

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COPING AND BURNOUT OF
ACADEMIC MANAGERIAL PERSONNEL**

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REMARKS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The references as well as the editorial style as prescribed by the *Publication Manual (4th edition)* of the American Psychological Association (APA) were followed in this dissertation. This practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the PU for CHE to use APA style in all scientific documents as from January 1999.
- The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article. The editorial style specified by the *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology* (which agrees largely with the APA style) is used, but the APA guidelines were followed in constructing tables.

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SUMMARY

Topic: The relationship between coping and burnout of academic managerial personnel.

Key words: Burnout; coping strategies; academic managerial personnel; academic stress factors ('stressors').

A healthy academic community is essential for the creation of an environment favourable to the development of managerial competence in education. The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between burnout and coping strategies of academic managerial personnel at a tertiary education institution.

A cross-sectional survey design was used. The study population consisted of 70 academic managers at a tertiary education institution from the job levels of departmental heads, directors of schools and deans of faculties. The COPE questionnaire and Maslach Burnout Inventory - General Survey were administered. Statistical analysis was carried out with the SAS-program. Cronbach alpha coefficients, inter-item correlations and confirmatory factor analysis were used to assess the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. Canonical correlation was used to determine the relationships between the dimensions of burnout and coping strategies.

The results indicate that in general, academic managerial personnel at a tertiary education institution in South Africa experience low levels of burnout. A positive correlation between active coping and both exhaustion and professional efficacy were found. A positive correlation was also found between focus on and venting of emotions and exhaustion. More specifically, the results show that active coping, planning and positive reinterpretation was associated with exhaustion and professional efficacy. It appears that academic managerial personnel utilise both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies, and the coping strategies of planning, active coping and positive reinterpretation and growth were used most often to deal with potential stress factors.

Recommendations for the organisation and future research were made.

OPSOMMING

Onderwerp: Die verband tussen coping-strategieë en uitbranding van akademiese bestuurspersoneel.

Sleuteltermes: Uitbranding (psigiese), coping-strategieë; akademiese bestuurspersoneel; akademiese stressors.

'n Gesonde akademiese gemeenskap is nodig om 'n omgewing te skep wat bevorderlik is vir die ontwikkeling van bestuursbevoegdheids in die hoër onderwys. Die doel van hierdie studie was om die verband tussen coping-strategieë en uitbranding ("burnout") onder die akademiese bestuurspersoneel van 'n Suid-Afrikaanse tersiêre onderwysinstelling te ondersoek.

'n Eenmalige dwarsnitontwerp is gebruik. Die ondersoekgroep het bestaan uit 70 akademiese bestuurders wat die posvaske van departementshoof, skoolvoorsitter en/of dekaan aan 'n tersiêre onderwysinstelling beklee. Die COPE-vraelys en die Algemene Vraelys van die Maslach Burnout Inventory is gebruik. Die statistiese ontleding is met behulp van die "SAS"-program uitgevoer. Cronbach alfa-koeffisiënte, inter-item korrelasies en bevestigende faktorontledings is gebruik om die betroubaarheid en geldigheid van die meetinstrumente te bepaal. Beskrywende statistiek is gebruik om die gegewens te ontleed. Die verband tussen die veranderlikes is met behulp van Pearson se produk-moment-korrelasiekoeffisiënte bepaal. Kanoniese korrelasie is gebruik om die verhoudings tussen die dimensies van uitbranding en coping-strategieë vas te stel.

Die resultate het aangetoon dat akademiese bestuurspersoneel aan 'n tersiêre opvoedkundige instelling in Suid-Afrika in die algemeen lae vlakke van uitbranding ervaar. 'n Positiewe korrelasie is gevind tussen coping en beide uitputting en professionele doeltreffendheid. 'n Positiewe korrelasie is ook gevind tussen die fokus en die lug van emosies en uitputting. Meer spesifiek, die resultate toon dat aktiewe coping, beplanning, en positiewe reïnterpretasie assosieer met uitputting en professionele doeltreffendheid. Dit wil voorkom of akademiese bestuurspersoneel gebruik maak van beide emosie- en probleemgefokusde coping-strategieë.

Aanbevelings vir die organisasie sowel as vir toekomstige navorsing is aan die hand gedoen.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation examines the relationship between coping and burnout in managerial personnel at academic departments of a tertiary education institution.

In this chapter, the problem statement, research objectives, basic hypothesis and research method are discussed, followed by a division of chapters.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

High levels of burnout, left unchecked and unmanaged, undermine the productivity, quality, and creativity of employees' work, in addition to their health, general well-being, and morale. Burnout results in substantial costs to organisations and the community through health care expenses, compensation payments, lost productivity and turnover (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua & Stough, 2001). The specific impact of burnout within the university sector is less well understood than its well-documented effects on the general workforce.

Within South Africa, there have been relatively few studies of burnout in academic life. Doyle and Hind (1998) stated that "the concept of burnout has not been adequately researched in samples of academics" (p. 67). Internationally, academic life has, until recently, been perceived as a low stress occupation (Gillespie et al., 2001). Research on this subject globally indicates that occupational stress in universities is alarmingly widespread and is increasing (Doyle & Hind, 1998; Gillespie et al., 2001).

Although academics are not highly paid in comparison with professionals in the commercial sector, they have been envied for their light work loads, flexibility, tenure, and 'perks' such as overseas trips for study and/or conference purposes, as well as for the freedom to pursue their own research interests. However, during the last two decades many of these advantages have been eroded or lessened. In countries such as the United States of America (USA), South Africa (SA), the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia, academic salaries have fallen in real terms. The pressure is mounting for academics to attract external funds, to 'publish or

perish' and increasing numbers of academic positions are now untenured (Gillespie et al., 2001). During the mid-nineties in countries such as South Africa and Australia, government cuts to higher education funding were followed by large-scale restructuring, downsizing and changes to governance structures (Gillespie et al., 2001). In South Africa the battle in educational institutions to rectify previous imbalances in staff demographics is compounded by the difficulty of attempting to attract educated individuals drawn by more lucrative salaries in the private sector.

Several key factors were identified that are commonly associated with stress among academic and general staff in studies conducted in the UK, USA, New Zealand and Australia. These include: inadequate salary, work overload, time constraints, inadequate resources and funding, lack of promotion opportunities, inadequate recognition, changing job roles, inadequate management and/or participation in management, increased student interaction and concerns regarding amalgamations (Gillespie et al., 2001). In South Africa, possible amalgamations are a current reality since the passing of the Tertiary Institutions Draft Bill by the National Assembly, whereby specified Universities, Technikons and Colleges will merge ("Tertiary institutions", 2001).

During the past 20 years, there has been substantial research on burnout. This phenomenon has been frequently studied in the human services professions, especially social work, teaching and health. Today it is acknowledged that people in almost any occupation could develop burnout (Drake & Yadama, 1995; Dubrin, 1990). Burnout is a concept that is applied to an individual's maladaptive reactions to chronic occupational stress (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). This concept is defined by Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) as a "persistent, negative, work-related state of mind in 'normal' individuals that is primarily characterised by exhaustion, decreased motivation, and the development of dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours at work. This psychological condition develops gradually but may remain unnoticed for a long time by the individual involved. It results from a misfit between intentions and reality in the job. Often burnout is self-perpetuating because of inadequate coping strategies that are associated with the syndrome" (p. 36).

In line with the work of Maslach, Jackson and Leiter (1996), the present authors considers burnout to be a syndrome consisting of exhaustion, cynicism and reduced professional efficacy. This definition of burnout is broadly accepted and underlies most of the instruments

developed for assessing burnout in organisations that are not orientated towards human services. Over 90% of the research on burnout is performed with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) or some adaptation of it (Büssing & Glaser, 2000; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Exhaustion occurs when individuals feel drained and lack the energy and mental resources to meet job demands. Cynicism reflects distant attitudes or indifference towards work with the exclusion of reference to personal relationships. Lack of professional efficacy manifests itself when individuals feel they are failing to meet other responsibilities associated with their jobs or feel ineffective in their jobs, both in terms of non-social and social aspects of occupational accomplishments (Maslach et al., 1996). Exhaustion is perceived to reflect the essence of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1986).

