ABSTRACT

This study sought to find the level of burnout among administrative staff at Philippine Normal University, and identify the causes of stress. The questionnaire is composed of three parts: Part 1- Socio-Demographic Variables; Part 2- Stressors; and Part 3- Level of Stress. A total of seventy six (76) administrative personnel served as the respondents. Factor analysis was used to validate the stressor items. All the items appear valid, having surmounted the significance threshold of 0.50 factor loading.

The findings show that both low and high levels of stress are experienced by the respondents. The tasks of the administrative staff appear with a negative beta coefficient. The positive beta coefficient of immediate supervisor and demands shows that when one has trouble getting along with his/her supervisor or when the supervisor imposes excess workload, the employee experiences a high level of stress. This is aggravated when this is coupled with the demands of faculty members, students, and other stakeholders. This is expected. The workload imposed by the immediate supervisor and the demands of others indeed are sources of burnout.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Key to the function of the school administrator is the facilitation of teaching and learning through the performance of several roles. These include educational leadership or the capacity to bring about shared vision; collaborative decision making ability; managerial skill; advocacy capability; and intra-professional collegiality. The collaborative decision-making role, wherein the school administrator encourages and develops shared leadership and shared responsibility, requires a number of skills in the areas of facilitating, team building, problem solving, leadership development, and the empowerment of others. The management of resources, both human and capital, is a role demanding time and skill that can often be best devoted to other administrative functions.

Administrative staff perform work that includes writing business correspondence, developing and maintaining paper and electronic filing systems, managing individual projects, conducting research online and offline, creating and maintaining databases, scheduling for managers and executives, maintaining calendar system for individuals and departments, ordering office supplies and maintaining inventories, leasing office equipment, and doing other functions as assigned by their superiors. This is a demanding role, as administrative staff must maintain a high level of productivity and efficiency while also ensuring the smooth operation of the organization.
equipment, working with co–workers, answering and handling telephone calls, creating spreadsheets and reports, planning and coordinating small and large meetings and events, making travel arrangements, and much, much more.

The stressful working conditions of administrative staff have attracted researchers’ interest. One stress-related consequence teachers may experience is burnout, which is an undesirable psychological state characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and feelings of reduced professional efficacy. The proposed explanations for administrative staff burnout are many and include associations between burnout and a strained work situation (i.e., high demands in combination with low job control), limited resources, permeable boundaries between private life and individual characteristics.

Background of the Study

School administrative staff are increasingly getting involved in responsibilities beyond the student body and professional staff. School councils, health and social agencies, and police and other authorities also have mandates with respect to the educational and other needs of students. In this role, school administrators must be sensitive to political, economic, social and cultural aspect issues.

Therefore, every administration has a responsibility, in collaboration with others, to implement appropriate work stress intervention programs to reduce burnout among school administration staff. Being able to understand burnout, its causes, and how to prevent it is essential in order to maintain a positive environment, and keep the best talent in the administration. Burnout is an individual’s response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors within the workplace (Maslach, et al., 2001). It doesn’t simply result from working too many hours in a high-demand environment. Rather, it is a multidimensional response with many complex causes. Burnout is a common phenomenon that no one is immune to. It is important to structure the work environment so that every administrative staff feels relatively pleased and motivated, and has the tools and support he needs to succeed.

The Problem

This study sought to find out the level of burnout among administrative staff at Philippine Normal University, and identify the causes thereof.

This study aimed to answer the following specific questions:

1. What is the burn-out level among administrative staff at PNU Manila?
2. What contributes to the stress level of administrative staff at PNU?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Burnout: Concepts and Nature
Burnout may appear similar and is related to stress, depression, and illness. Cedoline (1982) suggests that burnout and stress are interchangeable. They bear the same concepts and effects. When stress becomes severe, burnout sets in and a person undergoes a loss of energy, some flexibility and even resourcefulness. Burnout then is “an overall feeling of helplessness, losing self-control, and of being overwhelmed. Selye (1968; in Croucher, 2001) supports this claim by further explaining that stress and burnout are not the same. He defines stress in terms of the response our body makes to any outside force/s or stimulus/stimuli. Selye (1968; in Croucher, 2001) in fact argues that stress is a term used in physics which refers to the application of sufficient force to any given object. As such, stress is caused by any force felt from “outside” the organism causing a body to respond in either “fight” (when angry) or “flight” (when in fear). Croucher (2001) sees this outside event to impinge upon beliefs system, quite similar to how the brain interprets what’s happening around and telling the body how to respond.

