

A PROFESIONAL SKILL SET OF A TEACHER AND UNIVERSITY LECTURER IN RELATION TO THE CAUSES AND PREVENTION OF JOB BURNOUT

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Abstract

The term “burnout” exists in vernacular for centuries. By saying that something is burned we usually have in front of our eyes the image after a fire, that ash and rubble. However, nowadays burnout is a pictorial representation of what may remain after a large and fervent commitment to ones careers. Job is an important factor in life, it influences the existence beyond work. Thus, it is important to create the conditions of appropriate, harmonic, and effective work. In particular, the specific features of the teaching profession are characterized by high workload and increasingly more complex requirements – the rush to keep up with the innovation, competitive pressure of the environment and continuous stress. This research aims to present an analysis of job burnout among teachers highlighting the risks and protective factors expressed by the potential “victims”, as well as the measures that can be taken to counteract. It also elaborates on personal and social factors which have an impact on occupational burnout issue among teachers in Poland. This study was undertaken because the problem has not been sufficiently studied before in Poland, and too little attention was paid to the issues which the target group is facing. This background led to two theoretical assumptions, meaning that – regardless of the school type – all teachers are exposed to occupational burnout in the same way. The second theory claims that most of them do not realize the threat or are afraid to admit they have the symptoms resulting from job burnout. In order to confirm both theories, the author used qualitative and quantitative methods (interview and survey form) and the results were used to form a set of recommendations how to protect oneself from occupational burnout. The survey was conducted among 141 Polish teachers from primary, secondary and high schools, from two age groups – below 30 years old and over 46 years old. Special focus was placed on the age and inclination to exhaustion at work, lack of motivation and feeling of frustration, considering such factors like e.g. atmosphere at school and cooperation with students, other teachers and principals. The analysis showed that in most cases teachers within the scope of the research declared not to feel burnout. However, slightly less than a half of them admitted to operate under daily stress and in fact undergoing the process of the job burnout without even realizing it. The findings of the research are important for the potential identification of an adequate and rapid prevention, which result is closely linked to better wellbeing and health of teachers who could be more successful and passionate about their work.

Key words: *burnout, frustration, emotional exhaustion, job environment, lack of motivation.*

Introduction

It seems that in the present times of “a challenging labor market”, employees can not undergo the phenomenon of burnout and are even afraid to talk about it. In fact they are fighting for their workplace, want to be perceived as better than others and at the same time constantly advancing their education. It is no surprise that the reputation of the teaching profession in society is low, which is most acutely perceived by the teachers themselves (act of 2015, Ministry of National Education in Poland). The aim of this study is to access to what extent an external environment as well as individual factors contribute to occupational burnout. The

author analyzed as well the lack of administrative support which relates to the set of variables describing aspects of teachers' burnout at Polish schools.

General Background of Research

The phenomenon of occupational burnout was already identified in the seventies (Freudenberber & Richelson, 1980), but it may be presumed to have existed long before. First research has been conducted by many scholars abroad (e.g. Pines, 2004; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005; Maslach & Jackson, 2010; Maslach & Leiter, 2011; Pyhältö, Pietarinen & Salmela-Aro, 2011) but only in the eightieths the concept of burnout started appearing in the works of Polish researchers (e.g. Sęk & Tucholska, 1994; Terelak, 2005; Sęk, 2010; Wilczek- Różycka, 2014). The initial symptoms are not described in a schematic manner (Maslach, Schaufeli, Enzmann, Sęk, 2010) with researchers relying on extensive descriptions and interviews. The studies were then continued with single-item, as well as multi-item burnout assessment instruments (MBI, BM), with the latter being the most widespread method of burnout assessment. Recently, a significant progress has been made with regard to the methods of measuring burnout. This is a necessity, since the problem is spreading wider and wider (Pines and Aronson, 1988, Pines, 2004, Maslach & Jackson, 2010).

