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## All Used Up: Factors Associated with Burnout Among Missouri Social Service Workers

### Abstract

Analyses of data collected from 170 social service workers in Missouri find evidence that workers who report high levels of uncertainty about the future, low levels of professional self-esteem and low mastery are more likely to suffer from burnout while workers who have positive experiences with their coworkers, flexibility in their job, adequate promotion opportunities as well as low levels of unnecessary paperwork are less likely to report high levels of burnout.

## Introduction

Employees in “people work” jobs experience more burnout than employees in other occupational groups (Brotheridge, 2002). Burnout has been shown to have negative effects not only on the employees directly, for the clients they serve and the agencies that employ them. Not only has burnout been linked with physical illness (Powell, 1994; Rohland, 2000; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002), it also increases the chances of workers turning over which reduces the efficacy of services provided to clients (Collings & Murray, 1996) and leads to a loss of continuity of services to families (Winefield & Barlow, 1994). Departure of stressed staff represents a loss to the agency of that person’s training and experience, as well as consequent time and money spent training a replacement (Winefield & Barlow, 1994). This paper asks the question: What factors influence social service workers’ levels of burnout?

## Review of the Literature

Maslach and Jackson (1986) define burnout as a syndrome that is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. It is important to identify modifiable factors that contribute to the concept of burnout in order to prevent or alleviate their adverse consequences for individual workers, clients and organizations (Rohland, 2000). Previous literature has found factors within the three domains of demographics, personal characteristics and work environment characteristics are known to be important in influencing burnout.

### *Demographics*

While many demographic variables have an influence on workers' tendency to burnout including marital status and level of education (Acker, 2003; Collings & Murray, 1996; Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2001; Rafferty et al., 2001), the literature is conflicting as to how a worker's age, gender or job tenure is related to burnout. Some studies have associated older age with higher levels of burnout while others have found older workers to have higher morale scores (Collings & Murray, 1996; Koeske & Kelly, 1995). Some studies have found that as job tenure increases burnout increases and job satisfaction decreases (Schulz et al., 1995; Lambert et al. 2001) while others have found that length of employment has statistically significant positive relationships with feelings of personal accomplishment (Acker, 2003).

### *Personal Characteristics*

Individual social service workers bring their own personal characteristics to the job (Schulz, Greenley & Brown, 1995). Many have studied whether these personal characteristics influence their tendency to burn out (Acker, 2003; Collings & Murray, 1996; Lambert et al., 2001; Rafferty et al., 2001).

Psychological well being has been shown to have a very important relationship with burnout (Koeske & Kelly, 1995c). Optimism, control, self-esteem, and hardiness are personality dispositions that have been studied as possible buffers against burnout (Rohland, 2000). Several studies have also shown overcommitment to both a worker's job and clients to demand a lot of personal energy from the front line worker (de Jonge, Bosma, Peter & Siegrist, 2000; Koeske & Kirk, 1995b; Acker, 2003; Barber & Iwai, 1996).

Workers may feel that they do not have control when they cannot contribute to the decisions that affect their professional lives (Acker, 2003). Control, self-efficacy or task mastery are other features that has been studied when attempting to explain burnout (de Jonge et al., 2000; Dyer & Quine, 1998; Rafferty et al., 2001; Collings & Murray, 1996; Koeske & Kirk, 1995a). A large part of a social service workers' professional life is helping their clients. When they feel like they have no answers to clients' problems, it can increase their own level of stress (Collings & Murray, 1996).

Zunz (1998) found a strong sense of professional or personal purpose or mission is a resource that buffers the effects of burnout. This includes a sense of meaning to one's efforts, a commitment to a shared goal and responsibility to others.

Dyer and Quine (1998) found that the greatest satisfaction felt from social workers came from their own achievements (Dyer & Quine, 1998). Observable results of work, challenge provided and providing an essential service were found to be buffers against burnout (Dyer & Quine, 1998). Much of the reward social service workers feel from their job comes from feeling effective in improving conditions for children (Winefield & Barlow, 1994).

