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## The Role of Sanogenic and Critical Thinking in Preventing the Emotional Burnout of Young Primary School Teachers

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## Abstract

The article investigates the problem of emotional burnout of young primary school teachers. The results are compared between middle-aged teachers with more than ten years of work experience and teachers with more than fifteen years of work experience. Constructive and destructive factors of emotional burnout prevention of the teachers have been determined using the methods for diagnosing the level of emotional burnout by V. Boiko, L. Starkey's critical thinking test in O. Lutsenko's adaptation, methods for determining the level of sanogenic thinking by L. Rubtsova, methods for diagnosing an individual degree of expressiveness of reflexivity by A. Karpov, Pearson's correlation coefficient and regression analysis. It was found that in 50% of the studied general samples, where the average age is 37.8 years, the syndrome of emotional burnout has already been formed.

In particular, the indicator of its component "Exhaustion" dominates among teachers, whose average age is 22.4 years. For teachers, whose average age is 33.5 years, the indicator of the "Tension" scale prevails, and for teachers, whose average age is 52.9 years, the indicator of the "Resistance" scale prevails. At the same time, it has been investigated that the high level of reflexivity is mostly pronounced in teachers, whose average age is 22.4; the middle level - in teachers, whose average age is 52.9, the low level- in teachers, whose average age is 33.5. It was emphasized that teachers of public schools have a low level of reflexivity, while teachers of private schools have a medium level. There is a direct correlation between the indicators of reflexivity, age and experience of teachers in private schools. It has been studied that age and experience are constructive factors of reflexivity in teachers, whose average age is 33.5. The study shows that sanogenic thinking prevails among teachers working in a private educational institution, while it is neutral among teachers of public educational institutions. It has been found that the most pronounced sanogenic thinking is among teachers whose average age is 33.5 years. The inverse correlation between indicators of emotional burnout and sanogenic thinking, in particular in teachers with an average age of 22.4 years, revealed the importance of developing this type of thinking in the context of the burnout prevention. In addition, the inverse dependence of the development of sanogenic thinking among teachers of public institutions from the age criterion, the duration of the realization of professional scenario and working conditions has been examined. It has been investigated that age and experience are destructive factors of sanogenic thinking of teachers, whose average age is 52.9 years. The advantage of the average level of critical thinking indicators in teachers of all age groups, regardless of working conditions, has been studied.

There is a direct correlation between the indicators of critical thinking of primary school teachers and their reflexivity, in particular in teachers of public educational institutions and teachers

whose average age is 33.5 years. The direct correlation between the indicators of critical thinking and emotional burnout in teachers of private schools, as well as in teachers whose average age is 22.4 years and 33.5 years indicates the feasibility of further study of the components of critical thinking to clarify and specify causes of emotional exhaustion in this age group. The results have been received by means of regression analysis.

They confirm the importance of the development of sanogenic thinking and decrease in the level of critical thinking for counteraction of emotional burnout in teachers whose average age is 22.4 years and 33.5 years. On the contrary, it has been investigated that teachers whose average age is 52.9 years should develop critical thinking and reflexivity to prevent emotional burnout.

**Keywords:** emotional burnout, sanogenic thinking, critical thinking, reflexivity, young primary school teacher



## **Formulation of the research problem**

In a global pandemic the study of the problem of primary school teachers' professional burnout needs special attention. Adaptation to the implementation of the tasks of educational reforms, in particular the implementation of the ideas of the concept of "New Ukrainian School" requires the renewal of professional competencies (Hrynevych, Elkin, Makarenko, Usatenko 2016). This process is accompanied by emotional exhaustion of Ukrainian teachers. At the same time, the loss of teachers' emotional resources is exacerbated by "quarantine burnout". The situation of uncertainty, adaptation to new conditions, the load of the online format of lifestyle provoke burnout in all spheres of life. Therefore, the search for factors of energy conservation and combating exhaustion will be important for both teachers with some work experience and for beginners.

