


## The health of education workers: Situations of vulnerability and illness

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### ABSTRACT

The present study has as objective: to identify studies on the health of the education worker and situations of vulnerability and illness experienced in everyday school life during and after the covid 19 pandemic . In addition, it also seeks to problematize and discuss issues related to teacher health promotion in the school context, from the perspective of building public policies which focus on teacher health. For this, the reference used was of health policies, National Policy for Health Promotion and Education and the Welfare, Health and Quality of Life Policy at Work and Valorization of Education Professionals. Methodology: This is a qualitative study of the construction of the state of knowledge carried out in the databases of the Catalog of Theses and Dissertations of the Coordination for the improvement of Higher Education Personnel and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations. Results: The results indicate that the overload of work hours, external demands, stress, little mastery of technological tools, psychological shocks and lack of interaction with colleagues imposed by the pandemic context impact the physical, mental and psychological well-being of the teacher, leading to the development of anxiety and burnout syndrome. The research contributes to highlight factors that lead teachers to illness, making them vulnerable when facing these results. It is necessary to plan actions to improve the quality of life and promotion of health and well-being of these professionals.

**Keywords:** Teacher health, Teacher illness, Covid-19 pandemic, Teacher health promotion.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020, drastically affected the entire society, in a short space of time, changing the lives of people around the world, in all dimensions. The educational system immediately had to review its methodology, quickly implementing remote teaching in institutions, closing schools in prevention and so that there was no spread of the disease, given its severity and the lack of effective forms, necessary measures that required the distancing. A study carried out in the state of Amazonas, during the Covid-19 pandemic, showed that the educational administrative structure of states and municipalities was deficient and teachers were the main education agents affected/vulnerable throughout the pandemic (Vieira *et al.* , 2023).

In the pandemic scenario, the encounter with the unknown generated fear and anguish, which turned into anxiety, panic and, depending on the way each person deals with the situation, especially those who already had some type of symptom, the triggering of problems within the scope of the pandemic. of emotional and mental health was evidence. These aspects brought serious consequences for teachers. In this sense, it is pointed out that social vulnerability, whether of a personal, social or environmental nature, is defined by emphasizing the weaknesses of families, people and even a society in conditions of risk. Vulnerability, therefore, arises from difficulties in transforming current conditions and requires subsidies and development of processes, people and structural conditions (Vieira *et al.* , 2023).

Education, in fact, is the process that goes through the most vulnerable moments given the situation experienced during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Vulnerability can have several characteristics that encompass its different dimensions, that is, the vulnerability of citizens, families, people and societies (Vieira *et al.* , 2023). Psychological suffering affects groups with a lack of resources to a greater extent, making family and social structures vulnerable throughout life. Vulnerability affects different factors, including moral, ecological, economic, parental, psychological, among others (Lovo, 2021).

Furthermore, it is worth adding the conceptual representation of vulnerability proposed by Ayres *et al.* (2003), which is linked to the individual, social and programmatic component. The three components of the conceptual framework are interconnected, allowing multidimensional analyses, with vulnerability defined by the interweaving of material, psychological, cultural, moral, legal and political conditions (Ayres *et al.* , 2003). In this context of education and vulnerability, education, in general, already presented situations of vulnerability, however, after social isolation and the changes imposed by the pandemic, it was directly impacted on the health of teachers, due to a multiplicity of situations that generate stress. and adaptation; Exhaustion from excessive work demands and the presence of emotional and social conflict leaves the teacher weakened.



Depression, anxiety and stress were pathologies that increased during the pandemic period. Teachers had to reinvent the way they work and deliver content, through hybrid and remote virtual platforms, highlighting the precariousness of teaching activity, with an increase in involuntary online workload, as there was a need to be connected and involved with their planning over a much longer period of time, therefore affecting the financial, emotional and ethical dimensions of teachers.

In view of the above, this construction of the State of Knowledge aims to identify studies on the health of education workers and the situations of vulnerability and illness experienced in daily school life during the Covid 19 Pandemic until the return of in-person attendance. Furthermore, we seek to problematize and discuss issues related to the promotion of teacher health in the school context, from the perspective of building public policies focused on the health of education workers, especially teachers. Furthermore, it aims to contribute to educational debates about the importance of teachers' mental health, planning and implementing educational practices to promote health. And, more broadly, contribute to the development and implementation of public policies that consider teacher health as a fundamental aspect of quality education.

From this perspective, this text is organized into three chapters. Initially, it deals with health policies and the interface with education; Subsequently, the stage of methodological procedures describes the realization of the State of Knowledge based on the databases of the Catalog of Theses and Dissertations of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD ). The third chapter presents the results of the research in the databases, namely: teacher health – situations of vulnerability and factors related to illness.

## HEALTH POLICIES AND THE INTERFACE WITH EDUCATION

Discussing public health policies and the interface with education, when analyzing teacher health, in a current scenario, after various situations of vulnerability during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, requires an understanding of the expanded concept of health.

