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**BURNOUT SYNDROME AND ENGAGEMENT: CORRELATIONS**  
**IN TELEWORKERS**

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*Abstract*

This document presents a research developed under a quantitative approach, with a correlational design, between the dimensions of two variables: commitment (vigor, dedication and absorption) and the syndrome of exhaustion (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal fulfillment), in professors who develop teaching. -The learning processes in the telework mode, in a state institution, in the city of Barranquilla. This research aims to document the mental health indicators in this population. The research exercise was carried out with 156 virtual tutors, under a Positive Organizational Psychology (POP) approach, in three phases and with applications of Maslach Exhaustion Inventory (MBI) or Maslach Inventory and the Utrecht Scale Work Commitment (UWES) or Utrecht's Engagement Scale in its long version. The statistical analysis found correlations, statistically significant and of direct and inverse or negative type, between vigor and emotional exhaustion ( $r = -0.492$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); vigor and depersonalization ( $r = -0.421$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), dedication and emotional exhaustion ( $r = -0.445$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), dedication and depersonalization ( $r = -0.454$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), absorption and exhaustion ( $r = -0.257$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and absorption and depersonalization ( $r = -0.276$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) However, in relation to this third hypothesis, it is observed that between personal satisfaction and vigor ( $r = 0.484$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and between Dedication ( $r = 0.541$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). and absorption ( $r = -0.246$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), the correlation is significant and direct, but of a positive type, unlike the previous ones.

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**Keywords:** Burnout syndrome, engagement, telework, teleworkers.



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## 1. Introduction

Modern society has generated forms and working relationships, with its own tendencies that involve people and Psychology. These macro social changes have been marked by paradigms and trends impregnated by high technological developments that have reached the organizational contexts, in a significant way (Suárez-Barros, 2015).

Globalization has demanded spaces, times, dynamics and virtual environments in which the relational aspects and the subjectivities of man have varied, generating new mechanisms of control and power and before which Psychology cannot be alien. It is an imminent fact, that the work, the organizations and the associated explanatory theories, cannot and should not continue studying those areas, only from the face-to-face modality and from the concept of the institutions.

Psychology is a hinge science, which must generate contacts, research and document the new phenomena that appear in the world, as a result of the coexistence, proliferation and reinstitutionalization of labor systems. It is necessary, that assumes the commitments, in front of working for the well-being and the health, the sustainability of the systems and the documentation of the psychosocial phenomena that reign in this XXI century.

One of these phenomena is Teleworking. It is a new labor modality of inevitable emergence and evolution, derived from the global changes of socio-cultural and economic policies, which aims to seek alternative solutions to macro problems, which currently affect humanity. Teleworking should be recognized as a viable, legal labor option, with marked force in the implementation in different countries, cities and organizations. Figures in the world show that it is a trend, to which many countries in the world (Spain, Germany, England, United States, among others), and in Latin America (Argentina, Honduras, Brazil, Peru, Chile and Colombia), they have been welcoming and projecting it, even, as a State policy.

The countries, the cities, the governments, the organizations, and the sciences (especially the social sciences), cannot be alien to the study of emerging phenomena. However, it is important to ask ourselves. Is the subject of psychology, prepared to face this type of work? Have organizations thought about it, from the elements of health? Teleworking is a psychosocial and economic dynamic that deserves to be revised, in front of the subject that carries it out and within the framework of health and well-being.

It is necessary to look at the teleworkers, from a new social organization that does not need to constitute an "inside" and an "outside" but a context in which many agents are connected and disconnected (Domènech & Tirado, 1997), that is, , an environment that defines new and abstract spaces of the institutions and that become a network of interconnections.

## 2. Burnout syndrome or "burn" syndrome: concept and evolution

Burnout, is a concept derived from the contraction of burn and out, whose literal meaning in English is "burned" and as pathology was first described in 1969 and at the beginning was called 'staff burnout', to refer to the strange behavior they presented some police officers of that time (Morian and Herruzo-Cabrera, 2004). In the decade of the 70, is when the concept appears in writings derived from the works of Freudenberger and only in the 80s, began to investigate the construct, considering itself as one of the most controversial within psychology (Sandin, 2003). However, it has taken a scientific relevance, with the

studies of Maslach (Maslach & Jackson, 1986; Maslach & Leiter, 1999) and from which we will frame the approach of this construct in research.

