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Predictive Indicators of Job Burnout in Nonprofit Organizations

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Predictive Indicators of Job Burnout in Nonprofit Organizations

by Steven D. Pomerantz

Working Paper No. 15
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Executive Summary

One of the greatest concerns in personnel management of nonprofit organizations is the high turnover rate due to job burnout of high quality workers. This researcher's ten years of experience with nonprofit organizations, and the frequently received comments from agency executives, make it clear that burnout is an ever present problem.

The purpose of this project was to examine the many variables that determine the causal nature of burnout. The scope of this examination was to find predictive indicators of job burnout that will give personnel managers insight and understanding into the problem. The strategies and tools that were developed from this study, could be used to reduce the high turnover rate of high quality workers in nonprofit organizations.

A randomized control-group, pretest-posttest design and a correlational design were used to:

1) test the impact of a stress management training program that involves: relaxation exercises, self-hypnosis, physical exercise planning, nutrition education, stressful communication training, attitudinal training, and social support system planning; and

2) examine the relationship between job burnout and personality factors and organization-wide factors as are measured, respectively, by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (TJTA), the Ways of Coping Scale (WCS), and the Work Environment Scale (WES).
The results of this study will help determine specific strategies for nonprofit organizations to use in the identification of burnout in employees. These strategies may have an impact on recruitment and selection procedures, as well as managerial/personnel decisions that could reverse job burnout.

Several criteria prevented many nonprofit organizations from participating: a) agency size was fewer than 5 staff, b) difficulty in making a commitment to participate in a six month study, c) lack of use of MBO, and d) an unwillingness by some agency executives to obtain the approval of their board of directors.

A stratified random selection of 36 employees from each of the 3 organizations was produced from the persons willing to participate. These organizations met all of the above criteria, except for the use of MBO. Subjects were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups, but were not told in which group they were placed.

Data was compiled in two ways and analyzed in acceptable statistical methods. Comparison of difference were analyzed by a t test of the means between the experimental and control groups, as well as pre and posttest comparison to determine the effect of the treatment, the stress management training. Personality and organizational factors were correlated by using the Pearson r, and all data were organized in matched pairs including all pre and posttest data. Any data that could not be paired was eliminated.

The experimental design had 33 subjects, 19 in the experimental group and 14 in the control group (6 dropped out of the study, leaving 8 in the control group). Of the 27 subjects that completed the study, 7 came from one organization that was treated as experimental, and the other 20 subjects came
from the other two organizations and were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups.

Predictive indicators of job burnout in nonprofit organizations can be separated into two general categories: 1) individual personality factors, and 2) organizational environment factors. Though this study and other research studies have not been able to determine the cause-effect relationship of these factors and job burnout, the mere presence of the factors indicates that burnout is more likely to occur.

Certain personality factors have been associated with burnout dimensions and become a sign-post for determining the presence of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. What does a person look like who is in burnout? They are nervous, tense, high-strung, and apprehensive in their general appearance. They are depressive, pessimistic, discouraged, or dejected in their feeling, tone, attitude, or demeanor. They are subjective and not objective, emotional, self-absorbed, and illogical. They are hostile, critical, argumentative, or punitive in their conversation. And finally, they seem impulsive in their actions or decisions.

Work Pressure, the degree to which the press of work and time urgency dominate the job milieu, is strongly associated with both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Having a strong focus on getting the job done at the expense of showing concern for the individual may get the work out, but may also cause resentment and anger in the worker and lead to a general withdrawal of the individual's commitment to the job and the organization. Conversely, task orientation, the degree of emphasis on good planning, efficiency, and getting the job done, is associated with reduced depersonalization, as is
involvement, the extent to which employees are concerned about and committed to their jobs; and peer cohesion, the extent to which employees are friendly and supportive of one another.

Nonprofit organizations and managers must reconsider clearly the factors that are under their responsibility. Clarity, the extent to which employees know what to expect in their daily routine and how explicitly rules and policies are communicated; and supervisor support, the extent to which management is supportive of employees and encourages employees to be supportive of one another.

Future research on job burnout in nonprofit organizations should focus on two main areas of concern: 1) employee assistance programs (EAPs), and 2) cause-effect relationship of personality and organizational factors.
Acknowledgements

This study was made possible by a grant from the Institute for Nonprofit Organization Management, University of San Francisco. I wish to express my gratitude for this support.

The author conducted the study during the calendar year 1989 and wishes to acknowledge the support of the Sacramento Area United Way and the Sacramento Area United Way Agencies Executives Association in locating organizations to participate in this study.

My deepest appreciation to the three organizations and their employees that participated in the study: Stanford Settlement, Inc., Sacramento AIDS Foundation, Inc., and the Solano County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.

