

# PREVENTION OF TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION

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**Abstract:** The article explores the issue of professional exhaustion among educators. It discusses changes in perceptions of professional exhaustion over time and identifies primary theoretical approaches to understanding the concept and its psychological and physiological aspects. The article also categorizes the factors contributing to educators' professional exhaustion and classifies stressors of a professional nature. It establishes the phases of professional exhaustion experienced by educators and outlines its primary symptoms. Additionally, it assesses the impact of psycho-physiological exhaustion on the effectiveness of pedagogical activities and the education system. The article analyzes the relevance of applying prevention measures for professional exhaustion and outlines individual and group-based prevention techniques. It recommends developing and cultivating individual characteristics to decrease the likelihood of professional exhaustion. It details methods for acquiring stress management skills, including regulating personal, social, and physical well-being, modifying thought processes, and logical thinking. Lastly, the article presents universal approaches to combating professional stress factors.

**Keywords:** emotional exhaustion, emotional burnout, teacher, prevention

## Introduction

The profession of an educator carries significant social significance, particularly in light of the ongoing expansion and advancement of the higher education system. This growth has led to a rise in the demands placed on educators, both in terms of their professional responsibilities and

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personal character. Research has consistently demonstrated that the role of a teacher is one of the most demanding professions, characterized by emotional pressure, frequent social interactions, and a high degree of accountability. These factors often contribute to mental and physical exhaustion, which can significantly impact an educator's level of professionalism and skill.

Furthermore, it is evident that many prospective and current educators may not fully comprehend the potential implications of emotional fatigue and are unaware of effective strategies for preventing it. As a result, there is often a lack of emphasis on developing qualities that enhance stress resilience. This oversight can lead to educators feeling overwhelmed by the professional hurdles they face, ultimately affecting the quality of higher education and its ability to meet desired standards.

Hence, it is crucial to recognize and execute strategies and methods to prevent professional burnout among educators. This will be vital in improving the overall efficiency of educational tasks and ensuring that educators can fulfill the requirements of their profession while also looking after their well-being.

Extensive research has been devoted to comprehending the profound impact of emotional burnout. This debilitating condition manifests as a sense of emptiness, apathy, fatigue, and waning interest in work. It is particularly pervasive among professionals in the social sciences, notably teachers (Jabbarov, 2017; Jabbarov, 2021; Kamila et al, 2020).

The modern Azerbaijani society is founded on political and socio-economic principles that originate from the country's diverse cultural heritage, promoting tolerance and multiculturalism. Embracing and adjusting to these new values can lead to conflicting situations that bring about substantial changes in societal norms and values. This dynamic process results in shifts in individual behaviors, social norms, and fundamental beliefs (Aliyeva and Jabbarov, 2020). These conflicting situations and significant changes in societal norms can contribute to the burnout experienced by teachers. As they navigate the complexities of a rapidly evolving society, teachers may feel overwhelmed by the pressure to adapt to new values and expectations while maintaining their well-being.

The modern education system requires teachers to have a high level of competence,



especially in terms of promoting health and well-being. Parents' expectations of the education system are increasing, and sometimes teachers struggle to meet these demands, leading to negative reactions. This can result in emotional distress and physical health issues. Additionally, many adults do not fully understand the importance of maintaining good health and taking responsibility for their own well-being. There are few people in society, including teachers, who lead a healthy lifestyle and can effectively encourage children and adolescents to do the same.

In recent years, the problem of teacher burnout and emotional exhaustion has become a major concern in the education sector. Teachers constantly face various stressors such as heavy workloads, student behavior issues, and lack of support, which can significantly impact their mental well-being. This research aims to explore the effectiveness of preventive measures such as consultations and vacations in reducing emotional exhaustion among teachers in the Khazar District.

## **Literature review**

In 1974, the renowned American psychiatrist H.J. Freudenberger identified a distinct personality disorder that arises in otherwise healthy individuals due to intense emotional interactions in their professional roles with clients, patients, and students. This groundbreaking work led to the introduction of the term “burnout” in the scientific community.

