

PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF EFFICIENCY LOSS: ATTACHMENT STYLES AND BURNOUT

Anna DYLAŁ

Jagiellonian University, Faculty of Economics and Social Communication; a.dylag@uj.edu.pl,
ORCID: 0000-0002-9134-7979

Purpose: The aim of this article is to present the documented relationships between individual attachment styles reported by adults, and job burnout defined as a syndrome of work efficiency loss. In addition to highlighting the role of childhood patterns and their impact on adult professional life, the article also discusses direction of practical use of this interdisciplinary framework in the field of HR.

Design/methodology/approach: The study of the literature and research findings related to the theory of attachment and its correlates with burnout, as well as the study of the current reports on burnout scale, definition and legal regulations.

Findings: Evaluation of the research findings revealed the gap in theoretical knowledge and practical application of the attachment concept in organizations, especially with regard to Polish workplaces and burnout problem.

Research limitations/implications: Application of attachment concept in burnout research may require a dedicated tool with reference to work setting, as proposed by Leier et al., 2015.

Practical implications: The article promotes interdisciplinary approach, also with possibility of use in multicultural work settings; introduces a relatively new framework for stress/burnout intervention and prevention aimed at increasing quality of social environment and support systems. Research on the relationship between attachment style and occupational burnout has implications for HRM. Understanding employees' attachment types can assist organizations in adapting stress management and burnout prevention strategies by creating a supportive work environment, attentive recruitment and leadership, adjusting coaching and mentoring techniques, and promoting autonomy and extensive support for employees.

Social implications: In the face of currently observed burnout scale, both in Poland and globally, it is crucial to undertake actions toward reducing its spread. Building employees' awareness and stress resilience through better self-knowledge and modification of less effective operational models (i.e. non-secure attachment style), may be valuable for employees and managers. Research on relationship between attachment styles and burnout also provides a solid basis for organizational level interventions, as a better care and investments in more balanced and harmonious work environments.

Originality/value: Application of the psychological concept of attachment style typology to the field of work psychology, especially in Polish context; identification of the possible areas of implementation with the use of HR tools in reducing burnout.

Keywords: job burnout, adult attachment styles, human resource management.

Category of the paper: Conceptual paper, general review.

1. Introduction

In this article it will be discussed the relationships between individual attachment styles reported by adults (Bowlby, 2007/1969; Ainsworth, 1989; Plopa, 2019) and job burnout, defined as a syndrome of work efficiency loss (Maslach, Jackson, 1986; Maslach et al., 2001; Pines, 2004; Leiter et al., 2015). In addition to highlighting the role of childhood patterns and their impact on adult professional life, the article also presents practical proposals in the field of HR. This is a relatively new research perspective in work psychology, particularly in the Polish work environment context. It allows the integration of developmental psychology achievements into the area of people management, focusing on optimizing employee and organizational functioning.

Attachment style is a universal characteristic, developing in all humans and also in animals (see Marchwicki, 2006 on the ethological origins of attachment theory). It is understood as a relatively stable behavior pattern conditioned by an operational model (Kozłowska, 2010), which serves as a prototype for social relationships in adult life stages (Plopa, 2019).

Attachment style crystallizes from the moment of birth through the experience of care provided by primary caregivers. Over the course of research, these observations were extended to further life cycles, surpassing the barrier of childhood and applying attachment style typology to adult romantic relationships and marital couples (Hazan, Shaver, 1987; Plopa, 2019). Concurrently, studies on the correlates of mental health, addictions, and social functioning disorders in various age groups were conducted. Influences from childhood were also highlighted in numerous studies on stress, which paved the way for incorporating attachment style typology into research on job burnout.

Ayala Pines (2004) was one of the first to do this, confirming in pilot studies among working adult students from different national cultures. She formulated the hypotheses about the relationship between attachment style and reported job burnout. The direction of the relationship was shown as expected: a secure style correlated negatively, while the so-called insecure styles (anxious-avoidant and ambivalent) correlated positively with burnout. This highlighted the role of previously underestimated early life experiences in shaping professional attitudes and employees' subjective well-being. The concept of attachment styles brought new interpretative possibilities for the theory and practice of people management, providing arguments for actions towards the individualization of employee development (through feedback, coaching, or mentoring) and ensuring them autonomy and a supportive work environment (onboarding, training, integration), with an emphasis on the role of social resources (Leiter et al., 2015).