Finally, I owe much to my wife and children for their support and encouragement throughout the study.
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Introduction

One of the greatest concerns in personnel management of nonprofit organizations is the high turnover rate due to job burnout of high quality workers. This researcher's ten years of experience with nonprofit organizations, and the frequently received comments from agency executives, make it clear that burnout is an ever present problem.

The purpose of this project was to examine the many variables that determine the causal nature of burnout. The scope of this examination was to find predictive indicators of job burnout that will give personnel managers insight and understanding into the problem. The strategies and tools that were developed from this study, could be used to reduce the high turnover rate of high quality workers in nonprofit organizations.

A randomized control-group, pretest-posttest design and a correlational design were used to:

1) test the impact of a stress management training program that involves: relaxation exercises, self-hypnosis, physical exercise planning, nutrition education, stressful communication training, attitudinal training, and social support system planning; and

2) examine the relationship between job burnout and personality factors and organization-wide factors as are measured, respectively, by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (TJTA), the Ways of Coping Scale (WCS), and the Work Environment Scale (WES).

The study took place over a one year period, allowing for a posttest two months after the treatment, and to observe employee turnover,
absenteeism, and productivity over the one year period. Three nonprofit organizations were selected based on their willingness to participate in the study. Managers, supervisors, and workers from each organization volunteered to participate and were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups.

Findings and results of individual participants were kept strictly confidential by the researcher, and participating agencies gave assurance that resulting organizational profiles would not be used as grounds for disciplinary action toward any employee.

**Significance of This Study**

This study proposed a multi-factor approach by investigating the relationship between burnout and personality factors and organization-wide factors. No other study has been so encompassing in its efforts to address the burnout issue, and no other study has focussed its efforts on burnout in nonprofit social service organizations.

The results of this study will help determine specific strategies for nonprofit organizations to use in the identification of burnout in employees. These strategies may have an impact on recruitment and selection procedures, as well as managerial/personnel decisions that could reverse job burnout.

**Research Questions to be Answered**

The following research questions have guided this study:

1.) Do certain personality types tend toward burnout?
2.) Do certain work environments produce more employee burnout?
3.) Does an impatient and hurry-up behavior pattern produce more job burnout in nonprofit organizations?
4.) Does length of employment with a nonprofit organization increase the incidence or risk of employee burnout?

5.) Does training in stress management reduce job burnout in nonprofit organizations?

6.) Do certain work environment factors effect employee burnout?

7.) Do certain aspects of burnout predict a greater likelihood for employee absenteeism, turnover, or decrease in productivity?

Review of Literature

The term burnout was given by Freudenberger (1974), who observed the stress reactions of treatment staff in free clinics and half-way houses. The severest stress reactions were called burnout. The need for a clear definition of burnout has been noted in the literature (Burke, 1987; Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler 1986; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; and Pines & Maslach, 1978). The focus of the specific definition of burnout has evolved around the premise that interpersonal stress in human service professions is the cause (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Maslach (1982) defined the burnout syndrome using emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement as the criteria. High emotional exhaustion and depersonalization with low personal achievement defines high burnout.

Recent research on job burnout has shifted emphasis toward the situation, the work environment and away from the individual. This research has shown that work environment factors are more strongly related to burnout
than are personality factors (Burke, Shearer, & Deszca, 1984; and Maslach & Jackson, 1984).

Much literature on burnout has been published, Kilpatrick (1986) reviewed 661 citations published between 1973 and 1983. Of these, 479 were classified as research (87), descriptive (347), or combined research works (45). Dissertations comprised over 40% of the research studies, and 39.8% of the descriptive publications suggested ways to prevent or treat burnout. The major covariants of burnout identified in the studies included individual, occupational and organizational variables. Somatic conditions, absenteeism and theft were reported to increase with higher burnout; while trust, productivity, and quality of work decreased with an increase in burnout.

Tucker (1986) determined that about half the variance in stress could be accounted for by anxiety, depression, and alienation. Anxiety was the cognitive component of stress, depression was caused by emotional strain between the person and the environment; and alienation was caused by poor behavioral or coping mechanisms.

Individual coping mechanisms have been found to have from a moderating effect to very effective on stress without changing the stress producing environment (Rosenthal, Teague, Retish, West, & Vessel, 1983; and Zappert & Weinstein, 1985).

Horst (1986) surveyed 206 human service employees and found a positive relationship between job stress and both frequency (.59) and intensity (.50) of burnout. Adaptation, role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, job stress, and burnout were the variables tested. The job stress - burnout model was found to fit the data, whereby role ambiguity or conflict increased job stress, and job stress or role overload increased burnout.
Harden (1986) studied 122 subjects defined into four groups, males and females by Type A and Type B behavior patterns; and found no significant differences in terms of age, marital status, number of children, or income. Bienn (1986) studied 136 recently-graduated nurses in ten hospitals; and found that 1) Type A behavior was a determinant of job stresses and felt-strain, 2) coping behavior affected nurses' feelings of strain, 3) strain influenced nurses' organizational commitment, and 4) commitment played a role in determining turnover intention.

