但係呢小組活動

就有一啲形式改變啦，即係唔可以face to face住喇。呢個話係會改咗形式啊，咁講完呢排小組嘅活動之後呢就搭單講佢少少佢嘅嘢咁樣啊，咁佢嘅嘢就係佢要……咁呢佢就係兩公婆嚟嘅，就要同佢去複診，即係同佢嘅另一半去複診嘅時候呢咁就係而家直情係去複診嘅情況都好惡劣啊。譬如話我同你係兩公婆咁先算啦，跟住之後呢譬如話你帶我去睇醫生，跟住個醫生就話啦：矣？先生，我哋而家有得Face to face同你複診架喎。嗰個係醫生嚟㗎，個醫生咁樣同佢講，佢話打電話同佢複診，咁我就奇怪啦，點樣打電話同佢複診。佢就話打電話就問佢都係你血壓係咪正常呀？如果血壓正常咁都係咁樣食藥架啦喎，得啦走得喇啦咁樣。我聽完之後就令到我有啲好無助嘅感覺)' -- Billy

'I have a case about a student who would be down easily. I can tell a little more about the case. She is depressed……like looping a cycle. I told her do not let herself keep going down. However, she would fall on the same place everytimes. So I felt like……I have told you many times.(sign)' -- Fion因為我有個學生佢情緒都好容易低落，咁嗰個學生我會有少少呢個情況，好似係咁叫佢唔好喺嗰度不停咁循環，俾自己down 落去，咁佢係佢每一次就係跌落去嗰個位囉，咁我就會有少少覺得：哎呀我同你講過好多次la … …so far … 佢係咁send畀我嘅時候，第一下我會覺得唔太想理嘅，心入面有少少覺得哎呀點解你又係咁樣呀？

Informant E even felt desprated when he tried different ways to help the client but useless.

According to social competency model, the core of the social competency model helps illuminate the process through which we all form social responses tied to each situation's social norms. Harrison(1980) thought that practice competency and perceived competence may be related to burnout among social workers. The extent to which a worker perceives that he or she is having an effect on client problems may moderate levels of experienced burnout.

Besides, psychoanalytic perspective tells the reason why people choose to derive a sense of significance through a particular career is explained by the psychoanalytic perspective, which attributes it to significant childhood experiences and family of origin dynamics. Fischer(1983) believed that people with ideal jobs will suffer from job burnout when they are unable to change or achieve their ideals in reality and show disappointment when their own resources are exhausted. Cynicism, anger and gloom produced by burnout are essentially the hatred attitudes caused by the trauma of narcissism. That is a significant change in function caused by the failure to achieve their ideals and reduced self-esteem.

4.3.2.2 Work content

Informant D compared school social work and foodbank and showed that there are more complicated and urgent cases in school social work setting. Those cases were challenging and included family conflicts, mental illness, drug abuse, etc. He felt more sense of defeat as a school social worker.

Informant B also face different challenges in the job. He used to be scolded for three hours by a client. The client is an elderly's son and also a social worker. At that time, the client's son call Billy because he noticed that his mother still did not get the service after applicated for a long time. And he thought Billy did not put effort into the job so he was very angry. Informant B thought that was wrongly accused and felt wronged since the waiting list for that service is quite long and the client had to wait. Social workers face numerous challenges when they work with highly complicated and high-risk clients such as those who attempt or commit suicide; clients with severe health or mental health problems and who do not improve; those who display

high-risk behaviours; and those who perpetrate abusive or aggressive behaviours against others (Bongar & Stolberg, 2009; Gately & Stabb, 2005; Ting et al., 2006). They are often "pushed to the limit" and feel stressed when they try to complete their work with limited resources and under less-than-optimal work environments.

4.3.2.3 conflictual Interpersonal

According to the interviews, it seems the clients had lots of unrealistic demand and the informants were lack of skills of complins.

Informant B and C said that the relationship between colleagues is estranged. Informant B mentioned that he has a picky supervisor who had unpredictable and frequent requirements to him.

As Carman said, 'Because I am a school social worker and I seldom go to the unit centre, I am estranged with my colleagues. And my another colleagues at school would snitch on her so we do not trust each other.'