Hart, cited in Croucher (2001), also differentiates stress and burnout. Burnout is a defense characterized by disengagement, while stress is characterized by over engagement. Burnout is characterized as “blunted;” while in stress, the motions become over-reactive. In burnout, the emotional damage is primary; while in stress, physical damage is primary.

Hallsten (1993) posits that burnout is a form of depression that results from the process of being completely burnout. Hence, burning out is one route to depression as it is assumed to appear when the enactment of an active, self-definitional role is threatened or disrupted with no alternative role at hand.

Signs and Symptoms of Burnout

As any social condition, burnout has various manifestations. In fact, as advocated by experts, burnout must be addressed at the time that it is identified.

In her book *Overcoming Job Burnout: How to Renew Enthusiasm for Work*, Dr. Beverly Potter (1998) mentions some common signs of burnout like: negative emotions, interpersonal problems, health problems, below par performance, and feeling of meaninglessness. Potter also claims that burnout doesn’t occur overnight. It is a cumulative process, beginning with small warning signals that, when untreated, can progress into a profound and lasting dread of going to work. The symptoms may be ordinary events that won’t take notice of, not knowing that this is the start of job burnout. Before one knows it, a full-blown case of burnout is already at hand.

The warning signs of burnout include physical signs like: back pain, headaches, stomach pains, ulcers, exhaustion, sleeplessness, inability to shake colds, etc. The emotional, psychological and behavioral signs of burnout include: depression, discontent, detachment, dehumanization or robot-like behavior, negativity or cynicism, angry outburst, self-abasement, rigidity, suspiciousness, silence and withdrawal, the attitude of just putting time, making more mistakes on the job, leaving the job, low morale, and absenteeism.
Although burnout has no precise medical definition, victims are identified by symptoms such as: fatigue, lack of enthusiasm, helplessness, hopelessness, and malaise of spirit. As they feel extremely tired and irritated over minor incidents, victims could be propelled to take action, big or small.

To Maslach (1986), apart from symptoms like: more mental/health problems, feeling “bad, cold, calloused,” the desire to get away from people; increased marital and family conflicts add to the list of burnout effects.

Veninga and Spradley (1981) report that burnout shows specific manifestations among those who suffer from it.

Prevention and Reduction of Administrative Staff Burnout

Organization-directed interventions take into consideration the impact that work environment has on employees. Burnout is not necessarily the consequence of an overly demanding workload. It can result from a variety of workplace situations such as employees viewing their work environment as inequitable or from employees lacking control over their work. Organization-directed interventions typically have longer lasting effects than person-directed interventions when carried out alone. Common areas that are targeted in an effort to reduce or prevent burnout are:

1. Employee autonomy: Increasing control and decision making over work schedules, work load, and work processes.
2. Management style: Altering management styles to reduce micro-managing and top-down hierarchies; and increase visibility, open communication, employee trust and collaboration.
3. Training: Increasing employee competencies and providing opportunities for professional development.
4. Social culture/environment: This can include but is not limited to reducing interpersonal conflict, increasing social support and team work, supporting work-life balance, and aligning employee and company values.

Comprehensive approach, combining both individual-directed and organization-directed interventions, is arguably the best way to target burnout. Taking a comprehensive approach is like tackling the problem from all angles, which is more effective than focusing on only one aspect of the problem. Also, one alters organizational culture to combat current employee burnout symptoms, one will also reduce the risk of employees burning out in the future.
Research Paradigm

The paradigm of the study is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENT VARIABLES</th>
<th>DEPENDENT VARIABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Supervisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with co-workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands of faculty, students &amp; stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BURNOUT

- Low stress
- High stress

Figure 1. The Paradigm of the Study

As shown in the paradigm, it is hypothesized that: a) tasks; b) immediate supervisor; c) relationship with co-workers; and d) demands of faculty, students and stakeholders contribute to the burnout of employees.

