



# Emotional Exhaustion and Teaching Performance: An Approach to Burnout Syndrome in University Professors

*Desgaste emocional y desempeño docente: una aproximación al síndrome de Burnout en profesores universitarios*

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## Abstract

This study analyzes the influence of burnout syndrome on the performance of university teachers, based on data collected at the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Education Sciences of the Central University of Ecuador. The central problem addressed by the manuscript is the lack of attention given to the emotional health of education professionals, who constitute one of the populations most exposed to work-related stress. In response to this problem, the authors propose an approach to assess the impact of factors such as emotional exhaustion, personal fulfillment, and depersonalization on faculty performance. It contextualizes the current state of studies associated with the topic through a brief overview of the state of the art and the conceptualization of the variables studied. This is a quantitative, cross-sectional study based on descriptive and correlational methods, as well as data provided by a sample of professors. Data collection involved interviewing teachers using the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Competency-Based Teacher Evaluation Questionnaire (EDBC). Relevant findings include the weak relationship between the study variables, the importance of considering sociodemographic qualities such as the gender and age of participants when identifying possible causes of burnout, and the implication of professional experience in the development of strategies for preventing and coping with work-related stress.

## Keywords

Educational quality, teaching profession, work-related stress, teaching practice, burnout.

## Resumen

Este estudio analiza la influencia del síndrome de burnout en el desempeño de los docentes universitarios, a partir de datos recopilados en la Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación de la Universidad Central del Ecuador. El problema central que aborda el manuscrito es la escasa atención brindada a la salud emocional de los profesionales de la educación, quienes constituyen una de las poblaciones más expuestas al estrés laboral. En respuesta a esta problemática, los autores proponen una aproximación para evaluar el impacto de factores como el cansancio emocional, la realización personal y la despersonalización en el desempeño del cuerpo docente. Contextualiza el estado actual de los estudios asociados con la temática, mediante una breve exposición del estado del arte y la conceptualización de las variables estudiadas. Es una investigación con enfoque cuantitativo de temporalidad transversal, respaldada en métodos descriptivos y correlacionales, al igual que en los datos proporcionados por una muestra de catedráticos. El levantamiento de los datos consideró la técnica de la entrevista a docentes con la aplicación del Maslach Burnout Inventory y el Cuestionario para evaluar docentes basado en competencias (EDBC). Como hallazgos relevantes están la escasa relación entre las variables de estudio, la importancia de la consideración de cualidades sociodemográficas como el género y la edad de los participantes al momento de identificar las posibles causas del Burnout, así como, la implicación de la experiencia del profesional en el desarrollo de estrategias para la prevención y el afrontamiento del estrés laboral.



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## Palabras clave

Calidad de la educación, docencia, estrés laboral, práctica pedagógica, síndrome del quemado.

### 1. Introduction

Globalization and relentless capitalization, accompanied by stereotypes and social mandates, have shaped scenarios in which productivity is conceived as an inherent quality of a responsible individual committed to improving their environment. According to Salvagioni et al. (2017)

The combination of stressors has triggered conditions that affect the daily lives of millions of people around the world; this has increased the risk of emotional and sleep disorders, as well as psychosomatic problems, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, musculoskeletal pain, and strokes (p. 5).

Burnout syndrome (hereafter referred to as BS) is a significant biopsychosocial problem, as it is associated with both the physical and emotional well-being of human beings and their ability to respond to work and social demands. Furthermore, authors such as Rincón point out that this condition was recognized in 2019 by the World Health Organization (WHO), being included in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), and has gone from being conceived as a state of vital exhaustion to being considered a disease resulting from chronic stress caused by work overload (Rincón, 2025, p. 19).

However, when transferring this condition to the educational sphere, it has been identified that teachers are one of the populations most at risk of developing symptoms associated with BS. In this vein, Manzano-Díaz (2020) states that "when working conditions are poor, given that they often do not provide the necessary safety and protection for employees, they become a threat to health, causing occupational diseases" (p. 500). The teaching profession is also subject to constant change, as frequent reforms in the education system tend to increase both the demands and quality standards in this area of knowledge.

