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Small Business Burnout: Reversing the Entrepreneurial Exit

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**SMALL BUSINESS BURNOUT:
REVERSING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL EXIT**

A Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Designation
University Honors with Distinction

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This Study by: Adele Kuruppu

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Abstract

This thesis aims to review the current literature on entrepreneurial burnout, identify critical issues, evaluate and assess the research findings, and produce a plan for both new and experienced entrepreneurs to both avoid and minimize burnout. As a business and entrepreneurship student interested in opening a small business myself, I have become drawn to the topic of burnout and how it affects the family dynamic. Qualitative interviews revealed correlations between entrepreneurial characteristics and burnout as well as work-family conflict and burnout. By drawing from current literature and insight from small business owners, this study seeks to identify fundamental causes, symptoms, effects, and solutions for burnout in small business owners and entrepreneurs. These recommendations include encouraging support systems for entrepreneurs and leveraging parenting skills to navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs can use this research to avoid burnout in themselves and others to run their businesses to the best of their ability while maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship is often seen as an exciting and rewarding career in which individuals break free from their corporate jobs to pursue their passions independently. While this is true for most entrepreneurs, it is also true that entrepreneurship is one of the most stressful jobs (Busch et al., 2021). Individual entrepreneurs face many challenges while running a business, including a high workload, financial pressures, time constraints, exhaustion, and more (Busch et al., 2021). Entrepreneurs are required to take on many roles in their business, from administrative to financial to sales and marketing. Entrepreneurs face universal burdens due to heavy workloads, business risks, numerous commitments, pressure from various sources, and the drive for success. (Wang et al., 2023). Busch et al. define a small business owner (SBO) as a business owner with less than 50 employees (Busch et al., 2021). Studies have shown that entrepreneurs have higher levels of stress, but are ultimately more satisfied with their careers than salaried employees (Tahar et al., 2022). Burnout is a syndrome defined as physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion and is a widespread problem among entrepreneurs brought on by the challenges of running and growing their businesses while also trying to maintain their personal lives (Tahar et al., 2022). There are three aspects to burnout: emotional exhaustion being the most prevalent, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of self-accomplishment (McDowell et al., 2019).

The literature review discusses the prevalence of entrepreneurial burnout, identifying its causes and effects on small business owners using frameworks such as the Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R) and the Conservation of Resources Theory (COR). The review will also discuss the importance of social support as well as the impact of work-to-family conflict among entrepreneurs, with an emphasis on women and parent entrepreneurs. Once the dynamics of entrepreneurial burnout are understood, strategies are identified that entrepreneurs can use to

prevent and minimize burnout, which will ultimately assist small business owners to be more successful and well-balanced.

