KNOWLEDGE OF TEACHERS ABOUT THE BURNOUT SYNDROME: PROCESS, RISK FACTORS AND CONSEQUENCES[1]

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ABSTRACT. Burnout Syndrome (BS) is a psychosocial phenomenon that occurs as a chronic response to interpersonal stressors in work-related situations. This qualitative study aimed to explore the knowledge of teachers about the BS and to comprehend the elements used to interpret this process. Six Elementary School teachers participated in the study, and a semi-structured interview protocol was used in three investigations axes. Data was analyzed through content analysis, from six categories defined a priori, generating new sub-categories analyzed according to the BS theoretical model proposed by Gil-Monte. The results pointed that, in spite of some approximations to the theoretical model, considering the BS as a type of stress or depression indicates an important gap in knowledge, just as not naming it or not identifying it in its initial stages contributes to its aggravation. Relational aspects and organizational characteristics are linked to triggering factors, and the meaning and characteristics of a job, realistic expectations and social support are perceived as protective factors of the syndrome. The fact of considering prevention measures centered on the individual and on the organization shows a need for the expansion of the view to the macro social sphere. Understanding the job, its meaning and impacts, based on the experience and knowledge of the workers, constituted an indispensable teaching to deepen the comprehension about the BS and, thus, to propose efficient alternatives of prevention and health promotion.

Keywords: Burnout Syndrome; occupational health; teachers.

CONHECIMENTO DE PROFESSORES SOBRE A SÍNDROME DE BURNOUT: PROCESSO, FATORES DE RISCO E CONSEQUÊNCIAS

RESUMO. A Síndrome de Burnout (SB) caracteriza-se como um fenômeno psicossocial que ocorre como resposta crônica aos estressores interpessoais nas situações de trabalho. O presente estudo, de delineamento qualitativo, teve como objetivo explorar o conhecimento de professores sobre a SB, assim como compreender os elementos utilizados para interpretar esse processo. Participaram do estudo seis professoras do Ensino Fundamental e utilizou-se um protocolo de entrevista semiestruturada em três eixos de investigação. A análise dos dados deu-se por análise de conteúdo a partir de seis categorias estabelecidas a priori, gerando novas subcategorias, que foram analisadas de acordo com o modelo teórico de Gil-Monte da SB. Os resultados apontaram que, apesar de algumas aproximações com o modelo teórico, considerar a SB como um tipo de estresse ou depressão indica uma lacuna importante do conhecimento, e que não nomeá-la nem identificá-la em seus estágios iniciais contribui para o seu agravo. Aspectos relacionais e características organizacionais estão vinculados a fatores desencadeantes, assim como o significado e as características do trabalho, expectativas realísticas e suporte social são percebidos como fatores protetores da síndrome. O fato de considerar medidas de prevenção centradas no indivíduo e na organização demonstra a necessidade de ampliar o olhar para a esfera macrossocial. Entender o trabalho, seu sentido e suas repercussões, a partir da experiência e do saber dos trabalhadores constitui-se como ensinamento indispensável para aprofundar o conhecimento sobre a SB e, desse modo, propor alternativas eficazes de prevenção e promoção de saúde.

Palavras-chave: Síndrome de Burnout; saúde ocupacional; professores.

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CONOCIMIENTO DE LOS PROFESORES SOBRE EL SÍNDROME DE BURNOUT: PROCESO, FACTORES DE RIESGO Y CONSECUENCIAS