2. Job Burnout – A Global Efficiency Loss

In the late 1990s, pioneering job burnout researcher Christina Maslach, along with Canadian professor specializing in work engagement field, Michael Leiter, described the atmosphere and management philosophy in American organizations in their book “The Truth About Burnout: How Organizations Cause Personal Stress and What to Do About it” (Maslach, Leiter, 1997, 2011 Polish edition). The authors sharply criticized the contemporary work environment in North America: "Burnout is reaching epidemic proportions among employees... Today's workplace is a cold, hostile, and demanding environment, both economically and psychologically... People are emotionally, physically, and spiritually exhausted... Commitment and engagement in work are fading..." (Maslach, Leiter, 2011, p. 15). This grim picture of workplaces has not only persisted but has worsened. More than twenty years later, the World Economic Forum (2019) document calls job burnout "an emerging global crisis" (WEF, 2019). In the same year, the WHO defines job burnout as an "occupational phenomenon" and includes this syndrome in the international classification ICD-11 (www.who.int/news, Fitko, 2024).

Burnout is defined as "a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed". The syndrome is structured in three dimensions, describing burnout as increasing feelings of (i) exhaustion or loss of energy, (ii) psychological distance, negativity, or cynicism (indifference) towards work and colleagues, and (iii) reduced professional efficacy, i.e., a subjective sense of lack of achievement or loss of personal competence.

Additionally, the scope of the phenomenon is defined—according to the WHO, burnout specifically refers to the work environment and should not be considered in the context of negative experiences in other areas of an individual's life. It is also not recognized as a disease or disorder, but as a reason prompting an individual to seek health care. As a result, burnout has been officially included among factors influencing health status and well-being (chapter: "Factors influencing health status or contact with health services", *ibid*). It should be noted that in Poland, the implementation of the ICD-11 classification began only in 2023, and until its full adaptation, the previous version, ICD-10, remains in use, where burnout is similarly defined.

Job burnout, a term now widely used, is agreed as ascribed to writings by American psychiatrist Herbert Freudenberger in the 1970s (and almost simultaneously by Christina Maslach). Freudenberger based his description on observations of volunteers in aid centers and his personal experiences of losing motivation, effectiveness, and initial enthusiasm at work. The history of research on job burnout spans four decades and thousands of publications. Initially, descriptions of the phenomenon were case studies, but more systematic empirical research began after the "pioneering" phase (Schaufeli, Enzmann, 1997). Christina Maslach, a long-time professor at the University of California, Berkeley, contributed significantly to popularizing the term. Maslach and her colleagues developed the most frequently cited definition of job burnout (Maslach, Jackson, 1986, p. 1), however the first conceptualization

was limited to the helping professions exclusively. Job burnout was defined as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, primarily affecting those in "people-oriented" professions (doctors, therapists, nurses, teachers). Later, the scope of burnout research expanded to include all professional groups, with depersonalization encompassing not only interpersonal relationships but also the relationship with work itself. By the mid-1990s, a new version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-GS, 1996) was developed (Schutte et al., 2000).

Maslach and Leiter frequently emphasized the negative impact of organizations on employees in terms of competitive organizational culture, profit-driven attitudes, excessive workload, and systematic downsizing. Functioning in insensitive organizational cultures causes constant tension and psycho-physiological arousal, with chronic stress accumulating and weakening employees' mental, emotional, and physical condition. Job burnout represents an extreme form of work-related stress, where experienced overload leads to psychological and emotional exhaustion. Authors, in their next book (Leiter, Maslach, 2010 Polish edition) listed six organizational risk factors and proposed strategies for improving the relationship with work in areas of workload, low autonomy, value conflict, injustice and favoritism, inadequate reward systems, and lack of team and supervisory support.

