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THE DEFINITION OF BURNOUT WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE PROFESSION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHER

ABSTRACT

This study deals with burnout as a multifactor phenomenon, which is a state of complete mental, somatic, cognitive, and behavioral exhaustion. The aim is to provide an analysis of burnout, its causes, symptoms, developmental stage, and diagnostic methods. The study reported burnout as one of the manifestations of the contemporary developed, hurried, and consumer society, which is characterized by an increased pace of life and ever-growing economic and social demands. The first part of the analysis found burnout on a general level and in specific the profession of a university teacher. The first part of the study focuses on the characteristics of burnout, its reasons and various influencing variables, as well as the most vulnerable individuals. Another part of the study presents the different stages of burnout, which differ in various stages of development. In the next section, burnout relative to the profession of university teacher, which is characterized by specific forms and load requirements, is presented. At the conclusion of the study, the prevention of burnout, which should take place on a personal, organizational, and work level, is taken into account. Attention is drawn to the methods of diagnosing burnout. In essence, the study provides a comprehensive presentation of burnout, which creates potential and increasing threats to the form of the individual. The aim of the study was to develop a systematic approach to look at burnout as a gradual process with a set of cumulative and interrelated symptoms.

Key words:

burnout, stress, profession of university teacher, mental state, exhaustion

1. Introduction – burnout, its characteristics, and the background of its onset

Due to increasing work demands concerning performance, investment of a long period of time, and social contact, modern medicine has enriched the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10) with item "Z73.0 Burn-out (State of vital exhaustion)", which was included in the category "Problems related to life-management difficulty". Burnout is a phenomenon conditioned by multiple factors, and it displays a multidisciplinary nature characterized by causes, symptoms, developmental stages, and diagnostic methods. Burnout is a reaction to work that places an exceptionally heavy burden on an individual, a situation of utter exhaustion of strength, the feeling of a person who has concluded that he/she can no longer continue, and the state of a person who has lost hope that something may change. It is the disruption of balance between the emotional output (release) and input (intake), which occurs especially in subjectively demanding professions[1]. Individuals invest a large amount of effort and emotion in their work, but the emotional or personal gain is not large enough. Burnout can be experienced by each individual, regardless of age or financial and social status. High performing individuals operating in environments with very frequent contact with people display the most considerable exposure to burnout. Such efficient and ambitious individuals have a tendency to overexert themselves[2]. Burnout is "a process in which the professional's attitudes and behaviour change in negative ways in response to job strain"[3]. Burnout is characterized by mental, physical, and social exhaustion. In its consequences, it leads to a strong decrease in performance, internal distance, and psychosomatic problems. People suffering from burnout show signs of emotional and cognitive exhaustion, as well as overall fatigue associated with the internal distance from work problems and a strong decrease in job performance. "Its main symptoms include depression, apathy, cynicism, withdrawal from contact, loss of confidence, frequent illnesses, and physical

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[1] B.A. Farber, L.D. Wechsler, *Crisis in Education: Stress and Burnout in American Teachers*, San Francisco 1991.

[2] M.D. Rush, *Syndrom vyhoření* [Burnout], Praha 2003.

[3] C. Cherniss, *Professional Burnout in Human Service Organizations*, New York 1980, p. 5.

problems"[4]. Burnout is a disease of the soul, because it suppresses free will. Although an individual's skills and knowledge remain intact, his/her desire to perform well decreases.

One of the basic feelings of burnout is a feeling of professional failure and the belief that an individual has lost his/her potential to operate and continue to develop in his/her profession. Significant symptoms also include a weakening of empathy and a strong reduction or loss of positive relationships. In this context, burnout can be defined as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do "people-work" of some kind"[5]. Disruption of positive relationships mainly affects the range of persons to whom a certain service is to be provided (e.g. clients or students), and with whom the individual affected by burnout is in touch, and whose evaluation also determines the efficiency of his/her activity.

Burnout can be understood as a persistent reaction to the effects of chronic stress due to the accumulative effect of highly stressful situations. Burnout can occur due to an inability to meet high demands or a belief that the effort made is disproportionately high to the resulting effect. It is "a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion, caused by long term involvement in emotionally demanding situations"[6].

In the United States, the concept of burnout was originally used to describe the state of people who were addicted to alcohol and who had lost interest in the outside world. The term was then also applied in connection with drug addicts in the chronic stage. "Burnout from drugs" expressed the negative effect of chronic addiction when drug addicts only focus their attention on drugs[7]. The term was later used in the field of work environment and personal communication with both familiar and unfamiliar individuals, particularly in helping professions. Burnout used in this sense was defined for the first time by the German-born American psychoanalyst Herbert J. Freudenberger as a loss of motivation and stimulating ideas in a situation in which the care of individuals and unsatisfactory relationships is the reason that the work does not bring the expected results[8]. He also described the concept of burnout as "to fall, wear out, or become exhausted by making exces-

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[4] K. Kopřiva, *Lidský vztah jako součást profese* [Human Relationship as a Part of Profession], Praha 1997, p. 100.

[5] C. Maslach, *Burnout: The Cost of Caring*, Cambridge 2003, p. 2.

[6] A. Pines, E. Aronson, *Career Burnout: Causes and Cures*, New York 1988, p. 9.

[7] B.A. Potter, *Jak se bránit pracovnímu vyčerpaní: "pracovní vyhoření" – příčiny a východiska* [How to Defend Work Exhausted: "Work Burnout" – Causes and Solutions], Olomouc 1997.

[8] H.J. Freudenberger, G. Richelson, *Burnout: The High Cost of High Achievement*, New York 1980.

sive demands on energy, strength or resources"[9]. The concept of burnout was eventually generalized to denote the state of all individuals who, due to work commitments, manifested lethargy, despair, helplessness, and apathy. These symptoms appear despite the fact that these individuals were initially excited about their work, or even fully absorbed by it, and they dedicated their lives to their work ideals[10]. Burnout, however, is also applied to professions that demand high and invariable performance, based on little or even no possibility of relief, deviations, or discontinuation[11].

Apart from work effort, it should not be forgotten that the onset of burnout is always based on a set of internal conditions (character traits of the individual) and external conditions (environment and surroundings of the individual). Burnout can also be divided into active and passive. Active burnout is caused by the individual himself/herself due to the overriding influence of internal conditions. With regard to passive burnout, the individual is more of a victim and a tool of external circumstances. Burnout can be caused by many factors, including negative emotional experiences, the accumulation of adverse life events, negative thinking, the inability to cope with stress, a lack of rest and unhealthy way of life, extreme freedom and extreme control, poor working conditions (noise, inadequate lighting, insufficient space), and the organization of work (demanding deadlines).

