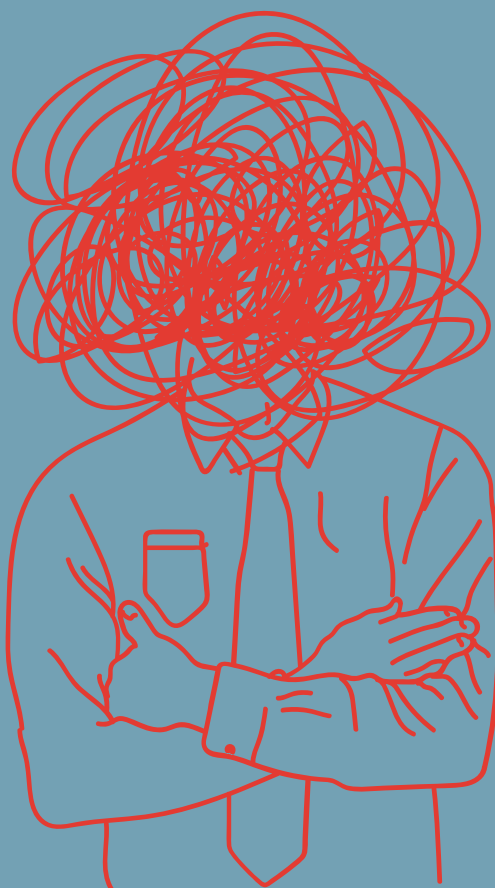# EXIT burnout

ITALIAN MAPPING REPORT

Stressors in Youthworking

Introduction

This report aims to highlight the results obtained from various national publications focused on the phenomenon of burnout in workers in the socio-educational field and to relate them to a survey questionnaire produced within the framework of the ExitBurnout project. During the research, we mainly focused on three socio-educational categories: teachers, social youth workers, and youth workers in the non-formal educational field.

Research in this field has not yet been sufficiently systematized. This underlines the importance of creating a mapping that highlights the correlation between some stress factors and the consequences that these may have in the long run.
With this project, the partners involved intend to develop actions aimed at the psycho-physical-emotional well-being of all the protagonists of the youth sector.
The idea is to improve the working conditions of those who systemically work in the educational field (on a personal, organizational, and community level) to improve the quality of the relationship with young people and have a decisive impact on individuals and the community.

The burnout phenomenon must be approached as a multidimensional syndrome: the etiopathogenesis of burnout can be attributed to the articulation of individual, relational, work, organizational, and historical-cultural factors. None of these in isolation can lead to burnout, but their simultaneity seems to determine it. (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Burnout syndrome is usually characterized by particulars (Fontana et al., 1993):
1. Moods include anxiety, irritability, physical exhaustion, panic, agitation, guilt, negativism, and low self-esteem.
2. Somatizations, including migraine, sweating, insomnia, gastrointestinal disorders, and paresthesias.
3. Behavioral reactions include frequent absences or delays in the workplace, defensive closure to dialogue, and emotional detachment from the interlocutor.

Taking into consideration the review by Converso and colleagues (2009), the study of burnout syndrome can follow different evolutionary paths and have other spheres of origin:

- Individual: relating to the socio-demographic characteristics, personality system, and/or motivations of those affected by the syndrome.

- Interpersonal: primarily concerns the relationship with users, an aspect that constitutes the peculiarity of burnout (Mancini & Magnani, 2008). However, the interpersonal dimension also includes the relational climate with colleagues and the work group: it is an intermediate interpretative level, which can be traced back in part to the interpersonal origins of the syndrome, in part to the organizational ones (Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 1997/2000).

- Organizational: this dimension has assumed progressive importance to lead to the affirmation that, contrary to personal factors and user characteristics, organizational elements are predictive of burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). For Maslach and Leiter (1997; 2000), the maladjustment between the person and the work that generates job burnout is produced in the disequilibrium related to six areas of working life: work overload, lack of control, insufficient gratification, the collapse of the sense of belonging community, lack of equity and conflict of values.

The survey

During the survey carried out through the questionnaire created in the frame of the ExitBurnout project, we decided to investigate some of the aspects that could lead to a burnout experience. We asked respondents to identify how stressors affect their daily lives, how they routinely interact with these constituents, and, most important to our research, what organizations could do to decrease these factors.

