

**Alison PROWLE**

*BA, PGCE, MScPhD, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Children and Families,  
the University of Worcester, Worcester, Great Britain*

## **A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH TO SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN ADVERSITY**

In our increasingly complex world, practitioners are encountering more and more families who are coping with multiple adversities (Hodgkins and Prowle, 2023). Within the UK, a cost-of-living crisis, financial austerity in public services, and high levels of post-pandemic mental ill health are presenting unprecedented challenges to both families and services. However, these issues are overshadowed by global concerns, including war in Europe, the threat of famine in multiple regions across the world, and the devastating effects caused by climate change. It is within this challenging landscape that practitioners from the children and family sector are privileged to offer support, intervention and also to inspire hope. However, this is emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) and comes at a personal cost to the practitioner.

This paper draws upon empirical research undertaken in the UK between 2016 and 2021, focusing on the support needs of forced migrant families in Wales, a devolved nation within the UK and the first country to take on the mantle of Nation of Sanctuary (Welsh Government 2019). This paper presents a multi-disciplinary, qualitative study of how the needs of forced migrant families in Wales are understood and supported. The research questions were:

- How do forced migrant parents make sense of their family's experiences and perceive their support needs? How do they feel those needs are being met?
- How do strategic actors and practitioners understand the needs and experiences of forced migrant families and how is this reflected in the service response?

The research used a constructivist approach, wherein knowledge is construed as both subjective and transactional, in recognition that realities of participants are diverse and multiple. This was supported by a multi-lens stakeholder approach (Freeman 1984), drawing on the perspectives of forced migrant parents (n=10), multi-agency

practitioners (n=33) and strategic actors (n=15). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were the main research instruments, providing rich narrative data. Using Interpretative phenomenological analysis, emergent themes within and across the data were identified, with an emphasis on seeking to understand the meanings attached by the participants themselves to aspects of their lived experience.

The research considered the experiences of the parents, focusing on constructions of identity, belonging, needs and aspirations. Whilst the parents were very positive about living in Wales and found it to be a friendly and welcoming host nation, their experience was often characterised by constrained circumstances, uncertainty and lengthy waits for asylum judgements. The challenges of integrating into a new society were coupled with a grieving for what had been left behind and many parents and children had experienced psychosocial challenges (Yan and Anucha, 2017).

Their experience was one of liminality (Hynes 2011), an in-between space, fraught with uncertainty, disorientation, and ambivalence. Meeting the needs of the children provided parents with purpose, routine, and aspiration (Denov and Shevell 2019). Their resilience in the face of adversity (Walsh 2016) was an inspiration to the practitioners and as families settled into their new homes, they were keen to share their skills, experiences and hospitality with their neighbours in a quest for reciprocity.

At the practice level, families were supported by committed and knowledgeable practitioners, who were often constrained by capacity issues, high workloads, and organisational uncertainty. A strong focus on dignity, autonomy, and choice (Monahan, et al. 2010) characterized the most effective support. Staff were keen to emphasise the importance of trauma awareness, cultural competence, strengths-based approaches, holistic support and multi-agency working when supporting families. Vicarious trauma and burnout were common, and self-care was rarely prioritized. However high-quality clinical supervision where available, provided a reflective space for improving practice, setting boundaries and exercising self-compassion.

Strategic actors highlighted the challenges of the UK systems for asylum and protection, and austerity policies when trying to meet their obligations to families. These challenges had intensified since the pandemic.

Whilst this was a relatively small-scale research project and is highly context specific, the research findings highlighted the potential for developing a strength-based, hope- inspiring, and distinctly Welsh approach to family support, focusing on agency, autonomy and reciprocity.

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**Halyna RADCHUK**

*Doctor of Psychology, Full Professor, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Ternopil, Ukraine*

**Yang HAICHAO**

*PhD student of the Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Beijing, China*

## **SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF EMOTIONAL BURNOUT AMONG IT WORKERS**

The field of information technology (IT) has been growing rapidly in recent years, and with it, the number of IT workers has also increased significantly. These workers are responsible for developing and maintaining various software, hardware, and network systems that are essential for the functioning of modern society. However, the nature of their work is often stressful and demanding, leading to emotional burnout. Emotional burnout is a psychological syndrome that results from chronic work stress, leading to exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy.

The relevance of this problem is clear, given the high levels of stress and demands faced by IT workers. Several studies have investigated the social and psychological factors that contribute to burnout, and research has shown that individual factors can also play a role. Scientific research on this topic is necessary to identify risk factors and develop interventions and prevention strategies, as well as to raise awareness of the problem among workers and organizations.

Based on a review of literature and empirical research, this study finds that social and psychological factors have significant impacts on the emotional exhaustion of IT workers, and understanding these factors is helpful for preventing and alleviating emotional exhaustion. Firstly, work stress is an important factor leading to IT workers' emotional exhaustion. The IT industry often faces tight deadlines and heavy workloads,