## **Analysis of previous research**

The results of theoretical analysis of modern research on this problem demonstrate the interest of scientists in studying the various external and internal factors of burnout and finding ways to prevent and overcome it. Scientists attach great importance to the organization of the professional environment and interpersonal interaction in it (B. Bunk, R. Burke, I. Winnabst, V. Schaufeli, K. Maslach, etc.) At the same time, the causes of burnout can be seen in the individual features of the emotional and motivational spheres of personality (L. Hullsen, S. Hobful, J. Friedy, A. Pines, etc.). The problem of emotional burnout of educators, professional stress is the subject of interest of such researchers as O. Baranov, V. Zenkovsky, L. Kolesnikova, T. Koltunovych, A. Shafranova, etc. In particular, the Ukrainian researcher T. Koltunovych (Koltunovych 2012), understands the phenomenon as a gradual loss of emotional, cognitive and physical energy under the influence of prolonged occupational stress. According to T. Koltunovych, this process is manifested in symptoms of psycho-emotional exhaustion, chronic fatigue, cynicism and decreased satisfaction with the work performed. However, the problem of burnout among young people, the study of the factors of this process are also relevant. Thus, in previous studies correlative dependence was found between the indicators of peak life success among Ukrainian migrants of different ages and the scenario directives. The latest, according to the work of transaction analysts and their followers (E. Bern, K. Steiner, B. and M. Goulding and others), are the main components of life and hence the professional scenario. Formed under the influence of the instructions of significant adults in childhood, in adulthood such attitudes can perform the function of hyperimmunity in the context of productive self-realization (Handzilevska,



Nikitchuk & Balashov 2019). Such results are confirmed by research of a problem of primary school teachers' professional burnout through a prism of implementation of resources of the professional scenario. It was shown that emotional burnout of primary school teachers depended on their unconscious scenario directives - the main component of the professional scenario, and the dominance of psychological roles (Handzilevska & Chervinko 2019). It should be noted that professional exhaustion was studied in the context of loss of resources in the implementation of the professional scenario. It is understood as a loss of resources in the implementation of a professional scenario - a plan of professional life, achievement of a professional goal. The results indicate the feasibility of further research on the problem of burnout of primary school teachers through the prism of conscious decision-making, based on different hypotheses, different options of solving professional problems and one's own capabilities, i.e. the development of critical thinking. The reflective nature of critical thinking acquires special significance in the modern era of online lifestyle, as evidenced by the revision of the criteria of the professional standard of teachers, including primary school teachers (Professional Standard for the professions "Primary school teacher", "General secondary school teacher", 2020). After all, the reflexive competence of teachers ensures their continuous professional development. In turn, critical thinking, as the ability to analyze facts, generate and organize ideas, defend opinions, make comparisons, draw conclusions, evaluate arguments, and solve problems (Chance 1986) is the basis of teachers' information and digital competence. It encourages teachers to use and activate intellectual and communicative means, which are important in the implementation of their professional tasks (Professional Standard for the professions "Primary school teacher", "General secondary school teacher", 2020). Sanogenic thinking is based on conscious reflexive analysis of own emotions and emotional (stress) factors (Hilman 2017). Sanogenic thinking, as one of the types of positive thinking, is an effective means of maintaining a positive self-image and aimed at overcoming negative emotional experiences, because it helps to distance oneself from them and adapt to them (Orlov 2003). It is likely that critical and sanogenic thinking, the common characteristic of which is reflexivity (introspection), are important in studying the problem of emotional burnout of young primary school teachers. The answer to the request to find ways to solve the problem of life exhaustion is the creation of the Center "Sanogenic Pedagogy and Psychology" at National University "Ostroh Academy", which trains future primary education professionals, on the basis of which the proposed study was conducted.

**The goal is** to explore the role of critical and sanogenic thinking in preventing emotional burnout of young primary school teachers.



