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SCHOOL AS A LIVING ORGANISM – THE SYSTEMIC ROLE OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF MTSS AND THE SUPPORT OF WELLBEING

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Summary. The current school represents a complex socio-ecological system in which educational processes are inextricably intertwined with mental health, safety and social cohesion. In this context, there is a significant change in the role of the school psychologist, who is shifting from individual diagnosis and intervention to the position of a systemic actor, coordinator of multidisciplinary cooperation and stabilizing element of school culture. The aim of this article is to analyze and synthesize key findings from the international literature (mainly from 2000–2024) in order to re-conceptualize the role of the school psychologist as a “silent engine of change” within the *whole-school approach* and with regard to the ecological factors of pupils’ development.

The study is based on a narrative synthesis of theoretical and empirical frameworks of school psychology, a systemic approach (e.g. MTSS – Multi-Tiered System of Supports) and inclusive leadership. The analysis focuses on the systemic work of psychologists, their key role in multidisciplinary cooperation, support for the well-being of teachers, crisis intervention management and prevention of risky behavior.

The synthesis reveals that the effectiveness of the transformation of the profession is limited mainly by structural barriers: high workload, vaguely defined expectations and limited access to information about the social context of pupils (risk of *individualisation* of systemic problems). A critical finding is that the effectiveness of a psychologist’s work is conditioned by institutional factors and organizational support, such as clear anchoring of the role, regular supervision, and explicit space for teamwork and systemic work.

The article emphasizes the need for a strategic shift towards a broader, systemic perspective that integrates the social, organizational and cultural context of the school. In conclusion, it is pointed out that anchoring systemic school psychology is a strategic tool for strengthening the stability, well-being and resilience of the entire education system in the conditions of increasing social complexity.

Keywords: school psychology, school psychologist, systemic approach, school climate, wellbeing, multidisciplinary cooperation, crisis intervention, leadership, whole-school approach.

1. Introduction

The modern school is no longer just an institution designed to impart knowledge. It becomes a complex social environment in which everyday relationships, emotions, expectations, conflicts and various forms of uncertainty and hopes intertwine, with which pupils, teachers and families enter the educational process. Research from recent years confirms that the quality of the school environment, especially the level of school climate, the nature of social relationships and subjectively experienced wellbeing, significantly affect not only the school success of pupils, but also their mental health, motivation and long-term satisfaction in and out of school.

At the same time, the changing educational reality shows that school can no longer act only as a place where pupils learn, but also as an environment that provides support in a period of rapid social change. The growing diversity of pupils’ needs, the higher incidence of mental difficulties in children and adolescents, the demands associated with inclusive education and the increased burden on teachers place new demands on schools. This implies the need for a broader concept of support, which includes not only individual intervention, but also systematic work at the level of the entire school environment.

Within these processes, the role of the school psychologist acquires importance. His work often remains hidden, yet it has a major impact on the functioning of the school. It participates in the integration of mental health support into everyday practice, accompanies teachers in solving challenging situations, supports class teams, identifies risk phenomena, provides crisis intervention and connects the school with the family and community environment. This activity increasingly goes beyond individual counselling and is aimed at working with the school system as a whole.

In many schools, it is the psychologist who is the expert who can capture subtle changes in the atmosphere of the institution, understand their context and propose procedures that strengthen the stability and safety of the entire school community. Its presence allows the school to function as an environment that supports the development of pupils, provides support to teachers and creates conditions for healthy and sustainable interpersonal relationships.

For these reasons, it is appropriate to rethink and define more precisely what importance school psychology has in the current education system and how it can contribute to schools being able to cope with the conditions of increasing complexity and societal expectations.

2. Transforming the Role of School Psychologists – from Individual Care to Systemic Work

Contemporary school psychology is undergoing a significant transformation, reflecting deeper changes in educational systems and in society as a whole. The traditional concept of the role of a school psychologist, focused primarily on individual diagnosis and intervention in individual pupils, turns out to be insufficient due to the complexity of current school environments. The growing diversity of the pupil population, the emphasis on inclusive education, the increase in psychological difficulties among children and adolescents, the need for systematic prevention and the increased demands placed on teachers create pressure to expand the scope of school psychology towards working with the school as a whole.

