

# Prevalence and Dimensions of Burnout Syndrome among Ecuadorian University Faculty: An Initial Diagnostic Analysis for the Development of Preventive Models

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## Abstract

*This study examines the prevalence and patterns of burnout syndrome among university faculty in Ecuador through an initial diagnostic assessment aimed at informing future preventive interventions. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was administered to 103 faculty members from a public higher education institution representing various academic programs. The results indicate concerning levels in two of the three assessed dimensions. High depersonalization was identified in 54.37% of participants, while 98.06% reported low levels of personal accomplishment, reflecting a substantial risk of professional disengagement. In contrast, emotional exhaustion showed a more heterogeneous distribution, with low, moderate, and high levels observed across the sample. These findings reveal the presence of significant psychosocial risks within the academic work environment and underscore the need to strengthen institutional strategies that promote faculty well-being. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of developing organizational management models focused on preventing burnout and supporting sustainable academic performance. Overall, this research provides contextualized empirical evidence that enhances understanding of burnout in Ecuadorian higher education and supports the formulation of preventive policies within university systems.*

**Keywords:** *Burnout, University Faculty, Higher Education, Occupational Well-Being, Prevention.*

## Introduction

Contemporary work environments are increasingly characterized by growing complexity and escalating professional demands, conditions that have positioned burnout syndrome as one of the most significant psychosocial risks in modern organizations. The higher education sector is no exception. Universities face sustained pressure related to academic productivity, including publication requirements, institutional ranking expectations, administrative responsibilities, community engagement activities, and the increasing complexity of teaching and learning environments. As highlighted by the Inter-American Development Bank (2023), higher education institutions in the region are confronting mounting challenges associated with faculty occupational well-being. Despite this context, empirical research examining the prevalence of burnout among university faculty in Latin America—and particularly in Ecuador—remains limited, constraining the development of effective institutional prevention and support strategies.

In this study, burnout syndrome is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct reflecting psychological strain among university faculty, primarily manifested through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced perceptions of personal accomplishment. These dimensions are assessed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), one of the most widely validated instruments in burnout research. The persistent presence of burnout affects not only faculty health but also teaching quality, institutional climate, and students' academic performance and innovation capacity. Recent studies have documented a sustained

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increase in burnout among university professors, largely attributed to academic overload and performance-related pressures (Herrera & Vinueza, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the present study provides an initial diagnostic assessment of burnout syndrome among Ecuadorian university faculty, offering contextualized empirical evidence from an institutional setting that remains underexplored in the national literature. The findings serve as a foundation for the development of preventive management models aimed at strengthening occupational well-being and enhancing academic performance in universities committed to educational quality. In doing so, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of professional burnout within Ecuadorian higher education.

## Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative, descriptive research design and involved 103 faculty members from various academic programs at a public higher education institution in Ecuador, located in the province of Manabí. This design enabled an initial diagnostic assessment of burnout syndrome within its specific institutional context.

Burnout was assessed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a widely validated instrument for measuring occupational burnout. The MBI evaluates burnout across three core dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment, which were applied in accordance with the university context of the study population. As noted by Maslach, Leiter, and Jackson (2022), these dimensions constitute the most widely accepted conceptual framework for burnout assessment. Likewise, Rodríguez et al. (2024) confirm that the MBI remains one of the most reliable and valid instruments for measuring burnout in higher education settings.

Data were collected through a self-administered digital questionnaire. The resulting data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to identify the distribution of burnout levels among the participating faculty members.

## Results

Among the 103 faculty members surveyed across different academic programs, 53.5% were female and 46.5% were male. With respect to age distribution, the largest proportion of participants fell within the 38–47 age group, followed by 32% aged between 28 and 37 years. This distribution reflects the presence of both early-career and more experienced academic professionals within the institution.

Regarding work experience, although a substantial proportion of participants were at a mature stage in their professional careers, most reported between one and three years of service at the institution. This finding suggests relatively recent processes of contractual incorporation within the university.

