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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL BURNOUT AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF PSYCHOLOGISTS UNDER CONDITIONS OF UNCERTAINTY

У статті наведено ґрунтовний теоретико-аналітичний аналіз взаємозв'язку між професійною ідентичністю та емоційним вигоранням серед психологів у сучасних умовах соціальної, професійної та екзистенційної невизначеності. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена глибокими трансформаційними процесами, що відбуваються в українському суспільстві внаслідок повномасштабної війни, тривалої соціальної напруги, зростання колективної тривоги та значного збільшення потреби населення у психологічній допомозі. У цих умовах фахівці допомагаючих професій, зокрема психологи, опиняються в ситуації хронічного професійного перевантаження, що суттєво впливає як на їхній психоемоційний стан, так і на якість професійної діяльності.

У цій роботі емоційне вигорання розглядається як багатовимірне психологічне явище, що формується під впливом тривалого професійного стресу та проявляється через емоційне виснаження, деперсоналізацію та зниження професійної результативності. Особлива увага приділяється сучасним підходам до розуміння вигорання, які включають феномени супутньої травматизації, морального стресу та синдрому виснаження співчуття, що є особливо характерними для роботи психологів, які займаються травматичними переживаннями, кризовими подіями та наслідками війни.

Професійна ідентичність у рамках даного дослідження визначається як інтегративний психологічний конструкт, що поєднує систему професійних цінностей, самосприйняття як фахівця, усвідомлення професійних ролей, внутрішню мотивацію, етичну відповідальність та відчуття значущості власної діяльності. Теоретичну основу аналізу становлять класичні концепції ідентичності (Е. Еріксон, Дж. Е. Марсія), а також сучасні підходи до професійного розвитку особистості (М. Л. Савікас), які розглядають ідентичність як динамічний процес, що постійно трансформується під впливом життєвих подій та професійного середовища.

У статті узагальнено результати сучасних зарубіжних та вітчизняних досліджень, які підтверджують існування тісного та двостороннього зв'язку між професійною ідентичністю та емоційним вигоранням. Показано, що сформована, цілісна професійна ідентичність є важливим психологічним ресурсом, який забезпечує стійкість до стресу, підтримує мотивацію до професійної діяльності та сприяє ефективній адаптації в умовах невизначеності. Водночас нестабільна, суперечлива або неповна професійна ідентичність значно підвищує ризик емоційного вигорання, втрати сенсу професійної діяльності та професійної дезадаптації.

Особлива увага приділяється тому, що емоційне вигорання має не лише наслідковий, а й деструктивний вплив на професійну ідентичність: тривале емоційне виснаження поступово призводить до розмиття професійного «я», зниження самооцінки професійної компетентності, втрати приналежності до професії та втрати внутрішньої цінності своєї праці. Таким чином, утворюється замкнуте коло, в якому слабкість професійної ідентичності посилює вигорання, а вигорання, у свою чергу, поглиблює кризу ідентичності.

У статті обґрунтовується необхідність переходу від суто симптомоорієнтованих підходів до профілактики емоційного вигорання до цілісних психопрофілактичних моделей, спрямованих на розвиток професійної самосвідомості, рефлексії, ціннісно-семантичної сфери та внутрішніх ресурсів психолога. Результати дослідження можуть бути використані у професійній підготовці майбутніх психологів, у системі супервізійної та інтервізійної підтримки, а також у розробці програм психологічної підтримки фахівців, які працюють в умовах кризи, війни та соціальної нестабільності.

Таким чином, аналіз сприяє глибшому науковому розумінню психологічних механізмів професійної резистентності та створює теоретичну основу для формування ефективних стратегій збереження психічного здоров'я психологів у сучасних умовах невизначеності.



Ключові слова: емоційне вигорання, професійна ідентичність, психолог, професійна резильєнтність, невизначеність, кризові умови, професійний стрес, психологічне благополуччя.

The article provides a comprehensive theoretical and analytical analysis of the relationship between professional identity and emotional burnout among psychologists in the current context of social, professional, and existential uncertainty. The relevance of the study is determined by the profound transformational processes taking place in Ukrainian society as a result of full-scale war, prolonged social tension, growing collective anxiety, and a significant increase in the population's need for psychological assistance. In these conditions, professionals in the helping professions, particularly psychologists, find themselves in a situation of chronic professional overload, which significantly affects both their psycho-emotional state and the quality of their professional activity.

