

# Identification of occupational stress and *burnout* in teachers of a secondary school in Mexico City

María Teresa Saltijeral Méndez,<sup>1</sup> Luciana Ramos Lira<sup>1</sup>

Original article

## ABSTRACT

### Background

Teachers are exposed to different work-related stressors and experiences. These may carry emotional and interpersonal problems leading to so-called burnout syndrome.

### Objective

To analyze the presence and characteristics of burnout syndrome, together with the sources of stress perceived by teachers at a junior high school in Mexico City.

### Method

A mixed quantitative and qualitative methodology was used (the Maslach Burnout Inventory [MBI] and the Teachers' Burnout Questionnaire [TBQ-R]), used to explore opinions and comments on several issues.

### Results

The MBI showed an acceptable internal consistency for emotional exhaustion and lack of realization, but not for depersonalization. The TBQ-R showed an acceptable internal consistency for role stress, burnout, and lack of supervision. Third grade teachers showed higher degrees of emotional exhaustion, role stress, lack of supervision, and burnout than first and second grade teachers. Qualitative results confirm that emotional exhaustion is influenced by the stress produced by the more conflictive and violent students. This causes a higher feeling of vulnerability and impotence in teachers around the possibility of becoming a victim.

### Discussion and conclusion

Junior high teachers should receive permanent training which allows them to respond to the needs of their career. Lack of motivation and interest in learning, difficulties in learning, substance abuse, lack of discipline, and antisocial behaviors are among the problems teachers face with their students. We consider it is highly important that they have the opportunity to channel the various different problems to professionals and health institutions able to help them.

**Key Words:** Stress, Burnout, teachers, junior high schools.

## RESUMEN

### Antecedentes

Los docentes enfrentan estresores y experiencias que los pueden conducir al denominado síndrome de *burnout* o desgaste profesional.

### Objetivo

Analizar la presencia y características del *burnout* y las fuentes de estrés percibidas por profesores de una secundaria para trabajadores de México, D.F.

### Método

Se utilizó una metodología mixta cuantitativa (Inventario de *Burnout* de Maslach [MBI] y el Cuestionario de *Burnout* para el Profesorado [CBP-R]) y cualitativa (explorando opiniones y comentarios sobre diferentes temas).

### Resultados

El MBI mostró una consistencia interna aceptable en agotamiento emocional y falta de realización y el CBP-R en estrés de rol, *burnout* y falta de supervisión. Los docentes de tercer grado presentaron mayor agotamiento emocional, estrés de rol, falta de supervisión y *burnout* que los de niveles inferiores.

Se encontró que el agotamiento emocional está influido por el estrés generado por los alumnos más conflictivos y violentos. Esto provoca a los docentes mayor sentimiento de vulnerabilidad e impotencia ante la posibilidad de convertirse en sus víctimas.

### Discusión y conclusión

Algunos de los problemas que los docentes enfrentan con sus alumnos son desmotivación y falta de interés para aprender, dificultades en el aprendizaje, consumo de sustancias, falta de disciplina y conductas antisociales. Es muy importante que canalicen los diferentes problemas a profesionales e instituciones de salud que los ayuden en estos aspectos. Por lo que se sugiere que los docentes de secundaria reciban una formación continua que les permita responder a las necesidades de su profesión.

**Palabras clave:** Estrés, *burnout*, profesores, secundaria.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Epidemiological and Psychosocial Research. Ramón de la Fuente Muñiz National Institute of Psychiatry.

Correspondence: Lic. María Teresa Saltijeral Méndez. Department of Epidemiological and Psychosocial Research. Ramón de la Fuente Muñiz National Institute of Psychiatry. Calz. México-Xochimilco, 101, San Lorenzo Huipulco, Tlalpan, 14370, Mexico City. E-mail: saltije@imp.edu.mx

Received first version: September 11, 2013. Second version: February 5, 2015. Accepted: June 3, 2015.

## BACKGROUND

Among the different activities carried out by junior high school teachers during their working life are innovating strategies and skills to transfer knowledge, adequate operating of pedagogical technologies, preparing class activities, and grading homework. In many cases, teachers also face demands such as developing strategies to maintain discipline, having empathy and providing support for students with difficulties, facing problems with addiction, violence, and adverse conditions in the working environment, and scarcity of material resources which make high performance difficult.<sup>1-3</sup>

Taking this into account, it is understandable that teaching staff can feel their personal reserves are exhausted or experience what is known as occupational stress.<sup>4,5</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>6</sup> advises that occupational stress is present when certain aspects of the working environment are extremely difficult or demanding for a person to deal with, which can manifest itself by means of a pattern of psychological, emotional, cognitive, or behavioral reactions. In 2010, the Director General of the International Labor Organization (ILO)\* explained that there are currently new risks, as we are immersed in a working world under constant transformation. Along the same vein, he recognized that one of the most worrying elements is "the outbreak of psychosocial disorders related to the stressful situations and working demands of a new world economy".

