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The Professional Burnout in Polish Teachers Review of Selected Studies

ABSTRACT: The article features a presentation of results of a meta-analysis of selected studies carried out among Polish teachers since 1992. Only a selection of studies will be discussed as publications on professional burnout found in Polish journals far exceed several hundred positions. The first article about burnout was published in 1988 in the social psychology textbook entitled *Psychology and life* (Zimbardo, Ruch), by C. Maslach titled "Burnout: loss of care for man". In 1990, Justyna Wojciechowska published a review article entitled "Syndrom wypalenia zawodowego" (Eng. *Professional burnout syndrome*) in "Nowiny Psychologiczne". In 1993, the English monograph "Professional Burnout: Recent Developments In Theory And Research", which consisted of materials from the Kraków conference organized by Tadeusz Marek (Schaufeli, Maslach, Marek, 1993). The book has been reissued multiple times. The most important parts of this study were published in the book edited by Helena Sęk entitled "Wypalenie zawodowe, przyczyny, mechanizmy, zapobieganie" (2000; Eng. *Professional burnout — causes, mechanism and prevention*). In the years 1992–2009 alone, nearly 40 Polish researchers, psychologists and educators were tackled the issue of professional burnout and published some important scientific publications (Bilska, 2010, pp. 28–29). The article features a presentation of results of a meta-analysis of selected studies carried out among Polish teachers since 1992. Only a selection of studies will be discussed as publications on Professional burnout found in Polish journals far exceed several hundred positions.

KEYWORDS: stress, burnout, depersonalization, *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (MBI), *Burnout Measure*.

Introduction

The burnout syndrome in the job of a teacher is not a qualitatively new phenomenon. The first publication on this matter was written by

H. Freudenberger in 1974. The beginnings of interest in this issue should be sought primarily in the social ailments related to the effects of professional burnout.

The article features a presentation of results of a meta-analysis of selected studies carried out among Polish teachers since 1992. Only a selection of studies will be discussed as publications on Professional burnout found in Polish journals far exceed several hundred positions. The first article about burnout was published in 1988 in the social psychology textbook entitled “Psychology and life” (Zimbardo, Ruch), by C. Maslach titled “Burnout: loss of care for man”. In 1990, Justyna Wojciechowska published a review article entitled “Syndrom wypalenia zawodowego” (Eng. *Professional burnout syndrome*) in “Nowiny Psychologiczne”. In 1993, the English monograph “Professional Burnout: Recent Developments In Theory And Research”, which consisted of materials from the Kraków conference organized by Tadeusz Marek (Schaufeli, Maslach, Marek, 1993). The book has been reissued multiple times. The most important parts of this study were published in the book edited by Helena Sęk entitled “Wypalenie zawodowe, przyczyny, mechanizmy, zapobieganie” (2000; Eng. *Professional burnout – causes, mechanism and prevention*).

In the years 1992–2009 alone, nearly 40 Polish researchers, psychologists and educators were tackled the issue of professional burnout and published some important scientific publications (Bilska, 2010, pp. 28–29). In the history of research on professional burnout, various methods were used to measure this construct: structured individual interview, projective drawings, numerous self-description inventories. The best known and most frequently used tool for diagnosing the level of professional burnout is *the Maslach Burnout Inventory* (MBI) developed by C. Maslach (Tucholska, 2009). This tool is still considered to be the most important one to this day. The second most popular inventory is *Burnout Measure* (BM) developed by Pines and Aronson (Enzmann, Schaufeli, and Girault, 1994). In Poland, research on professional burnout among teachers was carried out mainly by means of a Polish adaptation of *Maslach Burnout Inventory* developed by Tomasz Pasikowski (Pasikowski, 2006; Tucholska 2009). However, apart from these tools, also tools specially prepared by researchers and based on the theoretical model of Maslach’s professional burnout were used (Smulczyk, Rycielska, 2013; Dziurzyński, 2019).

Research on professional burnout (1992–2009)

Research on professional burnout in Poland began nearly 20 years after the first, pioneering article was published. There were also discussions on the theoretical foundations of this phenomenon. Thus, Polish researchers

have almost immediately entered the empirical research. In Poland, intensive research on the professional burnout of teachers was conducted in 1992–2000 by Helena Sęk (2004, p. 17). Her research showed that the low salary and low social prestige of this profession are among the biggest stressors causing the burnout syndrome among teachers.