According to Díez-Romero (2023), "among the group of workers who are at particular risk of burnout are those who work in social care, health care, or teaching" (p. 192). Similarly, authors such as Sorce and De Lucca (2020, p. 7) point out that, due to the high probability of forming bonds with the people in their care, education professionals are exposed to greater emotional exhaustion, influenced by both contextual factors and work demands. What has been mentioned up to this point is important in understanding the meaning of this research, since in addition to these factors, university teachers not only guarantee a quality educational process, but also, in their role as trainers of professionals, perform other substantive functions that support their vocation of service, such as research, links with society, and academic management.

In this regard, studies such as that by Kwiek (2016) warn that only 10% of university faculty in Europe are responsible for 50% of scientific production, reflecting a marked structural inequality in higher education systems (p. 395). This concentration of knowledge generates latent tension between teaching and research, as less productive academics tend to focus their efforts on teaching. Thus, there is a clear conflict between traditional educational functions and contemporary demands aimed at generating new knowledge.



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For authors such as Briceño-Núñez (2024), the SB approach in higher education poses challenges that go beyond andragagogical praxis, as it involves the consideration of epistemological, ontological, and axiological dimensions (p. 4). As this is an academic population with representative training in their respective areas of knowledge, the probability of divergences regarding epistemological conceptions of teaching increases. This heterogeneity can be both a protective factor and a risk factor with respect to a comprehensive approach to the academic function.

The ontological dimension focuses on the teacher's being and not simply on their doing (Villegas-Torres and Lengeling, 2021, p. 231), which addresses the teacher's sense of self-perception as a human being in service to society. In this sense, it is interesting to encourage approaches to professionals who have managed to remain active for prolonged periods, considering that the teaching vocation has three stages in its development: "entering the teaching profession, choosing to be a teacher, and the educational vocation" (Cardosa-Batres, 2024, p. 35). Along the same lines, teaching is configured as a reflective practice where the teacher continuously questions their role, values, and beliefs. In other words, it is not simply reduced to a technical training function, but also implies a form of existence linked to broader personal and social meanings. The tension between the roles of researcher and teacher is a substantive ontological aspect, as it compromises the way teachers recognize themselves within the educational institution. Along these lines, authors such as Yağan et al. (2022) highlight that the academic system itself forces faculty members to face a conflict of institutional roles assumed in their hiring, which guide research toward productivity, prestige, and metrics established by the scientific community (pp. 3-10).

In addressing the axiological dimension, Briceño-Núñez (2024) emphasizes the values that guide the actions, decisions, and relationships of teachers, influencing both their well-being and their professional performance, as well as their decision-making and interaction with the different actors in the academic context (p. 4). The aforementioned dimensions correspond to the cornerstone of teaching performance in higher education institutions, as they shape their level of commitment to the training of future professionals, as well as their self-care actions for the maintenance and improvement of educational quality. The study by Onofre-Pérez (2021) mentions that intrinsic work values, such as personal development and meaningful work, correlate positively with work commitment and negatively with SB (pp. 30-31). Therefore, this finding emphasizes the importance of integrating personal work values with institutional culture to improve individual and collective performance.

The current state of research on SB in teaching staff performance provides a solid basis for generating new studies on this topic. However, as it is a multi-causal phenomenon, one of the main challenges of burnout research is to define its causes and consequences. "Predicting performance is a complex task and requires analysis of its nomological network for understanding, since psychological variables are difficult to analyze in isolation" (Choy-Vessoni and Prieto-Molinari, 2023, para. 11). Furthermore, the diversity of each participant's realities and perceptions implies limitations in these studies, as they could lead to biased results regarding the degree to which burnout affects teaching.

