

THE PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT OF DOCTORS AND STRESS IN LIGHT OF THE CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES THEORY

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The researchers have discussed the phenomenon of the professional burnout in the psychological literature for over thirty years. Yet, it remains unknown what its essence is and what causes its emergence. A common definition of the phenomenon has not been elaborated so far either, but the authors agree that it is a complex of three different psychological phenomena. A key phenomenon, which starts the whole process, is the psychophysical and emotional exhaustion. The two remaining components are described not as much unambiguously. According to Maslach, these are depersonalization and a sense of lowered personal achievements. A significant cause of the burnout is the loss of resources. According to the Hobfoll conservation of resources theory, the burnout syndrome is defined as a process of expenditure, loss and run-down developing gradually in time and occurring when the restoration of the resources in the form of cognitive, emotional and physical abilities, cannot take place. It is the loss spiral, in which individuals has been „caught”, because their resources are threatened, lost or restored not enough and additional personal resources (stamina, social abilities) have to be expended to manage the stress. The doctors constitute one of the occupational groups most exposed to the burnout, which is confirmed by numerous research. The demanding attitudes of patients, lack of social support, and psychophysical fatigue constitute only a few causes of the burnout of the doctors. In the Polish conditions, additional difficulties arise of the economical nature – low salaries and the necessity of working on several jobs. The presented research on the relationship between the professional burnout and stress has been conducted among the group of Polish doctors of various specialties. The results obtained have been compared with the control group, constituted by individuals of occupations of a low professional burnout risk.