

The Problem of Burnout Syndrome in Official Professiography: Regulation of Emotional and Professional Stress

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Keywords: burnout syndrome, coping behavior, regulation of stress, occupational psychodiagnostics, decision making, cognition, emotion, ministry of internal affairs, ministry of emergency situations

Abstract: The article is devoted to the problem of burnout syndrome in occupational studies. The goal is to compare the coping models of professional and emotional stress among officers of the internal service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Emergency Situations. Our empirical study relies on the professiographic methods of psychodiagnostics, which are used to test our hypothesis about the existing differences in protective mechanisms for coping professional and emotional stress. The research results obtained by us show intergroup similarities and differences. Mathematical models point to two types of coping strategies: affective and cognitive. The similarities in affective coping strategies relate to the protective mechanism of depersonalization (personal detachment) under emotional stress. The similarity in the cognitive coping strategy is related to the strength and stability of the achievement motive under conditions of professional stress. The difference concerns the mechanisms of emotional control (to act, not to react) and the deprivation of emotions (not to react, to act) in decision making. Burnout is based on emotional rather than occupational stress.

1. Introduction

Scientific studies of the problem of the emotional burnout syndrome (EBS) in professional life (professionography) pursue the goals of predicting, diagnosing, correcting, and preventing the manifestations of the syndrome in different professional samples. In 1974, G. Freidenberger proposed the term burnout [1, 2] to describe demoralization, frustration, and extreme fatigue as a result of personality deformation in response to prolonged stress in professional activity in the form of a specific psychological defense. Most researchers (C. Maslach and S. Jackson, C. Cherniss, A. Pines, E. Aranson, A. Langle, B. Perlman, and E. Hartman) confirm the relevance of such an interpretation.

In ICD-10, “burnout syndrome” is assigned to the diagnostic taxon Z-73 – “Problems associated with the difficulties of managing one's life” and is encrypted by taxon Z-73.0 “burnout.” The syndrome includes a spectrum of emotional, cognitive, motivational, behavioral, and somatic manifestations. The emotional aspect of professional burnout is called emotional burnout syndrome. Of current interest in the study of EBS is the search for factors determining burnout, and the search for strategies to overcome them. The research topic includes both components and is related to the study of personality and activities in the system of emergency services and rapid response. The scientific attributes of research are as follows.

The object is the emotional burnout syndrome (EBS).

The subject is the EBS in coping with the regulation of occupational stress in performance.

The goal is to identify and analyze patterns of regulation of occupational stress in coping with the EBS.

The task is to compare the coping models of overcoming the EBS among officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

The hypothesis is that the specificity of the models of regulation of occupational stress in groups is expressed in the following: (1) in the distinction between professional and emotional stress; (2) the

difference in factors of emotional burnout in stress; (3) in the difference between mechanisms of protection and coping behavior in stress.

The theoretical base of the study includes the following foreign concepts [3, 4, 5, 6]:

- The one-factor approach (Pines, Aronson, 1981);
- The multifactorial approach (Perlman, Hartman, 1982);
- Productive models (Maslach, Jackson, 1981);
- Procedural models (Cherniss, 1992, Burisch, 1993);
- Overcoming behavior (Lazarus, Folkman, 1984).

The set of symptoms of emotional burnout is described in detail [7, 8] and classified [9, 10, 11] in professional psychodiagnostics (Kahill, 1988, Maher, 1983, Carroll, White, 1982) from the standpoint of theory and practice [12, 13]. Domestic experience in the study of the syndrome [14, 15, 16, 17] is represented by the concepts of the syndrome of emotional burnout (V. V. Boyko, N. E. Vodopyanova, E. S. Starchenkova, N. V. Grishina, V. E. Orel). Burnout syndrome analysis is traditionally considered in the context of theories of occupational stress, mental tension, and coping.

In professionography, the concept of coping behavior [18] is associated with the study of the mechanisms of self-regulation and coping with stressful situations not on an everyday level, but in the conditions of professional activity. At the level of personal protective mechanisms, coping with the EBS leads either to an intrapsychic form of response (in the form of psychological defense against unpleasant experiences) or to an interpsychic form of response (in the form of constructive personality activity aimed at proactively solving a problem). What specific EBS regulation models and in what form of coping are formed under the extreme conditions of professional performance (using the example of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Emergency Situations) is the subject of this work.

