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Academic librarian burnout: A survey using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI)

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Abstract

In the Spring of 2018 the authors administered the highly validated and reliable Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) work-related sub-scale to 1628 academic librarians employed within the United States. Academic librarians reported a total work-related burnout score of 49.6. Overall, female participants who were 35-44 years of age reported the highest levels of work-related burnout with males and older individuals reporting the lowest levels of work-related burnout. This study also revealed some interesting information about non-binary/third-gender librarians that suggests further research is warranted.

Keywords: academic librarian, copenhagen burnout inventory, burnout, gender differences, generational differences, library administration

Word Count: 6,911

Introduction

Burnout is most commonly defined as “a state of mental exhaustion resulting from chronic stress in the working situation” (Brenninkmeijer & Van Yperen, 2003, p. 116). The adverse effects of this condition are linked to mental and physical disorders of the individual, and economic costs to an organization by way of reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, and turnover. A review of the literature indicates that burnout in the library profession has typically been measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), with small, insignificant response rates. Although considered the “seminal inventory for evaluating a person’s level of burnout” (Nardine, 2019, p. 508), the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) has come under criticism. In addition to not being in the public domain, and being considered “very American,” i.e. not cross-cultural (Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, & Christensen, 2005, p. 195), the MBI measures burnout as a multi-dimensional score, rather than utilizing a simpler, unidimensional score (Enzmann, Schaufeli, Janssen, & Rozeman, 1998). In order to assess the prevalence of work-related burnout among academic librarians, the authors of this study administered a different instrument-- the free, highly reliable, and validated Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) -- to a cross-section of practicing academic librarians in June of 2018. The large sample size (n=1628), provides a precise, baseline total work-related burnout score (TWRBS), in addition to statistically significant evidence of generational and gender differences among academic librarians surveyed. The research design will allow for longitudinal investigation of this population, to discover trends, and to make a significant contribution to the library literature on the topic of burnout. Future research can explore causation, adverse effects, and effective interventions for the prevention of librarian burnout. In addition, this study will allow comparisons between baseline scores of librarians and the scores of other professions that have

been measured using the CBI. Since this study did not administer the Personal Burnout and Client-related Burnout sections of the CBI, it is the authors' hope that future research will include these sections.

Literature search

The term burnout first appeared in the United States around 1960-1970 as a “colloquial term [used] by professionals such as poverty lawyers, social workers, psychiatrists, teachers, probation officers, and hospice counselors” (Schaufeli, 2003, p. 2). Since its first appearance in the popular press fifty years ago, “the health sciences produced enough evidence to make burnout an important object of scientific enquiry” (Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017, p.10). However, without an official medical diagnosis, sufferers of burnout often felt shame, guilt, or worse-- that their physical symptoms were a result of an individual failure to cope with workplace stressors. This changed in May 2018, when burnout was officially recognized as a psychiatric medical diagnosis by the World Health Organization. This meant that burnout was recognized, not as a personal weakness or individual failing, but rather, as an evidence-based diagnosis that deserved validation, intervention, and further study (Fraga, 2019).

Burnout first made its way into the scientific literature in 1974, when psychiatrist Herbert Freudenberger identified it as a mental disorder suffered by those workers who were “the dedicated and the committed” (Freudenberger, 1974, p. 161). Freudenberger’s “clinical approach” to burnout differed from the “scientific approach” to burnout being developed at about the same time by social psychologist Christine Maslach and her team, who identified burnout as “more of a function of the situation than the person” (Maslach, 2003, p.191). In the early 1980’s Maslach and her associates devoted themselves to creating an easy to administer, self-reporting, psychometric instrument to measure burnout. Following the 1981 publication of the Maslach

Burnout Inventory (MBI), empirical research on the topic exploded (Schaufeli, 2003, p. 2). In addition to being easy to administer, the MBI measures exhaustion, cynicism, and sense of inefficiency as three dimensions of burnout. Upon publication it became the gold standard for burnout research in the scholarly literature (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Although other valid and reliable tools were developed, including the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, the Stanford Professional Fulfillment Index, and the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), a review of the literature shows that the MBI continues to remain a highly popular measure. For a comprehensive overview of the most commonly used burnout measures, the authors of this study refer you to a discussion paper published by the National Academy of Medicine (Dyrbe, Meyers, Ripp, Dalal, Bird, & Sen., 2018).

During the 1960's and 1970's, when other academic disciplines were in the early stages of developing a canon of burnout research, studies "about stress in librarianship [were] conspicuous by [their] absence" (Fisher, 1990, p. 216). Beginning in the 1980's, the topic of burnout began to appear with increasing frequency in the academic library literature (Blazek & Parrish, 1992). However, a review of this literature proves it was not subject to the scrutiny of peer review in that it was speculative, anecdotal, phenomenological, and editorial. The earliest research into the statistical prevalence of burnout in the library profession can be found in Smith and Nelson's 1983 Survey (Smith & Nelson, 1983). In this study, 262 academic librarians were surveyed using the "Forbes Burnout Survey" (Forbes, 1979). Using this self-administered survey composed of 30 questions, Smith and Nelson concluded that "academic librarians do not seem to be especially prone to burnout" (Smith & Nelson, 1983, p. 249). The authors contended that the "low...burnout score suggest[s] academic reference librarians enjoy the stimulation of the job" (Smith & Nelson, 1983, p. 247), and that librarians who experience burnout have "not

learned to relax” (Smith & Nelson, 1983, p. 249). These conclusions proved contrived and absurd, when only a year later a survey of 92 academic librarians conducted at a reference services conference using the Staff Burnout Scale for Health Professionals indicated that 14% of all respondents were completely burned out, and 28% of respondents were well on their way to burnout (Haack, 1984). As the 80’s progressed, so did the evidence of ever-increasing rates of academic librarian burnout. In 1987, 39.3% of 112 bibliographic instruction librarians indicated burnout was a problem in their current position (Patterson & Howell, 1990).

