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WORK ENGAGEMENT AND OCCUPATIONAL BURNOUT AMONG TEACHERS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF POSITIVE ORIENTATION

Abstract: The purpose of the research was: (1) to establish the relationship between work engagement, occupational burnout, and positive orientation; (2) to examine whether positive orientation mediates the relationship between work engagement and occupational burnout. The study involved teachers ($N = 106$) of grades 1–6 of primary school and grades 1–3 of mid-

dle school. As expected, work engagement correlated negatively with burnout, and positive orientation correlated positively with work engagement and negatively with burnout, also mediating the relationship between these variables.

Keywords: work engagement, burnout, positive orientation, mediation

INTRODUCTION

Research results show that as a professional group, teachers are particularly vulnerable to the effects of chronic workplace stress (e.g., Ogińska-Bulik, 2006). The feeling of excessive responsibility, undesirable behaviours of students, difficulties in cooperating with superiors, insufficient classroom equipment – these are examples of stressors in the teaching profession (Sęk, 2004). A teacher engaged in their work can inspire students towards intellectual, mental, and moral development, while a burnt out teacher will make a contrary impression. This raises the question of how teachers can avoid becoming burnt out in their profession. The creators of the job demands – resources model of burnout – Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli (2001) – believe that the demands and hardships that professional work brings can be balanced by resources that ultimately lead to the development of work engagement and thus prevent burnout (the term “resources” can be used to describe everything that a person uses to effectively deal with stress, Jelonekiewicz, Kosińska-Dec, 2004, that is, for example, a sense of agency, optimism, a certain personal philosophy, or social support).

The job demands – resources model has been confirmed in studies carried out in several European countries (Derbis, Baka, 2011), including Poland (e.g., Baka, 2013). Thus, it can inspire scientists towards further research in the area of work and organisational psychology as well as in related disciplines.

WORK ENGAGEMENT

Work engagement can be understood in several ways (Macey, Schneider, 2008). First, it can be seen as a psychological state associated with a sense of energy, flow, affection, satisfaction, and enthusiasm. Second, engagement can be defined as behaviour, or to be more precise, as a construct associated with performance, for example, taking personal initiative and putting in extra effort, striving to achieve above-average results or break away from conformity (e.g., according to Kahn, 1990, engagement involves using one's abilities to perform organisational roles and express oneself physically, cognitively, and emotionally during their performance). Third, work engagement can also be seen as a disposition (trait), that is, a tendency to perceive and interpret the world in a certain way. Fourth, work engagement can also be understood as a combination of these approaches, as in Wellins and Concelman's proposal (2005, p. 1, after: Macey, Schneider, 2008, p. 5), who define work engagement as 'a combination of commitment, loyalty, efficiency, and ownership'. Macey and Schneider (2008) note that many definitions of work engagement treat it as a desirable state that serves the organisation, suggests commitment, and is associated with passion, energy, satisfaction, and enthusiasm.

Work engagement may also be considered in the context of the so-called occupational burnout, where it constitutes the opposite pole of the same dimension (Baka, 2013). Work engagement is understood this way by, among others, Maslach and Leiter (2008), who believe that it is an energetic state of involvement in an activity that gives a sense of personal fulfilment, translating into an increased sense of professional effectiveness. In contrast to burnt out employees, engaged employees have a sense of energetic and emotional attachment to their tasks and see themselves as capable of coping with workplace demands and hardships (Chirkowska-Smolak, 2012).

On the other hand, Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzales-Roma, and Bakker (2002) treat engagement not so much as the antithesis of burnout but rather as a separate, complementary dimension. In their opinion, engagement is a positive, rewarding state of mind relating to work. It is a longer lasting affective-cognitive state that does not involve any particular object, event, unit, or behaviour. In this view, work engagement consists of the following factors: vigour, dedication, and absorption. Vigour is a high level of energy and flexibility at work, a willingness to make an effort, and perseverance even when faced with difficulties. Dedication to work is defined by Schaufeli et al. (2002) as a sense of importance of the work, enthusiasm, inspiration, and pride, and an evaluation of work events in terms of a challenge. They describe absorption as full concentration on one's work, complete focus, sense of a rapid passage of time when working, as well as difficulty in getting away from one's work.

