STRESS AND PROFESSIONAL BURN-OUT IN SELECTED GROUPS OF WORKERS

STRES I PROFESIONALNI ZAMOR KOD ODABRANIH SKUPINA RADNIKA

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Abstract

In the relation of society and technologies the individual man cannot be skipped. Firstly, because he is an integral element of the society. Secondly, technologies essentially influence human's life in direct or indirect way. Every social change, spreading processes and social movements, technological innovations, and even climatic changes - are not indifferent for the man's life and functioning. From the sociological perspective, one accepted thesis that changes that take place in the social macrostructure affect the social microstructure, but the inverse situations also happen when microstructures influence the macrostructure. The man must work to live. All social policy has its own source in working matter. The man derives many advantages from work e.g. financial means, the possibility of the self-realisation, the consciousness of the active presence in the social life etc. However work can determine also for man the source of torment, especially when certain problems appear, e.g. low salaries, difficult working conditions, discrimination of workers' rights, excessive demanding or lack of the opportunity of promotion. Stress and professional burn-out of workers become the negative result of the relation man - work. The phenomenon of stress and professional burn-out spreads more and more. The most alarming fact is that new categories of workers experience stress and professional burn-out. In this connection classical theories of professional burn-out which appealed only to menial occupations, so to those whose essence is to serve to another man, lose their meaning. Nowadays the professional burn-out does not limit only to welfare workers, teachers, nurses or doctors, but includes policemen, customs officers, military pilots or actors. The list of occupations can be expanded. Similarly it is with professional stress. Analysing the literature properly there is no such occupation, whereof stress was eliminated. It may be only less than in other occupations, but unfortunately it accompanies every profession. The article pays attention on stress and professional burn-out as the syndrome of people of work. It is proper to point out even on selected groups of workers that experience stress whose the most painful consequence is the professional burn-out. Factors that generate stress, its symptoms and results seem to be essential. Besides, one should think out on ways of its preventing. XXI century will certainly enroll into the history of the working people's world as the period of professional stress.

Sažetak

Kada promatramo odnos društva i tehnologije, pojedinac ne može biti zanemaren. Kao prvo, zato što je on sastavni dio društva. Kao drugo, tehnologija neminovno na direktan ili indirektan način vrši utjecaj na život pojedinca. Svaka društvena promjena, procesi koji se šire i društveni pokreti, tehnološke inovacije, pa čak i klimatske promjene – nisu nevažne za ljudski život i djelovanje. Iz sociološkog aspekta, postoji teza da promjene koje se događaju u društvenoj makrostrukturi utječu na društvenu mikrostrukturu, ali postoji i obrnuta situacija kad mikrostruktura utječe na makrostrukturu. Čovjek mora raditi da bi preživio. Čovjek od rada ima mnoge prednosti; financijska sredstva, mogućnost samoaktualizacije, utjecaj aktivnog postojanja u društvenom životu. Isto tako, za čovjeka rad može biti i izvor mučenja, osobito kada se pojave određeni problemi, npr. niske plaće, loši uvijeti rada, kršenje radničkih prava, pretjerani zahtijevi ili nemogućnost napredovanja na poslu. Stres i profesionalni zamor radnik€a ima negativan učinak na odnos čovjek –posao. Fenomen stresa i profesionalnog zamora se sve više i više širi. Najzabrinjavajuća je činjenica da sve šire kategorije radnika doživljavaju stres i profesionalni zamor. Klasične teorije profesionalni zamor spominju najčešće vezano uz fizički rad i poslove čiji je smisao služiti drugima. Danas se profesionalni zamor ne veže samo za zanimanja socijalnih radnika, medicinskih sestara i liječnika, također su uključeni i policajci, uslužni radnici, vojni piloti i glumci. Ova lista se lako može proširiti. Slična je situacija sa profesionalnim stresom. Ako se pažljivo analizira literatura, vidi se da ne postoji zanimanje u kojemu nema stresa. Stres može biti samo manji nego li u nekom drugom zanimanju, ali nažalost on prati svaku profesiju. Rad se bavi stresom i profesionalnim zamorom kao sindromom ljudskog rada. Važno je naglasiti da čak i kod odabranih grupa radnika koji doživljavaju stres na poslu, najbolnija je posljedica profesionalni zamor. Pritom su najvažniji faktori koji generiraju stres, njegove simptome i posljedice. Svatko treba razmišljati o prevenciji.Dvadeset i prvo stoljeće biti će obilježeno profesionalnim stresom koji se pojavljuje kod različitih zanimanja.

