


ORIGINAL

Updating the theoretical aspects and practical background of work stress and its assessment in teachers

Actualización de los aspectos teóricos y antecedentes prácticos del estrés laboral y su evaluación en docentes

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: work stress is described as a series of physical and psychological reactions that occur when workers must cope with occupational demands.

Objective: to update the state of the art of the theoretical aspects and practical background of work stress and its assessment in teachers

Method: a narrative review of the updated bibliography was carried out using recognized databases.

Development: stress is a natural reaction to the body; however, constantly remaining under that pressure can severely affect health. Mental stress is defined as that which is produced by anguish, worries in many cases of an economic or emotional nature, problems at work, among others: work stress, anxiety, depression, maladaptive beliefs, demotivation, work pressure, poor coping, etc.

Conclusions: the assessment of work stress in teachers is crucial to identify factors that affect their well-being and performance. The theoretical aspects highlight the importance of adequate measurement methods, the relationship between stress and mental health, and the need to implement intervention strategies. Understanding these elements can improve working conditions and educational quality in the teaching field.

Keywords: Stress; Teachers; Variables; Work; Anxiety.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el estrés laboral se describe como una serie de reacciones físicas y psicológicas que ocurren cuando los trabajadores deben hacer frente a exigencias ocupacionales.

Objetivo: actualizar el estado del arte de los aspectos teóricos y antecedentes prácticos del estrés laboral y su evaluación en docentes.

Método: se realizó una revisión narrativa de la bibliografía actualizada utilizando bases de datos reconocidas.

Desarrollo: el estrés es una reacción natural al cuerpo; sin embargo, permanecer constantemente bajo esa presión puede afectar severamente la salud. Se define que el estrés mental es aquel que se produce por angustias, preocupaciones en muchos casos de tipo económico, afectivo, problemas en el trabajo, entre otros: estrés laboral, por ansiedad, por depresión, por creencias desadaptativas, por desmotivación, por presión laboral, por mal afrontamiento, etc.

Conclusiones: la evaluación del estrés laboral en profesores es crucial para identificar factores que afectan su bienestar y desempeño. Los aspectos teóricos resaltan la importancia de métodos de medición adecuados, la relación entre el estrés y la salud mental, y la necesidad de implementar estrategias de intervención. Comprender estos elementos puede mejorar las condiciones laborales y la calidad educativa en el ámbito docente.

Palabras clave: Estrés; Docentes; Variables; Laboral; Ansiedad.

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO)⁽¹⁾ and the International Labor Organization (ILO),⁽²⁾ approximately 36 % of workers worldwide work more than 48 hours per week, generating occupational health and safety problems. This situation has led to growing concern in these organizations, negatively affecting professional performance and working conditions. It is estimated that 30 % of the global population faces this problem, which is more pronounced in industrialized countries.⁽³⁾

Cleofes indicates that in Latin America,⁽⁴⁾ 40 % of workers suffer from stress. In this context, Ecuador stands out as the country with the second highest incidence of stress in the region, reaching 54 %, while Venezuela has 63 %. Women are more vulnerable, with 44,8 %, compared to 36,7 % for men.

According to Bustillos and collaborators,⁽⁵⁾ in Santo Domingo, the problem of stress in the teaching field is on an alarming increase: 43 cases of Emotional Exhaustion (61 %), 23 of Depersonalization (30 %), and 22 of Personal Accomplishment (8,57 %) are reported. Currently, there is no data on this problem at the Instituto Superior Tecnológico Adventista del Ecuador (ITSAE), which justifies the need to conduct this research.

According to Castillo et al.⁽⁶⁾ among the risk factors for the development of the problem above in teachers is facing significant conflicts in their activities due to the increase of tasks in which they were not trained, poor recognition in the execution of assigned tasks, performing administrative functions and changes of roles to which they are constantly subjected, Sanchez⁽⁷⁾ also refers that there are socio-labor factors that affect the teacher, such as the labor condition that in some cases are hired for a short period and others who enjoy job stability, these are the ones who have higher levels of stress; In addition, they are overloaded at work and have little social support, which leads to dissatisfaction and stress.

