Working in intellectual Disability Services in New Zealand: An overview of current research

A paper presented to the NZASID Conference, August 26-27, Hamilton, 2009


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Outline of presentation about Phase One of our Project (50 minutes)

- Introduction (Nancy - 15min)
- Staff Demographics (Teresa - 20min)
- Job Satisfaction and Staff Characteristics/Job Characteristics (Paul - 20min)
- Questions (Team, including Brigit & Adelaide)
Working in intellectual disability services: Staff retention and turnover.

- Our project (2007-2010): 
  Working in intellectual disability services: Staff retention and turnover

- Research Questions
  1. What are the workforce issues for support staff, and how can staff turnover rates and retention be improved?
  2. What are residential support staff characteristics, employment conditions, job coping strategies, stressors, and job satisfaction levels?

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Working in intellectual disability services: Staff retention and turnover.

Phase I

- A demographic, working conditions, and job satisfaction survey for support staff in ten participating services.
- A national survey of all residential service agencies about the working conditions of residential support staff.
- Policy and document collection/analysis in the ten participating services.
Working in intellectual disability services: Staff retention and turnover.

Phase II

- Case studies of 3 support staff in each of participating services, interviewed 4 times a year.
- Key informant interviews in services. These ‘key informants’ will be interviewed one to two times for one hour.
Working in intellectual disability services: Staff retention and turnover

Phase III

- Analyse Information from the first two phases
- Report to 32 focus groups and discuss
- Write final report
Introduction

Project’s roots:

- High turnover of frontline support staff around the world (for decades! (Lakin & Bruninks, 1981)

- Increasing number of service users, and decreasing pool of workers (USA: about 530, 750 Support Workers, 900,000 additional needed each year by 2020) (Hewitt & Larson, 2007)

- Research says support staff may experience inadequate recognition, high stress, limited support and training, and then burnout (Skirrow & Hatton, 2007)

- Independent, contextual, multi-method and in-depth research needed (Hatton, Rose & Rose, 2004)
But some support staff are happy in, and stay in their jobs, why?

Could it be because of their:

- Characteristics
- Their coping strategies
- Training
- The Agency
What does the International Research say?:

Larson & Lakin (1999) (USA) (Longitudinal study): Four factors associated with turnover (43%/48%)

1. Length of time that home has been in operation (or is it the clarity of the service’s goals and objectives)

1. Service user characteristics (Later studies state that coping strategies and the support which staff receive may be more important (Mitchell & Hastings, 2001; Robertson, 2005)

1. Supervisor’s experience (or is it the type and availability of the relationship/supervision)

1. Pay, Benefits, Leave, and Promotional opportunities
What does the International Research say?:

Hatton et al (2001) (UK) (n=450)
What’s the priority for those who intend to leave their job?

4 Factors for intended turnover
1. Work satisfaction
2. Job strain
3. Younger staff
4. Easier subjective labour conditions

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Job Strain

Hatton et al. (1999a): found that job strain was due to:

- Work-Home conflict (e.g. hours of work)
- Lack of staff support and resources (e.g. supervision)
- Bureaucracy (e.g. small versus large agencies)
- Role ambiguity
- Wishful thinking versus practical coping strategies (Hatton et al, 1999)
Annual turnover Rates in NZ agencies, 2007

Ranged from 0% - 50%
Overall Mean was 17.8%

Micro Agencies (less than 20) = 16.9%
Small Agencies (21-100) = 15.9%
Medium Agencies (101-500) = 22.9%
Large Agencies (500+) = 18.2%

(Higgins et al, 2008)
Some New Zealand Research

- Commissioned Surveys (e.g. NRID)

- Parsons et al (2004a, b, c): survey of support workers in disability services in general.

- Low pay, training issues, recruitment and retention issues. Affecting service quality

- Bennie (1993) identified critical issue that staff need support, supervision, and training

- O’Brien & Thesling (1999). Study of de-institutionalisation of 54 people. Staff training needed. Participants commented that turnover disadvantage to community living
What’s good about the job?

Nankerviss (2006) need to build staff’s

- Empowerment
- Feelings of Choice
- Feelings of Competence
- Feelings of Meaningfulness
- Feelings of Progress
What’s good about the job?

Social support from colleagues and this predicted greater satisfaction with life & less stress (Hatton & Emerson, 1993)

Working with people with an intellectual disability:
- Increased social life
- Personal growth
- Positive Relationships with people with an intellectual disability
- Raised sensitivity to others

(Hastings & Horne, 2004)
What’s good about the job

Marquis & Jackson (2000): Quality of life for service users is dependent upon quality relationships with staff, which may not be emphasized in job descriptions, which instead emphasize tasks and not relationships.

