

## Relationships between secondary traumatic stress and burnout among social workers in south korea: Mediated moderation effects of emotional expression ambivalence and social support

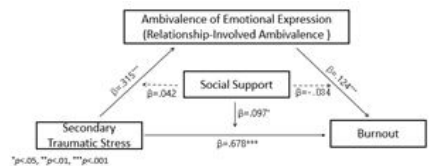
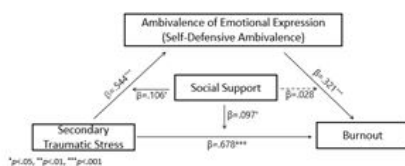
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This study aimed to examine the mediating effect of emotional expression ambivalence and mediated moderation effects of social support in the relationship between secondary traumatic stress (STS) and burnout among social workers. Specifically, based on distinctive attributes between self-defensive ambivalence and relationship-involved ambivalence, the role of self-defensive ambivalence and relationship-involved ambivalence was separately explored in associations with burnout.

Participants of the study were 291 social workers affiliated with public institutions, social welfare facilities under the Ministry of Health and Welfare in South Korea. For the statistical analyses, SPSS28 and Process macro4.2 were utilized. Specifically, bootstrapping methods were applied for the mediation test, and three steps of Muller's integrative model (2005) guided the mediated moderation test of the current study.

The results are as follows: in the relationship between STS and burnout among social workers, both self-defensive ambivalence and relationship-involved ambivalence significantly mediated the relationship. Moreover, the moderating effect of social support was also significant in the relationship 1) between STS and burnout and 2) between STS and self-defensive ambivalence. In other words, both burnout and self-defensive ambivalence was lower in the higher social support group than the lower social support group. Finally, the indirect paths from STS to burnout via self-defensive ambivalence were buffered by social support indicating significant mediated moderation effects. Social support had a lesser buffering effect in the higher STS group than the lower STS group on both burnout and self-defensive ambivalence.

Ultimately, the current study confirmed that STS among social workers is linked to burnout through self-defensive ambivalence and the moderating effects of social support on burnout can vary depending on the level of STS. Particularly, in the high STS group, the buffering effect of social support is rather limited, highlighting the need for professional interventions beyond social support for social workers experiencing high STS.



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## Biography

Gwon Yujeong has been working as a social worker in the field of mental health in Korea for over 19 years. Her extensive professional experience has fueled her research, particularly focusing on secondary trauma and burnout among social workers due to their harsh working environments. She aims to explore the emotional processes in the relationships between secondary traumatic stress and burnout. The mechanisms of ambivalence in self-expression are linked to being self-defensive or relationally involved. Gwon is committed to furthering her exploration of these subjects throughout her career as both a researcher and practitioner.

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