

Mental burnout syndrome of teachers in inclusive education

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Abstract. Research problem. At the present stage of society development in conditions of socio-economic instability and stress, the specified requirements for the professionalism level of educational workers are growing. In the professional activities of inclusive education teachers there is a wide range of phenomena and situations that pose a risk to their psychological health (high emotional tension, complex children contingent, pedagogical situations difficulty, need to implement often and intense contacts, frequent lack of a positive result or motivational reinforcement (positive feedback). In this regard, one of the priority tasks of modern pedagogy and psychology is to study the phenomenon of mental burnout among educational workers taking into account the specifics of their professional activities. The aim of the study was to identify the structure of mental burnout among teachers with various experience of pedagogical practice in inclusive education. As a hypothesis of the research it was suggested that mental burnout syndrome develops in the process of a teacher's long-term professional activity. And the development level of mental burnout syndrome among teachers with work experience from 11 to 20 years is higher than in teachers with pedagogical practice experience from 2 to 10 years. Research methods: 1) testing according to the methodology "Determination of mental burnout" (A.A. Rukavishnikov); 2) methods of mathematical processing of psychological research data (short statistics method, method of assessing the differences reliability in the Student's t-test studied indicators). Conclusions and recommendations. Teachers, regardless of their length of service, are experiencing a process of emotional and physical fatigue due to a large number of contacts with people (pupils, parents, colleagues). Teachers with a long work experience (more than 11 years) are diagnosed both with a higher integrative level of mental burnout and with the severity of its individual components. These results suggest that the identified signs of mental burnout among teachers are developing in the course of their professional activities in the field of inclusive education which support the earlier hypothesis. The results of the research can be used in pedagogical and psychological practice: in consulting teachers of inclusive education with different professional experience in order to prevent, detect and correct mental burnout syndrome.

Keywords: syndrome, mental burnout, teacher, inclusive education, health.

1 Introduction

At the present stage of society development in conditions of socio-economic instability and stress, the requirements for the level of educational workers professionalism are growing. Inclusive education teachers are exposed to a wide range of phenomena and situations that pose a risk to their psychological health (high emotional tension, complex children population, complexity of pedagogical situations, need for frequent and intensive contacts, frequent lack of positive result or motivation (positive feedback) [1,2].

Research shows that teachers in special (corrective) educational institutions, as compared to their colleagues in mass schools, have very low physical and psychological health indicators and are characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduction of personal achievements [3].

In pedagogical activity, risk factors for the onset and development of burnout syndrome are noted among teachers in both mass general education and special (corrective) establishments [4, 5].

In this connection, one of the priorities of modern pedagogy and psychology is the study of mental burnout phenomenon among educational workers, taking into account the specificities of their professional activities.

1.1 Purpose and objectives of the study

The aim of the study was to identify the structure of mental burnout among teachers with various professional experience in inclusive education. As a hypothesis of the study, it was suggested that mental burnout syndrome develops in the process of teacher long-term professional activity in an inclusive environment and the development level of mental burnout syndrome in teachers with work experience from 11 to 20 years is higher than among teachers with teaching practice experience from 2 to 10 years old.

1.2 Literature review

The World Health Organization defines “burnout syndrome” as physical, emotional or motivational exhaustion characterized by impaired productivity in work, fatigue, insomnia, increased susceptibility to somatic diseases, drinking alcohol or other psychoactive substances and suicidal behaviour [6].

Professional burnout is understood as the development process of moderate intensity chronic professional stress, that causes the professional's personality deformation [7].

Russian scientific publications use several versions of the English term “burnout” translation, introduced into scientific circulation in 1974 by the American psychiatrist H. Freudenberg: “emotional burnout”; “emotional combustion”; “emotional exhaustion”; “mental burnout”; “professional deformation syndrome”; “emotional (professional) deformation syndrome”; “professional burnout” [8].

The terminological variety is explained by different theoretical views on the problem of “burnout”. The results of many studies show that personal, situational and professional factors are of great importance in the development of mental burnout.

The following can be identified as personal factors in the development of mental burnout syndrome in teachers: unproductive coping strategies [9,10]; low involvement in work [11]; irrational beliefs about your work [12]; low level of physical activity [13]; bad habits, unhealthy food [14]; low stress resistance [15]; low frustration tolerance, external locus of control [16].

As part of the study of situational factors in the burnout syndrome formation, there are works on the relationship of this syndrome with the relations in the teaching staff [17,18,19]; with interpersonal conflict at work and at home [20]; lack of family support [21]; with/without management support [22].

The study of the relationship between burnout syndrome and professional factors of Brazilian primary and secondary school teachers is presented in the works [23].

Other authors have identified high levels of emotional burnout in primary and secondary school teachers in Serbia, such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduction of personal achievements. At the same time, it is noted the seasonality of the syndrome, i.e., high prevalence of emotional burnout at the end of the school year compared to the beginning of the educational process [24]. These conclusions are confirmed in other studies [25].