### *Work Environment Factors*

Attributes of the worker have commonly been cited as the cause of their burnout; yet recently researchers are focusing more closely on how organizational factors contribute to burnout (Arches, 1997). Many studies have discovered environmental factors to be better predictors of burnout than individual factors (Lambert et al., 2001; Collings & Murray, 1996; M. Soderfeldt & B. Soderfeldt, 1995; Acker, 2003).

An organizational factor that may possibly contribute to burnout is management and supervision (Dyer & Quine, 1998). They have been found to be both a source of social worker support as well as a potent source of a social workers' stress (Collings & Murray, 1996). Since work takes up a sizable proportion of a person's life, it is no surprise that relationships with co-workers certainly affect job satisfaction (Lambert et al., 2001).

A lack of resources within the social service work field may also contribute to burnout. Winefield and Barlow (1994) and Dyer and Quine (1998) found that social service workers' greatest dissatisfaction with their job was pay and promotion opportunities. Lambert et al.'s (2001) study also found financial rewards to have significant positive effects on job satisfaction.

Workers appear to be more satisfied with jobs that allow them variety rather than repetition (Lambert et al., 2001). Receiving recognition for a talent or skill can also be a resource against burnout (Zunz, 1998).

Many have studied the effects of social support and social integration on burnout (Dyer & Quine, 1998; Zunz, 1998; Rafferty et al., 2001; de Jonge et al., 2000; Barber & Iwai, 1996) which may best be a resource against high job demands when the type of support matches the demands of the job (Rafferty et al., 2001). Staff tended to consider other staff as a source of support (Dyer & Quine, 1998) and having support from one's supervisor is significantly associated with higher control, lower job demands and lower burnout (Rafferty et al., 2001).

Psychological demands of the job were the strongest predictors of emotional exhaustion, psychosomatic complaints and physical symptoms in de Jonge et al.'s (2000)

study. The expectations for long interactions with clients and the level of intensity and variety of emotional expressions needed have also been proposed as predictors of burnout (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Another predictor of mental stress is the social service worker's perceptions of their image in society (Collings & Murray, 1996).

A job requiring intense emotional regulation can be a heavy demand placed on the social service worker. In a study by Brotheridge and Grandey, (2002) perceived work demands, including frequency, duration, variety, and intensity of employee-client interactions, were positively related to burnout. Powell (1994) also found that alienation is closely related to burnout.

Some studies have shown that workload has emerged as one of the most consistent stressors among employees (Greenglass et al., 2001). The number of hours worked and the flexibility of those hours are potential variables influencing burnout (Dyer & Quine, 1998). Another demand that may possibly contribute to burnout is a worker's amount of responsibility (Dyer & Quine, 1998). A final workload item that is a significant predictor of stress among social service workers was having too much administrative paperwork (Collings & Murray, 1996).

#### *A Theoretical Perspective on Burnout*

Social service workers are more than aware of the many demands placed upon them; they must meet both the emotional and physical needs of their clients while also maintaining positive relationships with their coworkers and supervisors.

Payne's interactional model of burnout proposes that a job places demands on a worker, yet at the same time, a worker has sources of support within themselves and the job. These supports aid the workers in meeting their demands. Payne also explains that

there are constraints found within a job and a worker. These constraints may inhibit the worker from meeting the demands. Payne (1979) defined demand as the degree to which aspects of the environment command the individual's attention, mentally or physically, and require an appropriate response. Support was defined as the degree to which aspects of the environment, including social, intellectual, and physical aspects, assist the individual in meeting their demands. Finally, constraint was defined as the degree to which these same aspects of the environment, social, intellectual, and physical, impede the individual from meeting their demands. Payne proposes that it is a balance or combination of these supports, constraints and demands that best explain levels of stress and burnout. If a worker has inadequate support and overwhelming constraints, this makes it difficult to meet the demands placed upon them. These overwhelming demands then affect a worker's burnout level.

Payne also reminds us that certain factors can be either a constraint or a support depending on the person and the situation. A support for one person may be a constraint for another. For example, if a worker's experience with their supervision is satisfactory, it is likely that his or her supervisor will be a support for them. On the other hand, if a worker suffers poor experiences with their supervisor, the supervisor may act as a constraint against meeting his or her work demands.

