

New Working Conditions and Well-Being of Elementary Teachers in Ecuador

Luis E. Alvarado ^{a1,c}
Francisco D. Bretones ^{b, c2}

^aUniversity of Guayaquil, Ecuador

^bProgram Prometeo-Senescyt, Ecuador

^cUniversity of Granada, Spain

Abstract

The objective of this study was to analyze the stressors and working conditions which affect elementary teachers according to the TP-M theory. For this purpose, a research study was performed with nine focus groups composed of 75 teachers, each working in a different elementary school in Guayaquil (Ecuador). The results showed that occupational risks could be classified in two categories: (1) risks stemming from the social environment in which the teachers carry out their work; (2) risks derived from the new organizational demands that affect the physical and psychological health of teachers as well as their social and family relationships.

Keywords: stress; teacher roles; organizational changes; psychosocial risks; working conditions; burnout

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Introduction

There has been a great deal of research on the role of teachers in the intellectual and emotional development of their students. However, considerably less is known about the well-being of the teachers themselves despite the impact that they have on the socio-emotional development and academic performance of their pupils (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011).

Various authors have highlighted the fact that teaching is an extremely stressful profession since it is characterized by a heavy workload, an unsuitable physical environment, low salaries, responsibilities that are not clearly defined, and problems with students (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016; Aloe, Shisler, Norris, Nickerson, & Rinker, 2014; Peltzer, Shisana, Zuma, Wyk, & Zungu-Dirwayi, 2009; Bauer, Stamm, Virnich, & Wirsching, 2006). All of these factors are important psychosocial risks for teachers and have a direct impact on the quality of their work (Sammons et al., 2007).

There are several theories and models on the teachers' working conditions and their influence on their professional performance and burnout. One of the social-psychological theories is the Teacher-Performance Motivation Theory (TP-M Theory) developed by Blase (1982) which considers the teachers' perceptions of the students' needs as well as the socio-environmental conditions.

This author suggests that teachers' stress and burnout is the result of their perceptions of the students' needs and the coping resources and effort that they devote. So according to this theory, when teachers detect some (curricular and/or extracurricular) needs in their students,

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they will convert them into goals and will invest a great deal of effort in reaching them.

According to Blase (1982), these needs will be determined by the cultural rules of their environment as well as the internal (primary) or external (secondary) rewards.

The interrelation between the perceived needs, the effort and the rewards will be affected by the different working conditions or stressors that will influence teachers' satisfaction, involvement and motivation. Blase (1982) refers to this cycle as the degenerative development of the teaching efficacy, which in the long term can lead to a decrease in the teachers' performance ("give less" in qualitative and quantitative terms) and to burnout processes.

Concerning the possible stressors, Blase (1982) makes two big groups or orders. First order stressors interfere directly with the teachers' performance in class by reducing their involvement and effort and generating tensions and negative emotions. Within this group the author cites as examples the student apathy and discipline, obstructive supervisors or non-supportive parents. The second group refers to the context and conditions in which teachers perform their activity. In this sense, if teachers perceive a lack of support in their environment, their involvement and efforts will decrease. Among these factors the author cites the role change of teachers, the support from the social context or the ambiguity in the educational objectives.

Several later studies have followed, from different perspectives, the model proposed by Blase (Betoret, 2006; Helms-Lorenz & Maulana, 2016).

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However, some decades later, these working conditions and stressors have changed. For this reason, it is necessary to study the wide range of working conditions which may become psychosocial risks at work in elementary teachers and negatively affect their well-being.

The concept *psychosocial hazards* is defined by the International Labor Organization in terms of the interaction between working conditions and job content and the needs of the workers which perform it (ILO, 1986). Cox and Griffiths (2005) characterized it as those aspects of work and organizational context that could potentially cause physical and/or psychological harm to their workers.

There is reasonable consensus in the literature about the nature of the psychosocial risks at work. One of the most referenced models has been the European Framework for Psychosocial Risk Management: PRIMA-EF (Leka & Cox, 2008) which identifies 10 psychosocial risks at work: job content, workload, work schedule, control, environment & equipment, organizational culture, interpersonal relationship, role in organization, career development and home-work interface.

