

Causes and reflexes of physical and psychological health in high school teachers

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ABSTRACT. The psychological suffering of teachers is a relevant problem in the Brazilian society, being an emerging social demand since, in addition to influencing the professional's mental and physical health, it affects their quality of life, as well as the performance at work. The research aimed to know the factors related to the physical and psychological health of high school teachers. This was a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive field study carried out in two high schools in the municipality of Santarém, state of Pará, Northern Brazil - one of which is public and the other private, with high school teachers as participants. The semi-structured script was used as a collection instrument. The results showed that factors causing damage to the professional physical and mental health are related to conflicts with students, lack of motivation to work, precarious environment, devaluation of the profession, long working hours, low wages, stress, frustration with the profession, depression, instability, among others. It was possible to identify the factors related to the process of physical and psychological illness in high school teachers, which contribute to health problems and difficulties to develop their professional activities. These are relevant results that can support actions and measures aimed at the well-being of teachers in their workplace.

Keywords: faculty; mental health assistance; health care seeking behavior; indicators of quality of life.

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Introduction

The way of life of populations, especially in their relationship with the world of work, has pointed to an increase and/or recurrence of psychic illness, in the experience of workers, since, according to the increase in demands and protocols to be fulfilled in the course of work, the routine becomes more rigorous. In this bias, it is very common for work activities to undergo changes, thus inhibiting relationships in personal life and causing physical and psychosocial wear, which are the most responsible for the emergence of various pathologies (Sousa & Araújo, 2015).

The physical and mental health of teachers is a social problem, since the activities performed by teachers are associated with the emergence of professional dissatisfaction and depression. These professionals are pressured to develop their work with quality due to social imposition, which can result in psychological, emotional and physical exhaustion (Sousa & Araújo, 2015).

The figure of the teacher was historically conceived as a fundamental piece in the school context. Regardless of modality or level of education, they are seen as the master, who have and share knowledge. In this regard, Batista (2016) highlights the factors that contribute to the illness of teachers, which can be: precarious working conditions, low salaries, overcrowded classrooms, violence, pressure from parents, students and anxiety. As a consequence of these stressful events, we have: changes in psychological well-being and quality of life, as well as physical effects that cause changes in the functioning of organs that will influence the immune system, causing it to weaken.

The general objective of this study was to know the factors related to the process of physical and psychological illness of high school teachers in Santarém, state of Pará, Northern Brazil. And the specific objectives were to characterize the profile of high school teachers; to identify the factors that generate a process of physical or psychological illness in high school teachers; to verify the teachers' expectations directed to the quality of life in the personal and professional scope.

For Freitas et al. (2016), the teacher is a professional who acquires and expands knowledge from their practices, with the desire to contribute to the constitution and recognition of professional identity. In view of

this, the teacher must have capacity and competence and exercise the role of educator, without limiting their practice, thus instigating and maintaining students' curiosity and autonomy for teaching and learning, promoting space for the construction of knowledge.

According to Brasil et al. (2016), working conditions of teachers in Brazil are precarious. As a result, physical and psychological factors are identified as causes of illness. This is because the school assumes the role of preparing qualified and specialized labor for the job market, within the classroom structure, a place focused on rationalization and the construction of the teaching-learning relationship. In addition, this is one of the most vulnerable professional categories, with demanding situations, such as tasks, meetings and extracurricular activities, in addition to difficulties with students who even make verbal and even physical threats. A stressful reality, which can affect the physical and mental health and professional behavior of teachers (Gontijo, Silva, & Inocente, 2013).

Considering the challenges of teaching, and relating them to the moment the world has experienced due to the covid-19 pandemic, Palú, Schütz and Mayer (2020) show that, with the advancement of digital technology over the years, the population started to experience new forms of transmitting information, which happens while new ways of thinking, feeling, acting and living emerge. The use of technology represents a factor of change and habit formation. In this context, technology also started to be inserted in the educational context, but in a more restrained way, without great needs. The authors point out how insufficient the educational system in the country is and how the pandemic has revealed the great needs in this system, such as the lack of specific training for teachers and the precariousness of technological resources, such as computers and internet at school.

