

## HPEPA 2019

### Humanistic Practice in Education in a Postmodern Age 2019

# UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS IN CHANGING EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS: EMOTIONAL CONSEQUENCES

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### *Abstract*

Modern conditions of employment are characterized by such features as the instability or non-guarantee of workplaces, intensification and flexibilization of labour. These features fully apply to the work of professors. This study focuses on the unwarranted employment, which many authors note as one of the most powerful work stressors in today's work environment. The study examines the emotional consequences of professors that are working in unstable (non-guaranteed) employment. Anxiety and emotional burnout were considered as such consequences. To measure them we used interrogation-type techniques: the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and Manifest Anxiety Scale (MAS). The study sample involved two groups of Physical Education teachers working in different conditions: full-time teachers made up the first group, and part-time workers on a temporary contract were among the second one. As a result, statistically significant differences were recorded between the two groups of teachers in terms of anxiety ( $p < 0.01$ ) and the severity of symptoms of emotional burnout ( $p < 0.05$ ). The teachers from the second group, who worked on the terms of a temporary contract, were characterized by more intense symptoms of emotional burnout and a higher level of anxiety. In conclusion, the authors identified the limitations of the study, due to the characteristics of the sample and they outlined the subsequent areas of research.

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**Keywords:** Anxiety, burnout, professors, Russian sample, unwarranted employment.



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## 1. Introduction

Over the past three decades the employment field has changed dramatically and continues to change in most countries of the world. Intensification, flexibilization and unreliability of the working environment are distinguished as major changes. The increase in labor intensity is recorded by numerous studies conducted in various countries since the 1990s. The intensification of labor is not the same as an increase in the number of working hours, it is understood as performing more tasks during the working day (Kubicek, Korunka, Paskvan, Prem, & Gerdenitsch, 2014). Flexibilization (or flexibility) implies a variety of forms of employment, as a result of which traditional full-time employment is increasingly sidelined by non-traditional ones - with regard to the time aspect: underemployment, temporary work on the basis of a fixed-term contract, flexible work schedule; in the aspect of labor organization: various forms of home work, freelance, etc.; with regard to wages, the forms of which are also becoming more diverse. In the economic literature, it is noted that such processes of flexibilization of the labor market in our country are accompanied by a decrease in the social protection of an employee, as they are carried out taking into account the interests of an employer (Gasiukova, 2014; Rozevatov, 2014). At the same time, a number of authors note that such liberalization of employment largely determines the ability of the labor market to successfully adapt it to continuous changes in the economic and social environments (Cherkasov & Vakhovsky, 2012). Being an expected result of the first two changes described above unreliability or instability of the work environment is associated with both of them, and, in turn, supports their development and strengthening. Currently few people manage to work in one organization throughout their professional lives: the time of the “one-company employer” is a thing of the past, giving way to a multivariate professional career.

The features of employment described above are usually associated with the transition to a new economic structure - to post-industrial way, which is accompanied by the implementing of computer and robotics technologies into production process, acceleration of technological progress in general, which leads to a reduction of employed workers and a change in labor routine. In developed countries these changes were noted in the second half of the 70s, but in our country this transition becomes noticeable from the late 90s - early 2000s, and is also accompanied by significant shifts in employment, in particular, a decrease in producing sectors and the growth of the service sector (Musaev, 2017). Moreover, the institutional features of the service sector can be transferred to other areas of labor, in particular, the sphere of work of a teacher that interests us. A number of authors indicate that a teacher in modern conditions performs their responsibilities according to the type of learning services provided, in accordance with the change in the institutional nature of a university and the approximation of the academic contract to its classical form accepted in common organizations: renew a placement (so a short-term contract of employment is made for two or three years, sometimes for one year). Monitoring and remuneration of the results of individual activities of a teacher are being introduced, requirements are formalized, and transition to external control is taking place (Kurbatova & Kagan, 2016). The intensification of labor is also increasing: the workload is increasing, requirements for scientific work (publication activity) and methodological one that is characterized by multiplied types of reporting

Restructuring usually causes downsizing and makes a special contribution to strengthening precarious work. These processes are currently taking place in the field of higher education extremely

dynamic, leading to the unification of departments and other structural divisions, thereby discharging employees in relevant posts. It is common practice at a university to dismiss a teacher by “not declaring a competition” for a position: in essence, this is dismissal to reduce staff, but a teacher does not receive the compensation due to such dismissal in other organizations (Kirillova, 2017).

