

Review Article

Group intervention with teachers with burnout syndrome: an integrative review

Luciana de Araújo Mendes e Silva¹, Vitória Regina de Moraes Cardoso Rodrigues¹,

Alessandra Faleiros Silveira¹, Cleria Maria Lobo Bittar¹.

¹Universidade de Franca – UNIFRAN, São Paulo, SP- Brazil

Submitted: 08/08/2016

Accepted: 09/26/2016

laraujo3@yahoo.com.br

RESUMO

Justificativa e objetivos: A profissão docente é considerada uma das mais estressantes e o prolongamento da situação de estresse pode causar a Síndrome de *Burnout*. Trata-se de uma revisão integrativa que objetivou levantar as produções científicas que ressaltam a importância de intervenções grupais como estratégias para promover enfrentamento e/ou prevenção do adoecimento causado pela síndrome. **Conteúdo:** A base de dados utilizada foi a SCIELO sendo a amostra constituída de 01 artigo obtido a partir dos critérios de inclusão e exclusão adotados na pesquisa. Evidenciou-se que os estudos realizam levantamentos sobre: fatores de risco da Síndrome de *Burnout*; prevalência da síndrome em docentes, conhecimento da síndrome pelos docentes e estratégias de enfrentamento. Entretanto apenas um estudo realiza ações interventivas. **Conclusão:** Destaca-se assim a necessidade de realização de pesquisas no país com ênfase na efetivação de intervenções grupais para prevenir ou reabilitar os docentes com síndrome de *Burnout*.

DESCRITORES: Esgotamento Profissional. Docentes. Estudo Clínico.

ABSTRACT

Background and objectives: Teaching is considered one of the most stressful professions and long-term stressful situations can lead to Burnout Syndrome. The purpose of this integrative review was to identify the scientific productions that highlight the importance of group interventions as strategies to promote coping with and/or prevention of illnesses caused by the syndrome. **Contents:** The database used was SCIELO and the sample consisted of 01 article obtained based on the inclusion and exclusion criterion used in the research. It was demonstrated that the studies carried out surveys on Burnout Syndrome risk factors; prevalence of the syndrome among teachers, knowledge of the syndrome by teachers and coping strategies. However, only one study performed interventional actions. **Conclusion:** Therefore, the need to carry out studies in the country with an emphasis on effective group interventions to rehabilitate teachers who were diagnosed with Burnout Syndrome or its prevention is emphasized.

KEYWORDS: Professional Burnout. Faculty. Clinical Trial.

INTRODUCTION

Work is not only related to the survival of human beings, but also to production and profitability, as well as being a source of personal satisfaction, as it is related to self-realization and the maintenance of human relations.¹

It is worth mentioning that excessive work and unfavorable working conditions can lead to loss of quality of life and even diseases, including, in this context, stress.^{2,3}

Prolonged occupational stress can generate a set of symptoms, called “Burnout Syndrome”.⁴ The term burnout refers to individuals that have reached their limits, with great loss of physical or mental performance.⁵

Currently, the most accepted definition of this syndrome is based on the social-psychological causal model reported by Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, which characterizes it in three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal accomplishment at work.⁵ Emotional exhaustion (EE) is defined as the feeling of not having energy, either mental or physical, to continue with work activities. The psychosomatic symptoms in this dimension lead to work absenteeism and work leave due to health problems.⁶

Depersonalization (DE) or Cynicism (CY) is characterized by dehumanized and even ironic and cynical attitudes toward one’s peers. It is a defensive dimension tho the symptoms experienced.⁷

The reduced personal accomplishment (RPA) at work, or inefficacy, refers to a term that corresponds to the moment when professionals feel frustrated and dissatisfied with their work, with negative self-evaluation.⁸

Studies show that the professionals that are most often predisposed to develop Burnout Syndrome are those whose functions are related to jobs that deal directly with human beings, and among them, those who work in the health, safety, and education areas.⁹

The teaching profession is considered worldwide as one of the most stressful jobs, with a strong incidence of elements that lead to Burnout Syndrome. The demands related to the teaching profession, the school management, the school location and the teacher's relationship with the community, have had serious consequences for the health of this type of professional.¹⁰

Medical reports in different countries regarding the absenteeism of teachers due to health problems indicate a higher incidence of mental illness when compared to other diseases.² According to these authors, there is a strong indication that these diseases would be

related to activities that are inherent to teaching activities. Teaching has been the subject of several studies and it has psychosocial stressors inherent to the functions imposed on the professionals, as well as the social relations they experience.^{11,12} Such stressors can interfere with health and their persistence can lead to Burnout Syndrome.¹²

