BURNOUT AND JOB SATISFACTION OF VOCATIONAL SUPERVISORS

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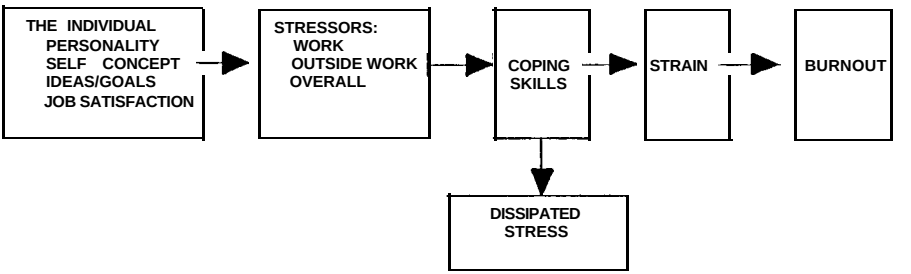
Over the past 15 years, there has been an explosion of research and inquiry into the burnout phenomenon. The study of burnout has moved from a hot topic to a serious issue which affects millions of workers (Farber, 1983). "Burned out professionals are more frequently absent or late for work than their non-burned out colleagues; they become noticeably less idealistic and more rigid; their performance at work deteriorates markedly, and they may fantasize or actually plan on leaving the profession" (Farber, 1983, p. 3)"

Studies of burnout have provided baseline data that bring the burnout phenomenon into focus. Research has shown that burnout-prone individuals are not lazy or underachievers but are in fact characterized as overachievers, dynamic, charismatic, empathetic, dedicated, idealistic and people oriented (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980). Burnout has been most prevalent among workers in the helping professions. Studies have shown that these individuals suffer from high stress levels (Freudenberger, 1974, 1981; Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980; Maslach, 1976; Pines & Maslach, 1978) and low job satisfaction (Freudenberger, 1975; Igodan, 1984; Maslach, 1978; Newcomb & Clark, 1985). Brookins (1982) and Cooper and Marshall (1980) found that administrators also experience high stress and low job satisfaction. Administrators reported that "70% of their total life stress resulted from their jobs" (Cooper & Marshall, 1980, p. 77).

This linkage between stress, job satisfaction, and the work environment is critical to the study of burnout. In fact, Maslach (1978) stated that, when looking for possible reasons for burnout, one is better off not to try to identify the bad people in an organization but instead to uncover the characteristics of bad situations where good people function. Three of the major related problems involve role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload (Caplan & Jones, 1975; Kahn, 1974; Newcomb & Clark, 1985; Pines, Aronson & Kafry, 1981).

Based on these studies, the following model has been proposed:



The premise is that all individuals are faced with a variety of stressors. Through coping skills, some stress is alleviated. Unrelieved stress leads to strain which, in turn, can result in burnout.

Reorganizations within school systems have forced vocational supervisors to face each of these potential stressors. Many supervisors have been delegated new responsibilities, such as supervision of non-vocational teachers, supervision of teachers outside their interest area, and performance of routine work such as hall duty (Barrick, 1987). These new job duties have often been accompanied with a lack of clarity in defining responsibilities, goals, or means of accountability. Many supervisors find that they must involve themselves in activities they perceive to be outside of their domain of work. Financial constraints have forced supervisors to become lobbyists and politicians as well as organizational administrators. Role overload continues to be a major problem. Not only has the workload increased but the tasks one is required to do may soon exceed the current abilities of the individual. Finally, role ambiguity among clients served has been identified as a source of potential dissatisfaction (Barrick, 1987). Based on previous research showing the linkage between work stress, job satisfaction, and burnout, vocational supervisors are prime candidates for burnout.

Purpose and Objectives

Burnout could severely limit the competence, vitality, and commitment of vocational supervisors. This limitation of supervisory performance may not only lead to a lowered administrative standard but may well lead to a tremendous human and financial waste due to individuals functioning at less than full potential. The purpose of this study was to determine the level of burnout, job satisfaction, occupational stress, personal strain, and personal coping resources of vocational supervisors.

