

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: The Relationship of Job Stress on Executive Coping Strategies, Decision Making,
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I surveyed 69 CEOs from credit unions across the nation. I first examined three antecedents to executive job stress and burnout (lack of coping behaviors, neurotic personality, and lack of organizational support). Coping behaviors did not significantly predict the CEOs burnout level, but neuroticism and lack of support did. Next I examined how the executives' burnout level predicted their decision-making style and their organizations' performance. While informational decision-making was not significantly related to burnout, avoidant decision-making was. CEOs experiencing more burnout tended to engage in more avoidant decision-making. Neither burnout nor decision-making style were related to organizational performance.

Keywords: Job Stress, Coping Strategies, Decision-Making, Organizational Performance

THE RELATIONSHIP OF JOB STRESS ON EXECUTIVE COPING STRATEGIES,
DECISION MAKING, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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Chapter 1 Literature Review

Introduction

Workplace stress has become a serious concern for employers and employees of organizations. Workplace stress is commonly defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the demands of the job exceed the capabilities, needs or resources of the worker (Wright, 2007). Top executives in organizations are increasingly susceptible to encounter workplace stress due to their high job demands. These job demands include devising strategies and policies to ensure that an organization meets its goals. Studies have shown that executives experiencing high levels of stress are more likely to alienate others and show a decline in organizational performance (Szalavitz, 2012). It is therefore important that executives manage their stress by utilizing coping skills to ensure their occupational wellbeing and to manage organizational effectiveness.

Occupational well being is the ability to achieve a balance between work and leisure time, addressing workplace stress, and building relationships with co-workers (Wright, 2007). Recently, empirical studies on the relation of workplace stress to psychological adjustment have emphasized the importance of coping strategies in reducing the negative effects of stress (Wright, 2007). Investigations have too frequently examined individuals' usual style of coping with broad categories of workplace stress. Failing to consider the situational diversity of stressors within the work setting, research from the life-stress literature has confirmed that specific types of coping strategies are more effective when situational factors are identified along with type of stressor being faced (Bowman & Stern, 1995). The current review of literature explores

the effects of workplace stress on the occupational wellbeing of managers and executives, examines the relationship between workplace stress and organizational performance, and assesses coping strategies used to reduce stress levels. A review of concepts and theories will provide detailed information relative to the current research on managerial workplace stress.

Managerial Workplace Stress

The complexity of industrial organizational life is an increasing source of stress for managers. In a recent survey conducted by Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, and Boudreau (2000), 88% of managers reported elevated levels of stress. Although the evidence points out that most managers report feeling work-related stress, the nature of the relationship between managers' self-reported work stress and work outcomes is less clear. Self-reporting stress studies indicate that middle level managers experience a larger amount of stress than lower or top-level managers do (Cooper, 1994). This research asserts that middle managers are under more stress in the work place than both their bosses and subordinates. Researchers say it is because middle groups, both socially and in the workplace, face more conflict from top-level management and pressure from lower level management.

A portion of managerial literature implies that managers experience higher job demands, higher levels of conflict, and lower degree of social support from their peers, however, they experience significantly lower emotional stress. Higher scores in the factors of psychosocial work environment explain this difference; job satisfaction, perceived management quality from their managers, influence, and autonomy (de Jonge & Dormann, 2006). The possibilities for managers to develop meaning of work in a

positive psychosocial environment can assist in reducing emotional stress in an otherwise highly demanding workplace. Similarly, individuals holding leadership positions experience less stress than subordinates, especially high-ranking leaders. Szalavitz (2012) mentions, “When we compared leaders of different ranks and levels, we found that higher-ranking leaders reported a greater sense of control in their lives” (p. 323). Simply thinking that you have control, whether or not you actually do, changes the way the brain responds to stress and makes it less toxic.

Executive stress research has varied widely due to the changing nature of work. Studies have shown that executives have lower overall occupational well being due to work related travel and interpersonal relationships at the top of the organization. For instance, managers are suffering from serious physiological symptoms from work related stress, such as disabling ulcers and coronary heart disease, which can force premature retirement before having an opportunity to complete their potential in organizational life (Fulcheri, Barzega, Maina, Novara, & Ravizza, 1995). Psychosomatic symptoms are also common in managerial roles, these include: chest pain; difficulty swallowing food or digesting; dizziness; fainting or blacking out; and being more accident-prone (Rojas & Kleiner, 2001). Sutherland and Cooper (1995) concluded that 32% of CEOs younger than 50 admitted to worrying about their own health as opposed to 20% of CEO’s above the age of 50. These results can relate to the willingness of younger CEOs to express concerns for their well being. Self-reports of anxiety and depression were much higher for the younger group of executives. The perceptions may be responsible for the decrease in “success at all cost” thinking and has paved the way for a growing interest in work-life balance. Managers are not only concerned with the impact of stress on themselves but

also the cost to the organization. Stress can impede on day-to-day decision-making of higher-level managers, which may result in either employee or financial consequences (Fulcheri, Barzega, Maina, Novara, & Ravizza, 1995). Although tasks and environment of an executive play a crucial role in workplace stress, a closer look is needed to assess the role of stressors and job strain.

Stressors and Job Strain

Dynamic tasks. There has been an increase in the concern over managerial productivity and the relationship to job stressors and strain. Yukl (2013) suggests that job responsibilities and the skills necessary to execute them vary for managers at different levels of an organization. Higher-level managers, such as executives, hold a dynamic and crucial role in organizations with responsibilities that include setting strategy and vision and developing a productive company culture (Robbins, 2014). Middle managers are concerned with interpreting and implementing policies and programs. Lower managers handle structuring, coordinating, and facilitating. The research suggests that as managers go down the corporate hierarchy, they have less discretion and freedom of action (Yukl, 2013). Therefore, researchers have suggested a pattern between the dynamic role of managers and the job strain experienced. The pattern suggests that dynamic tasks are positively related to stress reactions (Mohr & Wolfram, 2010). Mohr and Wolfram stated, “predictability of a task has a moderating effect in that the interrelation between dynamic tasks and irritation was stronger when predictability was low,” (p.167) In other words, managers experience greater irritation the more tasks are perceived to be unpredictable. The interrelation between dynamic tasks and irritation was stronger when managers’ perceived having low support from their supervisors or executive coaches. However,

dynamic tasks do not necessarily lead to negative emotional experiences. Managers can utilize additional support from supervisors and coaches when experiencing an increase in stress. Supervisors and coaches can lend support by ensuring managers have the time to manage well, help managers improve their own skills, provide greater levels of company information, and increase open communication among managers and senior leadership (Haggard, 2015). It is important to hold environmental variables as the focus of enhancements in management because they are easier to change than the personality of a manager (Fiedler, 2002). Therefore, making dynamic tasks predictable can be useful in a rapidly changing work environment.

Business and industry are undergoing great changes. In order to maintain a competitive advantage, executives must be willing to reconstruct their organizations in order to increase productivity and cut unwanted expenses. Downsizing remains the most difficult dynamic task for managers of all levels, especially executives, in organizations. Empirical evidence suggests that managers are becoming increasingly insecure about their employment and that downsizing has reduced their sense of job security. At least three categories of people are directly affected by downsizing: victims, survivors, and executioners (Gandolfi, 2008). Gandolfi posits that executioners, those responsible for downsizing implementation, suffer similar effects to those of victims and survivors. These findings suggest that downsizing has negative effects for surviving employees and managers who are not immune themselves from these adverse effects. Armstrong-Stassen (2005) examined the stressors of perceived job insecurity and workload demands on middle level managers and executive level managers during periods of downsizing. Armstrong-Stassen found that middle managers reported an increase in workload

demands as the downsizing progressed and state, “Compared with executive level managers, middle managers perceived more threat of job loss and a greater sense of powerlessness to influence decisions concerning the future of their job” (p. 117). This can be due to executive level managers having more control over resources and autonomy to make important decisions compared to middle managers. The study also found that executive-level managers reported higher levels of health symptoms during the post-downsizing period (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005). Feelings of guilt and prior levels of burnout may attribute to the increasing negative symptoms of executive’s following the downsizing phase (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Research implies the importance for executives to address the stress that managers experience during times of organizational change. In doing so, executives must proactively ensure support for their surviving employees during times of organizational change by providing training and assistance throughout the downsizing process (Gandolfi, 2008). Managers must also recognize the need for open and honest organizational communication as well as fair and ethical treatment of all employees (Tang & Fuller, 1995). Most importantly, downsizing should be treated as a last option for organizations. While there is no best way to downsize, some approaches are better than others. Management must assess the situation of the organization and carefully select the most optimal and ethical route to cut personnel (Tang & Fuller, 1995).

Personality traits. High levels of job stress and deteriorating mental health among executives is increasing. According to Kemp (2014), significant levels of psychological distress exist within executive populations. Roughly, 37.9% of subjects showed symptoms that may be consistent with depression, anxiety, somatization, and paranoia

(Kemp, 2014). This percentage is more than double than that of the general population. Most interestingly, executives with personality-based issues reported significantly higher levels of anxiety and depression than executives without personality-based issues. Gramstad, Gjestad, and Haver (2013) explored the impact of personality traits on stress reactions and levels of depression and anxiety symptoms of junior physicians. The main finding of this study showed that two personality traits predicated mental health symptoms. Junior physicians with high scores on neuroticism experienced more job stress and had an increased risk of developing stress reactions, whereas, junior physicians with high scores of extroversion actually prevented symptoms of anxiety and depression (Gramstad, Gjestad, & Haver, 2013).