“Studies carried out in 1991–1993 showed that the stress load was considerable among teachers and had a raising tendency. On a five-step scale ranging from 1 (no stress) to 5 (very intense stress), the average of the results for stressors in both studies was above 3.2. This means that the respondents evaluated the stress as closer to intense stress. The most stressful areas included:

- (1) low salary, disproportionate to the effort and input (3.91),
- (2) low social prestige of the teaching profession (3.91),
- (3) students’ behavior (3.91),
- (4) students’ characteristics (3.29),
- (5) overloaded curriculum (3.21),
- (6) constant changes of curriculum (3.21),
- (7) excessive demands of superiors (3,21)
- (8) conflicting demands of superiors (3,12),
- (9) constant risk of being subject to assessment by supervisory bodies (3.03),
- (10) unfavorable working conditions, (3,03),
- (11) equipment shortages (2.92). (...)

Compared to other subgroups, it is likely that elementary school teachers were the most overloaded mentally because as many as nine groups of factors were assessed as stressful above the average for the entire group” (Sęk, 2007, p. 152).

Her research has shown that professional burnout is determined by factors such as age or type of school in which teachers work. In the analysis of the results, Helena Sęk emphasized that among teachers with severe burnout syndrome there are tendencies to avoid contact with students and parents, the formalization of school meetings, frequent use of short quizzes as a testing method instead of oral testing (Tucholska, p. 106).

At that time, research on the burnout syndrome among Polish teachers was also carried out by L. Golińska and W. Świętochowski (1998), A. Krawulka-Ptaszyńska (1996), M. Kliś and J. Kossewska (1998). The selected results of their research were published in the volume entitled *Szkoła a wypalenie zawodowe* (Eng. *School and Professional burnout*) edited by Jan Kropiwnicki (1999). These focused on very specific aspects of this phenomenon: the relationship between burnout and methods of coping with stress (Krawulka-Ptaszyńska),

and certain personality variables (Golińska, Świętochowski, 1998); Kliś and Kosewska (1998), teacher's gender identity (Mandal, 1999) or methods of coping with professional burnout (Świętochowski, 2011).

In her research, Hanna Krawulska-Ptaszyńska confirmed the relationship between stress management strategies and professional burnout among educators. The data she has obtained indicate a strong link between depersonalization and the use of techniques to deal with difficult situations concerning the regulation of emotions. Originally, she expected that the use of various techniques to deal with difficult situations would prevent the development of depersonalization. The author explains the inverse relationship obtained here by the fact that unpleasant emotions (anger, rage) co-occur with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, while emotional coping is treated as an attempt to overcome these unpleasant feelings (1992, pp. 403–410).

Among the above mentioned Polish studies, the study carried out by Maria Kliś and Joanna Kosewska in 1998 is particularly worth noting. Kliś and Kosewska focused on the analysis of the relationship between the type of school and the level of burnout among teachers. Teachers from special schools, elementary school and secondary schools took part in the study. The analysis of the data indicates that secondary school teachers were characterized by: the highest level of emotional exhaustion, the lowest level of satisfaction with professional achievements and a tendency to depersonalization. On the other hand, elementary school teachers indicated the lowest emotional exhaustion. In the remaining dimensions, their results were comparable to those for special schools teachers. The data obtained suggest that the type of school where the teachers work is related to the level and structure of the burnout syndrome.

Kliś and Kosewska were looking for a link between the sense of control and professional burnout. The analyses showed that the sense of control turned out to be a very good predictor of stress but a bit weaker of burnout. Correlation analyses show that the external sense of control correlates significantly with dissatisfaction with professional accomplishment and emotional exhaustion and slightly less with depersonalization. The tendency to depersonalization among teachers positively correlates with the external location of control, the lack of job satisfaction remains in a significant, negative relationship with the external sense of control (Tucholska, p. 108).

Kliś and Kosewska compared their results with the Greek and Hong Kong studies by Kantas and Vasillaki (1997), and Chan and Hui (1995). The analysis of the data they collected provided evidence that in Polish teachers teaching in elementary and secondary schools are more likely to manifest depersonalization than Greek teachers working in the same types of schools.

Polish teachers in elementary school feel a lower level of professional satisfaction than Greek teachers. On the other hand, when it comes to the level of emotional exhaustion, the situation seems to be better. It is higher in case of Greek elementary school teachers and it is similar in case of secondary school teachers.