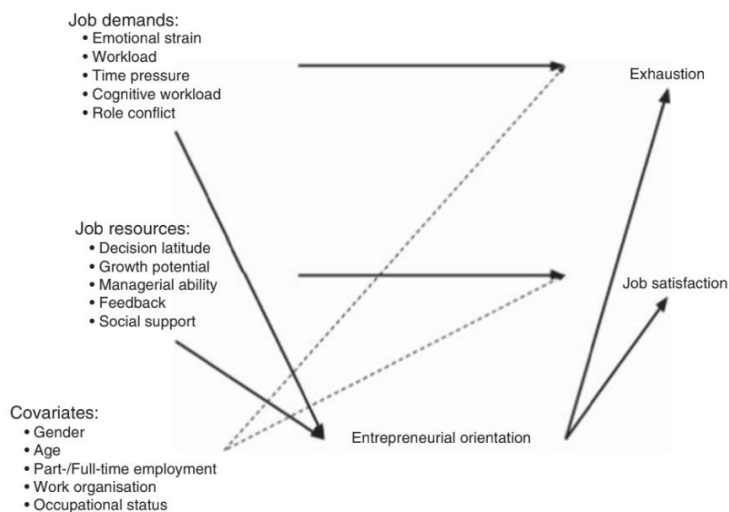
Job-Demands-Resource Model

The Job Demands-Resources Model is a framework that argues that burnout occurs when job demands exceed available resources (McDowell et al., 2019). Job characteristics are separated into two categories: job demands and job resources. Job demands are defined as working conditions that require strenuous physical or psychological efforts (Kattenbach & Fietze, 2018). According to Kattenbach and Fietze, there are five dimensions of job demands: workload, time pressure, cognitive workload, emotional demand, and role conflict. Job demands have a positive correlation with burnout; the higher the job demands, the higher the likelihood of burnout. On the other hand, job demands also have a negative impact on work satisfaction; the higher the job demands, the lower the job satisfaction (Tahar et al., 2022). Job resources are defined as physical, social, and workplace parts of the job that support the success of the business (Kattenbach & Fietze, 2018). Job resources can take the form of social support, technology, financial resources, growth opportunities, and much more. Job resources have a negative correlation with burnout; the more job resources, the lower the likelihood of burnout. Conversely, job resources have a positive impact on job satisfaction; the greater the job resources, the higher the job satisfaction.

Another important factor in understanding entrepreneurial burnout is entrepreneur orientation (EO). EO consists of characteristics such as competitiveness, optimization of performance, proactive thinking, and most importantly, autonomy (Kattenbach & Fietze, 2018). A high EO means that an entrepreneur is more likely to perceive their environment in a positive

light, which reduces their risk of burnout. EO is affected by both needs and resources in the workplace. An entrepreneur who builds a strong EO is better able to use job resources and manage job expectations. The image below depicts the Job Demands-Resources Model and how EO influences entrepreneurial burnout and job satisfaction.

FIGURE 1: Job Demands-Resources Model



Source: Kattenbach & Fietze, 2018

Understanding the relationship between job demands and job resources will help entrepreneurs better understand the elements that contribute to burnout. Addressing these traits can help businesses and owners create work environments that promote well-being and lower the risk of burnout.

Conservation of Resource Theory

The Conservation of Resource Theory (COR) is a “motivational theory relating to the evolutionary needs for people to acquire and utilize resources for survival” (Tahar et al., 2022, p.

703). “Resources are ‘defined as those objects, personal characteristics, conditions or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for the attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies’” (Tahar et al., 2022, p. 703). This means people must invest in resources to minimize risk, which partially explains the causes of entrepreneurial burnout. Unfortunately, entrepreneurs often do not have enough resources to operate their businesses with ease. To cope with stress, people invest their resources to save themselves from losses or to recover from losses and to gain new resources (Kattenbach & Fietze, 2018). If entrepreneurs were able to access the resources they required to effectively and efficiently run their businesses, they would experience minimal burnout.

One important part of COR is the concept of role overload, which occurs when entrepreneurs are overwhelmed by the multiple obligations and activities that must be completed within the restrictions of time, ability, and other considerations (Wang et al., 2023). Role overload happens when people perceive a shortage of resources to meet the demands of the various positions they hold. This might result in the threat of resource loss or a net loss of resources, prompting a necessity to protect these resources from depletion. Entrepreneurs frequently experience tremendous workloads, business risks, numerous responsibilities, and pressure from a variety of sources, all of which add to role overload (Wang et al., 2023). As a result, entrepreneurs may endure physical and mental symptoms such as eye strain, sleep disturbance, headaches, anxiety, and frustration, which can have a detrimental influence on their overall well-being (Wang et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the Conservation of Resources Theory provides useful insights into the causes and effects of entrepreneurial burnout. The framework addresses the importance of acquiring and investing in resources to meet personal needs and survival. However,

entrepreneurs often face difficulties in securing the necessary resources for their business to survive, which causes significant stress and burnout. Role overload also contributes to entrepreneurial burnout when small business owners become overwhelmed by responsibilities, financial burdens, and limited time and resources. This also contributes to emotional and physical exhaustion, leading to burnout. Recognizing the importance of resource management and creating a healthy balance between job expectations and resources can help entrepreneurs foster a more sustainable work environment and reduce the risk of burnout.

Social Support

Social support is essential for entrepreneurs to better navigate the multitude of stresses and challenges that come with owning a business, particularly managing work-family conflict. Entrepreneurship is a complex and stressful job, one that often requires the owner to take on many roles and responsibilities. Family support plays a significant part in how an entrepreneur manages work-family conflict and burnout (Welsh et al., 2021). It is becoming increasingly popular for mothers to leave their jobs and become entrepreneurs, drawn to the flexibility that allows them to be more present for their children (Eddleston et al., 2012). Studies have shown that high family role demands can lead to increased work-life conflict, ultimately affecting business performance (Puryear et al., 2019). This highlights the importance of defining work-family balance not only by time but also by psychological involvement and satisfaction.