**The task is to** empirically study the features of emotional burnout of young primary school teachers compared to middle-aged teachers with more than ten years of work experience and teachers with more than fifteen years of work experience; to reveal dependence of its indicators on indicators of critical and sanogenic thinking.

## Research methods

To implement the goals and objectives of the study, the diagnostic tools were applied. For determining the presence and level of burnout of primary school teachers the method of diagnosing the level of emotional burnout by V. Boiko (Boiko 1999) was used. L. Starkey's test of critical thinking in adaptation by O. Lutsenko (Lutsenko 2014) was used to single out the factors of emotional burnout of primary school teachers. To determine the general level of development of sanogenic thinking, L. Rubtsova's method (Rubtsova 2010) (adapted version of the questionnaire of X. Cornelius and S. Feir; separate blocks of the method were developed by L. Rubtsova on the basis of Spielberg's self-assessment scale, J. Taylor's personal scale of anxiety manifestations, control locus scale by D. Rothberg) was used. To clarify the role of the reflexive nature of critical and sanogenic thinking in the context of emotional burnout of primary school teachers, a method of diagnosing the individual degree of reflexivity by A. Karpov (Karpov & Skitiaieva 2002) was applied; Pearson's correlation analysis and linear regression were used for mathematical and statistical processing of empirical data.

## Research results

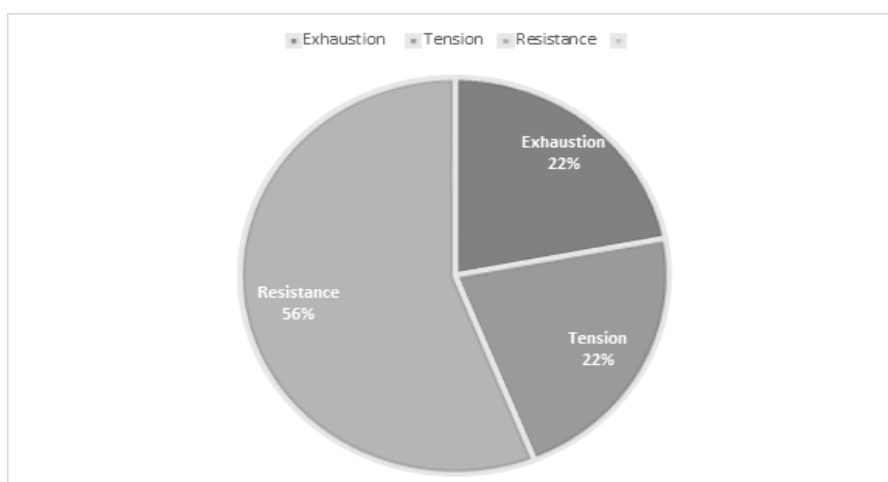
The empirical sample of our study consisted of 40 ( $n = 40$ ) primary school teachers of public and private secondary schools in Kyiv and Kyiv region (38 women, 2 men). Respondents' age is from 19 to 60. The average age of respondents is 37.8 years, the average length of work experience is 15.2 years. The average age of teachers ( $n = 20$ ) of a state educational institution is 42.65, work experience is 22.05; private ( $n = 20$ ) - 32.92, work experience - 8.2. According to the age classification of the World Health Organization as well as taking into account that among the sampled teachers there have been those who are still studying in higher educational institutions, three age groups have been identified: the first ( $n = 9$ ) - teachers, the average age - 22.44, work experience - 2.89, second ( $n = 19$ ) - teachers, average age - 35.53; work experience - 13.26 and the third ( $n = 12$ ), average age - 52.91, work experience - 27.33. This distribution of pedagogical experience reflects certain levels of formation of teachers' professional competence, which I. Androschuk demonstrates with the example of philology



teachers. The first level - “Professional development” (initial level) - “specialist” and “specialist of the II category” (up to 5 years of teaching experience). At this level, teachers successfully solve typical professional tasks using ready-made methods. The second - “Professional development” (heuristic level) - “specialist of the first category” (10 years of teaching experience) and “specialist of the highest category” (15 years of teaching experience). At this level, teachers are able to make modifications to the organization of the educational process, critically evaluate their experience in order to improve it. Third - “Creative implementation” (creative and innovative levels - “specialist of the highest category” and pedagogical titles (15-20 years of teaching experience). At this level, teachers freely and independently produce and implement new ideas in educational processes, make design and expert proposals for the organization of the educational process (Androschuk 2013).