The researchers analyzed the relationship between self-esteem, sense of empathy and loneliness, neuroticism, temperament of the respondents and professional burnout. In the light of the data they obtained, emotional exhaustion correlates significantly with neuroticism, with a sense of loneliness in three dimensions: lack of close relationships with other people, tendency to break relationships and one of the indicators of empathy, which is the tendency to sympathize with unknown people. They found a significant, negative correlation between emotional exhaustion and extraversion as well as social self-esteem and self-esteem. According to their findings, the depersonalization tendency in the examined teachers correlates positively with the arousal level, motility of nerve processes, loneliness in all three aspects and the tendency to sympathize with other people. Lack of professional satisfaction correlates significantly and positively with extraversion, the sense of general and social self-esteem, the arousal level and motility of nerve processes and cognitive empathy. The lack of professional satisfaction negatively correlates with the feeling of loneliness in all three aspects.

The scope and depth of the professional burnout vary, which can be concluded based on the selection of texts collected by J. Kropiwnicki. According to the research by H. Sęk from 1996, “in the group of 119 elementary and secondary school teachers, about 11% of them have developed professional burnout syndrome”. (p. 105)

In her research, M. Kondek focused on organizational factors influencing the emergence and development of professional burnout in teachers. According to the author, this research show that (...) “the most negative impact on the professional well-being of teachers have:

- incorrect management of the education system,
- poor working conditions,
- low income that does not provide decent living conditions
- the experienced need to work with an increasingly large group of maladjusted children or those who cause teaching or educational difficulties.

This is all overlapped by:

- difficulties of personal life,
- mental fatigue from work,

- the sense of powerlessness and
- the sense of inefficiency of educational activities” (Kropiwnicki, 1999, pp. 14–15).

The changes taking place in education almost all the time, contradictory requirements, systematic increase in the requirements of professional development, inadequate style of school management additionally intensify the threat of burnout in the teaching profession. Other organizational factors that drew the researchers’ attention include the lack of didactic aids, conflicts in teaching teams.

The research on the burnout syndrome among teachers also took into account specific difficulties in teaching students. These difficulties resulted from students’ developmental deficits, disabilities, or environmental problems such as behavioral disorders, poverty.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the research on professional burnout was conducted by Tomasz Grad (2004, pp. 32–38). The aim of the research was to gain information about stress and professional burnout, as well as various strategies to counteract it in a group of teachers. The author formulated an important research question: Are there effective methods to fight professional burnout in the teaching profession? The results of the research indicate that teachers most often use support in the work environment, practice hobbies. They often use pharmacological and herbal remedies. Among the numerous strategies for fighting or preventing professional burnout, many people resort to physical activity and sport. The choice of the method is determined by the individual differences of individual teachers.

As the research performed by Sylwia Jasiak from WSB-NLU showed, professional burnout syndrome is more common among young people under 40 years old. The main factor behind this may be the lack of satisfaction with salary or lack of a place to work. The respondents clearly indicated that already in the first 5 years of their professional career they felt that they were not fully satisfied with the duties that are often imposed on them by their superiors. And in people with more seniority and therefore more professional experience (after 20 years of work), similar symptoms became visible much later (dSPACE.wsb-nlu.edu.pl).

The phenomenon of professional burnout in the professional group of teachers is dangerous not only for the educators, but it harms mainly the students who are most important in the educational process. The teachers’ dissatisfaction arouses criticism from parents and superiors. These, in turn, further exacerbate the burnout in the teacher.

“The phenomenon of burnout among teachers is becoming an increasingly serious social problem in various countries. This is related to

macro-social, political and economic factors, as well as factors concerning, in particular, those education systems which are subject to permanent and not fully thought-out reform measures. This is a current problem both in countries with the highest standards of development (USA and Great Britain) and in emerging democracies” (Sęk, 2007, p. 150).

The study by Stanisława Tucholska (2009) was one of the most interesting and providing valuable information about teachers in the process of professional burnout. The subject she addressed was the question to what extent personality variables and remedial behaviors determine the way in which teachers lose their strength in their professional activity; in other words, to what extent it is possible to explain the process of teachers’ burnout by using psychological variables. It therefore classified the respondents into subgroups, taking as its starting point the results obtained in the three subscales of Maslach’s Occupational Burnout Questionnaire. The obtained data were analyzed by means of neural network method, which allowed to separate four groups of teachers:

1st – disappointed teachers – 20.70% of respondents;

2nd – matched teachers – 32.82% of respondents;

3rd – distanced teachers– 25.78% of respondents;

4th – burnt out teachers – 20.70% of the respondents (pp. 216–220).