The discussion of burnout in the library literature continued through the 1990’s. Much of this research surrounded the rapid changes in technology that were drastically altering the ecology of librarianship and levels of job satisfaction. In 1992, John Kupersmith penned a wide-ranging review of “technostress” (Kupersmith, 1992, p. 8), basing his research on the work of Craig Brod, who stated that “technoanxiety most commonly afflicts those who feel pressured—by employer, peers, or the general culture—to accept and use computers” (Brod, 1984, p.16). The great bulk of the literature published during the decade of the 1990’s does not systematically seek to measure the prevalence of librarian burnout, rather, the researchers were involved in nothing but “idle speculation” (Fisher, 1990, p. 234). Fisher called for librarians to produce quality research, and that “we must be brave, and be prepared to accept the findings of sound empirical analysis” (Fisher, p. 234). Mary Ann Affleck heeded Fisher’s admonition, and in 1996 she surveyed bibliographic librarians using the MBI and published her results. The Affleck study reported that more than half (53%) of the 150 bibliographic instruction librarians surveyed reported high rates of one dimension of burnout (Affleck, 1996, p. 178).

In the 2000’s, two evolutionary shifts can be perceived in the discussion of burnout in the library literature. The first shift acknowledged that librarians, like nurses, social workers, and

others in the helping professions, were experiencing high levels of burnout (Sheesley, 2001). The second involved the acknowledgement that librarianship, contrary to popular opinion, was a stressful profession (Petek, 2018). This meant that statistical tools like the MBI could and should be used to measure librarian burnout. In 2002, Bernice Ray's dissertation "An Assessment of Burnout in Academic Librarians in America Using the MBI" proved the "transferability of the MBI to academic librarianship and to college and university libraries" (Ray, 2002, p. 69).

This shift in attitude can be summarized in the following two quotes. In 1983, Smith and Nelson smugly contended that "academic reference librarians do not seem to be especially prone to burn out" (Smith & Nelson, 1983, p. 249). In 2005, 32 years later, Tim and Zahra Baird boldly asserted "the very nature of library work predisposes us to burnout (Baird & Baird, 2005, p. 1). The trend search chart below illustrates the growing interest, by decade, in scholarly publications containing the terms (librar* AND burnout) as keywords.

[Chart 1 here]

Despite the fact that librarians were now acknowledged as 1) stressed-out service workers; 2) a population worthy to be studied using validated tools such as the MBI; and 3) were very interested in the topic of burnout, a review of the literature proves that very little survey research was done in the 2000's. When the topic was researched, the preferred measurement continued to be the MBI, but the population samples were small and statistically insignificant. In 2013, Harwell measured burnout using the MBI and the Utrecht Inventory and found that of the 67 librarians surveyed, 1 in 7 was burned out, and that "libraries have a significant problem" (Harwell, 2013). The most recent survey was published by Nardine in 2019 (n=176). She utilized the MBI and Areas of Work-life Survey. Her findings from this small sample were that

1) senior management ranked lowest in reported burnout, and 2) that the professional values of librarianship appear to be at odds with the corporate work models being adopted in academia (Nardine, 2019).

As mentioned earlier, other valid and reliable instruments were developed to measure burnout, among them the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, and Utrecht Burnout Scale, but the MBI managed to retain its status as a highly validated instrument in burnout research (Dyrbe et al., 2018). That said, social science researchers began to question some of the underpinnings of the MBI. One of the main criticisms was the MBI's use of three dimensions, i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment, as opposed to one dimension. According to Brenninkmeijer and Van Yperen, a unidimensional measurement of burnout "improves the understandability and clarifies the results, especially when complex research questions...are studied" (Brenninkmeijer & Van Yperen, 2003, p. 199). In addition, the MBI is not available in the public domain. As of the publication of this article, the cost to download a license is \$125.00 per 50 administrations, and the manual that includes details on administration, scoring, and interpretation costs an additional \$50.00, thus proving cost prohibitive to social science researchers. Perhaps the greatest weakness of the MBI was perceived in its American bias— "the translation of questionnaires from one culture (usually the US) to another is a complicated issue" (Kristensen et al., 2005, p. 195). In response to these criticisms, Kristensen released the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory in 2005.

While the MBI has remained popular in social science research, the CBI has become the measure of choice for healthcare and the helping professions. Since the CBI does not presuppose an American bias, (Kristensen, et al., 2005) usage of the CBI has allowed burnout research to expand on a global scale. In addition to being free, brief, global, psychometrically strong, and

applicable to all professions (Dyrbe et al., 2018), a review of the literature found that no other researchers had heretofore used this instrument to measure librarian burnout. For these reasons, the authors selected the CBI for this study.

The CBI measures exhaustion and fatigue on three subscales: personal burnout, work-related burnout, and client-related burnout. For the purposes of this study, only work-related burnout was studied. Work-related burnout is defined as “the degree of physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion that is perceived by the person at related to his/her work” (Kristensen et al., 2005). The internal consistency for the work-related subscale is 0.88.

Methodology and Instrumentation

In order to assess the prevalence of burnout among practicing academic librarians, the authors administered a cross-sectional, web-based survey to approximately 21 professional email distribution lists in the Spring of 2018. The survey had an estimated reach of 10,260 academic librarians. To take part in the survey, participants had to be librarians with an ALA-accredited master's degree, 18 years of age or older, and employed in an academic library in the United States. A total of 1878 questionnaires were started and 1808 were completed. Some respondents were counted as completed, although the final total (n=1628) only included those that met the full inclusion criteria. The analyses were carried out using SPSS 25 for Macintosh. All statistics for which significance were relevant, the p-value was set at 0.05.

The questionnaire included 5 demographic questions:

1. Do you currently work in an academic library in the United States of America?
2. Do you have a Master's in Library Science, or other equivalent ALA-accredited degree?
3. What is your age?

