

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

J. Kevin Sullivan for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education presented on January 18, 1991.

Title: A Study to Examine the Relationship Between Burnout/Selected Demographic Characteristics and Supervisory Support Among School Psychologists

Abstract approved

Signature redacted for privacy.

Dr. Edwin Strowbridge

The principal focus of this investigation was to add to the very limited body of knowledge on stress and burnout among certificated school psychologists. The objective of this study was to learn both the incidence of burnout and the relationship between that incidence and selected demographic variables and supervisory support among certificated school psychologists in Oregon.

A sample of 70 school psychologists responded to a three-part research instrument consisting of a demographic data sheet, the Maslach Burnout Inventory, and the Work Experience Scale (WES). The primary measuring instrument, the MBI, provided a measure of perceived burnout in terms of the level of burnout of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. The Work Experience Scale provided a measure of perceived level of supervisory support.

School Psychologists were grouped according to the following demographic and job-related variables:

1. Educational level.
2. Type of academic preparation.
3. Years of experience as a school psychologist.
4. Years of experience in special education.
5. Sex.
6. Income.
7. Years in present job.
8. Geographical work setting.

Correlations of coefficient were computed to determine the degree of relationship between dependent burnout variables and significant independent demographic variables. Means and standard deviation for the study population and Maslach's sample population were performed to see if material differences exist between these two populations. Analysis of variance techniques were used to compare dependent burnout variables with selected independent demographic variables. The Newman Kuels Multiple Comparison procedure was performed to determine if statistical differences exist between geographical work settings. Multiple regression techniques were used to identify the relationship between the dependent burnout variables and all independent demographic variables.

Findings rejected the hypothesis that there was no significant relationship to burnout level of depersonalization and income, the burnout level of emotional exhaustion and years on the job, emotional exhaustion and income, emotional exhaustion and supervisory support, emotional exhaustion and level of academic

preparation, and level of personal accomplishment and work setting. All other hypotheses were rejected, however, significant relationships were found between the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization levels of burnout and selected independent demographic variables. Additionally, mean scores for the burnout subscales indicated moderate levels of burnout existed when respondent scoring information were compared against normative data.

A Study to Examine the Relationship Between  
Burnout/Selected Demographic  
Characteristics and Supervisory Support  
Among School Psychologists

by

J. Kevin Sullivan

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Completed January 18, 1991

Commencement June 1991

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the many special people who helped make this endeavor possible. I feel very fortunate to have worked with Dr. Edwin Strowbridge, major professor who guided me through this project and provided much needed encouragement throughout. In addition, I would like to thank the remainder of my committee, Dr. Eric Cooley, Dr. Carvel Wood, and Dr. Carlos Ovando, all whom provided thoughtful advice, numerous contributions, and constant ongoing moral support. I also wish to thank Dr. Aleta Robertson for her help and encouragement throughout.

I would like to extend a special thanks to my mother, without whose support and encouragement, attaining this educational goal would not have been possible. I know this Doctorate almost means as much to her as it does to me.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>		<u>Page</u>
I	INTRODUCTION .....	1
	Statement of the Problem .....	2
	Purpose of the Study .....	4
	Research Hypothesis .....	5
	Assumptions of the Study .....	7
	Limitations of the Study .....	7
	Discussion of Terms .....	8
II	REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....	9
	Nature of Stress .....	9
	Organizational Variables Related to Stress .....	14
	Burnout .....	19
	Findings of Burnout in Other Professionals .....	22
	Stress and Burnout Among School Psychologists .....	23
	Summary .....	27
III	METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE .....	29
	Procedures for Data Collection .....	29
	Instrumentation .....	30
	Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) .....	30
	Reliability .....	31
	Validity .....	32
	Work Environment Scale (WES) .....	32
	Procedures for Data Analysis .....	33
	Summary .....	33
IV	PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA .....	34
	Descriptive Data .....	34

Statistical Analysis .....	39
Gender Comparisons .....	42
Level of Burnout Syndrome when School Psychologists are Grouped by Education Level .....	46
Level of Burnout Syndrome when School Psychologists are Grouped by Level of Academic Preparation .....	47
Level of Burnout Syndrome when School Psychologists are Grouped by Work Setting .....	48
Level of Burnout Syndrome Emotional Exhaustion with Academic Preparation, Supervisory Support, Years on the Job, and Income .....	49
Level of Burnout Syndrome Depersonalization with Years on the Job, Sex, and Income .....	51
Level of Burnout Syndrome Depersonalization with Years on the Job, Sex, Income, Supervisory Support, and Educational Level .....	52
 V            SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS .....	55
Summary .....	55
Demographic Data Description .....	57
Statistical Analyses .....	59
Conclusions .....	60
Implications .....	64
Recommendations for Future Study .....	68
 REFERENCES .....	71
 APPENDIX	
A.    Cover Letters .....	75
B.    Survey Instruments .....	77

## LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE</u>		<u>Page</u>
I.	Range of Experienced Burnout .....	31
II.	Respondents by Sex .....	34
III.	Income Level .....	35
IV.	Number of Years in Present Job .....	35
V.	Type of Academic Preparation .....	36
VI.	Geographical Work Settings .....	36
VII.	Years in Special Education .....	37
VIII.	Education Level .....	37
IX.	Years of Experience as a School Psychologist .....	38
X.	Comparison of Means and Standard Deviations for Study Sample Population and Maslach's Sample Population .....	40
XI.	95% Confidence Interval for Mean .....	40
XII.	Pearson Product Moment Correlations Between Burnout Interval Variables .....	41
XIII.	Percentages of Males and Females in the Low, Moderate, and High Ranges of Emotional Exhaustion .....	42
XIV.	Percentages of Males and Females in the Low, Moderate, and High Ranges of Depersonalization .....	43
XV.	Percentages of Males and Females in the Low, Moderate, and High Ranges of Personal Accomplishment .....	43



XVI.	Comparison of Male and Female Mean and Standard Deviation Scores to Level of Burnout Syndrome When School Psychologists are Grouped by Sex .....	44
XVII.	Analysis of Variance Comparing Level of Burnout Syndrome When School Psychologists are Grouped by Sex .....	45
XVIII.	Analysis of Variance .....	46
XIX.	Analysis of Variance .....	46
XX.	Analysis of Variance .....	48
XXI.	Newman-Kuels Comparison of Mean Scores of Work Setting in the Personal Accomplishment Level of Burnout Syndrome .....	49
XXII.	Multiple Regression .....	50
XXIII.	Multiple Regression .....	51
XXIV.	Multiple Regression .....	52
XXV.	Variables in the Equation .....	53
XXVI.	Variables in the Equation .....	53

A STUDY TO EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
BURNOUT/SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND  
SUPERVISORY SUPPORT AMONG SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

We live in a highly charged, extremely competitive society where people are constantly faced with demands to function beyond a healthy operational range. Schools as work places have not been exempt as work places from societal pressures. In particular, special education with legal pressures of 94-142, labeling requirements, parental pressures, heavier case loads, increased performance demands, and funding sources that all too often are inadequate have caused the school psychologist to work under increasingly higher levels of stress. Although all indicators point to this stress level and concomitant burnout continuing, little research has been completed concerning the extent that school psychologists experience burnout and the relationship between burnout and relevant demographic variables. This is in contrast to a greater body of research that has been completed on role stress and burnout for the general population of educators.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The principle focus of this investigation is to add to the very limited body of knowledge on stress and burnout among certified school psychologists. The objective of this study is to learn both the incidence of burnout and the relationship between that incidence and selected demographic variables and supervisory support among certified school psychologists in Oregon. Lack of research in this area makes it extremely difficult to defend both the incidence of burnout in the profession and the impinging relevant variables that affect the population.

A review of doctoral dissertations in social science and humanities under the heading "Burnout" in the *Comprehensive Dissertation Index* (1973-1986) revealed only one dissertation (Johnson, 1983) of the 364 studies reviewed that addressed burnout among school psychologists. The dissertation identified focused on the relationship between irrational beliefs and burnout among school psychologists. This proposed study is quite different; it focuses on selected demographic variables versus irrational beliefs.

A thorough search of the Educational Resources Clearing Center (ERCC) Index was completed under the headings of "Stress and Social Psychologists," "Burnout and Psychologists," and "Stress and Burnout Among School Psychologists." This search revealed only six studies completed. All studies differed significantly both in terms of the instruments utilized and the variables considered from this proposed study.

Pierson-Hubeney and Archambault (1987) stated that "little" research to date has been conducted on the role stress and burnout is experienced by school psychologists. Beitman's (1982) research using 84 school psychologists from Delaware

indicated that job conditions, professional power, itinerancy, diagnostics, time for paperwork, workload, motivation, and prestige were the factors related to occupational stress and burnout for school psychologists. This study will differ from Beitman's by (a) focusing on the relationship between burnout among Oregon School Psychologists and the specific selected demographic variables of age, level of education, type of academic preparation, years of experience, years in special education, sex, salary, years in present job worksetting and supervisory support; and (b) attempting to survey the entire population of certified state school psychologists association. Reiner and Hartshore (1982) investigating concerns of school psychologists in Kansas also found the lack of time, support, and appreciation to be sources of distress.

Bennington (1982) and Jacobs (1983) found role conflict to be significantly related to burnout. Johnson (1983) compared the degree of perceived burnout for school psychologists to other previous studies of helping professionals. Factors found related to stress and burnout focused on job characteristics. Finally, Pierson-Hubeny and Archambault (1987) found that school psychologists, compared to other teacher groups had the second lowest level of burnout in the Depersonalization Domain of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, a section of the instrument developed by Maslach and Jackson (1979). Middle range perceptions of burnout were identified as the Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment dimension.

This study is intended to add to the limited body of knowledge available on stress and burnout among school psychologists. It will differ from previous studies by including a demographic variable not previously explored--the impact of the service

setting (rural, suburban, urban, inner city) on burnout and will examine the role of supervisory support in burnout.

Burnout is a condition characterized by lack of enthusiasm, high levels of frustration and alienation, and physical and emotional fatigue (Clouse, 1982b). It often occurs in the helping professions where failure and misery are variables that the teacher, doctor, nurse, or mental health professional is faced with on an ongoing basis (Maslach, 1982). Another commonly held view of burnout is that it occurs within the individual whenever the expectation level is dramatically opposed to reality and the person persists in trying to reach that expectation, the end result being inner conflict which can ultimately seriously impair the individual's ability to function (Freudenberger, 1980).

The research on burnout is relatively new with the majority of studies surveyed having been done since 1976. The majority of these studies have focused on the identification of the sources of burnout (Maslach, 1976, 1977; Selye, 1956). Other studies have suggested intervention strategies (Adams, 1980). There has been very little research, however, that identifies or measures the extent of burnout in specific populations and relates that to selected demographic variables (Allen, 1982; Pierce, 1982; Whitaker, 1984; Youree, 1984; Robertson, 1988).

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study, therefore, will be to learn to what extent school psychologists in Oregon report being burned out and the relationship between level of burnout, supervisory support, and the selected demographic variables of level of

education, academic preparation, years of experience, years in special education, sex, salary, years in present job, different work settings, and supervisory support.

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

This study is designed to examine the relationship between burnout and selected demographic characteristics among school psychologists. The following null hypotheses were constructed for research purposes.

