

Burnout among teachers in private institutions of higher education

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Abstract

The occupational health of teachers is an important theme in international and national literature. In Brazil, there is a lack of studies on Burnout in university teachers of the private school system. Thus, the purpose of this study is to assess the influence of Perceived Organizational and Social Support at work as well as socio-demographic variables over the incidence of Burnout in this public. The participants were 173 teachers who voluntarily answered valid and reliable questionnaires in their work environment. Data analyzed has used described statistics and standard multiple regression analysis. The results indicated symptoms of Burnout syndrome in teachers as well as greater predictive power of organizational support in the occurrence of the syndrome. Emotional social support, working time in the institution, age, and workload were predictors, but with less emphasis. Studies have recommended in samples from other regions of the country as well as longitudinal studies.

Keywords: Occupational stress; social behavior; organizational behavior.

Burnout em professores universitários de la red privada de enseñanza

Resumen

Las investigaciones sobre la salud de profesores son un tema importante en la literatura nacional e internacional. En Brasil hay escasez de estudios sobre Burnout en profesores universitarios de la red privada de enseñanza. De ese modo, el objetivo de ese estudio es evaluar la influencia de las percepciones de soporte organizacional y social en la labor, y también variables sociodemográficas en el suceso del Burnout en ese público. Los participantes fueron 173 profesores que respondieron voluntariamente cuestionarios válidos y fidedignos en su ambiente de trabajo. Se analizaron los datos utilizándose estadística descripta y análisis de regresión múltiple patrón. Los resultados apuntaron síntomas del síndrome de Burnout en los profesores y también como mayor poder de predicción de soporte organizacional en el suceso del síndrome. Soporte social emocional, tiempo de trabajo en la institución, edad, y carga horaria fueron predictores, pero con menos destaque. Se recomiendan estudios en muestras de otras regiones del país y también estudios longitudinales.

Palabras clave: Estrés ocupacional; comportamiento social; comportamiento organizacional.

Burnout em professores universitários do ensino particular

Resumo

As investigações sobre a saúde de professores são um tema importante na literatura nacional e internacional. No Brasil há carência de estudos sobre Burnout em professores universitários da rede privada de ensino. Desse modo, o objetivo deste estudo é avaliar a influência das percepções de suporte organizacional e social no trabalho bem como variáveis sociodemográficas na ocorrência do Burnout nesse público. Os participantes foram 173 professores que responderam voluntariamente a questionários válidos e fidedignos em seu ambiente de trabalho. Os dados foram analisados utilizando estatística descrita e análise de regressão múltipla padrão. Os resultados indicaram sintomas da síndrome de Burnout nos professores assim como maior poder de predição de suporte organizacional na ocorrência da síndrome. Suporte social emocional, tempo de trabalho na instituição, idade e carga horária foram preditores, mas com menor destaque. Recomendam-se estudos em amostras de outras regiões do país bem como estudos longitudinais.

Palavras-chave: Stress ocupacional; comportamento social; comportamento organizacional.

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Introduction

The most important objective of this study was to assess the impact of Perceived Social and Organizational Support as well as socio-demographic aspects (age, time of service for teaching institutions, and weekly workload) over the incidence of Burnout Syndrome (BS) on university teachers from the private education system of a city in the Triângulo Mineiro, a region in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. According to Diehl and Marin (2016), “the teaching occupation is considered by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as one of the most stressful in the world. Teaching has become an exhausting activity with obvious repercussions on an individual’s professional performance as well as on mental and physical health” (p. 65).

According to Carlotto and Diehl (2014), the BS has become a real problem for teachers in all levels. Studies have shown that BS has become more intense among teachers in comparison to other careers at the same risk (Byrne, 1999). Thus, such severity renders teaching a very high-risk career (Carlotto & Diehl, 2014). This situation is due to the fact that teaching professionals expose themselves too much to stress factors at work such as low salaries, precarious work conditions, too many bureaucratic attributions, too many classes, too many students in each class, student misbehavior, low participation in planning as well as a lack of preparation in order to cope with change and new demands. Concerning university teachers, according to Borsoi (2012), there is additional pressure by government institutions regulating academic activities and introducing, along teaching guidelines, research and extension assignments, and management activities, as well as increasing demands for productivity. According to Carlotto (2004), in this context of elevated, multiple requirements, the teacher in higher education is susceptible to stress factors, which manifest themselves by means of illnesses such as BS.

