



**WELL-BEING AND STRESS ASSESSMENT OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE  
 CITY OF ITAJAÍ / SC**

**AVALIAÇÃO DO BEM-ESTAR E ESTRESSE DE PROFESSORES DO ENSINO BÁSICO DO  
 MUNICÍPIO DE ITAJAÍ/SC**

**EVALUACIÓN DEL BIENESTAR Y EL ESTRÉS DE LOS DOCENTES DE EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA EN  
 EL MUNICIPIO DE ITAJAÍ/SC**

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**RESUMO**

A saúde mental é definida como sendo o estado de equilíbrio entre uma pessoa e o seu meio sociocultural. Este estado garante ao indivíduo a sua participação laboral, intelectual e social para alcançar um bem-estar e alguma qualidade de vida. O propósito desse estudo foi avaliar a saúde mental e os sintomas de estresse de professores do ensino básico e secundário público do município de Itajaí (SC). Participaram do estudo 40 professores de uma escola básica. A amostra foi selecionada considerando: motivação pessoal para aceitar o convite para preencher o instrumento. Os participantes preencheram: Escala de dados sociodemográficos; Termo de Consentimento Livre Esclarecido e *Mental Health Inventory-5* (MHI-5). Os resultados mostram correlações significativas entre as variáveis estado civil, se possui filhos e se está atualmente em sala de aula. As análises estatísticas mostram que as variáveis: casado(a), tem filho, atuam em sala de aula, correlacionam-se positivamente com professores que apresentaram ter um nível de sintomas de ansiedade e depressão mais alto. Quanto aos níveis de saúde mental medidos pela escala MHI-5, percebe-se que a amostra está em um nível grave de sintomas de depressão e ansiedade. Sendo assim, há a necessidade de novos estudos, com uma amostra maior, em outras cidades e com outros instrumentos, para fortalecer a ideia de que o professor precisa de ajuda. Também pesquisas onde haja uma intervenção com os professores, ensinando ferramentas para que eles desenvolvam estratégias de enfrentamento do estresse, uma possibilidade seria o estudo sobre a inteligência emocional.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Depressão. Professor. Inteligência emocional.

**ABSTRACT**

For a long time it did not matter how Psychology assessed individuals with psychopathologies or healthy individuals, since the overwhelming majority of the population did not suffer from mental pathology. Mental health is defined as the state of balance between a person and their socio-cultural environment. This state guarantees the individual their labor, intellectual and social participation, in order to achieve well-being and some quality of life. The aim of this study was to evaluate the mental health and stress symptoms of teachers from public elementary and high school in the city of Itajaí (SC). 40 teachers from a basic school participated in the study. The sample was selected considering: personal motivation to accept the invitation to complete the experiment. Participants completed: Scale of sociodemographic data; Informed Consent Form and *Mental Health Inventory-5* (MHI-5). The results show significant correlations between the variables of marital status, whether they have children and whether they are currently teaching. Statistical analysis shows that the variables: married, having a child, working in the classroom, positively correlate with teachers who showed a higher level of anxiety and depression symptoms. As for the mental health levels measured by the MHI-5 scale, it is clear that the sample is in a severe level of symptoms of depression and anxiety. Therefore, there is a need for further studies, with a larger sample, in other cities and with other instruments, to strengthen the idea that the teacher needs help. Furthermore, it could also be researched where there

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is intervention with teachers and educational tools for them to develop strategies to cope with stress. Another possibility would be the study of emotional intelligence applied to teachers.