In the field of work, burnout develops in a particular organizational and professional background. This includes not only the exercise of the profession with an objectively higher risk of burnout onset, but also a number of adverse work effects. Even a lack of personnel, time, money, and expertise can contribute to burnout. The most commonly reported causes of burnout in the workplace include conflicts of social roles, relational conflicts, bullying, various levels of education and social status, excessive expectations of both the individual and people around him/her, lack of autonomy, and authority uncertainties in hierarchical structures. Other causes include a lack of appreciation of work by management or clients, existence of demanding competitive conditions in the workplace, lack of expertise exchange, reduced possibility of workers' creative development, and the impossibility of promotion within the professional ladder. The maintenance and optimization of the originally high motivation requires important positive consequences of a well-

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9 H.J. Freudenberger, *Staff Burn-Out*, "Journal of Social Issues" 1974, No. 1, p. 159.

10 J. Křivohlavý, *Jak neztratit nadšení* [How to Keep Enthusiasm], Praha 1998.

11 V. Kebza, L. Šolcová, *Syndrom vyhoření: funkční duševní porucha* [Burnout: A Functional Mental Disorder], Praha 1998.

performed job, including the recognition that the individual receives from superiors, colleagues, clients, or students[12].

Workplaces that can be identified as hazardous, in terms of the development of burnout, include (1) workplaces where attention is not paid to the employees' needs, (2) workplaces where new employees are not instructed by older or experienced workers, (3) workplaces without personal development plans, (4) workplaces lacking intervision or supervision, (5) workplaces where workers lack the opportunity to tell someone competent that they face difficulties and problems, and (6) workplaces with strong bureaucratic control over the behavior of employees[13].

There are a number of problems with authority contributing to the onset of burnout. These include the centralization of all authority into the hands of a single person or, conversely, the excessive fragmentation of authority. There are also conflicts of formal and personal authority, i.e. situations in which workers respect a person who has no formal authority more than a person who exercises formal authority officially. Burnout also develops in conditions where a person holding a management position, or people holding management positions, are not sufficiently capable or do not have the possibilities and means to achieve what they would like to do.

Burnout presents a particular danger to individuals practicing a profession characterized by high demands concerning performance, high accountability, serious consequences in case of error or mistake, or no possibility of longer relief from duties and responsibilities. The exercise of such a profession is associated with great enthusiasm and viewing the performance as "a mission". Burnout affects people who are highly motivated to perform their work, and who have high ambitions. Such individuals accept new tasks exceeding their possibilities, and they hide the first signs of burnout from people around them because they regard the signs as proof of their failure. This category also includes individuals who are obsessed with rivalry and who feel a threat to their own positive self-image[14].

The first path leading to burnout is usually a loss of ideals. The beginning is associated with enthusiasm, joy of new employment, and identification with the new tasks and the team of colleagues. In this context, burnout is referred to as "a phenomenon of the first years of employment" because it is connected with disappointment, frustration, helplessness, and resignation after high expectations

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[12] A. Hladký, *Zdravotní aspekty zátěže a stresu* [Health Aspects of Burden and Stress], Praha 1993; V. Kebza; L. Šolcová, *Syndrom vyhoření…*, op.cit.

[13] *Metody a řízení sociální práce* [Methods and Management of Social Work], O. Matoušek (ed.), Praha 2003.

[14] J. Křivohlavý, *Jak neztratit…*, op.cit.

and enthusiasm. At this stage, work beyond working hours is considered to be fun, because it makes sense and meets the initial ideals. Gradually, however, problems begin to grow and there are conflicts of ideals with reality, which reveals the true nature. For this reason, a loss of confidence in one's own ability, as well as belief in the meaningfulness of the work itself, may emerge. However, this could be joined by an influencing factor of support from friends, the work team, family, and the individual's personality. The second path is workaholism. It is an addiction to work when the individual suffers from a compulsive inner need to work hard. Work gradually requires more time and energy, which is soon insufficient. The third path is terror of opportunities. Each new job is seen as an interesting and attractive opportunity. Later, however, it is revealed that a large amount of time and energy is required to meet all unfinished obligations. Inability to refuse may lead the individual to burnout[15].

Besides work factors, there are also general personality characteristics involved in burnout, such as perfectionism, purposefulness, competitiveness, independence, willingness to take risks, high consumption of success and recognition, responsibility, need for control, contempt for one's own or somebody else's failure, resistance to rules and norms, and an inability to relax. Patterns of behavior and habits, attitude to the world, self-reflection, and resistance or ability to handle stressful situations and stress influence the degree of susceptibility to burnout. It is difficult to determine precisely to what extent resilience is inborn and to what extent it is acquired. Predispositions to resilience are clearly inborn and they depend on a person's temperament. Generally, it can be stated that, for example, a sanguine person can handle strain better than a melancholic person. However, frustration tolerance is gained continuously over a lifetime, based on obstacles that we learn to defeat and overcome. The onset of burnout becomes more likely with the increasing number of risk factors being present and, subsequently, accumulating.

In addition to the personal configuration, other factors contributing to burnout include immediate environment and family. In particular, excessive attention to the problems of others, dismal housing or financial conditions, partner problems, illness, or other long-term strain in the family may also be factors contributing to the onset of burnout. Moreover, burnout is also generally more intensive in individuals whose work does not respect the work-home division.

Likewise, the competitive nature of our society leads to setting higher and higher goals. This is a reproduction of the stereotypical image of success in which it is the person who has achieved a prestigious job and earns enough money that is

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[15] K. Kopřiva, *Lidský vztah…*, op.cit.

considered socially recognized and successful. Pressure is also exerted on house-wives, who are expected to start working as soon as possible. Apart from a full-time job, they also fulfill the functions of housewife and mother. In addition to competitiveness, there is also an increasing pace for our society. Everyday work with information and communication technologies and the accelerating flow of information, transport, and people place high demands on each individual[16].

The manifestations of burnout return relatively quickly after periods of leave. Following a two-week holiday, indicators of employee burnout partially reappear after three days back at work. After three weeks at work, unless the conditions of its performance have changed, the symptoms of burnout return to their original levels[17].

One of the main factors in the onset and development of burnout and its handling is the degree of satisfaction of the basic existential need. It is the experience of meaningfulness of existence, which is a subjective phenomenon and is connected with the feeling of meaningfulness of work, and satisfaction with different areas of life and their quality[18].

There are numerous factors contributing to the development of burnout, including internal causes and external causes. Internal causes can be divided into individual physical causes and individual psychological causes, including attitude, lack of assertiveness, negative thinking, lack of satisfaction in everyday work, and ways of coping with stress. Mental and emotional behavior that causes stress is learned during childhood. Individual physical causes are physical dispositions that are fixed, and they cannot be easily influenced. In connection with burnout, what matters is mainly the type of nervous system, particularly the proportion of sympathetic nervous system and parasympathetic nervous system in nervous system management. This category can also include an unhealthy lifestyle, which negatively affects the physical level. External causes are represented by institutional causes and social causes. The institutional causes can include shortcomings in the management and structure of organizations and institutions, such as the range of educational activities, day structure, or the impossibility of professional growth. In addition, they include the negative effects of physical stressors (high noise levels or inappropriate lighting). Social causes are changes in society, such as poor social evaluation, taboos, and reducing the need for the job. Conditions in the workplace,

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[16] R.D. Myron, *Syndrom vyhoření* [Burnout], Praha 2003.