The term “skillful burnout,” as discussed by Russian scientist Vodopyanova (2019), refers to a prolonged stress reaction resulting from extended professional stresses of average productivity. This term is often associated with personal deformation, which occurs under the influence of professional stresses. The concept of “professional deformation” was first introduced by P. Sorokin to describe the negative impact of professional activity on an individual. V.E. Oryol's ideas are intriguing as he suggests that there are optimal limits to an individual's professionalization, beyond which the impact on their mental characteristics may become negative. Seer (2003) concluded, after studying the mechanism of professional deformation, that the expectations when entering independent professional



life act as a trigger mechanism for deformation. This is due to the significant disparity between professional reality and the expectations formed by graduates of professional educational institutions. Initial difficulties often lead young specialists to seek drastic work methods, and failures, negative emotions, and disappointments can initiate the development of professional maladjustment. Non-constructive problem-solving during the adaptation process at the beginning of professional activity may lead to the occurrence and development of deformations.

The issue at hand is the social demand for effective and high-quality education, while not enough attention is given to the psychological well-being of those who are expected to meet this demand. Therefore, it is important to study the causes and methods of preventing teacher burnout syndrome. Psychologists Veronica Doringer and Arseniy Volodko have identified the “traps” of emotional burnout: - Unrealistically high expectations - Ignoring one’s own emotions - Fear of dependence on other people According to Doringer and Volodko, a person who has accepted their own emotions and overcome the fear of dependence cannot experience emotional burnout.

Saloviita and Pakarinen (2021) argue that teacher burnout not only affects teachers but also their students. They found that higher burnout was linked to more negative attitudes towards inclusion, lower self-efficacy, and weaker connection with students. When teachers experience burnout, they lose connection with themselves and their students, which is concerning because teachers should feel connected with their students in the classroom. As students develop their motivation, they often reflect their teachers’ motivation, so if the teacher lacks motivation, the students may as well (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). This is problematic because if the teacher struggles to motivate themselves, they may not be setting the best example for their students.

Teachers experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion may exhibit reduced enthusiasm and dedication in their roles, ultimately impacting their teaching effectiveness and student outcomes, as indicated by research conducted by Maslach and Leiter in 1999 and Mérida-López and Extremera in 2017.

The symptoms of burnout among teachers can be reduced by providing them with training



sessions that focus on their professional development and teach them how to deal with stressful situations. These programs can be integrated into their initial education, pursued individually, or implemented by schools and districts. While these training strategies have been shown to decrease emotional exhaustion among teachers, some studies have reported mixed results, with no significant change in burnout levels (Iancu et al., 2017, p. 5).

Numerous intervention programs have been implemented to enhance teacher performance and reduce burnout symptoms. However, only a few broad categories have been extensively researched to validate their effectiveness. These include mentoring programs for new teachers, training on appropriate social skills curriculum, strategies for managing difficult behaviors, and general in-service training on addressing student behaviors (Bataineh & Alsagheer, 2012; De Stasio et al., 2017; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008).

Preventing emotional burnout syndrome requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses both psychological and non-psychological interventions. According to N.E. Vodopyanova, prevention should be carried out in several stages.

Firstly, teachers should be educated about the signs of burnout syndrome, which will not only help them recognize potential symptoms but also make them feel heard and understood. This will help alleviate feelings of loneliness and help them understand that burnout is caused by various objective factors related to the nature of their work.

Secondly, teachers should acknowledge that they can make mistakes in their professional activities. Before discussing these issues, it is beneficial to introduce teachers to the concept of psychosomatics, the characteristics of psychosomatic diseases, and the link between emotional well-being and physical health.

Lastly, it is crucial to allocate time to gather resources for change. This long-term stage's success depends on the educational institution's administration understanding its importance.