Informant D mentioned about the problems in cross-professional cooperation. He thought that was hard to balance the relationship and requirement between clients, school, parents and psychiatrist. He said 'A student tried to commit suicide and was transfered to a hospital for treatment and observatioin. Parents and school wanted the students stayed for one more week for taking a rest. But the psychiatrist did not understand. "She had lived for 7 days. Is she going to

stay in the hospital for the rest of her life? (in psychiatrist's tone)" At that time, I felt powerless……like I was wrong.'

4.3.2.4 Lack of support from supervisors

In addition, disconnect with supervisors or coworkers prompts a higher risk of burnout (Kulkarni et al., 2013). When Carman had complicated cases, she could not have enough suggestions from the supervisor. Informant B also claimed that

The supervisors and other senior staff do not give much help to young social workers as the following quotes:

'If I have difficulties, I would ask some senior staff and supervisor for seeking opinions. The supervisor would ask whether I have any solutions. I usually think about some methods before seeking help. The supervisor always just nodded his head and encouraged me to try but I actually want some practical advice.' -- Amy

'I have asked the supervisor for supervision since June of last year but I still do not have a supervision not.' -- Billy

4.3.2.5 Inadequate reward

Informat F mentioned that if the salary can follow the pay scale of the government, she would have more capacity and less burnout.

4.3.2.6 Lack of understanding

As Donald said, " I was tired because of my job and my off-work time is flexible so I have less time to be with my family. And I did not be understood all the time because I am a social worker and a son at the same time. Sometimes I need to deal with some problems at work at dinner time. My family may not know what happens. They would think about whether I am actually so busy like that.'

Three responded school social workers showed that the teachers and parents usually do not know the duties of social workers. In fact, it did cause vexation to social workers as they were asked to do something out of duty. As the following quotes are examples:

'Some parents did not know the function of a social worker and would make some unreasonable requirement. Once, a mother asked me to help her son be more hard-working and have good results. However, that is the teachers' job.' -- Evan

'I do not be close to the teachers because some students will worry about whether I am the teacher's friend who discloses all of our conversations to teachers.' -- Evan

'Parents always have different wired needs and ask me to help.' -- Carman

'Some parents who are from the middle class did not believe in me. I have told a parent that her son had some kinds of sensitive problems related to crime. She was angry and immediately stop me. Then she called a lawyer to the school. She said that she would not say any one word to me until the lawyer is here and I need to talk to the lawyer. ' -- Fion

Donald also said, 'You know sometimes the effects and results of intervention cannot be seen immediately or in a short time. So some parents will doubt your ability if they do not recognise any changes.' Social workers may have lower self-identity or confidence after that.

Although social worker is quite common in Hong Kong, not many people really know the duties and content of this job. Therefore, there may be some misunderstandings about social workers and that would affect social workers' interpersonal relationships and live.

4.3.2.7 Work-life unbalance

As Billy said, 'I felt strange about this career. Not like the salesperson, getting off means job finish. This job can connect to your life. If you have a family member……I mean I have a family member who has dementia. I am taking care of him. When I go back home and face the totally same problems as what I deal with at work, I felt like I was consumed more.

According to the conservation of resources theory, it is a stress theory that describes the motivation that drives humans to both maintain their current resources and to pursue new resources(Habfoll, 1989). Habfoll reported that people have the tendency to protect and acquire resources. The loss of the most valuable resources can make people uneasy. Burnout appears when the depletion rate of resources required for work is greater than the replenishment rate.

4.3.2.8 Workload

Social workers always have a heavy workload and that is one of the factors of burnout as mentioned in the literature review. Both informants also claimed that they have many works to do. Not only casework, holding groups, community work and mass programme, but they also have to handle much administrative work and paperwork like evaluation reports and funding proposals. Informant C said,

'The teachers always have to find me. That made me so nervous because if they cannot find me, they would make announcement through the public address system. And I even have no time having lunch. I have to work overtime. I also had to bring the works back home and kept doing until midnight. I always feel tired in day time.' Furthermore, Donald also said 'Because of the covid-19, there were more urgent cases I had to handle. I had a case that a student just tried to commit suicide. I always needed to check whether there is phone calls about the case. I was nervous and afraid that I would miss a call so I combined the sim cards of my personal phone and working phone into one.' Apparently, burnout is generated when workload gets worse. Over workload is the work requirements exceeding the boundary of medical staff. That is social workers could not bear the load physically or spiritually when excessive amount of work needs to be completed in certain period or the working time is too long. The social workers would first perceive emotional exhaustion and then depersonalization, which is to keep the distance with the working subjects in order to release emotional exhaustion(Xiaoming et al., 2014).

