

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

5-8-1997

Analysis of factors that contribute to residence life staff burnout

Antoinette Mascio

Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Educational Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mascio, Antoinette, "Analysis of factors that contribute to residence life staff burnout" (1997). *Theses and Dissertations*. 2086.

<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/2086>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact graduateresearch@rowan.edu.

ANALYSIS OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO
RESIDENCE LIFE STAFF BURNOUT

by
Antoinette Mascio

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Master of Arts Degree in School Psychology
of Rowan University
May 6, 1997

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved 5-8-97

ABSTRACT

ANALYSIS OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO RESIDENCE LIFE STAFF BURNOUT

Antoinette Mascio

1997

Dr. Dihoff

School Psychology

The purpose of this investigation is to provide an integrative study of the various factors that may interact to produce burnout among Residence Life staff members. This study examines psychosocial, physiological, and environmental conditions that are thought to contribute to burnout among Residence Life staff members.

The participants of this study were 71 student staff members, who are employed by the Office of Residents Life, at a co-educational, non-secretarian, state supported college in a rural area of southern New Jersey. The participants consisted of both male and female, graduate and undergraduate students, who range in age from 18 to 33 years old.

To test the hypothesis that there is a relationship between physical, psychosocial and environmental factors and the incidence of burnout the data was analyzed utilizing a Pearson-product-movement correlation. The MBI subscales, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were compared to the responses to a 25

item survey regarding the psycho-social, environmental, and physiological variables to determine whether a relationship appeared to exist.

This research revealed a positive relationship between several physiological, psychosocial, and environmental variables: members in certain residence halls did not abstain from alcohol consumption, males hold leadership positions more often than did females, staff members who hold leadership positions do not limit their consumption of caffeine, those who are not able to successfully negotiate time management strategies are not able to get a good nights sleep, and subjects who had been on staff for one year or less and exercised on a regular basis reported that they got along well with other staff members.

Positive relationships were also found among physiological, psychosocial, and environmental factors, and the subscales of the MBI. The data revealed that males, those who were involved in leadership positions, and those who did not get along with other staff members, evidenced a higher incidence of emotional exhaustion.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Antoinette Mascio

ANALYSIS OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO RESIDENCE LIFE STAFF BURNOUT

1997

Dr. Dihoff

School Psychology

The purpose of this investigation was to provide an integrative study of the various factors that may interact to produce burnout among Residence Life staff members. This study examined psychosocial, physiological, and environmental conditions that were thought to contribute to burnout among Residence Life staff members.

This research revealed a positive relationship among several physiological, psychosocial, and environmental variables, as well as a relationship between several variables and the subscales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are no words to express my appreciation and humble thanks to Dr. Klanderman and Dr. Dihoff for their patience and their help with this project. I am eternally grateful to them.

I send my love to my family and friends for supporting me and believing in me.

I would like to give special acknowledgment to my uncle, Robert Mascio, who kept reminding me that I could do it because I was a Mascio.

I to extend my gratitude to George Brelsford for allowing me to use his staff as subjects and supporting this endeavor, and I thank the entire Residence Life staff for their participation and encouragement throughout this process.

Lastly, a special message for Betty and Lena, **YES! I AM DONE NOW !!!!**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1:	THE PROBLEM.....	1
	<u>Need</u>	1
	<u>Purpose</u>	2
	<u>Hypothesis</u>	2
	<u>Theory</u>	3
	<u>Overview</u>	7
CHAPTER 2:	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	8
	<u>Human Service Providers</u>	10
	<u>Health Care Providers</u>	11
	<u>Law Enforcement Services</u>	12
	<u>Social Services</u>	12
	<u>Mental Health Care</u>	13
	<u>Burnout in Educational Organizations</u>	14
	<u>Residence Life Staff</u>	15
	<u>Summary</u>	23
CHAPTER 3:	METHOD AND DESIGN	24
	<u>Sample</u>	24
	<u>Measures</u>	26
	<u>Design</u>	28
	<u>Testable Hypothesis</u>	29
	<u>Procedure</u>	29
	<u>Summary</u>	30

CHAPTER 4:	ANALYSIS OF RESULTS	31
	<u>Summary</u>	32
CHAPTER 5:	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	33
	<u>Conclusions</u>	34
	<u>Discussion</u>	35
	<u>Implications for Future Research</u>	37
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	38

CHAPTER 1

NEED

In addition to the factors that can contribute to stress among college students, Residence Life staff members have additional responsibilities that are unique to their position. Residence Life staff members are hired to live in residence halls or apartment complexes and are expected to function in many different roles: peer counselor, policy enforcer, educator, and community facilitator. The Residence Hall Director's primary responsibilities include working with staff supervision and the judicial process, as well as having responsibility in conducting interventions and initiating hall community development. The Resident Assistant supports the comprehensive student life program in a residence hall or apartment complex and has specific responsibility for working with students in a particular area. In working with an area, the Resident Assistant is the primary facilitator of the development of that community. The Resident Proctor assists with the comprehensive student life program in a residence hall or apartment complex, as well as assisting students individually and in groups with safety and security concerns. In these roles, as front-line staff, they are subject to the anxiety normally associated with human service workers and the burnout often associated with the helping professions.

Past research on the role of residential staff and the impact of this position on burnout has indicated that there are various factors that contribute to this condition. Research suggests that certain types of health habits and certain residence hall environments are significantly associated with the levels of burnout among residence hall staff. Other research indicates a relationship among the following variables: status positions, health habits, social support, stress, job performance, job, gender, and burnout.

As more studies are conducted it becomes apparent that a variety of individual and situational variables, in addition to occupational stress, interact to contribute to burnout. Because burnout is a holistic or psychobiosocial concept, there is a need for a study which further explores the various factors that are considered to be potential causes of burnout.

The results of this study will be shared with the members of the Office of Residence Life at the college where the study will be conducted. This interactional model of burnout should provide information which may be helpful in making the job of Resident Assistant, Resident Proctor and Resident Hall Director a less stressful one.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the present investigation is to provide a more integrative study of the various factors that interact to produce burnout among residential staff in order to gain a more holistic perspective. This study will examine psychosocial, physiological and environmental conditions that may contribute to burnout of Residence Life staff members.

HYPOTHESIS

There is a significant relationship between physiological, psychosocial and environmental factors and the incidence of burnout among Residence Life staff members.

THEORY

Resident Assistants (RAs), Resident Proctors (RPs), and Resident Directors (RDs) are responsible for a myriad of people-related tasks that can lead to the burnout syndrome. The job description of the RD states that the RDs provide direction to staff efforts in the hall or apartment complex and work with individual staff members to help them establish and reach objectives. They must provide organization and communication to promote staff relations, create a support system for the individual staff members, and establish a format for the information exchange necessary for the staff to function effectively as a team. RAs and RPs are required to maintain a high profile in the residence hall or apartment complex; encourage involvement and interaction of residents in activities; confront and document inappropriate behavior; mediate conflicts; address safety and security concerns; and observe and respond to student behavior which may be indicative of personal, social or academic problems. In addition to these and other job related responsibilities, staff members live and work with peers, students, and supervisors in an environment where it is difficult to distinguish work from personal time. There is always the possibility for constant interruptions and intrusions, which allows little opportunity for relaxation or self-indulgence, and there is always the potential for problems that need to be resolved and work to be completed. The close proximity of the living environment and the lack of separation between job and self is conducive to the type of stress that arises interacting socially and dealing extensively with other human beings (Maslach, 1982). The chronic stress of this constant and intense interpersonal contact is typically identified as the primary source of burnout.

