Original article

Burnout and Job Satisfaction in Social Workers in the Ñuble Region, Chile

Andrea María Palma-Contreras iD ✉
Doctor in Psychology. Social Worker
Universidad del Bío-Bío. Chillán, Chile
apalma@ubiobio.cl

Francisca Antonia Marchant-Troncoso iD
Bachelor's in Social Work
Universidad del Bío-Bío. Chillán, Chile
francisca.marchant2001@alumnos.ubiobio.cl

Viviana Edith Vera-Meza iD
Bachelor's in Social Work
Universidad del Bío-Bío. Chillán, Chile
viviana.vera2001@alumnos.ubiobio.cl

María Josefina Larraín-Valenzuela iD
Doctor in Psychology. Psychologist
Universidad del Desarrollo. Santiago, Chile
josefinalarrain@udd.cl

✉ **Correspondence:** Andrea María Palma-Contreras. Universidad del Bío-Bío, Avenue Andrés Bello 720, Box 447 - CP: 3800708. Chillán, Chile. Email: apalma@ubiobio.cl

---

¿Cómo citar este artículo?

Abstract

The objective of this article is to analyze the burnout level (exhaustion, chronic fatigue) in social workers of the Ñuble Region of Chile and to study the association of adverse labor phenomena -high emotional demands, workplace harassment, occupational vulnerability and work overload- with burnout and between burnout and such phenomena with job dissatisfaction. A cross-sectional study was carried out by applying a self-report questionnaire to 173 social workers (143 women and 30 men) of the Intersectoral Network of Social Workers in the Ñuble Region.The results show that 6.9% of respondents experience Burnout syndrome. Bivariate analyses show an association of high emotional demands, presence of workplace harassment, and work overload with Burnout. Additionally, associations were found between Burnout, workplace harassment the last 6 months, job vulnerability, and job instability with job dissatisfaction. By adjusting for public attention and years of trajectory it was found that workers with high emotional demands (OR=6.811), workplace harassment (OR=5.430), and workload (OR=4.431) have a higher chance of experiencing Burnout than those who do not report such conditions. Finally, an analysis was made by salary tranche and type of contract, those reporting burnout (OR=4.042), job vulnerability (OR=2.464), or job instability (OR=2.526) have more chance to experience job dissatisfaction than those who do not report these phenomena.

Keywords: Burnout; Social Work; Job satisfaction; Mental health; Emotional demands; Workload; Workplace harassment; Job vulnerability.

2

Burnout y satisfacción laboral en trabajadores/as sociales de la Región de Ñuble, Chile

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es analizar el nivel de burnout (agotamiento) en trabajadores/as sociales de la Región de Ñuble de Chile y estudiar la asociación de fenómenos laborales adversos -altas demandas emocionales, acoso laboral, vulnerabilidad laboral y sobrecarga laboral- con burnout y entre burnout y dichos fenómenos con insatisfacción laboral. Se realizó un estudio transversal mediante la aplicación de un cuestionario de auto reporte a 173 trabajadores/as sociales (143 mujeres y 30 hombres) de la Red Intersectorial de Trabajadores/as Sociales de la Región de Ñuble. Los resultados muestran que el 6.9% de los encuestados presenta síndrome de Burnout. En los análisis bivariados se observa asociación de altas demandas emocionales, presencia de acoso laboral y sobrecarga laboral con Burnout. Además, se encontró una asociación de Burnout, acoso laboral los últimos 6 meses, vulnerabilidad e inestabilidad laboral con la insatisfacción laboral. Al ajustar por atención de público y años de trayectoria se encontró que los trabajadores con altas demandas emocionales (OR= 6,811), acoso laboral [OR=5,430) y sobrecarga laboral (OR=4,431) tienen mayor chance de presentar Burnout que aquellos/as que no reportan dichas condiciones. Por último, se realizó un análisis por tramo de sueldo y tipo de contrato, los que reportan burnout (OR= 4,042), vulnerabilidad laboral (OR=2,464) o inestabilidad laboral (OR=2,526), tienen más chance de presentar insatisfacción laboral que los que no reportan esos fenómenos.

Palabras clave: Burnout; Trabajo Social; Satisfacción laboral; Salud mental; Demandas emocionales; Sobrecarga laboral; Acoso laboral; Vulnerabilidad laboral.

3

1. Introduction

Professionals engaged in human services are exposed to emotionally disturbing situations during their workday (Eurofound, 2016), leading to an increased risk of mental health issues such as distress and burnout (Badura *et al.*, 2018; Blomberg *et al.*, 2015; Hollederer, 2022; Kokkinen *et al.*, 2018; Travis *et al.*, 2016) and are at higher risk of early retirement due to these issues (Rantonen *et al.*, 2017). Social work is one of these professions, where workers face specific risks and high levels of burnout (Crowder & Sears, 2017; Gómez-García *et al.*, 2020).

Studying burnout among these professionals is essential because the most vulnerable to this syndrome are those who must have daily human interactions with clients (World Health Organization [WHO], 2019). Additionally, social workers are often state employees performing socially significant tasks. These include supporting vulnerable communities (Huang *et al.*, 2022), conducting exchanges that are not necessarily reciprocal with clients whose emotional needs are not always met by organizations (Vaccaro *et al.*, 2021), and having client relationships that can be strained by reduced resources (Morley, 2022).