Afterwards, the World Health Organization developed the WHO Healthy Workplace Framework (WHO, 2010) which considered four dimensions of workers' health. One of the sub-dimensions (Psychosocial Work Environment) included work organization as well as attitudes and daily practices in the organizations which affect the mental and physical well-being of employees. The WHO included within this sub-dimension: workload, harassment, bullying, or discrimination; work–family imbalance, or job insecurity, among others.

One of those psychosocial risks that has received most attention in recent years is job

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insecurity and its harmful effects (Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002). According to Staufenbiel & König (2010), job insecurity is both an obstacle and a challenge. Firstly, job insecurity is an obstacle because of the discrepancy between what employees expect from their employers and what employers actually offer. Secondly, it is also a challenge because it increases employee effort as a safeguard against redundancy. Nonetheless, in both cases, the effects of job insecurity are predominantly negative. In the teaching profession, job insecurity is a clear source of stress (Chudgar, Chandra, & Razzaque, 2014; Maphalala, 2014) because of constant changes, fear of unsolicited relocation, lack of promotional opportunities, insufficient legal protection, low salaries, and limited teaching support (Richter, Näswall, Lindfors, & Sverke, 2015).

Another emerging psychosocial risk is work overload or intensification. The increase of external pressures from policy-makers, supervisors, parents, and experts, generally accompanied by a reduction of autonomy and creativity in the classroom, often leads to disqualification and deprofessionalization (Van Droogenbroeck, Spruyt, & Vanroelen, 2014). Among other demands, schools are expected to have a high performance. This increases the strain on teachers because of the mediating impact of role overload, role ambiguity, and role conflict (Somech, 2015). Moreover, teachers are increasingly expected to perform a greater number of administrative tasks. In addition, pressures stemming from continuous external assessments and constant competitive evaluations detract from and even devalue the educational role of the elementary teacher (Bullough, Hall-Kenyon, MacKay, & Marshall, 2014).

The work of elementary teachers is emotionally intense because of the close relation that teachers have with their pupils and because of the strategies that they must implement to maintain a positive climate in the classroom (Akin, Aydin, Erdoğan, & Demirkasimoğlu,

2014; Geving, 2007).

A significant cause of concern in educational systems in developing countries is also the implementation of new technologies. Al-fudail & Mellar (2008) demonstrated the presence of techno-stress when elementary teachers were obliged to use information technologies in the classroom. According to Joo, Lim, & Kim (2015), lack of training, inadequate infrastructure, and the absence of technical support can cause these teachers to suffer from anxiety and emotional strain. Not surprisingly, this increases the levels of stress associated with the use of new technologies.

Still another psychosocial risk at the workplace is violence in its different manifestations. This has been widely observed in other contexts where workers have been the object of verbal and/or physical aggression, and as a result, have suffered severe post-traumatic stress symptoms (Gómez-Gutiérrez, Bernaldo-de-Quirós, Piccini, & Cerdeira, 2016). Wilson, Douglas, & Lyon (2011) affirm that violence against elementary teachers is also a frequent problem, which has a negative impact on their physical and psychological health. Kovess-Masféty, Rios-Seidel, & Sevilla-Dedieu (2007) also highlight that the main occupational risk factors for teachers are not only individualization processes and lack of support from colleagues, but also fear of physical and verbal aggression. In many cases, this violence is directly related to the social context of the school and community, which is often characterized by high levels of violence, stemming from conflictive social relations between peers, drug use, and risky sexual behaviors. Evidently, this type of conflictive environment not only has a detrimental effect on students, but also has direct repercussions on the well-being of teachers (Voisin & Berringer, 2015).

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So, these working conditions of teachers not only affect the quality of the work they do, but also they impact on their well-being and mental health. Thus, it has been proved their relation with the appearance of somatic symptoms, anxiety, insomnia, moderate to severe depressive symptoms (Nagai, Tsuchiya, Toulopoulou & Takei, 2007; Kidger et al., 2016). In addition, negative emotions at work may have adverse consequences for well-being, attitudes towards the organization and performance (Kiefer & Barclay, 2012).