1. There will be no significant relationship between level of education and scores in the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment subscales (as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory).
2. There will be no significant relationship between type of academic preparation and scores in the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment subscales (as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory).
3. There will be no significant relationship between years of experience as a school psychologist and scores in the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment subscales (as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory).
4. There will be no significant relationship between years in special education and scores in the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment subscales (as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory).
5. There will be no significant relationship between sex and scores in the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment subscales (as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory).

6. There will be no significant relationship between salary and scores in the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment subscales (as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory).

7. There will be no significant relationship between years in present job and scores in the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment subscales (as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory).

8. There will be no significant relationship between work setting (rural, urban, suburban, inner city) and scores in the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment subscales (as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory).

9. There will be no significant relationship between supervisory support (as measured by the Work Environment Scale) and scores on the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment subscales (as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory).

10. There will be no significant relationship between emotional exhaustion as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the demographic variables of level of education, type of academic preparation, years of experience as a school psychologist, years in special education, sex, salary, years in present job, work setting, and supervisory support.

11. There will be no significant relationship between depersonalization as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the demographic variables of level of education, type of academic preparation, years of experience as a school psychologist, years in special education, sex, salary, years in present job, work setting, and supervisory support.

12. There will be no significant relationship between personal accomplishment as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the demographic variables of level of education, type of academic preparation, years of experience as a school psychologist, years in special education, sex, salary, years in present job, work setting, and supervisory support.

### ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

It is assumed that the data are accurate insofar as the Maslach Burnout Assessment Inventory is a valid and reliable instrument in measuring factors in burnout as perceived by selected school psychologists. It is also assumed that selected school psychologists will possess an adequate knowledge base to react to the survey instrument and that all certified school psychologists in Oregon can be accurately identified and sampled.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study could be limited by the following factors:

1. This investigation will be limited to certified school psychologists in one selected geographical location; thus, they will not be representative of all certified school psychologists.
2. This study will explore only occupational stress and burnout. It will not consider personal factors which occur outside of the job, but it is recognized that these factors can contribute to personal stress which can carry over into the work place and be a factor in burnout.



3. This study will focus on school psychologists' perception of sources of burnout. Therefore, the data was only valid to the extent that subjects' perceptions will be valid.

4. The study will be conducted with volunteers and may not reflect the perceptions of the total population.

### DISCUSSION OF TERMS

The following terms are described and discussed as a means of containing this study and containing the focus of the research problem.

Burnout. A syndrome of emotional and physical exhaustion involving the development of negative self-concept, negative job attitudes, and loss of concern for clients (Maslach, 1982).

Distress. Unpleasant or disease-producing stress (Pierce, 1982).

Eustress. Pleasant or beneficial stress (Pierce, 1982).

Frustration. The degree to which an individual feels thwarted in attempts to accomplish a desired purpose or goal (Pierce, 1982).

School Psychologist. A personnel services specialist certified by the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission to provide psychological services for children in public school settings.

Special Education. Education for any child who is considered handicapped under the guidelines of Public Law 94-142, Education for All Children Act of 1975.

Stress. The nonspecific response of the body to any demand made on it (Selye, 1956, cited in Pierce, 1982).

Stressor. A factor which produces stress (Pierce, 1982).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of the literature will be divided into four sections: the nature and definition of stress; organizational variables related to stress; general definitions and description of the burnout process; and stress and burnout among school psychologists.

#### NATURE OF STRESS

The concept of stress is not new; it can be traced back to even prehistoric times.

Hans Selye, a pioneer credited as the first to note the existence of human stress, described it as the nonspecific response to the body to any demand made on it. To Selye, it was immaterial whether the stress producing activity was pleasant or unpleasant; all that mattered was the demands it placed on us for readjustment or adaptation.

Reni Dubos, a French philosopher, described stress in the following terms:

Modern man has retained many physiological and mental attributes ill suited to civilized life, just as he has retained useless anatomical vestiges from his evolutionary past. As a result, he must meet the challenge of today with biological equipment largely anachronistic. Many forms of organic and mental disease originate from the responses that man's paleolithic nature makes to the condition of modern life.

No one is immune from stress, driving in traffic, carrying on simple conversations, or even the experience of gliding down a ski slope all produce stress. Any emotion, any activity, causes stress. We all respond differently to the stressors we are faced with. Stress that disables one person can be motivating and rewarding for another.

Stressful situations which are sporadic and chronic can exert an extremely negative influence on those exposed to them which eventually make these individuals vulnerable to illnesses, depression, and loss of self-esteem.

Selye felt that through the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), our various internal organs (i.e., the endocrine gland and the nervous system) help us to adjust to the constant changes which are in and around us. The GAS involved three distinct phases. They are alarm reaction, stage of resistance, and stage of exhaustion.

In the alarm reaction phase, the body shows the changes characteristic of the first exposure to a stressor. At the same time, resistance is diminished and, if the stressor is sufficiently strong, death may result.

The next phase, stage of resistance, involves bodily signs characteristic of the alarm reaction virtually disappearing and the body attempts to bring itself back to a stage of balance.

The final stage, exhaustion, involves a complete draining in the body to the stressor to which it has had long continued exposure. The signs of alarm reaction reappear, but they are not reversible and the individual dies.

Although Selye has also defined stress as the "rate of wear and tear on the body" he also felt that a certain amount of stress was essential for well being and he

distinguished damaging from growth promoting stress. He distinguished between the two by the labels distress and eustress. We generally view stress as distress (i.e., capacity to foster disease). Eustress involves challenge opportunity for growth and positive change.

The initial phase of the stress response commonly called fight or flight was first described by Walter Cannon, this country's premier physiologist. Simply put, when the animal or man perceives a survival threat, a response is triggered by the mind which prepares the body for the demand before the threat is physically upon it. As soon as a threat is perceived, then the body mobilizes so that if a real danger actually arrives, the animal or man is well prepared. How does this apply to man in the age of being insulated from threats to our physical survival? Does the question, "if we rarely need this response mechanism does its presence do us any harm?" What difference does it make to long-term functioning of health of the human body to have this response turned on when it is not needed. In our culture, the fight or flight response is being triggered time and time again when actual physical threats are not present and physical responses are inappropriate.

Besides outlining the fight or flight response, Cannon (1953) made a discovery crucial to physiology called homeostasis or "to remain the same." The mechanisms of homeostasis are of great importance to the normal recovery of the body from the state of imbalance brought about by the flight or fight response. A key ingredient to homeostasis is that physical activity is the principal mechanism necessary to bring the body back to a normal state in a reasonable period of time. Once internal arousal occurs, the body needs the subsequent physical activity to "burn off" the arousal. If

this does not occur, then internal organs stay at an elevated arousal for a long time and thus blood pressure stays high, heart rate is elevated, etc. Cannon describes this as an "evolutionary anachronism"--our cultural social evolution has out-paced our biological evolution. In modern situations we can neither fight or run and are forced to suffer the wear and tear that stress inflicts on our bodies.

Selye (1956) felt strongly that this wear and tear that stress inflicts on our bodies manifests itself most in psychosomatic stress diseases. His work in animal research indicated that emotional reactions seemed to play a major role in the development of psychosomatic diseases such as asthma, kidney disease, high blood pressure, arthritis, and ulcers.

Wright (1973) postulated that we all have limits beyond which stress is harmful and the primary purpose of a stress reaction is to act as a defense mechanism to return the individual's emotional state to balance.

A number of studies have been done in the past 40 years that measured the effects of various types of stimuli on both the level of stress and the effects of that stress. Holmes and Rahe (1967) developed the social readjustment rating scale for predicting susceptibility to stress diseases. The scale consists of 43 life change events with each event assigned a number of points which denotes the amount of readjustment or balance required after one experiences the event. Holmes found after extensive use of the scale that the more readjustment the individual makes in response to life events, the greater the probability of becoming ill and the higher the individual's score the more severe the illness is likely to be.

Jay Weiss (1972) subjected two rats to electric shock. One rat received an audible signal prior to the shock, another received random signals prior to shocking. The rat that heard the signals on a random basis developed ulcers five times larger than the rat that heard the warning signals.

Seligman (1975) discovered the phenomenon of learned helplessness by demonstrating clearly in animals and humans that distress and depression occur when an individual loses control over his environment.

John Cassell (1976) studied the degree of stressful readjustment during pregnancy to childbirth complications and found those who received little warmth and support during the readjustment period prior to delivery experienced three times the rate of complications to those who received a great deal of love and support during readjustment.

In a related study, Cassell (1976) found that divorced men have a death rate three to five times as high as married men of the same age.

Adams (1980) summarized studies and drew the following conclusions:

1. The incidence of illness is positively correlated with the amount of life change or transition one undergoes.
2. Unpredictable disruptions cause more severe stress-related diseases than predictable disruptions.
3. Lack of feedback causes more severe stress-related diseases than when relevant feedback is present.
4. Warmth and support during stressful periods appears to reduce the impact of stress.

5. Negative emotional experiences appear to facilitate the virus causing illness.
6. Hypertension occurs more frequently in environments characterized by high stress and few ways to respond to the stress.
7. The higher the incidence of social changes, the greater the risk of heart disease.

### ORGANIZATIONAL VARIABLES RELATED TO STRESS

Organizational strains have a direct influence on the degree of stress experienced by the individual in the work place. Gherman (1981) identified five primary causes of work-related stress. The first primary organizationally related stressor Gherman identified involved subtle pressure in the work place designed to make the employee contain emotional reactions. Openly expressed feelings of anxiety or hostility, although completely normal, are met with disapproval from management which, in turn, fosters repression of negative hostile feelings and higher stress levels. This gives rise to the so-called quiet, calm, "everything is under control" individual who buries his emotions only to have them surface in other ways. It also encourages people to engage in false hypocritical relationships with coworkers and manipulation rather than direct open communication as a primary mode in conflict resolution.

The cost of suppressed feelings and emotions is enormous both in terms of productivity for the organization and internal fight or flight phenomenon the worker is faced with and its subsequent toll affecting health and well being. The specific symptoms which then appear such as depression, loss of sexual interest, substance

abuse, generalized anxiety, etc., lead to an aggravation of problems the individual may be experiencing within the organization further raising stress levels experienced and fostering the development of a vicious cycle that can grow and affect others both in the work place and in the home setting.

A second organizational stress factor involves the imposition on the individual of external controls or rules and policies. The type and amount of external control placed upon the individual will significantly impact his stress level. An autocratic supervisor who excludes subordinates from the decision-making process decreases innovation, makes one feel a part of an inflexible structure, and fosters fear and apathy which leads to increased stress levels.

Predetermined role expectations that are inconsistent with the individual's personality and are grudgingly accepted by the individual is another stress increaser when one feels personal conflict as he feels weakened by the pressure to conform. Examples of predetermined role expectations which lead to conflict are many, but could include taking on extra projects, membership and participation in professional organizations, and following a rigid dress code.

Another area of organization external control of potential stress is the expected adherence to rigid procedures because they have a historical base in the organization. The individual can feel in this situation a certain sense of impotence and limited worth by being stopped from contributing to new and different approaches to the procedures within the organization.

Ambiguity within the organization is also a major reason for increased stress levels. Without clearly defined roles within the organization, security and effectiveness



are threatened. When there is a difference between what the individual is actually doing and what he is expected to do, conflict and stress results, thus the need for a clear, well-defined statement of responsibilities for every member of the organization.

