

**PEHPP 2019****Pedagogical Education: History, Present Time, Perspectives****PSYCHOLOGICAL FEATURES OF THE OF TEACHERS  
BURNOUT PREVENTION**

S. M. Shingaev (a)\*, G. I. Vlasova (b), A. S. Turchin (c)

\*Corresponding author

(a) St. Petersburg Academy of postgraduate pedagogical education, Saint Petersburg, Russia, sshingaev@mail.ru

(b) Academy of civil protection of EMERCOM of Russia», Khimki, Moscow region, Russia,  
vlasova-galina@bk.ru

(c) St. Petersburg military Institute of National Guard Forces, Saint Petersburg, Russia, ast55@mail.ru

***Abstract***

The article presents the results of psychological factors studies of teachers' professional health and burnout. Based on the concept of professional health psychological support, the psychological features of the teachers burnout prevention and correction at the stage of professional skills improvement in the system of postgraduate professional education. A description of the current condition of theoretical understanding and development of practical measures of teachers' burnout prevention is given. The study was conducted on a sample of teachers in St. Petersburg in 2011-2019. The advantage of the article is, on the one hand, the consideration of burnout prevention from the standpoint of professional health rather than "disease", as it is accepted in most modern Russian studies, on the other hand, the allocation of a set of psychological factors affecting the teachers' professional health (value orientations, stress factors of the professional environment, coping strategies). The results of the study: the value system of teachers as the foundation for the prevention of burnout, the level of professional health and burnout, symptoms of stress, stress factors of professional activity, coping strategies and ways to relieve stress. The main tasks of the psychological support of professional health and the of teachers burnout prevention in the postgraduate education system are formulated. The scientific significance of the study is that for the first time in Russian psychological science, the teachers' burnout prevention is considered comprehensively in line with the concept of psychological support of professional health.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

**Keywords:** Burnout, concept, prevention, professional health, psychological support.

## 1. Introduction

The topic of teachers' professional health, their burnout prevention is one of the most important in the general list of scientific and practical problems facing the modern Russian education system. Psychological science in Russia is attempting theoretical understanding and developing practical measures to prevent the teachers burnout (Konovalchuk, 2008; Kuzmenkova & Mitina, 1998; Mitina, 2018; Nikiforov, 2017; Nikiforov & Shingaev, 2015; Temirov, 2011; Vodopyanova, 2008; Vodopyanova & Nikiforov, 2013; Vorobyeva, 2008). At the same time, it should be recognized that there is still insufficient coverage of this important problem, primarily from the point of view of professional health; there is no systematic approach to the consideration of preserving and maintaining the teachers professional health; unresolved issues of developing tools and instruments that ensure the updating of professional health as a vital characteristic of the teachers professional activities and, as a consequence, the prevention of their burnout.

We consider it appropriate to understand the professional teachers' health as a set of human characteristics that allow him to successfully cope with the challenges and requirements of a professional pedagogical environment (Shingaev, 2011). In the general structure of psychological factors of teachers' professional health of, we consider three key modules: cognitive, emotional and behavioral, as well as stress factors of professional activity and individual psychological characteristics of a professional's personality. This implies our assumption about the study of professional burnout of teachers through the prism of professional health psychological factors. It is important to note that a number of foreign authors adhere to a similar approach (Houdmont & Leka, 2012; Perrez & Reicherts, 1992; Quick, 201; Schaufeli, 1999).

We admit that when considering the professional path of a teacher in the concept of professional health psychological support (Shingaev, 2011), we talk about all the stages of this path and accordingly consider: at the stage of professional self-determination - schoolchildren who choose pedagogical professions; at the stage of professional training - students studying in pedagogical specialties; at the stage of professional adaptation, regular professional activity, professional development - teachers; at the stage of "leaving" the profession — teachers of pre-retirement age and teachers who retired because of their age. This approach allows a holistic, systematic approach to solving the practical problems of forming, maintaining and strengthening the teachers professional health, taking into account the resources accumulated at each stage to address these tasks, as well as carry out preventive work in advance, at the previous stages, before professional burnout begins to appear in the teacher, and, as a result, warn this premature onset.

