

Are Fitness Instructors Feeling the Burn(out)?

An investigation of Feelings of Burnout and Coping Strategies among Fitness Instructors

Prochnow, T.¹, Oglesby, L.², Umstattd Meyer, M.R.¹

¹ Baylor University Robbins College of Health & Human Sciences, ² The University of Southern Mississippi

Purpose

This study examines relationships between fitness instructors' feelings of burnout and coping strategies to better understand effective ways to prevent/reduce burnout.

Background

- Occupational stress and burnout have been linked to negative health and occupational outcomes.
- In human service professions burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of clients, and feelings of reduced personal accomplishment.
- Demand for fitness instructors estimated to increase 10% over next 5-10 years.
- This profession is physically and mentally demanding and may lead to burnout.

Methods

- Fitness instructors were recruited from nine national fitness conventions to complete an online survey.
- Measures included demographics, years in the profession, work load, job type, feelings of burnout (Copenhagen Burnout Inventory), and coping strategies used (Coping Strategies Inventory-Short Form).
- Multiple regression was used to examine correlates of burnout scores.

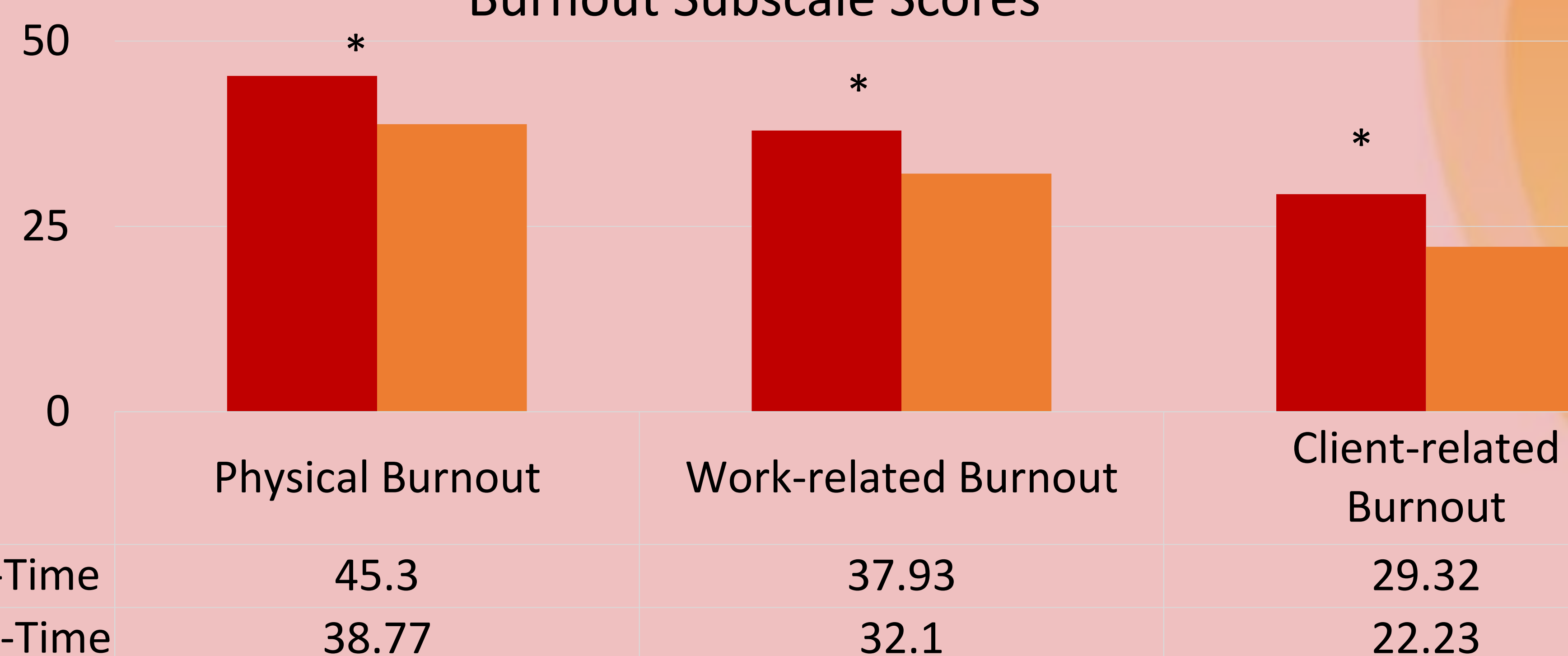
Sample Statistics

N=297

	N	%
Female	279	93.9%
White	254	85.5%
Hispanic	37	12.5%
Full-time Instructor	132	44.4%

	Full-Time Mean (sd)	Part-Time Mean (sd)	p-value (*=significant)
Age	43.64 (11.87)	46.66 (11.84)	0.03*
Years in Fitness	13.76 (11.22)	13.79 (9.98)	0.98
Weekly Hours	19.26 (13.48)	8.70 (7.84)	<0.001*
Weekly Vigorous Hours	9.04 (6.77)	5.42 (3.79)	<0.001*
Personal Workout Hours	4.42 (3.39)	4.05 (3.03)	0.32