Maslach (1982b) has suggested that employees suffering from burnout first experience exhaustion, followed by depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment. Golembiewski and Munzenrider (1988) oppose this sequence of events and believe that depersonalisation starts the chain of events, which includes feelings of inadequacy, and ends with the development of emotional exhaustion. Data has been presented to support each case study. Recent developments indicate that exhaustion and depersonalisation might be interrelated, with personal accomplishment a separate aspect of burnout that develops in parallel with (as opposed to sequentially from) emotional exhaustion (Kalliath, O'Driscoll, Gillespie & Bluedorn, 2000). This would have an impact on the detection of burnout and would give an indication of what the organisation should look for if potential stress factors, known to lead to burnout, are evident. The literature on burnout suggests that burnout relates in predictable ways to a variety of work-related variables. Employees who experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation in their jobs are likely to find it difficult to be satisfied with their jobs (Kalliath et al., 2000).

Burnout is accompanied by an array of symptoms of helplessness and hopelessness, disillusionment, negative self-concept and negative attitudes towards work, people and life itself (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Therefore, the consequences of burnout are potentially serious for staff, clients, and the larger institutions in which they interact. Maslach and Jackson (1986) suggest that burnout could lead to deterioration in the quality of care or service that is provided by staff. Burnout appears to be a factor in job turnover, absenteeism, and low morale. Furthermore, it correlates with various self-reported indices of personal dysfunction, increased use of alcohol and drugs, and marital and family problems (Maslach &

Jackson, 1986). Managers suffering from burnout could harm the organisation because they spread it to their subordinates as is the case with academic and general staff of tertiary institutions (Dubrin, 1990).

Burnout is the result of an interaction between dispositional and situational factors. The focus of this research is on the role of dispositional factors and coping. Coping is defined as “the efforts we make to manage situations we have appraised as potentially harmful or stressful” (Kleinke, 1991, p. 3). In order to avoid, manage and control potentially difficult situations, individuals use cognitive, behavioural or emotional responses available to them (Rothmann, Malan & Rothmann, 2001). The term “coping” could be used to refer either to strategies or results (Fleishman, 1984). A coping strategy refers to the different methods that a person may apply to manage his or her circumstances, whereas result coping refers to the eventual outcomes of this strategy for the person. For the purposes of this research, the focus is on coping as strategy.

Two types of coping are defined in the literature (Amirkhan, 1994; Callan, 1993; Folkman & Lazarus, 1984) such as problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. When a strategy is directed towards eliminating an unpleasant experience or reducing the effects thereof it is referred to as problem-focused coping. Emotion-focused coping is directed at reducing the effects of stressful feelings caused by an unpleasant experience through relaxation, the use of alcohol and drugs, social activities and/or defence mechanisms.

Withdrawal coping strategies, alternatively referred to as ineffective coping in the literature, are associated with high levels of burnout (Rowe, 1997), whereas constructive coping strategies are associated with low levels of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1982). Teaching individuals with limited coping skills to alter the way in which they address problems has been demonstrated by Rowe (1997) to be an important deterrent of burnout. A significant correlation between burnout and coping has been found by Alsoofi, Al-Heeti and Alwashli (2000). A passive, defensive way of dealing with stressful events contributes to the development of burnout in individuals, whereas a lower level of burnout is experienced by those who use confronting coping strategies (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). The inter relationship between confronting coping and personal accomplishment may be explained by the use of a problem-focused strategy (Lee & Ashfort, 1990).

The aim of this research is to establish the relationship between burnout and coping among academic managerial personnel in a tertiary education institution. If a relationship between coping and burnout could be found, it may have implications for the academics and academic assistants' recruitment, induction, selection, training, development and performance management.

The following research questions arise on the basis of the description of the research problem:

- How is burnout conceptualised in the literature and what are the causes thereof in educational institutions?
- What is the relationship between coping strategies and burnout in a tertiary education institution?
- Can coping strategies be used to predict burnout in managerial personnel at a tertiary education institution?

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research are divided into a general and specific objective.

1.2.1 General objective

The general objective of the research is to conceptualise coping and burnout from the literature, to determine the relationship between the above-mentioned constructs and to determine empirically whether this relationship exists in managerial personnel at a tertiary education institution.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

The specific research objectives are to:

- Conceptualise burnout and possible causes thereof in educational institutions from the literature.

- Determine the relationship between coping strategies and burnout in managerial personnel at a tertiary education institution.
- Determine whether coping strategies can be used to predict burnout in managerial personnel at a tertiary education institution.

1.3 BASIC HYPOTHESIS

A significant relationship exists between coping and burnout in a tertiary education institution.

1.4 RESEARCH METHOD

The research method consists of two phases, namely the literature review and an empirical study.

1.4.1 Phase 1: Literature review

A complete literature review is undertaken in accordance with the following steps:

- **Step 1:** Conceptualise burnout from the literature.
- **Step 2:** Conceptualise coping from the literature.
- **Step 3:** Indicates the relationship between the separate constructs according to the literature.

1.4.2 Phase 2: Empirical study

The following steps in the empirical investigation can be mentioned:

1.4.2.1 Step 1: The choice of a research design

This part of the present study is quantitative in design. A survey design is used and more specifically a non-experimental correlational research design (Huysamen, 1993). Each individual is measured according to both constructs by means of completing the different measure instruments. Thereafter the relationship between the different measurements is determined. This research design is appropriate, because it will be used to determine the relationship between the various constructs, without planning a specific intervention. The design can also be used to assess interrelationships among variables within a population. According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997), this design is ideally suited to the descriptive and predictive functions associated with correlational research.

1.4.2.2 Step 2: The choice of a study sample

The study sample consists of 70 managerial staff members at a tertiary education institution. The sample is drawn from the personnel category of deans, departmental heads and directors of schools only. The tertiary institution consists of 5000 personnel and owing to practical and time constraints this study concentrates on the above mentioned category only.

1.4.2.3 Step 3: The choice of measuring instruments

The following research instruments are used in the research:

The *Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey* (MBI-GS) (Maslach et al., 1996) is used to determine the participants' level of burnout. The MBI-GS consists of three sub-scales, namely Exhaustion, Cynicism and Professional Efficacy (Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996). The MBI-GS assesses the same three dimensions as the original measure of the MBI, using slightly revised items, and maintains a consistent factor structure across a variety of occupations (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo and Schaufeli (2000) as well as Taris, Schreurs and Schaufeli (1999) suggest that the three sub-scales be dealt with separately, based on factor-analytical support for their separation. In combination, the three sub-scales provide a three-dimensional perspective on burnout. The MBI-GS consists of 16 items. Maslach et al. (1996) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients for different studies varying from 0,87 to 0,89 for Exhaustion, 0,73 to 0,84 for Cynicism and 0,76 to 0,84

for Professional Efficacy. Maslach and Jackson (1981, 1986) and Lahoz and Mazon (1989) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients that varied from 0,71 to 0,90 for the three sub-scales of the MBI. Test-retest reliability varied from 0,60 to 0,82 and 0,54 to 0,60 (applied after one year). External validation of the MBI comes from analyses of its convergence with peer ratings, job dimensions associated with burnout, and stress outcomes (Maslach & Jackson, 1984). The MBI-GS has good psychometric properties such as (cross-national) factorial validity (Schutte et al., 2000) and construct validity (Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996).

The *COPE Questionnaire* (COPE) (Carver, Scheier & Wientraub, 1989) is used to measure participants' coping strategies. The COPE is a multidimensional 53-item coping questionnaire that indicates the different ways in which people cope in different circumstances (Carver et al., 1989). It measures 13 different coping strategies. Five sub-scales (four items each) measure different aspects of problem-focused coping: Active Coping, Planning, Suppressing of Competing Activities, Restraint Coping and Seeking Social Support for Instrumental Reasons. Five sub-scales (four items each) measure aspects of emotion-focused coping: Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasons, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth, Acceptance, Denial and Turning to Religion. Four sub-scales indicate coping responses that are used less: Focus on and Venting of Emotions, Behavioural Disengagement, Mental Disengagement, and Alcohol-drug Disengagement (Carver et al., 1989). Carver et al. (1989) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients varying from 0,44 to 0,92. All the sub-scales have sufficient levels of reliability except for Mental Disengagement, which measures lower than 0,60. Test-retest reliability varies from 0,46 to 0,86 and 0,42 to 0,89 (applied after two weeks).

1.4.2.4 Step 4: Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis is carried out with the help of the SAS program (SAS Institute, 2000). Cronbach alpha coefficients, inter-item correlation coefficients and confirmatory factor analysis have been used to assess the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) are used to analyse the data.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients are used to specify the relationships between the variables. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect, Cohen, 1988) is set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients.