In a similar way, Anitei, Stoica, Samsonescu (2013) found emotional stability to have a significant negative correlation in regards to physical health problems experienced by employees. Anitei, Stoica, Samsonescu (2013) mention, "Being about a person characterized by emotional maturity, they will know how to react to unforeseen circumstances and will consciously act in order to remedy the situation, without expressing and experiencing a higher level of stress." Not only is the impact of emotional stability physiologically beneficial to individuals, it also leads to higher work performance, especially those in powerful positions. Abetecola et al. (2011) found that emotionally stable CEOs led higher performing firms and were more likely to pursue innovative strategies. Firms with neurotic (low emotional stability) CEOs were more likely to claim bankruptcy. Their neurotic styles tend to undermine and obliterate the effectiveness of their organizations and people and lead to reckless results (Motamedi, 2006). Along with emotional stability, conscientiousness also has a negative correlation

to work stress experiences.

Conscientiousness is characterized by being able to control impulses through planning, organizing, setting goals, and prioritizing actions (John et al., 2008). This personality pattern does not prevent stressful events from occurring, but instead decreases the chances that stress will develop into more severe difficulties (Murphy, Miller, & Wrosch, 2013). Among the noted factors involved in job stressors and individual characteristics, there has been particular concern about affective variables such as mood and the trait of negative affectivity (tendency to experience negative emotions across situations and time), especially in the job stress domain. In a longitudinal study assessing negative affectivity (NA) and strains on the job, Spector, O'Connell, and Chen (2000) demonstrated that even after controlling for NA and prior levels of strain (negative effects experienced outside of work), a relationship was found between job stressors and job strain. These results suggest that correlations between our stressors and strains are not just by-products of NA or prior strains. Furthermore, the results posit that NA measures are subject to occasion factors. Future research must be conducted in order to isolate the potential effects of confounding variables and to test for causal relations in other job stressors and job strains. Research on personality traits and job strain has redirected efforts to focus on the effects of job demands and resources on employee stress.

Important Theories in the Occupational Stress Literature

The role of an executive is crucial to an organization. These upper-level managers must work with very high job demands and working conditions. Literature on occupational stress suggests that there exists a high level of job stress for employees with high job demands and lack of resources to successfully complete assigned tasks. The job

demands-resources model (JD-R) is used to predict employee burnout, engagement, and organizational performance. The JD-R model proposes that working conditions are categorized into two broad categories, job demands and job resources (Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2001). Job demands represent components of the work environment that require employees to exert continued physical or mental effort (Ellis & Pearsall, 2011). Providing adequate resources can offset these demands. Job resources are physical, social, psychological, and organizational components that reduce job demands, therefore, reducing psychological and physiological stress reactions (Ellis & Pearsall, 2011). The general framework of the JD-R model seems stable across various occupational fields; however, there is a lack of empirical research regarding the effect of the JD-R model on executive-level managers. Of the limited studies on the JD-R model and executives, Knudsen, Ducharme, and Roman (2009) found that job demands were positively associated with emotional exhaustion and emotional exhaustion was positively associated with turnover intentions, and the job resource of long-range strategic planning was negatively associated with emotional exhaustion. While upper-level managers have increasingly high job demands, it is important for them to utilize their access to abundant resources to counteract increasing rates of job stress and burnout.

Similar to the Job Demands-Resources Model, researchers have shown an interest in the Job Demand-Control Model (JD-C) to explore a situation-centered focus on job stress. The JD-C Model postulates that the primary sources of job stress lie within two basic characteristics of the job itself: (1) "psychological job demands" and (2) "job decision latitude" or "job control"(de Jong, Bosma, Peter, & Siegrist, 2000). According to the model, psychological strains are consequences of the effects of both job demands and

the amount of control available to the employee. The JD-C model has two main predictions. The first main prediction is that the strongest adverse strain reactions will occur when job demands are high and employees' control is low. The second prediction the model infers is that work motivation, learning, and growth will occur in situations where both job demands and worker's control is high (de Jong, Bosma, Peter, & Siegrist, 2000). Although the JD-C model is an interesting approach to the research on job stress, many studies have failed to produce the interaction effects proposed by the model (Bakker, Veldhoven, & Xanthopoulou, 2010). The major criticism surrounding the model is that it is too simplistic and fails to capture the complexity of work environments. The failure of the JD-C to capture the complexity of work environments has led researchers to focus on the JD-R model (Bakker, Veldhoven, & Xanthopoulou, 2010).

The Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) model, an alternative to the JD-C model, emphasizes the reward structure at work. Essentially, the model emphasizes that work-related benefits depend upon a reciprocal relationship between efforts and rewards at work (Siegrist, 1996). The main assumption of the model is that a failed reciprocity between high-work related costs and low occupational gains experienced by an individual may cause emotional distress (Feuerhahn, Kühnel, & Kudielka, 2012). Kinnunen, Feldt, and Mäkikangas (2008) explain, "Lack of balance in this relationship may cause emotional distress, which can lead via sustained activation of the autonomic nervous system to the development of physical (e.g., cardiovascular) and mental (e.g., depression) diseases" (p. 115). Stressful imbalances may occur when an employee perceives having a demanding and unstable job and performing at a high level without being offered any merit rewards. Recent studies have examined the role of organizational support in ERI

literature and found that those perceiving their organizations as unsupportive had a higher level of turnover intentions (Kinnunen, Feldt, & Mäkikangas, 2008). Although the ERI model is well received, researchers advise combining both ERI and JD-C models in order to gain a more encompassing view on the relationship of job stress and well being in the workplace.

Recent research in the job stress domain has shied away from the work environment and has taken an interest in the role of exchange relationships in the work place. Griffeth, Vecchio, and Logan (1989) argue that when individuals are uncertain about their abilities, they often evaluate themselves by comparing their abilities to others. This general theory of psychological equity has remained an important topic in the work motivation literature, but may also contribute to the job stress domain. Equity theory predicts that perceived inequity results in a range of negative affective and motivational outcomes (Festinger, 1957). The drive for a person to seek equity maximization rather than outcome maximization presumably lies in the need to reduce psychological tension (Festinger, 1957).

Taris, Schreurs, Peeters, Le Blanc, and Schaufeli (2001) conducted a study on the premise that a disturbed balance between the investments in and rewards gained from an exchange relationship at work increases the stress resulting from the relationship. The research concluded that the often-reported effect of inequity on burnout is partly interpreted in terms of elevated levels of job stress due to feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. Interestingly, the authors found that investments in exchange relationships at work were considerably less important in determining the perceived equitableness of that relationship than the

perceived rewards gained from that relationship (Taris, Schreurs, Peeters, Le Blanc, & Schaufeli, 2001). These results agree with earlier findings (Taris et al., 1999) but follow-up research is needed to acquire the reasons for these occurrences. In addition, we should try to uncover the best coping strategies for managers to reduce stress levels at work.

Workplace Stress: Coaching and Coping Strategies

Empirical studies regarding psychological adjustment to occupational stress has increasingly emphasized the importance of coping strategies in reducing the negative effects of stress. The focus on coping is of particular interest to counseling psychologists, who have now moved to organizational settings due to the increase of both health care costs and employee assistance programs. Bowman and Stern (1995) have defined two broad coping strategies: problem-focused coping and emotional-focused coping. Problem-focused coping consists of efforts undertaken to manage or alter objective conditions that are the source of stress. In contrast, emotion-focused coping consists of efforts undertaken to regulate stressful emotions by the use of mechanisms that avoid direct confrontation with the stressor. Brown, Westbrook, and Challagalla (2005) examined the moderating effects of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping tactics on the relationship between negative emotion and work performance. The findings suggest that negative emotion following a critical negative event adversely affected work performance in the absence of effective coping tactics (Brown, Westbrook, & Challagalla, 2005). For example, the emotion-focused coping strategy of venting aggravated the adverse effects of negative emotion. The problem-focused coping strategy of task focus had a beneficial direct effect on performance (Brown, Westbrook, & Challagalla, 2005). These findings uncover the importance of understanding adaptive and

maladaptive coping tactics in the workplace. Numerous studies have found that problem-focused coping to be highly effective in the work setting, but it is not clear in which settings emotional-focused coping may be helpful (Bowman & Stern, 1995).

Another possible coping strategy that has proved to be effective is managerial coaching. Literature by Wright (2007) advocates for the benefits of coaching for managers in today's work force. Executive coaching is designed to help facilitate professional and personal development to the point of individual growth, improved performance and contentment (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). The need of executive coaching varies from increased productivity to effectively dealing with change (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Reducing executive stress is an important component to executive coaching due to the increasing interest in work-life balance. As the executive coaching literature has expanded, many different approaches have surfaced. Of the different approaches, the cognitive-behavioral approach has a direct focus on stress management.

Cognitive-behavioral coaching (CBC) is a broad term encompassing a wide variety of intervention techniques that range from largely cognitive to largely behavioral (Ducharme, 2004). One treatment category of CBC includes stress inoculation training. This helps individuals build resistance to lower, more manageable levels of stress in order to build tolerance to higher, uncontrollable levels of stress (Ducharme, 2004). Research suggests that CBC is an effective approach and should be an important part of stress management coaching for executives. Ducharme (2004) agrees, "There is an abundance of research conducted with high-performing individuals that suggests that these techniques work" (p. 222). Although the cost of providing executives and managers the

luxury of executive coaching can be a hindrance, there is flexibility in how to effectively implement stress coaching. Wright (2007) mentions, “In today’s workplace where reducing costs is a primary factor, group coaching is the most cost-effective way to deliver wellness coaching” (p. 283). Workplace coaching to reduce stress must have interventions directed at the management level as well as at employees. Managers can have a significant impact on stress levels of their workers and can learn to better manage their own stress.

