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The effect of interpersonal relationships on burnout syndrome in Secondary Education teachers

Jesús Miguel Rodríguez-Mantilla and Mª José Fernández-Díaz
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Abstract

Background: Recent studies show that teachers, especially in Secondary Education present varying levels of burnout syndrome. This problem could be caused by internal factors unique to the subject (psychological characteristics) or external factors (overwork, social climate, etc.). **Method:** The objective of this study is to analyze the influence of interpersonal relationships on the development of burnout in a sample of 794 secondary education teachers from the Community of Madrid, applying structural equation modeling methodology. **Results:** it was observed that the teacher-student relationship has a significant effect on each of the three dimensions of the syndrome (exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy), and the teacher-superiors and teacher-coworker relationships show a moderate effect on these dimensions. **Conclusions:** The results show the importance of taking care of interpersonal relationships in schools to ensure the well-being of teachers and, ultimately, the quality of the learning process.

Keywords: Burnout, teachers, Compulsory Secondary Education, interpersonal relationships, structural equation modeling.

Resumen

El efecto de las relaciones interpersonales en el síndrome de burnout del profesorado de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria. **Antecedentes:** estudios recientes muestran que el profesorado, especialmente el de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, presenta niveles variables del síndrome de burnout. Esta problemática puede estar originada en factores internos al sujeto (características psicológicas) o externos (exceso de trabajo, clima social, etc.). **Método:** este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar la influencia de las relaciones interpersonales en el desarrollo del burnout en una muestra de 794 profesores de ESO de la Comunidad de Madrid, mediante la aplicación de la metodología de Modelos de Ecuaciones Estructurales. **Resultados:** se observó que la Relación Profesor-Alumnos es la que tiene un efecto significativo en cada una de las tres dimensiones del síndrome (Agotamiento, Despersonalización y Realización), si bien las relaciones Profesor-Superiores y Profesor-Compañeros muestran un efecto moderado sobre ellas. **Conclusiones:** los resultados obtenidos muestran la importancia de cuidar las relaciones interpersonales en el centro para asegurar el bienestar del profesorado y, en última instancia, la calidad del proceso de aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: burnout, profesores, Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, relaciones interpersonales, modelo de ecuaciones estructurales.

The changes that our society is currently undergoing affect the field of education. The expansion of the technological world and its inclusion in classrooms, new models in family structures, and legislative changes in the field of education influence aspects such as student motivation, the teacher's loss of authority, the increase of school failure, etc. (Rodríguez-Mantilla & Fernández-Díaz, 2012a).

Abenavoli, Jennings, Greenberg, Harris, & Katz (2013) state that teachers in the twenty-first century are increasingly exposed to emotionally provocative situations that threaten their performance, their physical and psychological well-being, and the teaching-learning process in general (Kokkinos, 2007). It is, furthermore, in secondary education where teachers say they experience more harassment, a lack of motivation, and the symptoms that make up burnout syndrome (Arís, 2009; Cisneros Report XI, 2009; Moya-Albiol, Serrano, & Salvador, 2010).

Maslach (2009), Golembiewski (1993) and Gil-Monte (2005) define *burnout* syndrome using three dimensions: *emotional exhaustion*, *cynicism*, and *inefficacy*. *Emotional exhaustion* refers to feelings of physical strain and psychological tiredness as a result of constant personal interactions. *Cynicism* refers to the development of negative and distant feelings and attitudes toward other people (coworkers, students, etc.). *Inefficacy* entails the loss of confidence in personal performance and the presence of a negative self-image.

Burnout does not appear suddenly, but rather is the final phase of a continuous process. According to Maslach (2009), Xiao-Ming & Dong-Mei (2005), and Weng, Sturmlinger, Wirsching, & Schaarschmidt (2005), the syndrome begins with *emotional exhaustion* that leads to *cynical* behaviors and, consequently, feelings of low personal and professional *efficacy*. This is the most widely accepted theory explaining the development of *burnout* in the scientific community, but authors such as Golembiewski (1993) establish that *cynicism* precedes *inefficacy*, and inefficacy

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Corresponding author: Jesús Miguel Rodríguez-Mantilla
Facultad de Educación
Universidad Complutense de Madrid
28040 Madrid (Spain)
e-mail: jesusmro@ucm.es

leads to *exhaustion*; others, such as Gil-Monte (2005) suggest that *exhaustion* and *inefficacy* have a direct effect on *cynicism*.

