



Anti-burnout puzzle for academics
Project number 2024-1-PL01-KA220-HED-000243646

Occupational burnout (OB)

- knowledge, attitudes, prevention currently vs. perceptions and expectations

Summary
of explorative qualitative survey
(based on n=14 IDIs among academic teachers in 3 countries)

Country:	Poland	Poland	Slovakia	Cyprus
Partner	Dobre Kadry. Dobre Kadry Research-Training Centre	Korczak University in Warsaw	BUEM	University of Nicosia
Author of the report:	Beata Pachnowska PhD	Marek Kawa PhD, Iga Kazimierczak PhD	Nadiya Dubrovina Marián Kováč Silvia Matúšová	Nuno Ferreira
Date:	10 th of January 2025	15 th of January 2025	15 th of January 2025	10 th of January 2025

1. Sample description and screening questions

- The sample represents different types of universities and groups of academic teachers.
- N=14 respondents in total
- Overrepresentation of women. (4 of 14 men).
- Mix of age - ½ below, and ½ over 50 y.o.
- Mix public and private universities, majority from large universities.
- Mix of total job experience as academic teacher (from 1 to over 40 years and professional status (from Junior Assistant to Professor).
- Mix specialties/faculties
- Some deal with OB professionally. Most laypeople in the field of OB

ID	Country	Gender	(Perceived) age	Professional status/job	Type / size of the university	How long working as a university teacher (in years)
1DK	Poland	Female	Over 50	Academic teacher, Manager of a faculty	Public. Large	26
2DK	Poland	Female	Over 50	Academic teacher	Public. Large	30
3DK	Poland	Male	Over 50	Academic teacher, Manager of a department	Public. Large	25
4DK	Poland	Female	30-50	Academic teacher, pro-rector	Public. Small (typical for the category)	20
1UK	Poland	Male	30-50	An academic teacher/interpreter	Public. Large	>4
2UK	Poland	Female	Over 50	An academic teacher/interpreter	Public. Large	>40
3UK	Poland	Female	30-50	An academic teacher/interpreter	Public. Large	>10
1SK	Slovakia	Male	30-50	Junior Assistant	Private. MSP	1
2SK	Slovakia	Female	30-50	Senior Assistant	Private. MSP	15
3SK	Slovakia	Female	30-50	Assistant professor	Private. MSP	7
4SK	Slovakia	Female	Over 50	Associate professor	Public. Small	25
1CY	Cyprus	Male	Over 50	Associate Lecturer Tourism and Hospitality	Largest private University in Cyprus (>11000 students)	21
2CY	Cyprus	Female	30-50	Assistant Professor Psychology	Largest private University in Cyprus (>11000 students)	8
3CY	Cyprus	Female	Over 50	Professor Business	Largest private University in Cyprus (>11000 students)	32 (24 at current University)

Work overload!!!

All perform the work of:

- A teacher: classes with students, consultations, supervising diplomas.
- A scientist - research, publications, conferences, evaluations
- Some also do administrative work
 - manage teams of people (faculty, department)
 - manage projects
 - hold a position in university authorities.

'Because of the fact that now these new technologies are on the wave, all sorts of projects, really these projects and in the department of such university and somewhere outside there is also asked for some kind of expert advice, or participation in projects, I have a lot of activities all the time.' [3,DK].

Trying to keep good balance in own life

- **having hobbies, passions outside of work**
 - sports (running/marathons, training juniors),
 - attending concerts, reading (PL)
 - cooking/baking cakes
 - foraging for mushrooms (CY)
 - dancing in a theater (SK),
- meeting people, family, being involved in the community and giving back (e.g. involvement with the Scouts).
- dinner out (CY),
- business trips (PL, CY)

Time for household or family responsibilities – varied.

CY only - time with family indicated as a way to spend leisure time. For some in PL and SK family time enforced by responsibilities (children, parents).

Despite the flexibility of university work, daily family responsibilities are becoming more absorbing.

Some are aware of the role of their hobbies and time out of work in the work-life balance, or combating burnout (acknowledge that it is developed on purpose)!

- *"I have my sacred time, I don't answer the phone, it is accepted that in exceptional situations there is contact, for example, after 7 to 8 pm, and I try until 4 pm, because, however, there is such a hygiene of time, because that's how you can work all the time." [4,F,PL].*
-
- *"It's a way to get out of this, when I build those toys. I get some pieces of wood and metal and I build like an arcade game for the kids and you can see how happy they are about it. I also use only recycled materials, so I feel like I'm doing something good. It's a break from all of this and a way to keep away from burnout" (#1CY)*
-
- *"Taking business trips sometimes helps us get out of our own wat and think for why do we stay with this work for so long...I get to have a change of scenery [Interviewer: "and a change in people?]. Yes, definitely, I get to see good colleagues and friends and to think about new possibilities to network."(CY)*

Main findings

- OB is widely recognized by interviewees both in themselves and others despite of professional background
 - **Majority of participants mentioned episodes in which they experienced themselves or witnessed burnout in other colleagues.** But it is rather hypothesis than knowledge based on diagnosis.
 - They differ in their assessment of the prevalence of OB, but are quite unanimous in their assessment that the risk is very high and the problem is growing.
 - High awareness of the negative impact of burnout both individually and to the institution.