All of these psychosocial risks have a wide range of negative effects and are associated with an increased risk of teachers requesting sick leave (Ervasti et al., 2012). In addition, research has confirmed that when elementary teachers become aware of the ambiguity of their role and the excessive workload combined with a lack of social support and low self-efficacy in the workplace, they have a greater probability of developing common mental disorders: symptoms of feeling nervous, tense or worried, followed by frequent headaches and bad sleep, and the others symptoms were thinking about ending life and feeling like a worthless person (Carlotto & Gonçalves, 2015).

One of the consequences of these risks is burnout which is a response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors to work and which consists of three components (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Maslach & Jackson, 1981): emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment, which may have important negative consequences for workers' health and their work performance (Arvidsson, Håkansson, Karlson, Björk, & Persson, 2016; Lindblom, Linton, Fedeli, & Bryngelsson, 2006)

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The causes of burnout must be searched for in workers' perceptions and experiences about the conditions in which they work (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010) although some authors have pointed to the mediation of personality factors, such as the self-concept, personal expectations (Mazur & Lynch, 1989) or other psychopathological factors (Kokkinos, 2007).

In the case of teachers, several studies have suggested that burnout has been associated with excessive work demands, lack of control, absence of social support, and the negative perception of the school environment (Wang et al., 2014; Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014; Lim & Eo, 2014) being the emotional exhaustion component one of those which has greater incidence (Yao et al., 2015; Wróbel, 2013).

Furthermore, these risks in the school environment are linked to problems that could affect work and family balance (Ilies, Huth, Ryan, & Dimotakis, 2015; Mauno, Kinnunen, & Pyykko, 2005) to the extent that they produce greater social weakness, lead to aggressive behaviors in the workplace, and undermine the employee's sense of identity, loyalty, and commitment to the organization (Sanz-Vergel, Rodríguez-Muñoz, & Nielsen, 2015).

However, all of these psychosocial risks are influenced by socioeconomic and cultural parameters that vary from one country to another. Most of the research on the topic has studied sample populations from developed countries. Thus, Montgomery & Rupp (2005) in a meta-analysis of 65 independently published studies about teachers between 1998 and 2003 found that 75% of the studies had been carried out on North American or European samples, none of them on Latin American samples and only one on African samples.

Precisely for this reason, it is interesting to focus on teachers in developing countries. In this sense, qualitative research data are particularly informative since they afford valuable

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insights into such processes, as highlighted by Diehl & Carlotto (2014).

In light of all these factors, the objective of this research study was to identify and characterize the working conditions and new stressors in teachers 35 years after the theory formulated by Blase (1982). This author already emphasized the need to conduct qualitative studies in order to confirm or refute elements of his theory and to discover new categories. The idea was to understand the teachers' perceptions of their profession, associated risks, and well-being implications. The results obtained could be used as a basis for proposals that foment a culture of prevention and encourage the development of healthy organizations.

Materials and methods

We performed a qualitative study of a sample population of elementary teachers working in the city of Guayaquil (Ecuador). The objective was to detect and characterize psychosocial risks in the teaching profession, and identify their causes and consequences. For this purpose, we created nine focus groups with the participation of 75 teachers (46 women and 29 men) from 75 public elementary schools (one participant per school). To be included in the study, participants had to be currently working as an elementary teacher and have at least three years of experience in the teaching profession.

For the selection of the sample, a standing invitation was sent to all participating schools requesting teachers to participate voluntarily in the study according to the inclusion requirement. In case of receiving more than one offer per school, and in order for all schools to have the same number of participants, one person was randomly selected.

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The focus group technique was chosen because it was considered the most effective way to study the effects of psychosocial risk factors at the workplace since it provides participants with maximum space and freedom to discuss their perceptions and experiences.

Accordingly, we chose an open approach for data collection though a concise script of semi-structured discussion questions was used as a starting point. This qualitative approach gave us a better understanding of the psychosocial risks evaluated and allowed us to capture the complex nature of these processes that are inseparable from the social context and personal experience of the actors.

