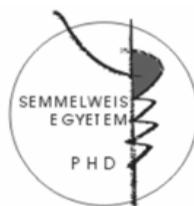


Sport, career choice and the mental wellbeing among  
professionals of pedagogy and education

Doctoral theses

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## 1. Introduction

Mental hygiene is considered to be one of the key tools in preventing damages caused by civilisation and urban factors...it is viewed as a primary prevention technique but an even more exciting aspect of the issue is the impact of body culture exerted on our mental health. (Frenkl, 2003).

Those working in the field of education and pedagogy have to spend most of their time dealing with adults and children's emotive reaction, its origin and effect. They should know those factors which help or hinder the process of education, their job and the methods of how to overcome these difficulties consciously while are still able to be mentally and emotionally fit both in their job and their private lives.

Regarding human services jobs, the main working tool is the own personality. On the one hand, they should help on others, but a similarly important thing is that they should also keep themselves in good condition. People's emotional life is not only a private matter – it has an influence on others, and others, their circumstances, life-leading affects their own mental self.

Many researches, experiences are available for demonstrating mental health and burnout, their components, proportion, parts and a lot of publications deal with the exploration and analysis of human services jobs' harmful factors. A great part of them can be linked to two main fields: the fields of workers in healthcare and medical attendance, doctors, nurses, and the fields of social workers. Relatively few overall publications can be read about the mental health of teachers, though, nowadays the changes in economy, society and education would make this question really current.

The narrowing sources in the field of education, the decrease of normative assistance about students, the minimizing of special, non-state institutions' support, the reduction in students numbers, the increasing of students' numbers in each class, the growing of teachers' lesson numbers, and as a result, the closing of schools have an effect on the duties of professionals working on the fields of education and pedagogy.

Furthermore, role-losing problems are also perceptible among workers, dealing with professional jobs in educational-pedagogical institutions.

Today's educational question is that teacher-training in the Bologna-system becomes longer, since they can just finish university with two degrees, after the master training.

In my research, I intend to analyze the situation of teachers and those hazardous factors which affect their mental health.

I aim to find answers for the following questions:

- how can the formation and motivation of their career choice help their everyday work and their empathy?
- what is their mental health like and how much their private life, workplace, environment influence it?
- what is the degree of signs of burnout and what are the possibilities in their profession for the regeneration and maintenance of their mental wellbeing?
- how can sport help the maintenance of their mental wellbeing?

## **2. The aim of the research**

The aim of the research is studying whether the advantageous effects of doing sports and regular exercises contribute to the maintenance of mental wellbeing and reduction of the likelihood of burnout, regarding teaching professionals working on the field of pedagogy and education, or not.

A further aim is studying the factors, especially motivation in the choice of career, sport, parents' perceived rearing attitude and professional model, which influence the mental wellbeing and burnout in case of teaching professionals working on the field of pedagogy and education.

My additional aim is studying the degree of how much the possibilities of mental hygienic state maintenance and burnout reduction are known among teaching professionals; furthermore, studying whether they require taking advantages of them or not.

### **3. Hypotheses**

Based on my research questions, I hypothesize the followings:

1. Those teaching professionals working on the field of pedagogy and education, who do sports on a daily basis or do exercises regularly, tend to be mentally healthier and the likelihood of burnout is lower among them than among those teaching professionals who do not do sports on a daily basis.

2. Warm-hearted, protecting, cooperative parental upbringing attitude affects the human services jobs of teaching professionals much more positively than the cold, refusal parental raising style.

3. Teaching profession, chosen by parental model, affects the mental wellbeing of teaching professionals more positively, than the one with the lack of parental pattern.

An additional goal is to find evidence that the adequate parental pattern, regarding sports, affects the mental hygienic state at adulthood.

4. Those professionals working on the field of pedagogy and education whose childhood interests and work-priority correspond to their present work style and work-interest are less likely to suffer from burnout than those who has the lack of this correspondence.