There are many ways that families can support an entrepreneur, from “family-to-business enrichment” to “family-to-business support.” Enrichment refers to the resources that are created in the family that are available to the business. On the other hand, support is referred to as family members who provide support for the entrepreneur and their business (Eddleston et al., 2012).

The danger of family-to-business support is when family members feel neglected and develop resentment towards the entrepreneur or their business, thus further exacerbating the work-family conflict.

Gender also influences how entrepreneurs view and manage work-family balance.

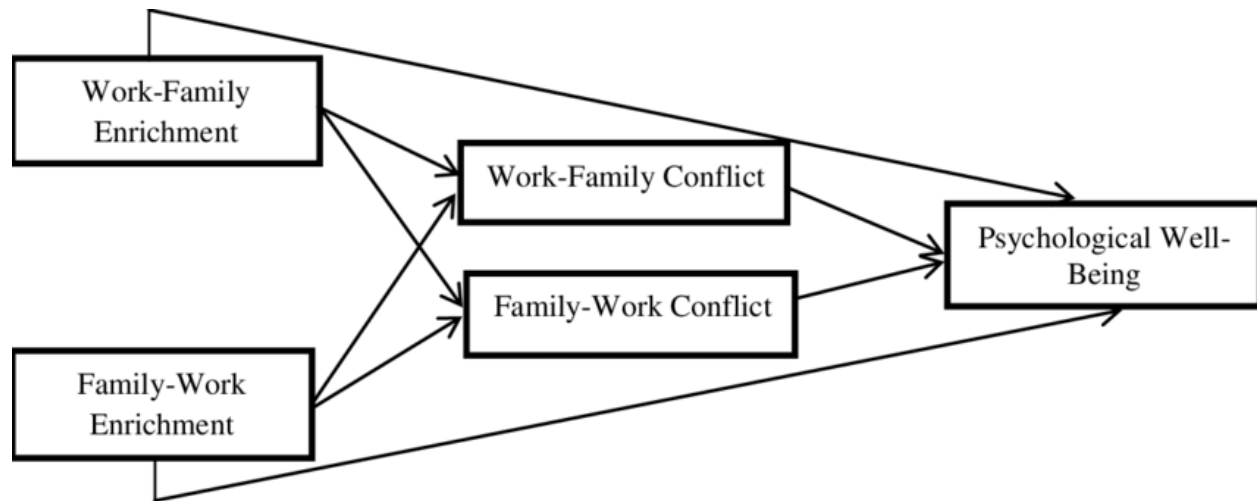
Women, who are sometimes saddled with more domestic chores and societal demands, may take a more holistic approach to balance due to their feminine characteristics, such as empathy and emotional intelligence. They are more likely to forge connections between their personal and professional lives, using their experiences to generate creative strategies for juggling both. They are more likely to create links between work and family, drawing on their experiences to develop innovative solutions for managing both endeavors (Eddleston et al., 2012). However, several studies have proven that women entrepreneurs receive far less support than their male counterparts (Eddleston et al., 2012). Despite facing greater family responsibilities and societal expectations, while also receiving less support, women entrepreneurs are able to overcome these challenges, showing resilience and creating unique solutions

Research shows that family-owned businesses can both increase or decrease stress for women entrepreneurs, depending on the individual. While women entrepreneurs may gain from family resources for business, they may also feel an increased responsibility to the family, which can lead to role conflict (Welsh et al., 2021). However, family support has also been proven to lessen perceptions of work-family conflict, helping entrepreneurs to better manage their duties in both areas. If entrepreneurs learned to find the balance between the two and capitalize on familial support, it would lead to decreased levels of both burnout and family conflict.

Work-to-Family Conflict

Work-to-family conflict presents a significant challenge for entrepreneurs, particularly women, even more so when combined with work-related emotional exhaustion. The stress of business demands can often take a toll on entrepreneurs and spill over into their family life, which can cause family conflict which exhausts the entrepreneur even more (De Clercq et al., 2021). The work-to-family conflict becomes a vicious, draining cycle as depicted below. Perceived competitive hostility exacerbates this stress even further, making it difficult for entrepreneurs to effectively balance the two domains (De Clercq et al., 2021).