4. How many years have you spent in the profession?
5. Select the gender identity that best describes you.

[Table 1 here]

The survey skewed towards female librarians (81.6%) with 10 or more years of experience. These results were consistent with 2017 American Library Association (ALA) survey results about their membership. For further analyses the age groupings were recoded so that both of the youngest groups (18-24 and 25-34) and the oldest groups (65-74 and 75 +) were combined to provide a more even distribution of most of the age groups (average of 22%). Despite this recoding, the 65+ group remained the smallest (5.4%); however, retaining this as an independent group was important to more fully examine the research questions and represent the experience of academic librarians.

Burnout Inventory

The CBI breaks the concept of burnout into 3 components: personal burnout, work-related burnout, and client-related burnout. This questionnaire used only the “work-related burnout” subscale of the CBI.

Work-related burn out Questions:

1. Do you feel worn out at the end of the working day?
2. Are you exhausted in the morning at the thought of another day of work?
3. Do you feel that every working hour is tiring for you?
4. Do you have enough energy for family and friends during leisure time?
5. Is your work emotionally exhausting?
6. Does your work frustrate you?
7. Do you feel burnt out because of your work?

Response Categories:

Questions 1-3: To a very high degree, to a high degree, somewhat, to a low degree, to a very low degree

Questions 4-7: Always, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, Never/almost never.

Scoring Questions 1-3, 5-7:

Always= 100, Often= 75, Sometimes=50, Seldom=25, Never/almost never= 0.

Scoring Question 4:

Always= 0, Often= 25, Sometimes=50, Seldom=75, Never/almost never= 100.

Reliability

The Chronbach's alpha for the 7-item subscale in this study was 0.798 (n = 1808), which was similar to results from two other studies that used the inventory on professional groups, including Kristensen et al. (2005) of 0.87 (n= 1910) and the Sestili et al. (2018) study of .868 (n = 91). This result demonstrated that the subscale had an acceptable measure of reliability.

Burnout Levels by total work-related burnout score (TWRBS)

As with other similar studies that used this scale, the authors calculated a "total work-related burnout score" (TWRBS) by adding together the scores from each of the questions in the work-related burnout subscale. It was necessary to reverse the scoring on question #4, to be consistent with other applications of the CBI.

[Chart 2 here]

[Table 2 here]

As demonstrated in Chart 2 and Table 2, women and non-binary/third gender individuals had the highest average TWRBS. Deeper examinations of the total burnout score by gender also showed some significant results. The results of ANOVA analysis for gender, demonstrate

significant differences in burnout scores between all the librarian groups by gender ($F = 10.340$, $df = 3$, $\text{Sig.} = <.05$). Post Hoc Analyses showed differences between specific groups including: male and female; male and non-binary/third gender individuals; and non-binary/third gender individuals and those who “Prefer Not to Say.” These results should be approached with caution. While estimates vary from the specific 0.4% to a more general $<1\%$, a small proportion of the population identifies as non-binary/third gender individual (4.) The small number of respondents in this survey who self-identified was consistent with what is currently known about the population; however, the typical number of participants needed in a given group to ensure accuracy in an ANOVA is thirty (30). Thus, while a noteworthy finding, the authors recommend approaching these results with both caution and curiosity as they suggest trends worth examining in more detail in further research.

[Chart 3 here]

As demonstrated by Chart 3 and Table 3, those participants aged 35-44 had the highest average TWRBS, 15.8 points higher on average than those in the 65 and older group. Using an ANOVA to look at average differences across groups, researchers found statistically significant differences between all age groups ($F = 11.262$, $df = 4$, $\text{sig.} <.05$). Post-Hoc analyses demonstrated that significant differences existed between the oldest group (65 and older) with all other groups. Those aged 35-44 had the highest average burnout score, followed by 18-34, 45-54, 55-64, and 65 and older, respectively.

[Chart 4 here]

[Table 4 here]

Chart 4 and Table 4 provide an examination of average TWRBS by the number of years in the profession. Using an ANOVA to look at average differences across groups, the authors

found statistically significant differences for years in the profession ($F= 3.541$, $df = 3$, $sig <.05$). Post Hoc analyses demonstrated significant differences between librarians with 11-20 years-experience and those with more than 20 years-experience. Those with 11-20 years of experience in the profession had the highest TWRBS, followed by those with 5-10 years of experience and those with more than 20 years-experience had the lowest score.

Discussion

In this paper, the authors have presented the work-related CBI scores of academic librarians surveyed in June 2018 who were employed in the United States. Through this research, the authors have added to the existing literature that analyzed the prevalence of burnout within the library profession and have built upon that research by analyzing rates of burnout by age, gender, and years in the profession. With a survey $n=1628$ and a non-respondent rate of 0% for individual questions, this study presents a highly reliable and representative overview of work-related burnout. Exclusion of respondents who were not in possession of an ALA-accredited library degree or employed in an academic library, ensures the generalizability of these results to the population of United States academic librarians.

This study's findings have shown that academic librarians are, generally speaking, in a state of burnout. More specifically, these findings tell us that academic librarians have a TWRBS score of 49.6 out of 100, and that demographic factors such as gender, age, and years in the profession are also tied to the prevalence and severity of burnout. These results may encourage library administrators and librarians themselves to enact professional changes to mitigate the effects and prevalence of burnout.

Of considerable interest to the authors was the severity of librarian TWRBS compared to that of other professions. In Kristensen's 2005 study, "The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory: A

new tool for the assessment of burnout,” 15 professions were surveyed for burnout. The average TWRBS was 33. Midwives experienced the highest score at 43.5, with the lowest score being reported by home helpers at 26.4 (Kristensen et al., 2005, p. 201). Kristensen et al. noted, “as a general rule of thumb, differences of 5 points or more are significant” to the individual (Kristensen, 2005, p. 201). Librarian scores are 6.1 points higher on the TWRBS-related burnout scale than the highest number found by Kristensen et al. This indicates that almost 50% of academic librarians are experiencing work-related burnout. Additional studies have found that the top three stressors for librarians are “patrons, workload, and supervisors and management” (Bunge, 1987, p. 112).