In general terms, this article aimed to contribute to the field of educational research related to quality assurance and the care of teaching staff in higher education. It began with the application of a survey of sociodemographic characteristics and the Spanish version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Human Services (Maslach burnout inventory human services survey), with the aim of characterizing the participating population. At the same time, the sample of teachers assessed their performance using the "Competency-based



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Teacher Evaluation Questionnaire (EDBC)" (Torres-Roldán et al., 2024), which allowed for a subsequent comparison between the two variables.

In light of the above, the aim of this study was to evaluate the impact of factors such as emotional exhaustion, personal fulfillment, and depersonalization on the performance of a sample of teachers from the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Education Sciences at the Central University of Ecuador during the 2024-2025 academic year. The recognition of the scarcity of this type of study in the field of education, especially in the case of teachers involved in the training of other professionals in this field, was the main motivation for the development of this article. Thus, the question was raised: How do the dimensions of burnout affect the performance of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Educational Sciences of the Central University of Ecuador in the 2024-2025 academic period?

This formulation was based on the recognition of university teachers as integral subjects who, despite having a remarkable career and extensive experience in their work, do not abandon their human condition. The assessment of teachers, as well as the prevention of health problems, is a relevant responsibility of the ideological, political, and economic spheres of any sociocultural context.

This manuscript was structured with the aim of starting with a brief overview of the state of the art and a theoretical-conceptual approach to the variables analyzed, in order to subsequently provide methodological specifications for the interactive phase. Once these components have been clarified, the most relevant results are presented based on the objectives of the study, moving on to a discussion of the findings and corresponding conclusions.

## 2. State of the Art

This section reviews research related to the topic; the studies considered were published within the last five years. Priority was given to identifying systematic reviews that provide a general overview of advances in the study of SB in teaching performance in recent years.

Tabares-Díaz et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review of 53 scientific articles, emphasizing studies on SB in teachers in Latin America. The objective that guided the study was to identify scientific production related to the topic, generated in the period between 2008 and 2018. One of the main findings was the recognition of a higher prevalence of research of this nature in health care populations, compared to the analysis of professionals in the field of education. It was concluded that most studies that sought to associate SB with sociodemographic, occupational, and psychological variables were able to establish relationships in the form of risk and protective factors.

Rojas-Solís et al. (2021) conducted a review of research carried out between 1994 and 2019. The objective of the study was to explore SB in the context of Latin American teachers. Based on the PRISMA model, they identified 25 research articles from nine high-impact electronic databases. Among the main results, it was evident that research on BS in teacher performance has mainly focused on the analysis of prevalence and the recognition of etiological factors, in contrast to the means of prevention and treatment. The conclusions highlighted the need to consider the gender variable, situational analysis, and the specific needs of participants in this type of study.

González-Valero et al. (2021) conducted a review of research related to the topic. The objective was to provide an overview of the main variables associated with SB and resilience



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in the field of teaching. The methodology used was similar to that of Rojas-Solís et al. (2021), who identified a sample of 25 scientific articles published between 2016 and 2019. The results showed that since 2019 there has been an upward trend in interest in researching psychosocial variables linked to BS. Similarly, it was stated that a large part of the studies analyzed showed that the dimensions of BS are highly related to the mood, sense of fulfillment, and work and interpersonal performance of university teachers. It was concluded that all levels of education show a significant number of professionals suffering from BS, which could have an impact on both the mental health of these individuals and the teaching-learning processes.

### 3. Conceptual approach to burnout

For authors such as Caballero-Domínguez et al. (2010), burnout syndrome is a term coined in the healthcare and organizational context to refer to people who showed signs of professional and emotional exhaustion (p. 132). For their part, Saborío-Morales and Hidalgo-Murillo (2015) mention that the first approaches to this condition date back to the 1970s, when psychiatrist Herbert Freudenberger first used the concept of burnout to describe the decline in the physical and psychological health of care staff at an addiction clinic in New York, USA (p. 2). Thus, they were able to identify effects from the first year of service, evidenced by changes in attitudes toward work and a continuous reduction in the effectiveness of the activities performed by these professionals throughout the workday.

