

PROFESSIONAL (EMOTIONAL) BURNOUT AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION PEDAGOGUES: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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Jumaniyazova Tupajon Alimovna

Assistant, Urgench State Medical Institute, Urgench, Uzbekistan

tubaxanum@gmail.com

Abstract

This study presents a descriptive analysis of professional (emotional) burnout among higher education pedagogues based on survey data obtained from 89 respondents. The increasing intensity of pedagogical work, combined with sustained cognitive and emotional demands, makes professional burnout a relevant issue in higher education institutions. The purpose of the study was to identify the prevalence and general characteristics of professional (emotional) burnout manifestations among pedagogues.

Data were collected using a questionnaire designed to assess key components of burnout, including emotional exhaustion, professional fatigue, and emotional detachment. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, with results presented in frequencies and percentages.

The findings indicate that professional (emotional) burnout is present among pedagogues at varying levels, with a predominance of moderate manifestations. A notable proportion of respondents also demonstrated high levels of emotional exhaustion and professional fatigue, suggesting a potential risk for the development of more severe burnout symptoms. At the same time, the presence of respondents with low burnout levels highlights individual differences in professional adaptation.

The results provide a realistic picture of burnout tendencies among higher education pedagogues and emphasize the importance of early identification of moderate burnout manifestations. The descriptive nature of the study limits broad generalization; however, the findings may serve as a basis for further empirical research and the development of preventive measures aimed at supporting pedagogues' professional well-being.

Keywords

professional (emotional) burnout, higher education pedagogues, emotional exhaustion, professional fatigue, emotional detachment, descriptive study, pedagogical profession, occupational stress.

Introduction

In recent years, the problem of professional (emotional) burnout has become one of the most pressing issues in the field of higher education. The increasing intensity of pedagogical work, constant intellectual load, emotional involvement in the educational process, and growing institutional demands significantly affect the psychological well-being of pedagogues. As a result, professional burnout is increasingly viewed not only as an individual psychological problem but also as a factor influencing the quality and sustainability of higher education systems.

Professional (emotional) burnout among pedagogues manifests itself through emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and a decline in professional engagement. These manifestations negatively affect pedagogues' professional performance, interpersonal interactions, and overall job satisfaction. In higher education institutions, where pedagogues are required to combine teaching, research, and organizational responsibilities, the risk of emotional burnout becomes particularly pronounced.

Scientific studies indicate that prolonged exposure to stressors in professional activity contributes to the gradual development of burnout symptoms. However, despite the growing body of research on emotional burnout, much of the existing literature focuses on general educational contexts or school-level pedagogy. The specific conditions of higher education pedagogues' professional activity and their emotional well-being remain insufficiently explored, especially in empirical studies based on real survey data.

Moreover, many studies emphasize theoretical interpretations of burnout, while descriptive empirical evidence reflecting the actual state of professional (emotional) burnout among higher education pedagogues is limited. This creates a research gap in understanding the current tendencies and manifestations of burnout in higher education institutions.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to descriptively analyze the level and characteristics of professional (emotional) burnout among higher education pedagogues based on survey data. The findings of this study aim to contribute to a clearer understanding of burnout tendencies and to provide a basis for further research and preventive strategies in higher education.

Methods

Participants

The empirical study involved 89 higher education pedagogues representing different academic disciplines and varying lengths of professional experience. All participants were actively engaged in teaching activities at higher education

institutions at the time of data collection. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and the confidentiality of their responses.

The sample was formed based on the availability of completed and valid questionnaires. Although the sample size limits the possibility of broad generalization, it is sufficient for conducting descriptive statistical analysis aimed at identifying prevailing tendencies in professional (emotional) burnout among higher education pedagogues.

Research Instrument

To assess the level of professional (emotional) burnout, a questionnaire on professional (emotional) burnout was used. The instrument included a set of structured items designed to capture key manifestations of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion, professional fatigue, and reduced emotional involvement in professional activity. Respondents evaluated each statement based on their personal experience.

The questionnaire format allowed for quantitative processing of responses and identification of general trends related to emotional burnout in pedagogical activity.

Procedure

Data collection was carried out through an anonymous survey. Respondents completed the questionnaire individually, without time restrictions, which helped reduce external pressure and increase the reliability of responses. No personal identifying information was collected, ensuring the ethical integrity of the study.

The survey was conducted under standard conditions, and all completed questionnaires were included in the analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were processed using **descriptive statistical methods**. Frequency and percentage distributions were calculated to identify the prevalence of professional (emotional) burnout indicators among respondents. The analysis focused on describing general tendencies rather than establishing causal relationships.

Inferential statistical methods were not applied due to the descriptive nature of the study and the sample size. The results were presented in tabular form to enhance clarity and facilitate interpretation.

RESULTS

The descriptive statistical analysis of the survey data made it possible to identify the general tendencies of professional (emotional) burnout among higher

education pedagogues. The results reflect the prevalence and distribution of burnout manifestations within the studied group of respondents.

General level of professional (emotional) burnout

The analysis showed that professional (emotional) burnout is present among a significant proportion of respondents to varying degrees. Most pedagogues demonstrated moderate manifestations of emotional exhaustion and professional fatigue, while a smaller proportion reported low or high levels of burnout indicators.