In 2017, ALA surveyed its members and determined that 81% of members were female and 19% were male (ALA Demographic Survey, 2017). This survey’s respondents were 81.6% female (1,355), 16.5% male (274), 0.7% non-binary/third gender (12), and 1.1% preferring not to say (19). This data indicates that the survey represents an accurate cross-section of librarians with the exception that non-binary/third gendered individuals are not accounted for within ALA’s demographic data. It is important to note that while non-binary/third gender individuals reported the highest TWRBS, the total respondent pool of 12 makes any conclusions drawn from this data inappropriate for extrapolation to an entire population. Additionally, responses from non-binary/third gender individuals, when subdivided by age or years in the profession are statistically insignificant as some categories only have one respondent. Regarding the age of respondents, the response pool is within one percentage point of ALA’s membership roster for all age categories excepting the 18-34 and 65+ year old categories, where this survey has a representatively higher number of 18-34 year old respondents (3.7% higher) and a representatively lower number of 65+ year old respondents (10.4% lower). This indicates that

the survey response pool reflects current academic librarian demographics and therefore presents an accurate sampling of academic librarian burnout perceptions.

We found varying levels of burnout among demographic subsections of respondents. For example, gender played a large role in TWRBS as shown in Table 2. Men reported a TWRBS of 44.2, women reported a score of 50.7, and non-binary/third gender individuals reported a score of 64. As already noted, scores with more than 5 points difference are significant to the individual. This means that while all academic librarians report high levels of TWRBS, women and non-binary/third gender individuals are experiencing burnout at noticeably higher scores than their male peers. These conclusions are supported by the burnout literature.

In 2010, Purvanova and Muros found that emotional exhaustion—one aspect of burnout—is higher for women than men in female-dominated occupations (Purvanova & Muros, 2010, p. 174). Similarly, in 2011, Innstrand, Langballe, Falkum, and Aasland found that gender differences in exhaustion are present in most occupations (p. 819) and in 2016, Hu et al. found that, when compared with male employees, “female employees were significantly more likely to be in either the middle or upper tertile of burnout” (p. 516). Additionally, Galbraith, Fry, and Garrison (2016) found that faculty status is a predictor of gender-differentiated stress, where “females reported statistically significantly more stress than their male colleagues” (p. 8). These differences may be related to work-life imbalances as well as lack of employment advancement opportunities. For example, Purvanova and Muros (2010) found that “women are significantly more emotionally exhausted than men in the US, where labor policies are most conservative, than in the EU, where labor policies are most progressive” (p. 175). This finding is echoed by Galbraith, Fry, and Garrison (2016), who found that among faculty librarians, “males reported statistically significantly higher work/life balance than females” (p. 77). The significance of

these findings is that multiple studies (Innstrand, Langballe, Falkum, & Aasland, 2011; Hu, Chen, and Cheng, 2016) note that female exhaustion is tied to gender inequalities regarding family expectations. The survey also found that female and third gender/nonbinary individuals are experiencing a work-life imbalance. For example, when asked if they had enough energy for family and friends during leisure time, male respondents reported a burnout score of 30.6, female respondents reported a burnout score of 38.9, and third gender/nonbinary individuals reported a burnout score of 45.8. Once again, female and third gender/nonbinary individuals scored over 5 points higher than their male peers. Beyond considerations of work-life balance, gender-based burnout differences may be tied to work-place inequalities. Ruth Simpson (2004) found that men in female-dominated professions believe their gender gives them career advantages, such as “greater authority,” “preferential treatment,” and “exposure to roles and situations that are challenging and developmental” (Simpson, 2004, pp. 356-363). These issues may explain why female respondents had a TWRBS of 52.9, while male respondents had a score of 46. These differences indicate that gender presentation changes how librarians experience work and are treated while working (Simpson, 2004, p. 357).

Gender is not the sole predictor of academic librarian burnout; age and years in the profession are also predictors. In this study, age and years in the profession are highly correlated, meaning those with many years in the profession are in older age categories and those with fewer years in the profession are in younger age categories. Table 3 shows that the TWRBS is highest among librarians aged 35-44 (51.9), aged 18-34 (50.2), and aged 45-55 (50.1). Librarians aged 65 and older experience the lowest TWRBS (36.2). These rates of burnout are reflected in the literature, where age is found to be a primary predictor of burnout, and gender serves as a secondary factor. For example, Cheng et al. (2013) found higher rates of burnout

among 20-40-year-old Taiwanese employees as opposed to 40-65-year olds (Cheng et al., 2013, p. 217). Echoing these results, Simionato and Simpson (2018) found that, among psychotherapists, “younger age was the most frequently identified risk factor” for stress and burnout, with gender serving as a related variable (p. 1448). In this case, “age and gender differences could also be attributed to the external demands of family life, as young clinicians are more likely to have a young family and females are typically more prone to work-life conflict while managing conflicting responsibilities” (Simionato & Simpson, 2018, p. 1449). The ways that age relates to burnout cannot be simplified to one variable. Cheng et al. (2013) noted that “low workplace justice was found to be the most predominant” contributor to higher rates of burnout among 20-40-year olds (p. 218). Van der Heijden, Brown Mahoney, and Xu (2019) found that burnout among registered Dutch nurses is “determined by developmental opportunities, social support from supervisor and social from colleagues for those under 40, but only by leadership quality and developmental opportunities for those aged 40 and over” (p. 14). These studies indicate that age can act as a powerful predictor of burnout with younger individuals experiencing higher levels of burnout than their older peers. In the case of this study’s findings, while there are age-driven differences in burnout, those differences are not significant (greater than 5 points) with the exception of those in the 65 years and older category. This indicates that a closer examination of the data is necessary, where co-related variables are presented alongside age.

