

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT

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Professional burnout is a widespread phenomenon, especially among employees in people-centered professions. In such professions, dominant norms may include selflessness, readiness to prioritize the needs of others, working long hours, and doing everything possible to assist clients, patients, or students. Work conditions are often characterized by high demands and limited resources. Professional burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

Currently, numerous organizational risk factors for various professions are known. C. Maslach identifies six factors: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values. Excessive workload reduces employees' ability to meet job demands as they lack opportunities to rest, recover, and regain balance. When employees can exercise professional autonomy and access the necessary resources for effective job performance, they are more likely to experience job engagement. Insufficient recognition and rewards (financial, institutional, or social) increase individuals' vulnerability to burnout, as they devalue both the work and the employees. Social connectedness is crucial: when workplace relationships lack support and trust, the risk of burnout increases. Employees in organizations where management decisions are perceived as unfair, where there is a gap between personal and organizational values, and where workers must compromise between the work they want to do and the work they must do, are at higher risk of burnout.

Individuals experiencing burnout can negatively affect their colleagues, cause personal conflicts, and disrupt task completion. The importance of social relationships in preventing burnout is now widely recognized. Burnout should be considered a characteristic of workgroups rather than merely an individual syndrome [1].

There is growing interest in analyzing gender differences in professional burnout, as men and women exhibit different response patterns to workplace stressors. Empirical research on this issue has yielded conflicting results.

In 2010, a meta-analysis of studies on the relationship between gender and professional burnout was conducted. It disproved the widely held belief that women experience burnout more frequently than men. Research findings indicate that women are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion, whereas men are more prone to depersonalization. This may be linked to differences in gender roles, social

expectations, and coping strategies. Women typically perform more emotionally exhausting work, especially in caregiving or educational professions, increasing their risk of emotional burnout [2].

An interesting study on gender differences in professional burnout among university staff involved 1040 participants (549 men and 491 women). The results showed no differences between men and women in levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. However, it was confirmed that women reported a lower sense of personal accomplishment than their male colleagues. There was also a difference in coping mechanisms: women had a wider range of social relationships than men and utilized them to manage exhaustion. Workplace injustice toward women may contribute to their lower sense of personal accomplishment [3].

The type of professional activity also plays a role. For example, in education, healthcare, and social work—fields dominated by women—job requirements often include emotional interactions with clients, increasing the risk of emotional exhaustion. Meanwhile, men working in technical or administrative fields are more likely to experience stress related to performance pressure, which can contribute to depersonalization.

To reduce the impact of gender factors on professional burnout, gender-sensitive stress management strategies should be developed. For instance, programs supporting emotional well-being and training on managing emotions in stressful situations should be implemented. Additionally, work conditions should be improved by reducing the number of emotionally draining tasks and ensuring a balance between professional demands and personal life.

Thus, studying gender differences in professional burnout is a crucial area of contemporary empirical research in organizational psychology. Recognizing these differences enables the development of more effective approaches to preventing and treating professional burnout, considering the unique needs of men and women. Further research in this area could significantly enhance our understanding of gender's role in professional burnout and contribute to the development of gender-sensitive interventions.

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