Work-related stress can become overwhelming and culminate in a more advanced stage defined as "burnout syndrome." Burnout syndrome is considered to be a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal work-related stressors in which personality constructs intervene such as loss of self-esteem, feelings of emotional, physical, and mental fatigue, failure and uselessness, a feeling of being trapped, and lack of enthusiasm for the work and for life in general.<sup>7</sup> It is characterized by three components: *emotional exhaustion*, which refers to feelings of being exhausted and overwhelmed in terms of personal reserves; *depersonalization*, which refers to impersonal responses and irritable attitudes towards people at work; and *low self-realization*, which describes feelings of incompetence and lack of achievement, especially related to people one works with.<sup>8</sup> In this proposal, depersonalization is not to do with an alteration in the perception of the self, characterized by feelings of separation between body and mental processes;<sup>9</sup> rather, it is a professional's attitude of indifference and cynicism towards the recipients/users of their service.

The syndrome refers to the presence of deterioration in the professional identity of people whose working activity is directly related to the provision of human services –as with professionals who work in education<sup>10-12</sup> and health-care–,<sup>13</sup> because of which, they can feel pressurized due to the demands of the role.

In terms of education, specific stressors also include pressure to fulfill the educational program, overload of work and students to deal with, loss of professional prestige, lack of support from the educational institution, little contact between the family and the school, the lack of respect that many students have towards their teachers, the need for greater preparation to face challenges from students, harmful routines that take place in the school, and the feeling that the work is not well paid, despite occasionally working two shifts to earn more money.<sup>12,14</sup>

In Mexico, two factors have been documented which can contribute to this fatigue. On the one hand, many junior high teachers have a knowledge of their subject but lack pedagogical training;<sup>15</sup> on the other hand, there is a high frequency of illicit and/or violent activities in schools, such as robbery, intimidation, or verbal abuse by students, and also by teachers or staff, physical violence between students, and use or possession of drugs and alcohol.<sup>16</sup>

In order to explore this subject in more depth, this article considers the presence of characteristics of occupational burnout and the sources of stress perceived to be associated with it in teachers at a junior high school for workers located in the east of Mexico City.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

A total of 28 teachers participated in the study, half of whom were men and half women.

### Type of study

The study carried out an investigation-intervention using a mixed methodology to assess the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of stress and occupational exhaustion in the teaching staff (more detailed information can be found in another publication<sup>17</sup>). The focus was based on creating actions in non-artificial contexts, in which the effects can be studied and described in real-life social practices.<sup>18</sup>

### Data collection techniques

Two instruments were used for the quantitative assessment: the first is the Maslach *Burnout Inventory* (MBI)<sup>19</sup> adapted by Seisdedos<sup>20</sup> in Spain, the factorial validity and internal consistency of which has been proven in Mexico by Gra-

\* Somavia J. Nuevos riesgos en un mundo del trabajo en continua transformación. Notimex Publicado en 2010; México, D.F.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics

	F	%	Mean/SD
Age			42.37 ± 11.032
Sex			
Men	14	50.0	
Women	14	50.0	
Civil status			
Married	13	46.4	
Common law	8	28.6	
Single	5	17.9	
Divorced	2	7.1	
Children			
Yes	22	78.6	
No	6	21.4	
Time in profession			15.21 ± 8.350
Class hours			24.82 ± 22.473

jales.<sup>21</sup> The second is the Teachers' *Burnout* Questionnaire (TBQ-R).<sup>22</sup>

Table 2 shows the dimensions and primary characteristics of the MBI, and the internal consistency for this population calculated using Cronbach's alpha. It highlights that acceptable levels are reached for the dimensions of Emotional exhaustion and Low self-realization (0.83 and 0.88 respectively), what did not happen with the depersonalization (.12).

In terms of the results from the TBQ-R, which assesses process of stress and *burnout* in teachers as well as the organization and occupational background which may be provoking these processes, Table 3 shows an acceptable internal consistency in the dimensions of Stress of the Job, Overall *Burnout* and its three subscales, and Supervision, between .64 and .72. The others presented alphas very low.