4.3.2.9 Personal traits (put on discussion)

Informants A and E agreed that personality traits can affect burnout. Informant A claimed that she is pessimistic and introverted so she would think about the negative side of an even first. Informant E said that he is a perfectioner. He always hope to do his best so he would feel upset when he could not achieve his own standard.

As Evan said,

'You know I am relatively impatient. I overdrew myself in the first year. Hurry up! Hurry up! Hurry up! Then I overdrew myself.(你知道我性格比較chur㗎嘛，chur爆自己㗎嘛第一年喎，chur爆chur爆chur爆 … …咁我就chur 死咗自己)'

Informant A presented that she was a pessimist and introvert who tend to see the world as more threatening than optimists. She worries more about things going wrong, expects more bad things to happen than good, believes in herself less, and has other key differences. She causes herself unnecessary stress in many everyday situations, which can make her more vulnerable to burnout. Layman and Guyden(1997) suggested that introverted people were at a higher risk of developing burnout than extroverted people. Ghorpade et al.(2007) in a cross-sectional survey of 265 full-time university teachers also found that emotional exhaustion is negatively related to extraversion and emotional stability and positively related to openness to experience.

Trait neuroticism scores have a modest relationship with perceived stress and all domains of burnout. This was consistent with that of most of the researchers including Shimizutani et al.(2008) and Zellars et al.(2000). Neuroticism in the five-factor model was described as the most pervasive domain of personality. These people are prone to a variety of psychological distress and the development of a variety of psychiatric disorders. They are characterized by irrational thinking low self-esteem, poor control of impulses, and ineffective coping resulting in recurrent nervous tension, depression, frustration, guilt, and self-consciousness.

Extraverts tend to be with positive emotions, higher frequency, and intensity of personal interactions, optimistic, and reappraise problems in a positive manner. They tend to focus on the good and positive side of the experiences and this temperament enables them in reaching

decisions with colleagues. Subjective well-being and higher job satisfaction have been correlated to extraversion in the meta-analysis(Judge et al., 2002). These could explain the negative correlation of tra(Divinakumar et al., 2019)it extraversion scores with all types of burnout and perceived stress.

Another study revealed a negative correlation of the agreeableness trait score and all domains of burnout and perceived stress scores. High scores on the agreeableness trait include altruism, nurturance and caring. These people are more likely to be treated kindly by others and evoke a favourable response from the work environment. Higher job satisfaction has been reported in individuals with these traits(Judge et al., 2002).

People with more open personalities were more likely to be emotionally exhausted(Deary et al., 2003) However, in our study, the correlation between openness to experience and various domains and perceived stress was very weak and not significant. Among the Big Five personality traits, openness to experience is the least predictive in meta-analyses for its correlation with job satisfaction and burnout(Judge et al., 2002).

Conscientiousness is associated with self-discipline, achievement, striving, dutifulness, and competence. They tend to be traditional in outlook, organized, and responsible. And there is a negative correlation between this trait score and various domains of burnout(Deary et al., Divinakumar, et al., 2019: 2003; Piedmont, 1993).

4.3.3 Impacts of burnout on young social workers

4.3.1 Personal level

All the informants have mentioned that because of the negative feelings and physical problems caused by burnout, their working performance was worse. For instance, Fion said, 'I think I am wasting time. Because I felt like my brain could not function well during burnout. I could not think about the job and that slower my job progress.' Informant F also said 'I think the working efficiency and quality of work were not as good as usual when I suffered from burnout.' Informant B even thought burnout would cause resignation and increase the turnover rate. Additionally, burnout made Fion be angry easier. However, she would not vent her spleen on others except her family. So she would have anger towards family members sometimes, especially when she was extremely tired. That may affect the relationship between she and her family.