Many of the factors related to burnout described in the review of literature can display this bilateral tendency. Factors such as self-esteem, mastery, flexibility, variety etc. can all be supports if a worker maintains healthy levels yet can be constraints if a worker suffers from damaging levels. Because of this, few concepts can be defined as either a support or a constraint. Thus, the term "support/constraint" will be used to refer

to these factors that can go both ways. This study uses these concepts of demands and support/constraints to build the conceptual model.

### *Conceptual Model*

The conceptual model parallels Payne's explanation of the way in which demands and supports/constraints interact with each other to influence burnout. This conceptual model recognizes that it is a combination of variables which interact to best explain levels of social service worker burnout. A review of the literature reveals three interacting domains impacting burnout; (1) demographics, (2) personal characteristics and (3) work environment factors. Supports/constraints and demands are embedded within these three domains which affect burnout (Barber & Iwai, 1996; Um & Harrison, 1998). Figure 1 illustrates this model. We now refine the research question to: Do demographic variables, individual characteristics and work environment factors interact in influencing social service worker's levels of burnout?

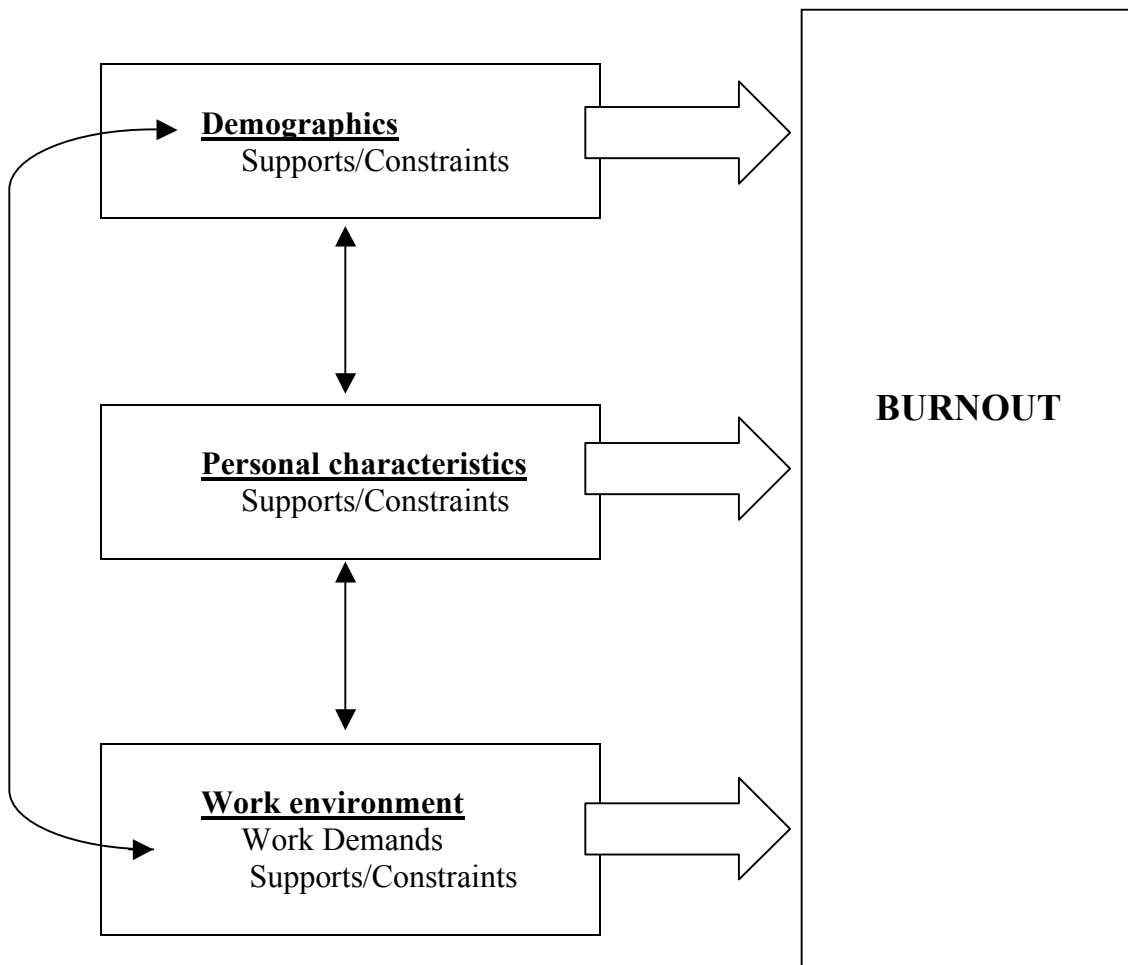


Figure 1. Conceptual Model Illustrating Three Categories of Factors Influencing  
Burnout

## Methodology

### *Collection and Sample*

The dataset used for these analyses is part of a larger research project evaluating a capacity building program for frontline family workers. The research project is a pre-test, post-test quasi-experimental design which surveyed social service workers from Missouri going through the training as well as a control group of similar social service workers not going through the training. The participants were all identified through their participation in this training program or were recruited using snowball and volunteer sampling techniques to participate as controls for the evaluation. Data were collected between October 2002 and March 2004. The sample size is 232. All participants work for non-profit, for-profit or government social service agencies such as domestic violence shelters, Missouri's welfare government agency and Head Start and have direct contact with clients as part of their regular job duties.