FIGURE 2: Work-to-Family Conflict Cycle



Source: Farradinna et al., 2020, p. 7

When confronted with work-family conflict, women entrepreneurs who are driven to succeed while adhering to societal expectations to prioritize family needs may experience decreased business performance. Women entrepreneurs may feel further driven to succeed to

‘make up’ for the family sacrifices they have made for their business. This conflict has an impact not just on their business, but also on their personal pleasure and well-being. Furthermore, thoughts of competitive hostility can exacerbate entrepreneurs' emotional weariness, especially if they feel threatened by external market pressures (De Clercq et al., 2021).

To manage work-family conflict and its impact on company performance, proactive solutions are required. Entrepreneurial couples, or copreneurs, can benefit from social support and recovery programs that promote detachment from work during non-working hours (Busch et al., 2021). Furthermore, perceived social support, particularly from spouses, is an important predictor of burnout recovery in small business owners (Kattenbach & Fietze, 2018). Entrepreneurs can reduce the negative consequences of work-family conflict and maintain long-term business success by cultivating a supportive environment and implementing appropriate coping methods.

In conclusion, understanding the current literature on entrepreneurial burnout is vital to understanding the source of entrepreneurial burnout and strategies to minimize burnout. The Job Demands-Resource Model demonstrates how job demands exacerbate burnout and how job resources can help mitigate burnout. Similarly, the Conservation of Resources Theory states that entrepreneurs have the need to acquire and invest in resources that can help them to succeed, but that they typically do not have sufficient resources needed to help them do so. Additionally, social support is proven to be one of the most important indicators of how entrepreneurs will cope with burnout and how they will navigate work-family conflict. Overall, addressing these issues and creating supportive environments are critical tactics for lowering burnout risks and encouraging long-term business success.

Hypotheses

My research aims are to test the following hypotheses:

1. A lack of work-life balance significantly contributes to entrepreneurial burnout and exit.
2. Social and family support is instrumental in preventing and minimizing entrepreneurial burnout.
3. The dual roles of parenthood and entrepreneurship create unique stressors, resulting in a higher possibility of burnout among entrepreneurs with children.

Entrepreneurship is often associated with high levels of stress due to the inherent risks, uncertainties, and responsibilities involved in running a business. Work-related stressors, such as tight deadlines, financial challenges, and the pressure to succeed, can exacerbate the risk of burnout among entrepreneurs. This first hypothesis posits that these combined factors contribute significantly to burnout among entrepreneurs, ultimately leading to business exit in some cases. However, the second hypothesis is contingent on the first and is vital to the topic. After learning what causes burnout, the next step is finding a solution.

Recognizing the detrimental effects of burnout on both entrepreneurs' well-being and business performance, this second hypothesis proposes that implementing targeted interventions can mitigate burnout and promote business sustainability. Specialized burnout prevention programs may include stress management workshops, mental health support services, and resources for work-life balance. By providing entrepreneurs with the necessary tools, support, and strategies to manage stress effectively, these programs aim to reduce burnout rates and foster a conducive environment for business growth and sustainability. This second hypothesis builds

on the premise that addressing burnout proactively can lead to positive outcomes for both entrepreneurs and their businesses.

Entrepreneurs who are also parents face the dual challenge of managing their businesses while fulfilling their parental responsibilities. The demands of entrepreneurship, such as long working hours, financial pressures, and the need for flexibility, can intersect with the demands of parenthood, including childcare responsibilities, time constraints, and emotional support for children. This third hypothesis suggests that the combination of these roles creates unique stressors that increase the risk of burnout among entrepreneurs with children. By examining the intersection of entrepreneurship and parenthood, this hypothesis aims to uncover the specific challenges faced by this demographic and their implications for burnout prevention strategies. The third hypothesis is a more narrowed version of the first hypothesis, with the intersection of entrepreneurship and parenthood. Both roles are emotionally exhausting, so looking at what happens when someone takes on both roles simultaneously is essential.

These three hypotheses collectively emphasize the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurial burnout, including individual well-being and business sustainability. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of burnout in entrepreneurship and develop practical strategies to support entrepreneurs in managing stress and fostering a healthy work-life balance. It does this by recognizing the connection between work-related stressors, targeted interventions, and the unique challenges faced by entrepreneurs who are also parents.