The sample was made up of 105 people: 36 teachers (34.3%), 33 educators (31.4%) and 36 youth workers (34.3%).
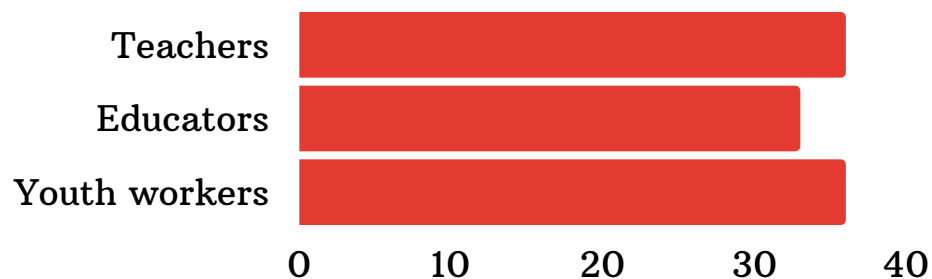
Below are the stress factors identified in the planning phase and among which the interviewees could choose - multiple choice, the percentage of response obtained is reported in brackets, and the three most common are highlighted - :

- An adequate financial recognition for the work requested and performed (time - responsibility) (52.6%)
- The balance between work and personal life (52.6%)
- Internal communication within the organization (50%)
- Have a defined and recognized role (34.2%)
- Long-term economic stability (31.6%)
- Space to express my potential (31.6%)
- Relationship with colleagues (28.9%)
- The target I work with (28.9%)
- The freedom to be able to express my ideas (18.4%)
- Work context (13.2%)
- Support for personal and professional development (13.2%)
- The required skills or personal attitudes concerning the project objectives (7.9%)

From the data collected, it emerges that the internal organization of the workplace is one of the aspects that most influences the well-being of workers. These appear to need punctual scheduling of commitments and correlated and precise communication to better plan their life outside the working context.

Another fundamental aspect is adequate financial recognition. Very often in this field of work, there seems to be neither a certainty in terms of time nor the funds necessary to pay for the required work. In the socio-educational area, the bond of vocation and mission towards a higher goal is still strong, which justifies a low remuneration for services and the consequent reduced economic recognition for operators working in the field.

On an individual level, these factors influence the psycho-social-emotional well-being of the interviewees. Some answers to the open questions are given below. These answers represent the starting point for designing concrete prevention actions that can inspire both workers and organizations.

1. How do these stressors impact your psycho-social-emotional well-being?
- "They increase fatigue and psycho-physical tiredness, consequently decrease the energy for personal life, decrease the time to devote to oneself, and all this negatively impacts the achievement of personal well-being (in its broadest sense)."

- "The stressful situation makes me demotivated and want to change the working environment—too many hours dedicated to work and little free time available.

- Feeling of always having to be hyper-connected and operational at any time and moment of the day."

- "They are a blow to self-esteem. They give rise to the feeling of not being up to the task. This feeling is then followed by frustration. I feel like I haven't done enough even when I think I have given my best."

- "They lead me to isolate myself and have a lascivious and disinterested attitude."

- "Effort, demotivation, boredom, anxiety, frustration."

2. How do you try to manage these stressors?
- "Confronting myself with those who have more experience looking for advice and always trying to have a plan. Above all, as regards the balance between the personal and working spheres, if it is a question of leaving in a period other than the summer, I need to organize myself mentally in advance to be able to fit all the commitments and not find myself in a stratum of frustration in which I am unable to complete the various pre-set goals properly."

- "Looking as much as possible for moments to be alone and rest. Meditating and trying to relax (also concretely through breathing) in the moments I perceive as the greatest source of stress."

- "Trying to simplify and optimize what you can and, above all, finding satisfaction in carrying out your role as a teacher even if it is not always enough."

- "Trying to carve out spaces for me and give me time/organization as much as possible."

- "I try to carry on despite the difficulties."

3. What could the organization/institution you work for do to avoid these stressors?

- "Increase the free break time for each operator (daily/weekly), and in general, pay more attention to the psychophysical well-being of the operator since this has a direct effect on the management of the target (children/adolescents) by the operator."

- "Follow precise schemes in work planning in the short and long term."

- "Remuneration adequate to the workload; contractual stability; less bureaucracy"

- "Encourage moments of supervision and sharing."

- "Challenge some work practices and better define working time management. Manage budgets better

4. What could help you deal with these stressors?

- "Have more time for self-reflection and self-care—clearer and clearer communication within the staff, from an organizational point of view. In our association, there is a lot of space for emotional sharing, and we are all free to express ourselves. Still, we cannot always remember what made that program or activity particularly tiring or difficult for those who worked on it. In short, less disorder and confusion in communication/organization and more formality only in the programming/management aspect, not in the application method."

- "Knowing that you don't have to face continuous changes: every year, different school, different classes, different programs. Greater stability and less precariousness would allow me to have a defined design capacity and not always improvise at the last minute."

- "Receive consistent and stable information."

- "More communication, interaction."

- "Psychotherapeutic Support"

These data give us an idea of our youth workers' well-being and mental health situation and the educational realities we usually collaborate with. They offer us a picture, albeit partial, of the reasons, in the long run, that could lead to the onset of Burnout syndrome. The research, starting from the pre-existing literature and the data collected through the questionnaire, will develop in the direction of practical, sustainable, and possible answers for the various partners involved in the project.

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