Three adjustments were made to this original sample to arrive at the final subsample used for this study. First, only participants working for non-profit agencies and state or federal government agencies are included in these analyses. As the occupation of social service worker is the primary focus of this study, any respondent indicating they worked for a for-profit agency is excluded. Second, only the pre-test data are used providing this cross-sectional analysis with the largest group of respondents possible. Finally, one version of the survey did not contain the Human Services Job Satisfaction Questionnaire which contains critical variables necessary for completion of this study. Therefore, only respondents for whom we have this information for are

included in the analyses. These adjustments result in a final subsample size of 170. This subsample is used in all analyses.

Over 90 percent of the 170 participants in the final subsample either reside or work in Missouri. The average age of the participants is 43 years. Females compose 87 percent of the sample, reflecting the gendered nature of people work. The majority of the participants work for non profit agencies (69.2 percent), while 30.8 percent work for state or federal government agencies. See Table 1 for complete demographic information.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the independent demographic variables

Variable	Value Labels	N (%)	M	SD	Max	Min
Marital Status	Married	81 (47.6)				
	Separated	6 (3.5)				
	Divorced	31 (18.2)				
	Widowed	4 (2.4)				
	Never been married	43 (25.3)				
Race	White	96 (57.8)				
	African American	60 (36.1)				
	Native American	7 (4.2)				
	Hispanic/Latino/Chicano	4 (2.4)				
	Other	4 (2.4)				
	Asian/Asian American	1 (0.6)				
Gender	Male	22 (13.2)				
	Female	145 (86.8)				
Age	Age	157	42.8	11.5	80	21
Education Level	Some high school	2 (1.2)				
	High school graduate	9 (5.4)				
	Some College	35 (20.6)				
	College Graduate	62 (36.9)				
	Some graduate education	26 (15.3)				
	Graduate or Professional School Degree	34 (20.2)				
	Years at Job	Years at job	168	5.0	5.00	27

Table Continues

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the independent demographic variables (continued).

Variable	Value Labels	N (%)	M	SD	Max	Min
Years in Type of Work	Years in type of work	168	10.9	8.82	36	1
Agency Type	Non profit agency	114 (67.7)				
	State or federal agency	55 (31.6)				

## *Survey instrument*

### *Dependent Variable: Burnout*

Shapiro, Burkey, Dorman & Welker (1996) published the Human Services Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (HSJSQ) designed to measure job satisfaction and burnout of human service professionals. This scale was chosen to be used in this study because it was the best source of information regarding a variety of working conditions such as affect, professional self-esteem and futility or avoidance. The scale included five subscales that measured several different aspects of the social service workers' work experience. The Futility/Avoidance and Affect subscales were combined to create the dependent variable of 'burnout'.