According to Ferreira (2016), in the context of public or private higher on-campus education, the university has gone through changes ever since the early 90s while generating significant transformations in teaching functions and attributions by means of measures established by the 1996 National Education Law (Law 9.394/1996), by the Supporting Program for Expansion and Restructuring Plans in Federal Universities, (Decree 6.096 de 2007), and by the National Education Plan (Law Project 8.035/2010). However, the lack of structure and support necessary for the implementation of such measures produce a negative impact on the job of teachers as well as on the whole institution (Gregório, 2012; Souza, 2013). Concerning private higher learning, in addition to pressure by production goals and bureaucratic assignments, these teachers need to deal with the ever-increasing number of students and attributions, which is very likely to contribute negatively to the health of these workers (Ferreira, 2016).

In their seminal work, Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined BS as a chronic response to interpersonal stress factors caused by work-related situations since the workplace and its organization might be responsible for the exhaustion in its workers. Burnout consists of three dimensions: emo-

tional exhaustion, depersonalization, and disappointment at work. Later on, BS was defined by Tamayo and Tróccoli (2009) as a “psychological syndrome caused by strong chronic emotional tension associated to severe occupational stress” (p. 213), which manifests itself by means of a reduction in idealism and of the energy devoted to one’s own career, of negative attitudes concerning the activities and clients in the workplace, as well as a drastic reduction in levels of professional satisfaction and commitment. Three components were identified in the measure constructed and validated by the authors, who took the previous measure by Maslach and Jackson as reference in order to adapt it to the Brazilian cultural reality. The instrument is provided with three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and disappointment in the work in the work. The first component comprehends feelings of physical and emotional tiredness caused by an individual’s awareness that too much has been demanded emotion-wise. The second component is associated to negative attitudes of insensibility, indifference, lack of commitment as well as excessive distance between professionals and the beneficiaries of their service. The third one, disappointment in the work, refers to feelings of incompetence towards the conducted activities (Tamayo & Tróccoli, 2009). In Brazil, the seriousness of the BS problem is made obvious by Decree 3.048/1999, in which the Social Welfare System recognized BS as an occupational disease.

The Burnout syndrome most frequently occurs among professionals working in direct contact with the general public and who are exposed to chronic stress factors (Gil-Monte, Carlotto, & Câmara, 2011). Their determinants are contextual, and of socio-professional nature while the causes are not attributed to individuals themselves (Gil-Monte et al., 2011; Gomes & Quintão, 2011). Although BS affects people in the most diverse professions, its study is predominantly focused on the areas of education and health because their activities involve contact with other people, which makes these professionals more susceptible to labor-related stress (Gomes & Quintão 2011; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Quintão & David, 2012). Studies have demonstrated that teachers are at high risk, maybe even at higher risk when compared to health professionals, which justifies the crescent number of research works on BS among teachers in order to establish prevention measures (Costa, Gil-Monte, Possobon, & Ambrosano, 2013).

According to Tamayo and Tróccoli (2002), research works have approached the relation between emotional exhaustion, a dimension of BS, and organizational variables, the nature of work, and individuals themselves. Cardoso, Baptista, Sousa and Goulart Júnior (2017), while assessing the production in national literature in the 2006 – 2015 period, identified a total number of 141 empirical studies, out of which 31 referred to the job of teachers. The authors reported that in most studies there is a predominance of burnout evaluations and statistical assessments of socio-demographic aspects. Cardoso et al. also realized a survey on the investigated variables in combination with burnout. The variables include depression, anxiety, mental disorders, coping, professional satisfaction, organizational commitment, workplace

engagement, and so on. However, it has been observed that perceived organizational and social support for professionals is not listed by these authors.

Diehl and Marin (2016), while revising the national production of studies on Burnout among Brazilian teachers in all levels of education in the 2010 to 2015 period, identified investigations on the quality of life of teachers as well as the most frequent occurrences among these professionals. The scope of studied variables focused on the symptoms because of a preoccupation to establish prevention measures for the benefit of these workers' health. Once again, the aforementioned perceptions were not investigated in this survey. This blank in national production justifies the theoretical model test in which perceived organizational and social Support at work is investigated as a BS explanatory variable.

