

World Conference on Psychology and Sociology 2012

## The Relationships Between Emotional Burnout and Motivational, Semantic and Communicative Features of Psychology Students

Sergii V. Tukaev <sup>a</sup>, Tetiana V. Vasheka <sup>b</sup>, Olena M. Dolgova <sup>b\*</sup><sup>a</sup>National Taras Shevchenko university of Kiev, 64, Volodymyrs'ka str., Kyiv 016015, Ukraine<sup>b</sup>National aviation university, 1, Kosmonavta Komarova ave., Kyiv 03058, Ukraine

---

### Abstract

There is a direct relation between burnout, organizational aspects of learning and individual psychological characteristics of students. Burnout is progressing more quickly in students with low motivation to learning and communication, utilitarian, practical and professionally meaningful motives. That can be explained by age-related characteristics. Also burn more of those students who do not comply to the strategy of cooperation in interpersonal relationship and display aggression. Thus, motivational and personal features of an individual and the strategies of interpersonal communication influence the development of burnout in students during their study. Sixty healthy volunteers who were psychology students aged 18 to 23 years participated in the study.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

Selection and peer review under the responsibility of Prof. Dr. Kobus Maree, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

**Keywords:** Burnout, Emotional, Features, Psychology Students;

---

### 1. Relevance

Emotional burnout syndrome refers to the phenomenon of personal strain. It develops in people who because of their professional activities include interacting much with other people, and the quality of communication often depends on the effectiveness of their activities. That is why burnout syndrome is often seen as a reaction to stress in interpersonal communication.

There is no unanimous view on the nature and structure of emotional burnout. One of the first researchers of burnout syndrome was Maslach; together with Jackson they developed and published in 1986 the method for the syndrome measuring. According to their model, burnout consists of three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal achievements reduction (Vasheka & Tukaev, 2011). By definition of Boyko, emotional burnout is a psychological defense mechanism in the form of full or partial shutdown of emotion in response to stressful influences. This stereotype gained emotional, often professional conduct is a manifestation of personality professional deformation. Boyko considers emotional burnout as a dynamic process that occurs in stages in accordance with the mechanism of stress. There exist 3 phases: anxiety stress, exhaustion and Resistance (Orel, 2001). Perlman and Hartman describes burnout as a reaction that appears in 4 stages of stress

---

\* Corresponding author: Olena M. Dolgova. Tel.: +380-99-030-8921

E-mail address: [Dolgusha50@yandex.ru](mailto:Dolgusha50@yandex.ru)

and states itself as the physical, emotional and motivational exhaustion, unconstructive behavioral protection, and subjective distress (Vodopyanova, & Starchenkova, 2009).

Today, the urgent issue is whether to form a syndrome of emotional burnout in students during their studies. On the one hand, there are elements of training activities that are factors of emotional burnout: a situation of social comparison or evaluation, experience injustice inflated expectations about future work, the complexity of interpersonal communication, which rises in the implementation of credit-modular system and increased competition in academic groups. On the other hand, students-psychologists are not yet engaged in professional activities, and therefore features of professional psychologist do not have an impact on the formation of burnout. Among main factors of emotional burnout the social insecurity can be also defined, which is an integral part of students lack of social support, dissatisfaction with training that leads to avoidance, distancing from training activities. All these factors lead to a decrease in motivation to learn, which in its turn increases admissions, missing some classes and formal attitude to learning. These symptoms can be treated as impairment of learning activities and the reduction of personal achievements in this field.

As for students learning activities it is important to note their attitude to higher education and motivation of a profession that depends on many factors, including the level of student expectations and the actual situation of training activities. Features of academic education often cause frustration students of 2-nd – 3-rd years of study through a heavy load, a large amount of material for self-study and the lack of practical experience in the specialty. A large number of students in the academic group leads to significant difficulties in processing techniques of psychotherapy and consulting activities, training technologies, which reduces the possibility of individual approach to students. Inflated expectations about future career, school and their academic performance may also affect the formation of emotional burnout syndrome if they do not comply with the reality of training activities.