Empirical research and review studies consistently show that effective mental health support in schools cannot be based solely on individual interventions, but requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach, known as the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), which provides an effective organisational framework for service delivery. This approach takes into account the organisational structure of the school, the quality of the school climate, the relationships between the individual actors and the connection between the school and the family and community environment (Weare & Nind, 2011; Thapa et al., 2013). In this context, the role of the school psychologist is gradually shifting from a narrowly defined specialization to the position of an expert who participates in the creation of school strategies, supports interdisciplinary cooperation and contributes to the long-term development of the school's support system.

2.1. Systemic approach in the school environment: psychologist as an integrator

One of the key frameworks of contemporary school psychology is the systems approach, often referred to as *the whole-school approach*. This approach is based on the assumption that the mental health and well-being of pupils and teachers are the result of a dynamic interaction of factors at different levels of the school environment. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of the school, the family and the wider community, and draws attention to the fact that psychological difficulties and protective factors arise in the context of the daily functioning of the school, its rules, relationships and shared values (Weare & Nind, 2011).

The theoretical anchoring of this concept is inextricably linked to the ecological theory of development (Zuo, F., Zhang, T., & Cai, W. 2025), which describes the development of an individual as a process influenced by the environment at various levels, i.e. from immediate microsystems such as family, school and peer groups, through the mesosystem of their mutual interactions to broader institutional and social contexts. The family environment is one of the key factors that significantly affects a child's school adaptation, emotional well-being and educational results.

Within the systemic approach, the school psychologist acts as an integrator and facilitator of the school environment. Its role is not only to respond to individual difficulties (Tier 3), but above all to support universal prevention (Tier 1 – school-wide measures), targeted group interventions (Tier 2) and interconnection of individual school actors, unification of procedures and creation of conditions for effective prevention and intervention in accordance with the principles of the MTSS. A psychologist participates in the coordination of cooperation between teachers, school management, other professionals and parents, or with external services. At the same time, it contributes to the transfer of information between professions, participates in the setting of school policies and prevention strategies, and in the systematic evaluation of the quality of the school climate (Nastasi et al., 2004; Knoff, 2017).

The importance of the systemic approach is also significantly reflected in the area of wellbeing, which is understood as a multidimensional construct encompassing the psychological, social, emotional and cognitive aspects of pupils' functioning. Research has repeatedly confirmed that the quality of the school

climate and the support of teachers are among the essential factors influencing not only the well-being of pupils, but also their educational success and long-term development (Thapa et al., 2013). The school psychologist plays the key role of an expert who can identify, reflect and systematically reflect these connections in the school's practice.

2.2. Moving from specialist to leader of change in school psychology

The development of a systemic approach is closely linked to the transformation of the professional competencies of school psychologists. The transition from a traditional expert role to a *Change Leader* role requires an expansion of professional skills beyond individual diagnosis and intervention. Current practice emphasizes an understanding of organizational processes, system theories, and the ability to consult at the school-wide level, including the design, implementation, and evaluation of prevention and intervention programs (Strein et al., 2003).

School psychologists are increasingly expected to take on leadership roles in coordinating interdisciplinary collaboration, leading Evidence-Based Interventions (EBI) teams, and advocating for systemic change. Their scientific and methodological preparation predestines them to participate in planning processes, interpret data and provide professionally based recommendations to educators and parents (Meyers & Swerdlik, 2003; DeHaan et al., 2017). In this context, their role becomes a form of distributed leadership, i.e. influence based on expertise rather than formal hierarchy.

An important part of this transformation is the systematic support of teachers and the development of interdisciplinary cooperation. The ability to provide consultation, coaching and data-driven decision support is a key competence of school psychologists in the role of change leaders. These activities contribute to strengthening the professional competences of teachers, to the implementation of preventive measures and to the creation of sustainable support strategies in schools (Meyers & Swerdlik, 2003; Knoff, 2017).

As the school population diversifies as the school population grows, so do intercultural and equality-oriented competences. These include not only skills in assessment, intervention and counselling, but also an understanding of cultural and linguistic differences and effective communication with parents and communities (Rogers & Lopez, 2002).

The transformation of the role of a school psychologist is a long-term and multi-layered process that requires continuous professional development, supervision and systematic assessment of competencies throughout the career (Melchert, 2011; Hunter & Schwartz-Mette, 2022). Only under these conditions can school psychology develop its full potential as a professional discipline that not only responds to the difficulties of individuals, but actively contributes to the strategic development of schools and to the creation of an environment that promotes mental health, wellbeing and educational success for all pupils.