- OB definition is not consistent and the symptoms of OB and other phenomena are mixed

OB is defined too broadly by academics. Many symptoms also related to general stress and reduced emotionality have also been indicated as symptoms of OB; in general, any problem can be entered under OB. This can lead to errors in recognising OB where there is only work overload/ or stress or rather depression already present.

- Institutional Environment is seen as a great / main contributor to OB but OB of individual is attributed to the personal weaknesses
- The specific nature of the work of academics and the organisation of work in universities **is mainly defined by stress.**
 - However, the occurring OB is attributed by the environment and the individual himself to his/her personal weaknesses or predispositions or organization of own work. There is also expecting responsibility of suffering individual in dealing with OB on his/ her own (e.g. seeking adequate support).
 - Individual characteristics such as **resilience, ability to balance management, mental trainings attitudes** were related to OB as **either protective factors (when present) or contributors to OB (when absent).**
 - There are also many other risk factors also external such as pandemic, AI or socio-political situation (militancy, political changes), but they are additional stressors rather than the main cause of the.

➤ There is a lack of awareness of existing solutions to support professionals experiencing OB/ no such activities in known universities

- **None of institutional policies or solutions that directly relate to OB mentioned.** Higher management of the universities seems to be unaware of OB, no measures addressing this phenomenon directly.
- **Some universities run educational activities, workshops/lectures on stress** or even OB (rare, SK more often probably), make psychological help available for those in need, also team building activities (rarely indicated).
- The nature of university work / little informal contact with colleagues makes peer-to-peer 'coffee therapy' practically non-existent.
- **So, individuals burnt out are out of the system and not recognized by employer procedures/** the OB phenomena is also not/ weakly managed.

➤ Academics are currently discovering and implementing measures preventive or for dealing with OB on their own. However, they expect support from the university in this area and some also expect systemic solutions at national level

- Some respondents actively **implementing or have implemented measures to help control stress, motivation or attitudes towards work and its outcomes.**
- They develop (or use for this purpose) **hobbies, get involved in sports or volunteering, go to therapy, consciously set work-life balance and boundaries.**
- They do not want to change jobs, but they feel they are **in danger of becoming OB. if they do not implement special measures.**
- According to them, **the university should implement OB-related measures of OB prevention/ coping and offer this to employees.**

- All the activities proposed in the project were found to be attractive, and together they form a comprehensive programme relevant to today's universities and academics
- Specific **assessments and indications vary from country to country** but overall the proposals are accepted.
- **Changes in attitudes, knowledge as well as specific skills should be developed.** The means to do this are contemporary and interactive rather than traditional reading publications.
- **Live workshops and videos (also for older people) are particularly attractive.**
- The authority and credibility behind the proposed solutions can be crucial for recommendations and publications to be recognised by the academic community, care should be taken with titles and affiliations, as well as the scientific basis. (SK, DK).

Detailed results

Spontaneous associations with WORK/ PLACE OF WORK

Very diverse - in each country a mix of positive and negative emotions and associations

- some of them more related to experiences of burden and challenge, other with a space with opportunities for growth and creativity
- some really like their job and do not want to change it despite many opportunities, mainly due to possibility of working in youth collective, always learning something new, opportunities to participate on education of new generation, while their students/clients are changing each semester, which gives them opportunity to avoid stereotypes (SK)

"In my case there is such a terrible distraction on various topics. Here teaching classes, here project, here I am the chairman of such a committee, just now I am the chairman of the committee for security, information systems of the university, now we have this audit, this audit is ending, still on Thursday we have the end of this audit there too. " [#3DK].

"There is a lot of space for creativity. When I'm in class interacting with the students, that is a great place to be. I feel like I'm contributing to their academic development. Or sometimes when preparing for a course because it gets me to read and gain new knowledge so you feel like you're growing... there is also a lot of flexibility because it's no a 9 to 5 job, so that helps." (#2CY)

Spontaneous associations with WORK/ PLACE OF WORK cont.

Between countries, the associations are quite similar in content, with local specific:

- **obligations** - their content/types of obligation, but also excess of duties, combining different activities, multitasking and responsibility causing distraction and mental strain, uneven distribution of responsibilities among employees
- **the need to combine and balance teaching/learning with research and bureaucracy**
- **problems with administration**, in PL DK - also with the administrative staff of the university (too many people), complexity of procedures affecting additional responsibilities for academic teachers
- **a strong hierarchy, extreme individualism of employees, a rat race of competition appears, a lot of comparisons between employees** (PL DK)
- **fatigue** (including physical/eye strain from the computer) (PL DK)

Knowledge of OB among respondents

OB - rather widely but vaguely known before, not only by name but also own experience and observation

- **self-found sources** - mainly the web, popular publications without specifying the source. Also as a result of searching for trying to understand their own feelings about stress at work.
- **meetings, webinars organized by the universities for employees** (PL, SK) - some of them related to stress at work in general rather than specifically to OB
- **observing ourselves/ personal experiences or others**
- own scientific and didactic work (one in CY, one in SK)
- from trainings provided by the employer (PL, SK)
- research studies, academic journals, peer discussions (SK)

"I read it myself. It was prompted by the feeling that something was going wrong at work, that there was too much going on, that I didn't grasp it, that I was fed up, that when I look at the students, I think how they move practically people in front of my eyes and all that, yes. And to do their own thing, to leave, to forget the best[1, DK].