With the scenario experienced by the pandemic, which required the adoption of measures of distance and social isolation, the educational context has changed, also affecting the school environment that had to be closed. About this, Grandisoli, Jacobi, and Marchini (2020) emphasizes that educators have undergone sudden changes, having to quickly adapt to a new teaching format, moving from the face-to-face model to the remote model mediated by technology, with classes being offered to the student in real time. All these changes had an impact on a new lifestyle for teachers, who had to reinvent themselves and re-signify the pedagogical practice, now associating the use of technology to transmit knowledge, seeking ways to make the teaching process viable, such as the online platform, live classes on social networks, google classrooms, whatsapp groups and others, requiring more time and dedication from the teacher.

Health promotion and teacher's quality of life

The concept of health, according to the World Health Organization, is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or illness (Carvalho, 2015). In this sense, it assumes that health is not only the absence of disease and proposes an expanded understanding of health as a positive state, referring to a complex network of interdependencies and interrelationships, in which it is not possible to establish a linear causality. Health should be seen as a resource for improving the quality of life, and not as a purpose of living, thus constituting forms of health promotion.

For an effective search for health promotion in the school environment, it is necessary to create strategies for the expansion of individual and collective autonomy in the school institution, towards a state of feeling good and with quality of life. In this way, promoting health is to enable ways to adapt the structures implicit to health problems, promoting an intersectoral approach to the levels of population's well-being and expanding this promotion towards the collective (Sperandio; Filho & Mattos, 2016).

Carlotto (2014) states that, in Brazil, although private and public educational institutions have common teaching guidelines, private institutions have greater autonomy and freedom in relation to the investment of financial resources, which makes it possible to offer a better quality of life to their professionals of education. However, Diehl and Marin (2016) revealed that, even with the difference in invested resources, both institutions face psychosocial factors that can induce the teaching staff to experience mental illness.

Regarding psychology, Vale and Aguillera (2016) point out the importance of the area in developing actions that promote quality of life in the school environment, both for students, faculty and other professionals. It is necessary to establish psychological practices aimed at the prevention of mental disorders, maintenance and promotion of mental health in the school environment.

The experience of psychic suffering of public-school teachers is considered a relevant problem in the Brazilian society, since, in addition to influencing the physical and mental health of the teaching professional, it also affects the quality of teaching and, consequently, student learning. The illness of the teacher is the

result of biopsychosocial aspects resulting from interpersonal relationships, both inside and outside the school institution (Antunes, 2014).

For Bendassollini and Godin (2014), psychological distress in the work environment can be defined as the loss or reduction of the meaning of the work activity performed, which consequently generates damage to the mental health of the professional, making the performance of the professional activity stressful and distressing. Silveira (2016) states that when teachers find themselves not meeting school demands, the results are noticeable, as they feel inferior and consequently vulnerable in their physical and mental health, thus making their role as a teacher frustrating and distressing.

Andrade and Cardoso (2016) and Ferreira (2011) agree that the excessive and exhausting low-paid working hours, students' indiscipline, professional devaluation, violence by students and family members, overcrowded classrooms, difficulties on the part of the students in the teaching-learning process, as well as the inadequate physical infrastructure of the schools are factors capable of leading the teacher to the experience of suffering.

Freitas (2018) emphasizes that Brazilian teachers express feelings of anguish, helplessness, anxiety, depression, burnout syndrome, social isolation, physical illness, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, among others, due to stressful experiences of the teaching activity. For Brasil et al. (2016), teachers from Brazilian public schools show a strong feeling of frustration arising from the current situation in the country regarding education and the devaluation of the profession. The same authors highlight that these experiences of psychic suffering are not a generalized fact, but that suffering is related to the professional's personal life history. That is, a portion of teachers experience psychological distress while others do not. This depends on the subjectivity of each one and the intensity of exposure to the stimuli that trigger this suffering, which can lead the educator to become ill.

