Melissa A. Heinlein Storti, Ph.D., MA, MS, CAVS
Contact information: m_heinlein@hotmail.com; (610) 955-7205

Executive Summary
Are Volunteer Resource Managers Experiencing Dimensions of Burnout:
An Exploratory Study

Barnhart (2008) acknowledged that, among all of the professional roles and responsibilities in the world of nonprofit work, one of the least valued and least understood is that of the volunteer resource manager. With millions of individuals giving their time and talent to nonprofit organizations annually, someone needs to manage and mobilize this unpaid workforce in an effective and efficient way. Much attention is paid to the total number of volunteers and volunteer hours contributing to many causes and organizations, but there is more to consider regarding the individuals who are managing this unpaid workforce.

While previous research focuses on volunteer burnout, there is a lack of research about burnout and volunteer resource managers. This exploratory quantitative research study examined whether volunteer resource managers (n = 408) in healthcare and non-healthcare organizational settings were experiencing the dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. Other variables examined included social support, role ambiguity, workload, total number of volunteers in the organization, tenure, and age. The findings from this research showed that volunteer resource managers are experiencing a moderate degree of emotional exhaustion ($M = 20.41$, $sd = 11.25$), a low degree of depersonalization ($M = 5.13$, $sd = 4.69$), and a moderate degree of personal accomplishment ($M = 38.39$, $sd = 6.74$). The findings of this study reveal that burnout experienced by volunteer resource managers is more complex than previously thought.

Regardless of which sector volunteer resource managers are working within, they are constantly defending the credibility of their profession to volunteers, paid staff, organization

leadership, and the community (Brudney & Heinlein, 2013). There is also a lack of consistency regarding the titles of those managing and leading volunteers. While the terms "volunteer resource manager" and "director of volunteer services" are commonly used, these titles do not appear in detail on the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) list. The term "volunteer coordinator" does occur among "Miscellaneous Administrative Support Occupations," which is vaguely described as "workers performing clerical duties who do not match any of the census occupation definitions" (BLS, 2015a).

Barnhart (2008) contends that the volunteer resource manager is the least valued professional. Volunteer management is a highly skilled, time and resource intensive profession. Though it is often said that "anyone can manage volunteers" the work of engaging volunteers, in fact, can be challenging (Barnhart, 2008).

Study Design

- Exploratory
  - It was important to research an area in which volunteer resource managers talk about but have not been studied.
- A web-based survey was used to explore the three dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment) in relation to:
  - Organizational setting
  - Social support
  - Role ambiguity
  - Total number of employees working in a volunteer department
  - Total number of volunteers in an organization
  - Total number of years employed as a volunteer resource manager
  - Age of the volunteer resource manager.

Sample

- Volunteer resource managers who were currently working in either a paid full-time or part-time position
- Healthcare or non-healthcare organizational setting
- Minimum of one year
- Those individuals not in a paid volunteer resource manager position or in the position for less than one year were excluded from the study

Data were collected from the sample of volunteer resource managers (n = 408) who were

affiliated:

- The Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration (CCVA; 1,000 members)
- Association for Leaders in Volunteer Engagement (ALIVE; 1,000 members), and/or
- Energize, Inc. (18,000 subscribers)

Survey Results

Demographic Characteristic	N	%
Gender		
Female	376	92.2
Male	32	7.8
Age		
18-24	7	1.7
25-34	88	21.6
35-44	65	15.9
45-54	106	26.0
55-64	118	28.9
65 or older	24	5.9
Country of residence		
United States	357	87.5
Other	51	12.5
Marital status		
Single (not married)	64	15.7
Married	250	61.3
Divorced	55	13.5

Demographic Characteristic	N	%
Widowed	10	2.5
Cohabitating	29	7.1

Education

High school diploma	10	2.5
Some undergraduate courses	50	12.3
Undergraduate degree	170	41.7
Some graduate courses	60	14.7
Graduate degree	107	26.2
Professional degree	6	1.5
PhD	3	.7
EdD	2	.5

Certification

None	285	69.9
Certified Administrator of Volunteer Services (CAVS)	32	7.8
Certified Volunteer Administrator (CVA)	86	21.1
Both Certified Administrator of Volunteer Services and Certified Volunteer Administrator	5	1.2

Membership (multiple memberships)

Association for Healthcare Volunteer Resource Professionals (AHVRP)	48	11.8
Association for Leaders in Volunteer Engagement (ALIVE)	66	16.2
Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration (CCVA)	72	17.6
Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA)	3	.7
Directors of Volunteers in Agencies (DOVIA)	108	26.5
Other	268	65.7

Volunteer Department Budget

Under $20,000	185	45.3
$20,001-$39,999	43	10.5
$40,000-$59,000	30	7.4
$60,000-$79,000	23	5.6
More than $80,000	127	31.1

Based on the criteria for burnout established by Maslach et al. (1981), the volunteer resource managers in this study are experiencing a moderate degree of emotional exhaustion, a low degree of depersonalization, and a moderate degree of lack of personal accomplishment.

Volunteer resource managers in a healthcare setting demonstrated a significantly increased mean score for personal accomplishment.

There was a significant inverse relationship between social support and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. There was a positive relationship between social support and personal accomplishment. Social support increased personal accomplishment and mediated emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

There was a significant inverse relationship with role ambiguity and personal accomplishment.

While the total number of paid employees in a volunteer department did not have any significant relationship on the dimensions of burnout, the number of volunteers giving their time in an organization was significant. Those volunteer resource managers who are working with 500-900+ volunteers had a higher mean score for depersonalization.

The total number of years employed as a volunteer resource manager was higher on emotional exhaustion for those volunteer resource managers working in the field 6-10 years compared to those volunteer resource managers working in the field 1-5 years and 11-20+ years.

The age of volunteer resource managers did not yield significant differences on emotional exhaustion. However, age did have a significant relationship with depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment. Volunteer resource managers who are 18-34 years old and 35-54 years old had higher mean scores on depersonalization than volunteer resource managers who

are 55-65+ years old. In addition, older volunteer resource managers who are 55-65+ years old

had a higher mean score for personal accomplishment than younger volunteer resource

managers.

The organizational environment appears to play a role in the experience of the

dimensions of burnout by volunteer resource managers. Volunteer resource managers

experience not only the three dimensions of burnout, but also the lack of social support and role

ambiguity within the organizational environment. The total number of years employed as a

volunteer resource manager seems to contribute to emotional exhaustion. The total number of

active volunteers in an organization and age seems to contribute to depersonalization. Age may

serve was a variable to predict depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Organizational

setting and role ambiguity may serve as variables to predict personal accomplishment. Social

support is a consistent variable in all three dimensions of burnout.

Implications for the Field of Volunteer Administration/Management

It may benefit future studies about volunteer resource managers to inquire about other

variables linked to burnout such as social support and role ambiguity. Knowing who supervises

the volunteer resource manager and the number of programs coordinated could provide

awareness and recognition of what is being accomplished with the current resources (i.e., staff or

budget). If there is limited social support within the organization, how supportive is the

volunteer resource manager's supervisor and the organization's leadership team as well as the

volunteers? Even though volunteer management does not require certification or credentialing, it

would be interesting to assess whether or not certification improves personal accomplishment,

clarity in one's role, and salary for the volunteer resource manager. A qualitative research study

could illuminate the phenomenon of burnout among volunteer resource managers.