Canonical correlation has been used to determine the relationships between the dimensions of burnout and coping strategies. The goal of canonical correlation is to analyse the relationship between two sets of variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Canonical correlation is considered a descriptive technique rather than a hypothesis-testing procedure.

1.5 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

The division of chapters in this mini-dissertation is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Research article

Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the problem statement and justification of the present study was set out. The general and specific objectives of the study were formulated, and the steps that were undertaken to complete the study, are specified. Finally a division of chapters was given.

In Chapter 2 the research article is given.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COPING AND BURNOUT OF ACADEMIC MANAGERIAL PERSONNEL

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ABSTRACT

In order to create a favourable environment for managerial competence development in education, a "healthy" academic community is needed. Globally, and even more so in South Africa, academic managerial staff are continuously confronted with changes which, depending on their coping strategies, could contribute to burnout. The objective of this study was to determine the relationship between burnout and the coping strategies of academic managers. A cross-sectional survey design has been used. The study population consisted of 70 academic personnel members in managerial positions at a tertiary institution in South Africa. Two questionnaires were used in the research, namely the Maslach Burnout Inventory-GS and the COPE questionnaire. The results showed that coping strategies are related to exhaustion and professional efficacy.

OPSOMMING

'n Gesonde akademiese gemeenskap is nodig om 'n omgewing te skep wat bevorderlik is vir die ontwikkeling van bestuursbevoegdheids in die hoër onderwys. Oor die wêreld heen, en soveel te meer in Suid-Afrika, word akademiese bestuurspersoneel voortdurend gekonfronteer met verandering wat, afhangende van die doeltreffendheid van hul coping-meganismes, tot psigiese uitbranding kan bydra. Die doel van hierdie studie was om die verband tussen uitbranding en coping-strategieë onder akademiese bestuurders aan te toon. 'n Eenmalige dwarsnitmeningspeiling is gebruik. Die ondersoekgroep het bestaan uit 70 akademiese personele wat bestuursposisies aan 'n tersiêre instelling in Suid-Afrika beklee. Twee vraelyste, naamlik die Maslach Burnout Inventory-Algemene Vraelys en die COPE Vraelys, is gebruik. Die resultate het verbande tussen coping-strategieë en uitputting sowel as professionele doeltreffendheid aangetoon.

A significant phenomenon of the modern age is the relationship that people have with their work and the difficulties that can arise when that relationship goes wrong (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). The cognitive, behavioural and physiological results of burnout are detrimental to both the individual and the organisation (Turnipseed, 1994). If left unchecked and unmanaged, burnout undermines the productivity, quality, and creativity of employees'

work, in addition to their health, well-being and morale. Burnout results in substantial costs to organisations and the community through health care expenses, compensation payments, absenteeism, lost productivity and turnover (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua & Stough, 2001; Rowe, 1997; Turnipseed, 1994). The specific impact of burnout within the university sector is less well understood than its well-documented effects on the general workforce.

Within South Africa, there have been no published studies of burnout in academic managerial life. Doyle and Hind (1998) have stated that “the concept of burnout has not been adequately researched in samples of academics” (p. 67). Internationally, academic life has until recently been perceived as a low stress occupation (Gillespie et al., 2001). Research on this subject globally indicates that occupational stress in universities is alarmingly widespread and increasing (Doyle & Hind, 1998; Gillespie et al., 2001; Reda, 1996).

Although academics are not highly paid in comparison to professionals in the commercial sector, they have been envied for their light work loads, flexibility, tenure, and ‘perks’ such as overseas trips for study and/or conference purposes, as well as for the freedom to pursue their own research interests. However, during the last two decades many of these advantages have been eroded or lessened. In countries such as the United States of America (USA), South Africa, the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia, academic salaries have fallen in real terms. The pressure is mounting for academics to attract external funds, to ‘publish or perish’ and increasing numbers of academic positions are now untenured (Gillespie et al., 2001).

During the mid nineties in countries such as South Africa and Australia, large-scale restructuring, downsizing and changes followed government cuts to higher education funding to governance structures (Gillespie et al., 2001). In South Africa, the battle in educational institutions to rectify previous imbalances in staff demographics is compounded by the difficulty of attempting to attract educated individuals drawn by more lucrative salaries in the private sector.

Several key factors have been identified that are commonly associated with stress among academic and general staff in studies conducted in the UK, the USA, New Zealand and Australia. These include: inadequate salary, work overload, time constraints, inadequate resources and funding, a lack of opportunity for promotion, inadequate recognition, changing job roles, inadequate management and/or participation in management, increased student

interaction and concerns regarding amalgamations (Gillespie et al., 2001). In South Africa, amalgamations are a current reality in consequence of the passing of the Tertiary Institutions Draft Bill by the National Assembly, whereby specified universities, technikons and colleges will merge ("Tertiary institutions", 2001).

Academic managers, usually referred to as head, director or dean, are not only responsible for faculty consensus building and management, but also have to fulfil the needs of upper level administration (Miller & Seagren, 1997). In addition, they play an important role in the effectiveness of universities/tertiary education institutions (Möller, Rothmann, Coetzer & Rothmann, 2000). Lack of leadership training, administrative experience, understanding of the ambiguity and complexity of the department head position, as well as knowledge of the dual responsibility mentioned above, characterise new managerial appointments in academic institutions (Gmelch & Burns, 1994). These situational demands combined with certain coping strategies may result in burnout and eventually impairment of the health of personnel.

Despite the apparent prevalence of burnout at managerial level, very few studies have focused on managers. Burnout may resemble a kind of contagion, in that burned-out managers have detrimental effects on the behaviour patterns and attitudes of those served by them, which is critical to the effectiveness of the organisation as a whole (Dubrin, 1990; Lee & Ashforth, 1993). Therefore, research regarding the extent and nature of burnout among academic managerial personnel seems relevant and necessary. The objective of this research is to determine the relationship between coping and burnout among managerial employees at a tertiary education institution.

Burnout

During the past 20 years, burnout has received a great deal of general attention. This phenomenon has frequently been studied in the human services professions, especially social work, teaching and health. Today it is acknowledged that people in almost any occupation can develop burnout (Drake & Yadama, 1995; Dubrin, 1990). Burnout is a concept that is applied to an individual's maladaptive reactions to chronic occupational stress (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). This concept is defined by Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) as a "persistent, negative, work-related state of mind in 'normal' individuals that is primarily characterised by exhaustion, decreased motivation, and the development of dysfunctional attitudes and

behaviours (sic) at work. This psychological condition develops gradually but may remain unnoticed for a long time by the individual involved. It results from a misfit between intentions and reality in the job. Often burnout is self-perpetuating because of inadequate coping strategies that are associated with the syndrome” (p. 36). Years of research have led to burnout being defined as a psychotic syndrome, which is a response to chronic stress factors on the job (Maslach et al., 2001).

Over 90% of the research on burnout is performed with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) or some adaptation of it (Büssing & Glaser, 2000; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). The Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS) has three subscales that parallel the MBI: exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy (Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996) and which were utilised for the purposes of this study. Thus, in line with the work of Maslach, Jackson and Leiter (1996), the present authors considers burnout in non-exclusive human service organisations to be a syndrome consisting of exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy. This definition of burnout is broadly accepted and underlies most of the instruments developed for assessing burnout.

- **Exhaustion** is related to physical and mental strain as well as role conflict and work overload in the work place (Maslach et al., 1996). Exhaustion occurs when individuals feel drained and lack the energy and resources to meet the demands of the job. Feelings of being frequently frustrated, irritable and worn out on a mental and physically level are also often described. The counterpart of exhaustion, namely emotional exhaustion, is perceived as reflecting the essence or core of burnout (Kalliath, Gillespie, O’Driscoll & Bluedorn, 2000; Lee & Ashforth, 1993; Maslach et al., 2001; Zellers, Perrewé & Hochwarter, 2000). The exhaustion items of the MBI-GS include reference to both emotional and physical fatigue, although no direct reference is made to people as the source of those feelings (Maslach et al., 2001).
- **Cynicism** replaces depersonalisation in the MBI-GS. Although cynicism is distinct from depersonalisation in the MBI, it serves the same function within the model of burnout. Where depersonalisation represents the quality of burnout that is most exclusively associated with human service work, cynicism is the interpersonal dimension of job specific burnout. The cynicism subscales reflect indifference or a distant attitude towards

work and, in general, refer to a callous, negative or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job. In order to cope with exhaustion and discouragement in the work situation, people employ cognitive and emotional distancing by developing a cynical or indifferent attitude (Maslach et al., 2001). Cynicism, like depersonalisation, represents dysfunctional coping within the MBI-GS. The energy that is normally available for developing creative solutions to problems and performing work is diminished by cynicism. Thus, in effect, it diminishes professional efficacy (Maslach et al., 1996).