Perceived awareness of OB among academics

Awareness of OB among academics varies according to respondents, although it is quite difficult to determine this due to the lack of conversations in the community about the topic.

Academics, if not professionally involved in OB, according to respondents, rely on similar sources as the average layperson (popular media, publications, rather than specialised workshops or lectures (as this is unlikely to be found at universities), although according to SK they would prefer to rely on professional publications.

According some of (PL UK) academic staff have sufficient knowledge about OB but it is not sufficient to deal with the problem or no have the opportunity to use it practically in anti-burnout strategies.

There is a need to improve knowledge on the subject.

“I think it’s generally a taboo in our society because people don’t want to appear weak. But in academia it’s somewhat recognized, that why you have practices such as sabbatical leaves so that people can have a bit of a different experience.” (#2CY)

SK: probably more about OB in public space but still awareness initiatives and discussions about well-being in the workplace are not yet widely institutionalized in all universities, which could contribute to a lower recognition and acknowledgment of OB among academics. Recent studies claim awareness of OB among Slovak academics to be moderate to low. For example, based on the study by **Halamová, J., Kanovský, M., & Pacúchová, M. (2021): Self-Compassion and Burnout in Helping Professions: A Systematic Review.**) [...] **The topic of OB is frequently present in TV documentaries, dailies, specialized newspapers and journals dealing with the psychology of life, career, relations at working places, etc.** The statements of respondents concerning the OB were deliberate, based on frequent occurrence of OB in small talks with friends and colleagues. The sources of knowledge about OB were reliable. The awareness of OB among academics is high. It is also promoted by multi-generational academic staff working at the university when senior academics mention the need of the balance between the work and the life.”

OB among interviewed academics and their peers

A. Thinking about your work at the university - how well does this statement fit with your own feelings about your job OR observations about your colleagues . Please indicate on a scale of 1-7 where: 1 - definitely does not fit, 7 - definitely fits.															
	#1DK	#2DK	#3DK	#4DK	#1UK	#2UK	#3UK	#1SK	#2SK	#3SK	#4SK	#1CY	#2CY	#3CY	AVG
b.1.1. When I think about work, I often feel exhausted or drained of energy	3	3	4	3	4	5	4	5	3	4	6	5	1	3	4
b.1.2. I observe this in my colleagues	4	4	6	6	6	4	5	6	3	4	6	5	2	6	5
b.2.1. I feel an increased distance from or even dislike my work, students or colleagues	3	7	3	2	3	4	4	2	2	0	4	4	1	3	3
b.2.2. I observe this in my colleagues	5	4	5	6	5	3	5	5	2	4	6	3	2	3	4
b.3.1. I feel reduced professional effectiveness, and even if I achieve something, I do not consider it a success	1	2	1	2	3	5	4	3	2	0	6	5	1	7	3
b.3.2. I observe this in my colleagues	1	--	4	2	6	3	5	1	2	4	6	4	2	2	3
Sum of b.1.1.+b.2.1.+b.3.1 = If >= 15, recruit as having symptoms of OB	7	12	8	7	10	14	13	10	7	4	16	14	3	13	10
Sum of b.1.2.+b.2.2.+b.3.2 = If >= 15, recruit as perceived OB problem	10	8+	15	14	17	10	15	12	7	12	18	12	6	11	12

Is OB easy to recognize? What are the sources/base of the diagnosis?

- **Opinions vary from country to country.**
- However, it was consistently emphasised that the main difficulty is the lack of communication about OB. If even one has OB., one does not tell others about it.
- OB in oneself or in others is **assumed rather than diagnosed**. The respondents themselves, apart from professionals, are not able to diagnose OB in themselves or in others for sure. However, they are **able to recognise symptoms which they attribute either to general stress or specifically to OB**.
- **Part of respondents noted symptoms in their past that they either recognized as being related to job burnout or at least to severe organizational stress.** Occupational burnout manifested in various ways: **physical** (e.g., somatic problems, lack of appetite) and **psychological** (lack of desire to work, frustration, anxiety and eventually withdrawal from professional life, chronic fatigue). It was noted that **professional burnout not only affects the well-being of employees, but also their self-esteem and sense of self-worth**.
- An important symptom directly associated with OB is a decrease in motivation for work, a reluctance to work, especially a lack of desire to teach students or be active in additional work not paid for in a full-time position. There were also themes of reduced professional effectiveness (but not lack of it) in the interviews. Achievements are then not treated as successes. Reduced professional effectiveness, even when successes are achieved, can lead to feelings of meaninglessness.

PL: OB is not easy to diagnose due to the lack of sufficient knowledge to self-diagnose, the similarity of symptoms to other disorders more strongly present in consciousness and dominant in hypotheses (such as depression, stress, or general fatigue due to overwork).

SK: The OB is rather easy to be recognized, especially by the lack of energy, lack of attention, interrupted sleep, rarely also reduced personal accomplishments. (from the report: “As the OB is considered a private issue, academics rarely share the concerns concerning the mental health and the intention to consult a medical doctor or a psychologist. If, by chance, a diagnosis of OB is confirmed, it would be rarely made public. The academics at the university could only assume, based on visible manifested symptoms, that the OB diagnosis could be the case.”)