5. The range of helping possibilities which would lessen the likelihood of burnout is too low or not available for teaching professionals working on the field of pedagogy and education. With time spent on the educational area the likelihood of burnout is increasing.

6. Financial appreciation and professional acclaim affect teaching professionals' mental state positively. It affects prevention strategies favorably against burnout.

### **3. The methodology**

#### **Research devices**

Questionnaires were distributed via email to teachers in various educational and training institutions located in the Western Hungarian region. It had two parts.

The first part focuses on the respondents' way of life, sporting habits, job motivation. These questions were constructed by the author, individually.

Units of the first part are the following: occupation information, career motives (interest, parents' attitude, family example), socioeconomic status and the respondents' particular job (work atmosphere, being recognized by others, free time, state of health, opportunities for obtaining help) and finally questions concerned about one's interest in this or her own profession.

The second part focuses on the measurement of burnout indicators with the help of Hézszer's Personal Load Questionnaire.

The 20 questions which measure burnout focus on three dimensions: the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and deteriorating personal accomplishment. The emotional exhaustion was studied by 9 questions, the depersonalization by 4, and the deterioration personal accomplishment by 7 ones, with dichotome variables. With the union of these variables I specified the degree then the phases of burnout's likelihood.

There was a pilot-testing of the questionnaire in December 2007 when I tested the content and the filling in of printed questionnaires in the circle of 50 teachers.

#### **Inclusion of data**

The inclusion of data happened via the Internet, with self-filling questionnaires. The addresses of educational and training institutions were gained partly from the data base of Educational Ministry, partly from the data base of Western-Hungarian Region's Executive Office.

I completed this list with some information from the three counties (Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas, Zala County) county-website and addresses of educational and pedagogical institutions from the 5 cities' websites. All the three data sources considered, I sent my request letters and on-line questionnaires to 672 educational and pedagogical institutions, and they could be distributed to 568 addresses finally.

The questionnaire was available for everyone to fill and return electronically between the beginning of January 2008 and the end of April 2008.

### **Working up the results**

The statistical working up of the results happened with the help of *Excel for Windows* spreadsheet and *SPSS 17.0 for Windows* statistical program package. Answers to each question of the questionnaire are more or less categorized variables. From them – beside the calculation of one-dimension frequency-distributions – I made charts and I used the *khi-square test* for studying the connection between the variables.

## 4. Results

Following the sequence of my hypotheses, the results can be summarized in the following way:

1. The study revealed that there is a strong connection between burnout and sporting activities.

Within the group of people who are not affected by the likelihood of burnout, the ratio of sport professionals and non-sport professionals is equalized. However, in the group where people are affected by an average or strong likelihood of burnout, the ratio of non-sport professionals is higher.

Studying the relationship between the period spent on the teaching profession and sport, the results seem surprising: with the increasing of time spent with teaching, the ratio of people who does regular sport activities is increasing.

The sample from the Western Hungarian regions shows a special feature: within the young population less people do any sports than within the elder ones.

In connection with that, it can be stated that the likelihood of burnout is lower in the elder population.

Answers for the questions referring to free time sport activities and physical education, physical activity show interesting results. 21% of the total respondents do some sport activities on a daily basis in their free time. 67% of them take care regularly of their own physical activity (50% of this group go on outings, 41% do gardening or work in the garden regularly).

2% of male teaching professionals do some sports regularly, while this ratio among women is 35%. The ratio of leading professionals working in the field of pedagogy and education as regards their sporting activities done on a daily basis is equalized.

To sum it up, one of the interesting results of the research was found with the help of researching the relationship between doing sport activities and the likelihood of burnout. Accordingly, the research proves that doing sport activities can be a protection against burnout.

2. Two thirds of the respondents gave an account of party accepting parental upbringing attitude. Every fifth teaching professionals remembered too demanding parental attitude. Every sixth and seventh respondents spoke about too protecting, just occasional accepting parental attitude.