In the same line, the concept of burnout was introduced by Freudenberger (1974), who defined it as "the feeling of failure and an exhausted existence resulting from an overload of demands on the worker's energy, personal resources, or spiritual strength" (p. 160). Likewise, the most widely used definition in the literature is by Maslach & Jackson (1981): "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism frequently occurring among people who do some form of work with others" (p. 99). This syndrome has three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a low sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Salanova *et al.* (2000) refer

Regarding 'emotional exhaustion,' to it as the depletion of emotional resources due to client demands, while 'depersonalization' involves negative and cynical attitudes toward clients. Lastly, 'low personal accomplishment' refers to a tendency to negatively evaluate one's work with clients (p. 118), affecting professional performance.

Given these points, burnout is a syndrome with severe consequences. Suñer-Soler *et al.* (2014) found that emotional exhaustion is associated with absenteeism, intention to leave the profession, and personal and family deterioration, while depersonalization is linked to increased errors at work. Burghi *et al.* (2014) associate burnout with sleep disorders, eating problems, memory loss, and mood irregularities, among others.

Previous studies report a 25% prevalence of burnout among social workers (Caravaca-Sánchez *et al.*, 2022). In Chile's Ñuble Region, a sample of public social workers showed a 6.7% burnout rate (Marchant-Lara *et al.*, 2010). The main phenomena associated with burnout at the

theoretical and empirical levels include job dissatisfaction. Other phenomena associated with both burnout and job dissatisfaction include work overload, job vulnerability and instability, high emotional demands, and exposure to workplace harassment, all of which are addressed in this research.

This article aims to analyze burnout levels among social workers in the Ñuble Region of Chile and to study the association of adverse work phenomena—high emotional demands, workplace harassment, job vulnerability, and work overload—with burnout and the relationship between burnout and these phenomena with job dissatisfaction.

Literature shows that burnout is linked to lower job satisfaction, defined as the level of contentment experienced by an individual concerning their employment and the sense of accomplishment derived from it (Sironi, 2019; Eliyana *et al.*, 2019). Thus, as burnout increases, job satisfaction decreases (Caravaca-Sánchez *et al.*, 2018; Figueiredo-Ferraz *et al.*, 2012; Gómez-García *et al.*, 2021).

Burnout is also associated with work overload (McFadden *et al.*, 2015; Tham & Meagher, 2009) since exceeding capacity can deplete emotional resources.

Job vulnerability is also linked to burnout. It is a component of job precariousness, defined as "fears that influence how workers perceive their ability to interact with employers and supervisors" (Casas-Becerra, 2016, p. 181), associated with job insecurity, which is widely linked to adverse mental health outcomes (Llosa *et al.*, 2018; Palma-Contreras & Ansoleaga, 2020). Job vulnerability is important in this study as social work has become more precarious in Chile (Muñoz-Arce *et al.*, 2021; Reininger *et al.*, 2022) and worldwide (Grootegoed & Smith, 2018), exposing the profession to increased burnout due to the tension between client needs and available resources (Beer *et al.*, 2021; Hollederer, 2022).

In addition, job instability, defined as a lack of contract stability (fixed-term) and/or part-time schedules, is associated with increased work stress and job dissatisfaction (Cladellas-Pros *et al.*, 2018), the reason why this association was examined.

Social workers are mainly tasked with performing "emotional labor," which involves attempting to display observable emotions that create specific feelings in clients (Hochschild, 1983). Thus, these workers are especially exposed to high emotional demands, which include maintaining emotional distance and/or hiding emotions and opinions (Candia & Pérez, 2020)—behaviors these workers must adopt in their interactions with clients setting out the study of these emotional demands and their link with burnout and job dissatisfaction.

Similarly, workplace harassment is defined as "prolonged and repeated exposure to negative social acts in the workplace that can take many forms, including personal harassment,

5

work harassment, social isolation, and (physical) intimidation" (Salin, 2015, p. 22), creating a hostile and unpleasant work environment for the victim (Salin, 2003). This phenomenon was included in the study due to its well-known mental health impacts on workers (Palma-Contreras & Ansoleaga, 2020) and its specific link to burnout onset (Ellis *et al.*, 2021; Desrumaux *et al.*, 2018; Takeuchi *et al.*, 2018).

To study burnout, it is essential to select contextual factors like those mentioned above because managing burnout depends partly on individual worker aspects. International evidence shows that the organizational context weighs more on labor well-being than personal responsibility (Fleming, 2024). Additionally, studying burnout in the context of organizational factors is relevant as burnout affects emotionally stable relationships with clients (McFadden *et al.*, 2015) and decreases service quality (Edú-Valsania *et al.*, 2022).

Based on the literature review, it was hypothesized that in social workers from Chile's Ñuble Region, exposure to adverse job factors—high emotional demands, workplace harassment, job vulnerability, and work overload—would be associated with burnout and that these factors—burnout, high emotional demands, job insecurity, job vulnerability, workplace harassment, and work overload—would be linked to job dissatisfaction.

2. Methodology
2.1 Design and Procedure

This study used an empirical, cross-sectional design. From September to December 2023, a self-report questionnaire was administered online through Google Forms and sent via email to 173 social workers (143 women and 30 men) in the Intersectoral Network of Social Workers of the Ñuble Region. A simple random sampling method was used, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, using as a sampling frame all social workers in the aforementioned network as of August 2023 (N=309).

Participants in the study approved an informed consent form, ensuring confidentiality and voluntariness. No risks associated with participation in the study were anticipated; however, if any question caused discomfort to a participant, they were offered the option to contact the academic advisor, who would guide them in contacting appropriate resources, or could choose to stop responding to the questionnaire if they preferred.

