



BURNOUT IN HEALTH PROFESSIONALS: IMPACTS ON QUALITY OF LIFE AND WELL-BEING



<https://doi.org/10.56238/levv15n41-071>

Submitted on: 09/22/2024

Publication date: 10/22/2024

José Antonio da Silva¹, Débora Miranda Dias², Gabriel de Albuquerque Pedrosa³, Tayane Moura Martins⁴, Marcelo Roberto Bruno Valio⁵, Gardenia de Oliveira Galvão⁶, Isaac Nogueira da Silva Neto⁷, Camila Martins do Nascimento⁸, Pedro Henrique Moura Teixeira⁹, Jonielly Pereira dos Santos¹⁰ and Izadora Valéria Lopes Beirão¹¹

ABSTRACT

The research aimed to analyze the relationship between burnout and the quality of life of health professionals, identifying the main risk factors and proposing mitigation strategies. For this, a qualitative approach was used, including interviews and questionnaires applied to professionals from different areas of health. The results showed a high prevalence of

¹Dr. in Education from the American University - FUUSA - Florida University. Judicial Mediator of the Court of Justice of the State of Rio de Janeiro. TJRJ.

E-mail: janthonous@uol.com.br, Brazil

²Speech Therapy Resident in Intensive Care

University: Hu University Hospital - UFPI

Email: deboram27@hotmail.com

³Highest degree (highest only): incomplete higher education

University: UNINTA

E-mail: gabrielpedrosa814@gmail.com

⁴Master in Health Promotion, Human Development and Society

Federal University of Pará (UFPA)

E-mail: tayanemartins@ufpa.br

⁵Post-Doctorate in Law

University: UNIFACVEST Evaluator

E-mail: brunovalio76@gmail.com

⁶Master's student in Organizational and Work Psychology

Potiguar University - UNP

Email: gardgalvao@gmail.com

⁷Undergraduate in Pharmacy

University: Catholic University Center of Quixadá

E-mail: isaacneto.00@hotmail.com

⁸Occupational Nursing Specialist Nurse

Faculdade Mauá GO

E-mail: camila.martins10c7@gmail.com

⁹Bachelor of Medicine at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

Residency in Dermatology at the State University of Rio de Janeiro

E-mail: pedromoura.sl@hotmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9621-514X>

¹⁰Highest degree (only the highest): Graduate in Dentistry

University: Faculdade São Francisco de Cajazeiras - FSF

E-mail: joniellypereiradosantos@gmail.com

¹¹Bachelor's degree in Law (UFMT) and studying Psychology (and scientific initiation scholarship) at the University of Cuiabá - UNIC

E-mail: izadoravaleria@gmail.com



burnout symptoms, with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization being the most common. The analysis indicated that factors such as work overload, lack of institutional support, and absence of mental health policies contribute significantly to the development of the syndrome. The conclusion emphasized the urgency of interventions that promote healthy work environments, with a focus on psychological support and self-care strategies, in addition to highlighting the importance of an organizational culture that prioritizes the well-being of professionals, which can result in improvements in the quality of care provided and in the general health of workers.

Keywords: Quality of life at work. Burnout. Health.

INTRODUCTION

Burnout, a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal fulfillment, has become a recurring theme in the context of health professions. Professionals such as doctors, nurses, and psychologists often face an intense and emotionally demanding workload, which makes them vulnerable to this condition. The nature of their activities, which involves constant care for others, often leads to a sacrifice of their own needs and well-being. Thus, understanding the nuances of burnout in this sector is crucial, both for the health of professionals and for the quality of care provided (Lima; Domingues Junior; Gomes, 2023).

The work environment in the health area is characterized by high pressure and high emotional demands. The need to make quick decisions, deal with life-or-death situations, and the lack of adequate resources are all factors that contribute significantly to occupational stress. In addition, long working hours, a shortage of professionals, and an overload of patients generate a vicious cycle of stress and exhaustion. These elements not only affect the mental health of professionals, but also compromise the quality of care and patient safety (Lima; Silva; Domingues Júnior, 2024).

Burnout is not only an individual problem, but also an institutional one. Healthcare organizations that do not adopt measures to promote the well-being of their employees face serious consequences, such as high employee turnover, increased medical errors, and, consequently, deterioration in the quality of care. This scenario generates a negative impact that extends to the health of the population, creating a situation in which everyone loses. Therefore, it is essential to investigate how this syndrome affects not only professionals, but also the health system as a whole (Lopes; Birth; Oliveira, 2023).