RESUMEN. El Síndrome de Burnout (SB) se caracteriza como un fenómeno psicosocial que ocurre como respuesta crónica a factores estresantes interpersonales en situaciones de trabajo. El presente estudio de diseño cualitativo tuvo como objetivo explorar el conocimiento de los profesores sobre el SB, así como comprender los elementos que se utilizan para interpretar este proceso. Participaron del estudio seis maestras de la escuela primaria y utilizó un protocolo de entrevista semiestructurada en tres áreas de investigación. El análisis de los datos se realizó mediante el análisis de contenido a partir de seis categorías establecidas *a priori*, generando nuevas subcategorías analizadas según el modelo teórico de Gil-Monte (2005) del SB. Los resultados mostraron que, a pesar de algunas aproximaciones al modelo teórico, considerar el SB una especie de estrés o depresión indica una falla importante de conocimiento, así como no nombrarlo ni identificarlo en sus primeras etapas contribuye a su empeoramiento. Aspectos relacionales y características organizacionales están vinculados a factores desencadenantes, así como el significado y las características del trabajo, las expectativas realistas y el apoyo social se perciben como factores protectores del síndrome. El hecho de considerar medidas preventivas centradas en el individuo y en la organización demuestra la necesidad de expandir la mirada hacia la esfera macrosocial. Comprender el trabajo, su significado y sus impactos, a partir de la experiencia y del conocimiento de los trabajadores, se constituye como una enseñanza esencial para profundizar el conocimiento sobre el SB y así proponer alternativas eficaces para la prevención y promoción de la salud.

Palabras-clave: Síndrome de burnout; salud ocupacional; profesores.

The last few decades have been marked by deep economic, political, social and cultural changes, with a pronounced impact on work organizations and forms. An increase is observed, thus, in the prevalence of depression, panic disorder and Burnout syndrome, stress, psychotic disorders, mental disorders related to alcohol consumption, etc.; each one of these disturbances is more correlated to certain professional categories (Lima, 2003).

The emergence of new losses to occupational health has a strict relationship with psychosocial factors, conditions present in a work-related situation, directly linked to work organization, work content and performance of tasks (Gil-Monte, 2005). In this sense, Burnout can occur when there is an unbalance between the demands and requirements of a job and the resources made available by the organization (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013, efforts and (Schaufeli, 2006), in addition to conflicts between values and individual motivations and institutional missions and orientations (Leiter, Bakker, & Maslach, 2014; Maslach & Leiter, 1999).

Persistence and the intensity at which an individual experiences stressors, coupled with successive attempts of dealing with them appropriately, may make him or her vulnerable to the appearance of the Burnout Syndrome

(BS), a psychosocial phenomenon that occurs as a chronic response to interpersonal stressors in work-related situations (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

There are several definitions and models of Burnout; however, the most used and consolidated in the literature is that by Maslach and Jackson (1981), constituted of three dimensions: 1) Emotional Exhaustion, characterized as the lack or deficiency of energy and enthusiasm, and a feeling of depletion of resources; 2) Depersonalization, situation in which the professional treats customers, coworkers and the organization as objects, developing an emotional insensitivity; 3) Feeling of Low Personal Accomplishment, defined as the worker's tendency to do a negative evaluation of himself or herself, feeling unhappy with himself or herself and dissatisfied with his or her professional development.

Gil-Monte (2005), more recently, developed a model of BS dimensions, based on qualitative studies, similar to that already consolidated by Maslach and Jackson (1981), having as a differential the inclusion of the Guilt dimension. In this model, Burnout is represented by four dimensions: 1) Illusion about the job, indicating an individual desire to achieve goals related to it, which the subject perceives as attractive and a source of

personal satisfaction; 2) Psychic fatigue, characterized as the feeling of emotional and physical exhaustion due to the direct contact with people who are sources of or cause problems; 3) Indolence, evidenced by the presence of indifference attitudes towards people who need some assistance in the workplace; 4) Guilt, defined as the outbreak of guilty feelings for attitudes and behaviors that violate internal norms and the social pressure about the professional role.

The model allows to delimitate two types of Burnout profiles: Profile 1, characterized as the presence of a set of feelings and conducts linked to work-related stress that originate a moderate form of unease, without preventing the professional from performing his or her tasks, although he or she could execute them better. Profile 2, constituted of the very same symptoms of Profile 1, plus the guilty feeling. They originate more serious clinical cases, which, not rarely, may lead the worker to a total inability to do the job.

Burnout in teachers has been receiving more and more attention from researchers and experts, considering that its severity, among education professionals, puts the teaching activity as a high-risk profession (Mallmann, Palazzo, Carlotto, & Aerts, 2009). Hypolito and Grishcke (2013) state that this is a field of study to be explored due to recent profound transformations in the school and in education, which affect teachers emotionally and affectively and nourish feelings of responsibility for the performance and quality of the school, consequently producing a feeling of guilt.

