MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES TO AVOID PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT

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Abstract: Professional burnout is one of the significant factors affecting the productivity of the workforce. This has become more common during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the decrease in the psychological safety of employees. Working from home can also negatively affect work-life balance, leading to burnout. Undetected and untreated burnout leads to a decrease in worker productivity and eventually depression and other psychological problems. It is important to create and monitor working conditions to prevent professional burnout. Preventing burnout is always easier to achieve than treating the damaging symptoms. This paper will examine the factors contributing to professional burnout as well as some strategies for mitigating professional burnout. The article identifies the factors of occupational burnout after the COVID 19 pandemic based on the experiences of employees from Poland and the USA. The aim of the work is to indicate the first results of research in the field of occupational burnout, which are conducted on the basis of surveys. The questionnaire summary was prepared according to the model of research on burnout in relation to the pandemic situation. The presented results concern research for both production and service companies. And they are the basis for recognizing the factors responsible for occupational burnout for these employees.

Key words: burnout, management strategy, productivity factors, burnout prevention, cooperation.

Introduction

Burnout was introduced into psychology by Herbert Freudenberger (1970's) (Freudenberger, 1980). The Dictionary of Psychology (American Psychological Association) has defined burnout as the "physical, emotional or mental exhaustion, accompanied by decreased motivation, lowered performance and negative attitudes towards oneself and others." (Borland, 2022). The initial research conducted by Freudenberger was focusing on healthcare professionals. Today burnout can be applied to any working individual seeking to advance their career, workers whose job is requiring working overtime without work-life balance. Often there is a lack of psychological safety or even a toxic work environment. Burnout can also often affect

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individuals whose lives are covered constantly in the media (NCBI, 2020). Since burnout can affect any individual, the identification and diagnosis may have many facets. Exhaustion, alienation and reduced performance are some of the signs which have been associated with burnout. Depression has often been confused with burnout due to similarities in some of the symptoms. Other terms which have been used in conjunction with burnout include fatigue, being overextended, ineffective and disengaged. Burnout can also demonstrate itself as personality changes, cynicism, and questioning your own professional self-worth.

The complicated scope of burnout has led to many diagnostic tools being developed. Five major diagnostic tools have been developed and approved as having high diagnostic and ethical validity.

- Maslach Burnout Inventory (Statisticssolutions)
  (The Maslach Burnout Inventory assesses emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.)
- Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Reis et al., 2015)
  (The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory measures exhaustion and disengagement from work.)
- Professional Fulfillment Index (Trockel et al., 2018)
  (The Professional Fulfillment Index assesses sixteen-items and measures work exhaustion, interpersonal disengagement and professional fulfillment.)
- Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (Campos et al., 2013)
  (The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory is assessing personal burnout, work-related burnout as well as client-related burnout.)
- Basic Needs Satisfaction General Scales (Johnston and Finney, 2010)
  (This assessment tool measures if the person being evaluated is dissatisfied with their life.)

Researchers have also identified other assessment tools and questionnaires for early detection of burnout (Northe, 2022). The literature review of scholarly research has identified three main attributes and symptoms usually associated with burnout (Koutsimani et al., 2019; Sweileh, 2020; Hernandez et al., 2021).

- Exhaustion.
- Cynicism.
- Inefficacy.

Other research has listed three additional factors contributing to professional burnout (Abramson, 2022; Heinemann and Heinemann, 2017; Ron et al., 2020).

1. Lack of psychological safety or toxic work environment.
2. Work-life balance.
3. Organizational Factors.

Factors Contributing to Professional Burnout

Lack of Psychological Safety or Toxic Work Environment as Factors Contributing to Professional Burnout

Psychological safety is an essential factor to lowering work-related stress and professional burnout. Employees need to be able to share their concerns, questions, and suggestions. Positive team support without feelings that may threaten psychological safety need to be provided within the daily work schedule. Meeting the needs of the team must also be facilitated outside the primary work environment. Those providing this psychological safety must also address the differences that exist within the work environment (day vs night shift, work scheduling, e.g., vacations, duration of shifts, etc.). A toxic environment where employees feel criticized rather than receiving constructive advice need to be eliminated (Leo et al., 2021; Brown, 2008; Brown, 2011).

