

UDC 616.8-008.615-084:159.944:378
DOI: 10.52534/msu-pp.8(2).2022.40-45

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Diagnosis and Prevention of Burnout in Teaching Physicians

Article's History:

Received: 18.03.2022

Revised: 20.05.2022

Accepted: 30.06.2022

Suggested Citation:

Bukach, O.P., Bilyk, H.A., Guk, A.M., & Zvir, V.A. (2022). Diagnosis and prevention of burnout in teaching physicians. *Scientific Bulletin of Mukachevo State University. Series "Pedagogy and Psychology"*, 8(2), 40-45.

Abstract. The paper highlights the problem of professional burnout in higher education institutions, which is especially aggravated in the context of distance learning and quarantine restrictions. Because the professional burnout syndrome occurs in response to constant emotional stress. However, this process can be influenced. The purpose of the study was to determine the level of emotional burnout, factors and conditions that affect its occurrence and develop recommendations for its prevention. To diagnose the level of emotional burnout, a survey was conducted using the adapted methodology by V.V. Boyko. Three phases were considered: "tension", "resistance", "exhaustion", and 12 symptoms of burnout were identified. Analysing the results of teachers of the Bukovinian State Medical University in the phase of «tension», the dominant symptom was «experiencing psycho-traumatic circumstances»; in the phase of "resistance" – "reduction of professional responsibilities"; in the "exhaustion" phase, the "personal detachment" prevailed. According to the study results, the majority of employees of the educational institution are in the "resistance" phase – 54%. According to gender characteristics, women are more likely to experience emotional burnout. At the age of 20-25, teachers are more susceptible to professional burnout syndrome due to their ambitions. Depending on the length of service, teachers with less than 5 years of experience have a predominant "tension" phase; among teachers with 5-10 and 20 years of experience, the "resistance" phase prevails. And teachers with more than 20 years of experience have an "exhaustion" phase. With this in mind, recommendations for the prevention of professional burnout have been developed. Namely: alternating work with rest, healthy sleep and walks in the fresh air, a variety of relaxation techniques and, certainly, spending time with family. The practical significance of identifying professional burnout among teachers of higher educational institutions is to conduct timely prevention and provide further recommendations for overcoming this syndrome, since the educational process and the atmosphere in the team directly depend on it

Keywords: professional burnout, teachers of higher educational institutions, phase of "tension", "resistance", "exhaustion"

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of the syndrome of "emotional" and "professional" burnout is relevant, since professional activity in higher educational institutions (HEIs), during the period of distance learning, is exposed to even greater negative influences. It includes the insufficient level of proficiency in computer equipment, the Internet, software; no direct contact between the teacher and the student; the inability of students to self-education, self-development; a decrease in the ability to motivate students and the occurrence of a number of

diseases (problems with vision, back, etc.), which influence the teacher's activity [1].

The main factors that affect emotional burnout: an increase in the types of work for teachers, considering distance learning, the level of responsibility, motivation, person-to-person interaction, general education, and different levels of intellectual and cultural characteristics of students [2]. Therefore, the main task of avoiding emotional burnout among university teachers is to help develop the

psychophysical stability and self-organisational competence of tutors. It is safe to say that professional burnout syndrome occurs against the background of chronic stress and leads to depletion of the emotional and personal capabilities of the teacher. It is characterised as exhaustion of mental, emotional, mental, and physical conditions in people of different professions. The syndrome includes three components – emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation (cynicism), and reduction of professional achievements [3].

Thus, one of the main components in the activity of teachers of HEIs is communication, the ability to find contact with students, which over time can lead to emotional fatigue and negatively affect the professional activity of the teacher. Today, professional burnout is a socio-economic problem for university teachers. Based on the study by F.B. Plotkin, burnout syndrome is a loss of physical and emotional component, which is manifested by exhaustion, both physical and emotional; loss of desire to work; the emergence of low self-esteem and loss of empathy [4].