There is no single definition of burnout that is accepted as standard. Definitions of burnout include the following:

To deplete oneself. To exhaust one's physical and mental resources. To wear oneself out by excessively striving to reach some unrealistic expectation imposed by oneself or by the values of society (Freudenberger and Richelson, 1980).

A state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion marked by physical depletion and chronic fatigue, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, and the development of a negative self-concept and negative attitudes toward work, life and other people (Paine, 1982).

Generally, burnout seems to be the fatigue and frustration brought about by dedication to a job, a cause, a way of life, or even a relationship that is not bringing the expected reward (Jaffe and Scott, 1984).

The common aspect of these and other definitions of burnout involves physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and interpersonal exhaustion (Paine, 1982).

Just as there are many diversified definitions of burnout, there are also various theories about what causes it and what its consequences are. Most of the literature in which burnout is discussed emphasizes the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, individual causes, job stress and the organizational setting in which work takes place. The term "burnout" has been broadened to include not only all forms of work stress but non-work spheres of life as well (Paine, 1982).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) has identified three psychological constructs as indicators of burnout: depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and level of accomplishment (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). These experiences are thought to be characteristic of individuals who have intense involvements with others in the course of their work experience.

Depersonalization is determined through answers to such questions on the MBI as, "I've become more callous toward people since I took this job." Depersonalization manifests itself in the experience, or feeling, of being detached from oneself and observing the self from the position of an outside observer; or in the experience of feeling mechanical or as if in a dream. It is important to note that depersonalization can appear briefly in many normal individuals and is not necessarily an indication of a disassociative disorder. It has been estimated that mild depersonalization may occur at some time in as many as 70% of young

adults. The presence of the symptom pattern is only considered to constitute a disorder when it results in a significant impairment in an individual's social or occupational functioning. Depersonalization, unlike other disassociative disorders, does not affect memory or consciousness; it causes a disturbance in the area of identity (Holmes, 1991).

Psychodynamic theory suggests that disassociative disorders result from one's attempt to dissociate oneself from stressful events or obliterate one's memory of them. In other words disassociative disorders can be considered as extensive use of repression (Sue, Sue, & Sue, 1990).

Emotional exhaustion is measured on the MBI with items such as, "I feel emotionally drained from my work." It occurs when the adverse effects of stress become overwhelming, and it involves feelings of depression, helplessness, hopelessness, and entrapment. Satisfaction from work and other activities diminishes. The burnt out person feels emotionally depleted, and irritable and they have no energy or enthusiasm for anything, especially other people's needs (Pines, 1982).

Eric Fromm maintains that under societal conditions that stifle personal development, a person comes to see others as threats to personal existence and as obstacles to be overcome or removed. As a result, persons become alienated from themselves and others and experience powerlessness (Ryckman, 1990).

Personal accomplishment is determined on the MBI by responses to statements such as, "I deal very effectively with the problems of my recipients." Responses to this section are subjective and are determined by the individual's perception of reality. This perception of personal accomplishment is generally diminished by someone who is experiencing the effects of the burnout syndrome. When people feel that they are not living up to their potential, they are incapable of meeting their need for self actualization.

Abraham Maslow maintains that a central tendency of personality is peoples need for the actualization of their human potentialities. This actualization of self is also a major theme in the writings of Carl Rogers, who defines this concept as such:

Self-actualization involves continual pressure to act and develop and to experience oneself in accordance with one's conscious view of one's self. Hence, self-actualization is the integration of the various aspects of the self; it is the congruence between self and society; it is the expression of one's potential; it involves changes and growth; it is openness to new experiences; it is active and creative life (Pines, Elliot, & Ditsa, 1980).

When human beings do not feel that they are living up to their potential and fulfilling their desire for personal accomplishment and self actualization, they suffer severe frustration which often contributes to the burnout syndrome.

ASSUMPTIONS

The most basic assumption is that burnout is a holistic or psychobiosocial concept. Additionally, it must be assumed that this study will give proper consideration of the categories that determine the physiological, psychosocial, and environmental factors to be examined. It must also be assumed that Residence Life staff members experience the same stress reaction to situational variables. Lastly, it must be assumed that the constructs of the Maslach Burnout Inventory are generalizable to this particular population .

LIMITATIONS

One limitation to this study is that the Residence Life staff at one college was the only population included in this study, so the results cannot be generalized. Another limitation is that the variables that are examined are unique to the subjects of this particular population, again restricting the generalization of the results. Lastly, an attempt to gain a holistic perspective may be limited by the design of this study.

OVERVIEW

The relevant literature pertaining to the factors affecting burnout in Residence Life staff members will be reviewed in Chapter 2. In addition, the methods employed in this study with a descriptive summary of the sample population and descriptions of their environments will be discussed in Chapter 3. There will be an analysis of results in Chapter 4, followed by a discussion of the findings with implications for further research:

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The concept of burnout arose from the study of stress in the workplace. According to the publishers of the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the burnout syndrome was originally a concern in the field of professional athletics and the performing arts, during the 1930's. The phenomenon was first formally differentiated by Herbert Freudenberger and Christina Maslach as a negative outcome of stress (Jaffe & Scott, 1984). Burnout was originally considered a problem that was found primarily or exclusively within the helping professions, but it has now been found to exist among many other occupations. The Maslach Burnout Inventory was designed by Maslach & Jackson, as a scale measure, to assess burnout experienced by people working in human service professions (Cherniss, 1980). Literature that is relative to this inventory and to the burnout syndrome will be reviewed in this chapter.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) has undergone several revisions and has added new versions which have been adapted for use with occupations other than the human services. Thus, there are now three versions of the MBI: the original measure that was designed for professionals in the human services, an adaptation of the original measure for use with educators, and a new version designed for use with workers in other occupations. The MBI for staff members in human services (HSS) and educational institutions (ES) are basically the same. The only modification is that of the word "recipient" on the HSS which was changed to "student" on the ES version. This change

was made to insure clarity and consistency in the interpretation of several items on the inventory. The General Survey (GS) was developed to accommodate a diverse number of occupational groups other than educators and human service providers (Maslach, Jackson, & Ryan, 1996).

According to Ryan (1996), a key aspect of the burnout syndrome is an increase in feelings of emotional exhaustion. Workers feel that they are no longer able to give of themselves at a psychological level as their emotional resources are depleted . The aspect of depersonalization, which causes people to have negative, cynical attitudes and feelings about their clients, can lead staff members to view their clients in a callous or even dehumanized way, and can create the perception that their clients are somehow deserving of their troubles. Moreover, the development of depersonalization appears to be related to emotional exhaustion; therefore, these two aspects of burnout should be correlated. The third aspect, reduced personal accomplishment, is indicative of a tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, particularly with regard to one's work with clients. This negativity is the causal factor of dissatisfaction with one's accomplishments on the job.