Analysis of reports on work-related stress reveals the global scale of the problem. Studies conducted by Mental Health America and FlexJobs show that 76% of respondents reported that work stress negatively impacts their mental health and that they have experienced job burnout. Selected sources on the indicators and costs of work-related stress and job burnout are presented below (see Table 1). These data were compiled in various countries and regions either before or during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic drastically altered the landscape of the world, including the workplace. According to the American Institute of Stress (AIS, 2020), citing Gallup survey results, factors such as isolation, uncertainty, border closures, business shutdowns, and job reductions caused stress levels among surveyed employees to reach a record high—increasing from 38% in 2019 to 43% in 2020 (from Gallup's "State of the Global Workplace Report 2021" conducted in 116 countries). Economic and organizational stressors in companies were compounded by the particularly severe external factor of uncertainty. We are experiencing not only an uncertain work environment but also immense global stress due to the migration and climate crisis, economic instability, rapid technological advancements, and ongoing armed conflicts.

Research on the consequences and costs of burnout is conducted at individual and organizational levels, aimed at specific occupational groups and industry, countries, macro-regions, and globally. Estimates are developed from economic, psychological, social, health, ethical, and legal perspectives. At the macroeconomic level, the effects of stress are calculated by the amount of lost hours and missed days, insurance and treatment costs, or the percentage of GDP allocated to mitigating the effects of stress and burnout. At the organizational level, the consequences of stress typically relate to absenteeism, turnover, reduced efficiency,

withdrawal of work engagement, replacement costs, layoffs, accidents, conflicts, strikes, deterioration of organizational climate and corporate image, increased aggression among staff, incidents of bullying, and even death from overwork (karoshi - a category recognized by the Polish Labour Inspection, PIP 2008, www.pip.gov.pl).

At the individual level, high levels of stress are associated with somatic illnesses, worsening mental health, substance use, and counterproductive coping strategies that intensify anxiety, depressive states, sleep disturbances, decreased immunity, infections, allergies, absenteeism, job resignation, and significant declines in productivity and efficiency.

Table 1.

Effects and costs of work-related Stress and burnout worldwide – selected reports

Institution	Year	Data Source	Data Scope
EU-OSHA	2014	Calculating the cost of work-related stress and psychosocial risks	EU-OSHA report analyzing various methods of estimating costs related to work stress and burnout.
ILO	2016	Work-related stress: A collective challenge	Analysis of global costs related to work stress and burnout, including productivity losses and healthcare costs.
CCOHS	2017	Workplace stress	Information on the CCOHS website regarding the costs of work stress in Canada and stress management strategies.
Eurofound	2018	Sixth European Working Conditions Survey – Overview report	Data on costs related to work stress and burnout in European countries.
WHO	2019	Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International Classification of Diseases	WHO announcement highlighting the health, social, and economic costs related to burnout as a global phenomenon.
HSE (UK)	2019	Work-related stress, anxiety or depression statistics in Great Britain	HSE data on costs related to work stress, including productivity losses, sick leave, and treatment costs in the UK.
APS	2019	Stress and wellbeing in Australia survey	Data from APS's annual survey on the costs related to work stress and burnout in Australia.
CDC (USA)	2019	Stress at work	CDC data and research on health costs related to workplace stress in the United States.
WEF	2019	Mental health in the workplace: An emerging global crisis	WEF report analyzing the economic and social costs related to work stress and burnout worldwide, emphasizing the need for preventive and intervention measures.
AIS	2020	Workplace Stress	AIS website containing reports and articles on the costs of workplace stress at national and international levels.

Source: Own elaboration.

Below it will be presented selected studies conducted in Poland after the Covid-19 pandemic (Table 2). Polish reports indicate that the scale of work stress has not decreased in recent years - despite the growing awareness and intensified efforts in occupational health protection. Contemporary stressors stem from post-pandemic economic destabilization, rising inflation and living costs, the necessity of additional employment (reported particularly by younger workers), and the risk of job loss. This is compounded by the rapid digitalization and implementation of artificial intelligence, which add to an overall ambiguity and complexity.

The term VUCA is often referred by strategic management researchers, in order to describe the unpredictable nature of current turbulent changes in the business environment (Machel, 2024).

Table 2.