While age often serves as a predictor of burnout, the authors have found that the primary variable in predicting burnout is gender followed by age, so the following discussion will analyze the impacts of gender and age on burnout. As already mentioned, this study failed to collect a sufficient number of responses from non-binary/third gender individuals to subdivide

their responses by another variable, such as age or years in the profession. For this reason, the following discussion will focus on responses from male and female individuals. One overarching trend becomes apparent in Table 4. While there are differences in TWRBSs among academic librarians, if divided by gender, male and female scores across age categories are within five points of one another (with the exception of 65+ individuals). As Kristensen et al. noted, differences of fewer than five points are insignificant to the lived experience (Kristensen et al., 2005, p. 201). This indicates that TWRBS among academic librarians of the same gender is perceived in a uniform manner. The same cannot be said of the experiences of male vs. female academic librarians or of burnout stressors within a single gender.

[Table 5 here]

Among male academic librarians, burnout does seem to be related to youth. Younger male academic librarians experience higher TWRBS than older male academic librarians. However, this difference is minimal, with overall TWRBS scores varying by only a few points. Among individual questions, those that triggered a response of more than 5 points difference between age categories were the following:

- #2. Are you exhausted in the morning at the thought of another day of work?
- #4. Do you have enough energy for family and friends during leisure time?
- #6. Does your work frustrate you?

In response to these questions, male academic librarians in the 18-34 age range fare the worst, with the exception of their response to question # 4 (work-life balance) where younger male librarians actually reported having more energy for their family and friends during leisure time than their older peers. In fact, the work-life balance question was the only category for which 65+ experienced higher scores than their younger counterparts. These findings match those of

Simionato and Simpson (2017) who found a 13:4 relationship in burnout literature between youth and high rates of burnout (p. 1446).

Among female academic librarians, burnout is primarily related to gender. Women in the 35-54 age group reported higher TWRBS than their younger and older peers. In addition, 18-34-year-old women experience higher TWRBS than those 55+. For example, women 35-54 scored lower in response to the work-life balance question (#4) than respondents under 35 and over 65, respectively. This speaks to the findings of other studies, such as Galbraith, Fry, and Garrison's (2016) study, where female librarians had higher work-life imbalances than male librarians (p. 77), and in Graves, Xiong, and Park's 2008 study, which found that female librarians were "significantly more likely than their male colleagues to postpone having children" (p. 209). The fact that these burnout scores remain relatively sustained until female librarians reach 65 indicates that these librarians may be pursuing a delayed childrearing schedule, and that they may also be acting as caregivers for aging parents (Halpern, 2005, p.160). That female work-life balance burnout corresponds to a delayed childrearing schedule indicates that the primary driver of this issue is gender rather than age. This is because the 35-44 age group is, most likely, actively involved in child rearing, and librarians involved in child rearing may feel pulled in too many directions. Coping with many work and familial duties produces a higher level of stress and TWRBS for this age group (Minnotte, Minnotte, & Thompson, 2016, pp. 2380-2381). Here the authors can see, from the varying burnout levels, that female academic librarians are experiencing a gender-driven work-life balance problem while their male counterparts are experiencing an age-driven work-life balance problem.

Future Research Directions

Entfremdung

The results of this survey show that burnout is prevalent across all age-groups and genders. The results reveal that 70% of the academic librarians surveyed, across the spectrum of age and gender, are sometimes, often, or always burned out. In the course of researching, the authors of this study rediscovered a philosophical theory attributed to Karl Marx in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Marx & Engels, 1932). “*Entfremdung*”, or estrangement, can be described as the phenomenon of workers feeling "estranged from their humanity" (Marx & Engels, 1932, p. 65). After giving themselves over, physically, mentally, or spiritually, to their work, the employee eventually becomes emptied, overworked, and alienated. More specifically, the relationships of employees with their co-workers, superiors, and loved ones—as well as the connection employees feel to their own work, creative capacities, and feelings of purpose and autonomy—are all compromised because of the nature of their work environment and structure (Bartlett, 2018). In addition, there is psychological stress on the employee’s mind, which can be caused by either a real or perceived imbalance between resources available and the demands of library stakeholders. Marx and Engels described this feeling as “alienation” from one’s work and products: the more one puts into their work, “the more the worker lacks of himself/herself/themselves” (1932, pp. 29-30).

Library administrators or managers should be cognizant that “stress is common in environments characterized by inadequate resources, loss or anticipated loss of resources, and uncertain role-related expectations” (Bartlett, 2018, p. 2). It therefore follows that updated and detailed job descriptions, professional development opportunities for library employees, and more organizational transparency will go far toward alleviating the symptoms of burnout syndrome. The authors of this study encourage further research into ways to mitigate either developing or existing academic librarian burnout.

The Gender Gap

This survey revealed a statistically significant, higher level of burnout reported by gender. 53% of women surveyed say they often or always feel worn out at the end of the day, compared to 37% of male respondents. Academic librarians are not alone; gender related rates of burnout are reported throughout the literature and across the professions. In addition, the results are consistent with literature that suggests that gender influences how individuals perceive stress (Sinha & Latha, 2018).

Librarianship is currently a female dominated profession. According to the American Library Association 2017 Demographic Study, 81% of librarians identify as female and 19% male (Mars, 2018). Unfortunately, third-gender/non-binary individuals were not represented in the 2017 demographic study. Although more males are entering the profession, according to research conducted for this study, the difference between burnout among the genders is statistically significant, with female and third-gender/non-binary individuals at greater risk of burnout. Library administrators need to acknowledge and look closer at gender inequality in the workplace, and the stressors and risk factors that are taking a greater toll on female and third-gender/non-binary librarians. Although these individuals represent a significantly smaller subset of the survey respondents, their rate of burnout is statistically and alarmingly high. The authors of this study also recommend future research into the circumstances in which third-gender/non-binary librarians are experiencing burnout in the workplace.