In this work, emotional burnout is considered as a multidimensional psychological phenomenon that is formed under the influence of prolonged professional stress and manifests itself through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduction in professional achievements. Particular attention is paid to contemporary approaches to understanding burnout, which include the phenomena of concomitant traumatization, moral stress, and compassion fatigue syndrome, which are particularly characteristic of the work of psychologists involved in dealing with traumatic experiences, crisis events, and the consequences of war.

Professional identity within the scope of this study is defined as an integrative psychological construct that combines a system of professional values, self-perception as a specialist, awareness of professional roles, internal motivation, ethical responsibility, and a sense of the significance of one's own activities. The theoretical basis of the analysis is formed by classical concepts of identity (E. Erikson, J.E. Marcia), as well as modern approaches to professional development of the individual (M.L. Savickas), which consider identity as a dynamic process that is constantly transformed under the influence of life events and the professional environment.

The article summarizes the results of contemporary foreign and domestic studies that confirm the existence of a close and bilateral relationship between professional identity and emotional burnout. It is shown that a formed, coherent professional identity is an important psychological resource that provides resistance to stress, maintains motivation for professional activity, and promotes effective adaptation in conditions of uncertainty. At the same time, unstable, contradictory, or incomplete professional identity significantly increases the risk of emotional burnout, loss of meaning in professional activity, and professional maladjustment.

Special attention is paid to the fact that emotional burnout has not only a consequential but also a destructive effect on professional identity: prolonged emotional exhaustion gradually leads to a blurring of the professional self, a decline in self-esteem of professional competence, a loss of belonging to the profession, and a loss of the intrinsic value of one's work. Thus, a vicious circle is formed in which the weakness of professional identity exacerbates burnout, and burnout, in turn, deepens the identity crisis.

The article substantiates the need to move from purely symptom-oriented approaches to the prevention of emotional burnout to holistic psychoprophylactic models aimed at developing professional self-awareness, reflection, the value-semantic sphere, and the internal resources of the psychologist. The results of the study can be used in the professional training of future psychologists, in the system of supervisory and intervision support, as well as in the development of psychological support programs for specialists working in conditions of crisis, war, and social instability.

Thus, the analysis contributes to a deeper scientific understanding of the psychological mechanisms of professional resilience and creates a theoretical basis for the formation of effective strategies for maintaining the mental health of psychologists in the current conditions of uncertainty.

Key words: emotional burnout, professional identity, psychologist, professional resilience, uncertainty, crisis conditions, professional stress, psychological well-being.

Problem statement. In the current conditions of constant social transformations, global crises, and war in Ukraine, professionals in the helping professions, particularly psychologists, find themselves in a situation of chronic professional uncertainty, which affects both their psycho-emotional well-being and their professional self-realization. One of the critical consequences of this state is emotional burnout, a multidimensional syndrome that includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional effectiveness.

The phenomenon of professional identity deserves special attention, as it plays a key role in the stability of a specialist's personality, their ability to adapt, make professional decisions, act ethically, and

maintain motivation to work. At the same time, in periods of uncertainty, professional identity can be both a protective resource and a vulnerable component that affects the intensity of burnout symptoms [5].

Despite the significance of both phenomena - emotional burnout and professional identity - their interconnection in conditions of uncertainty remains insufficiently studied in modern psychological science, especially in the domestic context. This necessitates a theoretical understanding and empirical study of the interaction between these factors for the purpose of further developing effective prevention and correction programs.

Thus, this article is relevant and scientifically significant, as it contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological characteristics of professional stability of specialists in crisis conditions, which is important both for the individual well-being of specialists and for the quality of psychological assistance provided in society.

Analysis of recent studies and publications. The issue of emotional burnout among psychologists in the current conditions of uncertainty caused by both global challenges and the war in Ukraine is attracting considerable attention from both domestic and foreign researchers [1; 4; 10; 12]. In Ukrainian scientific discourse, emotional burnout is considered a complex psycho-emotional phenomenon that arises as a result of prolonged stress in professional activity and is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decrease in personal achievements (O.E. Melnyk, 2024; I.O. Romanyuk, 2023) [1, p. 46].

The study of the impact of professional identity on the level of emotional burnout is of particular relevance. According to research by S.M. Rusanovsky (2023), unstable or undeveloped professional identity is a factor that increases a psychologist's vulnerability to professional stress, weakens their ability to adapt, and reduces their subjective sense of effectiveness. In turn, as noted by I.A. Shakhov (2022), a well-formed identity serves as an internal resource that helps overcome the challenges of uncertainty, maintains internal motivation, and promotes professional self-preservation [3].

