Teachers’ occupational burnout syndrome in secondary school

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Abstract

Due to many reasons, the phenomenon of occupational burnout in educational institutions is ignored. Therefore, it was considered advisable to carry out a research in the scope of the level, frequency and causes of occupational burnout among teachers in secondary school. The research work subjects are teachers of a randomly selected mechanical school complex in Poland. The results of the research presented in this paper lead to the conclusion that the occupational burnout syndrome affects the surveyed teachers. Most of the teachers are aware of the occupational burnout affecting them, however they are unable to unequivocally define its level. Almost 80% of respondents apply no remedies.

Paper type: research article

Keywords: occupational burnout, teachers, work

Introduction

The term “occupational burnout” is closely connected with work, career and stress. Occupational activity may cause mixed feelings and various opinions. For graduates of schools and the unemployed it can be the only goal they want to achieve, however for an “ordinary” employee it can cause torment and exhaustion.

Work expresses itself with two opposite values: positive and negative. Virtues include experience, fulfilment, satisfaction and professional development. In his encyclical Laborem exercens John Paul II (1981) writes: “Work is man’s good – the good of his humanity – this is because through work man not only transforms the na-

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ture, adjusting it to his needs, but also realizes himself as a human being, and also in a way becomes a human being.” The minuses of the performed work include fatigue, conflicts and continuous rivalry, which leads to exhausting mental tensions contributing to the appearance of occupational burnout (Szeliga-Kowalczyk, 2011).

Thanks to empirical research, many theoretical concepts of occupational burnout have been created, which show this phenomenon in its various aspects. The diverse approaches are mutually complementary, they show the multidimensional character of the phenomenon and difficulty in creation of the most appropriate, approved by all, theory of occupational burnout (Boucher & Maslach, 2009; Gonzalo, Polman, & Maslach, 2010; Jenkins & Maslach, 1994; Kwan, Bond, Boucher, Maslach, & Gan, 2002; Leiter & Maslach, 2009; Maslach, 2003, 2011; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Maslach, Leiter, & Jackson, 2012; Reevy & Maslach, 2001; Whitney, Sagrestano, & Maslach, 1994).

Despite the fifty-year long period of research of the occupational burnout, scientists are not unanimous in understanding this syndrome. Perlman and Hartman (1982) arrived at about fifty definitions. Counting the number of the created definitions of the burnout, nevertheless all the authors refer to the pioneer researchers of the phenomenon – Maslach and Freudenberger (e.g. Maslach & Goldberg, 1998; Freudenberger, 1974). The exceptional popularity of the burnout concept proposed by Maslach can be explained by the fact that she has formulated a psychometric tool adapted to any conditions of work in any country, which reliably and sensibly measures the burnout aspects in an individual (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

The public opinion and research in Poland confirm that the occupational situation of teachers leads to them being burnt out in their profession, which often is ignored in educational institutions (Pyżalski & Merecz, 2010; Tucholska, 2009).

The purpose of the paper is a deepened analysis of literature and data on the described and studied phenomenon of occupational burnout among teachers. Another purpose, resulting from the first one, is to examine the level, the frequency and the reasons of burnout among teachers in a randomly selected research group of teachers working in a mechanical school complex.

1. The concept of theories and the significance of the occupational burnout phenomenon among teachers

More and more often the persons who are professionally active have to contend with one of the greatest threats of the 21st century – the “burnout syndrome.” Freudenberger, the American psycho-analytically oriented psychiatrist was the first to use the term “burnout” – which is a metaphor recalling a burnt out candle or a bonfire – to define the state of exhaustion caused by excessive demands made by the environment and the given individual, in an article published in Journal of Social Issues of
1974 (Piotrowska, 2006, p. 45). According to Freudenberger the occupational burnout syndrome is a “state which forms itself at a slow pace by engaging all the life energy of an individual and making him suffer a never ending stress, which in turn has a very negative impact on beliefs, motivation and behavior of the given person” (Śęk, 2007, p. 37). Symptoms on the physical level include headaches, fatigue, and on the behavioral level – emotional see-saws, fits of anger, and on the mental level – a continuous feeling of boredom, discouragement (Rogala-Pawelczyk & Parkitna, 2003, p. 8). Since then, the term occupational burnout, introduced to the scientific language, has been appearing in the psychological literature regularly.