Research carried out by Diehl and Marin (2016), involving a study on the subject of mental illness, showed that the teaching profession is considered one of the most stressful and exhausting. The main factors of wear in the work environment and consequent illness include the lack of organization and time management, problems related to students, excessive bureaucracy, interpersonal difficulties with the teaching and institutional staff, as well as work overload. Barros, Zorzal, Almeida, Iglesias and Abreu (2007) reveal that physical consequences of the teacher's professional performance affect their existential condition in the form of musculoskeletal wear, spine problems, constant pain in the legs and arms, as well as the development of mental disorders and psychic suffering, such as apathy, discouragement, stress, hopelessness, irritability and traces of anxiety and depression.

According to Vale and Aguilera (2016), occupational stress and burnout syndrome are the main reasons for the teaching population to leave work activities. Burnout syndrome is defined as persistently experienced stress, which is directly related to work situations, resulting from the constant flow of interpersonal involvement and emotional pressure to develop professional activities (Diehl & Marin, 2016).

Another type of negative consequence that the teacher's professional performance can cause are the so-called Common Mental Disorders, which, according to Silva, Bolsonil-Silva and Loureiro (2018), are characterized by a high level of stress, insomnia, fatigue, lack of concentration, irritability, headaches, lack of appetite, gastrointestinal symptoms, among other symptoms that cause the interruption of the individual's secular activities. Santos and Siqueira (2010) identify the prevalence of 60% symptoms of Common Mental Disorders in Brazilian teachers, data that show the need to create mechanisms that provide quality of life to this category so fundamental for the future of any society.

The presence of pathological anxiety has also been identified among studies with teachers (Freitas, Calais & Cardoso, 2018). In a survey carried out with 21 teachers from multigrade classrooms, using the Beck Anxiety Inventory, it was identified that 30% surveyed public had moderate and severe anxiety symptoms (Silveira, Enumo & Batista, 2014). Still in this line of study, Almeida et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between vocal and emotional characteristics in a sample with 93 individuals. The results showed that teachers who have high level of anxiety present greater emotional and vocal impairment, with negative consequences on their quality of life.

The influence of depressive disorders on the mental health of workers are recurrent in national and international research (Silva, Bolsonil-Silva & Loureiro, 2018). In their review of the literature on depression and teaching, Gontijo et al. (2013) recall that this phenomenon occurs at different educational levels, being influenced by factors such as age, workload, problems related to students, personal problems, among others.

Methodology

This was a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive field study carried out in two high schools in the municipality of Santarém, state of Pará, Northern Brazil - a public school and a private school. The objective of choosing two schools was not to compare the results between them, but to enrich these results, bringing data from two different realities, public and private. The target audience consisted of 22 teachers who carry out educational activities in the High School of these schools, 11 in the public school and 11 in the private school, who met the research inclusion criteria.

As a data collection instrument, a semi-structured interview was applied. The procedure for carrying out the research took place after approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the Instituto Esperança de Ensino Superior – IESPES, under CAEE number 26527719.9.0000.8070 and the signature of the Informed Consent by the participants. After collection, the tabulation, thematization and analysis of the results were carried out, according to the thematic content analysis method (Minayo, Deslandes, & Gomes, 2016). Participants were identified by codes consisting of letters and numbers and the type of institution where they work, such as, for example: P1EE (state school participant 1) and P1EP (private school participant 1).

Results and discussion

Among the highlighted points is the characterization of the profile of high school teachers (Table 1 and Table 2). For a better description of the topic addressed, the results and the discussion are organized into three themes regarding the teaching work life: stressful situations in the teacher's work environment; teacher's personal satisfaction in relation to work; expectations regarding quality of life.

Table 1. Participant profile.

