

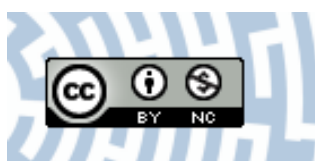


You have downloaded a document from  
**RE-BUŚ**  
repository of the University of Silesia in Katowice

**Title:** Emotional intelligence and burnout in the teaching profession

**Author:** Irena Przybylska

**Citation style:** Przybylska Irena. (2016). Emotional intelligence and burnout in the teaching profession. "The New Educational Review" (2016, no. 1, s. 41-52), DOI: 10.15804/tner.2016.43.1.03



Uznanie autorstwa - Użycie niekomercyjne - Licencja ta pozwala na kopiowanie, zmienianie, remiksowanie, rozprowadzanie, przedstawienie i wykonywanie utworu jedynie w celach niekomercyjnych. Warunek ten nie obejmuje jednak utworów zależnych (mogą zostać objęte inną licencją).



UNIwersYTET ŚLĄSKI  
W KATOWICACH



Biblioteka  
Uniwersytetu Śląskiego



Ministerstwo Nauki  
i Szkolnictwa Wyższego

## Emotional Intelligence and Burnout in the Teaching Profession

DOI: 10.15804/tner.2016.43.1.03

### Abstract

The presented study employed an emotional intelligence framework as a means of explicitly examining the emotional competences and experiencing job satisfaction or burnout. Emotional intelligence is hypothesized to have a positive relationship with higher job satisfaction and negative with burnout. Firstly, the variables are discussed on the basis of existing concepts and research. The second part presents my own research: methodology outline, main data and discussion. Results showed that emotional intelligence was a negative significant predictor ( $r=0.54$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) of burnout symptoms, and a positive significant predictor of job satisfaction ( $r=0.37$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The paper concludes with a discussion of the pedagogical implications, teaching professionalization and recommendations for future research.

**Keywords:** *teaching, emotional intelligence, emotional labour, job satisfaction, burnout*

Teaching is an emotional endeavour (Hargreaves, 1998, Przybylska, 2014). On a daily basis, teachers must deal with a variety of interpersonal and organizational aggravations. Increasing stress, decreasing personal achievement and job satisfaction might be the result of constant interruptions, rule violations or changing working conditions. Teachers are constantly required to manage their own emotional displays as well as the emotions of their students, therefore teachers who are emotionally apt better deal with emotional and social strains. On the one hand,

emotional intelligence changes the perception of relations with students, helps to reduce or even avoid stress. On the other hand, it influences the contentment a person derives from work.

## **Emotional labour in predicting burnout**

It has been assumed that in caring professions workers are more likely to experience burnout, as if there was something unique about health care, social service work, teaching, etc. (Fengler, 2000, Brotheridge, 2002). Hochschild (1983) proposed a list of “emotional labour jobs”, which involve frequent customer contact and emotion displays controlled by the organization. The concept considers customer services in which high emotional control is needed to maintain positive relations and interactions are less spontaneously emotional (Hochschild, 1983, Koster, 2011).

Normal interaction with people may be exhausting in itself and give implications for workload, but interactions in caring professions can also involve the need for employees to regulate their emotional expressions in authorized ways (Grandey, 2000). In burnout research the emotional nature of interpersonal relations at work is considered the main reason for burnout (Ashfort et.al, 1993, Hochschild, 1979).

Long interactions, the need to engage into a relation with a client, a variety and intensity of emotional expressions contribute to overload and exhaustion. On the other hand, the argument is raised that employee perceptions of work demands and control over the personal expression of emotions may be more predictive of burnout. In numerous studies interpersonal demands were not found as predictors of emotional overload. A question is posed whether emotional demands are stressful themselves or rather the perception of the demands. Emotional labour is not a dichotomous variable and many jobs have some level of these emotional labour demands (Grandey, 2003). In other words, employees in the “high emotional labour” group do not report considerably higher levels of emotional exhaustion than do those in the “low emotional labour” group. Therefore, emotional labour is effective in predicting stress and burnout not only in caring professions (Grandey, 2000). Moreover, the perception of demands, which is filtered through personal expectations, values and competences will alter the levels of job satisfaction and burnout. In contrast, the quality of teachers’ competences, including emotional ones, can be a strong indicator of effective school climate and teachers’ job satisfaction.