Civilizational changes, including dynamic development of the social services sector, whose representatives are particularly vulnerable to the symptoms of burnout, make burnout become a common problem (Anczewska, Świtaj, & Roszczyńska, 2005, p. 68).

The burnout syndrome affects the professions which have an aid nature. Hence, the exposure of the profession of teacher, among others. Exhaustion, depersonalization, alienation combined with lack of job satisfaction is a classic burnout syndrome occurring in this profession (Śęk, 2000).

The well-known social psychologist Aronson (2009) introduced, in 1983, the notion occupational burnout, defining it as a mental state affecting people who are addicted to work consisting in providing help, work with people and who are the giving party in such relations. Aronson also maintains that the burnout occurs in professions, which are not people-oriented and in circumstances not connected with performance of work, it can, for example, relate to marriage. The symptom is mental, emotional and physical exhaustion. In general, it is a progressing which leads to the mental destruction of an individual (Aronson, 2009, p. 32).

In the 1980s, Cherniss and Golembiewski (Anczewska et al., 2005, p. 68) presented the issue of burnout in a wider context, because they emphasized the role of management and work organization in the process of burning oneself out. It is important to construct coherent theoretical models of burnout, because their absence makes it difficult to diagnose and infer with regard to the prevention and treatment of burnout (Anczewska et al., 2005, p. 68).

One of the most common definitions of occupational burnout has been formulated by Maslach – which reads as follows: “occupational burnout is defined as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lowered satisfaction from occupational achievements, which may occur in individuals performing professions based on contacts with other people” (Tucholska, 2009, p. 22). The state of continuous tension that occurs in such professions may lead to emotional exhaustion. Maslach presents a three-dimensional model of burnout, which includes exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of effectiveness. Exhaustion is characterized by fatigue, excessive workload and lack of energy for work. In teaching this is due to the need to transfer knowledge and experience, to inspire young people to be creative, as well as the need to shape personalities. Depersonalization is a cynicism,
adoption of an indifferent and distanced attitude in interpersonal contacts, often almost heartless, while the lack of effectiveness is a feeling of a defective effectiveness in action, negative self-esteem, radical fall of feeling of one's competence. In the teaching profession it is, inter alia, the negative effect of social exposure, continuous functioning in difficult and stressful situations (Pyżalski & Merecz, 2010, pp. 7ff). Lack of effectiveness is a sense of unrealized goals, excessive bureaucracy, the awareness of being an educational officer/official which leads to negative self-esteem and dramatic downturn in the sense of one's competence (Maslach & Leiter, 2011, pp. 34–35). In 1980 Maslach developed MBI questionnaire (Maslach Burnout Inventory), which is currently the most useful tool to measure occupational burnout. It addresses 22 statements defining the mental condition of the organism in connection with the performed work (Anczewska et al., 2005, p. 68).

Another measurement tool is a model, in which burnout is evaluated in terms of emotional exhaustion and lack of commitment. This is OLBI questionnaire (Cieślak & Benight, 2008, p. 296).

In Poland the problem of occupational burnout concerns an increasing number of teachers. The factors influencing this process include: the above mentioned feeling of lack of professional efficacy, emotional exhaustion, lack of sufficient social support, lack of ability to cope with stress as well as insufficient, in the opinion of the concerned, prestige of the teaching profession (Świętochowski, 2011, pp. 133–143).

There are three types of sources of burnout among teachers, namely (Woźniak-Krakowian, 2013, pp. 119–131):

- individual, such as low self-esteem, perfectionism, sense of control, dependency, defensiveness,
- interpersonal – lack of cooperation for the benefit of rivalry, lack of trust in the workplace, blocking career promotion or questioning the competence,
- organizational – no possibility of development, lack of opportunities to express oneself and take a stand on specific issues, dissatisfaction with career development, etc.