The benefit of executive coaching goes beyond reducing work stress by increasing organizational performance through fostering creative problem solving. One of the many essential tasks of an executive includes the ability to adapt in a dynamic external environment through innovation and creativity. Richard (2003) explores the utility of executive coaching on creative problem solving and increasing organizational effectiveness. In creative problem solving techniques, the coach focuses on teaching the skills of operationally defining problems and rational creative problem-solving techniques in the context of the scientific method, whether it is interpersonal or business oriented (Richard, 2003). In order to generate ideas, the coach asks strategic questions based on rational techniques. These questions pertain to the conditions of the current market and the reactions of similar organizations to that market. Utilizing executive coaching as a way to foster creative problem solving is a tool to improving the executive’s effectiveness. The learning that occurs can aid executives to systematically manage innovation within the organization and enhance the executive’s appreciation of the creative efforts of others (Richard, 2003). Similarly, research conducted by Kets de Vries (2014) explores the effectiveness of dream coaching on executives as a problem-

solving tool. The researcher mentions that offering a route to a better understanding of the interior world of executives through dream assessments may itself foster creative problem solving. Kets de Vries (2014) states, “Executive coaches need to understand how each of their clients thinks and experiences emotions. They need to be skilled in detecting and evaluating the psychological idiosyncrasies that can help or hinder leadership development” (p. 6). In dreams, we deal with emotional content in a safe place by using dream symbols, images, or objects that have meaning and reflect on our underlying thoughts and feelings. By understanding, analyzing and interpreting executives’ dreams, coaches can push forward the boundaries of coaching (Kets de Vries, 2014). Awakening executive’s mental processes can lead to an increased level of awareness that may result in increased problem solving to enhance organizational effectiveness.

Reducing the stress levels of managers allows for a better performing organization. More research is required to better identify the relationship between managerial stress on decision-making and organizational performance.

Workplace Stress’ Impact on Decision-Making and Organizational Performance

Decision-making is arguably the most critical component of an executive’s job. Executives are expected to promote a positive vision of the organization, develop elite management teams, represent the organization to others, and must engage in many other important functions. Effective decision-making involves generating innovative alternatives that can be ignored when the executive is experiencing high levels of stress (Starcke, Markowitsch, & Brand, 2008). One particular area of interest on stress and decision-making centers on the “narrowing effect.” Narrowing refers to the focusing of one’s attention on fewer pieces of information when making a decision (Ganster, 2005).

When a decision maker is under stressful demands, his or her perceptions may narrow and he or she may consider fewer alternatives to the situation. The decision maker is also subject to consider fewer pieces of information when weighing the impact of different alternatives (Yates, 1990). Previous literature posits that stress in the form of time constraints has a “narrowing effect” on decision-making. Ganster (2005) found that stress created from job demands can reflect an increase in decision difficulty, which leads to poorer decision outcomes.

A lack of decision-making efficiency decreases the performance carried out by managers, therefore, negatively influences the organization as a whole. Research shows that individuals differ in their preferred decision-making style. These profiles tend to be stable over time. Allwood and Salo (2012) state, “Better understanding of the relation between decision styles and stress could help managers create work environments that provide more tailored support to employees who are responsible for decision-making tasks” (p. 34) The General Decision-Making Style scale (GDMS) by Scott and Bruce (1995) is utilized to measure decision-making style. This scale is one of the most well-established scales for decision-making styles because it provides a broad perspective on decision styles.

Scott and Bruce (1995) established the scale in order to typify individual differences in decision-making practices for career development and behavior studies. The model has been empirically supported by studies and independent factor analyses (Allwood & Salo, 2012). Bruce and Scott (1995) elaborate that their model on decision-making style is a learned habitual response, “resulting in a habit-based propensity to react a certain way in a specific decision context. People use more than one decision-making

style, but one style is dominant” (p. 822). The GDMS includes the following five styles: spontaneous (sense of immediacy and persistent desire to always finalize decisions as quickly as possible), rational (comprehensive info search, explicit inventory of alternatives and logical evaluation of options), intuitive (more reliance on implicit learning and tacit awareness (“hunches” or “feelings”) as a basis for decisions), dependent (resolves uncertainty through consultation, more interested in advice and guidance from others than other styles are), and avoidant (tries to avoid making decisions) (Scott & Bruce, 1995). The rational decision-making style has been found to be more associated to positive outcomes. Both the rational and intuitive styles have been associated with better job performance than the avoidant decision-making style. In previous studies, avoidant style lead to poorer performance and higher stress levels (Allwood & Salo, 2012). The degree of decision-latitude that the manager has is important in the relationship to workplace stress. The degree of control over one’s work tasks and the fit between the individual and their job characteristics remains an important aspect contributing to job stress and decision-making style research.

Studies have looked into the effect of job demands and decision latitude on stress outcomes, but few have taken a comprehensive view of their role regarding occupational stress and the strength of the stressors (Lobban, Husted, & Farewell, 1998). Karasek (1979) explains job latitude as the “features of jobs, primarily the ability of the worker to use his or her skills on the job and to have authority to make decisions regarding how the work is done and to set the schedule for completing work activities” (p. 290). Research developed by Karasek (1979) found that variables such as job satisfaction, exhaustion, and depression can be predicted by a combination of decision latitude and job demands.

More specifically, Warr (1990) found that employees in jobs perceived to have both low decision latitude and high job demands were more likely to report decreased well being. These results may help explain why middle managers experience more stress than higher-level managers do. Upper level managers are prone to high job demands but typically have higher job latitude matched with access to resources. Research conducted by Lobben, Husted, and Farewell (1998) found that outcomes of low supervisory support increased perceptions of role ambiguity, role conflict, job demand and lack of decision latitude, resulting in higher organizational stress and decreased job satisfaction. These factors combined display feelings of emotional exhaustion within employees of an organization. Emotional exhaustion in the workplace has detrimental effects on both employees and organizations. A closer look into the relationship between emotional exhaustion and its effect on organization support is needed.

A growing interest in the role of emotional exhaustion on organizational performance has added to the research surrounding workplace stress. This research has demonstrated that emotional exhaustion can lead to significant negative effects on employees, managers, and overall organizational performance. Emotional exhaustion is defined as a chronic state of emotional and physical depletion (Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne, 2003). Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli (2001) suggest, “Emotional exhaustion closely resembles traditional stress reactions that are studied in occupational stress research, such as fatigue, job-related depression, psychosomatic complaints, and anxiety” (p. 499). According to Motowidlo, Packard, and Manning (1986), factors such as work overload cause feelings of stress, which lead to depression and emotional exhaustion, which, in turn, causes decrements in interpersonal and cognitive/motivational

aspects of job performance. Studies have reported a variety of negative effects on employees experiencing stress including speed and accuracy in tracking, signal detection, verbal reasoning, sentence formation, and other kinds of verbal performance (Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986). Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne (2003) investigated the negative consequences of emotional exhaustion for individual employees and their employers. The researchers hypothesized that emotional exhaustion would negatively correlate with job performance, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and positively correlate with turnover intentions. Their findings provide support on the negative effects of emotional exhaustion on organizational performance and turnover intentions, but interestingly there was no support for the relationship of emotional exhaustion and OCBs. Similarly, a study conducted by Wright and Cropanzano (1998) utilized the conservation of resources (COR) model of stress as the theoretical framework for better understanding emotional exhaustion. This research examined the relationship of emotional exhaustion to job satisfaction, voluntary turnover, and job performance. Results indicated that emotionally exhausted employees exhibited significantly lower job performance and eventually quit their job. Wright and Cropanzano (1998) state, “without the benefit of outside help or intervention, respond to stress by coping with strategies that are designed to minimize any further resource loss” (p. 492). Hamwi, Rutherford, and Boles, (2011) posit that while coping strategies are a proactive way of managing and reducing negative effects of emotional exhaustion, organizational support plays a crucial role in employee, managerial, and organizational well-being.

Research has linked perceived organizational support to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors, and employee

turnover (Hamwi, Rutherford, & Boles, 2011). Perceived organizational support refers to an employee's perception that the firm values his/her contributions and cares about the employees' well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). Perceived organizational support (POS) benefits both the organization and employees greatly by increasing affective commitment as well as the belief that an increased effort in job performance will be rewarded. Acknowledgement and rewards allow an employee to develop trust in their organization along with the belief that that organization will act in a "fair manner over the long-term," (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986, p. 504). Research conducted by Jain, Giga, and Cooper (2013) examined the impact of organizational stressors on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and how perceived organizational support (POS) moderates the relationship between stressors and citizenship behavior. The results indicate a significant negative relationship between organizational stressors and OCB, a significant positive relationship between POS and OCB, and confirmation that POS moderates in the relationship between organizational stressors and OCB. This research concludes that organizational stress can reduce the impact of support and result in negative employee attitudes towards the organization, which may influence perceptions of organizational actions. Therefore, it is important for organizations to focus on preventative measures to reduce organizational stressors and the perceptions of them in order to avoid outcomes regarding stress and lower OCBs (Jain, Giga, & Cooper, 2013).

Overall, employees who perceive that they have organizational support typically feel the need to reciprocate by committing to the organization. However, employees who perceive a lack of support from their organization may feel as though they are not

provided adequate resources to perform their job successfully. This may cause employees to expel more physical, mental, and emotional resources in order to complete the tasks (Hamwi, Rutherford, & Boles, 2011). Management needs to foster an environment of open communication among all levels of the organization. Creating this type of environment can reduce emotional exhaustion and increase POS, therefore, reducing turnover and increasing organizational commitment.