Similar results were obtained in the study of burnout syndrome structure among teachers living in the North of Russia in different periods of the school year. During educational activities teachers are in a state of chronic stress, which against the background of a long stay in the extreme conditions of the North-East, can lead to the development of mental maladjustment, professional personality deformation and exacerbation of chronic diseases [26].

Researchers also point to the dependence of the emotional burnout syndrome expression on dissatisfaction with wages, overtime work, and the severity of administrative sanctions [27]; on educational institution type and the level of education [28]; on the duration of professional experience [29]. Symptoms of mental burnout occur both in

the beginning and in the course of professional activity, and thus there is a downward trend in propensity for mental burnout after 20 years of work [29]. In addition, there are differences in the expression of emotional burnout both culturally [30] and gendered [31,32].

It is worth noting the study of the burnout syndrome in special education teachers. The works indicate the highest level of burnout syndrome among teachers working with musculoskeletal disorders children [33]. According to researchers, most special education teachers experience high level of depression, psychological dysfunction, and role conflict.

Researchers point to the fact that the vast majority of special education teachers have a medium or high level of professional burnout that affects their well-being, health, relationships with others and their professional competence assessment. The factors that will help to preserve the psychoemotional health of teachers and overcome professional burnout are rest, a favorable socio-psychological climate in the team, a decent salary, the state social protection and psychological support. The mental burnout syndrome of special education teachers is related to the experience of inclusive teaching, the level of self-effectiveness and the acceptance of their work by family members [34].

In this study, we focused on the theory of A.A. Rukavishnikov, who considers the syndrome of mental burnout of teachers as a stable, progressive, negatively colored phenomenon, due to the peculiarities of professional activity. A.A. Rukavishnikov adapted the methodology for integral diagnostics of mental “burnout”, including various substructures of the personality. The author identifies the following components in the studied phenomenon structure: psychoemotional exhaustion, personal distancing and professional motivation decrease [35].

2 Materials and methods

The study was carried out using the following methods: 1) theoretical analysis of literature; 2) interview with subjects to clarify, complement, analyze information obtained in the methodology application; 3) testing according to the methodology “Mental burnout determination” (A.A. Rukavishnikov); 4) mathematical processing methods of psychological research data (the short statistics method, mathematical processing methods of psychological research data (the short statistics method, the method of assessing the differences reliability in the studied indicators Student's t-test).

Teachers of Kazan correctional and rehabilitation institutions participated in the study. The total sample size was 46: 24 teachers from 2 to 10 years' experience in correctional and rehabilitation institutions (1 group), 22 teachers from 11 to 20 years' experience in an inclusive environment (2 groups). The study was conducted in three stages with the content of each stage corresponding to the task.

Phase 1: Research programme development, subjects sample formation, selection of necessary methods and psycho-diagnostic methodologies for the stated goal realization.

Phase 2: Mental burnout structure research in teachers with different professional experience in inclusive education.

Stage 3: Research and relationship substantiation between the components of mental burnout structure among teachers with different work experience in inclusive education.

3 Results

In order to study the structure of mental burnout syndrome among teachers in inclusive education, A. A. Rukavishnikov's technique "Mental burnout definition" was used [36].

The methodology is intended for the "mental burnout" diagnosis, i.e. a stable, progressive, negatively colored phenomenon, which is characterized by psychoemotional exhaustion, development of dysfunctional attitudes and behavior at work, and loss of professional motivation. Psychological burnout can manifest itself at the interpersonal level (in the form of mental exhaustion, irritability, aggressiveness, increased sensitivity to the assessments of others); at the personal level (low emotional tolerance, anxiety, critical attitude towards others, and uncritical in self-appraisal); at the motivational level (unwillingness to go to work, desire to end the working day as soon as possible, absenteeism, indifference to one's career) [35].

The results are presented in Figure 1. (see **Ошибка! Источник ссылки не найден.**).

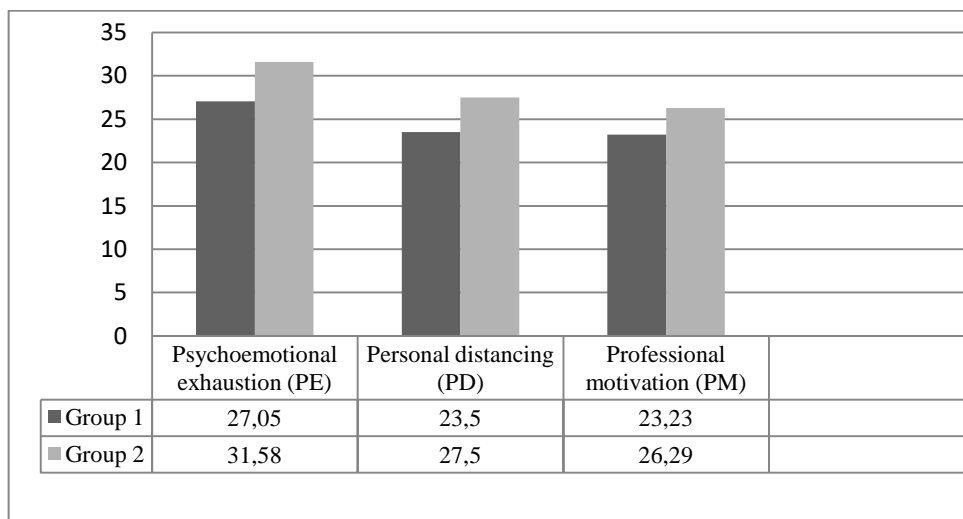


Fig. 1. Expression of mental burnout structural components among teachers with different work experience in inclusive education

This histogram shows that the highest indicators in two samples of teachers are noted on the scale: "Psychoemotional exhaustion", the lowest indicators on the scale: "Professional motivation".

