

# Burnout Syndrome in Faculty Members of the School of Medicine and Science at the University of San Sebastián, Concepción, Chile.

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**Abstract.** Burnout is a syndrome related to chronic work-related stress characterized by lack of energy, negative feelings, and lack of accomplishment. Educators face various occupational stressors such as high workloads, conflicts between teaching and research, and administrative demands. These factors can contribute to emotional exhaustion and increased depression among educators. In this quantitative cross-sectional study conducted at the School of Medicine of the University of San Sebastián, Concepción, Chile, 28 educators were surveyed. It was found that in most of the analyzed questions, educators reported a low level of stress, with 10% of respondents stating they are doing work that is too hard, and 14.3% mentioning being at the limit of their capabilities. However, it is emphasized that even these low levels warrant attention and care. Furthermore, a discrepancy is observed between the levels of burnout reported by educators and those reported by students at the same university. In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of addressing burnout syndrome among university educators. Although the results indicate low levels of burnout in this sample, further research and support for educators are necessary to promote their well-being and enhance the quality of education.

**Keywords:** Burnout Syndrome, Medical Education, Stress, Educators, Physicians.

## 1 Introduction

Various global studies have reported burnout among university educators. Cobos Sanz (2022) shows that 66.5% experience emotional exhaustion, 46.7% feel "burned out," and 49.2% report job frustration. In Bolivia (Torres Calvimontes, 2020), 55% of educators express emotional exhaustion. Nationally, Quass (2008) determined that 28% of university educators experienced some degree of burnout. On the other hand, a study conducted during the pandemic indicated that 17.5% would present burnout (Santibáñez Cárcamo, 2021). When comparing national data with various countries, clear disparities are evident. These discrepancies prompted an interest in investigating the local nuances in more depth, specifically focusing on Concepción, Chile, and the University of San Sebastián. Each contribution shedding light on mental health in the

educational context, both nationally and globally, significantly contributes to understanding this phenomenon and its evolution.

## **2 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Burnout**

According to the International Classification of Diseases, burnout is defined as a "syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed" (World Health Organization [WHO], 2019). WHO characterizes the syndrome with three main criteria: (1) feelings of energy depletion, (2) increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job, and (3) reduced professional efficacy.

### **2.2 Teacher Burnout**

Various global studies have reported burnout among university educators. Cobos Sanz (2022) shows that 66.5% experience emotional exhaustion, 46.7% feel "burned out," and 49.2% report job frustration. In Bolivia (Torres Calvimontes, 2020), 55% of educators express emotional exhaustion. Nationally, Quass (2008) determined that 28% of educators experienced some degree of burnout. On the other hand, a study conducted during the pandemic indicated that 17.5% would present burnout (Santibáñez Cárcamo, 2021). For years, this syndrome was underestimated as it was pigeonholed and categorized solely as an affliction. However, by defining it as an illness, it gains the relevance it deserves as a work incapacity requiring treatment and coping strategies (WHO, 2019). According to Wu, Cao, and Du (2023), university educators face various occupational stressors such as high teaching-research workloads, teaching-research conflicts, administrative task demands, and challenges in teacher-student relationships, personal development, and interpersonal relationships. These stressors reduce teaching job satisfaction and contribute to emotional exhaustion and stress, which can increase depression among educators.

## **3 Method**

A Quantitative Cross-Sectional Nature Research using Convenience Sampling was conducted. The Maslach Burnout Inventory questionnaire was administered to educators at the School of Medicine of the University of San Sebastián, Chile. The instrument used for data collection was the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 1996) questionnaire. Gender, age, work experience, and type of contract were also included. The questionnaire consists of 22 questions that provide information about the professional's feelings and attitudes regarding their work and interaction with

students, aiming to assess job burnout. This tool has three dimensions of analysis: 1) emotional exhaustion; 2) depersonalization; 3) personal accomplishment. The questionnaire was administered individually using the Google Forms platform for survey management. After data collection, descriptive analysis, percentage calculations, and averages were conducted depending on the nature of the variable. The analysis was performed using R 4.3.1. Participants were informed about the confidential treatment of provided information, ensuring anonymity. It's noteworthy that this study was conducted following the guidelines of the Helsinki Declaration, and informed consent was obtained from all individuals involved. Among the participants, 50% (n=14) were women. The average age was 48 years, ranging from 24 to 74 years. About 32.1% (n=9) of participants were in the medical profession. The surveyed educators did not hold the title of researcher educators.

## **4 Results**

A total of 28 educators (homogeneous with respect to the population) from the School of Medicine and Science at the University of San Sebastián, Concepción, Chile, were surveyed. Regarding emotional exhaustion, 21.4% (n=6) mentioned experiencing it a few times a week. This pattern also repeats when asking if they feel exhausted at the end of the day. Only 3.6% (n=1) reported never being able to easily understand what their students think, while 100% (n=28) believe they never treat their students as objects. Additionally, 7.1% (n=2) indicated feeling tense when working with students a few times a week. 92.9% (n=26) said they did not feel frustrated. 67.9% (n=19) affirmed they feel highly vital most days of the week. 10.7% (n=3) expressed feeling that they are doing work that is too hard. On the other hand, 7.1% (n=2) registered that they do not care about what will happen to their students. 10.7% (n=3) noted that they have difficulty creating a relaxed atmosphere in their classes. 82.1% (n=23) indicated feeling encouraged after working with their students. One individual (3.6%) expressed concern that the job is emotionally hardening them. Finally, 14.3% (n=4) reported being at the limit of their capabilities.

## **5 Discussion**

It is emphasized that even the low percentage of burnout in the faculty deserves attention. We are unaware of the possible consequences that one or two subjects may have on students. Additionally, it is necessary to note that these low levels do not align with the mental health levels reported by another mental health study conducted on students at the same university and during the same period (data from Paola Peña's presentation sent to this congress).

## **6 Conclusions**

While it is encouraging to see that the majority of educators report not feeling frustrated and many feel vitality in their work, the concerns expressed by a significant percentage of educators should not be overlooked. The ability to create a relaxed learning environment and the feeling of being at the limit of their capabilities are aspects deserving attention and possible interventions.

## **7 Limitations y Future Research**

The idea of conducting a systematic review on the topic is suggested to investigate whether there is an effective decrease in professional burnout among Chilean educators compared to their university counterparts in other countries. The possibility that this difference may be influenced by limitations in the survey used, such as biased responses due to perceived potential data tracking, is also considered.

Moreover, longitudinal and cyclical studies are suggested to analyze the temporal evolution of professional burnout in the faculty. Finally, adding and comparing burnout among educator-researchers is recommended.

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