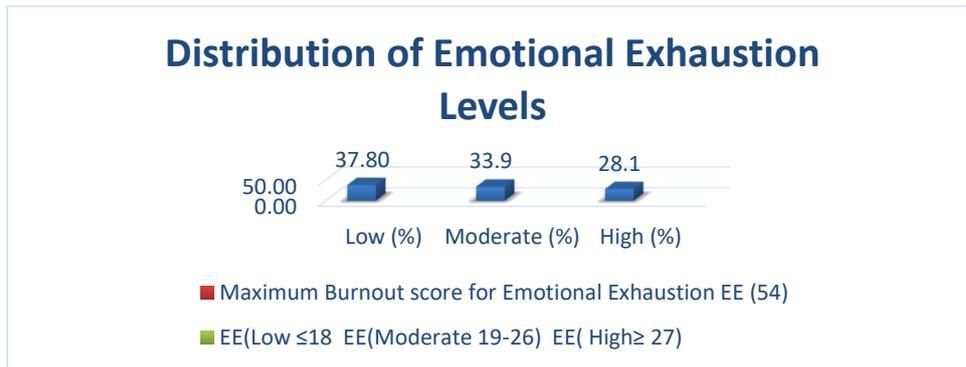
Burnout syndrome was analyzed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which is commonly employed in research on occupational stress among university faculty. The results allowed for a differentiated examination of the dimensions that structure burnout within the studied population. Interpretation followed established scoring thresholds for each dimension, in accordance with methodological guidelines reported in prior studies (Rodríguez et al., 2024). Table 1 presents the overall prevalence of burnout based on the analyzed dimensions.

**Table 1. Variable 1: Overall Summary Analysis of Burnout Syndrome**

Emotional Exhaustion (%)	Depersonalization (%)	Personal Accomplishment (%)	Presence of Burnout (%)
28.16	54.37	0.97	22.33

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration.

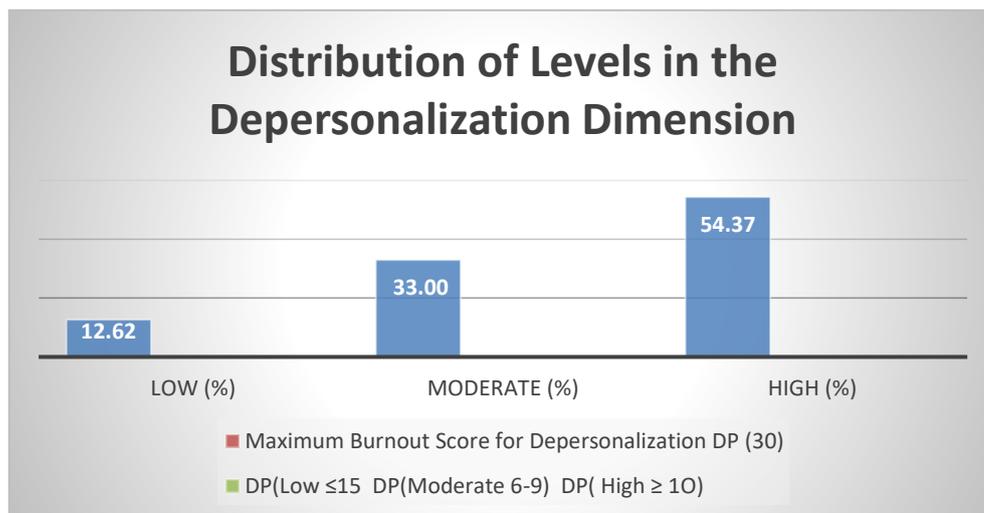
An individual analysis was conducted for each dimension of burnout syndrome. For the emotional exhaustion dimension, which comprises nine items, the results indicated that 37.8% of faculty members were classified at a low level, 33.9% at a moderate level, and 28.1% at a high level. Given that the maximum possible score for this dimension is 54 points, the following classification thresholds were applied: low ( $\leq 19$ ), moderate (20–26), and high ( $\geq 27$ ). Although a proportion of faculty members reported high levels of emotional exhaustion, the largest share of participants fell within the low-level category, suggesting that not all respondents are exposed to a high risk of burnout. The percentage distribution for this dimension is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Percentage distribution of emotional exhaustion levels

