ANTECEDENTS OF JOB BURNOUT AMONG
SMALL COMPANY PRESIDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Several studies suggest that small business presidents may be especially susceptible to job burnout because of their personality traits and the unique organizational demands of their position. This issue has not been directly tested in small business research, however. This exploratory study examined the relationship of several personal, work, and environmental characteristics to job burnout among 215 small company presidents. A series of regression analyses found that five variables explained 44 percent of the variation in burnout levels among small business presidents. Each of the five predictor variables was individually significantly related to burnout. The results of this study suggest that effective coping strategies for job burnout among small company presidents may be both individual- and situation-specific.

INTRODUCTION

Small businesses represent most of the economic growth in the United States today, accounting for over 99 percent of all employers (SBA, 2000). Furthermore, small entrepreneurial firms have created the majority of net new jobs in the past twenty years (Timmons, 1999). These businesses are expected to continue growing rapidly through 2005 in terms of output as well as employment. Clearly, the small business sector is vital to real economic expansion.

The growth associated with small business development extracts a very serious price from one of its primary participants, however, the small business president. That price is job burnout. Burnout has been linked to mental and physical health problems as well as interpersonal problems. The organizational effects of burnout include turnover, absenteeism, and reduced job performance (see Kahill, 1988 for a review).

Several studies suggest that small business presidents may be especially susceptible to burnout because of their personal traits (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) and the unique organizational demands of small businesses (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 1995: 471-481). While

there is considerable anecdotal and impressionistic evidence about job stress among small business presidents, the determinants of job burnout for this occupational category have not been the subject of systematic, empirical research. Over the past twenty years, burnout research has focused almost exclusively on care-giving professionals, e.g., nurses, teachers, social workers, etc. (Burke & Greenglass, 1995). A literature search produced no research on burnout for small company presidents despite evidence that this group may be as susceptible to burnout as employees in the typical "helping" professions (Jackson, 1984; Jackson & Schuler 1983).

Given the importance of the small business sector, the critical role of the small president within that sector, and the extreme negative consequences of job burnout, a study of burnout within this population is warranted. Perhaps an understanding of the correlates and antecedents of burnout among small company presidents can suggest ways to avoid or cope with this debilitating condition. While the research reported here is early and exploratory, it is important to identify directions for future research and some issues that require further investigation.

The research builds on previous studies in a systematic way by using the conceptualization of job burnout first established by Maslach (1982). Burnout is a particular type of prolonged job stress characterized by feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (treatment of people as objects), and reduced personal accomplishment. This multidimensional framework continues to be used by the major researchers in the field (e.g., Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Maslach & Jackson, 1981, 1986; Wolpin et al., 1991). In an attempt to extend their findings, this research specifically looks at gender issues. A comparison of male versus female small business presidents is necessary due to the large number of conflicting findings related to job stress among women managers and entrepreneurs (see Beatty, 1996 for a review).

The article is organized as follows. First, previous job burnout research is discussed, with emphasis on the personal, work and environmental demands of small firm presidents. Research hypotheses are presented, followed by a discussion of the study methodology. Next, the results of several regression analyses are provided, and implications of the research for small company presidents and management research are presented.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Job burnout represents a particular type of job stress--specifically a series of chronic, emotional responses to prolonged, stressful work demands and conditions (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991). The conservation of resources theory of stress (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993) suggests that burnout occurs when "certain valued resources are lost, are inadequate to meet demands, or do not yield the anticipated returns" (Lee & Ashforth, 1996: 123). These resources include job enhancement opportunities, control and autonomy, participation in decision making, and social support from various sources (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). The major work demands include role conflict, role ambiguity, stressful events, heavy workload, and pressure (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Burnout has been differentiated from job stress in that the former may be a possible response to prolonged stress (Quick, 1987).

