

## **Psychological features of teachers «Professional burnout» manifestation**

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**Abstract.** The article presents the results of "professional stress" theoretical and empirical study which is a multidimensional phenomenon expressed in physiological and psychological reactions to a difficult professional situation. The syndrome of "professional burnout" as a consequence of long-term professional stress of medium intensity is considered. The structure of the "professional burnout" syndrome is determined as a three-component system based on the researches of K. Maslach and S. Jackson, which includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduction of personal achievements. As well as on V. Boyko's definition, which includes such components as tension, resistance, exhaustion in the structure of the syndrome.

**Keywords:** *anxiety, professional burnout, emotional exhaustion, emotional burnout.*

### **Introduction**

*Relevance of the research.* The article considers the concept of "stress" as a reaction of the body, which is expressed in a state of tension, depression and occurs in a person under the pressure of a long-term influence, which includes both physiological and psychological components. Stress promotes the body mobilization for self-defence, adaptation to a new situation, activates protective mechanisms that provide resistance or adaptation to stress. The influence of stress is especially evident within pedagogical activity, due to its oversaturation with stressors, such as responsibility for the younger generation development, active interpersonal interaction, increased emotional tension, insufficient social evaluation, etc. One of the most serious consequences of long-term professional stress is the syndrome of "professional burnout". Therefore, it is very important to study the peculiarities of its occurrence, development and course in pedagogical activity.

### **1. Problem Statement**

A significant stress factor is the psychological and physical overload for teachers, which contribute to the emergence of the so-called "professional burnout syndrome" i.e. exhaustion of moral and physical strength, which inevitably affects both the effectiveness of professional activity, psychological well-being and family relationships.

Nowadays, when the life instability in Ukraine, countless social and economic difficulties, insufficient funding in the field of education, and low wages are making themselves known, the

problem of professional stress is becoming especially urgent. Among the professions with a high risk of occupational stress, one of the leading places is taken by the teaching profession. According to T. Zaychikova researches, the teacher belongs to the category of employees who are the most loaded (Zaychikova T., 2003). Studies conducted in the 80s revealed that a teacher's free time is 20-35 hours a week. Modern studies have recorded a reduction of the teacher's free time by 15 hours a week. The average working week in the late 1990s averaged 53-57 hours per week. The total working time of teachers of different subjects is not the same, teachers of different languages have the longest working week, followed by mathematicians and physicists (57 hours), primary school teachers have got 55 hours. Unlike most workers who have two days off, a teacher very often only has one. But on Sunday, about 60% of teachers work, but among linguists there are almost 80%. In general, researchers state that the difference between the fixed and actual working week is 200-300% for most teachers. Research results show that high quality of pedagogical work is achieved, as a rule, by increasing working hours. It is worth stating that when the load increases, the best teachers, who are the professionals, are overloaded most of all. From an economic point of view, this means that in one-hour best teacher receives about 20% less than a less qualified teacher. In addition, a teacher must perform a large number of functional duties. Only during 45 minutes of working time, he is forced to make extremely many demands on students. Every day, the teacher communicates with students, colleagues, and the administration for 6-8 hours a day. In addition, the teacher should closely cooperate with out-of-school educational institutions, state and public structures, and students' parents. Also, the teacher should communicate with his/her family, relatives, and friends. At the same time, each audience needs a qualitatively different communicative approach. Therefore, switching from one group to another also requires energy. Also, based on the above-mentioned studies, the work of a teacher is one of the most psychologically stressful professions. Such a professional load requires powerful resources to ensure the pedagogical activities implementation. Thus, the problem of "professional burnout" becomes especially relevant for teaching staff.

## **2. Research Questions**

The syndrome of "professional burnout" is a stress reaction that occurs as a result of long-term professional stress of medium intensity. From the point of view of the stress process definition (stages of anxiety, resistance and exhaustion) according to H. Selye, burnout can be attributed to the third stage, which is preceded by a persistent and uncontrollable level of excitement.

Frances Storley, a professor at the Nursing School at the University of Nevada, conducted a study of this phenomenon on nurses working in cardiology. She concluded that this syndrome is the result of a confrontation with reality, when the human spirit is exhausted in the struggle against circumstances that are difficult to change. As a result, professional autism develops. The necessary work is performed, but the emotional contribution that transforms the task into a creative form is lacking (Shaufeli V., Entsmann D., 1999).

Christina Maslach, a professor of psychology at the University of California, detailed this concept, describing it as a syndrome of physical and emotional exhaustion, which includes the development of negative self-esteem, a negative attitude to work, and a loss of understanding and empathy towards clients (Maslach S., Leiter M., 1997). In her opinion, burnout is not a loss of creative potential, not a reaction to boredom, but rather emotional exhaustion that occurs against the background of stress caused by interpersonal communication (Maslach S., Schaufeli V., 1993).