Together with burnout, work engagement in Schaufeli et al. (2002)'s concept plays a fundamental role in the job demands-resources model (JD-R: Demerouti et al., 2001). The JD-R model is a heuristic attempt to explain the emergence of work engagement through the interaction of job demands and resources (Bakker, Demerouti, Sanz-Vergel, 2014). This theory suggests that there should be a balance between an individual's resources and the demands they face. In an optimal situation of preserving or accumulating resources, engagement might occur, whereas a situation where demands predominate might lead to burnout. In this view, these resources are: autonomy, social support, opportunities for development, and so forth, as well as the characteristics of the employee themselves, for example, optimism or self-efficacy, while the

demands involve workload, emotional dissonance, unstable work environment, and so forth. (Kulikowski, 2015; Szabowska-Walaszczyk, 2010)

For the purposes of the current study, the operationalised variable is work engagement, understood from perspective of Schaufeli et al. (2002), that is, as a three-factor structure comprising vigour, dedication, and absorption.

OCCUPATIONAL BURNOUT

Occupational burnout is a state of physical and emotional exhaustion caused by excessive demands of the physical or social work environment (Freudenberger, 1974).

According to Maslach (1996, pp. 724-725), who considers it as the opposite pole of work engagement, burnout is “a kind of long-term response to chronic emotional and interpersonal work-related stress,” with the work characterised by a focus on other people. Therefore, due to the presence of strong emotional experiences related to their specific work environment, groups particularly vulnerable to burnout include health care, social services (welfare), mental health, justice, and education workers (Maslach, 1996, 2010).

As was noted above, Schaufeli et al. (2002) treat burnout and engagement as two separate but interdependent constructs. They maintain that the three components of engagement, that is, vigour, dedication, and absorption, correspond in turn to the three symptoms of burnout: exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal achievement.

The creators of the JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001) undertook to develop a theoretical framework for researching burnout also in those occupations that do not directly involve interpersonal contacts. In this model, burnout consists of *exhaustion* and *disengagement*. Exhaustion is considered by the authors of the model on cognitive, emotional, and physical levels. They view disengagement as a lack of interest in and perception of work as insignificant, resulting in distancing from colleagues and clients.

For the authors of the JD-R model (Hrečiński, 2016), the starting point was the assumption that each profession faces specific risk factors which, in the absence of sufficient resources, may contribute to burnout. In other words, if workplace demands (i.e., physical, social, or organisational aspects of work involving specific physiological or psychological costs and requiring an employee to engage their physical and mental capabilities) are excessive and stressful and are accompanied by a lack of sufficient resources (understood as physical, social, or organisational elements of work useful in achieving professional goals, ensuring optimal functioning even in difficult conditions, and stimulating personal development and acquisition of competences), exhaustion and disengagement, that is, occupational burnout, might occur. In this model, the demands include, for example, time pressure, irregular working hours, unfavourable environmental conditions in the workplace (noise, low temperature, etc.), and emotionally absorbing contacts with customers. Regarding resources, they can involve job-related factors (e.g., earnings, opportunities for development, etc.), interpersonal factors (e.g., relationships with coworkers, social support in the workplace, etc.), as well as organizational factors (e.g., the clarity of work roles, participation in decision-making, sense of autonomy, etc.).

For the purposes of the current study, the operationalised variable will be occupational burnout, understood in the perspective of the JD-R model.

