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Burnout and Job Dissatisfaction Among Practicing Illinois School Psychologists

Kathryn M. Niebrugge

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Burnout and Job Dissatisfaction Among Practicing
Illinois School Psychologists

By

Kathryn M. Niebrugge

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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Abstract

Survey materials including a Maslach Burnout Inventory, a School Psychologists Stress Inventory, and specially designed demographic and job satisfaction questionnaires were completed by a random sample of members of the Illinois School Psychologists Association (N=139). Results suggested that symptoms of burnout frequently occur among this group of professionals. Although job related stressors (e.g. lack of resources, time management) were related to burnout, demographic factors (e.g. satisfaction with supervision, case discrepancy index) were found to be the best predictors of burnout. Results suggest that supervising psychologists are considered to be primary figures in resistance to burnout. Further research could aid in promoting more attention to preventing burnout in the field of school psychology.

Chapter I

Introduction

Burnout and Job Dissatisfaction

Job burnout is a condition observed in recent years among a wide variety of helping professions. Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined burnout according to three major components. The first component is described as emotional exhaustion. Frequently, professionals report feelings of being tired and overwhelmed with work demands. As emotional resources are expended, professionals feel they are no longer able to give of themselves at a psychological level.

The second component involves depersonalization. Burned-out professionals develop impersonal attitudes and become indifferent in responding to their clients. This perfunctory perception of others can lead professionals to view their clients as deserving of their afflictions.

The final component in burnout is a reduced sense of personal accomplishment that is frequently displayed in feelings of incompetence toward helping clients. In addition, professionals may feel displeased with themselves and dissatisfied with personal job-related accomplishments. In light of this definition, it must be noted that burnout and job dissatisfaction are not synonymous, but rather, overlap (Huberty and Huebner, 1988).

Job satisfaction has been associated with self-esteem, personal adjustment, general life adjustment, physical and mental health problems, and a variety of work-related variables including professional attitudes, absenteeism, and turnover (Levinson, Fetchkan, & Hohenshil, 1988). Burnout is a chronic and critical condition which develops slowly and gradually. Pines and Aronson (1983) refer to burnout simply as physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. Freudenberger (1977) describes burnout as failing, wearing out, or becoming exhausted from excessive demands on energy, strength, and resources. Burnout is characterized as including symptoms such as cynicism and negativism as well as the tendency to be inflexible and adamant in thinking. Thus, burnout often leads to a closed mind about change or innovation.

Two key dimensions of burnout identified in the literature are: the time-related concept of wearing down, and the feeling of detachment (Reiner and Hartshorne, 1982). Frequently, the early warnings of burnout are overlooked and notice is taken only when the professional is no longer able to manage stress. Burnout is a multiple threat (Freudenberger, 1977). It undermines the professional and cheats the child. Burnout propagates negative feelings and resignation within both the professional and the child and curtails coping defenses.

Kahill (1988) groups the symptoms of burnout into five major categories. The first reported category is physical. Research done by

Belcastro and Hays (1984) indicates that burnout is associated with general physical health and illness, as well as some somatic complaints such as sleep disturbance. However, its relationship to major illness has not been consistently demonstrated.

The second category of symptoms is emotional. The most commonly reported emotional complaints include emotional depletion, irritability, anxiety, guilt, depression, and feelings of helplessness. Overall, the evidence suggests that burnout is most closely associated with depression (Kahill, 1988).

The third category described is behavioral. Research suggests that a number of unproductive behaviors are related to burnout. Such behaviors include turnover, poor job performance, absenteeism, and substance use (Kahill, 1988).

The fourth category of symptoms is interpersonal and usually affects clients, friends, and family members. Data suggest that burned-out subjects communicate with clients in impersonal and stereotyped ways. Victims of burnout may find it too demanding to concentrate on clients. Therefore, attempts to withdraw are frequently made. Data further suggest that burned-out subjects demonstrate negative emotions and often recede from their spouse and/or other family members (Kahill, 1988).

The final category of symptoms is attitudinal. Negative attitudes may develop toward clients, work, family, oneself, and life overall. Data indicate that victims of burnout often exhibit cynicism,

callousness, pessimism, defensiveness, client intolerance, dehumanization of clients through the use of jargon and intellectualization, a loss of work pleasure, and finally, absenteeism (Kahill, 1988).

In a broad sense, burnout can be perceived as the exhaustion of one's available energy, strength, and resources through an excessive struggle to reach some unrealistic expectation, whether that expectation is imposed by oneself or by existing societal values. In a specific sense, the definition of burnout must be related to the particular job situation, taking into consideration the nature of each of the stressors involved (Reiner & Hartshorne, 1982).