	Private school	State school
Gender	Male:4 Female:7	Male:2 Female:9
Age range	33 to 58 years Single:1 Married:8	34 to 58 years Single:2 Married:7
Marital Status	Stable union:2 Divorced:0 5 years:0 6 to 10 years:4	Stable union:0 Divorced:2 5 years:1 6 to 10 years:1
Working time	11 to 15 years:3 16 to 20 years:2 More than 21 years: 2	11 to 15 years:2 16 to 20 years:3 More than 21 years: 4
School	Public:0 Private: 9 Public and Private: 3	Public:11 Private: 0 Public and Private: 0
Number of work shifts	One shift:1 Two shifts:7 Three shifts:3	One shift:1 Two shifts:6 Three shifts:4

Research data.

The sociodemographic profile identified that the female gender prevailed over the male gender both in the state and private network. The age group of teachers varied between 33 and 58 years. Most have been working as high school teachers for more than 21 years, which is confirmed in both educational spheres, as demonstrated by Sousa and Araújo (2015), who emphasizes that $\frac{1}{4}$ of the teaching workers have been in the profession for more than 20 years, and that 70% have been working for more than 10 years as a teacher.

In the development of their work activities, 20 teachers interviewed work more than one shift during the day and the vast majority of respondents work in only one institution. These numbers are quite similar for both state and private network teachers. It is noteworthy that 03 teachers from the private network develop activities in both segments, state and private. On this subject, Gontijo et al. (2013) emphasizes that the teacher works in different shifts and schools, and the preparation of classes requires evaluations and varied plans, requiring investment in execution time, a greater volume of work, with more dedication and intellectual effort.

Table 2. Teacher health.

	Private school		State school	
Medication use	Yes:4		Yes:6	
	No: 7		No: 5	
	Reason	For how long	Reason	For how long
	High blood press.	5 years	Asthma	2 years
	Chronic Gastritis	8 years	Fibromyalgia	6 years
	Back and Lumbar Pain	5 years	Antiallergic	10 years
Removal of work	Diabetes	2 months	Vitamin C	1 year
	Reason	For how long	Reason	For how long
	Maternity leave	120 days	Surgery	
	Appendicitis	3 months	Body pain	3 months
	Surgery		Anxiety and	30 days
	Vocal cords and foot	2 months	Depression	2 months
	Surgery			
	Hernia Surgery	6 months		
	Depression	8 months		

Research data.

Regarding the use of medication, the study identified that, in the state network, 6 teachers have been using medication for a period of time from 1 to 10 years and, in the private school, 4 teachers reported that they have been using medication from 2 months to 9 years. The main medications mentioned, for daily use, are antiallergic, analgesics and vitamin C, used for high blood pressure, diabetes, fibromyalgia, back and lumbar pain, gastritis and asthma (Table 2).

In this regard, Freitas (2018) emphasizes that the workday performed by the teacher, often long, of standing service, brings serious overload damage to the spine and fatigue to muscles. Likewise, dedication to correcting tests and developing educational activities, with repetitive movements, can cause orthopedic problems. Another factor cited by the author and which represents a serious health problem for teachers is arterial hypertension.

With regard to absence from work, at the private school, 7 were removed due to maternity leave, appendicitis surgery, vocal cord and foot surgery, hernia surgery, depression, with a time off from 120 days to 8 months. At the state school, 3 were out of work due to surgery, body aches, anxiety and depression for a period of 3 days to 2 months, as shown in Table 2.

Among the reasons for absence from work, Freitas (2018) points out that voice disorder is one of the main health problems for teachers. It also emphasizes depression in teachers, emphasizing that teaching has gone beyond its role as a mediator of knowledge, expanding its attributions, which go beyond the classroom, including active participation in activities and programs in the school environment, as well as student care and their family. Such situations are described below, during the analysis of the results. Due to the range of attributions in the dynamics of the teacher's life, it is possible to perceive that this working class is an easy target for depression, as verified in the reports of the interviewees who had been removed due to a depressive illness.