The average duration of the focus group discussions was 52:35 minutes. All of the data collected in the discussions were recorded with the knowledge and permission of the participants, who gave their written informed consent. The fieldwork was carried out from May to October 2015.

The analysis of the data was centered on the semantic content of the discourse (van Dijk, 1985). Accordingly, the transcripts of the interviews were first segmented into chunks or smaller units of data, after which the narratives of the participants were coded, based on the topics addressed. These thematic units were then categorized. In the next stage, all of the categories were interrelated and structured with a view to configuring the different psychosocial risks underlying all of this information. Finally, the results were presented and organized so as to highlight the most important topics addressed in the evaluation. All of them were accompanied by paragraphs or literal extracts from the discussions that illustrate the interpretation of the data and the conclusions derived from the focus group discussions. The process of data codification and analysis was performed by at least two researchers in order to guarantee the validity of the results.

Results

Based on the results obtained, this study detected the main psychosocial risks underlined by the teachers. These risks were classified, first in terms of their causes and second, in terms of their consequences.

Causes:

Generally speaking, the participants said that in their teaching work, they were faced with high demands from the organization (the same as in other jobs) and from the social environment. These demands were not only associated with their role as a teacher, but also extended to the social and personal realms where they were also expected to be mentors and caregivers. This duality increased attrition levels.

... children are not objects. They are children, human beings, who become our responsibility when their parents leave them at school. We have to obtain good results with the children so that parents have confidence in the school where their sons and daughters are being educated (Janina, female elementary teacher).

In the case of teachers, their professional demands are of two types: (1) self-generated demands stemming from their perception of the teaching role and from social and community tasks that they assume must be performed; (2) new organizational demands that can only be satisfied with a substantial investment of time and effort that is rarely

acknowledged. The following sections provide a more detailed description of each type of demand.

Psychosocial demands

One of the main ideas that frequently surfaced in the discussion groups was the vocational nature of the teaching role and its significance, which led to the decision to enter the teaching profession. Teachers perceive their educational work as a social commitment that generates a high degree of personal and professional responsibility, which in most cases goes far beyond logical expectations. This perception of what society expects of teachers is not strictly limited to work performance. It also encompasses other roles that are more oriented towards childcare.

Teachers work because it is their vocation. Choosing to be a teacher is not the same as someone that takes a job only for the salary and then does not even work. The truth is that teachers teach out of vocation and because they have to be responsible (Líder, male elementary teacher).

Consequently, teachers believe that because of their role as educators, they must respond to and satisfy the educational needs of their students. Nevertheless, conscious of situations of poverty, social deprivation, and/or abandonment, they are also obliged to assume other social and affective functions. In certain cases, this means compensating for parental absence or institutional abandonment in the care of these children. In this sense, elementary teachers not only must teach curricular subjects as part of their professional work but also perform a wide range of extra educational tasks in order to satisfy other social and affective demands of the local community.

... a lot of times, parents do not even see their children in the morning, or they see them fleetingly at night. So, the children spend most of their time at school with us. We transform them and are obliged to assume the role that neither their fathers nor mothers can fulfill. We have to do this in the school. A lot of time, we even have to omit certain educational contents and spend time.... not only spend time, but push other things to one side in order to take that time and devote it to their integral development and thus transform them into well-rounded human beings. We have to rescue the values that have been lost. That is our job now ... (Glenda, female elementary teacher).

In addition, the teachers pointed out that their role had become increasingly complex not only because of these social demands but also because their work sometimes came into conflict with the students' families. This generated feelings of desperation, powerlessness, and fear of being reported to educational authorities or even fear of verbal or physical aggression.

... there are times when parents cause us to lose authority because they seem to feel that they have more power, more right to an opinion because they even threaten us (Nelly, female elementary teacher).

The acceptance of multiple organizational, social, and psychological demands leads to a state of over-involvement that initially satisfies the teachers' perception of their own work responsibilities. However, at the same time, it also produces fear and exhaustion.

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In fact, most of the participants said that fear was one of the main psychosocial risks in their work. In many cases, this affirmation was framed in a context of social harmony and resignation, whereas in others, the teacher had suffered traumatic experiences. In all cases, the teachers turned to group support from their colleagues at work.