Table 1

Distribution of respondents according to the level of professional (emotional) burnout (n = 89)

Level of burnout	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Low level	21	23.6
Moderate level	47	52.8
High level	21	23.6
Total	89	100

The data indicate that more than half of the respondents fall into the moderate burnout category, suggesting a stable presence of emotional strain within professional activity. At the same time, nearly one quarter of the pedagogues demonstrate a high level of burnout symptoms.

Emotional exhaustion indicators

Emotional exhaustion was identified as one of the most pronounced components of professional burnout. Respondents frequently reported feelings of fatigue, emotional depletion, and reduced energy after performing professional duties.

Table 2

Levels of emotional exhaustion among respondents

emotional exhaustion level	umber of respondents	ercentage (%)
ow	5	3.1
oderate	4	9.4
igh	0	2.5
otal	9	10

The results demonstrate that almost half of the pedagogues experience a moderate level of emotional exhaustion, while more than one fifth report high exhaustion levels. This indicates a persistent emotional load associated with pedagogical activity in higher education.

Professional fatigue and emotional detachment

Professional fatigue and emotional detachment were also observed among respondents. These manifestations are reflected in reduced emotional involvement in professional tasks and decreased enthusiasm for pedagogical work.

Table 3

Indicators of professional fatigue and emotional detachment

Level	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Low	29	32.6
Moderate	41	46.1
High	19	21.3
Total	89	100

The predominance of moderate indicators suggests that professional fatigue develops gradually and may remain unrecognized by pedagogues until it reaches a more severe stage.

Summary of results

Overall, the results indicate that professional (emotional) burnout among higher education pedagogues is characterized by a predominance of moderate manifestations, with a notable proportion of respondents demonstrating high levels of burnout-related symptoms. Emotional exhaustion and professional fatigue appear to be the most common components of burnout within the studied group.

The obtained results provide a descriptive picture of burnout tendencies and serve as a basis for further interpretation and discussion.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data presented in Tables 1–3 indicates that professional (emotional) burnout is a relevant issue among higher education pedagogues and manifests itself at different levels of intensity. The predominance of a moderate level of burnout shown in Table 1 suggests that emotional strain is a common and relatively stable component of professional pedagogical activity rather than an acute or sporadic phenomenon.

The presence of respondents with high burnout levels, as reflected in Table 1, indicates that a considerable proportion of pedagogues experience pronounced emotional and professional difficulties. At the same time, the existence of a group with low burnout levels points to individual differences in professional adaptation and coping strategies. These findings support the interpretation of burnout as a multidimensional and non-uniform phenomenon within higher education pedagogy.

The results related to emotional exhaustion (Table 2) demonstrate that this component constitutes one of the central manifestations of professional burnout. The dominance of moderate levels of emotional exhaustion suggests that many pedagogues continue to perform their professional duties under conditions of persistent fatigue and emotional depletion. However, the notable share of respondents with high emotional exhaustion indicates an increased risk of further deterioration in emotional well-being if preventive measures are not applied.

The indicators of professional fatigue and emotional detachment presented in Table 3 further confirm the gradual nature of burnout development. The predominance of moderate indicators implies that emotional distancing from professional tasks may initially function as a coping mechanism. Over time, such distancing can reduce professional engagement and negatively affect job satisfaction, potentially leading to more severe burnout manifestations.

Taken together, the data in Tables 1–3 suggest that professional (emotional) burnout among higher education pedagogues develops progressively and is characterized by a continuum from low to high intensity. Emotional exhaustion and professional fatigue appear to be interrelated components that reinforce each other within the structure of burnout.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results emphasize the importance of early identification of moderate burnout manifestations. Since the majority of respondents demonstrate moderate levels across the analyzed indicators, timely preventive interventions may help limit the progression toward more severe burnout states. The descriptive nature of the findings provides a realistic picture of burnout tendencies and creates a foundation for further empirical research focused on prevention and support mechanisms in higher education institutions.

CONCLUSION

The present study provides a descriptive overview of professional (emotional) burnout among higher education pedagogues based on survey data obtained from 89 respondents. The results demonstrate that burnout is not an isolated or marginal phenomenon but represents a stable tendency within pedagogical professional activity.

The predominance of moderate levels of professional (emotional) burnout identified in the study indicates that many pedagogues experience persistent emotional strain while continuing to fulfill their professional responsibilities. At the same time, the presence of respondents with high burnout levels highlights the risk of more severe emotional and professional difficulties if such conditions remain unaddressed.

The analysis of emotional exhaustion and professional fatigue confirms that these components constitute the core structure of burnout. Emotional exhaustion appears to be closely linked with professional fatigue and emotional detachment, suggesting that burnout develops as a gradual and cumulative process rather than as an abrupt reaction to professional demands.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings emphasize the importance of early identification of moderate burnout manifestations. Since moderate levels were most prevalent across all analyzed indicators, timely preventive and supportive measures may help reduce the progression toward more severe burnout states. Such measures may include psychological support, workload regulation, and the development of coping and self-regulation skills among pedagogues.

The descriptive nature of the study limits the possibility of broad generalization; however, the obtained results provide a realistic picture of burnout tendencies within the studied group. The findings may serve as a basis for further empirical research employing larger samples and inferential statistical methods, as well as for the development of targeted interventions aimed at supporting the professional well-being of higher education pedagogues.

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