Consequences of Burnout

The consequences of job burnout can be costly and damaging to both the individuals and organizations involved. Job burnout has been linked to a variety of physical consequences including fatigue, insomnia, headaches, and gastrointestinal disturbances (Kahill, 1988), as

well as chest pains and appetite problems (Burke & Deszca, 1986). Emotional effects include depression, irritability, decreases in self-esteem, and anxiety (Jackson & Maslach, 1982; Kahill, 1988). Interpersonal problems associated with burnout include the deterioration of social and family relationships (Burke & Deszca, 1986; Jackson & Maslach, 1982) and increased drug, alcohol, and tobacco use. Negative attitudes develop (Kahill, 1988), and organizational commitment decreases as well (Jackson, Turner & Brief, 1987; Leiter & Maslach, 1988).

Behavioral changes of burnout victims which directly affect organizational performance include higher levels of job turnover (Jackson et al., 1986) and absenteeism (Firth & Britton, 1989) and decreases in the quality and quantity of job performance (Maslach & Jackson, 1985). Clearly, burnout can have damaging effects on the individual employee, the employee's family, friends, and co-workers, as well as the organization.

Burnout Propensity Among Small Business Presidents

Despite the lack of research on job burnout among small company presidents, related studies suggest that this occupational group should be investigated. Small business presidents appear to be highly susceptible to burnout due to their personal characteristics, their unique job roles, and the organizational demands of small businesses. For example, several studies have documented that managerial work is inherently more stressful than other occupations due to higher levels of role overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity (Caplan et al., 1980; French & Caplan, 1972). Frequent interaction with others also increases the propensity for stressful conflict (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; French & Caplan, 1972). Empirical studies of managerial activity show that a very high proportion of time is spent in interaction with others (e.g., Mintzberg, 1973; Guest, 1956).

In addition to the frequency of interaction, certain kinds of interpersonal contacts can cause strain as well. Jackson and Schuler (1983) and Jackson (1984) speculated that managers and supervisors, because they are required to help their employees resolve both job-related and personal difficulties, may experience burnout in the same way that those in the "helping" professions do. Also, top-level managers who perform "boundary-spanning" functions have a high frequency and intensity of interpersonal contact which increases their burnout propensity (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Boundary-spanning personnel operate at the periphery of the organization, interacting with a myriad of people both inside and outside the organization (Behrman, Bigoness, & Perreault, 1981; Singh, 1993; Singh & Rhoads, 1991; Singh, Goolsby & Rhoads, 1994). As such, they experience a high degree of role conflict that is associated with higher levels of burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993: 628).

Individuals who hold work as a central life interest (e.g., Dubin, 1956) are also more likely candidates for emotional exhaustion because they view their work as being of extreme importance. Furthermore, high expectations in terms of achievement, work challenge, rewards, recognition, and career development create stress (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) which may lead to burnout. Overachievers, in particular, are more vulnerable to burnout than other individuals (Maslach, 1982).

All of the above characteristics could be said to describe many small company presidents, indicating that burnout could be one negative consequence of their occupational success. In order to determine the possible nature and extent of burnout among small company presidents, determinants of burnout are examined next.

Antecedents of Burnout Among Small Business Presidents

Overview. Cordes and Dougherty (1993) originally categorized the antecedents of job burnout into three areas: personal characteristics, job and role characteristics, and organizational characteristics. We theorize that both personal and job/role characteristics (what we term "work" characteristics) will be significant contributors to job burnout among small company presidents. Organizational characteristics are not likely to be significant predictors of burnout for this group, however. This is for two reasons. First, when Jackson, et al. (1986) investigated the impact of organizational characteristics on burnout, no significant relationships were found. Second, small business presidents enjoy much more organizational control as a group than managers or other workers due to their status. Therefore, organizational traits such as work shifts, reward systems, and psychological work environment are less likely to significantly impact presidents' burnout levels.