Work stress and burnout in Poland – current selected reports (2022-2024)

Institution	Year	Data Source	Data Scope
ZPP	2022	Occupational burnout - an issue of our times - social campaign	Report "Occupational burnout in the spotlight" from the Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers. It presents research results on stress and burnout, along with expert recommendations.
INFOR	2023	IKF Platform for Accountants and HR Specialists	Platform providing research findings and information on the latest reports, including stress and burnout, and updates on legal solutions in this area.
PARP	2023	Labor market, education, competencies. Current trends and research results.	Periodic reports from the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development on the labor market, unemployment, and issues related to stress, health, and well-being of workers.
ARC Market and Opinion	2023	Commissioned by Pracuj.pl - study: Well-being in times of uncertainty	Internet service dedicated to the job market and employment, presenting research results on the scale of stress and risk of burnout, as well as health perceptions in the context of work.
Deloitte	2023	Global 2023 Gen Z & Millennial Survey	Results of international research involving Poland among young workers, identifying sources of stress and the scale of burnout.
SW Research	2023	IKF Platform for Accountants and HR Specialists	INFOR (June 2024) "Well-being and mental health of Polish workers" - according to the report, nearly every second Polish employee struggles with burnout, and every fourth experiences its severe form.

Source: Own elaboration.

The compilation of the above studies illustrates a growing trend of interest in the issues of work stress and burnout among practitioners and occupational health institutions in Poland. According to the data collected by Deloitte, half of young workers (respondents born after 1983) report experiencing the effects of burnout. In addition, nearly four in ten Polish respondents simultaneously admit that the issue of reduced subjective job performance and exhaustion is taboo for them. Survey participants acknowledged feeling uncomfortable discussing their mental health with their employers. Globally, one-third of respondents reported similar feelings (see: Deloitte report, 2023).

Research commissioned by Pracuj.pl reveals that nearly 40% of office workers and 32% of manual workers surveyed declare experiencing an episode in their professional lives that they could describe as "burnout". Although burnout is typically a process rather than an episodic event, its initial stages can go unnoticed. According to studies cited by INFOR, young people and middle-aged workers are at higher risk. Psychologically, they exhibit a high need for achievement and success, perfectionism, sensitivity, and difficulty in accepting constructive criticism (see: INFOR reports 2023, 2024). These findings corroborate earlier research indicating that besides young, ambitious individuals dedicated to their professional endeavors,

workers in social services and related professions are also at risk of burnout. In this sector, both individual and organizational factors (such as work environment characteristics and personal resources) can significantly mitigate the development of adverse stress consequences and activate more effective coping strategies (Ogińska-Bulik, 2009). Studies on individual factors related to stress and burnout always consider demographic characteristics such as age, gender, tenure, industry, occupation, and sector. For instance, research among employees of small and medium-sized enterprises in Poland in 2020 showed that over 50% of those employed in this sector exhibit symptoms of burnout (Staszewska, 2020).

3. Attachment styles and burnout

The theory of attachment styles is associated with the names of John Bowlby (2007/1969) and Mary Ainsworth (1979). The attachment theory is increasingly recognized not only in developmental psychology, where it explains behaviors of children and adolescents, but also in the psychology of romantic relationships among adults (Shaver, Hazan, 1987; Plopa, 2006), and notably in the field of occupational psychology, stress, well-being, and the issue of burnout (Pines, 2004; Leiter et al., 2015; Virga et al., 2019).

According to J. Bowlby, the formation of interpersonal bonds is a biologically conditioned need. As pointed out by other researchers, this evolutionary mechanism, instinct, or neuroprogram is also observed in the animal world, including mammals and birds, and has been described by ethologists such as Konrad Lorenz (Marchwicki, 2006). The caregiver's appropriate response to the infant's needs is crucial for its survival. A functional, secure attachment leads to a child's sense of security, contributing to the development of effective coping strategies. A child, and later an adult, possesses in their resources such a disposition for regulating emotions and experiences that helps them cope with difficulties. Conversely, inappropriate caregiver responses somehow compel the child to develop alternative coping strategies for dealing with frustration (Kozłowska, 2010, p. 78). Alternative patterns can take the form of need extinction and reduction of certain behaviors (deactivation) or activation of excessive arousal mode (hyperactivation). While the optimal style serves as a kind of secure base for the child (Marchwicki, 2004), non-secure styles can result in dysregulation of neuro-hormonal responses. Experiencing warm, mutual interactions in early stages of development creates opportunities for displaying mature forms of closeness in adulthood, which are based on acquired attitudes of trust and a sense of self-esteem from childhood (Plopa, 2019, pp. 486-487). The table below presents the basic characteristics of three attachment styles identified by Mary Ainsworth, who, according to many researchers, significantly expanded Bowlby's concept.