Theories such as organizational theory, interactionist theory (social exchange), the Cisneros Report XI (2009), and the study by Grau, Vallejo & Tomás (2004), stress the role that work environment variables play (competitive environment, rivalries, conflict, insecurity, problems between teachers, etc.) in the syndrome. Some authors say that to understand the development of *burnout*, we must pay attention to the way in which individuals *perceive* and *interpret* the behavior of others at work. That is, they suggest that the origin of *burnout* lies in the subjects' perception of a lack of fairness in establishing interpersonal relationships (Bono, Alarcón, Rosa, & Moya-Albiol, 2005; Yong & Yue, 2008). There are several investigations that analyze the influence of the perception of work environment and interpersonal relationships on *burnout* in teachers. Some show that students' bad behavior or conflicts with coworkers are a cause of stress and *burnout* in teachers (Kokkinos, 2007; Maslach, 2009). However, others like Burisch (2010) conclude that contextual variables only influence the *emotional exhaustion* dimension.

In terms of *teacher-student relationships*, Unterbrink (2007) evaluated the balance between effort put in and rewards for teachers in relation to their students. The study found that the *lack of reciprocity* (between what one gives and receives) was positively related to the symptoms of *burnout*, especially *emotional exhaustion* and a lack of organizational commitment.

In *relationships between teachers and their superiors*, it is worth mentioning some of the most relevant variables, such as: overwork, role conflict, and the lack of participation in decision-making (Khan, Yusoff, & Khan, 2014). Santavirt, Solovieva, & Theorell (2007) and Grayson (2008) performed a regression analysis to estimate the separate and joint effects of the *work demands* made by superiors and the *level of autonomy in decision making* on *emotional exhaustion*. The results showed that teachers who defined their job as a job with high demands and low autonomy in decision making presented higher levels of the three dimensions of *burnout*.

Gil-Monte (2005) argues that within organizations there are processes of contagion among the worker's emotions, in such a way that a bad environment as experienced by one person can be *passed on* to others by personal relationships. Thus, *teachers' relationships with their coworkers* are decisive in the work environment. Maslach (2009) and Esparza, Guerra, & Martínez (2000) argue that the most destructive thing for a community are chronic, unresolved conflicts with others. Therefore, the more negative *interpersonal relationships* are, the higher the probability that there will be burnout.

Opposing these studies, which give greater importance to *contextual* variables in developing the syndrome, other theories such as the *social cognitive theory of the self-efficacy* base their theses on the prominent role of the subject's psychological variables. Roeser, Skinner, Beers, & Jennings (2012) and Jennings, Frank, Snowberg, Coccia, & Greenberg (2013) show the role that the teacher's personal abilities and characteristics play in maintaining an appropriate environment and behaviors with students. They state that when teachers lack the resources to effectively manage the social and emotional challenges within the classroom context, the classroom environment deteriorates, increasing conflict among the students, which is a factor that possibly leads to teacher *burnout*.

Other theories, such as the *structural* theory, focus on the joint importance of both types of variables (contextual and psychological) in the appearance of *burnout*. Along these lines, Cano-García et al. (2005) and Kokinos (2007) found in their studies that teachers who presented higher levels of *burnout* also had higher levels of *neuroticism* and *introversion*. However, with regard to contextual variables, they only found significant relationships between: high levels of *burnout* and teachers who *perceive their profession with little social prestige*; high levels of *burnout* and teachers with *bad relationships with their students*, and a medium level of *burnout* with rural public *schools*.

Due to the existence of burnout syndrome in teachers, especially in Secondary Education, it is necessary to identify the weight that certain variables have on the development of the syndrome. In this sense, this research provides a new study that analyzes the influence of *teacher's interpersonal relationships with students, coworkers,* and *superiors* have in *emotional exhaustion, cynicism* and *inefficacy* of teachers. Thus, the identification of these effects can help the design of prevention and intervention plans in the development of burnout in teachers, contributing to improving the quality of teacher performance and teaching-learning process.