Maslach, and Jackson, (1986), defined burnout as a three-dimensional syndrome, constituted by emotional fatigue, depersonalization, and low levels of personal fulfillment, which occurs in those individuals who work in contact with clients and users. In this population group, it is known as the most studied group, that of nurses, social workers and doctors, and the most affected by the burnout syndrome, that of teachers (Moriana and Herruzo-Cabrera, 2004).

The explanatory model most accepted by the scientific community is that of Maslach. Maslach and Leiter (1999), present a model derived from the experiences and studies developed in the last 20 years, by these authors. Conceived in this model, burnout syndrome as an individual and chronic experience of stress related to the social context (Maslach, 1982) and create an instrument called MBI (Maslach Burnout inventory), with which evaluate each dimension of the syndrome.

Maslach (as cited in Moriana and Herruzo-Cabrera, 2004), defines that this syndrome has three dimensions;

- Tiredness or emotional exhaustion, as a "component of stress that implies an inability to obtain sufficient emotional resources from oneself to face the work"
- Depersonalization is a "component associated with the evaluation of others in which negative feelings of distancing and cynicism surface with respect to clients" and
- Low personal performance, is a "component related to the negative evaluation of oneself and feelings of dissatisfaction about the result of their work" (p.11)

According to these concepts, it can be deduced that the syndrome is of a psychological nature and has three elements: 1- the experience of stress lived individually; 2- the evaluation that others do and 3- the evaluation of oneself. These components determine three dimensions that are: Emotional tiredness, depersonalization (high level) and personal fulfillment (low level). In this order of ideas, it can be said that in a subject, emotional fatigue would appear first and then depersonalization, to impact on the personal fulfillment of each one. This syndrome has been studied in teachers and students and no evidence has been found of teachers and students who guide training in virtual learning environments (tutors or teleworkers).

The investigations have been many and the most used measure has been the MBI of Maslach and Jackson (1986). A review from the empirical, has shown that, in teachers, there is a significant association between emotional fatigue and the multiplicity of administrative functions associated with their role.

On the other hand, it has been found that there is a higher level of Burnout Syndrome in teachers, in situations in which there are more students to attend or higher level of group behavior problems (Petri, 2001); during periods of evaluations with high demands of the work against delivery of commitments and post-holiday periods (Moriana and Herruzo-Cabrera, 2004); Pressure or stress cycles of the teaching staff (beginning years).

However, it is found that there is no unanimity in these results and that there are authors who state that burnout does not depend on the functions performed by the teacher or tutor, but on the personality traits that this subject has (Kinunen, 1989).

### 3. Engagement: concept and evolution

Although in the historical aspects its origin is not clear, it can be said that it appeared in the 90s and focused on two terms: employee engagement and work engagement. In this investigation, the second one is used, because it is more precise and framed to the particular characteristics of the worker in front of his work. The first (employee engagement), alludes to employee interrelationships with your organization.

We begin our review with Kahn (1990), who described what he called: -engagement personnel-, saying that: "(...) *making use of the members of the organization of their own work roles; in engagement, people use and express themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally and mentally during the development of their roles*" (p.694). This author highlights the significance, security and availability, as three psychological conditions that an employee must have engaged. It is then appreciated that this concept that was being born, was related to internal aspects and excluded the external ones and with little argumental support of why and how it was dynamized.

Later, engagement is considered as the opposite of a continuum of work related to well-being (Maslach and Leiter, 1999), that is to say, the opposite of high levels of exhaustion, cynicism and reduction of professional efficiency, was indicative of labor commitment or psychological state of personal fulfillment or the positive antithesis of burnout (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2009). At the beginning of the investigations, the two constructs were studied as opposites and the same instrument was used to evaluate it. That is to say, if there are low scores in the scales of exhaustion and cynicism and high scores in the scale of professional efficacy of the MBI, it would be taken as significant indicators of the existence of engagement.