In 1976, American psychologist Christina Maslach revisited the term burnout to refer to a three-dimensional syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal accomplishment, mainly associated with professions involving direct contact with human beings (Maslach and Jackson, 1981, p. 106).

Over the years, the definition of burnout syndrome has been supplemented by contributions from various authors. Figure 1 below summarizes the evolution of the concept of burnout syndrome over the last few decades.

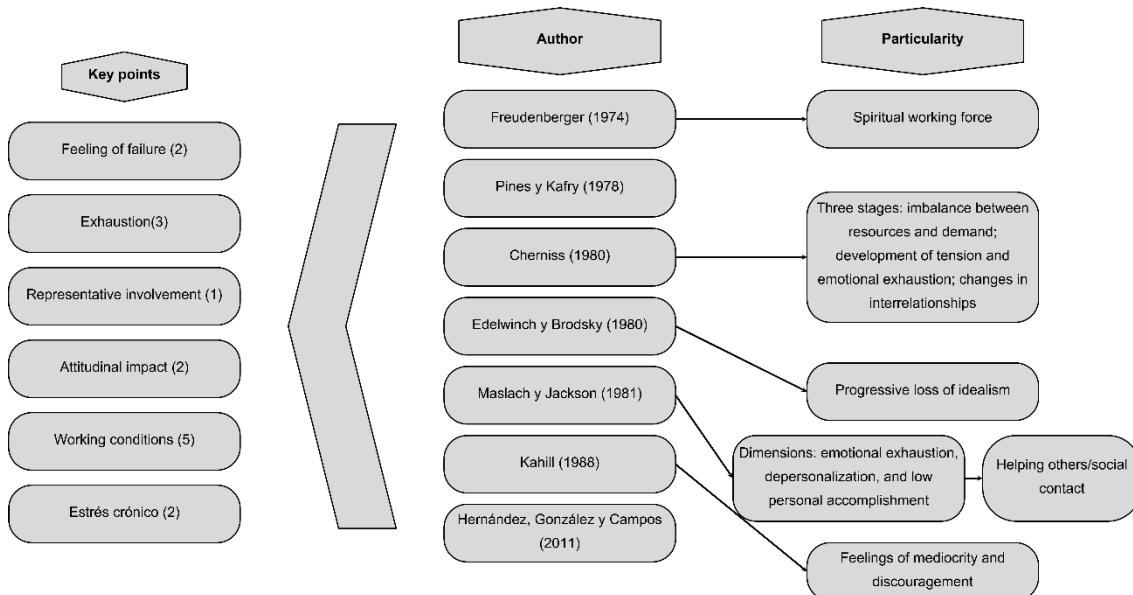


Figure 1. Conceptual evolution of SB. Adapted from: Estrada-López et al. (2018).



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Figure 1 shows that, from the perspective of Estrada-López et al. (2018), authors such as Freudenberg (1974) and Hernández, González, and Campos (2011) focused their work on recognizing burnout syndrome (BS), referring to a feeling of failure in individuals with this condition; while Pines and Kafry (1978), Maslach and Jackson (1981), and Kahill (1988) delved mainly into the study of factors associated with the syndrome, such as exhaustion from the work environment, weariness in dealing with people, changes in the attitude of the affected worker, and chronic stress.

Similarly, among the particularities and representative contributions to the concept of BS, three stages in the development of the syndrome have been identified: 1) the imbalance between resources and demands; 2) the development of a feeling of exhaustion, accompanied by an increase in stressors; and 3) behavioral changes in interpersonal relationships. In addition, it is worth highlighting the dimensions proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1981), which have been the basis for the development of numerous subsequent studies, thanks to the creation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory for human services.

### 3.1 Teaching Performance in Higher Education

The task of educating requires vocation and key skills for proper execution; however, the performance of university teachers demands greater rigor, as it incorporates personal, disciplinary, and pedagogical elements (Salazar, 2006, p. 31). The characterization of the professor is based on the recognition of the multidimensionality that defines the profile of the academic professional, given that, as a subject linked to the higher education sphere, they must perform training tasks of research, coordination, and tutoring that go beyond exclusively pedagogical aspects. University teachers represent strength and expertise in a specific area of knowledge; however, according to the United Nations, their participation in educational work requires that, in addition to being specialists in their area of knowledge, they possess skills in the field of pedagogical knowledge, such as knowledge of learning methods and understanding of assessment processes (UNESCO, 1998, p. 3).