In our case, this study's objective is to analyze the influence of the *teacher's interpersonal relationships with students, coworkers, and superiors* (as contextual variables) on the three dimensions of *burnout* (*emotional exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy*) using structural equation modeling. We will analyze the effects of *interpersonal relationship* factors on the dimensions of *burnout* and the direct effects that the dimensions of the syndrome have on each other (*emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy*).

According to the literature reviewed, the following hypotheses are proposed (which are shown graphically in Figure 1):

1. *Emotional exhaustion* leads to *cynicism*, which in turn results in decreased *efficacy* (Hypothesis 1) (based on the theoretical foundations proposed by Maslach, 2009).
2. The *emotional exhaustion* receives direct effects from the variables: *teacher's interpersonal relationships with students, coworkers, and superiors* (Hypothesis 2).
3. The *cynicism* receives direct effects from the variables: *teacher's interpersonal relationships with students, coworkers, and superiors* (Hypothesis 3).
4. The *inefficacy* receives direct effects from the variables: *teacher's interpersonal relationships with students, coworkers, and superiors* (Hypothesis 4).
5. The *teacher's sex* does not cause significant differences on the *effects* of the model (Hypothesis 5).
6. The type *of school* does not cause significant differences on the *effects* of the model (Hypothesis 6).

Method

The research methodology employed in this study is quantitative, ex post facto, with a non-experimental design.

Participants

The population of this study corresponds to Compulsory Secondary Education teachers in the Autonomous Community of Madrid (ACM), composed of a total of 12,770 teachers (Board of Education of Madrid, 2013). A total of 1,291 secondary education

teachers from 38 schools in different areas of the ACM (north, south, east, west and center) were contacted, of whom, 794 participated in the study. The sampling procedure was random and incidental, obtaining a margin of error of ± 3.37%. Thus, 62.6% of the sample (n = 497) are teachers from public schools, 29.85% (n = 237) from state subsidized private schools and 7.55% (n = 60) from private schools, (sampling distribution is proportional to the population distribution). The sample consists of 318 women (40.1%) and 476 men (59.9%), of which 45.2% are under 39 years old, 34.6% are between 40 and 49 and 20.2% are 50 or older.

Instruments

In order to measure the teachers' *interpersonal relationships*, the *Climate Measurement Instrument in Secondary Schools* (Rodríguez-Mantilla & Fernández-Díaz, 2015) was used, which evaluates the *teacher-student relationship* (10 items - PA01 to PA10-. The reliability analysis showed satisfactory levels in the study, Cronbach's α = .842), the *teacher-coworker relationship* (22 items-PC11 to PC32-. α = .923) and the *teacher-superior relationship* (17 items-PS33-. α = .964).

In order to measure burnout in teachers, the *Measuring Instrument for Burnout Syndrome in Teachers* (Rodríguez-Mantilla & Fernández-Díaz, 2012b) was used, which evaluates: *emotional exhaustion* (6 items -A01 to A06-. α = .849), *cynicism* (6 items-D07 to D12-. α = .774) and *inefficacy* (11 items-R13 to R23-. α = .899).

In both questionnaires, the teachers responded to the items on a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 indicates "not at all", "never" and 5 indicates "very much", "always").

Procedure

In order to obtain teacher participation in the study, questionnaires were sent to the schools, along with an informative letter explaining the objectives of the study and ensuring the anonymity of the participants. Once the questionnaires had been filled in, the teachers left them in a collection box provided for that purpose.

Data analysis

The data was processed with the AMOS 22 software package, by applying SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) methodology to specify initial and final models for the factors of teachers' *interpersonal relationships* that have an effect on burnout. After analyzing the fit indices of both models, a multi-group analysis was carried out (using as moderator variables: *sex* of the teacher and *ownership of school*).