Because of the above, it was decided to use the results of the TBQ-R for this article, in the following dimensions:

Stress of the job, *Burnout*, Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization, Low self-realization and Supervision.

For the qualitative information, the study used observations made in workshops which covered subject areas such as stress, occupational stress, *burnout* syndrome, affects on physical and emotional health, and indications for healthcare. Furthermore, the problems of sexual violence and school violence were also covered, including gender stereotypes. For this work, data is reported from the first five subject areas only.

## Procedure

In order to carry out the intervention, permission was sought from the Secretary for Public Education (SEP). Once this request was accepted, contact was made with the school authorities, which allowed an invitation to be issued to carry out a diagnosis and intervention on the subject of preventing sexual violence.<sup>17</sup> The managers offered the facilities for teachers to be invited to participate during a technical staff meeting, and they accepted voluntarily. Informed consent was obtained via a letter which included a guarantee of anonymity. At the same time, they were advised of a reference network to channel cases of sexual violence which may be discovered.

The intervention with teachers was carried out in three phases. The first started with the first grade from 6-10 October, then the second grade from 20-24 October, and the third grade from 27 October - 4 November. It took place during the 2008-2009 school year between the hours of 09:10 and 10:50 in the morning.

There were ten participants per grade on average. Attendance was not possible when it interfered with class timetables or on days when they were not required to teach. The sessions were held in the faculty lounge and were run by a researcher who acted as moderator, guiding and direct-

**Table 2.** Maslach *Burnout* inventory (MBI) (22 questions)

Dimensions	Description	Example question	Alpha	Type of response and scoring method
Emotional exhaustion (9 questions)	Assesses weariness, loss of energy, exhaustion, and physical and mental fatigue.	"...I feel fatigued when I get up and have to go to work".	.83	0="no" a 6="every day". Total score= the sum of responses to each one.
Depersonalization (5 questions)	Assesses attitudes of disinterest and distancing from other people, especially the beneficiaries of their work, with irritability and loss of motivation towards the work.	"...I'm worried that this job is toughening me up emotionally".	.12	Scores between 1-33 on the MBI are considered low. The syndrome is defined by high scores in the first two subscales and low scores in the third. It is advisable to keep the scores for each subscale separate and not combine them into a single score, because it is still not clear whether the three have equal weighting in the combined score or in what way.
Low self-realization (8 questions)	Measures the presence of negative responses towards oneself and one's work, low self-esteem, low productivity, and inability to cope with pressure.	"I deal with students' problems efficiently".	.88	

**Table 3.** Teachers' Burnout Questionnaire (TBQ-R) (66 questions)

Dimensions	Subscales	Descripción	Example question	Alpha	Type of response and scoring method
Stress of the job (13 questions)	Stress of the job	Defines a negative emotional response which stems from the requirements of the job not corresponding to the teacher's needs or resources. Includes conflict (which reflects a perception of qualitative and quantitative overload in the teaching experience) and ambiguity (which reflects a lack of clarity around what is expected of the teacher and what can realistically be achieved, such as inconsistent or confusing policies around student behavior).	Conflict = "...having to make my work fun and creative causes me a lot of stress", "...I feel like I have extra work beyond what would normally be expected of me". Ambiguity = "...there is a difference between how my supervisor thinks things should be done, and how I believe they should be done", "...I don't know what results my work will get".	.76	The response for each question fluctuates along a five-point range (1 = "totally disagree" to 5 = "totally agree"). For this study, the options were recoded to four points and the scores obtained were divided between the number of questions in order to have means for comparison.
Burnout (19 questions)	Emotional exhaustion (8 questions)	Characterized by low energy and chronic fatigue; feelings of ineptitude, desperation, or strangeness around the work which leads to negative attitudes developing towards oneself and one's work.	"...I feel anxious and tense going to work every day", "I often feel quite depressed about my profession".	.72	
	Depersonalization (4 questions)	Made up of feelings of indifference, emotional distance, and negative attitudes of insensitivity and cynicism towards those they teach.	"...I feel like my students are the enemy", "I tend to treat students like impersonal objects".	.64	
	Low self-realization (7 questions)	Refers to the perception of not feeling professionally fulfilled at work, an experience of personal insufficiency, feelings of failure and low self-esteem, a tendency to negatively assess past work, or self-berate for not having reached set objectives.	"...basically, I would say that I am not very happy with my work", "...generally, my work doesn't seem like it's at the level I would want".	.64	
Disorganization (21 questions)	Lack of supervision (12 questions)	Refers specifically to a style of control by managers which lacks support and recognition.	"...when I really need to speak to the management, they are not open to listening", "...I feel like it's useless making suggestions about my work, because decisions are made in spite of my attempts to influence them".	.66	
	Organizational conditions (9 questions)	Refers to an institution's material, financial, and technical resources to support teaching work.	"...my institution collects sufficient materials for the teachers to be effective", "...my institution offers incentives to motivate the students".	.28	
Administrative problems (13 questions)	Insecurity (9 questions)	Refers to various concerns related to the professional role which leads to a feeling of uncertainty in the working environment.	"...conflicts with the management," "...negative contact with parents".	.12	
	Atmosphere (4 questions)	Refers to the perception of not being professionally recognized by the institution.	"...low salary", "...lack of support services for professional problems".	.34	