## 2. Problem Statement

The contradiction between the urgent need of Russian society for professionally healthy teachers and the lack of reliable tools to maintain their health and prevent burnout is becoming more and more obvious. The questions of studying the effect of professional burnout on certain personal characteristics of teachers remain are poorly examined. There is a lack of highly effective and low-cost technologies for the teachers' burnout prevention and their stress resistance increase. The desire to find ways to resolve these

contradictions has determined the content of our study, the main results of which are presented in this article.

### **3. Research Questions**

Based on the concept of professional health psychological support, in the framework of this article we consider the psychological characteristics of the teachers burnout prevention and correction at one stage of their life paths, namely, at the stage of professional development in the system of postgraduate professional education.

#### **3.1. The subject of the study was:**

- The level of professional health.
- The level of burnout.
- Value system.
- Stress symptoms.
- Stress factors of professional activity.
- Ways to reduce stress.

We attribute these indicators to the psychological factors of teachers' professional health.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of our study is to examine the psychological factors of teachers' professional health and to develop practical recommendations for the burnout prevention and increase stress resistance, to strengthen the teachers' professional health of at the stage of professional development in the system of postgraduate professional education.

### **5. Research Methods**

The solution of theoretical problems for the development of the psychological support concept of professional health in relation to the profession of a teacher, the consideration of the psychological characteristics of the burnout prevention was carried out through logical and theoretical analysis and generalization of psychological literature related to the subject of the study.

The main methods for collecting empirical material were:

- Testing using a complex of psychodiagnostic techniques.
- Group and individual surveys using author profiles.

The teachers, included in survey, were those working in the educational system of St. Petersburg and undergoing further training in the system of postgraduate professional education. During the study, 418 respondents were tested, questioned and interviewed. Characteristics of the sample: 96% - women, 4% - men; age - from 21 to 65 years old, including 67% - aged 31 to 50 years; the vast majority (80%) have higher education. The study lasted from 2011 to 2019.

The study of the teachers professional health was carried out by a complex of psychodiagnostic tools, which included methods designed to study the cognitive, behavioral and emotional components of health (a modified method of M. Rokich “The system of values-goals and the level of their implementation”, a diagnosis scale for behavior of type A S.D. Polozhentseva, D.A. Rudneva, “Emotional burnout” questionnaire V. Boyko, Strategies of Coping with Stress Situations (SACS) questionnaire S. Hobfoll “Strategies for coping with stressful situations” (Nikiforov, Dmitrieva, & Snetkov, 2001); author's questionnaires “Symptoms of stress” (S.M. Shingaev), “Ways to relieve stress” (S.M. Shingaev), “Stress factors of professional activity” (S.M. Shingaev) (Shingaev, 2011 )

The study applied the procedures of quantitative analysis of psychodiagnostic data: calculation of averages, standard deviations. Statistical data processing was performed using the SPSS for Windows 12.0 RU program.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. The value system of teachers as a foundation for the of burn out prevention

The ranked list of values, according to the results of our research, is as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> place - a happy family life, 2<sup>nd</sup> - health (physical and mental), 3<sup>rd</sup> - interesting work, 4<sup>th</sup> - love (physical and mental proximity with a loved one, 5<sup>th</sup> - confidence in himself, 6<sup>th</sup> - life wisdom, 7<sup>th</sup> - materially secure life, 8<sup>th</sup> - cognition, 9<sup>th</sup> - friends, 10<sup>th</sup> - development. Considering the level of values realization gives the opposite picture. Those values that occupy the first five places (family, health, interesting work, commitment and confidence) are least implemented by educators in life. It is established that every 3rd respondent has no family (not married, divorced). A paradoxical picture arises: what is considered important and valuable is less achievable, but values that are not included according to the teachers' self-assessment, they are most fully implemented on the priority list, which we interpret as a kind of psychological defense that allows teachers (mostly women) to transfer the full potential of warmth and energy to work with students, as well as professional professional and personal development. Such a cognitive dissonance (I want one thing, but I am realizing myself in another thing), in our opinion, can be overcome both by a conscious revision of priorities in the value system, and by the application of significant efforts to implement the most significant values.