Table 3.*Main characteristics of three attachment styles*

Relation	A. Secure	B. Anxious/ambivalent	C. Avoidant
Object of attachment - caregiver	"secure base", "safe haven", consistency of the object	inconsistency of the object	unavailability of the object
Recipient of care - child	trust in the object of attachment, showing sensitivity in uncomfortable situations, feeling of security	heightened alertness, vigilance, and uncertainty, reduced sense of security, fear of separation, experiencing anger but also relief in the presence of the object	avoidance as a defense mechanism against injury, resignation from fighting for the object

Source: Own elaboration according to Plopa, 2006, 2019.

As illustrated above, the secure style is associated with trust, seeking support, functional sensitivity, and flexibility in terms of dependence-independence, activity-passivity (see Kozłowska, 2010; Łoś, 2010). The terms "secure base" and "safe haven" were introduced by M. Ainsworth (Plopa, 2019). The consistent and secure presence of the caregiving object allows the child to experience and accept their efforts and emotions, both positive and negative. In the following compilation, the fourth attachment pattern, the so-called disorganized attachment pattern ("disorganized/disoriented"), described in the mid-1980s by Mary Main and colleagues (Main et al., 1985, cited in Łoś, 2010), is not included. Neither are the intermediate styles or subtypes in the framework of multidimensional models, descriptions of which can be found in Polish publications by Łoś (2010) and Kozłowska (2010).

One of the pioneers who applied attachment theory to test its relationship with burnout in adults was Ayala Pines (2004). Pines represents the existential approach to burnout (Pines, Aronson, 1988) and emphasized the role of initial high motivation in seeking meaning and professional fulfillment. For burned-out individuals, this fulfillment does not occur, the work environment is perceived as stressful and demotivating, goals and expectations are not achieved, leading to feelings of failure and unmet expectations (Pines, 1993, cited in Schaufeli, Enzmann, 1998, p. 112). In her research on the relationships between attachment styles and burnout, Pines (2004) hypothesized a negative correlation between the secure attachment style and burnout, and a positive correlation between insecure attachment styles (avoidant or anxious/ambivalent) and burnout. The results confirmed the researcher's hypotheses, and it should be noted that the studies had a cross-cultural dimension. The universal, cross-cultural nature of attachment mechanisms allows for expanding research to other cultures. The similar results were obtained in studies with participants from China (Gong, 2022), demonstrating associations between attachment styles and burnout. Analyses revealed that participants with an avoidant attachment style reported the highest level of burnout, while those with a secure attachment style reported the lowest level of burnout. An additional variable (mediating) in the studies was stress resilience. In this aspect, it was shown that individuals with a higher level of secure attachment reported the highest resilience, whereas the group with an avoidant attachment style declared the lowest resilience to stress. The majority of respondents declared a secure attachment style.

When we examine the list of possible symptoms of burnout (at the individual level, not organizational), we notice their diversity and similarity to behaviors associated with insecure attachment styles. Among the symptoms of burnout reported by respondents, behaviors, characteristics, feelings, and beliefs such as anxiety, avoidance strategies, external locus of control (low belief in one's agency and ability to cope with difficulties), inability to seek help and support, resignation, perceived burden in direct social interactions, and others have been noted. The following table (Table 4) compiles selected correlates of burnout, which can also be found in literature related to attachment theory. For the detailed list of published findings on stress, coping and the style of attachment see Komorowska-Pudło (2016).

Table 4.
Correlates of burnout in relation to attachment styles A, B, C

Attachment style	Burnout correlates	Possible relations and overlaps
A. Secure	Hardiness, confronting coping style, self-esteem, social support from colleagues and superiors, participation in decision making, autonomy	Negative – burnout may decrease
B. Anxious/Ambivalent	Anxiety, neuroticism (emotional instability), direct social contacts (e.g., with clients), Type A behavior (hostility, competitiveness, over-engagement)	Positive – burnout may increase
C. Avoidant	Lack of feedback, lack of participation, low extraversion level	Positive – burnout may increase

Source: elaboration based on Ainsworth, 1979, 1989; Pines, 2004; Schaufeli, Enzmann, 1998, p. 75.