Other authors, in particular I.V. Zdanevich and N.M. Golovko, emphasize in their publications that in conditions of war and social instability, psychologists are increasingly faced with a crisis of professional identity, manifested in a loss of meaning in their work, blurred professional boundaries, and exacerbated burnout syndrome [10].

In foreign psychology, the works of G. Freudenberger and K. Maslach are considered classic, as they were the first to define burnout syndrome as a separate psychological phenomenon associated with the emotional exhaustion of professionals in the helping professions [4; 12]. Although there are limited direct empirical studies on the relationship between burnout and professional identity specifically in psychologists in the international literature, general approaches to the study of professional identity in the context of stress and adaptation (J.E. Marcia, M.L. Savickas) confirm that clear professional self-determination contributes to psychological stability and a lower susceptibility to burnout [5; 13].

Thus, analysis of the scientific literature indicates the existence of theoretical and empirical prerequisites for a more in-depth study of the relationship between emotional burnout and professional identity in the context of uncertainty. At the same time, this topic remains relatively new, especially in the context of contemporary crisis challenges, which creates opportunities for further research and the development of practical psychological support programs for professionals.

The purpose of the article. Emotional burnout is one of the most common and complex psychological phenomena in modern professional life. This problem is particularly acute for representatives of the helping professions—psychologists, teachers, doctors, social workers, who interact with other people's emotional states on a daily basis, taking on a significant emotional burden. In the current Ukrainian reality, where specialists work in conditions of war, traumatic experiences, and social and economic instability, the topic of emotional burnout is becoming even more relevant.

The concept of “emotional burnout” was first introduced by G. Freudenberger in 1974 to describe a state of exhaustion caused by excessive emotional stress in working with people [12]. Later, S. Maslach and J. Jackson developed one of the most influential models of burnout, which includes three main components [4]:

1. Emotional exhaustion - a feeling of emptiness, fatigue, loss of internal resources;
2. Depersonalization - a cynical or detached attitude towards clients, patients, students;
3. Reduction of professional achievements - a decrease in self-esteem of one's effectiveness as a specialist.

According to this model, emotional burnout develops gradually, passing through stages of tension, resistance, and exhaustion. A psychologist may not immediately notice how accumulated stress turns into emotional exhaustion, and then into a loss of meaning in work, indifference, or even irritation toward clients.

Contemporary foreign researchers (Ch. Figley, M. Leiter, C. Maslach, M. Savicki) are expanding the understanding of burnout to include the concepts of compassion fatigue and moral stress, which are particularly relevant in the work of psychologists who help people in emergency or traumatic situations [7].

In domestic psychology, emotional burnout is also studied as a complex phenomenon that affects the emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and motivational spheres of the personality. Scientists such as O.E. Melnik, S.M. Rusanovsky, and I.V. Zdanevich emphasize that emotional burnout among psychologists in Ukraine often arises in conditions of an unstable professional environment, excessive responsibility, ethical dilemmas, as well as their own unresolved traumatic experiences, which are activated in the process of working with clients [2].

Particular attention should be paid to the opinion of S.M. Rusanovsky (2023), who considers emotional burnout not as a purely professional crisis, but as a personal-motivational crisis that arises when there is a gap between the personal values of a specialist and the real conditions of their work.

In such cases, psychologists do not simply become tired, they begin to lose their sense of meaning, value, and satisfaction from their work.

Other Ukrainian researchers (I.A. Shakhov, N.M. Golovko) point out the link between emotional burnout and the level of professional identity, emphasizing that a vague sense of self in the profession, unstable motivation, or a lack of belonging to a community of professionals can be precursors to burnout [3, p. 72].

Professional identity is a complex psychological phenomenon that encompasses a set of value-semantic orientations, perceptions of oneself as a specialist, professional roles, and internal beliefs about one's own competence. It is the core of the professional «I» that forms a stable sense of one's role, place, and significance in professional activity.

In classical psychological literature, issues of identity were generally considered central to understanding personality formation. Thus, E. Erikson emphasized the importance of identity as an integrative structure of self-perception that determines the integrity of the personality in its life and professional path.

In the context of professional identity, J.E. Marcia's concepts are important, explaining the process of identity formation through the search for and acceptance of professional decisions. Marcia distinguishes such identity positions as diffusion, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved, which reflect different states of certainty of personality regarding the choice of profession and one's own professional plans. It is achieved identity that is associated with an inner sense of stability, a conscious choice of profession, and high motivation to realize it [5, p. 168].