## **Burnout and emotional intelligence in teaching – concept outline**

Emotional exhaustion is the core component of burnout. A person experiencing emotional exhaustion is no longer able to give himself/herself at an emotional or psychological level. Simplifying emotional exhaustion refers to feeling emotionally drained by intense interactions, which can lead to depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. At this stage, a burnt-out teacher begins to disregard people, view them negatively and cynically, which is reflected in negative or uncaring attitudes toward others. Consequently, the person begins to feel lack of control and decreased motivation to work. It results in discontent with professional accomplishments (Maslach et.al, 1984, p.189). Each component of burnout may be a consequence of chronic work stress.

The etiology and symptoms of burnout are diverse. Current burnout research validates the importance of external and internal factors (Koczoń-Zurek, 2006, Marek, 2000). Consequently, it seems that the teacher's self-esteem, intellectual and emotional competences along with the attitude towards perceived demands, stressors and expected rewards make him/her prone or immune to burnout (Jude et.al, 2011, p.106). Both the causes and the symptoms of burnout are emotional in nature, connected with subjective perspectives.

According to P. Salovey and J. Mayer (1990, pp. 185–211), individuals vary as regards their emotional knowledge and abilities to control their emotional lives. These individual differences are termed emotional intelligence. This paper draws on an ability model of emotional intelligence (Mayer, et.al, 2004).

The model of the role of emotional intelligence supports the thesis that is critical for success in professions based on communication and self-regulation (Mayer, et.al, 2004, p. 2013).

Teachers are expected to demonstrate positive emotions and suppress negative ones. Emotional expectations may overwhelm teachers, probably those more emotionally intelligent will be able to balance emotional costs in such a demanding environment and manage emotions so as to preserve well-being and coach emotional competences (Przybylska, 2014). People who deal with stress constructively are less prone to emotional exhaustion and are probably more immune to depersonalization and loss of job satisfaction. In addition, burnout is caused by experienced stress and it is chronic stress. It seems reasonable to consider the correlation between emotional competences, work satisfaction and burnout.

In outline, emotional intelligence supports personal and professional competences and helps to cope with emotion-eliciting situations. In the teaching profession, stress and emotional demands can lead to emotional and physical

exhaustion, cynical attitudes towards teaching, and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment. That is why there is an urge to find factors contributing to and preventing from burnout. It seems rational that people who deal with stress constructively are less prone to emotional exhaustion and are probably more immune to depersonalization and loss of job satisfaction.

## **Contemporary research overview**

Evidence suggests that emotional intelligence may play a significant role in a person's ability to effectively deal with work stress and avoid burnout (Brotheridge et.al, 2002, Wróbel, 2013). There has been a substantial amount of research on teachers' burnout (e.g., Fengler, 2000, Koczoń-Zurek, 2009, Sęk, 2000) and separately on their emotional competences (Górska et.al, 2013). Relatively little is known, however, about protective factors against teacher burnout, especially in Polish research (Wróbel, 2013). In their studies, Nikolaous and Tsaousis (Jude et.al, 2011, pp. 370–371) found a negative correlation between intelligence and emotional stress. Samples of British middle school teachers declaring lower emotional competences simultaneously experience increasingly strong symptoms of burnout. Correspondingly, the studies of Greek (Kondylis et.al, 2004, p. 443) and Chinese (Chan, 2006, p. 1046) school teachers point to the existence of the discussed correlation. De Vito (2009, pp. 80–98) reported a non-significant correlation between the general emotional quotient and burnout and a significant one in the subscale of burnout- job satisfaction and a lower sense of achievement.

## **Methodology outline**

**Aims and hypotheses.** The presented study attempted to elucidate whether emotional intelligence predicts burnout in the teaching profession and job satisfaction. Thus, it was proposed that lower levels of emotional intelligence would predict burnout in environments with higher levels of interpersonal work demands with a sampling of working teachers. With rising emotional intelligence depersonalization is dropping. Three hypotheses were formulated:

1. Perceived emotional intelligence relates negatively to burnout. The possibility of burnout increases with lower emotional intelligence.
2. Emotional intelligence positively correlates with job satisfaction and negatively with depersonalization.