Methodology

To accomplish my goal and to obtain accurate and relevant data from my research, five various small business owners and entrepreneurs were interviewed. My study used an interview-

based research method to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of small business owners regarding burnout, with a particular focus on the challenges faced by mothers who are entrepreneurs. The participants who were interviewed are small business owners with a range of business types and backgrounds in the Cedar Valley, Iowa area. The primary data source was semi-structured interviews, allowing for open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share their experiences relating to the challenges of owning a business. The following is the list of 17 questions that were asked of all interviewees:

1. How did you get started owning your business?
2. What motivated you to become an entrepreneur?
3. What kind of business do you own?
4. What is the most rewarding part about owning your business?
5. What is the most challenging part about being an entrepreneur?
6. How would you describe burnout as an entrepreneur?
7. What main stressors do you think contribute to entrepreneurial burnout?
8. What do you think are the usual reasons people leave their businesses?
9. How has burnout impacted the performance of your business?
10. How have you navigated entrepreneurial burnout, if you have?
11. What would most likely drive you away if you ever stepped away from your business?
12. What are some sacrifices you have had to make for your business?
13. Do you think those sacrifices are worth it?
14. To what extent does this job challenge juggling work and life?
15. How does being an entrepreneur affect your personal lifestyle?
16. Have you ever put your business ahead of your family? Do you think you ever would?

17. What positive and negative impacts on your family life has owning your business had?

Anticipated Results

Based on the comprehensive literature review prior to the qualitative research, it is anticipated that much of the findings will align with the existing literature while providing new insights into the topic of entrepreneurial burnout. The qualitative interviews are expected to provide a deeper look into the everyday lifestyle of entrepreneurs, including both positive and negative aspects. In addition, the interviews are anticipated to illustrate the underlying causes, effects, and solutions that entrepreneurs encounter. It is anticipated that the findings will support the prevalent reasons for entrepreneurial burnout noted in the literature review, including high levels of stress at work, financial strains, and a work-life balance. It is believed that the interviews will reveal the particular difficulties that entrepreneurs encounter in handling these pressures and the coping techniques they employ to deal with the demands of their line of work. Furthermore, the study examines how support networks might help entrepreneurs avoid burnout. The interviews are expected to reveal the kinds of support available to entrepreneurs, the efficiency of these systems, and the areas in which further assistance could be required. By comprehending how support networks and burnout interact, focused solutions that assist entrepreneurs in stress management and mental health maintenance can be developed.

The study also intends to investigate the connection between burnout and taking risks as an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs put considerable amounts of personal resources into their businesses, which increases their emotional investment and makes them more susceptible to burnout. The goal of the study is to shed light on the psychological aspects of entrepreneurial burnout and provide an understanding of how taking risks can lead to entrepreneurial burnout.

Additionally, this research intends to investigate the prevalence of burnout among business owners and how it affects family dynamics and company performance. It is anticipated that the qualitative data would demonstrate the widespread occurrence of burnout among entrepreneurs, thus emphasizing the negative consequences it has on their health as well as the wider ramifications it has for their personal and professional lives. Therefore, due to the high demands and limited resources, entrepreneurs are more susceptible to burnout than a non-entrepreneur. There will also be results not anticipated, which can be used as further research opportunities in the future.

Findings

Understanding the dynamics of work-to-family conflict and its impact on entrepreneurial burnout is key to finding a solution. The ability to effectively balance the two domains is an important skill in minimizing entrepreneurial burnout. The study found that entrepreneurial characteristics were a significant predictor for burnout, with age, gender, and family status being among the most prevalent. Additionally, the study focuses on how the experiences of entrepreneurs with work-to-family conflict manifest and affect levels of burnout.

TABLE 1: Key Words

Among the interviewees, six keywords were mentioned the most frequently that impact both the personal and professional lives of the entrepreneurs. The table on the right indicates those keywords as well as how often they were mentioned across the five interviews. “Time” revealed itself to be the primary concern among

Word	Mentions
Time	49
Money	42
Family	20
Opportunity	12
Passion	11
Community	8

entrepreneurs, with the word being mentioned 49 times. This reflects the constant pressure to manage a variety of responsibilities, meet deadlines, and ensure the success of their business while also meeting the needs of their family. "Money" followed, capturing the financial strains that come with becoming an entrepreneur, such as finding capital and managing cash flow. The topic of "family" also emerged, emphasizing the important role that family relationships play in the lives of entrepreneurs. Many entrepreneurs expressed a wish to spend more time with their loved ones while pursuing their business ambitions, highlighting the difficulties of juggling work and family obligations. In addition, the words "opportunity" and "passion" were used often, highlighting the motivation of entrepreneurs to take advantage of opportunities to engage in activities they are enthusiastic about. Other noteworthy terms that were mentioned were "community," "flexibility," and "balance," which highlight the value of having strong support systems, being flexible, and preserving equilibrium while starting a business. All things considered, these words encapsulate the complex character of entrepreneurship, including time management, financial concerns, interpersonal interactions, and pursuing one's passion.

