

Professional Burnout of Faculty Members of Higher Educational Institutions

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the analysis of professional burnout of the academic staff of a number of Moscow higher educational institutions. This problem most often affects residents of large cities, due to the intense rhythm of the city and lack of time for personal life, wasted on the way from home to work and back. The empirical basis of the study was the results of a sociological study conducted by the authors in 2019 on the basis of FSBEI HE Russian State Social University (RSSU), FSBEI HE Moscow State Humanitarian and Economic University (MSHEU), and FSBEI HE Russian State University of Tourism and Service (RSUTS). The problem of the deteriorated psychological state of teachers leading to professional burnout is poorly developed and causes increased research and practical interest, and gives rise to the practical need to improve the development of measures for the prevention and avoidance of burnout. All the above makes further research activity highly relevant, and may be extremely necessary in some universities. This is evidenced by the results of the study.: It is of vital importance to take measures to prevent professional burnout of the academic staff and to develop a strategy for a teacher-based approach considering personal qualities and potential. The administration should consider psychological, spiritual, and labor characteristics of teachers for the formation and distribution of individual schedules of teachers. The Novelty of the study is in investigating the professional burnout of the academic staff of an institution in Moscow.

Keywords: Education, higher education institutions, academic staff, professional burnout, labor conflicts.

INTRODUCTION

In the current context in Russia, higher education, career, and professional growth are the priority life values. Improving the effectiveness of the educational process and, accordingly, the training quality of graduates is a problem that requires an integrated approach to its solution. One of the elements of this approach is to improve the psychological state of the academic staff of the educational institution (Fabelico, & Afalla 2020).

The modern state of such an important social sector as education depends on the psycho-emotional state of higher education teachers (Kabanova, & Vetrova, 2018). The problem of ensuring the psychological state of the teacher has especially gained relevance in the last three decades. This is due to increased requirements for the teacher's personality and his/her role in teaching (Kabanova, & Vetrova, 2018; Kumar & Seranmadevi 2020).

Increased requirements, sometimes overstated, lead to constant stressful situations, and, consequently, to mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion. This exhaustion in turn worsens the neuropsychic state of the academic staff of universities and, accordingly,

contributes to the emergence and intensification of neurotic disorders in teachers.

In the second half of the XX century, scientists from different countries launched research on the mental and physical condition of a person associated with professional activities (Duke, Gross, Moran, Hodsdon, Demirel, Osterholm and Pitt 2020).

"Burnout" - this term was first coined by an American psychologist of German origin Herbert J. Freudenberger. He defined "burnout as a state of mental and physical exhaustion caused by professional activities associated with regular communication with other people in the person-to-person occupation system (Freudenberger, 1974). Further, Freudenberger's research on burnout syndrome was continued by Christina Maslach, Professor of Psychology, University of California, USA, and Susan E. Jackson, Ph.D. in organizational and social psychology, University of California, Berkeley.

To measure the main indicators of professional burnout, Christina Maslach and Susan Jackson (1981), developed a test method, and created the Maslach Burnout Inventory, Maslach & Jackson.

This inventory made it possible to quantify the main parameters of burnout syndrome, identified by the authors as follows:

- Emotional exhaustion - an experience of emptiness and powerlessness;

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- Depersonalization - dehumanization of relations with other people (hardheartedness, heartlessness, cynicism, or rudeness);
- Reduction of personal achievements - underestimation of own achievements, loss of meaning and desire to invest personal efforts at work.

At the end of the last century, a method for diagnosing the level of emotional burnout by (Boiko, 2014) was widespread in our country, which helped distinguish the following phases of the course of professional burnout syndrome, such as stress, resistance, and exhaustion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Emotional burnout is a psychological defense mechanism developed as a complete or partial exclusion of emotions in response to selected traumatic effects. It is an acquired stereotype of emotional, most often professional, behavior. “Burnout” is partly a functional stereotype because it allows a person to dose and economically spends energy resources. At the same time, its dysfunctional consequences may occur when “burnout” adversely affects the performance of professional activities and relations with partners” (Boiko, 2014; Duke *et al.* 2020).

A Russian method was developed for measuring the main indicators of professional burnout - the “Professional Burnout” (PB) Inventory (Vodopyanova, 2017).

Vodopyanova’s inventory “contains 22 statements about feelings and experiences associated with the professional performance. It consists of three subscales (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduction of personal achievements). Answers are evaluated on a 7-point measurement scale and range from “never” (0 points) to “always” (6 points). There are questionnaire options for different professional groups. The presence of a high level of burnout is indicated by high scores on the subscales of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and low scores on the personal achievement scale (Vodopyanova, 2017; Kumar & Seranmadevi 2020).

Some psychologists consider professional burnout the most dangerous disease of those occupied in the “person-to-person” systems, whose activity is impossible without communication.

No wonder the author of the first MBI, Maslach&Jackson, Christina Maslach gave the title to her book: “Emotional Burnout: the Cost of Caring”.