The fact that burnout and engagement were evaluated, initially, through the same questionnaire has at least two negative consequences. In the first place, it is not prudent to expect that both concepts correlate negatively so perfectly; This means that when an employee is not burned, it does not necessarily mean that he or she presents engagement at work. In the opposite case, the fact that an employee presents under engagement does not mean that he or they are burned. Second, the relationship between the two constructs can not be studied empirically when evaluated with the same questionnaire. In conclusion, both concepts can not be included simultaneously in a model to study their concurrent validity.

In this research, the concept of engagement is taken as "(...) a positive mental state, of realization, related to work characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2009, p. 109).

Strength, as the first component or dimension of engagement, refers to the high levels of energy that a subject is placed to do a job, even in the face of difficulties. The person faces their work commitments, without being discouraged and manages to overcome the negative aspects associated with their work (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2009). The authors state that vigor would correspond to the behavioral-energetic component of engagement, from where people show the level of mental energy to develop new situations in the company and with a high level of this dimension, they can infect or be propellers of their work team (Polo-Vargas, 2012; Schaufeli and Salanova, 2009).

Dedication, as a second dimension, is associated with a "high labor involvement, associated with the feeling of pride, enthusiasm, meaning, inspiration, joy and challenge" (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Roma and Backker, 2002, p.74; Schaufeli and Salanova, 2009, p.109) that wakes up during the execution of the work. The dedication would correspond, to the emotional component of the engagement, in which

there is an emotional charge of the subject, attached to his work, which makes him value it, generate spaces for his development and avoid feeling frustrated or empty in front of him. The high levels of this component, allow people to make sense of what they do and seek to be better based, motivating intrinsically (Polo-Vargas, 2012).

Absorption, as a third dimension, occurs: "(...) when the person is totally focused on his work, when time passes quickly and presents difficulties when disconnecting from what he is doing because there is a strong and high dose of enjoyment, concentration and satisfaction" (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2009, p. 109). It would be thought that this difficulty to "disconnect" could be associated with addiction to work, but this is not the case, because "employees with engagement also enjoy other things outside of their work and because, unlike workaholics, they do not work hard only because of a strong and irresistible internal compulsion, but because working for them is fun" (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003).

#### 4. Methods

This article is derived from a research project, and associated to one of the objectives, in which the variables represented in H3 are correlated: there is a relationship between the level of engagement dimensions (vigor, dedication and absorption) and the syndrome of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal fulfillment), in the tutors who develop learning processes in the modality of teleworking. The correlation of variables will be done through the Pearson correlation coefficient, as a measure for the strength or strength of the relationship.

The population of this study are Teleworkers of an educational institution, of an official nature, whose P is equal to 200 officials. Participated 156 teleworkers (n = 156), out of the 200 guests, who were given a collection of information mediated by technology and with the standardized instruments in Colombia, Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI); Maslach Inventory: Psychological Instrument, created by Maslach and Jackson (1981); reviewed by Maslach and Jackson (1986) and Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) or Engagement Scale: It has 9 items, which measures a component and three dimensions: Absorption, vigor and dedication (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

#### 5. Results

The alphas of Cronbach found obtained are: in the Maslach scale, it was 0.78 and the Engagement, was 0.66. The above allows confirming the level of reliability of the instruments applied.

**Table 01.** Reliability statistics

Reliability statistics UWES-Engagement scale		UWES reliability statistics-Maslach questionnaire	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of elements	Cronbach's Alpha	N of elements
,865	5	,785	22
>,70 reliability			

In H3, the relationship between vigor, dedication and absorption (dimensions of engagement) and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal fulfillment (dimensions of burnout syndrome) is assessed.