ing discussion of the themes dealt with in each session. The observer took notes and produced a report of each session, including phrases spoken *verbatim*. Two specialists in school violence and sexual violence participated.

The quantitative information was obtained in the first session through a self-administered instrument that con-

tained demographic data, the number of classes taught, and scales of exhaustion. This instrument was given a code that was known only to the teacher, so that their identity could not be known by third parties. The research team later scored this, and the results were turned into graphics to be shared personally and generally in another technical staff meeting.

## RESULTS

### Stress and exhaustion according to the TBQ-R

Table 4 shows a descriptive analysis of selected dimensions of the Teachers' *Burnout* Questionnaire (TBQ-R), which shows that high scores for *Burnout* were not seen among the teachers, although there were moderate scores for Emotional exhaustion, followed by Low- self-realization. Stress of the job and the perception of Lack of supervision were also moderately present.

### Associations between dimensions

Pearson's correlations show that the greater the *Burnout*, the greater the perception of Lack of supervision ( $r = .548$ ,  $p = .006$ , 24 gl) and Stress of the job ( $r = .702$ ,  $p = .000$ , 22 gl); and the greater the perception of Lack of supervision, the greater the Stress of the job ( $r = .608$ ,  $p = .001$ , 25 gl). In other words, conditions related to the school organization are associated with both occupational exhaustion and the perception of ambiguity and conflict in the job.

### Differences in Stress and *Burnout* by demographic and occupational characteristics

Various tests were carried out to observe whether there were differences between these dimensions and the demographic and occupational characteristics. Differences were only found between those who taught third grade classes and those who perceived that they had a lot of students. Third grade teachers reported greater Emotional exhaustion (2.10 vs. 1.48) ( $F = 5.69$ , 25,1 gl,  $p = 0.25$ ), Stress of the job (2.46 vs. 2.00) ( $F = 12.03$ , 22,1  $p = .002$ ), Lack of supervision (2.27 vs. 1.96) ( $F = 5.71$ , 24,1 gl,  $p = .025$ ), and *Burnout* (1.96 vs. 1.66) ( $F = 4.91$ , 21,1 gl,  $p = .038$ ) compared to teachers of other grades. As such, teachers who perceived that they had a lot of students per group reported greater Emotional exhaustion (3.38 vs. 2.39) ( $F = 5.62$ , 24,1, gl,  $p = .026$ ). It should be noted that 53.6% of the participants taught first-stage classes and an approximate percentage (46.4%) shared the

**Table 4.** Scores for selected dimensions of the Teachers' *Burnout* Questionnaire (TBQ-R) ( $N = 28$ )

Dimensions	$n^*$	Min	Max	Mean	SD
<i>Burnout</i> :	24	1.0	2.3	<b>1.82</b>	0.35
Emotional exhaustion	28	1.0	3.0	<b>1.90</b>	0.47
Depersonalization	26	1.0	2.5	<b>1.58</b>	0.43
Low self-realization	26	1.0	2.7	<b>1.83</b>	0.41
Stress of the job	25	1.5	3.2	<b>2.23</b>	0.35
Lack of supervision	27	1.3	3.0	<b>2.10</b>	0.35

\*Reports the  $n$  of respondents for the dimension.

second and third shifts. The majority of the teachers (85.7%) indicated that although they did not have many students per class, the type of students they taught represented a burden in their work performance.

### Perceptions of stress and exhaustion

The qualitative information about sources of stress was grouped into three subject areas: 1) those related to students, 2) the working dynamic between teachers and management, and 3) structural aspects related to their working situation.

