

Stress at Work : A Study of Organizational-Professional Conflict and Unmet Expectations

Le stress au travail : une étude du conflit profession-organisation et des attentes ignorées

El estrés debido al trabajo : un estudio del conflicto organizacional-profesional y las expectativas insatisfechas

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Article abstract

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Stress at Work

A Study of Organizational-Professional Conflict and Unmet Expectations

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This study examines how certain conditions of work affect human service workers' job stress. We propose and assess a model of organizational-professional conflict to determine how professional and bureaucratic conditions of work influence service providers' expectations and in turn their job stress. The model was tested using data from a survey of 514 human service providers in Alberta, Canada. The findings suggest that whether service providers' expectations are met is critical in explaining job stress. Professional conditions of work relating to working relationships and client interactions are key to fulfilling service providers' expectations, whereas bureaucratic conditions of work that reflect role conflict and excessive role demands are particularly stressful. An unexpected finding is that bureaucratization of procedures that may limit service workers' control over their work does not contribute significantly to their job stress.

A major area in the study of professions is the potential for conflict between professionals and the organizations for which they work (Sorensen and Sorensen 1974; Davies 1983; Freidson 1986; Wallace 1995a). This may occur when the values, goals and expectations of the professional are incompatible with those of their employing organization, especially when professionals are employed in highly bureaucratic organizations. The

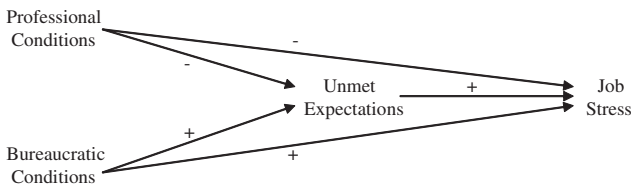
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professional is usually unprepared for organizational-professional conflict, or such incongruence, which may result in a stressful working experience (Kahn and Quinn 1970; Cherniss 1980; Eaton 1980; Stevens and O'Neill 1983; Leiter 1991).

This study will apply the organizational-professional conflict model¹ to job stress experienced by human service workers by addressing the question: "How do the conditions of work affect human service workers' job stress?"² In the case of service work, it has been reported that employment settings often represent a blending of elements of professionalism and bureaucratic organization, rather than purely one or the other (Cherniss 1980; Hasenfeld 1983; Harris 1998). For example, the rational administration of the bureaucratic system may function alongside the professional whose expertise grants him or her control over the content of services provided to clients (Harris 1998). Thus we would predict that human service workers may report some aspects of work that reflect professional ideals and norms of practice and others that manifest bureaucratic traits. It is hypothesized that more bureaucratic conditions will fail to meet professional workers' job expectations and contribute to stress, whereas working conditions that are more consistent with professional ideals will meet their expectations and thus alleviate the potential for job stress. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model that we are proposing and empirically assessing in this paper.

FIGURE 1
Conceptual Model of Job Stress



1. Related explanations include the person-environment fit (French, Caplan and Harrison 1982) or person-organization fit models (Kristoff 1996). These models emphasize the compatibility or "goodness of fit" between the worker and the job and that stress is not simply due to either the nature of the job or traits of the individual alone (Donovan 1987).
2. It should be noted that burnout is often found in discussions of stress among human service workers but the two terms are not synonymous. Burnout is usually considered to be the result of prolonged and unrelieved stress (Farber 1983; Reilly 1994; Wolfgang 1991; Veninga and Spradley 1981). As Pines (1993) notes, stress may happen to anyone in a number of different situations, whereas burnout is a specific experience that results when people work over *long periods* of time in *extremely emotionally demanding* situations. This study limits its attention to understanding the situational determinants of job stress among human service workers.

As a result of their training³ and socialization, human service professionals⁴ acquire a sense of occupational identity and internalize occupational norms that emphasize service to society and altruistic ideals (Raelin 1986; Drover 1998; Holosko and Leslie 2001). Many different models of what constitutes professional work include the characteristics of autonomy, professional collegiality, and service to others.⁵ Professionals generally expect to exercise their skills autonomously, have meaningful and collegial relations with their coworkers, and feel that they are helping others (Kerr, Von Glinow and Schriesheim 1977; Bartol 1979; Leiter 1991; Pines 1993). If their jobs fail to offer these rewards, workers may experience considerable tension between their day-to-day work experiences and their professional expectations and values, resulting in job stress.

Unfulfilled expectations may arise from unsatisfying professional work experiences due to bureaucratic constraints that call for administrative duties that infringe on professionals' autonomy and time spent with clients (Pines, Aronson and Kafry 1981; Williamson 1996). Professionals often enter their jobs with ideal and sometimes unrealistic expectations. This "romantic image" (Pines 1993) of their work may arise from the time and effort they have invested in training to learn the vocation, as well as the prestige that society attaches to professional jobs (Leiter 1991). Their expectations may not always be met, however, in their everyday work situations, which may result in frustrating and stressful work experiences (Kahn and Quinn 1970; Eaton 1980; Stevens and O'Neill 1983; Leiter and Harvie 1996). Human service providers may be particularly vulnerable to organizational-professional

3. While some claim that formal professional training is a more important distinguishing trait of a professional, others suggest that the individual's professional orientation that is guided by their occupational affiliation, regardless of their credentials, is key (Von Glinow 1988). We adopt this latter approach in recognizing that the training and education of human service workers varies significantly (Hasenfeld 1983) such that some human service workers may lack professional credentials but they are still considered to be working in a professional occupation and sharing a professional identity and sense of professionalism with their colleagues (Raelin 1986; Drover 1998).
4. The purpose of this paper is not to examine, debate nor determine whether human service workers are professionals. Rather, our interest is in the extent to which human service providers' employing organizations are more or less consistent with certain professional ideals and the extent to which these work experiences are important in understanding the degree to which they experience job stress. Thus our focus is more on how a sense of professionalism may contribute to unfulfilled expectations and job stress, than on the extent to which human service work as an occupation is professionalized (Drover 1998).
5. There are numerous typologies and lists of attributes used to classify occupations as professions. The discussion that follows is not an exhaustive review of the various attributes of an occupation in general, or social work specifically, that indicate professional status. Rather, the discussion illustrates how certain attributes of professional work are relevant to human service providers' work experiences and the more general stress literature.

conflict because social work is a particularly value-driven occupation whose members may share an especially strong internalization of professional values and moral principles (Pines 1993; Thompson et al. 1996; Holosko and Leslie 2001).