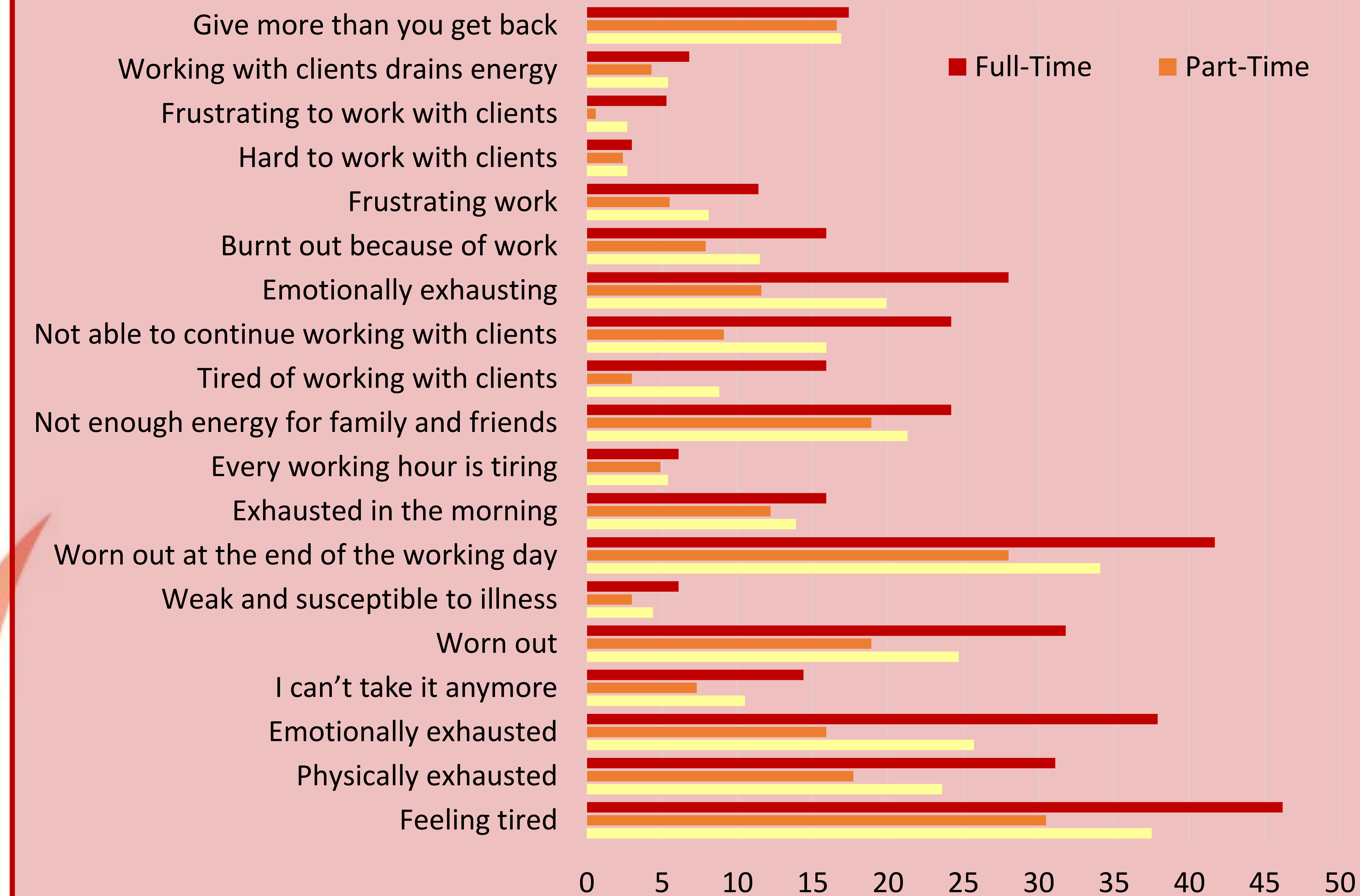
Burnout Subscale Scores



* = Significant at p<0.05

Results

Percentage of Responses Signaling High Burnout



Correlates of Burnout

	Age		Problem Engagement		Problem Disengagement		Emotion Engagement		Emotion Disengagement	
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time
Physical Burnout		-.210	-.356	-.324	.268	.239	-.222		.318	.276
Work Related Burnout			-.429	-.411	.177	.279	-.284	-.181	.340	.291
Client Related Burnout			-.392	-.335	.269	.312	-.211	-.173	.343	.310

All correlations are significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Regression Models

Physical Burnout			Work-related Burnout			Client-related Burnout		
Factor	Std. Coefficients		Factor	Std. Coefficients		Factor	Std. Coefficients	
	Part-time	Full-time		Part-time	Full-time		Part-time	Full-time
Vigorous Hours	0.16	0.19	Problem Engagement	-0.43	-0.46	Problem Engagement	-0.38	-0.44
Engagement	-0.33	-0.41	Emotion Disengagement	0.17	0.38	Emotion Disengagement	0.21	0.29
Disengagement	0.30	0.34	Problem Disengagement	0.24		Problem Disengagement	0.24	0.16
Age	-0.17		Age	-0.18				
	R ² =0.24	R ² =0.29		R ² =0.34	R ² =0.33		R ² =0.27	R ² =0.31

Conclusions

- There were significant differences between full-time and part-time instructors in feelings of burnout.
- In our sample, usage of engagement coping strategies was correlated with exhibiting lower levels of burnout; usage of disengagement strategies was correlated with greater feelings of burnout.
- Fitness instructors should cope with stress by engaging in problem solving, cognitive restructuring, expressing emotions, and elicitation of social support to reduce burnout.