Role conflict within the organization when an individual is torn by conflicting demands, feels pressured into getting along with people, has differences of opinion with supervisors is a major source of increased stress. Studies of the effects of role conflict on job satisfaction and professionally related tension in six large organizations (Kahn et al., 1964) showed that both men and women who suffered more role conflict had lower job satisfaction and more tension. It was additionally found that the personality of the individual is an important factor in how one reacts to role conflict. More specifically, it is the introvert rather than the extrovert who suffers the most stress from role conflict. A reason advanced for this is that it may be that the introvert has more difficulty with conflict because his higher level of independence, versus an extrovert, which is threatened with conflict that occurs primarily in social situations (Kahn et al., 1964). Kahn also noted that flexible people tend to blame themselves when things go wrong while rigid people externalize blame thus experiencing less stress in conflict than the flexible person.

Organizational "role overload" is a significant factor in stress and takes two forms. Quantitative overload involves the person having more work than can be done in a given period time and qualitative overload refers to work that is beyond the ability a person. Miller (1960) has postulated that excessive overload leads to the system breaking down irrespective of the level the system is at (i.e., single biological cells to individuals to organizations to states). McClelland (1961) described overload

as prevalent in our society and in one study cited a sample of university professors that averaged work weeks of 57 hours although their jobs did not demand it. Similarly high overload measures were reported at both the National Aeronautics and Space Agency and at the Goddard Flight Center. Quantitative and qualitative overload were studied together in a study at Goddard Space Flight Center by McClelland (1961). Those subjects found to be suffering from quantitative overload showed, as compared to subjects who were underloaded, lower self-esteem, higher incidence of errors, higher heart rates, and an increased level of cholesterol. Individuals determined to be suffering from qualitative overload, as compared to those who received easy tasks, suffered psychological strain in the form of embarrassment and loss of self-esteem and more psychological strain as measured by the basal skin resistance level.

Finally, personal space and territory plays a significant role in organizational stress and individual strain. Each time a person moves out of this "territory," whether it be an office or a building, and invades the territory of another, he is potentially putting himself as well as the other person under stress. Crossing organizational boundaries or having your job located in a territory where the prevailing occupation is different than your own (i.e., a psychologist working in an administrative setting with few other psychologists) produces strain. In the McClelland (1961) study cited earlier, the amount of time spent in interacting across organizational boundaries was associated with low self-actualization while the time spent in contact with persons from one's own work unit was associated with high self-actualization.

Having a job located in an alien work environment resulted in subjects experiencing quantitative and qualitative overload, higher systolic and diastolic blood pressure, and faster pulse beat (French and Caplan, 1972).

No discussion of organizational stress would be complete without a discussion of the identification by Friedman and Rosenman (1974) of the Type A behavior pattern. It is particularly relevant to the phenomenon of organizational stress because Type A behavior is nurtured, fostered, and rewarded in organizational settings. Friedman and Rosenman were both cardiologists who identified behavioral characteristics that correlated with coronary prone behavior. These characteristics involve: (a) time urgency, the constant need to move, walk, eat rapidly, and scheduling more and more in less time (time urgent behavior also equates success with getting things done faster than your co-worker); (b) impatience, hurrying the speech of others, attempting to finish sentences of people speaking to you; (c) polyphasia, frequently striving to think or do two things simultaneously; (d) quantitiveness, evaluating and translating your own and the activities of others in number terms; (e) egocentricity, a constant preoccupation with conversation themes that are of particular interest to you; (f) competitiveness, constantly seeking to outdo those we perceive as Type A; (g) existential dysfunction, a preoccupation with having and gaining things instead of spending time to become the things worth being; (h) unusual speech, constantly explosively accentuating key words in your ordinary speech when there is no need for such accentuation and uttering the last words of your sentences far more rapidly than the opening words; (i) unconscious tension, certain characteristic gestures or nervous tics such as clenching and unclenching the jaw or grinding teeth; and (j)

dulled senses, no longer aesthetically appreciating interesting objects or scenes in nature, not observing well.

Why then is Type A behavior common in organizations? The reason is clearly that in our culture, Type A behavior is valued and seen as essential to achieving the American dream. We assume that if we are fast, decisive, task-oriented, competitive, we will rise much quicker and higher than those of us who find it important to slow the pace down and make time in our lives to focus on the moment. The corporate ladders are filled with stress-ridden individuals overly focused on time and quantitative measurement at the expense of ignoring the overall goal and purpose of their activities in relationship to the *whole* organization.

## BURNOUT

Burnout emerged as a recognized syndrome in the early 1970s. The term was first coined by Dr. Herbert Freudenberger (1980) to help explain the cumulative debilitating effects he noticed in patients who were unable to cope with severe and chronic distress related to their jobs. He described burnout as a "nameless malaise with physical symptoms, feelings of depression, anger and weariness . . . a demon born of the society and times we live in and our ongoing struggle to invest our lives with meaning."

Jorde (1982) sees burnout as:

A stubborn and elusive problem that is characterized by a slow and progressive wearing down of the body and spirit. At its extreme, it has the power to render immobile otherwise healthy, competent individuals. Control slips away, the situation deteriorates, capacity to perform diminishes, and future stress results.

Maslach (1982) defines burnout as a "syndrome of physical and emotional exhaustion, involving the development of negative self concept, negative job attitudes, and loss of concern for clients."

Clouse (1982) viewed burnout as a three-pronged process. Initially he postulated that professionals enter their field with high levels of altruism. If these high expectations are not met, enthusiasm drops and feelings of inadequacy and frustration develop. If the individual is unable to cope with sources of frustration that develop, be they professional or personal in nature, he may then experience alienation and separation from the job.

Freudenberger (1980) believes that burnout begins slowly and is a chronic condition that has been developing over a period of months and years. He sees it as seldom acute and often not noticed in its early stages because most burnouts are competent, self-sufficient, and capable of hiding their weaknesses well. They are people who have high energy levels, are dedicated and committed, and have a high sense of accomplishment. Burnout begins usually as a result of over-commitment or over-dedication which is almost always an indication that the person's goals have been externally imposed. He has chosen his course because of standards that were set for him by others before he clearly thought it through. The origin of his choices was not from within with little real satisfaction involved--the search for more and more achievement and, ultimately, the burnout.

Gherman (1981) identifies nine behavioral symptoms of burnout. They are: (a) poor adaptability of mood, (b) ineffectuality, (c) increased irritability, (d) low frustration tolerance, (e) anxiety, (f) hostility, (g) unreasonable suspiciousness, (h)

feelings of helplessness, and (i) increased levels of risk taking. To cope with these symptoms, people may develop destructive habits such as alcohol or drug abuse which may lead to addiction and further aggravate the symptoms. Rigidity also occurs as people tend to become inflexible in their attitude. As burnout progresses, individuals question their ability to perform and both the quality and quantity of their work declines. This negatively impacts their off-the-job time where there can be a reduction of recreational activities and social contacts, feelings of isolation and marital discord as repercussions.

Jorde (1982) felt that three general characteristics shape the burnout profile-- emotional and physical exhaustion, disillusionment, and self-doubt and blame.

Emotional and physical exhaustion in burnout was seen as severe with absenteeism, tardiness, and psychosomatic illness increasing as the exhaustion intensifies. Denial is seen as a common response with many individuals working harder and longer in a futile attempt to demonstrate that they are not really as exhausted as they feel. This leads to disillusionment about the job and profession in general and a dehumanization of interpersonal interactions. Jorde sees negative behaviors developing at this stage in the forms of marital discord, overeating, substance abuse, etc.

The final stage of burnout is self-doubt and blame where the person can be viewed as functioning somewhat like a robot--skills and knowledge remain but the will to perform is robot-like. Moodiness, depression, and sadness are characteristic of behavior at this point.

Freudenberger (1980) describes behavior at this stage as "non-feeling," the caring has gone. The individual has lost the willingness and utility to feel. He is in a void where emotions such as anger, joy, love, and sorrow are not experienced.

### FINDINGS OF BURNOUT IN OTHER PROFESSIONALS

Numerous studies have been made in other professions regarding the prevalence of burnout. Allen (1982) found a correlation between total years in the occupation and years in the current position affected the burnout level of dental hygienists. Neville (1981) studied the burnout levels of services staff in academic libraries found the traditional organization structure and a fragmented professional support system were key contributors in burnout. Savicki and Cooley (1987), who explored the relationship of work environment and client contact to burnout in mental health professionals, found that work environments associated with high burnout are ones that restrict worker flexibility and de-emphasize planning or efficiency for the task at hand and are vague or ambiguous. Davis, Cooley, Savicki, and Firth (1989) explored the relationship between counselor satisfaction with supervision and counselor burnout and found a positive relationship between dissatisfaction with supervision and emotional exhaustion, feelings of depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Burchette (1983), in examining public school counselors, found that sex differences, ethnic background, mental status, age, and school building level appeared to be factors in burnout. Studying vocational rehabilitation counselors, Gentilli (1984) found relationships between burnout and role overload, role ambiguity, and nonparticipation in decision making.

Whitaker (1981), Pierce (1982), and Bonn (1982) studied burnout among public school teachers. Both Bonn and Pierce found a high percentage of their sample to be burned out with no correlation between age and years of teaching experience to burnout. Whitaker (1981) found frustration and alienation related to age and years of teaching experience.

### STRESS AND BURNOUT AMONG SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Educators have been faced with significant occupational pressures which have resulted in increasingly higher levels of stress and burnout. Mainstreaming, affirmative action, the endless quest for excellence in education, voter nonsupport of school funding issues, and an erosion of public confidence are changes that school psychologists, as well as other education groups, have had to grapple with. Heavier caseloads and increased performance demands are but two of the results of occupational pressures school psychologists contend with. Although all indications are that problems in the profession related to stress and burnout will multiply, very little research has been completed concerning this relationship between stress and perceived intensity of burnout among school psychologists.

Beitman (1982) indicated, using 84 school psychologists from the Delaware Valley, that job conditions, professional power, itinerancy, diagnostics, time for paperwork workload/motivation and prestige were the principal factors related to occupational stress for school psychologists. Reiner and Hartshore (1982) investigated the concerns of 43 school psychologists in Kansas and found that lack of time, support, and appreciation are sources of distress. Bennington (1982) and Jacobs



(1983) found that role conflict was significantly related to stress but reached different conclusions. Bennington, using members of the National Association of School Psychologists, found that, as a group, school psychologists reported significantly lower stress (i.e., anger, tension, fatigue, confusion, depression) than did a normal reference group of adults. He also found that physical symptomatology was that of a normal young adult. Jacobs, studying 276 educational psychologists in metropolitan Detroit, recommended continuing education and career advancement to raise the lowered self-esteem among psychologists surveyed.

Johnson (1983) compared the degree of perceived burnout for school psychologists to other previous studies of helping professionals. He used 250 members of the Ohio School Psychologists Association and found that job characteristics such as number of hours worked per week, previous teaching experience, and membership in professional associations were related to the degree of burnout using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). He found additionally that high standards, blame proneness, problem avoidance, and emotional irresponsibility as measured by the Irrational Beliefs Test were definitely related to burnout.