Alfried Langle, Austrian psychologist, psychotherapist, characterized this problem as follows: “Professional burnout is a modern-time symptom. This is a state of exhaustion, which leads to paralysis of our strengths, feelings and is accompanied by the loss of joy in life. At present, cases of burnout syndrome are becoming more frequent. This applies not only to social professions for which burnout syndrome was characteristic earlier, but also to other professions. The spread of professional burnout syndrome is facilitated by an era - a time of achievement, consumption, new materialism, entertainment and enjoyment of life.

A. Langle described the professional burnout syndrome as “a state of human exhaustion, which initially affects well-being, causes emotional distress in the future, and further - collapse of internal principles and a change in internal beliefs” (Langle, 2008; Fabelico, & Afalla 2020).

In (WHO. 2019), experts of the All-Russian Health Organization included a professional emotional burnout syndrome in the International Classification of Diseases - 11, but not as a medical condition or disease, but as one of the factors affecting the state of health.

“Emotional burnout is a syndrome recognized as a result of chronic stress at work that has not been successfully overcome. It is characterized by three signs:

- A feeling of motivational or physical exhaustion;
- Increasing mental distancing from professional duties or a feeling of negativity or cynicism towards professional duties; and
- Impaired productivity (World Health Organization...).

Analysis of Recent Publications on the Problem

In Russia, professional burnout has been the subject of research since the mid-1980s.

Domestic scientists, describing the phenomenon of professional burnout, explain the term “burnout” as a phenomenon, which is a set of destructive symptoms that include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduction in professional achievements.

To designate and describe "Professional burnout", domestic authors used various terms, for example, (Agapova, 2004; Berezentseva 2014; Boiko, 2014; Krapivina, 2004; Nerush, 2012), used the term "emotional burnout" in their works. In turn, (Vodopianova 2017), used the term "mental burnout". The term "emotional burnout" was used by (Yudina, 2011), Samokhval, 2016), in his writings described this phenomenon as "professional destruction and professional burnout".

A significant number of works by modern Russian scientists are devoted to factor models for measuring professional burnout: (Butova, Bychkova, & Lytkina, 2019; Nerush, & Povarenkov, 2013; Polyanskii, & Bykovskaya, 2018; Rytenkova, 2018) and many others.

One of the main foreign authors who studied burnout syndrome were (Maslach, & Jackson, (1981), Greenberg, 2002) and others. A thorough system was created to improve a comprehension of the function of the mental variety atmosphere, HRM practices and character attributes (Big Five) in work fulfillment and execution of the multicultural workforce (Bhatti, *et al.* 2019; Shrivastava, 2020).

However, despite the multiple scientific and practical developments in the studies related to the professional burnout of the academic staff, factors that come to the forefront at present have not been fully studied for understanding and managing professional stresses. The opinion of teachers in the context of occupational stress management has not been sufficiently studied. Currently, the issue of stress management remains poorly developed.

In connection with the increasing requirements for the professional qualities of the academic staff of universities, increased professional load, psycho-emotional overloads, the threshold of the vulnerability of this group of specialists in relation to the development of professional burnout is lowered.

Modernization of the higher education system at the present stage poses new requirements for the academic staff of universities making them quickly and efficiently respond and restructure to new conditions of professional activity, which in turn is a psychological prerequisite for the development of burnout syndrome.

METHODOLOGY

The empirical basis of the study was the results of a sociological study conducted by the authors in 2019 on

the basis of FSBEI HE Russian State Social University (RSSU), FSBEI HE Moscow State Humanitarian and Economic University (MSHEU), and FSBEI HE Russian State University of Tourism and Service (RSUTS).

The respondents were academic staff of the Russian State Social University, Moscow State University of Economics and Social Sciences, the city of Moscow and the Moscow region, aged 25 to 65 years (87 women, 13 men). Gender differences were neglected, since the sample was actually homogeneous in composition (87% of women). The basis of the sample was the information of the HR department about the teaching staff related to the academic staff, in alphabetical order.

The research tools — professional burnout diagnostics — were carried out by the authors based on the three-factor PBS model by K. Maslach and S. Jackson - MBI, and based on the Professional Burnout (PV) Inventory adapted by (Vodopyanova, 2017). This questionnaire allows the respondent to determine the degree of severity of professional burnout in terms of three components.

For this purpose, each subject should mark each item in the questionnaire that corresponds to the frequency of thoughts and his/her experiences: "never", "very rarely", "sometimes", "often", "very often", "every day".

The greater the sum of the points on each individual scale is, the more the respondent has different sides of "burnout". The total number of points indicates the severity of "burnout".

Respondents were provided with the text of a questionnaire with 22 questions and asked to answer how often they have feelings indicated in it.

The purpose of this study was to diagnose the professional burnout of the academic staff of the Russian State Social University, Moscow State Humanitarian and Economic University, and Russian State University of Tourism and Service, Moscow and the Moscow region, as well as to identify the causes of the development of professional burnout of the academic staff and find solutions thereto.