The table below shows key answers to the interview questions, providing insight into their challenges with burnout and coping strategies. Among the entrepreneurs interviewed, all were married with children except one. There were three women and two men among the interviewees, with one of the women being unmarried. While passion drove many of the women entrepreneurs, the men seemed to view their businesses more as a means of generating passive income. Despite differences in approach, family and social support emerged as a crucial factor in coping with the demands of entrepreneurship. However, the levels of family inclusion varied in each of the entrepreneurs, as well as the success rates. The two male entrepreneurs and one of the female entrepreneurs minimally include their children in their business, assigning them small

tasks to help them feel involved, rather than feeling ignored for the sake of the business. The fourth parent entrepreneur initially included her children in the business, but ultimately that led to additional family conflict. The primary reasons for entrepreneurship for all interviewees are independence, flexibility, and a desire to be their own boss. Common challenges the entrepreneurs described are time management, balance, and motivation. Common strategies the entrepreneurs utilized included family and social support, self-care, detachment, and organizing their time. By using coping strategies like self-care and detachment, the entrepreneurs showed resilience in the face of challenges like time management and preserving balance. Overall, the results indicate that although becoming an entrepreneur can lead to freedom and flexibility, work-family dynamics management is still crucial for long-term success and overall well-being.

TABLE 2: Interviewee Answers

Question	Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4	Interviewee 5
Gender	F	F	F	M	M
Married	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kids	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Passion or Passive	Passion	Passion	Passion	Passive	Passive
Family Support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Family Inclusion	No	Yes	Yes; failed with kids	Minimal	Minimal
Motivation for Entrepreneurship	Independence	Independence	Independence	Independence	Independence
Experienced Burnout	Yes	Yes	No	Minimal	Minimal
Business above	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

Family					
Challenges	Time, Balance, Motivation	Time, Finances, Balance, External forces,	Staffing, Initial family conflict, Balance, Time	Time, Balance	Repetition, Self-accountability
Strategies	Family & Social Support, Self-Care	Family & Social Support,	Family & Social Support, Detachment	Family & Social Support, Detachment	Family & Social Support, Self-Care

Work-to-Family Conflict

The interviews with entrepreneurs revealed a variety of situations when work and family conflicts occurred. Entrepreneurs shared their experiences with the difficulties of establishing a balance between their business and personal obligations. Nearly all interviewees acknowledged emotions of guilt when the demands of their businesses prevented them from spending as much time as they believed they should with their families. For example, one interviewee shared her guilt over being absent for most of her brother's high school graduation celebration due to work. Some shared stories of how stress from their jobs impacted their families, causing friction and arguments with their loved ones. Another interviewee discussed attempting to bring her daughters into the business, which resulted in significant friction and blurred lines between family and business. She stated, "They in turn didn't give me the freedom to be able to lead them the way I needed to lead them at work." On the other hand, three parent-entrepreneurs actively include their young children in the business, giving them small tasks to allow them to experience entrepreneurship. They claim that including their family in the business in small ways helps mitigate family conflict, as the children can understand the reasonings for their parents'

sacrifices. According to data, entrepreneurs frequently struggle with work-family conflict, which can negatively impact both their general well-being and the success of their businesses.

However, having family support can significantly decrease the work-family conflict, resulting in lower levels of entrepreneurial burnout.

Entrepreneurial Characteristics

Age

It was shown that age was a key determinant, with younger entrepreneurs reporting higher levels of burnout and family conflict than older ones. One parent-entrepreneur claims she would not have started a business with young children, but is impressed by those who do. Young business owners frequently put their companies before their families, which causes stress and strain in their relationships. The two younger entrepreneurs reported higher levels of burnout and family conflict than the three older entrepreneurs. This can likely be attributed to the idea that young entrepreneurs feel the need to spend more time on their business in order to establish themselves. This may lead to neglected relationships and family conflict, which, in turn, increases emotional exhaustion and workplace burnout. Understanding the connection between age and entrepreneurial burnout is vital in creating strategies for reversing the entrepreneurial exit.