Health can be understood as a complex phenomenon or merely as the absence of disease that is influenced by the context, the situation, cultural and economic policy. Health, as an expanded phenomenon, involves ways of being and producing and/or recreating life in its singularity and multidimensionality. Along these lines, it is necessary to question the discourses that privilege the concept of health solely due to its biological dimension, ensuring a fragmented conception of the human being, as well as the imposing and normative nature of the ways of intervening in the reality of individuals and communities (Medeiros; Bernardes ; Guareschi, 2005).

Health is considered a right of all and a duty of the State, guaranteed through social and economic policies that aim to reduce the risk of disease and other injuries and universal and equal



access to actions and services for promotion, protection and recovery (Brazil, 1988) This is the basis that guides the Unified Health System (SUS) and it is this basis that contributes to developing the dignity of people, as citizens and as human beings.

Thus, in its expanded concept, health has as determining and conditioning factors, among others, food, housing, basic sanitation, the environment, work, income, education, transportation, leisure and health. access to essential goods and services; The population's health levels express the country's social and economic organization, they also concern health and actions aimed at guaranteeing people and the community conditions of physical, mental and social well-being (Brazil, 1990). The Federal Constitution of Brazil democratized essential rights, such as those dedicated to education and health, and regulated public policies, focusing on the expanded concept of health, making it essential to implement some SUS principles and guidelines, such as decentralization, articulation, intersectorality, comprehensiveness in programs, articulating such principles in planning, sharing of resources, equipment and knowledge (Brazil, 1988, 1990).

The National Occupational Health Policy in the SUS, established in 2012, is aligned with the set of health policies within the SUS, considering the transversality of worker health actions and work as one of the determinants of the health-disease process (Brazil, 2012). Still in this vein, this policy covers all workers, prioritizing, however, people and groups in situations of greater vulnerability, such as those involved in activities or in informal and precarious work relationships, in activities with greater risk to health, subjected to forms of harmful effects of discrimination, or child labor, with a view to overcoming social and health inequalities and seeking equity in care. To this end, it highlights the importance of identifying vulnerable people and groups defined based on analysis of the local and regional health situation and discussion with the community, workers and other social actors of interest to workers' health, paying attention to their specificities and cultural and social singularities (Brazil, 2012).

In terms of the construction of public policies, the health of education workers, specifically teachers, thus far, shows fragility or incipience, which can be seen as a failure (or omission) on the part of the bodies responsible for the creation and implementation of pedagogical proposals. On the other hand, health policies are transversal and should include teachers in the group considered vulnerable, especially after the changes imposed by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The teacher is a worker who, on several occasions, has his health conditions and quality of life compromised, due to numerous risk factors. In this way, it must be part of the construction of new references, which enable an expanded concept of health, understood as an integral phenomenon, integrating and enhancing healthier living.

Faced with the need to rethink the process of attention and care for teachers, especially taking into account the pandemic impact, in 2023 the Policy for Wellbeing, Health and Quality of Life at



Work and Valuation of Education Professionals was established with the Law No. 14,681 of September 18, 2023 “Institutes the Policy for Welfare, Health and Quality of Life at Work and Valuation of Education Professionals”. This Policy considers the need to develop actions aimed at providing comprehensive health care and preventing illness, in addition to encouraging practices that promote well-being at work in a sustainable, humanized and lasting way (Brasil, 2023).

It is important to address the concepts established in the Policy on Welfare, Health and Quality of Life at Work and Valuation of Education Professionals. Quality of Life at work is conceptualized as a set of standards, guidelines and practices that integrate conditions, organization, work processes, management practices and socio-professional relationships, with the purpose of aligning demands and well-being from employees to the institutional mission. In the meantime, Well-Being at work is defined as the perception of positive emotions and the worker's feeling of satisfaction with the organization and working conditions, management practices, emotional involvement with the development of their tasks and the possibilities of symbolic recognition. Finally, the concept of comprehensive health is associated with the integrated vision of the worker as a biopsychosocial being, with needs in different areas of life, including work (Brasil, 2023).

Art. 1 This Law provides for the creation of the Policy for Welfare, Health and Quality of Life at Work and Valorization of Education Professionals, considering the need to develop actions aimed at comprehensive health care and the prevention of illness, as well and to encourage practices that promote well-being at work in a sustainable, humanized and lasting way. (BRAZIL, 2023)

The Promotion of Workers' Health in Education is a subject that has been discussed by scholars with the aim of understanding ways for teachers to live in better living conditions and influence their physical, mental, economic and social well-being. In this way, the concept of Health Promotion emerges as a tool for the construction of activities that express a transformative character. The National Health Promotion Policy (PNPS) highlights the relevance of social conditions and determinants of health in the health-disease process and has as its assumptions intersectorality and the creation of co-responsibility networks that seek to improve quality of life (Brasil, 2014 ).