Work-Life Balance

The results indicate that 34% of survey respondents in the 35-44 age group often or always feel exhausted at the start of another day of work. This is, most likely, the age group who are actively involved in child rearing. Academic librarians involved in child rearing may feel pulled

in too many directions and experience high levels of stress coping with their many work and familial duties (McCutcheon & Morrison, 2016). This potential child rearing cohort was followed by respondents in the 55-64 age group. Of this group, 29% reported being often or always exhausted at the start of another day of work. This older group, which has a greater degree of health problems and are a greater risk for disease symptoms, have been in the profession the longest, and represent a segment of caregivers for aged parents. The results replicate those from the U.S. National Study of the Changing Workforce, that found that “employees who most needed flexible time policies, [are those with children] under 18 years of age...and caring for a person over 65 years of age” (Halpern, 2005, p. 163).

Library administrators need to be cognizant of the 35-44 and 55-64 aged groups who reported higher rates of exhaustion in this survey. The literature reflects that traditional, rigid norms in academia make the raising of young children, the caretaking of elderly parents, and the advancement of one’s academic career a difficult struggle, if not an altogether incompatible circumstance (McCutcheon & Morrison, 2016). This may account for results from the ALA 2017 Demographic Study, which reported that although 78% of all librarians are female, male librarians account for a disproportionate 43% of library directors (Mars, 2018).

The authors of this study believe there is a correlation between a “second shift” family caretaking role and academic librarian burnout. The authors of this study encourage future researchers to investigate how family caretaking is affecting library organizations, particularly in respect to librarian performance evaluations, career advancement, diversity in library management, and gender inequality in the workplace. These results should inform library administrators that, by creating a family-friendly and flexible workplace, there would be a reduction in stress levels of the caregivers of both small children and aged parents (Minnotte,

Minnotte & Thompson, 2016). Additionally, more flexible and remote work arrangements would allow workers to better attend to their families and non-work obligations, thus providing “strong benefits for the quality of peoples’ lives” (Rossiter, O.’Flynn, Kalush, Kallis & Ashford, 2013, p. 1545).

Generational Issues

The prevalence of work-life imbalance is greater than 45% in every age group of librarians that were surveyed, with 66% of 35-44-year olds reporting that they sometimes, seldom, or never have enough time for family and friends at the end of the workday. Current research supports the idea that Generation X and Millennials value work-life balance higher than all other job characteristics. According to the 2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey, this generation views success as: 1) having control over how and when they work, and 2) accumulating various life experiences, both of which are facilitated by a better work-life balance (Deloitte, 2016). In addition, Millennials now represent the largest segment of the U.S. workforce. As such, creating work-life balance and harmony for Millennial librarians is crucial in order to engage and retain this segment of the library workforce.

Clearly, Millennials will shape the future of libraries, and are already in positions to do so. Librarianship cannot afford to lose the youngest members of the profession. Likewise, veteran librarians possess experience, expertise, and professional memory. In order to improve the quality of life for workers, the authors of this study encourage future research into reducing working hours, i.e. the 8-hour workday, as other countries and industries have done. Identifying and implementing tools to improve work-life balance is imperative. Library administrators need to actively promote telecommuting, flexible work schedules, purpose and meaning in the workplace, mentoring, and generational empathy.

Pace of Change

Librarianship is a profession under siege from the constant churn of change. Both the rapid pace of technological advancement and ever-diminishing resources are causing a perceived lack of control, lack of role clarity, lack of social support, and unrealistic personal expectations about the job, which contribute to work-related burnout. This is an area that has been little explored in detail, although it has been linked to the introduction of technology in the workplace (Knani, Fournier & Biron, 2017; Gill, 2017; Benselin & Ragsdell, 2016). In many ways, it is the pace of change rather than the change itself that may be a leading cause of academic librarian burnout. Library employees are more harried than ever due to the relentless pace of work (Cotter & McCormack, 2013), and yet the onus falls on employees to improve their time-management, organizational skills, and multitasking abilities through a series of professional development lessons. These palliative measures have yet to be proven effective at reducing workplace stressors or improving employee job satisfaction in the long term. According to Cotter and McCormack (2013), “eventually, the volume and pace of work, along with a myriad of other factors in the workplace, break down many individuals so that they can no longer function. Burnout is often the end result” (p. 2). The authors of this study encourage future research into the effects of the pace of change in academic libraries as a contributing factor in burnout syndrome.

Training and Professional Development for Library Administration

There is a wealth of literature on professional development for academic librarians and library employees on a variety of topics, ranging from dealing with difficult patrons to the information-seeking behaviors of students and faculty. In the course of their literature review, the authors of this study uncovered a gap in scholarship focused on library administrators and academic

librarian burnout. Library administration undoubtedly has a strong impact on workplace culture, behaviors, and wellness. It therefore follows that development of leadership skills that create awareness of academic librarian burnout, that help develop strategies to mitigate existing burnout, and that address preventative measures could go a long way in reducing burnout symptoms within their organizations.

Conclusion

The original aim and objective of this research was to measure the prevalence of academic librarian burnout using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), a widely available and validated instrument to measure work related burnout. The authors recognized that the CBI had never been used to measure the prevalence of librarian burnout and that they were engaged in original, discovery research. It was decided early in the process that the research would focus on identifying a baseline total work-related burnout score (TWRBS) for academic librarians.

In addition to being the first study to survey academic librarians using the CBI, the response rate (n=1628) proves the reliability and statistical significance of the results. The authors thank all the librarians who took the time to participate in the survey. The study identified a baseline total work-related burnout score for academic librarians, and discovered that when subdivided by demographic factors, academic librarian burnout is predicted first by gender and then by age. The research design will allow the authors to administer the survey longitudinally, to accurately determine trends in the practice and demographics of our profession. The limitations of the study include not administering the personal and client portions of the CBI.

The implications for future research are enormous. Gender disparities, work-life imbalance, differences in generational expectations of work culture, and the unrelenting pace of

change in academic libraries may be contributing factors to work-related burnout syndrome. The authors hope that future researchers will expand the survey to include the personal- and client-related burnout dimensions of the CBI in order to get a complete picture of the state of academic librarianship. While current employee development practices predominantly emphasize personal management of burnout symptoms, the authors of this study determined that there is no comparable focus for library administrators. If the goal is to reduce academic librarian burnout in the long-term, the responsibility for mitigating burnout should be shared between librarians and administrators alike. Since causation, prevention, and interventions to alleviate burnout were not measured, the authors encourage future research to address these questions. The results of this study will assist those involved in the professional education of academic librarians and those in library administration who seek to improve job satisfaction, retention, and the health of academic librarians.