Currently, there are three approaches to defining the syndrome of "professional burnout". The first approach considers "burnout" as a state of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion caused by long-term remaining in emotionally overloaded communication situations. With this approach, "burnout" is considered approximately as a syndrome of "chronic fatigue" (Burke R., Richardsen A., 1999). The second approach considers "burnout" as a two-dimensional model consisting of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (deterioration of attitude towards others and sometimes towards oneself). But the most common is the third approach proposed by American researchers K. Maslach and S. Jackson (Maslach S., Jackson S., 1997). They consider the syndrome of "professional burnout" as a three-

component system, which includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal achievements reduction.

There are many causes of the studied syndrome. These are also personal characteristics, such as low level of self-esteem, high level of anxiety, desire for absolute success, hyper-responsibility, lack of interests except work, a person's confidence that he/she is the only one capable of implementing this work, etc. But social conditions in which a person finds him/herself, whose profession is associated with great emotional stress but not less determine the occurrence of the syndrome. This is material insecurity, an insufficient number of employees, which provokes an increase in the pace and work volume, puts them in stressful conditions, lack of opportunities for career and professional growth at the workplace, etc.

Among the determinants of "professional burnout" among teachers, there can be mentioned the constant emotional tension associated with responsibility for the life and health of students, the need to control and organize a large number of children at the same time. Also, the need to spend extracurricular time for timely and high-quality work performance, the need to fill out a large amount of documentation, low prestige of pedagogical activity and weak prospects for professional growth. As the workforce in education is dominated by women, they are also under the role conflict pressure and overload. Young specialists are especially vulnerable who come to work at the school. In general, young specialists of various professions, according to the research of the professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, Keri Chernis (Shaufeli V., 1993), are one of the most vulnerable categories among employees. During the first six months, many of them begin to "burn out" i.e. they feel sadness, frustration, disappointment, the need to change jobs these symptoms indicate the beginning of the syndrome. A teacher who is just starting his professional activity faces the task of practically mastering all aspects of this profession: academic, educational, pedagogical communication, means of self-fulfilment of his personality, achieving results in education and schoolchildren education. After several years, simultaneously with the accumulation of experience, the development of one's own approach, individual style of activity, professional position, the teacher develops "mental fatigue", professional maladjustment, "professional burnout" symptoms, etc.

S. Maksymenko and other authors summarized the list of symptoms of "professional burnout" syndrome and divided them into physical, behavioural and psychological (S. Maksimenko, 2004). We will discuss them in details. *Physical* symptoms include fatigue; congestion; exhaustion; sensitivity to changes in indicators of the external environment; frequent headaches; disorders of the gastrointestinal tract; lack of appetite or, on the contrary, overeating; dyspnoea; insomnia; etc. *Behavioural and psychological* symptoms show that the work becomes more and more difficult, and the strength to perform it is less and less; a person comes to work early, stays for a long time; shows up late at work and leaves early; takes work home; has a negative attitude towards colleagues and the work itself; there is a feeling of unconscious anxiety; bad mood and related emotions such as pessimism, cynicism, hopelessness, apathy, depression, resentment; guilt; unnecessary things; nonsense; disappointment; boredom; decrease in the level of enthusiasm; uncertainty; anger; irritability; tension; harassment; excitement; overexcitement; anxiety; aggressive feelings; suspiciousness; a sense of omnipotence, power over the subordinates; rigidity; negative "I-concept"; inability to make decisions; distancing; increased sense of responsibility for students; avoiding interaction with employees; a general negative attitude towards life prospects; coffee abuse, alcohol abuse, etc.

"Burnout" is a syndrome, a group of symptoms that appear together. However, no one has all the symptoms at the same time, because "professional burnout" is a very individual process (Zaychykova T., 2003).

H. Roberts classifies the above symptoms as: 1) changes in behaviour; 2) changes in thinking; 3) changes in feelings; 4) changes in health (Roberts G., 1995). Among the symptoms that appear first, you can distinguish a general feeling of fatigue, hostility to work, a general vague feeling of anxiety, work becomes increasingly difficult and less productive. A teacher can easily fall into anger, get irritated and feel broken, pay a lot of attention to details, and be in an extremely negative mood (Karamushka L., Zaychykova T., 2003).

V. Boyko, developed his own classification of symptoms accompanying various stages of "professional burnout". The researcher, relying on the components of "burnout" identified by K. Maslach (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and professional duties reduction) and the theory of H. Selye, noted such components of the "professional burnout" syndrome as stress, resistance, and exhaustion. Each of the components is accompanied by four symptoms, thanks to which it is possible to investigate the specificity of the syndrome manifestation within teachers.