CY: Participants found OB to be easily recognizable from how people behave or from their own experience. However, only participant #2 would be confident to make a diagnosis.

OB symptoms mentioned as know and used by respondents for “diagnosis”: mix of general stress symptoms and specific OB symptoms: physical symptoms, lack of sleep, irritability, difficulty concentrating, chronic fatigue combined with increased irritability and conflict with loved ones, caused by a lack of understanding (PL UK), emotional exhaustion, fatigue, not being able to mentally disengage from work and desire for change (CY), stress, exhaustion, and emotional fatigue. It is linked with feelings of reduced professional efficacy, detachment, and mental overload in the workplace. (SK). The impact of OB on relationships at home/ with family, ‘the transfer of stress from work to home, but also the bringing of work itself into the home.

“In academia, in the summer when your work is supposed to be less, that’s when I started noticing signs of OB. It was difficulty in falling asleep, it was constantly running a list through my head of things to do, have this meeting, grade the exam. It was planning ahead for the next year, it was coordinating the placements of the students...It was like even though we’re in the off-season there is still an enormous amount of work.” (CY)

„I saw it happening in front of my eyes. My colleague across the corridor, I would see him just falling apart with stress and running around, I noticed that he started using alcohol to try and cope with all the pressure. He had an offer to leave and I had to tell him, “Take it man, you need to leave here as soon as possible” (#1CY)

"I'm not a psychologist, but somewhere a light goes on. Yes, I also have one such employee who is seen less, he does his duties, but he has cut himself off from the group so slightly. A simple example, we have some kind of meeting, he didn't come as the only one to the chair meeting." [3DK].

Is OB common or rare? /Widespread/ narrow? Extending? Stable?

- **Opinions on the prevalence of OB. vary both between countries and respondents.**
- It is quite consistent to perceive **OB as a growing problem**. This is due to the system of work at universities and the general overload of work, technological changes (especially in Poland, where there are many changes in higher education and generally we work much more than in other European countries), but in other countries, e.g. in Slovakia, as a result of general political and social changes.

CY: OB = common occurrence across all academic institutions both in Cyprus and abroad

PL: difficult to assess the extent of OB in academia. One's own or others' OB. is not discussed at the university, **OB diagnoses are not known, so there is no clear confirmation of assumptions about OB in others. Teachers themselves do not share information or discuss the problem. Several factors indicating that the problem is widespread or at least exacerbating: ageing of the staff, the lack of new/younger employees, the nature of university work - the workload/multitasking, and increasing stress and strain (punctuation).**

SK: Occupational burnout in Slovakia is relatively narrow. It is particularly prevalent among high-stress professions, such as healthcare workers, educators, and academics. Increasing workloads, limited resources, and the dual responsibilities of teaching and research have contributed to its spread in academic environments.

Is OB taboo? Or normal / existing phenomena? Why?

- **OB is rather taboo, and if it is even mentioned it is not officially.**
- **Only in SK OB is increasingly recognized as a normal and existing phenomenon, as awareness grows (especially among younger -below 40).**
- **In all reports it is apparent that OB is perceived as a weakness of the person. So academics try to not show weakness" and professional burnout can be interpreted as weakness which has further negative consequences for the person.**

PL UK: Likely OB is still considered, especially among male, to be a shameful topic that should be dealt with individually and not in a public forum instead.),

SK: also here the academics suffering by OB are feeling somehow stigmatized and do not want to share this experience since they believe it is a sort of professional failure in relation to students.

CY: it is often equated to showing weakness and that this can potentially lead to repercussions).

"If someone is burnt out - I rather not count for him anymore. How I manage a project, I have more than a dozen people in the project. I probably wouldn't want to have professional burnouts, because I could count on some less efficiency of their performance. That's how I perceive that a burnout will be less effective at work." [3,DK].

"I think people try to sweep it under the carpet for fear of losing their job at the end of the day. They don't want to give an indication that they are vulnerable or weak."(1CY)

"If there is a teacher who, for example, is overtired, burnt out and has no desire to work, often cancels classes, is absent, and is a specialist in a particular field, there is no substitution for him then at that point somehow this education sinks a lot. This is a serious problem at art schools, and I think it is similar in music school. Because it is direct master-student contact" [4,DK].

What are factors contributing to OB specific for academic life? Which of factors listed in the guideline are important (if any)

Job specific – most important group of factors

- **Overload of work – too much, 7/365, also inn weekends, in different areas, different topics, a lot of changes**
- **Organization structure / governance** - hierarchical structure, bureaucracy, rigidity of rules with many changes, socio-political situation. Authorities do not notice the problem of OB. in universities, they care poorly for the comfort and development of employees.

"The relationship between research and teaching staff and administrative staff has been shaken. There are more administrative workers than research and teaching teachers. Sometimes there is such frustration, and it's talked about, such discouragement in trying to get something done in the administration at this university.." [3,M,PL].