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Tables and Charts

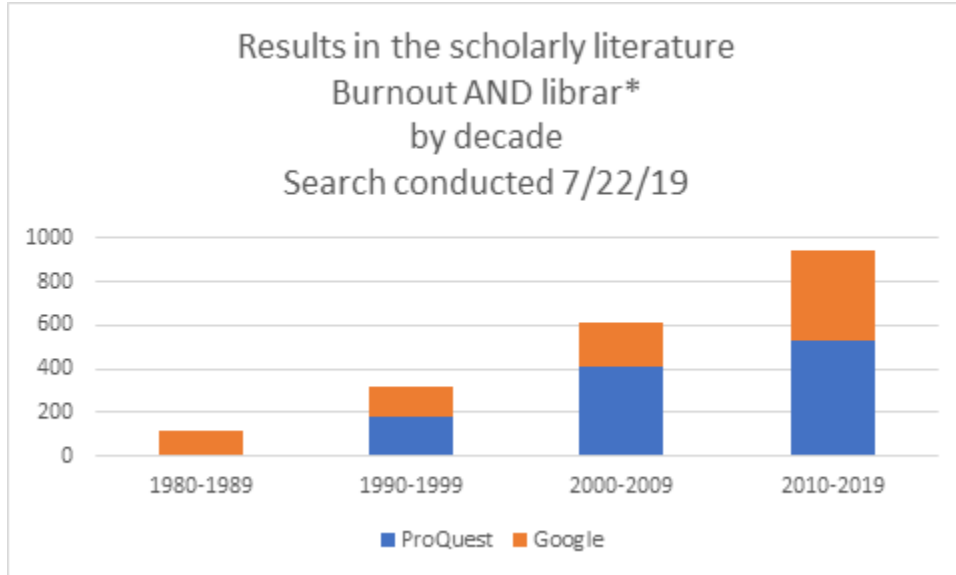


Chart 1. Literature Search Analysis

Characteristics	No.	Percentage
Gender		
Male	274	16.5
Female	1355	81.6
Non-binary/third gender	12	0.7
Prefer not to say	19	1.1
Age Range		
18-34	364	21.9
35-44	427	22.2
45-54	369	21.8
55-64	362	21.8
65 and older	89	5.4
Years in Profession		

> 1 yr-5 yrs.	273	16.4
5-10 yrs.	388	23.4
11-20 yrs.	497	29.9
<20 yrs.	503	30.3

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of Academic Librarian Burnout Survey, 2018 (n=1628)

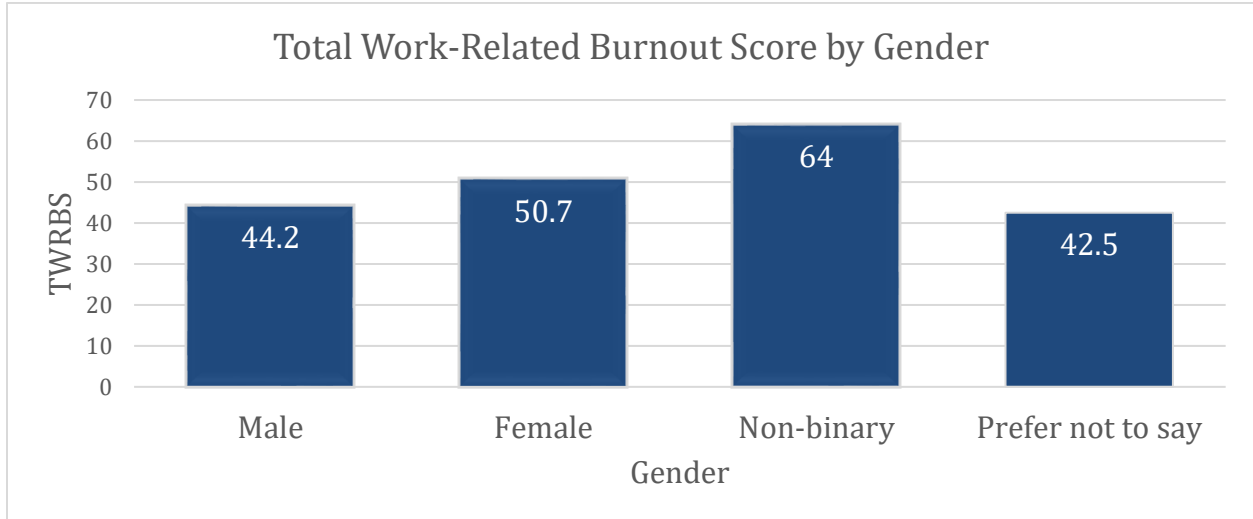


Chart 2. Prevalence of burnout by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Male	268	44.2	21.3	0	100
Female	1328	50.7	20.3	0	100
Non-binary	12	64	11.5	35.7	78.6
Prefer not to say	19	42.5	24	7.1	92.9

