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**COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL COACHING IN THE PREVENTION
OF BURNOUT AMONG EDUCATIONAL LEADERS:
A REVIEW OF EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH**

Abstract: *the article analyzes evidence-based research on the potential of cognitive-behavioral coaching (CBC) for preventing professional burnout among leaders of educational organizations. Drawing on meta-analyses and empirical studies from 2017–2025, the author identifies key burnout factors for educational administrators, describes CBC mechanisms and techniques, and presents data on the high effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral interventions. The possibility of transferring results obtained from related samples to the educational sphere is discussed. Strategies for implementing CBC in the system of support for educational leaders are proposed. It is noted that the number of direct studies for this professional group is still limited, indicating the need for further controlled research. The materials are intended for psychologists, coaches, heads of educational organizations, and HR specialists.*

Keywords: *cognitive-behavioral coaching, professional burnout, educational leaders, prevention, evidence-based approach, review of evidence-based research.*

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КОГНИТИВНО-ПОВЕДЕНЧЕСКИЙ КОУЧИНГ В ПРОФИЛАКТИКЕ ВЫГОРАНИЯ РУКОВОДИТЕЛЕЙ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ: ОБЗОР ДОКАЗАТЕЛЬНЫХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ

***Аннотация:** в статье анализируются доказательные исследования, посвящённые потенциалу когнитивно-поведенческого коучинга (КПК) для профилактики профессионального выгорания руководителей образовательных организаций. Опираясь на мета-анализы и эмпирические работы 2017–2025 гг., автор выделяет ключевые факторы выгорания управленцев, описывает механизмы и техники КПК, а также приводит данные о высокой эффективности когнитивно-поведенческих интервенций. Обсуждается возможность распространения результатов, полученных на смежных выборках, на образовательную сферу. Предлагаются стратегии внедрения КПК в систему сопровождения руководителей образования. Отмечается, что количество прямых исследований для данной профессиональной группы пока ограничено, что указывает на необходимость дальнейших контролируемых исследований. Материалы предназначены для психологов, коучей, руководителей образовательных организаций и специалистов служб персонала.*

***Ключевые слова:** когнитивно-поведенческий коучинг, профессиональное выгорание, руководители образования, профилактика, доказательный подход, обзор доказательных исследований.*

Introduction.

In the context of dynamic changes in the education system, the problem of psychological well-being of leaders of educational organizations is becoming particularly relevant. Empirical data confirm that professional burnout among educational leaders manifests itself in emotional exhaustion, reduced self-efficacy, and can hinder the implementation of innovations.

Traditional methods (counseling, training) do not always take into account the cognitive and behavioral patterns underlying burnout. One of the promising

approaches is cognitive-behavioral coaching (CBC) – the integration of the principles of cognitive-behavioral therapy into the coaching process, aimed at transforming dysfunctional thoughts and beliefs, forming adaptive strategies and increasing self-efficacy.

The aim of the work is to systematize evidence-based data on the potential of CBC for the prevention of burnout among educational leaders. The tasks are: to analyze the specific features of burnout in this category; to describe the mechanisms and techniques of CBC; to present the evidence base (meta-analyses, empirical studies); to propose implementation strategies and outline directions for further research.

Methodological framework. A theoretical analysis of the literature was carried out within the logic of an evidence-based approach. The search for sources was carried out in the databases eLibrary, Google Scholar, PubMed, CyberLeninka, using the keywords «cognitive-behavioral coaching», «professional burnout of educational leaders», «evidence-based coaching». The review includes meta-analyses and empirical studies from 2019–2025. Nevertheless, individual sources (Желдоченко & Гирина, 2017) are used to illustrate the effectiveness of coaching in the educational environment.

1. Professional burnout of educational leaders: specific features and risk factors.

Professional burnout is considered as a multidimensional syndrome that includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (cynical attitude to work) and reduction of personal achievements (feeling of incompetence). In leaders of educational organizations, the development of this syndrome has its own specifics due to the nature of managerial activity. Key risk factors include: chronic stress, cognitive overload, high uncertainty, lack of social support, and lack of effective self-regulation strategies [4]

Table 1

Main factors of professional burnout among educational leaders

Factor	Manifestation nature	Effect on burnout
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High uncertainty	Frequent changes in regulatory requirements	Increased anxiety, cognitive overload
Role overload	Combining managerial, pedagogical, economic functions	Emotional exhaustion
Lack of control	Dependence on higher authorities, limited resources	Decreased self-efficacy
Social tension	Conflicts with subordinates, parents, founders	Depersonalization, cynicism

Empirical data confirm the seriousness of the problem. A study conducted on a sample of 40 school leaders showed that they have an increased level of depersonalization, which distinguishes them from urban administrators [7]. Burnout causes the greatest damage to the ability of leaders to implement innovations in the management of an educational organization.

The scale of the problem is illustrated by international survey data. According to a report by Dicke et al., more than 56% of school leaders seriously consider leaving their position, and 42.6% demonstrate a high level of psychosocial risk, indicating a serious health threat [2]. A meta-analysis of 34 studies involving 23,522 educational leaders confirms that professional burnout reduces work effectiveness and impairs managerial abilities (for example, leads to a decrease in the level of transformational leadership), and also provokes a desire to leave the position [1].

Traditional approaches to burnout prevention include psychological counseling, stress-resistance training, the development of emotional intelligence, and mentoring. At the same time, their effectiveness is often limited by the lack of systematicity and focus on transforming the deep cognitive structures that maintain burnout.