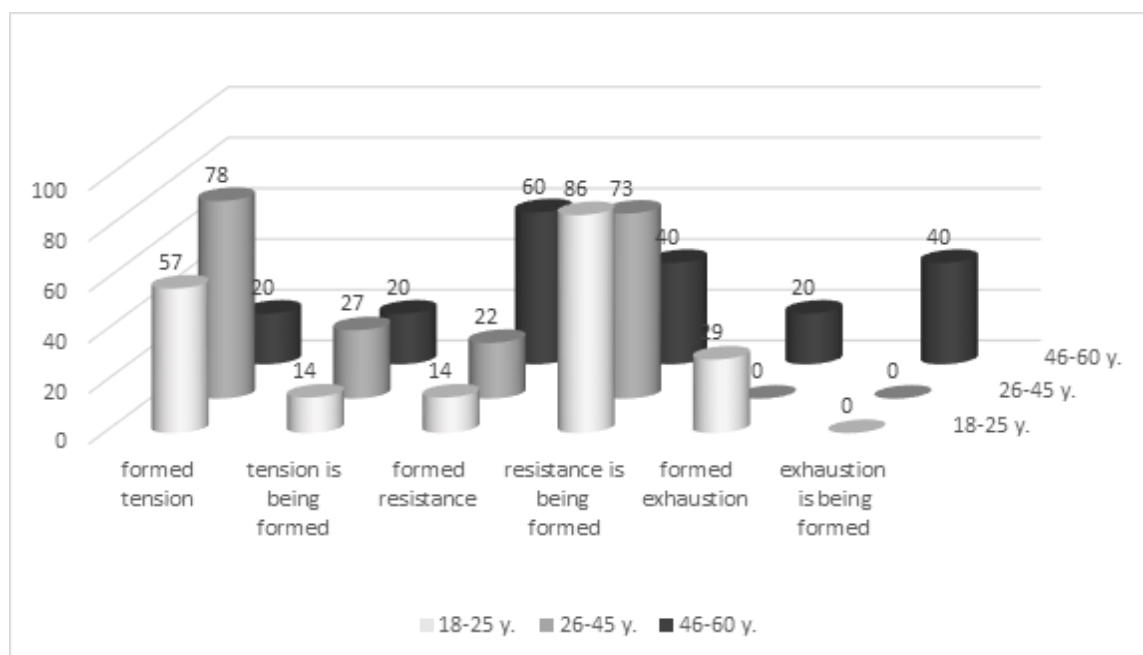
According to the results of V. Boiko’s method of diagnosing the level of emotional burnout, it was investigated that the emotional burnout had already been formed in 50% of primary school teachers of the general empirical sample, is in the process of formation in 28%, absent - in 22%. Comparative analysis of its components allowed to identify “Resistance” as the most pronounced among others (56%) at the level of complete formation (Fig. 1), as well as at the level of formation (54%). At the level of formation, the indicators of the scale of emotional burnout “Tension” are characterized by 31% of teachers, “Exhaustion” - by 15%. People under the study can be characterized by such phases of emotional burnout: emotional disorientation, inadequacy in the choice of emotional response (“Resistance”), self-dissatisfaction, experiencing traumatic circumstances (“Tension”), depersonalization, emotional deficiency (“Exhaustion”) (Lezhenina 2009).