Social support at work refers to informational, instrumental, and emotional support provided to individuals in their workplace. Such support is fundamental since it represents an important prevention factor against occupational diseases. It also directly contributes to individual general well-being, as well as mental and physical health (Andrade, Hoch, Vieira, & Rodrigues, 2012). The absence of this support, from an individual's perspective might cause negative feelings regarding professional activities, which generates greater susceptibility to emotional exhaustion, a central element of BS (Andrade et al., 2012)

Among organizational variables, Santos and Gonçalves (2010) consider Perceived Organizational Support (POS) to be strongly linked to BS since this perception is conducive to the satisfaction of socio-emotional needs of professionals in their workplace and to feelings of affiliation towards an organization and its social identity. POS is defined by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa (1986) as the beliefs and expectations of individuals concerning their own recognition and retribution by an organization for their services. POS and BS are especially linked when it comes to emotional exhaustion. Such exhaustion might be reduced by means of an improvement in social support by co-workers and supervisors in order to better manage the processes of an organization with the employment of clear policies of information availability, planning and updating (Andrade et al., 2012; Tamayo & Tróccoli, 2002). Considering indicators in literature, the listed perceptions constituted antecedents variables of BS. Following a common trend in studies on burnout, socio-demographic variables (sex, age, marital status, work shift, time of service for education institutions, weekly workload and the provision of guidelines) were included especially because the results of previous studies are not conclusive.

Method

Participants

The sample in this study is characterized by convenience and is made up of 179 professors at private institu-

tions, out of which 50.3% (90) are female, the average age 39.86 years ($DP=8.95$). Their levels of education ranged from graduate to post-doctorate, and the predominant level was master at 51.40% ($n=92$). Regarding, marital status, most participants (70.90%; $n=127$) were married or living with partners. Concerning their professional careers, the average time of teaching service was 11.42 years ($DP=9.22$) and the average time of service in the participating universities was 6.20 years ($DP=4.69$), the average weekly workload were 20.48 hours ($DP=11.52$).

Most participants were engaged in other professional activities, in addition to their teaching activities (64.60%; $n=115$). Concerning working schedules, 72.60% (130) work in the morning, 11.70% (21) in the afternoon, and 98.30% (176) in the evening, which demonstrates the fact that these teachers work at different times of the day. Some of the teachers checked the afternoon box as part of their working hours. However, the courses in the surveyed institutions are given only in the morning and in the evening. This is due to the fact that, for those engaged in professional activities other than teaching, the questionnaire did not make it possible to inform whether the reported professional activity was exclusively at the universities or not.

The student-orientation activities focused basically on papers by undergraduates at the end of their courses (28.50% - $n = 51$); followed by *lato sensu* post-graduation course conclusion papers (20.10% - $n = 36$); mastering and doctorate only 1.10% (2); and internship orientation (39.10% - $n = 70$). The other teachers were not engaged in orientation activities.

Regarding their position in the teaching career, 11.20% (20) were coordinators; 97.20% (174) were professors in graduation courses; 17.90% (32) worked in *lato sensu* post-graduation and only 1.10% (2) *stricto sensu* post-graduation. 14 participants (7.80%) were distance-learning professors and 27 respondents (15.10%) participated in institution commissions.

Concerning working hours, 109 (60.89%) professionals reported up to 20 hours a week, 60 (33.52%) from 21 to 40 hours a week, and 7 (3.91%) over 40 hours a week. The other participants did not answer that question.

Instruments

In order to collect data, three construct measures were employed along with a socio-demographic questionnaire, which will be described below:

The Burnout Characterization Scale (Tamayo & Tróccoli, 2009), consisting of 35 items assessing the dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion (Alpha = .93), dehumanization (Alpha = .84) and disappointment at work (Alpha = .90). These items are assessed by means of a Likert scale of 5 points ranging from Never (1) to Always (5). The Scale of Perceived Social Support for Work, by Gomide, Guimarães and Damásio (2004), is composed of 18 items distributed into three factors: informational social support (Alpha = .85),

emotional social support (Alpha = .83) and instrumental social support (Alpha = .72). The items are assessed by means of a Likert scale of four points ranging from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (4). Last, the scale Perceived Organizational Support (POS) - (Siqueira, 2008) is composed of six items, with reliability index of .86. The items are displayed in a Likert scale of seven points ranging from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (7). The socio-demographic questionnaire contains labor-related questions. For example, working shift, time of service for institution, personal info (sex, age, marital status).