2. Materials and Methods

The methods of test psychodiagnostics and methods of mathematical statistics are used in the paper. Our testing relies on the following methods: the CMEA questionnaire V. Boyko; the MBI professional burnout questionnaire K. Maslach, S. Jackson; K. Riff's psychological well-being questionnaire; the questionnaire of professional stress (K. Vaysman); the stress-coping behavior questionnaire S. Norman.

Samples of personnel (line managers) of the Ministry of Emergency Situations and the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the amount of 42 people made up the empirical basis of the study. Mathematical processing methods included the following: correlation analysis, factor analysis, and student T-test for independent samples. Statistical package Statistica 12.6 is used for data processing.

3. Results

3.1. Occupational stress and EBS

Tests for assessing occupational stress and burnout in samples demonstrate a high level of psychological correspondence of professional activity.

The specifics of the activities of services is not reflected in professional stress (Table 1) but in emotional burnout (Table 2). The degree of emotional burnout in both groups is diagnostically consistent with the norm and phase 2 of the syndrome, namely resistance.

TABLE 1. INTER-GROUP DIFFERENCES: PROFESSIONAL STRESS

Group 1 vs. Group 2	T-test for Independent Samples				
	Note: Variables were treated as independent				
	Mean	Mean	t-value	df	p
Prof.stress (1) vs. Prof.stress(2)	26,36842	26,47368	-0,076404	36	0,93952

TABLE 2. INTER-GROUP DIFFERENCES: PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT

Group 1 vs. Group 2	T-test for Independent Samples Note: Variables were treated as independent				
	Mean Group 1	Mean Group 2	t-value	df	p
degree of burnout (1) vs. degree of burnout (2)	38,16279	88,59091	-4,71920	63	0,000014

3.2. Psychological well-being and EBS

Emotional burnout among service employees is not associated with the psychological well-being of the individual. Unlike with the EBS, the level of psychological well-being does not depend on the type of activity. There were no significant differences in the Riff test between the groups (Fig. 1).

Both samples have a normative integral index of personal well-being, which emphasizes a high level of personal maturity and a harmonious level of subjective organization of personality. The cause of stress is not in the disharmony of the individual but in its defenses and copings.

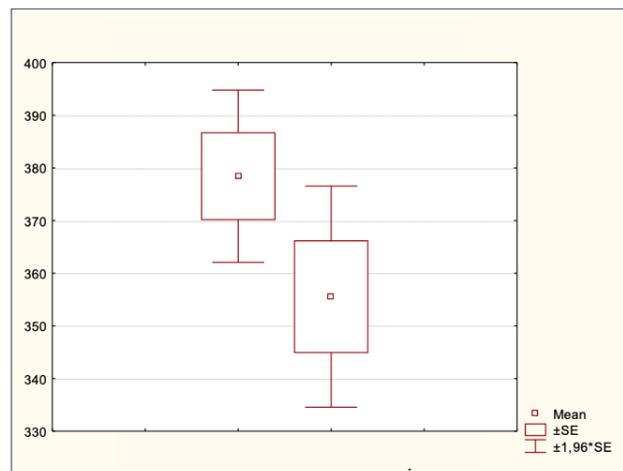


Fig. 1. Intergroup differences: psychological well-being.

Analysis of the statistics of the Riff questionnaire indicates significant differences between groups on the scale of “environmental management” (Table 3). Low opportunities for autonomy, influence, and management in the internal service system (the closed nature of activities, official information, rigidity of subordination) reduce the proactivity of the person and provoke intrapsychic tension.

TABLE 3. INTER-GROUP DIFFERENCES: THE RIFF QUESTIONNAIRE SCALE

	Mean MES	Mean MIA	t-value	df	p
Positive attitude with others	62.7674	61.1500	0.6471	63	0.5199
Autonomy	61.4186	57.0000	1.7571	63	0.0837
Environmental management	64.5349	58.8500	1.9616	63	0.0542
Personal growth	61.9767	56.2000	1.8024	63	0.0762
Goals in life	62.6744	60.1000	0.8662	63	0.3896
Self-acceptance	65.1628	61.8000	1.1796	63	0.2425

3.3. EBS symptoms

Analysis of the Boyko test statistics indicates the general parameters of the burnout syndrome, such as dissatisfaction with oneself, driven into the cell, delayed emotional response, saving emotions, emotional detachment, autonomic disorders, personal depersonalization.