**Figure 1.** Distribution of burnout symptoms in primary school teachers on the level of complete formation (%)



However, it should be noted that the teachers of the second group at the levels of complete formation and formation are dominated by indicators of the “Tension” scale, whereas the teachers of the third group at this level are dominated by indicators of the “Resistance” scale. At the level of formation, the indicators of this scale predominate among teachers in the first group as well. In the first group of teachers compared to others on the level of complete formation the indicators of emotional burnout of the “Exhaustion” scale prevail, while at the level of formation these indicators dominate in the teachers of the third group (Fig. 2)

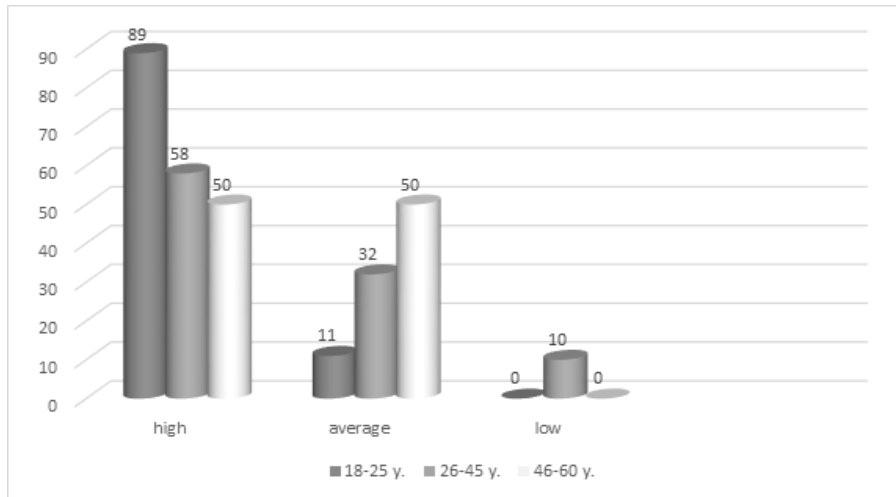
**Figure 2.** Indicators of emotional burnout in primary school teachers: age dimension. (%)



These results indicate the importance of psychological assistance at the initial stage of implementation of primary school teachers' professional scenario.

Using the method of diagnosing the individual degree of expression of reflexivity by A. Karpov, it was investigated that 62% of primary school teachers have a high level of reflexivity, while the average is 33% and only 5% of teachers have a low level of reflexivity. In the age dimension, the high level of reflexivity is most pronounced in teachers of the first group, while the average is in teachers of the third group (Fig. 3). The low level of reflexivity in teachers of the second group indicates the importance of additional research on the destructive factors of this phenomenon.

**Figure 3.** Indicators of the level of reflexivity in young primary school teachers in terms of age



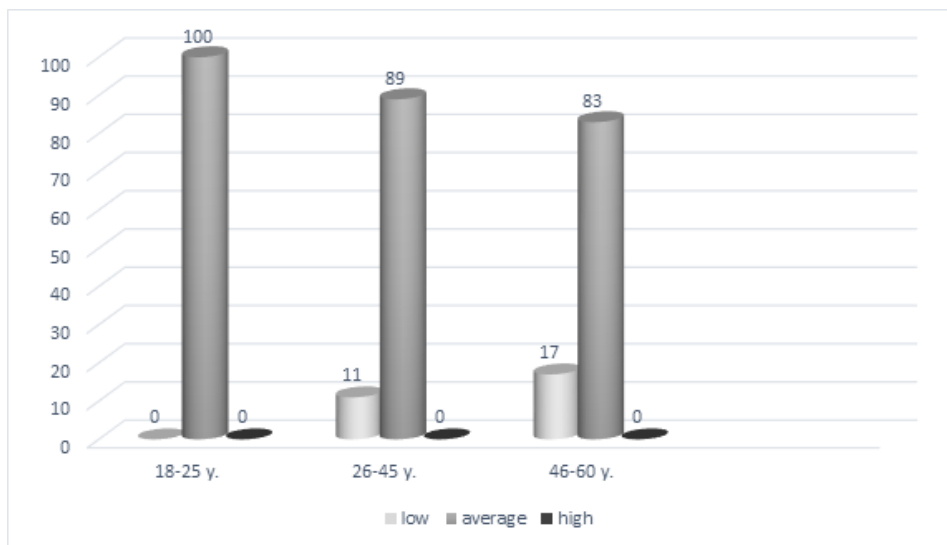
According to the results of L. Rubtsova's method, it was investigated that sanogenic thinking is observed in only 30% of the empirical sample. 35% of teachers have neutral thinking, and 35% have pathogenic thinking. It should be noted that primary school teachers working in a public school are dominated by neutral thinking (50%), while both sanogenic and pathogenic are characterized by 25%. Regarding teachers of a private school, 58% of teachers are characterized by the predominance of sanogenic thinking, 16% - by neutral and 26% - by pathogenic thinking. It is likely that the level of working conditions is important in shaping the positive emotional comfort of teachers.