[17] M. Westman, D. Eden, *Effects of Respite from Work on Burnout: Vacation Relief and Fade-out*, "Journal of Applied Psychology" 1997, No. 4.

[18] J. Křivohlavý, *Jak neztratit…*, op.cit.

the circle of colleagues, and sociological factors can be regarded as the main causes of burnout[19].

Burnout can be expected in individuals who are prone to the incidence of myocardial infarction. This is behavior type A. The concept of behavior type A/B (CHTA) is based on the relationship between the incidence of different types of cardiovascular diseases and certain forms of human behavior and action. Behavior type A is a risk factor, both in terms of the incidence of cardiovascular diseases and in terms of burnout. Extraordinary forcefulness, rivalry, impatience, high activity and awareness of responsibility, impetuosity of action, aggressiveness, and strong ambitiousness characterize people included in this group. They are not able to relax, rest, and enjoy life. They ignore and suppress both mental and physical symptoms of burnout; they also ignore warning signals. Individuals falling into behavior type A confirm the high strain of the teaching profession and also draw attention to the personality tendencies displayed by a large part of this professional population to act in ways that balance the strain by exaggerated activity, impatience associated with repressed hostility, and ignoring their own needs. Such behavior displays a high risk of the potential onset of burnout[20].

The source of burnout can also be a conflict of roles or role overload, when the individual must perform more duties and tasks than he/she is able to do. Role ambiguity – when the worker does not have enough information to solve a task or does not understand the expectations associated with a specific task – is another stress factor. Stress associated with role ambiguity raises the feelings of frustration and futility in the worker, reduces his/her feeling of self-esteem, increases his/her blood pressure, and strengthens his/her intention to leave the job[21].

There are different variables contributing to the development of burnout, including stress, fatigue, profession performed, and social environment. In stressful situations, negative effects called stressors affect the individual. People are able to effectively adapt to new or changing conditions. The intensity of stressors, however, must not exceed the acceptable maximum limit; otherwise, it may lead to irreversible physiological and anatomical changes due to various diseases. It is important to distinguish between acceptable stress – eustress (satisfaction of vital

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[19] C. Hennig, G. Keller, *Antistresový program pro učitele* [Anti-Stress Program for Teachers], Praha 1996.

[20] M. Friedman, R.H. Rosenman, *Type A Behavior and Your Heart*, New York 1974; B. Vašina, M. Vašková, *Učitel – pracovní zátěž – zdraví* [in:] *Učitelé a zdraví 1.* [Teachers and Health 1], E. Řehulka, O. Řehulková (eds.), Brno 1998.

[21] R.L. Kahn, D.M. Wolfe, R.P. Quinn, D. Snoek, R. Rosenthal, *Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity*, New York 1964; B.L. Brock, M.L. Grady, *Avoiding Burnout*: *A Principals' Guide to Keeping the Fire Alive*, Thousand Oaks 2002.

needs) – and negative stress – distress (dissatisfaction of vital needs)[22]. Burnout is linked to stress by many factors, but it cannot be fully explained against its background. Stress can change into burnout, but not each stress condition becomes the stage of total exhaustion[23]. Burnout can also be regarded as an intensified affective state in which the demands placed on the worker exceeded the limits of his/her capacity[24].

The process of burnout can be seen as a set of symptoms resulting from uncontrolled work-related stress. Normal stress is understood as a condition of the organism that can also be perceived as positive. Stress occurs in various activities while burnout occurs only in people absorbed by their work. However, the affected individual and his/her immediate environment perceive burnout as a negative mental state. Strain poses another difference. A stress response can be caused by virtually any stimulus. The onset of burnout is associated primarily with the effects of the social environment. In addition, a stress response is also caused by the short-term effect of stimuli, while burnout is a process developing over a long period[25]. It starts "creepingly", and its process takes several years, without the individual noticing any changes or symptoms[26].

Burnout is especially related to chronic stress, which weakens the immune system. Some authors place burnout in the last stage of Selye's GAS process (General Adaptation Syndrome). The Canadian endocrinologist Hans Selye, a native of Austria-Hungary, created a concept that presents three stages of stress: (1) alarm (shock) is characterized by a change in muscle tension and blood pressure, tachycardia, secretion of adrenal medulla hormones, loss of appetite, sweating, headaches, etc.; (2) resistance (state of emergency and strain of the organism) is typically characterized by anxiety, activation of the pituitary gland, and the onset of functional and organic diseases related to damage to organs (diabetes, asthma, allergies, etc.); (3) exhaustion (fatigue, decompensation) is manifested by feelings of chronic fatigue, depression, and functional and organic diseases associated with damage to organs[27]. Burnout represents the final stage of this process during which the reserve energy and defensive possibilities of the organism are used up. Stress is a transient process of adaptation. And, burnout is a breakdown of this process.

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[22] V.F. Birkenbihlová, *Pozitivní stres: radostně stresem* [Positive Stress: Joyfully though Stress], Praha 1996.

[23] J. Křivohlavý, *Jak neztratit…*, op.cit.

[24] A. Hladký, *Zdravotní aspekty…*, op.cit.

[25] B.L. Brock, M.L. Grady, *Avoiding Burnout…*, op.cit.; M.D. Rush, *Syndrom vyhoření…*, op.cit.

[26] R.J. Edelmann, *Psychosocial Aspects of the Health Care Process*, Harlow 2000.

[27] I. Šnýdrová, *Manažerka a stres* [Woman-Manager and Stress], Praha 2006.

Burnout also has many common symptoms with depression, such as sad moods, loss of motivation and energy, and feelings of worthlessness. Unlike burnout, depression has a negative impact on a wide range of a person's life activities. Negative effects of listlessness are usually largely limited to the thoughts and feelings concerning professional performance and its consequences. It is important to distinguish between a depressive mood and depressive reaction, which is connected with listlessness and depressive disorder, formerly referred to as endogenous depression. Their identification can be based on a number of factors. Burnout is usually neither associated with the seasonal depression nor with morning pessimism typical of endogenous depression. Furthermore, it is important to monitor differences in the possibility of deflecting depressive moods, which is possible with burnout if the psyche is turned to non-working content. In the field of sleep disorders, burnout is characterized by the deterioration in the ability to fall asleep, while depression is associated with awakening during sleep. Based on research, depressed and demonstrably burnt-out women were compared. In connection with sleep, depressed female patients reported that they wake up early in the morning and usually do not fall asleep after that. However, women suffering from burnout display difficulty falling asleep for a long time. Both groups of women got up sleepy and tired. They also showed difficulty concentrating and remembering details. However, burnt-out women's problems were associated with an overall lower activity of the brain[28]. It should not be forgotten that the main therapeutic procedure used to treat depression is pharmacotherapy. Individuals affected by burnout do not respond to pharmacotherapy and their main therapeutic procedure is psychotherapy.