Art. 4 The guidelines of the Policy for Welfare, Health and Quality of Life at Work and Valuation of Education Professionals are: Sole paragraph. The policy guidelines referred to in this article must be developed through quality of life plans in the work that aims to improve the organizational climate, through active participation and listening to education professionals from a preventive perspective, in which productivity results from the human meaning of work, experiences of well-being, promotion of health and safety in institutional spaces. (BRASIL, 2023)

Still in this sense, the PNPS is a transversal policy, with a view to promoting dialogue between the different sectors of government, private sectors and society, forming networks of commitment and co-responsibility regarding the population's quality of life (Brasil, 2014). The PNPS



brings the expanded concept of health and the theoretical framework of health promotion as a set of strategies and ways of producing health, at the individual and collective level, characterized by intra and intersectoral articulation and cooperation, through the formation of the Care Network Health (RAS), seeking to articulate its actions with other social protection networks, with broad participation and social control. It stands out as a challenge for the PNPS to advance intersectoral action, linking actions aimed at specific audiences, such as promoting health in the teaching work environment, advancing projects aimed at improving teaching health and identifying situations of vulnerability that may be related to coping of the determinants and conditions that influence the health of this group.

The PNPS intends to promote equity and improve conditions and ways of living, expanding the potential of individual and collective health, reducing vulnerabilities and health risks arising from social, economic, political, cultural and environmental determinants. In line with the Policy of Well-being, Health and Quality of Life at Work and Valuation of Education Professionals, it is based on the development of comprehensive health, personal and professional development, management practices, quality of life actions in work and promoting experiences of well-being.

The school is an environment for teaching work, socialization, production of knowledge and an instrument of social transformation, but it is also a place that triggers discontent, malaise, psychological suffering and illness in the bodies of teachers, from the daily school life and the contradictions that permeate the social issue and its expressions, and which are experienced in the school environment and classrooms (Silva, 2021).

Health Promotion spaces are understood as all places where human care activities are carried out, whether health units or other collective spaces, such as schools, in which there is the possibility of carrying out educational activities, aiming at the best quality of life and health of people.

## METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This research is a qualitative study, using the State of Knowledge methodology. The State of Knowledge is the identification, registration, categorization that lead to reflection and synthesis on the scientific production of a given area, in a given space of time, bringing together periodicals, theses, dissertations and books on a specific topic, enabling a broad and current view of research studies linked to the object of investigation that we intend to develop, providing opportunities for the search for new meanings regarding the topic of study (Morosini; Fernandes, 2014; Morosini; Nascimento; Nez, 2021).

When constructing a survey of scientific production in an area, it is important for the researcher to know and reflect on publications related to the topic in the scientific field. It is also essential to identify and analyze possible approaches and paths, not only regarding theoretical foundations, as well as methodological aspects, which will contribute to the



delimitation and organization of your investigation (Morosini; Nascimento; Nez, 2021, p. 70).

The databases used were the CAPES Theses and Dissertations Catalog and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD). The period adopted was between 2020 and 2023, when the Covid-19 Pandemic emerged and spread throughout the world, resulting in several impacts in the area of education and teacher health.

The following descriptors were crossed: teacher health, teacher illness, Covid-19 Pandemic and teacher health promotion. Secondly, studies whose titles had some relation to the topic covered were placed in front of them. The search in the aforementioned databases was carried out between second half of 2022 and the course of 2023.

## RESULTS

The results of the searches in both databases and the crossing of the descriptors are presented below. In Tables 1 and 2, the research carried out in the CAPES Theses and Dissertations Catalog and in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD) can be seen.

Table 1 – Research carried out through the CAPES Database, 2023

| Descriptors/filter          | Total | Dissertations | Theses |
|-----------------------------|-------|---------------|--------|
| Teacher health              | 3,583 | 2,900         | 683    |
| Covid-19 Pandemic           | 279   | 251           | 28     |
| Promotion of teacher health | 19    | 17            | two    |

Source: Prepared by the author (2023)

The research carried out in August 2023, in the CAPES Catalog of Theses and Dissertations, using the descriptors **teacher health**, found 3,583 works, 2,900 theses and 683 dissertations. Using the **Covid-19 pandemic** descriptor, 279 studies were found, including 28 theses and 251 dissertations. Using the descriptor **teacher health promotion**, 19 works were obtained, including two theses and 17 dissertations. The time frame was from 2020 to 2023.

Table 2 – Research carried out at the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD)

| Descriptors/Filters | Total | Dissertations | Theses |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|--------|
| Teacher health      | 3,587 | 2,516         | 1,071  |
| Teacher's illness   | 227   | 174           | 53     |
| Covid-19 pandemic   | 12    | 8             | 4      |

Source: Prepared by the author (2023)

In the research carried out in the BDTD database, the descriptor **teacher health was used**, 3,587 works, 2,516 dissertations and 1,071 theses were found; using **AND teacher illness**, 227





works, 174 dissertations and 53 theses were obtained. With *AND Covid-19 pandemic*, there were 13 works, nine dissertations and four theses. The time frame used as a filter was the period in which the Covid-19 Pandemic emerged, that is, from 2020 to 2023.

Abstracts of works that, theoretically, maintained a certain similarity with the research objectives were read. Finally, only publications that were related to the mentioned topic were selected and analyzed in their entirety.