Human Service work is more than doing a job. Humanitarian values important: Caring, enthusiasm, positive, interested in interacting with people.
Who are the stayers: Getting rewards from social relationships

Adams Equity Theory=
A type of justice based on individuals trying to “maintain fairness in their social relationships” .. In that their perceived inputs equal the rewards.

(Disley, Hatton, & Dagnan, 2009)
Working in Intellectual Disability Services in New Zealand.  
An overview of current research.

Part Two: Staff Demographics

Presentation to the NZASID Conference  

Teresa Evans-Turner
Outline of presentation

- Background Information
  
  1) Basic Staff Demographics
  2) The Understanding Staff Have of their Role
  3) Staff Work Hours
  4) Staff Training and Qualifications
  5) Staff Work History
  6) The Worksite
  7) Sources of Support
  8) Verbal and Physical Abuse Experienced by Staff

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Agency Survey Results

- 33 agencies completed an agency questionnaire - 33% response rate
- Participating agencies supported approximately 4168 service users and employed a total of 6067 staff
Staff Survey Results

- 6133 questionnaires distributed to staff in 10 participating services
- 1267 questionnaires returned by staff from the 10 agencies
- 20.65 % response rate
Basic Staff Demographics
Staff Survey Results - Sex

Sex of residential support staff
n=1267 in 10 services

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>300 (23.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>967 (76.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/F Ratio</td>
<td>0.32</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Age of Support Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Agency Survey</th>
<th>Staff Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-24</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64+</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Relationship Status of Support Staff (n=1267)

- Single: 42.7%
- Married/Civil Union: 17.4%
- Partner/Defacto: 18%
- Separated/Divorced: 6%
- Widow/Widower: 15.8%
- Missing: 0.2%

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On average, staff supported about one dependent ($M=1.00; SD=1.53$) (n=1095)
Disability Status of Support Staff
(n=170)

- Mobility: 17
- Seeing: 13
- Remembering: 45
- Agility: 27
- Speaking: 8
- Psychiatric/Psychological: 6
- Hearing: 6
- Learning: 7
- Intellectual: 1
- Other: 40

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The Understanding Staff Have of their Role
What type of service is your main job?
## Contracted vs Actual Hours Worked

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Contracted to work</th>
<th>Actually worked last week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many awake hours you are…</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many sleepovers you are…</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many split shifts you are…</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many days in a row are you…</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Number of Hours Worked
Last Week
(n=1061)
Staff Training and Qualifications
Secondary Qualifications

- None:
  - Staff Survey: 26.1%
  - Agency Survey: 35%

- Other:
  - Staff Survey: 24.5%
  - Agency Survey: 30%

- School Certificate or equivalent:
  - Staff Survey: 7.7%
  - Agency Survey: 11%

- 6th Form Certificate or equivalent:
  - Staff Survey: 16.3%
  - Agency Survey: 17%

- Bursary or equivalent:
  - Staff Survey: 6.2%
  - Agency Survey: 7%
Tertiary Qualifications

- None: 28.6%
- Bachelors: 22%
- Diploma: 14.2%
- Certificate: 24.9%
- Masters Degree: 2.5%
- Post-graduate Degree/Diploma: 0.95%
- Ph.Ds: 0.6%
- Tertiary Papers: 1%
- In-services Training Only: 0.2%
- Other: 4.5%

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17.5% of respondents had a Human Services Diploma or Certificate
Staff Work History
Number of years staff had worked in disability services
(n=1240)

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Number of years staff had worked at their present agency
(n=1240)
The Work Site
Number of residences staff work in
The number of residents staff supported
The number of other staff respondents worked with

![Bar chart showing the percentage of staff respondents who worked with different numbers of staff. The chart includes the following percentages:
- 0 staff: 24.5%
- 1 staff: 40.1%
- 2 staff: 14.1%
- 3 staff: 4.7%
- 4 staff: 2.1%
- 5 staff: 1.3%
- 6 staff: 1.2%
- 7 staff: 0.2%
- 8 staff: 0.4%
- 8+ staff: 0.3%](chart.png)
Relieving work in other residences

- Yes: 53
- No: 44
- Missing: 3
Sources of Support
Who helps support staff cope?

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Verbal and Physical Abuse Experienced by Staff
Have you ever been verbally abused in your present agency
Staff’s assessment of the support given to them by their service after incidents of verbal abuse.