...We even have former students who have left school and who are now delinquents. They threaten us. So we all have to leave school at the same time, neither earlier nor later, because we know that outside the school, they are waiting for us... (Jenny, female elementary teacher).

...we receive threats, such as 'you don't know who you're talking to'. This makes us feel helpless, and we are obliged to safeguard our integrity. So we have to leave school in a group in order to protect ourselves (Ángela, female elementary teacher).

This daily contact with violent events at the workplace as well as the prolonged exposure to violence generates levels of stress, anxiety, fear, and panic that in certain cases overwhelm teachers and lead them to finally abandon their job.

...the students make threats. In my school, two (female) teachers left their job for that reason...because they ran into the boys, and the boys threatened them. The teachers quit their job... they left everything. Even their job appointment finally meant nothing...And why? They were afraid(Eva, female elementary teacher).

All of the risks mentioned in these narratives have a negative impact on the mental health of teachers, and even go beyond the work environment to affect social and family relationships. For this reason, when faced with the chronification of these violent events and sensations of fear, many professors adopt a naturalization strategy in order to integrate these feelings in their everyday working life. This is a protection mechanism that isolates these emotions and hides them from their social world and families so that they will not suffer.

... I don't tell these things to my wife or children so as not to worry them. I also change, or really I have to change my state of mind when I am at home. Sometimes, there is no choice but to pretend... (Stalyn, male elementary teacher).

Evidently, the concealment of fear is also another source of stress for teachers. All of these extra-professional demands signify an additional workload, which requires great emotional and psychological effort. The role of teachers thus expands in scope and becomes more complex as teachers are obliged to take on extra responsibilities and emotional demands. In the end, this can overwhelm their response capacity and generate feelings of powerlessness, attrition, and dissatisfaction because of the lack of recognition. All of this can eventually affect not only their professional work but also their emotional health and social environment.

... Sometimes parents have problems, and they need to emotionally vent them on the teacher. They tell you about a certain situation, and then you go home with that load in your mind. So you not only absorb the parent's

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problem, but also the problems of the child, of the adolescent, and of your own job (Janina, female elementary teacher).

Organizational demands

Nevertheless, despite these heavy responsibilities, teachers feel dissatisfied because their affective and social performance does not compensate for the effort made.

Teachers believe that the institution does not sufficiently appreciate or value their work. This leads to the perception of greater organizational demands and a heavier workload because of an increase in administrative tasks. However, neither the educational organization nor the government appears to be aware of the social functions and duties performed by teachers, who receive no compensation, whether material or symbolic, for this extra work.

... if you think about it, no one has said anything about the economic side of the question, but I am going to mention it right now since the government has also failed in that respect. We are not being paid what we should be, according to the law (José, male elementary teacher).

Along with the social demands, the teachers also underlined other risk factors arising from the organizational system itself and the demands that the organization makes on them. The first risk factor mentioned was the number of students per class, which is the result of easier access to free education. However, this improved access has not been accompanied by higher funding that would enable schools to hire more teachers.

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Because of this, the teachers complain of work intensification caused by a longer workday as well as the proliferation of tasks.

... For some time now, mass education has opened schools to everyone so that all children can receive (free) public education, as they should, but still there are not enough classrooms. The number of students per class exceeds the limit, and this is a serious problem since then it is impossible to demand a high level of quality... (José, male elementary teacher).

Teachers feel greater pressure at work because they are continually required to adopt new learning methods in order to adapt to new education processes. This proliferation of tasks is perceived as an excessive bureaucratization of the job post in order to justify standardizationsystemsorthetheimplementationofnewpoliciestocombatschoolfailure.

... because now education has changed and there are so many papers to fill out for any kind of procedure...., this is what puts pressure on teachers (Katty, female elementary teacher).

...the long work shifts, ...that's it... when teachers do not understand the tasks or they are never explicitly asked to do them...or when the tasks are not explained, or when teachers do not know how to perform them, or when they are not aware of the risks that they are exposed to in their work or activities (Fany, female elementary teacher).