Stressful situations in the teacher's work environment

When talking about stressful situations experienced at work, both state and private school teachers reported stressful situations experienced in the performance of their work activities, including intense work overload. Such factors contribute to mental and physical illnesses, as the testimonies from the state public school teachers illustrate: "Lack of structure. Poorly educated students, without principles and values, lack of respect (P11EE)" and in the private school: "Pressure to comply with content, but there is a load of bureaucratic or extracurricular tasks that limit effective working time (P2EP)".

Silva and Guillo (2015) elucidate how much the teacher is exposed to unfavorable conditions for the care of their well-being, as well as the biopsychosociocultural context in which they are inserted in the contemporary world. When faced with conflict situations in personal and professional contexts, the professional faces factors that contribute to an imbalance related to their individual expectations, which produces negative effects on their educational activities and their health.

Other stressful situations are related to social and psychoeducational factors, as can be understood in the report of the teacher from the state school: "Government neglect in relation to our salary adjustment, lack of

respect from students in relation to my person and as a professional (P8EE)". The participant from the private segment reports that "When the family lays the responsibility for education only for the school, not showing up for the delivery of the report at the child's graduation mass, but at the party they are present (P11EP)."

In this sense, Diehl and Marin (2016) explain that teachers may suffer painful consequences in their emotional framework caused by stressful situations of greater involvement with students' problems. Demotivation and social devaluation of their work, demands to obtain better performance in professional qualification, lack of rest and leisure activities, as well as imbalance in intra and interpersonal relationships present a set of stress factors in the organization of work, which is identified in the speeches of teachers in both state and private networks.

Painful experiences arising from stressful situations in the school environment are constant challenges in the professional life of each teacher, as mentioned in the interview of the participant from the state network: "Discussion with students, when trying to set limits and/or order in the classroom. Disrespect and contempt against me coming from students. Disrespect writing swear words on the test for me to read (P8EE)." This is also portrayed in the expression of the teacher from the private school system: "Yes, lack of respect on the part of the student with verbal aggression (P11EP)."

From this perspective, Siveira, Enumo and Batista (2014) elaborate their perception beyond the external situations characterizing the routine of the teachers, but also points out on subjective aspects, when each individual tries to face such situations or succumbs to the illness process. Not resisting this process triggers consequences in a professional who craves respect, appreciation and recognition. This professional suffers painful experiences in favor of the collective of the category.

Regarding work overload related to stressful situations, Gouvêa (2016) argues that two complementary factors are identified in the process of becoming ill, the first one resulting from the absence of free time outside of work and leisure activities and the second related to the elaboration of work in stressful conditions, causing aggravations in physical and emotional health. These factors appear in reports of the participants of the private network.

Yes, many demands for improving activities are limited by financial investment. A serious problem is the lack of dialogue in setting up schedules at the beginning of the year. There is little communication on this particular point. Another problem is that we have tasks or meetings during break time. For example, we have to close the rooms and wait for the students to leave, which limits the time for resting (P2EP).

There is a pressure that exceeds the role of being an educator, there are problems that many students expose to us that we take home. In addition to weakening us because we don't have adequate time, we don't even have adequate tools to alleviate the problem situation (P4EP).

In the state network, there are other aggravating factors composed of verbal and physical aggression when the teacher prints their professional value and takes a position in the face of the painful situation, which is reported in the interviews: "Yes. A student who, as soon as I entered the State, told me to (a bad word) because he wanted to be out of the classroom all the time and I called his attention (P1EE.)." Aggressions experienced in their daily work are also reported: "Yes. A mother tried to physically attack me, because her daughter failed (she did not attend recovery classes) (P6EE)."

In this context, Siveira, Enumo and Batista (2014) also clarify how the problems of conflicting relationships arise, since on the one hand there is a need to confront the teaching practice from theory to practice and on the other an excess of institutional organization that affects the worker, forcing them to reach a certain standard, not creating possibilities to exercise their own creativity and autonomy in methodological practices. The subjectivity of each teacher is disregarded as well as the way in which they arrive at this teaching environment, with the life story they carry with them.

