JOB BURNOUT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN CHELYABINSK

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Abstract

The syndrome of emotional burnout and occupational stress has recently become a common cause of the decreased quality of educators’ labour and therefore of the reduced effectiveness of the learning process. Physical education (PE) teachers are susceptible to job burnout as well as other educators.

Our study is dedicated to quantitative and qualitative indicators of burnout in PE teachers in Chelyabinsk (Russia). Susceptibility to job burnout in educators was analysed using the emotional burnout assessment method by Boiko. According to this method, the burnout process includes 3 main phases and 12 component symptoms. The first phase is a phase of tension; the second one is a phase when stress is being resisted, but it takes a lot of effort, so professional duties are neglected and some emotional detachment is observed; the third phase is a phase of exhaustion when the teacher suffers emotional deficiency, depersonalization, and a whole range of psychosomatic and psychovegetative dysfunctional symptoms.

The sample included 200 PE teachers of Chelyabinsk schools (20 men and 180 women). Fourteen participants had experience less than 5 years; twelve – less than 10 years; forty-nine – less than 20 years; forty-six – less than 25 years; and seventy-nine – over 25 years. The analysis showed that the sample was representative for the overall situation in the education system –namely, so called “staff ageing” – as 60% of the respondents were older than 45 and had experience of 20 years minimum.

According to the results, 21% of the participants were susceptible to the risk of job burnout syndrome. Taking borderline cases into account increased this number to 29%, which is very high especially considering that even though Physical Education is generally the only subject which involves physical activity and is characterized by an intensive emotional background of classes.

The analysis of burnout syndrome development showed that the phase of tension was observed in 30% of the teachers, resistance – in 34%, and exhaustion – in 15%. These values indicate that the majority of PE teachers are at risk of burnout, which means that necessary measures for correction and prevention should be taken as soon as possible.

The authors suggest conceptual approaches to job burnout syndrome prevention. All related factors are classified into two categories: professional activity and individual personal features of physical education teachers. The first category is within the competence of school authorities and comprises reasonable distribution of teaching loads throughout the day, incentive for teachers (both material and moral), and formation of optimal labour conditions (first of all, the appropriate number of students per class) and friendly environment. The second category is under the supervision of school counsellors who are to carry out a long and meticulous work to help the teacher without judging professional aspects of his/her activity. The authors believe that individual work should precede group one which includes educational seminars and preventive trainings to develop the skills of ability to handle stress, time management, activity planning, effective co-operation, communicative competence, and ability to cope with negative emotions.

Keywords: PE teachers, job burnout, emotional burnout.

1 INTRODUCTION

Job burnout is a kind of psychological stress. It is characterized by exhaustion, pronounced lack of enthusiasm and motivation, and a sense of ineffectiveness; job burnout may also be accompanied by disappointment or sociopathy, which eventually results in lower occupational performance ([1], [2]).

Over last 20 years the specific occupational disorder of educators ([3]) – namely, job burnout syndrome – attracts the interest of many researchers. Currently, job burnout is regarded as a mechanism of psychological protection which a person has developed as a full or partial elimination of emotions in response to psycho-traumatic action ([4], [5], [6]).
The phenomenon of burnout is an acute crisis state characterized by a mental and physical fatigue, loss of confidence in one’s own potential and, as a result, inability to continue the efficient occupational activity. More and more data indicate that clinically job burnout is similar to depression ([7], [8]). Researchers compared depressive symptoms in people with job burnout and patients with clinical depressive states and did not reveal any significant differences between these two groups ([9]).

According to the approach suggested by American psychologists Maslach and Jackson (1986) burnout syndrome is a three-faceted construct ([10]):

- emotional exhaustion is expressed in dejection, indifference, emotional oversaturation, chronic fatigue, and lack of creativity;
- depersonalization may be characterized as deformity of personal relationships; it may be either the increased dependence on other people or, vice versa, the higher negativism and cynicism towards colleagues and students;
- reduction of professional achievements which is manifested in underestimation or even negative estimation of oneself, one’s occupational success, advantages and prospects; it may result in limited potential and responsibility relative to other people.

Emotional burnout is a personal and social problem. Though the number of studies dedicated to burnout keeps on growing there are still no perfectly investigated and developed methods for burnout correction and prevention ([3]). Emotional burnout affects all aspects of life including professional sphere and becomes a handicap in personal self-realization. The data indicate that etiological characteristic of burnout is multi-factored, and dispositional factors are essential here ([11]). One of burnout reasons is a constant or sporadic exposure to stress factors that cannot be fully overwhelmed. Job burnout often progresses latently and slowly and can remain unrealized until it is very serious.

Thus, due to a high level of stress inherent in educator's activity the problem of emotional burnout is pressing.

The aim of our research was to reveal the symptoms of job burnout in physical education teachers with different professional experience and to determine the factors of its stabilization.