- **Professional efficacy** is a third aspect of the burnout syndrome and is in many ways similar to personal accomplishment as measured by the MBI. In parallel with the personal accomplishment subscale of the MBI, reduced efficacy represents the self-evaluation dimension of burnout. It refers to feelings of incompetence and a lack of productivity and achievement at work. However, the scale focuses more directly than the MBI on efficacy expectations in addition to a broader focus, encompassing both social and non-social aspects of occupational achievements (Maslach et al., 2001).

Maslach (1982b) has suggested that employees suffering from burnout first experience exhaustion, followed by depersonalisation/cynicism and reduced personal accomplishment/professional efficacy. Golembiewski and Munzenrider (1988) oppose this ordering and believe that depersonalisation/cynicism, which includes feelings of inadequacy, starts the chain of events, which ends with the development of exhaustion. Data has been presented to support each point of view. Recent developments indicate that exhaustion and depersonalisation/cynicism might be interrelated, with personal accomplishment/professional efficacy a separate aspect of burnout that develops in parallel with (as oppose to sequentially from) exhaustion (Kalliath et al., 2000). This would have an impact on the detection of burnout and would give an indication of what the organisation should look for if potential stress factors are evident that are known to lead to burnout. The literature on burnout suggests that burnout relates in predictable ways to a variety of work-related variables. Employees who experience exhaustion and depersonalisation/cynicism in their job are likely to find it difficult to gain satisfaction from their jobs (Kalliath et al., 2000).

Whereas Perlman and Hartman (1982) have determined that organisational variables are more often a source of burnout than individual variables, a new theoretical framework,

integrating both situational and individual factors, is the outflow of recent work on burnout (Büssing & Glaser, 2000; Maslach et al., 2001). The newer model postulates that burnout arises from chronic mismatches between work settings and people in terms of workload, reward, fairness, values, community and control. Each area represents a perspective of interactions of people and their work settings, despite the close interrelationships of the areas (Maslach et al., 2001).

Work environments associated with low levels of general burnout are those in which workers are strongly committed to their work, and co-worker relationships are encouraged and supportive (Golembiewski & Munzenrider, 1988; Levert, Lucas & Ortlepp, 2000), supervisory relationships are supportive (Leiter, 1993; Maslach et al., 2001; Savicki & Cooley, 1987; Schaufeli & Buunk, 1996; Seltzer & Numerof, 1988; Turnipseed, 1994) and autonomy is fostered (Leiter, 1993; Schaufeli & Buunk, 1996; Turnipseed, 1994).

Work related aspects associated with higher levels of burnout are those in which job expectations are vague or ambiguous (role stress) (Lee & Ashforth, 1993; Levert et al., 2000; Maslach et al., 2001; Savicki & Cooley, 1987), management imposes extensive rules and regulations to constrain employees (Savicki & Cooley, 1987), support, feedback and encouragement of new ideas and procedures is low (Maslach et al., 2001; Savicki & Cooley, 1987), role conflict is high (Barber & Iwai, 1996) and work load is heavy (Leiter, 1993; Levert et al., 2000).

One demographic aspect that seems to have an influence on burnout is age. Research indicates that the older the person, the less their chance of experiencing burnout (Bellani, Furlani, Gnechi, Pezzotta, Trotti & Bellotti, 1996; Dietzel & Coursey, 1998; Hoeksma, Guy, Brown & Brady, 1993; Maslach et al., 2001; Poulin & Walter, 1993). The lack of experience that characterises youth makes employees more prone to excessive job involvement, leading to burnout (Bellani et al., 1996). Thus, as increased life and work experience is gained (Dietzel & Coursey, 1998; Maslach et al., 2001), individuals become more skilled in coping effectively with stress, increasing their sense of professional efficacy (Hoeksma et al., 1993). In addition, they may adjust expectations concerning work achievement (Dietzel & Coursey, 1998). An alternative explanation might be that employees who fail to manage job-related stress leave the profession earlier; and therefore, only those who can cope with these stress factors effectively remain in a job (Chen & Laura, 1994; Dietzel & Coursey, 1998). Gender

has not been a strong predictor of burnout, whereas unmarried people (especially men) seem to be more prone to burnout compared with married people (Maslach et al., 2001).

Research studies indicate that a relationship exists between education and burnout, that is, higher burnout levels occur among staff with higher education attainment (Leiter & Maslach, 2001; Maslach 1982b; Maslach et al., 2001). Education is confounded with other variables, such as status and occupation and it is thus not clear how to interpret these findings. One explanation might be that as people increase their level of training and education, expectations increase regarding what they should be able to accomplish on the job. If these expectations are not realised, they might become more distressed (Dietzel & Coursey, 1998; Maslach et al., 2001). It is also possible that people with higher education have jobs with higher stress levels and greater responsibility (Maslach et al., 2001). These individuals may also seek jobs with better opportunities for skill development and advancement or better paying salaries, attracting them to higher stressed jobs (Dietzel & Coursey, 1998).

Various research studies indicate that depression and burnout are two related, yet distinct constructs (Bakker, Schaufeli, Demerouti, Janssen, van der Hulst & Brouwer, 2000; Burke, Greenglass & Schwarzer, 1996; Farber, 1983; Glass, McKnight & Valdimarsdottir, 1993; Leiter & Durup, 1994). Burnout seems to be a phenomenon restricted and specific to the work environment (Burke et al., 1996), whereas depression is more pervasive and context-free in nature (Bakker et al., 2000; Farber, 1983; Glass et al., 1993). Burnout appears to occur in a context of anger rather than guilt and is (initially at least) situation-specific rather than pervasive (Faber, 1983). Individuals who experience burnout and have a reduced sense of superiority are susceptible to depression (Burke et al., 1996). The same debate exists regarding burnout and stress. Burnout develops as the end result of a long exposure to what Maslach calls chronic job 'stressors' (Maslach et al., 2001) and is most often the result of unmediated stress, that is, where individuals experience the absence of buffers, adequate rewards or support systems in the work place (Faber, 2001).

Coping

Coping is defined as “the efforts we make to manage situations we have appraised as potentially harmful or stressful” (Kleinke, 1991, p. 3). In addition, Folkman and Lazarus (1984) refer to coping as “cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 141). Thus, when a strategy is directed at eliminating an unpleasant experience or reducing the effects thereof it is referred to as coping. Lazarus has argued that stress consists of three processes. *Primary appraisal* is the initial process of perceiving a threat, *secondary appraisal* consists of the process of thinking of a potential response to the threat, and *coping* is the process of implementing the response (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989). Two types of coping are defined in the literature (Amirkhan, 1994; Callan 1993; Carver et al., 1989; Folkman & Lazarus, 1984) such as problem-focused and emotion-focused coping.

Emotion-focused coping is directed at reducing or managing the effects of stressful feelings caused by an unpleasant experience through relaxation, the use of alcohol and drugs, social activities and/or defence mechanisms such as denial. Furthermore, it includes the focusing and venting of emotions, seeking social support for emotional reasons, behavioural and mental disengagement, positive reinterpretation and growth, acceptance and turning to religion (Carver et al., 1989). Problem-focused coping is a strategy that aims to solve a problem or take action in order to alter the source of stress such as seeking assistance, planning, taking direct action, screening out other activities and forcing oneself to wait before taking action (Callan, 1993; Carver et al., 1989). Problem-focused coping is also referred to as active coping or planned problem solving and, in addition, includes increasing efforts to solve a problem, using a stepwise fashion to execute a coping attempt, suppressing competing activities and seeking social support for instrumental reasons (Carver et al., 1989). Although most stress factors elicit both types of coping, emotion-focused coping tends to be utilised as a strategy in situations where people perceive a 'stressor' as something that must be endured, whereas, when people feel that something constructive can be done, problem-focused coping mechanisms are employed more readily (Carver et al., 1989). The following coping strategies are applicable to the COPE questionnaire utilised in this study.

- In order to circumvent or remove a 'stressor', or to amend its effects, an active procedure can be followed. This procedure is referred to as active coping. Steps in this process

might include the effort to execute a coping attempt in stepwise fashion, increasing one's efforts or initiating direct action. Carver et al.'s (1989) description of active coping is similar to what Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and others referred to as problem-focused coping (Carver et al., 1989).