Burnout is conceptualized as a continuous variable, ranging from low to moderate or high degrees of the experienced feelings associated with the syndrome. This dichotomous variable is viewed as occurring to a high degree when reflected in high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales and low scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale of the MBI. An average degree of burnout is reflected by average scores on all three subscales. A low degree of burnout is reflected by low scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and high scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale. Scores are considered high if they are in the upper third of the normative distribution, average in the middle third, and low if they are in the lower third of the normative distribution (Maslach et al. 1996).

Human Service Providers

Any job in which a person helps others involves a certain degree of stress. Each occupation has its own unique pressures, anxieties, and conflicts which are inherent to the nature of the work and the context or setting in which the work is done. There are three characteristics that are the classic antecedents of burnout found to exist among human service workers: they perform emotionally taxing work; they share personality characteristics that influenced their career in human services; and they share a "client centered" orientation (Pines et al. 1980).

Human service professionals are exposed to their clients' psychological, social, and physical problems and consequently experience varying degrees of emotional stress. The specific degree and type of stress depends on the demands of the particular job and the resources available to the individual. The special characteristics of those who choose to help others is another factor in the experience of emotional stress. Those who choose to help others as a profession are generally particularly sensitive toward others. Although human service professionals struggle to obtain "detached concern," it is a balance that is very difficult to achieve. The "client-centered" orientation is the third antecedent of burnout among such professionals. Because the nature of the work focuses on the needs of the client, people in these professions very often fail to nurture themselves. As a consequence, the human service provider often becomes subject to physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. In order to defend themselves against the emotional stresses of their work, professionals may physically or emotionally withdraw from their job in varying degrees and ways in self defense. Despite attempts to mediate this chronic stress, it often leads to burnout (Pines et al. 1980).

A review of the research on the concept of burnout reveals that the burnout syndrome encompasses a wide variety of human service professionals. These professionals include those working in the following professions: health care, law enforcement services, social

services, and mental health care. Although many predictors of burnout were examined, the causal factors and ramifications appear to be very diverse as represented in the following studies.

Health Care Providers

According to Nordhaus (1995), health care organizations are facing a growing human crisis as the pace of change in the health care industry accelerates and is affecting all segments of the industry . A study of 248 nurses and 108 service employees was designed to differentiate the connection between job burnout, job dissatisfaction, and poor performance among these employees. Among service personnel, it was determined that burnout could not be distinguished from subjective incompetence. Among nurses, burnout could barely be distinguished from job dissatisfaction (Randall, & Scott, 1988).

Norwack & Penkowski (1994) explored the relationship between life style habits, substance use (alcohol, drugs, and smoking), and job burnout among 879 professional working woman employed in dental offices. Although there appeared to be a positive relationship between poor lifestyle practices and the use of substances for recreational purposes, in general , substance use was not significantly related to job burnout. Subjects who reported that they smoked did engage in significantly lower overall healthy lifestyle practices. Those who reported using alcohol or drugs perceived greater work and life stress. They also engaged in a lower quality of positive lifestyle practices and engaged in more frequent use of dysfunctional coping strategies.

A study of 128 hospital social workers who work with AIDS patients investigated the relationship between age, autonomy, social support , and burnout. The results showed that younger workers had slightly higher rates of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization on the MBI, but they did feel a substantially higher level of personal accomplishment than older workers. The researchers concluded that 19% of the variance in burnout could be attributed to age, autonomy, and social support (Oktay, 1992).

Law Enforcement Services

The literature reveals that those involved in the field of law enforcement experience many of the same aspects of burnout as do those in other human service professions.

The relationship between perceived stress, physical symptoms, daily hassles, gender, and job burnout among officers of a state highway patrol agency was examined by Norvell, Hills, & Murrin (1993). The subjects were 52 male and 52 female officers. Results suggested that male officers perceived a greater degree of perceived stress and emotional exhaustion and greater dissatisfaction with their work than do women. Perceptions of higher stress among the male officers was influenced by the experience of a higher number of physical symptoms and aspects of job satisfaction. Higher levels of perceived stress among the female subjects was associated with dissatisfaction with their co-workers.

Another study involving 138 police officers (Stearns & Moore, 1993) determined that there was a significant relationship among physical and psychological variables and burnout. The MBI was used in a stepwise multiple regression analysis that determined which set of variables were related to the measures of burnout. Psychological well-being was found to be one of the strongest factors in this study. Health concerns and authoritarian attitudes were also highly correlated with burnout in this study.

Social Services

The MBI was utilized to assess the degree of staff burnout in shelters for battered women. In this study (Epstein & Silvern, 1990), the relationship among working conditions, length of employment, and burnout was investigated. The findings of this study concluded that shelter workers were found to be significantly less emotionally exhausted when compared with norms for a more general group of personnel providers. Additionally, they had fewer feelings of depersonalization and had a higher sense of personal accomplishment. There was, however, a significant relationship between participation in decision making and emotional exhaustion: more participation was

associated with greater exhaustion for those recently hired, and less exhaustion for those who had worked longer. Moreover, greater autonomy and peer cohesion were associated with fewer feelings of depersonalization.

An investigation of the relationship between work-related activities, job satisfaction, and burnout was conducted in a study of 120 income maintenance workers (Hagan, 1989). The subjects in this study reported high levels of emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction, as well as an intent to change jobs. Depersonalization, however, was not a common occurrence among the subjects in this study. It is possible that greater autonomy and peer cohesion was a factor that contributed to the lack of feelings of depersonalization in this population as well.

The experience of burnout and its antecedents among 62 supervisors in public welfare organizations in the northern United States was examined using the MBI and other scales (Erera, 1991). The results of the study suggested that, in contrast to front-line workers, supervisors experienced significantly high levels of depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment, but only moderate levels of emotional exhaustion. The principal cause of supervisors' burnout was ambiguous and incompatible organizational policies. Role conflict, perceived overload, and conflicting expectations from supervisors also contributed to burnout in this population.

Mental Health Care

Case managers who worked with seriously and persistently mentally ill clients were the subjects under investigation regarding the degree and consequences of job-related stress in a study conducted by Koeske, Kirk, & Koeske (1993). The workers were evaluated upon entry to the job and at subsequent time intervals during the duration of their employment. The evaluations assessed the workers' degree of stress, strain and negative consequences, such as burnout, job satisfaction, physical symptoms, intent to quit, and life dissatisfaction. The effect of coping strategies was also examined. The results of this

study concluded that control-oriented coping strategies clearly acted as work stress buffers, and that those who relied exclusively on avoidance coping strategies reported higher general levels of negative consequences.