For school psychologists who provide services to an eclectic array of clients, burnout could be a significant problem. According to Levinson, Fetchkan, and Hohenshil (1988), school psychologists are relied upon to make important and critical decisions about children which may affect those children for the rest of their lives. Although school psychologists usually function as a member of an interdisciplinary decision making team, Gilliam and Coleman (1981) have shown that school psychologists, by virtue of their "expert power" and diagnostic expertise, are frequently regarded as the most influential members of this team.

Wise (1985) reported that school psychologists often experience a variety of on-the-job stressors. Such stressors are reported to include an over-abundance of work, insufficient pleasure

at work, inadequate structure and poor management, poor relationships with supervisory personnel, meager recognition of efforts, and the feeling of lacking control of one's situation. Additionally, school psychologists must attempt to balance seemingly irreconcilable job demands placed upon them by administrators, teachers, parents, and children. In a similar report, Reiner and Hartshorne (1982) contend that the lack of time and excessive caseloads, as well as the lack of support and appreciation are the predominant sources of distress among school psychologists.

Clair, Kerfoot, and Klausmeier (1972) further identified several areas of dissatisfaction among school psychologists. The primary area identified is an unavailability of adequate testing and interviewing facilities. In addition, lack of funding to attend conventions, lack of inservice training, lack of opportunity for advancement and promotion, and isolation from fellow practitioners are reported to be other major areas of dissatisfaction among school psychologists.

Freudenberger (1977) reported an important contributor to burnout is the absence of the opportunity to experience completion and follow-through. Often, because the child or the psychologist moves on, the school psychologist cannot determine if the work he/she has done with the child has really been effective. Furthermore, the lack of opportunities to experience ongoing follow-ups cause psychologists to view their work as ineffective.

Connolly and Reschly (1990) reported a relatively high turnover rate, as well as a current national shortage among school psychologists. Many school psychologists function in boundary role positions as they must work within specific area or regional guidelines. Such school psychologists maintain the function of working with and coordinating various intra- and extra-school subsystems without explicitly belonging to any subsystem. Accordingly, the probability of burnout among school psychologists is plausible.

Huberty and Huebner (1988) identified several major correlates of burnout among school psychologists. These correlates included clarity of role definitions, time pressures that resulted from excessive demands, external pressures beyond personal control, and internal pressures regarding how school psychologists perceived themselves. However, in spite of these correlates, clarity in job and role definitions appeared to be predominant in burnout victims. In a study by Peirson-Hubeny and Archambault (1987), role ambiguity and role conflict were identified and linked to perceived intensity of burnout. Huebner (1992) reported a significant relationship between burnout and obdurate supervisors, lack of contact with colleagues, and the feeling of being caught between a child's various needs and the administrative constraints. Additionally, Huberty and Huebner (1988) found age to be related to burnout. Their research suggested that as school psychologists become older, they may develop an

increased diversity of behavioral and attitudinal patterns that reduce the probability of the occurrence of burnout. As school psychologists become older and more experienced, they tend to be more aware of the types of stressors they are likely to undergo. As they experience such stressors, experienced psychologists are likely to be more aware of and to use personally effective coping strategies.

Huebner (1992) determined that burnout in the forms of feelings of emotional exhaustion and lack of perceived efficacy may be an unrecognized concern among school psychologists. In addition, a significant relationship was found between job-related stressors and burnout. The lack of resources such as inflexible supervisors, unavailability of testing materials, inadequate secretarial help, and lack of colleague contact were the most notable contributors to emotional exhaustion and burnout. Other contributors described were referral backlogs, report writing, suicide and child abuse cases, threats of due process, lack of consensus in staffings, and unyielding teachers and/or parents.

Huebner (1992) concluded that personal caseloads of school psychologists were not directly related to burnout. However, psychologists perceptions of their caseloads did significantly relate to burnout. This finding was consistent with that of Raquepaw and Miller (1989). They ascertained that although the caseload itself did not impel burnout, the satisfaction with personal caseloads did have a significant influence. Psychologists' perceptions of having too

many clients were notably associated with feelings of burnout. If the psychologist perceived himself as overburdened, symptoms of burnout were probable.