Contemporary international studies consider professional identity not only as an internal construct, but also as the result of a dynamic relationship between the individual and the professional environment. Thus, professional identity is formed through social interactions, professional practices, societal demands, and internal value orientations. It is not a static feature, but a process that changes depending on the context of activity and life events.

Domestic psychologists emphasize the special role of professional identity in auxiliary professions, which include psychologists. Ukrainian researchers (S.M. Rusanovsky, I.A. Shakhov, O.E. Melnik, and others) view professional identity as an integrative structure that includes awareness of one's professional role; reflection on professional values; experience of the effectiveness of one's activities; and internal acceptance of professional responsibilities.

The works of S.M. Rusanovsky (2023) emphasize that professional identity is a resource for professional adaptation: a clearly formed perception of oneself as a specialist supports psychologists in overcoming stressful situations and contributes to less vulnerability to emotional exhaustion [2, p. 61]. I.A. Shakhov (2022) focuses on the process of identity formation at the stage of professional training, noting that uncertainty in understanding professional values and roles among psychology students can become the starting point for the development of burnout in the early stages of professional activity.

Ukrainian researchers also emphasize that in conditions of social instability, in particular war and constant change, professional demands on psychologists are significantly increasing, which reinforces the need for internal mechanisms of self-support and resilience, which are formed through professional identity.

In modern psychological science, the idea is gradually forming that professional identity and emotional burnout are closely related as intrapersonal phenomena that have a mutual influence on professional activity, especially in conditions of high psychological and social stress.

Research shows that a clearly formed professional identity acts as an internal stabilizer in a specialist's work. It includes awareness of one's professional values, confidence in one's competence, a sense of integrity, and belonging to a professional community. According to the findings of S.M.

Rusanovsky (2023), it is these characteristics of identity that contribute to a higher level of professional adaptation and a reduced risk of emotional exhaustion [2, p. 58].

On the other hand, an unstable or incomplete professional identity is often a prerequisite for the development of emotional burnout. I.A. Shakhov (2022) points out that psychologists with a weak professional “I”, an insufficient internal sense of the value of their role, and low professional motivation are more likely to experience symptoms of depersonalization, fatigue, and decreased effectiveness. This dynamic is due to the fact that a lack of professional confidence increases vulnerability to external stress and creates an internal conflict between the desired image of a specialist and the reality of professional activity.

Foreign studies also confirm a similar relationship. In the context of J.E. Marcia's identity theories and S. Maslach's approaches to emotional burnout, the presence of an achieved professional identity (i.e., a conscious and accepted choice of profession) is associated with a reduced risk of emotional burnout, as it provides internal stability and support in difficult situations. At the same time, those who are in the stage of identity moratorium or diffusion demonstrate higher levels of emotional instability and burnout [5, p. 183].

A number of empirical studies have also found that professional identity can act as a buffer that mitigates the negative impact of factors such as uncertainty, traumatic experiences, ethical dilemmas, or reduced social support. For example, in the work of O.E. Melnyk (2024), dedicated to volunteer psychologists, it was shown that those who clearly understood their mission and professional role demonstrated higher levels of emotional resilience and lower rates of burnout.

Van den Berg et al. (2006) found that a clear professional identity significantly reduces the level of emotional exhaustion [8, p. 596]. The authors concluded that specialists who have a stable identity and are well aware of their professional boundaries, roles, and values show significantly less burnout. Similar results were obtained by Peeples (2001) in a study of social workers, which found a direct link between professional self-reflection, a sense of job significance, and low levels of burnout.

In the Ukrainian scientific context, there are also a number of empirical studies confirming these links. For example, a study by Osadcha M. and Goncharenko V. (2022) found that psychologists with undeveloped or conflicting professional identities show higher levels of emotional exhaustion.

On the other hand, those who clearly identify themselves with their profession have more stable emotional regulation and fewer manifestations of depersonalization.

Kozak Y. and Litvinenko O. (2023) in an empirical study involving more than 200 practicing psychologists in crisis conditions proved that professional identity not only moderates the level of burnout but also acts as an internal resource. The most protected were those specialists who had conscious professional values, internal motivation, and stable identity.

Thus, the relationship between professional identity and emotional burnout is two-sided: on the one hand, weak identity exacerbates burnout, and on the other hand, burnout can “erode” identity, leading to a loss of meaning in professional activity. All this confirms the need for a holistic approach to supporting psychologists, which should include the development and strengthening of professional identity as a protective resource in conditions of uncertainty.

