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ORIGINAL

Relationship between workload and psychological capital in a sample of Peruvian basic education teachers

Relación entre la carga laboral y el capital psicológico en una muestra de docentes peruanos de educación básica

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: in the educational context, workload entails various responsibilities, from planning and conducting classes to participating in extracurricular activities. This array of tasks can affect teachers, both in their performance and in their physical and mental well-being.
Objective: to determine if workload is related to the psychological capital of Peruvian basic education teachers.
Methods: a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional correlational study was conducted. The sample consisted of 183 teachers who were administered the Workload Scale and the Psychological Capital Questionnaire, instruments with adequate metric properties.
Results: preliminarily, it was determined that 39,3 % of teachers perceived their workload to be high. Similarly, 52,5 % of teachers also rated their psychological capital as high. Additionally, a correlation coefficient of -0,539 ($p<0,05$) was found between both variables.
Conclusions: there is an inverse and significant relationship between workload and the psychological capital of elementary school teachers. Therefore, it is recommended that educational authorities establish institutional policies that promote a balanced workload-resource ratio for teachers. This may include adequate allocation of resources and materials, as well as a review of assessment and work planning practices. Furthermore, implementing psychological support programs, time management, and stress management is suggested to ensure teachers' well-being.

Keywords: Workload; Psychological Well-Being; Mental Health; Teachers; Basic Education.

RESUMEN

Introducción: en el contexto educativo, la carga laboral implica diversas responsabilidades, desde la planificación y ejecución de clases hasta la participación en actividades extracurriculares. Este conjunto de tareas puede impactar en los docentes, tanto en su desempeño como en su bienestar físico y mental.
Objetivo: determinar si la carga laboral se relaciona con el capital psicológico de los docentes peruanos de educación básica.
Métodos: estudio cuantitativo, no experimental y correlacional de corte transversal. La muestra estuvo conformada por 183 docentes a quienes se les aplicó la Escala de Carga de Trabajo y el Cuestionario de Capital Psicológico, instrumentos con adecuadas propiedades métricas.

Resultados: preliminarmente, se determinó que el 39,3 % de docentes percibía la carga laboral en un nivel alto. Del mismo modo, el 52,5 % de docentes también valoró su capital psicológico en un nivel alto. Por otro lado, se halló que el coeficiente de correlación entre ambas variables fue de -0,539 ($p<0,05$).
Conclusiones: existe una relación inversa y significativa entre la carga laboral y el capital psicológico de los docentes de educación básica. Por ello, se recomienda a las instancias educativas correspondientes establecer políticas institucionales que promuevan un equilibrio adecuado entre la carga laboral y los recursos disponibles para los docentes. Esto podría incluir la asignación adecuada de recursos y materiales, así como la revisión de las prácticas de evaluación y planificación del trabajo. Además, se sugiere la implementación de programas de apoyo psicológico, gestión del tiempo y manejo del estrés para garantizar el bienestar de los docentes.

Palabras clave: Carga de Trabajo; Bienestar Psicológico; Salud Mental; Docentes; Educación Básica.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers, as critical agents in the educational process, face a wide range of demands and challenges in their daily work.[1] From lesson planning to interacting with students and classroom management, their work requires significant psychological skills and resources to effectively deal with the complexities of today's educational environment.[2] However, the workload they face could have a negative impact on their psychological and emotional well-being, and their ability to provide practical and quality teaching, as well as their psychological resources, also known as psychological capital.