Ahrens (1977) found that job satisfaction correlated positively with income, community size, experience in present position, professional experience, and education. An examination of the hierarchy of sub-factors contributing to overall job satisfaction indicates that school psychologists are satisfied with most aspects of their jobs. A positive relationship was found between age and job satisfaction suggesting that school psychologists eventually succeed in effecting the development of job satisfaction through changes in personal aspirations and needs, or in the job itself, or they leave the profession. Ahrens (1977) additionally reported that job satisfaction was not related to caseload. A negative relationship, however, was found between psychologist-to-student ratio and overall job satisfaction. Thus, it is assumed that as the psychologist-to-student ratios increase, the actual workload increases because more clients must be served. When ratios are too high, school psychologists become overworked and job dissatisfaction and burnout results.

In a study by Wright and Gutkin (1981), areas relating to interpersonal relationships between school psychologists and other school personnel, (i.e., effective communication among those with whom one has frequent contact, and relationships with immediate superiors), were rated higher than the subject's overall level of job

satisfaction. Thus, psychologists reported being more frequently satisfied in reference to their interpersonal relationships with other school personnel. The psychologist's workload and the ability to effect change or results was rated significantly below the subject's overall level of job satisfaction as psychologists reported being less frequently satisfied. Wright and Gutkin (1981) concluded that as a group, the majority of school psychologists find their workload excessive.

In a study of rural Pennsylvania school psychologists, Jerrell (1984), supported the idea that diversity of role lends itself to higher levels of job satisfaction. School psychologists engaging in more boundary-spanning functions such as community liaison work, reported being more satisfied with their jobs than those not involved in such functions. Those school psychologists who were more involved in community liaison activities described themselves as "networking types," and were more aware of the need to collaborate with other professionals, more influential in determining their role and overall more satisfied with their jobs.

Ahrens (1977) conducted a study on the effects of internal role conflict on overall job satisfaction of school psychologists. He reported that school psychologists are programmed to fulfill roles as change agents through their training and literature. Few employment settings, however, exist which support all of the role functions portrayed in the literature. The substantial discrepancy between real

and desired roles was found to be a source of much frustration and served to create a sense of professional impotence. Such a discrepancy between training and actual service roles was found to lead to incongruence, job dissatisfaction, burnout, and the tendency to terminate.

Benson and Hughes (1985) reported that school psychologists typically spend about 50% of their time in assessment activities, 20% in consultation, and their remaining time divided among counseling, in-servicing, administration, counseling parents, research, and program evaluation. However, school psychologists report a desire to spend less time in assessment and more time in every other activity, especially in consultation with school personnel and preventive interventions (Hughes, 1979). School psychologists experiencing a discrepancy between actual and desired roles often encounter job-related tension and lower levels of job satisfaction. Such an inconsistency between actual and ideal perceptions may be a source of conflict and anxiety for school psychologists, further resulting in burnout.

According to Anderson, Hohenshil and Brown (1988), training programs in school psychology prior to the passage of PL 94-142 (The Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975) encouraged students to move beyond intelligence testing and into broader service roles such as, consultation, parent training, and systematic intervention. However, PL 94-142 propelled many school

psychologists to spend much of their time conducting initial psychoeducational evaluations and the required re-evaluations of exceptional students. Guidubaldi (1981) indicated that school psychologists report wanting to diversify their roles, but that federal and state regulations necessitating an emphasis on psychoeducational assessment of handicapped students have prevented school psychologists from functioning in roles other than "tester." Thus, the broad course requirements in training programs have produced an era of highly qualified school psychologists to provide a larger array of services than many school systems request (Guidubaldi, 1981). Consequently, few school psychologists find employment in settings which support all of the role functions for which they are trained. Hence, a large number of practicing school psychologists find their skills under-utilized, a situation that leads to incongruence, job dissatisfaction, and burnout (Guidubaldi, 1981).

It is evident that burnout and job dissatisfaction are threatening problems among today's school psychologists. In the past, many studies (e.g. Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Wise, 1985; Miller, Witt, & Finley, 1981; Trachtman, 1981) have focused primarily on job satisfaction among school psychologists. Such studies examined self-esteem, personal adjustment, and general life adjustment. A review of the literature, however, has generated only a few published studies that closely address burnout (Huebner, 1992; Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Pierson-Hubeny & Archambault, 1987; Reiner &

Hartshorne, 1982). Furthermore, the generalizability of results from such studies to conditions in Illinois is questionable due to Illinois' current state of education, lack of available funding, shortage of personal, etc. In addition, the burnout scales that were employed lack solid reliability and validity. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify variables related to burnout among school psychologists in Illinois. In this study, burnout is described as emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and the desire to leave the job and/or profession. The primary questions addressed include: (a) What is the extent of burnout among a statewide sample of school psychologists? (b) What principal job-related stressors are associated with burnout? (c) What relationship exists between certain demographic variables and burnout? and (d) What best predicts burnout?