POSITIVE ORIENTATION

Positive orientation (POS) is defined as a basic predisposition towards a positive perception of life, future, and self (Alessandri, Caprara, Tisak, 2012). In other words, it is “a general tendency to perceive life experiences with a positive attitude” (Sobol-Kwapińska, 2014, p.77) or simply a positive way of thinking (Łaguna, Oleś, Filipiuk, 2011).

The concept of positive orientation has been formulated quite recently by the Italian psychologist Caprara (2009) and is still receiving increasing interest, in particular because, much like work engagement, it fits into the popular trend of positive psychology (Łaguna et al., 2011; Sobol-Kwapińska, 2014). Caprara’s proposal (2010), which is also based on research in personality psychology, is an attempt to go beyond the five-factor model of personality and to integrate the trait theory with the social-cognitive theory.

The idea of positive orientation grew out of a generalization of the results of empirical studies which showed that variables such as self-esteem, life satisfaction, as well as optimism consistently correlate with each other and form a single factor in factor analyses (Łaguna et al., 2011). The first of these variables, that is, self-esteem, is a positive or negative attitude towards, a global assessment of, and degree of acceptance of the Self (Harter, 1999; Rosenberg, 1965). Life satisfaction can be described as a general evaluation of the various areas and relationships that give meaning to human existence (Diener, 1984). On the other hand, optimism is the view that future personal and social events will abound in good outcomes while bad things will happen rarely (Scheier, Carver, Bridges, 2001). As was mentioned above, results of factor analyses allowed to formulate a hypothesis that there is a common latent variable underneath these variables (Alessandri et al., 2012). The results of statistical analyses indicate that positive orientation explains more variance of such dependent variables as positive and negative affectivity, quality of interpersonal relations, and health status than do self-esteem, life satisfaction, and optimism separately (Caprara, Steca, Alessandri, Abela, McWhinnie, 2010).

Therefore, positive orientation appears to be a higher-order multidimensional construct integrating three components which, in the light of the literature, are related to wellbeing and success in many different areas of human functioning, such as health, academic achievement, or productivity at work (Alessandri et al., 2012). However, from a theoretical point of view, the inspiration for this concept was an attempt to define the variables which could become the antithesis of Beck’s depressive cognitive triad (1967), which consists of negative beliefs about self, the world, and the future. Therefore, positive orientation means a natural inclination towards a positive self-esteem, high life satisfaction, and a high estimation of the chances of achieving personal goals, which, translating into a commitment to fulfilling life goals and a high evaluation of quality of life, is largely responsible for individual adaptive functioning (Caprara, 2009; Caprara et al., 2012). In Caprara’s opinion (2009), supported by empirical results, positive orientation is an inborn, genetically conditioned, and relatively stable personality trait (most strongly associated with the following three features of the Big Five model: positively with extraversion and conscientiousness, and negatively with neuroticism, Miciuk, Jankowski, Laskowska, Oleś, 2016), which promotes coping despite failures, adversities, and the inevitable prospect of death (Caprara et al., 2012).

Positive orientation can be defined as a personal resource, and perhaps even a meta-resource, that is, a superior resource optimising the performance of other resources

(Kaczmarek, 2006). Researchers describe positive orientation in terms of a potential for optimal functioning (Caprara, 2009), a predisposition contributing significantly to adaptation and achievements in various areas of life (Caprara, 2009), an element of human capital (Krysa, Łaguna, Kistelska, 2014), or an individual adaptative resource (Alessandri, Borgogni, Schaufeli, Caprara, Consiglio, 2014).

With reference to the assumptions of the JD-R model, it can be assumed that positive orientation, considered as a resource, can contribute to engagement and, buffering the negative impact of stress, reduce the likelihood of burnout.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The aim of the current study was to first establish the relationship between work engagement, occupational burnout, and positive orientation of teachers at different educational stages. A second aim was to examine whether positive orientation mediates the relationship between work engagement and burnout. This constituted an empirical attempt to verify the assumption of the buffering role of resources in the JD-R model.