Human service work, however, is not as consistent with the professional ideal as once was generally believed. For example, many human service providers unexpectedly find that their work is characterized by many mundane or routine tasks that involve tedious paperwork, organizational regulations that inhibit their decision making and impersonal, even at times conflicting, relations with coworkers and clients (Cherniss 1980; Leiter 1991; Williamson 1996). Because of the varying degrees of professional training, many human service workers are subject to considerable organizational evaluation and administrative authority and consequently have less autonomy and discretion over their work than professionals might expect (Hasenfeld 1983; Holosko and Leslie 2001). Bureaucratic rules and duties have been found to be among the most disillusioning aspects of work in the helping professions, as well as a major cause of stress and burnout (Cherniss 1980; Burke, Greenglass and Schwarzer 1996; Leiter and Harvie 1996). As a result, human service workers may find it particularly stressful when their expectations regarding client care are not fulfilled or they feel that organizational policies or procedures infringe on their ability to provide the best care for their clients (Cherniss 1980; Leiter 1991; Pines 1993).

Human service workers are not typically taught how to work in large bureaucracies, although many of them eventually work in such organizations, and as a result many are unprepared for the bureaucratic duties they are expected to perform (Pines, Aronson and Kafry 1981; Raelin 1986). Instead, they are trained to work in a professional system and apply their interpersonal skills to helping their clients. They are not prepared for working in a bureaucratic system where their interpersonal skills may also be needed to deal with organizational conflict with colleagues and administrators (Cherniss 1980; Leiter 1991). The resulting unmet expectations are key to the organizational-professional conflict model because workers' expectations arising from their sense of professionalism collide with the realities of working within bureaucratic organizations, which produces a stressful work experience.

***Hypothesis 1:** Greater unmet expectations will be associated with greater job stress.*

Professional Conditions

In this study, we examine four professional aspects of work in regards to human service workers' expectations and job stress: autonomy,

collegiality (coworker and supervisor), and client interaction. Each of these is discussed in greater detail below.

Autonomy is a key defining attribute of professional work; it grants individuals discretion and control in the performance of their work tasks (Engel 1970; Wallace 1995b). The literature shows how lacking control and discretion in one's job is associated with high levels of stress (Cherniss 1980; Hendrix et al. 1991; Leiter 1991; Guterman and Jayaratne 1994). When human service professionals enter their jobs, they often anticipate that they will have autonomy to do what is best for their clients but instead they encounter the unexpected constraints of working within a bureaucratic system that often results in feelings of frustration and strain (Cherniss 1980). For social workers, control over the content of interactions with clients provides a great sense of personal achievement, whereas lack of control and discretion over their day-to-day activities contradicts their expectations and contributes to job stress (Leiter 1991; Pines 1993; Pottage and Huxley 1996; Harris 1998).

Collegiality refers to the extent to which there is teamwork and support among professional colleagues (Wallace 1995a). Collegial relations are considered important not only for sharing work-related knowledge and operating as a form of self-control over occupational matters, but also for support and understanding, which may be helpful in coping with the stressors encountered in one's job (Cherniss 1980; Pines 1993). This concept is examined as *coworker* and *supervisor support* in the stress literature, where good relationships with colleagues and supervisors significantly reduce feelings of job stress (Burke 1988; Karasek and Theorell 1990; Bradley and Sutherland 1995; Collings and Murray 1996; Cartwright and Cooper 1997). As Leiter (1991) notes, service providers generally expect that their coworkers will be supportive of one another in their shared desire to help their clients. Many find that certain aspects of organizational design and management often discourage collegiality, however, and instead may promote conflict among coworkers and administrators.

The professional norms that emphasize service to society and altruistic ideals are characteristics of professional work that should be particularly salient for service workers, as their primary duty is to provide assistance to their clients and help them in difficult situations. Human service providers usually anticipate that they will be able to help clients or solve specific client problems, and when they do not it contributes to job stress and dissatisfaction (Cherniss 1980; Collings and Murray 1996; Balloch, Pahl and McLean 1998). When social workers are not satisfied and fulfilled from their *client interactions*, stress levels are expected to increase as a result of their professional goals being inconsistent with their performed work tasks (Leiter 1991).

Hypothesis 2: *Less autonomy, collegiality and satisfaction from client interaction will be associated with greater unmet expectations and job stress.*

Bureaucratic Conditions

Four bureaucratic features of the employing organization are examined in this study that are hypothesized to result in unfulfilled expectations and job stress. These are: formalization, routinization, work overload and role conflict.⁶ Each is described in greater detail below.

A key defining characteristic of bureaucracies is *formalization*, which is the degree to which organizational norms are explicitly formulated, usually in written form (Price and Mueller 1986). In the case of human service providers, highly formalized rules and procedures are not usually expected and they often threaten the professionals' autonomy and control over their work. Human service workers deal with varied client problems that require innovation and discretion in order to provide different solutions under different conditions (Engel 1970; Harris 1998). As well, in contrast to collegial relations, where coworkers govern each other and make decisions collectively based on consensus (Waters 1989), a high degree of formalization is more rigid and is based on top-down authority (Raelin 1986). This formalization that may limit human service workers' freedom to innovate is an unexpected condition of their work and is considered to be a significant job stressor (Pines 1993; Summers, DeCotiis, and DeNisi 1995).

Routinization, the degree to which a job is repetitive (Price and Mueller 1986), is another aspect of bureaucratic organizations that professionals may experience but do not usually expect. Although stress is often associated with too much stimulation, the understimulation that results from highly routinized work may also lead to stress (Cherniss 1980). An absence of variety has been found to be stressful (Sutherland and Fogarty 1995) and for social workers, large amounts of tedious paper work and routinized duties contrast with the interesting and challenging work that they usually expect (Pines, Aronson and Kafry 1981; Leiter 1991).