The causes and correlates of burnout also include: high levels of experienced stress, high initial engagement, sensitivity (feeling type), inflexible thinking style (rigid thinking), and schematic actions. As a consequence, there is withdrawal or irregular and unpredictable activity, decreases in engagement, feelings of isolation, sadness, loneliness, hopelessness, and helplessness. Schaufeli and Enzmann also point out consequences of burnout such as boredom, loss of interest, numerous health problems, demoralization, and intensified experience of negative emotions (anger, cynicism, jealousy, hostility, martyrdom syndrome, or superiority behaviors, see Schaufeli, Enzmann, 1998, p. 23).

Research on the relationships between the aforementioned characteristics and attachment styles in adults confirms these dependencies. In Polish studies, Żechowski et al. (2018) demonstrated through linear regression that an anxious attachment style was a significant predictor of somatic symptoms and impaired social functioning, while a secure style was a negative predictor (protective factor) for depressive symptoms. Similar results were obtained by Wawiórko and Zabłocka-Żytka (2018), who found a positive association between anxious-ambivalent style and somatic symptoms, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and between avoidant style and anxiety and depressive symptoms. A secure attachment style, on the other hand, was negatively correlated with depressive symptoms. Komorowska-Pudło (2016) found that respondents who most frequently exhibited active coping with stress and sought support in difficult situations experienced a secure attachment style and were raised in a stable family environment. Helplessness and avoidant behaviors were more often observed in stressful

situations by respondents raised in an insecure environment, specifically in families characterized by anxious-ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles. Furthermore, in an analysis of the relationship between attachment style and tolerance for ambiguity in career decision-making among young adults, subsequent studies indicated that both anxious-ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles (experienced in relation with mother and/or father) were associated with lower tolerance for ambiguity. Additionally, they demonstrated the mediating role of generalized sense of security, whereby the presence of this resource led to a complete or partial reduction of this relationship (Paszowska-Rogacz, Znajmiecka-Sikora, 2020). In earlier foreign studies, e.g. Leiter et al. (2015) or Virga et al. (2019) there has been similar patterns were shown between those two concepts – burnout and attachment styles.

Arguments supporting the inclusion of attachment style as a variable in research on burnout can be categorized into several categories, as illustrated in the table below (Table 5). The typology of attachment styles meets the criteria of scientific concepts. It is well-described, logically justified, has reliable measurement methods, and is incorporated into research not only in developmental psychology (e.g., social adaptation of children) and social psychology (functioning of romantic and partner relationships), but also in the fields of stress psychology, health psychology, and organizational psychology. There is promising prognostic potential in this concept, indicating that it can likely accurately predict future employee behaviors and facilitate the early design of optimal work environments (e.g., in terms of social support or individualized motivational systems).

Table 5.

Attachment theory in explaining the mechanism of burnout – selected aspects, theoretical and practical implications

Aspect	Description
Breadth of the issue	Attachment style developed in early childhood influences the establishment and maintenance of social relationships in adults, including the workplace. Research indicates that different attachment styles can lead to varied coping strategies with occupational stress, which is crucial for the development of burnout.
Theoretical foundations	The concept of attachment styles has solid foundations in object relations theory and developmental psychology, and even ethology. Theoretical frameworks help understand the mechanisms through which attachment styles impact individuals not only in childhood but also in adult life and in professional contexts.
Practical implications	Research on the relationship between attachment styles and occupational burnout has significant practical implications for human resource management. Understanding employees' attachment styles can assist organizations in adapting stress management strategies and preventing burnout by creating a more supportive work environment, including optimizing HR functions.
Interdisciplinary perspective	The issue of attachment styles in the context of work-related stress and burnout encompasses elements of clinical psychology, developmental psychology, and occupational psychology. Research in this area enables the integration of different perspectives and research approaches, contributing to a better understanding of the phenomenon under study.
Social and economic significance	Occupational burnout represents a significant social and economic problem, leading to reduced quality of life for employees, increased absenteeism, and higher costs associated with recruiting and training new personnel. Research on the relationship between attachment styles and burnout can contribute to the development of more effective prevention and intervention strategies in the field of mental health in the workplace.

Source: Own elaboration.

4. Critical remarks and issues for discussion

Occupational burnout constitutes a significant social and economic problem, leading to reduced quality of life for employees, increased absenteeism, and rising costs associated with recruiting and training new personnel. Research on the relationship between attachment style and occupational burnout can contribute to the development of more effective prevention and intervention strategies in the area of mental health in the workplace and in human resource management, including international environments, due to the universal and cross-cultural nature of individual differences in attachment styles.