The following hypotheses were put forward:

- H1. Work engagement is negatively related to occupational burnout.
- H2. Work engagement is positively related to positive orientation.
- H3. Positive orientation is negatively related to occupational burnout.
- H4. Positive orientation mediates the relationship between work engagement and occupational burnout.

The first hypothesis (H1) on the negative correlation between work engagement and burnout was based on the results of studies carried out by Schaufeli, Taris, and van Rhenen (2008), which proved that the correlation between work engagement and burnout was $r = -.65$. Almost identical results ($r = -.66$, $p < .001$) were also reported by Baka (2013).

The second hypothesis (H2) on the positive relationship between work engagement and positive orientation was based on the results of Alessandri et al. (2014), who reported a correlation between the two variables of $r = .51$, $p < .01$.

The third hypothesis (H3) concerned the negative relationship between positive orientation and burnout. It was based on results showing that all three components of positive orientation, namely, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and optimism, are negatively correlated with burnout. For example: Koeske and Kelly (1995) reported a negative relationship between self-esteem and burnout ($r = -.24$, $p < .05$), while in a study of restaurant managers, Hayes and Weathington (2007) showed that both optimism and life satisfaction correlated negatively with burnout ($r = -.299$, $p < .01$ and $r = -.258$, $p < .01$ respectively).

Next, it was anticipated that positive orientation as a personal meta-resource would mediate the relationship between work engagement and burnout (H4). In line with the JD-R model, the optimal level of resources available to an employee enables them to meet the difficulties and demands of their work, which may lead to the development of work engagement and a significant reduction of the risk of burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001). Notably, this model has been confirmed in studies carried out in several European countries (Derbis, Baka, 2011), including Poland (e.g., Baka, 2013). The assumption of the mediating role of positive orientation was derived indirectly

from the research of Chang, Lu, Chyi, Hsu, Chan, and Wang (2017), who studied a sample of 300 student athletes and showed that four types of negative beliefs being the antithesis of positive orientation, namely, a sense of personal inadequacy and a desire to change oneself, a negative self-image, resignation and helplessness, as well as negative expectations, partially mediated the relationship between life stress and burnout. Moreover, the results of the analysis of nineteen studies on mental hardiness (i.e., a meta-resource that enables optimal functioning, similarly to positive orientation) indicate that the direct effect of hardiness on health and well-being is documented much more frequently than the moderating effect (Funk, 1992, qtd. in: Baka 2013).

METHOD

Materials

Work engagement (explanatory variable) measure: The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), created by Schaufel et al. (2002). The UWES was adapted into Polish by Szabowska-Walaszczyk, Zawadzka, and Wojtaś (2011). It consists of seventeen items measuring the three factors of work engagement – vigour, dedication, and absorption. Responses are given on a seven-point scale, where 0 means ‘never’ and 6 means ‘every day’. The psychometric properties of the Polish version have been assessed on two samples, of 199 and 111 people respectively. The questionnaire proved to be reliable ($\alpha = .94-.95$) and valid (confirmed links with personal values, life satisfaction, and perception of resources in the organisation), although the results obtained were in favour of a single-actor structure (Szabowska-Walaszczyk et al., 2011). In the current study, the analyses utilized the global index of work engagement, which was $\alpha = .92$.

Occupational burnout measure (explained variable): The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI), created by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli (2001), adapted into Polish by Baka and Basinska (2016). This questionnaire consists of sixteen items measuring two factors of burnout – exhaustion and disengagement, which together give an aggregate burnout index. There are eight items for each of the two subscales. Answers are given on a four-point scale, where 1 stands for ‘I agree’ and 4 for ‘I disagree’. The psychometric properties of the Polish version of the OLBI were assessed on three independent samples, totaling 2216 people. Results revealed that the questionnaire has a two-factor structure (exhaustion and disengagement), shows satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha = .73$ and $\alpha = .69$ respectively) and reliability ($r_{tt} = .73$ and $r_{tt} = .67$ respectively), and meets the criteria of theoretical validity (Baka, Basińska, 2016). Only the global index of occupational burnout ($\alpha = .86$) was used in the analyses.