### *Independent Variables: Demographic, Personal and Work Environment Factors*

#### *Demographics.*

The relationship between marital status and burnout was measured in two ways. From the original variable with five response categories for marital status we constructed a dichotomous variable with married coded 1 and those not married coded 0. Gender has also been found to have effects on depersonalization, job satisfaction and support from friends and family and is therefore included in these analyses.

Educational attainment has been found to have a relationship with burnout. In this study, respondents were asked what was the highest grade or year in school that they had completed. There were six answer categories ranging from some high school to graduate/professional school graduate. A new education variable was created by dichotomizing the original education variable where 0 indicated having some college or less and 1 indicated at least a college degree.

The relationship between age and burnout was measured in three different ways. Age was kept as a continuous variable to conduct an analysis of variance (ANOVA) and it was categorized into four categories using its' quartiles as division points to conduct a crosstabulation. The original age category was also dichotomized using its median as the division point.

Questions related to job tenure; time started current job and time in type of work were also used in these analyses.

#### *Personal characteristics.*

Psychological well being was measured in two ways. The respondent's global self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and the respondent's level of uncertainty about the future was measured by asking how much uncertainty or anxiety they felt about the future on a scale of 0 to 100. Pearlin's (1978) task mastery scale measured the respondents' feelings of mastery, or control. Professional self-esteem was measured using the professional self-esteem subscale from the HSJSQ. Social support was measured using a score combining the responses to three questions assessing how often the respondent saw or visited with their relatives, neighbors and friends.

#### *Work Environment.*

Respondents' experiences with their supervisor were measured by constructing a new variable combining three questions from the HSJSQ which had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.892. Respondents' experiences with their co-workers were measured by constructing a new variable using four questions from the HSJSQ (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.744).

The number of hours worked and the flexibility of those hours can potentially influence burnout. Respondents were asked how many hours a week they usually worked. Two questions from the working conditions subscale were combined to measure the amount of flexibility in their job. This new variable had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.711.

A specific workload item that emerged from the literature as an important predictor of stress was having too much administrative paperwork. Respondents were asked to respond from strongly agree to strongly disagree to the statement: "There is a great deal of unnecessary paperwork at my job." A lack of opportunities for promotion can be an area of dissatisfaction among direct care staff. The respondents were asked about their feelings toward opportunities for advancement by asking them to respond to the statement: "There are opportunities for advancement at my job."

Studies have found that variety in the job is an area of satisfaction for social service workers and was measured for this study by the responses to the statement: "There is a lot of variety in my job."

It has also been shown that poor financial rewards have positive relationships with worker dissatisfaction. A worker's feelings about their rate of pay were captured by responding from strongly agree to strongly disagree to the statement: "I am fairly paid for my work."

### *Analytic Strategy*

Payne proposes that it is a balance or combination of demands and support/constraints that best explain levels of burnout and this study includes several measures to assess the amount of demands and support/constraints a worker encounters.

A worker's demographic support/constraints are measured by analyzing their age and marital status. Personal support/constraints are measured by analyzing levels of uncertainty, mastery and professional self-esteem. Demands of the work environment are measured by analyzing feelings of unnecessary paper work and flexibility within the job. Support/constraints within the work environment were measured by analyzing relationships with co-workers, promotion opportunities, and feelings about pay.

Bivariate correlations (not shown) between all of the independent variables and the dependent variable established preliminary relationships. Crosstabulations and analyses of variance (ANOVAs) measured the strength of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

Based on previous literature, theory, preliminary analyses, and the conceptual model, multivariate models were constructed to determine how well factors within each of the three domains, individually and combined, predict levels of social service worker burnout. Based on the bivariate analyses, not shown, and the review of the literature, the variables chosen to be used in the multivariate models are the demographic variables of age and marital status, the personal characteristics of uncertainty, mastery and professional self-esteem and the work environment variables of experience with co-workers, flexibility, unnecessary paperwork, promotion opportunities and fairness of pay.