Table 2: Average Work-Related Burnout Score by Gender

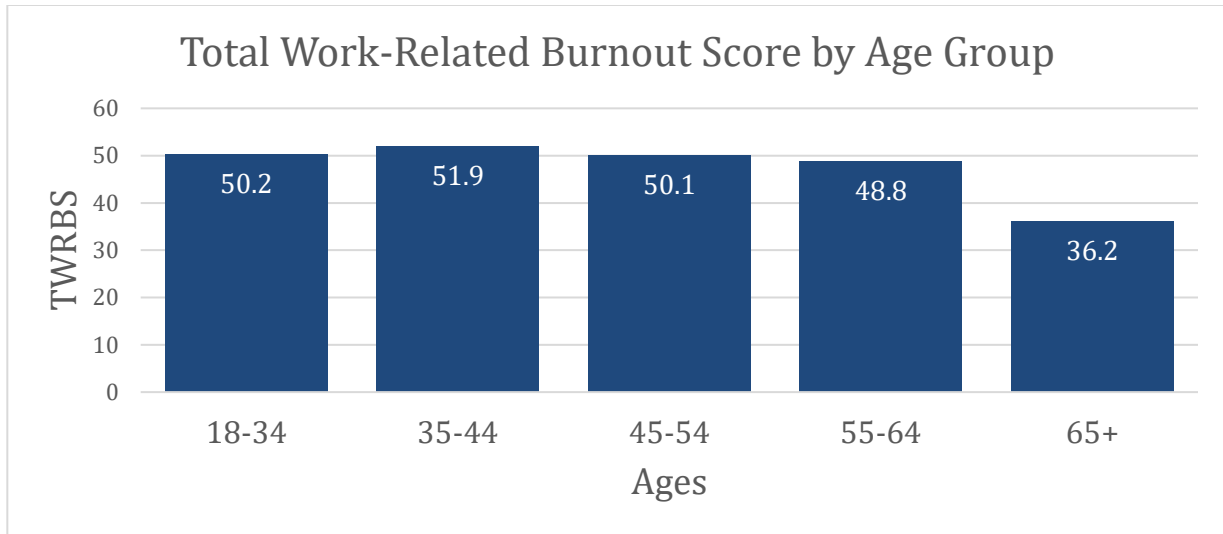


Chart 3. Prevalence of burnout by Age-Group

Ages	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
18-34	356	50.2	20.2	3.6	100
35-44	466	51.9	20.3	0	100
45-54	364	50.1	21.4	0	100
55-64	355	48.8	19.6	0	92.9
65+	87	36.2	19.9	0	92.9

Table 3: Average Work-Related Burnout Score by Age Group

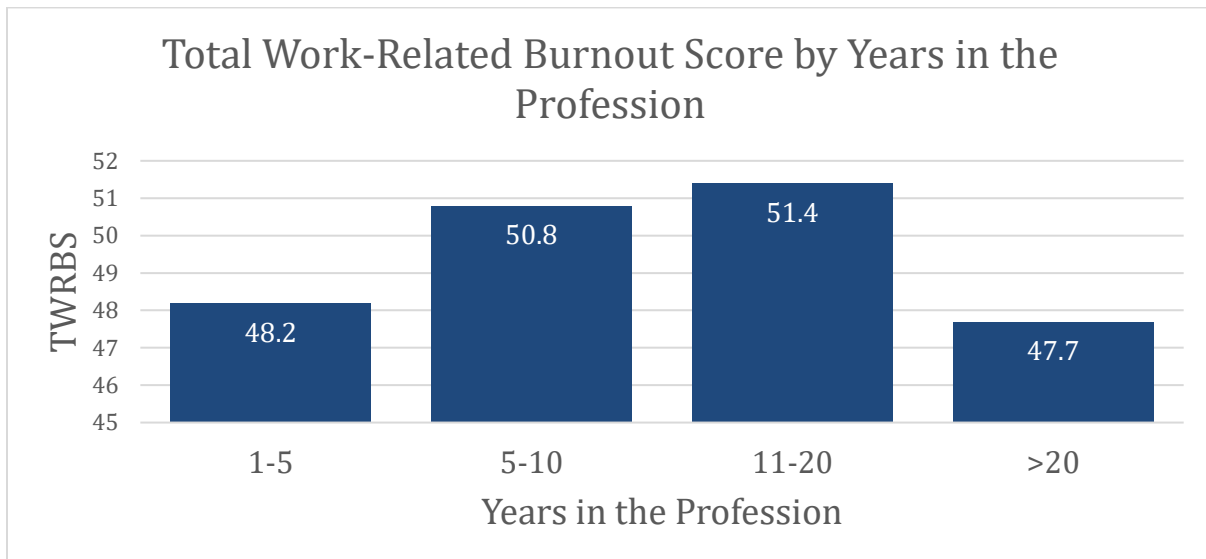


Chart 4. Prevalence of burnout by years in the Profession.

Years of Experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1-5	356	48.2	20.2	3.6	100
5-10	466	50.8	20.3	0	100
11-20	364	51.4	21.4	0	100
>20	355	47.7	19.6	0	92.9

Less than 1 yr. - 5 yrs.	268	48.2	20.9	3.6	96.4
5-10 yrs.	379	50.8	20	0	100
11-20 yrs.	484	51.4	20.6	0	100
More than 20 yrs.	497	47.7	20.9	0	100

Table 4: Average Work-Related Burnout Score by Years in the Profession

	Women 18-34	Men 18-34	Women 35-44	Men 35-44	Women 45-54	Men 45-54	Women 55-64	Men 55-64	Women 65+	Men 65+
Do you feel worn out at the end of the working day?	61.9	57.9	66.3	56.5	65	56.25	63.8	57.8	47.9	42.4
Are you exhausted in the morning at the thought of another day of work?	49.8	47.7	52.7	42.5	49.5	41.32	47.5	41	29.6	25
Do you feel that every working hour is tiring for you?	35.9	32.1	37.7	34.7	35	26	34.3	32.8	24.58	15.2
Do you have enough energy for family and friends during leisure time?	44.4	35.7	49	42.2	48.5	42	46.5	41.4	39.6	38
Is your work emotionally exhausting?	52.7	46.4	54.4	45.1	53.2	45.5	50.7	43.4	39.2	33.7
Does your work frustrate you?	54.4	60.7	55.6	55.5	56.8	50.7	54.8	50.8	44.6	32.6
Do you feel burnt out because of your work?	51.83	48.6	54.9	50	55	47.2	52	46.3	40.4	23.9
Total	50.1	47	52.9	46.7	51.9	44.2	49.9	44.8	38	30.1

Table 5: Male and Female Responses by Age