Other aspects reported by teachers, both from the state and private schools, show different types of feelings regarding the situation of the deadline to complete work activities, which reveals a sense of impotence, anxiety, pressure, stress and apprehension, as perceived in the reports: "Sometimes with a feeling of impotence or anxiety to solve them (P4EE)." In this same direction: "Very stressed and pressured (P10EE)." They emphasize that: "Sometimes extremely pressured and with the impression of not being able to handle so much (P1EP)." Others still point out: "Mentally pressured, over the years of work, I get stressed faster in the family environment (P10EP)."

In this context, Cortez, Souza, Amaral and Silva (2017) argue about the subjectivity each teacher has and how they maintain psychic balance as far as possible, considering their limitations and necessary adjustments

for greater growth in carrying out work activities. The authors consider some important aspects for coping with these sensations, as the understanding of the origin of psychic suffering, which permeates the degrading conditions. They also point to a mechanization associated with an adaptation guided by organizations, as well as the structuring of the model that includes excessive work. In this way, there are emergency situations in which the teacher needs support to manage the overload of their activities and the strengthening of healthy changes based on the individual reality of each one and how they perceive themselves (Cortez et al. 2017).

From this perspective, Santana and Neves (2017) point out the need for increasing the field of collective health practices, as well as the development of health management that provides the worker with reestablished professional sectors. Based on the responses of the interviewees, the importance for teachers to externalize their emotions based on their professional experiences is identified, as they are perceiving themselves in this process of realizing or not their activities.

The need to express feelings and sensations is identified both in public and in private education: "Sometimes I feel suffocated with the demands of the system, and now, it launches an online note, but we don't have many resources, and we don't even have the conditions to adequate jobs, there is a lot of demand, few conditions and little recognition (P8EE)." They also point out that: "Because of the workload, sometimes I feel suffocated, without time. Of course, this is related to the large amount of work the teacher takes home (P9EP)." In this sense, Santana and Neves (2017) argues about the reality that still exists in teaching, that is, the difficulty in limiting their space in institutions and the possibility of not being silent in the face of guaranteeing their rights, establishing increasingly reliable dialogues with one's real needs.

Teacher's personal satisfaction in relation to work

Regarding the feeling related to enjoying their work as a teacher, the interviewees emphasize that they feel professionally fulfilled, but they also express that their work is exhausting in some situations. Some teachers reveal the feeling of disappointment and abandonment of working in the area. In this regard, Cardoso and Costa (2016) emphasize the importance of professional satisfaction. It is a positive general and emotional state reflected in the quality of the work developed, enabling psychological well-being and good performance, which is highlighted in the report of some of the teachers interviewed from state and private schools: "Yes, I like what I do. Although I was not born to be a teacher, it is a profession that I identified with and I am satisfied in my personal fulfillment through my students, doing well in studies, in life (P11EE)." Another says: "I love, I love teaching, having contact with children and young people, because I learn a lot from them. I always say that when a 3rd grade class leaves, a part of me goes with them (P11EP)."

Another point observed by Cardoso and Costa (2016) is related to a teaching practice structured by intrinsic factors linked to emotions, feelings and experiences; internal factors related to personal fulfillment and professional recognition; factors of working conditions, safety, socioeconomic stability and interpersonal relationships solidified during the routine of exercising the profession. The intrinsic factor can be seen in the reports of some teachers: "Yes, I like my profession, I work with love (P6EE)", and this feeling is also stated by the private school teacher: "Yes. Master! Working with young people in the classroom is pleasurable, both when they are learning and when I am too. I learn a lot (P10EP)."

Silva and Guillo (2015) mention that, in order to carry out an effective work, the teacher needs favorable conditions in their workplace, which involves a set of factors, from necessary materials and facilities, to specific methods according to each one's specialty. In addition, relationships consistent with the process of enjoying the execution of the activity, including the forms of hiring and the career.