Physical stress refers to the physiological reaction of the body to different triggers. This type of stress often leads to psychological stress and, in turn, is frequently experienced as physical discomfort, while mental stress is that which is produced by anguish, worries, in many cases of an economic or emotional nature, and problems at work, among others.⁽⁸⁾

In turn, Chiang⁽⁹⁾ states that he carried out research whose purpose was to study the relationship between the level of job stress and job satisfaction, for which he used a cross-sectional, descriptive correlational empirical study and a questionnaire known as Karasek's Model, which was applied to a population of 184 workers. The results obtained through this instrument and study were, for job satisfaction between 0,656 and 0,923, for job stress, and that psychological demands or demands are negatively related to satisfaction and, therefore, to how the work is performed and satisfaction with autonomy. In conclusion, those individuals or work groups that have fixed-term contracts and suffer from excessive psychological demands have a more significant negative impact on satisfaction; in other words, if there is an increase in psychological demands, job satisfaction decreases on a larger scale.

Chavarría et al.⁽¹⁰⁾ had the objective of identifying the presence of burnout syndrome in medical personnel dedicated to teaching work; the research population consisted of 36 physicians, their study was observational, cross-sectional, and descriptive, and in order to carry out the above-mentioned, sex, age, personal relationships, etc. were taken into account. The CBP-R questionnaire explored two antecedent factors and one consequence factor. The result was 12 undergraduate and four postgraduate physicians who were diagnosed with a high level on the burnout scale. In conclusion, burnout is deeply linked to personal concerns, lack of organization, and sociodemographic and organizational variables that significantly influence the appearance of this condition in teachers.

Work-related stress is described as a series of physical and psychological reactions when workers must cope with occupational demands that do not correspond to their knowledge, skills, or abilities. Anguish, worries, economic or emotional problems, or work-related problems also produce mental stress.⁽¹¹⁾

El-Sahili⁽¹²⁾ mentions that several primary sources trigger stress in teachers and briefly describes each of them, as well as how it is obtained: On the part of the school organization, is the excessive workload, primarily physical and mental, and noise is one of the main stressors that leads to acute stress, both produced within the classroom and discounts for delays in time and delivery.

The objective of this review was to update the state of the art of the theoretical aspects and practical background of work stress and its evaluation in teachers.

METHOD

A search for information was conducted in Redalyc, Elsevier Science Direct, PubMed/Medline, and SciELO, as well as in the ClinicalKeys services and the Google Scholar search engine. Advanced search strategies were used to retrieve the information by structuring search formulas using the terms "stress," "teachers," "labor,"

“anxiety,” “mental health,” etc., as well as their equivalents in English. We selected the resulting documents that provided theoretical and empirical information in Spanish or English.

DEVELOPMENT

The World Health Organization^(13,14) defines stress as the set of physiological reactions that prepares the organism for action; globally, it is an alert system that originates in the body as a signal of the imbalance that begins to be generated by the lack of capacity of an individual to adapt to situations involving any change or circumstance.

Guy Ryder⁽¹⁵⁾ defines mental stress as that which is produced by anguish, worries, in many cases of an economic or emotional nature, and problems at work, among others.

Work stress

According to Cortez et al.⁽¹⁶⁾ work stress is the result of a substantial imbalance between the demands of the environment and the individual's response capacity to face them under conditions in which the failure of these responses can have significant consequences, in other words, for this situation to be generated, the individual must perceive the demanding situations, and this situation must be recognized as threatening to his/her stability and exceed his/her capacity to face it.