The parental upbringing attitude shows little difference among superior teaching professionals. The accepting parental attitude can be seen in case of both sexes. However, regarding women leaders, the too protecting parental attitude is more influential, while regarding men leaders; the occasional, over-demanding upbringing attitude is more significant.

3. The influence of the family example on the career choice is less significant among teaching professionals who do some sports than among their peers who are not involved in any sports. Women are more influenced by the family example. The major influence-providers are mothers, then aunts and sisters.

To the questions of what kind of career they imagined for themselves in their childhood, more than half of the respondents mentioned some teaching professions (nursery-school teacher, primary school teacher, school teacher, P.E. instructor, dancing master, trainer, educator, etc.)

One third of respondents had a family example. Every fifth teaching professional has a family example and their childhood ideas about career were also identical.

Comparing the ratio of the total respondents, men answered about their teaching career in a greater proportion and the ratio of family example was more significant among them.

During the evaluation of the results I did not find evidence whether the fact that the child wants to be a teaching professional in his or her childhood and also has an appropriate family example protects him or her from the likelihood of burnout or not.

4. Researching childhood interests, beside the leader job- interest direction, the social one has become dominant. Regarding subordinate teaching professionals, the social interest line is dominant. Childhood-interest lines show significant differences between the superior and the subordinate teaching professionals. Among leading experts the leader-type direction is absolutely

dominant, while the social and innovative interest directions remain in the background.

Similarly, differences can be observed regarding interests between sexes. Men tend to show greater leader and innovative interests at work, while women firstly show greater social-, secondly leading interests.

Studying childhood interests with the help of a three-dimension cross-chart, the following results were found in connection with the present work style and burnout:

Even if the childhood interest corresponds to the present work style, the likelihood of burnout is not always lower. Professionals, working in an objective and systematic style are more threatened by burnout, even if their work style is identical with their childhood interest-directions. On the basis of all of these, it can be stated that there is no relation between childhood interest-direction, work priority's correspondence and burnout. Teaching professionals working in an objective and systematic style are more threatened by burnout, independently of the fact that their childhood interest-direction corresponds to their present work-priority or not.

5. Forms of support which could prevent teachers from burnout can be divided into two big groups. One contains such professional supports as for instance supervisory sessions, discussion of case-studies, self-recognition trainings, etc. which serve the solution of the existing problem and the development of the teacher's personality. On the other hand, they also mean opportunities for attending cognitive, further training courses.

Two-thirds of the respondents obtain some professional help; let it be either discussion of case-studies, self-recognition trainings or supervisory sessions.

The research proved comfortably that only every sixth professional receives the lack of help, although they indicated their need for such support. Only third part of respondents obtains no help. Among them, 50% would want it, 50% do not lay claim to this professional support.

Studying the opportunities and demands for further training courses, the following results were found:

Nearly 90% of the respondents find attending training courses important and he or she would also take part in them. The reason of

this result may be seen in the pressure of continuous progress regarding the field of pedagogy and education. Only 8% of respondents were not offered opportunities to take part in further professional education and training courses.

An interesting result is that leading teaching professionals in the field of education and pedagogy take part in discussion of case-studies more significantly. 90% of leaders have already attended self-recognition trainings and such group meetings. The proportion of employers and subordinates is equalized regarding taking part in supervisory sessions.

Studying the relation between time, spent on the fields of teaching and education, and burnout the following, surprising relation can be seen: the likelihood of burnout does not increase with time spent on the field of education and pedagogy at all, but decrease.

Based on my hypothesis, the reason of this phenomenon is that those of teaching professionals who are threatened by burnout and can not cope with difficulties rather leave the field of education and pedagogy. Thus, likelihood of burnout is higher among younger generation teachers than among elder ones.

6. Studying burnout, three-quarters of teaching professionals, who feel that they get professional appreciation at their workplace, belong to the categories of average threatening level and lack of threatening level. Only every fourth teaching professional is threatened by the burnout syndrome. The likelihood of burnout decreased more when not just did professional acclaim exist but also financial appreciation was present, however, the lack of financial appreciation did not enhance the threat of burnout.