Fatigue, as an additional component accompanying burnout, expresses a negative mental state. Generally, it is characterized by a closer relationship with physical exercise. Therefore, it is possible to overcome fatigue by adequate rest, which does not work with burnout. Similarly, fatigue from physical and intellectual strain is felt positively. Burnout is particularly associated with significant emotional fatigue, manifested as distrust and insensitive callousness with respect to people. Although physical fatigue can be perceived positively, fatigue that accompanies burnout almost always raises negative, hopeless, and depressing emotions.

Burnout also shares similarities with chronic fatigue syndrome, including (apart from fatigue) decreased concentration, disorders of cognitive functions, and the occurrence of depressive symptoms. However, there are also differences between chronic fatigue syndrome and burnout, such as increased temperature, sore throat,

[28] A. Sändstrom, I.N. Rhodin, M. Lundberg, T. Olsson, L. Nyberg, *Impaired Cognitive Performance in Patients with Chronic Burnout Syndrome*, "Biological Psychology" 2005, No. 3.

lymph node tenderness, pain in skeletal muscles, joint swelling, alienation, and photophobia. Chronic fatigue syndrome is experienced by individuals due to a lack or loss of acceptable social standards, which originally formed the criteria of their life values.

Burnout is also considered as being related to alienation. Alienation occurs in individuals who have never been excited about or absorbed by their work. Their work did not represent a purpose or aim of their lives. However, in contrast with alienation, burnout occurs in individuals who were initially enthusiastic about their work.

Burnout can be interpreted as the opposite of flow, satisfaction, and mental health. Flow is a mental state of an individual who is involved in and devoted to an interest, work, or goal. Flow is one of the happiest experiences, because in its course the individual breaks free from his/her involvement in the network of purposes and goals and is immersed in a liberating flow of experience. Two aspects affecting life characterize flow. If an individual is immersed in this state every day, even for a short period of time, he/she feels non-objective, independent, and natural happiness. At this stage, his/her performance, concentration, creative thinking, and empathy increase. It is the opposite of burnout, which occurs after the loss of flow[29].

2. Stages of Burnout

The state of burnout is the result of a long gradual process in which we can identify four development stages. The whole process usually begins with initial, idealistic enthusiasm. On a general level, we speak about the "initiation phase" of initial excitement and enthusiasm. Many young people start the first job with high hopes and unrealistic expectations. They plunge into work enthusiastically, initially without having very clear ideas about it. High work performance typically generates strong satisfaction and the job can become the most important part of their life, giving it fulfillment and purpose. The individual has something to live for, and he/she tries to do his best and to deliver the highest performance. Work activity is meaningful. The greatest danger of this stage can be seen in the identification of the individual with clients and in the inefficient use of energy accompanied by voluntary overwork.

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[29] M. Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, New York 1991.

The initial enthusiasm is followed by a period of stagnation, which involves enlightenment, sobering up, and the realization that ideals cannot be quite fully implemented. The original means becomes a goal, and meaningful goals are replaced by apparent goals. The individual performs the activity for gain or enrichment, not as the purpose of life or based on personal needs. Requirements of the organization gradually begin to annoy the worker and his/her initial enthusiasm fades. At this stage, the work is no longer so attractive and the worker begins to realize that there are also other values than work.

The period of stagnation gradually becomes the stage of frustration. The worker begins to display disappointment concerning problems to be solved or work to be done. The worker begins to perceive clients or persons he/she is in contact with, whose evaluation he/she is dependent on, negatively. Characteristic features of this period include doubts about the effectiveness of one's own work and a search for purpose in the work. The stage of frustration may involve emotional and physical problems. There are also the first problems in relationships in the workplace, e.g. with superiors and colleagues.

The last stage of burnout is associated with apathy. The individual is constantly frustrated at work without being able to change the situation, because he/she is dependent on the job as a source of livelihood. Symptoms of apathy include strict adherence to job descriptions and working hours, avoiding new tasks, and sometimes even avoiding clients. The overall activity is dampened and spontaneity, creativity, initiative, and invention are reduced. There is a prevailing depressive mood, as well as feelings of sadness, frustration, hopelessness, despair, depressive feelings of futility of effort, and feelings of low meaningfulness as a result of self-pity and a lack of recognition, which feels intense. This is followed by the loss of respect for one's life and body, as well as the loss of enthusiasm. This stage displays eruptions of varying degrees of hostility to students and to everything related to the profession or work. There could be a complete loss of interest in topics related to the profession, as well as a negative evaluation of the institution where the profession is exercised. This stage represents a state of complete listlessness and exhaustion, accompanied by cynicism, depersonalization, and a loss of humanity. The burnt-out individual is characterized by a feeling of total work failure, inability to further develop, or even the inability to continue working. Although the affected individual has successfully mastered the knowledge and skills required for the occupation, he/she now performs the job poorly. The severity is emphasized by clear links between burnout and staff turnover, absences, and a decrease in the importance of moral values. There is even a prevalence of the conviction of both one's dispensability and worthlessness, bordering on micromanic delusions. There are

problems with communication with people, loss of empathy, and a social and emotional flattening. These symptoms are sometimes referred to as a "dehumanized perception of the surroundings". Burnout is also manifested not only at work, but also at home. The individual prefers to be alone and he/she is burdened with and tired of the company of people. At this point all energy sources has been burnt, nothing but negativism, indifference, and apathy remain[30].

Burnout can be analyzed in the context of three stages that are associated with three processes. These are: (1) Enthusiasm and goal setting in which work activity is meaningful, because it facilitates the achievement of the goal. Work activity represents a means to an end. (2) Utilitarian interest, where the means becomes a goal (utility value). The individual performs the work, because he/she has begun to desire a by-product, e.g. money received for the job. The basic motivation is unsatisfied due to the replacement of meaningful goals by apparent goals. The profession ceases to be used for personal development and it becomes a source of negative feelings. (3) Life in ashes, which is characterized by the loss of respect for the worth of others and for one's own life and the emergence of an existential vacuum. The loss of respect for the worth of other people, things, and goals leads to the "reification" of the social world. The affected individual ceases to appreciate his/her own body and loses respect for his/her beliefs, enthusiasm, and effort[31].