Wood (1985) researched whether personality traits of Type A behavior and locus of control relate to perception of work stressors and experienced stress. A non-experimental ex post facto approach was taken to analyze the data of 325 surveyed certified rehabilitation counselors in Maryland. Results showed that the perceived role stressors (role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload) did not account for a significant amount of the variance on any stress symptom. Personality variables of Type A behavior and locus of control were found to relate to both the perceived work stressors and experienced stress symptoms.

In developing a model that shows how excessive negative stress leads to burnout, Cherniss (1980) hypothesized that organizational variables combined to create a social isolation of the worker which resulted in burnout. If this is true, then the effectiveness of stress management training for the individual may not be sufficient to overcome organizational factors.

Johns (1986) studied correctional officers in a maximum security facility, and measured the effects of a comprehensive stress management package combining stress education, the external module, and the internal module. There was no significant differences observed in the ANOVA statistical analyses between the control and experimental groups.
Could nonwork stress also effect work stress and lead to burnout? Johnson (1985) sampled 105 female clerical workers on five variables: work stress, nonwork stress, work satisfaction, nonwork satisfaction, and psychological distress. Results showed that work and nonwork domains are interdependent, but nonwork variables contributed more to perceived psychological distress than work factors. Organization-wide factors contributed significantly more to work stress than job-specific factors. With respect to work satisfaction, supervisor and co-worker satisfaction were the most significant, while the work itself, pay, and promotion were found less significant.

Besselman (1987) studied 45 administrative level professionals in a quasi-experimental, static-group comparison study designed to assess the effectiveness of stress management techniques against the negative effects of burnout. The treatment intervention used a cognitive and a relaxation component. The degree of burnout was measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Findings showed both groups experiencing low to moderate burnout, and no significant differences were found between the treatment group and the experimental group. One significant finding was that as feelings of personal accomplishment increase, as the number of hours worked per week also increase.

Perhaps giving the worker more involvement in job decisions or improving peer and supervisor communication would reduce job stress? Penn (1987) studied the relationship of job involvement and sex-role identity to women's job stress and job satisfaction. A random sample of 363 women representing managerial, professional, and hourly employees were surveyed. The findings indicated that job involvement was related to sex-role identity;
and there was a significant relationship between sex-role identity and job stress, and a relationship between sex-role identity and job satisfaction. Organizational rank was significantly correlated with all of the psychological variables except job stress.

Additionally, Scheller (1984) investigated the relationship between communication effectiveness and job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Findings were that 1) employees' organizational commitment was not affected by communication message-types and source, 2) supervisors were most effective in directive and integrative communication message-types, 3) peer communication was most positive with participative and relational communication message-types, 4) and personal characteristics such as sex, age, work schedule, educational achievement, positions, and years of service significantly influenced communication and organizational commitment.

Summary

Emotional exhaustion appears to be the first stage of burnout (Cherniss, 1980; and Maslach, 1982). When the individual needs support or guidance to cope with the stressors that have contributed to the emotional exhaustion, then the combination of personality and organizational factors will determine if the burnout will increase.

It becomes clearer that burnout is caused by a combination of personality and behavior factors, organization-wide factors, and job-specific factors. Burnout increases absenteeism, somatic conditions, and turnover, while decreasing productivity and work quality. Role ambiguity or conflict increases job stress, and the frequency of job stress correlates positively with burnout. The Type A behavior pattern (impatient and hurry-up) and
organization-wide factors put a person at a higher risk of burnout, and stress management training seems to have no significant impact on the problem.

Methodology

Two designs were used in this study: a) randomized control-group, pretest-posttest design to test the impact of a stress management training program and b) a correlational design to examine the relationship between burnout and personality factors, and organization-wide factors. The stress management training program included: relaxation exercises, self-hypnosis, physical exercise planning, nutrition education, stressful communication training, attitudinal training, and social support system planning. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (TJTA), the Ways of Coping Scale (WCS), the Work Environment Scale (WES), and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) were the test instruments used to measure the various factors and variables.

The study took place over a four month period. Pretesting took place one month prior to the training and posttesting one and two months afterwards. Three nonprofit organizations were selected and 36 employees volunteered as subjects, who were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups.