Specifically in teachers, Cephe (2010) highlights the importance of developing questions of qualitative research from an investigation on perceived levels of stressors (macro, meso, micro) that could cause Burnout. Mazzola, Schonfeld and Spector (2011) point out those results of qualitative researches can add depth by detailing personal experiences originally not contemplated by researchers that use structured instruments in investigations of quantitative orientation. Vieira, Barros and Lima (2007) complement that, to understand the job, its meaning and impacts, the knowledge of workers needs to be placed on the center of discussion, which is an indispensable teaching to all researches/researchers in this area; the real knowledge about the job is only possible through workers, their experience, what they know and how they know.

From the exposition above, this qualitative study aims to explore the knowledge of teachers about the Burnout Syndrome, as well as to comprehend the elements used to interpret this process.

METHOD

Six public elementary school teachers participated in the study. The interviewees were aged between 40 and 51 years old; five of them were married, and four had one to three children. The time of teaching activity varied between 10 and 30 years; three had a college degree, and three, specialization-level education. As for working hours, four teachers worked 40 hours every week (two split them into 20 hours between another activity and another school, and two worked the full working time of 40 hours at the same school). The other two teachers lectured 20 weekly hours.

To determine the size and number of participants, the saturation sampling criterion was used, that is, the capturing of new components was interrupted when the information the participants of the research provided had little to add to the material already obtained, no longer contributing significantly to the enhancement of the theoretical reflection founded on the data that was being collected, considering the objectives and the theoretical model used (Fontanella, Ricas & Turato, 2008). To support the researcher's decision, inter-rater assessment was used to validate the content and the definition of the number of participants.

For data collection, a semi-structured interview protocol was adopted, divided into three axes comprising: 1) Sociodemographic and work-related questions (age, education, time in the job, whether there is leave history, marital status, whether the subject has children and how many); 2) Interview model and script proposed by Sackman (1992), reference for investigation on psychosocial

processes, which approached: knowledge about the phenomenon; casual-analytical attributions (description of the Burnout process in a chronological way); axiomatic knowledge (BS triggering and protective factors); descriptive components (symptoms, signs and criteria); causal-normative attributions (recommendations to improve the situation and prevent the BS); 3) Meaning of the teaching activity, satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the job, permanence and tendency to abandonment of the profession.

First, the Municipal Secretariat of Education in São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul, was contacted to organize, with the Direction of the schools, the opportune moment for the conduction of the interviews. Then, through the Direction of each school, teachers who had some knowledge about the BS were orally invited, in person, and had the chance to apply for the individual interview. The date and time were scheduled according to the availability of the participants, and the latter were chosen by order of application.

Prior to the conduction of the interviews, there was a pilot interview with a teacher who was not participating in the study, in order to verify the understanding and adequacy of the questions related to the objective proposed. The interviews were conducted in a specific room at the school, ensuring the secrecy of the pertinent questions, and were electronically recorded for further transcription. They were analyzed by means of the content analysis technique proposed by Bardin (1977), which considers the access to diverse contents present in a text, explicit or not, as a fact to be focused not only regarding the semantics of the language, but also regarding the interpretation of the meaning an individual attributes to the messages. Data was categorized by two independent raters (Bardin, 1977), who obtained 90% of agreement. For the contents in disagreement, the assessment by a third rater was requested.

Ethical aspects were all observed in accordance with Resolution 196/96 of the National Council of Health. This study is part of a broader project sent to and approved by the Ethics and Research Committee of the PUCRS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Below, Chart 2 describes the main categories and sub-categories identified in the answers of the participants of the research.

Chart 2 – Categories and Codes Defined Through CONTENT ANALYSIS.