#### 1. Situations which generate stress related to students

*Behavior problems: discipline and violence.* The teachers agreed that there are certain groups which stress them too much due to containing very undisciplined students. In particular, one teacher commented that she found a third grade group exhausting, "as they are very difficult students to control," to the point that sometimes she does not feel that she wants to teach the class, and she notes it with this group in particular, but not with others. The teachers advised that a high number of students "are badly behaved, violent, and apathetic." These students "use colorful, vulgar, and aggressive language," but deny it when confronted. They also "lie a lot," "they feel like they own the school, because some belong to gangs or groups, which makes them feel more protected..." This becomes a problem which has repercussions on teaching work, as it produces stress as a result of feeling that they are even at physical risk. Other teachers indicate that they are not exempt from receiving threats, to the point of being challenged to fights by some students who take drugs or who have been in care.

They advise feeling powerless and vulnerable to becoming victims if they respond to these challenges. "They have even threatened us, saying that they are going to kill us or get us..." They indicate that physical aggression is mostly directed towards male teachers: "they challenge male teachers more than females."

It is important to highlight that women also receive threats and intimidations by students of both sexes: "they have even urinated on a (teacher's) chair." One teacher advised that she had recently received threats from a female student: "On Thursday, I confiscated a shoe catalog and the girl swore and commented to the prefect that 'if that teacher', (i.e. me) 'doesn't give me back the catalog, I'll see her outside school with my aunt'"; as a consequence, teachers do not feel safe in the school environment.

The teachers considered that verbal and physical aggression represents a serious problem that has repercussions on their work performance, as they are very often witnesses to a constant lack of respect between the students and towards teachers themselves, commenting: "in the school there are a lot of fights between students themselves, and students being rude towards the teachers," "they behave with a lack of respect and

they taunt certain teachers," "when they fight between themselves, it has led to them pushing me...they have stained my hair, my glasses, and my face with correction fluid."

The atmosphere between students becomes hostile when they attack their peers in a sort of game known as "hoodies," where they take the bottom part of a classmate's sweater, cover their face with it, and hit them. This is a daily occurrence between different groups of students: "they young men are very rough in how they get along, they start out playing and they end up fighting," "they have no respect for each other and attack each other, even with physical violence," "they are rude, vulgar, and they call each other names."

For the teachers, lack of discipline, learning difficulties, and violent behavior may be explained by the fact that students come from violent backgrounds which involve drug and alcohol consumption, unemployment, under-employment, gangs, or family breakup. This is shown inasmuch as what students see and experience at home is replicated within and outside of the school context.

When teachers confront students who are taking some form of drug, they feel frustrated when describing their lack of skill for responding adequately to the problem.

### 2. Situations which cause stress between teachers and school management

The teachers perceive that the relationship between work colleagues becomes tense when faced with certain situations:

- When they have group activities and tasks are not achieved as a team, they feel a divisive atmosphere when they are unable to establish relationships of cooperation and solidarity: "there is a lack of participation by some teachers," "commitment is higher among women than men," "unwillingness to carry out some academic activities."
- When the institution does not take them into account when grouping the students, they are divided by behavior: "they are divided into groups made up of students who are very violent and those who have better averages (they separate the good from the bad students)."
- When they perceive inconsistencies in authority and they are not included as a work team: "the student can do what they like in school, and the teachers cannot do anything," "...the teachers' authority is ridiculed because the management protects them. A student can ridicule a teacher and the authorities say nothing; they can insult a staff member and nothing happens, but if they insult the Principal, it does escalate."
- When there is ambiguity in how rules are applied: "rules aren't followed, some students are allowed into school even though they don't have the correct uniform, hairstyle, etc." "it is worrying that they don't apply the established criteria for appearance and behavior to the students."
- When they agree that there is too much tolerance and

flexibility: "it is worrying that they keep students [at school] without expecting any commitment."

In the participants' opinion, the school does not have the facilities to encourage communication between colleagues, nor does it promote a suitable working environment. The only spaces for participation are in academic and council meetings, but there is a lack of informal spaces for spending time, where more level communication may be established. They consider that "the atmosphere feels heavy when you see that there is no support from the superiors; as a consequence, the working climate affects interpersonal relationships."