According to I.V. Oliynyk [5], professional burnout of a teacher is a destructive personality change, manifested by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, reduction of professional achievements, and a violation of subject-subject interaction. The main factors leading to burnout of teachers, according to researcher, include: subject-subject interaction, publicity of the teacher, constant need for professional development, limitation of professional expectations for students' achievements, self-doubt, and sense of anxiety for the level of information presentation [5]. N.E. Vodopyanova interprets this syndrome as the body's response to work stress and includes three components: behavioural, psychological, and psychophysiological. She developed the questionnaire "Professional burnout" [6].

Investigating this syndrome in social workers, N.A. Perhailo noted that emotional burnout leads not only to professional regression and low self-realisation, but also reduces psychological and physical health [7]. V.V. Boyko argued that empathy is central to professional burnout. For any psychotraumatic factor, a person will develop certain psychological protection in the form of a lack of emotional response to it [8]. The method of diagnosing emotional burnout is used by the majority [9].

According to O.E. Kerik, the syndrome of "professional burnout" occurs within a combination of external and internal factors, such as: a tendency to emotional rigidity; increased responsibility in the performance of their duties; attitude to work as a necessity that does not bring pleasure; weak motivation to work; role conflicts, and chronically tense psychoemotional activity [10]. The main factors that cause professional burnout of higher education teachers are divided into objective and subjective. Objective factors include: socio-economic restructuring in Ukraine; the risk of losing a job due to insufficient recruitment of students; overloading the teacher without incentives in the form of appropriate remuneration, and providing a part-time job instead of a full-time position. Subjective factors include:

insufficient motivation of the teacher, anxiety, workaholism, and inadequate self-esteem [11].

According to K. Maslach, emotional exhaustion is characterised by chronic fatigue, unstable mood, sleep disorders, and a tendency to various diseases. Depersonalisation or dehumanisation shows a negative attitude towards work and colleagues. A constant sense of incompetence and failure in their profession forms such a symptom as a reduction in professional achievements. But the last and most important symptom is considered vital instability, which manifests itself through depression, anxiety, feelings of helplessness, and irritability [12].

Greenberg's classification of teacher burnout into five stages was very interesting: he called the first stage "honeymoon" – when a teacher is happy with their work and is enthusiastic about it. But over time, enthusiasm declined as amount of work increased. The second stage is "lack of resource" – apathy, poor sleep, fatigue appear. The third stage is "chronic symptoms" – lack of rest leads to a variety of diseases, depression, anger, and irritability. The fourth stage is "crisis" – chronic diseases occur and working capacity is partially or completely lost. The fifth stage is "breaking through the wall" – mental and physical problems turn into an acute form and can be life-threatening [13].

That is why the problem of emotional burnout among university teachers is quite acute in society. Especially considering distance learning, when there are difficulties in adapting to new working conditions. In addition to these causes of burnout, technical problems are also added, in particular, difficulties with Internet networks, mastering new software programmes, trying to present the material in a shorter time, and giving the opportunity to speak to students who are not used to doing it online. This also includes possible equipment failures, so a teacher must have several alternatives for continuing the lesson and presentation [14].

The purpose of the study consists in determining the level of emotional burnout, factors, and conditions that affect its occurrence and developing recommendations for its prevention.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To establish emotional burnout at the Bukovinian State Medical University, a survey was conducted on the features of the development and prevention of burnout syndrome in teachers of the Department of Internal Diseases of Bukovinian State Medical University. The survey involved 20 teachers and used a developed questionnaire, which indicated age, gender, and work experience.

According to the gender section, a predominance of 14 women (70%) and 6 men (30%) was found. Teachers were divided by age according to the periodisation of E. Erikson [15] and 3 groups: 1) early maturity (20-25 years); 2) middle age (26-65 years); 3) old age (after 65 years). According to their work experience, respondents were divided into: up to 5 years – 4 people; 5-10 years – 6 people; 10-20 years – 7 people; >20 years – 3 people (Fig. 1).