In terms of age, it was shown that sanogenic thinking predominates in 56% of teachers of the first group, neutral - in 44%, pathogenic thinking was not detected at this age. It should be noted that sanogenic thinking is present in 67% of teachers of the second group, neutral - in 28%, and pathogenic - in 5%. The results of the third group of primary school teachers show the presence of sanogenic thinking - 31%, neutral - 31%, pathogenic- 38%. The results indicate the importance of taking into account the age criterion in the study of the implementation of the resources of the professional scenario of teachers as well as working conditions. Thus, it has been investigated that teachers of public schools are dominated by a low level of sanogenic thinking ( $M = 2, 55$ ) and reflexivity ( $M = 119, 65$ ), while teachers of private schools are dominated by an average level of sanogenic thinking and reflexivity (respectively  $M = 5, 95$  and  $M = 122, 6$ ).

The average level is demonstrated by the dominance of critical thinking indicators (90%), studied with the help of the test of critical thinking by L. Starkey in the adaptation of O. Lutsenko. It should be noted that among the teachers of this sample there are no indicators of critical thinking at

a high level. Low level is present in 10% of primary school teachers. Similar results, namely the predominance of the average level of critical thinking were studied in the age dimension (Fig. 4). In the age range, the teachers of the three groups showed an average level of critical thinking (respectively  $M = 14.44$ ,  $M = 14, 87$ ,  $M = 13, 17$ ) (Fig. 4). Similarly, the indicators of critical thinking in teachers of public and private educational institutions showed an average level (respectively  $M = 12.9$  and  $M = 15, 6$ ).

**Figure 4.** Indicators of the level of critical thinking in young primary teachers in terms of age



The lack of a high level of critical thinking indicators among primary school teachers confirms the urgency of educational reforms that provide for professional development. The obtained results are directed to the development of appropriate psychological support in the context of reforms of primary school teachers, including young ones.

The second stage of the study was aimed at identifying correlations between indicators of emotional burnout of primary school teachers and indicators of critical and sanogenic thinking. Thus, Pearson's correlation revealed an inverse correlation between indicators of emotional burnout and sanogenic thinking ( $r = -0.398$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ), which indicates the importance of developing this type of thinking in the context of burnout prevention. It should be noted that an inverse correlation between indicators of sanogenic thinking and age ( $r = -0.501$ ,  $p = 0.025$ ) and experience ( $r = -0.538$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ) was identified in teachers of public educational institutions. These results indicate the dependence of the development of sanogenic thinking of this group of teachers on the age criterion and the duration of the professional scenario which is important to consider in the development of an appropriate prevention or correction program.



The study also showed a direct correlation between indicators of sanogenic thinking and reflexivity (.788,  $p = .000$ ), age (.776,  $p = .000$ ) and work experience (.834,  $p = .000$ ) and is inverted with the indicators of emotional burnout (-.451,  $p = .046$ ) in private educational institution teachers. There is also a direct correlation between the indicators of reflexivity, age and experience (respectively, .723,  $p = .000$ ; .647,  $p = .002$ ) in private school teachers which indicates the importance of developing reflexivity for this category of teachers.