The objectives of the study were to: (a) determine the level of burnout, job satisfaction, personal strain, occupational stress, and personal coping resources of vocational supervisors in Ohio, (b) determine the relationships among levels of burnout, job satisfaction, personal strain, occupational stress, and personal coping, and (c) determine the difference in levels of burnout, job satisfaction, personal strain, occupational stress, and personal coping which exist among vocational supervisors by service areas.

Procedures

Population: The population consisted of vocational supervisors in Ohio (N = 202). Due to the small number of individuals in the population, a census was used. The subjects were supervisors of agriculture, business education, home economics, marketing and trade and industrial education.

Design: Descriptive research was used in this study. The study was designed to investigate the following variables and their interrelationships: independent variables: Job satisfaction, occupational stress, personal strain, personal coping resources; Dependent variables: Burnout (subcategories: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment).

Data Collection: Data were collected by means of a mailed questionnaire to all individuals in the population. A pre-letter. signed bv Darrell L. Parks, Director of Vocational and Career Education. was mailed to all subjects,-requesting their participation in the study. The first mailing of the questionnaire was sent on March 11, 1988. The second mailing was sent on April 14. A 92% response was obtained from the first and second mailings. Non-response error was controlled by comparing early respondents to late respondents. No significant difference was found between early and late respondents. Therefore, the responses were generalized to the entire census.

Instrumentation: The mailed questionnaire consisted of six portions: job satisfaction, occupational stress, personal strain, personal coping resources; Maslach Burnout Inventory, and personal characteristics. A modified version of the Brayfield-Roth "Job Satisfaction Index" was used for this study (Warner, 1973). Previous research with-administrators/mid managers obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .84. Occupational stress, personal strain, and personal coping resources were measured by instruments developed by Osipow and Spokane (1983). The Cronbach's alphas for these instruments were .89, .94 and .88, respectively. The level of burnout was determined by use of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) designed by Maslach and Jackson (1981). Cronbach's alphas of .83 for the frequency dimension and .84 for the intensity dimension were obtained. Each of the instruments in the study has been used with educational administrators and has been proven to be valid by either content validity or concurrent validity.

Analysis of Data: All data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences at The Ohio State University. Frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and analysis of variance were used to describe the data. An alpha level of .05 was set a priori.

Results

Job Satisfaction: A majority of the vocational supervisors (59%) were very satisfied with their jobs. An additional 35% were moderatelv satisfied with their iobs. Only 6% of the supervisors indicated that they were slightly satisfied with their jobs. None of the supervisors indicated that they were dissatisfied with their jobs (Table 1).

Occupational Stress: As shown in Table 2, the majority of vocational supervisors (94%) scored in the two lower quartiles, indicating medium to low levels of overall occupational stress. Scores on the occupational stress subscales indicated that role insufficiency, role ambiguity, and role boundary were not problems for supervisors. Role overload and scope of responsibility scores constituted the largest portion of occupational stress with 39% and 47% of the individuals scoring in the upper two quartiles, respectively, which indicated moderate to high levels of stress (Table 3).

Table 1
Job Satisfaction Scores (n = 181)

Job Satisfaction Scores	f	%
40 - 50 (slightly satisfied)	10	6
51 - 59 (moderately satisfied)	60	35
60 - 70 (very satisfied)	101	59
Total	171	100

Note. Possible range 14 - 70; range 40 - 70; mean 60.7.

Table 2
Overall Occupational Stress (n = 181)

Occupational Stress Scores	f	%
50 - 99 (low = 1)	25	15
100 - 149 (moderately low = ml)	128	79
150 - 199 (moderately high = mh)	10	6
200 - 250 (high = h)	0	0
Total	163	100

Note. Possible range = 50 - 250; range = 80 - 177; mean 117.4.