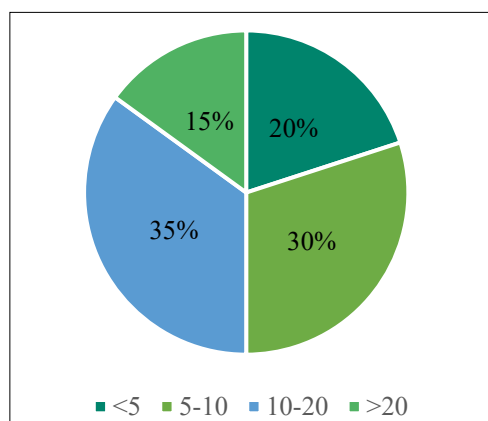


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents by work experience

The experiment lasted 30 days in 2020. First, anonymous questionnaires were developed for respondents, which indicated their age, gender, work experience, and marital status. Next, a survey was conducted to determine the level of burnout. This survey was conducted offline. After that, the data were analysed and recommendations for the prevention of burnout syndrome were developed. To diagnose the level of emotional burnout, the adapted method of V.V. Boyko was used [9]. According to this technique, the teachers of the Bukovinian State Medical University answered 84 questions “yes” or “no” and identified 3 components of emotional burnout: tension, resistance, and exhaustion. After that, the results were processed and interpreted. Considering the component separately, the following symptoms prevailed in the “tension” phase: the symptom of experiencing psycho-traumatic circumstances, the symptom of self-dissatisfaction, the symptom of “being trapped in a cage” and the symptom of anxiety and depression. In the “resistance” phase: a symptom of inadequate selective emotional response, a symptom of emotional and moral disorientation, a symptom of expanding the sphere of saving emotions, and a symptom of reducing professional responsibilities. In the “exhaustion” phase: emotional deficit, a symptom of emotional detachment or depersonalisation, and a symptom of psychosomatic and psychovegetative disorders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the results of the study, professional burnout occurred more often in women (71%) than in men (50%). They received more emotional stress due to taking care of their family, children, and additional household responsibilities.

At the age of 20-25, teachers were more likely to be exposed to this syndrome, because young teaching physicians have more ambition, the desire to achieve success “today”. Moreover, there is competition with teachers who have extensive experience. Distrust of students and ignorance of the young teacher in the interest of students lead to emotional burnout.

Three phases of emotional burnout according to V.V. Boyko’s methodology [9] were revealed: “tension”, “resistance” and “exhaustion” phases. According to the results, the teachers of the Bukovinian State Medical University were dominated by the “resistance” phase. In 54%, the phase was formed, in 28% – at the stage of formation, and in 18% – not formed. The “tension” phase in 36% of people – formed, 49% – at the stage of formation, and in 15% – not formed. Fewer teachers were in the “exhaustion” phase: 10% of people have it formed, 52% – it is at the stage of formation, and 38% – not formed (Fig. 2).