Cardoso and Costa (2016) argue that when workers feel fulfilled in their profession, activities are carried out with greater dedication and, when dissatisfied, production at work may not meet the expectations of school management and the quality of education for students. Thus, over the years, teachers feel the need to give up being a teacher or to seek improvements in the socioeconomic factor, moving from one school to another or, in some cases, going through a process of deep illness, both physical and psychological, as highlighted in the interviewee's speech: "Yes. I don't see myself doing anything else, I've already tried to shift areas by taking a totally different course (Law), but it's in the classroom that I feel fulfilled, the law certificate remains in the drawer (P11EP)."

Considering the report of the teachers interviewed, from both the state and private schools, they evaluate a satisfactory professional achievement when exercising what they want: "Sometimes I feel fulfilled and I feel that I can be contributing to a better future for my students. At other times I feel tired of not being able to encourage them as I should. (P10EE)." They also recognize the challenging moments and the non-recognition

for their trajectory and service provided to society and education, which is demonstrated in the following answers: “Accomplished yes, recognized no (P6EE).” They recognize the need to unite the category: “Yes, in part. I believe that there is a lack of recognition and empowerment of teachers (P4EP).”

Cardoso and Costa (2016) show that increasing the teacher’s personal satisfaction by minimizing dissatisfaction factors makes it possible for the teachers to be more dedicated and adds to their professional appreciation, thus allowing a greater understanding of what can be satisfactory or not, according to the report: “Yes, despite the lack of support and respect from the government, I continue to satisfactorily carry out my work (P11EE).” Some also pointed to the creation of support proposals in the institutions themselves:

At times, yes. However, the overload the teacher faces is very high. They are charged by the student, by the student’s parents, by the school and also by the family. So unfortunately feeling completely fulfilled is a privilege of few in this profession (P9EP).

Moreira, Jesus and Pinheiro (2013) understand that, although there are several factors causing satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the exercise of this profession, many still believe in the transforming process of education. This is shown in the responses of the interviewees, when they give importance to the teaching and learning they provide for their students. They also highlight their objective of contributing to the formation of each student, as well as preparing them for critical and reflective thinking, leading them to trace their own life story. Furthermore, it is observed that the teaching work becomes challenging in the various painful situations that contradict their expectations of professional fulfillment and satisfaction.

Expectations regarding quality of life

Considering expectations regarding their quality of life, teachers from the state and private network report doing various physical activities, from sports to specific training for good physical conditioning: “Doing weight training and whenever there is *muaithay* training (P6EE).” Others look for something outdoors like: “Yes, walks in the park and on weekends, I play basketball with my colleagues (P11EEE)”, and claim that such activities aim at quality of life: “Today walking and running are activities to favor my physical well-being (P4EP).” In this vein, Baldissera, Machado, Alves, Faleiro and Zawadzki (2017) emphasize the relevance of the practice of physical activities that allow human beings to improve their health, since they are essential in the prevention of diseases and thus for quality of life.

With regard to mental health, some teachers feel well by developing other different skills to ease the mind and maintain emotional balance, as highlighted: “I make shaped sweets to relieve the mind (P7EE).” The search for something relaxing leads the teacher to envision activities that are outside their daily routine, such as: “I practice gardening and take the road to beaches and quiet places to alleviate mental stress (P4EP).” The warmth of home and moments with the family are significant points for mental health, as she reports: “Mental health is to be with my two daughters, I try to disconnect from work, Saturday and Sunday are theirs when there is no work to be done at school (P11EP)”, others take care of their mental health through spirituality: “The mental health, I get attached to God, I read biblical texts and I seek strength, faith and courage to follow the path (P10EP).”

According to Trindade, Morcerf, and Oliveira (2018), the teacher’s health process has presented intense moments configured in concerns over the years. The profession was referenced by the International Labor Organization as a profession that produces risks, considering the aspects of physical and emotional illness. It is also pointed out how much some scientific studies have perceived risk factors related to excessive work routine, which causes illness processes.