- **Position and responsibility (manager vs. subordinate, tasks at work)** – particularly relevant for junior and subordinate staff, lack of partnership at work
- **Working with(out) people** – working alone at the university, *"everyone is in their office, and we can go a week without seeing anyone"* (#2CY) There is little meeting with others, little communication, a lot of competition and social comparison (PL). This lack of exchange makes it difficult to share problems. In PL it was pointed out that one does not get rewards and recognition for cooperation and relationships which is discouraging.
- **Specifics of Generation Z as students** – mentioned mainly in PL : The new generation, referred to as "Z's," is more demanding and less willing to engage in additional responsibilities. It can affect the atmosphere at work and the relationship between teachers and students.

- **Employee successes (or failures)** - in each area **evaluated by other people, a lot of external expectancies , success is not objective** - it depends on the subjective opinions of others (e.g. students or superiors). Failures accentuated more than successes. Development requirements, teaching and research evaluations, and student evaluations can lead to changes in staffing and affect employee morale and their willingness to take on new challenges
- **Method of assessing the quality of academic staff's work (scoring)** – is a problem because it excessively promotes one of the many activities of academics. They usually manage by dabbling in punctuation, but weaker people can be removed from the university even when they are excellent teachers. Stresses lack of money for research (PL DK)

"Often an article somewhere is submitted, reject, reject, reject, reject, reject, reject, no. After five it's also a person can already feel that something is not right, no. To publish, you often have to do research, yes. That is, at least sample surveys and money. This is another element that there is not much money for research." [1,DK].

- **The basic salary does not cover all work.** Some of the work and successes are not rewarded (the remuneration does not include, for example, extra work at the university in projects, in organisation, working with students beyond the norm) There are also no symbolic rewards - recognition of effort beyond the necessary level. The salary itself is not adequate to the prestige and position.

"The payout is inadequate to the prestige. The environment thinks that we have such a financial firecracker for it. And the professional leap isn't tied to an adequate salary." [2,DK].

- **Lack of adequate support and appreciation of successes**, making work more difficult: e.g., withholding publications, supervisors adding to the publications of junior employees

Personal specific: diverse opinions: but usually considered as a second important group of factors influencing OB levels

- **Over-motivation to work/ workaholism/ perfectionism:** according to interviewees, burnout often affects ambitious/developing people, who may be surrounded by envy or overused for various extra work due to their willingness to cooperate and unique competencies

“You’re expected constantly to perform exceptionally in your teaching, whilst developing new courses or programs, whilst coordinating or administering other programs...ah and don’t forget to do some research too.” (#1CY)

- **Employee successes (or failures) perception – assigning too much weight to them** can be a factor contributing to OB; as well as unrealistic and high objectives associated with academic achievements,

- **Personal/personality factors such as age/gender + Length of professional life + professional status:**

In PL (DK), the ageing of staff has been identified as a risk factor. The lack of young staff means that older staff have to do all the work once outsourced to assistants.

Opinions on OB susceptibility due to age vary. OB may, according to some, particularly affect

- younger - assistants/docs - because of the demands of superiors and career dependence on them.
- older/post-doctoral -when the career path begins to narrow. She emphasised that in circumstances of work at the university - with compulsory didactics, that is not rewarded, with an emphasis on creating research and publications, with an overload of administrative tasks, burnout is an element of the work environment. These can especially hide OB to seek their own solutions.
- everyone - OB is embedded in the work of academics, it is only intensified by socio-economic changes in universities as well.
- Interesting indicator of OB severity: **more frequent conversations about retirement.** (PL DK) *"Very often statements are already breaking through, how much is left until retirement, I think this is also a signal, because sometimes we have already spoken in conversations, and the topic did not come before."* [1,DKI].

- **Burden/stress – is a constant factor at work.** The job of a didactician is a physically tiring job, sometimes (SK) very much so, e.g. in summer when exams conducted in high temperatures . In addition (SK) exaggerated empathy towards the needs and problems of others (students, colleagues), low capability to relax and recover physical strength and mental energy
- **Work-life balance (balance between work and other aspects of life) –** very important protective factor but also really danger as academics are “still in work” and weakly control the balance. multichannel communication/breakthrough is also important factor.

"We are under attack all the time by a multitude of different devices, systems, information. That didn't exist in the past. I would check my email, I had to log in somewhere, I would check once top, twice a day. Now all the time if I stay in, my phone informs me, my watch informs me. WhatsApps, Messengers, social media and so on. There are a lot of these stimuli." [3,DK].

"We have now, especially with these new technologies, not work life balance, but work life flow, that it's a cross-fertilization, that we are not able to close the door at the proverbial 16 there." [1,DK].