3. The role of the school psychologist as a silent engine of school culture

School culture represents a set of shared values, norms, relationships and communication patterns that shape the daily functioning of the school and significantly affect the educational process and the psychological well-being of all its actors. Research has long confirmed that the quality of school culture is closely related to the academic results of pupils, their social inclusion, the occurrence of risky behaviour and the professional satisfaction of teachers. In this context, the school psychologist plays a key, although often invisible, role as an expert who co-creates the school climate through the systematic support of relationships, communication and well-being of the entire school community (Thapa et al., 2013; Knoff, 2017).

3.1. Promoting healthy relationships and a culture of communication at school

The quality of interpersonal relationships and communication processes is one of the basic pillars of school culture. School psychologists are involved in their development mainly through consulting activities, cooperation with educators and the implementation of evidence-based interventions. Empirical studies show that systematic teacher consultation support contributes to creating a structured and emotionally safe environment that promotes positive interactions between teachers and pupils and reduces stress levels in the school environment (Niehaus, Rudasill & Rakes, 2012; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Knoff, 2017).

An important area of activity of school psychologists is also restorative approaches aimed at restoring relationships, responsibility and dialogue instead of repressive sanctions. Research shows that the introduction of restorative practices in collaboration between educators and psychologists promotes open communication, a sense of belonging, and student participation, thereby contributing to a positive transformation of school culture (Morrison, 2007; McCluskey et al., 2016). These approaches strengthen social bonds, which represent an important protective factor in the mental health of children and adolescents.

The role of a school psychologist also includes direct work with pupils and the implementation of school-wide prevention programmes aimed at reducing bullying, harassment and discrimination. Integrated preventive interventions, implemented in close cooperation with educators, have proven to be an effective tool for promoting a safe and respectful school climate (Lam et al., 2012; Byrd & Carter Andrews, 2016). The psychologist acts here not only as an expert in intervention, but also as an advocate for an inclusive environment and equal treatment.

3.2. Supporting the well-being of teachers and the professional functioning of teaching teams

In addition to working with pupils, supporting teachers is another key area of activity for school psychologists. Research clearly confirms that teachers' wellbeing is closely linked to the quality of teaching, relationships with pupils and the overall school climate. School psychologists are uniquely positioned to provide professional support that includes consultation, professional development, and interventions aimed at preventing burnout and strengthening the professional resilience of educators (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Consulting activities are particularly important for novice teachers who face an increased professional burden associated with adaptation to the school environment. Support in the areas of coping with challenging behaviour of pupils, working with emotions and effective communication contributes to strengthening professional self-confidence and reducing the risk of early departure from the profession (Niehaus, Rudasill & Rakes, 2012).

At the organizational level, school psychologists are involved in creating conditions that foster collaboration between educators and mental health professionals. According to available studies, the promotion of policies and procedures aimed at teachers' well-being has a direct impact not only on their psychological well-being, but also on the educational outcomes of pupils (Sebastian, Herman & Reinke, 2019). Mental health care thus becomes an integral part of the functioning of the school, not just an individual responsibility of individuals.

3.3. Building a positive and inclusive school climate

School psychologists play an important role in developing a positive and inclusive school climate at the institution-wide level. One of the key areas of their action is the promotion of positive behavioral approaches that focus on reinforcing desirable behaviors, building relationships, and preventing problem behavior (Shernoff et al., 2022). These strategies contribute to the creation of a predictable and safe environment that supports both learning and psychosocial development of pupils.

Another important aspect is the coordination of interventions across classes and teams and the strengthening of cooperation between teachers, professionals and school management. Functional interdisciplinary collaboration is proving to be a key factor in the sustainability of change and the effectiveness of support measures (Sebastian, Herman & Reinke, 2019). The school psychologist acts as a facilitator of processes that support the cohesion of the school as an organization.

In the context of the growing diversity of the school population, the role of the psychologist in the field of equality and inclusion is also becoming increasingly important. Promoting equitable practices, sensitively working with cultural differences, and promoting equal access to education are an important part of modern school psychology (Byrd & Carter Andrews, 2016).

3.4. Supporting the well-being of the entire school community

The role of the school psychologist in the current school is expanding towards the systematic support of the well-being of all members of the school community. For pupils, this support focuses on strengthening mental resilience, a sense of security and belonging through support structures and preventive measures (Sebastian, Herman & Reinke, 2019). At the same time, it is confirmed that the well-being of teachers

is an important predictor of the well-being and success of pupils, which further underlines the importance of a systemic approach to mental health care at school (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The involvement of the family and the wider community is another key element of this work. School psychologists often act as liaison experts between the school, family, and external services, thereby promoting continuity of care and strengthening protective factors in the child's environment (Knoff, 2017; Lam et al., 2012).

