ABSTRACT

The negative impacts of trauma on clients are well known. However, the negative impact of working with traumatized clients on the counselor or helper has received less attention in the literature. Similarly, the contributions of certain work environments to experiences of compassion fatigue and the role of personality characteristics have gone unnoticed, especially in the South African context. The aim of this research is to examine the relationships between compassion fatigue, sense of coherence and work environment variables (job control, workload and collegial support), and to determine whether sense of coherence moderates the relationship between work environment and compassion fatigue on a sample of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) practitioners in the South African organisational context (both public and private sectors). The current study adopted a non-experimental research design, categorised as cross-sectional and correlational. A non-probability sampling procedure was utilised. A sample of ninety-nine (99) EAP practitioners was obtained. A 10-items Job Control Scale (Wall, Jackson and Mullarkey, 1995), Workload and Collegial Support Scale by Dewe (1987) 11-items each, a 30-items Compassion Fatigue Self-Test Scale (Figley, 1995), and 13-items Orientation to Life Questionnaire (QLQ-13/SOC-13) by Antonovsky (1987; 1993) were administered. Results indicate that the sample in the current study were at higher risk of experiencing compassion fatigue. There was a positive significant relationship between workload, collegial support and compassion fatigue, a negative insignificant correlation between job control and compassion fatigue, and positive insignificant relationship between sense of coherence and compassion fatigue. The results between sense of coherence and the work environment variables were insignificant. Finally, sense of coherence was only found to moderate the relationship between workload and compassion fatigue and the relationship between collegial support and compassion fatigue.