Workload is defined as the level of demand associated with a task and its relationship to the amount of skills and abilities that a person must employ to carry out the assigned tasks.[3] In the educational context, due to the labor transformation resulting from changes in traditional education and the new demands of educational institutions, one of the problems that has affected the teaching population is the perception of a high workload.[4] Among their primary responsibilities are the planning of curricula and educational materials, the development of learning sessions and extracurricular activities, formative evaluation, attention to parents, preparation and updating of school management documents, as well as the reflection of pedagogical practice and self-training.[5]

When teachers' workload is in an adequate balance, there is a positive impact on various aspects of their professional and personal lives. This situation translates into a higher level of satisfaction with their job responsibilities and optimal job performance, as previous studies have shown.[6,7] In addition, maintaining this balance is associated with adequate levels of well-being and psychological health, which contributes to their ability to face work and personal challenges more effectively.[8] However, an excessive workload can trigger negative consequences such as stress, emotional exhaustion, and other detrimental psychosocial factors,[9,10,11] which can affect both their physical and mental health and the quality of their teaching and overall quality of life.

Regarding psychological capital, it is a construct that has gained attention in organizational and health research in recent decades. It refers to the positive psychological state that people develop. It is characterized by having the confidence to tackle challenging tasks, maintaining a positive attribution about present and future success, persevering in the pursuit of goals, directing the path necessary to successfully achieve them, and, when adverse situations arise, sustaining and recovering from coping with them.[12] Psychological capital has been shown to have positive effects on various aspects of well-being and job performance. For example, workers with higher levels of psychological capital have been found to experience lower levels of job stress, burnout, and absenteeism[13] as well as higher levels of job satisfaction, engagement, and job performance.[14] In addition, psychological capital has been associated with positive mental and physical health outcomes, as well as a greater sense of overall well-being.[15]

Psychological capital comprises 4 dimensions: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience.[16] Self-efficacy refers to the confidence to succeed in challenging tasks.[17] Optimism implies an increase in positive attributes and expectations about future events.[18] Hope is associated with perseverance to achieve a goal and find a path to success.[19] Finally, *resilience* is defined as the ability that enables people to cope with or adapt positively to adversity.[20] Together, these dimensions of psychological capital provide a solid foundation for facing challenges, pursuing goals, and maintaining a positive approach to life and work.[21]

Workload is a factor that can significantly impact teachers' psychological well-being and, ultimately, their professional performance. Therefore, it is essential to understand the relationship between workload and psychological capital in order to identify where interventions could be made in the educational setting. By determining whether there is a relationship between these two variables, it will be possible to design strategies to support the mental health and well-being of teachers, which could result in a positive impact on the quality of the education they provide. In addition, it is important to consider measures that complement workload

management, such as institutional support, stress management training programs, and the promotion of a healthy and collaborative work environment. These initiatives can contribute to strengthening the resilience of teachers and improve their ability to face the challenges inherent to their profession, thus benefiting both teachers and students.

Finally, the objective of the present research was to determine whether the workload is related to the psychological capital of Peruvian primary education teachers.

METHODS

A quantitative approach was chosen since this method allows the use of statistical techniques to analyze numerical data objectively. The design was non-experimental, which meant that there were no intentional manipulations of the variables but rather observations and recordings in their natural environment. In addition, the type was cross-sectional correlational since data were collected at a specific time to describe and analyze possible relationships between the variables.[22]

The population consisted of 347 primary education teachers from five educational institutions located in the Peruvian Amazon, while the sample included a total of 183 teachers. It is important to note that the selection of this number of participants was made by means of stratified probability sampling with a confidence level of 95 % and a significance level of 5 %, thus guaranteeing the representativeness and statistical validity of the results obtained.

Two study variables were considered: workload and psychological capital. In the case of workload, this was categorized into 3 levels, considering the following cut-off points: low (6 -14), medium (15 - 22) and high (23 - 30). Psychological capital was also categorized into 3 levels, and the following cut-off points were considered: low (22 -51), medium (52 - 81), and high (82 - 110).

The data collection technique was the survey, while the instruments were the Workload Scale and the Psychological Capital Questionnaire. It should be noted that both instruments were structured in the Google Form. The Workload Scale[23] measures the self-perception of workers' efficacy in the face of work difficulties. This scale, composed of 6 items, is characterized by being unifactorial and evaluated quantitatively by means of a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Previous research conducted in the Peruvian context[24] validated its usefulness, demonstrating that it has adequate metric properties (Aiken's V= 0,811; α= 0,932).