School psychologists thus function as a silent but essential engine of school culture. By supporting relationships, a culture of communication, the well-being of teachers, the development of an inclusive climate and the connection between the school and the family, they contribute to creating an environment that supports learning, mental health and resilience of the entire school community in the long term. It is this systematic and often inconspicuous work that represents one of the key pillars of the modern school.

4. Multidisciplinary collaboration to support students with complex problems

Solving complex educational, behavioural and psychosocial difficulties in pupils usually exceeds the possibilities of a single profession. School difficulties often accumulate and mutually condition. A concurrent combination of specific educational needs, behavioral difficulties, emotional dysregulation, family burden, and sometimes health or neurodevelopmental factors is present. In such cases, a multidisciplinary approach proves to be crucial, which allows for the coordinated interconnection of professional perspectives and their translation into the joint practice of the school. The school mental health literature has repeatedly emphasized that it is precisely the "interface" between education and mental health care that requires collaboration across professions, as the needs of pupils arise in the confluence of school, family and community influences and cannot be sustainably addressed by isolated interventions of a single service (Waxman, Weist, & Benson, 1999; Weist et al., 2012).

Multidisciplinary cooperation in schools usually includes a psychologist, a special education teacher, a social worker or a social pedagogue, health professions and teachers, or other professionals depending on the nature of the difficulties. The essence of this cooperation is not only the simultaneous operation of several professions, but a shared understanding of the pupil's situation, joint planning of support and continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of selected measures. Emphasis is placed on clear communication, defined roles, mutual respect and shared values without hierarchical power dynamics that would reduce the security and openness of teamwork. In the context of schools, frameworks that define the "building blocks" of real cooperation and distinguish it from mere coordination or parallel work prove useful, because only shared goals, transparent rules and shared responsibility allow stable support of the learner over time (Griffiths et al., 2021).

4.1. Coordination of support measures and the role of the school psychologist in the team

Coordination of support measures is one of the most challenging, but at the same time the most important parts of multidisciplinary work. In this area, a school psychologist often acts as a professional coordinator who facilitates the integration of knowledge of individual professions and helps to translate conclusions into realistic interventions applicable in everyday school operations. The coordinating role of a psychologist concerns both case work with individual pupils and setting up processes within the school that allow for consistency of support. In addition, in the school environment, it is necessary that coordination is not a one-time act, but a repetitive process, because the pupil's situation changes over time and the team must flexibly evaluate whether the selected measures really work and whether they are implemented in the required quality.

Practical examples show that when working with pupils with complex difficulties, it works well to link interventions across contexts, i.e. to align practices in the classroom, in cooperation with the family and in connection with professional services. Therefore, models that combine school and clinical perspectives and create a bridge between school, family and other services appear to be effective in the field of school mental health. Such a setting makes it possible to reduce the risk of fragmentation of support and to strengthen the continuity of work with the pupil, especially in cases of longer-term problems that affect attendance, performance and relationship functioning (McKay-Brown et al., 2019). At the same time, coordination concerns the planning of support in the broad sense of the word. Teamwork at school

often stands and falls with whether there are stable mechanisms for joint planning, information sharing, and collaborative learning. Research in the field of teamwork in educational organizations shows that the quality of cooperation is higher where teamwork is not only based on operative case resolution, but also on shared goals, shared responsibility and regular reflection on procedures (Oude Groote Beverborg, Slegers, & van Veen, 2015). Quality coordination therefore presupposes not only professional knowledge, but also the ability to set up communication channels, clarify roles and create a common language through which the team can communicate.

The result of functional coordination is a reduction in the risk of duplicate or contradictory interventions and a strengthening of the continuity of support, which is essential for pupils with complex problems. At the same time, the school's ability to act predictably and consistently is strengthened, which in itself is an important stabilizing factor for pupils with emotional burdens, difficulties in regulation and increased sensitivity to the unpredictability of the environment.

4.2. Benefits of multidisciplinary work, risks and conditions of effectiveness

Multidisciplinary cooperation brings a number of documented benefits. In the field of school mental health, it follows that well-set cooperation between school and community services increases the chance that support will address the educational and psychosocial needs of pupils at the same time and will not be reduced to partial interventions without continuity. It also turns out that cooperation is not an "add-on" but a condition for success, and especially in situations where it is necessary to combine classroom work, family support and professional intervention into one coherent approach (Weist et al., 2012; Waxman et al., 1999). A significant benefit is the ability to provide truly comprehensive care. The team is able to capture the multifaceted needs of the pupil and his/her family, thereby reducing the risk that support focuses on only one part of the problem and misses other key determinants.