**KEYWORDS:** Depression symptom. Teacher. Emotional intelligence.

### RESUMEN

La salud mental se define como el estado de equilibrio entre una persona y su entorno sociocultural. Este estado garantiza al individuo su participación laboral, intelectual y social para lograr un bienestar y cierta calidad de vida. El objetivo de este estudio fue evaluar los síntomas de salud mental y estrés de docentes públicos de primaria y secundaria de la ciudad de Itajaí (SC). Un total de 40 maestros de una escuela primaria participaron en el estudio. La muestra fue seleccionada considerando: motivación personal para aceptar la invitación a llenar el instrumento. Los participantes completaron: Escala de datos sociodemográficos; Formulario de consentimiento informado e inventario de salud mental-5 (MHI-5). Los resultados muestran correlaciones significativas entre las variables estado civil, si tiene hijos y si actualmente está en el aula. Los análisis estadísticos muestran que las variables: casado, tener un hijo, trabajar en el aula, se correlacionan positivamente con los maestros que tenían un mayor nivel de síntomas de ansiedad y depresión. En cuanto a los niveles de salud mental medidos por la escala MHI-5, se percibe que la muestra se encuentra en un nivel severo de síntomas de depresión y ansiedad. Por lo tanto, existe la necesidad de nuevos estudios, con una muestra más grande, en otras ciudades y con otros instrumentos, para fortalecer la idea de que el maestro necesita ayuda. También la investigación donde hay una intervención con los profesores, enseñando herramientas para que desarrollen estrategias para hacer frente al estrés, una posibilidad sería el estudio de la inteligencia emocional.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Depresión. Maestro. Inteligencia emocional.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays it can be said that work constitutes the person. We no longer care about knowing what people like when we meet them, but what they do, what they work for. Thus, the relationship, the weight that work has in everyday life should be considered and studied. Researchers have sought to understand work-related psychic illness. (SOARES; OLIVEIRA; BATISTA, 2017; ASSUNÇÃO; OLIVEIRA, 2016; CARLOTTO, 2014; BATISTA; CARLOTTO; MOREIRA, 2016).

The teacher's psychic illness is usually conditioned by the poor working conditions and the limitations to which he is exposed. It is noticed in the literature that one of the professional categories most predisposed to depression are teachers, also those who are increasingly seeking treatments through psychotropic drugs (SOUZA; NETO FILHO, 2016).

Therefore, this article aims to evaluate the well-being and stress level of teachers of a public school in the city of Itajaí, using the MHI-5 (Mental Health Index) tool. It can be perceived today that the teaching class needs a look, from those who deal with education, and public policies, aimed at promoting the health of teachers, and of their students.

### 2 MENTAL HEALTH

For a long time it had no importance the way Psychology has evaluated individuals with psychopathologies, and healthy individuals, since the overwhelming majority of the population did not suffer from mental pathology (VEIT; WARE, 1983).



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The second revolution in the conception of health emerged as a consequence, among others, from an emphasis: on the main causes of mortality and morbidity related to human behavior, considered as: Expectations, Beliefs, Motivations, Attitudes, Attributions, Personal Reference Variables (Self-efficacy, Self-concept, Self-esteem etc.) etc.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as: “(mental health is) a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”(WHO, 2005).

From this definition three elements are pointed out: well-being, individual's efficient functioning, and efficient adaptation in the community (WHO, 2005). Thus, mental health today is also related to personal abilities that helps the individual to live better, having a lifestyle and behavior, social performance, which improves their life's quality (VAINGANKAR et al., 2011). The WHO also points out that mental health is part of the general health and that's interdependent of it with physical and social health.

In this context we can observe the teaching practice, which today is delicate and complex. Today is a historical moment of social and environmental crisis, where teachers practice their profession in increasingly unbalanced societies. They still live in the midst of successive educational reforms that always seek a focus on the students and parents needs'.

In particular, teachers' life quality and happiness may deserve scientific attention, as their mental health is capable of affecting students' well-being and learning (SKAALVIK E; SKAALVIK S, 2011). Several studies over the past decades have shown high teacher attrition and malaise among Western and non-Western countries, despite the relevant differences between education systems and the relative scarcity of studies (HONG, 2010). Teacher happiness, in this sense, is a matter of study.