Synthesizing foreign and Ukrainian approaches, professional identity can be viewed as a key factor that modulates a psychologist's individual response to professional stress. When professional identity is developed—the psychologist has a clear understanding of their values, competence, and role in the profession—it creates internal coherence that supports stress resistance and serves as a protective mechanism against burnout. In this case, external uncertainty (social, professional, or life) is perceived through the internal prism of conscious meanings and goals.

Conversely, a weak or incomplete professional identity exacerbates the impact of stress, because the psychologist feels insecure, experiences an internal conflict between the expectations of the profession and their own capabilities, and has difficulty understanding professional requirements (Fig. 1). This, in turn, contributes to the development of emotional burnout, which manifests itself in emotional exhaustion, decreased motivation, and professional maladjustment.

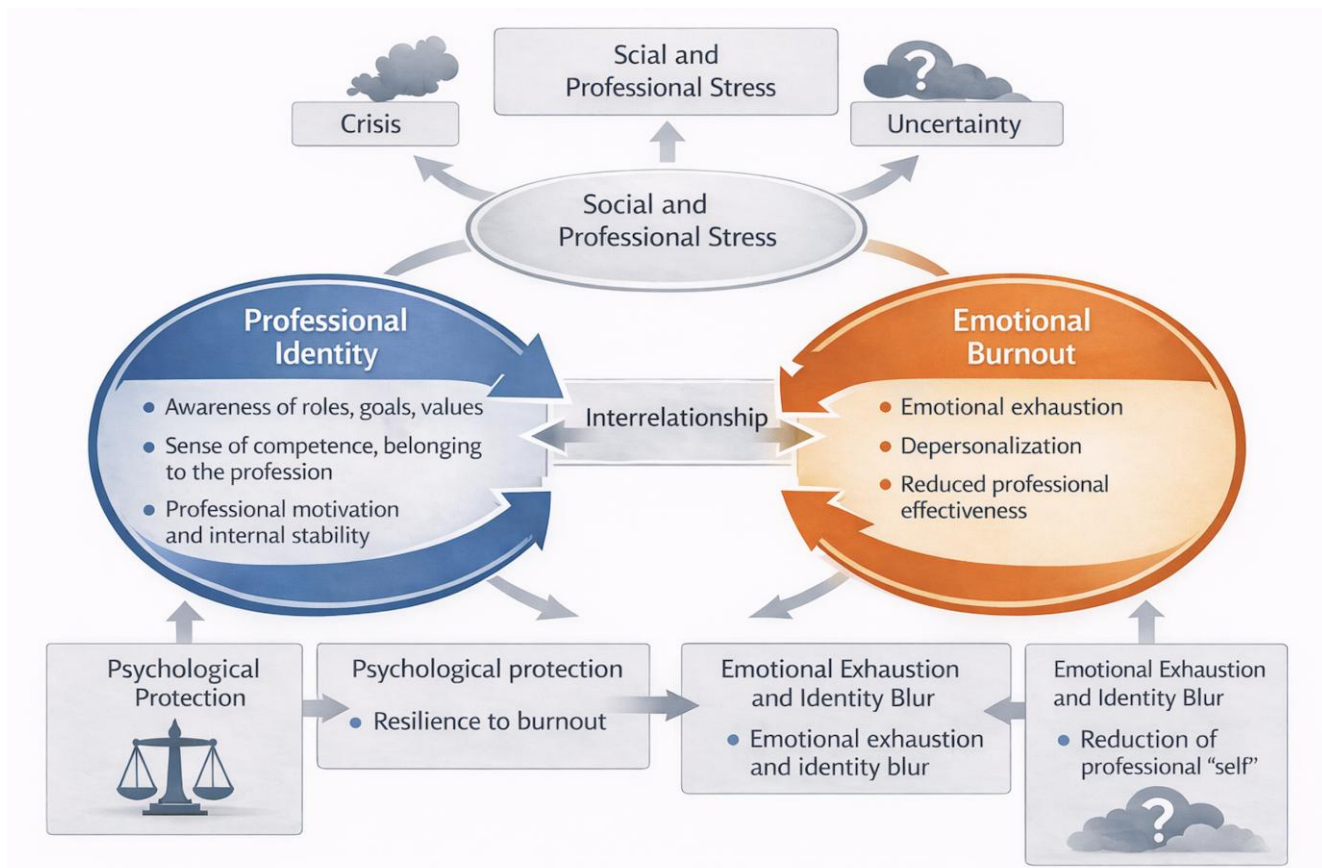


Fig. 1. Features of the relationship between emotional intelligence and professional identity of psychologists in conditions of uncertainty