We present the results of the bivariate analysis as well as the findings from several models containing (1) demographic factors only, (2) personal characteristics only, (3) work environment characteristics only and finally (4) the full model containing a combination of these three domains.

## Results

### *Bivariate Results*

Crosstabulations and ANOVAs were conducted to test for statistically significant relationships between the dependent and independent variables. With the exception of the categorized age variable, none of the demographics analyzed have a statistically significant relationship with burnout. The ANOVA of social integration and burnout did not reveal any significant relationships. The analyses conducted between self-esteem, uncertainty, mastery, professional self-esteem and burnout does reveal significant relationships. The ANOVA conducted comparing the mean number of hours worked for low burnout versus high burnout did not differ significantly. The bivariate analyses conducted of experiences with supervisors and coworkers, flexibility, feelings of unnecessary paperwork, opportunities for advancement, variety and fairness of pay does reveal statistically significant relationships with burnout.

### *Multivariate Models*

The model containing demographic factors only explains a small amount of the variance in the levels of burnout. The regression results show that this model as a whole is significant ( $F=3.554$ ,  $df=s$ ,  $p<.05$ ), yet only explains three to four percent of the variance in the levels of worker burnout. See Table 2.

Table 2. Ordinary Least Squares Regression of demographic factors on burnout

Variable	Unstandardized B	Standard Error	t
Demographics			
Age	-0.11	.01	-2.36
Marital Status	.17	.10	1.62
Constant	1.84	.20	9.40****

$R^2=.045$ , adjusted  $R^2=.033$ ,  $df=2, 150$

N=153

\*\*\*\* $p<.0001$ .

A regression was conducted for personal characteristics related to burnout. This model explains more of the variance in burnout levels than did demographic factors. The regression results show that this model as a whole is significant,  $F=38.181$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<.0001$ . The  $R^2 = .431$  and adjusted  $R^2=.420$  indicates that this model explains 42 to 43 percent of the variance in the chances that burnout will occur. All three independent variables are found to be significantly related to burnout. Higher feelings of uncertainty or anxiety about the future are positively related to burnout at a significance level of  $p<.0001$ . Mastery and professional self-esteem are negatively related to feelings of burnout at significance levels of  $p<.10$  and  $p<.0001$ , respectively. Table 3 presents these findings.

Table 3. Ordinary Least Squares Regression of personal characteristics on burnout

Variable	Unstandardized B	Standard Error	t
Personal Characteristics			
Uncertainty	.01	.00	3.68****
Mastery	-.18	.09	-1.96*
Professional self-esteem	-.55	.08	-7.21****
Constant	3.40	.35	9.76****

$R^2=.43$ , adjusted  $R^2=.42$ ,  $df=3$ , 151

N=155

\* $p<.05$ . \*\*\*\* $p<.0001$ .

The OLS regression conducted of work environment factors on burnout also yielded several significant findings. The regression results show that this model as a whole is significant,  $F=17.196$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p<.0001$ . This model explains 35 to 37 percent of the variance in burnout levels according to the R Square of .374 and the adjusted R Square of .352. In addition, four of the five independent variables included have statistically significant relationships with burnout. Feelings of unnecessary paperwork are positively related to feelings of burnout at a significance level of  $p<.0001$ . The relationship between experience with coworkers and burnout tends towards significance  $p<.10$  while burnout is negatively related to flexibility and opportunities for advancement,  $p<.05$  and  $p<.05$  respectively. Table 4 presents the findings for this regression.

Table 4. Ordinary Least Squares Regression of work environment factors on burnout

Variable	Unstandardized B	Standard Error	t
Work Environment			
Unnecessary paperwork	.21	.04	5.45****
Coworker experience	-.04	.02	-1.75†
Flexibility	-.06	.03	-2.06*
Opportunities for advancement	-.10	.04	-2.25*
Fairness of pay	-.00	.04	-.11
Constant	2.03	.27	7.67****

$R^2=.37$ , adjusted  $R^2=.352$ ,  $df=5, 144$

N=150

†  $p<.10$ , \* $p<.05$ . \*\*\*\* $p<.0001$ .