Results

Initial model of the effects of interpersonal relationships on burnout

The initial configuration of the model was based on the theoretical foundations proposed by Maslach (2009) in order to determine the effects of *burnout* factors. The aim was to observe how these factors behave together with the influence of teachers' *interpersonal relationships* in the workplace on the syndrome. Thus, it was established that *emotional exhaustion* precedes *cynicism*, with this second factor influencing the absence or presence of *inefficacy* (according to the Hypothesis 1). Similarly, and according to the theoretical foundation, we start with the premise that each of the teacher's *interpersonal relationships* (with students, coworkers, and superiors) affects each of the *burnout* factors (Hypothesis 2, 3 and 4).

In a first estimation of the initial model, using the maximum likelihood procedure, (Figure 1) the results showed some fit indices below acceptable values, according to Kline (2005), (Table 1) such as CFI= .840 and IFI= .841, below the recommended .9, so we proceeded to the re-specification model. The effects were not statistically significant were eliminated (*teacher-superior relationship* on *cynicism* and *inefficacy*, and the *teacher-coworker relationship* on *emotional exhaustion* and *cynicism)*.

The Modification Indices were consulted (Table 2), and multiple correlations were found among the error terms of several elements (items D07 to D12, PA01 to PA05 and PC11 to PC14 and items PS33 to PS35). According to indications from Byrne (2001) and Kline (2005), with the aim of obtaining a possible improvement in the fit indices, five sub-factors were included in the model using these items. The Modification Indices also indicated the possibility of including a correlation between the error terms ePA03 and eD11, and showed six variables with saturation problems in several factors (A03, R22, R23, PC30, PC31, and PC32) (Table 3); therefore these variables were eliminated.

Re-specified model of the effects of interpersonal relationships on burnout

Once the modifications were made, all of the re-specified model's fit indices showed satisfactory levels. We obtained CFI = .900 and IFI = .900; the RMSEA was considerably under .05 (RAMSEA = .041) and the parsimony indices were excellent (PRATIO = .9543, PNFI = .800 and PCFI = .858, above .7). The chi-square standardized value reached a value of 2.36 (within the adjustment limits of 2 to 5) (Table 2).

In order to facilitate the extraction of conclusions that will advance our knowledge of how teachers' *interpersonal relationships* influence the different *burnout* factors, the direct and indirect effects in the final model were analyzed. In Table 3 the standardized effects according to the final model are shown.

For the variable *emotional exhaustion*, although it receives effects from other variables, an elevated percentage of its variance cannot be explained (only 32%, according to the value of its squared multiple correlation) (see Figure 2). *Emotional exhaustion* receives two direct effects: one medium effect from the *teacher-superior relationship* (-.23), and a moderating effect from the *teacher-student relationship* (-.46). This variable, in this model, does not receive indirect effects from other variables; therefore the proposed Hypothesis 2 is partially met in the study.

64% of the *inefficacy* variable (Figure 2) can be explained by a group of direct and indirect effects. It has three direct effects: two weak effects from the *teacher-coworker relationship* variable (-.21) and the *teacher-student relationship* (-.25) variable and a moderating effect from *cynicism* (.49), therefore Hypothesis 3 is partially fulfilled. It receives indirect effects from the *teacher-superiors relationship* (-.06) through *emotional exhaustion* and *cynicism*, and from the *teacher-student relationship* (-.35) through *cynicism*. Finally, *emotional exhaustion* has a moderating indirect effect of .28 on the *inefficacy* variable through *cynicism*.