In addition, all of these new tasks are perceived as a disruptive factor since they do not fit

into the stereotyped profile that teachers have of their professional role. As previously mentioned, this role is more centered on child development and care than on administrative duties or complying with standard evaluation criteria.

All they do is demanding more and more from us. As I was saying, they just tell us what we have to do, and stuff like that. And, of course at any time, they can ask us for things, such as information, and frequently we leave school and return home only to continue working on the computer. So, we are living under constant pressure (Rosa, female elementary teacher).

This new role is perceived not only as something that is disruptive and which takes teachers away from their real work, but also as something that has bureaucratized their functions. In this sense, it has added new tasks to their workload, which require knowledge of new technologies and which lengthen their workday beyond what it used to be.

Our teaching day does not finish after our eight hours working in the school. Once when I was giving a talk, I used the example of a construction worker. A construction worker builds half a wall. His workday ends, and he goes home. The next day, he returns and continues building the other half of the wall. But teachers cannot do this. Our work is not over at the end of the workday (initially six hours and now eight hours). Our work does not finish when the workday ends. We get home; we rush to say hello to our family; we grab a quick bite to eat; and then we sit down at the computer and continue working (Stalyn, male elementary teacher).

Not only does the workday extend far beyond the school day but also the new tasks expected of teachers cannot be successfully performed without the implementation of technical knowledge and intellectual processes. This evidently increases the pressure to meet organizational demands, which entails an important cognitive effort as well as extra training and skills. Although the purpose of technology is to automatize and simplify teaching work, it is a source of anxiety for teachers, who regard it as an additional stressor.

The pressure at work, but also the technology, because... Well, on the one hand, it is good but on the other, it has affected us. Right? Because now, we receive e-mails, and everything has to be done immediately. Before, life was calmer, more peaceful, because everything was written with more patience (Enrique, male elementary teacher).

... We used to do everything by hand. Then computers appeared. Of course, we have to work here at school, but with the on-line community, now we all have laptops... Since everything is on the computer, it is all different. They say that now we must upload the students' grades to a platform, now we will not have to fill out so many documents by hand ... (Ángela, female elementary teacher).

All of this causes teachers to believe that they lack the necessary professional competences to successfully deal with new organizational changes. Not surprisingly, this is a source of frustration, powerlessness, and even despair. Again, teachers tend to perceive themselves in the role of educators and caregivers with an emphasis on all aspects related to children (where they feel more secure) rather than on more technological and administrative aspects of their job. This strong role image causes teachers to reject innovations in the educational

process.

... we were immersed in a different education system. For those of us who are familiar with it, and who have been elementary teachers for many years, things worked very differently then from how they work now... (María de Jesús, female elementary teacher).

... First of all, teachers should be prepared and taught how to deal with situations of that type. Now we have no idea what to do ... (Glenda, female elementary teacher).

In addition, supervision and leadership are perceived as a source of risk. Teachers highlight the absence of professional competences in their colleagues who have management posts. This lack of preparation leads many of these supervisors to adopt behaviors or leadership systems based on punishments and sanctions to guarantee the fulfillment of professional responsibilities. This inevitably creates a conflictive working environment and excessive supervision.

Soon I will have been a teacher for 22 years, and now they are always controlling us. It is as though they were persecuting us because they will not allow us to work freely. At any time, the education inspectors can arrive, and enter the classroom to observe how we are teaching the pupils (Líder, male elementary teacher).

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...The directors are the ones that create this problem. They divide us by saying.... 'you have your teaching post by appointment, and you are working on contract'. This creates a barrier. Someone should talk to the directors and ask them to be a little more flexible. I know that the law must be followed but sometimes directors create chaos and conflict (Luis, male elementary teacher).

Consequences:

The consequences of all these social and organizational demands are reflected in an exponential increase in chronic stress levels in teachers, accompanied by feelings of anxiety, and in many cases, other symptoms. All of this comes with an important cost for their physical and mental health.

... The thing is that many of us have serious health problems. What teacher... tell me, what teacher is really fit for work. None. We have heart problems, blood pressure problems. He has high blood pressure, those over there have something wrong with their heart. In fact, right now my heartbeat isn't regular (Glenda, female elementary teacher).