The Psychological Capital Questionnaire[25] evaluates the perception that a person has of four critical components of his or her psychological well-being in the work environment: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. It is made up of 22 Likert-type items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In a previous research conducted in Peru,[26] it was determined that it had adequate psychometric properties (α= 0,910). On the other hand, some sociodemographic variables were included, such as sex (male and female), age (between 21 and 34 years, between 35 and 49 years, and between 50 and 64 years), and specialty (primary education and secondary education).

Data collection was carried out after obtaining the necessary authorizations from the relevant educational authorities. To facilitate the participation of teachers, effective means of communication were used, such as the WhatsApp messaging application. Teachers were invited to participate and were provided with a link to the survey, along with clear instructions on how to complete it. This process, which lasted approximately 20 minutes, culminated in the confirmed participation of all 183 teachers surveyed. Once data collection was complete, access to the survey link was deactivated.

The data analysis was divided into two stages. The first stage consisted of a descriptive analysis, where figures were generated using SPSS version 25 software. These graphical representations allowed an initial understanding of the percentage distribution of the study variables. In the second stage, an inferential analysis was performed. Since the variables did not follow a normal distribution, we chose to use Spearman's correlation coefficient to evaluate the relationships between variables and dimensions. A significant relationship was considered when the p-value was less than 0,05.

The present research was carried out in compliance with strict ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all teachers, who were fully informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, as well as their rights of participation and confidentiality. In addition, the confidentiality of the data collected was guaranteed, using identification codes instead of personal information at all stages of the study. Similarly, the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki were respected at all times, ensuring the well-being and integrity of the participants. Finally, any information obtained was used exclusively for research purposes and was kept strictly confidential.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows that, of the total number of participants, 55,7 % were men and 44,3 % were women. Regarding the age of the participants, 36,6 % were between 35 and 49 years old, 34,4 % were between 50 and 64 years old,

and 29 % were between 21 and 34 years old. With regard to specialty, 57,4 % were primary education teachers, and 42,6 % were secondary education teachers.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample

Variables		n= 183	%
Gender	Male	102	55,7
	Female	81	44,3
Age	Between 21 and 34 years old	53	29,0
	Between 35 and 49 years old	67	36,6
	Between 50 and 64 years old	63	34,4
Specialty	Primary education	105	57,4
	Secondary education	78	42,6

Figure 1 shows that 39,3 % of the total number of teachers rated their workload at a high level, 34,4 % at a medium level, and 26,2 % at a low level. The above indicates that teachers are characterized by considering that they have many responsibilities to fulfill in their daily work, such as lesson planning, preparation of educational material, student assessment, and classroom management, among other activities. This could have important implications for their well-being and their ability to provide quality teaching to their students. Regarding the psychological capital variable, 52,5 % of teachers rated it at a high level, 32,2 % at a medium level, and 15,3 % at a low level. These data indicate that almost half of all teachers feel confident in their ability to face challenges, maintain an optimistic attitude in difficult situations, be resilient in the face of stress, and maintain hope in the achievement of their professional goals.