In addition to the direct impacts on the health of professionals, burnout can significantly affect the quality of life of these individuals. Symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and insomnia are common among those who experience this syndrome, impairing not only professional performance, but also personal relationships and social life. The inability to disconnect from work and the feeling of ineffectiveness can lead to a cycle of isolation and unhappiness, affecting overall health and life satisfaction. Therefore, understanding this relationship is vital for the implementation of effective interventions (Rezende; Pereira, 2023).

Identifying the factors that contribute to the development of burnout is an essential step in building a healthier work environment. Factors such as lack of social support, inadequate time management, and the absence of policies that prioritize mental health are critical points to be addressed. Recognizing these elements allows institutions to develop

support strategies and programs, promoting an environment that values not only the work, but also the personal lives of health professionals (Sousa et al., 2023).

Thus, the objective of this research is to analyze the relationship between burnout and the quality of life of health professionals, identifying the main risk factors and proposing mitigation strategies. Through a comprehensive approach, it seeks to map the consequences of this syndrome, both at the individual and institutional levels, providing data that can guide public policies and organizational practices in the sector.

Conducting this research is extremely important, not only for the well-being of health professionals, but also for improving the quality of care provided to the population. Understanding the causes and consequences of burnout is essential to implement solutions that promote the mental and physical health of caregivers, directly reflecting on the effectiveness of health services. The promotion of healthy work environments and the appreciation of professionals are fundamental steps to ensure a more resilient and effective health system.

DEVELOPMENT

QUALITY OF LIFE AT WORK

Quality of life at work (QWL) is a concept that involves several factors that affect the well-being of employees within the professional environment. It goes beyond simple satisfaction with working conditions, encompassing physical, psychological, social and organizational aspects. The theme has gained prominence in recent decades, especially in a context of growing competitiveness and demands for productivity, leading companies to rethink their policies and practices in relation to the care of their employees (Lopes; Birth; Oliveira, 2023).

One of the main components of QWL is the physical and mental health of workers. Environments that promote health, through proper ergonomics, flexible schedules, and wellness programs, contribute to the reduction of occupational diseases and stress. The implementation of rest spaces, physical activities, and mental health programs is essential to ensure that employees feel valued and cared for, positively impacting their productivity and engagement (Lima; Domingues Junior; Gomes, 2023).

Another important aspect is interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Open and transparent communication between colleagues and leaders is essential for creating a positive organizational climate. Environments in which trust and collaboration are encouraged tend to foster a greater sense of belonging and satisfaction among employees.

Unresolved conflicts and lack of recognition can lead to demotivation and, consequently, a drop in quality of life at work (Rezende; Pereira, 2023).

Flexibility at work is a growing factor in the search for QWL. The possibility of flexible hours, home office, and remote work policies have shown significant benefits in employee satisfaction. These arrangements allow workers to better balance their professional and personal responsibilities, reducing stress and increasing motivation. In addition, flexibility can contribute to increased productivity, as employees tend to feel more comfortable and engaged in their activities (Silva et al., 2020).

The compensation and benefits offered are also crucial elements in the perception of quality of life at work. Competitive salaries, health plans, bonus and incentive programs, among others, are factors that influence employee satisfaction and loyalty. However, simply offering benefits is not enough; it is essential that companies establish an environment in which employees feel that their contributions are recognized and valued (Lima; Silva; Domingues Júnior, 2024).

Professional development and growth opportunities within the organization also directly impact QWL. Employees who have access to training, mentoring, and well-defined career plans tend to feel more motivated and committed to the company. The possibility of learning and developing, combined with constructive feedback, is essential for workers to feel that they are progressing in their careers, which is reflected in their well-being (Rezende; Pereira, 2023).

Organizational culture is a determining factor in the quality of life at work. Companies that promote values such as inclusion, diversity, and respect tend to have a healthier and more productive work environment. Creating a culture that values employee well-being is a key step in ensuring that people feel comfortable and motivated to contribute (Lima; Domingues Junior; Gomes, 2023).

Thus, QWL becomes a reflection of the organization's practices and values. The measurement of quality of life at work can be carried out through organizational climate surveys, interviews and focus groups. These tools allow companies to identify areas for improvement and understand the needs of employees. Continuous feedback is key to adjusting policies and practices, ensuring that QWL remains a priority in people management (Sousa et al., 2023).