Another division includes up to twelve stages: 1. the compulsion to prove oneself; 2. increased input or working harder (e.g. feeling indispensable); 3. neglecting one's own needs (e.g. not taking time for breaks); 4. repression or displacement of needs and conflicts (e.g. forgetting things, lack of energy); 5. reinterpretation and revision of values (e.g. avoiding social situations, relationship problems); 6. increasing occurring problems (e.g. denial of cynicism, aggression, other negative feelings); 7. definitive withdrawal (e.g. empty feeling, psychosomatic reactions); 8. clearly visible behavioral changes (e.g. others notice the changes in you); 9. loss of feelings for one's own personality (e.g. sense of alienation); 10. feelings of inner emptiness (e.g. panic attacks, numbness); 11. depression and exhaustion (feelings of hopelessness and self-doubt); and 12. complete burnout and exhaustion (e.g. physical, spiritual, and emotional impact is severe).

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[30] A. Länge, *Burnout – Existentielle Bedeutung und Möglichkeiten der Prävention* [Burnout – Existential Meaning and Possibilities of Prevention], "Existenzanalyse" 1997, No. 2; J. Edelwich, A. Brodsky, *Burnout: Stages of Dissillusionment in the Helping Professions*, New York 1980; C. Hennig, G. Keller, *Antistresový program…*, op.cit.; K. Kraska-Lüdecke, *Nejlepší techniky proti stresu* [The Best Techniques against Stress], Praha 2007.

[31] A. Länge, *Burnout – Existentielle Bedeutung…*, op.cit.

3. Burnout in the Profession of University Teachers

Burnout affects teachers of all ages, all levels, and all types of institutions. This profession is of a collective character with people always in the center. High mental alertness, responsibility, the ability to communicate effectively, and empathy are all demands that are imposed. Teachers are exposed daily to stress associated with numerous and exhausting contacts with a number of other people, demanding requirements imposed on the work by superiors, society, ignorance of the issues of the profession by the general public, and a failure to appreciate the work of these employees. The ideal teacher is a mature personality; knows his/her life direction; has a positive and realistic concept; without neurotic or psychopathic personality traits; able to reflect on his/her own decisions, behavior, and emotions; open to suggestions; willing to educate himself/herself; and willing to go through regular intervision or supervision[32]. Teachers especially need education, value self-orientation, and awareness of the purpose of life. Educational activities include all activities from caring for one's own person, through ensuring clothing, to one's own continuous education and training. Any teaching profession is very demanding, especially with regard to the speed of responses and decision-making, autonomy and verbal readiness, flexibility, and creativity in the management of educational situations. These activities can also include the actual stability of the teacher, endurance, and strength of his/her personality. The essence of educational work lies in the cultural transmission of knowledge, values, and behavioral patterns[33].

Teachers' strain can be divided into sensory, mental, and emotional. Sensory strain is relatively common among teachers. Teachers must do their work in full, even heightened consciousness, and their senses, especially sight and hearing, face high demands. Deficiencies in these areas significantly reduce the chance of successfully performing this work. Mental strain, represented by the requirements for information processing, affecting attention, memory, thinking, imagination, and decision-making is also enormous. Increased demands are associated with verbal readiness, pronunciation, distributed attention, and the ability to control oneself. Many teachers, however, do not perceive these high demands as a significant strain. The reason is probably due to the fact that many already have a work routine, use prepared materials, and are not forced to change their activities, which helps them prevent potential stress. However, increased strain connected with the teaching

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[32] B. Kraus, V. Poláčková, *Člověk – prostředí – výchova: k otázkám sociální pedagogiky* [Human – Environment – Education: The Issues of Social Pedagogy], Brno 2001.

[33] A. Nelešovská, *Pedagogická komunikace* [Pedagogical Communication], Olomouc 2002.

profession is viewed in leadership and student formation. In terms of profession-alization of the teaching profession, professional and theoretical knowledge is considered as being the most important. As professionals, however, teachers should also be experts in the field of teaching. Besides traditional values, such as tolerance, solidarity, and responsibility, there are also new values. Teachers must understand the nature of their work and the purpose of their activities, and they must be flexible, communicative, co-operative, and open to change. Teachers are not only the ones who lecture and assess, but also the ones who motivate, encourage, inspire, and guide others on the path to education[34]. Within the division, emotional strain represents the most severe form of strain. In educational activities, both teachers and students largely apply their basic personality traits. Teachers usually display strong personal and emotional involvement in social relationships arising within the educational process. This emotional involvement constitutes an important source of teachers' job satisfaction, but it often becomes a very fragile and risky area of this job. Emotional relationships between teachers and students can also be conflicting, unstable, and erratic. This creates increasing demands on the teacher's personality and growth in the emotional strain[35]. Results of many studies agree that the teaching profession is one of the professions with a high degree of this form of strain, and that this strain is negatively perceived and experienced by nearly a quarter of teachers. A high degree of psychological strain, experienced by teachers as unpleasant, leads to relatively low job satisfaction. This is related to their high staff turnover and contributes to the occurrence of psychosomatic and neurotic symptoms, including specific expression in the form of burnout. Burnout develops if different forms of strain are confronted with the individual's ability and limits set by his/her personality, as well as with his/her real possibilities of influencing the process and results of his/her work. It is a long-term work-related stress in which the demands of the job overload or exceed the individual's possibilities.

According to research, burnout among teachers depends on the number of years of employment. The first boundary has been determined in the period between the first and the fifth year of employment and the next between the seventh and the tenth year[36]. The degree of burnout among teachers increases with age and

[34] *Současné proměny vzdělávání učitelů* [The Current Transformation of Teacher Education], V. Spilková (ed.), Brno 2004.

[35] E. Řehulka, O. Řehulková, *Problematika tělesné a psychické zátěže při výkonu učitelského povolání* [The Issue of Physical and Mental Stress in the Teaching Profession] [in:] *Učitelé a zdraví 1* [Teachers and Health 1], E. Řehulka, O. Řehulková (eds.), Brno 1998.

[36] G.S. Schmitz, *Kann Selbstwirksamkeitserwartung Lehrer vor Burnout schützen? Eine Längsschnittstudie in zehn Bundesländern* [Can Self-Efficacy Protect Teachers against Burnout? A Longi-

years of experience. It reaches the peak between the 41st and 45th year of age, and then decreases[37]. The highest probability of burnout is displayed by beginning teachers up to 40 years old, who are generally a more vulnerable group than teachers from other age categories. Teachers with 13–24 years of experience display a lower level of the personal performance factor[38]. However, other research indicates that important indicators of burnout include less experience and fewer years in one workplace[39]. Research conducted in Czech conditions points to a more significant increase in manifestations of burnout among teachers over 51 years of age, especially those under emotional strain. Older teachers complain about health problems, and health problems can increase their exhaustion. These results may be affected, among other things, by the specificity of the Czech school system, where the average age of teachers is relatively high, and where many teachers work for many years even after reaching retirement age.