A study carried out in schools in all states of Brazil for two and a half years, with a sample of 39,000 workers in the education area, disclosed that 48% of the teachers had some symptoms of burnout, 32% of the participants had low emotional involvement with their work, 25% had emotional exhaustion and 11% had depersonalization.¹³ Studies carried out in the United States and the Netherlands in five different professional sectors corroborate these results, by showing that teaching was characterized by high rates in the three burnout dimensions.¹⁴

However, even though teachers are likely to develop burnout, few are aware of this syndrome and care about preventing its effects.⁴ Some international studies have developed broad conceptual models for the syndrome.¹⁴ However, they consider that it is necessary, based on the descriptions of these studies, to seek new perspectives regarding interventions for burnout relief.¹⁴ Some Brazilian studies also have indicated the need for studies that discuss coping strategies by teachers whereas, at the same time, they carry out these interventions, although they point out that such initiatives are still scarce and often ineffective.^{15,16}

The report of an experience with intervention strategies used with teachers mentions that they have used a focal group or discussion group, in addition to conferences for large groups. The author emphasizes that, since 1997, at the Municipal Secretariat of Education of Curitiba City Hall, they have been working with sessions/meetings specially focused on promoting the teachers' health, with special attention to Burnout Syndrome. The author also emphasizes that the promotion of the teachers' health is a field with multiple challenges, but that the rewards of the performed interventions justify all the efforts involved in strategies developed in small groups and later transported to larger ones.¹⁰

Considering this context, after carrying out a search in the literature for articles related to Burnout Syndrome in teachers, we verified that the studies related to group interventions performed to promote actions to prevent the syndrome are rare. Therefore, considering what the National Health Promotion Policy of the Ministry of Health prescribes, in the sense that the health-disease process can be the result of the work conditions, thus requiring an analysis of the knowledge of the disease symptoms, but also the provision of conditions, and intervention actions to improve health conditions, the objective of this integrative review was

to assess the scientific productions that reported experiences of group interventions as strategies to promote coping and/or prevention of illness caused by Burnout Syndrome.¹⁷

METHODS

The present study is an integrative review of the Brazilian literature with the purpose of gathering and synthesizing pre-existing knowledge about group interventions to promote the health of teachers with Burnout Syndrome.

The initial procedure of this study was the definition of the guiding study question of the research, which was the following: "What are the scientific investigations related to group interventions, carried out with the purpose of promoting actions aimed at coping with and/or prevention of Burnout Syndrome in teachers?"

The data collection stage occurred in the month of December 2015 after the definition of the database and the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The chosen database was the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), which is an electronic library that covers a selected collection of Brazilian and Latin American scientific journals.

The inclusion criteria accepted only articles of studies performed in Brazil that were available as full-text, published in Portuguese, English or Spanish from January 2000 to December 2015, of which results were from review or field research. We initially considered the articles with the terms registered in the Descriptors in Health Sciences (DeCS), "Burnout" and "Teacher" and then crossed with "Intervention"¹, which could be both in the title, abstract and full-text of the article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After crossing the first two keywords ("Burnout" and "Teachers"), 34 articles were found in Brazil, 31 published in the Portuguese language, two in English and two in Spanish.

Sixteen articles had some reference to intervention focusing on the individual, the group, or the organization. They included discussions about the importance of group interventions, such as strategies to promote coping with and/or prevention of illness caused by Burnout Syndrome, whereas the other 18 addressed the Burnout Syndrome in teachers, but had no reference to interventions and their importance. Of these 16 articles, 13 were field surveys and three were review articles. As for the review studies, one of them discussed the characteristics of the teaching profession and the occurrence of burnout, presenting data from Brazil and other countries. They enumerate variables associated with the syndrome and point

out that such knowledge is indispensable for designing the intervention programs that meet professional needs in the teaching profession.¹⁸

In the second review article, risk factors associated with teaching were discussed, by establishing a parallel between the pleasures and the pains of teaching and mentioning that the knowledge about such factors allows planning and implementing interventive and preventive actions in the workplace, aiming at increasing the quality of life and the construction of a healthy school environment.⁶

The third review article describes the causes and consequences of the syndrome and proposes sanitation measures such as: diagnosis of the individual, of the workplace and people related to their profession; implementation of several intervention strategies that include training, specialized medical care, group meetings, etc.; professional training; activities to work on communication and interpersonal relationships; performance of techniques coordinated by a professional psychologist; and workshops with subjects related to the daily life of the profession.¹⁹

As for the remaining 13 studies, although they did not mention the subject of intervention in the objectives or even the results of the studies, it appears in the final considerations as something desirable for coping with or preventing the syndrome.

However, when crossing the third keyword "intervention", only one article met the adopted criteria, since it was the only one that effectively described an intervention strategy carried out with teachers to cope with the syndrome.