2.2 Variables and Instruments
2.2.1 Dependent Variables

Burnout: Measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory Human Services (MBI-HSS), validated in Chile by Olivares-Faúndez *et al.* (2014), consisting of 22 items in a Likert scale format with seven response options ranging from Never (0) to Daily (6). The analysis followed the recommendations of Maslach & Jackson (1981) and Seisdedos (1997), scoring each of the three subscales: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Low Personal Accomplishment. The first subscale, Emotional Exhaustion, includes nine questions with a maximum score of 54 points; the second subscale, depersonalization, consists of 5 items with a maximum score of 30 points; and the third subscale, Low Personal Accomplishment, has eight items with a maximum score of 48 points. Following the guidelines of Maslach & Jackson (1981) and Seisdedos (1997), high scores in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and low scores in personal accomplishment indicate burnout syndrome. To determine this, the following criteria from Table 1, as established by Maslach & Jackson (1981) and Seisdedos (1997), were used:

Table 1. Scores for Determining Levels of Burnout Dimensions.

Subscale	High	Intermediate	Low
Emotional Exhaustion	27 or more	19 - 26	Below 19
Depersonalization	10 or more	6 - 9	Below 6
Personal Accomplishment	40 or more	31 - 39	Below 30

Source: Own elaboration based on study results.

Job Satisfaction: The question "How satisfied are you with your current job?" was asked with five response options ranging from (1) Very dissatisfied to (5) Very satisfied. The variable Job Dissatisfaction included those who answered Very Dissatisfied (1) and Dissatisfied (2).

2.2.2 Independent Variables

Job Vulnerability: Measured with the Amable Scale (2018), consisting of 7 items with four response options, from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4). The variable was dichotomized into with vulnerability (1) and Without vulnerability (0). A positive response was recorded for social workers who agreed (3) or strongly agreed (4) with three or more statements. Job Instability: Assessed by asking, "Are you worried about being dismissed or not having your contract renewed?" (Amable, 2018), with four response options from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4). Those who reported job instability were considered.

Emotional Demands: Measured using the emotional demands scale from the SUSESO ISTAS 21 instrument, validated in Chile by Alvarado *et al.* (2009). This Likert scale includes four

items with four response categories ranging from "Never/Rarely" (1) to "Always" (4). A positive response was recorded for those who answered "Always," "Often," or "Sometimes" to each item, while a negative response was recorded for those who answered "Never/Rarely." The High Emotional Demands variable included those who responded positively to all four items.

Prevalence of Workplace Harassment in the Last 6 Months: Assessed by asking, "If harassment is defined as a situation where a person perceives that they are continually subjected to negative behaviors against which they have difficulty defending themselves, according to this definition, have you been harassed in the last 6 months at work? (Answer considering supervisors, coworkers, staff, clients, and clients' companions)." Response options: Yes/No.

Work Overload: Assessed with a Likert-scale question, "How often do you feel overloaded in your job as a social worker?" with 5 response options: Never (1), a few times a year (2), a few times a month (3), a few times a week (4), Always (5). Participants who answered "a few times a week" or "always" were considered to experience work overload.

2.2.3 Control Variables

Public Interaction: This was measured with a dichotomous response question (Yes/No): ¿In your job, do you usually have direct contact with the public in person or by phone (patients, clients, students, guardians)?

Years of Experience: The open-ended question "How many years have you been working as a social worker?" was asked, and three categories were created: 1 to 5 years (1), 6 to 15 years (2), and more than 15 years (3).

Salary Range: The question "In which of the following ranges does your net monthly income fall? (considering only your income as a social worker)" was asked, with seven response categories, ranging from less than or equal to $300,000 (1) to $1,500,001 or more (7).

Type of Contract: This was a closed question with five answer options, asking, "What is your type of contract?"

2.2.4 Results analysis

First, descriptive and bivariate analyses (chi-square) were conducted on exposure to the various study variables, burnout, its dimensions, and job dissatisfaction. Subsequently, the association between exposure to the different study variables and the dimensions of burnout was analyzed, controlling for public-facing duties and years of experience. The association between the various variables, including burnout and job dissatisfaction, was also analyzed, controlling for salary range and type of contract. For this, odds ratios (95%) were used as the measure of

association to determine the likelihood of occurrence of the dependent variables in the presence of the independent ones.

3. Findings

In Table 2, it can be seen that most of the study participants are women (n=143; 82.7%). They are aged between 25 and 45 years (n=145; 83.8%), have indefinite contracts (n=33; 50.3%), have been working for more than six and less than 15 years (n=94; 54.7%), have completed one or more diplomas (n=87; 50.3%), work in the health sector (n=70; 40.5%) and in childhood services (n=32; 18.5%), work full-time (n=124; 71.7%), and earn between $1,000,001 and $1,500,000 (n=76; 43.9%).

Table 2. Description of the sample.