As a factor of emotional burnout low professional motivation is often considered, which can be explained now by random choice of school and specialty by applicants. The situation in recent years, when the applicant may apply for admission to various colleges and the various professions, led to the "random" choice of future profession by a number of students, often depending on the competition issue. As a result, first-year students are not only boys and girls who deliberately have chosen in this field of study, but "random" students who do not have the talent to the chosen specialty and do not know what to expect from the training, and sometimes do not meet the profession requirement due to their individual psychological characteristics. Thus, one could argue that motivational factors are among the top for successful adaptation students to training and high motivation in learning activities and as a result can become a protection of emotional burnout.

In addition to these factors of emotional burnout, in our opinion, there are some more indicators of students' communicative sphere, which determines successful adaptation to the student team and effective interaction with teachers. We also try to establish a relationship of unexplored due to emotional burnout characteristics Purport areas as attitude towards life, self-esteem and the degree of controllability of life.

## **2. Objective**

The objective of the study is to determine whether the syndrome of emotional burnout of students in the learning process is emerging and to track the dependence on the characteristics of emotional burnout in motivational, semantic and communicative sphere of students.

The study was conducted on 60 students of 4-th years of study of speciality "Psychology" at the National Aviation University during very busy pre-exam period, when students were heavily busy with laboratory practicals, term papers and the like.

## **3. Psychodiagnostic tools applied**

To investigate the motivational sphere we have used diagnostic techniques on motivation to Avoid Failures (Elers); projective Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) by Hekhausen, methods of measuring training activities motives MI by Alekseeva. Also in order to diagnose attitude towards life, self-esteem and level of controllability life test by Leontyeva "Life orientation" Budassi Method of research of self-appraisal and method Locus of

Control Scale by J.B. Rotter were used. To establish the characteristics of interpersonal communication, we used a Leary Interpersonal Diagnosis and Thomas Behavior Assessment Inventory.

In order to determine emotional burnout in students, we used the “Syndrome of emotional burnout” by Boykos. We have not found any information on the application of this technique on a sample of students in the literature, so to achieve the objectives we have done its adaptation and tested the effectiveness on a sample of students (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

Another objective of the study was to determine whether emotional burnout syndrome is formed in students in the process of learning and identify.

The results allow making the following conclusions: anxiety tension stage is formed in 8% of students and in 16% it is under development, resistance stage is formed in 22% and in 52% is under development, exhaustion stage is formed in 13% of students and 27% are under development. In the process of learning activities of students emotional burnout is formed, and it has been noted in a fairly significant percentage of respondents.

Testing by means of Hekhausen methodology showed that people who fear failure, show the highest level of emotional burnout in general, and especially at the resistance stage. Index “motivation to avoid failure” methods by Elers positively correlated with the exhaustion stage of burnout determined by Boyko method by confirming the results obtained by projective techniques proposed by Hekhausen. Correlation analysis of method proposed by Alekseeva and Boyko test suggest that emotional burnout in the process of learning activities is affecting such motives as communication, practical and professionally meaningful and utilitarian. The communicative motive was among the most influential. It turns out that the less satisfaction students get from communication, the faster the phase of stress and emotional burnout appears. Also the development of strain phase is much influenced by absence or low expression of practical and vocational significant motives. If a student is disappointed in future or his profession and has not got professional motivation at the university, he is much faster burned out than students who are interested in learning to become a professional psychologist, those who plan to continue working in this field. Feedback between anxiety tension stage and utilitarian motives indicates the relationship between emotional burnout and understanding the importance of education for future career and employment. The motive to get a graduate degree is now one of the dominant among students often no matter what kind of education there are getting. Unfortunately, no cognitive motives or motives of self-education protect against emotional burnout.