Categories	Sub-categories
Knowledge about the phenomenon (definition and level of knowledge about the BS)	Stress
	Depression
	Disease of professionals who deal with people
	Detachment
Causal-analytical attributions (description of the BS process)	It occurs throughout time
	Result of the emotional pressure associated with intense involvement with people
	It is not perceived by the subject
Axiomatic knowledge (triggering factors of the BS)	Indiscipline of students
	Lack of support from parents and the direction of the school
	Overwork
	Social pressure
Descriptive components (symptoms, signs and criteria to identify the BS)	Physical symptoms
	Psychic symptoms
	Behavioral disorders
Axiomatic knowledge (protective factors)	Meaning of the job
	Characteristics of the job
	Realistic expectations
	Social support
Causal-normative attributions (possible measures to prevent the BS)	Centered on the individual
	Centered on the organization

Knowledge about the phenomenon (definition and level of knowledge about the BS)

From the reports of the interviewees, it was possible to identify themes that generated sub-categories related to the knowledge about the BS manifested in the form of stress, detachment, depression and disease of professionals who deal with people. Some knowledge, still incipient, about the disease is observed, declared through a common sense, originated from conversations with coworkers in the daily routine, and as a result of interventions carried out by psychologists.

BS as a synonym of stress is evidenced as a state derived from overwork, understanding associated to Emotional Exhaustion, first dimension to appear with the BS in the procedural model by Maslach and Jackson (1981), as well as to the Psychological Fatigue in the model by Gil-Monte (2005). Both dimensions are commonly associated to overwork, allowing for this approximation. The fact that Burnout is identified as a synonym of stress, although it indicates ignorance about the correct definition of the syndrome, is not uncommon. The literature itself, in its initial phase, treated such concepts as synonyms (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), fact that seems to persist, and can be verified in the following speeches: "It's stress… It comes from the routine, from being overworked. This causes the disease" (S2); *"Because I'm too busy, it generates a huge stress, really high and, because of that, some difficulties develop"* (S4).

The BS is also commonly mistaken for depression, as pointed in the following speech*: "A bit of depression for having to come to work, to deal with our routine, with students"* (S3). Although the Burnout experience has some relationship with feelings of depression, they are not equal (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Individuals with Burnout may present difficulties in a sphere of their lives, and work very well in others; in turn, the symptoms of classic depression manifest in all situations of their lives (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). It is possible to understand such association, because Burnout, not rarely, is diagnosed in its initial phase, in which depression is comorbidity (Gil-Montes, 2012).

The typical stress of some professions that require a direct relationship with people is evidenced in the speech by S2, which meets the definition of Burnout: the result of constant and repetitive emotional pressure associated with intense involvement with people for long periods of time (Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981):

> *A type of stress that makes these professionals sick, but specific professionals, right? Specially those who deal with the question of conflict, of security too… The front line, like teachers, health professionals, nurses… Those who are always with people, in contact! What are the police and the teacher? Front line! They are not in the office.* (S2).

Associating the BS with distancing from customers evidences an understanding that better fits its concept and one of its central dimensions, Indolence. This dimension is an essential element of the BS, while emotional exhaustion and the feeling of reduced personal accomplishment may be linked to other types of syndromes (Moreno, Oliver, & Aragoneses, 1991): *"A bit of aversion … I've already felt that, this thing of not wanting* [to deal with students]*… I've already passed the wrong light, without thinking, because I knew I had to go to a certain place and face certain students, that environment…"* (S3).

Associating the BS with occupational stress or some type of stress of somebody who deals with people, and, sometimes, perceiving it as depression, is a not a surprising result, because, although legally recognized by the Ministry of Social Security and Social Service (DOU, 1999), it is not widely known yet by health professionals (Batista, Carlotto, Coutinho, & Augusto, 2011), and it is not a consolidated practice in health actions promoted by most of the managers of the public and private sector.

Causal-analytical attributions (description of the BS process)

The expressions of the interviewees enable the interpretation of three sub-categories related to the developmental process of the BS: it occurs throughout time; it is the result of emotional pressure associated with intense involvement with people; and it is not perceived by the subject. According to the psychosocial perspective, the BS is considered a process whose inter-personal aspects and work-related context, in which stress situations are frequently and persistently experienced, contribute effectively to its development (Gil-Monte, 2005). A comprehension that is adequate to the theoretical assumptions is made explicit through this speech: *"It happens little by little, I guess… It's a little thing that happens in the beginning; then, it grows, and grows"* (S2).

The BS is the result of a constant and repetitive emotional pressure associated with intense involvement with people for long periods of time (Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981). When the inability to deal with stress persists, the latter will prolong and become chronic, and, thus, Burnout may occur (Guimarães 2000): *"This distress in the classroom may trigger… Problems with students, a malicious answer… These problems pile up, problems with parents, problems with the school itself, you know?"* (S5).