Determinants of direct-care staff turnover in group homes for individuals with mental retardation was the subject under investigation in a 1993 study by Nancy Razza. A model of direct-care human service staff turnover was proposed and tested with a sample of direct-care staff members in 9 agencies. The subjects were administered questionnaires measuring burnout, job satisfaction, distributive justice, satisfaction with supervision, agreement of the job with personal goals and values, and employment history. This study concluded that there was a significant relationship between the aforementioned factors and the incidence of less burnout and lower attrition rate among staff members.

Burnout in Educational Organizations

Educators also share personality characteristics that influenced their decision to seek career in education. Most teachers enter the profession out of a sincere desire to help students to develop academically and socially. The high level of burnout among teachers appears to be due to several factors. Foremost, however, is the increased pressure by society to expand their roles beyond education so that they must deal with the myriad of social problems that students are experiencing. Teachers are often expected to deal with issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, and violence in addition to their role as educators. Studies using the MBI- ES have identified several recurring themes in the identification of individual and environmental characteristics related to job burnout (Maslach, et al., 1996).

Studies by Dillon & Tanner (1995), Chen & Lu (1994), and Greenglass, Fiksen & Burke (1994), and many others, have found that teachers who are young, single, and working in suburban and urban secondary schools experience the highest incidence of burnout. In addition to demographic factors, multiple research studies have identified the

primary organizational factors that contribute to teacher burnout. The primary variables that have been shown to be related to educator burnout include role conflict, role ambiguity, participation in decision making, reward systems need deficiency, professional freedom and autonomy, and social support networks (Maslach, et al., 1996).

Although a myriad of studies have focused on classroom teachers, more recent studies have begun to look at job-related burnout of school principals, assistant principals, superintendents, school psychologists, and other school personnel (Maslach, et al., 1996).

The results of national study by Huberty and Heuber in 1988, indicated that burnout is related to demographic, environmental (e.g., role definitions), and professional activity (e.g., role diversity) variables. Recent studies of stressors and their relationship to burnout among a national sample of school psychologists have suggested that burnout is a serious problem in the field (Fagan, & Wise, 1994).

Role conflict and role ambiguity were found to be high correlates of burnout among a sample of 225 high school supervisors according to a study in 1985 by Kortkamp and Mansfield. School principals were found to experience moderate to high levels of burnout as well. In two separate studies in 1994 conducted by Smith, Stephenson & Saul, and Kathryn Whitaker, the data indicated that although respondents experienced as high degree of personal accomplishment in their work, a sizable number of principals experienced moderate or high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in their roles.

Residence Life Staff

Gary L. Dickson (1981) conducted a national study from 1975 to 1979 to determine the perceived stress levels of Resident Assistants (RAs). This investigation utilized a self-report instrument, the Resident Assistant Stress Inventory (RASTI), to determine the impact of selected housing variables believed to have an effect on the perceived stress of the RAs. The variables, or housing characteristics, were, type of residence hall, number of students

per residence hall, number of students in campus housing, number of students per resident assistant, and experience of the resident assistant.

The RASI contained 50 items describing stress situations from which the RA responds. These items form six factors that represent various levels of stress: Factor I - emotional resiliency refers to situations where support is expected but does not occur; Factor II - facultative leadership refers to interactions with large groups of residents; Factor III - counseling skills refers to responding to concerns initiated by students; Factor IV - environmental adjustment refers to adaptations in life-style resulting from role expectations; Factor V - confrontive skills refers to encounters with individuals or small groups of residents who violate the rights of others; and Factor VI - values development refers to personal conflict resulting from competing value systems. These six RASI stress factors served as the dependent variable in assessing the impact of the five characteristics of campus housing (i.e. independent variables).

The results indicated that the size of the residence hall was not significant in differentiating stress on the RASI factors. Differences in perceived stress levels did, however, exist for such variables as type of residence hall, the number of students per RA, the size of campus housing, and the experience of the RA.

RAs who worked in women's residence halls displayed the highest incidence of stress in the area of emotional resiliency and low stress on facultative leadership, followed by those in coed halls (wings/floors), men's halls, and coed halls (suites/rooms). The tendency for women to have higher scores on emotional resiliency is consistent with previous research, and the presence of men in the coed halls has a positive effect on lowering stress in nonsupport situations by, apparently, providing such support. On the other hand, group leadership situations are more stressful for RAs in men's halls or coed halls. Apparently, men residents are less responsive to leadership efforts by RAs which increases RA stress.

The number of students per floor and size of campus housing showed a similar pattern of results. RAs in larger housing systems showed a tendency to experience less stress in confrontive skills and more stress in counseling skills as compared with Resident Assistants in smaller systems. This could be attributed to the fact that RAs with a large number of residents accept the realities of confrontation as necessary for community organization but experience more stress in counseling situations because of the magnification of such needs in a larger, diverse housing situation. Conversely, the support system that probably exists in smaller systems may be responsible for the tendency to experience less stress on counseling skills.

The amount of experience for Resident Assistants was a determining factor in the perception of stress in different areas. Inexperienced RAs exhibited a tendency to perceive more stress in confrontive situations and less in leadership capacities than those who have completed one or two terms on the job. Most of the studies with the RASI show counseling skills to be the less stressful factor. Interestingly, environmental adjustment and values development create more stress for RAs the longer they are on the job (Dickson, 1981).

This study revealed several important considerations regarding the potential for burnout among Residence Life staff members. Later studies of the burnout syndrome utilized several of the stress variables indicated in this study, and subsequent investigations identified other possible causal factors of the stress implicated in the burnout syndrome.

Norwack and Hanson (1985) investigated the relationship between stress, job performance, and burnout in college student resident assistants. This study examined the relationship of stress, personality characteristics, and cognitive appraisal to job performance, burnout, and physical illness in Resident Assistants. It focused on the role of cognitive hardiness and personality factors as factors that buffer individuals against burnout and illness in the face of stressful events.

Cognitive hardiness is indicated in individuals possessing an internal locus of control, a genuine and vigorous commitment toward their work and life, and view change as a challenge rather than a threat, particularly when experiencing considerable life stress. This study also examined the role of the Type A behavioral pattern (TABP) on job performance. This overt behavioral style characterizes an individual who is hard-driving, concerned about time urgency, impatient, competitive, and hostile when perceiving environmental events as challenging, stressful, or threatening. This pattern has been demonstrated to be significantly related to the development of coronary disease and, hence, is an important variable to be included in stress research studies.

It was hypothesized that RAs possessing a cognitively hardy outlook would experience significantly less illness and burnout in the face of life stress. It was also expected that RAs who exhibited TABP would score higher in job performance because of the hard driving and achievement oriented characteristics of this behavioral style. Moreover, it was expected that burnout would be positively associated with frequency of physical illness but negatively related to evaluations of job performance.

The results of this investigation revealed that cognitively hardy RAs were no more likely to be buffered against becoming emotionally exhausted than other RAs, as predicted. The findings were, however, consistent with the explanation that cognitive hardiness does appear to serve as a buffer against both burnout and physical illness in the face of stressful life events. The results also indicated that high levels of burnout and illness were significantly and negatively associated with job performance. Surprisingly, RAs who rated themselves as Type A received significantly poorer job performance ratings from their floor members than did other RAs. The researchers concluded that further research was needed to clarify how other mediating variables such as social support, exercise and supervisory burnout directly or indirectly influence burnout and job performance in the face of work and life stress.