Correlation analysis of the results obtained by Boyko methods and life purport test by Leontyeva suggests that performance of satisfaction with life, its meaningfulness in emotional burnout students is significantly lower than in those who are not showing signs of emotional burnout. Emotional burnout develops in those students who are not satisfied with their life in present (life process), including training at universities as well as achievements (the result of life). Under the development of emotional burnout affects awareness of their role in life and opportunities to manage it, although significant relationships appeared between those variables. Turning to Budassi technique that measures the self-study, the results confirm the existence of significant relationships between emotional burnout and self-esteem: the lower is self-esteem, the more emotional burnout is pronounced.

When comparing the locus of control and level of emotional burnout it appeared that externality causes emotional burnout, but not internality, as has been shown in several studies. Among the indicators of methodology by Rotter the greatest impact on emotional burnout is made by low internality in industrial relations (that students are learning) and low internality in interpersonal relationships and failures. Thus, externality, and hence the ability to find causes of failures outside, shifts responsibility to others both in training and in interpersonal relationships, significantly enhances emotional burnout.

Among the types of behavior in conflict situations (method by Tomas) the feedback was found between emotional burnout and strategy of cooperation: the less pronounced this strategy is, the faster burnout is developing. In educational activities permanently, there are situations that require concessions, some cooperation and consideration of mutual interests. Failure to find an alternative that would fully satisfy either side, leads to the burnout phenomenon. Methods by Liri found no factors of emotional burnout, except one – the aggressiveness that has a direct relationship with the technique by Boyko. This suggests that the determinants of emotional burnout are more profound purport, motivation, personality variables, rather than a strategy of interpersonal interaction or conflict.

#### 4. Conclusions

This study leads to the following conclusions. The use of adapted methods for measuring emotional burnout by Boyko on a sample of students is appropriate and proved. It is confirmed by its validity and reliability.

It was found that learning activities forces in students an emotional burnout, and the percentage of patients is fairly significant. The reasons for this phenomenon are organizational aspects of learning (such as intensive communication, especially training in credit-modular system, the high demands of teachers, large amount of information, lack of time, etc.) and individual psychological characteristics of students as well. The last one is connected with low motivation to learn more, especially to develop communication, utilitarian, practical and professionally meaningful motives. The primary importance of the communicative motives in forming emotional burnout was found, which can be explained by age-related characteristics of the sample, because often an academic group is referenced to and meets the need for communication, interpersonal relationships.

In the field of personality the importance to avoid emotional burnout process was proved by the following: the satisfaction of life, their own achievements (meaningful past) and perceived ability to control their lives. High self-esteem also reduces the possibility of emotional burnout. The study found that more fade persons are with external locus of control, contrary to other studies. Among the indicators of externality the greatest impact on emotional burnout is shown by externality in the field of industrial relations (training) and externality in interpersonal relationships and failures. The process of burnout is more active in those students who do not comply to the strategy of cooperation in interpersonal relationship (test by Tomas) and display aggression (test by Liri).

Thus, motivational and personal features of an individual and less the strategies of interpersonal communication influence the development of burnout in students during their study. The factors indicate the direction for prevention and psycho-work for psychologists at universities, as well as for teachers and tutors of academic groups, what is especially important when working with first year students to form their motivation to learn, adapt to new activity in high school.

#### References

- Maslach, C., Jackson, S.E., & Leiter, M.P. (1996). *Maslach burnout inventory manual* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychological Press, Inc.
- Orel, V.E. (2001). *The phenomenon of «burnout» in foreign psychology: Empirical research and perspectives*. *Psychological J.*, 22(1), 89-100. [Article in Russian].
- Perlman B., & Hartman, E.A. (1982). *Burnout: Summary and future research*. *Human Relations*, 35(4), 283-305.
- Vasheka, T.V., & Tukaev, S.V. (2011). Determinants of emotional burnout of students studying psychology in learning. *Problems of General and Educational Psychology. Collected papers of the G.S. Kostyuk Institute of Psychology of the National APS of Ukraine* (pp. 47-55). Kyiv: GNOZIS. [Article in Ukrainian].
- Vodopyanova, N.E., & Starchenkova, E.S. (2009). *Syndrom of burnout: Diagnostics and prevention*. SPb.: PITER. [Book is in Russian].