Burnout is defined as a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a sense of inefficacy and lack of accomplishment. It might apply to people who work with others in a certain specific way. Exhaustion refers to the feeling of being emotionally overburdened and depleted of one's emotional resources (Maslach, 2011). The sense of lack of accomplishment is directly related to being successful at work and confident in one's own competence. Numerous researchers pointed out that there are many analogies and interrelations that cause, influence, or strengthen this condition. Stress is not only a peculiar reaction, but it can also be a syndrome with identified regular principles. Stress and fatigue are very common and happen to everyone and not only in work-related situations, hence they cannot be perceived as the primary factors leading to occupational burnout. Special attention is paid to a new kind of burnout – the specific emotional and professional fatigue, occurring especially in professions involving helping others. It affects those who are characterized by great work enthusiasm, lofty ideals, and strong motivation. Confronted with the job reality, their hopes and expectations are hardly satisfied (Ziarek, 2007). H. J. Freudenberger (1983) defined burnout as the final stage of exhaustion, which is treated as a result of gradual loss of involvement, illusions, and the sense of "meaning" in one's professional life. The reason why success, competence, and effectiveness are so important is because those factors make people feel that their actions – and, therefore, themselves – are useful and important (Pines and Aronson, 1988), that their life is important only when they find fulfilment and satisfy their ambitions. Analysis of the literature allows to conclude that the process of job burnout is associated with the inability to find meaning in one's "work life". Thus, burnout is treated as a result of failure in finding the meaning of existence and directing oneself to work with and for people. For instance, P. Harrisom (1983 (Eds.) Wilczek-Różycka, 2014) claims that "practically all the beginners are, in a sense, burning with motivation", while Wilczek-Różycka (2014) concludes that „high level of job involvement is often thought to be a prerequisite for burnout". We may ask: is it even worth trying?

A professional framework within which working individuals are most inclined to the aforementioned problems was also specified. The motivation of such people was called the „ethics of sacrifice" (Pines, 2004), which clearly shows that the main motivation to act is to help people. The undertaken action is not only a job in its own rights, but somewhat of a calling. This applies mostly to professions that involve interaction with other people in need or vulnerable; with someone who needs help, understanding, or requires new skills and knowledge. That is

why mental strength, self-confidence and competence are an indispensable elements allowing to cope with the problems of others.

An important element deemed to influence burnout is the work environment. It is accepted that supportive work environment has the maximum number of features that allow the employees to achieve their goals and ensure professional fulfillment. According to Sęk (2010), there are a couple of methods of coping with job burnout (having found out that the problem exists). The main focus was placed on pedagogues, teachers, and university lecturers. All of them perform an educational function focused on children and adolescents. It has been demonstrated that burnout is caused by environmental factors, such as work stress, especially aggravating when accompanied by the feeling of lack of effectiveness and resourcefulness. Low resourcefulness in dealing with problems leads to self defense mechanisms, such as depersonalization or lowering of job involvement. Burnout proceeds in steps, often unnoticed by the affected person. Involved teachers are the most susceptible to burnout, but, to make it clear, not every idealist will burn out. A tendency to irrational attitudes and lofty beliefs can be observed among many teachers. Instead of rational and clear judgment, distrust and distancing begin to dominate. One of the best forms of lowering the risk of burnout is to constantly improve the professional skills. Confidence in one's competence relates to the ability to cope with stressful situations. The following tendency appears in the literature (Sęk, 2010; Maslach & Jackson, 2010; Pines, 2004): people who enjoy working with the youth and have a positive attitude to life are somewhat naturally protected against burnout. It was proven that people who received more community support had a higher level of job satisfaction (Sęk, 2010, Fengler, 2000). For psycho-physical recovery, any kind of relaxation, rest, or indulging in one's hobbies is recommended.

Prestige of the Teaching Profession

The Polish philosopher, psychologist, and founder of the Lwów-Warsaw school of philosophy Kazimierz Twardowski, when expressing his gratitude at a ceremony of recognition, said: *"I want to point out that education is an element that accompanies us every day. There is always someone who teaches and someone who learns. Our future workplace is especially linked to the transmission of knowledge, the proper kind of it"* (Twardowski, 1932). The forerunners did not have the knowledge (concerning the dangers) that we have now. Maybe life in the previous century was less hectic and different, but education and its propagation have not changed. Great creators surely felt underappreciated and, as it is well known, many geniuses or excellent inventors were only recognized after their death.