“Disappointed teachers do not, according to S. Tucholska, derive satisfaction and contentment from their pedagogical role, they are characterized by their low resilience, little integrated personality structure, which makes it difficult for them to function optimally in changing difficult professional conditions (pp. 217–218). Sensitive, with a relatively low sense of security and little self-confidence, they are emotionally dependent on others and expect help and support from them. Gentle, hesitant, and not very resolute, they try to carry out the tasks and duties entrusted to them responsibly, without striving for personal gain or social prestige. The average intensification of the needs that condition the correct interpersonal relations co-exists with their readiness to take care of and care for others. Their pedagogical work generates an increased level of stress, which is mainly caused by difficult working conditions and low motivation of students to learn. In difficult situations, they strive to control their emotions and impulsive behavior and seek help and support from their surroundings. Disillusioned teachers are people who are open to contact with others, empathic and willing to be affiliated, but are characterized by a weakness of the ego, a small integration of personality and the associated lack of self-confidence and low dynamics of remedial behavior. Their pedagogical work is very challenging for them. Insecure, emotionally

dependent on others, they are not very effective and convincing in the role of a leader, which the teaching and educational work requires. Open to contacts, gentle but at the same time blaming and tensed, they require more support and help than they can give to others. Easily hurt, not very dynamic and not resourceful enough in difficult, changing conditions and various professional situations can feel lost, clumsy, dissatisfied and disappointed. They can be quite effective in optimal, favorable conditions, but fail in difficult situations. It seems that Pines had this group of people in mind when she expressed regret that “burnout is experienced mainly by sensitive people, often with idealistic attitudes, setting themselves lofty goals in their work” (1993, 1996).

In opinion of S. Tucholska, teachers matched to the teaching profession can be described as resilient, internally integrated, with good emotional control, affirming themselves and others (p. 217). Their great interpersonal skills are expressed in their openness, ability to establish and maintain contacts with others and high level of affiliate needs. This fosters their readiness to engage with other people with the right commitment, tact and culture. Patient and understanding the needs of others, they provide specific help and support without fear and aggression. When necessary, they take on a leadership role and responsibility for others. They are characterized by great perseverance, discipline and conscientiousness in the implementation of the tasks and aspirations set. In situations considered unfavorable, they use active, problem-oriented countermeasure strategies, while showing relatively high flexibility. Therefore, the distinguishing features of a group of matched teachers are: high resilience and high interpersonal competences. This arrangement of factors gives them a chance to function effectively in the teaching profession, because on the one hand they are open to the sphere of interpersonal relations and on the other hand they are able to be active and effective in it. An open, active, supportive approach to others, including students and the teaching community, is the plane on which their full professional identity is formed. This increases their involvement and confidence in their skills and pedagogical influence, preventing burnout. There is much to suggest that these are teachers who work in their profession with passion, commitment, a sense of responsibility for others and respect for their students.

Distanced teachers who tend to depersonalize and treat students in a subjective manner, according to S. Tucholska, are characterized by a relatively strong *ego* and the ability to both fine-tune themselves and use favorable environmental conditions to achieve personal tasks and goals (pp. 217–218). They are distinguished by a relatively high ability to defend their position, perseverance and even stubbornness and determination in achieving life

goals, plans and aspirations. They are characterized by a relatively high level of coping activity. In difficult situations they usually use different strategies, but most often they use the technique of distancing themselves from the stressful situation, while they make a positive re-evaluation of the problem or solve it in a planned manner a little less often. Their average sense of security is associated with lower emotional control, increased internal tension and less resistance to stress and overload in case of failure. In their professional work they are particularly stressed by time pressure and low motivation of students to work. A relatively good level of affiliate needs is associated with a markedly increased tendency to anger, hostility and physical aggression. Such a system of results allows to conclude that the teachers surveyed, in conditions favorable for them, or when they strive to achieve the intended goal, are caring, attentive and responsible, while in difficult, overloaded conditions or when their behavior is not observed or assessed by their superiors, they are manipulative, hostile or even aggressive towards students. This configuration of results makes it also possible to put forward a hypothesis about the overestimation of own interpersonal skills and affiliate needs by teachers from this group, which in self-description methods resulted in higher test results. Regardless of which of the above hypotheses is true, it should be clearly stated that their interpersonal competences are low. Thus, it can be said that distanced teachers are characterized by high resilience and low interpersonal competences. Their functioning can be considered optimal in terms of willingness to carry out tasks, striving to achieve success, dynamics of actions. However, they are characterized by low social skills, expressed by an unfriendly, distrustful and even hostile attitude towards their surroundings. Their personal involvement is not sufficient, hence they may relatively easily manifest a tendency to treat others in a subjective, instrumental way, which is not conducive to the effectiveness of their pedagogical influence. In difficult, unfavorable conditions and circumstances they relatively often use the technique of underestimating the problem, which allows them to distance themselves and react by avoidance.