In the relation of society and technologies the individual man cannot be skipped. Firstly, because he is an integral element of the society. Secondly, technologies essentially influence human's life in direct or indirect way. Every social change, spreading processes and social movements, technological innovations, and even climatic changes - are not indifferent for the man's life and functioning. From the sociological perspective, one accepted thesis that changes that take place in the social macrostructure affect the social microstructure, but the inverse situations also happen when microstructures influence the macrostructure. The man must work to live. All social policy has its own source in working matter. The man derives many advantages from work e.g. financial means, the possibility of the self-realisation, the consciousness of the active presence in the social life etc. However work can determine also for man the source of torment, especially when certain problems appear, e.g. low salaries, difficult working conditions, discrimination of workers' rights, excessive demanding or lack of the opportunity of promotion. Stress and professional burn-out of workers become the negative result of the relation man - work. The phenomenon of stress and professional burn-out spreads more and more. The most alarming fact is that new categories of workers experience stress and professional burn-out. In this connection classical theories of professional burn-out which appealed only to menial occupations, so to those whose essence is to serve to another man, lose their meaning. Nowadays the professional burn-out does not limit only to welfare workers, teachers, nurses or doctors, but includes policemen, customs officers, military pilots or actors. The list of occupations can be expanded. Similarly it is with professional stress. Analysing the literature properly there is no such occupation, whereof stress was eliminated. It may be only less than in other occupations, but unfortunately it accompanies every profession. The article pays attention on stress and professional burn-out as the syndrome of people of work. It is proper to point out even on selected groups of workers that experience stress whose the most painful consequence is the professional burn-out. Factors that generate stress, its symptoms and results seem to be essential. Besides, one should think out on ways of its preventing. XXI century will certainly enroll into the history of the working people's world as the period of professional stress.

Conceptions of stress and professional burn-out

There are many definitions of stress and professional burn-out . It is proper to pay attention on the most widespread ideas. As Nina Oginska-Bulik publishes, professional stress is stress experienced at the place of work. As a rule it appears on all grades of the organization. Analysing the working environment as the source of stress, one ought to take into account objective and subjective factors that accompany the man in the process of work. Objective elements are physical and social working conditions. Physical working conditions are connected with a location of the working environment, a temperature, a lighting, an equipment, a kind of work or existence of different kind of noxious agent. Social working conditions are totality of problems connected with the organization of work, system of rewards, social relations, possibilities of the promotion and the professional development. Each working environment is the social system, where particular professional groups occupy definite social positions that follow from fulfilled roles. Within the framework of this system these positions are differentiated in the dependence of the kind of executed functions, the degree of responsibility, the range of the required or admissible initiative at work, the degree of required qualifications. Subjective factors connected with the work refer to motives of undertaking by worker the employment in the given field, attitudes in the face of fulfilled occupation or professional duties, the degree of satisfaction from realized work, the professional environment /**1**/. Depending on the factors generating stress, there is the division on the organizational stress and stress of the occupational role. Most of the ideas concerning stress at work invokes to the interaction between requirements put by the working environment and individual resources of workers, appointive with their psychical efficiency. In accordance with such foundations, the risk of appearance of professional stress in certain working place will depend on the personal predisposition of particular man. In other words, in the same working environment, one of the employees can experience professional stress, and others can not. R.S. Lazarus points out on such idea of stress where he defines stress as: "the definite relation between the person and the environment which is viewed by the individual as aggravating or exceeding it resources" /**2**/. Lazarus formulates stress as process, where one can distinguish four integral elements. Firstly, the stressful factor must appear, then the process of the estimation of working factor happens, whose effect is classifying that factor as threatening, injurious, or neutral or favourable. The third element is the stressful reaction, while the last process is the struggle with stress /**3**/. There are many factors causing stress.