Anxiety stress

Stress is one of the most common sources of anxiety, by which the body, upon recognizing a demanding situation as a threat, reacts in a certain way, seeking survival, since anxiety triggers a fight or flight response:

When the mind calculates that the demands of the situation are very high or that the person's capabilities are limited to cope, the stress response appears. The body begins to activate, thus appearing the symptoms of anxiety, which is characterized by a feeling of mild distress or fear; besides being an emotional stress response, it can be an emotional reaction of alert to a threat.⁽¹⁷⁾

Depressive stress

According to WHO⁽¹⁸⁾ and PAHO⁽¹⁹⁾, depression stems from poorly controlled anxiety and is defined as a common mental disorder characterized by the presence of sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or lack of self-esteem, sleep or appetite disturbances, feelings of tiredness and lack of concentration; depression can be long-lasting or recurrent so that it substantially impairs the person's ability to perform at work or perform in their studies, or to cope with their daily life and in its most severe form, depression can lead to suicide, this disorder can become chronic, and therefore the ability to cope with the minor tasks will be significantly diminished, because of this and the difficulty that represents people suffering from significant depression need treatment. However, if the depression is mild, it can be treated without medication.

Stress due to maladaptive beliefs

According to Porro and Reynel, stress due to maladaptive beliefs is unreal thoughts that generate anguish and discomfort. Hence, when thinking and feeling that he/she is unable to meet the expectations of his/her superiors or parents, the teacher becomes anxious and stressed because he/she cannot face the situation. In this way, they are irrational beliefs that do not allow them to respond well to the problems that must be faced in daily life, generating stress, interpersonal conflicts, and sometimes suffering; these beliefs in teachers in the educational context are that their work is not valued, they feel that their work is not rewarded proportionally to their remuneration, they believe that the demands of parents are more significant than what the teacher can give.^(20,21)

Stress due to demotivation

Because of demotivation, teachers perform their activities continuously and routinely, and because of this, their profession becomes boring, which leads to emotional damage. Moreover, by not enjoying their work, their moods and energy decrease, so there is a decrease in proper productivity, satisfaction, and performance:

Demotivation is a feeling of hopelessness; in the workplace, it is when the worker feels limits and obstacles that generate states of anxiety for some internal or external cause, which triggers an imbalance in their activities and lack of energy. This factor causes the teacher to lose the possibility of professional fulfillment through their work by the reluctance and lack of encouragement to carry out their work.^(20,21)

Stress due to work pressure

Work pressure is the result of the demands at work, and these demands and requirements are capable of generating stress for those individuals who do not have the physical and mental capacity to cope with these events; it should be added that due to this, there are few opportunities to make decisions or exercise control

in those situations; the potential sources of work pressure stress in teachers are a work climate in which the teacher does not feel at ease, feeling that the workload is too strenuous, student behavior problems, the responsibilities, salary, and educational integration, because of this the teacher's knowledge and demands must be adjusted to the worker's capabilities. Thus, the work pressure will decrease significantly.^(20,21)

Stress due to poor coping

Alvites-Huamani⁽⁴⁾ refers that stress due to poor coping is a stressful situation for teachers, which has repercussions in the mistreatment of their students and the people around them, as well as in cognitive deterioration by affecting their concentration and attention, which is reflected in a decrease in their academic performance.

Variable in the function of workload and work pressure, which is one of the primary sources of stress in the teacher, obtained by the school organization, is the excessive workload, significantly the physical and mental workload; variable in function of noise, the noise produced inside the classroom is one of the main stressors that lead to acute stress; variable in terms of harassment at work, which is an enormous psychosocial source of stress, from the beginning to the last phase; variable in terms of discounts for tardiness and late delivery, which refers to institutions that deduct hours for the minutes that a teacher is late, thus increasing stress before the start of the day.^(20,21)

According to Aray, Acosta, & Valdano⁽²²⁾ refer to several factors involved in risk factors, such as: marital relationships, relationships with children and their education, living with the elderly and unemployed people, caring for sick relatives, as a consequence of the above mentioned stress is generated since they all require time, space and are essential to maintain; work factors, also represent other risk factors such as lighting, noise and temperature, in the case of lighting, clearly causes visual discomfort; noise, causes deconcentration at the time of performing tasks; the temperature if it is high can generate discomfort, so it is important to remember to keep it in a neutral state; the workday can affect the private life of the worker, extra-work activities and social relations, producing a decrease in motivation and communication with others, so it is attributed to productivity, salary, overtime, all this with the purpose or objective of being able to lead a more comfortable life, in addition to seeking greater economic independence and social comfort.