Employees of bureaucratic organizations often report that their work requires more time devoted to administrative tasks than they had expected or would prefer (Davidson and Veno 1980), which is referred to as *work overload*. In addition to administrative tasks, high workload also results

6. There are numerous lists of bureaucratic characteristics in the literature and the discussion below is not meant to provide an exhaustive review of all these. The purpose of this section is to identify and discuss select features of bureaucratic organizations that appear relevant to understanding professionals' job stress.

from the large number of cases that human service workers carry (Matteson and Ivancevich 1987). Administrative work involves compiling and/or providing information that assists in the management of the organization and often includes attending meetings and completing paperwork. Administrative tasks are inconsistent with professional activities and take human service professionals away from their primary focus, such as working with and helping clients (Pines 1993). A large amount of paperwork may interfere with direct contact with clients; in some organizations, it seems like completing paperwork has a higher priority (Pines, Aronson and Kafry 1981; Maslach 1982; Leiter and Harvie 1996). For example, a study of human service professionals found that they "often came to believe that the real client to be cared for and protected was the institution for which they worked rather than the individuals who came to them for help" (Cherniss 1980: 167). In studies of social workers, administrative duties and paper work (Matteson and Ivancevich 1987; Pines 1993; Bradley and Sutherland 1995; Collings and Murray 1996), large numbers of meetings (Parasuraman and Alutto 1981) and general work overload (Gibson, McGrath, and Reid 1989; Jones, Fletcher, and Ibbetson 1991; Leiter 1991; Pines 1993; Collings and Murray 1996) are reported to be significant stressors.

The authority structure of a bureaucratic organization and the administrative tasks that are required for maintaining its smooth and efficient running may be incompatible with what professionals require to do their best work. For most professionals, however, bureaucratic duties to maintain the organization have to be performed in addition to their professional tasks. As a result, it may be difficult for them to balance their responsibilities to their clients and to their organizations. This may cause *role conflict*, which occurs when the demands and expectations that the worker places upon him or herself clash with the demands and expectations of other members of the organization, or when the job includes tasks that the worker thinks should not be part of his or her duties (Sutherland and Cooper 1988).

This issue is particularly relevant for human service workers who exercise a high degree of autonomy over the content of their interactions with clients (Harris 1998), which results in a "high sense of personal ownership, and control of personal achievement" (Pottage and Huxley 1996: 127). Because of their employing organization's administrative systems, procedures and prescriptive working practices, service providers are often in a position to exercise discretion in regard to their clients, but at the same time may feel powerless in relation to the organization and its goals and functions, resulting in role conflict (Pottage and Huxley 1996). Furthermore, individuals who occupy roles at organizational boundaries, that is, when they work with not only people in the organization but also with

others who are external to the organization, are more likely to find role conflict a serious problem (Sutherland and Cooper 1988). This situation applies to human service workers because they are in a boundary spanning position—they are accountable to those higher up in the organization as well as to their clients who are external to the organization.

***Hypothesis 3:** Greater formalization, routinization, work overload and role conflict will be associated with greater unmet expectations and job stress.*

Control Variables

For the model to be properly specified, control variables must also be taken into account. *Position* is included as a control variable because managers and frontline service workers may experience different degrees of unmet expectations and stress as a result of the different work experiences they encounter on a day-to-day basis. *Negative affectivity*, characterized by negative emotionality and a negative view of self, is argued to be an important control when studying stress (Fogarty et al. 1999). Individuals high in negative affectivity are more sensitive to stress than others, and are thus more likely to experience greater distress in any situation (Watson and Clark 1984). *Work motivation*, which is defined as the degree to which work is a central part of a person's life (Kanungo 1982), is also included as a control variable. It is also considered to be a fairly stable personality trait and refers to the value workers attach to their work in general, as opposed to specific tasks or jobs (Wallace 1995b).

Education is controlled by taking into account completion of a college diploma or university degree as amount of training may reflect the respondents' perceptions of themselves as professionals. Formally trained social workers likely hold higher professional expectations and ideals than those without degrees (Williamson 1996). *Organization tenure*, or length of time in the organization, is another control, because those who have worked in the organization longer will experience lower levels of stress. This may be due to having more realistic expectations of one's job and of one's capabilities to influence clients. It has also been postulated that job stress decreases over the course of one's career because older workers have learned how to cope with stress more effectively (Turnage and Speilberger 1991).

It is expected that the more *hours worked*, the more stress will be experienced, thus number of hours worked is included as a control. *Gender* is also controlled for. Although there is no agreement in the literature, a common argument is that women experience more job stress than men (Ratliff 1988). It is also suggested that women are more likely to report psychological distress, whereas men are more likely to develop stress-related

illnesses (Speilberger and Reheiser 1994). *Earnings* is the last control variable, with the assumption that salary is related to job level, with management earning more than front-line workers. Higher earnings should function to reduce stress.

DATA AND METHODS

This study analyzes data that were collected by a 1993 survey administered to human service workers throughout Alberta who provide services to people with developmental disabilities. A stratified random sample based on agency size, type of service provided, and rural versus urban population was used. Two hundred organizations were approached, and senior administrators from 62 organizations agreed to participate. From these organizations, all human service workers were surveyed, excluding clerical, accounting and payroll positions. The sample was composed of people who work in both residential and vocational settings, and in frontline and management (including middle management) positions. Of the 1,600 surveys distributed, 575 were returned, which represents a 36% response rate.

This likely represents an under-estimation of the response rate, however. Because of the sampling strategy used, it is difficult to compute an accurate response rate for two reasons. First, of the 62 organizations who agreed to participate, surveys were sent to the senior administrators to distribute to their staff. These administrators were asked to estimate the number of surveys required. Extra surveys were included in each package to ensure a sufficient number were sent, thus more questionnaires were sent out than could actually be completed. Second, upon receipt of the surveys, some administrators decided they would not distribute them to their staff. Thus, some surveys were sent that were not actually received by eligible participants. Both of these factors likely contribute to an underestimation of the true response rate in this study. There is no reason, however, to expect that the 575 social workers who participated in this study differ significantly from other social workers employed throughout Alberta who provide services to people with developmental disabilities.