Data Collecting Procedures and ethical concerns

After approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Uberlândia – ruling 1.794.873, on October 24, 2016, for the realization of the present study, the instruments were applied to five private universities, with due permission by their administrators, during the breaks between classes. The teachers were informed that their participation was voluntary and their answers confidential, all in accordance with ethical guidelines. The researchers distributed 220 questionnaires and returned 179 with the required answers.

Data analysis procedures

After preparing the data file and verifying the necessary assumptions for the use of multivariate techniques, six cases of extreme values were eliminated, making up the sample 173 participants (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Later on, descriptive statistics (average, standard deviation and frequency), Cronbach's Alpha for sample and Pearson's Correlation were employed.

In order to verify the occurrence of BS, initially, the factor scores for the scales were estimated. Considering that the average scores might reveal too little about the syndrome occurrence, and taking as a reference the amplitude of the answer scale ranging from 1 to 5 points, frequency distributions and the use of percentiles were explored in order to classify scores. The cutoff points were based on the low, medium and high terciles of the score distribution. Thus, each dimension was characterized as low (up to 33 percentile scores), medium (percentile scores between 34 and 67), and high (over 68 percentile scores) (Borges, Argolo, & Baker, 2006).

The model test was realized by means of standard multiple regression analysis in order to verify which variables would constitute the best predictors of BS. The antecedents variables are represented by perceived organizational and social support for work, time of service for institution, weekly workload, and age. The criterion variables are the dimensions of BS.

Results

According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (2005) even though there is no absolute standard, alpha values equal

to or greater than .70 reveal acceptable reliability. Considering the observed values, all variables were included in posterior assessments because the values range from .79 to .93.

The descriptive statistics show the results in each factor of the study instruments (Table 1).

The results reveal that participants in general tend to present feelings of emotional exhaustion, dehumanization, and disappointment at work at levels below the midpoint of the scale (3.0), which is composed of five points. The exhaustion factor presents the highest average ($M = 1.95$, $DP = .63$), followed by dehumanization ($M = 1.66$, $DP = .50$) and, finally,

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of variables.

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Exhaustion	1.95	.63
Dehumanization	1.66	.50
Disappointment at work	1.59	.52
Organizational Support	4.79	1.58
Informational social support	2.79	.66
Instrumental social support	2.53	.66
Emotional social support	2.89	.51

Note. $n = 173$. Elaborated by the authors.

disappointment at work ($M = 1.59$, $DP = .52$), confirming the trend in which studies on BS reveal higher values for the emotional exhaustion factor.

Perception factors of social support at work, in a scale of four points, the highest average was identified for emotional social support ($M = 2.89$, $DP = .51$), followed by informational social support ($M = 2.79$, $DP = .66$), and the lowest average for instrumental social support ($M = 2.53$, $DP = .66$). The averages are just above the midpoint of the scale, suggesting teachers' doubts about the presence of the three types of social support at work.

In order to verify the occurrence of BS considering the level of severity, a categorization was used in which low, medium and high levels were attributed to each syndrome factors based on the percentiles (Table 2).

The results indicate that 63 (36%); 54 (31.2%) and 42 (24.3%) of the teachers presented moderate levels of emotional exhaustion, dehumanization and disappointment in the work, respectively; and 51 (29.5%) and 60 (34.7%) presented high levels of emotional exhaustion, dehumanization and disappointment, respectively. The identification of BS is possible when there are high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization whereas the level of disappointment is low. However, moderate results for any one of the dimensions deserve attention because they might point at the probability of BS (Codo & Vasques-Menezes, 1998).

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of the burnout dimensions.

Level	Exhaustion		Dehumanization		Disappointment	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Low	59	34.1	59	34.1	71	41
Medium	63	36.4	54	31.2	42	24.3
High	51	29.5	60	34.7	60	34.7
Total	173	100	173	100	173	100

Note. *n* = 173. Elaborated by authors.

The crossover of frequencies indicates that 42 (24.02%) teachers are categorized as high level regarding the occurrence of emotional exhaustion and disappointment. Concerning the emotional exhaustion and dehumanization dimensions, the results show that 36 (20.8%) teachers are within the zone of occurrence of burnout while 17 (9.8%) presented a moderate level.

The correlations between variables were significant at a $p < .01$ level, except for the socio-demographic variables that presented significance with only one or two of the BS dimensions. The correlation indexes were classified by means of a Proposal by Dancey and Reidy (2006). Correlations below .4 were considered low. Correlations between .4 and .69 were considered moderate and the ones above .69 were deemed as high.