Research Hypothesis

- The following contribute to the burnout of administrative staff:
  - a) tasks;
  - b) immediate supervisor;
  - c) relationship with co-workers; and
  - d) demands of faculty, students and stakeholders.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Locale and Population of the Study, Distribution of the Sample

The Philippine Normal University, Manila, was/is the locale of the study.

A total of seventy six (76) administrative staff served as respondents. Twenty five (25) respondents are male, and 47 are female. Four (4) respondents failed to provide their gender data.

Twenty five (25) respondents were single, and 47 were married, while four respondents did not provide data on their civil status.

The type of residence of the respondents yielded the following distribution:

- 34 own a house,
- 21 rent a house,
- seven live with relatives,
- while 11 opted not to answer.

In respect to monthly income, three (3) respondents earned Php50,000 and above, two (2) respondents earned Php40,000 to Php50,000, two (2) respondents earned Php30,000 to Php40,000, eleven (11) respondents earned Php20,000 to Php 30,000, fifty five (55) respondents earned Php20,000 or below,

while three (3) opted not to answer. Majority of the respondents are cooks from the Auxiliary Services Unit.
Instrumentation and Validation

The researchers developed a questionnaire consisting of three (3) parts: Part 1: Socio-Demographic Variables; Part 2: Stressors; and Part 3: Level of Stress.

Part 1 (Socio Demographic Variables) deals with the variables: sex, age, civil status, number of children (if married), office, years of service at PNU, employment status, position, number of hours travel from residence to PNU, estimated monthly income, and type of residence.

Part 2 (Stressors) is composed of 20 statements that are experienced by an administrative staff. The statements are grouped into 4 sets, namely: a) tasks; b) immediate supervisor; c) relationship with co-workers; and d) demands of faculty, students and stakeholders. Part 2 uses a five-point scale:

- Not at all - 1
- Seldom - 2
- Sometimes - 3
- Often - 4
- Always - 5

Part 3 (Level of Stress) is composed of four parts: a) physical symptoms; b) emotional symptoms; c) behavioral symptoms; and d) psychological and negative thoughts.

The questionnaire was validated, for construct validity, by means of factor analysis.

Data Gathering Procedures

With the permission of the Director of the Human Resources Management Development Services (HRMDS) of PNU, the researchers administered copies of the questionnaire to the employee-respondents.

The respondents were assured of their confidentiality, that is, that their responses would be accessible only by the researchers.

Data Processing and Statistical Treatment

To build the profile of the respondents according to the demographic variables, descriptive statistics including frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviations were computed.

The researchers performed factor analysis to analyze the administrative staff's responses on various sources of burnout/stress included in the Part 2 of the questionnaire, as classified into four categories: a) tasks; b) immediate supervisor; c) relationship with co-workers; and d) demands of faculty, students and stakeholders.

To explore the impact of the four sources of stress (tasks, immediate supervisor, relationship with co-workers, and demands of faculty, students and stakeholders) to the level of stress experienced by the PNU administrative staff, the researchers used multiple regression analysis to examine the possible influences of the four sets of stressors on level of stress (burnout).
DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Descriptive Findings

Table 1 shows the profile of respondents.

Table 1. Number of Children, Years in Service, and Travel Hours of Respondents to PNU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Service</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14.58</td>
<td>9.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Hours</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.0831</td>
<td>.76484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears that Table 1 shows that there are respondents who have no children but the maximum number a respondent has is 10. The mean number of children is 1.42. The standard deviation of 1.815 shows heterogeneity in terms of number of children of respondents. Further, table 1 reveals that the respondents’ number of service at PNU ranges from 1 year to a maximum of 37 years with an average of 14.58 years. The standard deviation of 9.110 shows that the years of service in relation to the mean is homogeneous. The travel hours from the place of residence to PNU has an average of 1.0831 hour. The minimum time spent in travelling is 50 minutes while the maximum travel time is 3 hours. The standard deviation of .76482 reveals that the variation of the travel hours of respondents is 76 minutes or about an hour and 16 minutes.

Interdental Findings

It is recalled that the “stressors” instrument used in the study is composed of 20 statements reflective of what are being experienced by the administrative staff. The statements are grouped according to: (a) tasks, (b) immediate supervisor; (c) relationship with co-workers, and (d) demands of faculty, students and stakeholders. A five-point scale is used ranging from not at all (1) to Always (5). The items under each category were validated through factor analysis with 0.50 set as the threshold for significant factor loading.