Gender

There were clear variations between the two groups of entrepreneurs; females reported higher levels of burnout and family conflict than their male counterparts. The two male entrepreneurs reported minimal levels of burnout, which can also be explained by the level of involvement required for the business. They described their business as a passive business, meaning less hands-on work is required. In addition, the male entrepreneurs declared they have

never put their business above their family, and never would. Women in particular struggled to strike a balance between the demands of their enterprises and the expectation from society that they put their families first. They described their business as a passion business, which they poured a significant amount of their time into. This contradiction implies that especially for women entrepreneurs, burnout and work-family conflict may be influenced by the type of business and level of involvement. Creating unique techniques to assist female entrepreneurs in properly juggling their business and family obligations is vital in addressing these obstacles, which could ultimately improve their general well-being and boost their business.

Family Status

Married entrepreneurs with kids had less difficulty juggling their obligations to their families and their careers than individuals who were single and had no children. No reasons for this were stated, but deductions can be made that parenting skills directly translate to entrepreneurial skills such as resilience, time management, decision-making, and flexibility. This likely correlates with age as parent entrepreneurs are typically older than non-parent entrepreneurs and therefore have an increased amount of life experience and wisdom to draw from. Additionally, having a family can provide a strong support system for entrepreneurs, helping to navigate the challenges of business ownership. Parent entrepreneurs can receive support from their spouses and children, but a lack of support can aggravate entrepreneurial burnout. All five entrepreneurs reported a strong support system within their family, from spouses, children, and immediate family, providing encouragement during challenging times. The responsibilities of parenthood imbue a sense of motivation and accountability, propelling them to succeed, not only for themselves but also for their family. On the other hand, unmarried entrepreneurs may lack family support and may encounter more challenges in finding motivation

and balance. However, it is important to remember that every entrepreneur's experience is unique; not all unmarried entrepreneurs may struggle to find support and not all married entrepreneurs may receive support from their family. Family status is only one predictor for entrepreneurial burnout, and factors such as the dynamics within the family, personal characteristics, and demands of the business all contribute to the level of difficulty managing work-to-family conflict.

Stressors

Time

Time emerges as one of the most significant stressors for entrepreneurs. Juggling multiple responsibilities within limited time frames often leads to feelings of being overwhelmed and increased stress levels. One entrepreneur expressed great concern over balancing time with her family, finding it especially difficult to spend time with her family while also putting forth the effort her business required to succeed. Another entrepreneur found herself spending so much time on her business that she began attempting to refrain from working on Sundays but found it difficult not to turn on autopilot and begin working on tasks for the week ahead. Entrepreneurs must manage their time efficiently to meet deadlines, handle business operations, and maintain a semblance of work-life balance.

Balance

Achieving work-life balance is a constant struggle for entrepreneurs. The demands of running a business often spill over into personal time, leading to feelings of burnout and strain on relationships. Balancing work commitments with personal and family needs requires careful prioritization and boundary-setting. One entrepreneur revealed her struggles in balancing work

and family, often missing family dinners and important events for the sake of her family.

Another entrepreneur explained her challenges in balancing her time and financial commitments with her family. A third entrepreneur found that oftentimes she was bringing work home and was the main topic of conversation within her family. After discussing with her family, she began making an effort to avoid discussing work during family time. These findings confirm the importance of provocatively managing work-life boundaries to prevent and maintain healthy relationships.

Finances

Financial pressures are a ubiquitous stressor for entrepreneurs, particularly in the early stages of business development. Managing cash flow, securing funding, and dealing with financial uncertainty can cause significant stress and anxiety. One entrepreneur revealed she and her husband sold their life insurance policies to fund their business in hopes it would propel the business further. Two interviewees believe that the primary reason for business closure is financial reasons. Entrepreneurs must navigate financial challenges while maintaining the stability and growth of their businesses.

Staffing

Building and managing a team can be a source of stress for entrepreneurs. Finding the right employees, delegating tasks effectively, and maintaining employee morale and productivity are ongoing challenges. One interviewee expressed anxiety over finding quality employees that fit in with the rest of the staff and possess the work ethic required for the position. Staffing issues can consume valuable time and resources, adding to the entrepreneur's workload and stress levels.