2. Cognitive-behavioral coaching: mechanisms, techniques and evidence base.

Cognitive-behavioral coaching (CBC) is focused on changing dysfunctional cognitions and maladaptive behavioral patterns. The psychological mechanisms through which CBC influences the symptoms of burnout in leaders include: identifying and correcting irrational attitudes and automatic negative thoughts (e.g., «I have no right to make a mistake», «I must control everything personally»); activating goal-directed behavior that contradicts the passive and avoidant style characteristic of burnout; increasing self-efficacy through the consistent completion of achievable tasks.

Table 2 systematizes the main techniques of cognitive-behavioral coaching and examples of their application in work with heads of educational organizations. The presented list of techniques makes it possible to purposefully influence the cognitive and behavioral determinants of professional burnout among educational leaders.

Table 2

Main techniques of cognitive-behavioral coaching for burnout prevention

Technique	Description	Example of application for an educational leader
Cognitive restructuring	Identifying and replacing dysfunctional beliefs	Transforming the attitude «I am fully responsible for all processes» into «I can distribute responsibility among my deputies»
Behavioral activation	Planning actions that counteract avoidance	Including short breaks after each meeting for recovery
Goal decomposition	Breaking down large tasks into sequential steps	Step-by-step implementation of a new educational program: first a pilot in one class, then adjustment, then scaling
Behavioral experiments	Empirical verification of the validity of beliefs	Testing the hypothesis «if I delegate part of the tasks, the quality of work will decrease» through controlled delegation and analysis of results

The evidence base for the effectiveness of the cognitive-behavioral approach to burnout includes several meta-analyses. According to a meta-analysis of 29 randomized controlled trials (Li et al., 2023), cognitive-behavioral interventions showed high effectiveness in reducing emotional exhaustion (overall effect size $g = 0.876$), while mindfulness, professional training and emotion-focused interventions did not demonstrate a significant effect [3]. Another meta-analysis of organizational coaching (Ametova et al., 2022) confirmed the significant positive effect of coaching on self-regulation and coping behavior.

Few direct studies have been published on the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral coaching specifically for leaders of educational organizations. However, data from meta-analyses conducted on related samples (mid-level managers, public servants) allow the findings to be extended to the educational sphere, taking into account its specificity. In particular, a Russian study involving 53 people (mid-level managers and entrepreneurs) recorded a statistically significant increase in self-efficacy of participants after two sessions of group

cognitive-behavioral coaching ($p < 0.05$) [6]. This result is particularly relevant for school directors and their deputies, who face role overload and lack of control. Consequently, the accumulated empirical data and meta-analytic generalizations indicate the high effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral coaching for the prevention of professional burnout among leaders, including those working in the field of education.

3. Strategies for implementing cognitive-behavioral coaching in the system of support for educational leaders.

Based on the evidence presented in Section 2, it is advisable to consider practical strategies for implementing CBC in the system of support for educational leaders. To effectively implement CBC in work with heads of educational organizations, it is possible to use an integrated approach combining three organizational models. Individual coaching is personalized work at the request of the leader, aimed at solving problems related to stress and burnout. Group (team) coaching allows leaders to exchange experience and jointly master CBC techniques. The third model is the integration of coaching into the professional development system, i.e., the inclusion of CBC modules in further professional education programs for managers.

The choice of a specific model is determined by the leader's managerial experience, the severity of burnout symptoms and available organizational resources. Individual coaching is indicated for leaders with high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, as well as for those who experience difficulties in solving specific, personally significant problems (e.g., delegation, time management). Group (team) coaching is effective for leaders working in similar organizational conditions (e.g., school principals from the same district), as it allows them to exchange experiences and reduce the feeling of isolation. The integration of CBC into the professional development system is appropriate for the planned prevention of burnout at the industry level, covering a wide range of managers without the need for individual selection.

An additional argument in favor of CBC is provided by the results of using coaching technologies in work with teachers. A study by Желдоченко and Гирина found that teachers who completed a program for the formation of emotional competence using coaching techniques significantly reduced their indicators of emotional burnout, increased their emotional intelligence and job satisfaction [5].

The implementation of a CBC program for heads of educational organizations involves five successive stages. At the diagnostic stage, the current level of burnout (MBI questionnaire) and self-efficacy is assessed, which makes it possible to identify leaders with a high risk of burnout. Then psychoeducation is carried out: information about the nature of stress and the principles of CBC, which forms the motivation of participants. Next is training in the techniques of cognitive restructuring, behavioral activation and goal decomposition, aimed at developing self-regulation skills. After that, coaching support is organized in the form of individual or group sessions (from two to six meetings) to consolidate skills and solve specific managerial problems. The final stage is an evaluation of effectiveness through repeated diagnostics, allowing the program to be adjusted.

At present, the number of published studies directly assessing the effectiveness of CBC for leaders of educational organizations remains limited. However, the data presented from related areas indicate the high potential of this approach for the educational sphere.

Conclusion.

Professional burnout of educational leaders is a consequence not only of role overload and uncertainty, but also of lack of control and organizational isolation. Cognitive-behavioral coaching, focused on restructuring dysfunctional beliefs and activating adaptive actions, can significantly reduce the key symptoms of burnout. The effectiveness of this approach is confirmed by meta-analyses, which show its advantage over traditional interventions. The strategies proposed in the article (individual, group and integrative formats) can serve as a basis for the development of psychological support programs for managerial personnel in education. At the same time, the number of direct studies specifically on CBC for educational leaders

remains low. Consequently, further controlled research is needed. Nevertheless, the available evidence allows us to consider CBC as a promising method for preventing burnout in the educational sphere.

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