Further research on the relationships between attachment styles and job burnout may rise, however, also some theoretical and methodological problems. The topic of attachment styles may prove to be niche or limited to romantic relationships and compared to the concept of coping styles, it may ultimately be less useful (successful attempts to overcome this limitation was shown in Leiter et al., 2015). Also economic limitations may hinder the development of research and practical applications in this field. If personalized support systems are found to be too costly and reserved only for managerial staff, then the analysis of attachment style might remain more of a curiosity or psychological amusement rather than a significant element in stress reduction and burnout programs among ordinary employees. Moreover, attachment style might sound too psychological, and as a specialized term, it could be rejected by managers as inadequate for the field of management and work efficiency. At this point, it's worth recalling that the issue of burnout was not taken seriously even 40 years ago, and mentions of this phenomenon were printed in colorful magazines for more entertainment purposes rather than educational-scientific ones.

Research on the relationship between attachment style and occupational burnout has important practical implications for human resource management. Understanding employees' attachment styles can assist organizations in adapting stress management and burnout prevention strategies by creating a supportive work environment, careful recruitment considering attachment style typologies, adjusting coaching and mentoring techniques, and promoting autonomy and extensive support for employees. Autonomy and teamwork are valuable resources for organizations that significantly mitigate the negative impact of stress on employees (see: Maslach, Leiter, 2010; Leiter et al., 2015; Karasek, 1979; Terelak, Izwatowska, 2009). However, these resources may remain inaccessible to employees whose professional behaviors are dominated by anxious, passive, or avoidant attitudes. Employees with such characteristics or functioning styles may not be open to integrative or team-based actions. This can result in overlooking the developmental needs of some employees, wasting their potential, and harmful evaluation practices. As research reports indicate, employees often do not share information about their mental state or well-being, remaining isolated, with "quiet quitting" being their only strategy. Most respondents would feel discomfort discussing their

burnout issues with their supervisors (see ZPP report, 2023, p. 27). This situation requires awareness and empathy in contemporary HR management and a reevaluation of approaches to burnout, as well as a broader perspective on the causes of work inefficiency (see INFOR report, 2023, 2024).

5. Conclusion

The aim of the article was to outline the issue of efficiency loss understood in terms of occupational burnout from the perspective of attachment styles theory, as a complementary variable explaining the mechanism of engagement erosion and energy depletion. Attention was drawn to the possibilities and limitations of interdisciplinary research using constructs from developmental psychology within the fields of work psychology and HR.

References

1. Ainsworth, M.S. (1979). Infant–mother attachment. *American Psychologist*, 34(10), p. 932.
2. Ainsworth, M.S. (1989). Attachments beyond infancy. *American Psychologist*, 44(4), p. 709.
3. Bowlby, J. (2007/1969). *Przywiązanie*. Warszawa: PWN.
4. Fitko, A. (2024). Wypalenie zawodowe wśród pracowników naukowych. *Przegląd Naukowo-Metodyczny*, 17(2/63), pp. 129-131.
5. Gong, J. (2022, July). *The relationship between adult attachment style and burnout: The mediating effect of resilience*. 3rd International Conference on Mental Health, Education and Human Development (MHEHD 2022). Atlantis Press, pp. 486-493.
6. Hazan, C., Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(3), pp. 511-524.
7. <https://kadry.infor.pl/wiadomosci/6636981,jak-walczy-z-wypalaniem-zawodowym-dotyczy-ono-takze-osob-ktore-swoj.html>, 2.06.2024.
8. <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-internationalclassification-of-diseases>, 2.02.2024.
9. Karasek, R.A. Jr (1979). Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24(2), pp. 285-308.
10. Komorowska-Pudło, M. (2016). The attachment style and stress coping strategies in adult men and women. *Instytut Psychologii, Uniwersytet Szczeciński. Polskie Forum Psychologiczne*, 21(1), pp. 33-52.