Significant context of burnout in the teaching profession takes stress. The following factors are present here as a source of stress:

- teacher – student relationships,
- the structure and the management of school – over-formalization and bureaucracy,
- inadequate working conditions,
- legislative changes in the education system,
- evaluation of teacher's work,
- insufficient status of the profession in the views of the concerned,
- lack of opportunities for promotion, etc.
2. Research methodology

The phenomenon of burnout in educational institutions is ignored due to many reasons. This is a disease underlain by mental reasons. It is not spoken of, which is the reason why it seems not to occur in our circles.

Teachers as an occupational group are particularly susceptible to burnout in the context of their work (Sekułowicz, 2002; Będzińska-Wosik, 2003; Kędracka, 1999). This is mainly due to the need for continuous involvement and efforts to implement educational and pedagogical processes with simultaneous exposure to stress resulting from:

- functioning in an environment of students/pupils with different types of still undeveloped personalities,
- demanding attitude of parents and the need to "be good."

For this reason, burnout among teachers goes through certain stages (Maslach, 2000):

- the phase of fascination with work and full involvement,
- the phase of stagnation, which consists in the feeling of difficulty of the work done by a teacher,
- the phase of frustration resulting in conflicts, inability to control the discipline, coercion towards students,
- the phase of apathy, when the teacher begins to perform only the minimum necessary duties, without any involvement,
- the phase of burnout – total exhaustion of a teacher.

In this connection, the following research problems have been formulated in relation to the secondary school:

- What is the level and frequency of occupational burnout among teachers?
- What are the most frequent symptoms of occupational burnout of teachers?
- What are the main environmental and personality causes of occurrence of occupational burnout of teachers?
- What factors influence the level of occupational burnout?
- What is the awareness of the suffered level of occupational burnout, what remedy strategies are applied?

Variables in this work are socio-demographic factors, and the indicators of these variables are: age (up to 25 years, 26–35, 36–45, above 45 years), gender (woman, man), length of work experience (below 5 years, 6–10 years, 11–15, above 15).
The next variable is a set of selected personality and environment factors of the occupational burnout. Indicators of this variable include: low remuneration, tensed relations between co-workers, lack of social support, difficult students, bad relations with parents, excessive work burden, chaos at work, difficult and contradictory claims raised by the environment, improper preparation for the profession, useless strategies of coping with problem situations, wrong organization of the work, low self-esteem, treating of stressing elements as a threat, strong motivation and active participation in school initiatives.

The third variable includes the applied remedy strategies, and the indicators of this variable are: ignorance of the problem, avoiding the problem, consideration of one’s own behavior and its improvement, finding of a hobby, going in for sport, relaxation and recreation, cherishing of good relations with people, improvement of techniques of coping with stress, care of a sufficient amount of sleep and a proper diet.

The last variable is the frequency of occurrence of occupational burnout and its level among teachers. The indicator of the variable is the result of the applied Maslach’s questionnaire (0–25 points – very low level of occupational burnout, 26–50 – low level of occupational burnout, 51–75 – medium level of occupational burnout, 76–100 – high level, 100–132 – very high level of occupational burnout).

This own researcher applied a questionnaire, which allows for gathering of information about numerous communities by way of research of a small sample, or a representative sample. It was a written questionnaire, containing closed questions and one open question, carried out in the work place of the research respondents. Additionally, Maslach’s questionnaire MBI (Maslach Burnout Inventory), researching the occupational burnout, was applied – the popular research tools applied in measuring of the occupational burnout. This questionnaire consists of 22 phrases concerning the emotional exhaustion, professional satisfaction and depersonalization. It is up to respondents to assess, in a scale from 0–6, to what extent they experience the described situations (Leiter & Maslach, 2004; Maslach & Leiter, 2005; Maslach, Leiter, & Schaufeli, 2009; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

The respondents were teachers of a randomly selected mechanical school complex of the Opolskie Voivodeship, who reserved the right to remain anonymous. This complex is the only who agreed to take part in the study under the condition of anonymity. Other schools claim the problem of burnout in them does not exist. The research embraced 45 teachers, in this, 20 men and 25 women. The survey was carried out in March 2015. The questionnaire was distributed among the teachers who declared their willingness to participate in the survey.