RESULTS

The survey results showed that out of 100 respondents:

1. Extremely high rates of professional burnout (PB) were found in 7 people - (7%) in terms of all three factors: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (D), and reduction of personal achievements (RPA);
2. High rates of professional burnout (PB) were found in 9 people - (9%) in terms of two factors: emotional exhaustion (EE), and depersonalization (D), by factor, reduction of personal achievements (RLD) - in 12 people (12%);
3. Moderate rates of professional burnout (PB) were found in 10 people - (10%) in terms of two factors: emotional exhaustion (EE), and reduction of personal achievements (RPA), according to the depersonalization factor (D), the average indicators in 30 people (30%);
4. Low rates of professional burnout (PB) were found in 17 people - (17%) in terms of two factors: emotional exhaustion (EE), and depersonalization (D) - in 12 people (12%), by the factor, reduction of personal achievements (RLD) - in 14 people (14%);
5. Very low rates of professional burnout (PB) were found in 57 people - (57%) in terms of two factors: emotional exhaustion (EE), and reduction of personal achievements (RPA), depersonalization was detected in 42% of respondents.

The authors used a calculation method for the Pearson criterion χ^2 (Table 1).

The number of degrees of freedom is 8. The value of the χ^2 criterion is 20.368. The critical value of χ^2 at the significance level $p=0.01$ is 20.09. The relationship between factorial and performance characteristics is statistically significant at a significance level of $p<0.01$.

The results of the study show that 7% of subjects have a critical level of professional burnout, quite close

to the critical level of professional burnout, and 9% of the subjects had high rates.

DISCUSSION

During the study, these seven respondents with a very high level of professional burnout reported that they feel emotionally exhausted, feel depressed and spathic, tired and unwilling to go to work. They have a sense of anxiety, insomnia, often increased pressure, and headaches and backaches. They believe that all these symptoms appeared due to prolonged stress at work.

There are external and internal factors that can lead to professional burnout. For example, working conditions relate to external factors: excess load, overloaded schedule; low wage, unloved work, labor conflicts, unhealthy atmosphere, pressure or isolation in the team, etc.

External factors can be changed relatively quickly, for example: find another work at another university.

Internal factors include character traits and beliefs, hyper responsibility, attitudes, patterns of behavior that guide a person in making decisions, and also thanks to a set of certain internal factors, a person continues to endure a situation he/she feels totally unhappy with.

External factors can affect the development of professional burnout when a person already has a set of internal factors contributing to the development of professional burnout.

A person enters a state of professional burnout smoothly, moving like in a spiral. He/she gradually refuses one or the other, not noticing how it rolls into a state of burnout.

An interesting fact is that the subjects with high rates admitted that they suffer from some signs of burnout: depression, persistent fatigue, lack of sleep, fear of a new working day, poor concentration, lack of

Table 1: Analysis of Contumacy Tables Using the Chi-Square Test

Factor attribute	Performance indicator					
	extremely high	high	average	low	extremely low	the amount
Psychoemotional exhaustion	7	9	10	17	57	100
Depersonalization	7	9	30	12	42	100
Reduction of personal achievements	7	12	10	14	57	100
Total	21	30	50	43	156	300

desire to delve into students' problems and low professional self-esteem. Their body has already triggered the alarm, reporting that something goes wrong in life.

The subjects, whose burnout rates were extremely low, were friendly, calm, full of enthusiasm and new ideas, were successful in their work. They noted that they do not concentrate their attention exclusively on work, have an exciting hobby, do sports, and actively spend holidays.

To prevent a problem - professional burnout of the academic staff of Moscow, it is necessary to develop a set of measures, which will include:

1. Training of psychological self-regulation skills.
2. Formation of overcoming behavior as a resource of stress resistance.
3. Formation of support from the academic management as a way to protect against burnout.

To relieve the existing stressful conditions of the academic staff of Moscow universities, we recommend them to take the following preventive measures:

- Live a healthy and harmonious lifestyle;
- Maintain balanced and regular physical activity, which favorably affects the psychological state of a person, reduce worry and anxiety.
- Find a comfortable balance between work and leisure;
- Maintain an optimistic view of life, self-confidence;
- Have a realistic view of oneself and others: avoid excessive personal demands, which are one of the main causes of stress;
- Do not refuse the help of others;
- Positively perceive innovation.

Prevention of professional burnout in the academic staff should be carried out both at the organization and individual levels.

CONCLUSION

The problem of the deteriorated psychological state of teachers leading to professional burnout is poorly

developed and causes increased research and practical interest, and gives rise to the practical need to improve the development of measures for the prevention and avoidance of burnout. All the above makes further research activity highly relevant, and may be extremely necessary in some universities. This is evidenced by the results of the study.

It would be a very constructive method to carry out the recommended preventive measures in every university in Moscow to prevent the formation and accumulation of professional stress, complicated relationships with others, worsening of self-esteem, and as a result, professional burnout.

Increased enthusiasm, the emergence of new inspiration and creative activity among teachers, in our opinion, would improve the quality of the entire educational process in general and in the said universities in particular.

The World Health Organization (2019) is planning to proceed with the development of evidence-based workplace mental health guidelines.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

A same research study can be done in other countries in order to make a more comprehensive conclusion in this area.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Elena E. Kabanova, Ekaterina A. Vetrova, Elena I. Kubasova

E E.K; collected the information, E A.V; analyzed the data, E I.K wrote the paper.

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