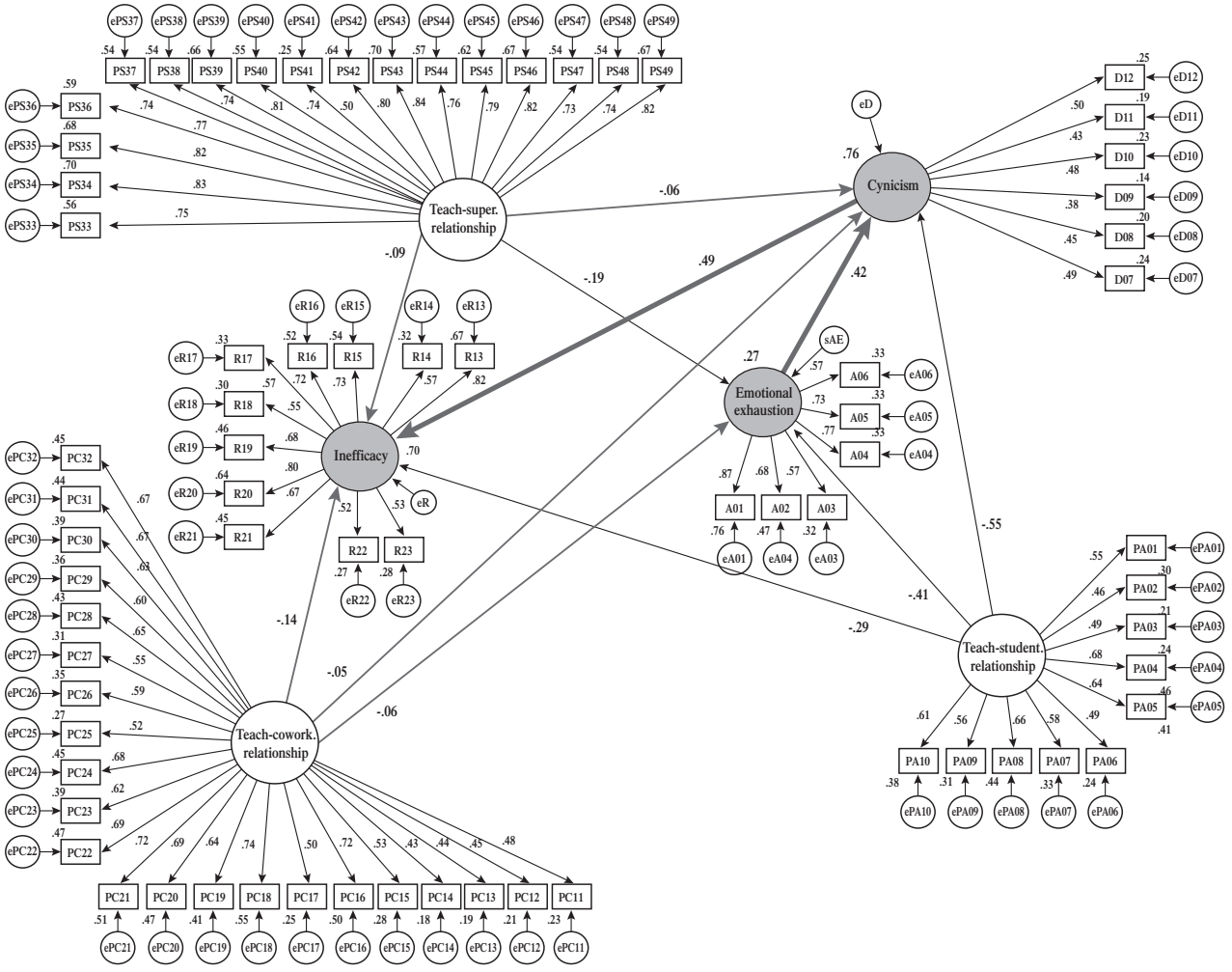

Figure 1. Initial model of the effects of interpersonal relationships and burnout

Table 1
Summary of fit indices

Measurement	Level of adjustment recommended	Initial model value	Final model value
CMIN/DF	2-5	3.013	2.365
IFI	>0,9	.841	.900
CFI		.840	.900
PRATIO	>0,7	.962	.953
PNFI		.749	.800
PCFI		.808	.858
RMSEA	<0,06	.050	.041
LO 90		.049	.040
HI 90		.052	.043
HOELTER .05	>200	276	353
HOELTER .01		281	361

CMIN/DF: Chi-square / Degrees of Freedom
IFI: Incremental Fit Index
CFI: Comparative Fit Index
PRATIO: Parsimony Ratio
PNFI: Parsimony-adjusted Normed Fit Index
PCFI: Parsimony-adjusted Comparative Fit Index
RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

