

Running head: EI AND BURNOUT

TRAIT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND BURNOUT IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

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Abstract

The role of the school psychologist is one that requires both emotional and physical energy in order to meet the demands of working with an array of children, teachers, administrators, parents, and other personnel. Such a demanding career can lead to high stress and burnout. The current study focuses on how emotional intelligence (EI), or the ability to understand, reason with, and manage feelings, impacts the likelihood of burnout among school psychologists. Two hypotheses were addressed: (1) school psychologists with higher levels of EI will be less likely to experience burnout, and (2) school psychologists' age and years of experience in the field will correlate positively with EI and negatively with burnout. Participants were 80 members of the New Jersey Association of School Psychologists (NJASP). They completed online questionnaires assessing EI with the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form (TEIQue-SF), burnout with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), and demographic factors including age, years of experience, degree earned, percentage of minority students served, and time spent in different professional activities. Multiple regression analyses (MRA) were conducted to examine the relationship between EI and three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and sense of personal accomplishment (PA). The MRA controlled for age and years in the field. The findings supported the study's first hypothesis: school psychologists with higher EI experienced lower levels of burnout. The results did not support the second hypothesis: there was no statistically significant relationship between age or years in the field and burnout. Exploratory analyses examined whether burnout or EI varied based on degree earned, percentage of minority students served, and time spent in various professional activities. The only statistically significant result was that time spent in intervention activities was negatively associated with the burnout variable of DP, but the nature of the

association was complex and unclear. Implications for school psychology training programs are discussed, and it is recommended that future research focus on additional factors that may moderate the relationship between EI and burnout, such as school characteristics and role definitions.

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Trait Emotional Intelligence and Burnout in School Psychologists

The field of school psychology is one that can cause a great deal of emotional and physical stress (Wise, 1985). Working with an array of children, teachers, administrators, parents, and other personnel, school psychologists typically work in very demanding jobs that require emotional and physical energy. Such high demands in a workplace can lead to a career high in stress. Job-related stress can cause a number of problems such as mental health struggles, burnout, and poor job performance (Huebner & Mills, 1994). It is therefore important that researchers understand the various factors associated with such stress-related difficulties. The current study in particular focuses on the experience of burnout among school psychologists. Burnout is the experience of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, which typically occurs in individuals who work with people, such as in the field of school psychology (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Burnout is a common result of job-related stress that has been linked to environmental and personal factors (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1993b; Huebner & Mills, 1994; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Mills & Huebner, 1998; Sandoval, 1993; Snyder, 2012).

One such personal factor that is hypothesized in this study to affect burnout is emotional intelligence (EI). EI is the ability to understand and reason with feelings in oneself and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). While literature on burnout among school psychologists is limited (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1993a; Huebner, 1993b; Huebner & Mills, 1994; Mills & Huebner, 1998; Sandoval, 1993), no published studies have examined the impact of EI in school psychologists. Individuals with high EI have been shown to be more likely to seek employment in settings that involve social interactions (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). These findings suggest that the typical school psychologist may have high EI, which has drawn him or her to the

field to begin with. However, studies that have linked personal factors such as personality to burnout (Huebner & Mills, 1994) suggest that emotional intelligence may also play a role in determining burnout, especially in a field that involves direct work with clients such as that of school psychology. The current study thus looks to extend this research by examining the experience of burnout in school psychologists and to explore the role that emotional intelligence may play in determining employee burnout.

The Field of School Psychology

School psychologists hold many responsibilities within their field of practice. They work with children, teachers, parents, and other educators in order to guide children academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally (NASP, 2010). Working with a variety of individuals increases the demands on school psychologists, as they must be able to maintain positive communication patterns with all involved so as to manage conflict effectively. In order to be an effective school psychologist, one must engage in a number of activities that can involve potentially stressful social interactions, such as psychological assessment, consultation, and mental health and educational interventions (NASP, 2010). One study, which surveyed what percentage of time school psychologists spent in various activities, confirmed that they spend much of their time in interpersonally challenging activities such as assessment (55.3%), consultation (19.3%), intervention (15.6%), and administration (5.6%; Huberty & Huebner, 1988). Such activities require school psychologists to take on many roles as they solve problems and manage conflicts among a variety of individuals, tasks that school psychologists have rated as stressful (Wise, 1985). It would appear, therefore, that the role of a school psychologist is emotionally demanding.

Burnout, its Correlates, and the Link to School Psychology

Defining burnout. Burnout has long been considered a serious issue affecting not only job satisfaction but also the mental and emotional wellbeing of individuals in the working world. Burnout is defined as an experience of chronic emotional and interpersonal stress, described as having three different dimensions: exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Maslach, 2003). Emotional exhaustion is a result of overwhelming work demands (Huberty & Huebner, 1988). When healthy individuals receive adequate support, workplace exhaustion can trigger healthy coping mechanisms; however, individuals who lack such adequate support can become cynical about work demands and can experience negative health outcomes as a result of work stress (Maslach, 2003).

Depersonalization, the second component of burnout, is the development of cynical and impersonal attitudes toward clients (Huberty & Huebner, 1988). The final component, reduced sense of personal accomplishment, is characterized by feelings of inadequacy and incompetence to help clients (Huberty & Huebner, 1988). Emotional exhaustion and depersonalization typically develop as a result of overwhelming work demands and social conflict (Cherniss, 1995; Maslach, 2003), while a sense of inefficacy can result from a lack of resources (Maslach, 2003).

