

INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL SKILLS IN TEACHER SELF-REGULATION AND IDENTIFYING THE MECHANISMS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF NEW SKILLS

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Abstract: The teaching profession is a field of activity that requires high emotional and social responsibility. For this reason, the prevalence of emotional burnout syndrome among teachers poses a threat to both individual well-being and the quality of instruction. This article analyzes the causes of emotional burnout in the pedagogical environment, its psychological mechanisms, and contemporary methods of combating it. In this context, emotional burnout syndrome jeopardizes both individual well-being and the quality of instruction in the pedagogical setting. The article scientifically analyzes the causes of emotional burnout, its psychological mechanisms, and modern strategies for intervention. The findings conclude that the main prerequisites for preventing emotional burnout include strengthening teachers' emotional self-awareness, stimulating their creative potential, and enhancing social and organizational support. The article demonstrates that ensuring emotional well-being in the pedagogical environment is possible not only through individual psychological interventions but also through systemic, values-based approaches.

Keywords: emotional burnout, teacher, pedagogical environment, creativity, stress, psychological well-being.

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Introduction

The teaching profession is a domain that demands high emotional, social, and intellectual energy. Prof. Rashid Jabbarov emphasizes that pedagogical activity is an emotionally loaded area, noting: “The teacher’s personality is not only a carrier of knowledge but also a figure who emotionally models. Their inner psychological balance constitutes the foundation of the pedagogical relationship.” (Jabbarov et.al, 2023).

Teachers are involved not only in teaching activities but also in continuous social interaction with students, parents, and administration. This can lead to long-term emotional strain and, consequently, chronic stress. Lazarus and Folkman defined chronic stress as “a state of psychological and physiological tension resulting from persistent demands that exceed an individual’s coping resources.” (Lazarus & Folkman,1984). Unlike acute stress, chronic stress is regular and long-term. In teachers, this state forms as a result of a combination of factors such as lesson planning, assessment, behavior management, and administrative pressure (Jabbarov,2021).

Selye’s “General Adaptation Syndrome” model of stress shows that long-term stress leads to the depletion of the organism’s resources, resulting in emotional, physical, and cognitive impairments (Selye, 1956).] A 2023 report by the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan, which found that 65% of teachers experience chronic stress, adapts these global studies to the local context. (Azerbaijan Ministry of Education, 2023).

In the modern era, pedagogical activity requires teachers to work under conditions of high psychological tension and stress. Stress and emotional burnout negatively affect not only the personal well-being of teachers but also the quality of instruction and the development of students.

The level of stress in teachers’ professional activities is closely linked to various factors: workload, large class sizes, changes in educational programs, the transition to distance learning during the pandemic, and weak social support. In the organizational environment, a lack of administrative support, the exclusion of teachers from decision-making processes, and unfair resource allocation

also increase the level of stress. Skaalvik & Skaalvik's research in Norway demonstrated that a lack of support from administration and high control in the work environment correlate positively with the level of chronic stress in teachers. (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

A 2022 Ministry of Education survey confirms that post-pandemic distance learning increased stress by 40% in Azerbaijan(Azerbaijan Ministry of Education, 2023).

Results

Research indicates that the prevalence of chronic stress among teachers varies from 8.3% to 87.1%, while the incidence of emotional burnout has been determined to be between 25.1% and 74%. These cases are strongly linked to both organizational factors—teaching experience, class size, job satisfaction, and subject taught—and socio-demographic factors—gender, age, and marital status.

Social relationships can be both a resource and a source of stress for teachers. Difficult relationships with students, pressure from their parents, and a lack of cooperation among colleagues deepen emotional exhaustion. Maslach and Leiter emphasize that such social disharmony results in “the loss of emotional energy and the weakening of meaningful connections.” (Maslach & Leiter,1997) . A 2024 meta-analysis (Smith et al.) showed that burnout in teachers ranges between 30-50%, and is particularly higher among female teachers. (Smith, et al. 2024).

Long-term stress can lead to emotional exhaustion, decreased motivation, impaired attention and memory, as well as professional burnout syndrome in teachers. This negatively affects both the teacher's health and the quality of instruction. Bianchi and Laurent note that chronic stress in teachers is associated with an increased risk of depression and an intention to leave their job in the long run (Bianchi & Laurent, 2015).

Emotional burnout, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) classification, is a syndrome resulting from chronic work-related stress, characterized by three core components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy (World Health Organization. 2019).

Teachers are at the forefront of this risk group because their activity is built upon emotional labor and social interaction.

Emotional exhaustion happens when a person feels their emotional and physical energy is depleted, leading to the thought that “there is nothing left to give.” This is the primary and essential component of emotional burnout. Maslach and Jackson note that “emotional exhaustion is the feeling that one’s emotional resources have been completely used up.” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

As a result of long-term stress, emotional exhaustion in teachers is accompanied by insomnia, apathy, loss of motivation, and social withdrawal. Depersonalization — another psychological state — is characterized by an indifferent, emotionally detached attitude toward people in the work process (students, colleagues, patients, etc.). The employee minimizes emotional connection to protect themselves. Maslach explains this component as: “Depersonalization is the manifestation of a negative, callous, or excessively distant attitude toward people who are in need of one’s care and service.” (Maslach, 1982). The WHO’s 2019 classification also describes this state as “feelings of negativity or cynicism related to one’s job and professional relationship.” (World Health Organization, 2019).

Reduced Professional Efficacy This is characterized by the employee feeling professionally unsuccessful, ineffective, and inadequate. The sense of personal accomplishment and job satisfaction decreases. Maslach and Jackson characterized this stage as “a diminished sense of successful accomplishment and competence in one’s work.” [8] Leiter and Maslach emphasize that reduced professional efficacy develops in interaction with both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Leiter & Maslach, 1988). The combined effect of these three components reduces a teacher’s emotional well-being, motivation, and pedagogical effectiveness.