According to S. Tucholska, burnt out teachers have a full-blown syndrome of loss of strength. "These are people with a poorly integrated personality, uncertain, with reduced self-confidence and a negative self-concept. Labile and little integrated, with a low sense of security, they do not feel adapted. They are characterized by weak skills of establishing and maintaining interpersonal contacts, from which they cannot derive satisfaction. They are little able to read and interpret their own and other people's needs properly. The low level of affiliate needs makes it difficult for them to perform social roles involving emotional exchange, closeness, showing care and taking responsibility for

others. They are characterized by low autonomy from the environment. They approach their tasks and responsibilities with little perseverance and determination. They experience difficulties in achieving those aspirations and goals that require firmness, discipline and consistency. Professional work is a source of great stress for them. In difficult situations, they tend to behave passively, mainly using avoidance and withdrawal strategies. These teachers show a deficit of interpersonal competences and a low level of resilience. Their low perseverance and low determination in performing tasks is combined with difficulties in fulfilling social roles involving openness, closeness and taking responsibility for others. As they are passive in interpersonal relationships, with little willingness to establish positive emotional bonds, they cannot be the community creators that the school community needs in order for cooperation and collaboration to emerge. Their current lack of interpersonal skills and remedial behavior, as well as their not quite task-oriented approach to duties, result in a growing number of burnout symptoms at the professional level: a sense of fatigue, exhaustion, cynicism and a sense of inadequacy for the profession” (p. 219).

Research on professional burnout (2010–2019)

Further research on the phenomenon of Professional burnout, which is worth mentioning, was conducted, independently of each other, by: Janusz Kirenko together with Teresa Zubrzycka-Maciąg (2011), Ludmiła Rycielska and Marek Smulczyk (2013), Piotr Hreciński (2016), Elżbieta Lisowska (2018) and Krzysztof Dziurzyński (2018).

Janusz Kirenko and Teresa Zubrzycka-Maciąg conducted a survey among 170 teachers teaching in kindergarten, elementary school, junior high and secondary schools. Due to the relatively small number of male teachers, they decided to exclude them from the study. Surveys from 158 teachers were analyzed (Kirenko, Zubrzycka-Maciąg, 2011, p. 53). In this study, the basic question was:

Is there a correlation between the level of professional burnout in teachers and their psychosocial functioning in terms of social support, self-esteem, sense of coherence, motivation of achievements and professional attitudes? If so, what is this dependence?

Six psychological tools were used to find answers to this question (p. 52). However, the starting point of the study was the evaluation of the intensity of the teachers’ professional burnout syndrome. The authors found that the

teachers surveyed were at the level of 6 sten in case of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and at the level of 5 sten in case of emotional involvement (p. 71).

In their study, Janusz Kirenko and Teresa Zubrzycka-Maciąg “distinguished three types of professional burnout in female teachers: completely burnt out, heavily engaged and not burnt out. It turned out that the group of teachers with all symptoms of professional burnout, i.e. with high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization with relatively low personal involvement, was not the most numerous. On the contrary, there was a much more numerous group of teachers with a high level of personal involvement and, at the same time, average values of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, i.e., strongly engaged professionally, and even a group of not burnt out teachers with relatively low values of all components of professional burnout (p. 305).

Ludmiła Rycielska and Marek Smulczyk surveyed 1,703 teachers conducting classes in subjects included in the curriculum for particular types of post-primary schools. It was a panel survey, based on a representative sample of educational institutions, in which 198 schools participated: general secondary schools (99 schools), technical and specialized secondary schools (60 schools), and basic vocational schools (39 schools). The schools were drawn from all secondary schools in Poland. Then one class was drawn from each school and the teachers who taught the students from the drawn class were qualified for the study. It was the largest survey of secondary school teachers. This was possible thanks to the co-financing of the project by the European Union under the European Social Fund (Smulczyk, Rycielska, 2013, p. 113).

The vast majority of the surveyed teachers were women (N = 1,324). The most numerous group in the sample were the teachers up to the age of 35 (N = 483), followed by teachers over 51 (N = 401), those between 36 and 42 (N = 391), and finally between 43 and 50 (N = 391) (Smulczyk, Rycielska, 2013, pp. 116–117).