The development of Burnout is gradual, cumulative and becomes progressively severe; it is not perceived by the individual in its initial stages, who usually refuses to believe in the possibility of having something wrong with him or her (Guimarães, 2000). The failure in the perception and the final phases of the process are identified in the following expressions: *"I've already witnessed teachers who freaked out inside the classroom and never returned 'I don't stay here, I'll never come back! This is not my job, I wasn't hired for that!' And they couldn't handle the situation…"* (S4).

> *Because, sometimes you have something, you don't know if you have a disease, if you don't… I think most people don't even know they have it… You see a doctor, you see another one… Your neck aches, you see a traumatology doctor, your stomach aches, you see a gastro doctor. … Sometimes I want, I want to die! (Pause). You know? I was so exhausted, physically exhausted, too much exhaustion, too much, really huge exhaustion. I've found my limit…"* (S1).

In this sense, it is important to consider that the teachers identify a sickening process, but they do not recognize its classification. The ignorance, by both doctors and the professionals themselves, hinders the diagnosis of the BS and its adequate treatment. Silva and Pinheiro (2013) refers that, as workers are unaware of the manifestations and causes of this phenomenon, they do not search for effective forms of prevention or intervention.

Diseases originated at work are frequently perceived at advanced stages, because many of them, in their initial phases, present symptoms common to other pathologies; thereby, identifying the processes that generated them becomes a hard task. Thus, the measures that should ensure the worker's health end up restricted to punctual interventions about the most evident risks, and, to this inconsequent form of dealing with health and the life, the resistance of individuals in accepting the condition of being an ill person is added (Minayo-Gomez & Thedim-Costa, 1997).

Axiomatic knowledge (triggering factors of BS)

From the perspective of the teachers interviewed, the students' indiscipline, the lack of support from parents and the Direction of the school, the overwork and the social pressure were the factors pointed as the main triggers of the BS. The interviewees mentioned that significant changes occurred in the teaching career in the last few years, especially when it comes to the relationship with students, to the engagement of parents in the education of their children, and to the role of the teacher. This increased the pressure regarding the quality and amount of tasks to be performed. There is also the feeling of powerlessness generated by educational policies considered inefficient and that difficult the exercise of the profession.

This understanding meets what Santos (2009) mentions as determinants of the Burnout in teachers: overwork, added to the little interest of students in school contents, discipline issues of students and lack of support derived from the negligence of parents or authorities, and from inconsistent policies. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) complement referring that aspects of the school context, such as lack of support and supervision, relationship with parents and discipline issues have contributed to the increase in emotional exhaustion and abandonment of the profession. The speeches below exemplify the feeling generated by the students' indiscipline, linked to disrespect and tiredness before the frequency of the facts. It is possible to perceive the sensation of powerlessness before the inconsistency of the rules and the indifference of parents, who, on the contrary, should serve as a support to the teachers:

> *There are days you are not able to teach. Some students are so annoying, everything is reason for jokes… One takes the material of the other, slaps another, the teacher is explaining something, he passes, stands up and walks around."* (S1).

> *As a last resort, you send him or her to the direction. Then you register the occurrence, and the student returns to the classroom. And the direction calls the parents, the parents don't show up. The parents are called, but they don't show up. Then the parents are called again, and this goes on, they don't show up, they don't show up … And… and we stay without support. And, on the other hand, the vice-direction says 'What are we going to do?'* (S2).

To many teachers, it is in the teacher-student relationship that the quest for the success in learning is established, being the main reason for the choice of the profession, and, in general, it is one of the main causes of satisfaction with the job, just as dissatisfaction is a reason for disillusion and suffering. The tense relationship with the student has been pointed, therefore, as one of the main stressors that may lead to the development of the BS (Young & Yue, 2007): *"It's this excessive talking they have, you can't speak, because, sometimes, they don't allow it. This lack of… of limits inside the classroom. They can't control themselves. It's an excessive excitement"* (S3).