Has been done an analysis of quantitative data. The basis of the gained knowledge on the level and frequency of occurrence of the burnout syndrome in the surveyed teachers was Maslach’s questionnaire (MBI). The respondents assessed the

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2 Due to the purpose of the elaboration and raised problems, only essential factors were selected.
occurrence of particular situations in a scale from 0–6. The circumstances they assessed concerned the way of treatment of co-workers, satisfaction from the work and the feeling of exhaustion. The results were obtained thanks to the key, according to which the respondents’ answers were allotted an appropriate number of points. The obtained result determined a given level of burnout.

3. Results – sociodemographic, personality and environmental factors of teachers’ occupational burnout in secondary school

Figure 1 shows that the biggest number of the surveyed 18 (40%) represent a low level of the occupational burnout. However, the 13 (30%) result on a medium burnout level is alarming. None of the respondents achieved a very high level of occupational burnout.

The Figure 1 also shows that occupational burnout affects as much as 41 (91%) of the surveyed teachers. Of course, most of them are in its initial phase, although one can state that the burnout syndrome is a very frequent phenomenon.

![Figure 1. Occupational burnout level of surveyed teachers, n = 45.](image)

Thanks to the personal data box (gender, age, length of service) included in the questionnaire, the researchers obtained the below results which present how particular socio-demographic variables influence the level of occupational burnout.

As the Table 1 shows, 10 (50%) of men suffer a low level of occupational burnout. The medium level of burnout occurs a little more frequently in women 8 (32%),
while the high level affects only 1 (4%) of women. This may be an evidence of a bigger susceptibility of women to occurrence of the syndrome, because women find it more difficult to control negative emotions. Moreover, it’s women who still are in the forefront of a simultaneous fulfilment of many roles, while acting under the pressure of time.

Table 1  Level of occupational burnout depending on gender of the surveyed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of occupational burnout</th>
<th>Women ( n = 25 )</th>
<th>Men ( n = 20 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No occupational burnout</td>
<td>4% ( n = 1 )</td>
<td>15% ( n = 3 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low level of burnout</td>
<td>24% ( n = 6 )</td>
<td>10% ( n = 2 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low level of burnout</td>
<td>36% ( n = 9 )</td>
<td>50% ( n = 10 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium level of burnout</td>
<td>32% ( n = 8 )</td>
<td>25% ( n = 5 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level of burnout</td>
<td>4% ( n = 1 )</td>
<td>0% ( n = 0 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The biggest group of teachers representing a low level of burnout is the age group of 36–45 followed closely by a group of people older than 45 (Table 2). In the youngest age group (26–35 years), the most frequently achieved level of occupational burnout is the medium level 6 (46.1%). Both the research and the literature of the subject indicate that young teachers are most susceptible to the threat brought by this disease. Their vulnerability is most probably caused by the lack of experience and difficulties in the acceptance of the school reality.

Table 2  Level of occupational burnout depending on the age of the surveyed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of occupational burnout</th>
<th>&gt;45 years ( n = 14 )</th>
<th>36–45 years ( n = 18 )</th>
<th>26–35 years ( n = 13 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No occupational burnout</td>
<td>7.1% ( n = 1 )</td>
<td>11.1% ( n = 2 )</td>
<td>0% ( n = 0 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low level of burnout</td>
<td>14.3% ( n = 2 )</td>
<td>27.8% ( n = 5 )</td>
<td>15.4% ( n = 2 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low level of burnout</td>
<td>57.1% ( n = 8 )</td>
<td>61.1% ( n = 11 )</td>
<td>38.5% ( n = 5 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium level of burnout</td>
<td>35.7% ( n = 5 )</td>
<td>22.2% ( n = 4 )</td>
<td>46.1% ( n = 6 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level of burnout</td>
<td>0% ( n = 0 )</td>
<td>5.6% ( n = 1 )</td>
<td>0% ( n = 0 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The biggest percentage (50%) of the low level of occupational burnout concerns the groups whose length of work record is 11–15 years and 6–10 years (Table 3). It is visible that even the medium level of burnout is achieved by a smaller number of respondents with work record longer than 15 years, than a group who has an aver-
age work track record of 6 to 15 years. Teachers with a smaller track record are more susceptible to occurrence of burnout symptoms, which may be caused by the lack of worked out defensive mechanisms in fight against them, which have been developed by those more experienced pedagogues.

