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## Occupational Burnout of Probation Officers Enforcing Judgments in Criminal and Family Cases

**Abstract:** The results of the study unambiguously indicate that the phenomenon of occupational burnout affects almost half (44%) of probation officers who participated in the study. It is illustrated by the most important, global occupational burnout ratio and, additionally, its individual dimensions. The correlation between stress and occupational burnout was confirmed, which corroborates the results of studies conducted by authors such as Schaufeli and Dierendock (1995), Hart (1996), Leiter, Maslach (1997), Maslach (1998).

**Key words:** burnout in probation officers, correlation between stress and occupational burnout, Polish probation officers.

### The theoretical context of studies

The occupation of the probation officer appeared in the Polish legal system in the interwar period, shortly after Poland regained its independence in 1918. The temporary Head of State Józef Piłsudski in 1919 signed a decree on the establishment of juvenile courts, which set out, among others, the role of the so-called social workers. They were appointed by a judge and collected a fixed salary from the funds at the court's disposition. They collected information about minors, exercised care of those who are under parental supervision or when parental supervision required additional control. Although the content of the regulation does not

use the name “probation officers” but only “social workers”, due to the nature of their tasks, they can be considered as the first court probation officers operating in Poland (March-Holka 1997, p. 148).

Currently, the professional curatorial court service in Poland has slightly more than 5,000 probation officers executing the judgments in criminal matters and cases of minors. There is no need to argue that the multiplicity of tasks and the number of operations carried out by Polish probation officers is huge, which undoubtedly also generates the undesirable phenomena associated with the efficiency of their work. After all, a sense of efficiency is associated both with the subject of stress and occupational burnout.

In fact, there is a consensus among researchers that occupational burnout is a response to stress experienced in professional work. However, occupational burnout is a separate category; it is a syndrome associated with a decrease not only in energy, but also with an increase of inappropriate behavior which do not occur in case of stress. These inappropriate behaviors relate to relationships with the client as well as inappropriate attitudes towards work (Kahn and Byosiére 1992; Cordes and Dougherty 1993; Schaufeli et al. 1996). In the case of acute stress phase, the phenomenon of depersonalization in behavior does not take place nor is there a decline in professional satisfaction or cynicism.

The syndrome of occupational burnout correlates with seniority, although the results of research in this field are not conclusive. Studies (Patterson 1992; Tabor 1987 and Whitehead 1981) have shown that probation officers at the beginning of their career and approaching retirement, show lower levels of stress than probation officers who are in the middle of their professional career. Also, the studies of Thomas (1988) showed that occupational burnout is associated with seniority. The author explained this phenomenon by the fact that experienced probation officers who had witnessed a promotion by favoritism, politics or just seniority, and not on the basis of qualifications, experience and skills, more often exhibit signs of occupational burnout (Thomas 1988). The opposite relationship between length of service and staff turnover has been found on the basis of the studies of Simmons et al. (1997). The increase in seniority correlated with the decline of the rate of the resignation from the profession. Older probation officers were more likely to exhibit greater job satisfaction and showed less occupational stress than their younger colleagues.

Occupational burnout is also related to marital status. Married probation officers showed a lower rate of occupational stress and more satisfaction from work than unmarried people (Simmons et al. 1997; Tabor 1987).

The place in the professional hierarchy also plays an important role. Probation officer supervisors also suffer less occupational stress and occupational burnout than line probation officers (Thomas 1988; Whitehead 1986). According to Whitehead (1988) one's place in the professional hierarchy and the level of job satisfaction are related. Managers have a greater impact on decision making than

line probation officers, they have more challenges, more interesting work and less contact with clients. Religiosity is also important for the development of the occupational burnout syndrome. Those declaring themselves to be more religious have lower rates of occupational burnout (Thomas 1988). Ambiguity and a conflict of roles also correlates with occupational burnout (Brown, 1987; Whitehead 1985, 1986).

A flood of documentation is perceived by probation officers as a stressor and a source of occupational burnout, which was confirmed in several research projects (Brown 1987; Simmons et al. 1997; Thomas 1988; Whisler 1994). Pettway and VanDine (2000) showed that the most common task that probation officers must perform is to deal with the flood of documentation (more often than activities related to relations with the client).

Stressors, as it turns out, are also a lack of recognition and accolades at work (Whisler 1994), while inadequate compensation, lack of circumstances of promotions/appreciation (Simmons et al. 1997; Whisler 1994; Whitehead 1986) are the causes of stress and occupational burnout. Participating management, i.e. the possibility of probation officers making decisions is a means for reducing stress and occupational burnout (Brown 1986; Holgate, Clegg 1991; Slate et al. 2003).

Australian studies on occupational burnout of probation officers conducted by Holgate (1991) revealed the role of personality factors in interaction with factors related to organization in occupational burnout of young probation officers. Factors inherent in organization are the determinant of occupational burnout of probation officers with greater seniority. Research in America (Whitehead 1987) in relation to probation officers confirmed more the validity of Cary Cherniss' theory about the causes of occupational burnout inherent in work organization, and not in relations with the client, as indicated by Christina Maslach (1982). Other American studies (Lewis et al. 2012) revealed higher levels of stress and occupational burnout among probation officers working with people who use violence, recidivists who have committed crimes of a sexual nature or working with victims of violence.