Chapter II

Method

Subjects

Survey materials were mailed to a random sample of 250 members of the Illinois School Psychologists Association (ISPA). Subjects were asked to complete the survey materials only if they were currently working as practitioners in school settings. A total of 139 surveys were returned, of which 117 were usable.

Instrumentation

Each participant received a cover letter, a postpaid return envelope, a Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI: Maslach & Jackson, 1986), a School Psychologists Stress Inventory (SPSI: Wise, 1985), and a demographic and job satisfaction questionnaire designed for this study.

The MBI is a self-report device consisting of three subscales (Emotional Exhaustion [EE], Depersonalization [DP], and Personal Accomplishment [PA]). According to Maslach and Jackson (1986), burnout is conceptualized as a continuous variable, ranging from low to moderate to high degrees of experienced feeling. A high degree of burnout is reflected in high scores on the EE and DP subscales and in low scores on the PA subscale. An average degree of burnout is reflected in average scores on the three subscales and a low degree of burnout is reflected in low scores on the EE and DP subscales and in high scores on the PA subscale. Based on Maslach and Jackson's

(1986) findings, scores are considered high if they are in the upper third of the normative distribution, average if they are in the middle third, and low if they are in the lower third. On the EE subscale, raw scores from 0 to 16 are considered low, from 17 to 26 are considered moderate, and from 27 and above are considered high. On the DP subscale, raw scores from 0 to 6 are considered low, from 7 to 12 are considered moderate, and from 13 and above are considered high. On the PA subscale, raw scores from 39 and above are considered low, from 32 to 38 are considered moderate, and from 0 to 31 are considered high. Such cut-off points were derived from the normative sample used in Maslach and Jackson's study (1986). Reported reliability coefficients for the subscales include: .90 for Emotional Exhaustion; .79 for Depersonalization; and .71 for Personal Accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Each scale is rated for frequency of occurrence from 0 (never) to 6 (everyday).

The SPSI was used to determine specific stressors affecting school psychologists. This scale, developed by Wise (1985), is a self-report device consisting of 36 stressful events related to areas such as interpersonal conflict, risks to self and others, time management, and legal issues. The SPSI is based on a nine-point Likert scale with 1 being the least stressful and 9 being the most stressful. According to Wise (1985), the SPSI can be broken down into nine factors through factor analysis. These factors encompass interpersonal conflict, high risk to self and others, obstacles to efficient job performance, public

speaking, time management, travel hassles, professional enrichment, insufficient recognition of work, and legal issues. No reliability and/or validity coefficients are reported for the SPSI in existing research.

The demographic and satisfaction questionnaire included demographic items related to age, salary, size of district, and years of experience. Items related to job satisfaction, supervision satisfaction, intent to leave the profession, and caseloads were also included. Subjects were asked to indicate on a 6-point Likert scale their degree of job satisfaction; their desire to leave their current job; their desire to leave the profession; and their satisfaction with supervision. In addition, subjects were asked to report the number of case studies they completed the previous semester as well as their preferred number of case studies. A Case Discrepancy Index was calculated by finding the difference between these two figures.

Procedure

The statistical procedures used to answer the research questions were as follows:

- 1) Means and standard deviations were obtained for each of the measures of the extent of burnout. This was operationalized as the MBI subscales: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment.
- 2) Means and standard deviations were obtained for each of the job related stressors. This was operationalized as the SPSI factors:

Interpersonal Conflict, High Risk to Self and Others, Lack of Resources, Public Speaking, Time Management, and Travel Hassles.

3) Means and standard deviations were obtained for each of the demographic variables: Subject's Age, Number of Years Served as a Practicing School Psychologist, Number of Schools Currently Served, Number of Districts Currently Served, Number of Students Currently Served, Number of School Psychologists Currently Employed by the District, Number of Cases Completed within the Past Semester, and Number of Cases Preferred to be Completed within the Past Semester.

4) Pearson product-moment correlations were used to determine the degree of relationships among the demographic variables and burnout indicators: Number of Years as a Practicing School Psychologist, Case Discrepancy Index (number of cases preferred subtracted from the number of actual cases completed), Supervision Satisfaction, Job Satisfaction, Desire to Leave Current Job, Desire to Leave Profession, and MBI subscale scores for EE, DP, and PA.