...I have been diagnosed with a serious depression, and I asked the doctors why. They told me that everyone has problems, but sometimes we try to be strong, very strong..., but the time comes when it is impossible to be strong any longer. And look, I have sent in my resignation three times, and so far it has not been accepted (Rosa, female elementary teacher).

In many cases, this is a source of emotional exhaustion for teachers, accompanied by

feelings of tiredness, fatigue, and emptiness. Teachers have the impression that they do not possess the emotional resources necessary to successfully address these new challenges at work.

... at some point, teachers suffer burnout. Our patience is exhausted, and we feel a deep sense of disappointment. So the next day, we do not want to go... to work... (Jesús, male elementary teacher)

... Teachers feel defeated because they say that the parents never appear. I call them up to come, but they can't because they are at work. They do not have time. So, I feel...I don't know what to do...I feel trapped. This happens a lot at work (Blanca, female elementary teacher).

Furthermore, this work intensification, because of the length of the workday and the emotional load, signifies a corresponding reduction of free time for personal enjoyment as well as less time for healthy social and family interaction.

... you always have to keep working, sometimes at home, sometimes at the school because it is necessary to plan. We have to do certain things that just can't be done at school because it is impossible. So, you end up doing them at home (José, male elementary teacher).

... we are away from home 12 hours a day...but we also have to spend time at home with our children, with our family, with our spouse. If this is not possible at a normal time, then we have to stay up until 1:00, 2:00, or 3:00.

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We have to stay up until the early hours of the morning... (Glenda, female elementary teacher).

As a result, the long day and heavy workload has a negative impact on the lifestyle of teachers in general, but especially on their family life.

... the children of school teachers don't receive enough attention because as others have mentioned, we spend 12 hours at work. When parents come home, they arrive when they arrive. The psychological drama then affects the children of school teachers ... (García, male elementary teacher)

... when it was my birthday, my children gave me a vase so that I could keep it at school. They had taken a photo of us all. I was there too, and they included a caption saying, "Mommy, we need you at home" (Ángela, male elementary teacher).

Discussion

In this study, we have characterized the main psychosocial risks and stressors associated with working conditions on a sample of elementary teachers in Ecuador, as well as their consequences on their psychological and social well-being.

Our study has enabled us to discover new stressors and working conditions as psychosocial risks. However, whereas Blase (1982) classified them into two groups, we have deemed it more appropriate, according to the collected data, to make a new two-group classification: a

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first set of risks determined by psychosocial demands that their job and role involve, and that in many cases are not recognized; a second group of risks determined by the demands generated by the organizational activity.

Among the psychosocial demands, we have found some of those already mentioned by Blase (1982) such as the role conflicts. It is clear that vocational behaviors have positive effects on organization performance and workers' commitment (Stanley & Meyer, 2016; Rawat & Nadavulakere, 2014). However, an imbalance between the effort made by the teachers to meet their students' (curricular and extracurricular) needs and the organizational and family rewards that they perceive have very negative effects not only on the physical and emotional health of teachers, but also on their teaching and professional performance (Kirkpatrick & Johnson, 2014; Firstater, Sigad, & Frankel, 2015).

However, the burnout process and its implications would not only depend on the excessive involvement, but basically on the level of ineffective performance that teachers perceive when assessing the magnitude and duration of the discrepancy between the effort and its rewards.

In addition, as the TP-M Theory suggested, when all of these demands are contextualized with high levels of violence, teaching becomes emotional intense work that can produce burnout in the long term. This logically has a very negative impact on the attitudes of educators and their subsequent behavior towards their students (Santos & Tin, 2016) which, at the same time, negatively affects the learning context and educational system in general. Furthermore, given these facts, teachers often choose not to report this state of violence and prefer to keep in silence and interiorize their feelings (Wilson et al., 2011).

But in the current labor, social and economic contexts, new stressors have appeared in relation to the TP-M Theory.

Regarding the organizational demands, the results found in our study show a general worsening of working conditions. In this sense, such precarious working conditions in developing countries would be in line with studies by other authors on the precariousness of the labor relations in South African teachers (Maphalala, 2014), or in different African countries (Chudgar et al., 2014).