Excessive work is considered as performed in such a way that it goes beyond the possibility of recovery of the individual; the workday extends more than eight hours; this can represent a risk since some people can demand a lot from their bodies and present difficulties of recovery. Therefore, they do not rest properly, leading to difficulties in the work environment and causing not only physical illnesses but also labor problems.⁽²²⁾

Stress is a natural reaction to the body; however, remaining constantly under that pressure can severely affect health; alternative remedies can be found to control it, which are hot baths, massages with essential oils, mala silvestre bath, palo santo tea, consuming natural proteins and above all, physical activity, relaxation techniques help to lower the heart rate and reduce blood pressure, for which there are many types, including deep breathing.⁽²³⁾

Medical treatment is based on psychiatry, which specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of mental health conditions; a psychologist and other mental health professionals can diagnose anxiety and provide psychotherapy counseling; from then a general perspective, it is necessary to adopt appropriate hygienic-dietary measures that can mitigate the adverse effects of Stress and accompany the medical treatment itself, in which specific drugs will be used.⁽²⁴⁾

According to the Ministry of Health⁽²⁵⁾, there are different medications for Stress, which are aimed at symptomatic relief of the progression of the condition to post-traumatic stress disorder; despite this, the use of psychotherapy is recommended over pharmacological treatment.

Likewise, the Ministry of Health⁽²⁵⁾ states that the drugs to be used for treatment are:

Benzodiazepines are given for the symptoms described, which correspond to the anxious sphere and sleep disturbances; this group of drugs has been frequently used in the acute phase of trauma exposure. Antipsychotic drugs are based on their sedative effect and rapid onset of antipsychotic action in low doses, such as Quetiapine, Chlorpromazine, or Risperidone could contribute to the management of anxiety and sleep disturbances; finally, the drug Propanol specifically could contribute to tremor, sweating and tachycardia.⁽²⁵⁾

Background

According to Alvites-Huamani⁽⁴⁾ in his original article entitled Stress in teachers and psychosocial factors in teachers in Latin America, North America and Europe, published by propósitos y Relaciones, in Lima, Peru; The objective of this article was to calculate the interaction between Stress in teachers and psychosocial components in teachers in Latin America, North America and Europe, the type of study was descriptive, with a non-experimental, cross-sectional and correlational study design, since the researcher seeks to measure data through data collection instruments, The population consisted of 329 elementary and pre-eminent teachers from Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Uruguay, Venezuela, Panama and Mexico), North America

(United States) and Europe (Spain), and the sample consisted of 81 teachers, with a predominant age range between 41 and 50 years old (36 %); The aforementioned individuals were asked to fill out the Questionnaire of Psychosocial Factors in Academic Work (FPSIS)-Teacher Scale ED-6 and the results obtained indicate a significant correlation between teachers' Stress and psychosocial components ($p < .001$); mainly prevailing the degree of Stress due to anxiety, depression, maladaptive beliefs that correlate with psychosocial components.

According to Pazán Torres⁽²⁶⁾ in the unpublished thesis entitled *El síndrome de burnout y las afectaciones emocionales de los docentes de nivel bachillerato del Distrito educativo 05D01 2018*, for obtaining a master's degree in human talent management, at the Universidad Técnica de Ambato, in Ecuador, its objective was to determine if burnout syndrome generates emotional affections in high school teachers of the 05D01 educational district, the type of study was qualitative-quantitative, and its design was retrospective, in addition, the population consisted of high school teachers of the educational district, with a sample of 287 collaborators, and the instrument used was the EPI_INFO 7 questionnaire and survey. As a result, it was obtained that of the total 100 %, 29,6 % feel tired at the end of the workday and 2,4 % feel saturated, while 15,6 % feel happy, and 52,2 % feel calm.

