

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SYMPTOMS OF BURNOUT OF THE EDUCATORS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR EXPERIENCE**

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**Abstract.** Research on new perspectives on management and resilience of different organisations including higher education has indicated that burn-out emerged as extremely important concept. Aim of this study is to investigate role of management in preventing burnout of the educators based on survey data received of the teaching staff of higher education institutions and to find if there is a relationship between symptoms of burnout and experience of the educators. Research results indicated relationship between symptoms of burnout of the educators of higher education institutions in relation to their professional experience and most important role is on management of the respective institution.

**Keywords:** role of management in preventing burnout, higher education, experience, educators.

**JEL Classification:** A23, C83, I23, I25, O1.

### **Introduction**

Recent scientific findings show how important topic burnout is on the scientific agenda, especially since the pandemic caused by Covid-19 has occurred. However, burnout is being discussed in scientific society since the 1970's, when it occurred on the scientific agenda. Researchers discuss different aspect of this phenomena. Since the end 20<sup>th</sup> century many researchers studied syndrome of burnout, defined it and discussed on it's symptoms. Some of them stated that burnout should be studied as phenomena of the profession (Savicki & Cooley, 1983), however, eventually many researchers concluded that burnout is affected by personal traits of the individual. Some of them stated that professional efficacy and high evaluation on personal work works as protective factors against burnout (De Vera Garcia & Gambarte, 2020). Personal traits of the educators can be used as part of the strategies on avoidance of burnout (Vukmirovic et al., 2020). Definitely, burnout is crucial topic on the scientific agenda, especially since the pandemic caused my Covid-19 occurred. Amount of the research done on burnout for the past year almost doubled if compared with pre-pandemic year 2018. However, there is still scientific discussion on many aspects of the burnout, especially on factors influencing it's rise.

Such possible factors as professional experience is discussed in scientific literature. Some authors, like Tobin and Taff state that stress has an impact on educators not

depending on their experience (Tobin & Taff, 2020). However, some researchers like Tjldink et al. in 2014 and Akram et al., 7 years later done similar research on medical professors and stated that they have higher rates of burnout if they are at the beginning of their career (Tjldink et al., 2014; Akram et al., 2021).

Aim of this paper is to research if experience of the educators of higher education institutions play role in the experience of symptoms of burnout.

Tasks of the research: 1) investigate recent scientific finding on the syndrome of burnout and its relation to the experience of educators and other professions in general; 2) analyse results of the survey of educators of higher education institutions based on their teaching experience (years) in higher education institution.

Research methods: scientific publications analysis and survey developed and conducted by Julija Mironova on teaching staff on aspects related to symptoms of burnout in higher education.

### **1. Theory of burnout**

Since the beginning of the pandemic caused by Covid-19 burnout as a topic for the research became extremely popular. Different research is done on many aspects of it, starting from theorising it, to the symptoms and influence factors.

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There are many definitions of the burnout in different scientific literature, however, they are not contradictory. World Health Organisation [WHO] has defined burnout as a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed (World Health Organisation, 2019). WHO describes three dimension of burnout – energy depletion, increasing mental distance and reduced personal efficacy. Symptoms of burnout defined by Christina Maslach, who is one of the main researchers in the field, were described in the end of 20th century and are very similar to the symptoms, provided by WHO. As the key symptom emotional exhaustion is mentioned, as well as depersonalization, which is cynical feeling toward clients, and third one is reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Since the definition of burnout and symptoms of burnout were presented by Maslach and colleagues in large variety of the literature, research on the burnout is mainly based on their scientific findings and measurement tool of burnout they developed – Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). What is important to notice – regarding recent scientific findings, burnout is not an inevitable syndrome, it can be recognise and prevented and it can be threatened, if it is recognised on time (Edu-Valsania et al., 2022).

There is different research done about the prevention of the burnout, however, one of the most noticeable research was done by Maslach. Author in her research state that one of the possible options in avoidance of burnout can be changing of the work pattern, like working hours and overload, which gives extra work-life balance. Social support from family and friends is another crucial factor mentioned by Maslach and many other researchers eventually. Such advice and using of relaxation strategies and self-analysis techniques were also mentioned as possible prevention and treatment options (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Other aspects have to be examined also.

