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V. NEW PERSPECTIVES ON MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE OF BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS *https://vilniustech.lt/bm*

CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF BURNOUT AMONG EDUCATORS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract. Burnout arise as an emerging topic at the end of the 20th century, especially in such profession as teaching, and since then there is ongoing discussion of its influence on different processes in organisation, as well as its financial performance. The aim of the study is to analyse if there is difference in aspects of burnout of educators from different countries. Methods used in the study – analysis of recent scientific findings and analysis of the survey created by authors. The results of the study highlight burnout symptoms of educators in Higher Education from different countries.

Keywords: burnout, educators, university, educators, teachers.

JEL Classification: A20, I20, I23.

1. Introduction

Since the rise of the concept of burnout, interest in the scientific society is growing. Definitely, pandemic, caused by COVID-19 influenced popularity of this topic, however, there is scientific discussion about many aspects related to burnout, related to its aspects, causes, symptoms, as well as its influence on the economic performance of the enterprises and countries.

The World Health Organisation [WHO] has defined burnout as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that hasn't been adequately managed (WHO, 2019). This encompasses three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion, increasing mental distance from work, and reduced personal efficacy. Burnout is now recognized in the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases [ICD-11] as an occupational phenomenon, though it's not categorized as a medical condition. The WHO's definition of burnout reflects the three factors identified by Christina Maslach.

Christina Maslach stands as one of the foremost researchers in the realm of burnout studies. In her early research, Maslach characterizes burnout as a "syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism commonly experienced by individuals engaged in 'people work'." Emotional exhaustion is highlighted as a pivotal component of the burnout syndrome. The second facet involves depersonalization, marked by cynical attitudes and feelings towards clients. The third aspect entails reduced personal accomplishment, characterized by diminished productivity and morale, leading to dissatisfaction with one's achievements and a sense of unhappiness (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). In her collaborative work with Michael P. Leiter, "The Truth About Burnout," Maslach points out that the escalation of burnout is influenced by several factors: work overload, lack of control, absence of fairness, deficient sense of community, and conflicts in values (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

Authors of this paper intend to conduct cross-country analysis study aimed to research if there are different evaluations of the factors related to burnout in different countries.

2. Burnout in the higher education

Teaching, like healthcare, is known for its high stress levels among professionals. Many studies have looked into what factors affect educators' daily lives and contribute to burnout. Educators work in very demanding environments, which leads to ongoing stress and worsens burnout symptoms (Springer et al., 2021).

Stress is one of the factors related to burnout, and academic field is not an exception. Stress experienced by university professors can lead to the emergence of intense emotions and a sense of being overwhelmed

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regarding the various responsibilities related to organizational tasks, research duties, and teaching obligations that faculty members are expected to fulfill (Avargues & Borda, 2010).

The psychological and mental well-being of teachers is highly significant as it indirectly influences the students under their guidance. The stress inherent in the teaching profession is commonly associated with three key interrelated issues: burnout, anxiety, and depression. These challenges have multifaceted effects, including implications for teachers' health, overall well-being, and productivity levels (Agyapong et al., 2022). However, it is important to note that stress levels can be different, as stress level among educators of higher education institutions can be moderate, what is not chronic enough to cause burnout, as an example in study what was conducted in Universidad de La Laguna and Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in Spain (Garces-Delgado et al., 2023).

There is ongoing scientific discussion in the academic community, discussing is there a difference between gender and affection of burnout. Some researchers state that female professionals are more affected by burnout (Gold et al., 2021; Torres et al., 2021; Nadkarni, 2022), some argue that male professionals are affected more (Cañadas-De la Fuente et al., 2018; Ilic et al., 2022). However, there are also researchers who state that there is no difference from the perspective of the gender (Apaydin, 2022; Kroupis et al., 2017). Teaching involves emotional dynamics shaped by diverse factors, such as contextual and administrative elements, which can have either beneficial or detrimental impacts. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the administration to improve working conditions and offer suitable emotional and professional assistance to alleviate the consequences of burnout (Batraga, et al., 2019; Ergul-Bayram & Eveyik-Aydin, 2023; Rodionova-Girsa & Batraga, 2019). Recognizing burnout is vital for academics, given the dynamic and resource-constrained work environments they navigate. It's essential to grasp the risks associated with burnout in order to mitigate its impact effectively. This involves discerning varying levels of burnout intensity (such as high, mild, or severe) and identifying stressors that exacerbate it. Prioritizing and implementing self-care strategies are key components of managing burnout proactively (Rusdi et al., 2023).