Correlates of burnout. Research has identified various factors linked to the development of burnout in the workplace. Maslach and Leiter (2008) demonstrated that an early warning sign for burnout is job-person incongruence, described as difficulties in the workplace that prevent the individual from being able to successfully handle the job. This focus on incongruence is further supported by a longitudinal study examining the experiences of new helping professionals (Cherniss, 1995). Cherniss noted that unrealistic expectations created a major source of job stress in dealing with feelings of incompetence, lack of autonomy, difficult clients, boredom, and lack

of sufficient social support in the work environment. Further research emphasizes the significance of communication in predicting burnout by demonstrating that greater empathic concern results in communicative responsiveness, which in turn reduces burnout (Miller, Stiff, & Ellis, 1988).

Burnout among school psychologists. A limited and dated body of research examines the experiences and correlates of burnout among school psychologists more specifically (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1993a; Huebner, 1993b; Huebner & Mills, 1994; Milles & Huebner, 1998; Sandoval, 1993). Similar to research on burnout in general, self-perceived competence in work demands, specifically consultation abilities, has been shown to be a strong predictor of burnout (Huebner, 1993a). Other correlates of burnout among school psychologists include clarity of role definitions, internal or external pressures, excessive workload demands, lack of resources, interpersonal conflicts, and lack of supervisory support (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1993b). Job tasks have also been linked to burnout among school psychologists (Huberty & Huebner, 1988). Huberty and Huebner (1988) found that feelings of personal accomplishment were negatively correlated with the number of hours spent conducting individual psychological assessments, while sense of personal accomplishment increased with an increase in number of hours conducting interventions.

Individual predictors of burnout. While it has become evident that many predictors of burnout are environmental factors and job characteristics, researchers have examined the impact of personal factors on burnout as well. Burnout has been seen to be more significant among school psychologists who are competitive, egocentric, introverted, and lacking conscientiousness (Huebner & Mills, 1994). Additionally, school psychologists who demonstrate adaptability are less likely to experience burnout (Sandoval, 1993). Sandoval suggests that workers who are more

tolerant are better able to predict a greater range of outcomes for their clients and will therefore experience a greater sense of personal accomplishment. Age has also been demonstrated to predict burnout, with older individuals being less likely to burn out (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1993a; Suñer-Soler et al., 2013). This finding aligns with Cherniss's (1995) discussion of unrealistic expectations due to lack of experience in the field. It may be the case that greater experience in the field reduces the chance of unrealistic expectations and thus reduces the likelihood of burnout. Research has also shown that employees who have optimistic outlooks and are able to manage their moods are less susceptible to burnout due to their ability to respond to client distress (Snyder, 2012). These findings indicative of a personality impact on burnout suggest that it is important to consider the individual's perceptions in addition to the working conditions.

Consequences of burnout. Burnout is an especially important construct to consider among helping professionals due to the consequences associated with the experience of burnout. Burnout has been shown to affect self-reported quality of care, in that professionals who are dissatisfied with their jobs are less likely to put effort into punctuality and meeting deadlines (Salyers et al., 2014). Conversely, professionals who experience higher personal accomplishment report higher levels of client-centered care (Salyers et al., 2014). Additionally, feelings of incompetence among mental health counselors have been shown to impact thinking, emotions, sense of control, work management, stress management, and self-worth (Puig et al., 2012). Puig and colleagues also found that depersonalization and devaluing the client may be associated with poor problem-solving abilities as well as indifference. However, of the three components of burnout, emotional exhaustion has been demonstrated to have the most negative impact on the professional's mental and physical health (Puig et al., 2012; Suñer-Soler et al., 2013). Puig and

colleagues (2012) found that mental health counselors who experienced emotional exhaustion were less likely to maintain physical health through exercise and nutrition. Similarly, Suñer-Soler and colleagues (2013) found that Spanish healthcare personnel experiencing emotional exhaustion were more likely to experience bodily pain, worse general health, poorer social functioning, and decreased vitality. These findings regarding emotional exhaustion provide further cause for the current study to examine EI as it relates to burnout.

Emotional Intelligence and its Correlates

Defining emotional intelligence. Salovey and Mayer (1990) first coined the term EI by defining it as a branch of social intelligence involving the ability to understand and reason with one's own and others' feelings. This type of intelligence is considered a "hot" intelligence, in the sense that EI involves self-related emotional processing (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000). Salovey and Mayer (1990) introduce the concept of EI with an explanation of emotions as being organized responses to events. Unlike mood, emotions are typically shorter and more intense. However, emotions have the potential to be adaptive, as they notify the individual of triggering experiences and can lead to an adjustment in personal and social interaction (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Salovey and Mayer explain that emotional intelligence enables the individual to use knowledge of emotional states in order to problem solve and regulate behavior.

Since this first introduction to the term EI, several researchers have examined the likelihood of EI to be an actual and independent form of intelligence. Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (2000) conducted an empirical study to examine whether EI meets the standards for an intelligence. They describe three groups of criteria for intelligence: conceptual, correlational, and developmental. The conceptual criteria indicate that the intelligence must be reflective of mental performance and must measure the concepts it has purported to measure. The correlational

criteria require that the abilities measured must be related and similar to previously established mental abilities while still being distinct. Finally, the developmental criterion states that the intelligence must develop with age and experience. Through their examination of EI with these criteria in mind, Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (2000) determined that EI does in fact meet the criteria for an intelligence.