Thus, the above-mentioned features of the university teacher’s labor in modern conditions prompt us to speak about clear signs of precarious work or precarization: a term widely used in sociological literature and characterizing employment as unreliable and unstable, as unwarranted (Startsev & Dzhabrailov, 2017). As conditions for the development of precariate in the university environment the authors cite a decrease in the number of higher education institutions throughout the country, a reduction in the academic load in absolute terms in educational institutions, and an intensification of the teacher’s work by increasing the workload per one labor rate.

Having analyzed a large empirical material, foreign researchers identified a variety of negative consequences of work carried out in conditions of precarious work: deterioration of both physical and mental health, increased depression and anxiety, decreased overall well-being (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke, Hellgren, & Naswal, 2002); the development of symptoms of burnout (Aybas, Elmas, & Dundar, 2015); decrease in involvement in work, deterioration in labor productivity, weakening of commitment (loyalty) in relation to the organization, increase in staff turnover, threats to maintaining work-family balance and a number of other consequences (Chuykova, 2011). Some negative consequences of precarious work have been confirmed in Russian samples: in relation to the psycho-emotional state (Bendyukov, 2006; Chuykova & Sotnikova, 2016; Demin & Petrova, 2010), involvement in work (Chuykova & Sotnikova, 2016), increase in staff turnover (Chuykova & Sotnikova, 2016; Demin & Petrova, 2010). In domestic studies, a decrease in the realization of labor potential was also recorded among workers in conditions of non-guaranteed work (Leonidova & Chekmareva, 2018); distortion of the time perspective (Chuykova & Sotnikova, 2017). It should be noted that the studies of domestic authors presented here were carried out on samples of workers at industrial enterprises (Bendyukov, 2006; Demin & Petrova, 2010) or on samples that included workers employed in various fields (Chuykova & Sotnikova, 2016; Leonidova & Chekmareva, 2018). We did not find studies performed on Russian samples in which university professors in the situation of unwarranted employment would be the target audience.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Thus, the study of the emotional consequences of the changed conditions of employment for professors is a research problem for us. These changes are characterized by a decrease in its stability and guarantee, as well as increased labor intensification.

## **3. Research Questions**

We believe that professors in the changing conditions of employment, noted primarily by a significant decrease in its stability and guarantee, show emotional consequences in increasing anxiety, which is recorded in a wide range of studies, including those conducted in domestic samples, as discussed above. In particular, in a study conducted on a sample of 104 people, which included university professors

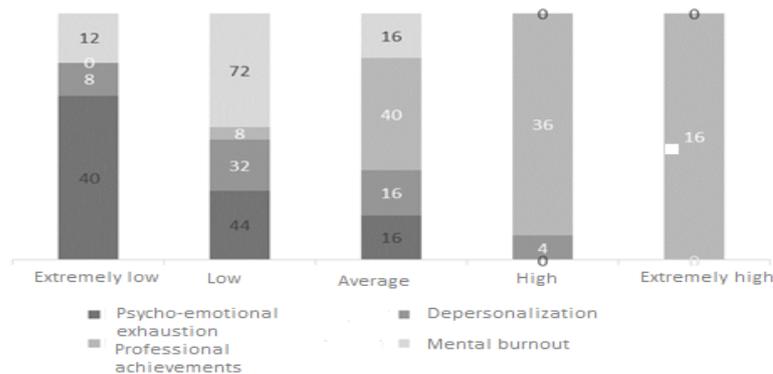
(40 respondents, accounting for 38.5% of the total sample), an increase in the level of depressive manifestations was recorded as an emotional consequence of the subjective feeling of unwarranted work (Chuykova & Sotnikova, 2016). We also assume that in conditions of unwarranted work and an increase in the intensity of labor, the manifestations of emotional burnout will increase among teachers.