## Methodology of own studies

The main aim of the research whose starting point was the previous results of studies on stress and occupational burnout of probation officers, was to determine the relationship between stress and occupational burnout among court probation officers, and also the relationship between occupational burnout and variables such as: gender, seniority, marital status, place of residence and type of profession. The following two study problems were formulated:

P<sub>1</sub>: Which of the stressors are strongest in connection with the various dimensions of occupational burnout?

P<sub>2</sub>: What is the relationship between occupational burnout and gender, seniority, marital status, place of residence and type of profession (family probation officers/probation officers for adults)?

Based on a review of studies on occupational burnout of probation officers, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H<sub>1</sub>: Stressors that have the strongest connection with occupational burnout are: lack of security associated with the profession (Thomas 1988), lack of recognition, honors at work (Whisler 1994), insufficient pay, lack of promotion/appreciation (Simmons et al. 1997; Whisler 1994; Whitehead 1986).

H<sub>2</sub>: Women have higher levels of occupational burnout than men (Simmons et al. 1997).

H<sub>3</sub>: Seniority correlates with occupational burnout – positive correlation. The content of the hypothesis was formulated in such a way, although the relationship between occupational burnout and seniority is not fully explained; this relationship has been shown in some research results (Patterson 1992; Tabor 1987; Whitehead 1985), while others were not confirmed (Slate et al. 2003).

H<sub>4</sub>: Persons who are in relationships exhibit lower levels of occupational burnout (Simmons et al. 1997; Tabor 1987).

## Research methods

The following research tools were used in the studies: Strength Burnout Scale (SWS), Inventory of Sources of Stress in the Profession of the Probation Officer (ISS) and own questionnaire. In the analysis of the results, for comparing the two groups, the Mann-Whitney U test was used as well as, in the case of comparisons, which are related to more than one group – the Kruskal-Wallis test as the counterpart to the analysis of variances for categorical variables. To illustrate the correlation between stress and occupational burnout, the r-Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated.

## Strength Burnout Scale (SWS)

Due to serious reservations as to the reliability of the Polish adaptation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory developed by Christina Maslach (1986), in our study, it decided to use the Strength Burnout Scale developed by Stanisława Steuden and Wiesława Okła. As the authors write (Steuden, Okła 1998, p. 3) “the theoretical basis for building the scale was the concept of stress arising from occupational activities by people who provide assistance to the sick, the results of own empirical research (pilot) on stress factors associated with work in support occupations

as well as experienced symptoms of burnout". The scale consists of 66 questions to measure the five variables of occupational burnout: reduced emotional control, loss of subjective involvement, lowered operating efficiency, narrowing interpersonal contacts and physical fatigue. The Scale's reliability was determined using internal compliance, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole scale was 0.95; percentage of explained variance for the five separate factors were as follows: for the factor of reduced emotional control – 12.48; for the factor of loss of personal involvement – 8.66; for the factor of reduced effectiveness – 6.28; for the factor of narrowing interpersonal contacts – 5.39 and for variable physical fatigue – 4.48. The theoretical accuracy of the tool was also studied, using factor analysis, which revealed 5 factors. To the experimental version of the scale were qualified claims for which the value of the factor load amounted: from 48 to 69 for the reduced emotional control factor; from 42 to 65 for the factor of loss of personal involvement; from 41 to 56 for the reduced efficiency factor; from 42 to 56 for the factor of limiting interpersonal contacts and from 42 to 61 for the physical fatigue factor (Steuden, Okła 1998).

## **Inventory of Stress Sources in the Occupation of the Probation Officer (ISS).**

The author of the tool is Bartłomiej Skowroński (2013). Work on constructing the Inventory of Stress Sources in the Profession of the Probation Officer was started in early 2011. The first stage was to conduct interviews with a group of 15 professional probation officers asked to indicate sources of stress which they are currently experiencing, experienced in the past, and also to indicate the hypothetical sources of stress that could affect the court probation officer. A justification of this procedure was the fact that some probation officers may not see certain areas of stress in the context of their professional activity, but they could be aware of their existence. Thanks to this, groups of stressors affecting probation officers were determined. Therefore, in the opinion of the studied group, stress lies in the following areas: physical conditions of work, control factors, method of performing work, interpersonal relations, professional development, functioning within the of organization, fulfilling the role of probation officer. The distinguished areas became the basis for the construction of particular positions of the tool.

The reliability of the Inventory of Stress Sources was calculated by estimating internal compliance and absolute stability. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability ratio for the entire inventory was  $\alpha = 0.93$ . The ratios for individual subscales distinguished when using exploratory factor analysis were: lack of agreement in the team and inappropriate atmosphere  $\alpha = 0.91$ ; discrepancies and confusion related to the performance of official duties  $\alpha = 0.88$ ; factors that impede career development and course  $\alpha = 0.86$ ; lack of safety and substantive support

$\alpha = 0.80$ ; control activities and insufficient physical conditions of work  $\alpha = 0.79$ ; inappropriate responses of charges  $\alpha = 0.88$ ; lack of the possibility to speak about systemic solutions  $\alpha = 0.73$ . All the ratios of internal compliance prove the reliability of both the entire Inventory of Stress Sources in the Profession of the Probation Officer, as well as all seven subscales (Skowroński 2013). To estimate absolute stability of the Inventory, a group of 110 people in an interval of 3 weeks were studied. The two measurements were correlated with each other. Correlation ratios range from 0.56 (moderate correlation, significant dependency) to 0.92 (very high correlation, very certain dependency). Given the values of correlation ratios, it can be concluded that the Inventory of Stress Sources in the Profession of the Probation Officer is characterized by absolute stability. The content validity, theoretical validity and criterion validity of the Inventory were estimated. The content validity of the Inventory of Stress Sources was estimated by calculating the content validity ratio (CVR), proposed by Chrls Lawsh (1975). A group of 41 probation officers was presented a universe in the form of the concept of stress with Philip Zimbardo's definition understood as: "A set of specific and non-specific responses of the body to stimulus events that disrupt its balance and subject to trial or exceed its capacity to cope" (Zimbardo, Gerrig 2012, p. 524). Experts were asked to respond to each item of the inventory, about how much they represent the given universe. In the case of two positions of the inventory the condition was not met, that half the judges consider this position essential for the test, and for this reason they were removed. The next 5 positions, though they met the aforementioned criteria, obtained an unsatisfactory CVR value and were also removed. The theoretical accuracy was also determined through the use of exploratory factor analysis, which revealed the existence of seven factors. The cumulative percentage of variance explained by the 7 factors amounted to 71.02%. Criterion validity was also estimated. In terms of the total result of the Inventory of Stress Sources, the groups distinguished on the basis of high and low results in the scope of all individual variables measuring occupational burnout, they had statistically significant differences. On the basis of results obtained using the Inventory of Stress Sources the result in terms of occupational burnout can be predicted. The above results confirm the criterion validity (diagnostic) of the Inventory of Stress Sources (Skowroński 2013).

## Questionnaire survey

The questionnaire survey was constructed for the purpose of this research project. The tool included questions about variables such as: sex, age, marital status (married; divorced; widow/widower; single; conjugal relationship); seniority, type of profession (adult probation officers/family probation officers).

**Group**

The group that was surveyed consisted of 300 people. They were professional probation officers enforcing judgments in criminal and juvenile cases of the District Court in Warsaw, District Court Warsaw-Praga, District Court in Włocławek, District Court in Sieradz and District Court in Bydgoszcz. Table 1 provides detailed data characterizing this group.

Table 1. Characteristics of the study group (N = 300)

Variables	Categories	N	%
Sex	Women	223	74.3
	Men	77	25.7
Marital status	married	223	74.3
	divorced	18	6
	widow/widower	12	4
	single	38	12.7
	Conjugal relationship	9	3
Profession	adult probation officers	230	76.7
	family probation officers	70	23.3

Source: own research.

In the studied group 74.3% are women (N = 223) and 25.7% are men (N = 77). The mean age for the entire group (N = 300) was approximately 40 years old (40.8), the standard deviation 7.03. 74.3% of all respondents (N = 223) are married, 6% divorced (N = 18), 4.0% of the total (N = 12) constitute widows or widowers, 12.7% (N = 38) are persons in no relationship (single), and finally 3.0% of the study group (N = 9) live in informal relationships. The average seniority amounted to nearly 13 years (13.4), standard deviation 7.5. Moreover, 76.7% of people (N = 230) are probation officers enforcing judgments in criminal cases, while the remainder are probation officers in family and juvenile cases – 23.3% (N = 70).

The surveyed group was not chosen at random; it represents approximately 6% of the entire population of professional probation officers in Poland.

**Results of own studies**

Occupational burnout was measured using the Strength Burnout Scale by Steuden and Okła, while stress was measured using the Inventory of Sources of Stress in the Profession of the Probation Officer of own authorship (Skowroński 2013).

The global rate of SWS burnout, as the most important measure of burnout, is regarded as the sum of points from all 5 scales (possible score is in the range from 66 to 330 points). The global severity index of occupational burnout is the only one without norms, and in its description the raw result is used, where  $M = 132$ , and  $SD = 8$ . For individual subscales it is possible to extrapolate the raw results to sten norms.

The study results allow to conclude that in the field of the global severity index of work fatigue as many as 32.3% ( $N = 97$ ) of people obtained a result of more than 2 of standard deviation; 11.7% ( $N = 35$ ) of probation officers obtained a result located within 2 of standard deviation (above normal); the result located within 1 of standard deviation, which speaks of the norm, was obtained by 15% of probation officers ( $N = 45$ ). A result below the normal range, which is below 1 of standard deviation was obtained by 6.7% ( $N = 20$ ) of probation officers, and under 2 of standard deviation less than 34.3% ( $N = 103$ ).

So, realistically, as many as 44% ( $N = 132$ ) of probation officers is affected by the phenomenon of occupational burnout in varying degrees, which is a highly disturbing result. The result obtained in the norm was obtained by 15% ( $N = 45$ ) of probation officers, and the result below the norm was obtained by 41% of the respondents ( $N = 123$ ).

Table 2. Study results of the global severity index of occupational burnout syndrome

Standard deviation	N	%
< -2	103	34.3
< -1 and > -2	20	6.7
$\pm 1$	45	15.0
> 1 and < 2	35	11.7
> 2	97	32.3
Total:	300	100.0

Source: own research.

After taking into account the criterion relating to the type of profession (probation officers for adults/probation officers for juveniles), the results in the global occupational burnout index confirmed that the percentage of people who can be described as occupationally burned out is higher than in the group of probation officers executing judgments in criminal cases (46.5 %) than in the group of probation officers executing judgments in juvenile cases (35.7%). The differences proved to be statistically insignificant  $p > 0.05$ .

Table 3. Study results of the global severity index of occupational burnout syndrome divided into probation officers for adults and for juveniles

Studied subgroups	Standard deviation	N	%
Probation officers executing judgments in criminal cases	< -2	74	32.2
	< -1 and > -2	13	5.7
	$\pm 1$	36	15.7
	> 1 and < 2	29	12.6
	> 2	78	33.9
	total:	230	100.0
Probation officers executing judgments in family and juvenile cases	SD	N	%
	< -2	29	41.4
	< -1 and > -2	7	10.0
	$\pm 1$	9	12.9
	> 1 and < 2	6	8.6
	> 2	19	27.1
	total:	70	100.0

Source: own research.

Taking into account the specific indicators of occupational burnout, i.e. decreased emotional control, loss of subjective involvement, reduced efficiency of action, limited interpersonal contacts and physical fatigue, it must be said that the mean score for all of the above indicators is within the normal range (6 sten in all cases; 7 sten already means occupational burnout). The results are extreme, but still normal. Detailed data is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Statistical measures for the results obtained using SWS

Subscales	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum score	Maximum score	Sten
Decreased emotional control	43.7	16.65	22	110	6
Loss of subjective involvement	28.9	8.71	15	73	6
Reduced efficiency of action	25.2	8.41	12	56	6
Limited interpersonal contacts	18.7	6.46	10	46	6
Physical fatigue	18.7	6.66	7	34	6
Overall result SWS	135.3	41.85	66	310	norm

Source: own research.

Undoubtedly, the value of the global occupational burnout index, indicating occupational burnout of as many as 44% of probation officers, may be surprising in light of the results in individual SWS subscales, which are normal. It should be said that these results are marginal and even in all 5 indicators. It must be said that relying solely on the central tendency, which is the arithmetic mean, in this case, would be an incomplete analysis and not fully representing the analyzed phenomenon. The means remain normal due to the number of people who do not suffer from occupational burnout syndrome.

Analyzing the same study results related to the norms (sten), it can be concluded that in terms of the indicators: decreased emotional control – the result of 109 subjects (36.2%) indicates occupational burnout; as regards the loss of subjectivity they are respectively 93 subjects (31%); in terms of reduced efficiency it is a group of 118 subjects (39.3%); in terms of limiting interpersonal contacts – 104 subjects (34.7%), and 107 probation officers (35.7%) in the case of physical fatigue.

Table 5. Distribution of the results in each SWS subscale expressed in ten norms

Variables		Stens										Total	No data	Subjects with the problem of burnout (7-10 sten)
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
Decreased emotional control	N	22	10	33	21	30	74	58	37	7	7	299	1	109
	%	7.3	3.3	11	7	10.0	24.7	19.3	12.3	2.3	2.3	99.7	0.3	36.2
Loss of subjectivity	N	11	8	24	31	36	96	77	10	2	4	299	1	93
	%	3.7	2.7	8	10.3	12	32	25.7	3.3	0.7	1.3	99.7	0.3	31.0
Reduced efficiency of action	N	11	13	29	28	30	70	61	42	14	1	299	1	118
	%	3.7	4.3	9.7	9.3	10	23.3	20.3	14	4.7	0.3	99.7	0.3	39.3
Limited interpersonal contacts	N	0	24	24	47	48	52	56	34	11	3	299	1	104
	%	0	8	8	15.7	16	17.3	18.7	11.3	3.7	1.0	99.7	0.3	34.7
Physical fatigue	N	6	14	36	38	50	49	57	22	11	17	299	1	107
	%	2	4.7	12	12.7	16.7	16.3	19	7.3	3.7	5.7	99.7	0.3	35.7

Source: own research.

In fact, all researchers dealing with the subject of occupational burnout agree that it is a consequence of stress. The following table shows the correlation between stress and occupational burnout. In the analysis of the data in the first

stage, correlation of variables was conducted to measure occupational burnout with variables which measure the sources of stress in the profession of the probation officer.

Table 6. r-Pearson's correlation coefficients between occupational burnout and stress

Sources of stress	Subscales of occupational burnout					
	decreased emotional control	loss of subjective involvement	reduced efficiency of action	limited interpersonal contacts	physical fatigue	overall result (SWS)
Lack of agreement in the team and inappropriate atmosphere	.289**	.244**	.263**	n.i.	.241**	.275**
Discrepancies and confusion related to the performance of official duties	.289**	.194**	.281**	.188**	.284**	.284**
Factors that impede career development and course	.355**	.238**	.290**	.224**	.325**	.333**
Lack of safety and substantive support	.279**	.201**	.213**	.178**	.177*	.250**
Control activities and insufficient physical conditions of work	.305**	.215**	.242**	.149*	.267**	.278**
Inappropriate responses of charges	.253**	.179**	.181**	n.i.	.244**	.231**
Lack of the possibility to speak about systemic solutions	.273**	.219**	.241**	.236**	.267**	.280**
Overall result (ISS)	.407**	.299**	.342**	.239**	.353**	.383**

\*\* correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (two-sided); \* correlation is significant at the level 0.05 (two-sided).

Source: own research.)

Besides two cases, i.e. correlation between the limited interpersonal contacts and lack of agreement in the team and inappropriate atmosphere as well as between limited interpersonal contacts and inappropriate responses of charges, all the remaining correlations were mostly at the level  $p < 0.01$ , and only in a few cases at level  $p < 0.05$ . In most this is a low correlation, a distinct but small dependency as well as a moderate correlation, significant dependency. The study results thus confirm the results of Schaufeli and Dierendonck (1995), Hart (1996), Leiter, Maslach (1997), Maslach (1998).

It is expected that the total result of the Inventory of Stress Sources will be most strongly correlated with both the global burnout index and with individual occupational burnout indexes, which was confirmed by the study results. Among the different types of sources of stress, the strongest correlation coefficients emerged between the factors hampering the development and course of professional careers and the global burnout index and all the individual burnout indexes. Thus, it can be confirmed that the results of studies confirm Whisler's (1994) world study results, which pointed to the lack of recognition, honors at work, and to the research of other authors who perceive factors such as: inadequate pay, lack of circumstances of promotions/appreciation in the etiology of occupational burnout (Simmonds et al., 1997; Whisler, 1994; Whitehead, 1986). Hypothesis  $H_1$  was confirmed.

To determine whether sex differentiates the group of probation officers in terms of occupational burnout, the U Mann-Whitney test was applied. Details are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Gender differences in terms of the components of occupational burnout and the total result

Subscales	Sex	N	Average range	U	z	p
Decreased emotional control	woman	201	107.44	3849.00	-.609	n.i.
	man	99	101.47			
	total	300				
Loss of subjective involvement	woman	201	102.98	3596.50	-1.275	n.i.
	man	99	115.48			
	total	300				
Reduced efficiency of action	woman	201	105.13	3940.00	-.369	n.i.
	man	99	108.75			
	total	300				
Limited interpersonal contacts	woman	201	108.38	3699.00	-1.005	n.i.
	man	99	98.53			
	total	300				
Physical fatigue	woman	201	107.22	3885.50	-.513	n.i.
	man	99	102.19			
	total	300				
Overall result (SWS)	woman	201	106.64	3977.50	-.270	n.i.
	man	99	103.99			
	total	300				

Source: own research.

It turned out that in all 5 indexes of occupational burnout, as well as the global burnout index, the differences between men and women were statistically insignificant. Hence the level of occupational burnout of men and women is similar. This result does not support hypothesis  $H_2$ , because women have similar levels of burnout as men (Simmons et al. 1997).

Differences between probation officers performing judgments in juvenile cases and probation officers performing judgments in criminal cases in terms of individual occupational burnout indexes proved to be insignificant. Detailed data is presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Differences between probation officers for juveniles and adults curators in terms of the components of occupational burnout

Subscale	Studied subgroup	N	Average range	U	z	p
Decreased emotional control	probation officers executing judgments in criminal cases	190	110.21	4342.00	-1.421	n.i.
	probation officers executing judgments in family and juvenile cases	110	97.53			
	Total	300				
Loss of subjective involvement	probation officers executing judgments in criminal cases	190	108.64	4563.00	-.892	n.i.
	probation officers executing judgments in family and juvenile cases	110	100.69			
	Total	300				
Reduced efficiency of action	probation officers executing judgments in criminal cases	190	110.04	4366.00	-1.364	n.i.
	probation officers executing judgments in family and juvenile cases	110	97.87			
	Total	300				
Limited interpersonal contacts	probation officers executing judgments in criminal cases	190	105.56	4873.00	-.149	n.i.
	probation officers executing judgments in family and juvenile cases	110	106.89			
	Total	300				
Physical fatigue	probation officers executing judgments in criminal cases	190	108.25	4617.50	-.761	n.i.
	probation officers executing judgments in family and juvenile cases	110	101.46			
	Total	300				

Subscale	Studied subgroup	N	Average range	U	z	p
Overall result (SWS)	probation officers executing judgments in criminal cases	190	109.69	4415.5	-1.247	n.i.
	probation officers executing judgments in family and juvenile cases	110	98.56			
	Total	300				

Source: own research.

Therefore, it can be concluded that if someone practices the occupation of probation officer for juveniles, or probation officer for adults does not differentiate between the study group in terms of occupational burnout; the level of occupational burnout in both groups is at a similar level.

Differences occurred between the distinguished groups, taking into account the criterion of marital status in terms of the following indexes of occupational burnout: reduced emotional control, loss of subjective involvement, narrowing interpersonal contacts, physical fatigue and global occupational burnout index (Tab. 9).

Table 9. Differences between groups of probation officers distinguished on the basis of the criterion of marital status in terms of components of occupational burnout

Subscales	Marital status	N	Average range	chi-square	df	P
Decreased emotional control	married	194	104.55	11.539	4	.021
	divorced	30	122.81			
	widower/widow	21	114.50			
	Single	40	119.93			
	Conjugal relationship	15	31.75			
	Total	300				
Loss of subjective involvement	married	194	107.66	10.508	4	.033
	divorced	30	105.04			
	widower/widow	21	76.06			
	Single	40	121.06			
	Conjugal relationship	15	42.17			
	Total	300				

Subscales	Marital status	N	Average range	chi-square	df	P
Reduced efficiency of action	married	194	106.11	4.785	4	n.i.
	divorced	30	109.69			
	widower/widow	21	105.78			
	Single	40	114.94			
	Conjugal relationship	15	55.25			
	Total	300				
Limited interpersonal contacts	married	194	107.09	11.876	4	.018
	divorced	30	127.08			
	widower/widow	21	95.61			
	Single	40	110.37			
	Conjugal relationship	15	27.83			
	Total	300				
Physical fatigue	married	194	103.35	10.483	4	.033
	divorced	30	114.15			
	widower/widow	21	127.44			
	Single	40	124.26			
	Conjugal relationship	15	42.92			
	Total	300				
Overall result (SWS)	married	194	105.15	10.553	4	.032
	divorced	30	116.77			
	widower/widow	21	109.56			
	Single	40	120.70			
	Conjugal relationship	15	33.25			
	Total	300				

Source: own research.

In terms of the reduced emotional control, differences emerged between subjects who are married and subjects living in conjugal relationships,  $\chi^2 = 8.787$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; married persons are characterized by significantly more reduced emotional control. Moreover, there were differences revealed between persons who are in informal relationships and divorced people,  $\chi^2 = 11.147$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; divorced persons are characterized by significantly more reduced emotional control. Differences also emerged between the singles and persons who are in informal relationships,  $\chi^2 = 8.673$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; single people area characterized by significantly more reduced emotional control.

As regards the index of loss of subjective involvement there were differences between persons who are in informal relationships and persons living alone,  $\chi^2 = 5.916$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . In this case, a person living alone manifests significantly greater attitude associated with the loss of subjective involvement than persons living in conjugal relationships.

In the case of the next index, i.e. limited interpersonal contacts, statistically significant differences occurred between persons who are in informal relationships and those who are married,  $\chi^2 = 10.181$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Married persons have significantly more limited interpersonal contacts than persons living in a conjugal relationship. Differences in this variable also occurred between divorced persons and persons who are in informal relationships,  $\chi^2 = 10.643$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Divorced persons significantly more often manifested limited interpersonal contacts than persons living in informal relationships. Finally, there were differences between persons who are in informal relationships and those living outside relationships,  $\chi^2 = 9.00$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; persons living alone have significantly more limited interpersonal contacts.

Statistically significant differences in terms of the physical fatigue index occurred between widowers/widows and persons who are in informal relationships,  $\chi^2 = 5.437$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . In this case probation officers who are widows or widowers, significantly more often exhibit physical fatigue. Further differences occurred between persons who are married and persons who are in informal relationships,  $\chi^2 = 6.140$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Married persons significantly more often exhibit physical fatigue. Differences were also found between divorced persons and people living in informal relationships,  $\chi^2 = 5.218$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . In this case probation officers who are divorced, significantly more often exhibit physical fatigue than probation officers living in informal relationships. People living alone are significantly more physically fatigued than those who live in a conjugal relationship,  $\chi^2 = 6.416$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . In this case probation officers who live alone, significantly more often exhibit physical fatigue than probation officers living in informal relationships.

Undoubtedly the most interesting seems to be the analysis of differences in the scope of the global occupational burnout indicator SWS. Statistically significant differences occurred between married persons and those in informal relationships,  $\chi^2 = 8.158$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . In this case, court probation officers who are married significantly more often exhibit occupational burnout. The analysis also revealed differences between divorced persons and persons living in informal relationships,  $\chi^2 = 8.900$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Divorced probation officers significantly more often exhibit occupational burnout. Statistically significant differences emerged between persons living alone and persons living in informal relationships,  $\chi^2 = 8.949$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Probation officers living outside a relationship significantly more often exhibit symptoms of occupational burnout.

The study results, after taking into account the criterion of marital status, are varied, although a tendency can be observed that those persons in relationships show a lower level of occupational burnout (Simmons et al. 1997; Tabor 1987). Hypothesis  $H_4$  was confirmed partially.

Differences between groups of probation officers distinguished on the basis of the criterion of area of residence in terms of occupational burnout proved to be statistically insignificant. Detailed data is presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Differences between groups of probation officers distinguished on the basis of the criterion of place of residence in terms of components of occupational burnout

Subscales	Place of residence	N	Average range	chi-square	df	p
Decreased emotional control	cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants	97	101.24	1.605	4	n.i.
	cities with 100,001–500,000 inhabitants	62	106.92			
	cities with 50,001–100,000 inhabitants	31	103.14			
	cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants	68	113.04			
	village	42	99.74			
	total	300				
Loss of subjective involvement	cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants	97	103.28	1.528	4	n.i.
	cities with 100,001–500,000 inhabitants	62	114.11			
	cities with 50,001–100,000 inhabitants	31	113.40			
	cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants	68	101.32			
	village	42	110.43			
	total	300				
Reduced efficiency of action	cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants	97	103.63	.242	4	n.i.
	cities with 100,001–500,000 inhabitants	62	106.39			
	cities with 50,001–100,000 inhabitants	31	106.98			
	cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants	68	106.41			
	village	42	110.79			
	total	300				

Subscales	Place of residence	N	Average range	chi-square	df	p
Limited interpersonal contacts	cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants	97	92.38	6.385	4	n.i.
	cities with 100,001–500,000 inhabitants	62	121.36			
	cities with 50,001–100,000 inhabitants	31	105.38			
	cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants	68	113.09			
	village	42	104.02			
	total	300				
Physical fatigue	cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants	97	99.89	3.239	4	n.i.
	cities with 100,001–500,000 inhabitants	62	95.14			
	cities with 50,001–100,000 inhabitants	31	117.19			
	cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants	68	111.97			
	village	42	111.52			
	total	300				
Overall re- sult (SWS)	cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants	97	100.73	.907	4	n.i.
	cities with 100,001–500,000 inhabitants	62	107.48			
	cities with 50,001–100,000 inhabitants	31	106.33			
	cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants	68	110.53			
	village	42	105.60			
	total	300				

Source: own research.

It can be concluded that the size of the city in terms of population does not differentiate the respondents in terms of occupational burnout.

There were no correlations between age and occupational burnout, or between occupational burnout and seniority. Therefore there was no confirmation of hypothesis  $H_3$ .

## Discussing the results

The study results clearly show that the phenomenon of occupational burnout applies to nearly half of probation officers who participated in the study (44%). This illustrates the most important – global occupational burnout index, and also its individual dimensions. This result is certainly concerning, it is in fact alarming, given the vast number of tasks that are performed by professional court probation officers. Occupational burnout results in a reduction in the quality of jobs, which is also significant for the safety of the public.

It confirmed the interdependence of stress and occupational burnout, which is consistent with the results of authors like Schaufeli and Dierendonck (1995), Hart (1996), Leiter, Maslach (1997), Maslach (1998). Among the different types of sources of stress, the strongest correlation coefficients emerged between the factors hampering the development and course of professional careers and the global burnout index and all the individual burnout indexes.

For many years, many authors have been studying the relationship between occupational burnout, stress and gender. Although the results of these studies are not conclusive, most suggest that women are more prone to both stress and occupational burnout. This is indicated by the research of Maslach and Jackson (1981b), Brookings et al. (1985), Büssing and Perrar (1991). Why does this happen? Most likely, the greater vulnerability of women to stress and subsequent occupational burnout can be due to their greater emotionality, greater emotional sensitivity, less distance to oneself and professional duties (Tucholska 2003). However, there are studies revealing that men are more prone to depersonalization (Ogus et al. 1990; Søk 1994), which may be conditioned by the fact that they avoid difficulties in interpersonal relations, which in this case fulfills the role of a defense mechanism. In the present study the differences between women and men in terms of individual indicators of burnout as well as the global burnout index proved to be statistically insignificant. Hence the level of occupational burnout of men and women is similar. This result is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Simmons et al. 1997).

Interesting is the fact that the differences between probation officers executing judgments in juvenile cases and probation officers executing judgments in criminal cases in terms of the indexes of occupational burnout proved to be statistically insignificant; the level of occupational burnout in both groups remained at a similar level. So far in Poland the differences in terms of the severity of the phenomenon of occupational burnout and stress among probation officers has not been studied, much less taking into account the type of profession (probation officers for adults/family probation officers). Both professions differ in the type of tasks performed, but mainly in the characteristics of clients (children/adults). It

could have been expected that the work of family probation officers has a more emotional effect, to a greater degree exposes to stress, and consequently occupational burnout, for instance due to taking a child away from its family and placing it in emergency care. It turned out that occupational burnout equally applies to both specialties.

Differences occurred between the distinguished groups, taking into account the criterion of marital status in terms of the following indexes of occupational burnout: reduced emotional control, loss of subjective involvement, narrowing interpersonal contacts, physical fatigue and global occupational burnout index. The differences in the individual indexes of occupational burnout after taking into account the criterion of marital status are varied and ambiguous. However, there can be a certain tendency observed in that people who live alone and are divorced significantly more often show symptoms of occupational burnout than probation officers from other group distinguished with the criterion of marital status. And so in terms of the index of reduced emotional control, persons who are divorced and live alone significantly more often exhibited reduced emotional control. People living alone significantly more often manifested an attitude related to the loss of subjective involvement than people living in a conjugal relationship. In the case of the next index, i.e. limited interpersonal contacts, statistically significant differences occurred between divorced persons and persons who are in informal relationships. Divorced persons significantly more often manifested limited interpersonal contacts than persons living in informal relationships. There were also differences among persons who are in informal relationships and persons living outside relationships. Those living alone have significantly more often limited interpersonal contacts. On the other hand, statistically significant differences in terms of the physical fatigue index occurred between divorced persons and persons living in informal relationships. In this case probation officers who are divorced, significantly more often exhibit physical fatigue than probation officers living in informal relationships. People living alone are significantly more physically fatigued than those who live in a conjugal relationship. Statistically significant differences in the global index occurred between divorced persons and persons who are in informal relationships. Court probation officers who are divorced, significantly more often exhibit occupational burnout. Statistically significant differences emerged between persons living alone and persons who are in informal relationships – court probation officers living outside a relationship significantly more often exhibit occupational burnout. Therefore, in part, the study results confirm the previous study results, which showed that probation officers who are married showed lower indicators of occupational stress and more job satisfaction than those are unmarried (Simmons et al. 1997; Tabor 1987). Moreover, the presented results support to some extent the results of research by Charles Handy (1987), which revealed that being married is strongly associated with professional success. Undoubtedly, the explanation of the role of marital status in exposure to

stress and occupational burnout entails the need to take into account other variables, such as age, mental condition or psychosocial problems, since these factors co-decide on the marital status of employees, which is noted by Stanisława Tucholska (2003).

The size of the city in terms of population does not differentiate the respondents in terms of occupational burnout. In literature on the subject there are studies confirming the differences in terms of emotional exhaustion (which is an indicator of occupational burnout) between teachers from rural schools and schools located in large cities (Tucholska 2003, p. 139–140). Undoubtedly, the fact of living in a big city means that a person is more exposed to a greater number of stressors and their accumulation may consequently lead to occupational burnout. Of course, one cannot speak about a direct connection of place of residence and occupational burnout, because there is no theoretical basis for doing so. Perhaps we are dealing with another category of clients in rural and urban areas. The answer to this question requires further scientific exploration.

The study results do not confirm dependencies of seniority and occupational burnout, which is a negation of the previous study results of Thomas (1988) as well as other authors (Patterson 1992; Tabor 1987 and Whitehead 1981), who obtained results proving that probation officers at the beginning of their career and approaching retirement show a lower level of stress than probation officers who are in the middle of their professional career.

The investigation of occupational burnout is extremely important, because it is closely linked to effective performance. It is indeed important what the condition of the workforce is, which should always be taken into account when implementing any system solutions concerning the shape of the court probation system in Poland. The actual picture emerging from the research is that we are dealing with personnel which is largely occupationally burned out and left without help. There is no mention in the current law on probation officers, or in any amendments planned to it, about psychological support or supervision.

It is not hard to make changes in the system of functioning of a given occupational group, the trick is to make such changes that will contribute to the efficiency of its operations. Imposing more and more new responsibilities makes sense only when it goes hand in hand with caring for the health of staff. Increasing efficiency certainly does not correlate with the uncritical increase of responsibilities. In 2005, the situation occurred in which the number of cases in the file of many probation officers exceeded 500, in some cases it reached 600 cases (District Court Warszawa Praga). For comparison, a court probation officer in Australia deals with 35 cases. It remains to hope that these “dark times” in the Polish probation system have gone forever. It seems that the reason that up to 44% of professional probation officers of the examined group is affected by the problem of occupational burnout is the excessive load of cases in previous years. As I have already mentioned, the average job seniority of the examined

group amounts to around 13 years, so the majority of professional probation officers began their jobs when the workload was huge. The results of the research allowed to observe some worrying symptoms. Among researchers there is general agreement that occupational burnout is a response to stress (Tucholska 2003). Our results showed that among the stressors affecting judicial probation officers, the strongest correlation coefficients emerged between burnout and the factors hampering the development and course of the professional career, which is worth emphasizing once more. And it is not just about financial gratification (over the last few years the salaries of judicial probation officers has been frozen; due to the lack of funds, promotion to a higher rank is in many cases blocked), but also about appreciating their work. These factors were also identified in foreign studies. Stressors inherent in the lack of recognition, honors at work (Whisler 1994), insufficient wages, lack of circumstances for promotions/appreciation (Simmons et al. 1997; Whisler 1994; Whitehead 1986) are the causes of stress and occupational burnout. So, it is worth being aware of this, especially in the situation of the absence of funds for career progression. I additionally mention that this situation has been going on for several years.

Finally, one more conclusion: the average age of the group of people manifesting occupational burnout is 41 years old, so they have an average of 26 years of work ahead of them...

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