In addition to the benefits for pupils, there are also positive impacts on the professional functioning of school staff in the literature. Functional cooperation can reduce the feeling of isolation, distribute the burden among multiple actors and strengthen the sense of meaningfulness of work. At the same time, however, multidisciplinary cooperation is not automatically effective. Significant obstacles appear at the level of organization and team dynamics. Classically described barriers include differences in professional languages, vaguely defined roles, limited time capacities, institutional separation of sectors, as well as different goals or criteria for the success of individual professions (Waxman et al., 1999; Weist et al., 2012). Another obstacle is that part of the teamwork takes place without support in clearly set processes, and cooperation is then dependent on personal relationships, the current motivation of members and the availability of time, which increases the fragility of the entire system.

Implementing common procedures and maintaining their quality is also a challenge. Implementing problem-solving approaches and staying true to interventions takes time, team stability, and well-set processes. The implementation literature shows that a "functioning program" is not only a matter of choosing the right model, but above all of the quality of implementation, organizational support, continuous evaluation and the ability to adapt procedures so that they remain effective in the real context of the school (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). This is particularly challenging in a multidisciplinary team, as the quality of implementation depends on the alignment of multiple professions and whether common work rules can be maintained even under conditions of high workload and pressure for a quick solution.

The conditions for the effectiveness of multidisciplinary cooperation are considered to be clearly defined roles, continuous dialogue and explicit communication agreements, participatory planning and stable systems of leadership and support. In the field of school mental health, continuous improvement strategies for team functioning are also proving to be effective, helping teams to systematically work on the quality of cooperation, not just on the content of individual cases. Empirical results suggest that targeted teamwork support strategies can improve the performance of multidisciplinary teams and strengthen their ability to provide coordinated services and support (Bohnenkamp et al., 2023). In this context, it is possible to understand a multidisciplinary team as a learning system, the quality of which is not only determined by the composition of professions, but above all by the way the team shares information, negotiates goals and evaluates the impacts of its work.

Overall, multidisciplinary cooperation represents a basic framework for supporting pupils with complex and accumulated difficulties. It allows for a coordinated intervention based on a combination of professional perspectives, supports comprehensive care and can positively influence both the results of pupils and the professional functioning of school staff. However, the effectiveness of teamwork depends on organizational conditions, the quality of communication, clarification of roles, and a culture that minimizes hierarchical barriers and encourages participatory decision-making. Strategically strengthening these conditions is one of the key prerequisites for sustainable support of mental health and wellbeing in schools (Weist et al., 2012; Griffiths et al., 2021; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Bohnenkamp et al., 2023).

5. Competencies of school psychologists as leaders in change management

Leadership of change in school is not only based on formal authority, but on the ability to create a shared direction, build trust and coordinate actions in an environment that is professionally and value-pluralistic. In this context, school psychologists can act as leaders whose influence comes from expertise, the ability to work with interpersonal dynamics and an understanding of the psychological processes that enable or block change. This role is of particular importance in situations where the school introduces new support mechanisms, revises the rules of work with risky behavior, develops inclusive practice or systematically strengthens prevention and wellbeing.

5.1. Key competencies for leading change in school conditions

The literature focused on leadership in educational organizations has long emphasized that effective change management is based on the interconnection of strategic and social competencies. In addition to the ability to formulate an understandable vision and plan change steps, participation, empathy, relationship orientation and working with trust prove to be essential, because change in school takes place primarily through professional communities and shared meanings (Kouzes & Posner, 2023).

Educational institutions are not managed mainly hierarchically, but through the professional autonomy of teachers and collective responsibility. The legitimization of change is therefore based more on professional credibility, transparent communication and clarity of arguments than on formal power. Thus, change management competencies include the ability to structure a process, set realistic goals, distinguish short-term and long-term priorities, and persist in implementation even in situations of resistance or fluctuating motivation (Kouzes & Posner, 2023).

Emotional intelligence and the ability to communicate play an important role. Effective leaders can formulate direction, inspire shared vision, reflect on dysfunctional practices, and appreciate the efforts of others, thereby strengthening motivation and commitment to change. These aspects of leadership are repeatedly described as key conditions for sustainable organizational change (Kouzes & Posner, 2023).