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration

For the depersonalization dimension, 54.37% of participants were classified at a high level, 33.0% at a moderate level, and 12.62% at a low level. With a maximum possible score of 30 points, the classification thresholds were defined as follows: low ( $\leq 6$ ), moderate (7–9), and high ( $\geq 10$ ). These results indicate that more than half of the evaluated faculty members exhibit attitudes associated with emotional distancing and interpersonal detachment in the workplace, reflecting an elevated risk within the burnout syndrome. The percentage distribution for this dimension is presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Percentage distribution of depersonalization levels

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration

In the personal accomplishment dimension, which is interpreted inversely, the results indicate that 98.06% of participants were classified at a low level, which—given the inverse nature of this dimension—represents the highest level of risk. Only 0.97% of participants were classified at a moderate level, and an equal proportion (0.97%) at a high level. Considering that the maximum possible score for this dimension is 48 points, the classification thresholds were defined as follows: low ( $\geq 30$ ), moderate (34–39), and high ( $\leq 40$ ). These findings indicate that the vast majority of faculty members perceive low levels of personal accomplishment, a condition commonly associated with feelings of inefficacy, dissatisfaction, and limited professional achievement. Consequently, this dimension constitutes a significant vulnerability factor for the development of burnout syndrome. The percentage distribution for this dimension is presented in Figure 3.

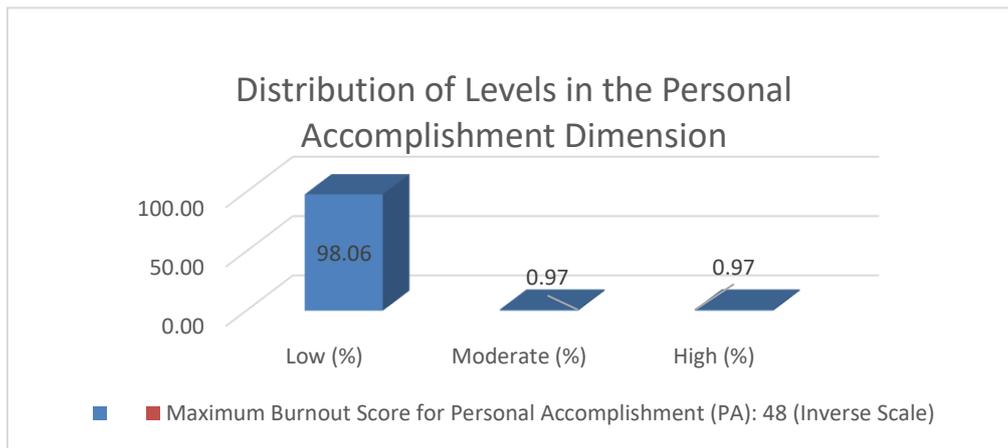


Figure 3. Percentage distribution of burnout levels in the personal accomplishment dimension

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Along the same line of analysis, and in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the factors associated with burnout syndrome and its relationship with organizational performance, the prevalence of organizational performance variables was examined using an organizational performance questionnaire. This instrument was structured around four key dimensions: faculty satisfaction, innovation, interpersonal conflicts, and leadership style. Its application made it possible to assess faculty perceptions regarding the work environment, professional development opportunities, institutional support for innovation, conflict management mechanisms, and the effectiveness of organizational leadership.

The results, expressed as percentages, reflect the current institutional context perceived by faculty members across these dimensions and provide essential input for the design of an integrated management model aimed at preventing burnout syndrome. In this regard, Pazos (2021) emphasizes the importance of incorporating management models that guide preventive actions and coping strategies for professional burnout, thereby enhancing teaching performance and contributing to improvements in educational quality (see Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5).

Table 2. Prevalence in the Faculty Satisfaction Dimension

Dimension	No. of Items	Items	Results(%) by Classification
Faculty Satisfaction	1	Feels satisfied with the work environment at the institution.	High: 58.68%

	2	Feels valued for his/her teaching performance within the institution.	
	3	Is satisfied with the professional development opportunities provided.	<b>Moderate:</b> 37.33%
	4.	Considers that the level of support received from the administration is adequate.	
	5	Believes that working conditions meet professional expectations.	<b>Low:</b> 4%
	6	Agrees with the distribution of working hours.	