Pierson-Hubeney and Archambault (1987) conducted a study to determine (a) whether there were significant differences in the role stress levels of school psychologists and educators in four other (teacher and specialist) groups, (b) whether there was a relationship between role stress of school psychologists and their perceived intensity of burnout, and (c) whether there were significant differences in the perceived intensity of burnout experienced by school psychologists and members of the remaining educator groups. All groups were administered the MBI which provides a

measure of the respondent's perception of burnout along the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and person accomplishment. In addition, the Role Questionnaire (RQ) designed by Rizzo, Mouse, and Lirtman (1970) was administered to assess levels of role conflict and role ambiguity.

Results obtained indicated that in relation to other educator groups, school psychologists reported lower levels of depersonalization and similar levels of emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. Teacher membership was found to be a more significant predictor of role conflict, but not a significant predictor of role ambiguity. Psychologists obtained higher mean scores than teachers in both role conflict and role ambiguity.

Wright and Thomas (1982) specifically studied role strain among school psychologists in the Midwest. Using Lyons' (1971) Job Related Tension Index, 171 school psychologists practicing in Nebraska, Iowa, and Kansas were surveyed. Results of this study indicated that a personal need for role clarity functions as a mediator in an individual's reactions to felt tension or that the amount of role strain associated with one's position is more or less tolerable according to one's personal need for role clarity. When one's need for clarity is high, then a higher level of job-related tension is more likely to be accompanied by a high propensity to leave. If propensity to leave is a symptom of burnout, then need for clarity is a variable to be considered in the possible prevention of burnout.

Finally, concerning the perceptions of burnout for school psychologists and other educator groups, it was found that perceptions were similar to those of guidance counselors, school social workers, and reading specialists within the schools. This

supports the findings of Jacobs (1983) who found that school psychologists report similar levels of stress with other education groups with the exception of classroom teachers who report the highest level of stress.

Vensel (1981) described stress and burnout among school psychologists as a major problem. She cited a survey conducted by a committee of the Illinois School Psychologists Association indicating 48% of those members surveyed planned to leave the profession within five years. The most common reasons given for wanting to leave were (a) paperwork and clerical duties, (b) salary, (c) legal and quasi-legal constraints, (d) opportunity to advance within the education hierarchy, and (e) opportunity to see the results of one's work.

Forty school psychologists surveyed in Arizona yielded similar results (Carroll, Bretzing, and Harris, 1981). Only 15 of the 40 school psychologists queried planned on staying in the field.

Wise (1985) conducted a study to identify and compare stressful incidents in both the daily and overall functioning of a nationwide sample of school psychologists and to determine which demographic variables relate to differences in perceived job stress and burnout. A stress inventory was utilized with results obtained from a nationally selected randomized sample of 621 school psychologists. High stress-related events were those that occur infrequently (i.e., "notification of unsatisfactory job performance," "potential suicide cases," and "threat of a due process hearing"). Other high related incidents are frequent such as "not enough time to do the job adequately." A study finding was that considerably more research needs to be done to

determine whether the infrequent crises or everyday frustrations are what cause school psychologists to suffer the symptoms of burnout.

## SUMMARY

This review examined the nature of stress, organizational variables related to stress, the burnout process defined, and stress and burnout among school psychologists.

Stress is basically the body's response to any demand made on it, whether pleasant or unpleasant, adaption or readjustment is required. We are all vulnerable to stress and experience three distinct phases or stages in response to it--alarm reaction, resistance, and exhaustion.

Unpredictable life events, loss of control over one's environment, lack of emotional support systems, a high incidence of social change, and time pressure all heavily impact on stress levels.

Organizational variables highly impact the type and level of stress experienced by individuals in the work place. Externally imposed organizational controls, predetermined role expectations, role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, and the variables associated with personal space and territory all play a significant role in organizational strain and stress level.

Burnout is a relatively recent recognized syndrome first identified in the early 1970s. It is the specific reaction to stress that is characterized by physical and emotional exhaustion, diminished capacity to perform, apathy, and lowered self-concept.

Numerous studies have been made in other professions regarding the prevalence of burnout. Identified factors associated with burnout include fragmented personal support systems, ambiguity, restriction of worker flexibility, quality of supervision, marital status, age, role overload, nonparticipation in decision making, and years of experience.

Stress and burnout has affected school psychologists as well as other education groups as a result of increased performance demands and the intensity and rapid rate of change within the teaching profession. Although all indicators are that school psychologists will continue to face the issues of stress and burnout, a thorough review of the literature indicated there has been very little research completed in this area. The need for further research was clearly indicated as an aid in identifying both the population within the profession and the impinging relevant burnout variables that affects this population.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

This chapter will discuss the instruments utilized, the design of the study, the population, and sample procedures used in collecting and analyzing the data. The purpose of this study is to learn at what point in the burnout cycle school psychologists in Oregon are, and the relationship between burnout variables and the selected demographic variables of age, level of education, academic preparation, years of experience, years in special education, sex, salary, years in present job, different work settings, and supervisory support.

#### PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION

One hundred thirty-five school psychologists representing all certified and employed school psychologists in Oregon were selected for use in this study. The number and location by school district was based on the Oregon Schools Directory. Prior to mailing survey instruments to psychologists in employing school districts, extensive telephone contact was conducted with various district personnel, i.e., department secretaries, special education directors, head school psychologists, and selected school psychologists. The purpose of this direct contact was to facilitate the distribution of survey instruments to subjects. All subjects were mailed a cover letter on Oregon State University letterhead describing the importance of the study and

requesting their participation. Anonymity of the participants was observed (see Appendix A). Surveys were mailed out on October 15, 1989. Of the 135 surveys mailed out, 71 were returned in usable condition, resulting in a response rate of 52 percent.

Data collected was by two instruments: *The Maslach Burnout Inventory* (MBI) and the *Work Environment Scale* (WES) and a demographic data sheet. The instruments and answer sheets were enclosed with a stamped, self-addressed envelope, return date requested.

## INSTRUMENTATION

### Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) (see Appendix B). It was developed to measure the three elements of the "burnout" syndrome: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lowered sense of personal accomplishment. The Emotional Exhaustion subscale described feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. The Depersonalization subscale described an unfeeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one's care or service. The Personal Accomplishment subscale describes feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Maslach and Jackson (1981) viewed burnout as a continuous variable ranging from low to moderate to high degrees of experienced feeling. It is not viewed as a dichotomous variable which either is or is not present. A high level of burnout is

reflected in high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales and in low scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale. An average degree of burnout is reflected in average scores on the three subscales. A low degree of burnout is reflected on low scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales and in high scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale.

Table I  
Range of Experienced Burnout

MBI Subscale	Low (Lower 3rd)	Moderate (Middle 3rd)	High (Upper 3rd)
Overall Sample			
Emotional Exhaustion	≤16	17-26	≥27
Depersonalization	≤ 6	7-12	≥13
Personal Accomplishment	≥39	38-32	≤31

Normative data had been collected using the MBI and are shown in Table I (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Scores are considered high if they are in the upper third of the normative distribution, moderate if they fall in the middle third, and low if they are in the lower third. Scores for each subscale are considered separately and are not combined into a single, total score.

### RELIABILITY

Internal consistency was estimated by using Cronbach's coefficient alpha (n = 316). Reliability coefficients for each of the subscales were as follows: .90 for



emotional exhaustion, .79 for depersonalization, and .71 for personal accomplishment.

Two-week test-retest reliability coefficients for each of the subscales were as follows: .82 for emotional exhaustion, .60 for depersonalization, and .80 for personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

## VALIDITY

Validity for the MBI has been established through both convergent and discriminant validity. *Convergent validity* was demonstrated in several ways. MBI scores have been shown to correlate with behavioral ratings made independently by someone who knew the person well such as a spouse. In addition, MBI scores were correlated with job characteristics that were expected to contribute to experienced burnout. Lastly, MBI scores were correlated with measures of various outcomes which had been expected to accompany burnout (i.e., stress). Discriminant validity was obtained by distinguishing the MBI from other constructs that might be confounded with burnout. Correlations between the MBI subscales and measures of general job satisfaction were not correlated high enough to suggest that they were the same. Correlations between the Crowne-Marlow (1964) social desirability scale and the MBI subscales were not strong enough to support the position that the scores on the MBI are subject to distortion by social desirability response set (Maslach & Johnson, 1981).

### Work Environment Scale (WES)

The Work Environment Scale (WES) (Moos, 1981) comprises ten subscales that measure the social environments in different work settings (Appendix B). The

ten WES subscales assess three sets of dimensions: the relationship dimension, the personal growth dimension, and the system maintenance and system change dimension. Respondents were asked to complete all ten subscales for the purposes of this study, only data from the supervisory support subscale were utilized. The supervisory support subscale assesses the extent to which management is supportive of employees and encourages employees to be supportive of one another.

The WES was standardized on a sample of over 3,000 workers representative of general work settings. The internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha) ranged from .69 to .86 for the ten scales, and the test-retest data (one month correlations) ranged from .69 to .83 (Moos, 1981).

## PROCEDURES FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Data from the MBI, WES, and the demographic data form (Appendix B) were analyzed by frequency and percentage simple linear regression, multiple regression; correlations of coefficient, and analysis of variance to ascertain the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. Data providing possible answers to these questions will reflect the null hypothesis stated in Chapter I.

## SUMMARY

This chapter described the instrument used for data collection, a description of the population and sample used in the study, procedures for collecting and analyzing data were explained, and limitations of the study were referenced. Findings will be described in Chapter IV.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data reported in this chapter are divided into two parts. The first part presents information from the demographic data sheet. The second part concerns the analysis of the research hypothesis utilizing the statistical procedures of simple linear regression, multiple regression, analysis of variance, and correlations of coefficient. Significance was sought at the .05 level of significance.

#### DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Data for respondents grouped by sex are reported in Table II. Female school psychologists composed 59.2 percent of the sample.

Table II

Respondents by Sex

Sex	Male	Female
Frequency	29	42
Percent	40.8	59.2

Data for respondents grouped by income are presented in Table III. A salary that ranged from \$29,000 to \$43,500 per year was earned by 85.9 percent of the sample. The median salary for respondents was \$34,000.

Table III  
Income Level

Income	\$23,000-28,500	\$28,500-34,000	\$34,000-39,500	\$39,500-45,000
Frequency	7	32	22	10
Percent	9.9	47.9	22.6	19.6

Characterization of respondents by the number of years in their present position is reported in Table IV. More than 59 percent indicated they had held their current position less than five years, while more than 39 percent indicated they have been in their present position for less than 10 years. Ninety-eight percent of respondents had been in their present position for less than 10 years.

Table IV  
Number of Years in Present Job

Years	0-5	6-10	10-23
Frequency	42	28	1
Percent	59.2	39.4	1.4

The data concerning type of academic preparation is reported in Table V. Academic preparation for school psychologists in both the counseling and school psychology disciplines was earned by 60.6 percent of the sample.

Table V  
Type of Academic Preparation

	School Psychology	Counseling/School Psychology
Frequency	28	43
Percent	39.4	60.6

Table VI indicates the majority of respondents (85.9 percent) were employed in urban or urban-related settings.

Table VI  
Geographical Work Settings

	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Inner City
Frequency	10	27	20	14
Percent	14.1	38	28.23	19.7

Data for respondents grouped by years in special education are reported in Table VII. Less than five years experience in special education was indicated by 25.4 percent, six to ten years by 35.2 percent, and eleven to fifteen years by 26.7 percent. Some 88.3 percent of respondents had a total of less than 15 years in special education. A minority (12.7 percent) reported more than 16 years in special education.