Table 3  Level of occupational burnout depending on the length of service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of occupational burnout</th>
<th>&gt;15 years n = 28</th>
<th>11–15 years n = 6</th>
<th>6–10 years n = 10</th>
<th>&lt;5 years n = 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No occupational burnout</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low level of burnout</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low level of burnout</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium level of burnout</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level of burnout</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another phenomenon researched were the most frequently occurring symptoms of occupational burnout in teachers. The respondents could select more than one answer. Symptoms which had not appeared in any of the respondents were not included in the Table 4.

The majority of teachers perform their work with a feeling of a smaller or bigger discomfort. The most irritating symptoms include lack of energy 32 (70%), bad feeling 30 (66%) and reluctance to go to work 27 (60%). The aversion has a basis in the lack of satisfaction, lack of pleasure from the performed work and disappointment felt by 19 (38%) of the respondents. A consequence of the problems in the mental aspect of the burnout is deterioration of the physical condition of the individual, e.g. headaches, sleeping disorders, cardiac and gastric disorders. Symptoms connected with depersonalization appear incidentally, although they can intensify if not remedied.

In order to solve the research problem concerning the identification of environmental factors having an influence on the occurrence of the burnout syndrome in teachers, the responding teachers assessed the inconveniences resulting from their work at school. A scale from 1 to 8 was used where 1 – meant the biggest difficulty, and 8 – the smallest one.

In Figure 2, the grey columns determine the number of people who selected the given answer as the factor most onerous for them, and the white ones – the factor less onerous in their opinion. 21 (48%) of the respondents maintain that the biggest difficulty in their profession is an excessive work burden. The respondents had a possibility to indicate the details, which compose that problem and many of them indicated to bureaucracy as the worst requirement they face in their work. The second place is occupied by disordered atmosphere at work – 18 answers (40%). In the detailed part, the indicated problems were lack of support, rivalry and
Table 4  
*Symptoms of occupational burnout of the surveyed teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptoms of occupational burnout</th>
<th>% Resp.</th>
<th>Resp.</th>
<th>% Answers</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Energy</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad feeling</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctance to go to work</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping disorders</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headaches</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastric and cardiac disorders</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of disappointment with work</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of satisfaction and pleasure of the performer work</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secluding oneself from others</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling into various conflicts</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small effectiveness of work</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional coolness</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth of aggression</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortening of the work time</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low self-esteem</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multiple-choice question.

![Bar chart showing percentages of responses to environmental factors contributing to occupational burnout](chart.png)

Figure 2.  *The main environmental factors of occurrence of the occupational burnout syndrome in surveyed teachers.*
conflicts. The smallest problem at teachers’ work are the relations with parents of their students 19 (42%). The second least annoying problem consists in the difficult and contradictory requirements put by the environment 17 (38%).

In order to solve the research problem in the scope of identification of personality reasons for occurrence of occupational burnout, the respondents selected answers which concerned themselves. The percentages in the Table 5 should not be summed up because there was a possibility to mark more than one answer in the questionnaire.

The main personality reasons for occurrence of the occupational burnout syndrome in teachers are improper strategies of coping with stress. The frequency of occurrence of this answer reaches as much as 32 (70%), hence, one can conclude that it is the direct link in the process of occupational burnout development. 24 (53%) of persons experiencing stress perceive the feeling as a threat rather than motivation for action. Many teachers 20 (46%) are strongly motivated and committed to their work. The strong commitment is the reason why there appear excessive requirements concerning the work and the individuals themselves, and assuming more and more new duties sooner or later brings disastrous effects. Such person's organism gets exhausted and then burns out.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality factors</th>
<th>% Resp.</th>
<th>Resp.</th>
<th>% Answers</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improper stress coping strategies</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treating of stressful factors as threats</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong motivation, strong commitment</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improper work organization</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient preparedness for the profession</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multiple-choice question.