4.3.2 Service and policy level

Informants B and C also mentioned that when they had burnout, it would affect their work performance. That may affect the image of the agencies. Informant C said,

'If many social workers turnover because of burnout, the agency would have loss as they need to cultivate the new social worker.' It means the agency may lose some resources and money on it.

4.4 Coping strategies for burnout of young social workers

4.4.1 Develop hobbies

Informants A, B, C, D and E also mentioned that they would spend time on their hobbies, like drawing, hiking, shopping, etc., to release their stress. A Lithuanian study has shown that

possessing a hobby, regardless of its connection with physical activity, has a significant influence on the reduction to occupational burnout symptoms(Merkys & Bubelienė, 2013). Teachers who have a hobby and are regularly engaged in it have significantly less expressed symptoms of burnout than those who have no hobbies at all, or do have but are little involved in it or are

4.4.2 Talk with friends and family and get support

Both informants mentioned that one of the coping strategies is talking wth friends and family. They can express their problems and feelings without concern. After they share their feelings, they were less stressful than before. As Amy said, 'They do not need to response to me. They just need to listen to me. I think that's good enough.' Informant D responded that sharing with former classmates was better as they are social workers too so they can undestand his situation and feelings better. The person they talked to doesn't have to be able to solve their problems. They just have to be a good listener, someone who'll listen attentively without becoming distracted or expressing judgment. Although during the covid-19, they may not talk to their friends face to face, they can chat by phone calls or zoom meetings. They can also share with family members. That shows seeking help from supporting networks is important.

4.4.3 Division of labour

Informant E said, 'I am so lucky that I have two PWs to asist me. I can asked them to help me do some administrative work. I felt more relaxed after they help me.' Therefore, the division of labour can reduce the personal workload and that can help dealing with burnout.

4.4.4 Praying

Informant F is a Christian so she would pray when she was burnout. As she said, 'I would pray to seek for peace. There are some studies proved that religious belief is related to burnout. According to a study done by Kovács and Kézdy(2008), data from all the three measures of religiosity provided evidence for the significant linear negative relationship between religiosity and burnout: there was a statistically significant negative relationship between subjective importance of religiosity and burnout, as well as between the frequency of church attendance and burnout. These results suggest that religiosity might play an important role as a protective factor against burnout.

4.4.5 Keep working

Informant E also said, 'Keep working make me have no time to think about my feelings. That can distract me from burnout.' There is not much research to support this point. Even though some research usually found that long working time would increase burnout(Coady et al., 1990; Hu et al., 2016), his experience is quite unique.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Contribution of the study

Building a solid base for the practice of social work requires the creation of a conceptual and practical frame for self-care among practitioners, supervisors, students and teachers (Lee, Miller, 2013). Most social work graduates, even though they will not work in crisis intervention centers specialized in violence and mental health issues, will frequently meet persons who present symptoms of traumatic stress, of adaptation or behavior, addictions, symptoms of burnout and depression as a response to different traumatic life events. Apart from the theoretical knowledge and the training of the specific work skills it is important that, especially when they work with traumatized persons, students learn to take care of themselves. For this purpose it becomes necessary that they find out, in Agllias's (2012) opinion, about the adverse reactions of fatigue and secondary traumatic stress they might be confronted with as practitioners and to prepare in due time in order to cope with them, especially if they suffered because of violence or they already dealt with symptoms of primary or secondary traumatic stress in their childhood.

5.2 Implication to social work practice

According to the results of the interviews, we can have more reflection on the situation of social workers' burnout.

5.2.1 Secondary setting

Both the school social workers in the interview mentioned different difficulties in cooperating with the principal and teachers. They also felt stressed and helpless sometimes. For example,

Fion and her agency pretend to mainly help with the serious cases and some mild cases can leave for the teachers. However, teachers expected informants to in charge all the cases. Although school social workers mainly work in schools, principal and teachers are the decision makers in school. The school setting and social work have different perspectives on different things. Therefore, different intervention methods and expectation lead to conflicts. Therefore, how to work in the secondary setting is very important.