" I noticed things like I was getting home tired all the time, I was not spending good quality time with the kids, you know I was there but I wasn't there. It was feeling constantly irritated. That's when I realized that I was bringing all of the frustrations from work at home and it was having a negative impact in my life" (3 CY)

External factors – least important but can exacerbate/ trigger OB through increased stress

- **Pandemic Covid 19 and lockdown : different opinion.** Mostly – that **it was stressful and lead to remote work** proven difficult and exhausting for some, BUT make the time more productive. Also the pandemic and the period of remote education were a time that helped them to create new forms and tools of work. It was also an opportunity to get rid of redundant tasks, time for personal development, and an opportunity to adjust the performed tasks to the work-life balance
- **Climate change – not mentioned**
- **Political threats/war – important mainly in SK (war in UA, shift in local politics)**
- **Artificial intelligence – mixed feeling. Discussed in CY and PL.** The concerns were not present in other countries / interviews so may be the topic is not a stress for rest of academics

AI and new tools can be a source of stress, especially for older employees who may have difficulty adapting to new conditions. Younger generations - students/younger employees - may be better able to cope with new technologies, which can lead to tensions within the team. **There is concern that as technology evolves, traditional teaching methods may become less effective, which could lead to further burnout among teachers.** AI makes work easier but also imposes additional responsibilities, for example, in the inspection of theses..

"Now if artificial intelligence wins out some of the robots, what will it be again, 'add more from yourself.' That's what I think. We don't know yet, but in a little while the requirements will turn into something bigger again." [1.F,PL] "There is this danger. In a few years, will our profession be needed or as it is now. As a scientist and as a teacher. I imagine that artificial intelligence will generate a lecture that will be 100 times more interesting than the lecture I gave yesterday." [3,DK].

Knowledge of existing solutions

- supporting the diagnosis, prevention and management of OB

- In general, there is a lack of activities related to OB prevention but also coping with it. The universities where the interviewees work do not have activities dedicated to professional burnout

“Despite the knowledge of how to prevent burnout, their universities do not use any procedures that would help employees cope with the problem of burnout”.(PL UK)

- Currently **individual having OB symptoms/ feeling something is wrong - cope on his/her own and with own efforts rather than with the help of academia.**

There is **no special diagnosis or treatment pathway for academics.** Everything on a general basis. The responsibility for **the initial diagnosis tended to be attributed to the employee himself (CY)**, but it **should also be done by the supervisor, the HR service of the university or colleagues (PL)**

SK: If any academic staff would have revealed the OB symptoms, there would be the only legal solution that the person would contact a medical doctor or a specialist (psychiatrist) in order to be diagnosed with the OB and only if the diagnosis is confirmed the patient could have the possibility of sick leave. There is so far no specificity in procedures among academics. They are treated as other employees in all other sectors and have the right to have treatment during sick leave (prescription, medical treatment, therapy, psychotherapy, artetherapy, etc.).

PL: one can go to sick or annual leave.

There are some general “psychological” activities offered employees by universities but not connected with OB.

- One of the respondents (PL) mentioned that they have introduced **additional contact hours with a psychologist for employees, which has been well received.**

"That person who wants to make an appointment makes an appointment directly with the psychologist. There is an email address given, a phone number There is not one book simply for entry. But there is also a note that these are like consultation hours, not treatment modes. This is a prevention, and from the information that just comes to me as well, it is received as if taking care. Someone can benefit, they don't have to, but they have that opportunity because we have diagnosed the problem, and they benefit." [4,DK].

- There are also conducted **lectures on stress, some recalled specifically on the topic of burnout, but this is not a systematic action, either preventive or against burnout that already exists. ALSO:** “pure” information about OB is not a solution leaves the employee recognizing symptoms but without any help. (PL UK)

"There is nothing about professional burnout at the university - as if this topic doesn't exist. It is treated as if it is not a problem. And I think it's better to talk now and sort of initiate it, so that there are not just problems." [4,DK]

- **There are (SK)/ or used to be in the past (CY) general activities building team like or general mental health combined with meetings with academic employees as outdoor activities where teambuilding is supported.** Events are organized several times a year, the organizers include academics and other employees. The place where meetings are organized is far away from the university, in the forest area.

Respondent's own expectations and ideas regarding the prevention of OB.

- **Prevention of OB. is definitely an important and expected course of action.**
- **Mixed opinions how to do this BUT it is crucial that university authorities understand that job burnout is not only a problem for the individual, but also for the entire organization.**
- **Without changes and having OB extending universities can expect high turnover rates, absenteeism, and lower reputation for universities (SK)**
- **By supporting employees, universities can improve** not only the individual's mental and physical health but also the quality of teaching, research output, and overall academic performance as well as **the work atmosphere, ensuring long term productivity.**
- **Good balance of responsibility between organization and individuals is expected (currently unbalanced and move to employees). But next step should be done by employer.** According to the respondents, universities should introduce various solutions related to the prevention of OB.
- **(SK) Also state/ government authorities can be expected to implement regulations promoting mental health in workplaces.** Other: employee organizations or unions (advocating for better working conditions, fair treatment, and workplace protections against OB).

"It should be talked about. Maybe some materials, maybe training or guides, whatever. So institutional. In the first place, they should be trained, the staff, especially the authorities, because they completely do not yoke it, and the managers. There should be a psychologist, of course. A person with whom I make an appointment and certainly a psychologist who is not an employee of the organization. A person from the outside. And I benefit from the fact that I can make an appointment with this person, I can go to myself for such therapy." [2,DK]].