Psychological safety is aligned with social support, i.e., concern for those around us. Psychological support recognizes that a negative (toxic) environment can be mitigated. Toxic environments happen in organizations, families, neighborhoods. This type of environment can affect coworkers and those with whom individuals interact on a daily basis. Elimination of a toxic environment can begin with one-to-one interactions, such as by extending organized meetings, seminars, training sessions and wellness programs. Overall psychological safety and the limitation of a toxic environment has been researched in the scholarly literature (Kim et al., 2020; Linders, 2022). Many research studies have focused on the role of leadership as related to psychological safety (De Smet et al., 2021). Results of one study indicated that continuity is important for the development of psychological safety and the elimination of toxic environments. Authoritative challenging leadership has a significant effect on psychological safety. Workers who reported frequent support by leadership were compared with those who reported infrequent support, 46% to 54% respectively. Workers who reported infrequent support also stated that they were not consulted by their supervisions on issue related to their job responsibilities (De Smet et al., 2021; Szczepańska-Woszczyna and Gatnar, 2022). The most significant issues related to psychological safety include group dynamics (awareness and biases) and communication while those issues resulting in toxic environments include humiliation and lack of mentorship. Lack of respect as well as bureaucratic regulations and hierarchies have been shown to have a significant negative influence on psychological safety in workplace environments.

Lack of Life-Work Balance as a Factor Contributing to Professional Burnout

The balance and conflict between work and private life has been an issue in the 21st century. This issue has affected to a greater extent people working from home. Social media and other forms of online work meetings often interrupt private lives and lengthen the workday. Changing demographics within the workforce have also created new issues related to work-life balance. Each business and industry sector also has its own specific issues. Many physicians reported professional burnout (Rodrigues et al., 2018).

- General surgery, anesthesiology, obstetrics and gynecology, and orthopedics: 42.5% reported burnout
- Internal medicine, plastic surgery and pediatrics: 29.4% reported burnout
- Otolaryngology and neurology: 23.5% reported burnout
- Healthcare professionals (7923) working in sixteen hospitals gave the following responses to their perception related to work-life balance (Sexton et al., 2017).
- Attending Physicians – 30% reported problems with work-life balance
- Registered Nurses (Management Positions) – 49% reported problems with work-life balance
- Registered Nurses – 52% reported problems with work-life balance
- Environmental Department – 50% reported problems with work-life balance
- Licensed Partitional Nurses – 58% reported problems with work-life balance
- Technician – 58% reported problems with work-life balance
- Pharmacist – 59% reported problems with work-life balance
- Therapists – 61% reported problems with work-life balance
- Administrative Support – 62% reported problems with work-life balance
- Dieticians – 70% reported problems with work-life balance
- Clinical Social Worker – 72% reported problems with work-life balance

In addition to healthcare professionals, management must consider the work-life balance needs of all employees especially older workers, one-worker households, working women and those with dependent children (Gragnano et al., 2020; Shanafeit et al., 2016; Shanafeit et al., 2019). The problems and needs of a diverse workforce cannot be met with a one solution fits all. Each business and industry sector has its own specific issues.

Individuals involved in the logistics sector (truck drivers and other supply chain workers) have also been surveyed related to work-life balance. Work schedules for workers in the logistics sector include nights away from home (Twenty-one nights or more away from home were reported by 84.6% of drivers). The daily work was also demanding and affected work-life balance.

- Working 11 or more hours daily – reported by 70.4% employees.
- Different daily schedules – reported by 82.7% employees
- Fast pace of work – reported by 68% employees

Even though these work situations are being considered as leading to burnout, truck drivers reported positive support from their supervisions (76.2%) and coworkers (48.9%). A majority of drivers, however, (62.6%) still reported high to moderate levels of burnout symptoms. Approximately 71.1% truck drivers reported sleep deprivation as a factor contributing to the quality of their job performance as well as professional burnout (Hege et al., 2019).