The relation between the criterion variables and antecedents variables is negative, which means that the less perceived organizational and social support, the more exhaustion, dehumanization and disappointment. That was not the case with the variable related to weekly workload, which presents itself as directly related to the two MS dimensions.

Concerning the relations between emotional exhaustion and the other antecedents variables, there is negative correlation with POS ($r = -.41$), informational social support ($r = -.32$), instrumental social support ($r = -.38$) and emotional social support ($r = -.29$). The greatest correlation coefficient, concerning emotional exhaustion, refers to POS even though it is considered low. The correlations between the dimensions of burnout and social and organizational support at work ranged from $r = .27$ to $r = -.44$, and therefore considered low. Disappointment, the last BS dimension, is negatively related to all types of perceived support, with coefficients ranging from .41 (POS) to .34 (informational social support).

Concerning socio-demographic variables, positive and low correlations are observed between weekly workload and exhaustion ($r = .15$) and dehumanization ($r = .19$), and negative relation between age and dehumanization ($r = -.16$). Therefore, only these variables will be part of the regression analyses (Table 3).

As an explanatory variable, exhaustion had only POS ($\beta = -.27$; $t = -2.767$; $p = .001$) which explained 21% of the variance (R^2 adjusted = .18; $F(5.167) = 8.747$; $p < .011$). The explanatory variables of dehumanization were POS ($\beta = -.28$; $t = -2.767$; $p = .006$), weekly workload ($\beta = .18$; $t =$

Table 3. Summary of standard multiple regression analyzes for the criterion variables emotional exhaustion, dehumanization and disappointment at work.

Criterion-variables	Predictors	B	B	<i>R</i> multiple	<i>R</i> ² model	<i>R</i> ² adjusted
Exhaustion	Perceived Organizational Support	-.11	-.27	.45	.21	.18
Dehumanization	Perceived Organizational Support	-.09	-.28	.50	.25	.23
	Weekly workload	.01	.18			
	Age	-.01	-.14			
Disappointment	Perceived Organizational Support	-.08	-.24	.47	.22	.20
	Emotional social support	-.21	-.20			

Note. Elaborated by the authors.

2.694; $p = .008$) and age ($\beta = -.14$; $t = -2.019$; $p = .045$). Such variables, combined, explain 25% of the variance (R^2 adjusted = .23; $F(6.166) = 9.367$; $p < .001$). Last, disappointment had as explanatory variables POS ($\beta = -.24$; $t = -2.327$; $p = .021$) and emotional social support ($\beta = -.20$; $t = -2.398$; $p = .018$) which explained 22% of the variance (R^2 adjusted = .20; $F(4.168) = 11.660$; $p < .001$).

Discussion

The evaluation of BS in its emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and disappointment dimensions has allowed for the identification of the prevalence of BS among the surveyed teachers, and indicating higher numbers for exhaustion, which is consistent with what has been recorded in literature (Borges, Ruiz, Rangel, & González, 2012; Maslach et al., 2001; Tamayo & Tróccoli, 2002). Maslach et al. (2001) believe that BS gets started in this dimension, which goes on to cause depersonalization as a means of defense against feelings of emotional exhaustion, which consequently causes feelings of frustration and a lack of commitment.

Boujut, Dean, Grouselle and Cappe (2016) consider emotional exhaustion to be a central characteristic of BS. For differential diagnosis, exhaustion is a necessary criterion, but it is not enough. That is why it is important that at least one of the dimensions be present in order to constitute BS.

The teachers noticed the support by the organization, but did not seem so confident regarding the presence or absence of social support in the workplace. The literature supports the view that the reduction of adverse consequences at work may be achieved by means of perceived organizational and social support, which truly benefits workers' well-being (Andrade et al., 2012; Neves, Oliveira, & Alves, 2014; Tamayo & Tróccoli, 2002).

The correlations between variables in this study revealed an inverted relation between BS and perceived social - organizational support and age, and direct relation with weekly workload, in accordance with other works published by, for example, Figueroa, Jara and Celis (2012).

Concerning the social support perception – informational, instrumental and emotional dimensions – the correlations were significant, despite being low, with all dimensions of BS. In consonance with the literature, these relations are negative and indicate that perceived support at the workplace is an effective way to prevent BS.