As part of the survey, teachers were asked to fill out a scale examining the symptoms of professional burnout, consisting of 17 questions, with a four-point answer scale, where 1 – means definitely yes and 4 – definitely no. The content of the scale questions consisted of three subscales:

1. Lack of job satisfaction (7 questions),
2. Difficulties in working with students (6 questions), and
3. Negative opinion about the teaching profession (4 questions) (p. 118).

Smulczyk and Rycielska have identified in their analyses a profile of teachers with high intensity of symptoms of professional burnout. Teachers with higher intensity of these symptoms are more often men than women.

Male teachers have more difficulties in working with students and have a worse reputation for their profession than female ones.

Another group of teachers are those at risk of professional burnout. According to Smulczyk and Rycielska, these are more often people from younger age groups. The youngest teachers, i.e. up to the age of 35, are more often negative about their profession than people over 35. People aged 36–42 are most unsatisfied with their work (p. 126).

Piotr Hreciński's studies on professional burnout covered 425 religion teachers (catechists). There were 138 men in this group (Hreciński, 2016, p. 145). The studies took into account psychological burnout factors such as: personality traits, sense of coherence, conviction of one's own teaching effectiveness, professional stress, applied remedial strategies and the type of emotional work performed (p. 160). Hreciński's analyses showed a clear link between the burnout syndrome and the four features described in the Great Five model (p. 160). The sense of coherence proved to be negatively correlated with each ingredient of professional burnout of the catechists surveyed (p. 161). Also the sense of self-efficiency in teacher's work revealed a negative relationship with each of the three dimensions of professional burnout (p. 162). The stress felt at work correlated positively with professional burnout (especially emotional exhaustion) (p. 163). Analyses of the links between professional burnout and coping methods proved to be interesting (pp. 165–166).

The results of the surveys indicate that each of the dimensions of burnout in the catechists surveyed co-exists with the frequent use of avoidance strategies, mainly such as: cessation of activities, distraction, use of psychoactive agents and denial (p. 165). According to Piotr Hreciński, by using them, teachers can somehow relieve the emotional tension resulting from stress, but the effects of these actions are not lasting. Effective stress management requires a change in the circumstances that cause stress or the way they are perceived. Hreciński's research confirms that the lower intensity of burnout symptoms is associated with more frequent use of problem-oriented countermeasures, among which the following stand out: positive revaluation and reference to religion. An attempt to spot also positives in difficult school experiences, e.g. an opportunity to develop oneself, allows the surveyed teachers to reduce the negative consequences of stress. Religion proves to be an important support for these activities.

Religion teachers surveyed by Hreciński, who struggle with stress, show high focus on emotions and their expression, experience a higher degree of emotional exhaustion.

The study of relationships between burnout and emotional work showed a positive correlation between these variables. According to the author, this means that suppression, intensification or pretending of emotional expression by the catechists surveyed is associated with a higher level of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced sense of personal achievement (p. 166).

The author managed to identify four types of professional catechists' functioning in the field of burnout and engagement in work: engaged (26% of respondents), exhausted (28%) completely burnt out (18%) and insufficiently.

Elżbieta Lisowska (2018) is another researcher dealing with the problem of professional burnout in educators. She has set three research goals for herself. She decided to check how and to what extent burnout and manners of burning out can be explained by clearly defined professional values. She declared her willingness to check whether seniority is an indicator of the conditions of Professional burnout. She pointed out that an important direction is not only to look for differences in levels of burnout in relation to this variable, but also for differences in the causes leading to burnout.

The third objective was of a practical nature. The researcher has set herself the task of finding a model of a tool to measure the scale of the burnout risk due to the impact of separated work factors.

In connection with the goals set in this way, Elżbieta Lisowska posed three specific research questions. The first concerned the relationship between the burn-out of teachers with different internal structures and their professional functioning in six dimensions: the dimension of psychosocial burdens; the dimension of areas of organizational fitting in and not fitting in; the dimension of job satisfaction; the dimension of orientation towards professional values; the dimension of sense of social mission in the profession. The second was "whether and how the professionalization of teachers determines the indicators of their burnout". The third was an alternative question: "is there a model of teachers' sensitivity/susceptibility to professional burnout and if so, what are the professional and individual factors involved?"