Survey results from two hundred sixty long-haul truck drives (Williams et al., 2017) indicated the following:

-Inability to relax – reported by 58.6% drivers

-Inability to engage with family and complete home responsibilities – reported by 59.1% drivers

-Changes in mood – reported by 82.0% drivers

-Effect on martial relationships – reported by 48.1% drivers

Life outside the work situation plays a significant role leading to professional burnout of workers in various sectors.

COVID-19 as a Factor Contributing to Professional Burnout

The World Health Organization (WHO) conducted extensive research related to the influence of COVID-19 on work-related stress and professional burnout. The American Psychological Association (APA) also collected data related to the work and wellbeing of 1,500 employees. The data was collected during the pandemic (2020-2021). Results of the survey conducted by the APA are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of APA survey (2020-2021)

Symptoms	Employees Experiencing Symptoms
Work related stress within the last month before the survey	79%
Experience negative impact of the work-related stress	69%
Lack of interest, motivation or energy	26%
Decrease of effort at work	19%
Worries about the future.	36%
Emotional exhaustion	32%
Physical exhaustion and fatigue	44%

The symptoms of professional burnout listed in Table 1 demonstrate a significant increase in burnout symptoms by approximately 38% compared to symptom-data collected in 2019 prior to COVID-19 (SCCMA). The increase in the burnout rate during the COVID-19 pandemics is because of the following:

- increase in job intensity because of understaffing,
- night shifts needed to comply with social distancing,
- extra hygiene accommodations for the food service industry, and
- extra hygiene accommodations for healthcare workers

The Bureau of Labor Statistics in the United States considered job responsibilities as the major contributor to burnout during COVID-19.

An extensive literature review (37 articles) described the effects of COVID-19 on healthcare professionals in China (Lai et al., 2019). One thousand two hundred fifty-seven respondents reported the following burnout symptoms.

- Depression – reported by 50.4% of healthcare professionals
- Anxiety – reported by 44.6% of healthcare professionals
- Insomnia – reported by 34.0% of healthcare professionals
- Distress – reported by 71.5% of healthcare professionals

The hospitalizations related to symptoms of burnout were not assessed in this study. Exposure to patients with COVID-19 contributed to the severe burnout symptoms and some of them resulted in hospitalization.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, relatively high levels of anxiety (24.94%), depression (24.83%) and sleep disorders (44.03%) were reported among healthcare workers (Sahebi et al., 2021; Marvaldi et al., 2021). Healthcare workers reported syndromes associated with mental illness as well as the fear of an impact mental illness would have on their careers (Brower, 2021).

The Journal of American Medicine reported the results of research conducted in Japan. Medical personals (pharmacists, nurses, doctors, laboratory technicians, radiological technicians) were the subject of the survey. Surveyed individuals had between 3 to 18 years of experience and their age varied from 23 to 43 years old. The results of the survey indicated that 40% of nurses and 30% of the laboratory and radiological technicians, as well as pharmacists, had symptoms meeting the criteria for burnout (Takahiro et al., 2020). The study was limited to women in these job categories.

Social care workers (social workers) are an important category of workers in hospital, education and other workplace settings. Approximately 80% of social workers are women. The mean age for social workers is between forty and fifty years of age. The job responsibilities of social workers include primary care social services, specialized social services, health social services and services in other sectors of the population. Research participants (273) reported the following rates of burnout related to four symptoms (Martínez-López et al., 2021).

- Emotional exhaustion- reported by 70.1% social workers
- Depersonalization-reported by 48.5% social workers
- Diminished job satisfaction-reported by 36.6% social workers
- Burnout-reported by 20.4% social workers

Many other factors contribute to burnout. In Italy a survey found higher levels of burnout among females (30 years or younger) working in healthcare professions (Wiederhold et al., 2018). Some of those factors include changes in job responsibilities, home responsibilities and moving to new locations.

An analysis of the data collected during the pandemic from health organizations in the United States indicated a high level of stress and burnout among Black and Latino individuals. A high level of burnout was discovered in hospital workers (nurses, nursing assistants, medical technicians, and social workers). Those professions reported a high level of stress, anxiety, and depression due to overwork and fear of exposure to COVID-19 (Halmai, 2022; Streimikiene, 2022).

