



Counselor emotional exhaustion and turnover intention in therapeutic communities

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Counselor turnover is a significant problem facing substance abuse treatment agencies. Understanding the role of organizational culture in predicting burnout and turnover intention may yield important information on how to address turnover in treatment organizations. Using data collected from 817 counselors employed in a national sample of 253 therapeutic communities (TCs), structural equation modeling was used to estimate the associations between emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, and three measures of organizational culture: centralized decision making, distributive justice, and procedural justice. The model controlled for counselor demographics, credentials, and earnings. Counselors' emotional exhaustion scores were higher in TCs with greater centralized decision making but lower in TCs where greater distributive justice and procedural justice were reported. Likewise, turnover intention was positively associated with centralized decision making and inversely associated with the workplace justice measures. These data suggest that management practices in TCs and perhaps in other types of substance abuse treatment facilities likely play a substantial role in counselors' well-being and in their decisions to leave their jobs. Because these practices are not structural features of organizations, they may be targeted for intervention and change.