It is also impossible not to notice the general public criticism (media, forums), which relates to the effort that teachers have put into their work. There are countless critical comments of people claiming that the job of the teacher is easy, and salaries are too high in relation to the workload. This assumption derives mainly from the fact that the time teachers spend on direct work with students is shorter than the standard working week of people in other professions. Despite this, according to studies published by the CBOS in 2013 on the classification of the most prestigious professions in Poland, the second place belongs to university professor (82% of the surveyed declared high estimate). This high position of professor is primarily determined by the expert nature of the occupation and tradition assigns its high social prestige. A university lecturer is yet another highly valued position in the hierarchy of prestige professions which common feature is a large social utility (74% of the surveyed declared high estimate) (CBOS, 2013). However, a school teacher is not so widely respected, though he is the "key" to the proper functioning of the educational system (Okoń, 1987; Okoń, 1996; Milerski & Śliwerski, 2000). The personality of a teacher, his preparation and professional competence, authority and ideological and moral attitude play a decisive role in the process of teaching and learning.

A teacher is in fact: the organizer, manager and guardian of the process. In recent times the researches developed a scientific study of the teacher and the issues of teaching profession, namely by separating a branch of knowledge called Pedeutology (gr. *Paideutés* - teacher-educator) (Pomykało, 1993). With the new field, numerous studies and analysis of educators and teachers received a wider audience. It is crucial to learn about the characteristics, behaviors and symptoms of the problems which teachers must overcome. One of them is the problem of burnout which is at the core of this discussion.

Methodology of Research

Among predominantly used research methods the author distinguishes the methodology based on analysis of literature, as well as collecting primary information directly from the source (surveys, interviews). Based on the conducted interviews, (pilot study) and subsequent proper surveys, the author characterized the issue of occupational burnout in Greater Poland region. The aim of the first stage of the research methodology was to recognize if the selected subject is correct. As mentioned before, the background literature analysis of the subject to two theoretical assumptions, meaning that – regardless of the school type – all teachers are exposed to occupational burnout in the same way. The second theory claims that most of them do not realize the threat or is afraid to admit they have the symptoms resulting from job burnout. In order to prove its relevance the author conducted brief interviews, consisting of 6 questions, among a random group of 21 teachers (primary, secondary and high school?).

1. What is the profile of the respondent (work experience, teaching specialization, health state)?
2. What are the most common factors causing stressful situations at work (inadequate salaries, too high expectations)?
3. What are the most common results of stress at work (chronic headaches, aggression, irritation)?
4. What is the estimated of the level of daily work load (“Is the daily work with students an excessive overburden for you?”)?
5. Whether and what it is the impact of work on emotional exhaustion teacher (“Does the work make you feel emotionally exhausted?”)?
6. Where are teachers potentially looking for help in case of work-related issues and coping with stress?

After proving their relevance, the questions were expanded and used as the core research questions in the next step of the study, which was the proper survey (paper questionnaire) conducted among 120 respondents. The choice of the traditional form of the survey was influenced by the diverse age of the respondents and the accessibility to Internet. The prepared questions in both surveys were approximate in their form which allowed the author to compare the results.

The presented research problem was based on the analysis of most common factors and burdens occurring in the work place of teachers that cause stressful situations. The evaluation of the level of burden of the daily work with students, and opinion on where respondents seek help in case of professional issues, were the key symptoms suggesting the burn-out of the study group.

Sample Selection

A pilot survey conducted in 2012/2013 aimed at investigating if, and if yes – to what extent – job burnout occurs among teachers. The research was conducted in Poznan, Greater Poland region, where in one administrative unit there are 375 schools encompassing the three levels of education (primary, secondary and high school). The entire region (Greater Poland) consists of 2032 schools (Education Information System, 2014), thus this sample is not representative as the trends across the entire country are diverse. The research was conducted on a randomly chosen group of teachers in selected schools. In urban schools, the total number of students varies from two hundred to five hundred whereas in suburban schools number of students varies from one hundred to three hundred. Therefore, although research results allow us to describe the relations between variables, they cannot be generalized to the entire teachers' population in Poland. The sample consisted of 141 teachers working in seven primary schools, four secondary schools, and two public high schools of Poland. The sample included teachers working at least part-time. The total amount of respondents can be divided into three groups: 86 primary school teachers, 35 secondary school teachers, and twenty high school teachers. Some of the respondents also lectured in other schools located in the Poznan agglomeration.