Recent studies suggest that strategies like increasing the income of teaching staff, improving workplace safety, nurturing better interpersonal relationships, offering leisure facilities, employing burnout reduction tactics, and enhancing problem-solving skills among faculty members are effective methods to alleviate and prevent the rise of burnout among teaching staff in higher education institutions (Irandoost et al., 2021). Strategies, what can be used to avoid burnout in the higher education should be dynamic and adaptive, according to the changes of the study process, as well as educational context (Escalante et al., 2023), thus organisations should regularly assess stress level of the employees (Almeneessier & Azer, 2023; Braslina et al., 2021; Malinauskas & Malinauskiene, 2023). Recent research findings on academic staff burnout is on research agenda also for other researchers in many countries.

3. Methodology

For empirical research it was conducted survey of teaching staff to find their views on different aspects related to their work in higher education institution.

To achieve the goal of the research authors created the survey, what consists of two parts:

– Respondent profile – Part A
– Questions related to burnout – Part B.

The structure of the survey is represented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Structure of the survey (*source*: author's construction based on Julija Mironova created and conducted survey)

Part	Question	Type of the question; responses	Code
A	Respondent profile	Gender, age, teaching experience in years, type of represented institutions, country of residence	A_1–A_5
B	Burnout/ Organisational culture	17 statements, multiple evaluation scales	B_1–B_17

As it is represented in the Table 1, first part of the questionnaire was dedicated to the respondent profile, and rest 17 statements/questions were related to the aspects of burnout and organisational culture of the institution.

Survey was created after the pilot survey with several suggested changes and placed on the platform QuestionPro and distributed via email to the educators of the Higher Education Institutions during the period of time from March 2022, to December 2023. In total, 1590 respondents took part in the research, representing different countries and various types of higher education institutions. Respondents, before the start of the survey were informed that survey is confidential and will be used in updated version to prepare recommendations for reduction and better management of burnout of higher education staff.

In Table 2 is included distribution of the respondents by gender, 1532 respondents noted their gender.

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents by gender (*source*: author's construction based on Julija Mironova created and conducted survey)

Gender	Number of respondents	Share (%) from respondents
Male	743	48%
Female	789	52%

As it is shown in the table above, distribution of the respondents by gender is almost similar – 48% male educators and 52% female educators participated in research and answered on questions of the survey.

Age groups of the respondents are presented in the Table 3, 1585 respondents noted their age group.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents by age group (*source*: author's construction based on Julija Mironova created and conducted survey)

Age group	Number of respondents	Share (%)of respondents
Less 30	54	3.4%
31–40	353	22.3%
41–50	482	30.4%
51–60	424	26.8%
61–70	234	14.8%
71–80	35	2.2%
More 80	3	0.2%
Total	1585	100%

Largest share of the respondents – 30.4% represented age group from 41 to 50 years old, followed by 26.8% group what was represented by 51–60 years old educators of higher education institutions. 31 to 40 years old educators were 22.3% from the total amount of respondents. Other age groups were represented by less than 15% of the total share of the respondents.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents by teaching experience (*source*: author's construction based on Julija Mironova created and conducted survey)

Teaching experience in years	Amount of respondents	Share (%) of respondents
Less than 1 year	42	2.6%
1 to 3	86	5.4%
4 to 6	151	9.5%
7 to 10	152	9.6%
11 to 15	248	15.6%
16 to 20	262	16.5%
21 to 25	276	17.4%
26 to 30	148	9.3%
31–35	114	7.2%
More than 30 years	111	7.0%
Total	1590	100%

Three groups were represented by similar amount of the respondents – 11 to 15 years of teaching was represented by 15.5%; 16 to 20 years of teaching by 16.5% and 21 to 25 years of teaching was represented by 17.4% of the total amount of the educators of higher education institutions.

Another three groups also showed similar distribution – 7 to 10 years of teaching was presented by 9.6% of respondents, following by 4 to 6 years of teaching – 9.5% and 9.3% of the total amount of the respondents were educators who had experience in teaching for 26 to 30 years.

In Table 5 is included distribution of the respondents by their country of residence.

Table 5. Distribution of the respondents by country (*source*: author's construction based on Julija Mironova created and conducted survey)

Country	Number of respondents	Share (%) of respondents
Latvia	221	13.9%
Estonia	214	13.5%
Lithuania	86	5.4%
Ukraine	84	5.3%
Finland	180	11.3%
Italy	180	11.3%
Denmark	87	5.5%
Other	411	25.8%
Decided not to mention country	124	8%

As it is presented in the table above, largest share of the respondents were from Latvia (13.9%), following by Estonia (13.5%). Share of 11.3% of the respondents was represented by Finland and Italy equally. Lithuania, Denmark and Ukraine were represented by little more than 5% large group from total share, while 8% of the respondents decided not to mention their country of residence. Respondents were asked also question "Have you ever considered to change field of work because of the exhaustion?" The distribution of responses on this question is included in Table 7.