Recent studies testify to the importance of the social support perception as a mitigating factor against BS, which demonstrates a predictive relation between these variables (Boujut et al., 2016; Ju, Lan, Li, Feng, & You, 2015; Figueroa et al., 2012; Pietarinen, Pyhältö, Soini, & Salmela-Aro, 2013). Pietarinen et al. demonstrate a consistent correlation between the three dimensions of BS and the social context in which teachers live. Boujut et al. also reinforce that idea indicating that social support has a moderating effect on the impact generated by labor-related stress in teachers in specialized education.

The relation between BS and POS presented a moderate level of correlation for all dimensions of BS. Anomneze, Ugwu, D. I., Enwereuzor and Ugwu, L. I. (2016) also found relation between POS and BS when surveying high school teachers but they employed measuring scales of a type different from the ones applied here. In addition, studies with teachers in higher education at private institutions are scarce. The few studies available also involve teachers from public institutions and from other levels of education.

According to Figueroa et al. (2012), POS affects the development of BS. A worker's perception that an organization works with inconsistent policies might affect POS, and consequently, contribute to the occurrence of BS (Figueroa et al., 2012).

The correlation between age and dehumanization (BS) has proven significant and negative, and in accordance with similar results from other studies. The authors explained that older teachers developed their own devices in order to cope with stressful situations inherent to teaching activities (Carlotto, 2010). Concerning the ages of the teachers, literature points at higher scores for emotional exhaustion among the younger ones, which would be a consequence of unrealistic expectations concerning their profession, and probably of their lack of experience or for not knowing how to deal with a demanding professional environment (Borges & Lauxen, 2016; Carlotto, 2010). However, in this study, there was significant correlation only with dehumanization. This questions remain unanswered concerning age and BS.

The teachers' time of service for institutions and in the teaching career did not present significant correlation with the dimensions of BS. Likewise, Carlotto (2010) did not encounter any significant result for the dimensions of BS while surveying teachers in child, basic, high school, and college education. Concerning higher education, the sample included teachers from private and public institutions.

The relation between time of service and the development of BS, according with the literature, is controversial concerning direction – direct or inverted (Codo & Vasques-Menezes, 1999). For example, Silveira, Câmara and Amazarray (2014) affirm that the probability of occurrence of BS increases with the tiredness caused by the time of exposure to stress factors in the workplace. However, Benevides-Pereira (2002 quoted by Silveira et al., 2014) admits that professionals with more time and experience might develop more adequate tools in order to cope with uncomfortable situations. On the other hand, the results in this study did not show any significant correlation between time of service and the dimensions of BS, POS and social support perception in the workplace.

The weekly amount of working hours was the only variable that presented positive and significant correlation, however low, with the appearance of BS, for the emotional exhaustion and dehumanization dimensions, in accordance with the literature (Borges & Lauxen, 2016; Carlotto, 2010). According to a study by Levy, Sobrinho and Souza (2009) too many working hours cause a cognitive and physical overload, and become one of the factors conducive to the

development of chronic stress. Ferreira, Santos and Rigolon (2014) consider the teaching career as one of the categories with the higher incidence of BS, especially brought out by too much work. Borges and Lauxen (2016) declare that the parallel exercise of other professional and bureaucratic activities by teachers in public institutions contributes to this work overload. This result might possibly apply to teachers in private institutions too. In this study, although most of the participants have reported the exercise of other functions in addition to teaching, which certainly contributed to the reported amount of working hours, there was no investigation into these teaching and non-teaching activities because the pieces of information were aggregated.

Anyway, work overload has been correlated with Burnout or, at least, discomfort among workers. Understanding this phenomenon requires a more comprehending approach including economic and social relations. It also requires the discovery of the historical context in which things went wrong (Castro, 2013). Castro (2013) reports a tension between the project designed by an individual and the organizational world with its new management ways. From that perspective, the realization of a historical analysis and of other investigation methods could better contextualize the occurrence of that syndrome.

Finally, the proposed model test that predicted social support perception and POS as explanatory variables of BS was partially confirmed. The results confirmed that POS was the most important explanatory variable for emotional exhaustion, dehumanization and disappointment, all in an inverted relation. If a teacher feels, on a daily basis, that the institution does not care about the well-being of its professionals, and does not appreciate their contributions, there is greater probability for the occurrence of the syndrome. The literature supports this explanation – lack of approval and support by supervisor, lack of proper retribution, as well as mutual distrust (Anomneze et al., 2016; Neves et al., 2014) contribute to the occurrence of BS.