As a result of analyzing the studies in full, 14 works were selected from the last descriptor mentioned above, 14 of which were dissertations. From this research, we focused on studying and briefly presenting what each of the authors brought to their work, what paths they took methodologically, what objectives they had with the work developed, who the participants were and what new developments were announced in terms of results. .

We sought to systematize these studies, verifying similarities with our research. Table 1 presents the 15 studies identified in line with the objective and analyzed based on thematic categories, namely: teacher health – vulnerable situations and factors related to illness.

Table 1 – Studies selected from the CAPES and BDTD database

| AUTHOR UNIVERSITY   | YEAR | TITLE  | LEVEL        | GOAL   | RESULTS  |
|---|------|--|--------------|--|--|
| Carlos Eduardo Cervilieri<br>University of Sao Paulo      | 2021 | Teaching work and health: study with teachers from public schools in the state of São Paulo in the city of Ribeirão Preto/SP                         | Dissertation | Investigate the relationships between teaching activity and the health problems reported by these professionals.   | With the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, work pressures on teachers increased, low pay and high workload, a lack of professional and social recognition and appreciation of the category. These factors were responsible for greater physical and mental illness.  |
| Camila Penha Duré Vieira<br>Don Bosco Catholic University | 2021 | Mental health of early childhood education teachers in the face of the covid 19 pandemic: study in a municipal school in Campo Grande / MS in Brazil | Dissertation | To analyze the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the mental health of teachers and early childhood education at a municipal school in Campo Grande/MS. | The results indicated that in addition to the psychological impacts directly related to Covid-19, the psychological and social shocks caused by preventive measures to contain the pandemic coexist, such as, for example, the effects of quarantine and social isolation, which limited not only the face-to-face interactions and social relationships, as well as restricting leisure activities. |
| Sheila Maria Gonçalves da Silva<br>Ceara state University | 2021 | Illness of teachers working in the municipal public education network of Quixadá - CE  | Dissertation | Understand the causes and complaints of basic education teachers in the municipal education network of Quixadá.  | The results demonstrated that the teacher's illness during work was related to interpersonal relationships at work, institutional demands for results, the lack of appreciation of the teacher, causing the worsening of the mental health of those surveyed.  |





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|--|------|---|--------------|--|--|
| Priscila Barros de Freitas<br>Ceara state University                     | 2021 | Coffee with affection: a formative experience for promoting teacher emotional health in times of pandemic   | Dissertation | Analyze professional teaching training referenced in the educational principles of Historical-Cultural Psychology, describing emotional health in this process of appropriation of knowledge and practices.  | In the results, it can be seen that with the pandemic and the obligation to work remotely, teachers inevitably began to take on more care and concern for their own families, allocating less time to themselves, mainly because they are women.   |
| Sandra de Araujo Teixeira Bispo<br>Lutheran University 1 of Brazil       | 2022 | Stress among teachers at the Federal Institute of Brasília during the covid-19 pandemic                     | Dissertation | Investigate the influence of stress on the absenteeism of high school and elementary school teachers through an integrative literature review and the level of stress in the work environment of high school and technical school teachers at the Federal Institute of Brasília-IFB during the class period remote access imposed by the pandemic. | The results showed that the majority of IFB teachers perceive themselves as having a high and intermediate level of stress (59.6%). The highest level of stress was identified for females (p=0.04). Teachers who received training that did not meet the needs for remote teaching had a high level of stress (p=0.01). The Autonomy and Control, Roles and Work Environment dimensions were those that presented the highest levels of stress; and Relationship with boss, Interpersonal relationships, Growth and Valuation were those with the lowest levels.  |
| Antoniêdo Araujo de Freitas<br>Federal University of Piauí<br>Foundation | 2023 | Health vulnerability of basic education teachers to Covid-19: analysis in light of the subject-social model | Dissertation | To evaluate SV to Covid-19 between the years 2020 and 2022 of basic education teachers in light of the subject-social model.   | In 2020, the authors identified that the variables that were most associated with Health Vulnerability were: training area (p=0.001), weekly working hours in the state network (p=0.001), link(s) with another( s) education network(s) (p=0.003), sharing working hours with other tasks (p=0.040), inactivity due to health reasons related to teaching work (p=0.001), seeking health services (p= 0.001), worsening of chronic diseases (CD) (p=0.001), diagnosis of CD before 2020 (p=0.001), and leisure planning (p=0.001); on the other hand, the following weakened SV: provision of <i>a face shield</i> or protective glasses by the school (p=0.001), practice of physical activities (p=0.001) and social support from friends (p=0.005).<br>In 2021, the variables that potentiate Health Vulnerability to Covid-19 were: working outside normal hours (p=0.001), seeking the same health services (p=0.001) and practicing physical activities (p=0.001) ; meanwhile, the following weakened SV: ergonomically adequate remote work furniture (p=0.004), inactivity due to work-related health reasons (0.001), worsening of CD during |



