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## **RECIPROCAL BURNOUT MODEL (RBM): INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF INTERPERSONAL AND INTRAPERSONAL FACTORS**

### **Abstract**

Most of researchers tend to link the burnout syndrome and environmental stress (interpersonal causes). Even though Freudenberg, who introduced the term burnout in 1976, thought that the burnout is a condition, that follows the preoccupation as a narcissistic need for omnipotence, researchers only recently focus their attention on personal characteristics of people that are experiencing burnout (intrapersonal causes).

Reciprocal burnout model (RBM) links both causes. It shows why only a portion of people in same circumstances suffer from burnout syndrome. It states that personal characteristics are one of the main causes why people suffering from burnout syndrome enroll in nonreciprocal personal and professional relations and shows the role that the socialization process plays in development of these characteristics.

The RBM explains the psychodynamic background of performance based self esteem (uncohesive) and four types of psychodynamic mechanisms that can lead to workaholism, which is the main symptom of burnout syndrome. The core of RBM consists in one's attitude towards his or her basic needs' fulfillment, personal system of values and correlation between fulfillment of basic needs (energy accumulation) and burning out process (energy consumption).

RBM is a foundation for differentiation between burnout syndrome and similar mental disorders and for understanding of the underlying dynamics that lead to burnout syndrome. It is also the fundament for appropriate choice of psychotherapeutic modality for people experiencing burning out and burnout. RBM is also opening series of questions, like connection between personal traits, life satisfaction and personal values, and burnout syndrome risk behavior, as well as influence of whole life circumstances on burning out process.

### **Reciprocal burnout model RBM:**

The cause for burning out and burnout is a lack of balance (nonreciprocity) between investment (drainage) of energy (body, emotional, cognitive) and fulfillment of needs (restoration of energy) and in ways people respond to nonreciprocal situations (personal characteristics) in life and work conditions.

## **Research**

Purpose of the research is to find common structural and psychodynamic characteristics of subjects with burnout syndrome regarding the theoretical concept of developmental psychoanalytic psychology.

We believe, that labile or negative self esteem (uncohesive self) can be formed through object relations, that don't support individuation and separation (upbringing with a conditional love). Moreover along with hardworking, if it is a strong family value or demand, that kind of self esteem is usually performance based. The need to sustain performance based self esteem represents inner compulsion that triggers workaholism, which can lead to burnout.

## **Subjects:**

147 persons (41 M, 106 F), that were attending psychological help on The Institute For the Development of Human Resources, due to their symptoms of burning out and burnout.

Method:

Structured anamnestic psycho diagnostic interview, supplemented with questions regarding workaholism and upbringing with a conditional love. All subjects were asked same questions. We analyzed collected data from the theoretical concept of developmental psychoanalytic psychology (structural and dynamical diagnosis).

## **Common Characteristics of Burnout Victims :**

Workaholism, Well or exceptionally energetically equipped, Hardworking as a strong family value, Use of »doing« (what I do, achieve) part of self (performance based self esteem) for compensation of low being (who I am) part of self, Relatively good (over)compensated deficits, decompensation takes place when burdens are longlasting and successive, till then, they function relatively efficiently, With subjects, that showed characteristics of borderline organization of personality, the development took inadequate course mostly on the developmental line of separation and individuation (organization of self), however personality organizations are very close to neurotic, All subjects have noticeable too severe and cruel superego, Almost 60% of siblings have psychopathological signs.

Four types of psychodynamic mechanisms (introjective motivation) were found: "narcissistic" (19% of sample), "borderline" (22% of sample), "schizoid" (10% of sample) and "anancastic (obsessive-compulsive)" (49% of sample) :

## **In anamnesis all burnout victim complain about exhaustion, anxiety or depression.**

Person with narcissistic dynamic most frequent complains about anger and disappointment because of the lack of influence (especially on decision making) and unsuitable evaluation. They come to the therapy when they lose important status or relationship and they expect to be able to perform like before as fast as possible. Their manifest self-value is very high.

Borderline complains are about depression and loss of motivation because of unclear expectations or role conflict, lack of social support and unsuitable reward. Trigger situation is need for decision or circumstances change. Expectations are to fulfill reparative demands. Manifest self-value is low.