The original goal was to select ten nonprofit organizations from the Sacramento area, however, even with the assistance of the Sacramento Area United Way and the Sacramento United Way Agencies Executives Association,
only two agencies volunteered to participate. Agencies selection was based on the following criteria:

1) commitment to participate in the complete study,
2) employment of a minimum of 15 full-time employees,
3) willingness to have individual records of participating employees to remain confidential only to the researcher,
4) willingness to review organizational findings and recommendations with the researcher,
5) organization's use of management by objectives (MBO) to evaluate employee performance, and
6) organizational board of directors' approval to participate in the study.

Several criteria prevented many nonprofit organizations from participating: a) agency size was fewer than 5 staff, b) difficulty in making a commitment to participate in a six month study, c) lack of use of MBO, and d) an unwillingness by some agency executives to obtain the approval of their board of directors.

The reaction and difficulty by over 25 organizations caused this researcher to wonder if the focus of the study should not be on goal setting and decision-making in nonprofit organizations, however, this was not the case. A third organization, a previous client of the researcher, was obtained from Solano county, about 45 miles west of Sacramento.

A stratified random selection of 36 employees from each of the 3 organizations was produced from the persons willing to participate. These organizations met all of the above criteria, except for the use of MBO. Subjects were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups, but were not told in which group they were placed.
Both groups were pretested with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (TJTA), the Work Environment Scale (WES), and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI).

The experimental group received a six hour stress management training within 2 weeks of the pretest. The experimental group was given the stress management training that includes relaxation exercises, self-hypnosis, physical exercise planning, nutrition education, stressful communication training, attitudinal training, and social support system planning. The control group was presented with the training after the posttesting was completed as part of the agreement of benefits that the organizations would receive.

Both groups were posttested within two weeks after the training, and again posttested 2 months later. Pre and posttesting was conducted in groups of 8 to 12 participants.

All participants in the experimental and control groups received follow-up consultation about the results of the testing in small discussion groups held at each agency. Only 5 persons requested to speak with the researcher individually regarding the results of their tests. These persons wanted greater clarity and direction in dealing with their stress. The researcher did not make any other observations about these individuals. This effort was an ethical and moral responsibility of the researcher to provide additional consultation to participants if they felt confused by the study. No problems or complaints were received from subjects or agencies by the researcher as a result of the implementation of this study.
Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by accepted statistical methods and tests of significance including t-test and Pearson correlation. For purposes of this discussion the results are presented in three sections: 1) description of the instruments, 2) how the data was analyzed, 3) significant burnout characteristics, 4) factors leading to emotional exhaustion, 5) factors leading to depersonalization, and 6) factors leading to personal achievement.

Description of the Instruments

A discussion of the personality characteristics and the work environment factors is given as an introduction to understanding the results of this study. The personality characteristics were measured by demographical data of the subjects as well as the following three test instruments: the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysts (TJTA), and the Ways of Coping Scale (WCS). The work environment factors were measured by the Work Environment Scale (WES). Burnout was measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) measures three subscales or aspects of burnout: 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) depersonalization, and 3) personal accomplishment. The degree of burnout increases as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization increase and personal accomplishment decreases. High personal accomplishment and low emotional exhaustion and depersonalization would reflect a low degree of burnout. Emotional exhaustion refers to the lack of emotional resources that the worker is able to give to him or herself. Depersonalization is the negative and cynical attitudes and feelings about one's
clients. Personal accomplishment refers to the tendency to evaluate one's performance positively.

The range of experienced burnout for social services is given below:\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Burnout</th>
<th>Range of Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>≤13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depersonalization</td>
<td>≤5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Accomplishment</td>
<td>≥37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Burnout:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Third</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability coefficients, means, and standard deviations for the subscales for \(n = 1,538\) social service workers were:\(^2\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Services</th>
<th>Emotional Exhaustion</th>
<th>Depersonalization</th>
<th>Personal Accomplishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean ((X))</td>
<td>21.35</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>32.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>10.51</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>7.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) evaluates the type preferences that individuals use to interact with their environment. There are four subscales: 1) extrovert - introvert, 2) intuitive - sensing, 3) thinking - feeling, and 4) judging - perceiving.

The Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (TJTA) measures 9 traits, and a high score indicates the presence of the trait, while a low score indicates the presence of the opposite trait (in parentheses below).\(^3\)

A. Nervous (vs. Composed): tense, high-strung, and apprehensive

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2 ibid.
B. Depressive (vs. Lighthearted): pessimistic, discouraged, or dejected in feeling-tone or manner
C. Active-Social (vs. Quiet): energetic, enthusiastic, and socially involved
D. Expressive-Responsive (vs. Inhibited): spontaneous, affectionate, and demonstrative
E. Sympathetic (vs. Indifferent): kind, understanding, and compassionate
F. Subjective (vs. Objective): emotional, self-absorbed, and illogical
G. Dominant (vs. Submissive): confident, assertive, and competitive
H. Hostile (vs. Tolerant): critical, argumentative, and punitive
I. Self-disciplined (vs. Impulsive): controlled, methodical, and persevering