The age distribution within the group is fairly even, only the last age group, over 51 years of age, is smaller. This is a result of an early retirement options for teachers. Job seniority is also a significant factor, with only 4% of the respondents having worked for less than 12 months. Over 20% of teachers worked between 1 and 5 years, while 18% had between 6 and 10 years of experience. The next group, 11 to 20 years of experience, is represented by 25% of respondents. The largest group, represented by 33% of the teachers, had 21 or more years of professional experience. This confirms that teachers rarely change their profession and once they have started working in a school, it usually remains their only career path. Sixty-one percent of the teachers were employed in primary schools, 25% in secondary schools, (while 26% of the respondents worked simultaneously in both), and in secondary schools 14%. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents were women, while men constituted eleven percent. This trend was confirmed in earlier studies, showing that the teaching environment is ageing and strongly feminized (CBOS, 2013).

Instrument and Procedures

The research consisted of two elements: a written survey and a structured interview with randomly selected participants. The respondents were asked to first fill out one questionnaire, than some of them were asked to take part in direct interviews. The Polish version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory for teachers (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) was used to measure the burnout issue. The survey consisted of 20 questions, and was divided into three sub-scales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The teachers could indicate their perceptions on a seven-point scale, ranging from 'never' to 'always'. The respondents answered twenty questions, eighteen of which were closed-end questions. A lack of data on individual questions did not exceed 2%. The percentage of refusals to participate in the study (especially interviews) was relatively high i.e. 15% (respondents were afraid of the consequences).

Direct interviews were conducted on a random group of 21 teachers from different type of schools: primary – 8 respondents, secondary - 6 respondents and high school – 7 respondents. Before the interview started the interviewee explained the framework and the definition of occupational burnout. Before starting the interview none of the respondents admitted that he or she feels exhausted or irritated at work. Each interview took several minutes and consisted of the following six questions:

- What is the profile of the respondent (work experience, teaching specialization, health state)?
- What are the most common factors causing stressful situations at work (inadequate salaries, too high expectations)?
- What are the most common results of stress at work (chronic headaches, aggression, irritation)?
- What is the estimated level of daily work load (“Is the daily work with students an excessive overburden for you?”)?
- Whether and what it is the impact of work on emotional exhaustion teacher (“Does the work make you feel emotionally exhausted?”)?
- Where are teachers potentially looking for help in case of work-related issues and coping with stress?

Results of the Research

The data were analysed using the main statistical procedures for data analysis with descriptive statistics. The analysis presented below is a result of a comparison between the research results (interviews and an anonymous questionnaire) of teachers up to 30 years old (25%) with the results of teachers above 46 years old (28%). Initially a single breakdown was analyzed an in-depth analysis of certain questions allowed to assess the physical and psychological state of the respondents. The Table 1 (see below) shows a general comparison between those two groups (mainly qualitative research results). It is a deliberate procedure which was supposed to indicate whether there is a difference in perception of the research problem by different age groups of respondents.

Table 1. The level of Polish teachers burnout based on their age.

	The whole sample		Teachers < 30 years old		Teachers > 46 years old	
	Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation
Reduced personal commitment	26.16	6.90	27.01	6.83	26.45	6.92
Emotional exhaustion	9.43	6.27	9.49	6.43	9.11	5.97

Finally, in comparison, there were no statistically significant differences (Table 1) between the two groups of respondents. Although some differences could be noticed, they were not significant enough to influence on the final correlation result.

Results Based on the Questionnaire

Direct interviews allowed the author to understand the most common results of stress and its correlation with the level of work load which the respondents faced. Through unconstrained discussion the respondents shared their experience on where it is possible to receive help in case of occupational diseases and how are they combating stress. Each of 21 respondents answered all six questions, including a self-description of their profile (Table 2)

Table 2. The profile of respondents.

	Teacher seniority			The amount of the survey (n=21)	Health (Excellent, good, acceptable, bad)	Teachers age	
	<10 years	10-20 years	>20 years			< 30 years old	> 46 years old
Primary School	2	4	2	8	Good	3	5
Secondary School	2	2	2	6	Acceptable	2	4
High School	1	4	2	7	Good	2	5

The characteristics of the study groups was long work experience, directly related to respondent's age (>46), as well as their self-proclaimed well-being. Questions about everyday physical and psychological condition were also asked, e.g. how the situations encountered at school in the previous day influenced the domestic life. Both groups felt the same emotional exhaustion, but during in-depth interviews we noticed the difference, negative incentives influencing them.