- **Systemic organisational solutions for OB: e.g. creation of a unit: person/department dealing with OB at the university, coordinating all activities in this field (diagnosis, prevention, counteraction).**
- **HR staff, superiors, management is expected as responsible to start change.**
- **Diagnosis of risk factors and OB:** e.g., surveys of job satisfaction, expectations of the university, or diagnosis of OB itself.
- **A transformation of current system of academic work (PL, SK)**
 - More balanced workload between teaching, administrative tasks, and research; Allowing more flexibility in working hours or remote work to help teachers better manage their tasks and personal lives;
 - Implementing systems to recognize and reward academic efforts, fostering a sense of appreciation and reducing feelings of undervaluation.
- **Formal solutions to facilitate rest from work and recuperation:** eg a leave for health reasons.
- **Supporting individual development and resilience (PL, DK)**
 - Education on occupational burnout
 - Promote physical activity
 - Relationship building: Creating spaces to establish relationships among staff and between teachers and students,. More integration in the team, which can help build a positive atmosphere in the workplace
 - Teaching load management
- Support for individuals – providing counseling (psychological) services, stress management workshops, or mindfulness training to help academics cope with stress

Note: in PL DK it was suggested that consultations or workshops should be carried out externally due to the stigmatisation of OB. *"I would do such an anonymous study at the university, a survey. I wouldn't call it concerning job burnout, but what you don't like, what bothers you, what frustrates you. To identify the problems, that is, what is not working. I would identify, I would diagnose, to indicate what the problems are."* [3,DK].

Evaluation of the results (OB prevention measures) planned for the Project.

- **All proposals are interesting and accepted.**
- **Taken together, they form a comprehensive proposal
for all target groups**

1. Changing attitudes towards life - building attitudes based on stoicism: living in harmony with the world, not paying attention to what is beyond our control, gaining experience and deepening knowledge, continuous work on ourselves as self-improvement.

- **This solution is acceptable and interesting for respondents.**
- **It promotes a philosophical and long-term approach to life and work, focusing on self-control, emotional balance, and personal growth.**
- **It aligns with values that are timeless and universally beneficial.**

<i>Strengths:</i>	<p>Low-cost / minimal cost from employers</p> <p>Help in dealing with uncontrollable external circumstances, reducing stress and frustration</p> <p>Already used spontaneously / intuitive (PL)</p>
<i>Weaknesses:</i>	<p>not all teachers tent to stoic principles;</p> <p>requires strong personal motivation and discipline, which might be challenging for overwhelmed individuals</p>
<i>Feasibility for employers and employees</i>	<p>Employer can support this by offering seminars or workshops on building stoic attitudes and self-improvement.</p> <p>The implementation would depend on individual interest and participation</p>

"Changing attitudes toward life is something I've said myself somewhere"/"People are anchoring themselves, this is a good direction, because the customer is changing for us. It is difficult to handle. And we have to know that we won't stop it."/ " You can say that I'm a bit of a stoic and I'm trying, I'm trying just this attitude of stoicism"

2. Enriching knowledge of occupational burnout: how to recognize occupational burnout, stress and its symptoms and effects; possibilities for prevention and early self-diagnosis; possibility of diagnosis in others (colleagues).

➤ **Practical and directly addresses the OB issue by providing awareness and education about OB, its symptoms, effects, and prevention strategies.**

➤ **It equips individuals with tools for self-diagnosis and mutual support**

<i>Strengths:</i>	Direct solution of lack of awareness Easy to implement through training programs, workshops, or online resources;
<i>Weaknesses:</i>	Knowledge alone is not skill and no lead to behavioral change
<i>Feasibility for employers and employees</i>	Simple solution by university management as it is both affordable and impactful. Should be (or is already) a common practice in many institutions, easy to implement

➤ **Some concerns toward using the word “tutorial” to refer to academics occurs, with suggesting the use of a more scientific term such as 'case studies'.**

"They're not going to read someone else's foolishness, because we write ourselves. I would avoid any such word tutorials at all. Just case studies, see - see." [2,DK].

3. Building psycho-physical resilience/resilience, a change of perspective and the ability to select activities appropriate to one's needs: resilience diagnosis, preference assessment, exploration and development of hobbies, including body and mind training, contact with nature (e.g. forest bathing), sports bridge, volunteering at selected aid sites. In general, activities to gain a new perspective on the surrounding reality.

- **Very attractive due to its holistic approach, combining mental, physical, and emotional well-being with engaging activities like sports, hobbies, and nature therapy.**
- **Most of the respondents incline to this solution as the best one**

<i>Strengths:</i>	not only support prevention of OB, also promotes overall health and well-being, reducing stress and increasing vitality; Balanced lifestyle and a connection to nature has proven mental health benefits; Offer of a wide range of activities, catering to diverse preferences and needs
<i>Weaknesses:</i>	May require significant resources, such as organizing group activities, facilities for sports, or funding for resilience training; Some individuals might not be interested in physical or outdoor activities. Stigmatization of participants can occur (as a help for coping current OB not prevention)
<i>Feasibility for employers and employees</i>	Due to logistical and financial constraints can be difficult Can be offered in partnership with internal Departments: HR, Sports and Leisure as well as with partners

- **OB self-diagnosis.** It can be an important part of helping you understand your symptoms yourself, but it can also help you understand the behavior of your co-workers.

What do they think about specified measures of OB prevention?

How do they see their relevance to academics?