Alternatively, it is more likely that the external environment faced by the small firm will affect the CEO's burnout potential. The small business CEO is directly impacted by multiple facets of the environment and is less buffered from the environment than his/her larger business counterparts. Accordingly, we defined a third area, environmental characteristics, as a predictor of burnout for this group. The external environment captures the important effects of industry structure such as the degree of environmental uncertainty, turbulence, and hostility (Covin & Slevin, 1989; Naman & Slevin, 1993). Small firms are especially vulnerable to hostile environmental effects because of their limited resources (Covin & Slevin, 1989). Each of these three categories of burnout variables, personal, work, and environmental characteristics, is discussed next in the context of this study.

Personal Characteristics. Age, gender, and the proactive personality trait were selected as key personal characteristics impacting burnout. Age has been shown to be inversely related to burnout by several researchers (Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984; Gold, 1985; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). One explanation for this relationship is that older persons have developed more experience in coping with job stressors and thus exhibit less burnout (Lee & Ashforth, 1993).

H1: For small company presidents, age will be inversely related to burnout.

In research on gender and job-related stresses, females often report more burnout than males (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Some researchers have speculated that entering male-dominated fields such as management makes women more vulnerable to stress. This is due to the unique combination of pressures, conflicts, prejudices, and isolation women encounter when they do not restrict themselves to traditionally 'female' jobs (Davidson & Cooper, 1988; Scase, Goffee, & Mann, 1987).

At the same time, several competing arguments have been offered. Female managers report lower levels of stress than both blue-collar workers and people with lower occupational status (Karasek & Theorell, 1990), and some managerial women experience less stress than other groups of working women, even those in female-oriented professions (e.g., Harlan & Jansen, 1987). Women in male-dominated professions have also reported lower levels of depression, fewer symptoms of illness and medication use, and higher job satisfaction (Beatty, 1996; Harlan & Jansen, 1987). Some empirical studies found a greater degree of depersonalization among men than among women, but the same studies found no relationship between gender and either emotional exhaustion or reduced personal accomplishment, two components of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1985; Russell, Altmaier & Van Velzen, 1987; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982b). Thus, the question of gender and job burnout has not been definitively answered. We postulate that female presidents will experience higher levels of burnout than

males.

> H2:   Female small company presidents will report higher levels of burnout than
> their male counterparts.

Proactivity was selected as the third personal variable. It is defined as "...the relatively stable tendency to effect environmental change" (Bateman & Crant, 1993). To the extent that small company presidents perceive some level of control over their environment and organization, as well as their ability to take positive action, their burnout levels should be lower. Loss of control has been associated with higher levels of stress, occupational strain (deviation from normal work responses including psychiatric symptoms such as anger, depression, memory loss), and job burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Rahim, 1996).

> H3:   Proactivity will be inversely related to burnout.

Work characteristics. According to Cordes and Dougherty (1993), job or role characteristics (i.e., work characteristics) can affect burnout levels as well. These include variables such as the degree of interpersonal interaction, role conflict, role ambiguity, and others. Organizational structure (i.e., organicity) is highly likely to impact burnout among small company presidents. Organicity refers to "the extent to which organizations are structured in an organic versus a mechanistic manner" (Covin & Slevin, 1989). It is proposed here that a more organic structure, i.e., one that is characterized by open channels of communication, an emphasis on expertise rather than authority, informal control, etc., would reduce the demand on the small company president and thus reduce felt burnout. Since various work demands contribute to job burnout, it is proposed that a structure which reduces these demands will have a positive impact on burnout levels. Accordingly,

> H4:   Organicity will be inversely related to burnout.

Role conflict has been found to be a significant factor in both job stress and job burnout (and one or more of its components) in a number of studies (see Cordes and Dougherty, 1993 and Lee and Ashforth, 1996 for reviews). Role conflict is defined as incompatible expectations directed to a role incumbent by his or her role senders (Kahn, 1978). Incongruent role demands and commitments are especially common in boundary spanning positions (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Singh et al., 1994). The findings regarding role conflict have been consistent across studies and for a variety of groups in care-giving professions. According to Cordes and Dougherty, the relationship between role conflict and burnout "...would be expected to be equivalent in corporate and industrial settings as well" (1993: 631). We propose that role conflict will therefore affect burnout levels of small firm presidents.