Do teachers know themselves perfectly and can decide whether or not they belong to the group of already “burnt out”? 32 (73%) of them are aware of their mental state and suspect their own occupational burnout. The rest of the surveyed 12 (27%) consider themselves to be persons whom the problem does not concern, despite the fact that the research indicate to existence of initial phases of the syndrome in those teachers. The lack of self-knowledge about the existence of the state
of burnout usually has negative consequences, because a person who is of the opinion that nothing bothers him/her, does not apply any remedies, which make their condition worse.

Apperception of the occupational burnout, which affects a teacher is usually wrong. Most of the teachers 30 (68%) are not able to correctly define the level of their own burnout without help from professionals. Knowledge of those surveyed concerning the described phenomenon was not too wide, which was the reason why they could not prevent its effects. Awareness education in the early stage of education is an important preventive measure.

The respondents gave answers to an open question concerning the remedy strategies, which are used in the fight against burnout. As much as 36 (80%) of teachers acknowledge that they do not use any remedy strategies. They justify their conduct saying it is needless and state that the burnout phenomenon does not apply to them. Actually, they are not aware of the fact that such simple activities as: relaxation, proper nutrition, appropriate amount of sleep – are strategies, which are helpful in prophylaxis of burnout.

What is worrying is the fact that a very small number of teachers 5 (11%) improve their skills in fighting the stress. The analysis of the subject and object shows that the main personality cause of occurrence of the burnout syndrome is a shortage of suitable ability to manage the stress.

Conclusions

The discussion on the theory of occupational burnout in the group of teachers presented in the first part of the article confirms that the described phenomenon is a rapidly progressive problem. Stress, emotional exhaustion, constant exposure to difficult and often unpredictable situations with simultaneous lack of environmental and institutional support cause the universality of this negative phenomenon. This is also confirmed by the results of the surveys presented in the article.

The results of the research presented in this paper allow for statement that the main goal of the work aiming at checking of the level of frequency and causes of occurrence of occupational burnout among teachers in secondary school has been achieved, namely:

- The occupational burnout syndrome affects as many as 40 (91%) of the surveyed teachers. Most of them are in the initial phase, but it can be stated that the burnout syndrome is a frequent phenomenon, taking into consideration that only 4 (9%) of the surveyed do not feel any of its symptoms.
- 10 (50%) of men achieve a low level of occupational burnout. The medium level of burnout occurs rather more often among women than among men, and the high level only occurs among women. The biggest group represent-
The low level of burnout is the group in the age of 36–45, and it is closely followed by a group of persons in the age above 45. The youngest group (26–35 years) most often reaches the medium level of occupational burnout. The biggest percentage of the low level of occupational burnout concerns the groups with then work record of 11–15 years and 6–10 years. The medium level of burnout is reached by a smaller number of respondents with work record longer than 15 years, than the group having an average work record between 6 and 15 years.

- The most biting symptoms include lack of energy, bad feeling and reluctance to go to work. A consequence of problems in the mental aspect of burnout is deterioration of the physical condition of an individual.
- Factors which influence the burnout level include: excessive overburdening with work, disturbed atmosphere at work, lack of social support, insufficient remuneration, problem students, improper stress management strategies.
- Most of the teachers are aware of the occupational burnout affecting them, however they are unable to unequivocally define its level. Almost 36 (80%) of respondents apply no remedies.

In order to carry out a comparative analysis of the occupational burnout phenomenon, of which the reference point will be this research carried out in a secondary level school, it seems advisable to also carry out surveys in kindergartens, primary schools, semi-secondary schools and higher schools (universities), especially since so far only a few research projects of this type have been undertaken (Świętochowski, 2011, pp. 133–143).

References


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