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration

**Table 3. Prevalence in the Innovation Dimension**

Dimension	No.of Items	Items	Results(%)by Classification
<b>Innovation</b>	1	The institution where the respondent works encourages the implementation of new teaching methodologies.	<b>High:</b> 61.30%
	2	The institution provides openness to proposing and applying innovative ideas.	
	3	Continuous training in innovative digital and pedagogical tools is facilitated.	<b>Moderate:</b> 34.00%
	4.	The institution assesses the impact of training on performance improvement and on the implementation of innovative ideas.	
			<b>Low:</b> 4.70%

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration

Table 4. Prevalence in the Interpersonal Conflicts Dimension

Dimension	No.of Items	Items	Results(%)by Classification
Interpersonal Conflicts	1	There are frequent conflicts among colleagues in the respondent's work area.	<b>High:</b> 54.92%
	2	Disagreements among faculty members are managed effectively.	
	3	Communication among academic staff is respectful and constructive.	<b>Moderate:</b> 34.02%
	4.	In the work area, the respondent feels comfortable expressing opinions different from those of colleagues.	
	5	The respondent considers the institution's process for addressing and resolving conflicts to be effective when they arise.	<b>Low:</b> 11.07%
	6	Interpersonal conflicts are perceived to influence staff turnover or work absenteeism within the institution.	

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Table 5. Prevalence in the Leadership Styles Dimension

Dimension	No.of Items	Items	Results(%)by Classification
Leadership Styles	1	Academic leaders encourage participation and motivation.	<b>High:</b> 57.06%
	2	Decisions in the work area are made in a democratic manner.	
	3	Institutional authorities show interest in the needs of the faculty.	<b>Moderate:</b> 34.20%
	4.	Leadership within the institution is effective in achieving academic goals.	
	5	Leadership staff promote a	<b>Low:</b> 8.73%

		positive and collaborative work environment.	
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**Source:** Authors' own elaboration

Table 6 presents a summarized analysis of the main findings and their implications for burnout syndrome, derived from the application of the organizational performance questionnaire. This instrument comprised 21 items and was administered jointly with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) using a digital format. The results support the conceptualization of burnout syndrome as a process of physical and psychological exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to work overload and sustained, inadequately managed stressors (De la Guerra et al., 2021a).

**Table 6. Key Results of Organizational Performance and Its Implications for Burnout, Focusing on Teachers**

Dimension	Main Results	Implications for Burnout
<b>Teacher Satisfaction</b>	Teachers reported a high level of job satisfaction, with 58.68% across the six items of this dimension.	The results of this study demonstrate high levels in factors such as teaching performance, professional development opportunities, institutional support, work environment, working conditions, and schedule distribution. Sánchez and Castañeda (2022) indicate that the reduction of Burnout syndrome, together with high levels of job satisfaction, is associated with a lower intention to leave the profession among teachers.
<b>Innovation</b>	A high level of 61.3% was found in this dimension across the four items, highlighting its importance for organizational productivity.	The innovation dimension shows favorable results, as the implementation of new teaching methodologies is promoted, continuous training in digital tools is widely provided, innovative ideas are encouraged, and impact assessments are conducted. According to Santos et al. (2024), strengthening teachers' digital competencies is associated with a reduction in Burnout and greater organizational commitment.
<b>Interpersonal Conflicts</b>	The study reports an overall high percentage of 54.92%; however, it also indicates that interpersonal conflicts among colleagues are frequent in the work environment and that these conflicts influence staff turnover and work absenteeism.	It is important to improve interpersonal relationships in the workplace, as positive relationships foster higher individual and organizational performance. Orozco et al. (2021) argue that socio-labor relations significantly influence the work system and require strong interpersonal components to ensure productivity and a healthy work environment. They further note that work performance and interpersonal relationships can be affected by various factors, potentially leading to a loss of empathy and cordiality, among other outcomes.
<b>Leadership Style</b>	Across all items, favorable results were observed, with 57.06% agreement in factors related to participation and motivation, democratic decision-making, leadership, and a positive and	The findings reveal a predominantly participatory work environment with leadership capacity. Nevertheless, greater emphasis should be placed on transformational leadership. As proposed by Tomalá (2021), this approach is conceived as a driver of

	collaborative work climate; however, greater attention to teachers' needs is still required.	organizational action, oriented toward collective well-being and the achievement of institutional objectives through dimensions such as individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation. Special attention to intellectual stimulation is essential, as it contributes to emotional and behavioral management, thereby improving interpersonal relationships, which in the present study appear to be weakened.
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**Source:** Authors' own elaboration