The respondents taking part in the interviews confessed that they haven't realized before that the issue of occupational burnout might affect them. Only after hearing the questions and considering their answers to them inspired them to do an individual assessment. The in-depth interviews turned out to be the best tool for that due to the direct and insightful conversation. By analyzing the collected opinions on the most common results of stress at work, the most frequent result of stress among older teachers is sleeplessness. Respondents up to 30 years old pointed at aggression, irritability, and depressive fits. Sleeplessness and chronic headache were mentioned as a second option.

The level of teacher's burden during daily work with students amounts to 24% in primary schools, 43% - in secondary schools, and 23% - in high schools. The highest level was reached in secondary schools in which the health state of teacher's is also the lowest (Table 2). This trend proved that the influence of work on emotional exhaustion and satisfaction is a significant issue in the education sector. When asked about their views on the positive influence their work has on others, the older teachers were not entirely sure whether their impact is really positive (Figure 1).

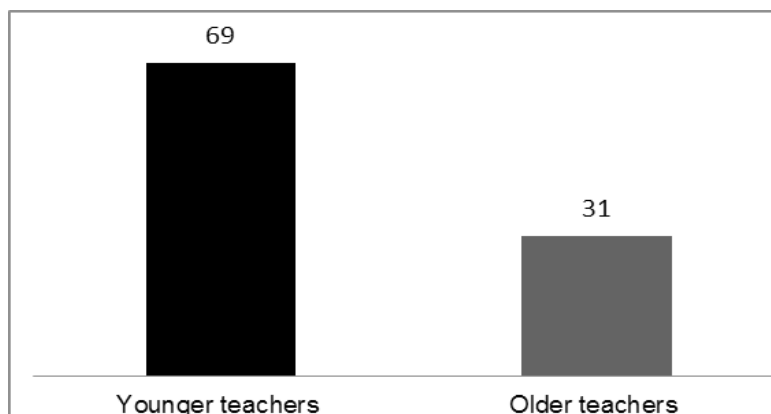


Figure 1: Positive influence teachers work on others.

Younger teachers, in turn, are more confident in their competence and believe that sharing knowledge with the pupils yields measurable results (69% of a group of young teachers, n=7). Younger teachers more often mention that they have plenty of strength and do not feel fatigue. Older teachers (n=14) sometimes admitted that they were exhausted by many years of work (31%). All the psycho-physical conditions are driven by difficult situations which often remain unsolved. However, none of the earlier mentioned factors can be taken as dominating. Teachers over 46 years old indicated different factors contributing to the occurrence of stressful situations at work and the resulting dissatisfaction (71%, n=10). Also their younger coworkers claim to report the issues connected to occupational hazards (57%, n=4), which was confirmed during the in-depth interviews.

The last question in the interview aimed to understand where teachers seek help in case of professional issues and how they cope with stress. According to the <30 years old respondents, one of the best forms of preventing job burnout is a continuous development of professional competence. Moreover, their own sense of competence is related to the ability to combat stressful situations. For teachers over 46 years old more important is to communicate in a delicate manner with pupils and their parents. However, all interviewees (n=21) believe that in order to keep the mental and physical balance it is advisable to relax, leisure, spending time with family or finding a hobby.

Results Based on the Survey

The graph below presents the results of the survey conducted among 120 teachers (78 from primary school, 29 – from secondary school and 13 – from high school). The questions in the survey were formulated by analogy to specific problems arising from the main research problem. By characterizing the study group, the author noticed again a significant disproportion between both age groups (>30 years – 38%, whereas <46 – 62%). More than half of the respondents estimated their health state as “good” (56%), “really good” was claimed by 38% and 6% confessed it is “bad”. Teachers don’t complain on their health state, although this assumption can be very subjective.

Presented below is the general ranking of workloads occurring in the working environment of both groups of teachers, without any significant differences that could influence the final correlation. The summary was created after analyzing the results for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, as well as an open questions: “What are the most important factors affecting the malaise at work?”