In the case of dehumanization – the second dimension of BS – the explanatory variables, in addition to POS, are age and working hours. In other words, the more POS and the older the teachers, the less possibility for the development of apathy and negative attitudes towards students and fellow teachers. On the other hand, the more working hours, the greater the possibility of dehumanization (Borges & Lauxen, 2016), which indicates that when the workload is perceived as excessive it might lead to teachers feeling exploited.

Disappointment – the third dimension of BS – presented social support perception and POS as explanatory variables, in an inverted relation. However, the lesser these perceptions, the greater the possibility for the deterioration of competence and satisfaction with personal achievements at work. Contrary to what has been presented by the literature, social support at work did not present itself as an explanatory factor of BS, except for emotional social support. This type of support, when it is present, might work as a shock absorber and help avoid feelings of discouragement, frustration, incompetence and inadequacy at work (Maslach et al., 2001; Tamayo & Tróccoli, 2009).

There are indicators of the occurrence or possibility of BS development among teachers, which is caused by the absence of perceived organizational support. Age, weekly workload and emotional social support might affect the occurrence of BS, with a lesser impact. The institutions must provide teachers with support and resources necessary for a good performance at the workplace, offer help when they have problems, appreciate and gratify their efforts, as well as show teachers that their satisfaction matters. The management of teaching in private institutions might be conducive to the exhaustion of teachers when their activities are previously organized, sometimes with standard teaching materials, in a way that reduces the autonomy of these professionals. The absence of human resource policies focused on organizational support and teacher satisfaction corroborates the perception that these professionals are underappreciated and that they might be easily replaced.

The reality of these professionals has inspired plenty of research aiming at getting to know the generating aspects of BS, as well as the planning interventions towards health and well-being. It is a consensus among scholars that the causes are a combination of social, organizational, and individual factors (Tamayo & Tróccoli, 2009; Neves et al., 2014). This study supports that view when it investigates individual and organizational aspects. Although this study has focused on these aspects, it is not possible to disregard the impact of economy on the work conditions of teachers in private institutions of higher education, where the terms of employment are not favorable and teachers do not feel safe. According to Barsotti (2011), private institutions dismiss professionals in order to avoid the obligation to pay higher salaries. The fact that the current law demands from universities 30% of doctors and masters might be conducive to this type of practice.

It is also necessary to remember that the great majority of teachers is engaged in other professional activities in addition to teaching, which leads us to the conclusion that teaching does not provide them with enough for survival.

Conclusion

BS is an occupational health problem that affects an increasing number of workers. Caused by chronic emotional stress and physical exhaustion, it is quite a common condition especially among professionals in the areas of health and education, which present socio-professional as well as contextual aspects as determinants (Maslach et al., 2001). According to Batista et al. (2010), BS studies on Brazilian teachers have become more numerous since the 90s. However, they still seem incipient when in comparison to international studies.

Regarding teachers in private institutions of higher education, it has been observed that organizational aspects might stimulate the development of BS. The presence of BS, in this group of teachers, is mainly a result of the absence of perceived organizational support. Other identified predictors of BS were age, weekly workload, and emotional social

support at work, with a lesser degree of influence though. The identified aspects show solutions for intervention and prevention of BS.

Policies and practices of human resources might constitute an organizational instrument for the valorization of teachers, along with the provision of solutions for necessities as well as social practices as an everyday source of emotional social support. The opportunity for teachers to take part in planning courses might prove an effective way to improve professional performance, along with strategies in order to control, or avoid work overload. An organization, therefore, plays a crucial role in the prevention of BS by implementing policies in order to increase support for workers. It is also important that such support be perceptible.

The present research seems to be something new when it studies the relations of social support perception along with POS and demographic variables as possible predictors of BS in university teachers at private institutions of higher education. Its results might contribute to the advancement of studies on the discussed variables, and serve as reference for news investigations. More comprehending context aspects, as well as socio-economic ones, deserve the attention of qualitative and longitudinal investigations.

Among the limitations of the study is the convenience sample, in addition to the sociodemographic questionnaire that generated doubts regarding the teaching workload and the work shift in teaching. Moreover, because these are results from particular faculties in a specific region, they are not generalizable. Thus, only the accumulation of knowledge will make it possible to reach conclusive results.

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