The presence of human and moral appreciation did not reduce the likelihood of burnout, but the lack of human and moral appreciation enhanced the threat of burnout to a great extent.

Consequently, the likelihood of burnout is positively influenced by the financial appreciation, but with the lack of it the threat does not increase. However, the lack of moral and human appreciation affects significantly the likelihood of burnout, as it starts increasing. But, the obtained human and moral appreciation does not influence the scale of burnout.

The quality of the Relationship with colleagues influences the threat of burnout significantly.

The quality of relationship with leaders, superiors influences the threat of burnout more strongly, and proportionately the category of those ones who are not affected by this threat.

The scale of burnout is over 50% if the respondent answered that she or he did not raise problems because they could not have obtained any help, anyway.

Workload, opportunities for rest at workplace and burnout show significance. The average and the threatened category raises because of the lack of rest.

Health problems and being on sick-leave shows a significant correlation with the likelihood of burnout. 57% of respondents had smaller health problems this year. Only 25% of respondents were on sick-leave in the passing year.

Results show the ratio of smaller health problems among leaders and employees in the field of education and pedagogy are completely identical. As a result, both groups' physical state may be similar. However, the ratio of respondents who are on sick-leave is significantly different. Leaders tend to be on sick-leave more rarely. Only every tenth leader in the field of education and pedagogy has been on sick-leave in the passing year; while every third professional employees in the field of education or pedagogy has been on sick-leave at this time.

## 6. Summary

The primer nuovum of the PhD thesis is that in the national literature such kind of research which studies the relation among sport, physical activity and likelihood of burnout has never published so far.

1. The study proves that within the group of professionals who are threatened by burnout the ratio of non-sport teaching professionals is bigger. Among those teaching professionals who have no risk of burnout, the ratio of sport-professionals and non-sport professionals is equalized. Sport can be a protection against the burnout syndrome. The sample from the Western Hungarian regions shows a special feature: within the young population less people do sports than within the elder ones. In connection with that, it can be stated that the likelihood of burnout is lower in the elder population. An alarming feature is however, that only 2% of male teaching professionals do some sports regularly, while this ratio among women is 35%. The ratio of leading professionals working in the field of pedagogy and education as regards their sporting activities done on a daily basis is equalized. The protective role of sport does not have an effect on male teaching professionals.

2. The majority of the respondents from the Western Hungarian region seemed to be aware of the opportunities and forms of professional support. Furthermore, they also have the chance to obtain this support and they take advantage of it, as well. The high ratio of attending training and professional education courses may be justified by the continuous progress in the field of pedagogy and education, furthermore new challenges which force professionals to cope with them, and finally the special feature of the field of pedagogy. This high proportion shows a more propitious picture here as compared to other regions of the country.

The high proportion of teaching professionals attending supervisory sessions and discussion of case-studies shows that we should not regard each part of our work (students, groups of students) as a

separate part but let us see it as part of a system and realize that the whole system is changing if one part of it changes.

3. Those teaching professionals are affected by the bigger risk of burnout that has an objective, systematic work interest, independently from the fact that their present work interest corresponds with their childhood interests. They are more threatened by burnout than their peers with other type of work-interests and priorities, based on even the same childhood interests. It could not be proved whether the same childhood job-interest and the present work-interest correspond positively with burnout or not.

4. Women are more influenced by the family example. Among the parents, the mother's model has the greatest impact on the child's career choice. Additionally, further major influence-providers are aunts and sisters.

5. Studying the relation between time, spent on the fields of teaching and education, and burnout, the following, important relation were found: the likelihood of burnout does not increase with time spent on the field of education and pedagogy at all, but decrease. The reason of this phenomenon is that those of teaching professionals who are threatened by burnout rather leave the field of education and pedagogy. Thus, the likelihood of burnout is higher among younger generation teachers, while regarding the elder ones, this likelihood is lower.

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