In the existent literature about teacher's happiness, a highlight has been given on the relationship between work-related burnout and stress syndrome (BORRELLI et al., 2014; BENEVENE; FIORILLI, 2015) or about the effects of stress' and physical's tiredness. emotional health in teachers' health. Contrariwise, to the authors' knowledge, no previous study has focused on the mediating role played by job satisfaction and self-esteem in the relationship between teacher happiness and health.

The relationship of individual's satisfaction with work is something very discussed in the organizational environment (ZANELLI, 2010; LIMA; RESENDE, 2016; SOUZA, 2016), but when we talk about teachers, literature seems to lack empirical studies that evaluate the schools' daily life, the teachers' routine, seeking alternatives for the solution and / or prevention for this situation.

Increasing knowledge about the individual and environmental / contextual factors that interfere with teachers' lives can provide pointers on how to promote their health in the most efficient and effective ways, providing relevant information on which domains have influence to better promote life quality among teachers.



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### 3 THE TEACHER AND MENTAL HEALTH

Work is a social activity for personal development and identity formation, and may, or may not, promote health and life quality or not, it establishes complex relationships within a socio-cultural and economic context, in addition to individual's physical and emotional characteristics (TABELÃO; TOMASI; NEVES, 2011).

In the work world, illness has always been present and related to situations, which leads to worker's physical and mental limit (FORATTINI; LUCENA, 2015). Regarding teaching work, which has its' greatest focus on the relationship between people, change over time and society have increased the role of the teacher as one of the is fundamental pillars in shaping the future of the student, as they increasingly more than the families, are responsible for personal and intellectual development today. Another important point is that to be able to survive and to be able to pay their bills, many teachers work in an exclusive dedication system, with long and exhausting working hours (SOUZA; NETO FILHO, 2010).

In the literature there are isolated studies highlighting the problem of teachers' emotional illness, for example, Silva (2015) verified the incidence of psychiatric diagnoses in teachers of a federal university. The author found that, during the surveyed period, 30% of the reports of teachers who were absent were issued with a diagnosis of anxiety and mood disorder.

Other studies were conducted to investigate the incidence of organic and / or mental illness in the teaching staff of a particular city. Carraro (2015) found that working conditions influenced the production of mental disorders in teachers of the Bauru Primary School (SP). The results pointed to the need to create strategies for health promotion in reducing the overload of activities and greater autonomy of teachers regarding the strategies elaboration for the execution of the educational act.

In another study in which, a higher proportion of mental illness was found, the researchers analyzed the prevalence of psychiatric symptoms in teachers of the Palmas public school (TO). These research subjects presented incidence of psychiatric symptoms, requiring treatment. (BALDAÇARA; SILVA; CASTRO; SANTOS, 2015)

Another very commonly disease encountered is the Burnout Syndrome. Costa, Gil-Monte, Possobon and Ambrosano (2013) investigated the prevalence of this syndrome in 169 teachers from Piracicaba (SP). Data were collected through the "Burnout Syndrome Evaluation Questionnaire", which revealed that 15.0% of the subjects had high levels of indicators related to the aforementioned syndrome.

Physical illness related to mental illness has also been focused in the research. Musculoskeletal pain, voice loss, poor sleep are some factors evaluated and related in national studies. (CEBALLOS; SANTOS, 2015; GIANNINI; LATORRE; FERREIRA, 2013; SOUZA et al., 2011; VALLE, 2011).

In addition to these studies, others sought to analyze aspects of professional teaching practice that might generate diseases. The absence of benefits at work, the extensive workload and the



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inadequate conditions (eg overcrowded classrooms, lack of adequate material and furniture...) provided by the profession appear in studies as related to the teacher's illness. (PEREIRA et al., 2014; SILVEIRA; ENUMO; BATISTA, 2014).

The capitalist way of life provided a stressful work environment for the teacher, Pereira (2015), through interviews, analyzed the occurrence of mental suffering in seven teachers of a state's public school. The data corroborate that the teacher ends up having to face alone the challenges of professional daily life.