In the age range, a correlation was observed between the indicators of sanogenic thinking and emotional burnout (-.732,  $p = .025$ ) of teachers of the first group. In the second group of teachers a direct correlation was observed between the indicators of reflexivity and emotional burnout (.647,  $p = .003$ ), and age (.461,  $p = .047$ ). In the third group, the inverse correlation between the indicators of sanogenic thinking and age (-.618,  $p = .032$ ) and length of work experience (-.905,  $p = .000$ ) was found. These results indicate the importance of additional research of teachers of the second group. Probably, such results are explained by the presence of normative crisis and, accordingly, excessive reflection during this period.

There is a direct correlation between the indicators of critical thinking of primary school teachers and their reflexivity (.540,  $p = .000$ ), in particular of teachers of public educational institutions (.648,  $p = .002$ ). In addition, a direct correlation was found between the indicators of critical thinking and emotional burnout in teachers of private schools (.578,  $p = .008$ ). A direct correlation between the indicators of critical thinking and emotional burnout was found in teachers of the first and second age groups (.898,  $p = .001$  and .521,  $p = .222$ , respectively), between indicators of critical thinking and reflexivity in teachers of the second group (.726,  $p = .000$ ).

Regression analysis statistically confirmed ( $F = 47.69$ ,  $adjR^2 = 0.94$ ) the impact on the emotional burnout of teachers of the first group of factors such as sanogenic thinking (-3.77;  $t = -3.69$ ), critical thinking (+16.1;  $t = 6.84$ ), age (+4.42;  $t = 3.06$ ). Regression analysis allowed to statistically confirm ( $F = 8.98$ ;  $adjR^2 = 0.47$ ) the impact on emotional burnout in teachers of the second group: sanogenic thinking (-3.16;  $t = -2.96$ ), critical thinking (+7.31;  $t = 3.71$ ). Regression analysis statistically confirmed ( $F = 4.1$ ;  $adjR^2 = 0.53$ ) the impact on the emotional burnout of teachers of the third group: reflexivity (-4.92;  $t = -3.55$ ), critical thinking (-18.69;  $t = -2.74$ ), age (+31.87;  $t = 3.58$ ), seniority (-9.6;  $t = -3.14$ ). The obtained results confirm and supplement the importance of the development of sanogenic thinking and the reduction of the level of critical thinking to counteract emotional burnout in teachers of the first and second groups. However, according to the results obtained for teachers of



the third group in order to prevent emotional burnout, it is important to develop critical thinking and reflexivity.

The obtained results testify to the importance of the development of sanogenic thinking in the context of emotional burnout prevention of primary school teachers. Modern scientist A. Hilman (Hilman 2017), quite thoroughly analyzes the role of sanogenic thinking for students. She characterizes it as a mental process with a high level of metacognition and monitoring, which manifests itself in awareness of unconstructive behavioral programs and involves the acquisition of adequate response skills in stress situations. It is obvious that such understanding of sanogenic thinking and the conditions of its formation in student youth, in particular the development of reflexivity, flexibility in behavior are also important in counteracting the emotional burnout of teachers. This research confirms the opinion mentioned above with the works of another modern domestic scientist (Bondarchuk 2014), who exploring the problem of psychological readiness for the heads of educational organizations in the face of change, emphasizes the importance of reflection, sanogenic thinking and ability to self-regulation and self-control in the formation of this competence. The concept of the “New Ukrainian School” testifies to the importance of the development of sanogenic as well as critical thinking in primary school teachers and future primary school specialists in the learning process (Hrynevych, et al. 2016), which aims to stimulate critical thinking of students.