In a follow-up study, Nowack, Gibbons & Hanson (1985), investigated several factors implicated in the previous study. This research explored the relationship of health habits and social support to psychological distress and burnout; the possibility that health habits and social support predict psychological distress and burnout; and the relationship among burnout, psychological distress, and evaluations of job performance.

The researchers hypothesized that RAs who regularly practiced good health habits and possessed strong social support networks would experience the least amount of burnout and psychological stress over the 10-month study period. They further hypothesized, in accordance with the aforementioned study, that burnout and psychological distress would be negatively correlated with evaluations of job performance.

As predicted, the results revealed that RAs who practiced regular, good health habits tended to experience significantly less psychological distress and emotional exhaustion. Additionally, RAs who were more satisfied with their social support network reported more personal accomplishment and less depersonalization. Social support did not, however, significantly contribute to predicted psychological distress and emotional exhaustion.

Nowack, Gibbons & Hanson concluded that these relationships should not be generalized beyond their sample because future longitudinal research is indicated to further delineate these complex causal relationships.

Fuer and McGonagle (1988) proposed that it was necessary to apply an interactional approach to see whether RAs are similar to other student service professionals, with a combination of individual and situational factors relating to burnout. They predicted that there was a relationship between the sex of the RA, the type of residence hall in which they worked, and the level of stress and burnout. They also studied individual perceptions of six dimensions of job-related stress as predictors to the experience of burnout.

The findings of this study indicated that sex was significantly related to differing perceptions of stress and burnout. Women reported more stress in situations involving

values development and also seemed to experience higher levels of burnout, specifically in the area of emotional exhaustion and a lack of personal accomplishment. On measures of frequency of burnout responses and on the dimension of depersonalization, however, men and women responded in similar ways.

The type of residence hall was not related to the type of situation that produced the most stress, but RAs in freshman halls did, however, report higher levels of burnout.

The interaction of gender and type of residence hall revealed that male RAs in upper-class halls and female RAs in freshmen halls seemed to experience greater stress in three types of situations than did female RAs in upper-class halls or male RAs in freshman halls. The situations that were perceived as differently stressful included situations that require emotional resiliency, confrontation skills, and counseling skills.

The only factors that consistently predicted significant portions of the variance of burnout were stress experienced in situations requiring environmental adjustment and type of residence hall. The results indicated that RAs in freshman residence halls, as a group, are more likely to report that they are experiencing feelings of burnout than RAs in upper-class residence halls. It may be the larger number of concerns and heavier demands of programming in freshman residence halls that make it likely that RAs who work with freshman will experience more stress. Stress in situations requiring environmental adjustment results from one's inability to express important aspects of one's value systems and life-styles.

The authors deduce that an interactional model of burnout can provide a number of suggestions for making the role of Resident Assistant a less stressful one.

The relationship among the RA position, gender and burnout was explored in a 1989 study by Hetherington, Oliver and Phelps. The researchers examined the difference between the three dimensions of burnout in male and female RAs compared with males and females who were simply college students.

The results of this study suggested that the degree of burnout that RAs experience depends on the gender and dimension of the MBI subscale. An ANOVA (analysis of variance) was conducted using gender and type of student (RA verses general) as independent variables. Although there were no main effects on the Emotional Exhaustion (EE) or Depersonalization (DP) subscales, there were, however, interaction effects on the EE and DP subscales. Female RAs show a greater amount of emotional exhaustion than male RAs, male general students, and female general students. Female general students reported a significantly higher level of depersonalization than male general students. All RAs reported a greater sense of personal accomplishment than did general students and male general students scored significantly lower on personal accomplishment than the other groups.

Implications of this study suggest that because all RAs reported a greater sense of personal accomplishment than general students, this may assist them with other elements of burnout.

The work of Norwack, Gibbons, and Hanson (1985) supported the possibility that good health habits may lower the incidence of burnout. Previous research had also indicated that employees with lower status jobs had a higher level of burnout on the personal accomplishment dimension of the MBI. The type of residence hall had also been indicated as having an impact on the stress level of RAs in the aforementioned study by Dickson (1981). In 1989 Benedict and Mondloch proposed to replicate and refine these earlier findings.

This comprehensive study examined the effect of health habits, the status and time in the staff position, and the type of residence hall that the student supervised to determine if they might be predictors of burnout among Residence Life staff members. Burnout was measured using the MBI and health habits were measured by a 29-item self care inventory. A multivariate analysis was performed on three subscales of the MBI to determine if the levels of burnout between RAs and HRs (Head Resident) were different. Five factors of

health habits were subjected to a stepwise multiple regression analysis to determine which of factors would best predict the burnout scores. A Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to determine the relationship between the three dimensions of burnout and the length of time in the present position.

The results of this research suggested that certain types of health habits and residence hall environments are significantly associated with the levels of burnout experienced by Residence Hall student staff. Specifically, that those staff members working in predominantly freshman halls experienced significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion than did those working in the predominantly non-freshman halls. Staff members in co-ed halls were not significantly different from either of the other two groups. Poor eating habits were indicative of depersonalization, and those who practiced good hygienic and exercise habits reported higher levels of personal accomplishment. This study did not find a significant relationship between health habits and emotional exhaustion. The length of time in the position was not found to be significantly related to burnout nor was the status position.

This research suggests that Residence Hall staff members, particularly in freshman residence halls, who have poor health habits are at risk for experiencing high levels of burnout as measured by the MBI.

SUMMARY

The research reveals that there are many commonalities among the variables that contribute to the burnout syndrome experienced by those in the helping professions and Residence Life student staff members. The primary causal factors appear to be related to age, gender, role ambiguity, role conflict, participation in decision making, reward systems, autonomy, social support, and lifestyle and health habits.

Although the conclusions and findings of the studies examined were diverse, some similarities were apparent. Residence Life student staff members who were most susceptible to emotional exhaustion were generally younger, female subjects, and those who work in freshman residence halls. Subjects, regardless of gender, who reported healthy lifestyle practices, satisfaction with social support, and a sense of autonomy, generally experienced higher levels of personal accomplishment and fewer feelings of depersonalization.

This study will attempt to integrate the findings of the aforementioned research into a more comprehensive and holistic model through the examination of physiological, psychosocial, and environmental variables that have been found, in previous studies, to contribute to the burnout syndrome.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD AND DESIGN

The primary purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between psychosocial, environmental and physiological variables and the incidence of burnout. A description of the sample, procedure, and research design are included in this chapter.

SAMPLE

The participant's of this study were 71 student staff members, who are employed by the Office of Residents Life, at a co-educational, non-secretarian, state supported college in a rural area of southern New Jersey. The participants consisted of both male and female, graduate and undergraduate students, who range in age from 18 to 33 years old. The enrollment of the college consists of approximately 9,000 graduate and undergraduate students. The participant's work and reside in the residence halls and apartments which house about 2,000 students.