Lisowska also noted that the research was exploratory in nature and did not formulate any research hypotheses. In this arrangement of research we are dealing with a collection of different results, e.g. from different surveys and questionnaires either connected or not. In questionnaires or sheets examining the professional functioning of the teachers studied, information on various features and dimensions of professional functioning was collected. In such a case the author wanted to verify the relationship of some variables with other variables. Thus, the situation of the exploratory character of the study we will be dealing with when we do not know what may come out of our study, but

we have a presumption that there are various important relationships in the collected data.

The researcher, even though she did not say explicitly that in view of the enormous complexity of the phenomenon of Professional burnout, and with the current state of research findings, there is still room for exploratory research in this area, and there is no reason for such research to be artificially “dressed up” as hypothesis testing.

E. Lisowska decided to study professional burnout with the help of a classic C. Maslach tool measuring three known dimensions of this phenomenon: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. 330 people participated in the study, of which 316 were teachers, of whom 261 were women and 55 were men. It is an incomparable and unequal number of the study group.

The researcher used many procedures, including cluster analysis in the k-means clustering version. In this way, she singled out groups with EE and rPA dominance. The first group included 125 people, while the second 185. In the group with domination of D (depersonalization), there were 6 teachers. And they were excluded from further analysis.

The author tried to find empirical connections between professional burnout and the stages of professionalization. In general, this division allowed E. Lisowska, for example, to state that in the group of teachers with the dominance of emotional burnout, the highest levels of emotional burnout and lack of sense of achievement are demonstrated by teachers working from 11 to 20 years, depersonalization appears in teachers with the longest seniority – over 20 years. In turn, in the group dominated by a lack of sense of achievement, the highest levels of emotional burnout and depersonalization were achieved by teachers working for 11 to 20 years and the lowest by those working from 1 to 10 years.

These are further results which confirm the thesis about the ambiguity of the professional burnout in a group of teachers.

Two more surveys were those conducted by Krzysztof Dziurzyński. 182 people participated in the first one (2019). 29.7% of the respondents showed low burnout level, average – 41.7%, while high – 28.6%. The surveys show that teachers working in elementary school are more vulnerable to burnout than those working in kindergarten. Also the age of these teachers has a significant impact on their feelings, as teachers aged 36–45 have a higher level of all professional burnout components. The higher the seniority, the higher the chances of burnout and the lower the personal accomplishment. The surveys show that teachers with master’s and higher education are characterized by

a higher level of burnout in terms of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. On the other hand, teachers after undergraduate studies are characterized by a higher level of burnout in terms of personal accomplishment and total burnout. The surveys also show that female nominated teachers are more vulnerable to burnout in such dimensions as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and total professional burnout. Female trainee teachers show a higher level of burnout in case of personal accomplishment. There are no significant differences between the place where the school is located and the burnout process, but more teachers working in the countryside are affected by professional burnout. In the case of self-assessment measured by the Rosenberg scale, it turned out that apart from the degree of professional advancement, no other variable determines the level of self-assessment of the surveyed female teachers.

In the years 2018–2019, Krzysztof Dziurzyński's conducted his second survey among 69 female teachers of early school education. 2.9% of the respondents showed very low emotional exhaustion, 17.4% – low and 52.2% – high. A very high level of emotional exhaustion was noted in 27.5% of the female teachers surveyed.

8.7% of female teachers showed a very low level of depersonalization, while 63.8% – low level. High levels of depersonalization were diagnosed in 21.7% of female teachers and very high in 5.8% (4).

Low level of personal accomplishment was noted in 4.3% of female teachers, while high level by 20.3% and very high by 75.4%.

The analysis of the results of the survey on professional burnout of teachers in particular areas shows that 52.2% of respondents manifest high level of emotional burnout. Most teachers (63.8%) manifest low level of depersonalization. The largest number of teachers, as much as 75.4%, are satisfied with their work and their sense of achievement is at a very high level.

The study of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and depersonalization showed a positive correlation between these variables. Emotional exhaustion is negatively correlated with a sense of accomplishment. In turn, the sense of accomplishment correlates negatively with depersonalization.

Summarizing the results obtained by Dziurzyński, one can say that a high sense of emotional exhaustion is accompanied by high depersonalization, and the higher the sense of accomplishment, the lower the depersonalization.

Final thoughts

Summarizing the issues contained in this article, it should be stated that the phenomenon of professional burnout is deeply inscribed in the work of educators and teachers. This is due both to general civilization factors, which also occur in other professional groups, as well as to specific features of the teaching profession.

The prevalence of the phenomenon and the degree of professional burnout in active teachers prove that this issue is still important, up to date and of interest to social sciences.