There are already works in the literature where a planned intervention was performed with the objective of assisting teachers in improving and / or acquiring socio-emotional skills to cope with stress in the workplace. Coelho (2012) conducted a quasi-experimental quantitative study with six teachers from the Ourém Elementary and Secondary School (Portugal), with the purpose of verifying the mental health of these professionals, as well as whether there was an increase in the emotional competence of these subjects, after the intervention done by the researcher. The results obtained through the Mental Health Inventory-5 (MHI-5) and the Veiga Branco Emotional Intelligence Capabilities Scale (EVBCIE), showed that after the intervention, statistically significant improvements occurred in the levels related to self-awareness and management. of emotions (personal and group).

The Mental Health Inventory-5 (MHI-5) is a brief, valid and reliable international instrument for assessing mental health in adults. The aim of the present study is to examine the stress' and mental health's levels of elementary school teachers of a public school in the city of Itajaí with this tool.

### 4 METHOD

Thus, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the mental health and stress level of public primary and secondary school teachers in the city of Itajaí (SC).

The project was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Federal Institute of Santa Catarina. The teachers were informed about the general objectives of the study and signed the free and informed consent form.

#### 4.1 Participants

Forty teachers from a basic school in the municipality of Itajaí, located on the coast of Santa Catarina (Brazil) participated in the study. The sample was selected considering: personal motivation to accept the invitation to fill the instrument.

Of these 40 teachers, 32 are in the classroom and 9 are in other roles within the school (coordination, guidance and direction); Those in the classroom focus mostly on elementary school I and II (29); 27 are female and 14 are male; 21 of the participants are between 30 and 39 years old, 10 between 40 and 49 years old and 10 over 50 years old. Regarding marital status, 3 are single, 24 married, 5 separated and 9 live in stable union. As for the number of children, 33 have children, 15 have 1 child, 12 have 2 children, 5 have 3 and 1 has 4 children. These teachers were asked how



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many people they live with, 16 live with 1 or 2 people, 22 live with 3 or 4 more and 3 live with 5 or 6 people.

As for schooling, it is clear that most of the sample is above specialization, this is good, because it shows teachers are concerned about their education and seeking improvement. In relation to this variable 2 have High School, 6 Graduation, 27 Specialization, 3 Master and 2 Doctorate. As for the time they work in education, 9 less than 4 years, 15 between 5 and 14 years, 12 between 15 and 30 years and 4 more than 30 years.

### 4.2 Instruments

Participants completed Sociodemographic data scale; Informed Consent and Mental Health Inventory-5 (MHI-5)

The mental health level of the sample was assessed by the Mental Health Inventory-5 (MHI-5) scale (RIBEIRO, 2001), designed to characterize it. Ribeiro (2001, p. 86) states that the scale is a "useful screening test for mental health assessment".

It is a scale consisting of 5 items in which 3 items have inverted quotation (questions # 1, 3 and 4 that correspond to items 17, 19 and 27 of the MHI scale with 38 items). The results consist of the sum of the gross values of each item. The items are scored from 1 to 5, translating the result from 5 to 25. The result obtained must be transformed according to the formula  $((MHI5) - 5) \times (100/25)$ , obtaining values between 0 out of 100, being the cohort point 52.

### 4.3 Results

The present study aimed to analyze the levels of anxiety and depression among teachers of a primary school of a public school in a small municipality.

Regarding the mental health levels measured by the MHI-5 scale, 19.5% of the sample is at a severe level of depression and anxiety, 61% is at a moderate level and 19.52% is at a healthy level, above the average cutting level. According to Silveira et al., (2014), such levels are harmful to the teacher's performance quality, as well affecting people in other social spheres. This does not mean, according to this classification, that the other subjects - classified as "minimum" - do not exhibit anxious behaviors. This statement reflects that anxiety today is a psychic mechanism used by all people, especially in situations that they find challenging and / or dangerous. In an active environment, such as the school, where the demands and personal interactions are frequent, the professional is expected to be anxious and, consequently, to have present in their daily activities situations of demotivation, sadness, anger and / or impatience. However, we do not refer to the instabilities related to this type of anxiety, which are experienced daily. We are pointing to anxiety disorders, that is, the symptomatic conditions that lead the subject to manifest, in an excessive way, certain behaviors, regardless of whether he is experiencing "real" stress situations. As for depression, the percentage for mild and moderate, as can be seen in Table 1, was even lower (30.5%). Specifically, regarding those considered sick (mild, moderate and severe), as well as in other studies