Of the respondents included in this analysis, 23% were male and 78% were female, with an average age of 35. They had worked in the human services field for an average of ten years, and they earned an average salary of \$24,493. In regards to education, 7% of the sample possessed a graduate degree, 29% an undergraduate degree, and 36% a college diploma. Of the remaining 28%, half had some postsecondary training and half had high school or less. After list-wise deletion, the sample consists of 514 respondents.

For most of the items, the respondents were asked to choose from the following Likert responses: "Strongly Agree" (coded 5), "Agree" (coded

4), “Neither Agree nor Disagree” (coded 3), “Disagree” (coded 2), and “Strongly Disagree” (coded 1), unless otherwise specified. “R” indicates that the item is reverse coded. For the measures composed of multiple items, the scores of each item were summed and then divided by the number of items to provide a mean score. Table 1 provides a descriptive summary of the variables examined in this study, showing for each the number of items, the mean, the standard deviation and range of scores. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) are reported for the multiple-item measures.

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics for the Variables Included in the Analysis (N = 514)

<i>Variable (Number of Items)</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Alpha*</i>
<i>Job Stress (6)</i>	2.133	.708	1 – 4.17	.838
<i>Unmet Expectations (4)</i>	2.239	.667	1 – 5	.649
<i>Professional Conditions</i>				
Autonomy (3)	3.711	.682	1 – 5	.654
Collegiality: Coworker (3)	3.864	.680	1 – 5	.817
Collegiality: Supervisor (3)	3.811	.978	1 – 5	.924
Client Interaction (4)	4.202	.527	1.75 – 5	.717
<i>Bureaucratic Conditions</i>				
Formalization (2)	3.368	.953	1 – 5	.773
Routinization (3)	2.338	.828	1 – 5	.748
Work Overload (5)	2.807	.752	1 – 4.8	.780
Role Conflict (3)	2.696	.778	1 – 5	.693
<i>Control Variables</i>				
Position (Frontline = 1) (1)	.638	.481	0,1	–
Negative Affectivity (3)	2.450	.738	1 – 4.33	.633
Work Motivation (3)	2.664	.784	1 – 5	.650
Education (College = 1) (1)	.718	.450	0,1	–
Organization Tenure (1)	3.689	3.857	< 1 – 29	–
Hours Required to Work (1)	34.996	9.174	4 – 90	–
Gender (Male = 1) (1)	.230	.421	0,1	–
Earnings (1)	24,493	10,877	1,000 – 68,000	–

* Alpha estimated for multiple-item measures only.

Examination of the zero-order correlations between the variables included in this analysis (available from authors) shows that none are .50 or higher, which suggests that there are no collinearity problems. In addition, following Fox (1991), variance-inflation factors (VIF) were estimated for all of the variables included in the analysis and multicollinearity among the predictors is not evident.

Job Stress

The construction of the job stress measure was based on open-ended interviews with 21 human service workers in an earlier stage of this study. The purpose of these interviews was to develop a measure of stress that does not confound individual's perceptions of stress with factors hypothesized to be responsible for such perceptions or the resulting outcomes.⁷ Thus, participants were asked to describe in their own words what it means to be stressed. The following six Likert items were constructed based on their responses: "I am discouraged about my work," "I feel that things are out of my control at work," "I feel overwhelmed by my work," "I feel like giving up on my job," "I feel unable to get out from under my work," and "I feel frustrated with my work." Exploratory factor analysis shows that these six items load together on a single factor with loadings ranging from .57 to .82.

Unmet Expectations

This measure was adapted from Wallace and Mueller (1994) and included four items: "All in all, I am disappointed in this job," "My experiences in this job have been better than I originally expected" (R), "Generally, this job is not what I thought it would be," and "This job has lived up to the expectations I had when I first started" (R).

Professional Conditions

The measure of *autonomy* was adapted from Wallace (1995b), and was composed of three Likert items: "I take part in decisions that affect my job," "I have input in deciding what tasks or parts of tasks I will do in my job," and "I influence the things that affect me in my job." *Collegiality* was measured by two scales, coworker support and supervisor support, adapted from Caplan, Cobb, and French (1975). *Coworker support* was measured by three items: "My coworkers are willing to listen to my job-related problems," "My coworkers can be relied upon when things get tough at work," and "My coworkers help me get through difficulties I have at

7. For example, the Occupational Stress Indicator includes not only job stress items but also indicators of personality type, physical and mental health and coping strategies (Kirkcaldy and Cooper 1993). Greenglass and Burke's (1991) measure of job stress taps eight characteristics of work in combination with the Hopkins Symptom checklist measures of depression and somatization. Ryland and Greenfeld's (1991) stress measure for university professors also contains aspects of the job, such as publishing efforts and relationships with students and colleagues, in addition to one question measuring the individual's perception of stress.

work.” *Supervisor support* was measured by similar items: “My supervisor is willing to listen to my job-related problems,” “My supervisor can be relied upon when things get tough at work,” and “My supervisor helps me get through difficulties I have at work.” *Client interaction* was measured by four items adapted from Brayfield and Rothe’s (1951) job satisfaction scale, except that reference to “one’s job” was replaced by “working with my clients.” The items were: “I find working with my clients very rewarding,” “I definitely dislike working with my clients” (R), “Most days, I am enthusiastic about working with my clients,” and “I am often very frustrated with my clients” (R).

Bureaucratic Conditions

Formalization was measured by two items adapted from Hackman and Oldham (1980): “This organization has a very large number of written rules and regulations,” and “This organization places a lot of emphasis on following rules and procedures.” The measure of *routinization* was adapted from Withey, Daft and Cooper (1983) and includes: “My job has lots of variety” (R), “My duties are repetitious in my job,” and “I have the opportunity to do a number of different things in my job” (R). *Work overload* was measured by five Likert items. The first two items, constructed for this survey, were “I have to attend too many meetings in this job,” and “My job involves a lot of paperwork.” The remaining three, adapted from Caplan, Cobb and French (1975), were “I have to work very fast to get everything done in my job,” “My workload is too heavy in my job,” and “I do not have enough time to get everything done in my job.” The *role conflict* measure was constructed for this study and included the following statements: “It is difficult to balance the demands of my clients, my coworkers, my supervisor, and this organization,” “It is hard to fulfill my responsibilities to both my clients and this organization,” and “It is difficult to always meet the needs of my clients.”