The conceptual approach to university teaching performance becomes more complex when recognizing this multidimensionality in practice, and even personal and emotional aspects that may affect performance throughout the educational process have been taken into consideration. The practice of teaching is inseparable from the establishment of relationships with students. Therefore, elements such as the treatment of students, attitude in learning spaces, and proximity to future professionals are important components in the evaluation of professional performance.

## 4. Methodology

This research focused on recognizing the degree of association between the dimensions of burnout syndrome as an independent variable and teaching performance as a dependent variable, as well as the influence that exists between them, making it specifically a correlational study. The article was written from a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional, and correlational approach. This approach was chosen because priority was given to obtaining and interpreting numerical data in an uncontrolled environment, with the aim of providing objective answers to the research questions (Creswell, 2014). It was cross-sectional because the data collection was carried out on a single occasion, and correlational because of the degree of association between the two variables.



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#### 4.1 Participants

The study involved a sample of teachers from the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Education Sciences at the Central University of Ecuador during the 2024-2025 academic year. The sampling process was non-probabilistic and intentional, given that individuals were selected based on the following criteria: a) working in the Faculty of Philosophy at the UCE; b) having an employment relationship with the university for more than one year; c) having a third-level degree in the field of education as their basic training.

Thus, a sample of 109 university teachers was considered for participation. This group corresponded to 39% of the total number of teachers working in the aforementioned faculty (279 professionals) at the time of data collection.

Características	N	%
Gender		
Male	67	62
Female	41	38
Other	0	0
Age		
Under 40	15	13.8
40 to 49	43	39.4
50 to 59	39	35.8
60 or older	12	11.0
Employment Status		
Full-time	87	79.8
Part-time	13	11.9
Part-time	9	8.3
Job Length		
1-10 years	35	32.1
11-20 years	49	45
21-30 years	22	20.1
Over 30 years	3	2.8

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the teaching sample.

It should be noted that the participation of all individuals involved in this study was completely voluntary, with informed consent and consent. Likewise, confidentiality and anonymity were respected at all times.

#### 4.2 Instruments

The instruments used to conduct the research were the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Spanish version) and the Competency-Based Teacher Evaluation Questionnaire (EDBC) (Torres et al., 2024). Both instruments have been recognized for their wide application in various studies as tools for measuring the variables: SB and teacher performance.



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The MBI (Maslach and Jackson, 1981) considers the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal fulfillment. This inventory has high internal consistency and reliability, close to  $\alpha = 0.90$  (Oyola-García et al., 2023). Its application has been one of the most recognized for research projects on SB (Rojas-Solís et al., 2021). The ranges for the rating by aspect evaluated are shown in Table 4.

Evaluated aspect	Low	Medium	High
Emotional exhaustion	0-18	19-26	27-54
Depersonalization	0-5	6-9	10-30
Personal fulfillment	0-33	34-39	40-56

Cuadro 2. Rangos para la calificación del MBI. Fuente: Briceño-Núñez (2024).

The “Competency-based teacher evaluation questionnaire (EDBC)” was created by Torres et al. (2024). The instrument has 22 items, designed with the intention of measuring the performance of teaching staff in higher education through the following competencies: Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Values. A pilot test was conducted to establish the reliability of the instrument, obtaining a Cronbach's alpha value corresponding to the excellent range ( $\alpha = 0.924$ ).

#### 4.3 Data analysis

The first phase of the study consisted of administering the instruments to the teaching sample of the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters and Educational Sciences of the Central University of Ecuador, active during the 2024-2025 academic year. The data were subsequently processed using the SPSS v26.0 statistical package and Microsoft Excel. The descriptive analysis included graphs created based on the measures of central tendency and the values obtained. A correlational analysis was also performed by comparing the scores resulting from the application of both instruments.