> H5:   Role conflict will be positively related to burnout.

Environmental characteristics. Covin and Slevin (1989) found that the external environment faced by small firms had substantial impact on their performance. The external environment consists of a variety of competitive, technological, and other uncontrollable variables that have a strong impact on small firm viability and growth. Given the small company president's typical role as the prominent, if not sole, boundary spanner for the firm, burnout may be caused by individuals and organizations in the firm's external environment. This study examines two aspects of the environment which are known to be relevant for small firms--hostility and turbulence, as interpreted and perceived by the president.

Hostile environments are "...characterized by precarious industry settings, intense competition, harsh, overwhelming business climates, and the relative lack of exploitable

opportunities" (Covin & Slevin, 1989: 75). They found that the adverse impact of perceived environmental hostility presented an even greater threat to small businesses "due to their limited resource bases and relative inabilities to survive the consequences of poor managerial decisions" (1989: 75). As the perceived threat to a small firm's viability increases, the likelihood of burnout should increase as well. Accordingly:

H6:   Perceived environmental hostility will be positively related to burnout.

The second environmental characteristic, perceived environmental turbulence, is defined as environmental dynamism, or the unpredictability of competitors' and customers' behaviors, the rate of product and technological obsolescence, and the required rate of change in a firm's marketing practices (Naman & Slevin, 1993). Since unpredictable change is inherently stressful, the higher the rate of perceived turbulence in a small business' environment, the higher the likelihood of burnout for the small company president. Thus:

H7:   Perceived environmental turbulence will be positively related to burnout.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedure

Questionnaires were mailed to 683 small business presidents located in a large Midwestern metropolitan area. Using the Small Business Administration's classification, small businesses were defined as firms having total annual sales less than $10 million. These presidents represented a combination of previous participants in a university Small Business Institute program over a thirteen year period and a few others identified in newspapers and business periodicals as businesses meeting the criteria of privately held with sales of less than $10 million. While industry type for each respondent was not identified in the data, the geographical area was primarily noted for manufacturing prowess. Hence, as compared with other regions, manufacturing companies most likely predominate in the sample

The response rate was 31 percent. Of the 215 respondents, 79 percent were male. The average respondent was 48 years old, had a four-year college degree and had been with the company for 11 years. Forty-nine percent of the sample started the business, 20 percent purchased the business, and 13 percent inherited the business. The remaining presidents did not own the businesses they managed. The average business was 15 years old, had 22 full-time employees, and enjoyed annual sales of $3,590,000.

Measures

The independent variables in this study include the three categories of personal (age, gender, and proactivity), work (organicity and role conflict), and perceived environmental characteristics (hostility and turbulence). The relationship between these predictor variables and job burnout is examined.

Job burnout. Burnout was measured using the widely-adopted MBI (Maslach Burnout Inventory) 22-item scale originally established by Maslach (1982). The favorable measurement properties of this scale have been extensively documented (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). A seven-point Likert scale was used, anchored at 1 ("very much like me") and at 7 ("very much unlike me"). Examples of individual items include: "I am at the end of my rope," "Work is hardening me emotionally," and "I accomplish worthwhile things." This scale demonstrated an alpha reliability of .89, indicating that the items are consistent measures of burnout.

Personal characteristics. The personal characteristics examined in this study were age, gender, and proactivity. Age and gender were self-report items. Proactivity was measured using a seven-point Likert scale anchored at 1 ("very much like me") and at 7 ("very much unlike me"). This 17-item measure has evidenced strong criterion validity (e.g., Crant, 1995). One sample item includes, "If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen." Reliability of this scale was very high at alpha =.91.