Also, the new technological processes and organizational changes in the education system have been perceived as a new source of risk. It is obvious that new technologies, which were not present in the schools in the 80s, are now a new risk and stressor that must be taken into account and assumed. The demands of new and continuous learning, as well as the fear of developing technological skills are some of the aspects pointed out by the teachers.

Moreover, inadequate leadership must be considered a potential stressor for teachers. Along with this, the excessive control and supervision become psychosocial risk factors themselves (Zhang & Bednall, 2016).

Regarding the results or consequences of this imbalance between the effort made by the teachers and the results obtained, according to the TP-M Theory, we think that these ones must be increased. In this sense, whereas originally Blase (1982) only focused on the stress and burnout processes, we have been able to observe a greater number of consequences.

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In our study, teachers have related different physical and psychological health problems, such as cardiovascular diseases, sleep problems, coinciding with the findings of Rosário et al. (2016). Teachers also reported some psychological health conditions due to workload and frequent exposure to negative experiences both with students and parents, which coincide with the findings of Bauer et al. (2007), being more vulnerable those teachers with insufficient resources to face stressful situations (Leung, Wah Mak, Yu Chui, Chiang, & Lee, 2009).

As for the emotions, we found that teachers who experienced a high level of emotional exhaustion due to time pressure or deadlines to do their tasks were likely to leave the teaching profession, as the study of Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2011) describes.

But along with these, we must take into account other social consequences, which were not originally considered by Blase (1982), such as the influence on the work-family balance that we have found in our study and that will coincide with the findings of other more recent authors (Palmer, Rose, Sanders, & Randle, 2012).

Implications for practice:

The present study suggests a number of implications for organizations and teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to draw attention to the need to promote a prevention culture for the development of healthy organizations (Jaimez, & Bretones, 2011). Thus, we agree with other authors (Kortum, Leka, & Cox, 2010) who urge that psychosocial risks related to working conditions, must be included in educational and normative systems of all sectors and countries.

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The education system and the organizational reforms should promote confidence-building measures (Mealy, Stephan, Mhaka-Mutepfa, & Alvarado-Sanchez, 2015; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015), including participation and incorporating teachers' perceptions and opinions in the planning and implementation processes of new educational policies.

For this reason, it is important that governmental agencies foment suitable organizational actions. Universities and, particularly, their Schools of Education should play an important role in adjusting the professional profile of future teachers to the specific social contexts in which they will carry out their professional activity. Furthermore, they should clearly define the personal and professional responsibilities that teachers should take on in the course of their work.

Some possible strategies can be based on the organization of inspirational workshops or the acquisition of coping skills to fight the environmental stressors that teachers deal with. It is thus necessary to train teachers in order to capacitate them to cope with the continuous organizational and social demands to which they are continuously subjected. It is important for teachers to know these new risks associated with the new work environments and to develop coping and mutual support skills (Wolgast & Fischer, 2017).

Conclusion

To sum up, this study has enabled us to check the validity of the TP-M Theory. In this sense, despite the legitimacy of the explanation of the burnout and stress in teachers as a process of imbalance between the effort (consequence of the teachers' perceptions of their students' needs) and the received rewards, this study has allowed us to update the current stressors that will affect that imbalance.

We think that further studies and debate is needed about these new working conditions in the educational context, their consequences, and the establishment of certain limits. It is evident that we live in a globalized world where organizational practices are being generalized in all sectors. Nonetheless, the educational sector has great transcendence because of its role in the development of future citizens. The demands of teaching as well as the conditions in which teachers carry out their work are of vital importance if we consider the transcendence that education has for society.

Our results confirm some of the psychosocial risks described in the literature, although with some specific peculiarities such as situations of violence or social demands which teachers suffer in their workplace.

Finally, we are aware of the limitations of this study. The qualitative methodology has allowed us to discover the main risks associated with the working conditions of these teachers. But, although we have tried to gather information from a large group of teachers from different schools, it would be convenient to carry out more studies in other contexts and cultures which would allow us in the future to make a comparison with the results obtained in our study.

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