### 3. Situations which generate stress related to working situation

For the teachers, stressful situations go hand-in-hand with other factors, such as:

- Personal dissatisfaction due to financial situation: "there are teachers who have a lot of financial and social problems, so it is hard for them to deal with problematic children."
- Lack of faculty participation in situations concerning labor agreements: "collective work is very important to set out and deal with conflicts, and have tools to face day-to-day problems."
- Teachers have difficulty responding to students' needs, "the students have a great need to be loved, touched, and looked at," "the emotional factor is very important in young people's learning." As such, one key element is being able to offer a familiar environment that narrows the gaps between the children who are most socially and environmentally vulnerable, and those who are more advanced, so that the student begins to change their behavior through feeling valued.
- Feelings of desperation and frustration when they perceive that whatever they do, they cannot change situations: "someone starts with a lot of impetus, wanting to change things, but over time this is diminished and they feel frustrated," "over time, you feel lonely as a teacher and you learn that things don't change as easily as you think." "You feel that you are an accomplice of the system, sometimes unconsciously, but sometimes consciously." "Sometimes it is very precarious to involve yourself in issues or problems that involve students because it can come back to haunt you."

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present work does not seek to be representative of what happens in all junior high schools for workers in Mexico City, nor of the Iztapalapa area. Although governed by the

\* [http://www2.sep.pdf.gob.mx/que\\_hacemos/secundaria.jsp](http://www2.sep.pdf.gob.mx/que_hacemos/secundaria.jsp)

\*\* <http://www.frecuencialaboral.com/maestrosecundariaparatrabajadoresdesaparecen2012.html>

same plan and program of study as daytime schools, this type of workers' school has a different organization and way of functioning. It does not have a program of study that includes technology activities, workshops, or physical education.\* It also admits students aged 15 and above, who mostly come from evening and night schools, expelled due to lack of discipline, low achievement, absenteeism, age, or for being workers.\*\*

Very specifically, this work investigated the phenomenon of occupational exhaustion and situations which cause stress to teachers based on a qualitative methodology which was complemented by the use of a quantitative technique. As indicated, the results form part of a diagnosis and intervention that took place within the school. As such, its usefulness is merely descriptive; a starting point to form more specific studies which allow for a deepening of knowledge about this subject. In terms of the quantitative data collected, it should be noted that the Maslach instrument showed low internal consistency, especially in the dimension of "Depersonalization," a situation which has been reported by other studies, primarily with non-US, non-English speaking samples<sup>23,24</sup> which also indicate conceptual shortcomings of factorial structure and rules for diagnosis.

The use of scores from some dimensions of the TBQ-R responded to it obtaining a better consistency, but that is not to say that this instrument does not need to be validated in our context. The results highlight the importance of including other aspects that are not just individual, but structural and relational, and of improving the conceptual discussion about the phenomenon of exhaustion and its operational correlates.

Beyond these considerations is the important finding that among the teachers who participated, some reported Emotional exhaustion and Lack of professional realization, but not Depersonalization, which is concordant with the findings of another study of a representative sample of teachers at this level in Guadalajara.<sup>10</sup> However, it is interesting that we did observe significant differences between teachers who taught third-grade classes compared to those who taught first or second grade. This was also demonstrable in the workshops.

Furthermore, the higher scores for Stress of the Job and the perception of Lack of supervision speak of the existence of a negative emotional response which originates when the demands of the job do not correspond with the teacher's reserves, whether due to overloading or lack of clarity between what is expected of the teacher and what happens in school. On the other hand, they point to the need for support and recognition of teachers' work by school managers, which is an organizational aspect.

It should be remembered that the variables which cause stress and *burnout* in teaching staff have been classified into three groups: sociodemographic, personality, and the work and organizations themselves.<sup>25</sup> The latter includes aspects

such as overload of work, administrative work, number of students, etc., and they may show that the phenomenon is not only a problem for individuals, but for the institutional structures and dynamics.

These results agree with other studies in Mexico which have found that in university teachers, for example, institutional disorganization –both supervision problems and poor organizational conditions–, is associated with poorer teacher performance.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, studies show that there is more risk of having emotional exhaustion when facing negative occupational factors.<sup>10</sup>

The qualitative results allowed for certain stressful situations for teachers in front of a class to be expressed and explored in more depth, such as student behavior problems which lead them to complain about how hard their class work is, sometimes due to interpersonal conflicts or lack of respect in the student-teacher relationship. Faced with this, they perceive negative and unpleasant experiences which overwhelm them and which they cannot control, which in turn impedes them adequately doing their work because of the tension they are subjected to.