The gender factor (gender perspective) is a variable with a possible influence on the incidence of burnout among teachers. There are significant differences between male and female teachers in perceptions of their own professional competence and the level of their depersonalization. Consequences of strain displayed by male teachers are reflected as depersonalization in relation to students. They show negative attitudes towards students more often than female teachers. On the other hand, women are more likely to perceive themselves as less successful in their profession. In contrast with men, they consider themselves capable teachers less frequently than men. Generally, men experience burnout features to a greater extent. For example, men find it much harder to tolerate inattention during lessons, while women feel more threatened by students' disrespect towards teachers and among students themselves[40].

Burnout presents a danger to teachers who are highly empathic, sensitive, and selfless, but also those who are more anxious, compulsive, and meticulous[41]. "Fading" teachers lose interest in their work, performing it routinely and without en-

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tudinal Study in Ten German Provinces], "Psychologie in Erziehung und Unterricht" [Psychology in Education] 2001, No. 1.

[37]   I.A. Friedman, *High and Low Burnout Schools: School Culture Aspects of Teacher Burnout*, "Journal of Educational Research" 1991, No. 6.

[38]   M.B. Anderson, E.F. Iwanicki, *Teacher Motivation and Its Relationship to Burnout*, "Educational Administration Quarterly" 1984, No. 2.

[39]   S.A. Capel, *The Incidence of and Influences on Stress and Burnout in Secondary School Teachers*, "British Journal of Educational Psychology" 1987, No. 3.

[40]   I.A. Friedman, *Student Behavioral Patterns Contributing to Teacher Burnout*, "Journal of Educational Research" 1995, No. 5.

[41]   V. Kebza, L. Šolcová, *Syndrom vyhoření…*, op.cit.

thusiasm, because the performance of the profession tires and exhausts them. Burnout is accompanied by a concrete-operational style of thinking, which is a sign of disinterest and only a necessary means to complete a given task. Teacher burnout is associated mainly with fatigue from teaching, fear of contact with other teachers, disappointment with their own professional failure, lack of interest in further self-education, or resistance to any educational innovations. The symptoms of teacher burnout include intense and frequent angry reactions, anxiety, restlessness, fatigue, cynicism, guilt, psychosomatic problems, rigidity, low frustration tolerance, and negative attribution in relation to students (e.g. beliefs that they neither read nor study). Burnt-out teachers tend to neglect preparing for lectures, show less interest in teaching and issues concerning students, and display more frequent absence due to illness, etc.[42].

With regard to university teachers, prolonged work stress and burnout are, among other things, caused by the fragmentation of working hours, the inability to achieve efficient distribution of creative activities and writing, disruption of mental concentration by operational activities, problems and conflicts, inefficient work meetings, increasing enforcement of inspection focusing on lecturing and publishing outputs, work at weekends and during holidays, lack of quality rest and even an inability to relax, and collaboration with colleagues endangered or affected by burnout.

Burnout can also cause situations of severe instability in relation to the job and insecurity to retain it, which can be felt by people working independently. Even inability to reach a minimum consensus on educational issues and little mutual support lead to the fact that the teacher is a lone runner who, in the event of difficulty, begins to have doubts about himself/herself. It is in isolation, which may lack an independent view and feedback from others allowing distance, that the onset of burnout may be enhanced[43].

The aggravating characteristics of university teachers include an extreme degree of freedom and the same extreme degree of control. An individual does not show satisfaction if he/she has almost no freedom of choice. The same happens if he/she has too much freedom. Control displays similar features. An individual does not show satisfaction if too strict and frequent control affects and influences his/her

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[42] I.A. Friedman, *High and Low…*, op.cit.

[43] J. Dan, *Pracovní vyprahnutí u učitelů* [Teachers' Working Parch] [in:] *Učitelé a zdraví 1.* [Teachers and Health 1], E. Řehulka, O. Řehulková (eds.), Brno 1998.

work. However, an individual is not satisfied in the case of solitary work and a lack of interest in the results either[44].

University teachers affected by burnout display an overall decline of sociability and lack of interest in evaluation by other persons (students). Teachers show a strong tendency to reduce contact with students, often also with their colleagues and all persons related to the profession. They exhibit an obvious distaste for the profession and all related factors (school year schedule or lecture preparations and participation).

The establishment of relationship boundaries between students and teachers is an effective defense. The main problem is that teachers accept the students' difficulties as their own. Therefore, anyone who has clearly defined such boundaries and respects them finds it easier to avoid potential burnout.

4. Symptoms and Prevention of Burnout

Burnout troubles not only the affected individuals, but also people around him/her. Neither the individual himself/herself nor his/her immediate environment may initially recognize any significant change in behavior. This occurs in advanced stages. However, the immediate environment usually notices the first subtle changes fairly early, even though it does not realize what the problem is at first. The increase in emotional exhaustion, loss of respect for other people, and reduction in efficiency are associated with the decrease in the affected individual's quality of life. As a result, there is also an increase in the consumption of alcohol and other addictive substances. There is a very close relationship between burnout and addiction. Individuals with higher burnout levels are more prone to addictive behavior. People who burn out very often seek solace in sedatives, alcohol, or other addictive substances.

Symptoms of burnout are diffuse. It is a state of total body fatigue that is accompanied by rapid fatigability, coming after short stages of relative recovery. Burnout is characterized by psychological, somatic, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms. The psychological symptoms include psychological exhaustion, depression, chronic dissatisfaction, aggression, fear, and nervousness. Somatic symptoms include musculoskeletal problems (muscle pain and tension), gastrointestinal symptoms (indigestion, heartburn, and flatulence), as well as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and disorders of the central nervous system (headache, dizzi-

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[44] J. Křivohlavý, *Jak neztratit…*, op.cit.

ness, physical exhaustion, fatigue, sleep disorders). Cognitive symptoms include impaired concentration and adaptability, decreased decision-making ability, doubts about oneself, loss of any motivation, hyper-criticality, feelings of disappointment, utter emptiness, boredom, and resignation. Behavioral symptoms are increased or decreased activity, impulsive behavior, hesitancy, tendency towards the consumerist way of life with the emphasis on material goods, increased consumption of coffee, alcohol, cigarettes, and medication, increased degree of risk behavior, and neglecting leisure time activities[45].

Burnout prevention is especially based on achieving and maintaining job fitness on the level appropriate to the demands of the work performed and in relevant job skills, including developed self-knowledge and effective social communication skills. It is extremely important to prevent the emergence of the first problems. With regard to effective prevention, it is necessary to realize factors protecting individuals against burnout, and to focus purposefully, in both one's professional and personal life, on their implementation and support. Factors that protect individuals against burnout include personal skills associated with a feeling of abundance of one's own abilities and skills to cope with the demands of the profession. Furthermore, they include optimism, work autonomy, optimum time management, assertive behavior, social support (sharing), and a sense of personal well-being, which includes life satisfaction, positive emotions, and happiness. The feeling of adequate recognition is another important protective factor.