- The process of thinking how to cope with stress factors is referred to as planning. Planning involves thinking how best to handle a problem, what steps to take, and devising action strategies. Although planning is problem-focused, it is different from active coping in that it does not execute action that is problem-focused (Carver et al., 1989).
- In order to concentrate more fully on a threat or current challenge the processing of competing channels of information are sometimes suppressed. Thus, the problem-focused process of letting things slide, if necessary, putting other projects aside, or trying to avoid being distracted by other events in order to deal with an agent of stress is referred to as suppression of competing activities (Carver et al., 1989).
- The problem-focused process of holding back, not acting prematurely, and waiting until an appropriate opportunity to act presents itself is referred to as restraint coping. By focusing behaviour on dealing effectively with a 'stressor', the individual is executing an active coping strategy, although it is also a passive strategy in that using restraint indicates not acting (Carver et al., 1989).
- Individuals seek social support for one of two reasons, which has an influence on its relation to problem-focused coping. As such, seeking social support for instrumental reasons is defined as seeking information, advice or assistance, whereas seeking social support for emotional reasons focuses on obtaining sympathy, understanding or support. Thus, seeking social support for instrumental reasons is problem-focused related, whereas seeking social support for emotional reasons is an aspect of emotion-focused coping. Seeking out social support for emotional reasons is functional in many ways, especially if the support fosters a return to problem-focused coping. However, if emotional support is used as an outlet for giving vent to emotions, there is evidence that it may not be very adaptable.

- Focusing on giving vent to emotions is the tendency to expose feelings that are being focused on. If used as a period of mourning to accommodate the loss of a loved one and to enable the mourner to move forward, the response is functional. If, however, the person focuses on these emotions for too long, adjustment may be hindered. This might cause the person to distract from active coping efforts and impede movement beyond the distress (Carver et al., 1989).
- Reducing an effort to deal with a stressful situation, or giving up on an attempt to attain goals with which the 'stressor' interferes, is referred to as behavioural disengagement. This type of coping strategy is dysfunctional in that it is associated with helplessness. Some people might employ this strategy when poor coping outcomes are expected (Carver et al., 1989).
- In situations where behavioural disengagement is not possible, the ability to cope is sometimes replaced by mental disengagement. Mental disengagement is defined by activities that are destructive in that this strategy blocks thoughts of the behavioural dimension or goal with which the 'stressor' is interfering. Activities to deflect attention from the 'stressor' such as immersion in television, escaping through sleep or daydreaming, are typically representative of mental disengagement. Although disengagement can be an adaptive response, it often prevents adaptive coping (Carver et al., 1989).
- Positive reinterpretation and growth is referred to as a type of emotion-focused coping, aimed specifically at distracting attention from the 'stressor'. This coping strategy not only has the potential to reduce distress; it can also potentially lead to the continuation of active, problem-focused actions (Carver et al., 1989).
- During primary appraisal, the strategy of denial sometimes emerges. If the stress factor can be profitably ignored, it has the potential to lessen distress and lead to the facilitation of coping. If however, it cannot be ignored, it has the potential of becoming more serious and in the process impeding the coping mechanism (Carver et al., 1989).

- Acceptance is perceived to be the opposite of denial. If the individual accepts reality and this leads to engagement in an attempt to deal with the problem, acceptance is perceived to be a functional coping response. Acceptance is normally related to situations that cannot be controlled (Carver et al., 1989). Fleishman (1984) are though of the opinion that individuals who continue to avoid major problems over the long term, can lose touch with reality and can suffer from poor levels of psychological adjustment.
- Turning to religion is a coping strategy that can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Potentially, it can be used as a vehicle for positive reinterpretation and growth, a source of emotional support, or a tactic of coping actively with a problem. In general, it refers to a tendency to turn to religion in times of stress (Carver et al., 1989).

Coping and Burnout



Alsoofi, Al-Heeti and Alwashli (2000) have found a significant correlation between the ability to cope and burnout. Withdrawal of coping strategies, alternatively referred to as ineffective coping in the literature, is associated with higher levels of burnout (Rowe, 1997; Van Dick & Wagner, 2001). Non-coping is defined by Callan (1993) as failed efforts to cope which result in higher stress due to various physical and psycho-social disturbances that accompany these effects. Non-coping results in higher levels of depression and anxiety (Carver et al., 1989). Constructive, confrontational and problem-focused coping strategies are associated with lower levels of burnout (Leiter & Harvie, 1996; Maslach & Jackson, 1982; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). A passive, defensive way of dealing with stressful events furthermore contributes to the development of burnout in individuals (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Removing oneself from the stressful situation by means of mental disengagement drains energy and depletes resources which are related to both cynicism and exhaustion. In addition, this may cause cynical and insensitive perceptions of co-workers and the organisation (Brown & O'Brien, 1998). The relationship between confronting coping and professional efficacy may be explained by the use of a problem-focused strategy (Lee & Ashforth, 1990).

Professional efficacy is related to planning, active coping, positive reinterpretation and growth (Brown & O'Brien, 1998; Maslach et al., 2001). Job competence and successful

achievement in people-orientated work situations can be achieved by using both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies (Brown & O'Brien, 1998). It can be argued that cynicism, by means of protective actions intended to avoid unwarranted demands or to reduce perceived threats, none the less correspond to the notion of coping. As such, the individual attempts to stop the depletion of emotional energy by treating others as numbers or objects rather than people even if the results are not always positive (Maslach, 1982a). Lee and Ashforth (1990) believe that cynicism is more strongly associated with psychological and physiological strain. Zellars and Perrewé (2001) caution that an erroneous conclusion has been made by research studies that conclude that problem-focused strategies are effective and emotion-focused strategies maladaptive. They argue that emotion-focused strategies are multidimensional, as suggested by the argument above, and have suffered from a negative reputation primarily as a result of their measurement in some studies.

Teaching individuals with limited coping skills to alter the way in which they address problems has been demonstrated by Rowe (1997) to be an important deterrent of burnout. Maslach and Goldberg (1998) are likewise of the opinion that coping skills play an important role in the prevention of burnout and sites that control aspects (i.e. internal coping) are among the resources most critical in fighting burnout. In addition, Brown and O'Brien (1998) point out that psychologists might model and teach coping strategies that relate positively to personal accomplishment/professional efficacy and negatively to exhaustion and depersonalisation/cynicism in order to prevent burnout.

METHOD

Research design

A survey design has been used to reach the research objectives of this study. The specific design is the cross-sectional design, whereby a sample is drawn from a population, at one time (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997).

Sample

The sample consisted of deans, departmental heads and directors of schools at a tertiary education institution in South Africa ($n = 70$). Out of 150 potential respondents, 70 returned

questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 47%. A total of 83% are married, and the average age of the population was 51 years. A total of 80% of the sample consisted of males. The prevalent language spoken by respondents is Afrikaans (71%). Half the respondents (50%) have been working at the institution for between five and fifteen years. An education qualification equivalent to a doctoral level was reported by 67% of the respondents, whereas 24% held master's degrees.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Participants

<i>Item</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Service	0 – 5 years	17.14
	5 – 15 years	37.15
	15 – 25 years	28.57
	More than 25 years	17.14
Job levels	Faculty dean	4.29
	Departmental head	91.43
	Acting departmental head	1.43
	School director	2.86
Gender	Male	80
	Female	20
Marital status	Married	82.86
	Unmarried	17.14
Language	Afrikaans	71.43
	English	21.43
	Other	7.15
Tertiary Qualifications	Degree	7.15
	Master's degree	24.29
	Doctoral degree	67.16

Measuring battery

Two questionnaires were used in the empirical study, namely the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS) (Maslach et al., 1996) and the COPE Questionnaire (COPE) (Carver et al., 1989).