Conclusion

Human resource practitioners and researchers in various organizations are concerned about the impact of occupational stress in organizations. Occupational stress has shown to have a negative effect on organizations in various ways such as employee turnover, decrease in performance, and reduced organizational commitment. Employers in organizations are experiencing concern over what interventions can be used to minimize the costs associated with workplace stress. Therefore, it is essential to better understand the causes and effects of occupational stress on organizational performance. Upper level managers are susceptible to workplace stress due to their high job demands. Interestingly, a portion of research has concluded that higher-level managers experience less workplace stress compared to lower level employees or middle managers due to a high degree of autonomy and availability of resources. However, research indicates executives' increased chances of experiencing physiological and psychosomatic symptoms caused by workplace stress. Executives can better cope with workplace stress and increase occupational wellbeing by utilizing effective coping strategies such as problem-focused coping or executive coaching. These coping strategies have proven effective in reducing managerial stress and preserving organizational effectiveness.

Further research on practical and efficient interventions to manage workplace stress in organizations, especially managerial roles, is needed to give a practical perspective on how to manage stress at work.

The Present Study

Based on the research in my literature review, I built a model of (a) how an executive's personality, coping strategies, and organizational support impact his or her burnout, and (b) how executive burnout impacts executive decision making and organizational performance. These relationships are displayed in Figure 1.

Previous research regarding psychological adjustment to occupational stress and burnout has increasingly emphasized the importance of coping strategies in reducing the negative effects of stress. A study by Jenaro, Flores, and Arias (2007) suggests that intervention techniques need to focus on increasing the use of active coping skills by employees. The study mentions, "Such skills as problem-solving training or techniques of behavioral or cognitive rehearsal might help increase the use of active coping strategies (focus efforts on resolving the situation) in instances when they are not in use" (p. 85). The authors encourage frequent use of active coping strategies, which increase overall job satisfaction for employees suffering from burnout. Therefore, I predict:

Hypothesis 1: Executive coping strategies will have a negative relationship with executive level burnout.

Perceived organizational support (POS) is linked to benefits for the organization and employees by increasing commitment as well as increased job performance (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). Jain, Giga, and Cooper (2013) found that a significant negative relationship between organizational stressors and OCB, a significant positive relationship between POS and OCB, and confirmation that POS moderates in the relationship between organizational stressors and OCB. This concludes

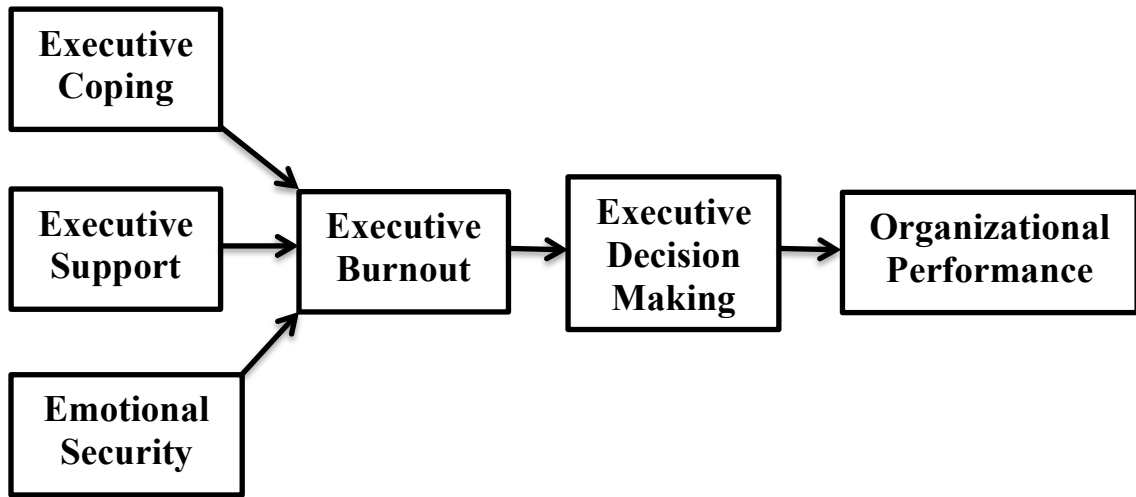


Figure 1. *Executive Burnout Model*

that organizational stress reduces the impact of support and results in negative employee attitudes towards the organization. Previous research has found similar results in regards to POS and employee burnout. Therefore, I predict:

Hypothesis 2: Organizational support will have a negative relationship with executive level burnout.

Findings of research conducted by Gramstad, Gjestad, and Haver (2013) focused on the impact of personality traits on stress reactions of depression and anxiety in junior physicians. The researchers found that two personality traits were responsible for mental health symptoms in stressed physicians. The junior physicians with high scores on neuroticism experiences significantly more job stress than those scoring higher in other personality categories. Previous research has shown that emotional stability has a significant negative correlation in regards to physical health problems experienced by employees Anitei, Stoica, Samsonescu (2013). Therefore, I predict:

Hypothesis 3: Emotional security will have a negative relationship with executive level burnout.

The causes of occupational stress are a major focus in occupational stress literature. Studies have provided stress literature with contributing theories that help identify the many stressors experienced in workplace. In addition, occupational stress also identifies ways in which employers can reduce the level of burnout in their organizations. Research has identified perceived organizational support, personality traits, and coping strategies as important ways in order to decrease occupational stress. Perceived organizational support is linked to not only organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors, and employee turnover but also a

reduced burnout rate (Hamwi, Rutherford, & Boles, 2011). Also, a study by Abetecola et al. (2011) found that emotional stability has a negative correlation to work stress experiences and that firms with low emotional stability were more likely to claim bankruptcy. Literature supports the importance to utilize coping strategies as a proactive way to reduce workplace stress and burnout levels. Brown, Westbrook, and Challagalla (2005) findings support stress coping strategies' impact on the reduction in burnout level in organizations. Therefore, I predict:

Hypothesis 4: Executive coping strategies will predict executive level burnout, even after controlling for organizational support and emotional security.

Research has demonstrated that emotional exhaustion can lead to significant negative effects on employees, managers, and overall organizational performance. Workplace stress can lead to depression and emotional exhaustions, which can cause a decrease in important cognitive and motivational aspects of job performance Motowidlo, Packard, and Manning (1986). Many studies have reported other negative effects on employees due to burnout including loss of signal detection, decrease in verbal reasoning, and more difficulty in sentence formation. Results from Motowidlo, Packard, and Manning (1986) indicated that emotionally exhausted employees exhibited significantly lower job performance and eventually quit their job. Therefore, I predict:

Hypothesis 5: Executive level burnout will have a negative relationship with organizational performance.

Effective decision-making remains a crucial aspect of organizational performance and health. Executives must remain innovative in order for the organization to sustain a competitive advantage. Generating these innovative alternatives may be reduced when an

executive is experiencing high levels of stress (Starcke, Markowitsch, & Brand, 2008). While under stress, executive's may encounter the "narrowing effect," which reduces the focus on fewer pieces of information when making decisions (Ganster, 2005). Gangster (2005) found that stress created from job demands can reflect an increase in decision difficulty, which leads to poorer decision outcomes. Therefore, my first research questions is:

Research question 1. Which decision-making styles are most related to burnout?

Rogers and Blenko (2006) have indicated that good decision-making and execution of those decisions are the hallmark of high-performing organizations. This study surveyed executives at 350 global companies about their organizational effectiveness, and only 15% said that they have an organization that helps the business outperform competitors. The top performing organizations rely on quality, speed, and execution of their decision-making. Rogers and Blenko (2006) state, "The most effective organizations score well on the major strategic decisions which markets to enter or exit, which businesses to buy or sell, where to allocate capital and talent. But they truly shine when it comes to the critical operating decisions requiring consistency and speed—how to drive product innovation, the best way to position brands, how to manage channel partners" (p. 1). Therefore my second research questions is:

Research question 2. Which decision-making style best predicts organizational performance?

Previous studies have indicated the negative effect employee burnout has on decision-making. Research also indicates that effective decision-making has a positive relationship with organizational performance. Scott and Bruce (1995) posit that

executives with a rational decision-making style are more likely to have organizational positive outcomes. Avoidant style of decision-making has been associated with poor job performance and leads to higher levels of stress overall (Allwood & Salo, 2012).

Therefore, my third research question is:

Research question 3. Is the relationship between burnout and organizational performance mediated by one or more of the decision-making styles?

Chapter 2

Method

Participants

For this particular study, I sampled CEOs in credit unions across the nation using proportionate stratified sampling specifically from the Credit Unions Directory website. This population was chosen for feasibility value, as the Credit Unions Directory (<http://credituniondirectory.net/>) provides listing and contact information of all Credit Unions by state in the nation. Using proportionate stratified sampling for Credit Unions, the Credit Union Directory allowed elements to be selected in exact proportion to their representation in the population. I sent out 1,000 surveys and received 69, a response rate of 6.9%. I was unable to use four of the surveys because of incomplete data. Therefore, the final total of useable surveys was 65. Seventy-one percent of the CEOs were men and 29% were women. Seventy-nine percent of CEOs were older than 50, 14% were between 35 and 50, and 6% were 35 or younger. Ninety-four percent were married and 4% were not. Thirty-six percent had three or more children, 48% had two children, 9% had one child, and 6% had no children. Thus, the typical CEO is a married man, over 50, with two children.