Table VII  
Years in Special Education

	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-22 Years
Frequency	18	25	19	9
Percent	25.4	35.2	26.7	12.7

Data for respondents by education level are reported in Table VIII. M.A. and sixth year composed 71.8 percent of the sample population, while Ph.D. and Ed.D. holders comprised 28.2 percent of the population.

Table VIII  
Education Level

	M.A. and Sixth Year	Ph.D.	Ed.D.
Frequency	51	11	9
Percent	71.8	15.5	12.7

Years of experience as a school psychologist are reported in Table IX. More than half of the respondents (56.3 percent) reported less than nine years of experience, while only 7 percent reported over 19 years of experience. Ninety-three percent of the sample population had less than 18 years of experience as a school psychologist.

Table IX  
Years of Experience as a School Psychologist

	0-9 Years	10-18 Years	19-27 Years
Frequency	40	26	5
Percent	56.3	36.7	7

Years of experience as a school psychologist ranged from less than one year to 27 years, with a median of nine years ( $N = 71$ ). Years in special education ranged from less than one year to 22 years, with a median of nine years ( $N = 71$ ). Salary ranged from \$23,000 to \$45,000, with a median of \$34,000 ( $N = 71$ ). Number of years at present job ranged from less than one year to 23 years, with a median of five ( $N = 71$ ).

After analysis of individual variables revealed which of those are significantly related to burnout, the next step in the analysis was to use a multivariate statistical approach which allowed for controlling the overlap between variables and multiple regression was chosen. The *Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)*, second edition (Nie et al., 1975) was utilized for all analysis procedures.

By referring to Table I on page 32 it is possible to compare the burnout characteristics of this sample to norms for the MBI. The sample means for this study were all within the moderate range of burnout on the MBI.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study involved two objectives. The first objective was to obtain information on the level of burnout among school psychologists in Oregon. The second objective was to determine the relationship between burnout and selected demographic variables.

The sample for the study consisted of 71 certificated school psychologists in Oregon. The MBI was chosen as the instrument for measuring emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The WES was selected to measure the school psychologists' perceived level of supervisory support. A demographic data sheet was utilized to obtain demographic information.

A comparison of the burnout characteristics of this study's sample norms for the MBI indicate sample means for this study were within the moderate range of burnout on the MBI.

A comparison of means obtained from the population of this study and Maslach's population indicate that the mean from Maslach's population fell outside of the 95% confidence interval in all three levels of burnout syndrome giving reason to suspect that the sample population of this research differs significantly from Maslach's with higher levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment reported by the present sample.



Table X  
Comparison of Means and Standard Deviations for Study Sample  
Population and Maslach's Sample Population

	Emotional Exhaustion		Depersonalization		Personal Accomplishment	
	Population Sample	Maslach's Sample	Population Sample	Maslach's Sample	Population Sample	Maslach's Sample
Mean	22.77	16.89	7.33	5.72	38.43	30.87
Standard Deviation	8.14	8.90	4.14	4.62	4.81	6.37

Table XI  
95% Confidence Interval for Mean

Emotional Exhaustion	20.8317 to 24.7112
Depersonalization	6.3403 to 8.3169
Personal Accomplishment	37.2821 to 39.5750

Demographic comparisons measured in this study were sex, income, number of years in present job, type of academic preparation, geographical work setting, number of years in special education, education level, years of experience as a school psychologist, and level of supervisory support.

Table XII

## Pearson Product Moment Correlations Between Burnout Interval Variables

	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Years of Experience as a School Psychologist	-.1679**	-.0666	.0307
Years of Experience in Special Education	.0283	.0446	.0469
Income	-.2008*	-.2259*	-.0280
Years on the Job	-.2758*	-.1674**	.0300
Level of Supervisory Support	-.3210*	-.1288	.1514

\*p < .05      \*\*p < .10

Correlation coefficients between burnout interval variables resulted in significant relationships between income and level of emotional exhaustion which suggests that as income increases, emotional exhaustion decreases. A highly significant relationship was found between level of supervisory support and emotional exhaustion suggesting that as supervisory support levels increase, levels of emotional exhaustion decrease. A highly significant relationship was also found between years on the job and a decrease in level of emotional exhaustion.

Findings approaching significance were obtained between years of experience in special education and a corresponding decrease in level of emotional exhaustion. Additional relationships approaching significance were found between an increase in years on the job and a decrease in depersonalization.

A significant relationship was also found between increase in income and decrease in level of depersonalization.

A significance factor which exceeds cutoff criteria but which is deemed close enough to be of interest to the reader is that as the level of supervisory support increases the level of personal accomplishment decreases.

Analysis of the percentage of males and females in the low, moderate, and high range of emotional exhaustion revealed that numerically, males tended to be at the low and higher levels of emotional exhaustion, while females feel predominantly into the moderate range.

### GENDER COMPARISONS

Table XIII

Percentages of Males and Females in the Low, Moderate, and High Ranges of Emotional Exhaustion

	Male	Female
Low	28.6	16.7
Moderate	52.9	59.5
High	28.6	23.8

Analysis of the percentage of males and females in the low, moderate, and high range of depersonalization revealed that males tended to score in the moderate category, while females displayed a tendency towards scoring in the low category.

Table XIV  
 Percentages of Males and Females in the Low, Moderate, and High  
 Ranges of Depersonalization

	Male	Female
Low	28.6	47.67
Moderate	60.7	47.6
High	10.7	4.8

Analysis of the percentage of males and females in the low, moderate, and high range of personal accomplishment revealed that numerically, males evidenced scores at the high and low extremes, while females tended to score in the moderate range.

Table XV  
 Percentages of Males and Females in the Low, Moderate, and High  
 Ranges of Personal Accomplishment

	Male	Female
Low	57.1	42.9
Moderate	28.6	50.0
High	14.3	7.1

A comparison of male and female mean and standard deviation scores to level of burnout syndrome when school psychologists are grouped by sex revealed that numerically, males tended to be in the low and high levels of emotional exhaustion, while females feel predominately in the moderate range. In the

depersonalization domain, males tended to be in the moderate category, while females displayed a tendency toward the low category. In the personal accomplishment domain, males evidenced scores at the high and low extremes, while females tended to score in the moderate range.

Table XVI

Comparison of Male and Female Mean and Standard Deviation  
Scores to Level of Burnout Syndrome when  
School Psychologists are Grouped by Sex

Sex	Mean	SD	N
Emotional Exhaustion			
Male	22.75	9.16	28
Female	22.79	7.49	42
Depersonalization			
Male	8.3571	4.8244	28
Female	6.6429	3.5187	42
Personal Accomplishment			
Male	38.67	4.5138	28
Female	38.26	5.0416	42

Comparison of the variability of level of burnout syndrome when school psychologists are grouped by sex indicated that variability between the groups was very small. In the depersonalization domain, significance was obtained at the .10 level with males obtaining a higher overall mean score. Variability was deemed very small in the personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion domains.

Table XVII  
Analysis of Variance Comparing Level of Burnout Syndrome  
When School Psychologists are Grouped by Sex

	DF	SS	MS	F-ratio	P
Emotional Exhaustion					
Between Groups	1	.0214	.0214	.0003	.9858
Within Groups	68	4566.32	67.1518		
Total	69				
Depersonalization					
Between Groups	1	49.3714	49.3714	2.9551	.0902
Within Groups	68	1136.07	16.7069		
Total	69				
Personal Accomplishment					
Between Groups	1	2.9167	2.9167	1246	.7252
Within Groups	68	1592.22	23.4151		
Total	69				

LEVEL OF BURNOUT SYNDROME WHEN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS  
ARE GROUPED BY EDUCATION LEVEL

Comparison of the variability of level of burnout syndrome when school psychologists are grouped by educational level indicated that variability between the groups was not significant.

Table XVIII  
Analysis of Variance

	DF	SS	MS	F-ratio	P
Emotional Exhaustion					
Between Groups	1	.3473	.3473	.0052	.9429
Within Groups	68	4565.99	67.1470		
Total	69				
Depersonalization					
Between Groups	1	16.1421	16.1421	.9387	.3360
Within Groups	68	1169.30	17.1956		
Total	69				
Personal Accomplishment					
Between Groups	1	1.4270	1.4270	.0609	.80582
Within Groups	68	1593.71	23.4370		
Total	69				

**LEVEL OF BURNOUT SYNDROME WHEN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS  
ARE GROUPED BY LEVEL OF ACADEMIC PREPARATION**

Comparison of the variability of level of burnout syndrome when school psychologists are grouped by level of academic preparation indicated that school psychologists with academic preparation in school psychology have significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion. Very small differences were noted in the depersonalization and personal accomplishment burnout syndrome levels.

Table XIX  
Analysis of Variance

	DF	SS	MS	F-ratio	P
Emotional Exhaustion					
Between Groups	1	351.483	351.4843	5.6706	.0201
Within Groups	68	4214.85	61.9832		
Total	69				
Depersonalization					
Between Groups	1	10.0665	10.0665	.5824	.4480
Within Groups	68	1175.37	17.2849		
Total	69				
Personal Accomplishment					
Between Groups	1	13.5283	13.5283	.5816	.4483
Within Groups	68	1581.615	23.2590		
Total	69				



**LEVEL OF BURNOUT SYNDROME WHEN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS  
ARE GROUPED BY WORK SETTING**

Comparison of the variability of level of burnout syndrome when school psychologists are grouped by work setting, i.e., rural, urban, suburban, inner city, indicated that no significance other than minor numerical differences in mean scores is found in emotional exhaustion or depersonalization. A significant difference was, however, found in level of personal accomplishment.

Table XX

Analysis of Variance

	DF	SS	MS	F-ratio	P
Emotional Exhaustion					
Between Groups	1	224.495	74.8197	1.1373	.3405
Within Groups	68	4341.884			
Total	69				
Depersonalization					
Between Groups	1	33.771	11.2370	.6439	.5895
Within Groups	68	1151.732			
Total	69				
Personal Accomplishment					
Between Groups	1	231.8276	77.2909	3.7419	.0151
Within Groups	68	1363.270	20.6556		
Total	69				

Using a pairwise comparison technique to investigate differences, it was found that a significant difference exists between rural and urban work settings with school psychologists in rural work settings evidencing higher levels of personal accomplishment.

Table XXI

Newman-Kuels Multiple Comparison of Mean Scores of Work Setting  
in the Personal Accomplishment Level of Burnout Syndrome

Work Setting	Mean	N
Rural	40.5	13
Suburban	39.8	23
Inner City	37.9	23
Urban	36.1	11

LEVEL OF BURNOUT SYNDROME EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION WITH  
ACADEMIC PREPARATION, SUPERVISORY SUPPORT,  
YEARS ON THE JOB, AND INCOME

Multiple regression analysis comparing the level of burnout syndrome emotional exhaustion with academic preparation, supervisory support, years on the job, and income resulted in a highly statistically significant finding that together these four variables account for 30 percent of the total variability in the emotional exhaustion domain.

