



Comparative Study on Burnout Among Higher Education Professors in Portugal and Brazil during COVID-19

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Abstract: The global pandemic context experienced in recent years has exacerbated the reality that the work environment does not always offer the necessary conditions for task completion. For example, in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), all over the world, were closing, to safeguard the health of professors, students, and education professionals had to change teaching methods, namely, remote teaching, involving new technologies. Faced with unprecedented stress situations, professors, students, and families have employed various coping and resilience strategies throughout the confinement period. This new reality of

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work brought more demands to professors in terms of work, often leading them to the limit of emotional and professional exhaustion and demanding new skills from them. However, in different countries and in different educational institutions, the same conditions and resources did not exist for professors to help them continue to teach with quality. This aspect had a differentiated impact on their performance, on their quality of life, on their well-being, on the stress and anxiety experienced which, in many cases, led to burnout situations, for professors. Given this fact, some professors implement various coping strategies for emotional control that are not always functional to mitigate such difficulties. This study aims to identify and characterize the frequency of levels of burnout and strategies of coping in professors between Portugal and Brazil.

A sample of 132 professors from the Universities and Polytechnics in Portugal (n = 62) and Brazil (n =70) answered to a set online self- administrated questionnaires, namely: sociodemographic and telework conditions during the pandemic situation; Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) and Brief-COPE scale. To achieve the objectives of the study, descriptive and inferential analyzes (e.g., T Student) were performed. The main results of this study suggest that: regarding burnout, the exhaustion dimension is higher among teachers in Brazil; regarding coping strategies, teachers in Brazil use more strategies designated as maladaptive (e.g., substance abuse). Currently, higher education professors are among the professionals who most experience burnout. With the COVID-19 pandemic, this phenomenon was exacerbated and the work of these professionals was increased and complexified. Appropriate coping strategies and resources made available to professors can contribute to their well-being at work and to their quality of life and happiness. Since education is one of the pillars of a nation, it is important that governments, policy makers and managers of HEIs encourage policies and practices that protect and promote the mental health of professors.

Keywords: Professors, burnout, strategies of coping, Portugal, Brazil