Instruments

Executive coping behaviors. In this study, executive coping is defined as the actions/behaviors that may reduce stressors/strain at the executive level. To measure this variable, the researcher used the brief version of the COPE inventory created by Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989). The COPE Inventory was developed to assess a broad range of coping responses, several of which had an explicit basis in theory. The COPE

inventory includes some responses that are dysfunctional, as well as some that are functional. For the purpose of this study, I only included 13 items from the inventory that focused on functional behaviors. Some sample items are “I’ve been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I’m in,” and “I’ve been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.” A four-point Likert scale was used that ranged from one (I usually do not do this at all) to four (I usually do this a lot). Because it had negative correlations with the other items, I reverse scored item 12, “I blame myself for things that have happened.” After making that change, the internal consistency of the scale improved from .50 to .67, based on coefficient alpha. The items can be seen in Appendix A.

Perceived organizational support. Most of the measures of perceived organizational support focus on employees who are lower in the organizational structure than CEOs. Because CEOs only report to the board, I rewrote items to fit the CEO position. Some examples of items are “I have the trust of my board members,” and “I can delegate important tasks to my senior management team and know they will be handled well.” I had four items and used a seven-point Likert scale that ranged from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree). The internal consistency of the scale was .64, based on coefficient alpha. The items can be seen in Appendix B.

Emotional security. I used seven items from the Berkeley Personality Inventory to assess personality. Items three, five, six and seven were reverse scored. In a previous investigation, Professor Yancey administered this test to 333 students in his Psychological Testing class. The internal consistency, using coefficient alpha, was .79. He also conducted a test-retest reliability study with 24 students and the correlation

between the two administrations of the Emotional Security scale was .90. When I examined the internal consistency of this test, using coefficient alpha, it was .64. This instrument appears in Appendix C.

Burnout. In this study, executive burnout will be defined as loss of energy and interest experienced by some executives as a result of excessive demands upon their resources or chronic overwork. To measure burnout level, the researcher used the Bernhard's (2005) College Student Survey (CSS) which examines how frequently students experience certain events. The original CSS consists of 22 items and is divided into 3 subscales: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Negative Personal Accomplishment (NPA). I used a 15 item version of the CSS that substitutes the word "school" with "work" and "friends and classmates" with "colleagues and supervisors." Emotional exhaustion can be described as a chronic state of physical and emotional depletion that results from excessive job demands. An example of an EE item is, "I feel emotionally drained from my work." Depersonalization items can be described as being detached from one's self. An example is, "I feel I treat some colleagues and supervisors as if they were impersonal objects." Lastly, negative personal achievement is perceived as not being able to achieve personal goals. A reverse example of NPA is, "I have accomplished many worthwhile things at work."

Gold, Bachelor, and Michael (1989) found internal consistency, using coefficient alphas, of .89, .76, and .73 for EE, DP, and NPA. When Lui (2010) used this shortened version, she obtained coefficient alphas of .87, .65, and .78 for EE, DP, and NPA. In my study, the obtained coefficient alphas for EE, DP, and NPA were .78, .86, and .75, and coefficient alpha for the entire scale was .83. This instrument appears in Appendix D.

Executive decision-making. To measure decision-making, I used the General Decision Making Style questionnaire (GDMS) that was designed and developed by Scott and Bruce (1995). The GDMS was developed due to a lack of instruments available to assess an individual's decision-making style. The inventory is comprised of 24 items and five decision making styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous. A sample item from the inventory that captures avoidant is, "I rarely make important decisions without consulting on other people." Scott and Bruce found coefficient alphas of .81, .79, .62, .84, .84, respectively, for the rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous scales.

So as not to overwhelm my participants, I only used ten items from GDMS using a seven-point Likert scale that ranged from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree). Therefore, I was unable to reliably measure all five decision making styles. So I conducted a factor analysis and two decision-making styles emerged out of the survey responses: informational decision making and avoidant decision making. Informational decision-making can be described as making a decision based on available information and resources. Five items loaded on this factor. They were, "I rarely make important decisions without consulting other people," "I use the advice of other people in making my important decisions," "I double check my information to make sure I have the right facts before making a decision," "I often need the assistance of other people when making important decisions," and "If i have the support of others, it is easier for me to make important decisions." The internal consistency of these five items was acceptable ($\alpha = .78$). Avoidant decision-making is characterized by avoiding to make a decision altogether. Four items loaded on this factor. They were, "I often put off making

decisions,” “I put off making decisions because thinking about them makes me uneasy,” “I avoid making important decisions until the pressure is on,” and “I make decisions in a logical and systematic way.” This last item needed to be reverse scored to fit in with the other three. The internal consistency of these four items was lower (α . 64). One item, having to do with using intuition, was unrelated to either factor. This instrument appears in Appendix E.

Organizational performance. Financial information was obtained from the web site www.ncua.gov. This site is available to the general public and contains basic financial information on all credit unions. Similar to Drogan (2002), I measured the credit unions’ financial success by three indices: net operating expenses to average assets ratio (earnings ratio), members to full-time employees ratio (productivity ratio), and market share growth. These performance measures represent a variety of indices of the credit unions’ economic health. Credit unions with smaller earnings ratios, larger productivity ratios, and larger market share growth will be considered more effective financially. To enhance the reliability of my financial measures, I collected data on these three variables for three years, 2013, 2014, and 2015. I then averaged each credit union’s performance over the three years for each measure.

Demographics. The researcher asked questions about the participants’ age, sex, marital status, number of children (to help determine additional stressors), and the name of the credit union currently employed. This instrument appears in Appendix F.

Procedure

Before collecting any data, the researcher obtained human subjects’ approval from the university’s Institutional Review Board (see Appendix G). Part of this process

involved making the participants informed about the study and getting their consent. The author included a cover letter (see Appendix H).

The first stage of the sampling process consisted of proportionate stratified random sampling from the Federal Credit Union Directory (2012). For this study, I selected a random sample of 1,000 credit union CEOs. To do this I divided the total number of credit unions by 1,000. Then I used this number (N), to select every Nth credit union. This directory contains contact information of each credit union's CEO. I identified the 1,000 credit union CEOs and their email address.

An email was sent to each CEO containing a brief description of the study and a link to the survey instrument through Survey Monkey was provided. The informed consent page will precede the instrument and allowed the participant to agree/disagree to participate in the study. The informed consent document notified the participant of confidentiality and protection of responses. Participants had the option to view the general results of the study as an incentive. The information given to the participant regarding results will not include confidential information. In addition, the participant had the opportunity to enter their name in a drawing for a \$100 Amazon gift card. Instructions for the incentives include participants to provide their first name and email address. The chances of winning (1/100) was clearly stated in the cover letter prior to the study. The participant clicked the NEXT button after agreeing to terms and began the study. The participants completed the instrument created provided by the researcher that measure burnout, decision-making, perceived organizational support, emotional security, and coping skills utilized to alleviate work stress. Responses were automatically compiled in a spreadsheet and remained anonymous. Data was stored in a password

protected electronic format. The researcher thanked the participant for the time to complete the study and an email containing the results/findings will be sent once the data has been analyzed.

Chapter 3

Results

Main Hypotheses

Coping strategies and burnout. For my first hypothesis, I predicted that executive coping strategies would have a negative relationship with executive level burnout. A Pearson correlation was conducted and found coping strategies had a negative relationship with executive level burnout, but not to a significant degree, $r(65) = -0.11$, $p = .398$, therefore, my first hypothesis was not supported.

Because the 13 items that I used to measure coping skills revealed a weak level of internal consistency ($\alpha = .67$), below the recommended level of reliability ($\alpha = .70$), I conducted a factor analysis. Three patterns emerged from the coping strategy survey responses: socio-emotional, peace of mind, and problem-focused coping. Socio-emotional can be described as a coping strategy based on seeking emotional support from others. This pattern included questions such as, "I get comfort from someone." The socio-emotional items revealed the same reliability ($\alpha = .67$) as the overall coping strategies. The peace of mind based questions can be described as a coping strategy based on ones spirituality. These questions include, "I try to find comfort in my spiritual beliefs." Factor analysis revealed the same level of reliability ($\alpha = .67$). Finally, the factor analysis for the problem-focused coping items revealed a slightly lower reliability level ($\alpha = .65$). Questions centered on problem-focused coping are described as coping by solving stress-induced situations. These questions include, "I take action and try to make the situation better." The relationship between problem-focused coping and burnout was -0.17 ($p = .172$), between peace of mind coping and burnout was -0.13 ($p = .318$), and between

social-emotional coping and burnout was .01 ($p = .915$).

When I examined the relationships between the three coping strategy subgroups (socio-emotional, problem focused, and peace of mind) and the three burnout subgroups (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and negative personal achievement), some significant findings emerged. A negative relationship between socio-emotional coping and negative personal achievement was found ($r(65) = -0.29, p = .020$) as well as a significant negative relationship between the problem-focused coping and negative personal achievement ($r(65) = -0.46, p = .001$). See Table 1 for all the relationships between the coping and burnout subgroups.

Perceived organizational support and burnout. It was predicted that perceived organizational support would have a negative relationship with executive level burnout. This hypothesis was supported ($r(65) = -0.37, p = .002$). It was also found that perceived organizational support has a significant negative relationship with negative personal achievement $r(65) = -0.55, p = .001$. However, perceived organizational support was not significantly related to either emotional exhaustion ($r(65) = -0.16, p = .194$) or depersonalization ($r(65) = -0.22, p = .074$).

Emotional security. My third hypothesis was that emotional security would have a negative relationship with executive level burnout. This hypothesis was supported ($r(65) = -0.44, p = .001$). Significant negative relationships were also found between emotional security and emotional exhaustion ($r(65) = -0.41, p = .001$) and negative personal achievement ($r(65) = -0.34, p = .005$). The relationship between emotional security and depersonalization was not significant ($r(65) = -0.24, p = .059$).

