



## The Burnout Syndrome in teachers of public institutions of the Ecuadorian Sierra

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### Abstract

Currently, the teaching profession requires multiple transformations/educational training to provide a quality education, this can generate saturation of activities, emotions and physical discomfort in teachers. The objective of this research was to determine the prevalence of Burnout Syndrome in teachers of public schools in the Ecuadorian Sierra. The methodology was quantitative-descriptive-correlational, with variables of sex, level of education in which they work and Burnout Syndrome. The instrument used was the Maslach Burnout Inventory questionnaire, with the following analysis categories: 1) emotional exhaustion; 2) depersonalization; and 3) personal fulfillment. The main results indicate that, in emotional exhaustion, teachers present various types of intensity: 44.92% low, 23.19% medium and 31.88% high. In depersonalization, 65.22% of teachers correspond to the low level; 24.64% medium; and 10.14% high achievement personal teachers are located at: 66.67% low; 18.84% medium; and 10.14% high. These percentages allow revealing that the work environment and the functions that each teacher performs determine the level of Burnout Syndrome that they may have and, although the percentages are not high, they do represent prevalence in their mechanical work performance and the emotional as well as physical part, they can be in decline

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## 1. Introduction

Teaching is a profession that has been underestimated for a long time, but the reality is that those who practice it can develop anxiety, stress or depression disorders. In the society of knowledge and information, constant updating is required of the teacher of the 21st century, to respond to the needs and requirements of this changing and diverse society, therefore, he must continuously seek techniques, strategies, methodologies, innovations, resources and new teaching methods, which can cause teachers discomfort due to poor management or ignorance of technologies (under certain conditions). This situation can frustrate, stress and saturate teachers due to the workload and functions that their work implies, such as: 1) preparing a situational analysis of each student; 2) group and personalized planning; 3) elaboration of didactic material; 4) weekly and monthly reports; 5) student performance evaluations; 6) training for legal representatives, mothers and/or fathers of the students; and 7) attendance at meetings called by the institution or by the Ministry of Education (2016).

On the other hand, the emotions of teachers can be affected by the saturation of activities, because the hours determined for their rest or recreation are used in the fulfillment of work activities. This can lead to stress and in some situations it becomes somatic. Working strenuous hours of more than eight hours a day leads the teacher to manifest headaches, fatigue, gastritis, among other physical alterations (Ramírez, 2017). Job exhaustion creates limiting situations that, due to psycho-emotional wear and tear, the teacher can no longer perform their responsibilities adequately and if the emotional part of the human being is not in optimal conditions, the teacher tends to react rudely or reject in front of their students, in addition to causing frustration due to the aforementioned condition. All the elements mentioned can cause physical and emotional discomfort, so the objective of this research is to determine the intensity of the Burnout Syndrome (SB) in teachers of three public educational institutions in the Ecuadorian Sierra, at all levels of education: Initial education; Basic Education, with its sublevels: Elementary (from first to fourth year), Middle (from fifth to seventh year), as well as Superior (from eighth to tenth year); and Unified General Baccalaureate.

### 1.1. Education in the 21st century: teaching work as a physical and psychological risk

The pedagogical action and the new educational demands place the teaching staff in a training and availability of resources that tend to be insufficient for the challenges of adapting the offer and the formats of pedagogical services to students in disadvantaged environments. In the 21st century, teachers in the Latin American region have few training opportunities for inclusion or for working with students in less favored and more diverse contexts (United Nations, 2020; UNESCO, 2013; 2018). In addition, the new conditions that have been generated after the Covid-19 pandemic, such as political and social ones, require teachers to use virtual platforms and methodologies with which they are not necessarily familiar.

Villafuerte (2020) mentions that after educational institutions worldwide develop contingency plans to reach students during the Covid-19 pandemic, virtual learning becomes viable. This pandemic opened up a range of problems and realities that are currently visible, which have led to reveal an educational inequality that is limiting and includes problems such as little internet access, low mobility of students, low economic resources that have required the teacher to seek various pedagogical strategies so that educational content reaches students who have this type of need, among others.