The Ways of Coping Scale (WCS) measures the use of 8 coping scales, and a high score means the use of that scale, which are listed below:\(^4\)

1. Confrontive Coping: aggressive efforts to alter the situation and suggests some degree of hostility and risk-taking.
2. Distancing: cognitive efforts to detach oneself and to minimize the significance of the situation.
3. Self-controlling: effort to regulate one's feelings and actions.
4. Seeking Social Support: effort to seek informational support, tangible support, and emotional support.
5. Accepting Responsibility: acknowledging one's own role in the problem with a concomitant theme of trying to put things right.
6. Escape-avoidance: wishful thinking and behavioral efforts to escape or avoid the problem, not distancing or detachment.
7. Planful Problem Solving: deliberate problem-focused efforts to alter the situation, coupled with an analytic approach to solving the problem.
8. Positive Reappraisal: effort to create positive meaning by focusing on personal growth, also has a religious dimension.

Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986). The relationship between Type A and Type B behavior patterns and coping shows that Type B individuals vary their use of problem-focused coping according to whether the episode was perceived as changeable, and Type A individuals used more problem-focused coping than did Type B individuals (Kirmeyer & Diamond, 1985). Type A's were significantly lower on acceptance and significantly higher on problem-focused coping (Vingerhoets & Flohr, 1984).

The Work Environment Scale (WES) measures 3 dimensions and 10 subscales, which are listed below:

**Relationship Dimension**
1. **Involvement**: the extent to which employees are concerned about and committed to their job.
2. **Peer Cohesion**: the extent to which employees are friendly and supportive of one another.
3. **Supervisor Support**: the extent to which management is supportive of employees and encourages employees to be supportive of one another.

**Personal Growth Dimension**
4. **Autonomy**: the extent to which employees are encouraged to be self-sufficient and to make their own decisions.
5. **Task Orientation**: the degree of emphasis on good planning, efficiency, and getting the job done.
6. **Work Pressure**: the degree to which the press of work and time urgency dominate the job milieu.

**System Maintenance and System Change Dimension**
7. **Clarity**: the extent to which employees know what to expect in their daily routine and how explicitly rules and policies are communicated.
8. **Control**: the extent to which management uses rules and pressures to keep employees under control.
9. **Innovation**: The degree of emphasis on variety, change, and new approaches.
10. **Physical Comfort**: the extent to which the physical surroundings contribute to a pleasant work environment.

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Managers or supervisors tend to perceive work settings somewhat more positively than employees do on each of the subscales, with the exception of Work Pressure and Physical Comfort. Differences are relatively small, less than one-half of all standard deviation in magnitude. Men and women tend to perceive differences in the subscales of individual settings, but these differences are inconsistent across settings.6

How the Data was Analyzed

Data was compiled in two ways and analyzed in acceptable statistical methods. Comparison of difference were analyzed by a t test of the means between the experimental and control groups, as well as pre and posttest comparison to determine the effect of the treatment, the stress management training. Personality and organizational factors were correlated by using the Pearson r, and all data were organized in matched pairs including all pre and posttest data. Any data that could not be paired was eliminated. Some subjects did not take all tests due to other demands on their time, or they dropped from the study.

The experimental design had 33 subjects, 19 in the experimental group and 14 in the control group (6 dropped out of the study, leaving 8 in the control group). Of the 27 subjects that completed the study, 7 came from one organization that was treated as experimental, and the other 20 subjects came from the other two organizations and were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups.

6 Ibid.
Significant Burnout Characteristics

Significant burnout characteristics were defined by the MBI: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement. Many personality and organizational factors did not significantly correlate with burnout characteristics, but many did and they are explained below.

Factors Leading to Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion correlated positively with nervous (+.48), depressive (+.43), subjective (+.44), hostile (+.43), work pressure (+.64), and confrontive coping (+.36) at N=77, p<.01. Emotional exhaustion correlated inversely with involvement (-.32), supervisor support (-.37), clarity (-.58), and physical comfort (-.41) at N=77, p<.01.

Other factors that significantly correlated with emotional exhaustion were number of hours worked (+.45), and inversely with age (-.41). Married workers scored significantly higher emotional exhaustion than not married workers, t=2.14, t.05, df=60, is 2.00, significant, p<.05.