3. Teachers declaring higher emotional intelligence less often feel emotionally exhausted.
4. Components of emotional intelligence: (a) emotional awareness, (b) emotional regulation, (c) using emotional knowledge, (d) identifying emotions of others, (e) social relations correlate negatively with total burnout.

**Sample.** A total of 140 full-time Polish teachers participated in this study. The participants were a convenience sample of teachers working in primary schools, middle schools and secondary schools. The age limit of the test group was 25–60 and the length of service was in the range of 7 to 30 years. Seminar students participated in data collection.

**Measures.** Two questionnaires were implemented in the research procedure. **Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (KBIE)** includes a 50-item self-report grouped under five categories, namely: emotional awareness, emotional regulation, using emotional knowledge, identifying emotions of others, and social relations. A higher score indicates a high level of emotional intelligence in that corresponding area. The author has reported an internal reliability rating of 0.78 (Przybylska, 2007).

**MBI CH. Maslach inventory** was originally intended for use with human service workers. In Polish teacher research it was employed by S. Koczoń-Zurek (2007). Collected data is declarative as teachers described specific behaviours, feelings and thoughts that indicate the possibility of experiencing burnout. In accordance with Ch. Maslach's concept, burnout manifests itself at three levels represented in scales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and loss of job satisfaction.

## **Findings and discussion**

The distribution of the results of both emotional intelligence and burnout is normal. The teachers declared high emotional intelligence and low burnout symptoms. The raw results of burnout are varied ( $SD= 84$ ), but they oscillate around low. The mean result ( $M=30$ ) suggests a low declarative level of burnout. At the same time, emotional intelligence results are less dispersed ( $SD= 11.31$ ), but they fluctuate around high and medium ( $M= 132$ ).

The first hypothesis referred to the relation between emotional intelligence and experiencing burnout. The gathered data and Pearson's correlation coefficient between the total emotional intelligence and the burnout syndrome is  $r=0.54$ , indicating that the correlation is significant at  $p<0.05$  (Table 1). In other words, in the sample there is a negative correlation between the general quotients of the

two variables. Emotional intelligence explains around 29% of variance of the level of burnout. Medium and low results in EI are accompanied by more frequent declarations of burnout symptoms. Age and seniority do not differentiate burnout syndrome experiencing.

**Table 1.** Correlation between general quotients of emotional intelligence, burnout, age and seniority

Variables	r	p<	N
Emotional intelligence	0.54	0.05	140
Burnout			
Emotional intelligence	0.69	0.05	140
Emotional exhaustion			
Emotional intelligence	0.37	0.05	140
<b>Job satisfaction</b>			
Emotional intelligence	0.13	0.05	140
<b>Depersonalization</b>			
Emotional intelligence	0.08	0.05	140
Age			
Emotional intelligence	0.07	0.05	140
Seniority			

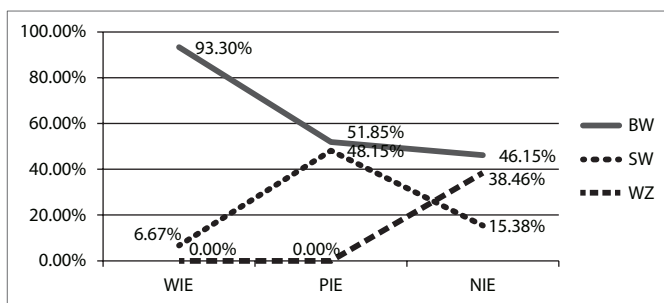
Source: own research.

Teachers with the highest emotional intelligence quotient do not report emotional exhaustion connected with work. They point to emotional engagement, even tiredness evoked by entanglement in social relations but not to emotional burden (Graph 1).