Burnout rates pre-COVID-19 (prior to 2019) and during COVID-19 (2020-2022) are difficult to compare. Some of the first indicators of burnout include fear, anxiety, depression and efficacy. These symptoms are usually labelled as stress which can lead to burnout, deteriorating health and hospitalization.

Research Results

The research was conducted in the first half of 2022. Data was collected using an online questionnaire. In total, about 300 invitations to participate in the survey were sent to employees of production and service companies. From the invitations that were sent out, 116 correctly completed questionnaires were returned. The average age of the respondents was 45 years. During the study, tools with verified psychometric properties were used. A tool developed by E. Demerouti et. all (2008) was used to measure the level of occupational burnout. The questionnaire consists of 16 questions grouped into 2 scales – exhausti on and distancing from work. Respondents answer on a 4-point scale, from 1 "agree" to 4 "disagree". On each of the scales, half of the statements are negative and half are positive. After inverting the responses, the mean for each scale was calculated. The results of the pilot studies showed that the average stress level in the studied group was 16.2 (production) with standard deviation 6.78 and 17.31 (service) with standard deviation 7.84. The correlation coefficient shows the relationship between the factors, in each case the result was above 0.5, which indicates a strong correlation. Table 2 presents the results of the pilot studies.

Table 2. The level of perceived stress and occupational burnout in research

factor	average	standard deviation	Pearson's correlation ($p<0.05$)		
PRODUCION					
Stress at work	16.2	6.78	1		
distancing	2.21	0.52	0.52	1	
exhaustion	3.2	0.65	0.69	0.65	1
SERVICE					
Stress at work	17.31	7.84	1		
distancing	2.33	0.52	0.54	1	
exhaustion	2.4	0.69	0.68	0.59	1

Research shows that work-related stress is seen as one of the main threats to the workplace, which has been further exacerbated by the pandemic situation. The conducted pilot studies made it possible to identify and try to systematize the factors that influence stress at work. The pilot studies are based on the opinions of the employees themselves and will become the basis for identifying the factors. These factors are the main sources of work-related stress, and they affect all spheres of human life (Kuzior, 2022). Figure 1 shows the identified factors and their orientation.
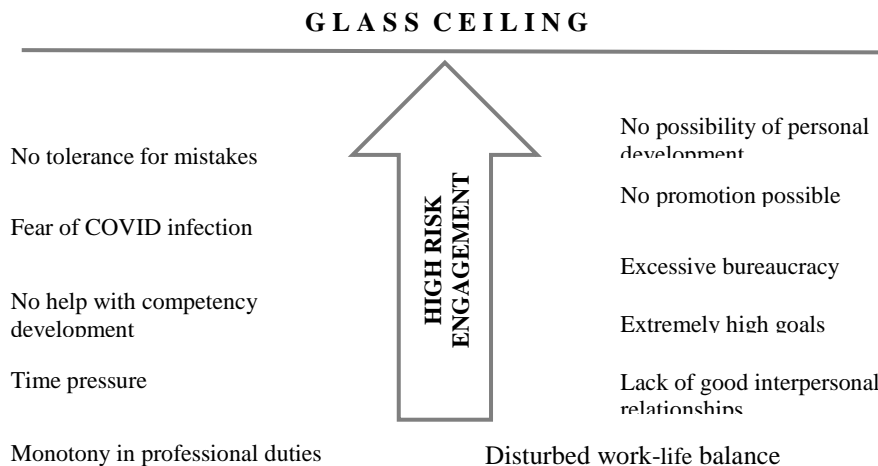
G L A S S   C E I L I N G

No tolerance for mistakes

Fear of COVID infection

No help with competency development

Time pressure

Monotony in professional duties

HIGH RISK ENGAGEMENT

No possibility of personal development

No promotion possible

Excessive bureaucracy

Extremely high goals

Lack of good interpersonal relationships

Disturbed work-life balance

Figure 1: Main determinants of occupational burnout according to pilot studies.

It should be noted that these studies focused on the analysis of the stress factor directly related to work. External (non-work) factors, which also affect a person / employee, were not taken into account. Initial research does not distinguish between stressors that result directly from the family situation, and indirectly, they certainly are not without significance.