Table 2
Modification Indices I

		Chi-square decrease	Parameter change
Sub-factor Emotional exhaustion	eD07<--> eD08	30.45	.109
	eD08<--> eD09	4.04	.053
	eD07<--> eD09	4.86	.058
Sub-factor Lack of concern for students	eD11<--> eD10	17.54	.083
	eD12<--> eD11	28.22	.116
Sub-factor Interaction with students	ePA01<--> ePA03	70.877	.163
	ePA04<--> ePA02	57.039	.201
	ePA04<--> ePA03	59.783	.160
	ePA04<--> ePA01	130.14	.314
Sub-factor Conflicts with coworkers	ePC11<--> ePC12	72.069	.240
	ePC13<--> ePC11	66.15	.190
	ePC14<--> ePC11	104.432	.226
	ePC15<--> ePC12	52.546	.206
Sub-factor Evaluation of superiors	ePS35<--> ePS34	25.946	.071
	ePS34<--> ePS36	44.045	.107
	ePS35<--> ePS34	85.766	.143
	ePS33<--> ePS35	91.731	.11
	ePA03<--> eD11	63.436	-.176
A03<--- Teacher-superiors relationship		22.73	.145
A03<--- Cynicism		14.34	-.207
R22<--- Emotional exhaustion		11.41	.096
R23<--- Teacher-coworkers relationship		33.76	.334
R23<--- Cynicism		22.97	-.355
PC30<---Teacher-superiors relationship		200.74	.568
PC30<---Teacher-coworkers relationship		77.523	.494
PC31<---Teacher-students relationship		15.943	.156
PC31<---Cynicism		15.768	-.181
PC32<---Inefficacy		12.02	-.119

According to Hypothesis 4, this model explains 82% of the variance in *cynicism*. The explanation for such a high percentage is due to the direct and moderating effects of *emotional exhaustion* (.58) and the *teacher-student relationship* (-.45). The *teacher-superiors relationship* and the *teacher-student relationship* have an indirect effect of -.13 and -.27 respectively through *emotional exhaustion*.

Multi-group analysis

In order to evaluate the moderating effect that the *sex* of the teachers and the *ownership of the school* have on the parameters of the model (Hypothesis 5 and 6), a multi-group invariance analysis was carried out on the final structural model between *men* and *women*, on the one hand, and between *public schools, private schools, and state subsidized private schools*, on the other.

With regard to the moderating effect of the variable *sex*, all of the parameters were invariant given that the *chi-square* value was non-significant in all cases. Therefore, the teacher's *sex* does not cause significant differences on the *effects* of the model (Table 4).

In order to evaluate the moderating effect of the *type of school* variable, the *private schools and state subsidized private schools* were combined in one group, given that the sample did not permit the minimum statistical power to carry out the analysis. It was shown that all the parameters are invariant between the two groups (*public* schools - *private/state subsidized* schools) except for the regression weight of the *teacher-student relationship* on *emotional exhaustion* (p<.01). Table 5 shows the direction and magnitude of the difference; here we see a greater regression weight in public schools. This indicates that the relationship the teacher has with his or her students has a greater effect on *emotional exhaustion* in *public* schools compared to *private and state subsidized* schools.