	Female	Male	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Total	**143 (82,7)**	**30 (17,3)**	**173 (100)**
Age ranges			
25-35 years	62 (43,4)	16 (53,3)	78 (45,1)
36-45 years	59 (41,3)	8 (26,7)	67 (38,7)
46-55 years	18 (12,6)	5 (16,7)	23 (13,3)
56-65 years	3 (2,1)	1 (3,3)	4 (2,3)
65-72 years	1 (0,7)	0 (0,0)	1 (0,6)
Type of Contract.			
Fixed Term	18 (12,6)	4 (13,3)	22 (12,7)
Indefinite Term	70 (49,0)	17 (56,7)	87 (50,3)
Contract	27 (18,9)	6 (20,0)	33 (19,1)
Honorarium	28 (19,6)	3 (10,0)	31 (17,9)
Years of Work as a Social Worker			
1 to 5 years	15 (10,6)	5 (16,7)	20 (11,6)
6 to 15 years	78 (54,6)	16 (53,3)	94 (54,7)
15 years	49 (34,5)	9 (30,0)	58 (33,7)
Level of education			
Social Assistant (Professional Institute)	4 (2,8)	2 (6,7)	6 (3,5)
Social Worker (University Degree)	40 (28,0)	10 (33,3)	50 (28,9)
One or more incomplete diplomas	4 (2,8)	0 (0,0)	4 (2,3)
One or more completed diplomas	74 (51,7)	13 (43,3)	87 (50,3)
Completed Master's Degree	12 (8,4)	3 (10,0)	15 (8,7)
Incomplete Doctoral Studies	0 (0,0)	1 (3,3)	1 (0,6)
Labor Sector			
Health	61 (42,7)	9 (30,0)	70 (40,5)
Childhood	23 (16,1)	9 (30,0)	32 (18,5)
Public positions	9 (6,3)	1 (3,3)	10 (5,8)
Higher Education	4 (2,8)	3 (10,0)	7 (4,0)
Private company	5 (3,5)	0 (0,0)	5 (2,9)
Gender	5 (3,5)	0 (0,0)	5 (2,9)
Elderly	4 (2,8)	1 (3,3)	5 (2,9)
Other sectors	32 (22,3)	7 (23,7)	39 (22,5)
Weekly Working Hours			
Less than 22 hours	9 (6,3)	1 (3,3)	10 (5,8)
22 to 32 hours	4 (2,8)	1 (3,3)	5 (2,9)
33 to 43 hours	23 (16,1)	4 (13,3)	27 (15,6)

44 to 45 hours	101 (70,6)	23 (76,7)	124 (71,7)
More than 45 hours	6 (4,2)	1 (3,3)	7 (4,0)
Income Brackets			
Less than or equal to$300.000	1 (0,7)	0 (0,0)	1 (0,6)
$300.001- $460.000	2 (1,4)	0 (0,0)	2 (1,2)
$460.000- $680.000	7 (4,9)	1 (3,3)	8 (4,6)
$680.001- $900.000	19 (13,3)	3 (10,0)	22 (12,7)
$900.001- $1.000.000	21 (14,7)	9 (30,0)	30 (17,3)
$1.000.0001- $1.500.000	64 (44,8)	12 (40,0)	76 (43,9)
$1.500.001 or more	29 (20,3)	5 (16,7)	34 (19,7)

Source: Author's creation.

In Table 3, the prevalence of the main variables of the study is presented. Notably, only 6.9% of the sample exhibited burnout (high exhaustion, high depersonalization, and low personal accomplishment). Among the burnout dimensions, the most prevalent was low personal accomplishment (n=54; 31.2%), followed by high emotional exhaustion (n=35; 20.2%), while high depersonalization was present in only 16.2% of the sample (n=28). Regarding the other variables, the highest prevalences were found in job vulnerability, reported by 45.1% (n=78) of the respondents, and work overload, reported by 42.8% (n=74).

Table 3. Main Variables of the Study.

Variables	n (%)
High emotional exhaustion	35 (20,2)
High depersonalization	28 (16,2)
Low personal accomplishment	54 (31,2)
Burnout	12 (6,9)
Job vulnerability	78 (45,1)
Job instability	60 (34,7)
High emotional demands	51 (29,5)
Job dissatisfaction	29 (16,8)
Workplace bullying in the last 6 months	40 (23,1)
Work overload	74 (42,8)

Source: Own elaboration

In Tables 4 and 5, the bivariate associations between the highlighted variables are shown. As seen in Table 4, statistically significant associations were found between job vulnerability, high emotional demands, workplace bullying in the last 6 months, and work overload with high emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, associations were found between job vulnerability and work overload with high depersonalization. Additionally, high emotional demands, the presence of workplace bullying, and work overload were associated with burnout.

Palma-Contreras, Marchant-Troncoso, Vera-Meza & Larraín-Valenzuela

Table 4. Bivariate Analysis of Main Variables with Burnout Dimensions

	Job Vulnerability n (%)	Job Instability n (%)	High emotional demands n (%)	Workplace bullying in the last 6 months n (%)	Work overload n (%)
High emotional exhaustion	22 (28,2)**	14 (23,3)	18 (35,3) **	12 (27,5) **	29 (39,2) ***
High depersonalization	18 (23,1)*	13 (21,7)	12 (23,5)	10 (25,0)	19 (25,7) **
Low personal accomplishment	30 (38,5)	23 (38,3)	19 (37,3)	13 (32,5)	21 (28,4)
Presence of Burnout	8 (10,3)	5 (8,3)	12 (11,8) **	7 (17,5) **	9 (12,2) *

The percentages refer to the total respondents reporting the main variables of the study. Significance codes: X2: "***"<0.001; "**"<0.01 y "*" <0.05

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 5. Bivariate Analysis of Main Variables with Job Satisfaction.

	Presence of Burnout n (%)	Workplace bullying in the last 6 months n (%)	Job Vulnerability n (%)	Job Vulnerability n (%)	High emotional exhaustion n (%)	Work overload n (%)
Job dissatisfaction	5 (41,6) *	11 (27,5) *	19 (24,4) *	16 (26,7) *	11 (21,6)	14 (18,9)

The percentages refer to the total respondents reporting the main variables of the study. Significance codes X2: "***"<0.001; "**"<0.01 y "*" <0.05.