Different models of emotional intelligence. Conflicting operational definitions of EI have led to two separate theoretical models of the construct: a mixed or trait-based model and a performance or ability-based model (Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Cherniss, 2010a; Cherniss, 2010b; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000; Petrides & Furnham, 2001). Trait EI has been defined as a set of behavioral dispositions as well as self-perceived abilities and is typically measured using self-report methods (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). Measures of trait EI include the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i; Bar-On, 1997) and the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue; Cherniss, 2010a). The ability-based model of EI concerns cognitive abilities in regard to the capacity to process and reason with emotions (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). Ability EI is measured through an evaluation of the individual's performance on a range of tasks involving perceptions, understanding, and management of emotions (Cherniss, 2010a). One of the most popular ability-based measurements is the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002).

Each measure of trait or ability EI has generated substantial debate among researchers. Of particular importance is that the different models do not correlate highly with each other (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). Cherniss (2010a) observes that the minimal shared variance between measures is indicative of separate constructs being measured. In discussing the varying models of EI, Cherniss suggests that trait-based models may be better defined as measuring emotional

and social competencies (ESC) rather than EI. Boyatzis (1982, as cited in Cherniss, 2010a) defined a competency as a characteristic that leads to effective performance, and ESC can therefore be understood as such characteristics involving EI. ESC or trait EI may be more relevant than ability EI when considering success in work (McClelland, 1973, as cited in Cherniss, 2010a), as well as burnout from work.

Correlates of emotional intelligence. Studies have examined the benefits and correlates of having high trait or ability EI. Research on EI in the workplace has examined qualities that make the individual a better worker and colleague. EI has been demonstrated to be an important quality of those in leadership positions when conceptualized by both the ability model (Antonakis, Ashkanasy, & Dasborough, 2009; George, 2000) and the trait model (Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2002). Many of the central roles in the leadership process require an emotional awareness (George, 2000), and the leader who is high in ability EI is better able to both perceive and manage emotions (Antonakis, Ashkanasy, & Dasborough, 2009). Individuals with greater ability to strategically regulate their emotions are also less likely to experience conflict with others (Lopes et al., 2011). ESC models of EI have also found that EI allows individuals to better empathize with others, which bolsters others' perceptions of leadership in those individuals (Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2002). In terms of general job performance, ability EI has been shown to predict job performance in careers that are high in emotional labor, such as educators and school psychologists, although trait EI has been shown to have a stronger relationship with job performance than that of ability EI (Joseph & Newman, 2010).

Further research has suggested a relationship between trait EI and burnout more specifically. Kaur, Sambasivan, and Kumar (2013) found that nurses with higher levels of EI experienced lower levels of burnout. Another study of nurses examined the relationship between

burnout and various components of trait EI, finding that emotional management and emotional control were both negatively correlated with burnout as well as with self-reported stress (Görgens-Ekermans & Brand, 2012). Similar to research on trait EI and burnout, research on ability EI among teachers, as measured by the MSCEIT, demonstrates that teachers who are better able to regulate their own emotions as well as to assist others in emotion regulation are more likely to experience a greater sense of personal accomplishment (Brackett, Palomera, Mosja-Kaja, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010). Based on such research, the current study seeks to determine similar relationships between burnout and trait EI in school psychologists. One might theorize that the emotionally intelligent school psychologist would be better able to mitigate conflicts with the many students, teachers, administrators, and parents they come into contact with during highly stressful situations. Having the emotional capacity to deal with stressful situations is hypothesized in this study to improve school psychologists' sense of efficacy and to reduce emotional exhaustion.

Current Study

The purpose of the current study is to examine the relationship between EI and burnout among school psychologists. Literature has demonstrated that stress related to interpersonal relationships in the workplace predicts burnout (Huberty & Huebner; Huebner, 1993b; Miller, Stiff, & Ellis, 1988). We hypothesize based on previous research on EI that individuals who are able to mitigate conflict and empathize with others are less likely to have difficulty with relationships in their workplaces (Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2002; Lopes et al., 2011). The logical conclusion may therefore be that high EI is a protective factor against burnout. Additionally, due to the developmental nature of EI as well as the influence of age on burnout, one may conclude that older school psychologists who have had more years of experience in the

field are less likely to experience burnout. Thus the current study serves to address the following hypotheses:

1. School psychologists with higher levels of EI will be less likely to experience burnout, specifically in that EI will correlate positively with sense of personal accomplishment and negatively with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.
2. School psychologists' age and years of experience in the field will correlate positively with EI and personal accomplishment and negatively with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 80 school psychologists from the state of New Jersey. All school psychologists who are members of the New Jersey Association of School Psychologists (NJASP) were contacted to participate in this study ($N = 425$). Members of NJASP are required to have school psychologist certification in order to join, which ensured that participants were certified school psychologists. A total of 118 school psychologists responded to the online questionnaire, with a response rate of 28%. All respondents who were not practicing school psychologists were excluded from the study ($n = 38$).

Demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1. The sample was predominantly female ($n = 73$; 91%) and Caucasian ($n = 71$; 90%). African Americans ($n = 5$; 6%), Hispanic ($n = 1$; 1%), and other ($n = 2$; 3%) made up the remainder of the sample. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 70 years old, with an average age of 42.65. Most respondents indicated having completed a master's or specialist level degree ($n = 56$; 71%), and the remainder of the sample indicated having completed a doctoral degree ($n = 23$; 29%). Forty

two percent of respondents indicated that less than 25% of the students they serve are racial/ethnic minorities ($n = 34$).