(n=733)
Have you ever been physically abused in your present agency

- Yes: 46.3%
- No: 51.8%
- Missing: 1.9%
Staff’s assessment of the support given to them by their service after incidents of physical abuse.
(n=576)
If you’re happy and you know it…..
Anticipating the job satisfaction of 1267 New Zealand residential support workers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Predictors</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Attributes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Q129 I feel satisfied with my job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in disability services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary training</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Certificate in human services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work attributes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hourly pay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment contract</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prevalence &amp; responsiveness to physical assault</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prevalence &amp; responsiveness to verbal abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The association between staff attributes and self-reported job satisfaction
Sex and job satisfaction

M=4.98; SD=1.60

M=5.24; SD=1.58

(F=6.07; p=0.01)
Age and job satisfaction

![Graph showing age and job satisfaction](image)

- Age group 17-24: M=5.12; SD=1.29
- Age group 25-34: M=4.86; SD=1.70
- Age group 35-44: M=5.64; SD=1.32

(F=4.80; p<0.01)
Years in disability services and job satisfaction

(F=1.83; p=0.04)

M=5.43; SD=1.45

M=4.69; SD=1.68

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Highest tertiary qualification and job satisfaction

(F=1.89; p=0.04)

N=3: M=6.00; SD=1.73
M=5.50; SD=2.20
M=4.62; SD=2.07
Certificate in human services and job satisfaction

M=5.33; SD=1.48

M=5.11; SD=1.62

(t=1.94; p=0.05)

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Modeling associations using Multiple Linear Regressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff attributes</th>
<th>Comparison of means (p-value)</th>
<th>Remained in regression model ((\alpha = 0.05))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship status</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in disability services</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years at present agency</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate in human services</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational qualification</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal income</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most dissatisfied residential support worker

- Male
- 35 - 45 years
- Separated
- Post-grad. degree
- Worked 9-10 years in sector

Most satisfied residential support worker

- Female
- Over 65 years
- Widowed
- No tertiary qualification
- New to disability support

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The association between work attributes and self-reported job satisfaction
Hourly pay and job satisfaction

(t=1.41; p=0.16)

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Employment contract (Casual) and job satisfaction

(F=8.35; p<0.01)

M=5.25; SD=1.59

M=4.92; SD=1.56

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Employment contract (Part time) and job satisfaction

M=5.27; SD=1.57

M=5.10; SD=1.59

(F=3.51; p=0.06)

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Prevalence of physical assault and job satisfaction

(Q73) Have you ever been physically assaulted in your current job?

(F=16.36; p<0.01)

(Q75) Physical assault: rate how helpful you found the support you received from your agency

(F=8.80; p<0.01)

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Prevalence of verbal abuse and job satisfaction

(F = 28.25; p < 0.01)

M = 4.99; SD = 1.51

(F = 15.59; p < 0.01)

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Ratings staff gave of help given to cope with their job.
Drawing the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’
Staff person: I was feeling sick, I was getting headaches, I didn’t know which way to turn. I wanted to support the guys because that’s what it is all about for me…..I left on that Sunday very, very upset. Still am. You can’t make relationships with these guys unless you give of yourself.

Researcher: Well the opposite of that is that you walk away from yourself when you leave

Staff person: The biggest mistake I made was resigning but I’ve come to realize that I didn’t have a lot of choice.
Adams’ Equity Theory

Scales are ‘calibrated’ to maintain equity in social relationships

What I put into my job:
- time, effort, competence, loyalty,
- tolerance, flexibility, integrity,
- commitment, reliability, soul,
- initiative & creativity, insight

What I get from my job:
- Relationships with service users,
- insight acknowledged, pleasure at improving wellbeing, ethical conversations, creativity recognised

Inequity is experienced if a mismatch between the two rations is perceived in relation to ‘comparison others’. Staff act to resolve the tension created by feeling ‘under benefited’ by altering their own inputs, altering their comparison of inputs, rewards or referents, or by leaving the role.
Male
45 years
Educated
Experienced
2 years at agency

Agency relationship markers
- insight acknowledged through consultation
- trusted to innovate
- stepping beyond formal aspects of role visible & acknowledged
- Accessibility of ethical conversations

Service user relationship markers
- liking
- feeling like contribute to life quality

Feeling under-benefited associated with agency
- Higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion
- Lower levels of Personal Accomplishment
- Greater intention to leave

(Van Yperen et al, 1995)

Feeling over-benefited associated with service users
- Higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion
- Higher levels of Burnout

(Van Dierendonck et al, 1996)

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“I feel like without even trying to I have discovered the most meaningful work I have ever had.”

Quoted in Leidy (2004)
References


Hatton, C., Rose, J., & Rose, D. (2004). Researching staff. In E. Emerson, C. Hatton, T. Thompson, & T. R. Parmenter (Eds.), The international handbook of applied research in intellectual disabilities (pp. 582-605). Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

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