Control Variables

The measure of *position* in the organization was dummy coded, with frontline (primarily working directly with clients) assigned 1 and the two categories of middle management (staff supervision *and* working with clients) and management (primarily staff supervision) were combined and assigned 0. *Negative affectivity*, adapted from Agho, Mueller and Price (1993), was measured by three items: “I always expect the worst to happen,” “Minor setbacks sometimes irritate me a lot,” and “There are days when I’m ‘on edge’ all of the time.” *Work motivation* was measured by three items adapted from Kanungo (1982): “Work is only a small part of my

life" (R), "My work is central to my very existence," and "The most important things that happen in my life involve my work." *Education* was dummy coded into two categories with "College Degree," "University undergraduate degree" and "University graduate degree" coded as 1 and the remaining categories (e.g., some post-secondary, high school) coded as 0. *Organization tenure* taps the number of years the respondent has worked at their current employing organization. *Hours required to work* taps the average number of work hours the respondent is scheduled to work per week. *Gender* was dummy coded 1 for males and 0 for females. The measure of *earnings* reflects respondents' total yearly income from their current job before taxes and other deductions are made.

Statistical Procedures

Path analysis, using ordinary-least squares (OLS) regression analysis, was used to estimate the hypothesized relations among the variables under study. Using this approach, the direct paths of the exogenous variables were estimated on unmet expectations and then on job stress. The direct effect coefficients are based on multiple regression results where all 16 determinants were entered simultaneously into the regression analyses for estimating their relations with unmet expectations and job stress. In addition, the indirect and total effects of each determinant on job stress via unmet expectations were computed following the technique proposed by Alwin and Hauser (1975) for the decomposition of effects. The indirect effects represent the products of the direct effects of each determinant on unmet expectations by the direct effect of unmet expectations on job stress (i.e., $\beta = .28$). The total effects represent the sum of the direct and indirect effects of each determinant on job stress.

The results presented in Table 2 show the estimates of the direct effects of all of the variables on both unmet expectations (Equation 1) and job stress (Equation 2). The results presented in Figure 2 reflect all of the direct effects that are statistically significant at the .05 level. Because it is likely that the determinants not only affect job stress directly, but also indirectly via unmet expectations, it is important to examine the indirect (Equation 3) and total (Equation 4) effects of these variables. Because the indirect and total effects on job stress are not estimated by the statistical package used (i.e., SPSS), significance tests are not available for Equations 3 and 4.

RESULTS

Table 2 and Figure 2 show that the less service providers' expectations regarding their work are met, the more job stress they report ($\beta = .28$), which

offers support for Hypothesis 1. Moreover, unmet expectations is the most important determinant of job stress, both in terms of its direct (Equation 2) and total effects (Equation 4).

TABLE 2

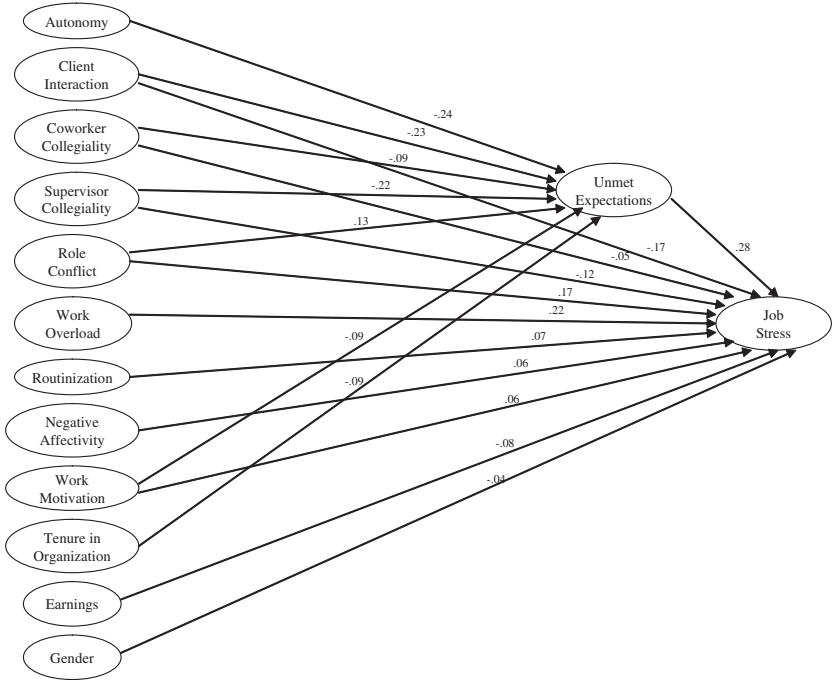
Path Analysis Results (Standardized Regression Coefficients) for the Determinants of Human Service Workers' Unmet Expectations and Job Stress (N = 514)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Unmet Exp. Direct (Eq. 1)</i>	<i>Job Stress Direct (Eq. 2)</i>	<i>Job Stress Indirect (Eq. 3)</i>	<i>Job Stress Total (Eq. 4)</i>
<i>Professional Conditions</i>				
Autonomy	-.236***	-.041	-.066	-.107
Collegiality: Coworker	-.089**	-.049*	-.025	-.074
Collegiality: Supervisor	-.223***	-.123***	-.063	-.186
Client Interaction	-.235***	-.167***	-.066	-.233
<i>Bureaucratic Conditions</i>				
Formalization	.050	.037	.014	.051
Routinization	.056	.071*	.016	.087
Work Overload	.046	.220***	.013	.233
Role Conflict	.132***	.169***	.037	.206
<i>Control Variables</i>				
Position (Frontline = 1)	.031	.041	.009	.050
Negative Affectivity	.036	.059***	.010	.069
Work Motivation	-.085**	.058*	-.024	.034
Education (College = 1)	.021	-.002	.006	.004
Organization Tenure	-.086*	.023	-.024	-.001
Hours Required to Work	.023	.031	.006	.037
Gender (Male = 1)	.036	-.042*	.010	-.032
Earnings	-.002	-.084**	-.001	.085
<i>Unmet Expectations</i>		.281***		.281
<i>R²</i>	.459	.709		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (one-tailed test)