Table 1

<i>Demographic Characteristics (N = 80)</i>	
Age	$M = 42.65$ ($SD = 12.40$)
Gender	
Female	73 (91%)
Male	7 (9%)
Race/ethnicity	
African American	5 (6%)
Hispanic	1 (1%)
Caucasian	71 (90%)
Other	2 (3%)
Degree Earned	
Master's Degree	6 (8%)
Specialist Degree	50 (63%)
Doctoral Degree	23 (29%)
Years in the Field	$M = 11.85$ ($SD = 9.24$)
Percentage of Minority Students	
Less than 25%	34 (43%)
25-50%	21 (26%)
More than 50%	25 (31%)

Results are expressed as mean (standard deviation) or frequency (percentage).

The average respondent had been practicing as a school psychologist for 11.85 years ($SD = 9.24$). Table 2 illustrates the breakdown of time spent in various professional activities. Most of the respondents ($n = 55$; 68.7%) indicated spending over half their time in case management activities, while a much smaller number spent more than half their time in assessment ($n = 14$; 17.6%). About one half of the respondents indicated that consultation ($n = 40$; 50.6%), intervention ($n = 48$; 60.0%), and parent/staff education ($n = 47$; 58.8%) make up 25% or less of their time. A large majority of the respondents indicated spending no more than one half their time in administrative duties ($n = 66$; 84.6%). A majority of the respondents indicated that program development ($n = 41$; 51.2%) and research ($n = 59$; 73.8%) make up none of their time.

Table 2

Percentage of Time Spent in Professional Activities (N = 80)

	Percentage of Time Spent				
	None (0%)	A little time (1-25%)	Some time (26-50%)	Most time (51-75%)	All time (76-100%)
Administrative	22 (28%)	24 (31%)	20 (26%)	11 (14%)	1 (1%)
Assessment	4 (5%)	20 (25%)	42 (53%)	11 (14%)	3 (4%)
Case Management	4 (5%)	5 (6%)	16 (20%)	41 (51%)	14 (18%)
Consultation	1 (1%)	40 (51%)	27 (34%)	7 (8%)	4 (5%)
Intervention	4 (5%)	48 (60%)	17 (21%)	9 (11%)	2 (3%)
Parent/Staff Education	17 (21%)	47 (59%)	11 (14%)	5 (6%)	0 (0%)
Program Development	41 (51%)	31 (39%)	5 (6%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)
Research	59 (74%)	19 (24%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Results are expressed as frequency (percentage) of respondents indicating they spend that percentage of time in each activity.

Procedure

After Institutional Review Board approval was obtained, the researcher contacted school psychologists via email with request to participate in the study, informed consent, a brief description of the purpose of the study, and information on completing measures to assess demographic information, burnout, and EI. Burnout was measured through the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), and EI was measured through the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form (TEIQue-SF; Petrides & Furnham, 2006). The measures were administered online utilizing the web-based survey system, Qualtrics.

Materials

School psychologist demographics. School psychologists completed a demographics survey, which asked questions regarding age, gender, race/ethnicity, number of years in the field, primary roles of the job, training degree, and percentage of students served who are racial/ethnic minority students.

Burnout. Burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory, Educators Survey (MBI-ES; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). The MBI-ES is a 22-item self-report

survey composed of three scales that cover the three areas of burnout. The Emotional Exhaustion (EE) scale involves nine items that measure fatigue resulting from conflict or stressors in the workplace. Depersonalization (DP) includes five items assessing feelings of indifference in regard to students. The Personal Accomplishment (PA) scale utilizes eight items that assess feelings of success, progress, and attainment of goals. The participant is asked to rate each statement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from never (0) to every day (6). Statements include “I feel depressed at work” from the EE scale, “I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job” from the PA scale, and “I don’t really care what happens to some students” from the DP scale.

The MBI has been used in many studies of burnout (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1993; Huebner & Mills, 1994; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Mills & Huebner, 1998; Sandoval, 1993). The authors’ original measurement of reliability was drawn from a sample of human-service workers, with Cronbach’s alphas of 0.90 for EE, 0.79 for DP, and 0.71 for PA (Fitzpatrick & Wright, 2005). In the current study, the researcher found adequate internal consistency reliability, with Cronbach’s alphas of 0.91 for EE, 0.71 for DP, and 0.70 for PA. Fitzpatrick and Wright (2005) also found adequate test-retest reliability and discriminant validity. The manual provides additional normative information as well as construct validity to support the research utility of the MBI.

The MBI Examiner’s Manual (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) provides cutoff scores to categorize burnout based on normative information. EE scores of 16 or below are in the low range, of 17-26 are in the average range, and of 27 or above are in the high range. DP scores of 6 or below are in the low range, scores of 7-12 are in the average range, and scores of 13 or above are in the high range. PA scores are reverse coded. Scores of 39 or above are in the low range of

burnout, scores of 38-32 are in the average range, and scores of 31 or below are in the high range.

Emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence was measured using the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, Short Form (TEIQue-SF; Petrides & Furnham, 2006). The TEIQue-SF is a 30-item self-report survey measuring global trait EI. The Short Form version of the TEIQue was designed based on the original full form of the TEIQue, which utilizes 153 items to measure global trait EI, four factors, and 15 distinct facets: Adaptability, Assertiveness, Emotion perception (self and others), Emotion expression, Emotion management (others), Emotion regulation, Impulsiveness, Relationships, Self-esteem, Self-motivation, Social awareness, Stress management, Trait empathy, Trait happiness, and Trait optimism. The questions on the TEIQue-SF include two questions from each of the 15 facets, chosen for their high correlation with the corresponding facets (Cooper & Petrides, 2010; Petrides & Furnham, 2006). A full copy of the TEIQue-SF is provided in Appendix A.