### *Statistical Analysis (SPSS)*

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software. Mean scores were calculated for each dimension of the two study variables. For the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), mean values were obtained for Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. Similarly, for the organizational performance variable, mean scores were calculated for Teacher Satisfaction, Innovation, Interpersonal Conflicts, and Leadership Style. Subsequently, data normality was assessed.

In empirical research, the selection of appropriate statistical procedures depends on the distributional characteristics of the data. Assessing data normality represents a critical preliminary step, as it informs the suitability of subsequent analytical methods and supports the validity of statistical inferences (Sánchez et al., 2024). Normality tests are commonly used to evaluate the extent to which a sample approximates a normal distribution, an assumption underlying many parametric statistical techniques.

Given that the sample size exceeded 50 participants, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was applied. As described by Molina and Molina (2025), this test compares the empirical cumulative distribution of the sample with the corresponding theoretical cumulative distribution. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were established:

- **H<sub>0</sub> (null hypothesis):** The data follow a normal distribution.
- **H<sub>1</sub> (alternative hypothesis):** The data do not follow a normal distribution.

**The decision criteria were defined as follows:**

- If  $p > 0.05$ , the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating that the data are normally distributed and that parametric statistical tests may be applied.
- If  $p < 0.05$ , the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that the data are not normally distributed and that non-parametric statistical tests should be used.

**Table 7. Kolmogorov–Smirnov Normality Test**

Test de Normalidad						
	Kolmogórov-Smirnov					
	Statistic	df	Sig.			
AE_PROM	.102	103	.010			
DP_PROM	.151	103	.000			
RP_PROM	.499	103	.000			

INN_PROM	.208	103	.000			
CON_PROM	.140	103	.000			
LID_PROM	.184	103	.000			

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Considering that the sample size exceeded 50 participants, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was employed to evaluate data distribution characteristics and to justify the use of non-parametric statistical procedures.

**Table 8. Spearman's Rho Correlation Analysis between Burnout Dimensions and Organizational Performance**

### Correlations

			AE_PROM	DP_PROM	RP_PROM	SAT_PROM	INN_PROM	CON_PROM	LID_PROM
Spearman's rho	AE_PROM	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.020	-.054	.	.131	.044	-.068
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.841	.587	.	.187	.662	.496
		N	103	103	103	103	103	103	103
	DP_PROM	Correlation Coefficient	.020	1.000	.111	.	.120	.125	-.010
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.841	.	.263	.	.227	.209	.918
		N	103	103	103	103	103	103	103
	RP_PROM	Correlation Coefficient	-.054	.111	1.000	.	-.156	.000	.053

		Sig. (2-tailed)	.587	.263	.	.	.116	.999	.598
		N	103	103	103	103	103	103	103
SAT_PRO M		Correlation Coefficient	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		N	103	103	103	103	103	103	103
INN_PRO M		Correlation Coefficient	.131	.120	-.156	.	1.000	-.073	.068
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.187	.227	.116	.	.	.463	.495
		N	103	103	103	103	103	103	103
CON_PR OM		Correlation Coefficient	.044	.125	.000	.	-.073	1.000	.026
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.662	.209	.999	.	.463	.	.792
		N	103	103	103	103	103	103	103
LID_PRO M		Correlation Coefficient	-.068	-.010	.053	.	.068	.026	1.000

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.496	.918	.598	.	.495	.792	.
	N	103	103	103	103	103	103	103

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration

When the non-parametric Spearman's rank correlation test was applied, the results indicated very low correlation coefficients, both positive and negative, with two-tailed significance values exceeding 0.05 across all tested combinations. These findings demonstrate the absence of statistically significant correlations between the analyzed variables. In the studied sample, perceived burnout levels among university faculty did not show a significant linear association with organizational performance.