The results presented in Table 2 and Figure 2 generally support Hypothesis 2 regarding the professional conditions of work that were hypothesized to reduce unmet expectations and job stress. All but autonomy has statistically significant, direct negative effects on both unmet expectations (Equation 1) and job stress (Equation 2). Greater coworker collegiality, supervisor collegiality and satisfaction from client interactions all serve to both meet human service providers' expectations and reduce the

FIGURE 2
Path Analysis Results (Standardized Regression Coefficients)
for the Determinants of Service Workers Unmet Expectations and
Job Stress



Note: All coefficients are significant at the .05 level (one-tailed test).

stressfulness of their job, as predicted. Greater autonomy appears more consistent with human service workers' expectations (Equation 1), but fails to have a significant direct effect on job stress (Equation 2). In addition, it is important to note the magnitude of the effects of the professional conditions on unmet expectations, which indicate that they are its most important determinants included in Equation 1. Specifically, autonomy ($\beta = -.24$), satisfaction with client interactions ($\beta = -.23$), and collegial relations with one's supervisor ($\beta = -.22$) have the greatest impact in meeting social workers' expectations.

Turning next to the bureaucratic conditions, it appears that only role conflict has a significant, direct effect on unmet expectations as predicted (Equation 1) and all but formalization have significant, direct effects on job stress (Equation 2), offering mixed support for Hypothesis 3. That is, greater role conflict ($\beta = .13$) results in less met expectations and greater

routinization ($\beta = .07$), work overload ($\beta = .22$) and role conflict ($\beta = .17$) result in greater job stress.

Only two of the control variables are relevant to human service workers' expectations, work motivation ($\beta = -.09$) and organization tenure ($\beta = -.09$). The more highly motivated a worker is and the longer they have worked in their current organization, the less their expectations are met by their work experiences. Four control variables are significantly related to job stress. Service workers with higher levels of negative affect ($\beta = .06$) and work motivation ($\beta = .06$) report more job stress. As well, men report lower levels of job stress than women ($\beta = -.04$) and the more workers earn, the less job stress they experience ($\beta = -.08$).

The results presented in Equations 3 and 4 of Table 2 illustrate the important mediating role that expectation plays in understanding human service workers' job stress, especially in the case of the professional conditions of work. For example, the total effects of autonomy, supervisor collegiality, satisfaction with client interactions, as well as the bureaucratic conditions of role conflict, are notably greater than their direct effects, as a result of the indirect effects they have via expectations. In order to adequately understand the effects of working conditions on social workers' job stress then, it appears important to take into account the extent to which their working conditions meet their professional expectations.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to examine the extent to which certain conditions of work affect service workers' job stress. In doing so, we adopted the organizational-professional conflict model to determine how the professional and bureaucratic conditions of work may influence service providers' expectations and in turn their job stress. In the discussion that follows the key findings of this study are discussed and suggestions for future research in this area are presented.

Expectations

It is clear from the results of this study that the extent to which professionals' expectations are met is both an important determinant and mediator of job stress. And while both the professional and bureaucratic conditions are important in directly contributing to job stress, the degree to which the conditions of work are consistent with professional ideals is particularly important in explaining the extent to which human service workers' expectations are met, which in turn results in significantly larger total effects on job stress. In regards to the organizational-professional

model, it appears that less professional working conditions are more important in explaining service providers' unfulfilled work experiences than are overly bureaucratic settings.

Expectations has the strongest total effect on job stress, which lends support to the argument that when professionals are disappointed with the fit between their expectations and the realities of their job it leads to a stressful work experience (Kahn and Quinn 1970; Cherniss 1980; Eaton 1980; Stevens and O'Neill 1983; Pines 1993; Leiter and Harvie 1996). An obvious way organizations can reduce job stress is to structure the conditions of work so that they meet workers' professional expectations (Leiter 1991). Based on the results of this study, this would appear to involve granting workers sufficient autonomy and discretion in their work, ensuring collegial and supportive working relationships, especially with supervisors, and promoting satisfying and rewarding experiences from working with clients.

Professional Conditions

As indicated above, all four of the professional conditions of work are important in understanding the extent to which human service workers' expectations are met by their day-to-day work experiences. The organizational-professional model suggests that professionals often enter their jobs with unrealistic, ideal images of what their work will be like. For example, they anticipate exercising considerable control and discretion in their work, having cooperative and supportive working relationships with their colleagues, and satisfying and rewarding interactions with their clients (Kerr, Von Glinow and Schriesheim 1977; Bartol 1979; Leiter 1991; Pines 1993). The mean score values presented in Table 1 suggest relatively high scores on the professional conditions of work and the regression results reported in Table 2 show that these conditions function to fulfill the expectations that human service workers hold.

Satisfying working relationships with coworkers, supervisors and clients also appear important in directly affecting feelings of stress for service providers. These findings are consistent with those reported in other studies (Burke 1988; Karasek and Theorell 1990; Leiter 1991; Bradley and Sutherland 1995; Collings and Murray 1996; Cartwright and Cooper 1997). If service providers lack collegial and supportive working relationships or if they are unsatisfied with their client interactions, they report higher levels of stress. The specific mechanisms or processes through which these satisfying working relationships act to reduce stress are unclear, however. That is, these positive and supportive relationships may simply result in less stressful work experiences or they may be effective coping strategies

in response to a stressful work situation. More in-depth investigations into the specific processes as well as the specific kinds of support provided by colleagues and their effects on stress are possible areas for future research. This study focused on the support that coworkers and supervisors offer by listening to problems and by helping cope with job difficulties. Future studies might tap more specifically into different types of support and who offers them. For instance, perhaps supervisors are in a better position to provide instrumental support by actually reducing stressors through such measures as reducing workload, clarifying roles, or increasing task variety. In contrast, coworkers may provide emotional support by sharing similar concerns and experiences with one another.