Emotional intelligence explains the variance of two levels of burnout: emotional exhaustion ( $r=0.59$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and diminished job satisfaction ( $r=0.37$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Those who declared emotional abilities were not emotionally exhausted (3/4 of all emotionally intelligent teachers,  $t$ -student=1.99,  $p<0.05$ ) because of work as often as those with lower competences. On the contrary, the teachers lacking EI declared that they felt exhausted at the very beginning of the work day, were worried about difficulties and stressful situations at work (80% of all low intelligent teachers). In the same group there are teachers reporting that they feel overloaded the whole week.

Emotional exhaustion is one of the first symptoms of burnout (Şek, 2000, p. 329). Diagnosed early, it gives more opportunities of prevention from full symp-

toms of burnout. Intrapersonal competences, which enable self-reflection and regulation, could be most important in handling teacher stress and avoiding the second step of burnout, i.e., losing work satisfaction (Maslach, 1994).



**Graph 1.** Variance of emotional intelligence level and burnout results

Source: own research. NIE – low EI, P – medium EI, W – high EI, BW – no symptoms of burnout, SW – symptoms of burnout, WZ – burnout.

According to the gathered data, the teachers who claimed emotional intelligence were more satisfied with work than the teachers less emotionally intelligent ( $t\text{-student}=2.1$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The teachers talked about losing energy and motivation to work as well as deferred work satisfaction or no satisfaction at all. Statistically more often negative outcomes of work experience were declared by the teachers with lower emotional intelligence ( $r=0.37$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). More emotionally intelligent teachers grasp the progress of their students and appreciate good climate in class more frequently. It seems that emotional competences which, with high probability, develop based on EI, help teachers to build interpersonal relations in class and school. Such teachers are more empathic, understanding and they better cope with problem solving. Intensified communication and often emotional engagement is easier dealt with by socially and emotionally competent teachers (Przybylska, 2006, p. 87), who are better perceived by students.

The above-mentioned results allow for confirming the hypothesis that emotional intelligence positively correlates with job satisfaction and negatively with emotional exhaustion.

Depersonalization means losing care of and interest in other people, reluctance or avoidance of relationships (Koczoń-Zurek, 2009, p. 315). It was not possible to assess the relation between the level of emotional intelligence and depersonali-



zation. Independently of the general result in KBIE ( $t=0.45$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), almost all the teachers avoided depersonalization in relations with students or declared that they avoided them. Statistically, there is no relation between results of emotional intelligence and depersonalization ( $r=0.13$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The hypothesis must be rejected. However, what is worrying, there was a group of teachers (17%) who chose the statement in the MBI questionnaire: *My profession makes me insensitive to other people's problems* as their frequent experience. They pointed to difficulties dealing with students as well as a lack of engagement in students' problems or needs. On the other hand, regardless of emotional intelligence the teachers stated that it happens that they avoid students or treat them unfairly. Probably this is a hint for another research project.

Depersonalization is a kind of defence mechanism of avoiding the source of stress, which most often is students (Fengler, 2000). This little constructive method is effective in the short term, but in a longer period is not satisfactory, that is why it was one of the research assumptions that emotionally intelligent teachers do not depersonalize as they are able to find more constructive coping strategies. This relation needs further exploration on a bigger sample and probably with testing methods implemented.

## **Subscales of emotional intelligence and burnout**

As can be seen in Table 2, where Pearson's coefficients among the scales of emotional intelligence and burnout general quotient are collated, emotional regulation was the most significant predictor among the variables. The abilities consisting in identifying emotions of others are found as not predicting burnout in the examined sample of teachers.

**Table 2.** Correlation (Pearson coefficient) between components of emotional intelligence and total burnout

	Components of emotional intelligence	burn out	p<
1	emotional awareness	0.26	0.05
2	emotional regulation	0.64	0.05
3	identifying emotions of others	0.16	0.05
4	social relations	0.20	0.05
5	using emotional knowledge	0.15	0.05

Source: own research.

Teachers experiencing difficult situations, which ontologically are part of their job, are exposed to a variety of work-connected emotions. Coping with them is indispensable to do the job efficiently and to maintain well-being. Thus, it was assumed that emotional awareness and abilities to cope with emotions are factors protecting from burnout. It turned out that emotional control correlates with burnout stronger ( $p < 0.04$ ) than emotional awareness ( $r = 0.26$ ) in the sample. Both abilities are factors explaining the variance of burnout. In the context it is obvious that the correlations are negative.