2 METHODOLOGY

Susceptibility to job burnout in educators was analyzed using the emotional burnout assessment method by Boiko [12]. According to this method, the burnout process includes 3 main phases and 12 component symptoms. The first phase is a phase of tension when a teacher goes through stress situation followed by anxiety, depression, hopelessness and dissatisfaction. The second one is a phase when stress is being resisted, but it takes a lot of effort, so professional duties are neglected and some emotional detachment is observed; the third phase is a phase of exhaustion when the teacher suffers emotional deficiency, depersonalization, and a whole range of psychosomatic and psychovegetative dysfunctional symptoms.

The sample included 200 physical education teachers of Chelyabinsk schools (20 men and 180 women). Fourteen participants had experience less than 5 years; twelve – less than 10 years; forty-nine – less than 20 years; forty-six – less than 25 years; and seventy-nine – over 25 years. The analysis showed that the sample was representative for the overall situation in the education system – namely, so called “staff ageing” – as 60% of the respondents were older than 45 and had experience of 20 years minimum.

3 RESULTS

According to our findings, 21% of the respondents were susceptible to the risk of job burnout syndrome. Taking borderline cases into account increased this number to 29%, which is very high especially considering that even though Physical Education is generally the only subject which involves physical activity and is characterized by an intensive emotional background of classes.

Though the obtained material suggests that emotional burnout symptoms are observed mainly in older respondents, in fact these symptoms were observed also in other groups including those with experience less than 5 years.

The analysis of burnout syndrome development showed that the phase of tension was observed in 30% of the teachers, resistance – in 34%, and exhaustion – in 15% (Table 1).
**Table 1. Qualitative data on job burnout in PE teachers of Chelyabinsk schools.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Stages of formation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not formed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhaustion</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen from Table 1, phases of resistance and tension were formed or being formed in many participants, that meant that job burnout process was going "at a full speed". The overall situation seemed even more dramatic.

**Table 2. Quantitative data on job burnout in PE teachers of Chelyabinsk school.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total job burnout indicator</th>
<th>Number of teachers, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 20%</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 40%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 70%</td>
<td>58</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The analysis of risk factors for job burnout allows the systematization of approaches to its prevention. All related factors are classified into two categories: professional activity and individual personal features of physical education teachers. The first category is within the competence of school authorities and comprises reasonable distribution of teaching loads throughout the day, incentive for teachers (both material and moral), and formation of optimal labour conditions (first of all, the appropriate number of students per class) and friendly environment ([13]). The second category is under the supervision of school counsellors who are to carry out a long and meticulous work to help the teacher without judging professional aspects of his/her activity ([1]). Individual work should precede group one which includes educational seminars and preventive trainings to develop the skills of ability to handle stress, time management, activity planning, effective co-operation, communicative competence, and ability to cope with negative emotions ([7]).

Allegedly, job burnout syndrome may be reversed at any stage of its development, but overcoming is much more effective at an early stage.

Thus, the main directions of preventive measures may be determined: release of psychoemotional tension, development of creative potential, and activation of personal resources in specialists. The work includes psychological training using appropriate methods and technologies in order to obtain the following results ([1], [3], [7], [12], [13]):

1. Adoption of new knowledge of the problem of job burnout.
2. Actualization and mobilization of personal resources.
3. Decrease of psychoemotional tension.
5. Formation of skills of constructive solution to job-related conflicts.
6. Adoption of skills of coping with stress and self-regulation of emotional state.

By now, the main principles and approaches have been already described in relation to a method focused on the optimal choice under the conditions of multi-factor influence – the method of psychological and educational support. Support means that an individual is involved in the interaction process in order to create the conditions for self-development and self-progress within activity of all interacting subjects ([3], [13], [14]).

The system of psychological and educational support should be developed stage by stage: conceptual justification of psychological and educational support; elaboration of psychological support program; and creation of psychological support techniques and technologies.
4 CONCLUSIONS

Our research shows that many physical education teachers are subjected to job burnout syndrome, and phases of resistance and exhaustion are formed or being formed in many of these educators.

The main psychological and educational support measures in development of occupational competence include psychological prevention, developing psychodiagnosis, psychological consulting, and occupational education and instruction.

Psychological prevention is assistance in a full-scale social development of a teacher, prevention of potential crises, personal and interpersonal conflicts, which also includes recommendations on self-realization considering social and economic relations influencing the educational environment. The essence of such prevention is elimination of potential situations and factors causing psychological tension, stress or trauma; prevention also means that educator’s mental tolerance to these adverse conditions is being increased.

Developing psychodiagnosis means that interpretation of diagnostic results concerning individual psychological characteristics communicated to the educator contributes to actualization of psychological skills and progress of psychological competence. As individual diagnostic indicators are very significant for the educator the explanation of diagnosed characteristics is personally critical. Psychological knowledge is not only adopted, but also appropriated, and so-called autocompetence is formed which becomes a factor of self-realization of an occupational and psychological potential.

Psychological consulting is assistance in self-knowledge, formation of adequate self-esteem and adaptation to living environment, formation of values and motivation, overcoming of crisis situations and professional destruction, and achievement of emotional stability contributing to permanent personal and professional growth and self-development.

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REFERENCES