Schizoid complaints are about severe somatizations, anger or loss of interest (distancing) because of the lack of control over circumstances or lack of autonomy. They come to the therapy when they found themselves in the circumstances which demand (greater) emotional engagement and they expect to learn how to protect better from others. Their manifest self-value is low.

Anancastic complaints are about depression, disappointment and psychosomatic disorders because of feelings of overburdening and unsuitable reward. They come to the therapy when they found themselves in competitive situation or when circumstances change.

Narcissistic dynamic leads to workaholism because of inner compulsion that their achievements have to be perfect and exceptional. The content of their performance based self-esteem is: I am good only if I get praise for my work. Workaholism appears to evade devaluation and to obtain false self through conformation of omnipotence.

Borderline inner compulsion is to satisfy others. The content of their performance based self-esteem is: I am not bad if other is satisfied with my work. Workaholism appears to evade abandonment and autonomy through controlling of the idealized object with indispensableness..

Schizoid inner compulsion is that the work is the existence. The content of their performance based self-esteem is: I work because that is me. Workaholism appears to evade feelings of nonexistence and enable contact without nearness and intimacy.

Anancastic inner compulsion is that the rest is forbidden until all work is done. Performance based self-esteem is: I'm a hard-working person. Workaholism appears to assert without feeling of guilt.

Narcissistic inner compulsion (motivation) comes from clear, but excessive parental expectations related to achievements with simultaneous devaluation at lack of success. Parent's love is conditional, child is emotionally accepted only when he DOES something exceptional to justify the parent's expectations.

Borderline inner compulsion (motivation) comes from unclear and inconsistent expectations with exaggerated praising or blaming for the same activity. Parent's love is conditional; parents were miserable or angry if the child's actions weren't in accordance with their inconsistent silent expectations.

Schizoid inner compulsion (motivation) comes from expectation, that child has no own need, main demand is "don't disturb" with lack of or mostly negative responses. Parents are rejective, cold, distant, communicating with child mainly through FUNCTIONAL providing, or they are severely intrusive.

Anancastic inner compulsion (motivation) comes from expectations that child must suppress any aggression, including constructive with rare or no praise at all. Parents are rigid, authoritative and autocratic; they demand diligence, order, work.

Narcissistic's: separational anxiety (If I am not the best, I will be abandoned.) arise the splitting as a defense: need for maintain the idealized self through praise leads to increase work investment. When tiredness and reduction of achievements and praise occurs, triggers feelings of devaluation, which are leading to workaholism or devaluation of object of refusion. Stagnation takes place in individuation and separation process in rapprochement phase, the frustration causes regression in the phase of practicing.

Borderline's: separational anxiety (Because I am bad, I will not be abandoned only if I satisfy object's needs) ) arise the splitting as a defense: refusion with idealized object leads into increase work investment. When disappointment of unrealistic expectations appears, trigger the need for abandonment of the object and the fear from abandonment at the same time. Aggression (as inner compulsion) is projected into the object, leading into workaholism. Stagnation takes place in individuation and separation process in rapprochement phase, the frustration causes regression into the dedifferentiation.

Schizoid: Desintegrational anxiety (I do not exist without work.) arise the splitting as a defense: threat of closeness or fear from isolation increases work investment, which triggers fear of loss of self, distancing follows and fear from isolation, which leads to workaholism. Stagnation takes place in in individuation and separation process in differentiation phase, functional practicing appears, in order to control the distance towards 'threatening nearness".

Anancastic: Fear of castration (I feel guilty if I don't do all the work) trigger suppression of assertion need, an inability to demand suitable reward leads to increase work investment, which is followed by disappointment and anger, suppressed again and redirected into guilt and redirection of aggression towards self (taking blame), leading into workaholism. Stagnation takes place in psychosexual development, anal phase as suppression of aggressive tendencies feelings (except through passive aggression), leading to overcompensational diligence (workaholism).

### **Formation of inner compulsions (introjective motivation), that can lead to burnout**

Object relation (relationship between a child and significant adult, usually parent) is shaped by both (child and parent), with accordance to their capabilities, characteristics and needs. Fulfillment of child's needs, that are necessary for healthy personal and emotional growth in early years depend a great deal on parental capabilities to recognize child's needs and respond to them accordingly. This is highly influenced by parent's personality characteristics and to some extend, environment, that influence the lives of parents and a child. Influence comes through socialization and through a set of values upon parents and also directly upon a child. When hardworking is a strong, positive value, this value transmits among generations – as a value or as a content of demands and expectations.