The psychometric properties of the TEIQue and the TEIQue-SF have been established through studies using these measures (Cooper & Petrides, 2010; Mikolajczak, Luminet, Leroy, & Roy, 2007; Petrides, Pérez-González, & Furnham, 2007). Studies of the full TEIQue have found the measure to have adequate reliability, convergent/discriminant validity, criterion validity, and incremental validity (Mikolajczak, Luminet, Leroy, & Roy, 2007; Petrides, Pérez-González, & Furnham, 2007). Additionally, Cooper and Petrides (2010) conducted a psychometric analysis of the TEIQue-SF more specifically, demonstrating high convergent/discriminant validity, precise measurement of trait EI, and overall good psychometric properties. Based on these properties of the TEIQue-SF, the measure provides an adequate measurement of individual differences in trait EI for the purposes of this study.

Analyses

Primary analyses. Prior to analysis, the dataset was screened and cleaned. Missing data appeared to be missing at random and made up less than 10% of the data. Listwise whole case deletion was used to avoid any misrepresentations that missing data may have caused in instances where the missing data was part of a crucial variable (e.g., missing responses in the EI scale). Descriptive statistics were analyzed to gain a better understanding of the data. Pearson-product moment correlations were then computed between EI, the three scales of burnout, age, and years of experience. Multiple regression analyses (MRA) were conducted to examine whether EI could predict the three factors of burnout, controlling for years in the field and age. Number of years as a practicing psychologist and age were considered possible mediators and were entered into the first block. Total EI score was then entered into the second block. This analysis was run for all three scales of burnout (EE, DP, and PA).

Secondary analyses. Exploratory analyses were conducted to examine whether burnout or EI varied based on degree earned, percentage of minority students served, and time spent in various professional activities. Degree earned was dichotomized by combining master's and specialist degrees, and an independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare means for the three dimensions of burnout in addition to EI. Six one-way between subjects analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were computed to compare the effects on burnout of percentage of minority students and time spent in the five most commonly occurring professional activities (administrative, assessment, case management, consultation, and intervention).

Results

Primary Analyses

Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics of the main variables of interest. EI scores

showed that the majority of respondents have above average EI ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 0.60$) in relation to the scale's theoretical average of 3.5. In comparison to the normative group, EE scores were in the high burnout range ($M = 31.27$, $SD = 10.73$), while PA scores were in the low burnout range ($M = 46.33$, $SD = 5.40$) and DP scores were in the average range ($M = 7.90$, $SD = 3.58$), indicating that the majority of respondents reported symptoms of burnout consistent only with emotional exhaustion.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics (N = 80)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range (Min-Max)
Years in the Field	11.85	9.24	0-40
Age	42.65	12.40	25-70
EI	5.66	0.60	3.97-6.70
EE	31.27	10.73	14-58
DP	7.9	3.58	5-20
PA	46.33	5.40	27-55

EI theoretical average = 3.5.

EE scores of <16 = Low, 17-26 = Average, >27 = High.

DP scores of <6 = Low, 7-12 = Average, >13 = High.

PA scores of >39 = Low, 38-32 = Average, <31 = High.

Pearson-product moment correlations are presented for variables of interest in Table 4. EI was negatively correlated with EE ($r = -0.40$, $p < 0.01$) and DP ($r = -0.52$, $p < 0.01$), and EI was positively correlated with PA ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$). These results suggest that higher EI is associated with lower burnout. Neither age nor number of years in the field was significantly associated with either EI or burnout.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to evaluate whether the three measures of burnout (EE, DP, and PA) could be predicted by reported EI (see Tables 5-7). The analysis controlled for factors that could account for burnout by entering age and years in the field into each regression equation. The first analysis examined EE as the dependent variable. Step 1 of the analysis showed that years in the field ($p = 0.74$) and age ($p = 0.87$) were not significant

predictors of EE. The overall model was not significant ($F = 0.07, p = 0.94$). In step 2 of the analysis, the EI scale was added, which increased the model's R^2 from 0.00 to 0.16 ($F = 4.37, p < 0.05$). The overall model for step 2 was significant ($p < 0.05$), and EI ($\beta = -0.39, p < .01$) was found to be significantly negatively associated with EE, accounting for 16% of the variance.

Table 4

Pearson-Product Moment Correlation Analyses (N = 73)

Variable	EI	EE	DP	PA	Years in the Field	Age
EI	-	-0.40**	-0.52**	0.62**	0.07	0.08
EE		-	0.39**	-0.21	0.02	0.01
DP			-	-0.47**	0.01	-0.04
PA				-	-0.11	-0.14
Years in the Field					-	0.77**
Age						-

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Multiple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Emotional Exhaustion (N = 73)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Years in the Field	0.07	0.21	0.06	0.04	0.20	0.03
Age	-0.03	0.16	-0.03	0.01	0.15	0.02
EI				-7.03	1.95	-0.39**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The second analysis examined DP as the dependent variable. Step 1 of the analysis showed that years in the field ($p = 0.71$) and age ($p = 0.60$) were not significant predictors of DP. The overall model was not significant ($F = 0.14, p = 0.87$). Adding EI in step 2 increased the model's R^2 from 0.00 to 0.21 ($F = 6.48, p < 0.01$). The overall model for step 2 was significant ($p < 0.01$), and EI ($\beta = -0.46, p < .01$) was found to be significantly negatively associated with DP, accounting for 21% of the variance.