|  |      |   |              |   |  |
|--|------|---|--------------|---|--|
|  |      |   |              |   | the pandemic (p=0.001) and leisure planning (p=0.001 ).<br>For 2022, working outside normal working hours (p=0.017) proved to increase Health Vulnerability to Covid-19; and, the following proved to weaken Health Vulnerability: training for remote work (p=0.013), seeking the same health services (p=0.001) and social support from the family (p=0.012).  |
| Martha Eliana Waltermann Lutheran University of Brazil                 | 2021 | Home office work, daily life and the perception of happiness and health of university professors                      | Dissertation | Knowing how working from home, triggered during the Covid-19 pandemic, affected the lives of university professors in Brazil in terms of health, daily routine and perception of happiness.   | The results showed that teaching work from home caused problems in teachers' daily lives: difficulties in reconciling teaching, domestic tasks and childcare; work overload, difficulties in handling new remote work technologies.  |
| Elenise Abreu Coelho Federal University of Santa Maria                 | 2022 | Characteristics of teleworking and burnout syndrome in basic education teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic          | Dissertation | To evaluate the relationship between the characteristics of teleworking and Burnout syndrome in basic education teachers in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, during the Covid-19 pandemic.   | The results of the studies indicated a negative perception of teachers, higher levels of burnout in teachers who already had a diagnosis of mental disorder among teachers who work in early childhood education, primary and secondary education. Correlations were identified between work characteristics and the dimensions of Burnout Syndrome.   |
| Kaíza Rafaelle Lucas Martins Barros State University of Paraíba (UEPB) | 2022 | Burnout syndrome, social support at work and work-family conflict in teachers in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic | Dissertation | To analyze the relationship between the constituent factors of burnout syndrome and the factors of Social Support at Work and Work-Family Conflict in remote high school teachers from public schools in Campina Grande (PB) in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. | The scarcity of Informational Support and the interference of professional schedules in private life are the main experiences of discomfort in the Covid-19 pandemic context. The teachers' home office work interfered with the time dedicated to their family, resulting in conflicts between work and family, with the words 'home' and 'time' being the most frequently mentioned, suggesting that the <i>home office</i> invaded the teachers' private lives, making it difficult for them to have time to dedicate themselves to their family. |
| Alciene Pereira da Silva Franciscan University                         | 2022 | Assessment of stress and empathy in teachers at higher education institutions in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic | Dissertation | Assess the level of stress and its relationship with the empathetic behavior of teachers at Higher Education Institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic.   | As a result of the abrupt closure of Educational Institutions, the uncertainties caused by the pandemic and the lack of familiarity with distance education, the long term of the problem led to exhaustion. Among the psychological symptoms evaluated here, one of the most striking findings to emerge are those related to the relationship between some domains of stress.  |



|  |      |  |              |  |  |
|--|------|--|--------------|--|--|
| Carolina Rocha Dúlios Landim<br>University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos  | 2022 | Psychosocial risk factors for teleworking during the Covid-19 pandemic: a study with teachers at a private university in southern Brazil                 | Dissertation | To identify the most influential psychosocial risk factors for teleworking, during the pandemic, among professors at a private university.   | The proposed model showed that the most influential risk factors in teleworking were: the work context and environment, organizational culture and management, personal experience and commitment, and health care and attention.  |
| Camila Araujo Coelho<br>Lutheran University of Brazil                | 2021 | Well-being and lifestyle habits of university professors at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil   | Dissertation | Identify the perception of well-being and changes in teachers' lifestyle habits in the face of the challenges imposed during the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020.  | The results showed that the teachers investigated are not completely satisfied with life during this pandemic period, as there were changes in the experience of well-being, nutrition, low frequency of physical activities and leisure. The data indicate that the activities that were carried out on a daily basis day have undergone changes with social isolation. Interventions, whether at the university or community level, aimed at promoting health, could result in improvements in the quality of life of this public during and after the pandemic. |
| Mônica Tavares França de Lima<br>University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos | 2022 | Influence of the pandemic on education workers: the case of a federal education institution University education   | Dissertation | Analyze the influences of Covid-19 on the work routine of education professionals, in the context of a federal public university, as well as propose people management strategies that contribute to the health and well-being of these professionals. | The pandemic has affected education workers physically and psychologically. Due to social isolation, the lack of interaction with colleagues, as well as personal relationships were harmed.   |
| Luana dos Passos Bishop<br>University of Pernambuco                  | 2022 | Remote teaching work in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic: repercussions on mental health in teachers at the Federal Institute of Sertão Pernambucano | Dissertation | To analyze the repercussions of remote work, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, on the mental health of teachers at the Instituto Federal do Sertão Pernambucano – IF Sertão PE.   | The research showed the existence of stress, overload and emotional exhaustion in teachers, given the uncertainty of the changes that occurred due to changes in the ways of working.  |

Source: Prepared by the author based on research carried out through the CAPES and BDTD Database, 2022/2023.