Table 7. Distribution of responses on question *Have you ever considered to change field of work because of the exhaustion*? (*source*: authors calculations based on Julija Mironova created and conducted survey)

Answer		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	745	46.6	48.4	48.4
	no	795	49.8	51.6	100.0
	total	1540	96.4	100.0	
Missing		57	3.6		
Total		1597	100.0		

Data of survey results indicate that almost half or 48.4 % of respondents have ever considered to change their place of work because of exhaustion. This is really a very dramatic number leading to serious recommendations for management of higher education establishments to organise work to limit cases of exhaustion of academic staff.

4. Results

As the first stage of the research, authors tested B part of the survey for internal consistency using SPSS for Cronabach's alpha. Cronbach Alpha for the whole B part indicate 0.870 which is high level of internal consistency. Results are shown in the Table 8.

Table 8. Test of the B part for internal consistency (*source*: authors' construction based on Julija Mironova created and conducted survey)

Nr.	Label of Question	Cronbach's Alpha
B_1	Appreciated by management	0.795
B_2	Appreciated by students	0.816
B_3	Hours spent on tasks/lectures	0.824
B_3	Hours spent on tasks/grading	0.824
B_3	Hours spent on tasks/preparation	0.825
B_3	Hours spent on tasks/research	0.829
B_3	Hours spent on tasks/skills	0.822
B_4	Workload/salary	0.807
B_5	Support for research	0.804
B_6	Social life	0.823
B_7	Balance	0.817
B_8	Concentration	0.807
B_9	Exhaustion	0.817
B_9	Depersonalisation	0.817
B_9	Reduced acomplishment	0.816
B_10	Change field	0.816
B_11	Level of control	0.802
B_12	Values	0.794
B_13	Fair	0.795
B_14	Supportive for development	0.802
B_15	Support of colleagues	0.793
B_16	Readiness for change	0.804
B_17	Sleep more than 8 hours	0.796
B_17	Sleep 7 to 8 hours	0.825
B_17	Sleep 6 to 7 hours	0.821
B_17	Sleep 5 to 6 hours	0.818
B_17	Sleep less than 5 hours	0.826

As Cronbach Alpha for the whole B part indicate 0.870 which is high level of internal consistency, it showed that there was no need to remove any item from the scale, based on the criterion "Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted".

For the second stage of the research, authors used Cruscal Wallis non-parametric test to test if there are differences between symptoms of burnout and countries of residence of educators.

H1: Educators from countries with lower income experience symptoms of burnout more often than educators from higher income countries.

Following question was asked: "Have you ever experienced following burnout symptoms?" with following options to answer yes/no:

1. Exhaustion (Feels like physical and emotional energy level is extremely low at most of the time and person might think "I don't know how much longer I can continue working like this");
2. Depersonalisation (Detached or indifferent attitude to work, person might have cynical behaviour, can be expressed in unprofessional comments addressed to colleagues, blaming them and students);
3. Reduced personal accomplishment (Person negatively evaluates the worth of the work, begin to doubt meaning of the work).

Respondents from Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Finland, Italy, Denmark Based on the results of the Cruscal Wallis non-parametric test it can be concluded, that there is no statistically significant difference for feeling of exhaustion and depersonalisation by respondents of different countries. However, there is statistically significant difference between different countries, as educators from related to the answer if educator ever experienced reduced personal accomplishment. Cruscal Wallis non-parametric tests showed result of Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) as 0.016, (as standard alpha level is 0.05). Mean rank of educators from Ukraine was 750.17, while for other countries it was less than 700, what shows that educators from Ukraine answered "yes" on the question "Have you ever experienced following burnout symptoms?" about reduced personal accomplishment more often than educators from other countries.

Based on the calculation of data from survey, hypothesis is approved, as Ukraine, by statistical data from the research of World Bank done in 2022 is Lower middle income country, while other countries in the research are High income countries (The World Bank, 2022). Results of the Irandoost study in 2021 underlined that increasing income of the educators of higher education institution can be one of the strategies to reduce symptoms of burnout and avoid them.

6. Conclusions

Burnout of the higher academic staff is emerging topic over all education industry, as many educators are facing symptoms of burnout, or burnout itself.

Burnout of higher education academic staff is on research agenda by many researchers worldwide where several factors are analysed by several aspects.

Members of academic staff have experienced exhaustion in all countries included in research and all age groups.

Members of academic staff have experienced depersonalisation in all countries included in research and all age groups.

Members of academic staff have experienced reduced personal accomplishment in all countries included in research and all age groups.

7. Discussion

The outcomes of this research align with previous studies (Springer et al., 2021; Agyapong et al., 2022) indicating that educators in higher education institutions commonly encounter burnout or its symptoms and almost half of members of academic staff have ever considered to change their work because of exhaustion. Nonetheless, authors suggest that future investigations focus on exploring the relationship between income levels and burnout symptoms in greater detail to gain deeper insights into these findings as it would be really a big loss for higher education institutions if half of academic staff decide to change their work because of exhaustion.

8. Disclosure statement

The authors do not have any competing financial, professional, or personal interests from other parties.

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