Table 5 presents the finding of the full OLS regression which simultaneously tests factors related to burnout from all three domains. The statistics show that this model is significant at a level of  $F=12.742$ ,  $df=10$ ,  $p<.001$ . The  $R^2 = .517$  and adjusted  $R^2=.477$  shows that this model explains 48 to 52 percent of the variance in the chances that burnout will occur. Three independent variables are also found to be significantly related to burnout. Higher feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about the future and the more the worker felt there was unnecessary paperwork are both positively related to burnout at significant levels,  $p<.05$  and  $p<.01$  respectively. Negatively related to burnout at a significance level of  $p<.001$  are high levels of professional self-esteem.

Table 5. Ordinary Least Squares Regression of demographics, personal characteristics and work environment factors on burnout

Variable	Unstandardized B	Standard Error	t
Demographics			
Age	-.01	.00	-1.61
Marital Status	.01	.09	.09
Personal Characteristics			
Uncertainty	.00	.00	2.40*
Mastery	-.16	.10	-1.58
Professional self-esteem	-.28	.09	-2.99**
Work Environment			
Unnecessary Paperwork	.18	.04	4.66***
Experience with coworkers	-.01	.02	-.62
Flexibility	-.03	.03	-1.08
Promotion opportunities	-.07	.04	-1.65
Fairness of pay	.02	.04	.42
Constant	2.91	.46	6.40****

$R^2=.516$ , adjusted  $R^2=.477$ ,  $df=10, 119$

$N=130$

\* $p<.05$ . \*\* $p<.01$ . \*\*\* $p<.001$ .

## Discussion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships between demographic factors, personal characteristics and work environment variables on social service worker burnout. This section will present a summary of the results as well as implications of the findings.

### *Discussion of Results*

We discovered that the three most statistically significant factors are; uncertainty about the future, professional self-esteem and unnecessary paperwork. Mastery, flexibility, opportunities for advancement and coworker experience are also significantly related to levels of burnout. Age, marital status and fairness of pay are not significant when included in multivariate analyses.

The findings of this study support previous studies on social service worker burnout. Both personal characteristics and work environment factors are highly associated with burnout in this sample while demographic factors have limited relationships with burnout. A possible explanation for the low significance of the demographics could be because of the low variability within the demographic data. The majority of the respondents are similar on the relevant demographics. Nearly half of the sample is white, middle-aged, married, women in Missouri with a college degree.

This study uses a theory that proposes that the demands of a job and supports/constraints influence one another. Our conceptual model contains variables measuring demographic, personal and work environment demands, and supports/constraints. The results of this study support Payne's (1979) theory that a combination of supports/constraints and demands explain the largest amount of variance

in burnout levels, indicating the complexity of this phenomenon. We needed to include demographic, personal and work environment supports/constraints to measure their effects on how well the workers deal with the demands placed upon them which in turn influences their burnout levels. We are able to understand a fuller picture of burnout by including more of the facets influencing it.

### *Multivariate Analyses*

The multivariate models reveal several interesting findings. Our study finds the three most robust individual variables that remained significant in all combinations of models are unnecessary paperwork, professional self-esteem and uncertainty about the future. It is an unexpected discovery that unnecessary paperwork is one of the strongest predictors of burnout. It may seem like a smaller, more insignificant part of a job compared to salary or management but it turns out to be extremely relevant when examining burnout. This may connect to the idea that many social service workers enter into the profession with the intention of being a public servant making human connections with others only to be overwhelmed or disillusioned by other factors, in this case, tedious paperwork. Administrative paperwork is an aspect of their job that permeates their every day experiences and has one of the largest effects on the level of burnout reported by our respondents.