Table 1

Coping Strategies and Burnout

	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Negative Personal Achievement
Socio-Emotional Coping	.24	-0.05	-0.29*
Problem Focused Coping	.09	-0.15	-0.46**
Peace of Mind Coping	-0.15	-0.05	-0.07

* = $p < .05$

** = $p < .001$

Note: positive correlations reveal coping behaviors related to increased burnout.

Predicting executive burnout. My fourth hypothesis was that executive coping behaviors would predict executive level burnout, even after controlling for perceived organizational support and emotional security. However, of my three predictors of burnout, coping behaviors was the only one that was not significantly related. A neurotic personality (the opposite of emotional security) was the best predictor of burnout ($r = -0.44$), followed by perceived organizational support ($r = -0.37$), followed by coping behaviors ($r = -0.13$). I regressed emotional security, perceived organizational support, and coping behaviors onto executive burnout. Emotional security and perceived organizational support predicted burnout ($R^2 = .29$, equivalent to a correlation of .54). However, executive coping behaviors did not add any additional explanatory power. Thus, my fourth hypothesis was not supported.

Executive burnout and organizational performance. My fifth hypothesis was that executive level burnout would have a negative relationship with organizational performance. To remind the reader, credit unions with smaller earnings ratios, larger productivity ratios, and larger market share growth were considered to be more effective financially. Thus, I expected executive burnout to have a positive correlation with a credit union's earnings ratio and a negative correlation with its productivity ratio market share growth. Executive burnout was not significantly correlated with any of the three measures of organizational performance: earnings ratio, productivity ratio, or market share growth

Research Questions

Burnout and decision-making style. In addition to my five main hypotheses, I also had three research questions. The first question was which decision-making styles are

most related to burnout? A reminder to the reader, I measured two decision-making styles: informational decision-making and avoidant decision-making. Pearson correlations revealed that informational decision-making was not significantly related to burnout ($r(65) = -0.09, p = .498$), but avoidant decision-making style was ($r(65) = -0.34, p = .005$). Table 2 depicts the relationships between each decision-making style and the three components of burnout. Executives who used more informational decision-making enjoyed a greater sense of personal achievement. Executives who used more avoidant decision-making experienced more emotional exhaustion and negative personal achievement.

Decision-making and organizational performance. My second research question was which decision-making style best predicts organizational performance? Informational decision-making was not significantly related to any of the measures of organizational performance, but avoidant decision-making was related to a higher productivity ratio. I would have expected avoidant decision-making to have more of a negative relationship with organizational performance measures. The correlations appear in Table 3.

Burnout, decision-making and organizational performance. My third research question examined whether the relationship between burnout and organizational performance was mediated by one or more of the decision-making styles. Because burnout was not related to the informational decision-making style, and because the informational decision-making style was unrelated to any of the organizational performance measures, I did not need to explore whether informational decision-making was a mediating variable.

Table 2

Burnout and Decision-Making Styles

	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Negative Personal Achievement
Informational Decision-Making	.07	-0.07	-0.28*
Avoidant Decision-Making	.30*	.20	.26*

* = $p < .05$

Note: positive correlations reveal decision-making styles related to increased burnout.

Table 3

Decision-Making Styles and Organizational Performance

	Earnings Ratio	Productivity Ratio	Market Share Growth
Informational Decision-Making	-0.13	.16	-0.16
Avoidant Decision-Making	.00	.29*	-0.05

* = $p < .05$

Note: Lower earnings ratios are good and higher productivity ratios and market share growth are good.

On the other hand, burnout was related to avoidant decision-making ($r(65) = -0.34$) and avoidant decision-making was related to productivity ratio ($r(65) = .29$). However, burnout was unrelated to productivity ratio ($r(65) = .04$). Thus, there was not a relationship for avoidant decision-making to mediate.

Overview

Figure 2 provides an overview of some of the findings. Executive burnout is lower when the executive is emotionally secure to begin with, when he or she gets organizational support from his or her board and senior management team, and when he or she engages in problem-solving coping behaviors (although this relationship was not statistically significant). When executives are more burned out, they are more likely to avoid making decisions. While burnout and decision-making styles had no meaningful relationships with the three organizational performance measures, I still believe that executive burnout and avoidant decision-making are two things an organization would not want to have to deal with.

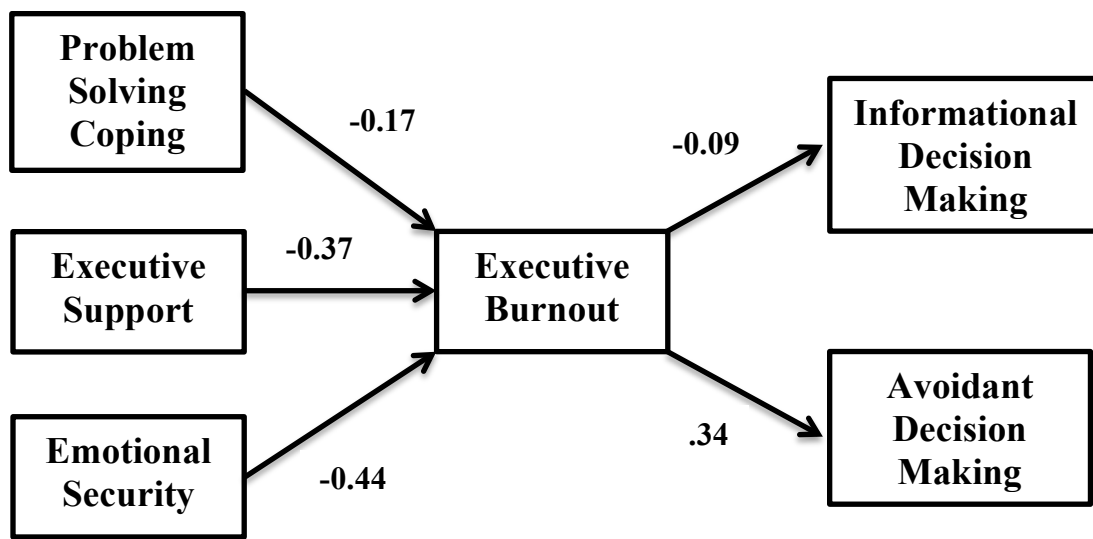


Figure 2. Results for the Executive Burnout Model

Chapter 4

Discussion

Kaiser, Hogan, and Craig (2008, p. 104) opined that “although organizational effectiveness depends on more than leadership, the data clearly show that leaders have a substantial influence on it.” Subsequently, it is in organizations’ best interest to have their top executives functioning at top capacity. However, organizational leaders are constantly under stress due to their busy schedules and the intense demands placed on them. One of the questions this study sought to answer was whether CEO burnout is negatively related to organizational performance, and if it is, might this be due to burned out CEOs making less effective decisions? This study also sought to identify key predictors of CEO burnout. It was my hope to produce knowledge that would help top executives to manage stress more effectively so that their decision making and their organization’s performance might improve.

Antecedents of Executive Burnout

In my first hypothesis, I predicted that executive coping strategies would have a negative relationship with executive level burnout. Although coping strategies did have a negative relationship with executive burnout, it was not to a significant degree. This study identified three categories of CEO coping strategies: socio-emotional, peace of mind, and problem-focused. Socio-emotional involves seeking emotional support from others. Peace of mind includes coping by spirituality. Lastly, problem-focused coping is choosing to focus on the problem causing the stressful situation. While the problem-focused strategy had the strongest relationship with lower burnout, none of the relationships were significant. To make sense of this non-significant finding, I noticed

that on the problem-focused behaviors, the CEOs averaged a 3.61 on a four-point scale where four equals “I do this a lot.” In other words, the CEOs are actively addressing the problems that cause stress in their jobs. In addition, the average burnout rate for the participants in this study is 2.47 on a seven-point scale where a two equals “disagree” to a statement about burnout. This indicates that the burnout rate is very low among the participants. Thus, most of the CEOs are engaged in problem-solving coping behaviors and are not very stressed at work. Therefore, the non-significant correlations between the problem-solving coping strategy and burnout could be caused range restriction.

Research conducted by Brown, Westbrook, and Challagalla (2005) found that problem-focused coping helped performance and deemed it a highly effective coping tactic in the workplace. According to the results of this study, problem-focused was a slightly more effective coping strategy than the other two strategies. Also, problem-focused coping rated a 3.61 on a four-point scale, while peace of mind coping (2.68) and socio-emotional coping (2.11) were used less often by the CEOs. Thus, they seem to have some insight into which coping strategies work best. Or perhaps CEOs are more likely to have problem-solving dispositions. John et al. (2008) found that conscientiousness in CEOs had a negative correlation to work stress experiences. Perhaps this is due to conscientious executives being able to control destructive impulses through planning and organizing. Perhaps the CEOs who are more likely to handle stress in an effective manner are those with more positive character traits such as conscientiousness.

Emotional focused coping, dealing with stress using emotions and by avoiding direct confrontation to the stressor, is as a maladaptive tactic in effectively dealing with stress. Conversely, emotional focused coping is linked to the personality trait neuroticism

or low emotional security and with avoidant style decision-making. Wright (2007) states in previous research that engaging in proactive strategies is a proven way to reduce managerial stress and preserves organizational effectiveness (Gramstad, Gjestad, & Haver, 2013).

