

Burnout among Psychotherapists: A Cross-cultural Value Survey among 12 European Countries during the Coronavirus Disease Pandemic

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Introduction

The issue of psychological health and well-being of psychotherapists is still largely understudied in clinical psychology and psychotherapy research, traditionally focusing on the clients of psychotherapy, rather than on the psychotherapists themselves (Laverdière et al., 2018, 2019). However, working as a psychotherapist may be related to multidimensional psychological distress, posing risks of burnout (e.g. Rzeszutek, & Schier, 2014). Several authors have observed that burned-out psychotherapists not only lose their ability to maintain their therapeutic relationship with clients (Berjot et al., 2013) but also experience a substantial decline in their well-being (Rupert et al., 2009). There are vast discrepancies in burnout prevalence among psychotherapists from various countries, ranging from 6% to as high as 54% (Simionato, & Simpson, 2018). Some authors attribute this variance to cultural differences (Cieślak et al., 2013).

Aim

Examine cross-cultural differences, as operationalized by Schwartz's refined theory of basic values, in burnout levels among psychotherapists from 12 European countries during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We also focused on the multilevel approach to investigate if individual- and country-aggregated level values could explain differences in burnout intensity after controlling for sociodemographic, work-related characteristics, and COVID-19-related distress among participants.

Hypotheses

1. A direct, positive relationship exists between levels of perceived, received and provided support and PTG intensity among participants.
2. The relationship between levels of perceived, received and provided support and PTG intensity is mediated partially by levels of resources from COR theory (vital, spiritual, family, economic, political, and power and prestige, and the general level of resources).

Methods

Participants

2915 psychotherapists from 12 countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, Great Britain, Serbia, Spain, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, and Switzerland) participated in this study.

Tools

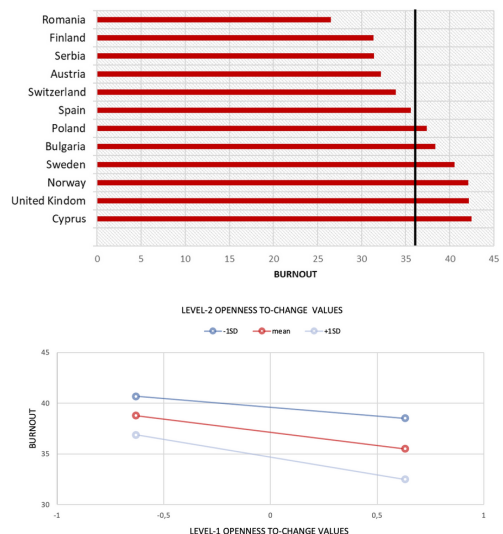
- Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Service Survey
- Revised version of the Portrait Values Questionnaire
- Survey questionnaire on sociodemographic, work-related factors, and COVID-19 related distress

Conclusion

Burnout among psychotherapists may be a transcultural phenomenon, where individual differences among psychotherapists are likely to be more important than differences between the countries of their practice. This finding enriches the discussion on training in psychotherapy in an international context and draws attention to the neglected issue of mental health among psychotherapists in the context of their professional functioning.

Results

In general, the lowest mean level of burnout was noted for Romania, whereas the highest mean burnout intensity was reported for Cyprus. Multilevel analysis revealed that burnout at the individual level was negatively related to self-transcendence and openness-to-change but positively related to self-enhancement and conservation values. However, no significant effects on any values were observed at the country level. Male sex, younger age, being single, and reporting higher COVID-19-related distress were significant burnout correlates. Lastly, The country-level aggregated values were found to be significant in the only observed cross-level interaction concerning openness to change.



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