From a theoretical standpoint, higher levels of burnout would be expected to correspond with lower levels of organizational performance. However, the lack of significant correlations in this study may be attributable to factors such as the sample size, homogeneity in participants' responses, or the influence of mediating variables, including institutional support mechanisms or individual work motivation. Consequently, these findings suggest that, within this specific institutional context, the analyzed dimensions operate relatively independently, underscoring the need for future research employing larger samples or longitudinal designs to more robustly examine the relationship between burnout and organizational performance.

In summary, the results reveal a notable prevalence of burnout syndrome among the evaluated faculty members. Specifically, in the emotional exhaustion dimension, 37.8% of participants were classified at a low level, 33.9% at a moderate level, and 28.1% at a high level. Although a proportion of faculty members appears to be considerably affected, the majority did not exhibit extreme exhaustion in this dimension. Nevertheless, preventive attention remains necessary to avoid potential progression, as emotional exhaustion has been identified as one of the earliest manifestations of teacher burnout in high-demand contexts (Ávila et al., 2024).

With respect to the depersonalization dimension, greater impairment was observed, with 54.37% of faculty members classified at a high level, 33.0% at a moderate level, and 12.62% at a low level. These findings indicate that more than half of the teaching staff experience emotional distancing, indifference, or detachment toward their professional responsibilities within the institutional environment. The elevated levels of depersonalization identified in this study are consistent with previous research suggesting that tense socio-occupational relationships significantly intensify this component of burnout (Orozco et al., 2021).

Finally, the personal accomplishment dimension yielded the most concerning results, as 98.06% of participants were classified at a low level. This outcome reflects widespread perceptions of reduced professional efficacy, dissatisfaction, and limited personal achievement. Given the inverse interpretation of this dimension, these results indicate a high risk for the development of burnout syndrome and are consistent with prior studies reporting diminished professional accomplishment under conditions of contractual instability (Sánchez & Castañeda, 2022).

## Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a pronounced risk pattern among the evaluated university faculty, particularly characterized by low levels of personal accomplishment and high levels of depersonalization. These results are consistent with prior research indicating that highly demanding work environments and unstable organizational conditions increase vulnerability to burnout syndrome in higher education settings (De la Guerra et al., 2021a). Moreover, the findings align with empirical evidence from similar institutional

contexts in which elevated burnout levels have been observed among individuals in educational management roles, suggesting that organizational factors exert a transversal influence across multiple levels of university structures (De la Guerra-De Urioste et al., 2021b).

Although emotional exhaustion did not reach critical levels for the majority of participants, the impairment observed in the remaining dimensions suggests that faculty members may be experiencing psychological strain that adversely affects both their sense of professional achievement and their relationship with work. Accordingly, these results reinforce the importance of implementing institutional support strategies, including faculty well-being programs, emotional support initiatives, strengthened academic leadership, balanced workload policies, and continuous professional development—particularly in the technological domain. As emphasized by Santos et al. (2024), the development of digital competencies, combined with institutional support mechanisms, can contribute to reducing burnout levels and enhancing faculty engagement.

## Conclusions

The diagnostic findings of this study are consistent with recent research in Latin America reporting an increasing prevalence of burnout among university faculty. The convergence of work overload, institutional pressure, and escalating technological demands emerges as a key set of contributing factors. These results highlight the need for higher education institutions to strengthen occupational health and well-being policies by promoting strategies focused on emotional regulation, work–life balance, and the prevention of professional burnout.

Furthermore, the analysis confirms the presence of significant indicators of burnout syndrome among Ecuadorian university faculty, particularly in the dimensions of depersonalization and low personal accomplishment. These findings underscore the urgency of designing and implementing preventive models aimed at addressing professional exhaustion before it more deeply affects organizational climate and institutional performance.

Finally, this study provides an initial empirical foundation for future research incorporating more robust correlational approaches and longitudinal designs. Such efforts are essential for supporting management models centered on faculty well-being and for strengthening educational quality within higher education systems.

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