Table 3
Occupational Stress Subscales (n = 181)

	Role Overload		Role Insufficiency		Role Ambiguity		Role Boundary		scope of Responsibility	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
10 - 19 (1)	6	3	101	57	46	26	90	51	2	2
20 - 29 (ml)	101	58	64	35	100	57	76	43	89	51
30 - 39 (mh)	65	36	14	8	28	16	12	6	79	45
40 - 50 (h)	6	3	0	0	2	1	0	0	3	2
Total	178	100	179	100	17.5	100	178	100	173	100
Mean	28.8		19.5		18.9		20.7		29.2	

Note. Possible range on each subscale = 10 - 50.

Personal Strain: Personal strain did not appear to be a problem for supervisors. The majority of individuals (98%) were in the lower two quartiles of the scale which indicated low to moderate levels of personal strain (Table 4). Supervisors indicated the subscales as indicated by the percentage of supervisors scoring in the lower two quartiles: vocational strain (100%), psychological strain (97%), interpersonal strain (98%) and physical strain (95%) (Table 5).

Personal Coping: The majority of supervisors scored in the highest two quartiles (94.8%), indicating good usage of personal coping strategies in dealing with stress (Table 6). On the subscales, recreation as a coping resource was low to moderate in usage (48%). Social support systems (support and help from those around them) were highly utilized (96%). The majority of supervisors (93%) use cognitive skills to deal with job stress as indicated by the rational coping subscale (Table 7).

Burnout: The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was used to obtain measures of burnout for the supervisors. The scale consisted of three major subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization,

and personal accomplishment. Each subscale obtained measures on two dimensions: frequency (how often supervisors had the feeling) and intensity (how strong the feelings were when experienced).

Table 4
Overall Personal Strain (n = 181)

Personal Strain Scores	f	%
40 - 79 (low)	131	85
80 - 119 (moderately low)	21	13
120 - 159 (moderately high)	2	2
160 - 200 (high)	0	0
Total	154	100

Note. Mean = 65.7; = range 43 - 144.

Table 5
Personal Strain Subscales (n = 181)

Personal Strain Scores	Vocational Strain f	%	Psychological Strain f	%	Interpersonal Strain f	%	Physical Strain f	%
10 - 19 (1)	149	85	134	75	120	72	138	79
20 - 29 (ml)	26	15	39	22	43	26	27	16
30 - 39 (mh)	0	0	3	2	3	2	6	4
40 - 5O (h)	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1
Total	175	100	178	100	166	100	172	100
Mean	15.7		16.5		17.4		16.1	

Note. Possible range on each subscale = 10 - 50.

Table 6
Overall Personal Coping

Personal Coping Scores	f	%
30 - 59 (low usage)	0	0
60 - 89 (moderately low usage)	9	5
90 - 119 (moderately high usage)	112	65
120 - 150 (high usage)	52	30
Total	173	100

Note. Mean = 110.7; range = 71- 138.

The majority of vocational supervisors were found to experience moderate to high levels of burnout as measured by the MBI. Percentages of individuals scoring in the high burnout category ranged from 14 to 30.6, depending on the subscale. These individuals indicated high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (distancing themselves from others). They also had low feelings of personal accomplishment (Table 8).

Relationship Between Burnout and Selected Variables: The strength of the relationship between job satisfaction and the burnout subscales ranged from low to moderate (r = .27 to .44) (Table 9). The data indicated that as the level of job satisfaction increased, the amount of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization decreased. Personal accomplishment also increased as job satisfaction increased.

Table 7
Personal Coping Subscales (n = 181)

Personal Coping Scores	Recreation f	%	Social Support f	%	Rational Coping f	%
10 - 19 (low)	10	5	1	1	0	0
20 - 29 (moderately low)	76	43	44	25	11	7
30 - 39 (moderately high)	83	47	6	3	85	4:
40 - 50 (high)	9	5	125	71	83	46
Total	178	100	175	100	179	100
Mean	29.7		42.4		39.0	

Note. Possible range on each subscale = 10 - 5O.

