

Burnout vulnerability in high-risk professions – a personological and therapeutical approach

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In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, socio-occupational changes emerge in a growing number of countries due to overburdening of employees and difficult working conditions. Some professions disappear from the labour market, while others are both psychologically and physically demanding. A great number of people have lost their jobs or have had to change their activity field, which has put pressure on their psyche. This creates the right ground for the establishment of the burnout syndrome, an insidious syndrome with multiple symptomatic manifestations.

The burnout syndrome has been widely investigated since the 1970s and continues to be an area of interest for the scientific world. Specialist studies show the presence of burnout syndrome with increasing incidence among doctors, nurses and teachers. With similar manifestations to the depression syndrome and various causes, the common element is the presence of causes related to the work and organizational style of the organization concerned.

Recently, more and more studies describe the relationship between the personality features and the establishment of the burnout syndrome. Most studies show as results the link between a high score in Openness, Agreeableness and/or Emotional Balance and the low chances of developing the burnout syndrome throughout life. However, other factors must be taken into account: age, gender, job features, the quality of the relationship with the other employees, the position within the organization and the life issues of the subject outside the workplace.

The doctoral paper includes a theoretical part and two studies. The theoretical part describes the burnout syndrome from the specialist literature perspective and includes: definitions, symptomatology, differential diagnosis, causes, consequences and peculiarities of the burnout syndrome among doctors, nurses and teachers (in primary, secondary schools, high schools and universities).

Study 1 addresses the link between the burnout syndrome and the personality dimensions in two groups of subjects belonging to the professions of doctor, nurse and teacher. In addition to this objective, Study 1 also addresses the link between burnout syndrome and age and the link between burnout syndrome and gender, in terms of the personality dimensions. At the same time, it was sought the presence of pathological side in the burnout through the PD5 assessment.

The assessments have included a set of 3 psychometric tests. The burnout syndrome has been assessed with the Maslach Burnout Inventory Test, while for personality DECAS and PID5 have been applied.

The results of the 192 subjects have led to aspects similar to those in the literature, the dimensions of Openness, Agreeableness and Emotional Balance having the highest scores for subjects who had burnout syndrome. The novelty brought is the use of PD5 in the burnout syndrome assessments, the subjects assessed, even those with burnout syndrome, having no pathological personality manifestations. Another original objective is to propose a new personality type, called the Burnout Personality, which features all personality aspects with statistically significant scores from psychometric assessments. As regards the gender differences, the following personality traits have had statistically significant scores: Severity, Restrictive Affectivity and Risk Taking for the male gender, and Emotional Lability, Impulsivity and Negative Affectivity for the female gender. As far as the correlation with age is concerned, the Privacy Avoidance feature has a positive correlation and the Risk-Taking feature has a negative correlation. There is also a positive correlation between age and Conscientiousness and a negative correlation between age and Emotional Exhaustion. The results have also showed that female doctors and nurses aged between 25 and 40 have a higher predisposition for burnout, possibly due to the work specificity and the overburdening of the health care system during the pandemic.

Study 2 aims to apply a combination of therapies to subjects with burnout syndrome. Known and applied to multiple conditions, both medical and psychiatric, the cognitive-behavioural therapy and the hypnotherapy have been used alternately in therapeutic plans for each patient, with amazing results in both symptomatic reduction and changes in the dimensional aspects of the patient's personality.

By including in therapy a batch of 30 subjects with burnout syndrome, pre- and post-therapy assessments have been performed using MBI, DECAS, Hamilton, PID5 and Survey of Work Style (SWS) tests. The results have shown statistically significant differences for almost all the symptoms the subjects accuse, especially insomnia, depression, headache, cardiovascular symptoms, negative thoughts, attitude toward activity and work and emotional condition. The personality assessment has showed significant differences in many aspects of personality dimensions and features. After therapy, the subjects had lower scores in Depressiveness, Anxiety, Anhedonia, Eccentricity, Hostility, Restrictive Affectivity, Suspiciousness, Unusual Beliefs, Withdrawal. The multi-varied analysis has highlighted Anhedonia, Unusual Beliefs, Negative Affectivity and Emotional Stability as being independently associated with the burnout syndrome.

It can be concluded that progressive relaxation with guided imaging, combined with cognitive-behavioural therapy, has increased efficiency in reducing the symptoms of burnout

syndrome and optimizing the personality traits, with positive impact on the increase in patient quality of life.