The six residence halls and three apartment complexes vary in terms of architectural design, number of residents, and the class rank of the residents who reside in them. It was expected that the different environmental factors would contribute to or minimize the incidence of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

Additionally, it was predicted that there might be a difference among the three job positions held by the staff members who consist of 42 Resident Assistants, 20 Resident Proctors and 9 Resident Hall Directors and the three degrees of experienced feelings

associated with the burnout syndrome. Because each type of staff position has its own unique pressures, anxieties, and conflicts, the various positions were examined as separate variables.

Variables such as the length of time on staff, gender, membership in other campus organizations, leadership positions held and the number of organizations in which the staff was involved was also examined for correlation with the incidence of burnout. Additionally, each of the physiological, psychosocial factors in the survey, were examined as separate variables regarding their relationship to the subscores of the MBI.

Physiological factors included items to determine the health habits of the subjects. The subjects responded to items that revealed whether or not they exercised, ate a well balanced diet, got ill less than twice a year, slept well, smoked, limited caffeine, as well as their habits regarding the consumption of alcohol.

Psychosocial items included questions that were intended to determine factors relating to social support systems. The questions contained items in which the subjects reported: the opportunity to socialize with friends and family, the existence of a friend, counselor, or clergy member to talk to in times of need, the ability to successfully negotiate time management, the ability to get along with staff members, and the amount of direction, encouragement, and support the subjects felt that they received from their immediate supervisor.

Items regarding environmental factors were limited to the residence hall or apartment complex that the staff member worked in and the number of students that the subjects were responsible for.

MEASURES

One instrument that was used in this study is a 25 item, survey which was designed to obtain information regarding factors such as age, gender, length of time in the position, housing assignment, health and lifestyle habits, and social support systems.

Part of this survey is devised in a manner in which the subject's are required to answer yes or no to the questions regarding their physiological and psycho-social habits. Questions that are answered "yes", are considered to be desirable and indicative of positive psycho-social, health and life-style habits. Previous research has indicated that these positive characteristics are helpful in reducing the stress associated with the burnout syndrome. Conversely, research suggests that negative responses to such questions are considered to be detrimental to ones well-being and can add to the stress level of the individual and contribute to the incidence of burnout.

Other questions regarding such factors as gender, age, position on staff number of semesters on staff, residence hall or apartment they work in, number of years in the position, and so forth, required the subject's to fill in the correct information.

This survey was designed to provide a holistic overview of the independent variables that may contribute to, or negate factors previously associated with the incidence of burnout. The simplistic and straightforward responses contribute to the reliability of this instrument, however, the attempt to gain a holistic overview of the various psycho-social, physiological, and environmental variables affecting the subjects could possibly be compromised by the limitations of the instrument.

The second measure to be used in this study, is the Maslach Burnout Inventory, ES, for educational institutions. The test format is a 22 item scale consisting of statements to be rated on a 0-6 frequency. Each item contains statements about the individual's feelings or attitudes towards various aspects of his or her work. Each statement is rated according to the frequency of occurrence of the feeling or attitude from 0 (never) to 6 (everyday). A

scoring key is provided that identifies and sums the depersonalization, emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment, subscales. The scale is designed to determine the frequency of occurrence of the individual's feelings or attitudes in relation to certain aspects of their job.

Burnout is conceptualized as a continuous variable, ranging from low to moderate or high feelings associated with the syndrome. An average degree of burnout is reflected by average scores on all three subscales. A low degree of burnout is evidenced by low scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and high scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale.

Reliability of the test is adequately demonstrated in the MBI manual. Subscale coefficients range from .71 to .90 (N = 1,316). Subscale standard errors of measurement ranged from 3.16 to 3.80. Reported test-retest reliability coefficients ranged from .60 to .82 after 2 to 4 weeks (N = 53) and .54 to .60 (N = 248) after 2 years. Reliability data for the ED form used in this study are reported to be consistent with those of the MBI. Cronbach alpha estimates ranging from .76 to .90 (N = 462) are reported from two studies.

Reliability coefficients for the subscales were the following: .90 for Emotional Exhaustion, .79 for Depersonalization, and .71 for personal accomplishment. Test-retest reliability for the subscales (N = 248 teachers) were the following: .60 for Emotional Exhaustion, .54 for Depersonalization, and .57 for Personal Accomplishment.

This instrument is solidly constructed and its reliability on the aforementioned subjects is validated by previous research of this population utilizing the MBI. Moreover, it has been established that Residence Life Staff members are subject to the same antecedents of burnout found to exist among those in other helping professions. The fact that the subjects in this research live and work with the students that they serve, gives further credence to the reliability of the psychometric properties of the MBI, (ES), on these particular subjects.

DESIGN

To test the hypothesis that there is a relationship between physical, psychosocial and environmental factors and the incidence of burnout the data was analyzed utilizing a Pearson-product-movement correlation. The MBI subscales, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were compared to the responses to the survey regarding the psycho-social, environmental, and physiological variables to determine whether a relationship appeared to exist. Each of the responses to the survey was considered as a separate variable and was examined for a relationship to each other as well as to the three components of the burnout syndrome. The relationship among the research variables was examined using the following hypothesis:

H₀: There is no relationship between gender, age, class rank, position on staff, number of years on staff, residence hall or complex worked in, number of residents or staff one is responsible for, semesters in the same residence hall or apartment, involvement in campus organizations, number of campus organizations involved in, holding a leadership position, number of leadership positions held, exercise habits, diet habits, incidences of illness, sleep habits, smoking habits, caffeine consumption, consumption of alcohol, social support systems, socialization opportunities, the ability to successfully negotiate time management and, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

H_a: There is a relationship between gender, age, class rank, position on staff, number of years on staff, residence hall or complex worked in, number of residents or staff one is responsible for, semesters in the same residence hall or apartment, involvement in campus organizations, number of campus organizations involved in, holding a leadership

position, number of leadership positions held, exercise habits, diet habits, incidences of illness, sleep habits, smoking habits, caffeine consumption, consumption of alcohol, social support systems, socialization opportunities, the ability to successfully negotiate time management and, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

TESTABLE HYPOTHESIS

Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between physiological, psychosocial, and environmental factors and the three psychological constructs of burnout.

Alternative hypothesis: A relationship exists between physiological, psychosocial, and environmental factors and the three psychological constructs of burnout.

PROCEDURE

The subjects were asked to participate in this study at an Inservice by anonymously completing two surveys. They were told that the questionnaires were for the purpose of determining job related attitudes and to put the last four digits of their social security number on the first page if they wanted feedback regarding the results. The subjects were then requested to read each question carefully and answer all the question on both surveys honestly. The were asked not to converse with their neighbors or look at their answers

during the procedure. The participants completed both surveys and returned them to the examiner when they were through. When all the subjects had completed and handed in the surveys the examiner passed out a feedback sheet explaining the true nature of the research. The examiner also gave a brief description of the burnout concept including the three dimensions of the subscales. It was then explained that this research would be used to help them to negate the stress related variables associated with the burnout syndrome.