5) Multiple regression analyses were used to predict the extent of job satisfaction, the desire to leave a current job, and the desire to leave the profession as measured by the demographic and satisfaction scale constructed for this study. Multiple regression analyses were further used to predict the MBI subscales including EE, DP, and PA.

Chapter III

Results

The subjects reported a mean age of 42.18 (SD=10.04) with 11.42 (SD=7.64) years as practicing school psychologists. Sixty-nine percent were female and 29% were male. Twenty-four percent indicated the master's degree, 49% indicated the master's degree plus thirty or more additional hours, 15% indicated the Specialist's degree, and 11% indicated the doctoral degree as their highest degree attained. Twenty percent of the subjects reported their job location to be urban, 49% suburban, 29% rural, and <1% to be within prison communities. The sample appeared representative as the demographic characteristics correspond favorably to data collected from national samples of school psychologists by Huebner (1992) and Stinnett, Havey, and Oehler-Stinnett (in press).

The subjects reported an approximate number of hours they spent per week in various activities. The mean number of hours spent in assessment and report writing was 19.06 (SD=11.77), indirect intervention and consultation was 8.20 (SD=6.59), direct intervention and treatment was 7.14 (SD=8.40), continuing education was 1.43 (SD=2.34), and research was .39 (SD=1.37). The mean number of hours reported to be spent in unspecified activities was 3.06 (SD=5.34). These hours were quite similar to those collected by Stinnett, Havey, and Oehler-Stinnett (in press) in a national sample of school psychologists.

Means for each SPSI factor, excluding three one-item factors, were 4.55 (SD=1.75) for Interpersonal Conflict, 3.26 (SD=1.53) for High Risk to Self and Others, 4.32 (SD=1.62) for Lack of Resources, 2.62 (SD=1.78) for Public Speaking, 5.39 (SD=2.05) for Time Management, and 2.99 (SD=2.06) for Travel Hassles. Factor scores were made comparable by summing the scores for each item and dividing by the total number of items for the particular factor. Huebner (1992) used this method in his national investigation.

The mean MBI scale scores were 21.20 (SD=10.23) on Emotional Exhaustion, 5.60 (SD=4.63) on Depersonalization, and 38.09 (SD=6.24) on Personal Accomplishment. These scores are very similar to those MBI scores reported by Huebner (1992) and by Huberty and Huebner (1988) in national surveys of school psychologists. Using Maslach and Jackson's criterion for "high" scores (i.e., scores in the upper third of the normative distribution on the EE and DP scales; scores in the lower third of the distribution for the PA scale), 28.8 percent of the subjects in this study showed high Emotional Exhaustion, 11.0% showed high Depersonalization, and 50.8% showed low Personal Accomplishment.

The subjects were asked to rate on a six-point Likert scale (1 [very high] to 6 [very low]) their overall job satisfaction, satisfaction with supervision, desire to leave their current job, and their desire to leave the profession. Mean ratings were 2.47 (SD=1.20) for job satisfaction, 3.25 (SD=1.70) for satisfaction with supervision, 4.49

(SD=1.55) for desire to leave current job, and 4.98 (SD=1.25) for desire to leave the profession.

Table 1 presents correlations among the various demographic variables and MBI subscale scores. Results were what was expected. Overall job satisfaction was significantly related to satisfaction with supervision ($r=.547$), desire to leave current job ($r= -.792$), and desire to leave the profession ($r= -.550$). Satisfaction with supervision was significantly related to the number of years as a school psychologist ($r=.173$), desire to leave current job ($r= -.417$), and desire to leave the profession ($r= -.244$). Furthermore, desire to leave current job was predictably related to desire to leave the profession ($r=.536$).

Several significant correlations were found among the MBI subscales and various demographic variables, further supporting the construct validity of the MBI with school psychologists. Emotional Exhaustion was significantly correlated ($p<.001$) with satisfaction with supervision ($r=.303$), overall job satisfaction ($r=.579$), desire to leave current job ($r= -.499$), and desire to leave the profession ($r= -.421$). Depersonalization was significantly correlated ($p<.001$) with satisfaction with supervision ($r=.353$) and overall job satisfaction ($r=.319$). Personal Accomplishment was significantly correlated ($p<.001$) with satisfaction with supervision ($r= -.359$), overall job satisfaction ($r= -.452$), and desire to leave the profession ($r=.352$).