### 5. Results

#### 5.1 Fase 1: Measurement of burnout levels among teaching staff at the Faculty of Philosophy, Literature, and Education Sciences

The first element analyzed was the prevalence of SB among the teaching staff. It should be noted that the sample consisted primarily of full-time professors with approximately 11 to 20 years of service in higher education, with a mean ( $\mu$ ) age of 49 years and a standard deviation of  $\sigma = 9$ .

Figure 2 presents the data obtained according to each dimension of the MBI, referring to the high, medium, and low levels offered by the instrument.



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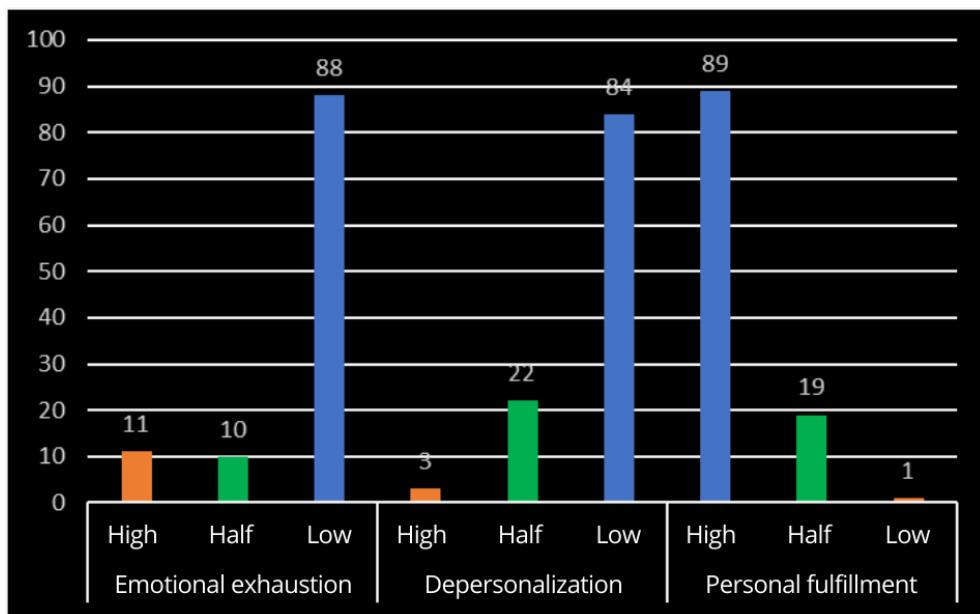


Figure 2. Distribution of the teaching sample according to the dimensions of burnout.

#### 5.1.1 Emotional exhaustion

- 88 teachers showed scores between 0 and 18 (low): Indicates that burnout or emotional overload generally does not occur due to stress levels experienced during the academic day.
- 10 teachers showed scores between 19 and 26 (medium): These teachers report feeling some level of emotional exhaustion, which could increase and rise to a high level of fatigue in this dimension.
- 11 teachers showed scores between 27 and 54 (high): Typical of individuals who constantly experience exhaustion due to work demands.

#### 5.1.2 Depersonalization

- 84 teachers scored between 0 and 5 (low): Refers to teachers who can easily establish positive relationships with students.
- 22 teachers scored between 6 and 9 (medium): Indicates a certain emotional distance and loss of interest in interacting with others.
- 3 teachers reported a score between 10 and 30 (high): These teachers consider themselves to have a poor ability to connect emotionally with their students. This could be interpreted as a cynical and dehumanizing attitude toward others.

#### 5.1.3 Personal fulfillment

- One teacher reported a score between 0 and 33 (low): This teacher claims to be dissatisfied with their job and lacks a sense of accomplishment.
- 19 teachers demonstrated scores between 34 and 39 (medium): Typical of teachers with a relatively moderate sense of satisfaction with their job performance and achievements.
- 89 teachers obtained scores between 40 and 56 (high): Indicates that these participants feel satisfied with their work and their academic achievements.