The characteristics of mental burnout, such as personal distancing and professional motivation decrease are approximately equal.

Figure 1 shows that the percentages for all three mental burnout scales are higher among teachers with 11 - 20 years' experience (group 1) than among teachers with less than 2 - 10 years' experience (group 2).

According to A.A. Rukavishnikov, psychoemotional exhaustion is the process of depletion of the emotional, physical, and energy resources of a professional who works with people. Exhaustion manifests itself in chronic emotional and physical fatigue, indifference and coldness towards others with signs of depression and irritability. Personal distancing is a specific form of social maladjustment of a professional who works with people. Personal distancing is manifested in a decrease in the number of contacts with others, an increase in irritability and intolerance in communication situations, and negativism towards other people. Professional motivation is the level of work motivation and enthusiasm towards the work with altruistic content. The state of the motivational sphere is assessed by such indicators as the productivity of professional activity, optimism and interest in work, professional competence self-assessment and the degree of success in working with people [35].

In order to identify reliable differences between the expression of structural components of mental burnout in two groups of teachers an analysis was made on Student t-test. The results are reflected in table 1.

Table 1. Formation of mental burnout structure parameters (mean values) in both groups of subjects.

Scales names	Group 2 (teachers with 11- 20 years' experience)	Group 1 (teachers with 2- 10 years' experience)	Student's t- test
"Psychoemotional exhaustion" (PE)	31.58	27.05	2.09 *
"Personal Distancing" (PD)	27.50	23.50	2.16 *
"Professional motivation" (PM)	26.29	23.23	2.27 *
"Mental Burnout Index" (MBI)	85.38	73.77	2.59 *

*Note: * - significant differences at $p \leq 0.05$*

From Table 1 it can be seen that there are significant differences between the following indicators (mental burnout parameters) in both groups of subjects:

- 1) Psychoemotional exhaustion (temp = 2.09, at $p < 0.05$),
- 2) Personal distancing (temp = 2.16, at $p < 0.05$),
- 3) Professional motivation (temp = 2.27, at $p < 0.05$),

4) Mental burnout index (temp =2.59, at $p < 0.05$).

As can be seen from Table 1, the Student's t – test analysis revealed significant differences in all parameters of the mental burnout structure, as well as in the overall level of mental burnout development (at the significance level $p < 0.05$). The subjects of the first group (teachers with 2-10 years' experience) have indicators on all scales in the mental burnout structure and the integral level of mental burnout lower than those of the second group (teachers with 11-20 years' experience). Thus, we can summarize the results obtained:

1. Teachers, regardless of their work experience, have a process of emotional and physical fatigue as a result of the large number of contacts with people (students with disabilities and their parents, colleagues).
2. At the same time, teachers with long work experience (from 11 to 20 years) have a higher rate of success than teachers with a shorter professional career (from 2 to 10 years).
3. Also, all teachers, regardless of their work experience, show a lower degree of decline in productivity, motivation and professional self-assessment (compared to other mental burnout indicators).
4. However, among teachers with a long work experience, these mental burnout signs are significantly higher than among teachers with work experience from 2 to 10 years.
5. In teachers with work experience from 11 to 20 years, also such signs of mental burnout as irritability, negativism, intolerance towards other people (“personal distancing”) are more reliably expressed.
6. Thus, teachers with a long work experience (over 11 years) are diagnosed with both a higher integrative level of mental burnout and the expression of its individual components.
7. These results suggest that the identified signs of mental burnout in inclusive education teachers develop in the course of their professional activity in the “human-human” field.

4 Discussion

The results obtained made it possible to draw the following conclusions:

Reliable differences have been found in all aspects of mental burnout structure formation and, consequently, in the overall level of mental burnout syndrome development (at the level of significance $p \leq 0.05$). Teachers with long work experience (11-20 years) have a higher level of mental burnout syndrome than teachers with less years of pedagogical experience (2-10 years). In other words, we can assume that as the length of teaching experience increases, there is a tendency to develop all the indicators in the structure of teachers' psychological burnout.

Thus, our hypothesis that mental burnout syndrome develops in the course of a teacher's long career and the level of psychological burnout syndrome development in teachers with 11 - 20 years' experience is higher than in teachers with 2 - 10 years of pedagogical experience fully confirmed.

5 Conclusion

The quantitative results obtained and their qualitative interpretation make it possible to determine the content of psychological and pedagogical work on development prevention, identification and correction of psychological burnout syndrome in teachers at all stages of their professional development in an inclusive education.

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