No people taught Evan about the worldly wisdom and how to deal with people in the workplace. As he said, 'On one occasion, I worked until very late. I supposed there was only me except the security guard. I receive a call from the IC. He said now the time is very late and I should get off work. Then he asked me to leave as soon as possible. I was quite awkward at that time. I don't know what happens. After a period of time, I know that the security can only get off after all people leave the building. That's why IC gave me the phone call.' It shows that nobody taught Evan about the worldly wisdom in the workplace.

Management staff may do well to devise strategies for coping with the phenomenon of job burnout in social workers, to provide a healthy work environment with better social workers morale and enhanced productivity. The findings of the study have implications for organizations in the service sector. This being a client-centred industry expects social workers to enhance clients' well-being. Therefore, it would be worthwhile for IC to help social workers in dealing with job stressors in their work environment.

5.2.2 Public lack of understanding on social workers

Most people may not know much about social worker's job and cause misunderstandings. As Donald mentioned that his parents and girlfriend did not understand why he still need to take the phone calls and even go out for working after getting off. Although they know that Donald is exhausted, they still have some blaming sometimes. That made Donald more tired and frustrated. He also felt guilts because he has less time with them and he was not good enough as a son and boyfriend.

5.2.3 Find a suitable way to release stress

No matter what coping strategies are used, finding the most suitable way to relax is the most important. Shannon and others (2014) explore the practice of self-care among social work students during advanced courses of trauma therapy. The interviewed students report that in their practice of self-care some strategies functioned more efficiently and that it was important to explore previously more strategies before choosing the most suitable ones for them as current practices. Out of these they enumerate: physical or behavioral strategies (jogging, dancing, yoga, hiking in the mountains, diverse sports, simple relaxation exercises and deep breathing learnt during workshops); relational strategies (expressing feelings in the relations with friends, colleagues, partners, supervisors, mentors or therapists, spending time with pets, as well as doing activities together with the dear ones: cooking, eating, exercises etc.); cognitive strategies (deliberate distraction of attention: film, music, internet surfing, avoidance of trauma exposure outside of the work hours, avoidance of reading about trauma under conditions of overwork, limitation of exposure to details regarding traumatic experiences, limitation of the work time with trauma, daily prayers, work diary/marking the experience in writing as a strategy of thought

processing, focusing on the clients' strong points etc.). The difficulties in the practice of self-care reported by the interviewed students were: stressful school program, lack of time, lack of motivation and mutual support for this kind of practice, a degree of difficulty of some relaxation strategies that is too high etc. (Shannon et al., 2014, 444-445).

5.3 Limitation of the study

As the present study pertains to only a small part of young social workers, the results cannot be generalized. Future research can take a larger sample for the same. Besides, the respondents' mental condition of interview day will also affect the answers so the study result may be different if the interviews are conducted on various days.

On the other hand, personalities and traits are also a kind of main factors which affect burnout but it is not included in this research. It is because most researchers use the big five model to analyse personalities and traits and that cost more time to do the tests and analysis. There may not be enough time to finish it. That makes the analysis not comprehensive.

Moreover, the condition of informants may be changed after a period of time so the data may not be accurate. As there was a long time lag between the sampling test (MBI) and interviews for some informants, their condition changed. For example, because of work arrangement, Evan could only take the interview after three weeks.

Moreover, two-thirds of the informants are school social workers so the data may not represent social workers in different fields. It may also because school social workers have burnout easier than other social workers.

Chapter 6 Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

To conclude, the research explored the situation of burnout, including experience, factors, impacts and coping strategies, among young social workers.