SUMMARY

This approach will be used to gain a holistic perspective of the factors that contribute to the burnout syndrome among Residence Life Staff members. The possibility of finding a relationship between the variables examined in this study and the incidence of the various components of burnout, will provide information that may be used to identify risk factors that contribute to stress among Residence Life Staff members. This information will be helpful in the development of hiring policies, placement of the staff, and training strategies that may minimize or prevent staff burnout.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

It was predicted that there was a significant relationship among physiological, psychosocial and environmental factors and the incident of burnout among Residence Life staff members. This hypotheses was tested using a Pearson-product-movement correlation. The data revealed significant relationships among the research variables, therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

The Pearson product-movement analysis revealed a significant relationship between several physiological , psychosocial and environmental variables. There was a significant negative correlation between the use of alcohol and the apartment complex or residence hall assignment ($r=-0.28, p>0.01$), the number of leadership positions held and the use of caffeine ($r=-0.29, p>0.01$), the ability to get a good nights sleep and time management ($r=-0.24, p>0.04$). These results indicate that staff members in certain residence halls and apartment complexes did not abstain from alcohol consumption , staff members who hold leadership positions do not limit their consumption of caffeine, and those who are unable to successfully negotiate time management strategies are generally not able to get a good nights sleep. Positive correlation's were found between exercise and the ability to get along with other staff members ($r=0.28, p>0.03$), the number of years on staff and the ability to get along with other staff members ($r=0.51, p<0.01$), and gender and leadership positions ($r=0.27, p<0.01$). Those who had been staff members for one year or less and exercised on a regular basis reported that they got along well with other staff members and males held more leadership positions than did females.

Significant positive relationships were found among physiological , psychosocial and environmental factors and the subscales of the MBI as well. There was a significant relationship between gender and emotional exhaustion ($r=0.27, p<0.02$), the number of residents that one was responsible for and emotional exhaustion ($r=0.25, p>0.03$), leadership positions and emotional exhaustion ($r=0.28, p>0.01$), and relationships with staff and emotional exhaustion ($r=0.34, p<0.01$). Males experienced a higher incidence of emotional exhaustion as did those who were involved in leadership positions and those who did not get along with staff members.

SUMMARY

The analysis of the data revealed a positive relationship between several physiological, psychosocial, and environmental variables: members in certain residence halls did not obtain alcohol consumption, males held leadership positions more often than did females, staff members who hold leadership positions do not limit their consumption of caffeine, those who hold are not able to successfully negotiate time management strategies are not able to get a good nights sleep, and subjects who had been on staff for one year or less and exercised on a regular basis reported that they got along well with other staff members.

Positive relationships were also found among physiological, psychosocial, and environmental factors, and the subscales of the MBI. The data revealed that males, those who were involved in leadership positions, and those who did not get along with other staff members experienced a higher incidence of emotional exhaustion. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this investigation was to provide an integrative study of the various factors that may interact to produce burnout among Residence Life staff members. This study examined psychosocial, physiological, and environmental conditions that were thought to contribute to burnout among Residence Life staff members.

The participants of this study were 71 student staff members, who are employed by the Office of Residents Life, at a co-educational, non-secretarian, state supported college in a rural area of southern New Jersey. The participants consisted of both male and female, graduate and undergraduate students, who range in age from 18 to 33 years old.

To test the hypothesis that there is a relationship between physical, psychosocial and environmental factors and the incidence of burnout the data was analyzed utilizing a Pearson-product-movement correlation. The MBI subscales, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were compared to the responses to a 25 item survey regarding the psycho-social, environmental, and physiological variables to determine whether a relationship appeared to exist.

This research revealed a positive relationship between several physiological, psychosocial, and environmental variables: members in certain residence halls did not abstain from alcohol consumption, males hold leadership positions more often than did

females, staff members who hold leadership positions do not limit their consumption of caffeine, those who are not able to successfully negotiate time management strategies are not able to get a good nights sleep, and subjects who had been on staff for one year or less and exercised on a regular basis reported that they got along well with other staff members.

Positive relationships were also found among physiological, psychosocial, and environmental factors, and the subscales of the MBI. The data revealed that males, those who were involved in leadership positions, and those who did not get along with other staff members, evidenced a higher incidence of emotional exhaustion.

Conclusions

This study revealed the following relationships between variables:

- 1.) The use of alcohol and the apartment complex or residence hall the subject works in. Subjects residing in primarily freshman residence halls did not obtain or limit alcohol consumption.
- 2.) The number of leadership positions held and caffeine consumption. Staff members who hold leadership positions do not limit their consumption of caffeine.
- 3.) The ability to get a good nights sleep and time management. Those who hold are not able to successfully negotiate time management strategies are not able to get a good nights sleep.
- 4.) Exercise and the ability to get along with other staff members. Subjects who exercised on a regular basis reported that they got along well with other staff members.
- 5.) The number of years on staff and the ability to get along with other staff members. Subjects who had been on staff for one year or less reported better relationships with other staff members.
- 6.) Gender and leadership positions held. Males held leadership positions more often than did females.
- 7.) Gender and emotional exhaustion. Males experience a higher incidence of emotional exhaustion.

8.) The number of residents that one is responsible for and emotional exhaustion. Those who are responsible for a larger number of residents experience a higher degree of emotional exhaustion.

9.) Leadership positions and emotional exhaustion. The more leadership positions held the higher the level of emotional exhaustion.

10.) Relationship with staff and emotional exhaustion. Subjects who reported that they did not get along well with other staff members experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion.

Discussion

Past research on the role of Residence Life staff and the impact of this position on burnout has indicated that there are various factors that contribute to this condition. Research suggests that certain types of health habits and certain residence hall environments are significantly associated with the levels of burnout among residence hall staff. Other research indicates a relationship among the following variables: status positions, health habits, social support, stress, job performance, job, gender, and burnout.

This study revealed several similarities and relationships to the findings of other researchers, but it also revealed some contradictory findings. Nowack, Gibbons & Hanson (1985), explored the relationship of health habits and social support to psychological distress and burnout; the possibility that health habits and social support predict psychological distress and burnout; and the relationship among burnout, psychological distress, and evaluations of job performance. The results of this study were consistent with this research in that it revealed that RAs who practiced regular, good health habits tended to experience significantly less psychological distress and emotional exhaustion. Contrary to this research, social support did not significantly contribute to predicted emotional exhaustion in the Nowack, Gibbons & Hanson study.

Fuer and McGonagle (1988) explored a combination of individual and situational factors relating to burnout. They predicted that there was a relationship between the sex of the RA, the type of residence hall in which they worked, and the level of stress and burnout.

The findings of their study indicated that gender was significantly related to differing perceptions of stress and burnout. Women seemed to experience higher levels of burnout, specifically in the area of emotional exhaustion, again, indicating a contradiction to the findings of the present study. Fuer and McGonagle also found that female RAs in freshmen halls seemed to experience greater stress. This may account for the relationship between alcohol consumption by subjects residing in freshman residence halls that was indicated in the present study. It may be the larger number of concerns and heavier demands of programming in freshman residence halls that make it likely that RAs who work with freshmen will experience more stress and consequently use alcohol to relieve that stress.