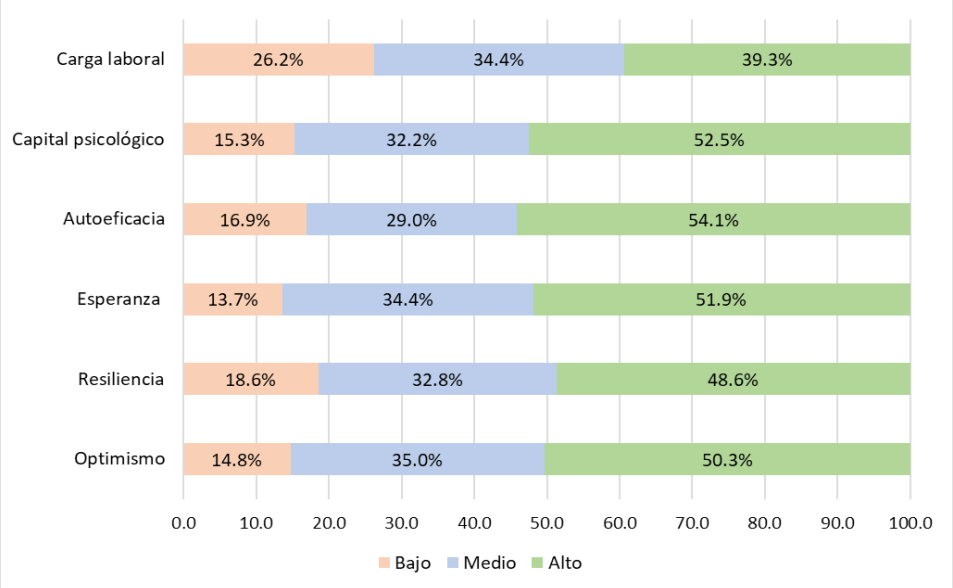

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of the study variables and their dimensions
Source: Surveys

According to the data presented in Table 2, the p-value of the workload and psychological capital variables, calculated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, turned out to be lower than the established significance level ($p<0,05$). This suggests that the scores did not follow a normal distribution. Therefore, it was decided to use Spearman's Rho nonparametric statistical test to determine the presence of a possible significant relationship between the variables analyzed.

Table 2. Normality test for the study variables

Variable and dimensions	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Statistician	gl	Sig.
Workload	0,643	183	0,000
Psychological capital	0,168	183	0,000

Source: Surveys.

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Table 3 shows the results of the correlation analysis between the study variables and the dimensions. In this sense, it was determined that workload correlated inversely and significantly with the variable psychological capital (rho= -0,539; p<0,05) and the dimensions self-efficacy (rho= -0,595; p<0,05), hope (rho= -0,512; p<0,05), resilience (rho= -0,548; p<0,05) and optimism (rho= -0,583; p<0,05). These data indicate that excessive workload could put pressure on teachers' psychological resources, decreasing their self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and hope. However, an appropriate balance in workload could strengthen teachers' psychological capital, fostering a sense of competence, an optimistic attitude, and an ability to cope successfully with difficulties.

Table 3. Correlation between workload and psychological capital

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Workload	1	-	-	-	-	-
2. Psychological capital	-0,539**	1	-	-	-	-
3. Self-efficacy	-0,595**	0,743**	1	-	-	-
4. Hope	-0,512**	0,785**	0,674**	1	-	-
5. Resilience	-0,548**	0,708**	0,688**	0,630**	1	-
6. Optimism	-0,583**	0,716**	0,653**	0,694**	0,745**	1

** p<0,01

Source: Surveys.

DISCUSSION

Currently, the workload of teachers has emerged as a topic of growing relevance and concern in the educational field. Teachers face a series of challenges and demands that impact their daily lives, their well-being, and their professional performance. Therefore, the present research focused on determining whether the workload is related to the psychological capital of Peruvian primary education teachers.

Preliminarily, it was observed that teachers were identified by perceiving a high level of workload, which included lesson planning, preparation of educational material, student assessment, and classroom management, among other tasks. This could have significant implications for their well-being and their ability to provide quality teaching to their students. Similar results were obtained in previous research,[24,27,28] which concluded that teachers experienced work overload and, as a result, were forced to take work home and spend time off to complete tasks related to their teaching work.

