Wellbeing at work: exploring burnout & engagement in early and mid/late career AOD workers

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Introduction and Aims: Frontline work in the alcohol and other drugs (AOD) field is widely acknowledged as having the potential to be very rewarding and also extremely demanding. Hence the work can be a source of significant personal and job satisfaction and also bring a high risk of burnout. This study explores the predictors of burnout and engagement in AOD workers, and implications for job satisfaction and turnover intention.

Design and Methods: Cross-sectional data were analysed from the 2019-2020 AOD National Workforce Survey (n = 672 frontline client service workers). Multiple regression analyses examined burnout, engagement, job satisfaction and turnover intention. Predictors included demographics (social, employment), working conditions and job quality.

Results: Work intensity was a stronger predictor of burnout for early (β=.54,p≤.001) compared to mid/late career workers (β=.43,p≤.001). Engagement was predicted by work meaning for both groups (β=.37,p≤.001; β=.26,p≤.001), and by perceptions of respect and support for mid/late career workers (β=.21,p≤.001). Engagement was the strongest predictor of job turnover intention for early (β=.26,p≤.001) and mid/late career workers (β=.22,p≤.001). Burnout was the strongest predictor of sector turnover intention for mid/late career workers (β=.25,p≤.001). Engagement was the strongest predictor of job satisfaction for early career workers (β=.28,p≤.001). Respect/support was consistently one of the strongest predictors of job and sector satisfaction for both groups.

Discussions and Conclusions: Early and mid/late career AOD workers represent distinct groups with regard to the predictors of wellbeing and the relationship between wellbeing and workforce outcomes (satisfaction, turnover intention). The importance of both engagement and respect/support is highlighted.

Implications for Practice or Policy: AOD work can be highly rewarding and extremely demanding. Workplace interventions to support wellbeing and retention should be tailored to workers' career stage and experience; respect/support is particularly important for established workers. Work intensity and meaning are central for early career workers.

This submission differs from the Skinner & Roche paper in the following ways:
- Considers burnout & engagement as separate predictors and outcomes (the first paper examined combination of these states, ie high-high, high-low, low-high, low-low)
- Provides separate analyses of early career and established AOD workers (these groups were not differentiated in the first paper)
- Includes additional predictors of burnout and engagement not included in the original paper (e.g. job security, access to flexibility, work meaning, work hours)

- Examines burnout and engagement as predictors of satisfaction & turnover intention, alongside demographic, employment and job quality factors (not included in first paper).