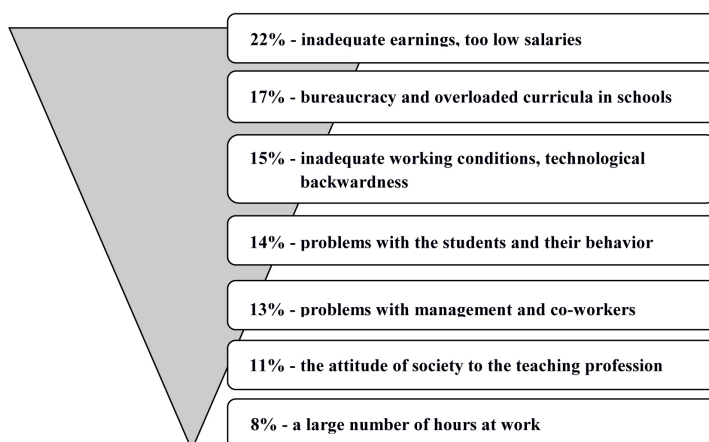


Figure 2: Ranking occurring loads in the working environment of teachers (the whole sample).

It is worth noting that on the top of the rankings (Figure 2) is the burden resulting from the organization of the education system. Teachers strongly believe that their salary is not satisfactory if compared to the workload. They also point to the saturation of plans and curricula. This involves the need to implement solutions imposed from above, the limited autonomy of teachers and educational institutions.

The respondents were also asked how they try to cope when the professional problems occur. Mature and experienced pedagogues seek help and solution among their coworkers, or they do not seek it at all. This might mean that they are confident in their own experience and can cope with their problems effectively. However, younger teachers (38%) are more eager to take council from their friends who are not teachers. The younger generation has also no problems with expressing their feelings to others. Subsequently the interviewer asked for an opinion on the impact of the work on teacher's indifference. The graph below (Figure 3) presents the response of teachers to the question "Are you afraid that the work makes you indifferent?".

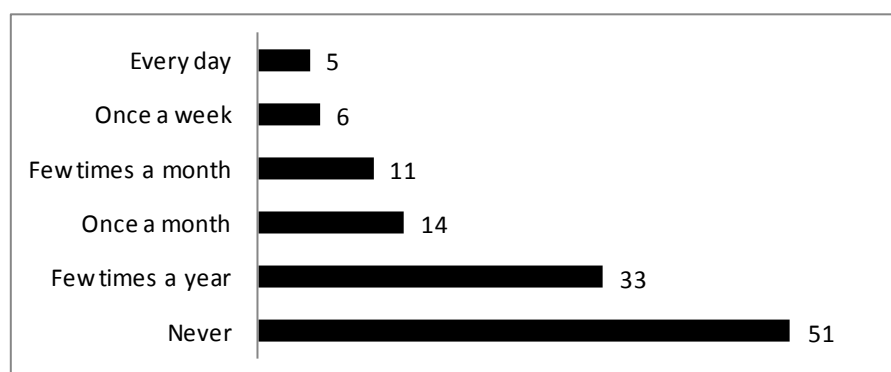


Figure 3: The fear of becoming indifferent at work among teachers.

Most teachers are not concerned about becoming indifferent, however 36 of the respondents did notice this problem. Although it affected only minority of the interviewees, it shouldn't be neglected. Interesting was also the fact that 42% declares not to be at the end of their tether, whereas 28% more than few times a year, 12% - one a month, 7% - once a week, 5% - few times a week. Regarding the in-depth interviews, half of the respondents (n=10) pointed out that teachers are afraid to say they feel worse and do not want to admit to their colleagues that they need a break (paid sick leave). Especially teachers above 46 years (62%) are afraid that talking about burnout might end up in losing their job or worsening their reputation in the workplace.

In compared results between teachers of primary (n=78), secondary (n=29) and high school (n=13) a difference in stress levels is clearly visible. Work stress occurs more rarely among teachers dealing with younger children (primary schools). Teaching in secondary schools is believed to be harder and more stressful than in the two other educational institutions. This is a result of the rebellious phase that the adolescents go through.

Discussion

Burnout syndrome develops when the requirements exceed the tolerance to work load of a given level (both occupational and psychological). In other words - it is the result of chronic work - related stress. With regard to the organization, autocratic management style and lack of freedom to organize one's work (rigid frame imposed by management), lack of adequate

remuneration (not only financial, but also e.g. gratitude) and the fair and subjective treatment in the workplace, may also contribute to the burnout syndrome.