There are both long-term and short-term measures that can contribute to coping with a high degree of strain. They can be applied immediately in the focus on one's own mind (perceiving changes and problems as challenges, purposeful thinking about the positive aspects of events, full concentration on current activities, etc.) and one's own body (ensuring enough exercise and fresh air, eating well, observing fluid intake and sleep regimen, etc.). The long-term measures include practicing specific relaxation techniques (e.g. autogenic training), and performing them regularly. They may also include the completion of courses aimed at strengthening and developing managerial skills (especially in effective

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[45] H.J. Freudenberger, *Staff Burn-Out…*, op.cit.; A. Hladký, *Cena pracovního stresu a nápravná opatření* [Price of Stress and Remedial Actions], "Psychologie v ekonomické praxi: Určeno pro psychologii práce a její aplikace" [Psychology in Economic Practice: Designed for Psychology Work and Its Applications] 1994, No. 4; A. David, *Epidemiologie onemocnění vyvolaných pracovním stresem* [Epidemiology of Diseases Caused by Work-Related Stress] [in:] *Práce, stres a zdraví: sborník přednášek z kurzu Institutu pro další vzdělávání lékařů a farmaceutů v Praze* [Work, Stress and Health: A Collection of Lectures from the Course of the Institute for Further Education of Physicians and Pharmacists in Prague], A. David (ed.), Praha 1991.

interpersonal communication, including argumentation, negotiation, and conflict resolution).

The most serious consequences of workplaces where burnout occurs are high staff turnover and reduced work performance. High staff turnover prevents the creation of closer relations between employees and a functioning system of social support. In addition, continual training of newcomers prevents the flow of work, leading to overloading of senior staff and, in relation to an unsatisfactory social environment, subsequently increasing the level of burnout in the workplace. Burnout can be prevented in this context by providing stepped levels of the organization on the training–intervision/supervision–support axis[46]. The amount of work required from employees should match their abilities and skills. Workers should be able to influence their work and its results. In addition to the relevant remuneration, it is also important to provide feedback, regular evaluation, praise, and recognition. In terms of burnout prevention, an important protective factor is a social support network, i.e. the existence of close people. It includes active listening, encouragement, emotional support, and mediation of social reality. With regard to employees, it is important that their workplace is respected and achieves prestige. Ideally, the values recognized by employees are identical to the values of their workplace[47].

Other protective factors in relation to listlessness include sufficient assertiveness, the ability and skill to relax, appropriate time management, personal competences, self-efficacy, belief in one's own abilities, optimism, social support, and feeling adequate social and economic recognition and evaluation. In addition, they may include learned optimism, self-confidence and self-esteem, and the ability to use social support. Neutral factors, in terms of the onset of burnout, include intelligence and major demographic characteristics, which are age, marital status, education, length of experience in the field, and the period during which the current job has been performed[48].

More and more organizations are starting to use programmed focusing on personal development, employment counseling, training in professional skills, teamwork, and an increase in the share of workers in management. Other preven-

[46] R.J. Edelmann, *Psychosocial Aspects…*, op.cit.; B. Baštecká, *Terénní krizová práce: psychosociální intervenční týmy* [Field Work in Crisis: Psychosocial Intervention Teams], Praha 2005.

[47] M.D. Rush, *Syndrom vyhoření…*, op.cit.; J.F. Wilder, R. Plutchik, *Preparing The Profesional: Building Prevention into Professional Training* [in:] *Job Stress and Burnout: Research, Theory and Intervention Perspectives*, W.S. Paine (ed.), Beverly Hills 1981.

[48] M.D. Rush, *Syndrom vyhoření…*, op.cit.

tive measures aimed at external circumstances accompanying burnout include the removal of time pressure on workers by delegating tasks and responsibilities in the work team, and the improvement of the actual work organization. It is important that burnout "can be stopped, and what is even more important for us, is that it can be prevented"[49].

Burnout prevention involves mastering techniques to prevent and reduce stress, time management, separation of work from personal life, and the pursuit of professional growth. What is important is the ability of an individual to break away from work and indulge in activities enabling intense positive experience. In addition to an active approach to life, work motivation, and awareness of positive aspects of one's profession; subjective active prevention of burnout includes self-diagnostics, self-evaluation, self-presentation, training in assertiveness skills, coping strategies, and video training. Objective prevention and intervention include the employer's care of employees and their working environment, as well as the offer of social-psychological training sessions and training programmed, including training, intervision, and supervision. The aim is to stabilize the personality, i.e. inner calming in which emotional tension is released, and in which the situation with regard to the future is understood. The essence is the awareness of the context as a prerequisite for resolving the situation and opening the future to prevent another crisis[50].

What is given as a preventive recommendation is the increase in the resistance to stress, which can be achieved through conditioning exercises, balanced relaxation and rest, time management, and social support. Social support is based on social closeness and interpersonal relationships, i.e. family, circle of friends, and partner relationships. It is also a form of support that can be, and is, provided by these relationships to the individual. Social support can serve different functions and meet many needs. One of the major needs is the need of listening and recognition from the immediate environment, which encourages the individual in his/her work, giving it more meaning. Each person also usually needs a certain "social mirror" that can show him/her how what he/she does is viewed by others. Major sources of social support are located in the family, at work (colleagues), in the circle of friends, in good acquaintances, and in leisure time activities. Lack of support is positively correlated with listlessness. It seems that the greatest importance, in this context, is displayed by the support provided by colleagues on the same

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[49] K. Nešpor, *Závislost na práci* [Dependence on Work], Grada 1999, p. 21.

[50] J. Průcha, E. Walterová, J. Mareš, *Pedagogický slovník* [Pedagogical Dictionary], Praha 2009.

level[51]. However, emotional support is only effective when coming from a partner, not from co-workers or the employer[52].

Relaxation is the natural opposite of stress, eliminating states of fatigue and exhaustion. Like physical exercise, relaxation relieves anxiety and depression. Relaxation helps prevent various diseases, and it can also heal them. Relaxation techniques that can be used include Jacobson's progressive relaxation, Schultz's autogenic training, abdominal breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and meditation. Other techniques that can be used include art therapy, drama therapy, hippotherapy, music therapy, aromatherapy, and biofeedback.

However, the most important means of treatment is psychotherapy, which enables reflected change in the client's feelings and behavior. Psychotherapeutic methods usually applied in Europe include dasein analysis, based on Martin Heidegger's philosophy, and Viktor Emil Frankl's logotherapy. Burnout manifests itself by states in which the affected individual experiences a loss of purpose of his/her own existence. Existential psychotherapy (dasein analysis) puts emphasis on the individual's world of inner experiences, the essence of his/her existence, the meaning of life, freedom, and responsibility. It seeks to find a way to understand one's own existence and its most responsible implementation. Existential psychotherapy focuses on the uniqueness and singularity of a person's individuality and his/her further development. Life purpose, in accordance with one's own life and personality, is also stressed by logotherapy, which is based on the discovery of new values in life and new reasons to live. For people with fully developed burnout, therapeutic help can be crucial, because their world and their purpose broke down. Other treatments that can be used include individual psychotherapy, group psychotherapy, cognitive psychotherapy, dynamic psychotherapy, interpersonal psychotherapy, and depth-psychology-oriented psychotherapy.