In this study, we found that informants with burnout would have physical health problems, emotional problems and behavioural problems. In physical health problems, informants would lose hair, break out in cold sweat, had stomach aches, throw up and fast heartbeat. In emotional problems, informants felt tired, stressed, depressed, anxious, nervous, anxious, worried and fearful during burnout. In behavioural problems, informants would have no motivation and were not able to finish the job. Some informants also fell asleep quickly and needed a lot of deep breaths. Besides, helplessness and secondary traumatic stress, interpersonal relationship between colleagues, lack of support from supervisors, inadequate reward, lack of understanding, work-life balance, work content, traits and workload are the factors of burnout. Impacts can be divided into macron level and micro level. At the macro level, burnout causes damage to agencies' image. At the micro level, burnout would affect social workers' work performance and affect the relationship between them and family. About the coping strategies, informants would develop hobbies, talk to friends and family, have the division of labour, pray and keep working.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 For recommendations to social workers

I think knowing the position and duties of social worker is very important. Just like what most informants mentioned, social workers need to cooperate with different people and professional staff. They would be doubted about their ability and decisions by clients, colleagues, psychiatrists, etc. so they felt lots of pressure and had burnout. However, the unique and strengths of social workers are that social workers know about the clients, their needs and resources in society. Social workers as case managers help clients reflect the needs to other professionals and seek for resources to help clients at the same time. Social workers also coordinate and integrate opinions from different professionals, stakeholders and clients. If social workers can have a clear understanding of their job, they may have less chance to get lost or burnout. Furthermore, to cope with the frustration and helplessness brought by the adverse reactions of fatigue and secondary traumatic stress, the suggested ways are training the abilities to be completely present in one's body and the abilities of stress reduction (simple and systematic exercises of progressive relaxation, yoga, qigong, taichi etc.); empathic communication, debriefing for the verbalization and processing of the secondary traumatic stress experience and mutual social support in the intervision sessions; mentoring programs for social support offered to newcomers in social work (Mathieu, 2012; Babin et al., 2012).

6.2.2 For recommendations to the agencies

I believe improving an adequate reward for one's work, the team cohesion support, good organizational communication and supervision can help social workers reduce burnout situation. The reward generally refers to the salary. Nowadays many social workers of non-governmental organisation do not paid as the suggestion of pay scale from the government. They usually have

lower salary. As Fion mentioned, she would be more willing to deal with the heavy workload and complicated cases if she has higher salary. She thought the current salary does not match with the jobs she need to do. In addition, the supervisioor need to offer enough support to the young social workers. As young social workers are lack of experience, they need more guidance and help particularly handling complicated cases. They expected more suggestions and comments, not just criticism, from senior workers. It may help them find a direction and not burnout easily.

6.2.3 For recommendations to social work training schools

Although students can learn professional knowledge and practical skills from the lessons and practicums, the interpersonal relationship skills training is not enough. Teachers and supervisors usually only focus on professional training but ignore the interpersonal relationship development. That make the fresh and young social workers having more difficulties on work like communicating with colleagues especially when social workers need to cooperate with other professionals in case conference. Furthermore, the schools need to adjust the course content to fit in the needs of students and help prepare for their future career. Students have less chance in the placement to cooperate with different professional staff too so they need to learn after they start working. That undoubtedly lower their confidence and decrease their professional identity in the beginning. Therefore, the social work training school should adjust their course's contents in order to cultivate better social workers to deal with the work and reduce the opportunity of burnout.

For the recommendations to the government, the Social Welfare Department need to adjust their policy on time and truly consider the feasibility of some requirements in special situation. Most informants mentioned covid-19 and the epidemic prevention measures brought many difficulties to them during work. For example, the funding service agreement(FSA) have requirement on numbers of participants. However, fewer people join the activities because of the pandemic. IC can only give pressure to staff as they need to fulfil the FSA to make sure they can have funding from the government next years. If the social workers have to focus more on the administration work and FSA, their working performance may be worse since they pay less attention to the clients and activities' content. When they have too much pressure, that may increase the possibility of burnout.