Object relation can therefore be directed towards acknowledgement of child's developmental needs or mostly at parent's needs fulfillment. First manifests as a unconditional love, second as a conditional love. Upbringing, that is based on unconditional love will support autonomy in the process of separation and individuation, while parents, that pursue their own needs, reject child's independent activity and his true needs, therefore supporting dependence. Object relation that ensures adequate fulfillment of child's developmental needs and supports his autonomy, helps the child to grow emotionally and to form firm and stable personality organization, in contrast, neurotic personality organization can take place, or even borderline personality organization.

Part of stable personality organization is a positive and stable self esteem and a healthy superego, in which hardworking can be included as a value inside ego ideal. In this personality organization motivation is mostly autonomous, and comes out of true needs.

In neurotic personality organization, activities are directed by cruel and punishing superego. In that case demand or expectation of hardworking becomes as a performance based self-esteem part of ego ideal, which is obligatory. That means that punishing superego floods with anxiety and feeling

of guilt every time the person does not behave in accordance with it. With this personality structure conflict between autonomic and introject motivation predominates, feelings of anxiety and feelings of guilt are appearing together with arousal of true need.

Self esteem in borderline personality organization is labile or negative. When self is split on omnipotent false and devaluated true one, the internalized (introjected) demand for hardworking shapes as performance based self esteem, which helps to sustain omnipotent image of false self. Self in this case is labile and dependent on achievements. When there is split in the ego, the demand for hardworking also gets internalized as a pursuing introject – i.e. performance based self esteem. If the self is negative and image of object idealized, a person has a feeling that object needs him/her only because of his/hers hardworking, and will be not abandoned if he/she will work hard enough for an object. When both images (of self and object) are negative, a person internalized demand for hardworking serves as a message, that work is an ultimate form of interaction with environment. In all those cases introject motivation predominates.

### **Reciprocal burnout model RMB**

In RBM model there are two variables that influence person's activation, inner variables (motivation) and outer variables (expectations and demands of social environment). Both variables can influence as stimulation or as an obstruction for persons activation. Inner variable for activation is motivation for fulfillment of basic and internalized needs every person has. Autonomous motivation arises from basic needs, meanwhile introjective motivation from introjects, from inner compulsion.

In order to fulfill basic needs one has to invest certain amount of energy, which is increasing proportionally with motivational strength (or inner compulsion) and with obstacles. Inner obstacles can be conflict between basic and introjected needs. In case of conflict feeling of anxiety and guilt are activated at the same time as a true need arises. Outer obstacles are demands and expectations of social environment or other objective obstacles. Social environment can stimulate or obstruct fulfillment of basic or introjected need. The stronger inner motivation is, the more one will force himself even in circumstances, where ones investment is far greater than what person gets in return.

When the activation occurs on the base of autonomous motivation, and the environment is supportive, one can fulfill basic need. Person with autonomous motivation will respond to outer barriers with either additional investment or with windrow and defense mechanisms. If with greater investment a need stays unfulfilled, nonreciprocity occurs and the energy deficit is increasing, one is exhausting oneself. If one can't influence outer circumstances, wornout can occur. When unsuitable outer circumstances change, the exhausting process stops.

When demands and expectations of environment supports the introjected needs fulfillment, basic needs stay constantly unfulfilled (nonreciprocity occur) and will trigger the tension. Whenever introjected needs get fulfilled, performance based self-esteem hardens and prevents basic needs fulfillment. This process leads to energy loss without possibility of restoration, thus into burnout. If environment prevents false self's needs fulfillment, introjective motivation is still able to trigger additional investment of energy without basic needs fulfillment (nonreciprocity) hence the burnout.

Person with strong autonomous motivation can reach the wornout in unfavorable psychological circumstances, from which he cannot get out, because of objective reasons.

Person with performance based self-esteem can reach burnout regardless of circumstances. Inner motivation is the factor that can activate the burning out process in unfavorable psychological

circumstances. If motivation derives from basic needs, then will the obstacles from the environment lead the person only to the state of wornout, and not to burnout. The key to understand the burning out process is the difference where the motivation is rooted. It can be rooted in true, basic needs or in introjects of performance based self-esteem (needs and demands of environment).