Positive orientation measure (mediation variable): Positivity Scale (P-Scale), created to shorten, simplify, and aggregate the measurement of three variables – life satisfaction, self-esteem, and optimism, which together constitute the positive orientation (Caprara, Alessandri, Eisenberg et al., 2012). This tool was adapted into Polish by Łaguna, Oleś, and Filipiuk (2011). It consists of eight diagnostic items that form one dimension. The answers are given on a five-point scale, where 1 means ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 means ‘strongly agree.’ The psychometric properties of the Polish version of the P-Scale were assessed on a sample of 905 people. This tool has a single-factor struc-

ture and shows satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha = .77-.84$), reliability ($rtt = .84$), and confirmed convergent validity (Łaguna et al, 2011). In the analyses presented in this article, Cronbach's alpha for the P-Scale was $\alpha = .82$.

Participants

Data gathering for the current study was conducted from April to June 2017 in seven schools located in the Lubuskie and Opole voivodeships. The research was based on questionnaires and was carried out voluntarily and anonymously.

The sample included 106 teachers from grades 1 to 6 of primary schools ($n = 57$; 53.77%) and from grades 1 to 3 of middle schools ($n = 49$; 46.23%). The vast majority of the respondents were women ($n = 89$; 83.96%). The age of the respondents ranged from 26 to 60 years ($M = 43.19$; $SD = 9.21$). All of the respondents had higher education (except for two cases of lack of data; 1.89%). Seniority in the profession ranged from 1 year to 36 years ($M = 18.96$; $SD = 10.03$). On average, the teachers spent over 34 hours per week ($SD = 8.45$) to fulfil their professional duties at school and at home.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis (H1) expected that work engagement would be negatively associated with occupational burnout.

In the study presented in the current article, the correlation between work engagement and burnout was $r = -.51$; $p < .001$. This means that the first hypothesis (H1) was confirmed.

The relationship is strong, although the study by Baka (2013) indicated an $r = -.66$, $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis (H2) expected work engagement to be positively related to positive orientation.

The statistical analysis showed that the correlation between work engagement and positive orientation was $r = .37$; $p < .001$, which means that the second hypothesis (H2) was also confirmed.

The strength of the correlation was average. For comparison: in the study by Alessandri et al. (2014), the correlation between work engagement and positive orientation was $r = .51$, $p < .01$.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis (H3) assumed that positive orientation will be positively related to occupational burnout.

In the current study, the relationship between positive orientation and burnout was $r = -.52$; $p < .001$, which means that the third hypothesis (H3) was also con-

firmed. The strength of this correlation is the strongest of all the correlations obtained in the current study.

Table 1 contains the means, standard deviations, and Pearson's r values for work engagement, burnout, and positive orientation (H1, H2, and H3).

TABLE 1
Correlation matrix of the explanatory, explained, and mediating variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
EXPLANATORY VARIABLE					
1. Work engagement	4.57	.79	–	–.51***	.37***
EXPLAINED VARIABLE					
2. Occupational burnout	2.09	.51	–.51***	–	–.52***
MEDIATING VARIABLE					
3. Positive orientation	30.32	4.90	.37***	–.52***	–

*** $p < .001$

Source: own work.

Hypothesis 4

In the fourth hypothesis (H4), positive orientation was expected to mediate the relationship between work engagement and occupational burnout.

It should be noted that if the moderation effect relates more to the conditions under which the explanatory variable interacts with the explained variable and answers the question of when this interaction occurs, then the mediation effect relates rather to the mechanisms behind it and answers the question of how this effect occurs (Baka, 2013).