11. Kozłowska, M. (2010). Style przywiązania a preferencje wartości we wczesnej dorosłości. *Psychologia Rozwojowa*, 15(2), pp. 77-88.
12. Leiter, M. P., Day, A., Price, L. (2015). Attachment styles at work: Measurement, collegial relationships, and burnout. *Burnout Research*, 2(1), pp. 25-35.
13. Leiter, M. P., Maslach, C. (2010). *Pokonać wypalenie zawodowe. Sześć strategii poprawienia relacji z pracą*. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnictwa Wolters Kluwer, pp. 71-98.
14. Łoś, Z. (2010). Dyskusyjnie o klasyfikacji i pomiarze wzorców przywiązania. *Psychologia Rozwojowa*, 15(2), pp. 43-55.
15. Machel, W. (2024). Strategic coherence in the world of VUCA-case study analysis. *Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej. Organizacja i Zarządzanie*, 194, pp. 112-126.
16. Marchwicki, P. (2004). Psychospołeczne uwarunkowania stylów przywiązania. *Studia Psychologiczne*, 42(1), pp. 23-36.
17. Marchwicki, P. (2006). Teoria przywiązania J. Bowlby'ego. *Seminare. Poszukiwania naukowe*, 23, pp. 365-383.
18. Maslach, C., Leiter, P.M. (2011). *Prawda o wypaleniu zawodowym. Co zrobić ze stresem w organizacji*. Warszawa: PWN.
19. Maslach, C., Jackson, S.E. (1986). *Maslach Burnout Inventory*. Manual (2nd ed.). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
20. Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W.B., Leiter, M.P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual review of psychology*, 52(1), pp. 397-422.
21. Ogińska-Bulik, N. (2006). *Stres zawodowy w zawodach usług społecznych [Professional stress in social services occupations: sources, consequences, prevention]*. Warszawa: Difin.
22. Paszkowska-Rogacz, A., Znajmiecka-Sikora, M. (2020). Styl przywiązania a tolerancja niejednoznaczności w sytuacji podejmowania decyzji zawodowych przez młodych dorosłych. Mediacyjny efekt poczucia bezpieczeństwa. *Polskie Forum Psychologiczne*, 25(1), pp. 67-84. Uniwersytet Kazimierza Wielkiego w Bydgoszczy.
23. Pines, A.M. (2004). Adult attachment styles and their relationship to burnout: A preliminary, cross-cultural investigation. *Work & Stress*, 18(1), pp. 66-80.
24. Pines, A., Aronson, E. (1988). *Career burnout: Causes and cures*. Free Press.
25. Plopa, M. (2006). *Więzi w małżeństwie i rodzinie [Marriage and family ties]*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.
26. Plopa, M. (2019). O wrodzonej potrzebie doświadczania podmiotowości i miłości: Perspektywa teorii przywiązania. *Studia Elbląskie*, 20, pp. 485-501.
27. Schaufeli, W., Enzmann, D. (1998). *The burnout companion to study and practice: A critical analysis*. Taylor & Francis.
28. Schutte, N., Toppinen, S., Kalimo, R., Schaufeli, W. (2000). The factorial validity of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS) across occupational groups and nations. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 73(1), pp. 53-66.

29. Staszewska, J. (2020). Wypalenie zawodowe wśród pracowników małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw. *Humanitas Zarządzanie*, 21(4), pp. 187-196.
30. Terelak, J.F., Izwantowska, A. (2009). Adaptacja Kwestionariusza Obszary Życia Zawodowego (Areas of Worklife Survey) Christiny Maslach i Michaela Leitera. *Studia Psychologica*, 9, pp. 223-232.
31. Vîrgă, D., Schaufeli, W.B., Taris, T.W., van Beek, I., Sulea, C. (2019). Attachment styles and employee performance: The mediating role of burnout. *The Journal of Psychology*, 153(4), pp. 383-401.
32. Wawiórko, A., Zabłocka-Żytka, L. (2018). Style przywiązania młodych dorosłych-w poszukiwaniu korelatów zdrowia psychicznego. *Psychologia Wychowawcza*, 55(13), pp. 121-130.
33. Żechowski, C., Cichocka, A., Rowiński, T., Mroziak, K., Kowalska-Dąbrowska, M., Czuma, I. (2018). *Style przywiązania a zdrowie psychiczne osób dorosłych w populacji ogólnej-badania pilotażowe, vol. 15, no. 4*. Instytut Psychologii, Wydział Filozofii Chrześcijańskiej, Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie. Wydawnictwo Via Medica, 193-198.