#### 4. Purpose of the Study

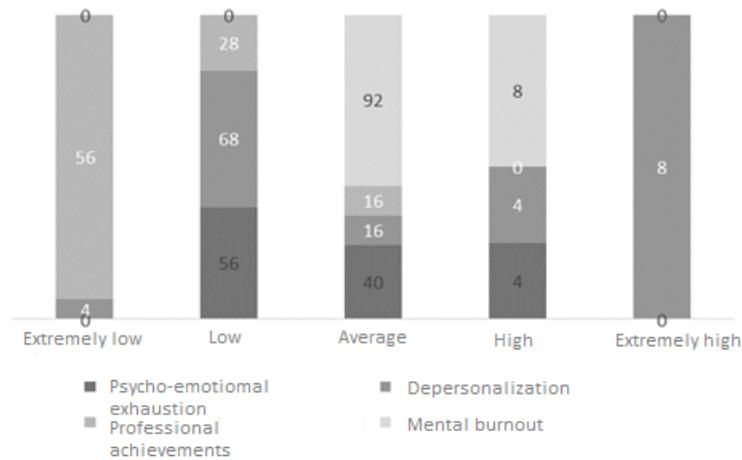
The aim of the study is to identify the emotional consequences of the changed conditions of employment of university teachers associated with a decrease in stability and job security. We intend to find these consequences in increasing the level of anxiety and manifestations of burnout among teachers, for whom the indicated features of labor employment are most pronounced. We have already referred to the results of empirical studies, in which an increase in depressive manifestations and signs of emotional burnout in situations of experiencing unwarranted work were recorded. Many authors, both foreign and domestic, consider burnout as a negative consequence of professional stresses (Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Vodopyanova, Starchenkova, & Nasledov, 2013, etc.). Among such stresses, the experience of job instability, the lack of reliable guarantees for its preservation is one of the most powerful work stressors in modern employment conditions (De Witte, 2005). In addition, a positive correlation between the increase in workload and burnout has been recorded in studies (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). The authors of the study note that when the load increases and begins to exceed individual human resources, emotional exhaustion (the leading structural component of burnout) is a predictable consequence.

#### 5. Research Methods

A sample of empirical research was made up of 49 physical education teachers working in various educational institutions: 31 people - in higher educational institutions, 18 - in secondary vocational educational institutions. The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 55 years, distribution by gender: 34 - women, 15 - men. 25 people worked in their organizations as full-time teachers and 24 worked as part-time workers under the terms of a temporary agreement. Accordingly, the employment of the respondents who made up the first group was constant and relatively stable (figure 01), while the employment of the respondents from the second group had all the signs of unreliable unstable work (figure 02).



**Figure 01.** Layout of respondents of the first group according to the level of severity of mental burnout and its individual aspects



**Figure 02.** Layout of respondents of the second group according to the level of severity of mental burnout and its individual aspects

Two questionnaires were used as tools:

1) the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) adapted by Vodopyanova, Starchenkova, and Nasledov, (2013). The inventory includes 22 statements, distributed in three scales: “emotional exhaustion”, “depersonalization” and “professional achievements”. The presence of a high level of burnout is indicated by high grades on the scales of “emotional exhaustion” and “depersonalization” and low grades on the scale of “professional achievements”. Accordingly, emotional burnout manifests itself in the exhaustion of one’s emotional, physical, energy resources, chronic emotional and physical fatigue, indifference and coldness towards others with signs of depression and irritability (high values on the scale “emotional exhaustion”); in a personal distance from people, reducing the number of contacts with people around them, increasing irritability and intolerance in communication situations, negativity towards other people (high values on the “depersonalization” scale); finally, in the reduction of personal achievements, manifested in a decrease in the sense of competence in one's work, dissatisfaction with oneself, a decrease in the value of one's activities, negative self-perception in the professional sphere, the emergence of feelings of guilt for one’s own negative manifestations or feelings, a decrease in professional and personal self-esteem, and the emergence of feelings of own insolvency, indifference to work (low values on the scale of "professional achievements").

2) Manifest Anxiety Scale (MAS) (Taylor, 1953) adapted by V.G. Norakidze (as cited in Dermanova, 2002). The technique allows you to assess the level of general anxiety (or the level of emotional stress), includes 50 statements to assess the level of anxiety and 10 statements to assess the reliability of the answers.

## 6. Findings

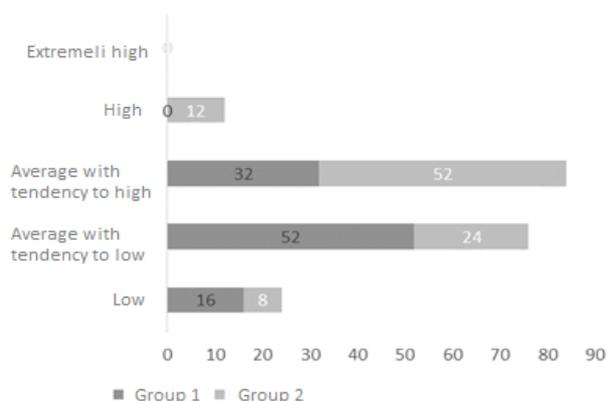
Figures 01 and 02 show the data on the scales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach et al., 1996) of the respondents of the first group who work in their organizations on an ongoing basis - Group

1 (figure 01) and the respondents of the second group who work as part-time workers under a temporary agreement - group Group 2 (figure 02).