The effect of the stress management training increased the emotional exhaustion of the experimental group, t=-1.86, t.05, df=11, is 1.796 for one-tailed, significant, p<.05. The control group had no significant change in emotional exhaustion during this same period, t=1.34, t.05, df=8, is 1.86 for one-tailed, not significant, p>.05. Perhaps the training increased subject awareness of their stress, and gave them permission to express it. The stress management training had no other significant effect on emotional exhaustion.
Factors Leading to Depersonalization

Depersonalization correlated positively with emotional exhaustion (+.75), nervous (+.49), depressive (+.52), subjective (+.51), hostile (+.42), work pressure (+.54), and escape-avoidance (+.33) at N=77, p<.01. Depersonalization correlated inversely with self-discipline (-.31), involvement (-.36), peer cohesion (-.34), supervisor support (-.45), clarity (-.61), and age (-.35), at N=77, p<.01.

Introverts scored significantly higher on depersonalization than extroverts, t=-2.05, t.05, df=50, is 2.009, significant, p<.05.

The stress management training had no significant effect on depersonalization.

Factors Leading to Personal Achievement

Personal achievement did correlate positively with only one factor, number of hours worked (+.30), at N=77, p<.05; and did inversely correlate with seeking social support (-.35) and age (-.39), at N=77, p<.01.

Extroverts scored significantly higher on personal achievement than introverts, t=2.12, t.05, df=50, is 2.009, significant, p<.05.

The stress management training had no significant effect on personal achievement.

Summary of Findings

The findings are summarized in Table 1 and Table 2. Many personality factors are related to emotional exhaustion. From the TJTA nervousness, depressiveness, subjectiveness, and hostility show moderate correlations indicating a substantial relationship. With respect to depersonalization these personality factors showed slightly stronger correlations, which further
supports the relationship between emotional exhaustion and depersonalization which had a correlation of $r = .75$ in this study. These personality factors had no relationship to personal achievement.

**Table 1: Significant Correlations of Factors and Burnout**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Emotional Exhaustion</th>
<th>Depersonalization</th>
<th>Personal Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-disciplined</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>-.32</td>
<td>-.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Cohesion</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor Support</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>-.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Pressure</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>-.58</td>
<td>-.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Comfort</td>
<td>-.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontive Coping</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking Social Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape-Avoidance</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>-.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.41</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>-.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Hours Worked</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td></td>
<td>.30*</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*df=70
Significant, $p<.01$
*Significant, $p<.05$

Several work environment factors have a significant relationship with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and all were inversely correlated except work pressure, which had the strongest direct relationship with emotional exhaustion. Clarity had the strongest inverse relationship with emotional exhaustion and with depersonalization. Involvement, concern and
commitment to one's job was of a moderate negative correlation with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and the was true for supervisor support. The lack of physical comfort and pleasantness in the work environment correlated with emotional exhaustion but not depersonalization. Peer cohesion and task orientation, however, did not correlate with emotional exhaustion, but did inversely relate with depersonalization.

The only factor that correlated positively with personal achievement was number of hours worked, and that was low. Age was negatively related to all three burnout dimensions, and may have something to do with "the eagerness of youth and the patience of age."

Only three coping strategies significantly related to any of the burnout dimensions, though the relationships were definite but small. Both confrontive coping, which is aggressive, and escape-avoidance, which is passive, correlated with emotional exhaustion. Perhaps being aggressive or passive doesn't allow the individual to reduce the stress or the conflict. Seeking social support is negatively related to personal achievement. Only escape-avoidance correlated with depersonalization, which one might expect.

### Table 2: Burnout and Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extroverts (N=27)</th>
<th>Introverts (N=25)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (X)</td>
<td>Std Dev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depersonalization*</td>
<td>6.63</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Achievement**</td>
<td>38.89</td>
<td>5.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * t=-2.05, t.05, df=50, is 2.009, significant, p<.05.

** t=2.12, t.05, df=50, is 2.009, significant, p<.05.
Personality type preference as measured by the MBTI showed significant results only on the extroversion-introversion scale (Table 2). Introverts had significantly higher depersonalization scores than extroverts, but extroverts scored significantly higher on personal achievement. This is not consistent with the findings of Garden (1987), in which feeling types scored higher depersonalization.

**Overall Conclusions**

Predictive indicators of job burnout in nonprofit organizations can be separated into two general categories: 1) individual personality factors, and 2) organizational environment factors. Though this study and other research studies have not been able to determine the cause-effect relationship of these factors and job burnout, the mere presence of the factors indicates that burnout is more likely to occur. Individuals and managers must increase their awareness of the presence of these factors in order to prevent job burnout and the resulting organizational behaviors that have been associated with it, such as, decreased job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and decrease productivity.

The research questions for this study are answered below:

1.) Do certain personality types tend toward burnout? Yes, nervous, depressive, subjective, and hostile personality types have increased emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Introverts scored higher on depersonalization than extroverts.
2.) Do certain work environments produce more employee burnout? Yes, lack of clarity, lack of supervisor support, and increased work pressure correlate with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

3.) Does an impatient and hurry-up behavior pattern produce more job burnout in nonprofit organizations? Yes, to the extent that nervous and hostile are impatient and hurry-up behavior.