Let us give an example: in the formation of pedagogical groups in SOS villages (Austria, Russia), priority is given to single women.

### 6.2. Diagnosis of behavior of type A

The vast majority of educators are extremely involved in the work of people (more than 88% of respondents), their distinctive features are: work under pressure of the time factor (80% of respondents indicated this); the level of competition, energy, specificity of behavior and restraint of emotions - at an average level; the level of ambitiousness and hostility is low. Most educators (over 75%) are type B.

We believe that the low level of aspirations for career growth and moderate assertiveness are a consequence of the professional pedagogical environment specifics, oriented primarily to horizontal professional growth rather than to the career vertical.

### **6.3. The level of teachers' burnout**

More than 60% of teachers are at the 3 (highest) stage of burnout - the stage of exhaustion, which is manifested in a decrease in the overall energy tone of teachers, symptoms of emotional deficiency, emotional detachment, personal depersonalization, which, undoubtedly, requires urgent measures as a managerial character (at the educational level organization), as well as individual orientation (training in the skills of mental self-regulation, increasing stress resistance).

### **6.4. Symptoms of teachers stress**

Very often, teachers find such symptoms of stress as a feeling of fatigue (70% of respondents indicated this symptom), muscle tension, frequent pain in the neck and lower back (43%), sleep disturbances (31%), unmotivated anxiety various occasions (27%), increased irritability (24%), depressed mood (15%), impaired appetite or overeating (12%), persistent headaches (11%), deterioration in the qualitative and quantitative indicators of work (8%).

### **6.5. Stress factors of professional activity**

Analyzing the main stress factors affecting teachers in the course of their professional pedagogical activities, we identified three large groups:

- More than half of the respondents indicated problems with the technical part of their job - a large number of reporting documentation, excessive work with papers, insufficient material and technical base at the workplace (computer, printer, other office equipment);
- Difficulties of the communication plan - difficulties in interpersonal interaction, conflicts in the workforce, strained relations with managers and colleagues. More than 40% of respondents indicated this;
- An insufficient system of material and moral incentives, a significant excess of duties over rights in the workplace - every third teacher pointed to this factor.

### **6.6. Ways to relieve teachers stress**

Among the ways to relieve stress, teachers mostly use: communicating with friends (60% of respondents indicated this method), reading (48%), hobbies (45%), humor, laughter (44%), walking, trips out of town to nature and sleep (43% each), music (42%), water procedures (bath, sauna, pool) (40%), shopping and talking with relatives (38% each), talking with pets (35%), watching TV shows (33%).

### **6.7. Copying strategies of educators**

The results of the study of teachers' coping strategies using the SACS methodology showed that the leading ones are: the search for social support (59% of respondents adhere to this coping strategy), avoidance (48% of teachers prefer it), impulsive actions (40%) and aggressive actions (35%) Strategies for overcoming stressful situations, such as entering into social contact, assertive actions, and indirect and cautious actions are typical for 15-18% of teachers. Less than 10% of respondents use asocial actions. In our opinion, the insufficiently developed assertiveness of teachers can be compensated for by short-term education (seminars, trainings), as well as subsequent psychological support by a tutor (mentor).

## 7. Conclusion

The psychological support of professional health and teachers burnout prevention at the stage of professional development - in the postgraduate education system, in our opinion, should be focused on achieving the main goal - achieving the optimal ratio of the teacher's energy costs and the results achieved during training, since in the vast majority of cases teacher training is carried out "on the job"; the teacher continues to work actively at the main place of his work in the educational institution and at the same time to attend training sessions, which greatly increases the stress load and requires additional health educator resources.