Although stress and Burnout have been occurring for a long time among teachers, their recognition as serious problems has been made more explicit in the last few years, because, in an increasingly way, potentially stressful aspects are present in this field, such as low wages, overcrowded classrooms, excessive working time, unexpressive participation in the institution's policies and planning, feelings of threat in the classroom (Levy, Nunes Sobrinho & Souza, 2009), and need for improvisation due to lack of pedagogical material (Santos, 2009). Therefore, the figure of the teacher is currently different from that that inspired him or her to choose the job, a position of prestige and appreciation for the social condition of his or her practice (Hypolito & Grishcke, 2013), as pointed in the report:

> *This thing of having to be working more and more, searching for alternatives. So I think that this makes him [the teacher] more stressed out… Because, besides having the importance of his profession unappreciated, there is also the financial devaluation, and he ends up, sometimes, having to sell this, to sell that* (S4).

Soon, it is possible to observe contradictions that contribute to the sickening process of teachers. The devaluation of the profession comes together with the expansion of the teacher's roles (Hypolito & Grishcke, 2013). Teachers feel pressured, but, at the same time, they do not find conditions to answer to the demands imposed to them: *"We deal with many children, you know? It's a lot of children… So, this is really complicated. And there are many teachers working sixty hours, at three different schools, so it's really complicated"* (S5).

> *You have to be everything, right? Because you have to have a calm tone of voice, you have to be balanced, you have to motivate the students, you have to be educated with parents, and you have to be a good example … How could I behave in an inappropriate or explosive way? What if the father of a student is there? I can't, right? However, I'm a human being; so, I'm in that stressful moment, where am I supposed to put my stress?* (S6).

Therefore, overwork expressed in the amount of students to be served and in the excessive working time, as well as the social pressure that reflects in conflict and role ambiguity, are factors that influence the development of Burnout (Moriana-Elvira, & Herruzo-Cabrera 2004). The demands of the job are not necessarily consonant with the resources made available by the organization, and this unbalance is one of the questions related to the occurrence of the Burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013).

Descriptive components (symptoms, signs and criteria to identify BS)

When questioned about signs and criteria to identify the BS, the interviewees revealed expressions related to three types of symptoms: physical, psychic and behavioral. The physical symptoms include psychosomatic reactions related to physical exhaustion: the professionals present lack of energy and physical fatigue that can be fatal (Kaschka, Korczak & Broich, 2011). The speech of S2 makes explicit the sensation of mental exhaustion until the emergence of physical pain, and, in S5, the excessive work without adequate breaks and rest causes vertigo and difficulty relaxing: *"You feel drained, you know? It seems all of your energies were taken from you. Then you get physically, mentally tired. … Disease that is proper of the job, like tendinitis, back pain"* (S2); *"Today is one of the worst days, because I stay four periods in the classroom, and supervise the playtime, then I get home dizzy, because it's a lot of agitation"* (S5).

Regarding psychic symptoms, Kaschka, Korczak and Broich (2011) stress the presence of psychological reactions, including anxiety, reduction of cognitive performance, faltering behavior and decreased evocative memory, as illustrated in the report:

I imagine they are repetitive symptoms, right? … I don't know if it's momentary memory loss, if it's OCD. … I left, I closed the door, I didn't know if I had closed it, I came back home to see if the door was closed… I grabbed something; I didn't remember that I had grabbed that…" (S1).

It is common that the professionals think about quitting the job and remain hopeless when they do not visualize possibilities of changes (Yong & Yue, 2007), as the interviewees suggest: *"Then you don't see a perspective, a light at the end of the tunnel… That's why many abandon the career, you see?* (S3); *"You act as if you had no hope in life, no perspective of better times"* (S2).

Behavioral signs manifest through tendency to isolation, causing people to have difficulty contacting their customers, and to avoid social meetings (Kaschka, Korczak, & Broich 2011). Detachment, first important dimension for the characterization of Burnout, is evident in the following speeches: *"You get to the point that you can't tell* [the student] *anymore 'This is not like that!' As if you were saying: 'Just leave it like that!' We often hear 'Let's pretend he didn't come!'"* (S2); *"There are those teachers that enter the classroom, teach the content, their subjects, turn their backs and leave, because they don't have, a close relationship with the students"* (S4). It is understood that people seek to preserve their physical and psychic integrity by not being sensitive and not taking on the responsibility for problems coming from the job, thus defending themselves from an environment that attacks them (Santos, 2009).