It is not a secret that society has ever-increasing expectations towards teachers (or maybe even claims), which are not accompanied by adequate recognition, prestige or gratification. This was particularly evident in the years 2018–2020, when the representatives of the executive power showed an unwilling and sometimes even contemptible attitude towards the teaching community.

Excessive expectations of the authorities do not translate into teachers' salaries. It is one of the unsolvable paradoxes of the teaching profession. No government cared about meeting the needs of teachers (at least at the level of miners' claims or policemen's salary demands).

In addition, parents and students very often make unfair assessments of teachers. They do not notice that the teachers work more hours than their timetable provides for. Apart from conducting lessons, they have to prepare for them, check the work of students, prepare scenarios and aids, constantly improve their professional qualifications and participate in projects. Educational authorities at ministerial or curatorial level also perceive teacher's work as such.

The modern education system requires more and more versatility, efficiency and achievement from teachers. The COVID-19 pandemic showed, in the opinion of the Ministry of National Education, that if teachers were more involved in remote teaching, the outcomes would be much better. COVID-19 as a higher-order event will not be without influence on the mental well-being of teachers.

The Polish school has become a care facility in addition to being an educational institution. Recent changes in the educational system have strongly affected not only students, but also teachers. In the multitude of tasks outside of the educational ones, school principals forget that the teacher's work is long-lasting and the effects do not always appear in the so-called short time horizon.

The picture of Polish education shows what influences the emergence of stressful situations in teacher's work. One can say that a teacher functions under constant stress. The professional situation of a teacher becomes extremely troublesome when the requirements and expectations are not adequate to the teacher's abilities or when the idea of the dream profession does not correspond to reality. Disillusionment occurs, motivation to work is weakened, self-esteem is lowered.

We have to remember that the burnout starts slowly and unnoticed. Gradually, the sense of self-esteem, efficiency and self-agency is reduced, internal strength is weakened.

A burnt-out teacher avoids contact with superiors, parents of students, other teachers. He or she shows aversion to the students, often treats them subjectively, does not think about their future, and does not draw satisfaction from the contact with other people. The consequence of such behavior is a much poorer knowledge transfer, lack of motivation of students to learn and lack of development of activity and creativity of the pupils. A professionally burnt-out teacher is also an organizational problem. This is due to frequent absenteeism from work, reduced readiness to perform additional functions or tasks, lack of proper fulfillment of the school principal's requirements.

Professional burnout has an impact on the quality of a teacher's private life. This phenomenon is influenced by the transformation of relationships with other people, partnerships or family life. It is therefore a very important individual and social problem.

The teacher is unfortunately lonely in the fight against professional burnout. When a burnout syndrome occurs, teachers often are left alone with their problems. This phenomenon has a negative impact not only on their physical and psychophysical health but also hinders them from performing their work properly. It limits the teachers' activity, communication, inhibits their development.

It seems necessary to take appropriate prophylactic measures. One of the basic is to make teachers, both future and active ones, aware of the specifics of professional burnout. The acquired knowledge, being familiar with preventive and protective measures and self-awareness inhibits the occurrence of professional burnout. At the same time, it strengthens the sense of own professional competence.

The basic preventive step in the teaching profession is to broaden the knowledge about the specifics, sources, symptoms and ways to prevent this phenomenon. Own measures taken to counteract the stress in the work environment are also very important. It is worth remembering, however, that

sometimes a proper rest, properly organized free time, getting away from everyday school life, the ability to forget about school when coming back home brings positive effects, supports professional functioning.

The article presents an analysis of research results obtained using various scales to examine the symptoms accompanying professional burnout in a group of people working in education. Numerous studies have shown that the teaching profession is associated with stress and specific nuisance (cf. Sęk, 2004a; Tucholska, 1996, 1999, 2009a; Bas, 2011). Three symptoms that may cause the phenomenon of professional burnout were considered important: lack of job satisfaction, difficulties in working with students and a negative opinion about the profession.

The presented research may serve as a starting point for further research among educators. It seems important to try to describe their working conditions. It would be interesting to be able to assess the role played by the teacher's personality dispositions in the six fitting in/not fitting in at work areas highlighted by Maslach. (Maslach, Leiter, 2011). It may also be interesting to use questionnaire tools to diagnose the types of burnout described by Farber (2000).

This article shows that in terms of the quality of the teacher's work understood as the ability to manage oneself, one's work environment no new preventive solutions have appeared.

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