The statistical analysis found correlations, statistically significant, and of the following characteristics: correlations, direct and inverse or negative, between vigor and emotional exhaustion ( $r = -0.492$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); vigor and depersonalization ( $r = -0.421$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), dedication and emotional exhaustion ( $r = -0.445$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), dedication and depersonalization ( $r = -0.454$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), absorption and exhaustion ( $r = -0.257$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and absorption and depersonalization ( $r = -0.276$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

These last two, show a lower correlational force, which shows that absorption is not a dimension whose absence is directly shown by the Burnout syndrome. However, in relation to this third hypothesis, it is observed that between personal fulfillment and vigor ( $r = 0.484$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and between dedication ( $r = 0.541$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). and absorption ( $r = -0.246$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), the correlation is significant and direct, but of a positive type, unlike the previous ones.

## 6. Discussion

The correlations found point to empirical evidence about the acceptance of the hypothesis H3, which confirms that the variables and their components are related to each other, and although they are not causal of each other, they correlate. It confirms what the theory suggests about the fact that absorption is not synonymous with occupational stress. It is validated that this dimension is a component of engagement, but it is not at the level of work addiction (Suárez-Barros, 2015).

Regarding the relationships between engagement and burnout, in the relationships found in this study, the negative correlation significantly between vigor, absorption and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization is confirmed; and positive and significant, between vigor, dedication and personal fulfillment (burnout). This can be explained by the statistical studies carried out, which show two factors that are called: 1- "positive dimension of well-being", which includes the three scales of engagement and the scale of personal accomplishment of the burnout syndrome. 2- "heart of burnout", which includes the essential dimensions of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (cynicism). (Salanova, Schaufeli, Llorens, Peiró, & Grau, 2000).

The statistical results of burnout in its dimensions, show that there are no manifestations of this syndrome in the population evaluated, which would correspond to the negative correlations, detailed previously and in which the negative correlation found with satisfaction with life and engagement is confirmed, in terms of positive dimensions. The non-existence of a low level of personal fulfillment in this syndrome confirms the positive feelings and satisfaction that the population experiences and contradicts what was proposed by Cifre & Salanova (2012), regarding the level of high work addiction found in teleworkers (figure 01).

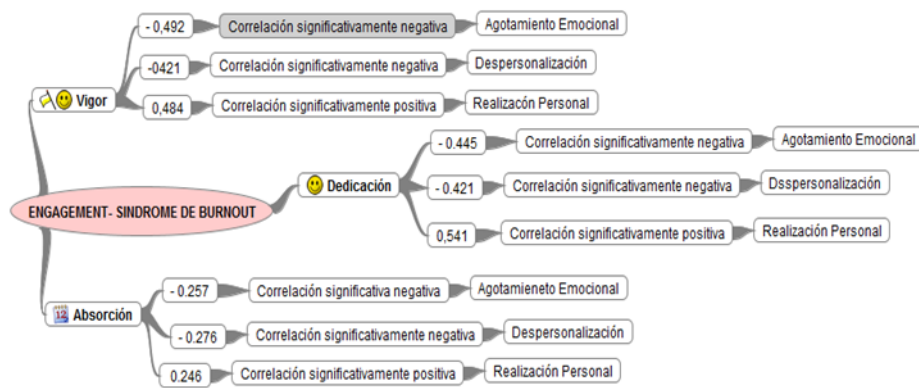


Figure 01. Statistical correlations. Own construction. (2015)

## 7. Conclusion

The study validated that the teleworking population experienced the engagement and burnout states in the same way as the face-to-face workers and the teachers in the face-to-face mode, in that the dimensions of vigor, dedication and personal fulfillment determined the level called "positive dimension of well-being", and that of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (cynicism), are reiterated as the "heart of burnout, (Salanova et al., 2000).

However, it is necessary as psychologists, to understand that modern organizations need engaged employees that reflect their continuous development, their learning and commitment.

But, although this benefits organizations, we must have the procedural clarity that these employee competencies should be promoted by organizations and by the State, in the midst of their responsibility in the psychosocial health of work environments. While it is true that there is a reciprocity between employee's engagement and healthy organizations, it should also be considered that the subject who works is influenced by their environment, and that "they are active agents that reinforce the healthy organization" (Salanova and Schaufeli, 2009, p.66) and that they have the responsibility to strengthen the personal fulfillment of each one of their collaborators.

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