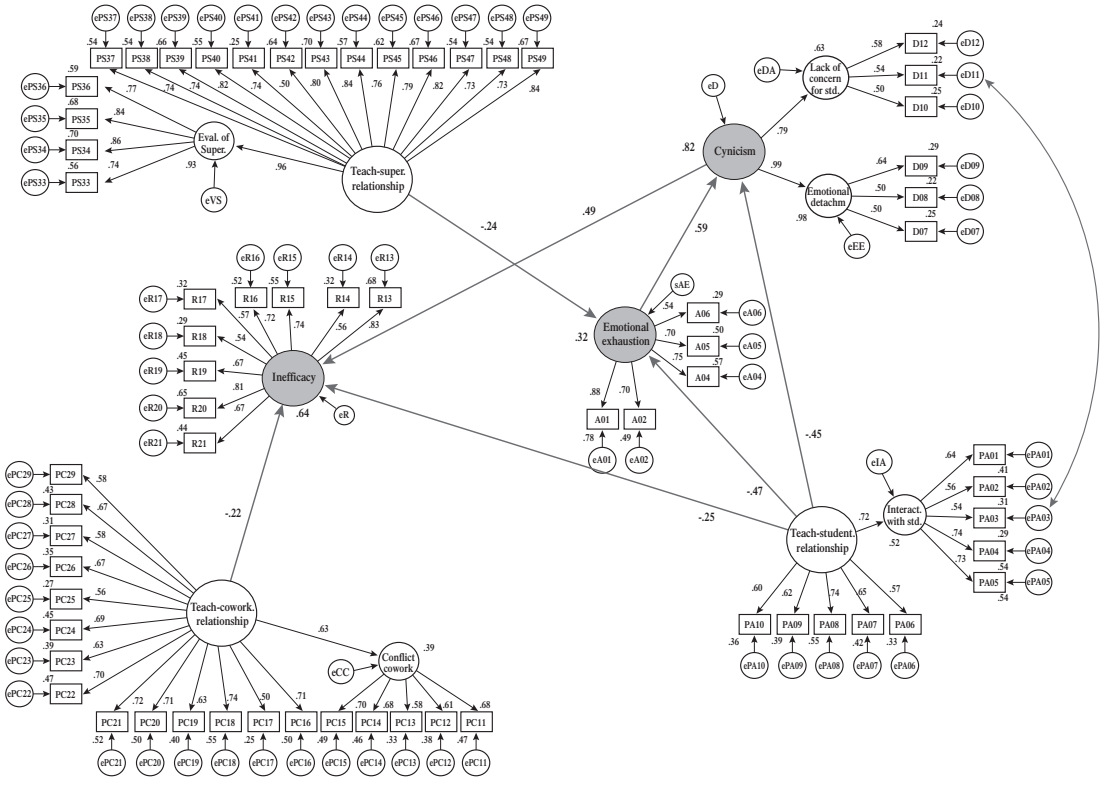

Figure 2. Re-specified model of the effects of interpersonal relationships and burnout

Discussion

In light of the results obtained, the most relevant conclusions for the scientific community in the field of *burnout* syndrome study are presented below.

Firstly, the importance of *interpersonal relationships* with students, coworkers, and superiors in burnout has been demonstrated (Grayson, 2008). In configuring the model, Maslach's model (2009) was taken as a reference. This model proposes *emotional exhaustion* as a first step in the syndrome and as the most important aspect in the origin of burnout. Emotional exhaustion leads to *cynicism*, which in turn results in decreased *efficacy*. According to this model, *emotional exhaustion* showed an important, direct effect on *cynicism*, which indicates that a teacher's increased exhaustion increases his or her cynicism. It was also observed that when the teacher's level of *cynicism* increased, his or her *efficacy* decreased. Therefore, the Hypothesis 1 proposed is true.

Regarding the direct effects received by variables *emotional exhaustion, cynicism* and *inefficacy* proposed in the Hypothesis 2, 3 and 4, we have only found the following effects:

Analyzing the *teacher-student relationship*, it was shown that this type of relationship influences the development of *cynicism* in teachers (Kokkinos, 2007), as well as their *inefficacy* and *emotional exhaustion*. This indicates that, the more positive the relationships between teacher and students, levels of cynicism and exhaustion decrease significantly, and efficacy increases. The media is constantly reporting incidents where students harass other students or their teachers, especially in Compulsory Secondary Education (Kokkinos, Antoniadou, & Markos, 2014). In these situations, teachers suffer from high levels of *burnout*, which can lead to depression (Abenavoli et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2013). Given the importance that this type of relationship seems to have on the appearance and development of burnout, it is necessary to expand studies regarding student behavior and their relationship with teachers.

The *teacher-coworker relationship* seems to affect a teacher's *efficacy* in such a way that improving this relationships tends to improve their level of professional efficacy. In the case of *teacher-superiors relationships*, it can be inferred that by improving the quality of these relationships, the teacher's level of *emotional exhaustion* decreases. However, this type of relationship does not have such an important effect on burnout factors as the *teacher-student relationship*. Nevertheless, and in terms of future studies to identify and analyze possible *burnout* triggers, we consider it important to include the *teacher-family relationship* in the model, given that, many times, a student's disruptive behavior - inside and outside of the classroom - is accompanied by a lack of support for the teacher from his or her family (Grayson, 2008; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Similarly, it would be especially interesting to analyze to what extent legal changes contribute to a decrease in conflicts and an improvement in *teacher-student relationships*.