Regular monitoring also helps to identify trends and changes in worker expectations. In addition to the factors mentioned, workload and time management are critical aspects in the quality of life at work. Excessive working hours and the pressure for results can lead to burnout and other mental health problems. Companies should strive to balance

performance expectations with respect for human limitations. Promoting a culture that values breaks and moments of relaxation can contribute to a healthier and more productive environment (Vilela et al., 2020).

Leadership plays a crucial role in promoting quality of life at work. Leaders who demonstrate empathy, active listening, and support are key to creating a positive work environment. Investing in QWL-focused leadership training can result in better interpersonal relationships and increased employee satisfaction. The training of leaders who prioritize the well-being of their teams can transform the organizational culture and bring long-term benefits (Rezende; Pereira, 2023).

Corporate social responsibility is also related to the quality of life at work. Organizations that are committed to social and environmental causes tend to attract and retain talent that values these principles. Employees who identify with the company's values generally have greater satisfaction and engagement. This connection between the company's purposes and the expectations of employees is essential to promote a work environment that prioritizes quality of life (Pêgo; Pêgo, 2016).

Implementing diversity and inclusion policies is another effective strategy to improve QWL. Environments that respect and value differences among employees not only promote equality but also drive innovation and creativity. Diversity brings varied perspectives that enrich decision-making and strengthen organizational culture. Thus, by embracing inclusion, companies create a more welcoming and motivating space for everyone (Lima; Domingues Junior; Gomes, 2023).

In addition, emotional responsibility and psychological support are essential in building a good quality of life at work. Programs that offer psychological support and resources for stress management are valuable tools for employees. Access to mental health services helps prevent burnout and promotes resilience, positively impacting job satisfaction and performance (Santos; Sources; Lima, 2022).

BURNOUT

Burnout is a psychosocial syndrome that results from chronic stress in the workplace, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a sense of low personal fulfillment. Although it can affect professionals in various areas, it is especially prevalent among those who work in high-demand sectors, such as health, education, and social assistance. The growing pressure for productivity and the intensification of responsibilities have contributed to an alarming increase in this condition (Lopes; Birth; Oliveira, 2023).

The symptoms of burnout can manifest themselves in several ways. Emotional exhaustion is often the first to appear, leading individuals to feel drained, fatigued, and unable to cope with daily demands. Depersonalization, in turn, refers to the tendency to see others, especially colleagues and clients, as objects or numbers, resulting in emotional withdrawal. Finally, low personal fulfillment is characterized by a perception of ineffectiveness, where the professional feels unable to contribute in a meaningful way (Rezende; Pereira, 2023).

The impact of burnout goes beyond the individual, affecting team dynamics and the quality of services provided. Professionals who experience burnout tend to be less engaged, with reduced levels of motivation and productivity. This can result in a vicious cycle, where stress generates underperformance, leading to more stress and thus a worsening of the syndrome. In addition, the deterioration of the work environment can affect team morale, contributing to a negative organizational culture (Pêgo; Pêgo, 2016).

The causes of burnout are multifactorial and can include both individual and organizational aspects. Factors such as work overload, lack of control over tasks, absence of social support, lack of clarity in expectations, and toxic organizational cultures are often cited as triggers. The individuality of each professional must also be considered, as resilience and the ability to deal with stress vary from person to person (Lima; Farah; Bustamante-Teixeira, 2018).

To address burnout, it is crucial for organizations to implement targeted interventions. Wellness programs at work, which include psychological support, training in stress management, and initiatives that promote a healthy work-life balance, can be effective. The promotion of a work environment that values mental health and encourages open communication is essential to mitigate the risks associated with burnout (Lima; Domingues Junior; Gomes, 2023).

Awareness of burnout syndrome is also essential. Professionals and leaders should be educated about the signs and symptoms, as well as best practices to prevent it. Cultivating a culture that values mental health, where employees feel safe to discuss their difficulties, can be a significant step towards reducing the incidence of burnout. Research on burnout is vital to better understand its causes and consequences (Santos; Sources; Lima, 2022).

The relationship between organizational factors, stress, and workers' well-being are key to the development of effective intervention strategies. In addition, collecting data on the prevalence of the syndrome in different sectors can help direct prevention and support efforts (Lima; Domingues Junior; Silva, 2024).