In the analysis of the only article on group intervention related to teacher burnout, it can be observed that the authors justify the relevance of their study by mentioning that there is scientific production about the teacher-stress-burnout association, but from the point of view of these researchers, a gap persists related to this problem, regarding the performance of studies that carry out/propose intervention programs.²⁰ These findings coincide with the conclusions of Hernandez et al. (2002), whose data suggest the need for intervention programs with teachers; however, these authors also mention that intervention programs have been scarce or practically nonexistent.²¹

A study carried out in 2006, aiming at establishing operative groups from an intervention perspective aimed at changes, shows the benefits of this intervention method by stating that it allows the sharing of professional experiences, reduces isolation, and provides personal and professional social support for teachers.²⁰ This statement was reinforced by another study, which considered that maintaining adequate social support within and outside the workplace prevents the onset of Burnout Syndrome.²²

The fundamental thing in the group task of an intervention group is the search for solutions in situations considered difficult and even unchallengeable, promoting a reflection about the reality and the necessity of changes. The group process includes moments for discussion about working conditions and finishes with the construction of an operational strategy to address the causes and effects of Burnout Syndrome.²⁰

The analyzed study was carried out using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which verifies the occurrence of Burnout signs.²⁰ This tool was applied before and after the intervention for both the control and experimental groups, which participated in nine meetings with a debate on the perception of the teaching profession. After the meetings, the hypothesis of symptom improvement was refuted for the experimental group, as verified by the researchers, whereas there was an increase in the signs of the syndrome dimensions. After analyzing the content, their meanings, convergences and divergences, the authors inferred that, initially, the group had superficial discussions, and over time the dialogues became more realistic arousing anxiety, which justifies the increase in stress levels. But while this anxiety symptom appeared in the participants, the social support of the colleagues supplied the lack of institutional support, which is corroborated by another study that shows that the feeling of unity and respect among colleagues improves working life.²³

With the conclusion of the meetings, the group moved from an alienating view of their profession to an investigative attitude, aimed at attaining changes, while the control group continued with an inadequate view of their professional reality. Even with the increased the level of Burnout in the experimental group, greater awareness was raised and knowledge of coping strategies through the experiences in the group was achieved. The authors of the article under discussion here believe that by increasing the number of meetings, one could consolidate coping actions and decrease anxiety levels. The small number of meetings was also an aspect assessed in another group intervention study not found in the database used in the review (it was found in another database during the development of the present article), and even considering the small number of meetings, the study brought, according to several participants, positive aspects related to the prevention/control of Burnout Syndrome.²⁴

However, despite the benefits of the intervention strategies, the creation and systematization of operational groups depend on the educational institutions that should consider these actions as a priority, since the benefits extend beyond the operative groups, influencing students and the school community as a whole, because "without healthy teachers there is no and there won't be an educated and healthy society."^{20,25}

CONCLUSION

The present review demonstrated the researchers' concern in pointing out the risk factors related to the occurrence of Burnout Syndrome; the prevalence of the syndrome among teachers; the sociodemographic and occupational profile/characterization of the patients. The knowledge found in the research, reviewed according to the authors, show the need for interventions as well as how they can contribute to raise awareness among them, aiming at minimizing the consequences of this disease to professionals and, consequently, benefit the school community.

It can be observed that although the studies indicate the need for establishing intervention actions for the prevention of the Burnout Syndrome, only one of these studies fully met the search criterion, which aimed at group actions to prevent teachers' Burnout. This fact characterizes a gap in the Brazilian scientific production regarding studies with practical application of interventions among teachers in relation to this syndrome. This reality suggests the need to carry out studies such as the present one even in small groups, aiming at minimizing the consequences of this disease and increasingly perform larger studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal (CAPES) for the financial support.

REFERENCES

1. Murta SG, Tróccoli BT. Avaliação de intervenção em estresse ocupacional. *Psicol teor e pesqui* 2004;20(1):39-47. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0102-37722004000100006>
2. Assunção AA, Oliveira, DA. Intensificação do trabalho e saúde dos professores. *Educ soc* 2009;30(107):349-72. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0101-73302009000200003>
3. Benevides-Pereira AMT. O burnout docente e seu reflexo no ensino. In: *Anais do X Congresso Nacional de Educação - EDUCERE e III Encontro Sul Brasileiro de Psicopedagogia*, 11;3, 2011, Curitiba: Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná, 2011.
4. Benevides-Pereira AMT. O CBP-R em português: Instrumento para a avaliação do burnout em professores. In: *Anais do IX Congresso Nacional de Educação - EDUCERE e III Encontro*

Sul Brasileiro de Psicopedagogia, 9;3, 2009, Curitiba: Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná, 2009.