Family conflict

Balancing business responsibilities with family commitments can lead to conflict and tension. Entrepreneurs often feel torn between their work and family obligations, leading to strained relationships and feelings of guilt or resentment. As mentioned previously, two of the interviewed entrepreneurs reported family conflict, stemming from a lack of balance. However, they also reported improvements after addressing the conflict and making changes to prioritize their family more. Managing family dynamics while pursuing entrepreneurial goals requires open communication and support from loved ones.

In conclusion, the findings of this study support the research found in the literature reviews as well as my hypotheses. Understanding how entrepreneurial characteristics affect burnout as well as work-family relationships will assist entrepreneurs in developing strategies to minimize the likelihood of burnout and the negative effects that are associated with it. This study highlights the importance of supporting work environments that take into account the various responsibilities of entrepreneurs, with consequences for businesses and entrepreneurs alike. To find successful interventions to boost entrepreneurial well-being and to explore different factors that lead to work-family conflict, more study in this field is necessary in the future.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations can be made to identify and manage entrepreneurial burnout by fostering a healthier work-life balance. These recommendations are primarily aimed at entrepreneurs who are also parents but can be tailored to assist any entrepreneur.

1. Creating a Supportive Environment: Recognizing and leveraging the positive correlation between parenthood and entrepreneurship can benefit both entrepreneurs and their families. By

integrating parenting skills and experiences into their entrepreneurial journey, entrepreneur-parents may find greater fulfillment and resilience in their work, leading to reduced burnout and increased business success. Additionally, supporting entrepreneur-parents with specific resources and opportunities can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for diverse entrepreneurs, contributing to the overall health and sustainability of entrepreneurs everywhere.

2. Support for Parent-Entrepreneurs: Organizations and support networks can offer tailored resources specifically for parent-entrepreneurs. These measures may include providing access to childcare, offering flexible work arrangements, or facilitating peer support groups. Empowering parent-entrepreneurs to build a healthy balance between their business and family responsibilities is essential for their overall well-being and success.

3. Leveraging Parenthood Skills: Many skills learned from parenting, such as time management, decision-making, determination, and flexibility, translate directly to entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs can benefit from learning how to leverage these skills to minimize the risk and severity of burnout. Programs aimed at teaching these skills, whether or not the entrepreneur is a parent, can be valuable in promoting resilience and sustainable success in entrepreneurship.

These recommendations offer business owners practical strategies for addressing burnout and promoting a better work-life balance. By emphasizing preventive measures and fostering supportive environments, organizations and support networks can help reduce emotional exhaustion. By leveraging the positive correlation between parenthood and entrepreneurship as well as providing specialized support to parent-entrepreneurs, these initiatives are strengthened

even more. Ultimately, implementing these methods may assist entrepreneurs more effectively overcome challenges, leading to increased business success, health, and happiness.

Limitations

Five interviews were conducted thus leading to a small sample size. Consequently, the quantity of data obtained was restricted, which can have an impact on the scope of information collected. It is also important to acknowledge that not all applications of the research's findings will be universally applicable. This is largely because only qualitative interviews with small business owners have been prioritized. As a result, the conclusions could not accurately reflect the experiences and viewpoints of company owners in various industries or locations. When analyzing the study's consequences, it is critical to take these limitations into account. Even while the insights from the interviews offer useful information, it's important to acknowledge the need for further research to confirm and expand on these findings.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship is a challenging career choice that is often idolized while overlooking the struggles entrepreneurs regularly face. This research aims to address the issues while identifying common causes of entrepreneurial burnout and trends in women and parent entrepreneurs. To do so, this study reviewed current literature, conducted qualitative interviews with small business owners, and proposed recommendations based on my findings. Through current research, several factors were found that lead to entrepreneurial burnout such as financial stress, work-family conflict, or competitive hostility, to name just a few. The qualitative interviews revealed patterns that further supported this research. First, women are more likely to

experience burnout and work-to-family conflict due to their difficulty in emotionally detaching from their business. Second, parent-entrepreneurs are less likely to experience entrepreneurial burnout due to skills learned from parenting such as time management, decision-making, resilience, and flexibility. Based on these findings, recommendations can be made to be proactive against entrepreneurial burnout through prevention programs, policy initiatives, leveraging parenting skills, and creating a supportive environment. While this research provides valuable insights, it is important to recognize the limitations and use this research to conduct further research. Overall, by addressing the issue of entrepreneurial burnout, entrepreneurs can be empowered to thrive in their ventures while maintaining their well-being and achieving sustainable business success.

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