

### **The Development of Burnout Process: A Study in Teachers**

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**Background:** Burnout is a psychological response to chronic work-related stress of an interpersonal and emotional nature that appears in professionals in service organizations who work in direct contact with the clients or users of the organization (Gil-Monte, 2005). Burnout in teachers has received increasing attention by researchers and scholars, as its severity among teaching professionals has made teaching a profession at high risk of developing this syndrome. Teachers are vulnerable to a large quantity of psychosocial stressors, including role ambiguity (Papastyliaou, Kaila & Polychronopoulos, 2009) and job overload (Shirom, Nirel, & Vinokur, 2006).

The theoretical model underlying the Spanish Burnout Inventory (SBI) (Gil-Monte, 2011) describes two patterns in the development of burnout. In both, attitudes and behaviours of indolence can be viewed as a coping strategy used to deal with cognitive (i.e., lower enthusiasm toward the job) and emotional (i.e., psychological exhaustion) deterioration. However, while for some professionals this coping strategy allows them to manage the levels of strain, other professionals feel uncomfortable with it and develop feelings of guilt (Gil-Monte, 2008). The occurrence of burnout in teachers affects the educational environment and interferes with reaching pedagogical objectives, leading professionals to a process of alienation, cynicism, apathy, health problems, and the intention to abandon the profession.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the mediating role of feelings of guilt in the relationship between burnout and inclination towards absenteeism. Hypotheses were tested by structural equation modelling.

**Methodology:** The study sample was composed of 120 high school teachers (35.5% men). Job overload, role ambiguity, and inclination towards absenteeism were assessed by the UNIPSICO subscales. Burnout was evaluated by the SBI.

**Results and Conclusions:** The Hypothesized model yielded an adequate fit to data according to: GFI = .963, RMSEA = .070, NNFI = .906, CFI = .951. In the Hypothesized model, all the paths were significant at  $p < .05$  with exception of the relationship between enthusiasm toward the job and guilt ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $p > .05$ ). The results support the specification of the burnout process according to the model designed by Gil-Monte (2005; 2008). A limitation of the present study is that it does not provide definitive answers about the direction of causality. Regarding the practical contributions, the current study may advance the knowledge of burnout, and may also contribute to its prevention.