4.) Does length of employment with a nonprofit organization increase the incidence or risk of employee burnout? No significant results were obtained for the length of employment, but emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement decreased with age.

5.) Does training in stress management reduce job burnout in nonprofit organizations? Not as tested in this study, on the contrary it increased emotional exhaustion scores, which seems to suggest that subjects became more aware of their emotional reaction to work from the training.

6.) Do certain work environment factors effect employee burnout? No cause-effect conclusions can be drawn from this study.

7.) Do certain aspects of burnout predict a greater likelihood for employee absenteeism, turnover, or decrease in productivity? Yes, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization seem to predict absenteeism, turnover, or decrease in productivity; however, this study did not collect adequate data to draw any conclusions. Other research studies support this relationship, though.

Personality Factors

Certain personality factors have been associated with burnout dimensions and become a sign-post for determining the presence of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. What does a person look like who is in burnout? They are nervous, tense, high-strung, and apprehensive in their
general appearance. They are depressive, pessimistic, discouraged, or dejected in their feeling, tone, attitude, or demeanor. They are subjective and not objective, emotional, self-absorbed, and illogical. They are hostile, critical, argumentative, or punitive in their conversation. And finally, they seem impulsive in their actions or decisions. This is not a very happy picture, indeed, and it seems similar to the picture of clinical depression: irritability, depressed, crying, loss of appetite, change in sleep patterns, thoughts of suicide, loss of weight. Perhaps they are similar.

Further, it seems that certain coping strategies are associated with increased emotional exhaustion. Both confrontive coping and escape-avoidance are strategies that require the individual to focus on the problem. Such focus probably causes the expenditure of emotional energy. If the problem is out of the control of the individual to effect any change, then another coping strategy may require less emotional energy. Other strategies that had no negative impact on the burnout dimensions were distancing, self-controlling, accepting responsibility, planful problem solving, or positive reappraisal (see page 18).

Seeking Social Support, an effort to seek informational, tangible, and emotional support, may be useful; but is correlated negatively with personal achievement. It makes sense that the worker who is looking for emotional support will spend less time doing their work. Organizations that make it easy for workers to obtain informational, tangible, and emotional support may reduce the negative aspects with personal achievement.

Whether burnout and depression are similar is not the critical question. Burnout does not just exist in the individual, rather it is a response to a situation that the individual has been experiencing. Studies that examine employee revitalization state that the person was previously very productive
and had behaved differently (Brewer & Dubnicki, 1983; Lazaro, Shinn, & Robinson, 1984). Depression may be present in the individual during job burnout, but it may be this negative change in behavior and performance that distinguishes job burnout from symptoms of clinical depression.

The goal for the individual is to become calm, relaxed, trusting, optimistic, objective, self-disciplined, controlled, methodical, persevering, and learn to let go of things that are out of his or her control. Physical exercise and relaxation-meditation have been shown to help persons become more calm and positive in their attitude. Cognitive psychotherapy has also been demonstrated to improve one's attitude and self-image.

**Organizational Factors**

Work Pressure, the degree to which the press of work and time urgency dominate the job milieu, is strongly associated with both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Having a strong focus on getting the job done at the expense of showing concern for the individual may get the work out, but may also cause resentment and anger in the worker and lead to a general withdrawal of the individual's commitment to the job and the organization. Conversely, task orientation, the degree of emphasis on good planning, efficiency, and getting the job done, is associated with reduced depersonalization, as is involvement, the extent to which employees are concerned about and committed to their jobs; and peer cohesion, the extent to which employees are friendly and supportive of one another.

So, how does the manager or the organization create a work environment that seems to resist job burnout? Two factors are moderately to strongly associated with reduced emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and they
are clarity, the extent to which employees know what to expect in their daily routine and how explicitly rules and policies are communicated; and supervisor support, the extent to which management is supportive of employees and encourages employees to be supportive of one another.

It is clear the managers and supervisors must be talented leaders as well as human relations specialists. The very essence of the manager's job, planning, coordinating, and leading, does have a direct impact on worker burnout.

Physical comfort, the extent to which the physical surroundings contribute to a pleasant work environment, is also an important factor and may be the most difficult for nonprofit organizations to remedy. Nonprofits may have financial constraints that prohibit major or even minor physical plant improvements, however, involving workers in the problem-solving process may actually do more to reducing emotional exhaustion than making the physical improvements would accomplish.

**Cause-Effect Speculation**

Though this study has demonstrated association of many factors with job burnout, it has not clarified the cause of burnout. We know that certain personality and organizational factors vary either with or opposite of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization; but which comes first? Does personality factors in an individual cause the organization to respond a certain way to this person?