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 5 shows an association between the presence of burnout, workplace harassment in the last six months, vulnerability, and job instability with job dissatisfaction among social workers in the intersectoral network of the Ñuble Region, Chile.

Table 6 reveals that, when adjusting for public service and years of experience, social workers who report high emotional demands (OR=6.811), exposure to workplace harassment in the last six months (OR=5.430), and work overload (OR=4.431) are more likely to experience burnout compared to those who do not report these issues.

Table 6. Associations between high emotional demands, job vulnerability, workplace harassment, and work overload with burnout, adjusted for public service and years of experience.

	Burnout			
	Crude OR	CI (95%)	Adjusted OR	CI (95%)
High emotional demands	5,488*	1,572- 19,156	6,811*	1,718- 26,993
Vulnerability Job	2,600	0,752- 8,985	2,155	0,596- 7,760
Workplace bullying in the last 6 months	5,430*	1,620- 18,206	5,193*	1,527-17,653
Work overload	4,431*	1,156-16,990	4,736*	1,209- 18,548

*p <0.05

Source: Own elaboration

Table 7 shows that, when adjusting for salary range and type of contract, participants who report burnout are over four times more likely (OR=4.042) to report job dissatisfaction than those without burnout. The same occurs for those experiencing job vulnerability (OR=2.464) or job instability (OR=2.526), who are more than twice as likely to report dissatisfaction as those who do not experience these issues. High emotional demands and work overload are not significantly associated with job dissatisfaction.

Table 7. Associations between burnout, workplace harassment, job vulnerability, job instability, high emotional demands, and work overload with job dissatisfaction, adjusted for salary range and type of contract.

	Job dissatisfaction			
	Crude OR	CI (95%)	Adjusted OR	CI (95%)
Presence of Burnout	4,077*	1,196-13,906	4,042*	1,166-14,01
Workplace bullying in the last 6 months	2,423*	1,032- 5,690	2,604*	1,092-6,212
Job Vulnerability	2,737*	1,188- 6,307	2,464*	1,022-5,940
Job Instability	2,797*	1,240-6,308	2,526*	1,042-6,125
High emotional demands	1,589	0,690- 3,659	1,620	0,696-3,774
Work overload	1,307	0,587- 2,908	1,395	0,619- 3,143

Source: Own elaboration.

In general terms, it is possible to establish that the most prevalent dimension of burnout is low personal accomplishment (31.2%), while the overall presence of burnout was 6.9%. Among adverse organizational variables, job vulnerability stands out with the highest presence, followed by work overload. In the bivariate analyses, it was found that job vulnerability, high emotional demands, the presence of harassment, and work overload are associated with burnout. When adjusted for salary range and contract type, these associations persist. Additionally, bivariate analysis found that the presence of burnout, harassment, job vulnerability, and job instability are associated with job dissatisfaction. When adjusted for salary range and contract type, these associations persist.

4. Conclusions

Regarding the burnout dimensions, this study found a lower presence of them compared to a previous study conducted with Spanish social workers (Gómez-García *et al.,* 2020). This study found 20.2% emotional exhaustion, while Gómez-García *et al.* (2020) reported 33.2%; 16.2% depersonalization was observed here vs. 22.1% in the aforementioned study, and 32.1% reported low personal accomplishment vs. 54.2%. The burnout level was 6.9%, a percentage lower than that found in a study of Spanish social workers (25%) conducted by Caravaca-Sánchez *et al.* (2022) and slightly higher than one conducted with Chilean social workers (6.7%) by Marchant-Lara *et al.* (2010). In Chile, it has been found that social workers engaging with individuals in highly

vulnerable situations, such as young offenders and their families, have a high likelihood of experiencing compassion fatigue (Reyes-Quilodran *et al.*, 2023). This could also be linked to their job insecurity, especially considering the high job instability these workers experience in the country (Valdebenito-Pedrero, 2017).

As hypothesized, it was found that reporting high emotional demands, workplace harassment, and work overload is associated with burnout, as all these factors represent occupational psychosocial risks. In other words, the characteristics of work conditions and organization affect people's health (Moncada et al., 2002) and should be prevented by the institutions where social workers are employed.

Consistent with the hypothesis, social workers experiencing burnout in their job are more likely to report job dissatisfaction, a relationship previously reported in other studies (Gómez-García *et al.*, 2021; Soto-Rosales & González-Losada, 2018; Weinberg, 2018). Workers who experience job vulnerability or instability are also more likely to report job dissatisfaction than those who do not; they are more than twice as likely to report dissatisfaction if they experience vulnerability or instability at work. However, high emotional demands and work overload are not significantly associated with job dissatisfaction. This may be because, in some cases, higher user demands may be positively associated with job satisfaction. As reported in some studies (Ballentine & Woo, 2021; Lee, 2018), it is attributed to the satisfaction derived from user relationships and the feeling of compassion, which protects them from the adverse effects of high demands on their mental health (Kinman & Grant, 2020).

The two key ideas this article contributes are: Firstly, burnout is a multi-causal phenomenon influenced by organizational contextual factors such as high emotional demands, job vulnerability, harassment, and work overload, which increase the likelihood of experiencing the syndrome. Secondly, burnout affects job dissatisfaction; however, aspects of the work environment, such as job vulnerability, workplace harassment, and perceived job instability, are also associated with this latter phenomenon.