According to J.F. Terelak /**4**/, contemporary professional stress is created with complicacy of expectations towards workers, aspirations of workers and tension which is a consequence of the tempo in what one should completely realizes new aims or undertakings. However there are many people who cannot rise these requirements. Such situation generates many sources of stress which except for specific reactions on professional stress e.g. the fall of work effectiveness are characterized with unspecific symptoms, connected first of all with excessive emotional reactions and discomfort. Other explorer M. Laboda, distinguished seven factors that cause stress: bad conditions of physical work, stressors connected with the manner of job processing, stressors connected with fulfilling of the organizational role, stressors connected with interpersonal relationships, stressors connected with functioning of the individual as the element of organization, stressors connected with professional development, stressors connected with simultaneous performing of professional and practical roles /**5**/. One mentions many factors of professional stress in the dependence on conception and scientific discipline. It does not doubt that many of these factors can be minimized to prevent negative results of this phenomenon. As the example can be working conditions which can be improved, or the creation by employers the opportunity for professional promotion. Work which gives the satisfaction and feeling of safety certainly presents smaller risk of the appearance of professional stress, than work in bad or even unsanitary conditions, as well as non awarding the worker for his doings. Results of professional stress are suffered by both the worker and place of employment. Stress experienced by worker is reflected on working of the organization which employs him. One mentions here, such results of professional stress, e.g. enlarged absence, decreased productiveness, higher fluctuation, increase of costs connected with the greater morbidity of workers, diminished professional satisfaction /**6**/. So in the employer's business should be worker's protection before professional stress, even through eliminating of those factors which to a large extent are conditioned with decisions of employers. Stress and professional burn-out are related with one another. This results from the fact, that burn-out presents the most tragic consequence of professional stress for worker. In this grasp one should accept that each worker can experience stress, however not at every one appears the occurrence to professional burn-out. The most well-known definition of professional burn-out was formulated by Maslach in which he pays attention on three basic components: emotional exhaustion,

depersonalization and reduced feeling of personal achievements. Emotional exhaustion - refers to feelings of certain person who feels that he is overburdened emotionally and his resources of excitement became greatly decreased. The second component or depersonalization - refers to negative, soulless or too insensible reacting on other people who are usually consumers of services of the given person or the object of the care from his side. Reduced feeling of personal achievements - bears upon the fall of feeling of the own competence and successes in the job /**7**/. Professional burn-out causes many factors, from here one mentions different conjunctions of professional burn-out in the dependence on the source origin. Among them the next are worth to pay attention: the set of burn-out as the feeling of the lack of sense, the set of burn-out as the lack of resources, the set of burn-out as the defeat opining of the idealistic picture of himself, the set of burn-out as the lack reciprocity, the set of burn-out as the example of mistaken expectations or at last the set of burn-out as the mismatch of person and job /**8**/. Results of professional burn-out are huge and the most painful for the person who undergoes to professional burn-out. Only from Maschach's definition mentioned above follows that the result is emotional exhaustion (and this joins the lack of motivation to work, the loss of enthusiasm, energy, fatigue, and even reluctance), furthermore one points on the depersonalization (the objective treatment of customers, the impersonal behaviour, routine) and at last the reduced feeling of personal achievements (the insignificance of fulfilled work, the lack of awards, the lack of effects at work). Similarly, like in case of professional stress, the responsibility for professional burn-out is also beard partly by employers. It is worth to remember that for burn-out workloads are key, connected with an excess of duties and interpersonal conflicts /**9**/. Other factors can be added, e.g. fear to lose the workplace, the rivalry, the premium system for most effective workers, and at times even so-called "the system of set-ups". The consciousness of requirements, as the appearing of threats makes the devastating power for the most devoted to work people. Professional burn-out belong to slowly exposed occurrences. We still have not got full information about its factors and manners of getting over the crisis situation. However, statistical data do not doubts that both stress and professional burn-out present the syndrome of contemporary working class. As S. Tucholska notices, the results of realized in different countries research show that stress and burn-out become an essential problem for considerable group of active professionally people. Research managed in countries of the European

Union point that almost 30% workers observe the destructive influence of professional activity on their own psychophysical form /**10**/. Modern working class contains certain plot of the tragic nature. On one hand we deal with technological innovations, control space by man on rare scale so far, denial of the manual work with participation of alive man by the system of technical innovations, the minimum- physical effort and the work exploiting of the man. However on the other hand we notice crowds of more and more frustrated, embittered, wronged, burnt-out and discouraged workers. Why is it so? The answer on this question is not easy and is not univocal. We can implicate that one from the reasons is the overvaluation of economic profits from occupation upon a subject of work, what the man is. Nowadays at many productions the participation of man is already unnecessary or limited to the turning on or turning out the machine. All the attention is paid back on technologies that take human's place. Those overvaluation of material factors over nonmaterial forms above the content, machines over the man, quantities over the quality and profits over losses - makes for the inevitable collapse of man in the work organization. As far as in the past the main problem of working people was the exploitation physical powers, so at present we notice the exploitation of psychical powers. Present places of employment can be compared to the pump sucking up the best from the most devoted and enthusiastic to work people, forcing them to rivalry, egoism and fight.