## 1.2. Burnout Syndrome

Syndrome (BS) has several other names: *burnout syndrome*, *emotional overload syndrome*, *burnout syndrome* or *fatigue at work syndrome*. This syndrome was identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an occupational risk factor that affects the quality of life and mental health, which can push the individual to the limit on some occasions and put the life of the patient at risk from it. Said risk can lead the person or professional who suffers from it or who shows signs of SB to provide poor service and attention to the students or group of people to whom they provide care; and leads people who may suffer from it to be inoperative in their daily activities, absenteeism in care, and failure to achieve goals, among others (Lachiner, 2015).

Torres (2022) mentions that the World Health Organization has officially recognized Burnout or "syndrome of being burned" as a disease that can trigger not only emotional disorders, but lead to physical illnesses, information that, after the ratification of revision number 11 of the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems* (ICD-11), is approved and in force since January 1, 2022.

Stress is considered as the disease of the 21st century, in which the incidence is increased annually in the different professions, especially in those related to jobs that involve human contact such as health and education. Regarding the educational field, referred to in this article, in recent years educational institutions have been affected by numerous cases of work stress in teachers, due to contemporary political and/or social changes, leaving sequels and related problems in the physical, social, psychological and emotional part (Rodríguez et al., 2017).

## 1.3. Consequences of the Burnout Syndrome in teachers

Marrau (2004) indicates that the most common consequences produced by the SB are of different types and are developed in three components: a) emotional exhaustion; b) depersonalization; and c) people's performance is harmed. These components trigger and develop psychosomatic alterations, which can present with cardiorespiratory diseases, migraines, chronic fatigue, sleep disorders, ulcers and disorders, muscular tension, dizziness and vertigo, among others. Those of a behavioral type develop addictive and avoidant actions, also adding the intake of substances such as coffee, alcohol, the existence of absenteeism from work, low personal performance, emotional distancing, frequent interpersonal conflicts in the workplace and in the family. Also, affections in the emotions, which trigger irritability, inability to concentrate, emotional distancing. Work consequences demonstrate impaired performance, hostile actions, conflicts, accidents, unwanted turnover, abandonment. The mental part is affected with feelings of emptiness, exhaustion, failure, impotence, low self-esteem and poor personal fulfillment. It is usual to appreciate attitudes such as nervousness, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, paranoid and/or aggressive behavior towards students, classmates and the family itself.

## 2. Methodology

The research was carried out during the years 2020 and 2022, under a quantitative-descriptive research model, with the participation of sixty-nine teachers: ten men, equivalent to 14.49% participation and fifty-nine women, equivalent to 85.51% participation, from three schools in the Ecuadorian Sierra; in order to identify relationships between variables. A descriptive correlational design was used between variables such as: a) gender; b) level of education in which they work; and c) Burnout Syndrome. Next, the number of participants is presented in relation to the educational level that works considered in the national education system of Ecuador.

**Table 1.** Research participants.



Level of education in which they work	Number of individuals who work in this field	Percentage equivalence
Initial Education	14	20.28%
Basic - Elementary	23	33.33%
Basic - Middle Education	23	33.33%
Basic - Higher Education	7	10.14 %
Unified General Baccalaureate	2	2.89%
Total:	69	100%

Source: Own elaboration.

The instrument used was the *Maslach Burnout Inventory –MBI–* questionnaire (Maslach et al., 1986). This instrument is made up of twenty-two items (reactive) in the form of statements about the feelings and attitudes of the professional in his work and towards the student body; its function is to measure professional burnout. This test measures the frequency and intensity with which Burnout Syndrome can occur.

tool *Google Forms* and was sent to the participants via *WhatsApp*; Their contact numbers were provided by the relevant authorities of the participating educational units. The elements evaluated by the indicated instrument are framed in three subscales: 1) *emotional exhaustion or exhaustion*, estimates the experience of being emotionally exhausted by work instances; 2) *depersonalization*, assesses the degree to which each teacher maintains behaviors such as detachment and estrangement; and 3) *personal fulfillment*, assesses feelings of (self)efficiency and personal fulfillment in the field of work.