It is worth highlighting that the teachers, even presenting important signs of physical, psychic and behavioral exhaustion that compromise the quality of their job and accelerate their sickening process, keep working. Although they think about abandoning their jobs or the organization, many of them do not do so and keep working below their full potential and presenting some problems in the quality of their work (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

Axiomatic knowledge (protective factors of the BS)

When asked about the protective factors of the BS, the teachers provided answers that originated four sub-categories: meaning of the job, characteristics of the job, realistic expectations and social support. The first studies on the theme of meaning of the job are attributed to Hackman and Oldhan (1976). According to these authors, a job with a meaning is important, useful and legitimate to the one performing it, and these three dimensions found it. The first one refers to the variety of tasks, which enables the use of different competences, in such a way that the worker identifies with the execution. Hackman and Oldhan (1976) sustains, as second dimension, that a job with a meaning allows the worker to identify its entire process, perceiving its sense and contribution to the social environment. These aspects are portrayed in the speeches: *"I think this thing of flexible content is interesting, because then I use things of the moment, and it doesn't get boring, it doesn't…* (S6)*; "I can see all of that daily struggle, that thing of sitting, of discipline, of being listened, of feeling that you're making a difference in the life of somebody, and I think that is really good"* (S4). The third dimension, in turn, is about the importance of workers having some feedback on the execution of their activities, allowing for the necessary adjustments for the improvement of their performance (Hackman & Oldhan, 1976). The speech by S5 shows the importance of teachers feeling recognized for what they do: *"Parents are also recognizing my job… They send me feedback on the diary, complimenting me, you know, and this is really gratifying, it's really good to me".* (S5).

Overwork, according to Yong and Yue (2007), with too many weekly working hours, is a bothersome factor among teachers. In this way, the professionals who manage to keep a working time compatible with their capacity of developing their job, in addition to healthy relationships with customers, may be revealed as sources of protection against Burnout. S3 reports being very happy this year, for being working at only one school, *"which is less exhausting, in terms of displacement. And I think that the students… they come to us, hug and kiss us, and we see that they like us too, so, for me, this is… is great"* (S3).

Realistic expectations about the job have been one of the important factors of Burnout

prevention (Yong & Yue, 2007). Teachers should be aware of their responsibilities and role, of their own boundaries and limits, understanding, thus, that the success or failure of their activity depends on other variables, as important as the teacher-student relationship (Eklund, 2009). The speech of S4 points out the importance of self-knowledge and discernment in relation to the role of a teacher. According to the interviewee, *"I get involved with the student, but I know that there are certain problems I can do nothing about, so I can disconnect from that. When I see that something doesn't belong to me, I don't connect with it either"* (S4).

Social support can act as a moderating factor of the Burnout Syndrome, promoting the interaction and mutual assistance between collaborators, contributing to the improvement of the workplace and of the relationships between the individuals and the organization (Eklund, 2009), as one of the interviewees points: *"Here, we are very close, and, if something isn't nice, I talk to the supervisor, we talk to the director… That's it, we're a team, and we help each other"* (S1).

Therefore, the promotion of a social support network among groups and heads for exchange of information, experiences and feelings about questions related to the job and the organization can be highlighted as an intervention alternative for preventing the BS.

Causal-normative attributions (possible measures to prevent BS)

The reports of the teachers point to solutions that involve actions centered on the individual and actions centered on the organization of the work. Measures centered on the individual referred in the reports reinforce the understanding of Burnout as the individual's problem, attributing to him or her, the responsibility for solving it.

It is worth emphasizing that intervention strategies centered on the individual are important, because they increase and qualify the worker's personal resources; however, they offer limitations, since they can mask the problem due to the consensus that Burnout is rooted in the work organization (Moriana-Elvira & Herruzo-Cabrera 2004). Carlotto and Gobbi (1999) also warn about the consequences of interventions aimed at the worker only, because they can reinforce his

or her feeling of failure, isolation and low self-esteem.