Chosen occupations that experience stress and professional burn-out

The agreed typology of occupations that experience stress and consequently professional burn-out does not exist. As far as one can experience stress in every work, one speaks about burn-out actually only at chosen groups of workers.

a) occupations on duty to another man

The greatest risk of professional burn-out is included into the works whose sense is the service to another man. These works one qualifies as helping or menial. Among these works one mentions: welfare workers, doctors, nurses, teachers, psychologists, psychotherapists.

The most numerous group is presented by welfare workers. At social job there are many stressful factors e.g. excessive demanding, difficult relationships with customers, claiming and aggressive customers, the lack of effects of executed work, little prestige of occupation, low salaries. It is the most widespread factors generating stress, and consequently professional burn-out. The work of the welfare worker does not belong to easy one. In Poland this is the occupation mostly executed by women. All reforms of the social service do not bring expected results. Besides it is felt lack of non-governmental organizations supporting the social service. According with law about social service about 2 thousand of inhabitants fall to one welfare worker. Meanwhile, as welfare workers claim in some centres of the social service even 3 thousand of inhabitants fall to one welfare worker. Among customers of the social service unemployed people present the greatest group. At high rate of unemployment and the small quantity of job offers - even best welfare workers are not able to solve problems of their charges. The social work is based on certain establishments which are difficult to equal in practice. First of all one is based on the respect of freedom and dignity of other man. Most often it invokes to professional helping. In compliance with foundations professional help is a smooth, variable process. Practically one never can be convinced to the end that all elements of work with the customer were definitively worked out. It results from research that most often people who put themselves very high demanding and treat their work as mission, which requires from them special engaging and utterances, undergo to the professional burn-out /**11**/. Jerzy Szmagalski shows 9 symptoms of professional burn-out of welfare workers: 1) chronic causeless fatigue, 2) absorption with work, customers and taking the work home, 3) growing inability to undertaking decisions - even insignificant, 4) loss of enthusiasm, mechanical reactions on tasks, 5) height of impatience and irritation, 6) stereotyped treatment of customers, 7) inertia, problems with doing anything, 8) isolation from others, problems with communication, 9) antipathy to do something new, the conviction that all is nonsensical /**12**/. Results of professional burn-out of welfare workers, doctors, nurses, psychologists or teachers - suffer three sides: the worker, the charge and the working place. In helping jobs not only the large risk of professional burn-out appears, but also the consequence are more painful, than in case of other job. Professional burn-out in menial work leads to moral dilemmas. One of them is the question: can the person, whose job is qualified as helping, still help other people, when whereas he needs help? This is the absurdity that was calculated into profession affected risk to professional burn-out. May be in connection with this dilemma, the problem of professional burn-out in above mentioned occupations stays a little hidden.

b) occupations of public services

This group of occupations is very wide. We can accept here both occupations mentioned above, because they provide public services, and other occupations e.g. policemen, judicial trustees, military pilots, emergency services or municipal administration. The difference between mentioned helping occupations and occupations of social services consists in the lack of direct interpersonal relationships with customers. In occupations of social services we have a service rather on matter of "what", and not of "somebody". This "something" can be social order, social peace, protection of possession, correct work of the office, and even achieving of economic or political aims. The most often mentioned here professional group are policemen. In policeman's job it is turned the attention on certain factors of burn-out: 1) critical events - the accumulative activity of unusual, terrific impulses, risk on aggression, wound, death, 2) relations with people consumed with panic, enemy, aggressive, and even the necessity of providing psychological help to desperate people, informing about somebody's death, relay negative news, 3) necessity of constant vigilance, suspicions, distrusts, 4) obligatory norms in the professional group. Policemen live in convincing that society does not realize their problems and it is disposed inimically, what causes the increase of the group cohesion and simultaneously the distance to people, 5) isolation from the natural system of support, feeling of being away the thrust by the inimically disposed society, 6) permanent contact with cruelty and suffering /**13**/.