It is essential for school psychology that the role of a change leader requires managerial skills in addition to these relational competencies. This includes planning, resource allocation, setting responsibilities, and ongoing implementation evaluation. Research shows that psychologists are often chosen for leadership roles precisely because of their interpersonal, analytical and organizational skills, but at the same time they need targeted development of strategic and managerial competencies to be able to anchor changes at the school-wide level (Kearney & Miller, 2022).

5.2. Psychological Leadership Competencies in Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is an area in which the leadership of change is most clearly manifested in working with the culture of the school, not only with teaching methods. Empirical studies show that school leaders act as “guardians” of change initiatives, as they determine the legitimacy of a topic, create space for professional learning, and set expectations that translate into everyday practice (Sharma & Subban, 2023).

A key mechanism of inclusive leadership is strengthening the psychological safety and autonomy of teachers. Inclusive leadership encourages the involvement of teachers in decision-making processes and enables professional learning without a sanction framework. Research shows that it is psychological factors such as a sense of security, autonomy and meaningfulness of work that mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and desirable outcomes, such as higher levels of engagement, innovative behaviour and willingness to change practice (Xie, Yao & Zhu, 2025).

Other studies confirm that inclusive leadership is associated with increased innovation and professional engagement of teachers, as it creates an environment in which difficulties can be openly identified, uncertainties can be shared, and new solutions can be experimented with. A mediating role here is played by leaders' attitudes towards inclusion and their ability to build a shared meaning of this value within the school (Aldosari, 2024).

From the point of view of the long-term sustainability of change, it is also essential to build professional and practice communities that enable collegial learning, sharing of experience and the gradual anchoring of inclusive approaches into the normal functioning of the school. Empirical findings suggest that the collective dimension of professional learning is one of the most important factors in the successful implementation of inclusive change (Kivirand, Leijen & Lepp, 2022; Sharma & Subban, 2023).

6. Risk management, crisis intervention and prevention at school

The school environment is long-term exposed to the risk of acute crisis situations, including violent incidents, threats from students, sudden losses, traumatic events, suicidal behaviour or serious forms of cyberbullying. These situations show that crisis intervention in a school cannot be understood as an isolated response to an emergency, but as part of a systematic framework of risk management, prevention and subsequent recovery. It is in this area that the role of a school psychologist is significantly linked to professional leadership and the ability to manage changes in the organization of the school.

6.1. Organizational Preparedness and Crisis Management at School

Effective crisis management is conditioned by the existence of clearly defined crisis management plans that define responsibilities, lines of communication and follow-up after a crisis event. Research has repeatedly shown that although many schools declare the existence of crisis plans and teams, their practical preparedness is weakened by the lack of systematic training and realistic rehearsals of crisis scenarios. This mismatch between formal readiness and actual competencies increases the risk of uncoordinated reactions and secondary traumatization of both pupils and school staff (Smith et al., 2001).

Functional crisis management includes multidisciplinary crisis teams that enable a coordinated response at different levels of severity of the situation. The literature promotes a tiered crisis intervention model that distinguishes between one-size-fits-all interventions, targeted support for at-risk groups, and highly individualized interventions for students and families with intense traumatic stress or a high risk of decompensation (Jaycox, Stein & Wong, 2014; Kearney & Childs, 2021). This approach allows for effective use of school resources and at the same time to respond appropriately to the severity of the situation.

An important element of the crisis framework are standardized models of school crisis intervention that integrate safety, pedagogical and psychosocial aspects. The aim of these models is not only to manage the acute phase of the crisis, but also to minimize the long-term impacts and support the return of the school to a functional regime (Crepeau-Hobson, Sievering & Bartilotta, 2020). This area also includes systematic protocols for assessing the risk of suicide and violence, which reduce reliance on individual judgment and strengthen continuity of care (Michael et al., 2015).

A specific challenge is the crisis intervention in cyberbullying, which requires a quick response, coordination with school rules and sensitive work with consequences for the social position of the pupil in the classroom. Empirical studies emphasize that an effective intervention must combine protective measures, work with the class team, and support for both the victim and the family (Elbedour et al.). In this area, the key role of school psychologists and counsellors as professionals capable of stabilisation, risk orientation and coordination of further care has been repeatedly reaffirmed (Culha, S., Urick, A., & Carpenter, D., 2025).