Key objectives of this stage:

1) increasing stress resistance, developing skills to effectively solve tasks of increasing complexity (work plus studying) with minimal energy costs and without compromising health. A description of effective stress management strategies can be found in the works of foreign and Russian authors (Allen, 2002; Atkinson, 1994; Hearn, 2001; Holden, 1998; Neenan & Palmer, 2001; Quick, 2010; Shingaev, 2011);

2) the development of time management skills, which include the ability to manage their own time adequately, the ability to separate the essential from the secondary, the ability to find time reserves, use the anti-stress management style;

3) improving the qualities that are most important during this period:

- intellectual (the development of new knowledge; productivity, flexibility, analyticity, creativity, field independence, liability and adaptability of thinking);
- communicative (maintaining and developing contacts that are most important for work and study; expanding social ties; developing skills and abilities for effective communication, writing and speaking; correcting and developing attitudes that determine the success of communication);
- regulatory (double responsibility - for the results of work and study; the ability to reward oneself for good achievements in work and study; concern for maintaining vigor, commitment and self-control; skills of mental self-regulation, goal-setting, self-confidence, development of volitional potential).

## References

- Allen, D. (2002). *Getting things done: the art of stress-free productivity*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Atkinson, J. M. (1994). *Coping with stress at work*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Hearn, W. (2001). The Role of Coaching in Stress Management. *Stress News*, 2, 13-15.
- Holden, R. W. (1998). *Stress Busters*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Houdmont, J., & Leka, S. (2012). *Contemporary occupational health psychology: Global perspectives on research and practice*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- Konovalchuk, A. N. (2008). Burnout Syndrome and its Prevention in the Professional Activities of Urban and Rural Teachers. (Candidate dissertation). Retrieved from disserCat Dissertations and Thesesdatabase. [in Russ.]
- Kuzmenkova, O. V., & Mitina, L. M. (1998). Psychological Characteristics of Intrapersonal Contradictions teachers. *Vestnik psihologii*, 3, 3-16. [in Russ.]
- Mitina, L. M. (2018). *Personal and Professional Development of Teachers: Strategies, Resources, Risks*. Moskva-Sankt-Peterburg: Nestor-Istoria. [in Russ.]
- Neenan, M., & Palmer, S. (2001). Cognitive behavioural coaching. *Stress News*, 3, 11-16.

- Nikiforov, G. S. (2017). V. M. Behterev and his Concept of Healthy Personality. *Psihologicheskii Jurnal*, 38(1), 113-120. [in Russ.]
- Nikiforov, G. S., Dmitrieva, M. A., & Snetkov, V. M. (2001). *Practical Work on Psychology and Management of Professional Activity*. Sankt-Peterburg: Rech.[inRuss.]
- Nikiforov, G. S., & Shingaev, S. M. (2015). The Psychology of Professional Health as a Relevant Research Area. *Psihologicheskii Jurnal*, 36(2), 44-54. [in Russ.]
- Perrez, M., & Reicherts, M. (1992). *Stress, coping, and health. A situation-behavior approach. Theory, Methods, Applications*. Seattle-Toronto-Bern-Gottingen: Hogrefe & Huber Publishers.
- Quick, J. C. (2010). *Handbook of occupational health psychology*. Washington, DC: APA Books.
- Schaufeli, W. (1999). *Stress in health professionals: psychological and organizational causes and interventions*. New York: Welley & sons.
- Shingaev, S. M. (2011). *Psychological Support of Professional Teachers Health*. Sankt-Peterburg: SpbAPPO. [in Russ.]
- Temirov, T. V. (2011). Psychological Regularities of the Mental Burnout Dynamics of the Teacher's Personality in Modern Social Conditions. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from *dissertationCat Dissertations and Theses database*. [in Russ.]
- Vodopyanova, N. E. (2008). A Syndrome of Mental Burnout in Communicative Professions Health. *Psychology*, 443-463.
- Vodopyanova, N. E., & Nikiforov, G. S. (2013). Theoretical Aspects of Prevention and Correction of Burnout. *Bulletin of St. Petersburg University Economy*. [in Russ.]
- Vorobyeva, M. A. (2008). Psychological and Pedagogical Conditions for Overcoming the Emotional Burnout Syndrome by a Teacher. (Candidate dissertation). Retrieved from *dissertationCat Dissertations and Theses database*. [in Russ.]