The stress load related to the work performed is a long-term factor affecting the employee. In long-term operation, this factor leads to serious negative consequences that relate to various spheres of human functioning - not only in the field of work (Kmecová, 2021). The consequences of stress at work include: changes in health (somatic diseases), changes in behavior (reduced work efficiency, increased number of mistakes, reduced innovative approach, susceptibility to accidents), and consequences in the emotional and cognitive sphere (irritability, apathy, depression, depressed mood). Burnout is an important element in the functioning of social service workers, where functioning is based on commitment, creativity and competence development (Grebski and Mazur, 2022).

The authors of the article are aware of the limitations of the sample itself, as well as the number of factors that should be analyzed. The research results will be used to detail and select research instruments adapted to both production and service workers.

Strategies to Mitigate Professional Burnout

Job Crafting (Change your job to be more meaningful to you.)
Professional burnout can be caused by many different factors. One of these factors includes feeling out of control. One of the ways to counter this is job crafting. Job crafting is the ability we have to take control of our job to make it more than what it once was.

Job crafting can take the form of:

– Task Crafting - This can be the changing of the tasks that need to be done.
– Relational Crafting - Interpersonal interactions with other people are a form of relational crafting.
– Cognitive Crafting - This changes a person's perspective of their job.
– Developmental Crafting - This can be what the employee does to help advance themselves.
– Environment Crafting - This is a change in a person's environment. A person can potentially work from home or in an office. The person can change their environment in and out of the office.

If burnout is suspected, there is a need to revise the job responsibilities of the employee keeping in mind the following factors:

– Employees need to have control over the decisions that affect the job responsibilities.
– There need to be clear job expectations.
– There needs to be transparency and honest work dynamics.
– There needs to be a calm and relaxed work environment.
– There needs to be social support related to work and private life.
– There needs to be work-life balance.

Workplace Culture and Climate

The severe symptoms of burnout are very difficult and time consuming to address. Very often severe professional burnout leads to hospitalization end mental illness. Preventive measures are always less costly and more effective. Changing the workplace's culture/climate to prevent burnout is not an option anymore, it becomes a necessity. Many proactive companies have undertaken five steps in that direction by these five main implementations:

1. Psychological safety of employees
2. Lowering the workload by hiring additional staff
3. Providing time for family leave
4. Providing daycare services for children
5. Providing free psychological and mental health services

The measures and initiatives to manage and avoid professional burnout contribute to an increase in productivity as well as creativity and innovativeness of the workforce.

Organizational Policies

Many of the leading companies have organizational policies geared to preventing employee burnout. Preventing employee burnout leads to increased productivity and economic success for the company. Preventing employee burnout is more important than ever. Due to pandemic-related stress, long work hours and limited vacation time employees' burnout became a bigger concern than ever. Approximately 44% of employees report more burnout today as compared to before the pandemic. Company policy needs to mitigate workplace stress preventing professional burnout. There are five components of workplace stress mitigation.

• Provide guidelines on remote work from home.

Remote work from home increases the flexibility of employees, but at the same time does not provide any distinction between work life and family life. There may also be additional frustration because of being disconnected from your coworkers and colleagues. ZOOM virtual meetings (especially back-to-back) can be very tiring, leading to physical exhaustion. Company policy needs to establish boundaries and allow employees to spend time with families without being interrupted with constant messages, consumer complaints, etc. After work hours the system needs to shut off non-urgent messages. Employee training on work-life balance can also be helpful.

• Establish a mentoring program.

The ability of employees to contact a mentor and discuss problems increases confidence and lowers work-related stress. Mentoring is a proven method to improve employee well-being. Mentoring can have a positive effect on the mentor and mentee. The mentoring process enhances employee confidence as well as helps with skill development and supports healthy choices.

• Establish flexible company habits.

Company policy needs to be flexible and allow individual employees to take a break as needed, to recharge their emotional battery. Flexible company policy decreases work- related stress and increases productivity. Internal communication within the company needs to be transparent, fair, and promote psychological safety.

• Establish procedure for empowering employees and delegating authority.

Delegating authority and empowering employees are an effective method of lowering work-related stress. Empowering employees has been shown to increase job satisfaction and prevent professional burnout.

• Establish policy prioritizing mental health.