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that used the same instruments (SANTOS; ALMEIDA; MARTINS; MORENO, 2003; SILVEIRA; ENUMO; BATISTA, 2014), we observed the prevalence of the "level". Ferreiro-Costa and Pedro-Silva (2019) draws attention to the inconclusive character of this specific diagnosis of depression or anxiety disorder in non-psychiatric populations. As we pointed out in the literature review, a significant part of the teachers' mental health studies aimed to investigate the psychological distress of this working class, without dwelling on the analysis of a specific psychopathology.

The intention was to identify the physical and mental exhaustion harmful to health, even if it does not fit into a category that medicine would classify as the common mental disorders. Thus, when considering anxiety and depression, around 80.5% of the teachers participating in the study revealed symptoms indicating mental illness.

It is noteworthy that the percentages of psychically ill teachers are probably higher than the results obtained. One hypothesis for this assumption is that the survey was conducted only on anxiety and depression levels. Thus, other psychic conditions, such as psychosis, personality disorders were not contemplated in the study. Another reason, specifically in relation to depression, refers to the content of some alternatives of the instrument that could be assumed as "weakness" by the respondent. This is because the teacher is a professional who was built on a concept of superiority, and since he is perceived sometimes as the knowledge holder, and to prove him/herself fragile might not be well accepted by school and family.

Another factor that may have influence was the fear of some teachers of being punished by their superiors, who would have access to information about their mental illness. This is in line with the speech of some participants who in the face-to-face meeting with the researcher expressed this concern, even though they were informed that the data would remain confidential.

From these results, we present the correlations between the MHI-5 score and the sociodemographic data of the participants, as these can also be stressful factors in daily life.

Following are some tables related to statistical data correlating gender, age, marital status, whether the teacher has children, number of people living in the same house, education, if currently in class, level of teaching acting in education.



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**Table 1: Significant correlations between participants' sociodemographic data**

<b>Sex and Have Children</b>	0,83*
<b>Gender and Number of people living in the same dwelling</b>	- 0,76*
<b>Sex and Time acting in education</b>	0,91*
<b>Age and marital status</b>	0,83*
<b>Age and Number of people living in the same dwelling</b>	- 0,88*
<b>Age and Schooling</b>	- 0,86*
<b>Currently in Classroom with Schooling Gender</b>	- 0.84*

\*p<0,05

Table 1 shows that there is a significant positive correlation in the sex factors with whether the teacher has children, and sex with time working in education, women with fewer children tend to have more time in education. Also, in marital age, the older the teachers, the higher the probability of been married.

There is a negative correlation between sex and age with people living in the same house, showing that older women tend to live with fewer people in their house. Also, the age of the teacher with schooling and the number of people living in the same house, the older the teacher, the less schooling he/she has, and they live with fewer people at home. Schooling with the time in the classroom shows that the higher the level of education the less the teacher is in the classroom.





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**Table 2: Significant correlations between the participants' sociodemographic data and the MHI-5 score.**

	MHI-5
Sex	- 0,97**
Age	- 0,59
Marital Status	0,93**
Have Children	0,98 **
Number of people living in the same dwelling	0,53
Schooling	0,33
Currently in Classroom	0,92 *
Teaching level	0,24
Actuation time	0,59

\*p < 0,05  
\*\* p< 0,01

The data show significant correlations between the variables marital status, if you have children and if you are currently in the classroom. Calling attention to the positive correlation, these data show that teachers who are married, have children and are working in the classroom, tend to have a higher level of anxiety and depression.