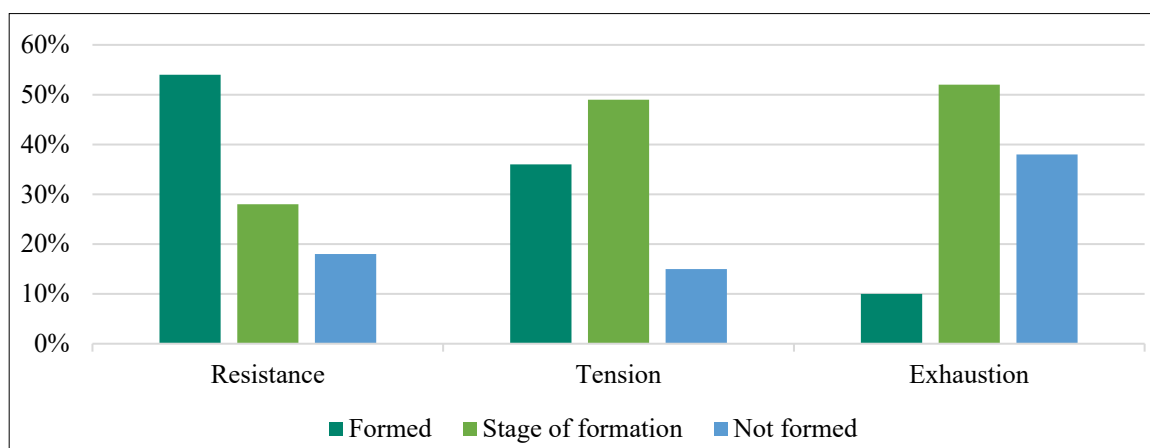


Figure 2. Levels of development of burnout phases

In each phase of burnout, there are 4 main symptoms. Analysing the results obtained in the “tension” phase, the dominant symptom was “experiencing psycho-traumatic circumstances” – 25% (5 people). Symptoms “self-dissatisfaction” were formed in 10% (2 people); the symptom “being trapped in a cage” was present in 10% (2 people); the “anxiety and depression” was formed in 20% (4 people). In the “resistance” phase, the dominant symptom was “reduction of professional responsibilities”, which was observed in 45% (9 people). The symptom “expanding the sphere of saving emotions” was formed in 35% (7 people); the symptom “inadequate emotional response” – in 40% (8 people); the symptom “emotional and moral disorientation” – in 25% (5 people). In the “exhaustion” phase, the dominant symptom was “personal detachment” – 20% (4 people). The symptom “psychosomatic and psychovegetative disorders” was observed in 15% (3 people); the symptom “emotional deficit” – in 5% (1 person); symptom “emotional detachment” – in 5% (1 person).

Having considered the phases of emotional burnout, depending on the length of service, it was found that those who work for less than 5 years were dominated by the “stress” phase (75%). They were characterised by such symptoms as: “experiencing psycho-traumatic circumstances” (50%); “dissatisfaction with themselves” (25%); “anxiety and depression” (25%); and there was no symptom of “being trapped in a cage”. Teachers with 5-20 years of experience were dominated by the “resistance” phase – (54%) with the most common symptom of “reduction of professional responsibilities” (40%). Considering those who have been working for more than 20 years, then they had a phase of “exhaustion”.

All of the above requires timely prevention of burnout. To do this, it is necessary to influence both the physical and emotional state of each teacher of the educational institution. All recommendations were given for preserving the components of health [4]: a healthy sleep which should last at least 8 hours; a balanced diet with all the necessary trace elements and vitamins to ensure all energy consumption; sports and massage, which relieve tension throughout the body. Aromatherapy has a positive effect on the nervous system and restores body defences. Breathing exercises increase blood circulation, improve concentration and attention, and eliminate psychoemotional stresses. Art therapy has a positive effect on the psychological state, in particular, red and yellow colours restore energy, green calms. Music therapy and walking in the fresh air should be part of the day. The best recipe for burnout is to communicate with family, friends, and loved ones who will always support and provide assistance.

Emotional burnout in teachers according to the methodology of V.V. Boyko was determined by T.B. Tsyomyk-Yavorska [16]. According to the results, the “resistance” phase prevailed among teachers, as in this study. The main symptoms that were observed were the unwillingness of teachers to communicate with work colleagues, perform professional duties, the appearance of somatic symptoms,

such as headache, irritability, and poor sleep. However, in the study [16], the “tension” phase was the least formed, only 5%, and in this study it was formed in 36% of people. V.V. Boyko’s methodology was used by Yu.R. Semenista [17], who determined emotional burnout of teachers in higher education institutions. According to her research, the “resistance” phase also prevailed among research and teaching staff of various specialities, which was formed in 10% of teachers. The main symptoms that were observed in teachers were emotional dryness, unwillingness to communicate, decreased attention to students and colleagues, and frustration with their own profession [17].

An interesting study was the definition of emotional burnout in psychology students of the 1st-5th courses. A.B. Mudryk found that in the 1st-year students, the phases of “tension” and “exhaustion” are unformed, and the phase of “resistance” is at the stage of formation. And for the 5th-year students, the phase of “tension” and “exhaustion” is at the stage of formation, and the stage of “resistance” is already formed. Such results are conditioned by the fact that students in the 5th-year of study are significantly more stressed. Because there is more workload, uncertainty about what will happen after graduation, job search, starting a family, and having children. All this creates more anxiety than in the 1st year students [18].