## 2. Burnout in the education

Since the concept of burnout has been studied, educators are recognised as one the professions associated with high level of stress what is one of the factors influencing the rise of the burnout. Different factors are described in the literature as the ones influencing burnout. What is important to notice – burnout of the educators has negative consequences, as lower level of the performance of the educators and poor mental health (Thomas et al., 2019), what means that this topic is definitely worth for an attention on the research agenda. Understanding the nature of burnout give to the management of the higher education institution a possibility to solve problems with retention and recruitment of the faculty members (Edu-Valsania et al., 2022). Research done in Norway (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020), as well as in Italy (Peddizi et al., 2021), Czech Republic (Cech et al., 2021), China (Sang et al., 2022) showed that teachers are on the high risk of burnout. Factors like role conflict researched in China, low

job satisfaction researched in Italy and Czech Republic were associated with the burnout among studied educators. Educators work in the excessively demanding work environment, which results in the chronic stress and rise of the symptoms of burnout (Springer et al., 2021).

One of the factors described widely in the scientific literature related to burnout is engagement. Results of the recent research show that increased cognitive and emphatic roles amplify the possibility of rise of burnout, followed by reduced willingness to stay engaged in the processes of the work (Groggel et al., 2022). Study of Bolatova and colleagues also show link between burnout and engagement, as in their research they found that male respondents show higher level of disengagement then female respondents, however, female respondents show higher level of burnout (Bolatova et al., 2020).

Interesting research was done by Ramos and colleagues, on the burnout of teachers from Brasil, as the results showed that burnout symptoms were higher for those educators, who before the pandemic were not familiar with remote work (Ramos et al., 2022) and had difficulties to obtain new skills for remote work.

As it is stated by Jamaludin and Yo, burnout within the educators negatively affects education process in whole, as it leads to the decrease of the productivity (Jamaludin & Yo, 2019). As by Lee, burnout within the educators positively correlates with the turnover (Lee, 2019). That is not a surprise, as the more signs of the burnout educator has, the stronger his intention to leave teaching job might become.

As many factors what affects rise of the burnout were discussed previously, emotional intelligence withing the educators are considered as one of them. Kant and Shanker as well as Zysberg and colleagues had done research in order to find if there is a link between burnout of the educators and their emotional intelligence (Kant & Shanker 2021; Zysberg et al., 2017). Results showed that burnout and emotional intelligence correlated negatively, as emotionally intelligent educators are less affected by stress and are more adaptive to the stressful situations at the workplace.

Research of Schoeps and colleagues show similar results, as development of the emotional skills in relation to emotional intelligence are directly associated with a lower level of job stress, which in turn leads to the lower possibility of getting burnout (Schoeps et al., 2021). Similar results were showed in research of Ismail and colleagues where authors state that educators with high level of emotional intelligence show higher resilience, are able to better control their emotions, can act rationally and suffer from the burnout less (Ismail et al., 2020).

Russell et al. state that despite all the research done on burnout for last 50 years, still burnout can be called as modern epidemic, as companies are full of employees who feels exhausted, cynical and lack of professional efficacy (Russell et al., 2020). In is extremely important to improve working conditions of academic staff.

Since the SARS-CoV-2 virus, called Covid-19, caused worst global health crisis in recent years, as World Health Organisation was forced to declare pandemic in March 2020 (World Health Organisation, 2020). Pandemic changed the way work is organised in many industries all over the world. Data analysed by Aetna International Medical Insurance Company has shown that 32% of the respondents (total amount of respondents – 4011) state that mental health was negatively impacted performance at work since the beginning of pandemic (Aetna International Global Employee Health Study Data, 2022). Recent research done in 2022 by Kita et al. share similar results, that mental health of the faculty members became worse during the pandemic, compared with the results before it started. Results of the research showed that 33% of the faculty members were showing signs of the mental illness during the pandemic (Kita et al., 2022). During the pandemic universities all over the world faced major changes in organisation of the study process. More than 220 million tertiary students were disrupted by closure of the offline studies in the Higher Education Institutions in 2020. UNESCO Covid-19 Education Response states that in 2021 universities all around the world are working on the preparation of the safety measures to provide safe and effective learning in the terms of pandemic (UNESCO Covid-19 Educational Response, 2021). Research made by the World Bank shows that at least 24 million children, from preprimary to tertiary level education, might never return to schools (The World Bank's education response to Covid-19, 2020).