Work characteristics. Two job/role characteristics were included in this research: organicity and role conflict. Organization structure was measured using a seven-item scale measuring organicity (i.e., the extent to which organizations are structured in an organic vs. a mechanistic mode). First developed by Khandwalla (1977), it uses a semantic differential scale, anchored at 1 ("a strong emphasis on always getting personnel to follow the formally laid down procedures") and at 7 ("a strong emphasis on getting things done even if it means disregarding formal procedures"). Reliability for the organicity scale was alpha =.86.

Role conflict was measured with four items adapted from the Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970) scale. A seven-point Likert scale was used, anchored like the proactivity scale (e.g., "very much like me" and "very much unlike me"). A sample item includes, "I receive incompatible or contradictory requests from two or more people." Reliability of the role conflict measure was marginal at .61, but the exploratory nature of this study makes this acceptable.

Environmental characteristics. Perceived environmental hostility and turbulence were the two variables included in this category because they seem most relevant to small businesses (Covin & Slevin, 1989; Naman & Slevin, 1993). Hostility was measured using Khandwalla's (1977) original three-item, seven-point scale, later adapted by Naman and Slevin (1993) to four items. A semantic differential scale was used in which bipolar descriptions of the external environment facing the firm were provided. For example, one of the hostility measures includes, "hospitable and low-stress environment," anchored at 1, while "very stressful and hostile environment" represented the opposite end. For the turbulence scale, Miller and Friesen's (1982) five-item, seven-point scale of environmental dynamism was used, also used later by Covin and Slevin (1989) and Naman and Slevin (1993). A sample item includes, "actions of competitors are quite easy to predict," anchored at 1 while "actions of competitors are unpredictable" was anchored at 7. The reliability of the environmental hostility scale was alpha = .59, while the reliability of the environmental turbulence scale was alpha = .73.

Data Analysis

Correlations between the variables were analyzed in order to determine the nature and strength of their relationships. Analysis of variance was conducted to determine differences in job burnout levels based on gender. Next, multiple regressions were performed in which each of the three categories of burnout antecedents was related to the overall job burnout measure. A series of stepwise multiple regression analyses using all predictor variables was then performed to determine whether different sets of the independent variables contributed specifically to burnout among the small company presidents.

RESULTS

Table 1 provides the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and intercorrelations of the research variables. The data provide support for Hypothesis 1. Age is moderately and inversely related to burnout (-0.17). With respect to H2, an analysis of variance revealed that females reported a statistically significant higher average score (66.70) than males (59.46) on

burnout (between group F=4.46; p=0.03). Thus, H2 is supported. Hypothesis 3 is supported by the data in Table 1. Proactivity is strongly and inversely related to burnout (-0.54). Hypotheses 4 and 5 are also supported in that organicity is inversely related to burnout (-0.26) and role conflict is strongly related to burnout (0.42).   H6 is supported, but not H7. Environmental hostility is related to burnout (0.29), but environmental turbulence is not.

Table 1
VARIABLE MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS,
RELIABILITIES & INTERCORRELATIONS

Variable	Mean	SD	Burnout	Age	Pro-activity	Organ-icity	Role Conflict	Hostility	Turb-ulence	Alpha
Burnout	62.52	19.25								0.89
Personal Characteristics										
Age	47.9	11.04	-0.17*							
Proactivity	91.14	14.03	-0.54**	-0.05						0.91
Work Characteristics										
Organicity	35.17	7.34	-0.26**	-0.07	0.30**	0.06				0.86
Role Conflict	14.51	4.32	0.42**	-0.1	-0.18**	-0.1	-0.09			0.61
Environmental Characteristics										
Hostility	12.61	3.43	0.29**	0.01	-0.22**	-0.02	0.02	0.11		0.59
Turbulence	20.37	5.66	0.02	0.1	0.07	0.1	0.11	0.1	0.18**	0.73

*p<0.5;**p<.01

Because of the significant zero-order correlations for almost all the individual predictor variables, multiple regressions were performed within each of the three categories of predictor variables: personal, work, and perceived environmental characteristics. Table 2 reports the multiple correlation coefficients. A comparison of the zero-order (1) with the multiple correlation coefficients for the predictor categories produces two important findings: 1) in combination, multiple variables in each category are significant predictors of burnout; and 2) the multiple regression model for the personal characteristics and the work characteristics categories provides better explanatory power than either of the independent variables within these categories taken alone.