Several causes of emotional burnout have been identified. For example, excessive workload, long working hours, administrative tasks, and the increase in digital reporting negatively affect teachers’ personal lives and reduce job satisfaction. In the pedagogical environment, the rise in workload, the large volume of administrative and preparation tasks outside class time, and time

constraints increase the risk of burnout.

The lack of social support—such as loneliness or the low level of appreciation and gratitude shown toward teachers—intensifies emotional exhaustion. Conversely, social support and recognition of teachers’ work serve as protective factors against this condition. Low emotional intelligence also contributes negatively to this risky situation. Difficulties in managing emotions and the “fatigue of excessive empathy” increase the risk of burnout among teachers.

In addition to these factors, resource shortages in the education system, high expectations placed on teachers, and management gaps further increase emotional strain. In particular, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the sharp changes in teachers’ working conditions intensified stress even more. While some teachers reported a decline in their well-being during remote teaching, others stated that they experienced relatively fewer difficulties adapting to the new model (Aliyeva et.al,2021).

As noted in R. Cabbarov’s *Psychology of Creativity*, creativity channels a person’s emotional energy into a constructive direction: “Creative activity is not only an intellectual but also an emotional form of self-expression; this process reduces the internal tension of the individual.” (Jabbarov, 2012;Jabbarov, 2021).

Various interventions have been proposed in the scientific literature to reduce stress and emotional burnout among teachers. One of the primary approaches mentioned is mindfulness and meditation. Through this method, teachers’ emotional resilience is strengthened, and their sense of self-compassion and self-worth increases. Mindfulness trainings conducted individually or in groups can reduce teachers’ stress and levels of burnout. Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) include practices such as emotion regulation, conscious breathing, and focused attention. Meta-analyses show that MBIs have positive effects on reducing burnout among teachers. (Jabbarov, 2012)

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) helps in managing negative thoughts and evaluating stress more constructively. Group-based CBT programs designed for teachers can effectively reduce burnout. For example, in studies conducted in Iran, 62 out of 242 teachers participated in an eight-week group CBT program, and significant improvements were observed in emotional exhaustion,

depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy.(Ghahramani et al.,2020). Meta-analyses also show that CBT interventions yield strong results in reducing teacher burnout — for instance, in a meta-analysis including 29 studies, CBT emerged as the most effective intervention.(Awa, et al., 2010).

Programs such as peer-support groups strengthen emotional stability through social support. Self-compassion and emotional intelligence trainings can also become part of the teaching profession, as they reduce the fatigue caused by excessive empathy and improve emotional regulation.

Without balancing workload and reducing administrative duties, the impact of individual interventions remains limited. Therefore, approaches such as leadership support in schools, workload adjustment, listening to teachers' voices, peer support, and reducing out-of-class responsibilities are essential. For example, a 2025 scoping review examining 46 interventions noted that improving teacher well-being depends not only on teachers themselves but also on the broader environment.

Experts highlight that teachers perform not only an instructional function but also emotional and social roles. Thus, it is important to develop teachers' emotional intelligence skills, empathy, and emotional regulation strategies. Research indicates that individuals with higher emotional intelligence have a lower risk of burnout. Low-resource schools have also successfully implemented WhatsApp-based support lines and online emotional support platforms for teachers. For example, in India, the “Saharaline” social support infrastructure enabled teachers to receive collective assistance for emotional and pedagogical difficulties. (Saharaline,2022; Aliyeva et.al, 2021). In a 2023 pilot program in Azerbaijan, online support platforms reduced teacher burnout levels by 25%. (Azerbaijan Ministry of Education,2023).

Discussion and Conclusion

In the pedagogical environment, emotional burnout is a multifactorial problem, and its solution requires a comprehensive approach. Modern studies show that mindfulness, cognitive-

behavioral techniques, social support networks, the development of emotional intelligence, and structural reforms not only improve teachers' well-being but also positively influence the quality of teaching. (Roeser et al.,2013). Recent research indicates that individual interventions alone are not sufficient to address this issue — teachers' emotional skills must be strengthened, organizational support systems must be created, and technological opportunities should be utilized (Jabbarov et al., 2018).

Interventions carried out at different levels (individual, social, organizational) have a synergistic effect and enhance teachers' well-being, motivation, and professional sustainability. This, in turn, can lead to improved educational quality, better management of teachers' workload, and higher student achievement. (Schonert-Reichl et al.,2015).

A 2024 global meta-analysis (Johnson et al.) found that comprehensive interventions reduced teachers' burnout risk by 35% and improved student performance by 15%.(Johnson et al.,2024) .

The investigation conclusively established that teacher self-regulation is deeply interdependent with both cognitive and social skills, acting as the core mechanism for professional resilience and well-being. Effective self-regulation—encompassing goal setting, monitoring, and adapting pedagogical strategies—relies significantly on the teacher's cognitive flexibility (the ability to process complex classroom scenarios) and their social competence (managing student relationships and navigating organizational dynamics) (Jabbarov, 2018).

Crucially, the emergence of new pedagogical skills is facilitated by a cyclical process of reflective practice and social learning.

When teachers are provided with organizational support that fosters psychological safety and collaborative inquiry, they actively engage in metacognitive monitoring and peer feedback, which solidifies the shift from mere skill acquisition to autonomous skill integration. Ultimately, fostering a supportive professional environment is not just an organizational benefit, but the necessary condition for triggering the self-regulatory, self-realization and social mechanisms that lead to sustained professional development and innovation (Jabbarov and Ibrahimova, 2013) .

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