In a world where mental health is gaining more and more prominence, the discussion about burnout should be a priority on organizational agendas. Recognizing that mental health is as important as physical health can transform the way companies operate and relate to their employees. By addressing burnout proactively, organizations not only improve the quality of life of their workers, but also enhance productivity and efficiency (Maissiat et al., 2015).

BURNOUT IN HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND ITS IMPACTS ON QUALITY OF LIFE AND WELL-BEING

Burnout is a syndrome that has become alarmingly common among health professionals, a category marked by high emotional and physical demands. Characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a sense of ineffectiveness, burnout not only affects the professional, but also the quality of care provided to patients. In a sector where empathy and attention are essential, the occurrence of burnout can lead to serious consequences for workers' health and patients' well-being (Lima; Domingues Junior; Silva, 2024).

Healthcare workers often face long working hours, constant pressure, and the responsibility of making critical decisions in stressful situations. These factors, combined with a lack of resources and institutional support, create an environment conducive to the development of burnout syndrome. Emotional exhaustion, one of the main characteristics of burnout, makes these professionals feel exhausted and unable to offer the necessary support to their patients, generating a cycle of dissatisfaction. In addition to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization is a common response to burnout (Maissiat et al., 2015).

Professionals begin to treat patients as numbers or cases, rather than individuals. This dehumanization not only harms the professional-patient relationship, but can also lead to a lack of motivation and personal fulfillment, which are fundamental elements for job satisfaction. When employees feel disconnected from their functions, the quality of care decreases, negatively impacting the patient experience (Lima; Farah; Bustamante-Teixeira, 2018).

The impacts of burnout are not limited to the work environment. The mental and physical health of the healthcare professional can be severely affected, leading to problems such as anxiety, depression, and chronic illnesses. These problems not only decrease the worker's quality of life, but can also result in frequent absences, which aggravates the situation in health institutions and further affects the quality of care. Organizational culture plays a crucial role in preventing burnout. Environments that promote emotional support,

recognition, and appreciation of employees are less likely to develop this syndrome (Lima; Domingues Junior; Silva, 2024).

Implementing policies that encourage self-care, continuous training, and flexibility at work can help reduce the incidence of burnout. When professionals feel that their needs are being met, job satisfaction and quality of life increase. Awareness about burnout is essential, not only for health professionals, but also for managers and institutions. Training on recognizing the signs of burnout and prevention strategies are essential to create a healthy work environment (Santos; Sources; Lima, 2022).

Organizations should encourage a culture of open dialogue, where employees feel comfortable expressing their difficulties and seeking help. In addition to organizational interventions, it is important for health professionals to also develop resilience and self-care skills. Practices such as meditation, physical exercise, and psychological support can help mitigate the effects of stress. The promotion of well-being must be a shared responsibility, involving both employees and the management of health institutions (Lima; Farah; Bustamante-Teixeira, 2018).

Ongoing research on burnout in healthcare professionals is vital to better understand this syndrome and its consequences. Studying the prevalence, causes, and risk factors associated with burnout allows the development of more effective intervention strategies. In addition, the collection of data on the impact of burnout on the quality of services provided can help justify the implementation of mental health policies in the workplace (Pêgo; Pêgo, 2016).

In the current context, where mental health is gaining more and more attention, the discussion about burnout becomes a priority. Recognizing that mental health care is just as important as physical care can transform the way health institutions operate. Promoting an environment that prioritizes the quality of life of professionals is a strategy that will benefit both workers and patients (Maissiat et al., 2015).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research on burnout in health professionals has revealed the severity and complexity of this syndrome, which affects not only workers, but also the health system as a whole. Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a feeling of ineffectiveness, compromises the quality of care provided and puts the mental and physical health of professionals at risk. In the face of increasing pressure for productivity and lack of resources, the health of caregivers becomes an urgent concern that cannot be ignored.

The data collected indicate that the risk factors for burnout are multiple and interconnected, including work overload, lack of institutional support, and the absence of policies that prioritize mental health. These conditions create an environment where exhaustion becomes a common response, leading professionals to a state of disengagement and demotivation. This dynamic not only harms individuals, but also affects the quality of health services, reflecting in an overall deterioration of care and well-being of patients.