Bureaucratic Conditions

In addition to unsupportive working relationships and unsatisfying client interactions, excessive role demands from paperwork, meetings and workload and conflicting role demands between the employing organization, supervisor and clients, are also important predictors of service providers' stress. Together, these two sets of variables suggest that working relationships and role expectations are critical to understanding the work-related stress that service providers experience. In regards to the latter, it appears that conflicting role demands are both unexpected and stressful for service providers. They do not anticipate conflict with colleagues and administrators nor between their organizations' demands and their clients' needs and they find it stressful when these obligations and responsibilities conflict with one another (Cherniss 1980; Leiter 1991). Excessive role demands have no significant impact on service providers' expectations, but they are one of the most important determinants of stress (Cherniss 1980; Gibson, McGrath and Reid 1989; Jones, Fletcher and Ibbetson 1991; Leiter 1991; Pines 1993). Excessive bureaucratic demands appear to be stressful for professionals whose primary concern is the welfare of their clients.

A somewhat surprising finding is that formalization and routinization were not that important in relation to either unmet expectations or job stress. The literature suggests that bureaucratic rules and duties are amongst the most disillusioning and stressful aspects of work for helping professionals (Cherniss 1980; Burke, Greenglass and Schwarzer 1996; Leiter and Harvie 1996). The results of this study show that the bureaucratic requirements of following set rules and procedures or performing repetitive tasks are apparently not that unexpected nor that stressful for human service workers.

The patterns of findings for formalization and routinization, in addition to those for autonomy, may be related in that all three variables reflect the control that service providers may or may not exercise over their work.

Formalization implies limitations on workers' freedom to innovate in dealing with varied client problems (Pines 1993; Summers, DeCotiis and DeNisi 1995; Harris 1998), whereas repetitive and tedious tasks suggest that work is less challenging, less flexible and less discretionary for service providers (Leiter 1991; Pines 1993). Autonomy refers to the control and discretion over one's work tasks. Since all three of these variables have limited total effects on human service workers' job stress, it suggests that lacking individual control over one's work in the form of autonomy and being limited by the employing organization through formalization or routinization are not particularly stressful. The formalization and routinization of tasks may not be stressful for workers if the set procedures are consistent with the profession's norms and values as to how service providers should perform such tasks. That is, this bureaucratization of procedures may serve to protect and reinforce professional norms and values rather than challenge or contradict them (Wallace 1995a). Future research may examine more explicitly whether the professional norms and values of employees are supported or contradicted by the organizational policies and procedures of their employing organization.

CONCLUSIONS

In closing, several conclusions may be drawn from the results of this study regarding the organizational-professional conflict model and the conditions of work that affect service providers' job stress. First, the extent to which human service workers' expectations are met appears to be critical in understanding their job stress. Second, the professional conditions of work that relate to working relationships and client interactions are central to explaining the extent to which service providers' expectations are met. Third, the bureaucratic conditions of work that reflect role conflicts and demands are important predictors of job stress. Fourth, the bureaucratization of procedures (formalization and routinization) that may limit human service workers control over their work tasks does not appear to contribute significantly to job stress.

As a final note, several limitations of this study should be noted. First, some service workers' jobs may not be very bureaucratic. Many of the service workers in this sample are located in either vocational or residential settings, some of which are likely far removed from a bureaucratic setting. The larger employing organizations may be bureaucratic, but the service workers may work in smaller subunits where they do not experience highly bureaucratic conditions in their day-to-day jobs.

Second, this model includes only two truly "bureaucratic" or structural characteristics (routinization and formalization). A model that includes

more bureaucratic features, such as decentralization or hierarchy of offices, could contribute to our understanding of the effect of the structural characteristics of bureaucracies on stress. As well, instead of simply testing a organization-professional conflict model by examining bureaucratic and professional variables separately, it would be useful to directly measure the degree of organizational-professional conflict experienced.

Third, due to the sampling strategy used in this study it is impossible to accurately determine the response rate and estimate the representativeness of the sample analyzed in this paper. Due caution should be exercised in generalizing these results to other service providers working with people with developmental disabilities as well as to other occupations. Future research should examine the determinants of job stress using the organizational-professional conflict model and taking into account the expectations with samples of workers from other occupations in order to cross-validate the results and test for the stability and generalizability of the findings reported here.

Lastly, the data used in this study are cross-sectional, which means that stress and the effects of its determinants cannot be examined over time. The importance of longitudinal data in the study of stress has been noted in the literature (e.g., Handy 1988; Lazarus 1991). Longitudinal data allows a clearer understanding of the causal order of the variables, and of the processes taking place over time. For this topic, longitudinal data could reveal whether length of tenure and/or change in position affect social workers' work experiences, orientations and stress levels. The passage of time may result in changes in professionals' expectations in regard to their employing organizations, or in a shift from a professional orientation to a more bureaucratic one, and both of these may help to better explain the stress experienced by professionals in bureaucratic organizations.

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RÉSUMÉ

Le stress au travail : une étude du conflit profession-organisation et des attentes ignorées

Un aspect important de l'étude des professions aborde la possibilité d'un conflit entre les professionnels et les organisations qui les emploient. (Sorensen et Sorensen 1974 ; Davies 1983 ; Freidson 1986 ; Wallace 1995a). Ce fait peut survenir lorsque les valeurs, les buts et les attentes du professionnel sont incompatibles avec ceux de l'organisation où il travaille, de manière plus particulière lorsque les professionnels sont à l'emploi d'organisations fortement bureaucratisées. Face à une telle incompatibilité, le professionnel ne se sent pas préparé et ce fait peut déboucher sur une expérience de travail comportant un stress (Kahn et Quinn 1970 ; Eaton 1980 ; Cherniss 1980 ; Stevens et O'Neill 1983 ; Leiter 1991).

Au cours de cette étude, nous avons fait appel au modèle du conflit profession-organisation en l'appliquant à l'analyse du stress en emploi dans le cas des travailleurs impliqués dans une relation d'aide. Nous l'avons fait en posant la question suivante : comment les conditions de travail peuvent-elles influencer le stress en emploi chez les travailleurs des services sociaux ? Dans le cas de ce type de travail, on entend souvent dire que les lieux de travail reflètent un mélange de caractéristiques du professionnalisme et de l'organisation bureaucratique, plutôt que la présence de l'un ou l'autre seulement de ces éléments (Cherniss 1980 ; Hasenfeld 1983 ; Harris 1998). Par exemple, le système bureaucratique de gestion rationnelle peut accompagner le professionnel dont l'expertise lui permet un contrôle sur la nature du service fourni (Harris 1998).

