

Mindful Self-Compassion Training to Alleviate Work Stress and Fatigue in Community Workers: A Mixed Method Evaluation

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Abstract : In Quebec, there are more than 8,000 community organizations throughout the province, representing more than 72,000 jobs. Working in a community setting involves several particularities (e.g., contact with the suffering of users, feelings of powerlessness, institutional pressure, unstable funding, etc.), which can put workers at risk of fatigue, burnout, and psychological distress. A 2007 study shows that 52% of community workers surveyed have a high psychological distress index. The Ricochet project, founded in 2019, is an initiative aimed at providing various care and services to community workers in the Quebec City region, with a global health approach. Within this program, mindful self-compassion training (MSC) is offered at a low cost. MSC is one of the effective strategies proposed in the literature to help prevent and reduce burnout. Self-compassion is the recognition that suffering, failure, and inadequacies are inherent in the human experience and that everyone, including oneself, deserves compassion. MSC training targets several behavioral, cognitive, and emotional learnings (e.g., motivating oneself with caring, better managing difficult emotions, promoting resilience, etc.). A mixed-method evaluation was conducted with the participants in order to explore the effects of the training on community workers in the Quebec City region. The participants were community workers (management or caregiver). 15 participants completed satisfaction and perceived impact surveys, and 30 participated in structured interviews. Quantitative results showed that participants were generally completely satisfied or satisfied with the training (94%) and perceived that the training allowed them to develop new strategies for dealing with stress (87%). Participants perceived effects on their mood (93%), their contact with others (80%), and their stress level (67%). Some of the barriers raised were scheduling constraints, length of training, and guilt about taking time for oneself. The qualitative results show that individuals experienced long-term benefits, as they were able to apply the tools they received during the training in their daily lives. Some barriers were noted, such as difficulty in getting away from work or problems with the employer, which prevented enrollment. Overall, the results of this evaluation support the use of MSC (mindful self-compassion) training among community workers. Future research could support this evaluation by using a rigorous design and developing innovative ways to overcome the barriers raised.

Keywords : mindful self-compassion, community workers, work stress, burnout, wellbeing at work

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