When comparing the results with the sociodemographic qualities presented previously, it is possible to affirm that from a sample of teachers with an average age of 49 years, mostly



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composed of male teachers with approximate seniority of 11 to 20 years, no participants with SB indicators were evident.

## 5.2 Fase 2: Análisis Correlacional entre las dimensiones del SB y el índice de desempeño docente

The results of the first phase allowed for a distribution of SB dimensions, which facilitated correlational analysis using the Pearson coefficient ( $r$ ). The results presented below correspond to a comparison between the SB dimensions and the total score obtained in the questionnaire regarding teacher performance.

		Emotional exhaustion	Personal achievement	Despersonalization	Teaching performance
Emotional exhaustion	Correlación Pearson	.317**	.248**	-.110	
	Sig. (bilateral)	.001	.009	.254	
	N	109	109	109	109
Personal achievement	Correlación Pearson	-.317**	1	-.353**	.248**
	Sig. (bilateral)	.001		.000	.009
	N	109	109	109	109
Despersonalization	Correlación Pearson	.248**	-.353**	1	-.072
	Sig. (bilateral)	.009	.000		.459
	N	109	109	109	109
Teaching performance	Correlación Pearson	-.110	.248**	-.072	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	.254	.009	.459	
	N	109	109	109	109

\*\*. The correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (bilateral).

Table 3. Correlation between SB dimensions and teacher performance index.

Regarding the relationships between the dimensions of burnout syndrome, the results showed significant correlations between them, consistent with what has been reported in the literature. A moderate negative correlation was found between emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment ( $r = -.317$ ,  $p = .001$ ), indicating that as teachers perceive greater emotional exhaustion, their sense of achievement and personal efficacy tends to decrease. Likewise, the relationship between emotional exhaustion and depersonalization was positive and weak ( $r = .248$ ,  $p = .009$ ), suggesting that higher levels of emotional exhaustion are associated with more distant or cynical attitudes toward students and teaching. Finally, the relationship between personal accomplishment and depersonalization



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was negative and moderate ( $r = -.353$ ,  $p < .001$ ), reflecting that a lower perception of personal success is accompanied by greater depersonalization in professional practice.

On the other hand, when analyzing the relationship between the dimensions of burnout syndrome and teacher performance, the findings revealed that only one of the dimensions showed a significant correlation. Personal accomplishment was positively and weakly associated with performance ( $r = .248$ ,  $p = .009$ ), suggesting that teachers who feel more professionally fulfilled tend to report better performance in their academic duties. In contrast, the correlations between emotional exhaustion and performance ( $r = -.110$ ,  $p = .254$ ), as well as between depersonalization and performance ( $r = -.072$ ,  $p = .459$ ), were negative but not significant, indicating that these dimensions of burnout did not show a statistically relevant influence on perceived performance in the participating sample.

## 6. Discussion of results

The state of the art presented at the beginning of this article raises the importance of expanding the depth of studies related to burnout syndrome (BS) in teacher performance. Clearly, there is a significant number of analyses that focus specifically on descriptive approaches (Rojas-Solís et al., 2021), neglecting contextualization that facilitates a broader understanding of the conditions under which the findings were obtained.

In this study, significant associations were identified between the dimensions of BS and teacher performance, particularly in the dimension of personal accomplishment, which was shown to be a relevant factor in the prevention of this syndrome. Using the Pearson coefficient, the following were found: 1) a moderate negative correlation between emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment ( $r = -.317$ ,  $p = .001$ ); 2) a moderate negative correlation between personal accomplishment and depersonalization ( $r = -.353$ ,  $p < .001$ ); and 3) a weak positive correlation between personal accomplishment and teaching performance ( $r = .248$ ,  $p = .009$ ). These results suggest that a greater sense of personal accomplishment could contribute to mitigating symptoms such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, while also promoting better professional performance.