**Table 2.** Elements of the MBI with their values, clues, item numbers and questions evaluated.

Evaluated element	Values			Indications of Burnout	Number of items	Questions evaluated
	Low	Medium	High			
Emotional exhaustion	0 – 18	19 – 26	27 – 54	More than 26	9	1-2-3-6-8-13-14-16-20
Depersonalization	0 – 5	6 – 9	10 – 30	More than 9	5	5-10-11-15-22
Personal	40 – 56	34 – 39	0 – 33	Less than 34	8	4-7-9-12-17-18-19-21
				Total	22	

Source: Own elaboration based on Maslach et al. (1986).

### 3. Results and discussions

Next, the analysis of the results obtained from the MBI test is detailed from the application to the population to the 69 participants: teachers of three public educational institutions of the Ecuadorian Sierra, who work at levels that correspond from Initial Education to Unified General Baccalaureate; For this, the information is detailed by means of analysis categories, which are based on the elements that the mentioned test evaluates.

#### 3.1. Emotional

Emotional exhaustion reflects the level of emotional fatigue, due to the instances of work in which a person finds himself. The frequency of the results of this category of analysis is detailed in a general way in table 3. The information reflects that: 44.92% of the evaluated population has a low level;



23.19% of teachers obtained an average result; and 31.88% have a high level of emotional exhaustion; this can be generated by the different activities they carry out in their educational institution.

**Table 3.** Frequency distribution: emotional exhaustion.

Emotional exhaustion	Frequency	Percentage
Low	31	44.92%
Medium	16	23.19%
High	22	31.88%
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Own elaboration.

Manzano (2020) mentions that the SB in teachers can be generated from the demands of the functions and activities that each teacher exercises in educational institutions; In addition, the work environment in which they work should be considered, which can generate fatigue, physical and mental fatigue, as well as anxiety disorders. It should also be considered that teaching is a profession that is located in the field of social relations, which is demanding in terms of human and empathetic responsibility, since commitment to childhood, childhood and adolescence requires commitment to the profession and this it can generate instability or psychological discomfort in multiple scenarios for each teacher (López and Zacarías, 2020). On the other hand, it implies actions and behavior that trigger diverse emotional exhaustion, depending on the level of education in which they work, as well as the sex to which they belong.

**Table 4.** Cross table of frequencies by sex and level of education in which they work: emotional exhaustion.

Level of education in which they work	Gender	Emotional exhaustion			Total
		Low	Medium	High	
Initial Education	Female	6 42.86%	2 14.29%	6 42.86%	14 100%
	Male	2 50%	2 50%	0 0%	4 100%
Basic - Elementary Education	Female	11 57.89%	4 21.05%	4 21.05%	19 100%
	Male	2 50%	2 50%	0 0%	4 100%
Basic Education - Middle	Female	7 36.84%	7 36.84%	5 26.32%	19 100%
	Male	3 75%	0 0%	1 25%	4 100%
Basic - Higher Education	Women	2 33.33%	1 16.67%	3 50%	6 100%
	Men	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1 100%
Unified General Bacallaureate	Women	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1 100%
	Men	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1 100%
<b>Total women</b>		26 44.06%	14 23.72%	19 32.20%	59 100%



<b>Total men</b>	5 50%	2 20%	3 30%	10 100%
<b>General total</b>	31 44.92%	16 23.18%	22 31.88%	69 100%

Source: Own elaboration.

In Initial Education there are only 14 female teachers, of whom it can be seen that 42.86% have a low level of emotional exhaustion, 14.29% are at a medium level and 42.86% have a high level for the multiple activities that must be carried out in the educational field. It is necessary to highlight that the low and high level have the same percentage, in addition in the Ecuadorian Initial Education there are numerous teachers, mainly because this level is considered as a space destined only for women, due to the care that childhood required (Cabrera-Vintimilla and Cale-Lituma, 2020). This situation can generate frustration, as well as emotional exhaustion, since historically women have been included in domestic activities and even today they perform caregiving roles at home, saturating their professional activities with personal activities.