The third analysis examined PA as the dependent variable. In step 1 of the analysis, years in the field ($p = 0.99$) and age ($p = 0.45$) were not significant predictors of PA. The overall model was not significant ($F = 0.71, p = 0.50$). EI was added in step 2 of the analysis, which increased the model's R^2 from 0.02 to 0.39 ($F = 15.01, p < 0.01$). The overall model for step 2 was significant ($p < 0.01$), and EI ($\beta = 0.61, p < .01$) was found to be significantly positively associated with PA, accounting for 39% of the variance.

Table 6

Multiple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Depersonalization (N = 73)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Years in the Field	0.03	0.07	0.07	0.01	0.06	0.03
Age	-0.03	0.05	-0.10	-0.01	0.05	-0.04
EI				-2.76	0.63	-0.46**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 7

Multiple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Personal Accomplishment (N = 73)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Years in the Field	-0.00	0.11	-0.00	-0.01	0.09	-0.02
Age	-0.06	0.08	-0.14	-0.07	0.06	-0.17
EI				5.69	0.87	0.61**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Secondary Analyses

Tables 8 and 9 provide means and standard deviations for EE, DP, PA, and EI as a function of degree earned, percentage of minority students served, and time spent in different professional activities. An independent samples t -test revealed no significant difference in levels of EE ($t = 0.09, p = 0.93$), DP ($t = -0.18, p = 0.86$), PA ($t = -1.02, p = 0.32$), or EI ($t = -1.20, p =$

0.24) between professionals with master's/specialist degrees and professionals with doctoral degrees. A one-way between subjects ANOVA revealed that there was not a significant effect of percentage of minority students on burnout at the $p < 0.05$ level for EE [$F(2, 74) = 0.76, p = 0.47$], DP [$F(2, 74) = 0.67, p = 0.52$], or PA [$F(2, 74) = 0.49, p = 0.62$].

ANOVAs were also computed for the five commonly occurring professional activities, comparing effects between percentages of time spent in each activity. As illustrated in Table 10, there was not a significant effect of time spent in administrative, assessment, or case management activities on burnout at the $p < 0.05$ level. There was a significant effect of time spent in consultation activities on EE [$F(4, 71) = 3.09, p = 0.02$]. However, the sample was not large enough to conduct post hoc analyses in order to interpret the significant result.

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations for EE, DP, PA, and EI as a Function of Degree Earned and Percentage of Minority Students Served

	<i>n</i>	EE		DP		PA		EI	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Degree Earned									
Master's/Specialist	56	31.52	10.31	7.87	3.45	45.81	5.00	5.59	0.58
Doctoral	23	31.27	11.79	8.04	4.01	47.30	6.20	5.78	0.62
Percentage of Minority Students									
<25%	34	31.62	10.20	7.71	3.42	46.12	4.84	-	-
25-50%	21	32.86	11.22	7.62	3.43	47.14	5.25	-	-
>50%	25	29.38	11.19	8.40	3.99	45.91	6.40	-	-

EI theoretical average = 3.5.

EE scores of <16 = Low, 17-26 = Average, >27 = High.

DP scores of <6 = Low, 7-12 = Average, >13 = High.

PA scores of >39 = Low, 38-32 = Average, <31 = High.

There was also a significant effect of time spent in intervention activities on DP [$F(4, 72) = 3.80, p = 0.01$]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for participants who spend none of their time in intervention activities ($n = 4, M = 13.75, SD = 7.09$) was significantly higher than the scores of participants who spend 25% or less ($n = 48, M =$

7.50, $SD = 3.15$), 51-75% ($n = 9$, $M = 6.78$, $SD = 1.92$), or 76-100% ($n = 2$, $M = 5.00$, $SD = 0.00$)

of their time in intervention activities. However, the DP scores for individuals who spend none of their time in intervention were not significantly different from those who spend 26-50% of their time in intervention ($n = 17$, $M = 8.59$, $SD = 3.41$).

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations for EE, DP, and PA as a Function of Time Spent in Different Professional Activities

	<i>n</i>	EE		DP		PA	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Time Spent in Administration							
0%	22	33.09	11.09	8.41	4.56	46.29	4.34
25% or less	24	31.63	11.53	7.54	3.05	45.70	6.87
26-50%	20	28.25	10.83	7.70	3.42	46.85	3.94
51-75%	11	32.09	8.85	8.00	3.03	45.36	6.44
76-100%	1	38.00	-	13.00	-	51.00	-
Time Spent in Assessment							
0%	4	25.25	9.43	6.50	1.91	49.25	2.50
25% or less	20	28.00	11.22	8.60	4.12	46.32	6.89
26-50%	42	32.36	10.18	7.83	3.48	45.85	4.42
51-75%	11	32.40	8.32	7.91	3.83	46.73	7.17
76-100%	3	42.00	18.52	6.00	1.73	47.67	3.21
Time Spent in Case Management							
0%	4	30.00	17.57	6.75	1.50	49.00	5.83
25% or less	5	25.40	10.99	8.60	2.30	47.60	2.07
26-50%	16	26.19	9.69	7.56	3.10	48.38	4.33
51-75%	41	33.60	10.12	7.98	3.94	45.15	5.35
76-100%	14	32.86	10.08	8.14	4.02	46.15	6.85
Time Spent in Consultation							
0%	1	14.00	-	11.00	-	49.00	-
25% or less	40	31.13	9.68	7.58	3.76	45.95	5.31
26-50%	27	32.30	10.79	8.78	3.78	45.68	5.15
51-75%	7	24.17	9.87	7.29	2.14	47.57	7.63
76-100%	4	44.25	10.08	6.25	1.50	49.50	2.89
Time Spent in Intervention							
0%	4	33.75	15.95	13.75	7.09	45.50	7.42
25% or less	48	30.37	9.93	7.50	3.15	45.63	5.52
26-50%	17	33.00	12.18	8.59	3.41	45.71	4.77
51-75%	9	28.63	9.84	6.78	1.92	50.44	3.61
76-100%	2	43.50	7.78	5.00	0.00	51.00	2.83

EE scores of <16 = Low, 17-26 = Average, >27 = High.

