



EMOTIONAL BURNOUT: CAUSES AND PREVENTION

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Abstract

This article explores emotional burnout as a complex psychological phenomenon resulting from prolonged exposure to stress factors. It examines the main causes and risk factors, including professional overload, emotional exhaustion, and lack of personal resources. Special attention is given to the structure of burnout syndrome, its stages, symptoms, and consequences for mental and physical health. The paper also presents modern approaches to the prevention and management of burnout aimed at enhancing stress resilience and improving quality of life.

Keywords: Emotional burnout, stress, mental health, professional overload, prevention, psychological resilience, burnout syndrome.

Introduction

In recent decades, the problem of emotional burnout has become one of the central issues in occupational and clinical psychology. The increasing pace of life, digitalization of society, growing professional demands, and high levels of responsibility contribute to the development of chronic stress, which is considered the main predictor of burnout.

Main Part:

Emotional burnout is regarded as a state of physical, emotional, and cognitive exhaustion resulting from prolonged involvement in emotionally demanding activities. In scientific literature, it is described as a multidimensional syndrome that



includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. This issue is especially relevant in professions involving intensive interaction with people, such as medicine, education, social work, and the service sector. However, in modern society, signs of burnout are increasingly observed among representatives of other professions as well, including IT specialists, managers, and students.

The aim of this study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the causes, risk factors, and methods of preventing emotional burnout. Emotional burnout is a complex and multi-level process formed under the influence of prolonged stress and a lack of resources necessary to cope with it. In modern psychology, this phenomenon is viewed as the result of a mismatch between environmental demands and an individual's capabilities. One of the key approaches to understanding emotional burnout is its structural analysis. Burnout includes three main components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal achievement. Emotional exhaustion manifests itself in feelings of emptiness and chronic fatigue. Depersonalization is expressed through the development of a negative and cynical attitude toward other people. Reduced personal accomplishment is associated with feelings of inefficiency and loss of professional significance.

Particular importance is attached to the analysis of factors contributing to the development of burnout. These factors are divided into external (organizational) and internal (personal) categories. External factors include working conditions, workload, management style, and the social climate within a team. Internal factors involve individual psychological characteristics such as anxiety levels, motivation, value orientations, and the ability to self-regulate.

It should be noted that an imbalance between energy expenditure and recovery plays a significant role. Prolonged absence of rest and emotional relief gradually leads to the depletion of the body's adaptive mechanisms. As a result, resistance to stress decreases and stable negative emotional states begin to develop.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the research consists of general scientific and psychological methods of analysis.

The following methods were used in the study:

- analysis and synthesis of scientific literature;



- comparative analysis of various theoretical approaches;
- classification of burnout factors and symptoms;
- generalization of empirical data presented in recent studies.

The theoretical framework of the research includes works in the field of stress psychology, adaptation theory, and professional personality development. Modern models of burnout were also examined, including the three-component model and process-oriented approaches describing the stages of burnout formation.

It was revealed that organizational working conditions play an important role in the development of burnout, including lack of control over work processes, ambiguity of professional roles, and low levels of social support. Alongside these factors, individual psychological characteristics such as a high degree of responsibility, emotional involvement, and low stress resistance also have a significant impact. The analysis showed that emotional burnout develops gradually and is accompanied by several characteristic symptoms. These include emotional exhaustion manifested through feelings of fatigue and emptiness, depersonalization expressed through cynical attitudes toward others, and decreased professional effectiveness. Furthermore, it was established that burnout negatively affects not only professional activity but also general health, including the development of psychosomatic disorders, reduced concentration, and deterioration in sleep quality.

Conclusions

Emotional burnout is a complex psychological phenomenon caused by prolonged exposure to stress factors and a lack of recovery resources. Its development is associated with a combination of organizational, social, and personal causes. The conducted study demonstrated that timely identification of burnout symptoms is highly important for preventing its further progression. Effective prevention is possible only through a comprehensive approach that includes optimization of working conditions, maintaining a proper rest schedule, developing self-regulation skills, and strengthening social support.

Scientists Who Studied Emotional Burnout

One of the first scientists who introduced the concept of emotional burnout was Herbert Freudenberger. In 1974, he used the term “burnout” to describe the state of emotional and physical exhaustion observed among medical workers and volunteers.



Freudenberger believed that constant stress, excessive workload, and emotional pressure gradually lead to loss of motivation, chronic fatigue, irritability, and reduced professional productivity. His work became the foundation for further scientific research on burnout syndrome.

Another important contribution was made by Christina Maslach, who became one of the most influential researchers in the field of burnout psychology. Together with Susan E. Jackson, she developed the famous Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a psychological questionnaire used worldwide to measure burnout levels. Maslach identified three main components of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

Michael P. Leiter also made a significant contribution to the study of emotional burnout. Together with Christina Maslach, he explored organizational causes of burnout and emphasized the importance of the working environment. Leiter argued that burnout develops when there is a mismatch between a person and their job in areas such as workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values.

An important role in understanding stress and burnout belongs to Hans Selye, the founder of stress theory. Although he did not study burnout directly, his concept of stress became the theoretical basis for later burnout research. Selye introduced the idea of “general adaptation syndrome,” explaining how the human body reacts to prolonged stress.

Another influential scientist is Stevan E. Hobfoll, who created the Conservation of Resources Theory. Hobfoll explained that people experience stress when they lose important personal resources such as energy, time, motivation, or emotional stability. If these resources are not restored, emotional burnout gradually develops.

Wilmar B. Schaufeli is also widely known for his studies on job burnout and work engagement. He examined the relationship between professional stress, emotional exhaustion, and employee motivation. Schaufeli emphasized that burnout is not only an individual problem but also an organizational issue connected with working conditions, leadership style, and workload.

In Russian psychology, Viktor V. Boyko became one of the leading researchers of emotional burnout. He developed diagnostic methods for identifying burnout stages and symptoms. Boyko described burnout as a psychological defense mechanism that appears under conditions of chronic stress.



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