During the pandemic well organised working conditions should be provided for the employees, is said by Rozman and Cancer, in order to improve work efficiency and work satisfaction (Rozman & Cancer, 2021). Such aspect as improvement of communication, paid leave during the virus and emotional support is crucial during the pandemic. Rozman and Tominc made an analysis of different indicators of mental and physical health of employees before and during the pandemic. Results show that physical symptoms like headaches, sweating, varied blood pressure and some others are higher than were indicated before the pandemic (Rozman & Tominc, 2021). The same results are related to the emotional symptoms, as employees indicated higher agreement with depressive feelings, were more afraid of loosing job and many other. Behavioral symptoms, like insomnia, avoidance of activities, lower working ability etc. were also indicated to be higher after than pandemic, than before.

### 3. Burnout symptoms and experience of work in years as one of the influencing factors

As teaching is one of the professions associated with stress, long working hours, high level of responsibility for acquisition of knowledge by the students, in the scientific society different factors influencing rise of the symptoms of the burnout is discussed. However, there is a scientific discussion if work experience in years influence likelihood of rising of symptoms of burnout in many professions.

In one of the recent research it is proved that intrinsic career motivation and intrinsic career value relates negatively to burnout and positively to career optimism. However, authors state that no significant relations were found between teaching and learning experiences and rise of burnout (McLean et al., 2019). Similar results were confirmed Vitale and Casolaro, where no link between years of work experience and emotional exhaustion was found (Vitale & Casolaro, 2021), innovations (Batraga et al., 2019), as well as by Smirnova and Soloviev in their research with psychiatrists-narcologists, as they showed burnout signs without any relation to work experience (Smirnova & Soloviev, 2022). However, recent findings of Singe and colleagues show that less experienced secondary school athletic trainers are more affected by burnout than their more experienced colleagues (Singe et al., 2022). Results of the research, where less experienced professionals show stronger signs of the burnout shows extremely important information – those professionals, as less experienced ones, definitely needs more support from the management of the institution or more experienced colleagues to fight early predictors of the burnout, gain confidence and wider knowledge of the profession and all the risks what might occur due to the high stress of the educators. Information technologies have significant influence (Rodionova-Girsa & Batraga, 2019; Bormane, 2019; Braslina et al., 2021). Some aspects were analysed by Julija Mironova (Mironova et al., 2021; Mironova & Sloka, 2021; Mironova et al., 2022; Mironova & Sloka, 2022).

Similar results were stated by the researchers with research done in USA in summer 2021. Among the surveyed nurses, those who had greater experience and were closer to the retirement, higher compassion satisfaction were reported and lower level of stress, while youngest nurses reported greater stress and burnout (Schroeder et al., 2022).

Discussion in the recent scientific literature is clearly stated, some research show results that there is no link between professional experience in age and burnout, and other provide completely different result. However, there is a lack of research which is dedicated specifically to the work experience in age and it's link to burnout within the education field. Understanding, if symptoms of burnout and experience is related would help management of the institution to recognize the target group of the most vulnerable employees in order to develop and implement strategy for the prevention of the burnout or decrease of its symptoms if it occurred already.

### 4. Empirical research results

Empirical research results are based on survey of higher education institution academic staff in several countries with questions on organizational culture of higher education institution and several aspects of self-evaluations on burnout with deeper analysis of experience on several symptoms of burnout, results are included in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of responses on analysed burnout symptoms in HEI academic staff in 2022 (source: Author's calculations based on Julija Mironova conducted survey)

Exhaustion					
Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	387	69.7	70.2	70.2
	no	164	29.5	29.8	100.0
	total	551	99.3	100.0	
Missing		4	0.7		
Total		555	100.0		
Depersonalisation					
Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	160	28.8	29.6	29.6
	no	380	68.5	70.4	100.0
	total	540	97.3	100.0	
Missing		15	2.7		
Total		555	100.0		
Reduced personal accomplishment					
Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	299	53.9	54.8	54.8
	no	247	44.5	45.2	100.0
	total	546	98.4	100.0	
Missing		9	1.6		
Total		555	100.0		

Table 2. Distribution of responses on ever considered to change field of work because of the exhaustion in HEI academic staff in 2022 (source: Author's calculations based on Julija Mironova conducted survey)

Evaluations	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	241	43.4	45.9	45.9
No	284	51.2	54.1	100.0
Total	525	94.6	100.0	
Missing	30	5.4		
Total	555	100.0		

Survey results indicate that 45,9% of respondents who replied on this question have considered to change the field of work because exhaustion in their work at higher education institution.