Less important correlations are in the group of the so-called interpersonal abilities of emotional competences (cf., Przybylska, 2009, p. 265): identifying emotions of others ( $r = 0.16$ ) and social relations ( $r = 0.20$ ). It could indicate that intrapersonal qualities are more significant for dealing with occupational stress. Similarly, the fifth set of EI abilities- using emotional knowledge - is not significantly related to burnout ( $r = 0.15$ ). It can be assumed that competences connected with dealing with socially difficult situations, emotion-laden interaction, self-perception and control are of special importance.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

On the basis of the gathered data, which underwent statistical operations, and qualitative description, the assumed correlations between emotional intelligence and burnout were verified. In this research emotional intelligence turned out to correlate positively with job satisfaction and negatively with the general burnout quotient, emotional exhaustion. The correlation between EI and depersonalization is not statistically significant.

Apart from the tendencies observed in the research, theory and research on emotional regulation have already suggested training teachers. Training may be an effective means of adjustment to work if indeed “jobs are not as easily moulded as people are” (Loscocco et.al, 1991, p. 187). Emotional labour and the emotional intelligence concept guarantee some intriguing, new areas for future research and teacher training.

Taking into consideration the role of emotional intelligence in emotional control, dealing with emotion evoking events it is reasonable to verify predicted relations so as to plan prophylaxis and implement new competences in teachers’ professionalization.

Definitely, teachers agree that the ability to manage emotions contributes to their professional effectiveness: in achieving academic goals, building quality social relationships, and maintaining good classroom management and discipline practices (Sutton, 2004). Most teachers are also aware of the negative outcomes of poor emotional regulation. Although awareness is the core of competences, it does not guarantee competent acting.

Emotional competences are culturally determined. They develop naturally while acting social roles and getting experience. When emotions are engaged at work, especially service, the competences to deal with them must be professional and high standard. Thus, selecting students according to their abilities, followed by training soft competences during studies and finally supporting professional development throughout professional activity is a must in teaching professionalization.

## References

- Ashfort B.E., Humphrey R.H., (1993). Emotional labor in service roles: The influence of identity. *Academy of Management Review*, no 18, pp. 88–115.
- Brotheridge C. Grandey A.A., (2002). Emotional Labor and Burnout: Comparing Two Perspectives of “People Work”. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol, 60, pp. 17–39. Source: <http://www.idealibrary.com> (01.07.2015).
- Chan D., (2006). Emotional intelligence and components of burnout among Chinese secondary school teachers in Hong Kong, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 22, no 8, pp. 1042–1054.
- De Vito N., (2009). *The relationship between teacher burnout and emotional intelligence: A pilot study*, Fairleigh Dickinson University.
- Fengler J., (2000). *Pomaganie męczy. (Helping exhaust)* Gdańsk, GWP.
- Freudenberger H. J., (1974). Staff burnout. *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 30, pp. 159–165.
- Golińska L., Świętochowski W., (1998). Temperamentalne i osobowościowe uwarunkowania wypalenia zawodowego u nauczycieli. (Temperamental and personal factors of teacher’s burn out). *Psychologia Wychowawcza*, vol. 5, pp. 385–396.
- Górska R., Madlińska-Michalak J., (2012). *Kompetencje emocjonalne nauczyciela. (Teacher’s emotional competences)*. Warszawa, Wolters Kluwer Polska.
- Grandey A.A., (2000). Emotion regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labour. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, vol. 5, no 1, pp. 95–110.
- Grandey A.A., (2003). When „the show must go on”: Surface and deep acting as determinants of emotional exhaustion and peer-rated service delivery. *Academy of Management Journal*, no. 46, pp. 86–96.
- Hargreaves A., (1998). The Emotional Practice of Teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 14, no. 8, pp. 835–854.