If the correlation between the age of teachers and the occurrence of a burnout syndrome there is almost no dependency. We cannot state that younger teachers experience a burnout syndrome more frequently or vice-versa. In this case we should also point out the lack of consistency in the previous results. For instance, based on her research Tucholska (2003) declares that the level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization increases with seniority. On the other hand, Sekułowicz (2002) indicates that the most burnout teachers are in two groups, 25-29 years old and 50-54 years old (has been studied in detail). Furthermore, comparison between the burnout occurrence and the type of school in which teachers work, are small as well: only primary school teachers presented slightly lower level of tiredness than teachers working in other institutions - though here the difference is negligible. Burnout syndrome is also conditioned by gender (Ogińska-Bulik, 2006), although the relationship between these variables is not unique. A greater tendency to "burnout" is attributed to women, mainly because of their greater sensitivity to emotional exhaustion. It is expressed in the fact that women are more prone to emotional exhaustion, while men to the depersonalization. However, the results of the survey may also relate to the fact that most of the respondents (89% of a sample group) were women.

The study focuses on primary, secondary and high schools in one, particular region. However, appropriate measures e.g. support of school principals, is important for teachers' sense of well-being and the bond with their school. The leaders can probably create stronger emotional bonds at school by trying to inspire the teachers, cooperate with them and involve them in the achievement of common goals.

Conclusion and Implication

The issue of job burnout is very current in almost every profession, not only among teachers. The analysis shows however, that teachers are especially susceptible to the long-lasting stress resulting from occupational burnout. A huge number of factors influences this situation, including: troublesome students, low salaries, the amount of admin tasks, poor equipment at schools, and low professional prestige. Frustration and a sense of helplessness pile up, while the necessity of coping with daily problems does not allow to catch a break and recover. This is especially problematic for young teachers who have just started working. A very good way to preserve the well-being and to avoid burnout is a proper lifestyle - maintaining harmony between work, recreation, social activities and pleasures. But there is no single recipe for all - people are different, so everyone individually must strike the right balance.

1. Good practice and recommendations: constructive teamwork and community support are essential when it comes to health and satisfaction. It allows people not to yield to stressful and traumatic situations in life. The existing problems can be solved at the school level, but are often overlooked by the headmasters.

2. Management should optimally organize their work according to their individual needs and abilities of employees. Ensuring good communication, enabling employees to involve in defining the functioning of the organization, trying to create a climate of justice and appropriate reward that will appreciate and motivate employees.

The analysis of the research results confirmed the assumed hypothesis that the majority of teachers have never experienced a burnout, but a little less than a half of them operates under constant stress without even realizing it. It should be clearly noted that in Poland the interest of employers in improving psychosocial working conditions is minimal. The teachers' well-being at school and the reputation of the teaching profession in general, certainly depend on the interplay of various aspects in school life. The abovementioned study reiterates that the atmosphere created by the colleagues as well as the working climate prevailing in the school also play a role in how the teachers feel at school and to what extent they identify themselves with

the workplace. Not only financial rewards, but also quality of relationships and management are important for the teacher as well as for all employees to feel good in an organization.

One of the main research problems was based on the assumption that the age of the teachers has a significant influence on the burnout process. Based on the results of the study (both surveys and interviews) theory has been refuted. The characteristics of the respondents indicated that there are significant differences in reacting to external stimulants, like lack of understanding, underappreciation, stress, between the two age groups (<30 and >46 years old). As a result of the study, it is possible to identify the symptoms of occupational burnout in advance in order to find a way to cope with them. The presented research problem aimed to discuss the most common burden in teacher's daily work, i.e. while cooperating with students, as well as the most crucial factors causing increasing discomfort. The respondents pointed out also the numerous nuisance with which they are trying to cope, and their source – stress. Stress, as a disease of modern civilization, is causing a negative effect on the educational sector. Stressful situations, growing demands and discontent lead to a chronic headache, insomnia, irritation and deterioration of relationship with the loved ones (based on respondents' feedback). As a result of the growing level of stress is indifference, which more than half of the respondents seemed to ignore as a symptom of job burnout. This reaction is another argument in favor of the author's theory, that most of the teachers are not aware of the fact that they are already going through the burnout process.

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