The judicial trustees also meet many difficulties. As it was shown in the research realized by the Institute of Psychology of Health in 2003 on the population of judicial trustees working in curatorial centres for youth, over 40% curators working with dysfunctional families, admitted that this work exhausted psychically, while every fifth examined person (19%) told that work with juvenile delinquents some time later took the wish of helping in view of inefficiency of these activities. Every third researched curator pointed that he would be able to give up work because of the feeling of burn-out /**14**/. In the mentioned here occupations public services we can also tell about certain common factors. Among them there is high responsibility, necessity of constant readiness or high-availability, consciousness that in many cases decides about the fate of people, excessive demanding and so-called "the conflict of roles", bureaucracy, but also the supervision of superiors who decide about fates of workers and connected with this consequences of neglecting of his duties. These factors one should treat as main stressors in above mentioned occupations public services.

c) journalists, actors, artists

Certain professional groups are especially exposed to stress. The thing is about the occupations that are found under the continuous pressure of the social opinion. Here one should mention journalists, actors, artists. Successes or defeats in mentioned above jobs are conditioned with a social opinion. The public usually decides about the professional success. Research realized among journalists prove that main source of stress is the psychical overload with a work. Journalists bear first of all healthful effects. Every fifth journalist (21, 7%) was classified to the group of workers with upper level of burn-out and almost the half (46, 7%) to the group with worse health. The general coefficient of burn-out was however lower than at workers of the protection, municipal guard, taxi-drivers and drivers. Journalists do not differ with the level of emotional exhausting from other researched groups. There also show similar coefficient of depersonalization /**15**/. Actor's job is full of various stressors. Among them one mentions: loads that consequent from physical preparing to the part, memorising the text, or even "maladjustments" of part to the actor. A source of stress is also the dependence from other people e.g. the necessity to adjust visions and ideas of character with the director and other actors. To this one can add the continuous rivalry in achieving of successes /**16**/. Research show, that level of stress at actors was one of the highest in examined professional groups. As the main source of stress actors admitted psychical workload, lack of awards, social relations and lack of control. It is worrying that in stressful situation actors more often reach for alcohol and drugs. However considering the degree of burn-out, only 16, 7% actors one classified to the group of higher intensity of professional burn-out /**17**/. A common feature of above-mentioned occupations is permanent opinion from others. Next to potential occupational stressors, here additionally other factors appear, external in the face of the institution employing journalist or actor. Hence the risk of stress certainly is greater than at the rest of professional groups. Unfortunately research point the usage of substitutes in stressful situations, and such manner of struggling with stress, certainly is not a good solution.

d) managers or management personnel

Stress and professional burn-out are not unfamiliar in so-called "business world". Though we currently possess poor research's results, but it

is doubtless that managers experience stress and undergo professional burn-out. Manager is an occupation, in which it is essentially important to have proper qualifications not only technical (e.g. knowledge), but also intellectual (intelligence) and interpersonal, and also skills of dealing himself with stress. Person fulfilling the role of manager should be ready to begin everything from the beginning in case of defeat, with an ability to make decisions independently and to be guided by his own system of value. The number of managers in the world grows up. In the United States among new 8 million workplaces of formed in 1991-1995, 60% are "managers and other specialists". Nowadays this is the largest professional group in the world **/18/**. From research realized among managers it comes out that only one-fourth examined (25, 7%) became classified to the group with the higher intensity of stress. It turned out that the main source of stress is psychical workload. Every fifth examined (21, 4%) shows strong psychological and wholesome results of stress. Managers possess strong personal and social resources to deal with stress. Research show that 8, 6% are people with higher burn-out, but better health - and we notice the inverse situation - 24, 3% are employees with lower burn out, but worse health **/19/**. Managers currently belong to the best prepared professional group to fight with stress. And the most widespread method is self-control.

Conclusion

Stress and professional burn-out belong to occurrences only been exposed, and presented above occupations are only small examples of workers experiencing stress and professional burn-out. Research broadening our knowledge on stress and professional burn-out in new professional groups certainly will cause the modification of some ideas of burn-out, but also the work out of new theories that take into consideration factors generating professional burn-out and stressors performed at working place. However currently

too little attention devotes to prophylaxis itself and ways of overcoming stress and "the solution" from professional burn-out. Besides, we have knowledge on many penetrating questions: is professional burn-out a state of short or long duration? Is it possible to overcome burn-out working in certain occupation, or is it necessary to change work? Does burn-out in one work not leave negative results in the man's psychics for the whole life? These and many other questions broaden the area of scientific studies.

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