Of the 19 teachers of Basic - Elementary Education, 57.89% obtained a low level in terms of the element evaluated, 21.05% presented a medium level and 21.05% obtained a high level. Of the 4 teachers who work at this level, 50% obtained a low level related to the emotional exhaustion element, and the other 50% presented a medium level. Saltijeral and Ramos (2015) mention that although the percentages are low and medium, it does not mean that the SB is present, on the contrary, they are indications that can warn the teaching staff about the situation they are going through. This situation is replicated in Basic - Middle Education: of 19 were women, 36.84% obtained a low level and a medium level; while 26.32% were found in the high level of emotional exhaustion. Of the 4 teachers, 75% correspond to a low level and 25% to a high level of the evaluated element.

In Basic - Higher Education it was possible to show that, of 6 women, 33.33% have a low level of emotional exhaustion, while 16.67 have a medium level and 50% a high level. The only teacher who works in this field obtained a high level related to emotional exhaustion. In Unified General Baccalaureate, the only teacher obtained a high result in terms of emotional exhaustion. The medium and high levels of these levels of education are interrelated with the SB, since one of the peculiarities of the indicated educational years is that the majority of students enter puberty and adolescence, so their treatment is more complex in terms of how interpersonal relationships and the teaching-learning process are developed, which can cause absenteeism derived from work conditions and the educational needs of the group of students that is located in the mentioned school years (Bruch et al., 2016).

In general, of all the teachers, 44.06% obtained a low level, 23.72% a medium level and 32.20% a high level; As for the teachers, 50% obtained a low level, 20% obtained a medium level and 30% a high level. In total, of the 69 teachers to whom the MBI was applied, 44.92% obtained a low level of emotional exhaustion, 23.18% had a medium level and 31.88% obtained a high level in terms of emotional exhaustion element of emotional exhaustion. According to Abraham (1984, as cited in Rodríguez et al., 2017) women are more likely to face work stress, because they play two roles: at work and at home, but this does not exempt men from can acquire SB, either at a low, medium or high level; Therefore, the role of the 21st century teacher requires the development of multiple skills to carry out activities inside and outside educational institutions, such as proper management of emotions, personal relaxation processes and metacognition of their teaching work.



### 3.2. Depersonalization

Depersonalization *refers* to the possible ways in which people could come to see themselves as “strange”, “different”, “lost of themselves”, among others. As in the previous category, first the results are shown at a general level, through table 5, where it can be seen that 65.22% of participants obtained a low average, 24.64% of teachers reported a high level medium and 10.14% had a high impact in terms of depersonalization.

**Table 5.** Frequency distribution: depersonalization.

Depersonalization	Frequency	Percentage
Low	45	65.22%
Medium	17	24.64%
High	7	10.14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Own elaboration.

The percentages indicated in table 5 indicate that the SB is present at different levels, especially in the bass. These percentages, over time, can rise, according to the various conditions in which teachers work and can generate negative attitudes, emotions and feelings, as well as a distant, irritable and impolite personality towards their work peers, such as to their students (Ramos et al., 2020). These elements vary depending on the level at which each teacher works.

**Table 6.** Cross table of frequencies by sex and level of education in which they work: depersonalization.

Level of education in which they work	Sex	Depersonalization			Total
		Low	Medium	High	
Initial Education	Female	9 64.29%	3 21.43%	2 14.29%	14 100%
	Male	1 25.00%	3 75.00%	0 0%	4 100%
Basic - Elementary Education	Female	14 73.68%	5 26.32%	0 0%	19 100%
	Male	1 25.00%	3 75.00%	0 0%	4 100%
Basic - Middle Education	Female	11 57.89%	7 36.84%	1 5.26%	19 100%
	Male	3 75.00%	0 0%	1 25.00%	4 100%
Basic - Higher Education	Female	4 66.67%	0 0%	2 33.33%	6 100%
	Male	1 100%	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%
Unified General Baccalaureate	Female	1 100%	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%
	Men	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1 100%
<b>Total women</b>		39 66.10%	15 25.42%	5 8.47%	59 85.51%
<b>Total men</b>		5 50%	3 30%	2 20%	10 100%





<b>General total</b>	44 63.76%	18 26.08%	7 10.14%	69 100%
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Source: Own elaboration.