## TEACHER HEALTH: SITUATIONS OF VULNERABILITY AND FACTORS RELATED TO ILLNESS

In recent years, studies analyzing teacher health have advanced significantly, opening new paths to deepen knowledge about teaching work conditions, which makes it possible to map the main situations of vulnerability at work to which the category is subjected and their respective problems of health. Among the main situations of vulnerability and factors that led to teacher illness during the Covid-19 pandemic period, are the psychological and social shocks caused by social isolation measures, difficulties in reconciling teaching, domestic tasks and family care, overload work conditions, difficulties in handling technology tools and a lack of appreciation for teachers, causing a worsening of teachers' mental health.

We live in a time of great transformations in the field of education, making the school context require rapid changes. The teacher needs to be aware of a variety of methodological strategies that meet the planning of their classes, so that they can contemplate the engagement of students in the development of their learning. As a result, there is a strain on the teacher's health, resulting in occupational illnesses.

In all professional careers, it is possible to identify intense workloads in the workplace, involving demands for goals and results, quality work and in a systematic way, for example. However, the teaching profession is one of the most affected by these factors of work overload, not only due to the demand for results, but due to several factors, which involve low pay, constant adaptation to different realities (Dworak; Camargo, 2017).

Understanding vulnerability as a state of human existence can expand this concept. Vulnerability gains prominence when it is recognized as a trait of the human condition, of its fragility, lack of protection, reduced capacity and precariousness, in which this condition is permanently exposed and is constantly injured. Reflecting on the dimensions of vulnerability that involve the individual and the community is understanding the essence of care in their presence (Florêncio *et al.* , 2021).

The teacher's work is immaterial, exhausting and requires time for planning and monitoring. In recent years, many changes have been occurring and have a plural character, require multidisciplinary knowledge and have been the object of study in many analyzes and debates, especially with regard to transformations in the teacher's work process (Cervilieri, 2021)

A study carried out by Cervilieri (2021) investigated the relationships between teaching activity and the health problems of teachers in the public education network in the state of São Paulo, in the municipality of Ribeirão Preto. Based on the findings, it was possible to identify that teachers' working conditions were precarious and exhausting, professionals often presented physical and emotional exhaustion as a result of their work, with serious health problems. Teachers are



overwhelmed by excessive work, making it necessary to compromise rest and leisure hours to carry out extra-class activities, increasing emotional tension, increasing the level of stress and anguish of workers, who start to fall ill due to the process. the feeling of impotence.

Given these results, it can be inferred that these factors mentioned are responsible for greater physical and mental illness, making it plausible to conclude that the activities carried out by public school teachers, as they are currently configured, negatively affect the health of these students. workers, leading to greater social and individual and pragmatic vulnerability. Therefore, the need for special attention from school management and the implementation of health policies in this scenario is evident.

In turn, Vieira (2021) analyzed the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health of Early Childhood Education teachers, in a municipal school in Campo Grande, Mato Grosso do Sul. The results indicated psychological and social impacts caused by preventive measures to contain the pandemic. Still according to the findings, the effects of quarantine and social isolation limited not only face-to-face interactions and social relationships, but also restricted the carrying out of leisure activities. Such factors triggered profound fatigue and occupational and emotional exhaustion in teachers, impacting health conditions.

The research developed by Silva (2021) sought to understand the causes and complaints of Basic Education teachers in the municipal education network of Quixadá, in Ceará. The results showed that the complaints were related to intense and frequent headaches, migraines, hypertension, nodules and cracks in the vocal cords, depression, voice difficulty, nervous gastritis, hearing loss, anxiety disorder, urinary infection, hoarseness, thyroid, stress, discouragement, fatigue, mental exhaustion, among other complaints linked to or enhanced by the work environment. The findings demonstrated that the teacher's illness during work was related to interpersonal ties at work, institutional demands for results, and the lack of appreciation for the teacher, which caused the worsening of the mental health of those studied (Silva, 2021). With the pandemic, the factors were accentuated, as many teachers found themselves alone, without being seen, heard or cared for.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, as already highlighted, the teacher's work began to receive new demands, adaptation to classes in a remote format, use of technologies, work in the family environment. The heavy workload led teachers to reduce their hours of rest, sleep and leisure activities to complete professional requirements, which increased gradually and daily.

Along these lines, Freitas (2021) investigated teacher emotional health and its relationship with the continuing education of teachers in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. For the author, with the obligation to work remotely, teachers inevitably began to take on more care and concern for their own families, allocating less time to themselves, mainly because they are women. Ademas, highlighted denialism, a thought that there is no need to take care of mental and emotional health.



Such statements emphasize the lack of interest in teachers' health and this fact must be considered by studies focused on this topic. Therefore, teacher training can and should be a space for promoting emotional health and preventing illness.

The emotional and psychological illness of education workers, especially teachers in the workplace, caused by occupational stress, can influence physical and mental health, leading to the absence of teachers in schools, affecting quality of life, well-being and the performance of work activities.