1. According to V. Boyko, *the first component is "tension"* characterized by a feeling of emotional exhaustion, fatigue caused by professional activity. It manifests itself in such symptoms as: 1) experiencing psycho-traumatic circumstances when a person perceives working conditions and professional interpersonal relationships as psycho-traumatic; 2) dissatisfaction with oneself i.e. dissatisfaction with the professional activity and oneself as a professional; 3) "cornered" i.e. a feeling of the situation hopelessness, a desire to change work or professional activity in general; 4) anxiety and depression shows the development of anxiety in professional activity, increased nervousness, depressive moods.

2. *The second component is "resistance"* characterized by excessive emotional exhaustion, which provokes the emergence and development of defensive reactions that make a person emotionally closed, detached, indifferent. Against this background, any emotional involvement in professional affairs and communications causes a person to feel overworked. This component manifests itself in the following symptoms:

- 1) inadequate selective emotional response (uncontrolled influence of mood on professional relationships);
- 2) emotional and moral disorientation (development of indifference in professional relationships); 3) expanding the sphere of saving emotions (emotional isolation, alienation, desire to enrol any communications);
- 4) professional duties reduction (curtailment of professional activities, striving to spend as little time as possible on performing professional duties).

3. *The third component "exhaustion"* is characterized by a person's psychophysical overfatigue, desolation, the levelling of one's own professional achievements, a violation of professional communications, the development of a cynical attitude towards those who have to communicate on work issues, the psychosomatic disorders development.

According to K. Maslach, "professional burnout" can manifest itself in the form of three stages [88, p. 56-67]. For example, in the first stage of burnout, an individual is emotionally and physically exhausted and may complain of headaches, colds, and other various pains. The second stage of burnout is characterized by two sets of symptoms. For example, a teacher may develop a negative, cynical, and depersonalized attitude toward the people he/she works with (both colleagues and students), or, conversely, he/she may have negative thoughts about himself because of the feelings he/she has toward students and colleagues. To avoid these negative feelings, the teacher "deepens in him/herself", performs only the minimum amount of work, avoids communication. He/she may have signs and symptoms of one or both groups. The final stage is complete burnout, which, according to K. Maslach, does not happen often, resulting in a complete aversion to everything in the world. The teacher is offended at him/herself, at all people, at life, he/she lacks expressions of emotions, it is difficult for him/her to concentrate. In the first two stages of burnout, a person can recover, but in order to return to a normal life, he/she must learn to live with what is or change the situation. According to K. Maslach, a person who is completely burnt out will probably never change (Maslach L., 1993).

Thus, mastering the teaching profession is associated not only with the development of the teacher's personality, abilities, skills and capability, which helps to successfully perform work, but also with negative consequences, such as impaired well-being, conflict, fatigue, which is reflected in relationships with students, colleagues, administration.

T. Zaychikova considers psychological and mental overwork are the main cause of "professional burnout". It occurs especially quickly and noticeably when people are overworked, who due to their

professional duties must "give" the warmth of their soul to clients (Zaychykova T., 2003). Victims of "burnout" are primarily doctors, teachers, and professionals in communication who are called and trained to serve other people politely and with warmth. "Burnout is the price of compassion" that's how the American psychologist K. Maslach called her book, where the results of the research she obtained while studying this phenomenon are given (Maslach S., Jackson S., 1997).

*Purpose of the Study.* Scientific-theoretical analysis of the manifestation characteristics and occurrence of the "professional burnout" syndrome among teachers led to the need for an empirical study of this phenomenon.

### **3. Research Methods**

We carried out a theoretical understanding of the problem, conducted an analysis of literary sources on this issue, worked out the experience of foreign and domestic scientists. Our study was based on the model of "professional burnout" syndrome by such scientists as K. Maslach, S. Jackson and V. Boyko. The use of these models when conducting an empirical study made it possible to deeply and comprehensively study the manifestations of the "professional burnout" syndrome among teachers.

*Mathematics Methods.* The choice of methods and specific research methods to obtain the necessary information was carried out in accordance with the goals and tasks of the work. The research used the following methods: organizational (comparative); empirical (surveys); methods of quantitative and qualitative description of results.

### **4. Findings**

*An analysis of the theoretical base made it possible to conduct an empirical study.* Our study was aimed at determining the level of development and characteristics of the manifestation of the syndrome of "professional burnout" among teachers. The study was conducted in April 2024. The sample of our research was composed by teachers of secondary educational institutions: Lyceum No. 3 (25 people) and Lyceum No. 22 (25 people).

### **5. The results of the research – statistic data and their interpretation**

The results of the empirical study made it possible to evaluate the peculiarities of the manifestation of "professional burnout" all components among pedagogical workers. We will analyse the results that allowed us to assess the level of development of the components of the "professional burnout" syndrome.