To address burnout among social workers, it is suggested, in line with previous findings, to consider the importance of relationships, self-care, work-life balance, and resources that enable well-being (Mack, 2022). These represent phenomena that could be further investigated regarding their connection with burnout and mental health in this specific labor population.

Among the limitations of this article is that, although it was a probabilistic sample, it was drawn from a single region in Chile. For future research, the sample should be expanded to various regions of the country to achieve statistical representativeness.

Additionally, future research should use stratified samples according to relevant variables such as contract type and work areas to better represent these professionals' work realities.

13

Finally, another limitation of this study is that the instrument used to measure high emotional demands was brief (4 items). Future research should explore a broader phenomenon, such as emotional labor, which accounts for the demands of managing feelings in the workplace to create a publicly observable display in line with institutional expectations (Hochschild, 1983). Therefore, for subsequent studies, it is necessary to validate instruments to measure emotional labor in social workers and study this phenomenon in association with professional mental health outcomes such as burnout and organizational aspects like job satisfaction and intention to change jobs, among others.

Funding

The authors declare that they received no funding for the writing or publication of this article.

Authors' Contributions

Andrea María Palma-Contreras: Conceptualization, formal analysis, methodology, software, supervision, validation, visualization, writing (original draft), writing (review & editing); Francisca Antonia Marchant-Troncoso: conceptualization, data curation, investigation, software, writing (draft review & editing); Viviana Edith Vera-Meza: conceptualization, data curation, investigation, software, writing (draft review & editing); María Josefina Larraín-Valenzuela: formal analysis, methodology, software, writing (original draft), writing (review & editing).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest in the writing or publication of this article.

Ethical Implications

They are already included in the methodology, under the design and procedure section, where the following is stated: "Study participants provided informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and voluntariness. No risks associated with participation in this study were anticipated; however, if any question caused discomfort to a participant, they were given the option to contact the academic supervisor of the research, who would guide them in contacting individuals who could offer advice or stop responding to the questionnaire if they deemed it appropriate."

14

5. Bibliographic references

Alvarado, R., Marchetti, N., Villalón, M., Hirmas, M., & Pastorino, M. (2009). Adaptación y análisis psicométrico de un cuestionario para evaluar riesgos psicosociales en el trabajo en Chile: versión media del CoPsoQ. *Revista Chilena de Salud Pública, 13*(1), 7-16. https://revistasaludpublica.uchile.cl/index.php/RCSP/article/view/652

Amable, M. (2008). *La precariedad laborar y su impacto sobre la salud. Un estudio en trabajadores asalariados en España* [Doctoral thesis, Universitat Pompeu Fabra]. Digital file. https://www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/7116

Badura, B., Ducki, A., Schröder, H., Klose, J., & Meyer, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Sinn erleben – Arbeit und Gesundheit [Experience of meaning – Labour and health]*. Springer.

Ballentine, K. L., & Woo, J. (2021). Structural equation model of emotional labor, work–home interaction, and well-being. *Social Work Research, 45*(4), 269-280. https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svab019

Beer, O. W. J., Phillips, R., & Quinn, C. R. (2021). Exploring stress, coping, and health outcomes among social workers. *European Journal of Social Work, 24*(2), 317-330. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2020.1751591

Blomberg, H., Kallio, J., Kroll, C., & Saarinen, A. (2015). Job stress among social workers: Determinants and attitude effects in the Nordic Countries. *British Journal of Social Work, 45*(7), 2089-2105. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcu038

Burghi, G., Lambert, J., Chaize, M., Goinheix, K., Quiroga, C., Fariña, G., Godino, M., Pittini, G., Pereda, S., Fregossi, C., Mareque, S., Bagnulo, H., & Azoulay, E. (2014). Prevalence, risk factors and consequences of severe burnout syndrome in ICU. *Intensive Care Medicine, 40*(11), 1785–1786. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00134-014-3454-x

Candia, M., & Pérez, J. M. (2020). *Manual del método del cuestionario SUSESO/ISTAS21.* Super Intendencia de Seguridad Social.

Caravaca-Sánchez, F., Carrión-Tudela, J., & Pastor-Seller, E. (2018). Síndrome de burnout y satisfacción laboral en profesionales del trabajo social en prisiones de España. *Revista Española de Sanidad Penitenciaria, 20*(2), 40-46. http://www.sanipe.es/OJS/index.php/RESP/article/view/513

Caravaca-Sánchez, F., Pastor-Seller, E., Barrera-Algarín, E., & Sarasola, J. L. (2022). Burnout, apoyo social, ansiedad y satisfacción laboral en profesionales del Trabajo Social. *Interdisciplinaria, 39*(1), 179-194. https://doi.org/10.16888/interd.2022.39.1.11

Casas-Becerra, L. (2016). *The Effectiveness of Sexual Harassment Law in Chile: From Theory to Practice.* [Doctoral thesis, University of Ottawa]. digital file. https://ruor.uottawa.ca/handle/10393/34670

Cladellas-Pros, R., Castelló-Tarrida, A., & Parrado-Romero, E. (2018). Satisfacción, salud y estrés laboral del profesorado universitario según su situación contractual. *Revista de Salud Pública, 20*(1), 53-59. https://doi.org/10.15446/rsap.V20n1.53569

15

Crowder, R., & Sears, A. (2017). Building resilience in social workers: An exploratory study on the impacts of a mindfulness-based intervention. *Australian Social Work, 70*(1), 17-29. https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2016.1203965