Table XXII  
Multiple Regression

Multiple R	0.54589
R Square	0.29800
Adjusted R Square	0.25480
Standard Error	7.02259

Analysis of Variance

	DF	SS	MS	F-Ratio	P
Regression	4	1360.75	340.1808	6.89802	.0001
Residual	65	3205.59	49.31678		

Variables in the Equation

Variable	Beta	T	P
Academic Preparation	-.31291	-3.002	.0038
Income	-.11533	-1.040	.3023
Supervisory Support	-.34342	-3.272	.0017
Year on the Job	-.24341	-2.184	.0326

LEVEL OF BURNOUT SYNDROME DEPERSONALIZATION WITH  
YEARS ON THE JOB, SEX, AND INCOME

Multiple regression analysis comparing the level of burnout syndrome depersonalization with years on the job, sex, and income resulted in a finding that these three variables account for 13 percent of the variability within the depersonalization burnout syndrome level. In comparing the significance of the three variables in the equation, sex has the highest level of significance followed by income and years on the job.

Table XXIII

Multiple Regression

Multiple R	.36299
R Square	.13176
Adjusted R Square	.09169
Standard Error	3.97626

Analysis of Variance

	DF	SS	MS	F-Ratio	P
Regression	3	155.958	51.9860	3.28803	.0261
Residual	65	1027.69	15.8106		

LEVEL OF BURNOUT SYNDROME DEPERSONALIZATION WITH  
YEARS ON THE JOB, SEX, INCOME, SUPERVISORY  
SUPPORT, AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Multiple regression analysis for the purpose of comparing the level of burnout syndrome depersonalization with years on the job, sex, income, supervisory support, and educational level revealed that these five variables account for 18 percent of the variability within the depersonalization domain. The significance level of the variable in the equation reflects high significance for sex and income, with educational level not statistically significant but worthy of mention.

Table XXIV  
Multiple Regression

Multiple R	.42963
R Square	.18458
Adjusted R Square	.11986
Standard Error	3.91411

Analysis of Variance

	DF	SS	MS	F-Ratio	P
Regression	5	218.477	43.6955	2.85214	.0220
Residual	63	965.174	15.3202		

Table XXV  
Variables in the Equation

Variable	Beta	T	P
Years on the Job	-.13090	-1.047	.2988
Sex	.27534	2.328	.0230
Income	-.22749	-1.817	.0739

Table XXVI

Variable	Beta	T	P
Years on the Job	-.14470	-1.162	.2495
Sex	.27981	2.395	.0196
Income	-.27583	-2.190	.0322
Supervisory Support	-.13644	-1.188	.2393
Educational Level	-.18415	-1.542	.1282

On the basis of analyses of research data outlined in this chapter, there was evidence to suggest that certificated school psychologists in Oregon were in the moderate range of burnout as measured by the burnout variables of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. A statistically significant relationship was found between depersonalization and income level, emotional exhaustion and years on the job, emotional exhaustion and income, emotional exhaustion and level of academic preparation, and level of personal accomplishment and work setting. A highly statistically significant finding was found when one compares the burnout syndrome factor of emotional exhaustion with

academic preparation, supervisory support, years on the job, and income. Together these four variables account for 30 percent of the total variability in the emotional exhaustion domain. When depersonalization was compared with years on the job, sex, and income, 13 percent of the variability within the depersonalization domain is obtained. When supervisory support and education level were added to the equation, it is found that with the addition of these two added variables, an 18 percent variability level is obtained.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter contains three sections. The first section is a discussion of the objectives of the study, a description of demographics, and statistical treatments utilized. The second section discusses findings in relationship to purposes. The third section includes recommendations for further research.

Relatively little research has been done which identifies or measures the extent of burnout in specific populations and burnout to selected demographic variables. This is particularly true for school psychologists where studies have focused on exploring burnout and its relationship to issues such as role clarity, comparison to other occupational reference groups, internal belief systems, and the frequency of occurrence of high stress related events. This present research concentrated on burnout in relation to descriptive and situational demographic variables, including two variables not previously explored: the impact of service setting and the role of supervisory support in burnout. This study examines burnout as defined by Maslach and Jackson (1978) and as measured by the MBI.

### SUMMARY

This study began with four principal objectives. The first objective was to learn where in the burnout cycle Oregon school psychologists are.



The second objective of the study was to provide and analyze descriptive data of demographic and situational variables by frequency, percent, and measures of central tendency.

The third objective of the study was to determine the degree to which burnout is related to selected demographic variables. The dependent variable-- burnout--was defined by three constructs: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The independent variables were measured in 10 separate demographic areas.

The fourth objective of the study was the determination of the degree to which burnout is related to all demographic variables with the dependent variable again defined by the three constructs of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The independent variable included the demographic and situational variables utilized in this study.

The sample for this research consisted of 70 school psychologists. All 135 certified and employed school psychologists in Oregon were contacted by mail and invited to complete and return a questionnaire containing demographic information and two test instruments: The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the Work Environment Scale (WES).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory is a 22-item instrument developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981). The inventory measures three elements of the burnout syndrome: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lowered sense of personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being emotionally overextended and mentally and physically exhausted by one's work.

Depersonalization is an unfeeling, impersonal affect towards a client. Personal accomplishment, a reverse indicator of burnout, refers to feelings of satisfaction, happiness, and competence in one's work with clients (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Based upon Maslach and Jackson (1981), test respondents are not classified as "burnout" or "not burned out," but are placed on a continuum from more to less burned out. High levels of burnout on the MBI would be associated with high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales, and low scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale.

The WES (Moos, 1981) is comprised of 10 subscales which measure social environments in different work settings. Three different sets of dimensions are addressed by the 10 WES subscales: the relationship dimension, the personal growth dimension, and the system maintenance and system change dimension. For the purposes of this study, only data from the supervisory support subscale was utilized. The supervisory support subscale assesses the extent to which management is supportive of employees and encourages employees to be supportive of one another.

Demographic information was obtained through the use of a demographic data sheet. The Moos WES which measured supervisory support variables thus obtained were: (a) sex, (b) level of education, (c) type of academic preparation, (d) years of experience as a certified school psychologist, (e) years in special education, (f) salary, (g) years in present job, (h) work setting, and (i) supervisory support.

#### Demographic Data Description

A basic overview of the Oregon certificated school psychologist was derived from the following demographic statements.

1. Female school psychologists composed 59.2 percent of the sample.
2. The salary range for responding school psychologists was \$29,000 to \$43,500 per year with a mean salary of \$34,000 obtained.
3. More than 59 percent of the respondents indicated they had been in their current position for less than five years, while more than 39 percent had been in their position for less than 10 years.
4. The majority of respondents, 85.9 percent, were employed in urban or urban-related settings.
5. A total of 25.4 percent of school psychologists who responded had less than five years experience in special education, 35.2 percent had six to 10 years, and 26.7 percent had 11 to 15 years. Only 12.7 percent reported more than 16 years in special education. A total of 60.6 percent of school psychologists had less than 10 years in special education, while 99 percent of school psychologists reporting had been in their present job less than 10 years.
6. More than half of the respondents, 56.3 percent, reported less than nine years of experience as a school psychologist, while only 7 percent reported over 19 years of experience.
7. A total of 71.8 percent of school psychologists responding had graduate preparation at the M.A. and sixth year level.
8. The majority of the respondents received their training in counseling and school psychology (60.6 percent), while discipline specialization in school psychology involved 39.4 percent of respondents.

From the data gathered, the typical respondent in this sample was a certificated school psychologist, female working in a suburban setting. She would have nine years of experience as a school psychologist in a special education setting, and would have been employed in her present job for five years. Annual salary would be \$34,000. Her graduate academic preparation would be in school psychology or counseling and school psychology. Her level of training would be Master's degree plus one year of graduate work beyond the Master's level.

### Statistical Analyses

Statistical operations were performed to test 11 major hypotheses of this study. Pearson Product Moment Correlation procedure was utilized to determine the degree of relationship between dependent burnout variables and the independent variables of years of experience as a school psychologist, years of experience in special education, number of years on the job, income, and level of supervisory support. A comparison of means and standard deviations for the study sample population to Maslach's sample population was performed to determine if material differences exist between these two populations. Cross tabulated percentage data by category was computed in order to identify whether numerical differences between males and females exist in the low, moderate, and high ranges of burnout syndrome. Analysis of variance techniques were used to compare dependent burnout variables with school psychologists grouped by sex, educational level, level of academic preparation, and work setting. Mean and standard deviation data by sex were used to compare level of burnout syndrome when school psychologists were grouped separately by sex, educational level, level of academic preparation, and work setting.

The Newman Kuels Multiple Comparison procedure was utilized to determine if statistical differences exist between the four work settings included as variables in this study.

Multiple regression techniques were used to identify the relationship between the following: (a) dependent burnout variable of emotional exhaustion and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation identified independent variables of academic preparation, supervisory support, years on the job, and income; (b) the dependent burnout variable of depersonalization and the independent variables of years on the job, sex, and income; and (c) the dependent variable of depersonalization and the independent variables of years on the job, sex, income, supervisory support, and education level.

## CONCLUSIONS

Review of the literature indicated that the study of burnout is largely a recent phenomenon with the majority of studies taking place since 1976.

Burnout, in the context of this study, is viewed as a negative cynical attitude that occurs among school psychologists. It can be accompanied by various levels of physical and emotional exhaustion and decreased regard for children and parents served.

On the basis of analysis of research data obtained from this study, there was evidence to suggest that certificated school psychologists in Oregon were within the moderate range of burnout as measured by the burnout variables of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. A comparison of mean

and standard deviation scores for this study's population and Maslach's population indicate this sample population differs significantly from Maslach's sample by evidencing higher mean scores in all levels of burnout syndrome.

Statistical analysis of this data led to rejection of the null hypotheses that there is no significant relationship between depersonalization and income, emotional exhaustion and years on the job, emotional exhaustion and income, emotional exhaustion and supervisory support, emotional exhaustion and level of academic preparation, and level of personal accomplishment and work setting. All other hypotheses were accepted; however, analysis beyond the original hypotheses resulted in a finding of significant relationships between emotional exhaustion and level of academic preparation, level of income, years on the job, and income. In addition, a significant relationship between depersonalization and years on the job, sex, and income was found. Finally, a significant relationship was found between depersonalization and years on the job, income, supervisory support, and educational level. Additionally, mean scores for the burnout subscales indicated moderate levels of burnout when all respondent scoring information was compared against normative from the MBI.

Significant relationships were found between income and level of emotional exhaustion suggesting that as income increases emotional exhaustion decreases. A highly significant relationship was found between level of supervisory support and emotional exhaustion suggesting that as supervisory support levels increase, levels of emotional exhaustion decrease. A highly significant relationship was also found between years on the job and a decrease in level of emotional exhaustion. A

significant relationship was also found between increase in income and decrease in level of depersonalization.

Results approaching significance were obtained between years of experience in special education and a corresponding decrease in level of emotional exhaustion. Additional findings approaching significance were found between an increase in years on the job and a decrease in depersonalization.

A comparison of mean and standard deviation scores for males and females for the levels of burnout syndrome when school psychologists were grouped by sex showed that variability between the groups was very small. In the depersonalization domain, significance was obtained at the .10 level with males obtaining a higher overall mean score. Variability was deemed very small in the personal accomplishment category. Comparison of the variability of level of burnout syndrome when school psychologists are grouped by educational level indicated that variability between the groups was not significant.