In order to verify this hypothesis (H4), the statistical procedure proposed by the Baron and Kenny (1986) was used. It is a four-stage method of mediation testing using regression analysis. The first step verifies whether the independent variable (X) is a predictor of the dependent variable (Y) (path c). The second step verifies whether the independent variable (X) is the predictor of the mediator (M) (path a). The third step verifies whether the mediator (M) is the predictor of the dependent variable (Y) when controlling for the independent variable (path b). The fourth step verifies whether the independent variable (X) is the predictor of the dependent variable (Y) when controlling for the mediator (M) (path c'). In order for the mediation effect to occur, the conditions of statistical significance of the β value of paths a and b should be met, together with the situation in which the β value of path c is greater than path c'. The authors also stress that if the β value of the dependent variable when controlling for the mediator is close to or equal to zero, it indicates the influence of a single, dominant mediator, and if not – it indicates the influence of many mediating factors (which is closer to reality, as most psychologists [also social psychologists] point to the multiplicity of causal factors when explaining a given phenomenon). Additionally, the mediation effect can be checked with the Sobel test.

The results of the analyses are shown in Table 2.

The calculations show that all of the analyzed paths, as well as the Sobel test result, are statistically significant. This means that the relationship between work en-

TABLE 2

β Regression coefficients in the model of the relationship between work engagement and occupational burnout with positive orientation as a mediator

X – Work engagement Y – Occupational burnout M – Positive orientation	<i>β</i>
Mediation paths	
X → Y (c)	-.51***
X → M (a)	.37***
M(X) → Y (b)	-.38***
X(M) → Y (c')	-.37***
Sobel test	<i>z</i> = -3.06**

***p* < .01; *** *p* < .001

Source: own work.

agement and burnout is mediated by positive orientation. Thus, the fourth hypothesis (H4) was also confirmed. As can be seen, the JD-R model once again (previously – e.g., Baka, 2013) finds application in the Polish labor market conditions.

However, noting the the *β* value of path *c'*, it can be concluded that partial mediation occurred in this case. Regarding the remaining effect sizes of the multiple regression analysis of path *c'*, the obtained model ($F(2,103) = 32.47; p < .001, t(2,103) = 15.17; p < .001$) explained about 39% of the obtained variance of the independent variable ($R^2 = .39$), that is, 13% more than for path *c* ($R^2 = .26$).

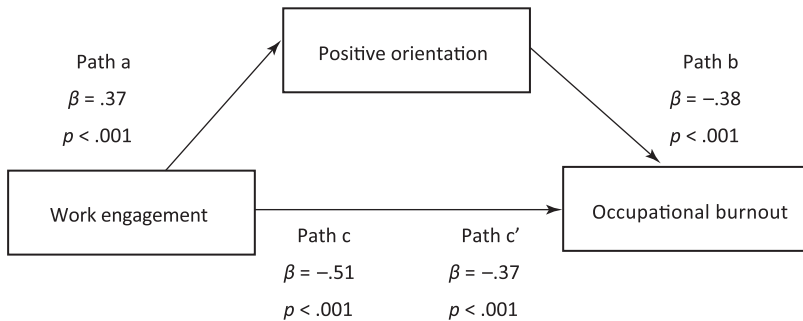


FIGURE 1. Positive orientation as a mediator of the relationship between work engagement and occupational burnout.

Source: own work.

OWN RESEARCH DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The overarching aim of the current research was an attempt to empirically verify the theory of the buffering role of resources in the job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001) in the group of teachers in grades 1-6 of primary schools and grades 1-3 of middle schools. The study established the relationship between work engagement, occupational burnout, and positive orientation. It also investigated whether

