

Mental Health of University Professors in B Razil and its Relationship with Working Conditions and Professional Development

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Abstract

University teaching work has been marked by intensified demands, institutional precariousness, and pressure for productivity, creating a context conducive to psychological distress. This environment in Brazil is characterized by unfavorable working conditions that can threaten professors' professional development (PD). In light of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, this quantitative study aimed to investigate the associations among working conditions, mental health indicators (stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout), resilience, and perceived PD among university professors. To this end, 484 professors from public and private institutions participated, answering a sociodemographic questionnaire and five psychometric scales validated in the Brazilian context. Confirmatory factor analyses and Pearson correlations were performed. All scales maintained their original factorial structures, with good psychometric indicators and dimensional reliabilities exceeding 0.70 (Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega). The correlation results showed high positive relationships between stress, anxiety, and depression (r between 0.70 and 0.78), as well as consistent associations between these indicators and the dimensions of burnout, especially exhaustion and mental distancing (r between 0.43 and 0.59, respectively). The perception of burnout showed moderate negative correlations with depression ($r = -0.34$), mental distancing ($r = -0.40$), and decline in cognitive control ($r = -0.44$), indicating that higher levels of psychological distress are associated with a more fragile perception of professional growth. Conversely, burnout correlated positively with all dimensions of working conditions, particularly development and achievement at work ($r = 0.51$) and social environment ($r = 0.41$). Resilience showed moderate negative correlations with stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout (r between -0.32 and -0.45), as well as a positive association with professional development ($r = 0.39$). All correlations were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that favorable working conditions and greater resilience function as central resources in reducing mental suffering and sustaining faculty professional development, thereby reinforcing assumptions of the JD-R model and contributing to the understanding of mental health issues and working conditions among university faculty. These results support public and institutional policies for this population.

Keywords

Mental Health, University Faculty, Professional Development.