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**Coping with stress and professional burnout by university teachers  
Psychopedagogical study**

**Key words:** occupational stress, coping, coping strategies, occupational burnout, psychosocial risk factors, university teachers

**Abstract**

The aim of this study was to identify how university teachers cope with professional stress as well as to determine to what extent they are affected by burnout syndrome. A diagnostic survey method, using standardized questionnaire tools, was used to measure the stress level, verify the coping strategies used and determine the burnout level. In addition, the author's tool was developed to determine the presence and severity of psychosocial risk factors. The research conducted in the quantitative paradigm was exploratory, although the contexts regarding the relationship between independent variables and levels of stress or burnout were subjected to verification, and on the basis of research findings to date, a number of hypotheses were proposed the verification of which would deepen the results obtained.

The adopted theoretical framework assumed that stress is the result of an interaction between the employee and his work environment, while burnout represents a multidimensional syndrome. Coping was measured at the level of strategies – individual actions that depend largely on situational conditions. Psychosocial risk areas were classified in terms of their relationship to the specifics of professional role, institutional characteristics, factors of social background and individual variables. Next, a classification was used to differentiate specific risk elements in terms of their association with work background and content.

Data were collected from 1308 individuals: 628 men, 676 women and two individuals identifying themselves non-binary. They represented all fields of study, although the ratio of participation ranged from 4-5% for the arts and theological sciences and 27% for the social sciences. The predominant individuals were PhD graduates, employed in research and teaching positions, and nearly 73% declared employment in public entities.

The analyses carried out were preceded by verification of the reliability of tools, which revealed the need to restructure the burnout questionnaire. The results show that university teachers are affected by the phenomenon of stress and burnout, although their results are below average. Among the three elements of burnout: exhaustion, lack of professional satisfaction and

negative relationships, it was the exhaustion that was the most indicative. As the burnout questionnaire was restructured, it was impossible to compare the results of university teachers with those of other professions. However, a comparison of the level of occupational stress was conducted, and the results turned out to be higher than those shown in the available publications by a group of research and teaching staff as well as representatives of diversified professions. Hypothesis verification provided conclusions on the relationship of stress and burnout with the respondents' age, gender, position held, field of science represented, promotion plans and type of employing units, which partially confirmed previous research reports. It was verified what risks the university teachers perceive in their work and determined which ones they rated as the most severe. Their selection was complemented by space to include alternative factors that were missing from the list. The respondents provided answers that could be classified in terms of belonging to the categories of private conditions (e.g., illness), external conditions (e.g., legislative contexts), and organizational conditions and relationships. The last category dominated the respondents' answers. Finally, coping strategies were recognized, their relationship to stress levels was analyzed, and correlated with the aforementioned risk factors to determine whether there were tendencies to apply strategies in relation to specific risks. It was also determined whether specific stress coping strategies were related to the previously mentioned independent variables.

The study conducted may inspire further scientific research, but may also contribute to recommendations of a practical nature.