Because of both the high and significant zero-order correlations and the improvement evidenced with the multiple regressions, stepwise multiple regressions (p ≤ .05) using all six predictor variables were performed.   This analysis was designed to determine whether different sets of predictor variables contributed specifically to burnout.

Table 3 presents the stepwise regressions. The most important finding is that 44 percent of the variation in burnout is accounted for by five of the six predictor variables. Perceived environmental turbulence was not included as a significant regression variable.

Table 2
MULTIPLE REGRESSION: PERSONAL
CHARACTERISTICS, WORK CHARACTERISTICS, & ENVIRONMENTAL
CHARACTERISTICS AS DETERMINANTS OF BURNOUT

Dependent Variable	Regression variable	Beta	t Stat.	P Value	Overall F Stat.	Sig.	R	Adjusted R^2
	Personal							
Burnout	Age	-0.20	-3.21	0.00	41.92	0.00	0.57	0.32
	Proactivity	-0.55	-8.73	0.00				
	Work							
Burnout	Organicity	-0.22	-3.19	0.00	24.27	0.00	0.48	0.22
	Role conflict	0.40	5.88	0.00				
	Environmental							
Burnout	Environmental Hostility	0.29	3.98	0.00	7.96	0.00	0.29	0.07
	Environmental Turbulence	-0.03	-0.42	NS				

$*p<0.5;   **p<.01$

Table 3
STEPWISE REGRESSION: BURNOUT AGAINST ALL VARIABLES

Dependent Variable	Regression variable	Beta	t Stat.	P Value	Overall F Stat.	Sig.	R	Adjusted R^2
Burnout	Organicity	-0.12	-1.95	0.05				
	Proactivity	-0.42	-6.69	0.00				
	Role Conflict	0.30	5.07	0.00	27.76	0.00	0.68	0.44
	Age	-0.18	-3.01	0.00				
	Environmental Hostility	0.16	2.75	0.01				

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has identified important determinants of job burnout for a sample of small company presidents. The results support some of the previous job burnout research, but some new findings emerged. For example, the finding that environmental hostility, but not environmental turbulence, is strongly related to burnout is noteworthy. Perhaps the uncertainty created by a turbulent environment does not take its toll on the small firm president the way the stress of a hostile environment does. This finding may be unique to small company leaders, however, and not business leaders in general. Entrepreneurs may be accustomed to a great deal of uncertainty in the external environment. Since 49 percent of our sample consisted of small company presidents who had started their businesses, the entrepreneurial orientation explanation has merit.

The results regarding age confirm the notion that younger small business leaders are more susceptible to burnout than their older counterparts. This suggests that organizational practices with respect to hiring, training, and providing employee assistance programs may be affected. For example, younger presidents may need a greater variety of experiences earlier in their careers in order to improve their coping abilities quickly. Alternatively, they may require job and/or personal counseling in order to deal with burnout effects.

The finding that women reported significantly higher burnout levels than men is important because of the conflicting results of previous research. It is possible that earlier research which found equal or lower burnout levels among women (as compared to men) may have been due to female subjects' unwillingness to report higher burnout levels. This may be true for women in male-dominated professions or in higher level supervisory positions especially. As women assume more traditional male roles, they may fail to acknowledge their burnout in attempts to be "more professional" or more like their male counterparts. Alternatively, they may actually experience less emotional anxiety or have learned how to subsume, limit, or somehow resolve their stress-related responses on the job.

Regarding the final stepwise analysis, it is also significant that proactivity, role conflict, and organicity all play an important role in understanding burnout. How a proactive personality predisposition permits a small company president to minimize burnout, and the specific types and amounts of role conflict which are more closely associated with burnout, should be subjects of future research. The findings on personality could lead to better hiring practices or even the use of personality tests in recruiting if high burnout is anticipated.