The formation of the ability to think critically is one of the tasks of a typical program of teachers’ professional development of “New Ukrainian school: responding to challenges”, developed by Ukrainian Institute for Educational Development in 2020. It is aimed at forming those competencies of primary school teachers that are necessary for effective organization of the educational process in the implementation of the State Standard of Primary Education, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine from February 21, 2018 № 87, and the Concept of State Policy in the field of reforming general secondary education of “New Ukrainian School” for the period up to 2029, approved by the order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated December 14, 2016 № 988-r (A standard program of professional development “New Ukrainian school: responding to challenges” 2020). In turn, this indicates the importance of developing critical thinking for teachers. However, according to the results of the study, critical thinking stimulates emotional burnout in the first and second group of teachers in the sample and the teachers of private schools. Thus, there is a relevance of a separate study to study the components of critical thinking and the direct relationship of their indicators with indicators of emotional burnout. It is evidenced by studies of modern Ukrainian scientists led by prof. I. Pasichnyk (Pasichnyk 2015). The period of experiencing normative and situational crises of teachers requires



detailed research as well as taking into account the gender aspect, which confirms the previous research (Handzilevska & Chervinko 2019). These questions make the prospect of further study. Thus, the obtained results allowed to state the formation of the emotional burnout syndrome in primary school teachers of the studied sample with the dominance of one of its components - "Resistance". It was investigated that the teachers of the second group (average age is 35.5 years) are dominated by indicators of the "Tension" scale, while in the first group of teachers (average age is 22.4 years) in comparison with others prevails "Exhaustion". Teachers of the third age group (average age is 52.9 years) at the level of formation are dominated by indicators of the "Resistance" scale. These results stress the importance of psychological assistance for primary school teachers at all ages of the professional scenario. Levels of reflexivity, critical and sanogenic thinking in primary school teachers were studied to identify the factors of counteraction to emotional burnout in terms of age. The obtained results testify to the dominance of indicators of high level of reflexivity of primary school teachers of the general empirical sample. At the same time, it is noted that the high level of reflexivity is most pronounced in teachers of the first group (average age is 22.4), while the average (average age - 52.9) is in teachers of the third group, and in teachers of the second group (middle age - 33.5) - low. In addition, it was emphasized that teachers of public schools have a low level of reflexivity, while teachers of private schools have a medium level. There is a direct correlation between the indicators of reflexivity, age and experience of teachers in private schools. It has been investigated that age and experience are constructive factors of reflexivity in teachers of the second group. It was studied that teachers who work in a public school are dominated by neutral thinking and teachers of a private school - by sanogenic. According to the age criterion, the most pronounced sanogenic thinking was revealed in the teachers of the second group. In addition, it was emphasized that teachers of public schools have a low level of sanogenic thinking, while teachers of private schools have a medium level. The inverse correlation between indicators of emotional burnout and sanogenic thinking, in particular in teachers of the first group, revealed the importance of developing this type of thinking in the context of burnout prevention. In addition, the inverse dependence of the development of sanogenic thinking in teachers of public institutions on the age criterion, the duration of the professional scenario and working conditions was studied. It is investigated that age and experience are destructive factors of sanogenic thinking of teachers of the third group and therefore this type of thinking needs to be optimized in this age range.

The predominance of the average level of critical thinking indicators has been studied in teachers of all age groups, regardless of working conditions. There is a direct correlation between the



indicators of critical thinking of primary school teachers and their reflexivity, in particular in teachers of public educational institutions and teachers of the second age group. The direct correlation between the indicators of critical thinking and emotional burnout in teachers of private schools as well as teachers of the first and second age groups indicates the feasibility of studying the components of critical thinking to determine and clarify the causes of emotional exhaustion in this age group. The results obtained by regression analysis confirm and supplement the importance of the development of sanogenic thinking and reducing the level of critical thinking to combat emotional burnout in teachers of the first and second groups. However, the use of regression analysis revealed that for teachers of the third group in order to prevent emotional burnout, it is important to develop critical thinking and reflexivity. To develop psychological support for primary school teachers for the prevention of emotional burnout, the prospect of further research lies in the study of gender characteristics of teachers and the peculiarities of their experience of normative and situational crises.





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