The **Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS)** (Maslach et al., 1996) was used to determine participants' level of burnout. The MBI-GS consists of three sub-scales, namely Exhaustion, Cynicism and Professional Efficacy (Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996). The MBI-GS assesses the same three dimensions as the original measure of the MBI, using slightly revised items, and maintains a consistent factor structure across a variety of occupations (Maslach et al., 2001). Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo and Schaufeli (2000) as well as Taris, Schreurs and Schaufeli (1999) suggest that the three sub-scales be dealt with separately, based on factor-analytical support for their separation. In combination, the three sub-scales provide a three-dimensional perspective on burnout. The MBI-GS consists of 16 items. Maslach et al. (1996) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients for different studies varying from 0,87 to 0,89 for Exhaustion, 0,73 to 0,84 for Cynicism and 0,76 to 0,84 for Professional Efficacy. Rothmann and Malan (in press) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients that varied from 0,75 to 0,89 for the three sub-scales. Whereas, Jansen van Vuuren and Rothmann (in press) found alpha coefficients varying from 0,80 to 0,84, and Rothmann, Jackson, Kruger and Veldman (in press) reported coefficients that varied between 0,69 and 0,86. Reported inter-item correlation coefficients varied between 'stressor' 0,40 and 0,61 (Rothmann & Malan, in press), 0,45 and 0,57 (Jansen van Vuuren & Rothmann, in press) and 0,27 and 0,56 (Rothmann et al., in press). Maslach and Jackson (1981, 1986) and Lahoz and Mazon (1989) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients that varied from 0,71 to 0,90 for the three sub-scales of the MBI. Test-retest reliability varied from 0,60 to 0,82 and 0,54 to 0,60 (applied after one year). External validation of the MBI comes from analyses of its convergence with peer ratings, job dimensions associated with burnout, and stress outcomes (Maslach & Jackson, 1984), whereas Schaufeli, Leiter and Kalimo (1995) found that the three burnout components of the MBI-GS (referred to as the General Burnout Questionnaire) are differentially related with stress reactions, job 'stressors' and ways of coping.

The **COPE Questionnaire (COPE)** (Carver et al., 1989) was used to measure participants' coping strategies. The COPE is a multidimensional 53-item coping questionnaire that

indicates the different ways in which people cope in different circumstances (Carver et al., 1989). It measures 13 different coping strategies. Five sub-scales (four items each) measure different aspects of problem-focused coping: Active Coping, Planning, Suppressing of Competing Activities, Restraint Coping and Seeking Social Support for Instrumental Reasons. Five sub-scales (four items each) measure aspects of emotion-focused coping: Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasons, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth, Acceptance, Denial and Turning to Religion. Four sub-scales indicate coping responses that are used less: Focus on and Venting of Emotions, Behavioural Disengagement, Mental Disengagement, and Alcohol-drug Disengagement (Carver et al., 1989). Carver et al. (1989) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients varying from 0,44 to 0,92. All the sub-scales have sufficient levels of reliability except for Mental Disengagement, which measures lower than 0,60. Test-retest reliability varies from 0,46 to 0,86 and 0,42 to 0,89 (applied after two weeks). Storm and Rothmann (2002) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients varying from 0,24 to 0,92, whereas inter-item correlation coefficients varied between 0,08 (Mental Disengagement) and 0,75 (Turning to Religion). Jansen van Vuuren and Rothmann (in press) found alpha coefficients varying from 0,75 (Seeking Support for Instrumental Reasons) to 0,85 (Problem-focused Coping) with mean inter-item coefficients that varied between 0,38 (Problem-focused Coping) and 0,70 (Turning to Religion).

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the SAS program (SAS Institute, 2000). Cronbach alpha coefficients, inter-item correlation coefficients and confirmatory factor analysis have been used to assess the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) were used to analyse the data.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect, Cohen, 1988) was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients.

Canonical correlation was used to determine the relationships between the dimensions of burnout and coping strategies. The goal of canonical correlation is to analyse the relationship

between two sets of variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Canonical correlation is considered a descriptive technique rather than a hypothesis-testing procedure.

RESULTS

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics, the Cronbach alpha coefficients and the mean inter-item coefficients of the MBI-GS.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics, Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlation of the MBI-GS

Item	Mean	SD	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis	r (Mean)	α
Exhaustion	10.96	7.23	29.00	0.67	-0.27	0.62	0.89
Cynicism	5.19	4.75	18.00	1.11	0.46	0.50	0.81
Professional Efficacy	29.32	5.00	19.20	-0.50	-0.35	0.32	0.73

Table 2 indicates that the scores of the MBI-GS are relatively normal distributed, with low skewness and kurtosis. Cronbach alpha coefficients of the MBI-GS vary between 0.73 and 0.89, and are acceptable compared to the guideline $\alpha > 0.70$ (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Although the alpha coefficient of Professional Efficacy is somewhat lower than the cut off point suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), it is still acceptable for further analysis. The inter-item correlations between items are also acceptable ($0.15 \leq r \leq 0.50$, Clark & Watson, 1995). The inter-item correlation for Exhaustion is slightly higher. It appears that the scales of the MBI-GS have high levels of internal consistency and construct validity.

The descriptive statistics, inter-item correlation coefficients and internal consistencies of the COPE are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics, Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlation Coefficients of the COPE

Item	Mean	SD	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis	r (Mean)	α
Active coping	13.29	1.86	7.00	-0.10	-0.87	0.33	0.66
Planning	14.21	1.79	8.00	-0.98	0.74	0.42	0.74
Restraint coping	8.80	2.13	9.00	-0.56	-0.04	0.55	0.79
Seeking social support (instrumental)	11.43	2.50	11.00	-0.26	-0.51	0.52	0.81
Seeking social support (emotional)	10.00	3.38	12.00	-0.06	-0.91	0.67	0.89
Positive reinterpretation & growth	12.69	2.46	8.00	-0.22	-0.97	0.41	0.73
Acceptance	11.16	2.61	12.00	-0.26	-0.13	0.34	0.68
Turning to religion	10.29	4.61	12.00	-0.19	-1.48	0.84	0.95
Focus on & venting of emotions	8.41	2.50	12.00	0.65	0.37	0.44	0.76

Table 3 shows that the most frequently used coping strategies used by managerial personnel are Planning, Active Coping, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth, Seeking Social Support for Instrumental Reasons (the person is seeking advice, assistance, or information to remove the 'stressor') and Acceptance. Academic managerial personnel are less inclined to use the strategies Turning to Religion, Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasons, Restraint Coping and Focus on and Venting of Emotions.

The average scores obtained according to the COPE vary between 8.41 (Focus on and Venting of Emotions) and 14.21 (Planning). The scores of the COPE is relatively normal distributed, with low skewness and kurtosis. Cronbach alpha coefficients of the COPE vary between 0.66 and 0.95, and are acceptable compared to the guideline $\alpha > 0.70$ (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Although the alpha coefficients of Active Coping, Acceptance, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth, Planning, Focus on and Venting of Emotions and Restraint Coping are somewhat lower than the cut off point suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), it is still acceptable for further analysis. The inter-item correlations between items are also acceptable ($0.15 \leq r \leq 0.50$, Clark & Watson, 1995). The inter-item correlations for Seeking Social Support for Instrumental Reasons, Restraint Coping, Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasons and Turning to Religion are higher. It appears that the COPE has satisfactory internal consistency and construct validity.

The inter-scale correlation coefficients between the MBI-GS and the COPE are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients between the MBI-GS and the COPE

Item	Exhaustion	Cynicism	Professional Efficacy
Active coping	0.33†	0.05	0.30†
Planning	0.14	-0.02	0.25
Restraint coping	0.05	-0.00	0.11
Seeking social support (instrumental)	0.15	0.02	0.08
Seeking social support (emotional)	0.16	0.06	0.04
Positive reinterpretation & growth	0.13	0.06	0.15
Acceptance	0.13	0.10	0.05
Turning to religion	0.19	0.10	0.09
Focus on & venting of emotions	0.30†	0.17	0.03

†Correlation is practical significant $r > 0.30$ (medium effect)

Table 4 shows that Exhaustion correlates positively with Active Coping and Focus on and Venting of Emotions. A positive correlation exists between Professional Efficacy and Active coping.