Continuing, Teixeira Bispo (2022) investigated the level of stress in the work environment of high school and technical school teachers at the Federal Institute of Brasília (IFB), during the period of remote classes imposed by the pandemic, and the influence of stress on absenteeism of secondary and elementary school teachers. The results showed that the majority of teachers perceived themselves as having a high and intermediate level of stress (59.6%). The highest level of stress was identified for females ( $p=0.04$ ). Teachers who received training that did not meet the needs for remote teaching had a high level of stress ( $p=0.01$ ). The dimensions autonomy and control, roles and work environment were those that presented the highest levels of stress. On the other hand, teachers with a good relationship with their boss, interpersonal relationships, professional growth and appreciation presented the lowest levels. The results of this study contribute to actions aimed at the well-being of teachers in the workplace. It is suggested that teachers, managers and organizations carry out collective preventive actions in order to reduce the illness of these professionals, such as, for example, choosing training that best meets the demands related to the execution of teaching activities.

The study by Freitas (2023) examined the health vulnerability to Covid-19, between the years 2020 and 2022, of Basic Education teachers, in light of the subject-social model. The results showed that working conditions, especially excessive working hours and the situation of the work environment, showed practices and the physical situation at work as the biggest indicators of SV to Covid-19.

In 2020, teachers had more variables/concepts associated with Covid-19, highlighting conditions of precariousness and, consequently, potential for SV to Covid-19. Also in 2020, there were more concepts/variables about protective and health-promoting behaviors with an association. Throughout the period analyzed, working conditions, especially excessive working hours and the situation of the work environment, revealed practices and the physical situation at work as indicators of increased SV to Covid19 in teachers.

Furthermore, the research carried out by Waltermann, in 2021, aimed to understand how working from *home*, triggered during the Covid-19 pandemic, affected the lives of university professors in Brazil in terms of health, daily routine and perception of happiness. The results showed





that teaching work from *home* caused problems in teachers' daily lives, such as: difficulties in reconciling teaching, domestic tasks and childcare; work overload, difficulties in handling new remote work technologies. Furthermore, according to Waltermann (2021), these factors affected the physical and emotional health of teachers and interfered with family relationships, leisure and rest spaces, increasing stress. Furthermore, the researcher observed that remote professional work parallel to family and domestic life harmed emotional health and the perception of happiness, since the teacher was unable to allocate time to family, leisure and rest.

Burnout syndrome is a psychosocial phenomenon that emerged as a “response to stressors present in work situations, which affects professionals who maintain a constant and direct relationship with other people” (Coelho, 2022, p. 28).

The research by Barros (2022) reflected on the relationship between the constituent factors of Burnout Syndrome and the factors of Social Support at Work and Work-Family Conflict. It identified a significant percentage of teachers with Burnout Syndrome, and also found greater interference from Work in the Family. Working entirely from home ( *home office* ) and having irreconcilable professional and family schedules were the main sources of teacher discomfort during the pandemic. The research result denoted an important contribution so that school managers can rethink remote work, together with the teaching category, aiming to alleviate the mental exhaustion experienced in the Covid-19 pandemic.

Such findings encourage the need to carry out interventions that aim to promote teachers' mental health, which will only be effective through changes in the organization of work, considering the characteristics and specificities of each context of activity and level of education of each professional.

Coelho (2022), in his master's thesis, evaluated the connection between the characteristics of teleworking and Burnout Syndrome in Basic Education teachers in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings indicated that the main factors in the psychological illness of teachers were overload, exhausting working hours and intense work pace, lack of support and training, scarcity of teaching resources, inadequate infrastructure and conflicts with management, the low professional discredit from which it comes enjoying the category, mainly in relation to career and salary prospects. Due to all these factors, the organization of teaching work has characteristics that expose teachers to the risk of developing Burnout Syndrome.

Silva's Research (2022) sought to evaluate the level of stress and its relationship with the empathetic behavior of teachers at Higher Education Institutions in the five Regions of Brazil, during the Covid-19 pandemic. The main results demonstrated that stress and empathy levels in university professors were not statistically relevant in terms of health and lifestyle parameters. For the author, it is essential to highlight that:





[...] the variances in the relationships between levels of empathy and stress can be a predictor that adaptation strategies to stressful circumstances can be aimed at solving problems, such as, for example, technological training and adaptation to remote classes in times of pandemic (Silva, 2022, p. 33).

Similarly, Landim (2022) sought to identify the most influential psychosocial risk factors of teleworking, during the pandemic, among teachers in Rio Grande do Sul. The study showed that, among the factors that increase damage to mental health, organizational management and personal experiences, or the way each individual internalizes events, proved to be more relevant than other factors when it came to satisfaction, performance and perceived positive aspects of teleworking (Landim, 2022).

Lima (2022) investigated the influences of Covid-19 on the work routine of education professionals at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Based on the findings, he found that the Covid-19 pandemic affected the physical and psychological health of workers education due to social isolation, lack of interaction with colleagues, as well as personal relationships, which were damaged. He observed that the psychosocial risk factors that can lead education workers to stress and illness, during and after the pandemic, present themselves as an important task for managers, who need to think about protective measures capable of reducing the impacts of Covid-19 on the physical and mental health of education workers, providing greater quality of life.