When school psychologists were grouped by level of academic preparation, it was found that school psychologists with academic preparation in school psychology have significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion. Very small differences were noted in the depersonalization and personal accomplishment burnout syndrome levels. When the level of burnout syndrome is compared to work setting, i.e., rural, urban, suburban, and inner city, no significance other than minor numerical differences in mean scores is found in emotional exhaustion or depersonalization. A significant difference was, however, found in level of personal accomplishment. Using a pairwise comparison technique to investigate differences, it was found that a

significant difference exists between rural and urban work settings with school psychologists in rural work settings evidencing higher levels of personal accomplishment.

After analysis of individual variables revealed which of these were related to burnout, a multivariate statistical approach, multiple regression analysis was chosen which allowed for controlling the overlap between variables. Utilizing this approach, the level of burnout syndrome, emotional exhaustion with academic preparation, supervisory support, years on the job, and income resulted in a highly statistically significant finding that together these four variables account for 30 percent of the total variability in the emotional exhaustion domain. When one uses this same procedure comparing level of burnout syndrome depersonalization with years on the job, sex, and income, we find that these three variables account for 13 percent of the variability within the depersonalization burnout syndrome level. Comparing the significance of the three variables in the equation, sex has the highest level of significance followed by income and years on the job. When one adds supervisory support and education level to the equation, we find that with the addition of these two added variables an 18 percent variability level is obtained. The significance level of the variables in the equation reflects high significance for sex and income, with educational level not statistically significant but worthy of mention.

An analysis of the percentage of males and females in the low, moderate, and high range of the level of burnout syndrome revealed that numerically, males tended to be at the low and high levels of emotional exhaustion, while females fell predominantly in the moderate range. In the depersonalization category, males



tended to be in the moderate category, while females displayed a tendency toward the low category. In the personal accomplishment domain, males evidenced scores at the high and low extremes, while females tended to have scores in the moderate range.

## IMPLICATIONS

Several implications can be drawn from the review of past research and findings of this study. Presented below are some practical considerations, interpretations, inferences, and ideas which emerge as a result of the preceding conclusions:

1. Results of this study confirm that burnout among school psychologists is an area of concern in the profession.
2. A majority of school psychologists surveyed had been in their present job and in the field for relatively short periods of time. An example of this would be that 59.2 percent of Oregon school psychologists surveyed have held their position for less than five years. The correlations between the burnout variable of emotional exhaustion and income, emotional exhaustion and years of experience, and depersonalization and income may indicate that school psychologists who burn out do so fairly rapidly and leave the profession early. Thus, those school psychologists who survive the early years and stay in the profession may be hardier or more complacent, and less affected over time by burnout variables. A survey of Illinois School Psychologists by Vensel (1981) indicated 48 percent of school psychologists surveyed planned to leave the profession within five years. Two of the most common

reasons given for wanting to leave were salary and opportunity to advance within the education hierarchy.

3. School psychologists have among the highest academic preparation standards in public schools. Generally, the minimum required is a master's degree, a year of graduate study beyond the master's degree, and completion of a one-year supervised clinical internship. Results from this study suggest that doctoral level school psychologists are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion than master plus school psychologists. Given the training required for a doctoral level school psychologist, there is little opportunity to utilize these broad skills in a system that is largely special education assessment dominated under the quasi legal umbrella of Public Law 94-142.

Beitman (1982) identified paperwork/workload as a predictor in burnout among school psychologists in the Delaware Valley. Vensel (1981) obtained similar findings among Illinois school psychologists, and Weis (1985), surveying a nationally selected randomized sample of school psychologists, found threats of due process hearings under Public Law 94-142 as a possible contributor to burnout. Given the lack of intellectual challenge inherent in a system that promotes a rigid psychometric assessment role for school psychologists, one might determine that given the level of training a doctoral level the school psychologist may find himself or herself more prone to a higher level of emotional exhaustion than the master's level counterparts.

4. As a group, school psychologists may be facing a quantitative overload issue which may be a contributing factor in burnout. Quantitative overload (Miller, 1960) involves the person having more work to do than can be done in a given

period of time. McClelland (1961) in a study of quantitative overload, found that subjects who suffered from quantitative overload as compared to subjects who did not suffer psychological strain in the form of embarrassment and loss of self-esteem. Reiner and Hartshore (1982), studying school psychologists in Kansas, found lack of time to complete assigned tasks a source of distress. Wise (1985) obtained similar findings using a nationally selected randomized sample of school psychologists. Since supervisory support and emotional exhaustion were correlated in this study it may be that lack of supervisory support in the form of encouraging coworkers to be mutually supportive of one another in resolving work load issues are related factors.

5. Ambiguity or lack of role clarity (Gherman, 1981) may be a factor in increased stress levels and burnout. School psychologists have historically been without a clearly defined role to teachers and principals who view and seek their services from a global point-of-view and special education administrators who promote special education assessment responsibilities but are unwilling at times to clearly support this to a regular teacher or building administrator, hence the subtle double message emerges. This is consistent with Reiner and Hartshore's (1982) findings which found that a number of respondent school psychologists expressed feelings that they are often dealing with ambiguous role descriptions and, therefore, with unclear expectations on the part of the school psychologist and on the part of the administration and faculty. This is also consistent with research done by Lyons (1971) who indicated negative relationships between role clarity and measures of felt tension and withdrawal behaviors, as well as a positive relationship between role clarity and job satisfaction. Kahn et al. (1964) found a direct correlation between

role conflict and ambiguity and lower job satisfaction, higher job related tension, and lower confidence in the employing organization. Since role clarity is to a significant degree dependent upon supervisory support for the school psychologist, this could also be viewed as a possible explanation for the correlation between emotional exhaustion and supervisory support.

6. Data from this study suggest a relationship exists between level of personal accomplishment and a work setting that is rural versus urban, inner city, or suburban. One possible explanation for this could involve the difference in bureaucratic structure that generally exists between rural versus urban and urban-related settings. Thus removed to a less rigid system the school psychologist may be able to have greater influence over selecting job tasks presumably in areas of interest and strength. This could then account for psychologists in rural settings experiencing a higher sense of personal accomplishment.

7. The higher level of personal accomplishment of the population studied compared to Maslach's population may be due to the relatively low number of years of experience as a school psychologist, with 56.3 percent of respondents reporting less than nine years, and 59 percent indicating less than five years experience in their present job. It may be that experience in the profession is related to development of the successive phases of burnout. Clouse (1982) described burnout as a three-pronged process with altruism and enthusiasm high during the early years in the profession, with frustration and alienation occurring over time in the profession. Freudenberger (1980) believes that burnout is a chronic condition that develops over

a long period of time and that people can be in the burnout process but maintain a high sense of accomplishment for relatively long periods of time.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The following studies are suggested to provide a better understanding of the burnout phenomenon and the school psychologist.

1. A study to more completely examine the role of the physical work environment (i.e., level of distractible stimuli, privacy and space, and the impact that this has on level of burnout).
2. A study to measure the physiological variables involved in long-term exposure to stress with particular regard to studying individuals who internalize and are not proactive when facing burnout.
3. More research is needed to measure the impact that role clarity has on burnout among school psychologists. As school budgets decline and more services are expected from the public schools, the impact of clearly defined role parameters for school psychologists on burnout appears warranted.
4. A study to determine if there is a clearly established relationship between line administrative management opportunities for school psychologists and level of burnout.
5. Additional research is needed to determine if the training provided in school psychology graduate programs promotes unrealistic professional expectations in the minds of graduates. Since school psychologists primarily employ psychometric skills versus intervention and counseling skills, how much does this difference

between what school psychologists are trained to provide and actually provide contribute to burnout?

6. There is a need for additional studies to determine if gender differences are a factor in burnout level among doctoral level school psychologists.

7. Additional qualitative research is needed to more clearly define differences in burnout levels between masters and doctoral level school psychologists, and study the impact differentiated role descriptions might have on level of burnout for these two groups.

8. The rigidity of the bureaucratic structure and its impact or absence of impact on level of burnout is an area where further study is recommended. In connection with this, do school psychologists select job tasks in areas of strength and interest in an organizational system that allows them that flexibility is an interesting point that would appear to warrant further study.

9. There has been considerable speculation about a developmental process and successive phases of burnout, but limited data to support these ideas. The majority of the research done to date has involved studying people at one point in time. It appears that there is a need for comprehensive longitudinal studies that follow the pattern of burnout over time periods.

In summary, further studies that may result in a better understanding of school psychologist burnout could address impacting factors on the physical work environment, the physiological variables involved in long-term exposure to stress for individuals who do not adopt a proactive stance to burnout avoidance, the impact of possible doctoral level gender differences to burnout, differences in burnout levels

between masters and doctoral level school psychologists, and the issue of undifferentiated role clarity for school psychologists. An additional areas for study might involve the degree to which graduate school psychology preparation programs promote or do not promote unrealistic expectations in the minds of graduates, the impact or absence of a rigid bureaucratic structure. Finally, the issue of a developmental process and successive stages of burnout needs further exploration, perhaps in the form of comprehensive longitudinal studies.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, John D. *Understanding and Managing Stress*. San Diego, CA: University Associates, Inc., 1980.
- Adams, J., Mayer, J., and Hopson, B. *Transition: Understanding and Managing Personal Change*. New York: Universe Books, 1977.
- Allen, E. A. *A Correlational Study of the Relationship Between Levels of Burnout and Sociological Ecological Factors in Dental Hygiene Office Practice*. Nashville, TN: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University, 1982.
- Allen, Roger J. *Human Stress: Its Nature and Control*. College Park, MD: Burgess Publishing Co., 1983.
- Bennington, M. "Stress and School Psychologists. *Dissertation Abstracts International* (1982) 42.
- Beitman, B. "Sources of Occupational Stress in School Psychologists." *Dissertation Abstracts International* (1982) 42.
- Bonn, B. "The Extent of Burnout as a Phenomenon Affecting Teachers in Selected Virginia Schools." *Dissertation Abstracts International* 43 (1982) 1418A.
- Burchette, B. "The Extent of Professional Burnout and Related Factors Affecting Public School Counselors. *Dissertation Abstracts International* (1983) 43, 2554A.
- Cannon, W. B. *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear, and Rage*. Boston: C. T. Branford, 1953.
- Cassel, J. "The Contribution of Social Environment to Host Resistance. *American Journal of Epidemiology* 104.2 (1976): 107-123.
- Clouse, R. *The Burnout Assessment Inventory*. Nashville, TN: Matrix Systems, 1982.
- Corral, J. L., Bretzing, B. H., and Morris, J. D. "Psychologists in Secondary Schools: Training and Present Patterns of Service. *Journal of School Psychology* 19 (1981): 267-73.



- French, J. R. P., and Caplon, R. D. *Organizational Stress and Individual Strain*. New York: Amacon, Inc., 1972.
- Freudenberger, H. *Burnout: The High Cost of Achievement*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1980.
- Friedman, M. "Type A Behavior Pattern. *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* (1977) 53.
- Friedman, M., and Rosenman, R. H. *Type A Behavior and Your Heart*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1974.
- Gentilli, J. "The Relationship Between the Characteristics of Burnout and the Perceived and Personal Job Characteristics of Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling." *Dissertation Abstracts International* 43 (1982) 2359A.
- Gherman, E. M. *Stress and the Bottom Line*. New York: Amacon, Inc., 1981.
- Holmes, T. H., and Rahe, R. H. "The Social Readjustment Rating Scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* 11 (1967) 213.
- Jacobs, D. "Burnout and Occupational Stressors in Educational Psychology. *Dissertation Abstracts International* (1983).
- Johnson, P. A. "The Relationship Between Irrational Beliefs, Demographic Characteristics, and Burnout Among School Psychologists. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 43.7 (1983) 218.
- Jorde, Paula. *Avoiding Burnout*. Washington, DC: Acropolis Books, Ltd., 1982.
- Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. P., Snoek, J. D., and Rosenthal, R. A. *Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964.
- Maslach and Jackson, S.E. *Journal of Occupational Behavior* 2 (1981): 99-113.
- Lawson, S. *Stress and Burnout in Intensive Care Nurses in Selected Southeastern Hospitals*. Nashville, TN: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University, 1984.
- Lyons, T. F. "Role Clarity, Need for Clarity, Satisfaction, Tension, and Withdrawal. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 6 (1971) 99-110.
- Maslach, C. *Burnout: The Cost of Caring*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1982.

