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The life experiences of therapists who are mothers to children with developmental disability.

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5. CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate that therapists who work with Disability and parent a child with developmental disability are subjected to three sources of stress. The first source involves the documented stressors associated with each of the life domains which they occupy. Not only do these women bear the stresses of ordinary mothers, they also face the stresses associated with raising a child with disability. In addition they assume the challenges that working mothers must face. It could be argued that that engaging in multiple roles is a cathartic experience that individuals from many professions engage. However, for the participants the aim of engaging in multiple social roles is role release in order to escape the stressful nature of their personal lives.

The second source of stress is the merging of professional and mothering identities. Though the professional knowledge supported their decisions in the mothering realm, it also invoked great anxiety. Conversely, the mothering identity impacted on their professional interactions with clients.

Thirdly, the impact of Disability had a pervasive presence in all aspects of their lives. They attempted to escape disability in their personal lives by engaging in role release, namely work. Ironically, they do not escape from the Disability. Instead, they face the source of their stress from a different perspective. As such, these women are unique in that they are constantly attempting to cope with the root of their personal stresses. The nature of Disability does not make the situation any easier in terms of the long term impact on the individual, family and broader socio-communicative environment. Families coping with disability have reported

emotional, mental and physical burnout. From a professional perspective, individuals who work with disability have also reported that the emotional strain that one bears often culminates in stress and burnout.

The important finding is that dealing with disability results in greater psychological losses for the individual. This sense of emotional depletion is carried across into other life domains due to the merging of social roles. As a result, there is concern regarding the possible outcomes of professional and ethical behavior in such instances. The high stress levels potentially culminate in burnout, which is significant to the therapists' ability to provide effective services. Furthermore, burnout may lead to the attrition of professionals which means that there will be a lack of services available to communities. Preventing the consequences of burnout requires an understanding of the sources of stress.

There are also pros and cons to engaging in multiple social roles. To a large extent, this is dependent on a myriad of individual and social factors. There is also a degree of role ambiguity associated with occupying multiple social roles. From a professional point of view, the psychological well-being of multiple social roles has a rippling effect, meaning that professional competencies need to be considered holistically. Ensuring professional longevity and high quality professional services necessitates that practitioners engage in global life management mechanisms.

Ultimately, this will ensure that the integrity of professional bodies and academic disciplines are upheld while promoting efficient ethical professional behavior.

This study has shown that working therapist mothers are a unique group of women who are invaluable in furthering our knowledge of family interventions. It has also

demonstrated the importance of supporting therapists on a personal and professional level.