Table 5

Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients between the MBI-GS and the MBI-GS

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Active coping	-	0.64††	0.33†	0.35†	0.18	0.41†	0.12	0.29	0.14
2. Planning	-	-	0.30†	0.14	0.14	0.45†	0.01	0.34†	0.12
3. Restraint coping	-	-	-	0.18	0.10	0.49†	0.22	0.05	0.01
4. Seeking social support (instrumental)	-	-	-	-	0.70††	0.30†	0.34†	0.11	0.39†
5. Seeking social support (emotional)	-	-	-	-	-	0.30†	0.31†	0.17	0.57††
6. Positive reinterpretation & growth	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.44†	0.35†	0.04
7. Acceptance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.29	0.18
8. Turning to religion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.09
9. Focus on & venting of emotions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

†Correlation is practical significant $r > 0.30$ (medium effect)

††Correlation is practical significant $r > 0.50$ (large effect)

Table 5 indicates that one cluster of items that correlates consist of the theoretically adaptive strategies of Active Coping and Planning. Active Coping and Planning are associated with

Restraint Coping, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth and Turning to Religion. Another cluster of items, that of Seeking Support for Instrumental Reasons and Seeking Support for Emotional Reasons, also correlates significantly. Seeking Social Support (for instrumental and emotional reasons) correlates to Positive Reinterpretation and Growth, Acceptance and Focus on and Venting of Emotions. Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasons correlates strongly with Focus on and Venting of Emotions, whereas this relationship is not so strong with Seeking Social Support for Instrumental Reasons.

Canonical correlation was performed between a set of active coping strategies and burnout, as well as passive coping strategies and burnout using SAS CANCORR. Shown in the tables are correlations between the variables and canonical variates, standardised canonical variate coefficients, within-set variance accounted for by the canonical variates (percent of variance), redundancies and canonical correlations.

The results of the canonical analysis of problem-focused coping strategies and burnout are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Results of the Canonical Analysis: Problem-focused Coping and Burnout

	First Canonical Variate	
	Correlation	Coefficient
Problem-focused Coping Set		
Active Coping	0,97	0,91
Planning	0,68	0,07
Restraint Coping	0,09	-0,21
Positive Reinterpretation and Growth	0,41	0,06
Turning to Religion	0,45	0,15
Percentage Variance	0,36	
Redundancy	0,10	
Burnout set		
Exhaustion	0,68	0,77
Cynicism	0,19	0,11
Professional Efficacy	0,58	0,79
Percentage Variance	0,28	
Redundancy	0,08	
Canonical Correlation	0,52	

The first canonical correlation was 0.52 (27% overlapping variance). The other two canonical correlations were 0.21 and 0.09. With all three canonical correlations included, $F(15, 168,80) = 1.65, p < 0.05$. Subsequent F-tests were not statistically significant. Therefore the first pair of canonical variates account for the significant relationships between the two sets of variables. Total percent of variance and total redundancy indicate that the first pair of canonical variates was moderately related.

With a cut-off correlation of 0.30 the variables in the 'stressor' set that were correlated with the first canonical variate were Active Coping, Planning and Positive Reinterpretation and Growth. Among the burnout variables, Exhaustion and Professional Efficacy correlated with the first canonical variate. The first pair of canonical variates indicates that active coping (0.97), planning (0.68) and positive reinterpretation (0.41) are associated with exhaustion (0.68), but also with professional efficacy (0.58).

The results of the canonical analysis of emotional-focused coping strategies and burnout did not show any significance.

DISCUSSION

The results show that in general, academic managerial personnel at a tertiary institution in South Africa experience low levels of burnout. This deduction is based on the results of low levels of experienced exhaustion and cynicism and average levels of experienced professional efficacy (Carver et al., 1989). Owing to the findings of Schaufeli et al. (1995), it can be deduced that academic managerial personnel experience physical and mental strain, role conflict and work overload although they also experience organisational commitment, satisfaction, job involvement and have access to resources. The managers also believe in their own capacity to achieve positive results in the workplace by means of control exercise (Schaufeli et al., 1995).

Schaufeli et al. (1995) have compared the burnout of different levels of job holders and found that managerial representatives scored lower on cynicism and higher on professional efficacy than the other occupations' groups. Although no comparison has been made to other job categories in this study, the findings are similar to that of Schaufeli et al. (1995) in that

managerial personnel experienced lower scores in cynicism and higher scores on professional efficacy. It should be noted that a response rate of 47% was achieved during this study and that managers who truly represent burned-out individuals could have been excluded from the sample. Taking this into account, it can be deduced that the group of academic managerial personnel represented here, did not experience a crisis in their relations to their work at the time of the study.

Research has indicated that the older a person, the less their chance of experiencing burnout (Bellani et al., 1996; Dietzel & Coursey, 1998; Hoeksma et al., 1993; Maslach et al., 2001; Poulin & Walter, 1993). It seems that the results of this study confirm these findings. The average age of respondents was 51 years of age. Furthermore, research indicate a relationship between education and burnout, where it was found that higher levels of burnout occur among staff with higher educational attainment (Leiter & Maslach, 2001; Maslach 1982b; Maslach et al., 2001). The educational level of respondents in this study was exceptionally high (doctoral level of 67% and master's level of 24%). The results of this study do not confirm these findings. It should be noted that the management group represented here is based at a tertiary education institution, and that the sample have higher educational levels than its counterparts in the private sector. It is safe to deduce that managers represented in this study are able to accomplish their own expectations within their jobs. The score on professional efficacy confirms this deduction. Payne (2000) believes that professional qualifications can prepare people better for their positions, which will contribute to professional efficiency. Thus the findings of this research support those of Payne (2000) and Mor and Laliberte (1984) in that a relationship exists between general education and professional efficacy.

Caution is advised in the interpretation of the relationship between coping and burnout. Coping is argued to be a situation specific response (state) to stressful situations, which could stimulate a person to cope in a particular way (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Cherniss (1980) regards withdrawal from work, which closely resembles avoidance coping mechanisms, as a core symptom of burnout. Depersonalisation (cynicism) is also characterised by mental or behavioural withdrawal (Maslach, 1982a). Accordingly, avoidance coping ploys and burnout overlap conceptually.

Academic managerial personnel utilise both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. This supports the finding of Patterson (1999), that individuals are likely to report both emotion- and problem-focused coping responses following exposure to stressful events. Managerial personnel most often utilise the coping strategies of planning, active coping and positive reinterpretation and growth. Planning and active coping are problem-focused coping strategies most often used in situations that are experienced as manageable (Carver et al., 1989). It thus seems as if academic managerial personnel experience the majority of stress inducing factors at work as within their control.

Coping strategies that are used less often include focus on and giving vent to emotions, restraint coping and seeking social support for emotional reasons. Focus on and giving vent to emotions and seeking social support for emotional reasons are emotion-focused coping strategies. Although restraint coping is a problem-focused coping strategy, the focus is on not acting, because the individual holds back, trying not to act prematurely and waiting for an appropriate opportunity to act (Carver et al., 1989). Thus respondents prefer not to use coping strategies that disallow them the ability to act on or react to a 'stressor'. If the assumption is made that emotion-focused coping strategies are normally used in situations that are out of control of the individual (Carver et al., 1989), a logical deduction would be that respondents generally feel in control of their environment owing to a reluctance to use the emotion-focused coping strategies mentioned here. This makes sense when one considers that they are in managerial positions and that it would be expected from them to be in control and to take charge.

The results indicate that academic managerial personnel, who engage in active coping strategies, experience both exhaustion and professional efficacy. Research indicates that active coping is a problem-focused strategy that is related to professional efficacy (Brown & O'Brien, 1998; Maslach et al., 2001). A similar relationship is found in this study. It also supports the findings of Leiter (1993), who found that control coping was negatively related to burnout. The indication is thus that academic managerial personnel, who attempt to execute a coping strategy in a stepwise fashion, increase their efforts or tend to take direct action when confronted with a 'stressor' at work, experience higher levels of professional efficacy. The finding presented here also indicates that active coping causes exhaustion in staff members. The only logical deduction that can be made is that staff members experience physical and mental strain when executing active coping strategies. Active coping in this

regard may be a doubled edged sword, in that it increases productivity and feelings of achievement, but it also depletes energy resources. This might be an indication that several problems or 'stressors' have to be dealt with, but with the added advantage that these are dealt with successfully.

The only other significant relationship that exists between coping strategies and burnout in this study is between focus on giving vent to emotions, on the one hand and exhaustion on the other. Focus on and giving vent to emotions is an emotion-focused coping strategy that is directed towards reducing or managing the effects of stressful feelings caused by unpleasant experiences. Although most stress factors elicit both emotion- and problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping tends to be utilised as a strategy in situations where people perceive a 'stressor' as something that must be endured (Carver et al., 1989). Although this is not always the case, it seems as if respondents utilise focus on and giving vent to emotions in situations that are perceived to be uncontrollable, thus resulting in exhaustion. Similarly, the strategy of active coping is preferred in situations that are perceived to be controllable. However, the end result of both strategies is exhaustion. The emphasis on focus on and giving vent to emotions might be more detrimental in the long run, especially if it distracts the individual from active coping efforts (Carver et al., 1989).