## **Methodology**

### **Design**

This research aims to investigate and implement strategies to prevent teachers' emotional exhaustion in the Khazar district. Emotional exhaustion among teachers is a significant issue that can lead to burnout, reduced job performance, and ultimately impact the quality of education students provide.

The research will focus on utilizing consultations, vacation time, and other techniques to prevent emotional exhaustion among teachers. Consultations with mental health professionals can provide teachers with the necessary tools and support to cope with stress and emotional challenges in their work environment. Additionally, providing teachers with adequate vacation time and encouraging them to rest and recharge can help prevent burnout and emotional exhaustion.

By identifying effective strategies to prevent teachers' emotional exhaustion, this research aims to improve the overall well-being of 53 educators in the Khazar district and ultimately enhance the quality of education for students. Additionally, the findings of this research can inform future prevention efforts and support the development of policies and interventions to address emotional exhaustion among teachers in the education sector.

### **Participants**

A cohort of 53 dedicated teachers from High School of Khazar District actively participated in this pivotal study. Among them, 45 were remarkable women and 13 were outstanding men. These educators diligently completed a comprehensive survey to evaluate their emotional exhaustion levels both before and after the implementation of crucial preventive measures. These proactive steps included regular consultations with a mental health professional and ensuring that our esteemed teachers took their well-deserved vacation days to rest and revitalize. The research encompassed primary school



teachers, subject teachers, social workers, psychologists. All participants were well-informed about the research methods and willingly gave their permission for the study to proceed.

## **Instruments**

Several methods were used in the study. Teacher burnout is a growing issue, leading many educators to leave their profession due to overwhelming job pressures. To avoid burnout, it's crucial to establish clear boundaries between work and personal life. Setting limitations on work hours, such as refraining from checking emails after a certain time, and prioritizing personal time for rest and renewal are essential strategies for maintaining well-being. In a previous study, the Maslach Burnout Inventory was utilized to identify and assess teachers who were experiencing emotional exhaustion. In this current research, the focus is on investigating the effects of specific interventions, such as a couple of months of vacation and psychological consultations, on reducing emotional exhaustion among teachers. The study aims to provide insights into the potential benefits of these interventions in mitigating the impact of emotional exhaustion in the teaching profession.

## **Results**

The comprehensive analysis of burnout syndrome among 53 teachers (comprising 13 men and 40 women) at a High School situated in the Khazar district serves to shed light on the intricate relationship between specific recommendations and the emotional exhaustion experienced by educators. My previous study revealed that 15% of female teachers and 7.69 % of male teachers reported experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion, 15% of female teachers and 23.07% of male teachers exhibited symptoms of high depersonalization, and 25% of female teachers and 15.38% of male teachers demonstrated a high level of personal accomplishment (Mir Jalalli, N.M., 2024). These findings underscore the complex emotional landscape within which educators operate, emphasizing



the potential for them to feel overwhelmed and disconnected from their work, ultimately impacting their job satisfaction and performance.

Table 1. Indicators of emotional exhaustion before preventative work

Before intervention			
#	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal accomplishment
Women	15%	15%	25%
Men	7.69%	23.07%	15.38%

Upon receiving these results, I promptly initiated preventative measures. I formulated recommendations to encourage well-being, such as taking regular breaks from work, enhancing self-regulation skills, pursuing ongoing professional development, and nurturing positive connections with the environment. As the summer vacation approached, we arranged remote work sessions with teachers and provided psychological consultations. Upon their return, the teachers underwent the test again, yielding the following results:

Table 2. Indicators of emotional exhaustion after preventative work

After intervention			
#	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal accomplishment
Women	7.5%	10%	12.5%
Men	0%	15.38%	7.69%

The repeated diagnosis results indicated a positive trend in the teachers group. The results indicate that men experienced the most significant improvements. This suggests that taking a quality vacation and distancing themselves from work contributed to their overall health and well-being. Following the implementation of preventive measures, the study findings indicated a noteworthy decrease in emotional exhaustion levels among teachers. The consultations were particularly effective in providing teachers with a secure and supportive environment to express their concerns and seek





assistance. Additionally, the provision of vacation days allowed teachers the opportunity to unwind and revitalize, leading to a noticeable improvement in their overall mental well-being.