The relationship among the RA position, gender and burnout was explored in a 1989 study by Hetherington, Oliver and Phelps. In this study the findings were again contradictory to those of this research, indicating that female RAs evidenced a higher amount of emotional exhaustion than male RAs.

The work of Norwack, Gibbons, and Hanson (1985) supported the possibility that good health habits may lower the incidence of burnout. This results of this study suggests that Residence Life staff members, particularly in freshman residence halls, who have poor health habits are at risk for experiencing high levels of burnout as measured by the MBI.

The contradictions between the aforementioned studies and the present study may be due to differences in sample size, male to female ratio of subjects, differences in variables examined and, variations of the analysis of the data.

This study suggests that staff members who hold more than one leadership position, have difficulty negotiating time management strategies, do not limit their intake of caffeine,

and are unable to get enough, sleep experience a the higher incidence of emotional exhaustion. It also indicates that the length of time on staff negatively effects their relationship with other staff members. Furthermore, those who experience poor staff relationships also experience a higher level of emotional exhaustion. This study also suggested that those staff members who were responsible for a greater number of residents, and those residing primarily in freshman hall appeared to experience higher levels of stress.

This information may be helpful in the development of hiring policies, placement of the staff, and training strategies in order to minimize or prevent staff burnout.

Implications for Future Research

Future research of the burnout syndrome should continue to enlist a holistic perspective. Contiguity of variables and factors examined among researchers and populations would be advantageous to the research process. A standardized questionnaire to examine the physiological, psychosocial and environmental factors would enhance the reliability of the research. Furthermore, testing conditions must be consistent as well as the method for the analysis of data. Test -retest applications would also be helpful, as it is possible that a subjects answers to the MBI may vary according to their mood or that levels of burnout may change over time or due to extraneous variables.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Benedict, James, O., Mondloch, Gregory, J. (1989). Factors affecting burnout in paraprofessional residence hall staff members. Journal of College Student Development, 30, 293-297.
- Chen, William, W., Lu, Laura, P. (1993-1994). Assessment of job related burnout among health education specialists. International Quarterly of Community Health Education, 14, 2, 207-214.
- Cherniss, Cary. (1980). Staff burnout: job stress in the human services. California: Sage Publications.
- Dickson, Gary, L. (1981). The Resident Assistant Stress Inventory 1975-1979. American College Personnel Association, 22, 362-367.
- Dillon, John, F., Tanner, Glen, R. (1995). Dimensions of career burnout among educators. Journalism and Mass Communication Educator, 50, 4-13.
- Edelwich, Jerry, & Brodsky. Burn-out: stages of disillusionment in the helping professions. New York: Human Services Press.
- Erera, Irit, P. (1991). Supervisors can burn out too. The Clinical Supervisor, 9, 131-148.
- Epstein, Sara, R., & Silvern, Louise, E. (1990). Staff burnout in shelters for battered women: A challenge for the '90s. Response to the Victimization of Women and Children, 13, 9-12.
- Fagan, Thomas, K., & Wise, Paula, Sachs. (1994). School psychology: past, present, and future. New York: Longman.
- Fuehrer, Ann, Mc Gonagle, Katherine. (1988). Individual and situational factors as predictors of burnout among resident assistants. Journal of College Student Development, 29, 244-249.
- Freudenberger, Herbert & Richelson, G. (1980). Burnout: the high cost of high achievement. New York: Bantam.
- Greenglass, Ester, R., Fiksenbaum, Lisa, & Burke, Ronald, J. (1994). The relationship between social support and burnout over time in teachers. Journal of Social Behavior and Personality, 9, 2, 219-230.
- Hagan, Jan, L. (1989). Income maintenance workers: Burned out, dissatisfied, and leaving. Journal of Social Service Research, 13, 47-63.
- Hetherington, Cheryl, Oliver, Meri, Kim, & Phelps, Christine, E. (1989). Resident assistant burnout: Factors of job and gender. Journal of College Student Development, 30, 266-269.

- Holmes, David, S. (1991). Abnormal psychology. New York: Harper Collins.
- Huberty, Thomas., & Hubner, E Scott. (1988) A national survey of burnout among school psychologists. Psychology in the Schools, 25, 54-61.
- Jaffe, Dennis, T., & Scott, Cynthia, D. (1984). From burnout to balance. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Koeske, Gary, F., Kirk, Stuart, A, & Koeske, Randi, D. (1993). Coping with job stress: Which strategies work best? Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 66, 319-335.
- Kortkamp, Robert, B., Mansfield, John, R. (1985). Role conflict, role ambiguity, powerlessness and burnout among high school supervisors. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 18, 4-13.
- Maslach, C. (1982). Burnout: the cost of caring. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Maslach, Cristina, Jackson, Susan E., & Leiter, Michael, P. (1996). Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual 3rd. edition. California: Consulting Psychologists Press Inc.
- Norvell, Nancy, K., Hills, Holly, A., & Murrin, Mary. R. (1993). Understanding stress in female and male enforcement officers. Psychology-of Women-Quarterly, 17, 289-301.
- Norwack, Kenneth,M., Pentkowski, Annette, M. (1994). Lifestyle habits, substance use and predictors of job burnout in professional working women. Work - and -Stress , 8, 19-35.
- Norwack, M., Gibbons, Jack, M., & Hanson, Alan, L.(1985). Factors affecting burn-out and job performance of resident assistants. Journal of College Student Personnel, 26, 137-142.
- Oktay, Julianne, S. (1992). Burnout in hospital social workers who work with AIDS patients. Journal of Social Work, 37, 432-439.
- Paine, Whiton, Stewart. (1982). Job stress and burnout: research, theory and intervention perspectives. California: Sage Publications.
- Pines, Ayala, M., Aronson, Elliot, & Kafry, Ditsa. (1980). Burnout: from tedium to personal growth. New York: Free Press.
- Randall, Mary, & Scott, William, A, (1988) Burnout, job satisfaction, and job performance. Australian Psychologist, 23, 335- 347.
- Razza, Nancy, J. (1993). Determinants of direct-care staff turnover in group homes for individuals with mental retardation. Mental Retardation, 31, 284-291.

- Ryckman, Richard. (1993). Theories of personality. California: Brooks Cole Publishing.
- Smith-Stephenson, Ruthie, Saul, Charles, E. (1994). An investigation into burnout among Mississippi high school principals. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association , Nashville, Tn, November 9-11.
- Stearns, Gerry, M., & Moore, Robert, J. (1993). The physical and psychological correlates of job burnout in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Canadian Journal of Criminology, 35, 127-147.
- Sue, David, Sue, Derald, & Sue, Stanley. (1990). Understanding abnormal behavior. New Jersey: Houghton/Mifflin.
- Whitaker, Kathryn. (1994). Are principal really burned out? Educational Research Quarterly, 17, 5-23.