Of the 14 teachers who work in Initial Education have a low level, this represents 64.29%, followed by 21.43 who are in the middle level and 14.29% with the high level. The responsibility inherent in the work carried out with early childhood is an element that is inferred in the generation of this category of analysis. This due to the great responsibility in the care of children; for example, in changing diapers, feeding, learning difficulties, the little autonomy of children, the lack of rules of coexistence and the little commitment of legal representatives (Tejedor, & Mangas, 2016; Rodríguez, Sola, & Fernández, 2017, as cited by Muñoz et al., 2020).

In Basic - Elementary Education, of the 19 women evaluated, 73.68% have a low level depersonalization and 26.32% obtained a medium level, none had a high level; Regarding the 4 men who work at this level, 25% obtained a low level and 75% a medium level; like the women, none had a high level. In Basic - Middle Education, of the 19 women, 59.89% have a low level, 36.84% are located in the middle level and 5.26% in the high level; of the 4 men, 75% are located in the low level and 25% in the high level, no one is located in the medium level. The percentages presented by each teacher can lead to teaching-learning processes that lack emotional and vocational connection with respect to their activities, as well as a cold and unassertive response to the educational needs of each student (Aguilar and Mayorga, 2020).

In Basic - Higher Education, of the 6 women, 66.67% obtained a low level of depersonalization and 33.33% had a high level; On the other hand, the only teacher had a low level. The Unified General Baccalaureate has two teachers: the teacher obtained a low level and the teacher obtained a high level. Salgado et al. (2018, as cited in Tabares, 2020) refer that in relation to the educational level, teachers who work in secondary education institutions have a greater prevalence of presenting SB, compared to those teachers who work at the level of primary education.

As a general result, it was possible to show that 68.18% of women had a low level of depersonalization, while 66.67% had a medium level and 42.86% had a high level. On the other hand, of the men, 11.36% obtained a low level, 16.67% a medium level and 28.57% a high level. This category of analysis makes it possible to highlight that depersonalization, although it does not present high percentages in all the participants, it may have signs that indicate an over-demand, personal as well as professional, on the part of the teacher; and it can generate a lack of interest and irresponsibility at work, emotional, physical and mental exhaustion (Salcedo et al., 2020).

### 3.3. Personal

refers *fulfillment Personal fulfillment* to elements that achieve the possible success of a person in his personal and professional field. Table 7 shows that 66%67 of teachers have a low level of personal achievement, 18.84 obtained a medium level and 10.14% of teachers presented a high level in this category.

**Table 7.** Frequency distribution: personal fulfillment.

Personal achievement	Frequency	Percentage
Low	46	66.67%
Medium	13	18.84%
High	10	10.14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Own elaboration.





This category is based on self-assessment in terms of cognitive and professional achievements. The level of personal achievement, evidenced in table 7, in the highest percentage, is low. Any teacher who presents low personal achievement tends to provide a teaching-learning process that is not of quality in terms of pedagogical support, problem-solving, didactics, innovation, among others (Fuster et al., 2019). The type of personal fulfillment also depends on the level at which they work, since the goals that each student must meet vary depending on the difficulty of the school grade in which they are located; therefore, it is necessary to analyze each level in terms of this category.

**Table 8.** Cross table of frequencies by sex and level of education in which they work: personal fulfillment.

Personal achievement					
Level of education in which they work	Gender	Low	Medium	High	Total
Initial Education	Female	12 85.71%	2 14.29%	0 0%	14 100%
	Male	4 100%	0 0%	0 0%	4 100%
Basic - Elementary Education	Female	10 52.63%	4 21.05%	5 26.32%	19 100%
	Male	4 100%	0 0%	0 0%	4 100%
Basic Education - Middle	Female	11 57.89%	5 26.32%	3 15.79%	19 100%
	Male	2 50%	1 25.00 %	1 25.00%	4 100%
Basic - Higher Education	Female	4 66.67%	1 16.67%	1 16.67%	6 100%
	Male	1 100%	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%
Unified General Baccalaureate	Female	1 100%	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%
	Men	1 100%	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%
<b>Total women</b>		38 64.40%	12 20.33%	9 15.25%	59 100%
<b>Total men</b>		8 80 %	1 10%	1 10%	10 1000%
<b>General total</b>		46 66.66%	13 18.84%	10 14.49%	69 100%