The number of employees with at least one diagnostically significant symptom of EBS in the resistance phase is at least 5% in groups. The symptom profile of EBS in the groups is not qualitative but quantitative differences (in the group of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, quantitative indicators of EBS are higher).

3.4. Defense from and Coping with the EBS

The protective mechanisms for regulating occupational stress in groups do not qualitatively differ (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). The reaction of depersonalization (personal detachment) is a reaction to occupational stress.

Variable	Correlations Marked corre N=42 (Casev Prof.Stress	
	Prof.Stress	
emotion.exhaustion	0,36	
depersonalization	0,51	
reduction of achievements	-0,33	

Fig. 2. Weissman test (group 1).

Variable	Correlations Marked corre N=42 (Casev Prof.Stress	
	Prof.Stress	
emotion.exhaustion	0,28	
depersonalization	0,57	
reduction of achievements	-0,39	

Fig. 3. Weissman test (group 2).

Unlike defenses, copings of professional stress in groups are different:

Variable	Correlations Marked corr N=42 (Case Prof.stress	
	Prof.stress	
decision	0,62	
emotion	0,25	
avoidance	0,05	
distraction	-0,07	
social distraction	-0,06	

Fig. 4. Norman Test (Group 1).

Variable	Correlations Marked corr N=42 (Case Prof.stress	
	Prof.stress	
decision	0,67	
emotion	0,65	
avoidance	0,03	
distraction	-0,23	
social distraction	-0,19	

Fig. 5. Norman Test (Group 2).

A study of coping behavior strategies in occupational stress showed that coping in the Ministry of Emergency Situations group is associated with the decision-making mechanism and does not affect emotions, while in the Ministry of Internal Affairs group, the coping mechanism includes both coping strategies (both decision and emotions). The emotional response to stress occurs through blocking emotions and a strategy of removal, rather than responding or controlling them.

Factor analysis revealed affective and cognitive protective strategies.

Variable	Factor Loadings (Varim Extraction: Principal co (Marked loadings are >	
	Factor 1	Factor 2
Prof.Stress	0,563588	0,508834
emotion.exhaustion	0,869080	0,153214
depersonalization	0,944990	0,048004
reduction of achievements	-0,056630	-0,953973
Expl.Var	1,969143	1,194756
Prp. Totl	0,492286	0,298689

Fig. 6. Norman Test (Group 1).

Variable	Factor Loadings (Varim Extraction: Principal co (Marked loadings are >	
	Factor 1	Factor 2
emotion.exhaustion	0,844604	-0,046000
depersonalization	0,840385	0,263818
reduction of achievements	0,024059	-0,914485
Prof.Stress	0,530926	0,654486
Expl.Var	1,702065	1,336350
Prp. Totl	0,425516	0,334088

Fig. 7. Norman Test (Group 2).

An affective strategy includes a reaction of personal detachment with emotional exhaustion; a cognitive one indicates the preservation of the motive for achievement in work under conditions of professional stress. The achievement motivation in the resistance phase does not suffer.

4. Discussion

The results of experimental statistics allow us to make the following generalizations:

- Diagnosis of the level of professional and emotional stress in the samples shows a high level of psychological correspondence of professional activity;
- The specifics of the activities of the services is reflected in coping models of professional stress, and it concerns not professional, but emotional burnout. Diagnostically, the parameter corresponds to the concordant norm for the syndrome phase 2, namely resistance.
- The emotional burnout among officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Emergency Situations is not associated with the psychological well-being of the individual, which indicates the personal and subjective maturity of professionals. The level of psychological well-being does not depend on the type of activity;
- The EBS level is determined by the assessment of the possibility of environmental management in professional activities. A diagnostically significant indicator of burnout syndrome in groups is a scale of emotional detachment;
- The component analysis points to 2 types of defensive strategies: affective and cognitive. The first (affective) includes a reaction of personal detachment with emotional exhaustion, the second (cognitive) does not imply a decrease in the motive for achievement in a stressful situation;
- A study of protections and coping behaviors in occupational stress showed that coping patterns in groups differ as follows. If in the group of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, coping is more connected with the decision-making mechanism and does not affect emotions, then in the group of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, coping includes both coping strategies. Emotion blocking serves as a EBS catalyst in occupational stress.

5. Summary

The results of the work make it possible to identify and compare the coping models for overcoming occupational stress in the specifics of two departments (the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Emergency Situations), to determine the place and role of EBS in occupational stress, and to indicate protective mechanisms and coping.

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