A person, who is depressive, pessimistic, discouraged, or dejected in their feeling, tone, attitude, or demeanor; subjective and not objective, emotional, self-absorbed, and illogical; and/or hostile, critical, argumentative, or punitive in their conversation, will not be treated by their supervisor the
same way that a person who is calm, relaxed, trusting, optimistic, objective, self-disciplined, controlled, methodical, persevering, and has learned to let go of things that are out of his or her control. Supervisors and managers are human, too. Or is it the other way around?

Does the calm, relaxed, trusting, optimistic, objective, self-disciplined, controlled individual begin to change due to the lack of clarity in the organization, lack of supervisory support, increased pressure to get the work done, and disregard for the physical comfort of the work environment? These questions are still unanswered, but research continues to come closer to the cause-effect relationship between burnout, personality, and organizational factors.

What should be done?

Be it the chicken or the egg, burnout or depression, counseling is a first step to recovery when you have a worker burning-out. Many organizations have Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) available to them. These programs allow for employee self-referral as well as supervisor referral. A trained psychotherapist can help the person assess and diagnose the problem in 2 to 3 sessions, and facilitate a plan that will help ameliorate the problem. It is best if the person refers him or herself, for this seems to require some level of acceptance of the existence of the problem. Supervisor referrals can be made, if the worker needs a push. Ignoring the situation only enables the problem to continue.

The supervisor referral, as well as the supervisor-worker interchange, seems to cause the supervisor to acknowledge and accept the existence of the problem. Whose problem is it, the supervisor's or the worker's? The problem
belongs to both, and the organization must recognize its part in the development of burnout. Nonprofit organizations and managers must reconsider clearly the factors that are under their responsibility. Clarity, the extent to which employees know what to expect in their daily routine and how explicitly rules and policies are communicated; and supervisor support, the extent to which management is supportive of employees and encourages employees to be supportive of one another. These two areas will be a good place to focus the attention of management and the board of directors.

Another area of concern would be the person-job fit. Clarity and involvement seem to go together to the extent that the person can understand the job and be committed to it. If the person-job fit is such that the person feels either overwhelmed or not challenged by the job, then stress could be created which might lead to emotional exhaustion. Selecting the right person for the job is a difficult task, and nonprofit organizations should utilize selection practices that will allow for a challenging fit for the person in the job.

Finally, a word of advice for the board of directors regarding what they can do to help prevent job burnout. During this study it became apparent that many executive directors are given carte blanche authority over the staff, and some of these executives screen or filter information about the staff from the board of directors, who are ultimately responsible for the staff. Three areas of focus should guide the board of directors: 1) turnover, 2) EAPs, and 3) direct communication with staff. Turnover in staff may not be an indicator of job stress or burnout, because nonprofit organizations frequently hire for entry level positions which require a minimum amount of experience, and persons frequently use their experience at the nonprofit to help them promote.
However, turnover may be a starting place to question either management practices, person-job fit, or the nature of the job itself.

Second, the utilization of employee assistance programs by government and private sector for-profit organizations has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing employee problems, so that the worker can maintain or even return to satisfactory performance. None of the nonprofits in this study had employee assistance programs for their staff, and this researcher would anticipate few nonprofits do.

Direct communication with staff by board members should be conducted in a formal arena, such as committee work or surveys. Impressions should be shared with the full board and the executive director. The board does not want to undermine the efforts of the executive director, but should be in a position to monitor the executive's effectiveness with staff. In large organizations job stress may be a result of midlevel or frontline supervisor behavior, which has not been brought to the attention of the executive director. The board of directors could bring such behavior to the attention of the executive to avoid exacerbating negative politics for staff. Though this is a tough position for the board of directors, lack of action could have more severe consequences on staff morale, absenteeism, and productivity.

In conclusion the management of job burnout by nonprofit organizations is complex but not much different than what is required by profit or governmental organizations. A multifaceted approach is needed involving job clarity, supervisory support, coworker support, teambuilding, and employee assistance counseling to allow the employee an outlet to resolve some of their own internal conflicts. Nonprofit managers, including board members should be sensitive to the various aspects that contribute to job burnout and establish
management practices that will prevent as well as reduce job burnout. Stress management training programs, though well presented, may help the individual better understand how they become stressed, but cannot replace effective management practices in the organization.

Future Research on Nonprofit Organizations

Future research on job burnout in nonprofit organizations should focus on two main areas of concern: 1) employee assistance programs (EAPs), and 2) cause-effect relationship of personality and organizational factors. The frequency and utilization of EAPs by nonprofits could be surveyed through a large population of nonprofits. The cause-effect relationship of personality and organizational factors would require an experimental design, and possible dependent variables could be nervousness or depressiveness of the individual, and independent variables could be clarity, supervisor support, or work pressure.
References