Subjects were further asked to estimate their actual caseloads (including evaluation and intervention cases completed during the

previous semester) as well as their ideal caseloads (i.e., number of clients they would like to have served during the previous semester). A discrepancy index was calculated by subtracting ideal from actual caseloads. Although their actual caseloads did not predict burnout, their discrepancy scores did. The correlations between the discrepancy index and MBI were .299 with Emotional Exhaustion, .301 with Depersonalization, and -.110 with Personal Accomplishment. The significant Depersonalization correlation ($p < .001$) suggested that negative attitudes toward clients increased as dissatisfaction with caseloads increased.

Table 1

Correlations Among Demographic Variables and MBI Scores

	YRSPSY	CASEDIS	SPVSAT	JOBSAT	LVJOB	LVPROF	EE	DP	PA
YRSPSY	1.00	.05	.17*	.13	-.17*	-.23*	.05	.06	.09
CASEDIS		1.00	.22*	.38**	-.40**	-.02	.30**	.30**	-.11
SPVSAT			1.00	.55**	-.42**	-.24*	.30**	.35**	-.36**
JOBSAT				1.00	-.79**	-.55**	.58**	.32**	-.45**
LVJOB					1.00	.54**	-.50**	-.27*	.25*
LVPROF						1.00	-.42**	-.14	.35**
EE							1.00	.43**	-.34**
DP								1.00	-.29**
PA									1.00

Note.

YRSPSY = Number of years as a school psychologist

CASEDIS = Case discrepancy index

SPVSAT = Satisfaction with supervision

JOBSAT = Satisfaction with current job

LVJOB = Desire to leave current job

LVPROF = Desire to leave profession

EE = Emotional exhaustion DP = Depersonalization PA = Personal Accomplishment

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

Several stepwise multiple regression analyses were employed to identify the best predictors of overall job satisfaction, desire to leave current job, desire to leave the profession, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. Table 2 summarizes the regressions.

Satisfaction with supervision was the best predictor of overall job satisfaction and accounted for 30% of the variance. Satisfaction with supervision was also able to predict desire to leave current job (17% of variance), desire to leave the profession (6% of variance), Emotional Exhaustion (9% of variance) and Depersonalization (13% of variance). The case discrepancy index was the second best predictor of overall job satisfaction and accounted for 7% of additional variance. The case discrepancy index also added to the prediction of desire to leave current job (11%), Emotional Exhaustion (6%), and Depersonalization (5%). Finally, overall job satisfaction was the best predictor of personal accomplishment accounting for 20% of the variance. No other variables added significantly to the predictions.

Table 2**Regressions Predicting Job Satisfaction, Desire to Leave Job and Profession, and MBI Factors**

	R	R ²	R ² change	F to-enter	P	Overall F*
Job Satisfaction						
SPVSAT	0.55	0.30		6.60	0.00	43.55
CASEDIS	0.61	0.37	0.07	3.39	0.01	29.77
Desire to Leave Job						
SPVSAT	0.42	0.17		-4.63	0.00	21.44
CASEDIS	0.53	0.28	0.11	-3.78	0.00	19.27
Desire to Leave Profession						
SPVSAT	0.24	0.06		-2.54	0.01	6.44
Emotional Exhaustion						
SPVSAT	0.30	0.09		3.20	0.00	10.29
CASEDIS	0.39	0.15	0.06	2.60	0.01	8.81
Depersonalization						
SPVSAT	0.35	0.13		3.81	0.00	14.51
CASEDIS	0.42	0.18	0.05	2.54	0.01	10.88
Personal Accomplishment						
JOBSAT	0.45	0.20		-5.11	0.00	26.13

SPVSAT = Satisfaction with supervision

CASEDIS = Case discrepancy index

JOBSAT = Satisfaction with current job

Chapter IV

Discussion

The first goal of this investigation was to estimate the extent of burnout among practicing school psychologists in Illinois. Using Maslach and Jackson's (1986) definition, this research suggested that burnout in the forms of feelings of emotional exhaustion and lack of perceived efficacy is a great, but often unrecognized, concern among this group of professionals. More than one-quarter of the respondents met the criterion for high Emotional Exhaustion, more than one-half met the criterion for reduced Personal Accomplishment, and more than one-tenth met the criterion for high Depersonalization.

A second goal of this research was to determine the job-related stressors that are associated with burnout using Wise's (1985) SPSI factors. Time management (e.g., backlog of referrals, backlog of reports) ranked as the highest stressor followed by interpersonal conflict (e.g., teacher dissatisfaction with recommendations, conferences with resistant teachers and parents, lack of consensus in staffings), lack of resources (e.g., lack of appropriate assessment materials, inadequate secretarial help), high risk to self and others (e.g., potential suicide cases, child abuse cases, threats of due process hearings), travel hassles (e.g., carrying testing equipment, excessive driving time), and public speaking (e.g., conducting in-services, parent groups).