In the professional activity of a psychologist, a key role is played by how deeply he realizes himself as a specialist - with his own values, professional boundaries, goals and a sense of the meaning of his work. It is this internal «I am a professional» that constitutes the core of professional identity. When it is clearly formed, the psychologist has more resources to overcome stressful influences, is able to maintain motivation, efficiency and empathy even in difficult, crisis conditions.

On the other hand, under conditions of prolonged social and professional instability - in particular, such as war, moral overload, systemic emotional stress - there is a gradual decrease in emotional endurance. This may be accompanied by a feeling of internal exhaustion, cynicism, devaluation of one's own activities - signs of emotional burnout. A particular danger is that burnout is not only a consequence of external pressure, but also has a negative impact on professional identity: doubts about one's own competence begin to arise, the sense of belonging to the profession disappears, and the understanding of the meaning of one's work becomes blurred.

In psychological research, more attention is paid to the relationship between these two phenomena. On the one hand, professional identity is considered as a buffer that reduces vulnerability to burnout. On the other hand, burnout is perceived as a factor that gradually destroys identity, especially when a specialist loses a sense of the significance of his role or experiences moral fatigue [11].

The results of the study presented in this article create a solid theoretical basis for building modern psycho-prophylactic strategies aimed at preserving the psychological well-being of specialists in auxiliary professions, in particular practicing psychologists. The revealed relationship between professional identity and emotional burnout allows us to rethink the directions of preventive work not only from the standpoint of reducing burnout symptoms, but also through the purposeful strengthening of professional identity as an internal resource. It is the deep awareness of oneself as a specialist, a stable understanding of professional values, roles and goals, as well as a sense of the significance of one's work that act as a buffer that reduces vulnerability to professional stress and exhaustion.

These results can be used to create training and psychoeducational programs, within which specialists will be able to reflect on their professional identity, recognize the risks of emotional burnout at early stages and develop self-regulation skills in conditions of increased stress. In particular - this applies to the development of specialized methodological materials for students of psychological specialties who

are in the process of forming a professional «I», as well as for practicing psychologists who work in conditions of humanitarian crises or hostilities [6, p. 92].

In addition, the results of the article can be integrated into supervisory and practice, which involves a reflexive understanding of the professional role, ethical dilemmas, boundaries and meanings of professional activity. Promoting the formation of a stable professional identity increases not only individual stress resistance, but also the overall quality of providing psychological assistance in society. It is also advisable to create diagnostic tools to identify the level of formation of professional identity as a preventive indicator of the development of emotional burnout.

Conclusions. Summarizing the theoretical foundations and results of the analysis of current scientific research, it can be concluded that the relationship between professional identity and emotional burnout is a complex, interdependent, and dynamic process, especially within the professional activity of psychologists operating under conditions of uncertainty, social tension, and crisis-related influences. Professional identity functions as an internal psychological resource that ensures emotional resilience, sustains motivation for professional activity, facilitates adaptation, and supports the preservation of psychological well-being. At the same time, instability or an insufficiently developed professional identity increases vulnerability to emotional exhaustion, the devaluation of one's professional role, and reduced effectiveness.

Emotional burnout, in turn, is not only a response to prolonged occupational stress but also exerts a destructive influence on the structure of professional identity. It leads to a blurring of values, loss of meaning in professional activity, and growing doubt regarding one's own competence. Therefore, a bidirectional influence exists between these two phenomena: a well-formed professional identity can serve as a preventive factor against burnout, while burnout may disrupt the integrity of the professional self.

Given the current societal challenges, particularly the full-scale war, nationwide uncertainty, and widespread moral fatigue, the issue of preserving professional identity and preventing emotional burnout is of exceptional relevance. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach to supporting helping professionals, especially psychologists, which should incorporate not only external organizational resources but also the development of internal personal foundations such as self-reflection, value-based thinking, and conscious professional self-determination.

Thus, a deep understanding and practical consideration of the interrelation between professional identity and emotional burnout can form the basis for the development of effective support programs for professionals during periods of occupational turbulence. These programs may contribute to maintaining their professional effectiveness, emotional endurance, and humanistic orientation in their work with people.

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