Professional self-esteem and uncertainty about the future are the remaining two strongest and most consistently significant variables related to burnout. The more confidence and assurance a worker feels in his or her job, the less likely they are to burn out. Knowing this, it makes sense that the more confused, unsure and uncertain a workers feel about the future, the more burned out they will be. These two opposite

measures touch on the same fact; that the more certainty and sureness one feels about oneself and the future, the more protected one is against the threat of burnout. Previous studies discovered that a large part of social service work is coming up with answers to their clients' problems. If workers do not feel confident that they are successfully helping their clients, it is understandable that they would begin to feel burned out over time.

Mastery is also found to be consistently related to burnout. Pearlin's task mastery scale was used to measure the respondents' feelings of control and mastery. Responses to statements such as, "I have little control over the things that happen to me," give insight into the complex relationships between control and burnout. The less control a worker felt they had over the circumstances, the more likely they are to indicate high levels of burnout. Demands in which workers feel that they have little control over, such as amounts of administrative paperwork, have detrimental effects on their abilities to prevent burnout.

Many social service workers truly value flexibility in their jobs. Being unable to maintain a balance between the work world and the personal world is a source of stress in many workers' lives. We found in this study that the more flexibility one felt in his or her job, the less likely he or she indicates high levels of burnout. This could be because having flexibility with your work schedule allows workers to more adequately manage their personal lives, thus diminishing another potential source of stress.

It is natural that a worker should want to advance throughout his or her career. It can be frustrating and defeating to work hard in a job with no rewards of promotion. This

study finds the more negative a respondent feels towards opportunities for advancement at the job, the more likely she or he indicates higher levels of burnout.

Many employees have coworkers that they interact with to varying degrees on a regular basis. These coworkers can be an integral and pervasive part of one's day-to-day functioning in the work setting and have been shown to be a very important source of social support for the social service worker. We discover that the better coworker experiences are, the less likely our respondents feel high levels of burnout.

One very interesting finding is when other factors were controlled for, fairness of pay loses its significance. Perhaps a reason for this is because social service workers are aware that this work does not pay well. They make the choice to enter into the human services field for other reasons only to unexpectedly find the unappealing combination of mountains of paperwork coupled with poor advancement opportunities.

### *Implications for Employers*

The more we can understand factors associated with burnout, the better we can prevent it. This and other studies have revealed the importance of both personal characteristics and work environment factors affects on worker burnout. Agency managers and supervisory staff have reason to believe that personal troubles may become agency problems and that organizational design and development can address structural and procedural impediments that reduce agency efficiency and limit workers' ability (Koeske & Kelly, 1995).

Administrative paperwork is clearly an issue among social service workers. It has become an unwelcome and time-consuming facet of their work life. The more agencies are aware of this, the more steps could be taken to address this issue. Eliminating,

condensing or sharing of paperwork could be possible ways to lessen this stressful component of the social service workers' workday.

Our study's findings suggest that it is critical for employers to understand the importance of professional self-esteem on a worker's burnout levels. Agencies would be well served to incorporate practices that increase their staff's levels of professional self-esteem by including benefits such as professional training, etc. These autonomous and empowered workers could thus lead to better support of clients and improved agency functioning.

Burnout is significantly related to job satisfaction (Dyer & Quine, 1998) and job satisfaction greatly influences turnover intent (Lambert et al., 2001). Organization and management processes create work environments that either increase or decrease job satisfaction (Schulz et al., 1995). Our study and others suggest one way employers may be able to satisfy workers, which may reduce turnover levels, is to maintain a reasonable level of demands while simultaneously offering support (Dyer & Quine, 1998).

Managers and supervisors should create work environments conducive to employee autonomy and personal control (Koeske & Kirk, 1995a). Although programs that provide support for staff may be considered expensive, management needs to consider the cost effectiveness of these programs as they have been shown to significantly reduce burnout (Acker, 2003). If burnout can be reduced, this will have a significant effect on turnover rates, saving the agency money.

Our analyses point out that merely throwing money at this pervasive issue will not necessarily solve the very real problem of burnout in social service workers; simply paying workers more does not work. It is imperative that daily work experiences are

made better to reduce levels of burnout. This reduction will lead to more satisfied workers, improved agency functioning and enhanced service to clients. Everyone will benefit.

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