So, we can note that in the first group, according to the general indicator of the severity of emotional burnout, respondents were divided into three levels: extremely low (12%), low (72%) and average values (16%). In the second group, respondents on this indicator were distributed differently, namely: average (92%) and high values (8%). Let us look at the severity of individual aspects of burnout in each group. In the first group, respondents showed extremely low (40%), low (44%) and average values (16%) for the component "psycho-emotional exhaustion"; extremely low (8%), low (32%), average (16%) and high (4%) values for the "depersonalization" component - these indicators have a positive contribution to the development of mental burnout. According to the component "professional achievements", which makes a negative contribution to the development of emotional burnout, respondents showed mainly average (40%), high (36%) and extremely high (16%) values, and only 8% showed low values for this component. Thus, this group of respondents looks relatively prosperous, only a small percentage of the respondents who make up this group show individual manifestations of emotional burnout.

In the second group, in terms of psychological exhaustion, low values were found in 56% of respondents, average - in 40%, high - in 4%, extremely low and extremely high values were not revealed. In terms of depersonalization, extremely low values were found in 4%, low in 68%, average in 16%, high in 4% and extremely high in 8% of group respondents. In terms of professional achievements, extremely low values were found in 56%, low - 28%, average- 16%, and high and extremely high indicators in this group were not found. The predominance of low values on this scale indicates the severity of the reduction of personal achievements. Thus, emotional burnout manifests itself among the respondents of this group mainly through the reduction of personal achievements, which is manifested in a decrease in the feeling of professional competence, a decrease in the value of one's activities, the appearance of a feeling of one's own inferiority, and indifference to work. Applying the U Mann-Whitney statistical criterion with respect to the general indicator of burnout among the respondents of the two groups, we obtained  $U = 198.5$  at  $p < 0.05$ .

Figure 03 presents the results of the Manifest Anxiety Scale among the respondents of the two groups. We see that only respondents of the second group demonstrate a high level of anxiety (12%); the average level with a tendency to high was observed in 52% of the second group and 32% - in the first; the average level with a tendency to low - in 24% of the second group and 52% - in the first; and a low level of 8% of the second group and 16% of the first. Thus, the first group is dominated by respondents with a low and average level with a tendency to low, and the second group is dominated by respondents with a high and average level with a tendency to high. The application of the Mann-Whitney statistical test confirmed the presence of significant differences between the two groups in terms of anxiety level ( $U = 83.0$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).



**Figure 03.** Layout of respondents of the first and second groups according to the level of severity of anxiety

## 7. Conclusion

The employment is becoming increasingly unstable and less predictable. As noted by Ryder (2015) in the ILO Report, “in the modern world of work, the prospect of staying in one job throughout the working life has become something outdated” (p. 10). And further: “the perceived reality of many people working for one employer throughout their lives is no longer popular with society” (p. 16). Instability of the work environment is complemented by the intensification and flexibilization of labor. We can reliably attribute these characteristics to the sphere of pedagogical work, as well as their negative consequences. The main aim was to study emotional burnout and anxiety as a consequence.

The results of our study, conducted in two groups of physical education teachers working in different conditions: as full-time teachers and on a temporary employment contract, demonstrated a clear difference in the emotional state of the teachers of the two groups. If in the first group, characterized by relatively stable employment, only certain manifestations of emotional burnout were noted for a small percentage of employees, then in the second group, characterized by unstable conditions of employment, there were distinct symptoms of emotional burnout in a significant number of employees, manifested most in the reduction of personal achievements. Differences between groups in terms of severity of emotional burnout reached the level of statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Regarding the second emotional consequence of unstable working conditions, the level of anxiety, there were also statistically significant differences between the teachers of the two groups: as we expected, the workers of the second group, characterized by unstable working conditions, showed higher levels of anxiety ( $p < 0.01$ ).

We believe that the results of our study are preliminary in view of the small sample, as well as its specificity, presented exclusively by teachers of physical education. We suppose that further larger research in this area is indispensable.

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