Desrumaux, P., Gillet, N., & Nicolas, C. (2018). Direct and Indirect Effects of Belief in a Just World and Supervisor Support on Burnout via Bullying. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 15*(11), 2330-2346. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15112330

Edú-Valsania, S., Laguía, A., & Moriano, J. A. (2022). Burnout: A Review of Theory and Measurement. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19*(3), 1780. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19031780

Eliyana, A., Ma'arif, S., & Muzakki. (2019). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment effect in the transformational leadership towards employee performance. *European Research on Management and Business Economics, 25*(3), 144–150. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iedeen.2019.05.001

Ellis, R. J., Nicolas, J. D., Cheung, E., Zhang, L., Ma, M., Turner, P., Nussbaum, M. S., Are, C., Smink, D. S., Etkin, C., Bilimoria, K. Y., y Hu, Y. (2021). Comprehensive Characterization of the General Surgery Residency Learning Environment and the Association with Resident Burnout. *Annals of Surgery, 274*(1), 6-11. https://doi.org/10.1097/SLA.0000000000004796

Eurofound. (2016). *European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions. Sixth European Working Conditions Survey – Overview report.* Publications Office of the European Union.

Figueiredo-Ferraz, H., Grau-Alberola, E., Gil-Monte, P. R. & García-Juesas, J. A. (2012). 'Burnout and job satisfaction among nursing professionals'. *Psicothema, 24*(2), 271-276. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221897302_Burnout_and_job_satisfaction_among_nursing_professionals

Fleming, W. (2024). Employee well-being outcomes from individual-level mental health interventions: Cross-sectional evidence from the United Kingdom. *Industrial Relation Journal, 55*(2), 162-182. doi.org/10.1111/irj.12418

Freudenberger, H. J. (1974). Staff burnout. *Journal of social issues, 30*(1), 159-165. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1974.tb00706.x

Gómez-García, R., Alonso-Sangregorio, M., & Llamazares-Sánchez, M. (2020). Burnout in social workers and socio-demographic factors. *Journal of Social Work, 20*(4), 463–482 https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1468017319837886.

Gómez-García, R., Bayón-Calvo, S., & Lucas-García, J. (2021). The Relationship between Burnout and Job Satisfaction in a Sample of Spanish Social Workers. *The British Journal of Social Work, 51*(8), 3115–3134. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcaa150.

Grootegoed, E., & Smith, M. (2018). The Emotional Labour of Austerity: How Social Workers Reflect and Work on Their Feelings towards Reducing Support to Needy Children and Families. *The British Journal of Social Work, 48*(7), 1929–1947. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx151

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling.* University of California Press.

16

Hollederer, A. (2022) Working conditions, health and exhaustion among social workers in *Germany. European Journal of Social Work, 25*(5), 792-803. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2022.2063813

Huang, C., Xie, X., Cheung, S. P., & Zhou, Y. (2022). Job Demands and Resources, Positive and Negative Affect, and Psychological Distress of Social Workers in China. *Frontiers in Psychiatry, 12,* 752382–752382. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2021.752382

Kinman, G., & Grant, L. (2020) Emotional demands, compassion and mental health in social workers. *Occupational Medicine, 70*(2), 89-94. https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqz144

Kokkinen, L., Kouvonen, A., Buscariolli, A., Koskinen, A., Varje, P., & Väänänen, A. (2018). Human service work and long-term sickness absence due to mental disorders: A prospective study of gender-specific patterns in 1.466.100 employees. *Annals of Epidemiology, 31,* 57-61. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2018.12.006

Lee, H. J. (2018). Relation between display rules and emotive behavior strategies and its outcomes among South Korean public service employees. *Public Performance & Management Review, 41*(4), 723–744. https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2018.1464479

Llosa, J., Menéndez-Espina, S., Agulló-Tomás, E., & Rodríguez-Suárez, J. (2018). Job insecurity and mental health: A meta-analytical review of the consequences of precarious work in clinical disorders. *Anales de Psicología, 34*(2), 211-223. https://doi.org/10.6018/analesps.34.2.281651

Mack, B. M. (2022). Addressing Social Workers' Stress, Burnout, and Resiliency: A Qualitative Study with Supervisors. *Social Work Research, 46*(1), 17–28. https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svab032

Marchant-Lara, A. E., Riquelme-Morales, J. P., & San Martín-Pastene, M. Y. (2010). *Desgaste profesional: Síndrome de Burnout en trabajadores sociales del sector público que desarrollan su actividad laboral dentro de la comuna de Chillán* [Unpublished undergraduate work]. Universidad del Bio Bío.

Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 2*(2), 99-113. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030020205

McFadden, P., Campbell, A., & Taylor, B. (2015). Resilience and Burnout in Child Protection Social Work: Individual and Organisational Themes from a Systematic Literature Review. *The British Journal of Social Work, 45*(5), 1546–1563. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bct210

Moncada, S., Llorens, C., & Kristensen, T. S. (2002). *Método ISTAS21 (CoPsoQ): manual para la evaluación de riesgos psicosociales en el trabajo.* Instituto Sindical de Trabajo Ambiente y Salud. http://istas.net/descargas/m_metodo_istas21.pdf

Morley, L. (2022). Contemporary Practitioner Experiences of Relational Social Work: The Case of Child Welfare. *Australian Social Work, 75*(4), 458–470. https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2021.2001831