Another preliminary finding shows that the level of psychological capital self-perceived by most teachers was high. This suggests that teachers possess internal resources, such as self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and hope, which enable them to effectively face and manage the demands and challenges of their work. This perception could have important implications for their overall well-being, as well as for their ability to perform effectively in the classroom and provide optimal support to their students. There is some research to support the findings described above.[29,30,31]

An important finding shows that workload was inversely and significantly related to the variable psychological capital and the dimensions of self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. This implies that the greater the workload experienced by teachers, the lower their perceived self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism may be. This relationship suggests that effective workload management could contribute not only to improving teachers' psychological well-being but also to strengthening their internal resources to cope with work demands and maintain a positive and proactive attitude toward work and personal challenges.

The results presented align with previous research,[32,33,34] which, although not explicitly conducted on teachers, provides a consistent basis for understanding the challenges faced by professionals in similar work settings. This research has examined a variety of occupations and has highlighted the presence of stressors and their effects on individuals' health and well-being. Although circumstances may vary across occupations, the nature of the workload and its implications may be comparable across occupational fields. Therefore, this research complements the understanding of the challenges that teachers may face by providing a broader perspective on the effects of workload in various professional contexts.

Some theories support the above finding. Job burnout theory[35] emphasizes that job demands, such as workload, can deplete workers' psychological resources, which can lead to stress and impaired well-being. Likewise, self-efficacy theory[36] indicates that belief in one's ability to successfully perform specific tasks can influence how people cope with and manage job demands. If the workload is high, it may decrease teachers' self-efficacy, which in turn may affect their psychological well-being. On the other hand, the stress and coping model[37] provides a comprehensive understanding of how the workload can affect the psychological well-being of workers, including teachers, and suggests the importance of considering both job demands and personal

resources in promoting mental health at work. These theories provide insight into how teachers' workload may influence their psychological capital and, thus, their well-being and performance at work.

Teaching stands out as one of the professions with a high workload and significant exposure to multiple stressors, which can have a considerable impact on teachers' health and well-being.[38] The constant flow of responsibilities, administrative and academic demands, pressure to meet educational standards, and managing classroom dynamics are just some of the factors that can contribute to teachers' job stress.[39] In addition, interaction with students, parents and colleagues, as well as adapting to changes in educational policies and the school environment, can also generate additional stresses.[40] This accumulation of stressors can have negative repercussions on teachers' physical and mental health, increasing the risk of burnout, anxiety, depression, and other stress-related health problems.[41] Therefore, it is essential to recognize and address the specific challenges that teachers face in their daily work.

It is necessary to specify that this research presents some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results obtained. First, the sample used in the study was homogeneous. In addition, the use of self-administered data collection instruments may have led to social desirability biases. Therefore, for future research, multicenter studies with more diverse and representative samples should be carried out, which would allow more robust and generalizable results to be obtained in different contexts. Finally, it would be beneficial to complement quantitative data collection with qualitative tools, which would facilitate a deeper and more holistic understanding of the study variables.

CONCLUSIONS

The workload of primary education teachers can significantly influence their professional performance, well-being, and psychological resources. This load encompasses a wide variety of responsibilities, including planning, preparing, and developing lessons tailored to students' needs and interests, continuous assessment of students' progress, and constant feedback for their development. In addition to these tasks directly related to teaching, teachers must also face a series of extracurricular activities and administrative responsibilities, which demand an additional investment of time and effort.

The present research concluded that there is an inverse and significant relationship between workload and the psychological capital of primary education teachers. This implies that an excessive workload could put pressure on teachers' psychological resources, decreasing their self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and hope. However, an adequate balance in workload and institutional support could strengthen teachers' psychological capital, promoting a sense of competence, an optimistic attitude, and an ability to cope with difficulties.

Therefore, it is recommended that competent educational authorities implement strategies to manage workload more equitably, involving teachers in decision-making and providing ongoing training in stress management and self-care. In addition, it is crucial to offer emotional and professional support, as well as to promote a positive work climate that recognizes and values teachers' work. Along with this, it is essential to promote a work-life balance for teachers. These measures can strengthen their well-being and professional performance, which will ultimately contribute to improving the quality of the education they provide to students.

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