The relationship between various demographic variables and burnout was also investigated as the third goal of this research. Satisfaction with supervision, overall job satisfaction, desire to leave the job, and desire to leave the profession contributed significantly to Maslach and Jackson's (1986) definition of burnout. Although school psychologists' actual caseloads were not related to burnout, their perceptions of their caseloads did significantly relate to burnout. A case discrepancy index was calculated by subtracting subjects' perceptions of ideal caseloads from their actual caseloads. Consistent with findings by Huebner (1992) and Huberty and Huebner (1988), this case discrepancy score was significantly correlated to the MBI subscales. This finding suggests that further research of individual differences in psychologists' appraisals of their working conditions is important in investigating job satisfaction and burnout.

Determining the best predictors of burnout was the final goal of this research. Demographic variables including satisfaction with supervision and the case discrepancy index were found to be the strongest predictors of burnout. Such results suggest that supervisors are considered to be central figures in resistance to burnout as they could provide technical assistance, feedback, and support. Williams, Williams, and Ryer (1990) speculate that the types of feedback available to school psychologists and the quality of that

feedback may be associated with differences in job satisfaction and self-perceptions of competence.

In closing, much remains to be learned about burnout among school psychologists in Illinois. Even though satisfaction with supervision appears to be a key variable, it is unclear from this study whether school psychologists in Illinois feel that they receive insufficient amounts of supervision or that the supervision they receive is of inferior quality. Although many variables were examined in this research, a great amount of variance remains unaccounted for in predicting burnout. Thus, it is hoped that this study will stimulate further research in the study of job satisfaction and burnout, as well as promote greater attention to preventing burnout in the field of school psychology.

Footnote

Permission to reproduce the School Psychologists Stress Inventory for use in this study was granted by Paula S. Wise, a professor in the Department of Psychology at Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois.

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BOARD OF GOVERNORS UNIVERSITIES

Appendix A

Psychology Department
217 / 581-2127
Charleston, Illinois 61920

712 North Second Street
Effingham, IL 62401
May 20, 1993

Dear School Psychologist:

I am a school psychology graduate student from Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois. Currently, I am working on my Specialist's thesis entitled, "Burnout Among School Psychologists in Illinois." Research in this area is very limited. Therefore, the primary questions I will be addressing in my analysis include: (a) What is the extent of burnout among a statewide sample of school psychologists? (b) What principal job-related stressors are associated with burnout? and (c) What demographic variables correlate with burnout?

In order to complete my study, I must gather pertinent data from practicing school psychologists. Will you please take a few moments and complete the enclosed questionnaires? All information will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope for prompt return. Please return no later than June 15, 1993.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Kathryn M. Niebrugge, M.A.

Kathryn M. Niebrugge, M.A.
Eastern Illinois University

Enc.

Christina Maslach • Susan E. Jackson

Human Services Survey

The purpose of this survey is to discover how various persons in the human services or helping professions view their jobs and the people with whom they work closely. Because persons in a wide variety of occupations will answer this survey, it uses the term *recipients* to refer to the people for whom you provide your service, care, treatment, or instruction. When answering this survey please think of these people as recipients of the service you provide, even though you may use another term in your work.

On the following page there are 22 statements of job-related feelings. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way *about your job*. If you have *never* had this feeling, write a "0" (zero) before the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate *how often* you feel it by writing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way. An example is shown below.

Example:

HOW OFTEN:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

HOW OFTEN

0 - 6

Statement:

_____ I feel depressed at work.

If you *never* feel depressed at work, you would write the number "0" (zero) under the heading "HOW OFTEN." If you *rarely* feel depressed at work (a few times a year or less), you would write the number "1." If your feelings of depression are fairly frequent (a few times a week, but not daily) you would write a "5."



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Human Services Survey

HOW OFTEN:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

HOW OFTEN 0 - 6

Statements:

1. _____ I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. _____ I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. _____ I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. _____ I can easily understand how my recipients feel about things.
5. _____ I feel I treat some recipients as if they were impersonal objects.
6. _____ Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
7. _____ I deal very effectively with the problems of my recipients.
8. _____ I feel burned out from my work.
9. _____ I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.
10. _____ I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.
11. _____ I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
12. _____ I feel very energetic.
13. _____ I feel frustrated by my job.
14. _____ I feel I'm working too hard on my job.
15. _____ I don't really care what happens to some recipients.
16. _____ Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.
17. _____ I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my recipients.
18. _____ I feel exhilarated after working closely with my recipients.
19. _____ I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
20. _____ I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.
21. _____ In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
22. _____ I feel recipients blame me for some of their problems.