Teachers are not exempt from facing a multitude of obstacles for which they do not feel completely prepared. They also perceive other conflicts, such as incompatibility between teachers and authorities, due to which many behavioral problems are tolerated or favored in different ways within the same school, which leads to these problems being part of their daily surroundings. This atmosphere is linked with the dissatisfaction that both qualitatively and quantitatively indicate that they are not clear about their roles due to lack of support and ambiguity in respect of their working rights and obligations. Along this vein, Doménech (2011) indicates that an important factor of stress within the job of teaching is the ambiguity of the role, primarily when information is not clear and consistent in terms of obligations, tasks, and responsibilities - a situation that is a major cause of confusion and discomfort.

The demands on teachers, as well as the lack of resources, financial reward, and social recognition are situations which cause feelings of frustration. This agrees with that proposed by Llorens et al. (2005), in that because *burnout* is associated with feelings of personal, professional, and collective incompetence, there is a perceived crisis of effectiveness that has to do with the existence of organizational obstacles in the workplace, such as undisciplined or unmotivated students, lack of technical resources, and lack of social support, which makes the teacher feel incompetent.

The teaching team lacks the pedagogical tools to deal with students who may require specialized help. Furthermore, by being witnesses to, and victims of, various manifestations of violence expressed by some students, whether physical, verbal, or sexual, they are negatively affected, not just in student-teacher relations, but also in the teaching and learning process. This represents enormous discomfort and

stress for teachers, who may even end up with the total destruction of their professional identity.

Because of the above, it is necessary to carry out preventative actions in the entire school community, by means of conferences and workshops aimed at the whole education community, including managerial staff. Teachers need to receive suitable, continuous, and permanent training which allows them the tools and resources to deal with learning, addictions, and antisocial behavior problems in their students. Equally, they need more support from mental health staff and the possibility of channeling the most complicated cases.

Every day, teachers face a certain disillusionment because of their work, due to the lack of motivation shown by students to learn. Another cause is the discovery that the results they get do not meet with the expectations of their teaching work. It is important to consider that this is also a source of stress; professional expectations fade away when teachers feel disenchanted carrying out their job, when they perceive a lack of concordance between the professional ideal and the real-life conditions of the teaching profession. For all these reasons, it is suggested that more research is carried out into the working conditions of this profession, and support is urged for other studies on the subject of occupational stress in teaching.

### Funding

We appreciate the financial support of the Social Co-investment Program (PCS) from the Secretary for Social Development of the National Institute of Social Development (INDESOL).

### Conflict of Interest

The authors do not declare any conflicts of interest.

### Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Secretary of Public Education (SEP) for the facilities granted to make contact with the management, teachers, and students; to the Human Rights Commission in Mexico City, to Raúl Zúñiga, Monica Mendoza, Claudia Ledesma, Raúl Gallegos, and Said Almanza; and our special appreciation goes to Nellys Palomof de Kinal Antzetik, Mexico City, A.C.; to the Iztapalapa Pediatric Hospital, its Director, Dr. Ramón Carballo, and Dr. Bony Mendoza. To the research team: Irma Saucedo, Rus Funk, Miriam Arroyo, Ingrid Caballero, Fiorella Calderón, Lluvia Castillo, Katia Delgado, Jessica Gutiérrez, Nohemí Ortega, Michel Retama, Francisco de la Rosa, and Alejandro Sandoval. Finally, to all the school staff for allowing us to use their information.

### REFERENCES

1. Sandoval E. La inserción a la docencia. Aprender a ser maestro de secundaria en México. *Revista de currículum y formación del profesorado* 2009; 13(1):183-194.
2. Saucedo C. Los alumnos de la tarde son los peores: Prácticas y discursos de posicionamiento de la identidad de alumnos problema en