Nous nous attendions à ce que les travailleurs des services sociaux fassent état de quelques aspects de leur travail qui refléteraient plus les

idéaux et les normes de pratique du professionnel et d'autres aspects qui montreraient plus de traits propres à la bureaucratie. Dans de telles conditions, les attentes des professionnels originant de leur sens du professionnalisme peuvent s'opposer aux réalités du travail en milieu bureaucratique, créant ainsi une expérience de travail stressante. Nous sommes alors en mesure de prédire que les travailleurs de la relation d'aide éprouveront un stress d'autant plus élevé que leurs attentes ne seront pas rencontrées (hypothèse 1). Nous faisons également l'hypothèse que les conditions de travail qui sont plus compatibles avec les idéaux de la profession rencontreront les attentes et ainsi réduiront la possibilité d'un stress au travail (hypothèse 2). Nous considérons de plus que des conditions plus bureaucratiques ne réussiront pas à satisfaire aux attentes des professionnels et contribueront alors à une augmentation du stress (hypothèse 3).

Nous vérifions nos hypothèses en utilisant les techniques d'analyse linéaire OLS avec un échantillon de 514 travailleurs de la relation d'aide qui rendent des services aux personnes éprouvant des troubles de développement. Pour valider la première hypothèse, nous évaluons les effets des attentes ignorées sur le stress en emploi. Pour la deuxième hypothèse, nous ajoutons quatre dimensions du travail du professionnel comme déterminants des attentes des travailleurs sociaux et de leur stress en emploi : l'autonomie, la collégialité (collègues et superviseurs) et l'interaction avec la clientèle. Pour valider la troisième hypothèse, nous incluons quatre caractéristiques du modèle bureaucratique qui peuvent contribuer à l'augmentation des attentes non satisfaites et du stress en emploi. Ces caractéristiques sont les suivantes : la formalisation, la routine, la charge de travail et le conflit de rôle. Pour que le modèle soit convenablement précisé, nous tenons également compte de huit variables de contrôle.

On peut dégager plusieurs conclusions de l'étude touchant le modèle du conflit organisation-profession et les conditions de travail qui affectent le stress en emploi chez les travailleurs de la relation d'aide.

Premièrement, les données confirment la première hypothèse à l'effet que le degré de satisfaction ou non des attentes de ces travailleurs devient un élément critique de l'explication de leur stress en emploi. Les conclusions illustrent le rôle important d'intermédiaire que les attentes jouent dans la compréhension du stress au travail chez les travailleurs sociaux, notamment dans le cas des conditions professionnelles de travail et dans celui des attentes ignorées comme étant les déterminants les plus importants du stress en emploi, les deux en termes de leurs effets directs et globaux. Alors, pour bien saisir les effets des conditions de travail sur le stress dans ce milieu, il nous apparaît important de tenir compte du degré auquel leurs conditions de travail satisfont leurs attentes d'ordre professionnel.

Deuxièmement, les conditions professionnelles de travail qui sont plus particulièrement associées à la relation de travail et aux échanges avec la clientèle sont au cœur de l'explication du degré auquel les attentes des travailleurs sociaux sont satisfaites. Une plus grande collégialité chez ces travailleurs avec leurs surveillants et la satisfaction au plan des échanges avec les clients concourent à la rencontre des attentes des travailleurs sociaux et à la réduction du caractère stressant du travail, tel que prédit par la deuxième hypothèse tout en lui fournissant ainsi un support empirique.

Troisièmement, les conditions d'ordre bureaucratique du travail impliquant des exigences de rôle excessives en termes de travail de bureau, de comités, de charge de travail et d'exigences conflictuelles entre l'organisation, le superviseur et la clientèle sont aussi des prédicteurs importants de l'amplitude du stress chez ces travailleurs de la relation d'aide, de telles observations apportant un appui à la troisième hypothèse. Les conclusions permettent de croire que les demandes de rôle excessives deviennent un élément critique de la compréhension du stress en emploi et des demandes conflictuelles sont à la fois inattendues et stressantes chez ces travailleurs.

Quatrièmement, une conclusion imprévue, à l'effet que la bureaucratisation des procédures en termes de formalisation et d'accentuation de la routine peuvent limiter le degré de contrôle que ces travailleurs exercent sur leurs tâches, ne semble pas apporter une contribution significative au stress en emploi. Ces conclusions viennent défier les prévisions mises de l'avant dans la troisième hypothèse. La documentation existante laisse croire que les obligations et la réglementation constituent les deux éléments qui contribuent le plus à la déception et au stress chez les travailleurs de la relation d'aide (Cherniss 1980 ; Burke, Greenglass et Schwarzer 1996 ; Leiter et Harvie 1996). Les résultats de cette étude montrent que les exigences bureaucratiques de l'ordre des règles et des procédures à observer ou de l'accomplissement de tâches routinières ne sont apparemment pas aussi inattendues et stressantes qu'on serait porté à le croire chez ces travailleurs. Il ressort que peut-être la formalisation et l'accentuation de la routine des tâches ne contribuent pas au stress si les procédures établies sont compatibles avec les normes et les valeurs de la profession quant à la manière dont ces travailleurs devraient s'acquitter de leurs tâches. Cela veut dire que la bureaucratisation des procédures peut contribuer à protéger et à appuyer les valeurs et les normes de la profession plutôt que d'entrer en contradiction avec elle ou chercher à les défier (Wallace 1995a).

En conclusion, nous proposons qu'un travail de recherche subséquent utilise ce modèle dans des situations de travail plus bureaucratisées et qu'il incorpore des mesures additionnelles de conditions vraiment bureaucratiques. Également, au lieu d'évaluer de façon séparée les conditions

bureaucratiques et celles d'ordre professionnel, on devrait dans des modèles futurs inclure une mesure explicite du conflit bureaucratie-profession. Enfin, lors de l'utilisation de ce modèle dans l'étude de d'autres occupations et en recourant à un design longitudinal, on contribuerait au caractère généralisable du modèle et à la compréhension des processus de causalité lors de l'explication du degré de stress vécu par différents types de professionnels à l'emploi d'organisations différentes.