5. Methods of Burnout Diagnosis

One of the first methods used in determining the extent of burnout was the Tedium Scale, created by the clinical and social psychologist Ayala M. Pines, the head

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[51] N.P.G. Boumans, J.A. Landeweerd, *The Role of Social Support and Coping Behaviour in Nursing Work: Main or Buffering Effect?*, "Work and Stress" 1992, No. 2.

[52] J. Sauer, E. Gamsjäger, *Ist Schulerfolg vorhersehbar? Die Determinanten der Grundschulleistung und ihr prognostischer Wert für den Sekundarschulerfolg* [Is School Success Predictable? The Determinants of Primary School Performance and Their Prognostic Value for Secondary School Success], Göttingen 1996.

of the department of Business Administration at the School of Management, Ben-Gurion University in Israel[53]. Ayala M. Pines and the American psychologist Elliot Aronson prepared the revised version of the questionnaire, the Burnout Measure (BM). The questionnaire consists of 21 questions, whose answers are numbered 1 to 7. The numbers are assigned on the basis of the frequency of feelings and experiences. This questionnaire focuses on the feelings of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. Following the BM, a shorter version of this questionnaire was created – Burnout Measure: Short Version (BMS).

The methods most commonly used for professional examinations of burnout include Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), published by the Californian psychologist Christine Maslach and her colleague Susan E. Jackson in 1981[54]. The first version of the diagnostic questionnaire contained a certain amount of statements that were supposed to be evaluated by the client, based on the frequency of occurrence and intensity, using a seven-point scale. In 1996, a team including Christine Maslach, Susan E. Jackson, Michael P. Leiter, and Wilmar B. Schaufeli created two versions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS) version was used to measure burnout in professions that do not fall in the service sector. The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES) version is designed to measure burnout in the teaching profession[55].

The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) is a newer method in burnout diagnosis. Exhaustion is a key development component here, and – in contrast with the Maslach Burnout Inventory – the inventory removes depersonalization and poor job performance from the concept of burnout. Other self-diagnostic methods include an orientation questionnaire introduced by Don Hawkins, Frank Minirth, Paul Meier, and Chris Thurman[56]. These authors see burnout as a process that gradually develops and accumulates. The orientation questionnaire contains 24 questions and statements that can only be answered positively or negatively.

To diagnose burnout other methods can also be used, such as the method of using semantic differential, based on bipolar adjectives. Burnout can also be diagnosed on the basis of blood and saliva tests, because stress influences the level of cortisol in the body. Individuals suffering from depression usually display a high

[53] V. Kebza, L. Šolcová, *Syndrom vyhoření…*, op.cit.

[54] C. Maslach, S.E Jackson, *The Measurement of Experienced Burnout*, "Journal of Occupational Behavior" 1981, No. 2.

[55] W.B. Schaufeli, M.P. Leiter, C. Maslach, S.E. Jackson, *Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey* [in:] *The Maslach Burnout Inventory*, C. Maslach, S.E. Jackson, M.P. Leiter (eds.), Palo Alto 1996.

[56] *Before Burnout*: *Balanced Living for Busy People*, D. Hawkins, F. Minirth, P. Heier, C.H. Thurman (eds.), Chicago 1990.

level of this stress hormone, while individuals affected by burnout exhibit a low level. Too much or too little cortisol signals danger to physical and mental health. Chronic stress and unbalanced cortisol levels cause a domino effect, which can even lead to diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, immune disorders, and severe mental health problems[57].

6. Conclusion

A postmodern situation is possible to characterize like a crisis of belief in rationality and explanatory power of scientific knowledge. People feel confused and helpless in the world of the decline of great metastories and unifying ideologies under the influence of social changes, such as plurality, flexibility, variety, differentiation and mobility, decentralization and globalization. Some metachange occurs in the postmodern society where new accepted forms of variety and ambivalence wipe limits and question base institution originally standing on clear measures.

Metachange brings uncertainty and problems during the decision-making process, as it does not set decision-making procedures. Traditional institutions cannot react to rapid social changes in an effective way. Social forms lack time for stabilization and, because they last for a short period of time, they cannot be considered as referential frames of human behavior nor long-term life plans. Traditional institutions, social forms, and structures have been loosened and reordered. We live in the time of fulfilling individual projects and self-realization, in the time of enhanced demands on personality, qualities, competences, and individual skills. Individuals lose their reliance in traditional social forms and structures[58].

"Plurality of postmodern society is not just some irresponsible barging around the prodigally prosperous world, but it is foremost the world of personal responsibility"[59]. We live during the time of newly generated existential forms and situations that force individuals to place themselves at the center of their own life plans and modes of life. Based on enhancement of individuality, we experience a fragmentation of notions about working conditions. Postmodern lapse society does not know a lifetime position. Employees specialize and in the course of their

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[57]   R.P. Juster, B.S. Mcewen, S.J. Lupien, *Allostatic Load Biomarkers of Chronic Stress and Impact on Health and Cognition*, "Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews" 2010, No. 1.

[58]   U. Beck, *The Reinvention of Politics: Rethinking Modernity in the Global Social Order*, Cambridge 1997.

[59]   M. Petrusek, *Společnosti pozdní doby* [Societies Late Times], Praha 2007, p. 312.

working life they change specializations according to current work opportunities[60]. People therefore must be prepared to change strategies, style, and use opportunities. Hereby, they steadily influence the choices of their life direction. Individualization and insecurity cause a differentiation of notions about working conditions. More conflicts between expectations and reality occur and people have to meet difficult decisions. The postmodern situation weakens interpersonal bonds, incites antagonism, give priority to competition, and individual interest. It causes a collapse in long-term thinking and planning. It confirms the ideal of an individualist, whose emphasis on achievement and great demands accompanied by the feeling of long-term insecurity often lead to burnout.

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[60]   P.F. Drucker, *To nejdůležitější z Druckera v jednom svazku* [The Most Important of Drucker in One Volume], Praha 2002.

z kurzu Institutu pro další vzdělávání lékařů a farmaceutů v Praze [Work, Stress and Health: A Collection of Lectures from the Course of the Institute for Further Education of Physicians and Pharmacists in Prague], A. David (ed.), Praha 1991.

Drucker P.F., *To nejdůležitější z Druckera v jednom svazku* [The Most Important of Drucker in One Volume], Praha 2002.

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