- la escuela secundaria. *Revista Mexicana Investigación Educativa* 2005;10(26):641-668.
3. Rivero L, Cruz MA. Trastornos psíquicos y psicómicos: problemas actuales de salud de los docentes mexicanos. *Psicología Salud* 2010; 20(2):239-249.
4. Esteras J, Chorot P, Sandín B. Predicción del Burnout en los docentes: papel de los factores organizacionales, personales y sociodemográficos. *Revista Psicopatología Psicología Clínica* 2014; 19(2):79-92.
5. Gismero ME, Bermejo L, Prieto M, Cagigal V et al. Estrategias de afrontamiento cognitivo, auto-eficacia y variables laborales. *Orientaciones para prevenir el estrés docente. Acción Psicológica* 2012; 9(2):87-96.
6. Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS). Sensibilizando sobre el estrés laboral en los países en desarrollo. Un riesgo moderno en un ambiente tradicional de trabajo: Consejos para empleadores y representantes de los trabajadores. Serie protección de la Salud de los Trabajadores; N° 6, Ginebra; 2008.
7. Maslach C, Schaufeli W, Leiter M. Job Burnout. *Annu Rev Psychol* 2001; 52:397-422.
8. Maslach C, Jackson S. The measurement of experienced burnout. *J Occupational Behavior* 1981; 2:99-113.
9. Bergé D, Bulbena A, Sperry L, Pailhez G et al. Síntomas de despersonalización en pacientes psiquiátricos: La nueva escala de despersonalización presente-vida (DP-PV). *Archivos Psiquiatría* 2009; 72(1-4):1-13. Disponible en: [www.archivos.de.psiquiatria.es](http://www.archivos.de.psiquiatria.es) Consulta: 12/02/20013.
10. Aldrete MG, González J, Preciado ML. Factores psicosociales laborales y el Síndrome de Burnout en docentes de enseñanza media básica (secundaria) de la zona metropolitana de Guadalajara, México. *Rev Chil Salud Pública* 2008; 12(1):18-25.
11. Arias F, González M. Estrés, agotamiento profesional (Burnout) y salud en profesores de acuerdo a su tipo de contrato. *Revista Ciencia Trabajo* 2009; 11(33):172-176.
12. Aldrete M, Preciado M, Franco S, Pérez J et al. Factores psicosociales laborales y Síndrome de Burnout, diferencias entre hombres y mujeres docentes de secundaria, zona metropolitana de Guadalajara, México. *Revista Ciencia Trabajo* 2008;10(30):138-142.
13. Dickinson M, González C, Fernández M, Palomeque R et al. Características del Síndrome de Burnout en médicos mexicanos de atención primaria. *Archivos Medicina Familiar* 2007; 9(2):75-79.
14. Silvero M. Estrés y desmotivación docente: el síndrome del "profesor quemado" en educación secundaria. *Estudios sobre educación* 2007; 12:115-138.
15. Parga L. El profesorado de secundaria: ¿identidades en crisis? *Educación* 2008; 163:50-54.
16. OECD Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) 2009. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/51/43023606.pdf> (Access date: February 13, 2012).
17. Ramos L, Saucedo I, Funk R. Promoviendo políticas públicas para la prevención de la violencia sexual en secundaria. Creación de liderazgo de jóvenes y capacitación dirigida al sistema educativo, organizaciones no gubernamentales y sistema de salud Iztapalapa, Distrito Federal. UNICEF México. Una mirada hacia la infancia y la adolescencia en México. Segundo Premio UNICEF 2009. México: Debate. 2010; 172-252.
18. Kemmis S, Mc Taggart R. *Cómo planificar la investigación-acción*. Barcelona: Laertes; 1988.
19. Maslach C, Jackson S. *Maslach Burnout inventory. Manual research edition*. Palo Alto: Universidad de California: Consulting Psychologist Press; 1986.
20. Seisdedos N. *Manual MBI, Inventario "Burnout" de Maslach*. Madrid: TEA Ediciones; 1997.
21. Grajales T. Estudio de la validez factorial del Maslach Burnout Inventory versión española en una población de profesionales mexicanos. Enero-mayo, 2000. Available at: <http://www.tgrajales.net/mbivalidez.pdf> (Access date: April 16, 2012).

22. Moreno B, Garrosa E, González JL. La evaluación del estrés y el Burnout del profesorado: el CBP-R. *Psicología Trabajo Organizaciones* 2000; 16(1):331-339.
23. Olivares-Faúndez V, Mena-Miranda L, Jélvez-Wilke C, Macía-Sepúlveda F. Validez factorial del Maslach Burnout Inventory Human Services (MBI-HSS) en profesionales chilenos. *Universitas Psychologica* 2014; 13(1):145-159.
24. Cárdenas M, Méndez LM, González MT. Evaluación del desempeño docente, Estrés Y Burnout en profesores universitarios. *Revista Actua-lidades Investigativas Educación* 2014; 14(1):1-22.
25. Moriana JA, Herruzo J. Estrés y Burnout en profesores. *International J Clinical Health Psychology* 2004; 4(3):597-621.
26. Doménech F. El malestar psicológico del profesorado: variables impli-cadas. *Anuari IÀgrupació Borrianenca Cultura* 2011; 22:27-40.
27. Llorens S, García M, Salanova M. Burnout como consecuencia de una crisis de eficacia: un estudio longitudinal en profesores de secundaria. *Revista Psicología Trabajo Organizaciones* 2005; 21(1-2),55-70.