DP scores of <6 = Low, 7-12 = Average, >13 = High.

PA scores of >39 = Low, 38-32 = Average, <31 = High.

Table 10

	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Administrative						
EE Score	Between Groups	288.97	4	72.24	0.60	0.67
	Within Groups	8608.77	71	121.25		
DP Score	Between Groups	38.92	4	9.73	0.73	0.58
	Within Groups	953.08	71	13.42		
PA Score	Between Groups	45.17	4	11.29	0.38	0.82
	Within Groups	2122.25	71	29.89		
Assessment						
EE Score	Between Groups	837.72	4	209.43	1.87	0.13
	Within Groups	8077.73	72	112.19		
DP Score	Between Groups	34.39	4	8.60	0.64	0.63
	Within Groups	961.56	72	13.36		
PA Score	Between Groups	49.15	4	12.29	0.42	0.80
	Within Groups	2132.64	72	29.62		
Case Management						
EE Score	Between Groups	821.20	4	205.30	1.83	0.13
	Within Groups	8094.25	72	112.42		
DP Score	Between Groups	12.01	4	3.00	0.22	0.93
	Within Groups	983.94	72	13.67		
PA Score	Between Groups	180.38	4	45.10	1.62	0.18
	Within Groups	2001.41	72	27.80		
Consultation						
EE Score	Between Groups	1293.09	4	323.72	3.09	0.02*
	Within Groups	7418.60	71	104.49		
DP Score	Between Groups	52.17	4	13.04	0.99	0.42
	Within Groups	934.82	71	13.17		
PA Score	Between Groups	60.84	4	15.21	0.52	0.72
	Within Groups	2059.84	71	29.01		
Intervention						
EE Score	Between Groups	483.09	4	120.77	1.03	0.40
	Within Groups	8432.36	72	117.12		
DP Score	Between Groups	173.67	4	43.42	3.80	0.01*
	Within Groups	822.28	72	11.42		
PA Score	Between Groups	182.55	4	45.64	1.64	0.17
	Within Groups	1999.25	72	27.77		

* $p < .05$.

Discussion

The results of the present study indicate that trait EI is negatively associated with burnout. Significant relationships were found between EI and all three measures of burnout (EE, DP, and PA). These findings support the study's first hypothesis and suggest that school psychologists who have higher levels of EI are less likely to experience burnout.

The amount of time reportedly spent in various professional activities for New Jersey school psychologists in this study is similar to previous findings, with a large portion of time spent in assessment (Hops & Reschly, 2002; Huberty & Huebner, 1988). The current study found that the greatest amount of time was spent in case management, an activity that has not been measured in previous research due its limited role in states outside of New Jersey. Further analysis demonstrated that the amount of time school psychologists spent engaging in intervention activities impacted their experience of DP, suggesting that school psychologists who spend more time in intervention activities are less likely to experience a sense of depersonalization in their work with students. These findings align with previous research (Huberty & Huebner, 1988) and might be explained by the personal nature of direct intervention services. When school psychologists are more directly involved with their students, they may develop deeper connections with their students, which decrease the sense of depersonalization that leads to burnout. Further research is warranted to investigate this hypothesis.

While these positive findings support previous research, the previously reported correlations between PA and time spent in assessment and intervention (Huberty & Huebner, 1988) were not duplicated in the current study. These discrepant findings might be explained by the differing methodological procedures used across the two studies. The previous study asked school psychologists to provide an estimated number of hours spent in each professional activity, while the current study provided school psychologists with ranges to choose from. The sample size for the current study ($N = 80$) was also substantially smaller than the previous research ($N = 234$), and it is possible that the power of the current study was too small to detect significant effects in these areas.

The findings of the current study do not support the second hypothesis that school psychologists' number of years in the field and age will correlate positively with EI and negatively with burnout. No significant relationship was found between years in the field and either EI or burnout. The current study also demonstrated no relationship between age and either EI or burnout, which contradicts previous research indicating older age as a protective factor (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1993a; Suñer-Soler et al, 2013). These contradictory findings may be due to the small sample size and warrant further investigation into the effect of age and years in the field on school psychologist EI and burnout.

The current study reflects generally high trait EI among New Jersey school psychologists, regardless of education. Although predictors of trait EI were not explored in depth in the current study, this finding is intriguing. One explanation for this finding could be related to the kinds of individuals who are drawn to the field of school psychology, a field that involves empathizing with others and mitigating conflict while keeping in mind the best interest of the children served. Previous research has illustrated that individuals with high trait EI are better leaders and are better able to empathize with others (Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2002). It is possible that the leadership role required of school psychologists lends itself to further development of trait EI.

In spite of the high levels of trait EI reported in the current study, school psychologists tended to report higher levels of EE than the normative average. Research has shown that EE results from overwhelming work demands (Cherniss, 1995; Maslach, 2003) and that school psychologist burnout in particular is correlated with lack of clarity of role definitions, excessive workload demands, lack of resources and support, and interpersonal conflict (Huberty & Huebner, 1988). Thus the relatively high levels of EE reported in this study may be reflective of the demanding nature of the school psychologist role in New Jersey.

