

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**THE RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF COMPASSION FATIGUE AND
BURNOUT IN PSYCHOLOGISTS**

Sharon Heather Tomkins

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University, 1999.

ABSTRACT

The present study examined how both individual and organisational factors combine in different ways to produce risk and protective factors for the development of compassion fatigue and burnout. The reason for undertaking research into secondary traumatic stress disorder in psychologists is because there seems to be an increase in psychologists leaving the field of psychology due to increased stress and burnout.

Several variables were examined, including an investigation between risk and protective factors for the development of compassion fatigue and burnout. These included work settings i.e., public institutions and private practices, full time and part time work, life satisfaction, work locus of control, and intention to quit the field, along with several demographic variables, such as gender.

The compassion fatigue and burnout variables correlated with many of the protective and risk factors. Public institutions, external work locus of control, poor life satisfaction, and full time work, all predicted a higher risk of developing either compassion fatigue/burnout or both. The results indicated that compassion fatigue and burnout should be considered as a concern for practitioners, mental health organisations and trainers of future psychologists.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisors Cheryl Woolley and Douglas Paton for their guidance and encouragement. Through their outstanding advice and positive approach they inspired my confidence in my ability to successfully complete this project.

I would like to thank the psychologists and mental health workers who participated, for giving their time and thoughts and making this research possible.

My Parents Owen and Lyn Tomkins, who I would like to dedicate this work to. Their encouragement to persevere and their belief in my ability over the years has been to my advantage. For their unlimited love and support throughout my studies, I am forever grateful.

Lloyd and Denise Reeve for their support and kindness, for which I am indebted.

Special thanks to David for his love and support and for always believing in me.

Finally, I would like to thank all of my friends, especially Amanda Smith, Lisa Balemi, and Andi Nicholson, for their support and much appreciated distraction.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Contents	iv
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
List of Appendices	viii
Introduction and Review of Literature	1
Compassion Fatigue symptoms	5
Organisation and Person Factors	13
Organisation Factors	17
Burnout	17
Public Institutions and Private Practice	20
Person Factors	23
Locus of Control	23
Life Satisfaction	25
Intention to Quit	27
Method	30
Hypotheses	30
Participants	31
Measures	31
Rational for Measures	31
Questionnaire Development	34
Scoring	36
Procedure	36
Design	37

Results	38
Data Entry	38
Missing Data	38
Descriptive Information	39
Demographic information	39
Scales and Sub-scales	42
Qualitative Information	43
Relationships among Measures	47
Pearson Correlation Coefficients	47
Standard Multiple Regression	51
Analysis of Variance	53
Discussion	56
Findings of the Present Research	56
The Hypotheses	56
Compassion Fatigue and Burnout	57
Descriptive Information	59
Scales and Sub-scales	61
Qualitative Information	63
Predicting Compassion Fatigue and Burnout	64
Relationships among Variables and Measures	69
Prevention of Compassion Fatigue	72
Contributions of the Present Research	74
Contributions to the Literature	74
Contributions to Mental Health Organisations	76
Future Research	77
Limitations of the Present Research	78
Conclusions	80
Appendix A Information Sheet	81
Appendix B Questionnaire	83
References	89

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Demographic Information Showing the Frequencies and Percentages for the Categories of the Main Demographic Variables.	41
Table 2. The Means and Standard Deviations for the Categories of the Scales and Sub-scales.	43
Table 3. Summary of what was Found in the Thirty Two Qualitative Data Responses.	46
Table 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix for the 10 Measurement Scales and Compassion Fatigue.	47
Table 5. Pearson Correlation Matrix for the 10 Measurement Scales and Burnout.	50
Table 6. Summary of Standard Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Compassion Fatigue.	52
Table 7. Summary of Standard Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Burnout.	53
Table 8. Analysis of Variance of Gender for Compassion Fatigue and Burnout.	54
Table 9. Analysis of Variance of Work Settings for Compassion Fatigue and Burnout.	54
Table 10. Analysis of Variance of Intention to Quit for Compassion Fatigue and Burnout.	55

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. The Differences between Compassion Fatigue, Secondary Traumatic Stress, Vicarious Traumatization, and Countertransference.	4
Figure 2. A Conceptual Model of Compassion Fatigue and Burnout.	14
Figure 3. Model of Employee Turnover as a Function of Job Satisfaction and Unemployment Rate.	28

LIST OF APPENDICES

	Page
Appendix A Information Sheet	83
Appendix B Questionnaire	85