6.2. Prevention, Shelter and Long-Term Restoration of the School Environment

Crisis management is closely linked to prevention and procrastination. Schools that systematically develop prevention programs not only reduce the likelihood of certain crises occurring, but also strengthen the resilience of the entire school community. Long-term universal prevention programmes implemented in close cooperation with educators deserve special attention, as they prove to be effective especially when contextualised in everyday school life.

An important factor in the effectiveness of prevention is the involvement of the family and the wider community. Interventions aimed at parents, communication support, and parental monitoring contribute to the prevention of risky behaviors and strengthen protective factors across the child's environments (Andriessen et al., 2019). For serious risky behaviors, such as substance use or gun carrying, comprehensive approaches combining school policy, prevention programs, and mental health services have proven effective (Smout et al., 2020).

A separate area is the prevention of child sexual abuse, where programs focused on skills development, safety scenarios and cooperation between the school and the family and child protection systems are proving to be more effective (Mat Pa et al., 2025). An important part of the crisis framework is also the guardianship after traumatic events and suicide, which reduces the risk of complicated grieving, secondary traumatization and imitation. Planned post-school support, including communication, psychosocial support and connection to professional services, is proving to be crucial for the restoration of safe school functioning (Andriessen et al., 2019).

In some areas, it is also appropriate to take into account gender-based differences, for example in the relationship between victimization and self-harm, allowing for a more targeted and sensitive intervention for different groups of learners (Wang et al., 2024).

7. Workload, professional identity and conditions for the sustainable role of a school psychologist

The expansion of the role of the school psychologist towards systemic work, leadership and crisis management encounters significant structural and organizational limitations in everyday practice. Research has long drawn attention to the high workload of school psychologists, limited personnel and time capacities and the ambiguous definition of their professional role within the school. These factors not only reduce the efficiency of the services provided, but also pose a risk to the professional well-being and long-term sustainability of the profession.

7.1. Workload and capacity limits of school psychologists

School psychologists are faced with a high number of cases in their daily practice that require assessment, intervention or coordination of further care. In addition to working directly with students, they are often burdened with the need to continuously educate other school staff in the area of pupils' specific needs, mental health and prevention of risky behaviour. The breadth of these requirements is further exacerbated by the lack of administrative support, resulting in a significant part of working time being devoted to activities that indirectly reduce the capacity for professional work (Baeriswyl, Bratoljic & Krause, 2021).

Empirical studies show that a high workload limits the ability to work systematically with classes, pedagogical teams and the entire school environment. Psychologists are often pushed into a reactive regime in which the solution of acute individual cases prevails at the expense of preventive and development activities that could reduce the occurrence of problems in the long term (Niehaus, Rudasill & Rakes, 2012). This discrepancy between the expectations of a systemic role and real capacities represents one of the key paradoxes of contemporary school psychology.

7.2. Unclear expectations and the question of professional identity

Another significant challenge is the vaguely defined professional role of a school psychologist. The expectations of school management, teachers, parents and psychologists themselves often differ, which can lead to feelings of insecurity, professional isolation and weakening of professional identity. Psychologists move between the roles of individual diagnostic specialist, crisis worker, teacher consultant, and systemic actor, without these roles being clearly prioritized or institutionally anchored (Baeriswyl, Bratoljic & Krause, 2021).

Unclear expectations complicate cooperation with other school staff, especially in an environment where there is a lack of shared understanding of the contribution of school psychology to the functioning of the school as a whole. The visibility of the work of a school psychologist is usually low, as a significant part of his or her activities takes place behind the scenes of the day-to-day operation of the school and its effects are felt in the long term rather than in the immediate term.

7.3. Limited knowledge of the pupil's social sphere as a limit of intervention

An important, but often insufficiently reflected, limit of the work of school psychologists is limited access to information about the social context of pupils' lives. The school environment provides only a partial picture of a child's functioning, and a number of key determinants of a child's behavior, emotional experience, and educational success take place outside of school, especially in family, community, and socioeconomic contexts.

School psychologists often rely on mediated information, voluntary sharing by parents, or indirect indicators of social burden such as increased absenteeism, sudden changes in behavior, repeated school failure, or conflict manifestations. Direct insight into the social situation of a pupil is usually limited by legislative frameworks for the protection of privacy, institutional barriers and distrust of some families towards educational institutions.