When comparing these findings with the systematic review by González-Valero et al. (2021), who stated that "[...] personal accomplishment is related to emotional repair with a large effect ( $r = 0.501$ )" (p. 282), consistency is observed regarding the positive role of this dimension in teacher well-being. A notable aspect of this study is the typology of the participating teachers, given that all had basic training in education, which could have favorably influenced their ability to manage work demands and maintain a sense of personal accomplishment. In line with Hernández-Ortega (2023), who notes that several university professors "have found themselves under constant work pressure, which has forced them to adapt environmentally and professionally" (pp. 112-113), the findings of this study suggest that such adaptation appears to be effective in the analyzed sample, with no evidence of severe impact on performance. In fact, the majority of professors presented low levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, along with high or medium levels of personal accomplishment. This is consistent with Garcés-Delgado et al. (2023), who argue that, despite moderate levels of stress, there are no indicators that indicate that professors suffer from chronic stress, suggesting that the symptoms of BS in university contexts are situational and not necessarily clinical.

Finally, factors such as age and professional experience appear to play an important role in the quality of teaching performance. Bolívar and Mula-Falcón (2022) highlight that teachers are more likely to develop stress in their early years of practice, when they are still adapting,



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since "the fear of failure leads individuals to voluntarily exploit themselves to the point of exhaustion" (p. 123). This approach is consistent with what was observed in the present sample, characterized by an average age of 49 years and extensive professional experience, which could explain the greater emotional resilience and sense of personal achievement reported. As Mendes and Miguel (2024) affirm, experienced workers are more successful in regulating their emotions in demanding situations, which facilitates a more defined sense of personal accomplishment, positively impacting performance and relationships with students.

As a result, it is understood that a sense of personal accomplishment could be considered a protective factor for teachers against emotional burnout and depersonalization. For their part, the professional career and experience were also perceived as elements that could make a difference in the etiology of SB in this population, something that undoubtedly deserves to be investigated in greater detail in subsequent studies, especially with samples of novice teachers or those from other training areas.

## 7. Conclusions

In the analyzed sample, the influence of burnout syndrome (BS) on university professor performance depended on a combination of personal, emotional, social, and occupational factors that enabled or prevented the onset of warning signs. In this regard, no participant showed chronic stress; however, some professors reported experiencing emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. It is worth noting that sociodemographic characteristics provided key information in understanding why there was no significant relationship between the study variables, given that factors such as age, vocation, and years of service proved relevant for managing the demands associated with teaching.

Among the most relevant dimensions of burnout syndrome in relation to professor performance, a sense of personal accomplishment was identified as especially important as a factor in preventing emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in the analyzed population. This finding is significant considering that the entire sample consisted of teachers with a background in education, which suggests that many of them may feel fulfilled by working in university teaching.

Teacher performance is undoubtedly a multi-causal phenomenon that combines a variety of resources and skills developed throughout one's professional career. Factors such as teachers' age and years of experience play a fundamental role in consolidating optimal performance and in students' positive perceptions of their work. Both the present study and the aforementioned contributions show that, over time, teachers tend to adjust their priorities, increasingly focusing on aspects that promote educational quality and empathic and assertive interactions with students. This shift in perspective enriches the learning experience and strengthens the relationships between teachers and their context. Likewise, as they gain more experience, teachers refine their strategies for managing stress and improve their emotional regulation skills, which contributes to the development of protective factors against burnout and other conditions related to work-related stress.

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### Declaration of authorship-CRediT

**ESTEBAN BOZANO-RIVADENEIRA:** Conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, research, resources, data curation, writing – original draft, writing – revision and editing, visualization.

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**BRITTANNY ARROBO-GUAYLLAS:** Resources, data curation.

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### Declaration of the use of artificial intelligence

The authors declare that they used the ChatGPT tool – GPT-4 model (OpenAI), June 2025 version – solely for linguistic review and improvement of the wording of certain sections of the manuscript. All scientific content was prepared, reviewed, and validated by the authors, who assume full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and academic rigor of the work.



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