Paper 1: The influence of social support in female Portuguese teacher's burnout

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Nowadays teachers' work is complex and has new demands, including; teaching, learning new information and skills, keeping abreast of technological innovations and dealing with students, parents and the community (Pillay, Goddard & Wills, 2005). They work under stressful conditions and deal with people presenting demands thus making them more vulnerable to experiencing burnout (Carlotto & Camara, 2007; Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006; Marques- Pinto & Picado, 2011; Watts & Robertson, 2011). Social support has been studied as an important variable protecting individuals from burnout (Hendrix, Cantrell & Steel, 1988; Salami, 2011; Zhang & Zhu, 2007).

This study aims to verify the influence of social support in burnout among 400 female Portuguese teachers. The Maslach Burnout Inventory – ED (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996) and Social Support Appraisals (Vaux, 1988) were used to collect data in the district of Porto, Portugal. Teachers aged from between 24 to 60 years old ($M=41.05$ $SD= 8.94$), had an average of 16.6 years of teaching experience, 65% were married, 64% had children and all taught students aged between 10 to 17 years (with 44% teaching students aged between 12 to 15 years).

The results showed that the sample presented moderate levels of emotional exhaustion, low depersonalization, high professional accomplishment and high social support levels, especially from family and friends. Marital status only distinguishes married teachers with more emotional exhaustion and age was negatively correlated with social support and personal accomplishment. No other socio-demographic differences were found. Emotional exhaustion was negatively predicted from others social support (colleagues and students, $\beta = -.160$, $p < .001$), depersonalization was negatively predicted by friends social support ($\beta = -.124$, $p < .05$), and professional accomplishment was positively predicted by others social support (colleagues and students, $\beta = .284$, $p < .001$).

Overall, the results suggest that despite the sample not experiencing high burnout levels, social support (in particular, support from colleagues and students) seems to be a protective factor. Recent results (Watts & Robertson, 2011) suggest that burnout among teachers is comparable with other service sector employees. When those professionals burn-out, they affect not only their self well-being, but also prejudice the care they give to other individuals and negatively influence the school. In sum, due to teachers' central role in our society, it is recommended that protective factors should be reinforced in the future among this population.