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Appendix A Concent form

<div align="center">

宏恩基督教學院

社會工作學院

年輕社工的職業倦怠情況研究

參與研究同意書

</div>

本人 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿ 備悉上述研究計劃目的在研究年輕社工職業倦怠的情況、成因、影響及應對方法。本人亦知悉此研究負責人來自宏恩基督教學院之社會工作學士學位課程學生蔡欣欣。本人知悉所提供的資料將根據香港法例第 486 章《個人資料(私隱)條例》加以保護。而此研究所得的資料將會被錄音及可能被用作日後的研究及發表, 但該研究及發表中亦不會包含能夠識別本人身份的細節。本人的私隱權利會得以保留，本人的個人資料不會被公開。研究人員已向本人清楚解釋列在所附研究程序上的資料, 本人明瞭當中涉及的利益及風險;本人自願參與研究項目, 並同意參與提供個人意見。本人知悉本人有權就程序的任何部分提出疑問, 並有權隨時退出而不受任何懲處。

參與者簽署：

參與者姓名 (正楷)：

家長或監護人 (如適用) 簽署：

家長或監護人 (如適用) 姓名：

研究人員簽署：

研究人員姓名 :蔡欣欣

日期 :

備註 : 就有關上述研究細則, 可聯絡宏恩基督教學院社會工作學院 (李玉儀博士)　　　　電

話:5804 4140 (內線：261)

Appendix B Maslach Burnout Inventory

<div align="center">馬氏工作倦怠量表MBI</div>

請您仔細閱讀每一項，然後根據最近一個月發生的頻率圈出分數。

0=從未有過;

1=極少數時候(一年中有幾次或更少);

2=少數時候(一個月一次或更少);

3=稍多時候(一個月中有幾次);

4=多數時候(一個星期一次);

5=幾乎每天(一個星期中有幾次);

6=每天。

項目	分數						
1.我感到自己在工作中投入了過多的感情。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.下班時, 我感到自己的精力全部都被耗盡了。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.早上醒來時想到又要面對一天的工作, 我感到很累。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.我能輕鬆地理解病人或同事的感受。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.我感到自己用一種冷漠的方式對待某些人。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.工作一整天對我來說很緊張。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.我能非常有效地解決工作中的問題。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.我的工作使我疲憊不堪。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.我感到自己的工作對別人的生活來說很重要。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10.自從事這項工作以來, 我變得對人更冷淡了。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
11.我擔心這項工作使我感情冷漠。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
12.我感到精力非常充沛。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13.我的工作使我有挫折感。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
14.我覺得自己工作得太辛苦。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
15.我不太關心發生在某些病人身上的事情。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
16.從事直接與人打交道的工作給我帶來巨大的壓力。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
17.我能毫不費勁地創造一個輕鬆的工作氛圍。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
18.能從事與人密切接觸的工作使我很愉快。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
19.我在自己的工作中完成了許多有價值的事。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
20.我感到自己已經到了忍受的極點。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
21.在工作中, 我能非常冷靜地處理情緒問題。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
22.在工作中, 我感到別人因爲他(她)們自己的某些問題而責備我。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

李超平, 时勘，分配公平与程序公平对工作倦怠的影响,心理学报, 2003, 35(5), 677-684

Appendix C Interview guide

1. 青年社工感到職業倦怠的經歷（近一個月內）

    a. 甚麼時候/情境會感到倦怠

    b. 當時在甚麼地方

    c. 有甚麼人在場

    d. 發生什麼事/正在進行甚麼事情？

2. 哪些因素會影響青年社工的職業倦怠？

    a. 情緒耗竭

        i. 角色認同

        ii. 角色衝突

        iii. 工作挑戰

        iv. 工作時長

        v. 服務對象

    b. 去人格化

        i. 教育程度/專業知識及經驗

        ii. 工作年資

        iii. 工作能力（與自我認同、自尊及能力感相關）

        iv. 上司督導

    c. 低個人成就感

        i. 工作挑戰

        ii. 工作能力（是否與工作挑戰程度相關？能否產生滿足感及成就感？）

        iii. 團隊支持（來自上司/機構/家庭/同事/朋友的支持）

3. 職業倦怠對青年社工的影響是什麼？

    a. 微觀層面

        i. 服務表現

        ii. 與服務對象的關係

        iii. 生理健康（例如失眠、胃痛等）

        iv. 精神健康（例如抑鬱情緒、焦慮、缺乏動力等）

    b. 宏觀層面

        i. 增加機構的機會成本

        ii. 影響機構運作

        iii. 資源損失

4. 青年社工倦怠的應對策略是什麼？

    a. PsyCap（希望、自我效能、復原力、樂觀）

    b. 尋求社會網絡支援

    c. 其他？