5. Trigo TR, Teng CT, Hallak JEC. Síndrome de Burnout ou estafa profissional e os transtornos psiquiátricos. Rev de psiquiatr clín 2007;34(5):223-33. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0101-60832007000500004>

6. Andrade PS, Cardoso TAO. Prazer e Dor na Docência: revisão bibliográfica sobre a Síndrome de Burnout Saúde Soc2012;21(1):129-40. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-12902012000100013>

7 Batista JBV, Carlotto MS, Coutinho AS, et al. O ambiente que adocece: condições ambientais de trabalho do professor do ensino fundamental. Cad Saúde Coletiva 2010;18(2):234-41. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1414-462X201500020001>

8. Carlotto MS. Síndrome de Burnout em professores: prevalência e fatores associados. Psicol Teor Pesqui 2011;27(4):403-10. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0102-37722011000400003>

9. Levy, GCTM, Nunes Sobrinho FP, et al. Síndrome de Burnout em professores da rede pública. Prod 2009;19(3):458-65. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0103-65132009000300004>

10. Amorim CAA. Formação Continuada e a promoção da saúde do professor. In: Anais do VIII Congresso Nacional De Educação – Educere III Congresso Ibero-Americano Sobre Violência Escolar, 8; 3, 2008, Curitiba: Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná, 2008.

11. Batista JBV, Carlotto MS, Coutinho AS, et al. Prevalência da Síndrome de Burnout e fatores sociodemográficos e laborais em professores de escolas municipais da cidade de João Pessoa, PB. Rev Bras Epidemiol 2010;13(3):502-12. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1415-790X2010000300013>

12. Carlotto MS. A síndrome de Burnout e o trabalho docente. Psicol estud2002;7(1):21-9. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1413-73722002000100002>

13. Codo W (org.). Educação e Carinho. Petrópolis: Vozes/Brasília, DF: CNTE – Universidade de Brasília, Laboratório de Psicologia do Trabalho.1999.
14. Maslach C, Schaufeli WB, Leiter MP. Jobburnout. Ann Rev clinPsychol 2001;52: 397-422. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.397>
15. Mazon V,Carlotto MS, Câmara S. Síndrome de Burnout e estratégias de enfrentamento em professores. Arq bras psicol 2008;60(1):55-66.
16. Santos MN, Marques AC. Condições de saúde, estilo de vida e características de trabalho de professores de uma cidade do sul do Brasil.Ciênc saúde coletiva 2013;18(3):837-46. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1413-81232013000300029>
17. Ministério da Saúde (BR). Secretaria de Vigilância em Saúde, Secretaria de Atenção à Saúde. Política Nacional de Promoção da Saúde. 3ª. ed. Brasília, DF. 2010. (Série B. Textos Básicos de Saúde).
18. Pocinho M, Perestrelo CX. Um ensaio sobre Burnout, engagement e estratégias de coping na profissão docente. Educ Pesqui 2011;37(3):513-28.
19. Yurevna SI. Ayuda psicológica al pedagogo en la superación del síndrome de “incineración profesional”.Psicol Esc Educ 2011;15(1):161-7. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1413-85572011000100017>
20. Böck VR, Sarriera JC. O Grupo Operativo Intervindo na Síndrome de Burnout. PsicolEsc Educ 2006;10(1): 31-9. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1413-85572006000100004>
21. Hernández EG, Benevides-Pereira AM, Moreno-Jimenez JLGG. Prevenção e intervenção na síndrome de burnout. Como prevenir ou remediar o processo de burnout. In: Benevides-Pereira AMT, editor. Burnout: quando o trabalho ameaça o bem-estar do trabalhador. 1. ed. São Paulo: Casa do Psicólogo. 2002. p.227-271.

22. Figueroa AEJ, Gutiérrez MJJ, Celis ERM. Burnout, apoyo social y satisfacción laboral en docentes. *Psicol Esc Educ* 2012;16(1):125-34. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1413-85572012000100013>
23. Benevides-Pereira AMB. O Processo de adoecer no trabalho In: Pereira AMB, organizador. *Burnout: Quando o trabalho ameaça o bem-estar do trabalhador*. São Paulo, SP: Casa do Psicólogo. 2002. p. 21-91.
24. Carlotto MSC. Prevenção da síndrome de burnout em professores: um relato de experiência. *Mudanças psicol Saúde* 2014;22(1):31-9. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15603/2176-1019/mud.v22n1p31-39>
25. Carneiro RM. Síndrome de Burnout: um desafio para o trabalho do docente universitário. [Dissertação]. Anápolis: Centro Universitário de Anápolis. 2010.

AHEAD OF PRINT