- McClelland, D. C. *The Achieving Society*. Princeton, NJ: VonNostrand, 1961.
- Miller, J. G. "Information Input Overload and Psychopathology. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 116 (1960) 695-704.
- Neville, S. M. "Job Stress and Burnout." *College and Research Libraries* (1981) 242.
- Pierce, Z. *An Exploratory Study to Identify and Describe the Nature and Prevalence of Burnout in Special Education Teachers*. Nashville, TN: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University, 1982.
- Pierson-Hubeney, D., and Archambault, F. X. "Role Stress and Perceived Intensity of Burnout Among School Psychologists. *Psychology in the Schools* 24 (1987) 244-52.
- Reiner, H., and Hartshore, T. "Job Burnout and the School Psychologist. *Psychology in the Schools* 19 (1982) 508-12.
- Robertson, A. *An Exploratory Study to Examine the Organizational Interpersonal and Personal Factors that Affect Teacher Burnout Among Teachers of the Behavior Disordered*. Nashville, TN: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University, 1988.
- Savicki, V., and Cooley, E. "The Relationship of Work Environment and Client Contact to Burnout in Mental Health Professionals." *Journal of Counseling and Development* (1987) 249-252.
- Seligman, M. E. P. *Helplessness*. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1975.
- Selye, Hans. "General Adaptation Syndrome and Diseases of Adaptation. *Journal of Endocrinology* 6 (1946) 117-47.
- Selye, Hans. *The Stress of Life*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1956.
- Vensel, D. S. "Assuming Responsibility for the Future of School Psychology. *School Psychology Review* 10 (1981): 182-193.
- Weiss, Jay M. "Psychosocial Factors in Stress and Disease. *Scientific American* (June 1972) 104-13.
- Whitaker, C. *An Exploratory Study to Identify and Describe the Nature and Burnout Among Secondary Teachers*. Nashville, TN: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University, 1981.

- Wise, P. S. "School Psychologists' Rankings of Stressful Events. *Journal of School Psychology* 23 (1985) 31-41.
- Wright, D., and Thomas J. "Role Strain Among School Psychologists in the Midwest. *Journal of School Psychology* 20.2 (1982) 96-102.
- Youree, B. *A Study of the Levels of Burnout as Perceived by Faculty Members in the State Universities and Colleges in Tennessee*. Nashville, TN: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University, 1984.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Cover Letters



School of Education

Corvallis, Oregon 97331

October 15, 1989

Dear Colleague:

As part of my doctoral research at Oregon State University, and as a practicing school psychologist, I am conducting a study relative to how school psychologists perceive their jobs and the impact supervisory support has on that perception.

The purpose of the enclosed questionnaires is to discover how school psychologists view their jobs in relation to various personal and job-related factors, what school psychologists think about supervisory support and the effect that this has on them. Without understanding what school psychologists need and want from their supervisors, effective supervision programs are difficult to develop. Your answer may help us to formulate proposals to correct this situation.

Would you please answer the questions as honestly and completely as possible? All questionnaires are strictly confidential. Your name will never be attached to the questionnaire. Please complete and return to me the demographic data sheet, human services survey, and the answer sheet from the Work Environment Scale.

It would be most helpful if I could receive your questionnaires within five days of receipt as this would greatly assist me in meeting predetermined deadlines. A stamped self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Sullivan".

Kevin Sullivan  
Doctoral Candidate

KS/sh

Encls

School of Education



Corvallis, Oregon 97331

October 15, 1989

Dear Coordinator/Supervisor of School Psychologists:

Would you please distribute the attached letter(s) and survey forms with return self-addressed envelopes to the School Psychologists in your district?

The information obtained as a result of the completion of the surveys will be included as research completed in connection with my doctoral program at Oregon State University.

It is my hope that the information obtained will be an aid in the development and expansion of supervisory programs for psychological services.

Thank you very much for your assistance in distributing the survey instruments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Sullivan".

Kevin Sullivan  
2410 N. E. 22nd Avenue  
Portland, OR 97212

KS/sh

Encls

**APPENDIX B**

**Survey Instruments**



Christina Maslach • Susan E. Jackson

## Human Services Survey

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

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

### Example:

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

### HOW OFTEN

0 - 6

Statement:

\_\_\_\_\_ I feel depressed at work.

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



Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc.  
577 College Avenue • Palo Alto, CA 94306

Copyright © 1986 Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. All rights reserved. No portion of this material may be reproduced by any means without written permission of the Publisher. Printed in the U.S.A.

---

## Human Services Survey

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

---

**HOW OFTEN**  
0 - 6

Statements:

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

(Administrative use only)

cat.

cat.

cat.

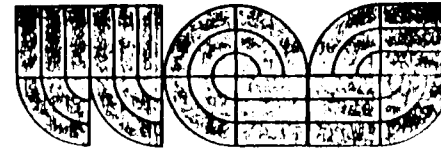
EE: \_\_\_\_\_ DP: \_\_\_\_\_ PA: \_\_\_\_\_

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 74. Employees function fairly independently of supervisors.                     | 83. Supervisors really stand up for their people.                                 |
| 75. People seem to be quite inefficient.  | 84. Supervisors meet with employees regularly to discuss their future work goals. |
| 76. There are always deadlines to be met.                                       | 85. There's a tendency for people to come to work late.                           |
| 77. Rules and policies are constantly changing.                                 | 86. People often have to work overtime to get their work done.                    |
| 78. Employees are expected to conform rather strictly to the rules and customs. | 87. Supervisors encourage employees to be neat and orderly.                       |
| 79. There is a fresh, novel atmosphere about the place.                         | 88. If an employee comes in late, he can make it up by staying late.              |
| 80. The furniture is usually well-arranged.                                     | 89. Things always seem to be changing.  |
| 81. The work is usually very interesting.                                       | 90. The rooms are well ventilated.  |
| 82. Often people make trouble by talking behind others' backs.                  |   |

# WORK ENVIRONMENT SCALE

## FORM R

PAUL M. INSEL & RUDOLF H. MOOS



### Instructions

There are 90 statements in this booklet. They are statements about the place in which you work. The statements are intended to apply to all work environments. However, some words may not be quite suitable for your work environment. For example, the term supervisor is meant to refer to the boss, manager, department head, or the person or persons to whom an employee reports.

You are to decide which statements are true of your work environment and which are false. Make all your marks on the separate answer sheet.

If you think the statement is *true* or mostly *true* of your work environment, make an X in the box labeled T (true).

If you think the statement is *false* or mostly *false* of your work environment, make an X in the box labeled F (false).

Please be sure to answer every statement.



Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc.  
577 College Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94306

Copyright © 1974 by Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., Palo Alto, CA 94306. All rights reserved. This test, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without permission of the publisher. Printed in the U.S.A.

1. The work is really challenging.
2. People go out of their way to help a new employee feel comfortable.
3. Supervisors tend to talk down to employees.
4. Few employees have any important responsibilities.
5. People pay a lot of attention to getting work done.
6. There is constant pressure to keep working.
7. Things are sometimes pretty disorganized.
8. There's a strict emphasis on following policies and regulations.
9. Doing things in a different way is valued.
10. It sometimes gets too hot.
11. There's not much group spirit.
12. The atmosphere is somewhat impersonal.
13. Supervisors usually compliment an employee who does something well.
14. Employees have a great deal of freedom to do as they like.
15. There's a lot of time wasted because of inefficiencies.
16. There always seems to be an urgency about everything.
17. Activities are well-planned.
18. People can wear wild looking clothing while on the job if they want.
19. New and different ideas are always being tried out.
20. The lighting is extremely good.
21. A lot of people seem to be just putting in time.
22. People take a personal interest in each other.
23. Supervisors tend to discourage criticisms from employees.
24. Employees are encouraged to make their own decisions.
25. Things rarely get "put off till tomorrow."
26. People cannot afford to relax.
27. Rules and regulations are somewhat vague and ambiguous.
28. People are expected to follow set rules in doing their work.
29. This place would be one of the first to try out a new idea.
30. Work space is awfully crowded.
31. People seem to take pride in the organization.
32. Employees rarely do things together after work.
33. Supervisors usually give full credit to ideas contributed by employees.
34. People can use their own initiative to do things.
35. This is a highly efficient, work-oriented place.
36. Nobody works too hard.
37. The responsibilities of supervisors are clearly defined.
38. Supervisors keep a rather close watch on employees.
39. Variety and change are not particularly important.
40. This place has a stylish and modern appearance.
41. People put quite a lot of effort into what they do.
42. People are generally frank about how they feel.
43. Supervisors often criticize employees over minor things.
44. Supervisors encourage employees to rely on themselves when a problem arises.
45. Getting a lot of work done is important to people.
46. There is no time pressure.
47. The details of assigned jobs are generally explained to employees.
48. Rules and regulations are pretty well enforced.
49. The same methods have been used for quite a long time.
50. The place could stand some new interior decorations.
51. Few people ever volunteer.
52. Employees often eat lunch together.
53. Employees generally feel free to ask for a raise.
54. Employees generally do not try to be unique and different.
55. There's an emphasis on "work before play."
56. It is very hard to keep up with your work load.
57. Employees are often confused about exactly what they are supposed to do.
58. Supervisors are always checking on employees and supervise them very closely.
59. New approaches to things are rarely tried.
60. The colors and decorations make the place warm and cheerful to work in.
61. It is quite a lively place.
62. Employees who differ greatly from the others in the organization don't get on well.
63. Supervisors expect far too much from employees.
64. Employees are encouraged to learn things even if they are not directly related to the job.
65. Employees work very hard.
66. You can take it easy and still get your work done.
67. Fringe benefits are fully explained to employees.
68. Supervisors do not often give in to employee pressure.
69. Things tend to stay just about the same.
70. It is rather drafty at times.
71. It's hard to get people to do any extra work.
72. Employees often talk to each other about their personal problems.
73. Employees discuss their personal problems with supervisors.

## D E M O G R A P H I C   D A T A   S H E E T

Sex:  Male     Female

Educational Level:

- Masters
- Masters + Sixth Year
- Ed. 5 or C.A.G.5
- Ed.D.
- Ph.D.
- Other

Type or Graduate Academic Preparation:

- Counseling and School Psychology
- Educational Psychology
- School Psychology
- Counseling
- Clinical Psychology
- Other

Years of Experience as a School Psychologist? \_\_\_\_\_

Years Directly Assigned to Special Education? \_\_\_\_\_

Current Salary \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Years in Present Job? \_\_\_\_\_

Geographical Work Setting:

- Rural
- Urban
- Suburban
- Inner City