Canonical analysis showed that a combination of problem-focused coping strategies best predict exhaustion and professional efficacy of academic managerial personnel. More specifically, it seems that a combination of active coping, planning and positive reinterpretation relate to exhaustion, but also professional efficacy.

The most serious limitation of this study is probably the reliance on cross-sectional, perceptual measures. Common method variance was introduced through the use of data collection via self-report measures on one occasion, which have the potential to inflate the observed relationships spuriously. The fact that the research design does not allow one to determine the direction of the relationship between the variables seems to be another limitation of this research. Furthermore, the findings cannot be generalised to other settings, which is implied by the use of a non-probability sample. The sample size was also relatively small.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, it is imperative that employees and managers should be aware of the symptoms and causes of burnout. This could enable the early detection of exhaustion, cynicism and low professional efficacy in the organisation in order to minimise the development and occurrence of burnout. It is of even greater importance to detect managerial burnout because managers who suffer from burnout could spread it to their subordinates (Dubrin, 1990; Lee & Ashforth, 1993). Secondly, individuals who use constructive coping strategies such as active coping, planning, positive reinterpretation and growth, seeking emotional support for instrumental reasons and acceptance in order to engage in an attempt to deal with the problem, could be selected to minimise the occurrence of burnout within the tertiary environment. Thirdly, practices to cope with or prevent burnout and stress such as the implementation of programmes directed at the stimulation of coping, personal growth, hardiness, self-esteem, internal locus of control and effective stress management could be considered by tertiary institutions.

Future research needs to explore different coping patterns and the preferences of academic managerial personnel at tertiary institutions. The improvement of the construct validity and measurement of role 'stressors' in certain job environments, such as academic managerial positions, should furthermore be focused on in future research. In addition, larger samples in a wider variety of organisations should be used in order to investigate the relationship between burnout and coping. In order to promote the understanding of antecedents and correlates of burnout, further research is warranted at both the organisational and individual level, especially at managerial level.

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, conclusions are drawn regarding the literature study and the results of the empirical study. The limitations of the research are discussed, where after recommendations are made regarding the organisation and future research.

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions are drawn with regard to the specific theoretical objectives and the results obtained from the empirical investigation.

3.1.1 Conclusions in terms of the specific literature review objectives

Derived from the literature, burnout can be conceptualised as the end result of chronic exposure to occupational stress. The individual's over extension of energy output chronically exceeds the energy available and is associated with opposing mental, physical and cognitive experiences. This leads to behavioural and mental patterns intended on the termination of the stress factors.

Coping is conceptualised as efforts that are behavioural and cognitive in nature and which are utilised to avoid, manage or control situations that are experienced as stressful or difficult. The efficacy with which individuals act to resolve and deal with emotional responses to 'stressors' can be described as effective coping. The literature study reveals that active problem-solving has a positive effect on personal well-being, whereas emotion-focused coping is often linked to poorer levels of psychological adjustment in the long term. Problem-focused coping is more successful in situations that can be controlled and changed by the individual. The value of emotion-focused coping should therefore not be underestimated in situations that are not readily amenable to change.

3.1.2 Conclusions in terms of the specific empirical objectives

The results show that academic managerial personnel experience higher levels of exhaustion and professional efficiency than they do cynicism. They use problem-focused as well as emotion-focused coping strategies to deal with potential 'stressors'. The reported tendency is to use problem-focused strategies such as planning and active coping slightly more than emotion-focused strategies. This is reassuring due to the reported tendency of individuals to use problem-focused strategies in situations that are perceived to be under their control. The use of positive reinterpretation and growth as well as acceptance is a potential cause for concern. If used to distract attention from the 'stressor' causing distress without leading to active, problem-focused actions, this form of coping mechanism may become detrimental to the individual. In the long term, confrontation rather than avoidance is essential. Likewise, acceptance should lead to engagement in an attempt to deal with problems in order to be a functional coping response (Carver et al., 1989).

Practical significant relationships were found between active coping and exhaustion and professional effectiveness. A practical significant relationship was furthermore found between focus on and venting of emotions and exhaustion. It seems therefore that active coping, planning and positive reinterpretation are associated with exhaustion and professional efficiency.

3.2 LIMITATIONS

The following limitations have emerged during the study:

- Because the study was conducted at one tertiary education institution in Gauteng, the possibility exists that the results could have been influenced by demographic and other situational factors. This implies that the results cannot be generalised for the entire tertiary educational setting representative of South Africa.
- Few female academic managerial personnel were included in the study population, simply because that is the nature of top management at the institution used in the empirical study.

- The influence of personality dimensions and the relationship thereof with burnout and coping have not been included in this study. This could have played an important role in the prediction of burnout.
- Only academic managerial personnel members were included in the study population, while the literature indicates that academic personnel members within tertiary educational settings internationally experience increased levels of stress.
- The most serious limitation of this study is the reliance on cross-sectional, perceptual measures. Common method variance was introduced through the use of data collection through self-report measures at one point in time, which has the potential to inflate the observed relationships spuriously.
- The fact that the research design does not allow one to determine the direction of the relationship between the variables, thus not indicating causality, seems to be another limitation of this research.
- The sample size was also small. Little less than half of the targeted population completed the research, which could have affected the results. In effect, those who did not respond might not have done so either because of time structures or because they are potential candidates for burnout.
- Literature on burnout in a South African as well as an international context regarding managerial personnel is limited. A study within the tertiary educational environment has not yet been performed and therefore findings and results cannot be compared.

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations pertaining to the specific organisation used in this study, as well as recommendations for future research are made in this section.

3.3.1 Recommendations for the organisation

The following recommendations can be made on the basis of the results of this research.

Coping with stress and burnout on the organisational level requires the use of both individual-level and organisational strategies.

- The tertiary institution should invest in stress management courses and investigate structural inefficiencies and procedures and practices that add to worker burnout. In order to do this, an organisational culture should be created and maintained that explores micro-level and macro-level changes that will alleviate burnout in the organisation. Thus, interventions need to be targeted at teaching the individual a range of work-related coping skills. One such strategy may be to enhance empowerment as one of its key values. In particular, empowerment gives permission to managers especially, but also to work teams, to be their own agents of change.
- In addition, practices to cope with or prevent burnout and stress such as the implementation of programmes directed at the stimulation of coping, personal growth, hardiness, self-esteem, internal locus of control and effective stress management should be considered by the tertiary institution.
- Because emotion-focused or avoidance strategies contribute to burnout, special attention should be paid to the development of problem-focused coping. The organisation should furthermore assist managers to develop and use coping strategies that are most effective in specific work-related situations.
- In order to minimise the occurrence of burnout, the tertiary institution should facilitate organisational support and increase (or sustain) autonomy over work methods, objectives and scheduling. Activities such as the recognition of effort, rewarding good performance and providing assistance should be fostered. This is especially important in the light of increased stress levels at tertiary institutions and the lower remuneration of academic personnel compared with professionals in the commercial sector.

- Managers in the tertiary institution should be equipped with leadership training and an understanding of the ambiguity and complexity of the department head position. Experienced managers, especially those who measure low in burnout should be used as role models for less experienced managers.
- Employees and managers should be aware of the symptoms and causes of burnout. This could enable the early detection of exhaustion, cynicism and low professional effectiveness in the organisation in order to minimise the development and occurrence of burnout. It is even of greater importance to detect managerial burnout because managers who suffer from burnout could spread it to their subordinates (Dubrin, 1990; Lee & Ashforth, 1993).
- Individuals, who use constructive coping strategies such as active coping, planning, positive reinterpretation and growth, seeking emotional support for instrumental reasons and acceptance in order to engage in an attempt to deal with the problem, could be selected to minimise the occurrence of burnout within the tertiary set up.

3.3.2 Recommendations for future research

The following recommendations for future research can be made.

- The relationship between personality dimensions and burnout in academic personnel within the tertiary educational setting could be investigated.
- The relationship between personality dimensions and burnout in academic managerial personnel within the tertiary educational setting could be investigated.
- Future research must be done to investigate the influence of personality dimensions on burnout and coping in tertiary education institutions.
- Burnout and coping in academic managerial personnel could also be investigated in relation to other variables such as stress, job performance, situational factors and job satisfaction.

- Longitudinal studies regarding coping are required to learn more about the factors that influence coping responses among academic managerial personnel.
- Future research should also be directed more towards the specific coping mechanisms used by academic managerial personnel.

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