positive orientation mediates the relationship between work engagement and burnout. The results obtained confirmed all the hypotheses put forward. The findings indicate that work engagement is negatively associated with occupational burnout (H1), which is consistent with the results of previous studies (e.g. Baka, 2013; Schaufeli et al., 2008). However, positive orientation is positively related with work engagement (H2), which is consistent with the results of research by Alessandri et al. (2014). It was also revealed that positive orientation correlates negatively with occupational burnout (H3), as indicated by, for instance, Koeske and Kelly (1995), which showed a negative relationship between self-esteem and professional burnout. In turn, a study by Hayes and Weathington (2007) showed that both optimism and life satisfaction correlate negatively with burnout. The statistical analyses confirmed the mediating role of positive orientation in the relation between work engagement and burnout (H4). This finding is important for several reasons. First, it provides empirical support for the JD-R model (also in Polish conditions), which suggests that the appropriate resources available to the employee enable them to face the requirements and difficulties of their work, which contributes to the development of engagement and mitigation of the risk of occupational burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001). Second, as noted by Wojciszke (2009), finding a mediator of a given relationship is equivalent to determining the reasons for its occurrence. However, partial mediation was observed in the current research, which indicates that positive orientation is not the only mediator of the relationship between work engagement and burnout, and the question about the other mediators remains open. However, the mediating role of positive orientation in the relationship between engagement and burnout should not be particularly surprising if one takes Beck's cognitive triad (1967) as a starting point. In this case, considering positive orientation as the antithesis of this triad (high self-esteem, life satisfaction, and optimism *vs.* negative beliefs about the self, the world, and the future) and occupational burnout as a variant of a depressive disorder (e.g., Bianchi, Schonfeld, and Laurent, 2015), it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that positive orientation may appear to be an effective means of defense against – as Maslach and Leiter (2011) put it – “the disease of the soul”. Third, increasing self-esteem, life satisfaction, and optimism (components of positive orientation) can therefore be considered an important factor in both the prevention and treatment of occupational burnout. Cognitive-behavioral therapy may also prove useful. Its effectiveness in treating various disorders (including depression and anxiety) has been scientifically proven (Roth and Fonagy, 2004; after: Briers, 2011). Therefore, there is high probability that this type of therapy (and/or different types of trainings or workshops which implement its assumptions, methods, and techniques) will prove helpful in increasing professional productivity and deriving authentic joy and satisfaction from work, making it an important part in life, preventing the feeling of emotional exhaustion.

The current research is not free of certain limitations which weaken their external validity and require some caution in interpreting the results. One of them is a relatively small sample, numbering 106 people. The second is the uneven distribution of the sample in terms of gender. As we know, teaching is a mostly female-driven profession, so the obtained results should not be generalized to the male population. One might argue that the research presented here may also be limited due to only two types of schools – primary and middle – being taken into consideration. Also, a non-random selection of the sample indicates that the obtained results should be treated with caution. Moreover, only self-description measures were used in the study, which, accord-

ing to the author, may create at least two types of problems. First, the respondents may easily deduce the aim of the study and may not want to give accurate information about themselves (e.g., due to shame). The respondents may exhibit self-presentation tendencies, as a result of which they will present themselves in a better light (admitting to being burnt out, even before themselves, can be difficult because it generates a sense of personal failure and unsuitability for the profession). Fearing that the head of their school might see their questionnaires (even though the data collection was anonymous), some of the respondents may have given dishonest answers. In addition, the questionnaires could mostly have been completed by teachers who were motivated (and willing to help), and not by those showing symptoms of burnout (as the study revealed there were more teachers with higher levels of engagement than burnout). Second, it should be kept in mind that the answers obtained in the current study are subjective and, as Nisbett and Wilson (1977) claim, people's introspective skills are severely limited because they are generally unable to adequately describe their mental states and processes.

It should be noted that the statistical analyses were conducted on the basis of the results of cross-sectional rather than longitudinal or experimental research. Baka (2013) indicates that both work engagement and occupational burnout are dynamic processes that develop as a result of long-term influences, therefore, only longitudinal research, which would be more advisable from the point of view of the subject matter of the current article, provides an insight into the dynamics of their development and mutual influences.

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Transl. Jarosław Woś, Piotr Kałowski