One possible reason for the range restriction in CEO burnout might be explained by previous research (Szalavitz, 2012) which found that individuals holding leadership positions experience less stress than those in lower positions, especially high-ranking leaders. Szalavitz found that these high-ranking leaders tend to have a greater sense of control over their lives, thus creating less occupational stress. In addition, these executives tend to have a financial “safety net” to fall into if they find themselves to be trouble at work. Szalavitz states, “Simply thinking that you have control, whether or not you actually do, changes the way the brain responds to stress and makes it less toxic,” (p. 324).

In my second hypothesis, I predicted that perceived organizational support would have a negative relationship with executive level burnout. This hypothesis was supported. However, this negative relationship was driven primarily with the burnout factor of negative personal achievement, rather than emotional exhaustion or depersonalization. The findings in this study suggest that it is important for CEOs to feel supported by their board members and their senior management teams. As Kaiser, Hogan, and Craig (2008) noted, organizational effectiveness depends on more than leadership. CEOs cannot do it all themselves, they need help and support, and when they do not get it, it makes it difficult for them to achieve their desired outcomes. Thus, it is not surprising that a lack of support was most strongly related to negative personal achievement. Hamwi,

Rutherford, and Boles (2011) found that perceived organizational support is linked to greater organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors, and employee turnover. Jain, Giga, and Cooper (2013) found that when employees feel that they are not provided adequate resources to do their jobs, they can feel exhausted trying to do more with less. While CEOs might have more resources at their disposal than the typical employee, support still remains critical for emotional well being. Employees who perceive they have organizational support typically feel the need to reciprocate by committing to the organization (Jain, Giga, & Cooper, 2013).

My third hypothesis predicted that emotional security would have a negative relationship with executive level burnout. This hypothesis was supported. Significant negative relationships were found between emotional security and two of the three components of burnout: emotional exhaustion and negative personal achievement. There was no significant relationship between emotional security and depersonalization. Emotional security has an interesting role in this research as it is the only dispositional trait that was included. The results indicated that having strong emotional security is an important aspect in being successful executive. Research supports this idea. Firms with neurotic (low emotional stability) CEOs were more likely to have poor performing organizations, undermining the effectiveness of their organizations, which leads to reckless results (Motamedi, 2006). Gramstad, Gjestad, and Haver (2013) showed that high scores in neuroticism led to more job stress and an increase risk of developing stress reaction in junior physicians. Conversely, those with high levels of extroversion actually prevented symptoms of anxiety and depression over time. Anitei, Stoica, Samsonescu (2013) also found that emotional stability had a significant negative relationship with the

physical health problems experienced by employees.

The research in this study points towards the idea that it is not so much what the executive does not alleviate stress, but more about who the executive is. Conscientious CEOs are more likely to be proactive in stress management and emotionally stable CEOs usually experience less stress than those who are neurotic. These results hint that effective CEO stress management might be more of a selection issue. Maybe organizations should spend more time selecting an applicant with high conscientiousness and emotional stability in order to reduce stress related risks than on coping strategies.

However, when I regressed emotional security, perceived organizational support, and coping behaviors onto executive burnout as part of my fourth hypothesis, I found that emotional security and perceived organizational support together predicted burnout ($R^2=.29$, equivalent to a correlation of .54) better than either of these two variables alone. Thus, the person and the environment combine to impact CEO burnout. Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, and Sowa (1986) mention that perceived organizational support benefits both the organization and employees significantly by increasing affective commitment as well as the belief that an increased effort in job performance will be rewarded. Organizations must take into consideration both the personality traits of upper level managers and the need to offer them support as they continue to lead the organization.

Consequences of Burnout

Organizational performance. My fifth hypothesis predicted that CEO burnout would have a negative relationship with organizational performance. CEO burnout was not significantly correlated with any of the three measures of organizational performance:

earnings ratio, productivity ratio, or market share growth. One explanation for these non-findings can be that although CEOs have a great influence over the organization, they are not the only person making important decisions within the company. Many times upper level managers must go through their Board of Directors in order to have an idea actually implemented within the organization. Many CEOs have a great supporting staff that allows for the organization to remain competitive despite having a neurotic executive. There are many factors that can determine how an organization can perform well and have a low emotionally secure CEO. Conversely, a CEO with high emotional stability, positive coping strategies, and informational decision making style can run a low performing organization. An organization runs on more than decisions of the CEO. Organizational culture may have a hand at how an organization performs. Employees are following through with decisions made about policies and procedures in the organization, rarely do employees have contact with their executives especially in day-to-day activities. The culture that is established in the organization is what motivates or does not motivate employees to work productively in order to align with the organization's goals. Organizational culture along with many other factors can help explain why this hypothesis was not supported. I know that I quoted Kaiser, Hogan, and Craig (2008) at the beginning of the Discussion section, "although organizational effectiveness depends on more than leadership, the data clearly show that leaders have a substantial influence on it" (p. 104). However, there are researchers who disagree. In a study of 167 large corporations over 20 years, Lieberman and O'Connor (1972) found that "much of the variance in three performance variables - sales, earnings and profit margins - can be explained by factors other than leadership variance. Leadership has a smaller effect than

either industry or company” (p. 129). Regardless of how important leader behaviors are, it is difficult to empirically link leader behaviors with organizational performance.

Decision-making styles. My first research question explored which decision-making style are most related to burnout. The study measured two decision-making styles: informational decision-making and avoidant decision-making. The results indicated that information decision making (comprehensive information search, explicit inventory of alternatives, and logical evaluation of options) was not significantly related to burnout. However, it was significantly negatively related to one aspect of burnout, negative personal achievements. This makes sense, the CEOs who gathered less data before making decisions felt less satisfaction with their achievements. In their book, *Hard Facts, Dangerous Half-Truths, and Total Nonsense: Profiting from Evidence-Based Management*, Pfeffer and Sutton (2005) claim that many companies and their leaders show little interest in subjecting their business practices and decisions to the same scientific rigor they would use for technical issues.

Avoidant decision-making was significantly positively related to burnout, especially negative personal achievements and emotional exhaustion. The CEOs who use an avoidant decision making style tend to become emotionally exhausted and experience negative personal achievement. Previous studies show that avoidant style decision-making leading to poorer performance and high stress levels (Allwood & Salo, 2012). Research posits that even though individuals differ in their preferred decision making style, their preference remains stable over time. Results in this hypothesis can shed light on CEO' who prefer an avoidant decision-making style as opposed to an informational style. Those who engage in avoidant style may be the executives who have a low

emotional security and low perceived organizational support. These types of CEOs would have high burnout rate and low self-confidence and not perceive having the support of others, resulting in the inability to have adequate resources to make an informative decision. In doing so, these executives may avoid the decision making process and, potentially, decrease the effectiveness of the organization.

My second research questions involved the relationships between the two decision-making styles and the three measures of organizational performance. Informational decision-making was not significantly related to any of the organizational performance measures. Avoidant decision-making was related to a higher productivity ratio. Interestingly, it was expected that this decision-making style would have more of a negative relationship with organizational performance. These results contradict research conducted by Gangster (2005) which suggested that a lack of effective decision-making tends to decrease the performance carried out by managers and negatively influences the organization as a whole. Future research should investigate the role avoidant decision-making has on the productivity ratio of organizations.

Limitations

One important limitation of this study was the small sample size. One thousand surveys were sent out, but only 69 of the potential participants responded, a response rate of 6.9%. This low of a response rate does not allow for the results of this study to effectively generalize to the CEOs in the credit union industry. If this study were replicated, it would seem important to find ways to improve upon the participant response rate.

Another limitation derives from the fact that only credit union CEOs were used in this study. This implies that the findings in this study may not be representative of CEOs in other industries. Credit unions are non-profit organizations, which may help explain why these results show that CEO's are less stressed than expected. Perhaps the for profit industries have CEO's experiencing more stress due to the emphasis on competitive drive. In these organizations the drive stems from making strategic decisions on ways to stay ahead of the competition as well as the emerging trend of innovative thinking. This may also explain why CEO burnout and decision-making styles failed to relate to organizational performance.

In addition to the above threats to external validity, threats to internal validity existed as well. The researcher was unable to make casual inferences in regards to the results of this study. This was due to the correlational nature of survey research. Also, the variables measured in this study were obtained by self-reporting which is a source of mono method bias (using a single method of measurement). Self-reporting methods may have detrimental influences on the validity of a study in several ways. One, the participant may be less honest when trying to answer questions that might cast them unfavorably. Two, even when a participant is being honest, sometimes they lack the introspective ability to provide accurate responses. Some individuals may view themselves differently than how others view them. Therefore, self-report measures may be incorrect even through their best efforts to answer accurately. Three, participants may vary regarding their understanding and interpretation of questions provided in the survey. This could be an issue when measuring abstract concepts such as personality. People typically do not measure how often they feel certain emotions, which can be misleading

and may result in faulty responses. Finally, using only one method may artificially enhance some of the correlations found because the same person is providing data for predictors and criteria.

The weak reliability scores for many of the variables is an important limitation of this study. Many of the measures did not meet the cutoff level of reliability ($\alpha = .70$). Although the reliability measures were not far from the cutoff score, it remains an important limitation of the study.

Finally, the small sample size made it difficult to uncover anything but large to moderate effect sizes. Future research should administer the surveys in a way that increases the response rate in order to have a more favorable sample size. Increasing the sample size will better represent the credit union industry and make it easier to generalize results. Utilizing a more 360 degree feedback survey by administering not only to CEOs in a self-report scale, but to his/her subordinates and Board of Directors may produce more accurate results leading to more practical implications. Lastly, future studies should use survey questions that meet the reliability cut off score of ($\alpha = .70$) as this can assist in increasing the reliability of the study and producing more accurate results.