The research carried out by Bispo (2022) in the Master's Dissertation analyzed the repercussions of remote work, in the context of the COVID19 Pandemic, on the mental health of teachers at the Instituto Federal do Sertão Pernambucano – IF Sertão PE. The results showed the existence of stress, overload and emotional exhaustion among teachers, given the uncertainty of the changes that occurred due to changes in the way they work. However, the findings also demonstrated a feeling of pleasure and fulfillment on the part of teachers in carrying out their activities, even with the difficulties faced in the context of the Covid 19 Pandemic.

It is necessary to broaden the perspective on teachers' health, as, in addition to understanding the serious biological risks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there are other risks that interfere with the physical and mental well-being of teachers, such as stress, overload and emotional exhaustion in teachers, faced with the uncertainty of the changes that occurred due to changes in the way they work.

On the other hand, Vieira (2021) identified and learned about the mental health of Early Childhood Education teachers in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, in a municipal school in Campo Grande, Mato Grosso do Sul. Depending on the findings, in addition to the direct psychological impacts related to Covid-19, the psychological and social shocks caused by preventive measures to contain the pandemic coexist, for example, the effects of quarantine and social isolation, which have



limited not only face-to-face interactions and social relationships, but restrict the carrying out leisure activities.

Coelho (2021), in his dissertation, investigated the perception of well-being and changes in teachers' lifestyle habits in the face of the challenges imposed by the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020. The results showed that the teachers investigated did not they were completely satisfied with life during the pandemic period, as there were changes in the experience of well-being, nutrition, and little frequency of physical activities and leisure. The data showed that day-to-day activities underwent changes due to social isolation.

Understanding the dynamics of diseases associated with a teacher's work requires a more human perspective on the professional, understanding that everyone carries out their activities in a certain way and not everyone reacts to the stimuli provided by their work in the same way. Thus, interventions, whether at the university or community level, aimed at promoting health, could result in improvements in the quality of life of this public during and after the pandemic.

According to Mocelini (2020), teachers need to be seen as promoting human development, they are committed and should direct, teach and correctly follow the members of a team, a group, an institution and, for this responsibility, it is essential to be prepared to contemplate everyone. To achieve this, it is necessary for the teacher to be an excellent communicator, facilitator, organizer, who knows how to train, delegate and supervise so that life projects can be carried out. The teacher needs to be the leader of his own life project, commanding, with self-confidence and autonomy, motivating and promoting human values, activating the best in himself, awakening his abilities through himself, not only accumulating results, but seeking your happiness and freedom, reinforcing your internal world and culture of prosperity, conquering the external world and your well-being, making your profession something that satisfies you, transmitting love for your work. It is a path of growth, both individual and collective.

Social responsibility for quality of life involves better working conditions, less institutional pressure and professional well-being. One of the possible paths will be to develop, together with professionals, a mental and psychological health policy, which can provide ways to understand teachers in periods of existential crisis and serve as a support network for the exercise of their profession (Oliveira, 2023).

Finally, the word cloud is used to highlight the vulnerable situations addressed by the studies, which impacted the worker's health, leading to the teacher's illness.

Figure 1 – Word Cloud



Source: Prepared by the author (2023)

Understanding what has led teachers to become ill is essential to encourage prevention and health promotion actions for these workers, contributing to improving their quality of life and well-being. Physical health and mental health are components that promote an individual's ability to live, work, manage their own life, remain functional and have a quality of life to overcome obstacles and challenges in everyday life, relate well to themselves and others. Teachers often do not recognize themselves in the product of their work. There is an emptying of meaning in this worker, in the characteristics of emotional exhaustion, overload of working hours, loss or devaluation of professional identity. What in other moments was synonymous with achievement, through mental illness, loses its meaning of being.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The results emphasized that the vulnerable situations experienced in daily school life, during the Covid-19 Pandemic and post-pandemic period, impacted the teacher's well-being, leading, in many situations, to mental illness and the presence of Burnout Syndrome. .

The present study identified, through the State of Knowledge, the main factors related to teacher illness, such as: socioeconomic pressures, overload of working hours, overload of multiple tasks, external demands, both from the state and from families. , poor mastery of technological tools, psychological shocks, lack of interaction with colleagues, stress, emotional exhaustion imposed by the pandemic panorama, loss or devaluation of professional identity.



In this sense, the research contributes by highlighting the factors that led/lead teachers to become ill, making them vulnerable and, given these results, it is urgent to plan actions to improve the quality of life, health and well-being of these professionals . Furthermore, institutions need to develop health promotion actions, in which teachers can express their emotions.

The Covid-19 pandemic has unevenly affected different population groups, especially teachers, despite there being studies focusing on teacher illness. There is little scientific evidence relating vulnerability in the context of Basic Education teachers, who are part of a group vulnerable to Covid-19 and all situations imposed by the pandemic scenario and the current education panorama.

It becomes relevant to investigate the situations of vulnerability experienced by Basic Education teachers during the pandemic period and after, since there are indications that they are experiencing processes of vulnerability, due to the living and working conditions to which they were subjected due to social distancing and for the suspension of face-to-face classes. To this end, it is necessary to develop studies that monitor the health status of these professionals and that can contribute to the implementation of health policies focusing on teachers.



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