Likewise, it is recalled that the level of stress (burnout) covers four dimensions, namely: (a) physical symptoms, (b) emotional symptoms, (c) behavioral symptoms, and (d) psychological and negative thoughts. Respondents were asked to check as many symptoms as they experienced. After of which, the mean of all the variate values of the stress items were calculated to constitute the variate values of the dependent variable (level of stress or burnout).

Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the possible relationships between the stressors (tasks, immediate supervisor, relationship with co-workers, and demands of faculty, students and stakeholders) on one hand and level of stress (burnout) on the other.

The result of the analysis is shown below.
Table 4. Regression of Stress Level (Burnout)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV</th>
<th>Regression Coefficient</th>
<th>T value</th>
<th>Signif</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks</td>
<td>-.780</td>
<td>-.145</td>
<td>-1.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Superior</td>
<td>.944</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>.969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with co-workers</td>
<td>1.002</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>.979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands from faculty, students and stakeholders</td>
<td>2.703</td>
<td>.341</td>
<td>2.795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-.050</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| R                   | = .521 |
| R Square            | = .271 |
| Adjusted R Square   | = .221 |
| F value for ANOVA   | = 5.403 |
| Significance of F   | = .001 |

The foregoing table shows that the equation is significant (F value for ANOVA = 5.403, p = .001). Of the four repressors, only one appears significant. This is demands from faculty, students, and stakeholders. This has positive regression coefficient (beta = 0.341, p = .007). The adjusted R Square of 0.221 reveals that 22.1% of stress/burnout variance is explain by the aforementioned four repressors, mainly by demands from faculty, students, and stakeholders.

The four dimensions of stress/burnout (physical, emotional, behavioral, and psychological & negative) were also individually regressed on the four (4) aforementioned sets of repressor. However, each resulting equation shows just one significant repressor (positive), i.e., demands from faculty, students, and stakeholders.

This is expected. Why so? One may take note that tasks, immediate supervisors, and co-workers are not sources of stress or burnout because one has learned to adjust to these factors in the course of working and staying put on the job. When one is adjusted to his tasks and supervisor and co-workers, there likely occurred already some sort of a symbiotic relationship between and among all concerned parties.

However, it is quite different when the sources of stress are the clienteles (faculty, students, and stakeholders). When the requests turn into demands and which the employees have no choice but to comply, then stress builds up which usually leads to burnout.

Selye (1968; in Croucher, 2001) supports this claim that stress is caused by any force induced from “outside” the organism, causing the body to respond in either “fight” (when angry) or “flight” (when in fear) mode. Croucher (2001) sees this outside event to impinge upon one’s beliefs system, quite similar to how the brain interprets what’s happening around and telling the body how to respond. In other words, when demands...
are in the extreme, the employee either “fights” or takes “flight”. To Hart, cited in Croucher (2001), burnout is a defense characterized by disengagement where sometimes, the motions become over-reactive.

Hallsten (1993) posits that burnout is a form of depression that results from the process of being completely burned out. Hence, burning out is one route to depression as it is assumed to appear upon the onset of an active, self-definitional role being threatened or disrupted with no alternative role at hand.

To Maslach (1986), symptoms like mental, health problems, feeling “bad, cold, calloused,” the desire to get away from people; increased marital and family conflict add to the list of burnout effects. It is possible that when employees experience demands, they exhibit dehumanizing response patterns which can be deemed as individual detachment techniques to cope with such demands.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to find out the level of stress/burnout among the administrative staff at Philippine Normal University, and identify the causes thereof.

A survey questionnaire was developed composed of three parts: Part 1 on Socio-Demographic Variables, Part 2 on Stressors, and Part 3 on Level of Stress.

A total of seventy six (76) administrative personnel served as the respondents. Factor analysis was used to validate the stressor items, all the items appeared valid (with construct validity) at the threshold factor loading of 0.50.

The findings show that the respondents experience a certain level of stress/burnout. Only one set of stressors appears positively significant, that is, demands from faculty, students, and stakeholders. This is expected. The workload imposed by the immediate supervisor and the demands of others (faculty, students and stakeholders) indeed are sources of stress/burnout.

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