Professional burnout during turbulent times: one-year follow-up study in four occupations

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Aim

The one-year follow-up study aimed to examine professional burnout among four occupations in Poland:

• teachers,
• nurses,
• civil servants,
• IT specialists.

RQ: Are changes in burnout during times of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity due to the Covid-19 pandemic universal or rather job-specific?

H: The level of burnout increases, although the amount of change depends on the professional group.
Burnout defined in terms of primary and secondary symptoms (Schaufeli, De Witte, & Desart, 2019)

**CORE SYMPTOMS**
- Exhaustion
- Cognitive impairment
- Emotional impairment

**SECONDARY SYMPTOMS**
- Mental distance
- Psychological distress
- Psychosomatic complaints

**Inability to work**
**Unwillingness to work**
Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME 1</th>
<th>TIME 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2019</td>
<td>March 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2019</td>
<td>May 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 4, 2020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Covid-19 pandemic: conditions both at work and outside work characterised even more than before by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.
The timeline of the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March 4</th>
<th>March 11</th>
<th>March 15</th>
<th>March 24</th>
<th>until May 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>patient zero</td>
<td>closing of schools</td>
<td>closing of national borders</td>
<td>prohibition of mobility</td>
<td>hard lockdown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Red = infections
Black = deaths
Green = recovered

https://koronawirusunas.pl/
Pandemic in Poland: daily data

https://koronawirusunas.pl/
Sample and changes at work duties

**Sample:** N = 1201 (time 1) and N = 821 (time 2)
Age: 42±10.2 years; Job tenure: 19±10.9 years
Women 66% of the sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IT specialists</th>
<th>Nurses</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Civil servants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1 (N = 1201)</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2 (N = 821)</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-out rate</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IT specialists: higher workload due to new demands caused by the pandemic (digital transformation)
Nurses: tele-counselling, perceived higher direct health threat and lack of protective measures
Teachers: impromptu remote teaching without sufficient support
Civil servants: reduction of personal contacts, online service for citizens and new procedures
Method and statistical analysis

1. Bifactor model for BAT-C and BAT-S:

2. Reliability: $\alpha$-Cronbach > .80

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EX</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>EI</th>
<th>BAT-C (23)</th>
<th>DS</th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>BAT-S (10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. MAN(C)OVA test

Model:

Interaction time (one-year lag for BAT) and occupation (4 groups)

Control variable: gender, age and job tenure
BAT-23

Civil servants (orange), Teachers (blue), Nurses (red), IT (green)

Wilks’ Lambda = 0.97
F = 7.27 p < .001

Time1: burnout is higher in civil servants than among IT specialists (p < .001)
BAT-23: core symptoms

time*occupation: Wilks’ Lambda = 0.96 F = 2.83 p = .001

Exhaustion

Mental distance

Civil servants
Teachers
Nurses
IT

Civil servants*
Teachers*
IT*
BAT-23: core symptoms

Cognitive impairment

Emotional impairment

Civil servants
Teachers
Nurses
IT
BAT: secondary symptoms

time*occupation: Wilks’ Lambda = 0.99  F = 1.84  p = .089

Psychological distress

Psychosomatic complaints

Civil servants*
Techers*
Nurses*
IT*
### Job burnout: summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Core symptoms</th>
<th>Secondary symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EX</td>
<td>MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil servants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

• Job burnout is a multifaceted phenomenon that is related to changing job conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

• Benefits:
  • less workload and fewer personal contacts were beneficial for civil servants and teachers

• Detriments:
  • more workload for IT specialists
  • more distress for nurses

• Benefits and costs are not equally distributed across occupations, which requires further research as well as a proper reorientation of practical interventions, including the prevention of burnout.

• Rather than universal factors, occupation specific demands and resources may be of crucial importance for burnout.
Thank you!

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