By defining the effects of the proposed final model, we were able to explain 64% of the variance in *inefficacy*, 82% in *cynicism*, and 32% of the variance in *emotional exhaustion*. According to

Table 3
Direct and indirect effects from the final model

INDIRECT EFF.	Teacher-coworkers relationship	Teacher-superiors relationship	Teacher-students relationship	Emotional exhaustion	Cynicism
Emotional exhaustion		-.237	-.469		
Cynicism			-.450	.588	
Inefficacy	-.219		-.252		.490
INDIRECT EFF.					
Emotional exhaustion					
Cynicism		-.139	-.276		
Inefficacy		-.068	-.356	.288	

Table 4
Comparison of the fit indices of the nested models (by sex)

Model (Regression weight)	DF	CMIN	P
Teacher-superiors relationship–Emotional exhaustion	1	.029	.865
Teacher-coworkers–Inefficacy	1	.088	.767
Teacher-student relationship–Inefficacy	1	.005	.942
Teacher-student relationship-Emotional exhaustion	1	.836	.361
Teacher-student relationship–Cynicism	1	1.408	.235
Emotional exhaustion–Cynicism	1	.131	.718
Cynicism–Inefficacy	1	1.084	.298

DF: Degrees of Freedom
CMIN: Chi-square

Table 5
Estimation of regression weights (by type of school) in exhaustion - Teacher-Student Relationship

Public					Private and state subsidized				
Standard estimate	Estimate	SE	CR	P	Standard estimate	Estimate	SE	CR	P
-.543	-.742	.085	-8,.45	<.001	-.289	-.428	.111	-3.869	<.001

CR: Critical Ratio
SE: Standard Error

the Hypothesis 2, the *emotional exhaustion* only receives direct effects from *teacher's interpersonal relationships with students and superiors*. In this regard, the fact that so little of the variance is explained for *emotional exhaustion* indicates that there are aspects that explain this factor that were not contemplated in this model. This circumstance could be due to the fact that *emotional exhaustion* does not only depend on contextual variables, but also on personal characteristics unique to the individual (Abenavoli et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2013). Specifically, a hostile environment can cause the appearance in this case of greater *emotional exhaustion* in teachers, but the response to this situation may be different in each case, depending on the psychological characteristics of each subject. Therefore, it would be particularly interesting to configure a model that included, on the one hand, *contextual variables*, and, on the other, the most prominent *psychological variables* in the process of the syndrome (type A behavior pattern, cognitive styles, external locus of control, dependence, resistant personalities, sense of coherence, etc.) (Fives, Hamman, & Olivares, 2007) in order to analyze their joint influence on burnout.

According to the Hypothesis 5, the *sex* of the teacher variable showed no differentiating effect on the proposed model; these results do not coincide with those obtained by Gil-Monte (2005), Unterbrink (2007) and Grayson (2008), who suggest that *emotional exhaustion* is more prevalent in women and *cynicism* in men. However, the results proposed here are consistent with those of Weng et al. (2005), which demonstrate the absence of significance in this variable on the development of *burnout* syndrome. With regard to the *type of school* variable, Hypothesis 6 is partially fulfilled. It was found that in *public* schools, a negative *teacher-student relationship* has a greater influence on *emotional exhaustion* compared to the effect observed in *state subsidized private schools and private* schools. These results are consistent with those of Kokkinos (2007). This explains the fact that *public* schools seem to have a higher level of conflict between students, which means that teachers face serious difficulties to teach class normally.

However, regardless of the results obtained and the resulting conclusions, it is worth noting the recommendation to increase the study sample. Therefore, this being a limitation of the study, it is considered appropriate to extend the study to other regions in order to increase the power of generalization of the results.

As a final conclusion, while the teacher's *interpersonal relationships* and psychological characteristics seem to play an important role in the development of *burnout* syndrome, we believe that future research should be aimed at training teachers in strategies to face and overcome conflictive situations (at both a psychological and behavioral level). In order to do so, *applied research* aimed at not only treating *burnout* syndrome, but also at prevention, will be absolutely necessary, given that, ultimately, the quality of education depends on it.

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