Siveira, Enumo and Batista (2014) show that understanding psychic illnesses is not simple and that the reality in the classroom presents factors that indicate illnesses, considering the difficulties related to dealing with students, parents or guardians with different forms of personality and behavior. In addition, there is the external environment, such as school management, which, in most situations, does not provide the necessary support to meet the demands of these teachers. Another point observed is how the teacher visualizes their perception of the world, their way of construction as a subject, the projections about their personal and professional life that can also reveal a psychic illness.

Still along this same line, Carlotto, Câmara, Batista and Schneider (2019) analyze that teacher health is still seen as a secondary factor in the face of aspirations of the education sector, whether on the part of managers or even the teachers themselves. This is due to the non-recognition of emotional illnesses and the structuring of their relationship with work as factors that maintain risk situations to one’s health.

In this regard, most respondents consider that their institutions promote activities aimed at physical and mental well-being on important dates throughout the year and when they need to carry out specific training, as pointed out by the teacher of the state network: “Always! They do events like our birthdays, New Year’s parties, good chats during breaks (P2EE).” In the private segment, they express the need to expand these moments:

Yes, there are occasional activities that collaborate with our mental well-being. For example: awareness-raising lectures on women’s health and violence, and how to combat this problem situation. But I believe there is more to be done, listening to the employee, carrying out evaluations of actions and projects (P4EP).

Trindade et al. (2018) consider that the development of proposals aimed at the physical and mental well-being of teachers allows the permanence of positive emotions within the scope of their tasks, because the individual starts to develop their work with greater skill and potential, as well as evolve in the achievement of their life goals. However, some teachers interviewed have another perception about what institutions promote for physical and mental well-being, being reported as: “No. All they do is charging us to teach classes, classes and classes (P11EE).” In the private school system, teachers express the need to improve the quality of life in the work environment, reporting that:

Yes, but with insufficiency. Teacher’s Day, for example, is held in the workplace. The pedagogical journey is just technical training and the position that we are humans, not machines. In addition, sometimes, we help students to carry their burdens, as there is still a lack of a psychological sector in the school, both for them and for us, the professionals (P5EP).

According to Trindade et al. (2018), understanding the scope of the school and the real, concrete, ideal and value transformations arising from the members that compose it, the effectiveness of the various phases that are part of it becomes fundamental. The context in which the teacher works is complex and the school is a social constructor. The fulfillment of its role as an educational institution must adjust to the necessary conditions for the professional doing of the teacher with new proposals, which promote a different education. It is relevant to promote an education linked to the well-being of the teachers, which allows growth in their professional and personal life, considering the perspective of satisfaction and fulfillment of being a teacher, since teachers are first and foremost human beings with interpersonal relationships.

Final considerations

Although there are many scientific studies focused on the challenges, implications, methods and restructuring of teaching activities with a view to both physical and psychological health, there is still a limitation of intervention proposals in relation to high school teachers. The experience of being a teacher causes intense situations related to physical and psychological exhaustion, affecting their personal, professional and social life. Thus, the achievement of the objectives of this study tries to bring an understanding of the effects of work on the health of high school teachers.

There is an accumulation of experiences in which these teachers are immersed when performing their teaching role. There is a need to expand healthy ways for the teachers to work with quality of life, respecting their limitations, anxieties, uncertainties and expectations. The research also seeks to understand the results related to the profile of teachers, leading to the discovery that, both in private and public education in the state network, there are teachers teaching for decades, others at the beginning of their careers, all of them suffering from the emergence of illness processes caused by multiple factors, whether related to work overload or existential conflicts.

Regarding the practices aimed at quality of life developed in the school context, it is identified that, both in private and public schools, it is still necessary to draw up plans, such as programs of interventional practices that allow the teacher to establish their way of teaching, considering each one’s potentials. It is also relevant to create spaces in the school that strengthen the cultivation of care with the mental and physical health of this professional. Therefore, the presence of professionals specialized in emotional and physical health demands is essential in the construction of projects that provide teachers with improvement in their quality of life.

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