Interesting results are also on higher education institution members of academic staff of their feelings of different burnout aspects by their experience of teaching time in higher education institutions – the distribution of responses were analysed by teaching years in ten different groups (less than year; 1–13; 4–6; 7–10; 11–15; 16–20; 21–25; 26–30; 31–35). Results of the analysis of chi-square tests on members of academic staff at higher education institutions on their feelings of exhaustion by their teaching time are reflected in Table 3.

Table 3. Main results of chi-square tests on cross-tabulations by experience in teaching (years) and exhaustion feeling in HEI academic staff in 2022 (source: Author's calculations based on Julija Mironova conducted survey)

Indicators	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.607 <sup>a</sup>	9	0.001
Likelihood Ratio	25.909	9	0.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	14.095	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	548		

a. 1 cells (5,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2,97.

Results of the analysis indicate that there are not statistically significant differences on evaluations of exhaustion based on experience in teaching (years).

Table 4. Main results of correlation analysis on experience in teaching (years) and exhaustion feeling in HEI academic staff in 2022 (source: Author's calculations based on Julija Mironova conducted survey)

	Exhaustion	Teaching experience in years
Pearson Correlation	1	0.161**
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
N	551	548
Pearson Correlation	0.161**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
N	548	552

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Results of correlation analysis indicate that correlation is statistically significant at the 0,01 level – it means that there is positive relation of feeling of exhaustion and experience in teaching (years). Correlation analysis on experience in teaching (years) and on depersonalization feeling in HEI academic staff in 2022 are reflected in Table 5.

Table 5. Main results of correlation analysis on experience in teaching (years) of depersonalization feeling in HEI academic staff in 2022 (source: Author's calculations based on Julija Mironova conducted survey)

	Teaching experience in years	Depersonalisation
Pearson Correlation	1	0.171**
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
N	552	539
Pearson Correlation	0.171**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
N	539	540

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Results of correlation analysis indicate that correlation is statistically significant at the 0,01 level – it means that there is positive relation of feeling of depersonalisation and experience in teaching (years) – by increase of teaching experience in higher education institution increases feeling of depersonalisation. Analysis of relationships between teaching experience and reduced personal accomplishment feeling in higher education institutions are reflected in Table 6.

Table 6. Main results of correlation analysis on experience in teaching (years) of reduced personal accomplishment feeling in HEI academic staff in 2022 (source: Author's calculations based on Julija Mironova conducted survey)

	Teaching experience in years	Reduced personal accomplishment
Pearson Correlation	1	0.134**
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.002
N	552	545
Pearson Correlation	0.134**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	
N	545	546

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Results of correlation analysis indicate that correlation is statistically significant at the 0,01 level – it means that there is positive relation of feeling of reduced personal accomplishment and experience in teaching (years) – by increasing teaching experience in higher education institution increase also feeling of reduced personal accomplishment.

## Conclusions

Academic researchers world-wide have confirmed in their research that burnout in higher education institutions is becoming more and more problematic and several steps are suggested to reduce burnout in higher education institutions.

Members of academic staff in higher education institutions feel exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment, but not depersonalisation.

With experience in teaching (in years) for members of academic staff in higher education institutions increase feelings of exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment.

Almost half of higher education staff have ever considered to change the field of work in higher education because exhaustion.

The research findings could be possible to use for designing of support measures for academic staff in higher education institutions.

## Contribution

Jūlija Mironova – conception and design of the work, analysis of scientific publications, development of draft

of the survey questionnaire, acquisition of data from survey;

Biruta Sloka – corrections of conception and design of the work, analysis of scientific publications, contribution in development of the survey questionnaire; analysis and interpretation of data; preparation of conclusions and recommendations, revising the article for important intellectual content.

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