Staff members of community services for people with intellectual disability and severe mental illness: Values, attitudes, and burnout

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on the connections between the value preferences, attitudes toward community living, and burnout among staff members of community services for people with intellectual disability ($n = 126$) and severe mental illness ($n = 96$) in Israel. A higher preference for the self-transcendence values and a lower preference for the self-enhancement values were associated with the staff members' positive attitudes toward their clients' empowerment, a higher sense of similarity, and a negative attitude toward exclusion. In addition, a higher preference for the self-transcendence values and a lower preference for the self-enhancement values were associated with a lower level of depersonalization and a higher sense of professional accomplishment. Finally, a more positive attitude toward empowerment, a higher sense of similarity, and a more negative attitude toward exclusion were associated with a lower level of burnout.

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1. Introduction

For the last 50 years, the philosophy of supported community living for people with intellectual disability and severe mental illness (ID/SMI) has been widely accepted by human service professionals in different countries (Balcazar, MacKay-Murphy, Keys, Henry, & Bryant, 1997; Henry, Keys, Jopp, & Balcazar, 1996). At the policy level, this philosophy assumes independent living, social integration, working in real jobs, and client participation in decision-making regarding their lives (American Association on Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities, 2013; National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2013). A wide array of community services have been developed to implement this policy, including supported residences, workshops, clubs, and outpatient clinics (Grinshpoon, Zilber, Lerner, & Ponizovsky, 2006; Ministry of Health, 2008). However, it quickly became obvious that the success or failure of these services depended on the degree to which their staff members adhered to the philosophy of community living and developed an attitude of inclusion and empowerment toward people with ID/SMI (Corrigan & Wassel, 2008).

The attitudes of community service staff members toward community living have been investigated in several studies (e.g., Balcazar et al., 1997; Henry, Keys, Balcazar, & Jopp, 1996; Henry, Duvdevany, Keys, Balcazar, & Walsh, 2004; Olney & Kennedy, 2000). However, these studies have mainly focused on the connection between the staff members' socio-demographic characteristics and their attitudes toward community living. The present study aims to broaden our

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understanding of the factors affecting attitudes toward community living, focusing on the staff members' psychological characteristics. Specifically, the present study investigates whether the staff members' value preferences are related to their attitudes toward community living for people with ID/SMI, beyond the staff members' socio-demographic characteristics. In addition, the present study examines a possible connection between the staff members' value preferences and burnout. Finally, the connection between the staff members' attitudes and their burnout is investigated.

Investigation of the staff members' values is important for both theoretical and practical reasons. The theoretical assumption stating that individual values affect attitudes is widely accepted in psychology (Ajzen, Czasch, & Flood, 2009; Schwartz, 2006); however, it has rarely been tested regarding attitudes toward people with ID/SMI. From a practical point of view, understanding the connection between the values and attitudes of staff members may indicate new directions for their selection and training, which, in turn, may improve the quality of community services. Finally, it may open new opportunities for improving the staff members' work-related well-being and help decrease their turnover.

1.1. Theory of values

The present study applies Schwartz' values theory, the most modern and empirically sound theory of values (Schwartz, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2012). Schwartz's theory defines values as desirable trans-situational goals that serve as guiding principles in people's lives (Schwartz, 2006). The theory specifies a comprehensive set of 10 motivationally distinct values: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. Table 1 presents definitions of the 10 basic values. The theory further assumes the existence of dynamic relations between these values: pursuit of each value has consequences that may conflict or may be congruent with the pursuit of other values. The circular structure in Fig. 1 portrays the total pattern of conflicts and congruities among values (Schwartz, 1992). The circular arrangement of values represents a motivational continuum: the closer any pair of values is in either direction around the circle, the more similar the motivations they express; the more distant any pair of values, the more antagonistic the motivations they express. For example, pursuing stimulation values (looking for novelty and change) usually undermines tradition values (preservation of time-honored customs). In contrast, pursuing tradition values is congruent with pursuing conformity values: both motivate actions of submission to external expectations (Tartakovsky & Schwartz, 2001).

The conflicts and congruities among all 10 values yield an integrated structure of four higher-order value types arrayed along two orthogonal dimensions: self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence and openness to change vs. conservation (Fig. 1). Self-enhancement includes the values of achievement and power, and emphasizes the pursuit of self-interest through demonstrating competence and attaining social status and dominance over others. Self-transcendence includes the values of universalism and benevolence, emphasizing concern for the welfare and interests of others, and contradicts the self-enhancement values. Openness to change includes the values of self-direction and stimulation, emphasizing independent action, thought and feeling, and a willingness to engage in new experiences. Conservation includes the values of security, conformity, and tradition, emphasizing self-restriction, order, safety, and stability, and opposes the openness to change values. The value of hedonism emphasizing pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself includes elements of both the openness to change and self-enhancement value types (Schwartz, 2006). Empirical studies conducted in more than 70 countries have verified the distinctiveness of the 10 types of values and their dynamic structure (Schwartz, 2006).

1.2. Personal values and attitudes

Psychologists assume that human cognitive structures are organized according to a hierarchy (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998). Values constitute the most general and abstract part of this hierarchy; they reflect individual preferences across a wide range of situations and have a motivational property (Schwartz, 2006). Attitudes are defined as the disposition to evaluate an attitudinal object with some degree of favor or disfavor and, therefore, they represent the individual's preferences in specific

Table 1
Definitions of the 10 basic values.

Values	Definitions
Benevolence	Caring for the welfare of the others with whom one is in frequent social contact
Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection of the welfare of all people and of nature
Tradition	Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the costumes and ideas provided by the traditional culture or religion
Conformity	Limiting actions and urges that might violate social expectations and norms
Security	The need for protection of safety, harmony, and stability of the social structure and of the self
Power	Aspiration for social status through gaining control and dominance over other people and resources
Achievement	Acquiring personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards
Hedonism	Pursuit of pleasure and sensual satisfaction
Stimulation	Valuing variety, aspiration for change, challenge, and excitement
Self-direction	Importance of independent thought and action

Adopted from Knafo, Daniel, and Khoury-Kassabri (2008).