Muñoz-Arce, G., Reininger, T., Villalobos-Dintrans, C., & Morales-Torres, C. (2021). Análisis de las condiciones laborales de trabajadoras/es sociales que implementan programas en Chile en tiempos de COVID-19. En S. Iturrieta (Ed.), *Vivir en tiempos convulsionados. Reflexiones*

17

sociocríticas para propuestas de intervención social (pp. 101-122). Ariadna Ediciones. https://books.openedition.org/ariadnaediciones/11122

Olivares-Faúndez, Mena-Miranda, L., Jelvez-Wilker, C., & Macia-Sepúlveda, F. (2014). Validez factorial del Maslach Burnout Inventory Human Services en profesionales chilenos. *Universitas psychologica, 13*(1), 145–159. https://doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.UPSY13-1.vfmb

Palma-Contreras, A., & Ansoleaga, E. (2020). Asociaciones entre factores de riesgos psicosociales, dimensiones organizacionales y problemas de salud mental, relacionados con la violencia laboral, en trabajadores de tres hospitales chilenos de alta complejidad. *Cadernos de Saúde Pública, 36*(3), e00084219. http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0102-311x00084219

Rantonen, O., Alexanderson, K., Pentti, J., Kjeldgard, L., Hämäläinen, J., Mittendorfer- Rutz, R., Kivimäki, M., Vahtera, J., & Salo, P. (2017). Trends in work disability with mental diagnoses among social workers in Finland and Sweden in 2005–2012. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences, 26*(6), 644–654. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2045796016000597

Reininger, T., Muñoz-Arce, G., Villalobos, C., Morales, C., & Campillo, C. (2022). Pandemic and Social Work in Chile: Precarity, precariousness and the Quest for Resistance in an Uncertain World. *British Journal of Social Work, 52*(8), 5105–5123. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcac109

Reyes-Quilodran, C., Ruffolo, M. C., & Chang, S.-Y. (2023). Compassion fatigue among social workers in juvenile offender systems in Chile. *International Social Work, 66*(3), 674-684. https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728221088169

Salanova, M., Schayfeli, W., Llorens, S., Peiro, J. M., & Grau, R. (2000). Desde el "burnout" al "engagement": ¿una nueva perspectiva? *Revista de Psicología del Trabajo y de las Organizaciones, 16*(2), 117-134. https://journals.copmadrid.org/jwop/art/7c590f01490190db0ed02a5070e20f01

Salin, D. (2003). Bullying and organisational politics in competitive and rapidly changing work environments. *International Journal of Management and Decision Making, 4*(1), 35-46. http://doi.org/10.1504/IJMDM.2003.002487

Salin, D. (2015). Workplace bullying as a form of violence at the workplace: defining characteristics, causes and national differences. En L. Godoy y E. Ansoleaga (Coords.), *Un campo en tensión o tensión entre campos. Psicología de las organizaciones y del trabajo en Iberoamérica* (pp. 15-26). RIL editores.

Seisdedos, N. (1997). *Manual MBI, Inventario Burnout de Maslach.* TEA

Sironi, E. (2019). Job satisfaction as a determinant of employees' optimal well-being in an instrumental variable approach. *Quality & Quantity, 53*(4), 1721–1742. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-019-00835-3

Soto-Rosales, A., & González-Losada, S. (2018). Satisfacción laboral y desgaste profesional en trabajadores de servicios sociales de atención a la infancia. *Trabajo Social Global, 8*(14), 80–107. https://doi.org/10.30827/tsg-gsw.v8i14.7222

Suñer-Soler, R., Grau-Martín, A., Flichtentrei, D., Prats, M., Braga, F., Font-Mayolas, S., & Gras, M. E. (2014). The consequences of burnout syndrome among healthcare professionals in

18

Spain and Spanish speaking Latin American countries. *Burnout Research, 1*(2), 82–89. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.burn.2014.07.004

Takeuchi, M., Nomura, K., Horie, S., Okinaga, H., Perumalswami, C. R., & Jagsi, R. (2018). Direct and Indirect Harassment Experiences and Burnout among Academic Faculty in Japan. *The Tohoku Journal of Experimental Medicine, 245*(1), 37–44. https://doi.org/10.1620/tjem.245.37

Tham, P., & Meagher, G. (2009). Working in Human Services: How Do Experiences and Working Conditions in Child Welfare Social Work Compare? *The British Journal of Social Work, 39*(5), 807-827. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcm170

Travis, D. J., Lizano, E. L., & Mor-Barak, M. E. (2016). 'I'm So Stressed!': A Longitudinal Model of Stress, Burnout and Engagement among Social Workers in Child Welfare Settings. *The British Journal of Social Work, 46*(4), 1076–1095. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bct205

Vaccaro, C., Swauger, M., Morrison, S., & Heckert, A. (2021). Sociological conceptualizations of compassion fatigue: Expanding our understanding. *Sociology Compass, 15*(2), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12844

Valdebenito-Pedrero, S. (2017). *¿Cuántos trabajadores emplea el Estado de Chile? Problematización y orden de magnitud de la contratación a honorarios.* Estudios Nueva Economía. https://estudiosnuevaeconomia.cl/wp-content/uploads/delightful-downloads/2018/06/DT005_042017_Valdebenito_-Cuantos-trabajadores-emplea-el-Estado-de-Chile.pdf

Weinberg, M. (2018). Paradox and Trespass: Possibilities for Ethical Practice in Times of Austerity. *Ethics and Social Welfare, 12*(1), 5-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2017.1375135

World Health Organization [WHO]. (2019). *Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International Classification of Diseases.* https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases