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Professional burnout of police officers and their self-esteem

Abstract: Speaking about the life of a police officer and their professional work we touch the issue that is unknown to the average citizen, because the role of an officer results from the specific position of the police in the state and the social expectations related to ensuring order and public safety. The servant nature of work in this profession, as well as the existing significant social pressure towards achieving effectiveness in fighting against crime is a source of a sense of burden, numerous tensions and sometimes frustration (Hanausek 1996). The psychophysical strain related to the duty, the threat to cherished values, especially health and life, causes an accelerated process of professional burnout among police officers. An extremely important role in counteracting these negative phenomena is played by their belief in their own strengths and abilities, the conviction that they have the necessary personal resources to meet the expectations of both society and their superiors. The significance of this issue requires systematic research and analysis in order to undertake adequate countermeasures on this basis. This article is an attempt to present current data on professional burnout of police officers in the context of their self-esteem. In the research falling within the paradigm of quantitative research, a diagnostic survey carried out using the questionnaire technique was used. A significant relationship between the variables studied was found. The results indicate a high level of professional burnout of police officers in all its aspects, as well as their relatively low self-esteem.

Key words: police officers, workload, burnout, self-esteem.

The term "professional burnout" emerged in the 1970s to describe a state of exhaustion of an employee's resources in the work environment. Although the term was taken from colloquial language, it has been adopted in science to define the phenomenon of exhaustion resulting from long-term involvement in work situations that are emotionally, physically or mentally burdensome (cf. Pines, Aronson, 1988, p. 9). This group of symptoms was first described by H. Freudenberger as "(…) an accumulation of several factors: long-lasting emotional exhaustion, dehumanization of people with whom one has professional relations, lack of professional satisfaction, decreased level of commitment to one's work, and chronic physical fatigue" (quoted from: Korlak-Łukasiewicz 2001, p. 8). Therefore, this syndrome is associated with the loss of motivation to continue working and confusion as to who is to blame for the state of affairs, it means giving up and coming to terms with an uncomfortable situation.

Professional burnout, as an important individual and social problem concerning persons exposed to long-term stress at work, overloaded with professional duties and feeling dissatisfied with their work and at the same time lacking the possibility of psychophysical regeneration, is currently the subject of interest of many scientific disciplines: medicine (Chmiel 2003; Chodkiewicz 2005a; Chodkiewicz 2005b; Dudek et al. 2004), psychology (Terelak 2007; Bańka 1996; Ogińska-Bulik, Juczyński 2008), work organization and management (Bartkowiak 2009), sociology (Zbyrad 2009) or pedagogy (Karney 2007; Kirenko, Zubrzycka-Maciąg 2011).

In the literature on the subject there are many different definitions of this term. M. Santinello, for example, defines professional burnout as "a psychophysical state accompanied by apathy, aloofness, coldness in interpersonal relations, helplessness in action and emotional exhaustion" (quoted from: Chrzanowska 2004, p. 36). Thus, professional burnout is "an emotional reaction in a stressful situation created in one's job by the requirement to constantly focus on other people's problems" (Strelau 2000, pp. 307–308). J. Szmagalski (2008) extends this meaning by indicating that professional burnout is a state of fatigue or frustration caused by dedication to an important cause, way of living or social reaction that did not bring the expected reward. Hence, burnout is a state affecting individuals who were previously driven in their professional work by enthusiastic energy and keen interest in the problems they were tasked to solve (p. 19). W. B. Schaufeli and D. Enzmann (1998) went even further, describing burnout as a process. In this approach, "burnout is a persistent, negative work-related condition that occurs in generally healthy individuals. It is characterized mainly by exhaustion accompanied by psychological and physical discomfort, a sense of diminished effectiveness, low motivation, and dysfunctional attitude and behavior at work. This condition develops gradually (…) and results from a discrepancy between intentions and the realities of the job. Burnout is often a self-perpetuating process as a result of inadequate coping strategies" (quoted from: Anczewska et al. 2005, p. 69).

As indicated by many authors (cf. Bańka 1996; Fengler 2000; Szmagalski 2004; Kirenko, Zubrzycka-Maciąg 2011), the symptoms of burnout include distancing from problems, instability of feelings, lowered morale, loss of enthusiasm for work, procrastination in performing activities that were previously satisfactory and irritation, susceptibility to mental and physical disorders. Professional burnout is described as a gradually developing or suddenly surfacing state of exhaustion that occurs most often in professional work. It is preceded by a characteristic long-term intensification of professional expectations without a counterbalancing measure (cf. Burisch 1989, p. 10). A. Bańka (1996) notes that when discussing professional burnout, it should be pointed out that it is a specific occupational stress that is closely related to specific work conditions and is a response to a person's struggle with threats and responsibility. Therefore, stress will occur when an employee experiences high expectations (from the environment) and at the same time has limited possibilities of meeting them, and when there is a discrepancy between the efforts they make and the gratifications they receive for doing so. Under unfavorable circumstances, with exhaustion or passivity of a police officer experiencing professional stress, the development of phases of crisis may occur. If one fails to overcome it, then a chronic crisis reaction – professional burnout syndrome – appears (Badura-Madej 1999, p. 197).

According to Maslach's (2000) approach, there are three phases of the burnout syndrome in the profession of a police officer:

1. The phase of emotional exhaustion, when dissatisfaction with work is the most prominent symptom, is an indicator of exceeding one's own abilities at work and coping with problems. It is manifested by discouragement at work, decreasing interest in professional matters, decreased activity, pessimism, constant psychophysical tension, loss of energy, negative emotional states, irritability, boredom and anger, as well as somatic disorders – chronic fatigue, headaches, insomnia, gastric problems, frequent colds (cf. Bielecki 2008, p. 207). The police officer will feel depleted and exhausted, and will not see any possibility of regeneration. At the professional level it will result in lack of ability to continue effective work. Psychologically, the bonds with others will be loosened, which can often take the form of loss of attachment and closeness (cf. Tucholska 2009, p. 20). The consequence of these symptoms will be lowered morale of police officers, diminished commitment to the profession, avoidance of work and frequent sick leave.

2. The phase of depersonalization that defines the attitude toward other people. The relations among officers will be losing their subjective character, becoming impersonal (depersonalized) (cf. Tucholska 2009, p. 20). Thus, they will become indifferent and distanced from other people's problems, the contacts will become superficial, shorter and more formal. Cynicism, blaming others for one's own failures at work, distancing oneself from difficult professional matters and escaping from relations requiring emotional involvement will be-

come common. The police officer will avoid contacts with superiors and other co-workers and will behave towards them with contempt and indifference. Their behavior will indicate the strategy of isolation, which gives the illusion of being in control of the situation.

3. The phase of diminished sense of personal accomplishment of police officers is most often manifested by dissatisfaction with their achievements at work, conviction of their own lack of competence (knowledge, skills), loss of faith in their own abilities, sense of being misunderstood by superiors, gradual loss of ability to solve emerging problems and inability to adapt to dynamic and difficult situations at work. In relations with colleagues at work it may be reflected in the form of verbal aggression or escape behaviors (cf. Bielecki 2008, p. 208). Diminished sense of self-efficacy and effectiveness may be associated with difficulties in effectively coping with the demands of professional responsibilities as a law enforcement officer. They may develop a belief that they have not achieved anything significant in their service, which leads to apathy, meaninglessness and attitude of resignation. A police officer suffering from professional burnout does not feel any satisfaction from their work, no longer identifies himself/herself with his/her role, does not see the connection between his/her psychological state and poor performance at work. Feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and resentment emerge. These factors can lead to depression, turning to alcohol and other drugs (cf. Badura-Madej 1999, pp. 197–198).

The Maslach's theory was extended by Santinello (2014), who broadened the scope of measurement of employee burnout by introducing the feeling of disappointment, which in previous methods of measuring professional burnout did not have an adequate operationalization despite the existing theoretical rationale. Thus, his questionnaire comprises: Psychophysical exhaustion, Deterioration of relations, Sense of professional inefficacy, and Disappointment. As experts point out, "the enthusiasm of idealists when confronted with difficult professional realities can be a source of much tension and stress, which can lead to exhaustion and discouragement in a relatively short period of time" (cf. Tucholska 2009, p. 16). Thus, depletion of personal psychophysical resources constitutes the central feature of professional burnout syndrome. This construct is more than just excessive fatigue of an employee – it is also the lack of energy and strength to take on new challenges. The lack of commitment, in turn, means the inability to dedicate oneself to work, distancing oneself from one's duties and tasks. The sense of lack of effectiveness, on the other hand, is the subjective difficulty in seeing the progress made at work and, consequently, the lack of job satisfaction. It is also important to perceive oneself as an effective person, as this increases self-esteem and future involvement at work. Disappointment, on the other hand, results from the lack of realization of expectations about the professional activity and its significance for daily life, as well as the possibility of realizing values

and ideals through this work. Moreover, disappointment results in the loss of passion and enthusiasm that are present at the beginning of an employee's career (cf. Santinello 2014).

Hence, following the considerations of Ch. Maslach and M. Leiter (2010), the following sources of professional burnout of police officers can be identified:

a) Excessive workload (too many assigned tasks, exhaustion, excessive availability, time pressure). It occurs when the police officer is subjected to too many demands in too short a time and he/she does not have adequate resources. When the overload becomes chronic, when there is no opportunity for full rest that ensures recovery and restoration of the desired balance, an increase in one of the symptoms of burnout – emotional exhaustion occurs;

b) Lack of sense of control (lack of participation in decisions, ineffective leadership). This situation occurs when the officer does not have sufficient control and opportunity to influence his/her work, or when he/she is subject to rigid and excessive monitoring, or work in poorly organized conditions. It is intensified by the lack of influence over decisions concerning work, their subjectivity is destroyed and bonds with the police as an institution are weakened, the situation contributes also to a belief in one's ineffectiveness and a decline in personal commitment;

c) Sense of underestimation and lack of job satisfaction (too low remuneration, lack of recognition). Police officers may particularly severely experience the lack of adequacy between the requirements imposed on them concerning their competences and formal qualifications, the effort they make and the necessity to be available at work, and the material benefits they receive. There is also no adequate moral gratification. Comparing oneself to others and a sense of harm is a source of frustration.

d) Interpersonal problems at the workplace in terms of communication and obtaining support resulting in a breakdown of community. Police officers experiencing this situation will lose the sense of purpose and willingness to maintain positive interpersonal relations in the work environment. Especially destructive for community are chronic, intensifying conflicts among employees, rivalry, lack of mutual trust, disturbed communication, psychological violence, which on one hand lead to the sense of harm, hostility towards others, and on the other hand reduce the likelihood of social support. The interpersonal sources of burnout also include stressful situations emerging from contacts with superiors, especially conflicts and manifestations of psychological harassment of subordinates.

e) Sense of injustice, unequal treatment of police officers, which appears if the functioning of organizational structures is not established on the basis of clear rules and principles ensuring the maintenance of mutual respect and recognition. Lack of fairness can occur in the unequal distribution of workloads or the division of tasks. It can take the form of cheating an officer or bias in

their evaluation or rewards. Blocking of professional development and promotion opportunities. Unpleasant experiences associated with the above are emotionally exhausting and become a source of rebellion, sometimes giving rise to cynical attitudes.

f) Discrepancy between personal values and the values of the police as an organization. The conflict of values will occur when police officers feel that obliged or even coerced into unethical actions or behaviors, or are expected to engage in forms of activity that are in conflict with their value system.

According to Ch. Maslach (2010) "the sources of burnout are rather to be sought for in the work environment than in the characteristics of the individual" (p. 59). She points out, however, that the characteristics of people who are particularly susceptible to professional burnout include: strong dedication to work, high expectations of oneself, negation of one's own burden boundaries, sidelining one's own needs and interests, eagerness to take on new responsibilities and tasks, and an imbalance between workload and life satisfaction (pp. 13–31). Increasingly, attention is also paid to the stress-generating role of such subjective variables as a low degree of individual resistance to psychological stress, or deficiencies in the area of coping skills, expressed in the use of threat-appropriate defense techniques against negative emotions that arise in a situation of threat to important values (Tucholska 2008 p. 18).

E. Bilska (2004), when writing about individual characteristics of employees conducive to professional burnout, indicates: low self-esteem and insecurity, irrational perception of their own professional role, low sense of efficacy (pp. 3–7). People who have no faith in their abilities avoid difficult situations, do not try to face them, are convinced that not much depends on them, react emotionally to difficult professional situations, are perfectionists, set very high requirements for themselves and often punish themselves for not being able to meet them or treat their profession as a mission requiring their special commitment and special sacrifices, are likely to experience professional burnout in their careers (pp. 3–7). This perception and valuing of self has an impact on behaviors, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes (cf. Stawecka 2014. p. 27). It is therefore an element of judging and valuing oneself, including views, opinions, judgments that refer to oneself and concern somatic features (external appearance, physical health), mental features (intellectual abilities, experienced emotions towards oneself and others, motivation) and social features (concerning interpersonal relations) (cf. Gindrich 2011, p. 93). In most people their overall self-esteem is positive. The exceptions are people who are depressed or maladjusted, who tend to lower their self-esteem (Mądrzycki 1996, p. 179). On the other hand, high general self-esteem is characteristic of people who positively view everything that pertains to their person or is connected with it (their own successes, social and material status, appearance, etc.), striving to experience positive emotions. As noted by J. Reykowski (1982) "Self-acceptance (…) has a great influence on the emotional balance of a person and is one of the

factors determining human social functioning" (1982, p.79). He further states that inflated self-esteem is connected with attributing to oneself higher abilities than one really has, which causes a person to undertake tasks that are too difficult and the consequences of this are not always negative, because as a result of mobilization it is possible to achieve more than others (cf. Stawecka 2014, p. 37). Low self-esteem, on the other hand, results too large discrepancy between the real and ideal state of an individual, and people attribute to themselves lower abilities than the actual ones. These people think poorly of themselves, which results in their poor functioning, limited activity, failure to use their personal resources, they cannot cope with problems, avoid difficult situations and are less resistant to stress, although they perceive themselves more accurately. This is because they do not overestimate their own abilities, competences, influence on the course of events and are less optimistic about the future (cf. Stawecka 2014, pp. 37–38). Therefore, low self-esteem, in comparison to high self-esteem, is associated with a greater sensitivity to rejection and negative judgment from the environment, as well as pessimistic attitudes, feelings of incompetence and powerlessness. Such people are less self-confident, often withdraw and avoid undesirable, risky situations, and when faced with new challenges, they focus on escaping dangers and threats and avoiding social rejection. They also have a lower expectation of success or even do not believe in the possibility of achieving it. Thus low self-esteem prevents self-fulfillment and triggers various destructive ways of coping with problems (cf. Wiatrowska 2019, p. 77).

Research problem

Given the above observations, a search for an answer to the question of professional burnout of police officers, which was considered in the context of their self-esteem, became an interesting research issue. Therefore, the main objective of the research was to determine the relationship between professional burnout of police officers and their self-esteem as an attitude towards themselves, their belief in their resources and potential. Having in mind the presented subject and aim of the research, the following main research problem was formulated:

Is there, and if so, what is the relationship between professional burnout of police officers and their self-esteem?

The following general working hypothesis was adopted:

There is a significant relationship between professional burnout of police officers: psychophysical exhaustion, deterioration of relations, sense of professional inefficacy and disappointment of not meeting professional expectations and their level of self-esteem. Low self-esteem of police officers, lack of self-confidence, and low sense of effectiveness foster their professional burnout (cf. Bilska 2004; Stawecka 2014; Wiatrowska 2019).

The resolution of the research problem formulated in this way and verification of the working hypothesis is possible by answering the following specific questions (problems):

1. What characterizes the professional burnout of police officers?
2. What is their level of self-esteem?
3. What is the correlation between the professional burnout of police officers and their level of self-esteem?

Solving the above research problems and verifying the general working hypothesis requires, first of all, diagnosing the professional burnout (dependent variable). In operationalizing this variable, the Santinello's (2014) concept was adopted as a theoretical basis according to which four constructs of professional burnout (specific variables) can be identified: psychophysical exhaustion, deterioration of relations, sense of professional inefficacy, and disappointment with unfulfilled expectations. The LBQ questionnaire (Link Burnout Questionnaire) was used to collect empirical material. The method of answering the questionnaire is based on a 6-point Likert scale. When assessing the professional burnout of police officers, the answer options in the LBQ Questionnaire were assigned ranks (point values) on a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 point means never, 2 points – very rarely, 3 points – once or more a month, 4 points – more or less every week, 5 points – several times a week and 6 points – every day. The higher the rank of the respondents' answers (higher mean), the higher the level of burnout among the officers.

Global self-esteem (independent variable), on the other hand, was determined based on the data collected using the M. Rosenberg Scale (2008). This scale allows to determine three levels of self-esteem: high, average and low. It is composed of 10 statements, all of which are of diagnostic nature. The respondent was asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with each statement. Answers were given on a four-point scale from 1 to 4 (1 – strongly agree, 4 – strongly disagree). For each answer the respondent received points from 1 to 4.

The variables were then correlated and the assumed significant correlation between them was verified. In order to analyze the empirical material, elements of descriptive statistics (percentages, means and standard deviations) and correlational statistics (R- Spearman statistical test) were used. The research also took into account demographic and social factors (independent mediating variables): gender, age, education, seniority in the police, corps, role (managerial, executive).

The method of selecting the sample group for the research was purposeful random sampling. The research was conducted at the turn of 2019/2010 in Warsaw. The project involved 127 police officers of the capital garrison. Every second respondent was in the rank of aspirant (51.18%), almost every third respondent belonged to the non-commissioned officer corps (30.70%) and only every eighth respondent was an officer (11.8%). Only a few (6.29%) belonged

to the private corps. Every fourth respondent (25.19%) was a woman. Thus, men significantly dominated among the respondents (74.8%). As it was established, every third respondent (36.22%) had up to 10 years of work experience, four out of ten police officers (41.73%) had already served in the police for 11 to 20 years. The remaining group of respondents (22.04%) were officers with more than 21 years of service. The respondents held various roles in the police structure. The vast majority of officers (85.00%) held executive positions. Only one in seven respondents (15.00%) served as a superior of a smaller or larger team. Nearly half of the officers had a master's degree (46.45%), one in five respondents (21.25%) had a bachelor's degree and the remaining respondents (32.28%) had a high school diploma.

Analysis of empirical research findings

According to the adopted research concept, the professional burnout of the surveyed police officers (dependent variable) is described by four components (specific variables): psychophysical exhaustion, deterioration of relations, sense professional inefficacy, and disappointment (table 1). Descriptive statistics were used to characterize the variables analyzed. Scores were converted to a sten scale ranging from 1–9. The distribution of standardized scores has a mean of 5 and a standard deviation of 2 (cf. Santinello 2014, p. 44).

Table 1. Professional burnout of the surveyed police officers

Measures of professional burnout of the surveyed police officers	Descriptive statistics					
	(N) Valid opinions	Mean	Median	Lower quartile	Upper quartile	Standard deviation
Psychophysical exhaustion	127	6.14	7.00	5.00	8.00	2.16
Deterioration of relations	127	6.52	7.00	5.00	9.00	2.57
Sense of professional inefficacy	127	6.29	6.00	4.00	9.00	2.74
Disappointment with the service	127	6.51	7.00	4.00	8.00	2.30

The data obtained shows that the officers surveyed experience certain problems in the course of their service, which is negatively reflected in the intensity of the values of the variables determining their professional burnout. Most often they feel a deterioration of relations (M=6.52) and disappointment with their service (M=6.51). This means that they often perceive the problems of the people they work for in a cold and dehumanized way, they also do not enter into close relations with other colleagues, and treat daily work tasks rather unenthusiastically, as a routine, without much commitment.

Another significant symptom of the professional burnout of police officers is their sense of ineffectiveness (M=6.29). It stems from the disappointment of non-fulfillment of various expectations that they had for police service. To a lesser extent, however, they experience psychophysical exhaustion (M=6.14), which is most often reflected in the feeling of functioning under pressure, a decrease in professional activity and readiness to take on new challenges and perform difficult tasks.

Deterioration of relations

Deterioration of relations refers primarily to the quality of relations of the police officers surveyed both in the work environment (with colleagues, superiors, or subordinates) and citizens in situations of dealing with various issues and in intervention activities. It should also be noted that these relations are often characterized by emotions and negative attitudes towards police officers on the part of the customers. Deterioration of relations is reflected in their indifference, social distance and lack of respect for the individuality of citizens in intervention situations. The obtained results concerning the level deterioration of social relations of the surveyed officers represent the dominant aspect of the professional burnout of the surveyed persons (Table 2).

Table 2. Level of lack of commitment to relations of the surveyed officers

Level	Lack of commitment to relations of the surveyed police officers	
	Number	Percent
Low	28	22.05
Moderate	27	21.26
High	72	56.69

It turns out that more often than every second police officer surveyed (56.69%) has a high level of indifference to the problems of other people, including both officers from their work team and customers. They try to avoid closer contacts even with their colleagues, and they treat citizens with a lot of distance, so there is no empathy, kindness and understanding. At a similar average level is their interest in the problems of other people (21.26%). However, full commitment to social relations distinguishes the other officers (22.05%). Committed police officers are keen to help their colleagues, devote a lot of time and energy to their customers, and in intervention situations try to listen to all parties to a conflict, take their problems to heart, while maintaining full impartiality when it is necessary to resolve contentious issues.

The statistical data obtained suggest that there is a significant relationship between the deterioration of social relations of the officers and the division in

which they serve (p<0.000) and the position held (p<0.001). It turns out that the deterioration of relations is more frequent among officers working in the criminal division than in the prevention division, and among police officers functioning in executive roles rather than their superiors.

Disappointment with the service

When joining the police, each officer had various expectations of the job and values attached to it, which related, among others, to the possibility of development, obtaining a certain material and social status, prestige and power, achieving life and professional stability (cf. Wierzejska, 2017). The confrontation of these expectations with the reality of working in the police, the demands and the nature of the duties and tasks performed, the work atmosphere and the gratifications received became for a significant number of the respondents a source of disappointment, loss of enthusiasm for work. This is evidenced by the data obtained (Table 3).

Table 3. Level of disappointment of the surveyed officers with their service

Level	Disappointment of the surveyed officers with their service	
	Number	Percent
Low	33	25.98
Moderate	15	11.82
High	79	62.20

As it was found, almost two-thirds of the respondents (62.20%) are to a greater or lesser extent disappointed with their service in the police, their many expectations connected with work as a police officer have not been fulfilled. The reality of the hard and responsible service has clearly mismatched with their ideas about it. These people say that if they could turn back the time they would definitely choose a different profession. It should be noted that every fourth respondent (25.98%) is satisfied, because they are not disappointed with police work, they are passionate about this service and their professional ideals are still a source of motivation to work. They have a strong conviction that their work is of great social value. Every eighth police officer surveyed (11.82%) expresses moderate disappointment with the service. This is because some of the expectations of the respondents have been fulfilled, while others have no chance to be realized in the current conditions.

Statistically significant correlations were found between the sense of disappointment with the job of the surveyed police officers and their professional experience (p<0.003). Among the respondents, the greatest disappointment with the police service so far characterizes officers with professional experience of 11

to 20 years – which is considerable work experience. In addition, the gender of officers is a factor that differentiates their sense of disappointment with the job (p<0.033). Men more often than women express their disappointment in police service not meeting their expectations.

Sense of professional inefficacy

Man must repeatedly experience the effectiveness of their own actions to finally develop a sense of self-efficacy, so that they adequately assess their own situation and their capabilities, creating plans of action, demonstrating persistence and determination in their implementation. In the case of a high sense of self-efficacy, police officers will perceive the difficult tasks they are given as challenges. If they lack the sense of self-efficacy, they will experience doubt, uncertainty, and generally pessimism in their performance (cf. Bandura, 1998). Thus, it can be concluded that the sense of professional inefficacy refers to the personal resources possessed, which have a certain deficit and prevent the successful performance of the professional role. Detailed data on the surveyed police officers are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Level of sense of professional inefficacy of the surveyed officers

Level	Sense of professional inefficacy of the surveyed officers	
	Number	Percent
Low	38	29.92
Moderate	31	24.41
High	58	45.67

Analyzing the results, it should be concluded that almost half of the officers surveyed (45.67%) have a high level of a sense of professional inefficacy, which may translate into low effectiveness in combating crime and maintaining public order. These persons find it difficult to cope with workload and stress, feel fear and doubts in situations requiring decisive and definite actions, and in difficult situations experience strong emotional arousal, excessive focusing on their deficiencies, exaggeration of difficulties. They believe that they are not competent enough and that they are not able to properly organize their work (cf. Bandura 1998; Kościelak 2010). More than one in four respondents (29.92%) is a kind of contradiction of this characteristic. These officers are resistant to stress and disorganization factors, show persistence and consistency, high confidence in their ability to control the situation, and commitment to their tasks. The rest of the respondents (24.41%) experience a moderate level of a sense of inefficacy.

Statistical analyses showed that the sense of professional inefficacy of the surveyed police officers correlates with the position they hold (p<0.004). It turns

out that the police officers acting as superiors have a lesser sense of inefficacy than police officers in executive positions.

Psychophysical exhaustion

Psychophysical exhaustion is another characteristic of the professional burnout syndrome of the surveyed police officers that was analyzed. It is manifested by discouragement, decreasing interest in professional matters, pessimism, constant emotional tension and a sense of acting under pressure, irritability or chronic fatigue, and often escape into illness (Table 5).

Table 5. The level of psychophysical exhaustion of the surveyed officers

Level	Psychophysical exhaustion of the surveyed officers	
	Number	Percent
Low	25	19.68
Moderate	36	28.35
High	66	51.97

It turns out that every second police officer surveyed (51.97%) shows various forms of psychophysical exhaustion, lack of energy to act and decreasing interest in professional matters. At the opposite extreme is every fifth respondent (19.68%) who tolerates well the hardships of service, demonstrates full participation and high energy, quickly regenerates fatigue, and the work performed mobilizes them to take on new tasks with great care. More than one in four respondents (28.35%) have ambivalent feelings in this regard. These are people who cope with the hardships of their service with varying degrees of success. They are either full of energy and enthusiasm, or the excess of tasks and their level of difficulty is beyond their capabilities and is a source of stress.

The analyses showed that there is a significant correlation between psychophysical exhaustion of the surveyed police officers and their gender (p<0.010) and the position held (p<0.040). Psychophysical exhaustion is more often experienced by men than by women, officers in executive roles (subordinates) than their superiors.

The next step of the research procedure is to determine the general level of self-esteem of the surveyed police officers as a system of their beliefs about themselves, determining the resources they have in coping with professional problems and new challenges, preventing the feeling of being overburdened with service and professional burnout. (cf. Mądrzycki 2002).

When determining the general self-esteem index of police officers on the basis of the sten scale, it is important to note that the mean for self-esteem is 6.54 sten, which places this data in the range of high scores (Table 6). This means

that the respondents show a very positive overall attitude towards themselves, their capabilities, abilities and weaknesses, the various judgments and opinions they hold about themselves, and their personal resources (physical, mental, social or moral). Thus, it can be concluded that the surveyed officers have high self-esteem (cf. Bera 2019).

Table 6. General self-esteem index of the surveyed police officers

General self-esteem	Descriptive statistics of the self-esteem of the surveyed officers					
	Valid N	Mean	Median	Lower quartile	Upper quartile	Standard deviation
Raw score	127	32.06	32.00	28.00	36.00	5.24
Sten score	127	6.54	7.00	5.00	8.00	2.32

The analysis of the general self-esteem of the surveyed police officers (Table 7) shows that every second police officer surveyed (50.39) is characterized by an overall high self-esteem in various aspects of social and professional functioning. Thereby, they are convinced of their professional knowledge and skills, their ability to act effectively and thus achieve their goals. Hence, they are fully aware of the strengths of their personality and their ability to handle the tasks assigned to them by their superiors.

Table 7. General level of self-esteem of the surveyed police officers (data in %)

Level	General self-esteem of the surveyed officers	
	Number	Percent
Low	26	20.47
Moderate	37	29.13
High	64	50.39

However, one in five officers surveyed (20.47%) displays various deficits that make them critical of their personal resources and ability to meet more and more challenging tasks. They have little self-confidence and often blame themselves when they fail. They are not satisfied with themselves and their achievements so far, and are convinced that they do not have any successes they could be proud of. On the other hand more than every fourth respondent (29.13%) has a moderate opinion of themselves and their abilities. This is because they take into account their well identified strengths and weaknesses. When performing tasks they do not show excessive bravado, nor do they shy away from responsible tasks when expected by their superiors.

According to the adopted research assumptions, in addition to the diagnosis of the analyzed variables – professional burnout of police officers and their self-esteem – the essence of this research was to verify the relationship between these variables. The obtained results of correlation using the R-Spearman rank correlation test are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Relationship between the professional burnout of police officers and their self-esteem

Components of professional burnout	General self-esteem of the surveyed police officers	
	R	P
Psychophysical exhaustion	-0.381	0.000
Deterioration of relations	-0.245	0.005
Sense of inefficacy	- 0.524	0.000
Disappointment with police work	-0.363	0.000

The statistical analysis revealed that self-esteem correlates negatively with all components of the professional burnout of the surveyed police officers. The strongest relationship is found between self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy (R=-0.524). This is followed by psychophysical exhaustion (R=-0.381), disappointment with police work (R=-0.363) and deterioration of relations with other people (-0.245). It turns out that the more police officers do not believe in their own potential and abilities, the more critically they evaluate their personal resources and possibilities of effective performance, the more uncertain they are in making decisions, have problems with coping with workload and stress. They also feel more physically and mentally fatigued and exhausted, discouraged at work, and function in constant tension. They withdraw from difficult tasks because they perceive them as a personal threat, have low aspirations, experience strong emotional arousal, focus too much on their shortcomings, do not set distant goals, and are uncertain about what they are doing (cf. Bandura 1998; Kościelak 2010; Kirenko, Zubrzycka-Maciąg 2011; Łukasik 2013; Bera 2019). Police officers with low self-esteem are more often than others disappointed with their service so far and the fact that their expectations connected with the profession of a police officer have not been fulfilled and resign from improving their competences. They believe that they are misunderstood by their superiors, and do not receive adequate social support. One must bear in mind that these individuals will be the first to resign from the service. The declining self-esteem of the surveyed officers is also accompanied by the deterioration of relations. The more police officers do not feel self-confident, the more often they are afraid to enter into closer relations in the service environment and distance themselves from the problems of their customers, displaying indifference and insensitivity. They do not give adequate attention to the people, their expression of their needs and treat

them in a cold and dehumanizing manner (cf. Sęk 1996; Zbyrad 2009, 2014; Wierzejska 2017). Thus, along with the decline in the level of self-esteem of the surveyed police officers there is an increase in the professional burnout syndrome, which causes a change in their attitude towards work, the tasks performed, to the social environment of the service and the customers, their motivation disappears and they give up ambitious efforts in order to accept their fate and, when the opportunity arises, leave the job (cf. Burisch 2000).

Summary

The research carried out confirmed the findings of previous explorations that working in the police, the nature of the dangerous tasks performed and the workload is a source of chronic severe stress, which in consequence leads to early professional burnout of officers (cf. among others Terelak, 2007). Police officers are a professional group characterized by a high level of professional burnout in comparison to, among others, the municipal police and firefighters (Ogińska-Bulik 2006), nurses (Sęk 1996), teachers and educators (Kirenko), Zubrzycka-Maciąg 2011; Wierzejska 2017), social workers (Zbyrad 2009; 2014;) or military pilots (Bera 2020) or soldiers serving in military missions abroad (Czuba 2018).

The results of the research indicate that about half of the surveyed police officers exhibit high levels of symptoms of professional burnout. It is particularly experienced by officers performing executive roles, more often men than women, which may result from the nature of the tasks performed, as well as those with longer professional experience. Professional burnout manifests itself primarily in the deterioration of relations with other colleagues, superiors, and customers, who are treated with a large distance and often quite indifferently. This is accompanied by a very high disappointment with the service. Many hopes and expectations that police officers had for their profession did not come true. The respondents often declared that if they could go back in time, they would choose another profession. Police officers also have a strong sense of professional inefficacy, which in their opinion is not only a result of their own weaknesses but also of the conditions of their service. They are psychologically and physically exhausted, which causes a visible decrease in the quality of their service, their professional dissatisfaction and a general decrease in their commitment.

The hypothetical assumption about the existence of a significant relationship between professional burnout of officers and their self-esteem was positively verified. There is a negative correlation between these variables. Officers characterized by low self-esteem are more likely than other police officers to experience professional burnout in all aspects analyzed here. Whereas the more the surveyed officers believe in their own strengths, competences and abilities, the less they are affected by the professional burnout syndrome. This confidence in

having the necessary personal resources allows them to bear well the hardships of police service, to function properly in social relations, to work effectively and to achieve successes that are a source of life and professional satisfaction. That is why it is so important to build adequate self-esteem of officers in the course of their service, to strengthen it through activity connected with care for building high social and material status of the service, properly conducted personnel policy ensuring conditions for fair assessment of work, clearly defined opportunities and possibilities for professional development and promotion.

A detailed analysis of the data shows that every second officer surveyed feels, to a greater or lesser extent and with varying degrees of intensity at work, that they have to deal with people who are more difficult both among colleagues and among customers. The discomfort associated with this is to a greater or lesser extent experienced by every fifth officer (20.47%), who every day or several times a week has a feeling that in their work they have to deal with more difficult situations than other colleagues. This is experienced more or less once a week by 12.59% of respondents, and once a month or more often by nearly one in five police officers (18.11%).

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