According to Zuniga-Jara & Pizarro-Leon⁽²⁷⁾ in their original article titled "Measurements of Work Stress in Teachers of a Chilean Regional Public School", published by Información Tecnológica (INFOTEC), in Chile, Conquimbo; The objective of the study was to discover the presence of burnout syndrome, and to find depersonalization, lack of personal fulfillment and emotional exhaustion in teachers belonging to a public institution of professional technical education in the city of Coquimbo, Coquimbo Region, which had a non-experimental study design and qualitative approach, The instrument applied for data collection was the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) questionnaire and the result was that the Level of global Burnout Syndrome is medium or low in the educators of the school and that only emotional exhaustion showed a higher level than the other data with 34 % of presence in the educators surveyed, Finally, to conclude, the data obtained suggest that the most significant problem is related to exhaustion, both physical and mental, and this is due to the fact that the effort of the teachers includes not only teaching classes, but also the development of other activities, If we also incorporate the fact that a significant number of the educators surveyed work in more than one educational establishment with the objective of increasing their economic income, then the reason for the greater emotional exhaustion among teachers is easy to understand.

According to Parihuamán-Aniceto⁽²⁸⁾ in his unpublished thesis entitled *Level of Stress in teachers of the Educational Institutions of Villa Vicús and kilometer 50, district of Chulucanas - Morropón - Piura*, for obtaining the academic degree of Master in Education with Mention in Educational Management, at the University Piuria, Peru, which aimed to establish the magnitude of presence of Stress in teachers of three institutions: I.E. N° 14634, I.E. Vicús de Villa Vicús and I.E. Andrés Avelino Cáceres del km 50; in the methodology the type of study was descriptive, non-experimental and of quantitative approach; the sample consisted of 50 teachers, which is the entire population; for data collection the instrument used was the ED-6 Scale and 6 of its dimensions; The results indicate that there is a low level of anxiety, depression, pressures, maladaptive beliefs, and poor coping, however, there is a medium level of demotivation, finally, it is possible to conclude that in general teachers have a low level of Stress in the institutions mentioned above, however, they suffer from demotivation, this may be due to the poor economic remuneration, since it may not be in accordance with the amount of work that teachers have and they even feel that their work is not appreciated.

According to Vergara,⁽²⁹⁾ in his original article entitled "El nivel de Stress en los docentes de la UNEMI, published in the magazine *Dominio de la Ciencia en Ecuador, Guayaquil*"; the objective of the research was to determine the Burnout index in the State University of Milagro in the teaching area, so the methodology used was the quantitative and non-experimental approach so that the sample consisted of 100 teachers from different educational areas, which is why the instrument that was applied for the development of the research was the Stress Reactivity Index test developed by J. L. González de Rivera, consequently. As a result, the alarming presence of Stress in the institution's teachers was obtained due to the demands of the authorities towards the teachers and the variety of activities that must be carried out to meet the expectations imposed on third-level teaching.

Theoretical positions

Stress is a term of daily use, and its purpose is to adapt to situations that are demanding either mentally or physically and is fully linked to the social context, either work or family; therefore, in order to find coping strategies, a theory or model of Callista Roy was developed as a tool for adaptation, where it is noted that the adaptive responses are responses that favor the integrity of the person in terms of survival goals, growth, reproduction, and mastery, through this model can understand the role of the nurse and her intervention to reduce stress-producing mechanisms.⁽³⁰⁾

Types of Roy model modes

The physiological mode of adaptation incorporates the biological behaviors of the individual, shown through

vital signs, behavior, physiological reactions, and clinical laboratory values; such forms of adaptation are observed by the nurse, who will choose to guide the subject to identify and manage their reactions through the use of strategies such as relaxation and deep breathing to neutralize responses derived from the adaptation mode which focuses on psychological, emotional and self-esteem related aspects since the individual reflects how people perceive him/her within a group, based on reactions to the environment and naturally has sufficient resources to be able to cope with the stressful situation.⁽³⁰⁾

Bonfill et al.⁽³⁰⁾ refer that the adaptation mode of role performance is about social adaptation and its role in society; the nurse can identify if the person is socially overloaded and the factors that influence the performance of their role, as well as what represents an overload and all this through recognition techniques in the distribution of time, setting priorities and establishing spaces to work together; Finally, the last mode of adaptation to independence is based on the integrity of relationships, it refers to the moment in which people adapt to difficult situations and in turn seek help, support, love, among others; however, nurses must detect the difficulties that people present and offer support systems.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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