The results of this study and the findings of other researchers suggest that it is necessary to prevent the manifestations of emotional burnout. O.B. Dubchak developed preventive measures for professional burnout of teachers. According to his recommendations, it was advisable to engage in curating, plan time outside of work, engage in hobbies, eat a balanced diet, and have healthy sleep. It is also important to use “time-outs”, a variety of relaxation techniques, sports, conduct field seminars and classes [19].

CONCLUSIONS

In quarantine conditions, teachers of higher educational institutions of Ukraine suffer from constant emotional stress, which leads to professional burnout syndrome. The factors that caused this syndrome were the inability of emotional contact and live communication with students through COVID-19, information overload, a high level of responsibility, and teachers’ ignorance of how to cope with excessive stress. Based on the results of the study conducted according to the adapted methodology of V.V. Boyko among teachers of the Bukovinian State Medical University, the dominant phase of emotional burnout was “resistance” – 54% with a symptom of “reduction of professional responsibilities” – 45%. This phase was characterised by a lack of desire to communicate with colleagues, students, patients, and relatives. In addition, in the desire of respondents to reduce all their professional responsibilities, which requires large emotional costs. This was manifested in a decrease in attention to working with students and patients and the desire to be alone. This inevitably affected the authority of the teacher and doctor, and led to mental emptiness and the development of psychosomatic

diseases. In the study of gender characteristics, women were more likely to experience burnout. Given the age of teachers, there was an increase in the level of this syndrome in young teachers-doctors. This was conditioned by a number of factors, namely, career growth and the desire to reach the maximum in the profession “here and now”. Depending on the length of service, young teachers, less than 5 years of experience, had a phase of “tension” compared to teachers who work for 5-10 years, and 10-20 years (they had

a predominant phase of “resistance”). And with more than 20 years of work experience, the “exhaustion” phase dominated. This gave rise to the development and prevention of this syndrome. The recommendations were aimed at healthy sleep, balanced nutrition, walking in the fresh air, art therapy, breathing exercises, and alternating work with rest. Such measures would allow the teacher to reduce the level of professional burnout and affect mental and physical health.

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Діагностика та профілактика емоційного вигорання у викладачів-лікарів

Анотація. У статті висвітлено проблему професійного вигорання у вищих навчальних закладах, яке особливо посилюється в умовах дистанційного навчання і карантинних обмежень. Оскільки синдром професійного вигорання виникає у відповідь на постійний емоційний стрес. Однак на цей процес можна впливати. Метою дослідження було визначення рівня емоційного вигорання, чинники та умови, які впливають на виникнення та розробка рекомендацій щодо його попередження. Для діагностики рівня емоційного вигорання було проведено анкетування за допомогою адаптованої методики В.В. Бойко. Було розглянуто 3 фази: «напруги», «резистентії», «виснаження» та визначено 12 симптомів емоційного вигорання. Аналізуючи результати у викладачів Буковинського державного медичного університету у фазі «напруги» домінуючим симптомом став «переживання психотравмуючих обставин». У фазі «резистентії» – «редукції професійних обов'язків». У фазі «виснаження» переважав симптом «особистісної відстороненості». За результатами дослідження більшість працівників навчального закладу перебували у фазі «резистентії» – 54 %. За гендерними особливостями частіше у жінок виникало емоційне вигорання. У віці 20–25 років викладачі були більш піддатливі до синдрому професійного вигорання за рахунок своїх амбіцій. Залежно від стажу роботи у викладачів з досвідом менше 5 років переважала фаза «напруги»; з досвідом 5–10 та 10–20 років спостерігалась фаза «резистентії». А у викладачів зі стажем більше 20 років фаза «виснаження». З огляду на це, було розроблено рекомендації щодо профілактики професійного вигорання. А саме: чергування праці з відпочинком, здоровий сон та прогулянки на свіжому повітрі, різноманітні техніки релаксації та звичайно проводити час із сім'єю. Практична значимість виявлення професійного вигорання у викладачів вищих навчальних закладів полягає у проведенні вчасної профілактики та наданні подальших рекомендацій для подолання даного синдрому, оскільки навчальний процес та атмосфера у колективі напругу від цього залежить

Ключові слова: професійне вигорання, викладачі вищих навчальних закладів, фаза «напруги», «резистентності», «виснаження»