Practical Implications

Organizations should always look for ways to improve the occupational wellbeing of their employees. Unfortunately, executive level managers are continuously dealing with high job demands and stress-induced tasks such as strategic planning to meet the companies' goals in order to stay in competition with competitors (Wright, 2007). Research is important in order for organizations to select the executive whose

dispositional traits align with the demand of the organization's goals and with the contextual factors of the organizational culture.

The results in this study point to the importance of dispositional traits in executive level managers. The personality of the executive speaks more to ways they handle stress than their behaviors reacting to the stress. Essentially, conscientious CEOs are known to be organized and prioritize information based on what is available. These types of managers are able to channel anxiety around high job demands and stress by engaging in problem-focused coping and dealing with the problem in order to eliminate the stress that is involved with it. Conscientious executives have a lower burnout rate and tend to prefer an informational decision-making style (Abetecola et al., 2011). On the other hand, executives low in emotional security are more susceptible to experiencing stress related to job demands and often react by avoiding decision-making altogether. This style of decision-making can have a negative impact on the organization. Organizations would be well advised to utilize personality assessments in order to assess executive candidates' disposition. Selecting a candidate that is emotionally secure can increase the chance the individual will be more resilient to job stressors, effectively handle negative contextual factors (environment), and make use of better decision-making processes for the organization (Kemp, 2014).

Unfortunately, most companies do not perform psychological assessments of their executive candidates. Kaiser, Hogan, and Craig (2008) wrote:

People outside the academic community seem not to be overly impressed with what psychologists know about leadership (R. Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan,

1994). For example, in an article concerning the coming war for talent, *The Economist* magazine noted that even if organizations are able to recruit talented people, they will not know how to lead them because “human resources as a discipline has not achieved anything like the level of sophistication of, say, finance” (p. 96).

While personality assessments may be the most important aspect in selecting a resilient CEO, organizations should not forget the importance of contextual factors. Employers must understand the need to cultivate an environment that emphasizes support and provides adequate resources. The results in this study highlight how having organizational support can positively influence the CEO in an organization. Executive level job seekers should investigate the culture of the organization and assess whether the position provides support and adequate resources throughout.

Coping strategies are important for employers to emphasize in their organization as they allow employees to reduce the stress of their jobs (Brown, Westbrook, & Challagalla, 2005). Although the results of this study were not significant, this has significance in the larger picture. Participants in the study rated a high occurrence of problem-solving coping and a low burnout rate, suggesting that these executives are engaging in coping behaviors and are able to reduce their stress levels. It is important for CEOs to continue this trend because research shows to be effective.

Finally, avoidant decision-making results in increased burnout (Scott & Bruce, 1995). Boards and senior management teams, those responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of CEOs, should keep an eye on their CEO and his/her use of avoidant decision-making as a behavioral alarm. When they find evidence of frequent avoidant

decision-making, they should communicate with their CEO, provide support, and encourage positive coping strategies in order to reduce the stress experienced by him/her.

In conclusion, this study proposed that CEO level stress and burnout is affected by dispositional factors, perceived organizational support, and coping strategies, in turn leading to either effective or ineffective decision-making styles that ultimately influence the performance of organizations. The results of the study partially supported my model and provided interesting insights regarding the relationships between the variables. These findings suggests that I/O psychologists and human resources managers can play a critical role in selecting the right candidate by emphasizing personality assessment and creating a supportive organizational culture to increase occupational wellbeing.

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Appendix A
Coping Behaviors

Coping Behaviors

Instructions: Please indicate how often you engage in the following behaviors to help you cope with the stress of your job by checking one of the numbers between **1** (I usually do not do this at all) and **4** (I usually do this a lot).

	I usually do not do this at all	I usually do this a little bit	I usually do this a medium amount	I usually do this a lot
1. I exercise.	1	2	3	4
2. I consult with an executive coach.	1	2	3	4
3. I meditate or pray.	1	2	3	4
4. I express myself creatively via dance, music, art, drama, poetry or other art forms.	1	2	3	4
5. I concentrate my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.	1	2	3	4
6. I take action to try and make the situation better.	1	2	3	4
7. I try to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.	1	2	3	4
8. I get help and advice from others.	1	2	3	4
9. I express my negative feelings.	1	2	3	4
10. I think hard about what steps to take.	1	2	3	4
11. I look for something good in what is happening.	1	2	3	4
12. I blame myself for things that happened.	1	2	3	4
13. I get comfort from someone.	1	2	3	4

14. What are other coping skills you utilize that are not listed on this survey?

Appendix B

Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived Organizational Support

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by checking one of the numbers between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I have the trust of my board members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My board members give me helpful feedback about my performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I can delegate important tasks to my senior management team and know they will be handled well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I can depend on my senior management team when things get tough.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C
Emotional Stability

Emotional Stability

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by checking one of the numbers between **1** (strongly disagree) and **7** (strongly agree).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I remain calm in tense situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I am relaxed and handle stress well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I get nervous easily.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I am emotionally stable and not easily upset.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I am depressed, blue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I worry a lot.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I can be tense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix D

Burnout

Burnout

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by checking one of the numbers between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel emotionally drained from my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I feel used up at the end of the week.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Working with people all day is really a strain for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Working with people puts too much stress on me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I feel like I am at the end of my rope.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I feel frustrated by work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I feel I treat some colleagues and supervisors as if there were impersonal objects.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I worry that work is hardening me emotionally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I don't really care what happens to some colleagues and supervisors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I feel colleagues and supervisors blame me for some of their problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I deal very effectively with the problems of my colleagues and supervisors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I feel I am positively influencing other people's lives through my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my colleagues and supervisors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I have accomplished many worthwhile things at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I feel exhilarated after working close with my colleagues and supervisors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix E
Executive Decision Making

Executive Decision Making

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by checking one of the numbers between **1** (strongly disagree) and **7** (strongly agree).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I rarely make important decisions without consulting on other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I use the advice of other people in making my important decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I double-check my information to be sure I have the right facts before making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I put off making decisions because thinking about them makes me uneasy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I make decisions in a logical and systematic way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. When making decisions, I rely on my instincts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I often need the assistance of other people when making important decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I often put off making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I avoid making important decisions until the pressure is on.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. If I have the support of others, it is easier for me to make important decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix F
Demographic Information

Demographic Information

Instructions: Check the appropriate response.

Age:

Sex: Male Female

Marital Status: Married Not married

Number of Children: 0 1 2 3 or more

Name of Credit Union:

Appendix G
IRB Approval Letter

IRB Approval Letter

**EMPORIA STATE
UNIVERSITY**
 ■ GRADUATE SCHOOL AND
 DISTANCE EDUCATION

Research and Grants Center
 Campus Box 4003
 1 Kellogg Circle
 Emporia, Kansas 66801-5415
 820-341-5351
 820-341-5909 fax
www.emporia.edu/research

August 25, 2015

Alyssa Castillo
 Psychology
 2101 SW Potomac, Apt. 7
 Topeka, KS 66611

Dear Ms. Castillo:

Your application for approval to use human subjects has been reviewed. I am pleased to inform you that your application was approved and you may begin your research as outlined in your application materials. Please reference the protocol number below when corresponding about this research study.

Title:	The Relationship of Job Stress on Executives Decision Making, Coping Strategies, and Organizational Performance
Protocol ID Number:	16002
Type of Review:	Expedited
Time Period:	August 12, 2015 to May 31, 2016

If it is necessary to conduct research with subjects past this expiration date, it will be necessary to submit a request for a time extension. If the time period is longer than one year, you must submit an annual update. If there are any modifications to the original approved protocol, such as changes in survey instruments, changes in procedures, or changes to possible risks to subjects, you must submit a request for approval for modifications. The above requests should be submitted on the form Request for Time Extension, Annual Update, or Modification to Research Protocol. This form is available at www.emporia.edu/research/irb.html.

Requests for extensions should be submitted at least 30 days before the expiration date. Annual updates should be submitted within 30 days after each 12-month period. Modifications should be submitted as soon as it becomes evident that changes have occurred or will need to be made.

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I wish you success with your research project. If I can help you in any way, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Dr. Michael Butler
 Chair, Institutional Review Board

pf

cc: George Yancey

Appendix H

Cover Letter

Cover Letter

Dear President XXX,

I am a graduate student conducting research on executive stress. By completing this survey, you will not only be helping me complete my masters thesis, you will also help shed light on how executives cope with the stress of their jobs. I will be happy to share my results with you.

This survey will take about 15 minutes. All data will be stored in a password protected electronic format to protect your confidentiality. The results of the study will be used for scholarly purposes only. Participants of the survey will have the opportunity to enter a drawing for a **\$100 gift card to Amazon**. There will be a 1/100 chance of winning the Amazon gift card. **After the survey, if you wish to receive an electronic copy of the results and/or enter the drawing for a \$100 gift card from Amazon then please include your first name only and email address. This information will not be linked to your survey responses.**

By clicking on the NEXT button, you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in this research. You are free to withdrawal consent and to discontinue participation in the project or activity at any time without any penalty. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at acastill@g.emporiam.edu.

NEXT

I, Alyssa Castillo, hereby submit this thesis to Emporia State University as partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree. I agree that the Library of the University may make it available for use in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I further agree that quoting, photocopying, or other reproduction of this document is allowed for private study, scholarship (including teaching) and research purposes of a nonprofit nature. No copying, which involves potential financial gain, will be allowed without written permission of the author.



Signature of Author

04/1/16

Date

The Relationship of Job Stress on Executive Coping
Strategies, Decision Making, and Organizational Performance
Title of Thesis

Signature of Graduate Office Staff Member

Date Received