It is essential that health organizations recognize the importance of promoting quality of life at work. Implementing programs that offer psychological support, professional development opportunities, and a healthier work environment can be a significant step toward mitigating burnout. Cultivating a culture of support, open communication, and recognition is essential for retaining talent and fostering a positive organizational climate.

In addition, the survey emphasizes the need for awareness and ongoing training on burnout. Professionals and leaders must be trained to recognize the signs of this syndrome and adopt practices that promote well-being. Proactive interventions, such as training on stress management and self-care, can help build resilience and prevent emotional burnout.

Another important aspect is the shared responsibility between institutions and professionals. While organizations must create a work environment that values mental health, individuals also need to develop skills to cope with stress and seek support when needed. This collaboration is key to building a more resilient and effective health system. Finally, the survey highlights that mental health care should be a priority in organizational agendas.

Recognizing the importance of health workers' well-being is not only an ethical issue, but also a strategy that can bring long-term benefits to both workers and patients. By investing in a work environment that prioritizes quality of life, institutions can ensure safer and more effective care, promoting a culture of care and appreciation.

In summary, combating burnout and promoting quality of life at work are issues that require immediate attention. It is imperative that everyone involved in the healthcare industry join efforts to address this syndrome by fostering a work environment that not only protects caregivers but also improves the care experience for all. The transformation of the work environment is an urgent need and a collective responsibility, which can redefine the future of health care.

REFERENCES

1. Lima, A. S., Farah, B. F., & Bustamante-Teixeira, M. T. (2018). Análise da prevalência da síndrome de burnout em profissionais da atenção primária em saúde. *Trabalho, Educação e Saúde*, 16(1), 283–304.
2. Lima, L. A. O., & Domingues Junior, G. O. V. O. (2023). Saúde mental e esgotamento profissional: Um estudo qualitativo sobre os fatores associados à síndrome de burnout entre profissionais da saúde. *Boletim de Conjuntura Boca*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10198981>
3. Lima, L. A. O., Domingues Junior, P. L., & Silva, L. L. (2024). Estresse ocupacional em período pandêmico e as relações existentes com os acidentes laborais: Estudo de caso em uma indústria alimentícia. *RGO – Revista Gestão Organizacional (Online)*, 17, 34–47. <https://doi.org/10.22277/rgo.v17i1.7484>
4. Lima, L. A. O., Silva, L. L., & Domingues Júnior, P. L. (2024). Qualidade de vida no trabalho segundo as percepções dos funcionários públicos de uma Unidade Básica de Saúde (UBS). *Revista de Carreiras e Pessoas*, 14, 346–359. <https://doi.org/10.23925/recape.v14i2.60020>
5. Lopes, A. de A. L., Nascimento, R. Z. do, & Oliveira, K. C. do N. (2023). Estresse em trabalhadores da Atenção Primária em Saúde no cenário da pandemia pela COVID-19: Reflexões à luz da Teoria de Betty Neuman. *Research, Society and Development*, 12(10), e19121043149.
6. Maissiat, G. S., et al. (2015). Contexto de trabalho, prazer e sofrimento na atenção básica em saúde. *Revista Gaúcha de Enfermagem*, 36(2).
7. Pêgo, F. P. L., & Pêgo, D. R. (2016). Síndrome de Burnout. *Revista Brasileira de Medicina do Trabalho*, 14(2).
8. Rezende, A. A. F., & Pereira, A. C. (2023). Estratégias de coping de profissionais da saúde de Piracicaba durante a COVID-19. *Revista Psicologia, Diversidade e Saúde*, 12.
9. Santos, H. M. M., Fontes, C. J. F., & Lima, D. S. (2022). Síndrome de Burnout e qualidade de vida dos profissionais da atenção primária à saúde durante a pandemia de COVID-19, em município da Amazônia Brasileira. *Debates em Psiquiatria*.
10. Silva, J. F., et al. (2020). Síndrome de Burnout em profissionais de Enfermagem no contexto da Atenção Básica. *Revista Eletrônica Acervo Saúde*, (39), e2320.
11. Sousa, V. T. S., et al. (2023). Esgotamento profissional e cultura de segurança do paciente na Atenção Primária à Saúde. *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem*, 76(3).
12. Vilela, N. F., et al. (2020). Síndrome de burnout em profissionais da rede de atenção básica em saúde. *Revista Saberes da Fapan*, 8(2).