Following, it is possible to observe alternatives suggested by the teachers, pointing at the search for a solution individually. There is even a stimulus to giving up the craft of teaching, evidencing, with this, the limitation of knowledge about other possible alternatives of intervention and, at the same time, the hopelessness and tendency to abandonment, which are indications of BS: *"Oh, what about therapy? Even yoga, alternatives, so many things … You have to seek for help and, if you have conditions, change your profession"* (S2); *"We have to help each other. A lot of money is spent on these things too. I medicate myself, I prevent this exhaustion with vitamins. Getting another job, getting… I don't know if this is the way"* (S3); *"You have to be well balanced. We have to feel good about ourselves, if we aren't, no chance"* (S5).

Actions centered on the organization indicate a need for social support, which agrees with the considerations by Gavish and Friedman (2010) when they refer that the learning atmosphere, the support and cooperation among teachers and advisors are linked to lower levels of Burnout. The social network can offer teachers the expectation of being supported in circumstances in which they experience difficulties, and should be stimulated by the technical team, especially regarding the skills and competences relevant to the success of the teaching-learning process: *"Or groups, forming groups of teachers during breaks, so that everybody can open up"* (S2).

Comprehending the micro factors (personal and professional biography of the teacher) and meso factors (institutional) that could prevent the Burnout is important; however, Cephe (2010) highlights the relevance of including the influence of macro social factors (forces derived from global trends and governmental policies). The fact that the interviews did not bring contents relative to prevention measures centered on the macro context is a worrisome data, because of the distance from solutions aimed at public policies in order to protect the rights and health of teachers through the control, monitoring and evaluation of educational institutions.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

This study, whose objective was to explore the knowledge of teachers about the Burnout Syndrome, contributes to increasing the comprehension on the theme and to favor the construction of efficient alternatives for prevention and health promotion. In spite of some approximations to the theoretical model, as the perception that the BS affects professionals who deal with people and causes some detachment from customers, considering it as some type of stress or depression indicates an important gap in knowledge. This fact deserves attention, because the first step towards an efficient solution to a problem is to learn how to identify it. Its recognition, just as the recognition of the variables involved, enables the selection of an adequate form of coping.

The development of the BS is understood as a process that occurs little by little, due to a gradual accumulation of stress. It is perceived as the result of emotional pressure associated with intense involvement with students, parents and coworkers, which is coherent with what the theory sustains. In spite of that, and although symptoms and clear physical, psychic and behavioral signs are recognized, not naming the disease and not identifying it in its initial stages contributes to its aggravation.

Relational aspects and organizational characteristics, like overwork, are linked to triggering factors of the BS and strongly related to transformations in the organization of the teaching job in the last few decades. These findings lead to the reflection that the prevention and eradication of the Burnout should contemplate a joint action involving workers, union entities and work organization (Carlotto & Gobbi, 1999). Workers, union entities, managers and health services must be encouraged in order to equate work-related issues, considering that the Burnout has important negative individual, social and economic implications (Carlotto, 2012). Burnout today is no longer an academic concern only, and has been consolidated as an important practice that counts with workers and managers (Leiter, Bakker, & Maslach 2014).

The protective factors of the BS manifested by the teachers indicated important data that can subsidize the creation of intervention programs. Stimulating a meeting with the meaning of the job, adjusting expectations, self-managing time and workload adequately, thus favoring the balance between work-private life-leisure, are examples of strategies with focus on the individual. Social support also proved a protective factor of the BS; therefore, this intervention focus can assist in the creation of social support strategies and development of teamwork skills, enhancing the communication and the feedback exchange.

The fact of considering prevention measures centered on the individual and the organization only shows the need for expansion of the view to the macrosocial sphere, reporting responsibilities to public authorities and promoting work public policies within a broader context, as the national plan. When assisted in social relationships established with coworkers, or suggesting actions of individualizing character, these teachers move the focus away from possibilities of more effective actions together with governmental entities.

Understanding the job, its meaning and impacts, from the experience and from the knowledge of the workers, constitutes an indispensable teaching to deepen the comprehension about the BS and, thus, to propose efficient alternative of prevention and health promotion. Finally, it is worth stressing that, although the categories investigated are significant according to the theoretical framework presented, they are not the only possibilities of the theme studied.

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