The results underscore the critical need to address burnout and stress among teachers, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding their well-being and maintaining their effectiveness in the profession. The initiatives aimed at preventing emotional exhaustion among teachers in the Khazar District have provided valuable and comprehensive insights into potential strategies for preventing emotional exhaustion in the future.

These findings underscore the critical need to implement proactive measures to bolster teachers' mental health and well-being. Equipping teachers with the necessary resources and unwavering support can cultivate a positive work environment, fostering job satisfaction and mitigating burnout. Regular consultations with mental health professionals can empower teachers to effectively manage stress and address underlying issues contributing to emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, providing teachers with well-deserved vacations can offer them a vital respite from their demanding roles, enabling them to rejuvenate and return refreshed.

## **Discussion**

Teacher burnout is a growing issue, leading many educators to leave their profession due to overwhelming job pressures. To avoid burnout, it's crucial to establish clear boundaries between work and personal life. Setting limitations on work hours, such as refraining from checking emails after a certain time, and prioritizing personal time for rest and renewal are essential strategies for maintaining well-being. In order to maintain physical and emotional well-being and avoid burnout, prioritizing self-care is crucial. Teachers must carve out time for activities that bring them joy and relaxation, even though it may be challenging. Similarly, principals and head teachers need to actively foster a sense of community and support among staff to prevent burnout. Engaging in collaborative projects, sharing ideas and resources, and seeking advice and input from peers are all ways to fortify



a professional network.

Ensuring that daily work is captivating and stimulating is crucial for avoiding burnout. For example, integrating new technologies into classroom lessons, experimenting with alternative teaching approaches, and devising innovative methods to actively engage and captivate students.

To maintain focus and prevent feeling overwhelmed, educators should regularly reflect on their work and prioritize tasks. This entails maintaining a sense of control and accomplishment, assessing progress, setting achievable objectives, and breaking down projects into manageable tasks.

### **Limitations and Further Research**

The current study has delivered results that are in line with previous research; however, it is crucial to address certain limitations. These limitations are a result of the selection process, which involved a smaller number of respondents from just one school. Additionally, the data collection process was conducted over a limited period and with a restricted number of participants. Nonetheless, the insights gained from this study have the potential to enhance current methodologies within a specific national-ethnic environment and cultural context. Furthermore, they provide a unique perspective on scientific research, indicating the need for a larger sample size for future quantitative analysis.

### **Conclusion**

Upon conclusion, the extensive research carried out in the Khazar District on the mitigation of teachers' emotional exhaustion has produced compelling outcomes. The study, which engaged 53 teachers, centered on the implementation of various interventions, including preventive measures, consultations, and vacation periods. The findings suggest that these strategies exhibit significant potential in improving the overall well-being and mental health of educators. Consequently, it is expected that such interventions will contribute to cultivating a more positive and supportive work



environment, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students. It is imperative for educational institutions to prioritize the emotional well-being of their staff and establish necessary support systems to alleviate burnout and exhaustion. Furthermore, continued research and sustained efforts in this domain are crucial to ensure the enduring success and effectiveness of these preventive measures.

The research results indicate that facilitating discussions and providing support for teachers can positively impact their emotional well-being. Additionally, allowing teachers to take breaks and recharge during vacation time can help alleviate the pressures of the profession.

Overall, the findings suggest that integrating preventive measures, such as consultations and vacation time, into the school environment can effectively promote teachers' mental health and enhance the quality of education. It is essential for educational institutions and policymakers to prioritize the well-being of teachers to create a supportive and sustainable work environment. By implementing these preventive measures, we can work towards creating a healthier and more resilient teaching workforce in Khazar District and beyond.

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