Managerial Implications

An important implication of job burnout among small business presidents concerns firm performance. To the extent that burnout leads to poorer managerial decision making, the firm's viability and growth potential may be endangered. For example, one behavioral response of burnout victims is withdrawal from colleagues, coworkers, clients, and others. Withdrawal from others is likely to decrease the amount of participation in an organization. Participation is usually defined as joint decision making in which employees are invited to help solve organizational problems (Tjosvold, 1987). Participation has been shown to improve problem solving in organizations, increase job satisfaction, and, to a lesser extent, increase individual and organizational productivity (Miller & Monge, 1986). If small business presidents suffer from job burnout and subsequently withdraw, the consequences could be poorer performance and morale not only at the top but throughout the organization. In this respect, burnout can act as a sort of virus which spreads to different areas and levels within the company (i.e., a "contagion" effect; Lee & Ashforth, 1993).

Small business presidents identified as prone to or suffering from burnout may need intervention from close colleagues or family members. Ideally, this intervention would occur before firm performance is negatively impacted and, for humanistic reasons, before burnout seriously affects the CEO's physical and emotional health.

Addressing burnout should not be limited to just managerial practice, however. Educators in small business management must include burnout-related research and topics in their curricula. Often this topic is restricted to psychology courses or, in business programs, to human resource management courses. As university programs in small business management and entrepreneurship grow due to their increased economic importance, the issue of burnout as a topic of interest in entrepreneurship education should grow as well.

A second performance issue concerns the life cycle stages of business ventures (the phases documenting the activities and evolutionary process of business organizations from start-up to eventual decline). Following Kuratko and Hodgett's model, these stages consist of: 1) new-venture development, 2) start-up activities, 3) growth, 4) stabilization, and 5) innovation or decline (1995: 472). It is in the later aspects of the growth stage and in the stabilization stage where burnout effects are most critical. During the growth stage, major changes in organizational strategy are required in that businesses need to become more managerially- or administratively-oriented in order to handle rapid growth. As a result, organicity is likely to

decline as formal policies and procedures are developed and implemented. As organicity declines, burnout increases. In addition, role conflict is likely to increase for the small business president as the organization evolves. More and more demands are placed on the president's time as the business evolves from a one-leader, entrepreneurially-managed firm to a multi-level, administratively-managed firm. As role conflicts increase, burnout propensity increases as well. Thus, the evolutionary stage of the small business may be a likely factor in burnout tendency among small company presidents.

Future research should address several areas. First, additional data on the type of industry in which small businesses operate would be helpful. Some industries (e.g., healthcare) are undergoing volatile change, and others are expanding rapidly into new areas (technology industries and entrepreneurial "dot com" ventures). Including samples of small businesses from these industries could bias results if included with other industries that have radically different environmental profiles. For example, as an independent variable, industry type could explain the differing environmental hostility/turbulence results in this study (hostility was significantly related to burnout, but turbulence was not). Clearly, the next step for research in this area is to examine industry type.

Second, other predictor variables within the three categories should be examined. In the personal characteristics category, for example, personality type (e.g., "Type A"), attitudes toward risk, locus of control, and religiosity could be investigated. For work characteristics, we propose the following: extent of slack in the firm, quantitative and qualitative role overload (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993), and the extent of delegation of authority. For the environment, industry type, uncertainty, work-family conflict, and social support mechanisms need to be examined as well as objective measures of hostility and turbulence.

Third, moderating and mediating variables need to be introduced. With regard to the latter, for example, how does environmental hostility "play through" as a correlate of burnout? Of course, longitudinal research designs may be useful to explain causal relationships.

Further theoretical development will depend partially on identifying specific antecedents for specific occupational (or other) groups. A more detailed understanding of how burnout predictors vary across occupations, situations, and/or individuals will allow researchers in job burnout to develop and test models that exhibit greater predictability and parsimony.

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