Providing company benefits allowing contact with mental health professionals can be helpful in lowering stress and preventing burnout. Subsidizing a gym membership can also boost physical activity and prevent burnout. Companies can also consider providing a physical activity zone (e.g., walking path) on the premises.

Preventing professional burnout is a collaborative effort. This can be done by trying to find alignment between a person's vision of themselves and the company's vision.

Conclusion

The results of the pilot studies showed indicators of the level of stress for workplaces in production and services. Preliminary results point to service processes as the more stressful element in general. In terms of production, only the exhaustion indicator is the higher indicator, which results directly from the nature of the workload in the positions. Pilot studies require an in-depth analysis of stress factors as well as taking into account external factors for the level of perceiving stress. The causes of occupational burnout constitute the information necessary to undertake development activities in the field of motivational strategy for employees. The obtained results are the basis for the identification of strategies and operational activities to counteract professional burnout.

Burnout symptoms can present themselves very similarly to symptoms of depression. If no, accommodations are implemented those symptoms become more and more severe. It is important to recognize the symptoms early enough and take preventive and corrective action. Corrective actions can be as follows:

- Evaluate the different options (Discuss the problems with a supervisor to reach compromises and solutions, preventing burnout.)
- Seek support (Reach out to coworkers, friends, and family, or any employee assistance program for social support.)
- Try relaxing activities (Yoga, meditation, etc.)
- Exercise
- Additional sleep (Sleep helps restore mental health and ability.)
- Be mindful (Mindfulness focuses on deep breathing and physical experience in the present to better help a person cope with stress.)

No job is worth undermining your mental well-being.

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STRATEGIE ZARZĄDZANIA W ZAKRESIE PRZECIWDZIAŁANIU WYPALENIU ZAWODOWEMU

Streszczenie: Wypalenie zawodowe jest jednym z istotnych czynników wpływających na produktywność siły roboczej. Pojęcie to stało się bardziej powszechne ze względu na czas pandemii COVID-19, co miało bezpośredni związek ze spadkiem bezpieczeństwa psychicznego pracowników. Praca w domu może również negatywnie wpływać na równowagę między życiem zawodowym a prywatnym, co stanowi podstawowy czynnik prowadzący do wypalenia zawodowego. Niewykryte i nieleczone wypalenie prowadzi do spadku produktywności pracowników, a ostatecznie do depresji i innych problemów psychologicznych. Ważne jest tworzenie i monitorowanie warunków pracy, aby zapobiec wypaleniu zawodowemu. Zapobieganie wypaleniu jest zawsze łatwiejsze do realizacji niż leczenie szkodliwych objawów. W niniejszym artykule zostaną zbadane czynniki przyczyniające się do wypalenia zawodowego, a także niektóre strategie łagodzenia wypalenia zawodowego. W artykule dokonano identyfikacji czynników wypalenia zawodowego po pandemii COVID 19 na bazie doświadczeń pracowników z Polski i USA.

Słowa kluczowe: wypalenie zawodowe, stategia zarządzania, czynniki produktywości, zapobieganie wypaleniu, współpraca.

管理策略 以避免职业倦怠

摘要：职业倦怠是影响劳动力生产力的重要因素之一。在COVID-19**大流行期**间，由于员工的心理安全感下降，这种情况变得更加普遍。在家工作也会对工作和生活的平衡产生负面影响，导致倦怠。未被发现和未被治疗的倦怠会导致工人生产力下降，最终导致抑郁症和其他心理问题。创造和监测工作条件以防止职业倦怠是很重要的。预防职业倦怠总是比治疗破坏性的症状更容易实现。本文将研究导致职业倦怠

的因素，以及缓解职业倦怠的一些策略。文章根据来自波兰和美国的员工的经验，确定了COVID19**大流行后**职业倦怠的因素。这项工作的目的是表明职业倦怠领域的研究的初步结果，这些研究是在调查的基础上进行的。问卷摘要是根据与大流行情况有关的职业倦怠的研究模式准备的。提出的结果涉及生产和服务企业的研究。而且它们是认识这些员工职业倦怠的因素的基础

关键词：职业倦怠，管理策略，生产力因素，预防职业倦怠，合作