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 8 shows the percentages of all educational levels taken into account. In Initial Education, 85.71% reflect a low level and 14.29% a medium level, no one has high levels. These data are alarming, because they show that their perception is low. Estrada and Gallegos (2020) indicate that these data may be the product of the little recognition that the teaching field receives from the



highest government authorities, as well as institutional ones, and that its development, as well as its development in the classroom, does not become of the best quality.

Regarding the Basic – Elementary level, of the 19 women: 52.63% obtained a low level, 21.05% a medium level and 26.32% a high level; all males correspond to 100% in the low level. In Basic – Middle Education, of the 19 teachers surveyed: 57.89% correspond to the low level, 26.32% to the middle level and 25% to the high level; in the case of men: 50% are at the low level, 25% at the medium level and the remaining 25% at the high level. The results of these two levels converge in the self-evaluation and achievements that each teacher perceives about himself, in general a tendency of negative self-perception is observed and this can constitute negative behavioral changes in the teaching process that each teacher performs (Gady et al., 2021).

In Basic - Higher Education, the 6 teachers reach the following results: 66.67% at the low level, 16.67% at the medium and high level; As for the teachers, 100% obtained a low level. And at the Unified General Baccalaureate level, the teacher is located at the low level. Tabares-Díaz et al. (2020) point out that when personal fulfillment is affected, it can generate psychological responses of chronic stress, which is situated in physical, emotional, affective deterioration and affects interpersonal relationships, either between colleagues or with their students.

Of the total number of women who were part of the population of this research: 64.40% obtained a low level, 20.33% a medium level and 15.25% a high level, which generates a comparison with men: 80% reached the low level, 10% the medium and high level. Globally: 66.66% have a low level, 18.84% a medium level and 14.49% a high level. This can be caused because there are teaching activities that limit the personal growth of each individual due to the multiple activities entrusted to them. Some of the causes that cause SB in the educational context are work overload in relation to planning and curricular content and innovations, constant teacher training and updating, quality attention to students, among others (Rivera et al., 2018).

#### 4. Conclusions

The factors associated with the detection and intensity with which SB occurs vary according to gender and the educational level in which they work. Although the majority of teachers do not present high levels in the *emotional exhaustion category*, it is important to highlight that the low and medium levels can increase if working conditions do not improve. The work environment is decisive in the mentioned category, since emotional fatigue can break into teaching actions and attitudes, as is the responsibility with infancy, childhood and adolescence. In other words, the actions of the highest authority of each institution should promote spaces free of work stress and adequate conditions that foster not only the development and cognitive and educational progress of students, but also of the teaching staff.

The *depersonalization* in teachers indicates that most feel out of place at medium and low levels; however, as in the previous category, they are signs that warn about the perceptions that a person has about himself, especially if he is a teacher, who must intervene in multiple processes and respond to the educational needs of his students. This cannot be developed adequately if the teachers are irritable with the educational community, since socialization is an inherent capacity of the teaching role, which must be based on communication processes supported by trust and respect.

Personal achievement is a factor that indicates the low value that teachers have of themselves. Self-perceptions in terms of recognizing the effort that each teacher maintains lie in continuous improvement, but if this factor is not very high, they cannot develop assertive communication skills and quality pedagogical intervention processes. That is to say, education is also conditioned to how



each teacher feels and places himself in his work field; Therefore, physical and social spaces should be improved by improving the work environment in general.

The teaching profession implies a number of actions that demand physical and intellectual effort to provide a quality education, therefore, it is necessary to provide adequate working conditions, a safe and comfortable environment, adequate working hours and activities and responsibilities that do not demand oversaturation, which can cause work stress and anxiety, leading to SB.

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