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# Exploration of Predictors of DSP’s Intent to Stay or Leave the Utah Workforce

## Introduction

Direct support professional (DSP) turnover affects business practices and causes disruption to the lives of vulnerable individuals receiving support. High turnover creates a discouraging cycle where organizations spend significant resources on training and quality improvement, only to see little to no sustained improvements (Rahman & Schnelle, 2008; Rantz et al., 2001; Rosen et al., 2005). It is essential to target key areas that are accessible for improvements, and impactful for employee retention.

**The purpose of this study** was to identify factors associated with DSP retention.

## Sample

Online surveys (N = 132) were collected from DSPs employed in Utah.

## Measures

- Supervisory working alliance inventory (SWAI) – Supervisee; Efstation, Patton, & Kardash, 1990.
- Self-Care Practices Scale (SCPS); Lee, Miller, & Bride, 2020.
- Professional Quality of Life: Compassions Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5 (ProQOL); Stamm, 2009-2012.
- Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ); Weiss, Dawis, & England, 1967.
- MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (MSSSS); Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000.

## Results

Exploratory analyses investigated associations between employee’s intent to search for a new job in the next 6 months. Table 1 displays the results of correlation analyses between demographic and work-related variables and the employee’s report of how likely it is for them to search for a new job in the next six months. Results indicate that while age, length of employment, social status, and employee rated intensity of client needs were statistically significantly related to intent to search for a new job, the size of the correlation was fairly small (less than 0.30).

Table 1: Pearson Correlations

	How likely are you to search for a new job in the next 6 months?
Age	0.239*
Length of Employment	0.267**
Education	0.084
Difficulty paying for basics	-0.162
Total household income	0.062
Salary	-0.086
Subjective Social Status	0.223*
Hours per week	-0.048
Intensity of client needs	-0.295**
Case load	0.098
Training satisfaction	0.490**
<b>Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory</b>	
Client Focus	0.417**
Rapport	0.467**
<b>Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire</b>	
Intrinsic	0.398**
Extrinsic	0.464**
General satisfaction	0.442**
<b>Self-Care Practices Scale</b>	
Personal Self-Care	0.473**
Professional Self-Care	0.319**
<b>Professional Quality of Life</b>	
Burnout	-0.611**
Secondary Traumatic Stress	-0.497**
Compassion Satisfaction	0.448**

\* = 0.05 level significance; \*\* = 0.01 level significance  
 ≥.50 strong, .30-.50, moderate, ≤.20 weak

Work related variables, such as supervisor alliance, job satisfaction (measured by the MSQ), and satisfaction with training were all moderately related to intent to search for another job in the expected direction. Some of the most highly correlated variables were related to self-care and professional quality of life. Employee reported burnout was the only correlation to be above the acceptable convention for a “strong” correlational association. Taken together, this suggests that both employee’s mental health and workplace satisfaction and connection are important elements related to retention. Results from these analyses were used to select variables for inclusion in regression analyses to inspect the relative impact of multiple variables at once.

The final regression (see Table 2) revealed that satisfaction with training, length of employment, burnout, and employee support of well-being were significantly related to how likely employees were to search for a new job in the next six months after controlling for all other variables. Associations were all in the expected direction.

**Table 2. Regression Results**

Variable	Beta	Sig
Training Satisfaction	.296*	.015
Length of Employment	.258*	.016
Burnout	-.253*	.041
Employer Well-being Support	.232*	.041
Pressure to Work	-.187	.073
SWAI Client Focus	.169	.152
Subjective Social Status	-.061	.564
Professional Self-Care	-.047	.655
Intensity of Client Needs	-.016	.878

Note: Betas reported are standardized coefficients. \* = < 0.05 level significance

## Conclusions

These exploratory results suggest that both training and employee well-being are key factors to supporting direct support professionals to stay in the workforce.

The lack of correlation between income and intent to remain in the workforce was surprising, as many initiatives focus on this aspect. Previous research indicates that providing “good jobs” that reduce employee turnover, multiple factors must be considered in addition to wages (Ton, 2014). While a livable wage, that reflects the valuable work provided by DSPs, is critical, the results presented here indicate that more is needed beyond focusing on wages. In addition, just before these data were collected, Utah passed legislation increasing DSP wages, which may have impacted these results.

### Key Takeaways:

- Many factors impact employee’s decisions to exit the workforce
- Satisfaction with training may be critical to employee retention
- Employers should be cognizant, and supportive of employee well-being

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