Lack of social consideration increases the risk of individualisation of problems whose origin is in fact structural or social in nature. Interventions focused solely on behaviour or emotional regulation in the school environment can then have limited effectiveness if they are not linked to support in the wider life context of the child. This discrepancy is a source of professional frustration and at the same time reinforces the unrealistic expectations placed on the school as an institution that is supposed to compensate for deficits arising outside its direct reach.

For this reason, the need for systematic cooperation with social workers, counselling facilities and other services outside the school is emphasized in the professional literature. In this process, the school psychologist often acts as an intermediary between the school and the child's wider support system, with their role not only in diagnosis and intervention, but also in identifying situations where it is necessary to involve external professional services.

7.4. Institutional support, supervision and burnout prevention

Institutional support from the school management and founders is essential for the fulfilment of the potential of school psychologists. Research has repeatedly pointed to the importance of a realistic distribution of work tasks, sufficient time for teamwork and systemic work, and the availability of professional support in the form of regular supervision (Baeriswyl, Bratoljic & Krause, 2021; Sebastian, Herman & Reinke, 2019).

The risk of burnout is one of the most serious consequences of long-term overload and emotional demands on the profession. A significant proportion of school psychologists show signs of emotional exhaustion and chronic stress, which can negatively affect the quality of their work as well as the stability of their career paths (Alston, N., & Hughes, T. L., 2025). Preventing burnout therefore requires systematic support of mental hygiene, early identification of warning signs and creating conditions for the long-term sustainable performance of the profession.

School psychologists face a high workload, limited capacity, vaguely defined expectations, and an increased risk of burnout. A significant limit of their work is also the limited knowledge of the social context of pupils' lives, which can reduce the effectiveness of intervention strategies. If the role of a school psychologist is to truly fulfil the potential of systemic support, leadership and prevention, strong institutional support, regular supervision, a realistic distribution of tasks and an emphasis on interdisciplinary cooperation are necessary. A key prerequisite for the sustainability of this profession remains the time and space reserved for teamwork and systemic work, which enables a shift from reactive solution of individual cases to the long-term development of the school environment.

8. Conclusion

Today's school represents a complex social system in which education is inextricably intertwined with issues of mental health, relationships, safety and social cohesion. An analysis of the role of the school psychologist in this context shows that its importance can no longer be understood exclusively at the level of individual diagnosis or intervention, but as part of broader systemic processes that shape school culture and everyday school functioning. In this concept, a school psychologist becomes an expert who connects individual actors, supports preventive and development strategies and contributes to the stability of the school environment.

The article shows that systemic work, multidisciplinary cooperation and the ability to work with the dynamics of relationships at the level of the whole school are key areas in which school psychology can significantly influence the quality of the educational environment. The role of the school psychologist as a “silent engine of change” is not manifested by ostentatious interventions, but by long-term and often invisible work in the field of teacher support, work with class teams, coordination of professional teams and cultivation of the school climate. It is this inconspicuous but systematic activity that creates the conditions for the sustainable development of the school as a safe and supportive space.

At the same time, however, it confirms that the potential of this role is significantly limited by structural and institutional conditions. High workload, vaguely defined expectations, limited access to information about the social context of pupils and insufficient institutional support are major obstacles to the effective work of school psychologists. Without systematic support from school management and founders, there is a risk of reducing their work to reactive solutions to acute problems, which weakens the preventive and transformational potential of school psychology.

The conclusions of the article highlight the need to shift from an individualized understanding of problems to a broader perspective that takes into account the social, organizational and cultural context of the school. The integration of the pupil’s social sphere, the strengthening of multidisciplinary cooperation and the creation of spaces for teamwork and systemic work are proving to be key prerequisites for effective support for pupils and teaching staff. Here, the school psychologist plays the role of a professional mediator between the school and other support systems, thus contributing to the reduction of individualization of difficulties and to more realistic expectations towards the school as an institution.

From the point of view of practice and educational policy, this analysis implies the need to create conditions for the long-term sustainable performance of the profession of school psychologist. Regular supervision, continuous professional development, a realistic distribution of work tasks and a clear institutional anchoring of the role are not above standard, but a basic prerequisite for the quality and efficiency of the services provided. Investing in school psychology is thus not only supporting individual professionals, but a strategic step towards strengthening the stability and resilience of the school system as a whole.

School psychology in this concept does not act as a visible carrier of change, but as a stabilizing and integrative element that allows the school to function despite the increasing complexity of the demands it faces. It is this ability to act quietly, long-term and professionally anchored that makes the school psychologist a key actor in shaping schools that can hold together and respond to the challenges of contemporary society.

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