All of the proposals are liked, relevant to the subject matter and needed by academics. **All formats as that these should be used simultaneously so to give employees more choice in how to access them but also recognizing that different people might have different needs.**

It could be also important to communicate widely at universities using the intranet. It is also advisable to combine the various forms, e.g., a link to a publication that deepens the topic shown in the video.

<p>A guide for university teachers on occupational burnout, prevention of OB and self-diagnosis - a traditional book</p>	<p>Rather for older staff and authorities. The least attractive. Not catchy but traditional book might be relevant, as academics often rely on research-based and well-structured documents. Also the practical usage of implementing knowledge may be limited without interactive elements</p>
<p>A guide for university teachers on occupational burnout, prevention of OB and self-diagnosis - a set of short videos about OB prevention</p>	<p>For younger – more suitable More engaging, dynamic, and easier to follow, especially for those with busy schedules. More entertaining manner than text Possible to watching them not only during free time, but also while travelling to and from the work</p>
<p>Traditional workshops - with a trainer, aimed at changing attitudes to life, enriching knowledge of the OB or building resilience</p>	<p>The most effective measure –combine sharing real case knowledge with interactions highly relevant since they provide a platform for academics to share experiences, reflect on their challenges Possible problem of being open in a group of peers from the same university (DK)</p>

- Some of respondents spontaneously recognized in them their own activities and ways of OB, as well as the proposals given in the earlier part of the interview. It can be said that the project proposals are a natural response to the perceived needs.

<p>How interesting are proposed topics: the practice of stoicism, the basics of bridge, forest baths as a way to relieve stress, self-diagnosis of OB.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All can be attractive for part of the target group • Contacts with nature: already being used by interviewees to work with each other. Forest baths known by name, from publications - attractive as some novelty. • Body and mind training: a very broad category. Seen are various exercises, e.g. yoga, tai chi, but also more intensive workouts e.g. running. For the mind e.g. mindfulness, breathing techniques. Also the practice of stoicism can be conducted as a workshop. • Bridge would be supplemented with board games. Board games are now growing in popularity and could be an alternative to bridge.
<p>What topics could the guide/ videos/ workshops cover otherwise?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering was also suggested as a complementary activity that can help change perspectives. • Other workshop topics include developing hobbies such as crafts - ceramics, glass decorating. • Team building (eg. semi-regular break for all employees where they would be taken to a hotel for a couple of days, and would do things like team building exercises) <p>Videos - emotional intelligence - coping and reacting to stress, communication, teacher-students relationship, how to manage problem students</p>

What could we expect while raising awareness of the OB phenomenon in universities by preparing dedicated materials?

Polish academics

- We can expect some level of distance toward new topic. Some level of reactance can occur also due to protective mechanism (we are NOT burnout-ed)
- Attention to the work culture at Polish universities, which is based on excessive use of employee resources. **It is necessary to point out the preventional character of the activities and possibility to make individual decisions about participation.**

Slovak academics

- May view OB as a personal issue rather than an institutionally driven problem.
- A demand for practical and evidence-based resources to address burnout rather than theoretical discussions.
- Responses may vary based on age groups: younger academics may be more open to acknowledging OB, while senior academics might show resistance due to traditional work culture.

Cyprus academics

- Agreed with the point about raising awareness and doing it in a very open manner by providing as much information as possible for people to be able to identify symptoms of OB in themselves and seek help.
- Mode of delivery should be as diverse and flexible as possible, but workshops were the best solutions as *“they provide a sense of support and community”* and that this is *“a collective effort”* (1CY).

Sharing dedicated OB prevention activities for university teachers, should this topic be discussed openly or in a more camouflaged/discreet manner? Why?

Mixed opinions: due to the nature of universities and academics and the fear of the stigma of burnout, any activity in this area must be quite cautious. BUT it would be valuable for the project and activities at the university to allow people talking about PB. To show that it is a phenomenon as present as physical ailments.

BUT be careful, to prevent stigmatization (OB.= weakness)

PL more cautions. *"Name some one room in this organization, and there are hundreds of these rooms, that certain people meet in. Maybe set up such a cell on our site for employees, the password professional burnout, and give them a chance to meet. But it has to be secret, that is, encrypted input from employees. People would start talking about it. In this chat maybe let them exchange these views, but some people need to see that you are not alone. To have the support that I'm winding you up, they have that too. That we can see that it's a phenomenon, and just like leg pain, something else can also appear." [2,F,PL].*

CY – talk openly about OB. And solutions

Focus of prevention is a very good direction, it allows to get acquainted with the subject of OB and how to not only prevent, but also diagnose or deal with the problem in a safe way. Safe, that is, without betraying possible problems of their own and without risking a label - a person who may be professionally burned out.

Therefore, the whole activity must carry the key word PREVENTION.

Success depends on actors: decision makers and users as well as implementation details

- ✓ **Acceptance by the university management** (awareness, importance, financing, implementation)
- ✓ **Find time for this in day full of tasks – employees** (time management. it would be hard to incorporate any of the proposed strategies unless some time was released specifically for these)
- ✓ **Implementation and usage – should be optional**, no obligations / mandatory exercise
- ✓ **Communication mostly about prevention** but solutions also for coping
- ✓ **Co-operation with external partners/ institutions** (may be additional communication for them to raise the awareness also specific of OB among academics)