- Hochschild A., (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules and social structure, *American Journal of Sociology*, no. 85, pp. 551–575.
- Hochschild A., (2009). *Zarządzanie emocjami. Komercjalizacja ludzkich uczuć. (The managed heart. The commercialization of human feelings)*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
- Jude A. M., Adekunle A., (2011). Emotional Intelligence and Locus of Control as Predictors of Burnout among Secondary School Teachers. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 106–112.
- Koczoń-Zurek S., (2009). *Czynniki zabezpieczające nauczyciela przed wypaleniem zawodowym. (Factors protecting teachers from burnout)*. [in:] Popek St., Winiarz A.(ed.), *Nauczyciel. Zawód – Powołanie – Pasja. (Profession-Vocation-Passion)*. Lublin, UMCS, pp. 310–320.
- Kondylis E. K., Pandelis S., Sfakianakis M. E., Prokopiou D., (2004). *Burnout and emotional intelligence in Greek employees*. [in:] Brebbia C. A., Voiskounsky A., (ed.), *Human Perspectives in the Internet Society: Culture, Psychology and Gender*. University of Piraeus, Greece .
- Koster S., (2011), The self-managed heart: teaching gender and doing emotional labour in a higher education institution. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 61–77.
- Loscocco, K., Roschelle, A. R., (1991). Influences on the quality of work and nonwork life: Two decades in review. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 39, pp. 182–225.
- Marek T., (2000). Stres i zmęczenie psychiczne w procesie pracy (Stress and psychological tiredness in the process of work) . *Czasopismo Psychologiczne*, vol.6, no 1–2, pp. 35–40.
- Maslach C., (1994). *Wypalenie się: utrata troski o człowieka. (Burning out: depersonalization)* [in:] Zimbardo P. G., Ruch F. L. (ed.), *Psychologia i życie. (Psychology and life)*. Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Maslach C., (2000). *Wypalenie w perspektywie egzystencjalnej. (Burning out in life context)* [in:] Sęk H.(ed.), *Wypalenie zawodowe. Przyczyny, mechanizmy, zapobieganie. (Burning out. Etiology, mechanisms, prophylaxis)*. Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Maslach C., Jackson, S. E., (1984). Patterns of burnout among a national sample of public contact workers. *Journal of Health and Human Resources Administration*, vol. 7, pp. 189–212.
- Maslach C., Schaufeli W. B., Leiter M. P., (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol.52, pp. 397–422.
- Mayer J.D, Salovey P., Caruso D.R.,(2004). Emotional intelligence: theory, findings and implications, *Psychological Inquiry*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 197–215.
- Przybylska I.(2003). *Inteligencja emocjonalna jako kluczowa kompetencja współczesnego nauczyciela. (Emotional intelligence- teacher's key competence)* [in:] Ekiert-Oldroyd D.(red), *Współczesny nauczyciel w koncepcjach pedeutologicznych i praktyce edukacyjnej, (Contemporary teacher in pedeutology and educational practice)*. *Chowanna*, vol 1, no. 26, pp. 85–95.
- Przybylska I., (2007). *Inteligencja emocjonalna a uzdolnienia twórcze i funkcjonowanie*

- szkolne młodzieży. (*Emotional intelligence, creative abilities and school functioning of young people*) Wyd. UŚ Katowice.
- Przybylska I., (2009). *Dojrzałość emocjonalna nauczycieli w świetle koncepcji inteligencji emocjonalnej (Teachers' emotional maturity in the light of emotional intelligence concept)*, [in:] Popek St., Winiarz A. (ed.), *Nauczyciel. Zawód – Powołanie – Pasja. (Teacher. Profession-Vocation-Passion)* Lublin, UMCS, pp. 264–274.
- Przybylska I., (2014). Emotional aspects of school education- curricula and relationship context, *Us-China Educational Review B*, vol.4, no.7, pp. 431–442.
- Salovey, P. Mayer J. M., (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, vol. 9, pp. 85–211.
- Sęk H. (2000). *Wypalenie zawodowe. Przyczyny, mechanizmy, zapobieganie. (Burn out. Etiology, mechanisms, prophylaxis)* Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Wróbel M., (2013). Praca emocjonalna a wypalenie zawodowe u nauczycieli: moderująca rola inteligencji emocjonalnej (Emotional labour and teachers' burnout: emotional intelligence moderation). *Psychologia Społeczna*, vol. 8 1, no. 24, pp. 53–66 .