(Administrative use only)

cat.

cat.

cat.

EE: _____ DP: _____ PA: _____

Wise (1985) Stress Inventory

Directions: Please rate the extent to which each of the items below has been a problem or stressor for you on your job this year. The ratings should be between 1 and 9. The more stress associated with an event, the higher the rating.

Rating	least stressful	moderately stressful	most stressful						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
_____	1.	Keeping up with current professional literature.							
_____	2.	Conferences or staffings with resistant teachers.							
_____	3.	Supervising an intern or school psychology graduate student.							
_____	4.	Conducting in-service workshops.							
_____	5.	Carrying testing equipment around in unfavorable weather conditions.							
_____	6.	Pressure to complete a set number of cases (e.g., you must test at least 100 children a year).							
_____	7.	Lack of availability of appropriate assessment materials.							
_____	8.	Report writing.							
_____	9.	Lack of consensus in a staffing.							
_____	10.	Not enough time to perform job adequately.							
_____	11.	Impending teachers' strike in your district.							
_____	12.	Telling parents their child is handicapped.							
_____	13.	Working with uncooperative principals and other administrators.							
_____	14.	Public speaking engagements (e.g., PTA).							
_____	15.	Potential suicide cases.							
_____	16.	Teacher dissatisfaction with your recommendations.							
_____	17.	Spending time driving between schools.							
_____	18.	Incompetent and/or inflexible "supervisors".							
_____	19.	Feeling caught between child's needs and administrative constraints (i.e., trying to "fit" a child into an existing program).							
_____	20.	Inadequate secretarial help.							
_____	21.	Lack of contact with professional colleagues.							
_____	22.	Conducting parent groups.							
_____	23.	A backlog of more than five reports to be written.							
_____	24.	Notification of unsatisfactory job performance.							
_____	25.	Threat of due process hearing.							
_____	26.	Insufficient recognition of your work.							
_____	27.	Working in physically dangerous situations (e.g., gang-ruled high schools).							
_____	28.	A backlog of more than ten referrals.							
_____	29.	Lack of appropriate services for children.							
_____	30.	Child abuse cases.							
_____	31.	Being told that you "have it easy" by classroom teachers.							
_____	32.	Conferences or staffings with resistant parents.							
_____	33.	Screening bilingual children.							
_____	34.	Keeping your district "legal" (i.e., in compliance with federal, state, and local regulations).							
_____	35.	A change in the schools or districts which you serve.							
_____	36.	Using the same scale (1-9), how stressful is your job overall?							

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SATISFACTION SCALE

ID # _____

01. Highest Degree Acquired:

_____ Masters _____ Masters plus 30 _____ Specialist _____ Doctorate

02. Age: _____ 03. Gender: _____ 04. Marital Status: _____

05. Job Location: Urban _____ Suburban _____ Rural _____

06. Number of years serving as a school psychologist: _____

07. Salary per year:

 20,000 to 25,999 _____
 26,000 to 30,999 _____
 31,000 to 35,999 _____
 36,000 to 40,999 _____
 41,000 + _____

 08. Work Setting: Elementary Schools _____ Secondary Schools _____
 Combination _____ Other _____

09. Number of schools served: _____

10. Number of districts served: _____

11. Approximate number of students served: _____

12. Number of school psychologists employed by your district or co-op: _____

13. Number of cases completed during the past semester (include interventions and evaluations): _____

14. Number of cases you would have preferred to complete during the past semester: _____

15. Overall job satisfaction:

 very high _____
 moderately high _____
 mildly high _____
 mildly low _____
 moderately low _____
 very low _____

16. Desire to leave current job:

 very high _____
 moderately high _____
 mildly high _____
 mildly low _____
 moderately low _____
 very low _____

17. Desire to leave current profession:

very high _____
moderately high _____
mildly high _____
mildly low _____
moderately low _____
very low _____

18. Satisfaction with supervision:

very high _____
moderately high _____
mildly high _____
mildly low _____
moderately low _____
very low _____

19. Please list four methods
you use to cope with job
related stress/burnout:

20. Please estimate the hours per week spent in:

Assessment -report writing _____
Indirect Intervention/Consultation _____
Direct Intervention/Treatment _____
Continuing Education _____
Research _____
Other _____

21. Please write any additional comments that you may have.