Table 8
Degree of Burnout (n = 181)

Level of Burnout	Burnout Subscales[a] EEF f	%	EEI f	%	DPF f	%	DPI f	%	PAF f	%	PAI f	%
Low	95	53	82	47	99	58	66	38	87	51	71	42
Moderate	58	33	57	33	47	28	52	31	58	34	65	38
High	25	14	36	20	24	14	52	31	26	15	33	20
Total	178	100	175	100	170	100	170	100	171	100	169	100

[a] Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA); Frequency (F) and Intensity (I).

The relationship between occupational stress and the burnout subscales ranged from a high of r = .57 for the emotional exhaustion frequency subscale to a low of r = -.24 for the personal accomplishment intensity subscale. These relationships revealed that the higher the stress level, the higher the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization levels for the supervisors. The personal accomplishment level was reduced as stress increased (Table 9).

Table 9
Relationship Between Burnout and Selected Variables (n = 181)

Burnout Subscale	Independent Variables: Job Satisfaction r	Occupational Stress r	Personal Strain r	Rational Coping r
EEF	-.44	.57	.78	-.48
EEI	-.36	.52	.60	-.39
DPF	-.39	.5O	.59	-.39
DPI	-.27	.37	.37	-.26
PAF[a]	.27	-.27	-.32	.27
PAI[a]	.29	-.24	-.30	.38

[a] Subscale scored in reverse.

The relationship between personal strain and the burnout subscales ranged from very strong (r = .78) for the emotional exhaustion frequency subscale to moderate (r = -.30) for the personal accomplishment intensity subscale. These relationships indicated that as the supervisor's personal

strain increased, their levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization also increased. The level of personal accomplishment tended to decrease as strain increased. Low to moderate relationships were found between rational coping and the burnout subscales for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (range: r = -.48 to r = -.26). Personal Accomplishment relationships with rational coping were found to be low to moderate (range: r = .38 to r = .27) (Table 9).

Differences Among Vocational Supervisor Job Categories: Analysis of variance was used to determine if differences in job satisfaction, occupational stress, personal strain, personal coping or burnout existed among the five vocational areas. No significant differences among groups were found. Agriculture supervisors did not differ from any other supervisor groups for any of the burnout or job satisfaction categories. Further analysis for only the agriculture group was, therefore, deemed inappropriate.

Conclusions and Recommendations

While it appears that job satisfaction, occupational stress, personal strain and personal coping are not major problems for vocational supervisors, attention should be paid to problems of role overload and the scope of responsibility of the individuals. These factors were the highest contributors to stress on the job and substantiate earlier studies of vocational agriculture supervisor role responsibilities.

Large numbers of vocational supervisors were experiencing high levels of burnout which demand attention. These individuals show high levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (distancing themselves from others) and low levels of personal accomplishment.

Job satisfaction, occupational stress and rational coping have a direct bearing on the amount of burnout experience by supervisors. The more satisfied supervisors are with their job and the more coping measures used to dissipate stress, the lower the degree of burnout. Increased levels of occupational stress and personal strain tend to increase the level of burnout.

The results of this study did not completely coincide with the burnout model. Respondents may have over-reacted to the pre-letter from the state director of vocational education by indicating what they perceived their responses should be. The Maslach Burnout Inventory is more difficult to "second guess," and responses may be more accurate on the MBI than on the other scales. A follow-up study should be conducted to determine if this group in fact did over react to the director's letter or if this group is different from previous groups from which the model was developed.

The Ohio vocational education program and local schools must seriously look at the burnout problem. In times of tight fiscal constraints, no organization can afford to be spending large sums of money on individuals functioning at less than full potential. Special attention should be directed toward investigation of role overload and responsibility of vocational supervisors. In addition, supervisors should be made aware of the problems associated with burnout. This should be done through seminars, workshops or meetings which include time management, communication, stress reduction, human relations, and recognition of burnout symptoms.

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