The study was conducted according to the "Methodology of diagnosing the level of emotional burnout" by V. Boyko. The dominant component of the "professional burnout" syndrome among teachers is "resistance" ( $p < 0.0001$ ), which is characterized by a reduction in professional duties, a decrease in interaction with colleagues and students, an expansion of the saving emotions sphere, a desire to be alone, inadequate emotional response, etc. A high level of this component development was found in 38% of respondents, while only 13% of respondents found a high level of development of the syndrome first component i.e. stress, and 12% of teachers have a high level of development of the syndrome third component which is exhaustion. Therefore, the development of "professional burnout" among teachers occurs precisely because of the second component of the burnout syndrome.

The professional activity of a teacher always includes communicative activity overloaded with emotions i.e. communication with students, colleagues, administration, parents, etc. All this creates conditions of constant emotional stress for the teacher. The results of the study clearly show that in such conditions, teachers tend to react by giving communicative activity up. In order to preserve their own emotional health and well-being, teachers usually refer to emotion-saving tactics and put up protective barriers in the way of exhausting communication.

**Table 1.** The level of development of the "professional burnout" syndrome components

№	Components of "professional burnout" syndrome	Levels of development of the "professional burnout" syndrome components, (in % of the total number of respondents)		
		Low	Medium	High
1.	Tension	51,4****	35,6****	13,2****
2.	Resistance	19,1****	43,9****	38****
3.	Exhaustion	58****	30****	12****

\*\*\*\* –  $p < 0,0001$ 

This conclusion is supported by data on the development of individual symptoms of "professional burnout" among teachers. The data obtained as a result of the research indicate that teachers are dominated by the symptoms of the second component of the "professional burnout" syndrome - resistance ( $p < 0.0001$ ). If we rank the symptoms of "professional burnout" by frequency of occurrence, then the symptom of "inadequate selective emotional response", which is formed in 53% of respondents, will take the first place. The second place is held by the symptom "reduction of professional duties" - 44.2% of respondents. Accordingly, the third symptom of "expanding the scope of saving emotions" was found within 32.6% of respondents. The symptom of "experiencing psycho-traumatic circumstances" ranks fourth in 31.5% of respondents; the fifth is the symptom of "emotional and moral disorientation" - 31.3% of respondents, etc. (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Features of the manifestation of "professional burnout" symptoms

№	Symptoms of "professional burnout"	Percentage of the total number of respondents
1.	Inadequate selective emotional response (a symptom of the second component of the syndrome - "resistance")	53,0****
2.	Reduction of professional duties (a symptom of the second component of the syndrome - "resistance")	44,2****
3.	Expanding the scope of saving emotions (a symptom of the second component of the syndrome - "resistance")	32,6****
4.	Experiencing psycho-traumatic circumstances (the symptom of the first component of the syndrome is "tension")	31,5****
5.	Emotional and moral disorientation (a symptom of the second component of the syndrome - "resistance")	31,3****
6.	Psychosomatic and psycho-vegetative disorders (the symptom of the third component of the syndrome - "exhaustion")	28,2****
7.	Anxiety and depression (the symptom of the first component of the syndrome - "tension")	25,8****
8.	Personal alienation (depersonalization) (the symptom of the third component of the syndrome - "exhaustion")	14,7****
9.	Emotional deficiency (the symptom of the third component of the syndrome - "exhaustion")	14,2****
10.	Dissatisfaction with oneself (the symptom of the first component of the syndrome - "tension")	11,9****
11.	Emotional alienation (the symptom of the third component of the syndrome - "exhaustion")	10,9****
12.	"Cornered" (the symptom of the first component of the syndrome - "tension")	9,6****

\*\*\*\* –  $p < 0,0001$

The obtained results make it possible to reveal the essence of teachers' behavioural reactions when the syndrome of professional burnout occurs. In our opinion, the vast majority of interviewed teachers are prone to such a defensive reaction as "economy of emotions", which is reflected in relationships with others, can lead to inadequate emotional reactions, and also provokes the reduction of professional duties.

## **6. Conclusion**

The spread of the "professional burnout" syndrome among teachers is a very alarming symptom, because in the secondary education system, the students' mental health and well-being who he works directly depends on the teacher's personality and his/her professional activity. Therefore, the presence of burnout syndrome harms not only the teacher, but also negatively affects his/her interaction with students, causes the appearance of another negative syndrome in some of them that is the school maladjustment. It is also obvious how negatively this syndrome can affect the professional development of a teacher's personality. The data of foreign and domestic researchers indicate that a significant percentage of young teachers leave schools and, in general, change their profession precisely under the influence of the "burnout" syndrome. And teachers who feel emotional exhaustion and continue to work lack professional development and self-improvement. Being in such an emotional state, a person simply tries to "survive today" at work, without receiving any satisfaction from his/her own professional activity. Therefore, the question of further study and scientific development of this syndrome is particularly relevant, in order to find effective methods of its prevention and overcoming, and to prevent its negative effect on themselves and surrounding people.

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