Implications for Practice

The findings of the current study highlight the importance of considering the impacts that trait EI and burnout may have on school psychologists. This is especially relevant to training programs for school psychologists. The findings of the current study demonstrate no difference in either burnout or EI relative to degree of education. Thus, EI and burnout impact school psychologists regardless of level of education. Training programs at all levels (i.e., Master's, Specialist, or Doctoral) can provide prospective school psychologists with education on how to improve trait EI as well as how to develop coping strategies to prevent burnout, particularly in the domain of emotional exhaustion. Given that school psychologists are trained to provide their students with coping strategies, it may often be assumed that school psychologists do not need strategies of their own. However, the above average EE in the current sample indicates that school psychologists may benefit from such training. Future research is needed to determine the efficacy of these potential programs.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study is limited by its small sample size ($N = 80$) and low response rate (28%). While the sample was large enough to obtain adequate power for computing multiple regression analyses, the number of participants within each subgroup limits the generalizability of the exploratory findings. This is of particular significance in relation to the significant effect of time spent in consultation activities on level of EE. Due to the high reported EE in the current sample, the significant relationship between time spent in consultation activities and reported EE could have helped to explain these findings. Future research should focus on the relationship between burnout and time spent in various school psychologist activities.

Participant characteristics may also have impacted the generalizability of the current

findings. Respondents voluntarily participated in the online survey for the current study, and it is thus possible that nonparticipants would have responded differently. For instance, nonparticipants may have experienced higher levels of burnout that impeded their desire to take the time to respond to an online survey. Further, the participants of this study were only school psychologists who were members of NJASP. School psychologists who either do not work in New Jersey or who are not members of NJASP may experience differing levels of burnout or EI than those who participated in the current study. Future studies with participants from a broader range of locations that are more representative of the general school psychologist population will produce more generalizable results.

Finally, future directions for research should focus on evaluating the factors that moderate the relationship between EI and burnout. Existing research investigating years in the field and time spent in various activities is either nonexistent or limited. Thus the contradictory findings revealed by this study indicate that these are two factors worth examining. Other factors such as school characteristics and role definition may also play roles in the relationship between EI and burnout. While the current study found no relationship between percentage of minority students and burnout, other school characteristics such as poverty level and school climate should also be examined.

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Appendix A

Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form

Please answer each statement in questions 23-52 by choosing the number that best reflects your degree of agreement or disagreement with that statement. Do not think too long about the exact meaning of the statements. Work quickly and try to answer as accurately as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. There are seven possible responses to each statement ranging from ‘Completely Disagree’ (number 1) to ‘Completely Agree’ (number 7).

1. Expressing my emotions with words is not a problem for me.
2. I often find it difficult to see things from another person’s viewpoint.
3. On the whole, I’m a highly motivated person.
4. I usually find it difficult to regulate my emotions.
5. I generally don’t find life enjoyable.
6. I can deal effectively with people.
7. I tend to change my mind frequently.
8. Many times, I can’t figure out what emotion I’m feeling.
9. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
10. I often find it difficult to stand up for my rights.
11. I’m usually able to influence the way other people feel.
12. On the whole, I have a gloomy perspective on most things.
13. Those close to me often complain that I don’t treat them right.
14. I often find it difficult to adjust my life according to the circumstances.
15. On the whole, I’m able to deal with stress.
16. I often find it difficult to show my affection to those close to me.
17. I’m normally able to “get into someone’s shoes” and experience their emotions.
18. I normally find it difficult to keep myself motivated.
19. I’m usually able to find ways to control my emotions when I want to.
20. On the whole, I’m pleased with my life.
21. I would describe myself as a good negotiator.
22. I tend to get involved in things I later wish I could get out of.
23. I often pause and think about my feelings.
24. I believe I’m full of personal strengths.
25. I tend to “back down” even if I know I’m right.
26. I don’t seem to have any power at all over other people’s feelings.
27. I generally believe that things will work out fine in my life.
28. I find it difficult to bond well even with those close to me.
29. Generally, I’m able to adapt to new environments.
30. Others admire me for being relaxed.

Demographic Questions

Please respond to the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. Are you currently a practicing school psychologist? If not, please state your current role.

- a. Yes
 - b. No _____
2. How many years have you been a practicing school psychologist? _____
3. How much time do you spend engaging in the following activities? _____
1=None of my time (0%)
2=A little of my time (25% or less)
3=Some of my time (26-50%)
4=Most of my time (51-75%)
5=All of my time (76-100%)
 - a. Administrative
 - b. Assessment
 - c. Case Management
 - d. Consultation
 - e. Intervention
 - f. Parent/Staff Education
 - g. Program Development
 - h. Research
 - i. Not Applicable
4. What percentage of the students you serve are racial/ethnic minorities?
 - a. None of the students served are racial/ethnic minorities
 - b. Less than 25% of students served are racial/ethnic minorities
 - c. 25-50% of students served are racial/ethnic minorities
 - d. More than 50% of students served are racial/ethnic minorities
 - e. Not Applicable
5. Which degree have you earned?
 - a. Master's Degree (less than 60 credits)
 - b. Specialist Degree or equivalent (60 credits or more)
 - c. Doctoral Degree
6. How old are you? _____
7. What is your gender?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Other
8. What is your race/ethnicity?
 - a. African American
 - b. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - c. Hispanic
 - d. Native American/Alaskan Native
 - e. Caucasian
 - f. Other _____