### 5 DISCUSSION

Analyzing the changes in society, it can be seen that today it brings to the teacher a physical overload of work to the mind questions, with an increase on demand and responsibility, working time and permanent need for adaptation and retraining. Other points that also helps to increase this stressful environment are 3-shift working, lack of labor rights wage devaluation, pressure for results, sometimes unhealthy or lacking adequate working conditions, lack of limits and violence by students, high number of students in class. Adding to the situation the teachers still have all family commitments (marital and parental) to further stress their daily lives.

The family is an important function in people's emotional lives, as it is the basis for the constitution of a relational model. Family support is a demonstration of the attention, affection and dialogue that exists between members. Soares, Mafra and Faria (2018) analyzed family support and teaching career and their interference with occupational stress. The study was conducted in the city of Viçosa-MG. The results revealed that family support is present in the daily life of teachers, but overwork, productivity, vanity and even perfectionism create a burden on university teachers. Thus, overload impairs family relationships, reduces leisure time, causes feelings of guilt, anguish, sadness, and abandonment to the family, thus affecting family life.



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The relationship of stress at work and its consequences in family relationships is something important to consider regarding teachers' daily lives (LIPP; MALAGRIS, 2001). Therefore, is needed greater attention, not only to the effects of occupational stress on the family, but also for the implications that a stressful family life can have on creativity and work. When we see that the number of children and marital status appear positively correlated with the level of stress, we realize how much we need to strike a balance in all areas of our lives.

Thus, the work / family relationship is a two-way relationship where work affects the family, and the family affects work. We are a single being who plays numerous roles but seeking to be in tune with them is paramount to improving the quality of life.

Yang et al., (2009) studied 3,570 teachers in China and found that they had higher stress rates and worse quality of life than people did in the general population.

Goulart Júnior and Lipp (2008) conducted a study with 175 elementary school teachers in a city in the interior of São Paulo, with the objective of verifying if the teachers presented stress, using the Lipp Adult Stress Inventory (ISSL). The survey revealed that 56.6% of teachers were experiencing stress and also the predominance of psychological symptoms in the surveyed sample (59.6%).

Sorato and Marcomin (2007) aimed to verify the stress level and its causes in 16 university professors of Nursing, Philosophy, Letters and Computer Science courses. Regarding the causes of stress in the profession, teachers highlighted issues related to overwork (25%); interpersonal relationships (25%); bureaucracy (12.5%); responsibility in student education (12.5%) and student disinterest (12.5%).

With this we can affirm that there is a need for public policies that support these professionals, who have an essential role in our society.

### 6 CONSIDERATIONS

By conducting the study, one can analyze the level of stress that teachers today live. Although the sample is small, it is believed that this reality is repeated in each school, in each state of our country.

Mental illness, especially anxiety and depression, has been a major contributor to teachers' sick leave. And at the same time, not only is the teacher getting sick, but also the school, community, and his students are suffering the consequences of this demand.

Considering this context, the level of depression and stress of elementary school teachers was analyzed. The MHI-5 test showed a high rate of mental illness in this sample, which ends up impairing the teaching-learning process.

The data's analysis allowed us to conclude that it is urgent to create public policies that take into account the psychological health of educators and promote actions that can prevent the occurrence of these inadequacies, as well as assist them by offering psychological care to these professionals.



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It is unacceptable for society to continue to see the teacher as having no psychic problems. It must also be rethought the process of hiring these professionals needs to contemplate the psychic and "vocational" conditions for the exercise of a profession that demands a high degree of "tolerance" and resilience.

Thus, there is a need for further studies, with a larger sample, in other cities and with other instruments, to strengthen the idea that the teacher needs help. Another possibility would be to conduct researches with more intervention on teacher's daily activities, teaching tools to them to develop strategies to cope with stress. One possibility would be the study on emotional intelligence.

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