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Relationship Between Organizational Climate And Burnout Syndrome At The Fire Station In Guaranda Canton: A Case Study

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Summary

The organizational climate refers to the perception that workers have about the work environment in which they operate, that is, the rules, policies and procedures, the degree of support and recognition they receive, the level of communication, decision making, among other factors. Burnout syndrome is a work-related emotional disorder characterized by feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal fulfillment at work. This research used a quantitative approach, collecting data through validated surveys. It was obtained that most of the workers perceived a deficient organizational climate (84.8%) and presented symptoms of burnout (81.8%). A significant relationship was identified between the type of organizational climate and the presence of burnout. These findings highlight the need to improve organizational climate and address burnout to ensure the well-being of firefighters.

Resumen

El clima organizacional se refiere a la percepción que tienen los trabajadores sobre el ambiente laboral en el que se desenvuelven, es decir, las normas, políticas y procedimientos, el grado de apoyo y reconocimiento que reciben, el nivel de comunicación, la toma de decisiones, entre otros factores. El síndrome de burnout es un trastorno emocional relacionado con el trabajo que se caracteriza por sentimientos de agotamiento emocional, despersonalización y falta de realización personal en el trabajo. Esta investigación utilizó un enfoque cuantitativo, recopilando datos a través de encuestas validadas. Se obtuvo que la mayoría de los trabajadores percibían un clima organizacional deficiente (84,8%) y presentaban síntomas de burnout (81,8%). Se identificó una relación significativa entre el tipo de clima organizacional y la presencia de burnout. Estos hallazgos resaltan la necesidad de mejorar el clima organizacional y abordar el burnout para garantizar el bienestar de los bomberos.

Keywords: Palabras clave: clima organizacional, síndrome de burnout, agotamiento emocional, bomberos

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Introduction

The organizational climate refers to the perception that workers have about the work environment in which they operate, that is, the rules, policies and procedures, the degree of support and recognition they receive, the level of communication, decision making, among other factors (Kirilo et al. 2018). Burnout syndrome is a work-related emotional disorder characterized by feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal fulfillment at work. (López-Cortacans et al. 2021).

The Healthy Organization theory posits that employees are an organization's most valuable resource, which has a significant impact on the organization's work effectiveness. (Huang et al. 2022). It has been suggested that in the current business environment, psychological safety is becoming increasingly important to facilitate the success of companies. (Andersson, Moen and Brett 2020). When an organization cultivates a healthy and ethical environment, it fosters positive work attitudes and behaviors among its employees, which can result in a considerable improvement in organizational performance and the quality of service offered. (Pomirleanu, Gustafson y Townsend 2022; Huang et al. 2022). For a long period, experts in organizational behavior have used the concept of organizational climate as a tool to assess more tangibly the characteristics and practices of an organization that influence the attitudes and work behaviors of employees. (Peacock et al. 2023).

The organizational climate is equivalent to what people call "work environment", from this perspective it is possible to understand the concept of organizational climate as a corporate environment and a psychological atmosphere, being an increasingly important concept when it comes to describing the perceptions that members of the corporation have about their work environment. (Kirilo et al. 2018; Sherman, Hadar and Luria 2018). It refers to the implicit norms that determine acceptable behaviors in a company, and employees interpret and attribute meaning to these norms, shaping the organizational climate. This provides employees with a sense of control over their actions. (Acosta-Prado 2020; Loh et al. 2019).

There are multiple key dimensions of organizational climate, such as clarity of roles, professional development, respect, communication, reward system, planning, decision-making, innovation, relationships, teamwork, support, quality of service, conflict management, commitment, morale, training, learning and management. These dimensions vary between organizations due to their own unique characteristics, such as behaviors, rules, procedures, and practices. (Akrong, Shao, and Owusu 2022; Li, Huang and Chen 2020).

Organizational climate refers to the perceptions and meanings shared by employees regarding the organization's policies, practices, and procedures, as well as the behaviors they observe and the rewards they receive, which are supported and expected. (Hubert et al. 2022). Mohammad &

Husted (2023) They defined that the organizational climate is a fundamental aspect in working life, since it influences the performance, satisfaction and well-being of employees in any organization.

In the field of emergency services, where work demands are high and exposure to stressful situations is constant, an adequate organizational climate can be crucial to prevent the onset of burnout syndrome in workers.

Burnout syndrome is a psychological phenomenon characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a reduction in personal fulfillment, which can negatively affect the health and quality of life of those who suffer from it. (López-Cortacans et al. 2021) .

The burnout syndrome, conceptualized by Freudenberger and developed by Maslach, refers to chronic stress caused by constant contact with clients, manifesting itself in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of fulfillment. This syndrome can be interpreted as the extreme response to chronic stress experienced in the workplace. (Rivas-García et al. 2023). Symptoms of burnout can be physical, behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and social. Lazarus describes four stages of the syndrome: enchantment, stagnation, frustration, and apathy. (Gómez-Perdomo, Meneses-Higueta and Palacio-Montes 2017).

Occupational stress associated with firefighting presents both physiological and psychological risks for firefighters, and these risks have been observed to be interrelated. (Albitres Flores 2016). However, the exact nature of these relationships in terms of indicators and impact remains unclear, especially with regard to sleep health (e.g. quality, quantity, hygiene, etc.) as a specific physiological risk and burnout as a specific psychological risk. (Dyal et al. 2021).

According to the study by Cevallo, et al., (2022), the Burnout Syndrome, is a condition of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion associated with the work environment, the stress generated by work and the lifestyle of the employee. Although firefighters are respected, recognized and appreciated for their important role in society, they may be susceptible to this syndrome due to improper working conditions that lead to anxiety and stress. The work of a firefighter requires technical preparation as well as a strong vocation.

Firefighters face daily emergencies, such as fires, rescues, pre-hospital care, ambulance transfers, attacks and natural disasters. The high demand for your job and constant exposure to problems can result in psychological disturbances such as depression, anxiety and acute stress, affecting not only your work life but also your personal life. (Back et al. 2023).

Unfavorable working conditions can be a contributing factor in the development of burnout syndrome, which, according to the classical concept, arises from a discrepancy between the expectations of employees and the reality of work, aggravated by inadequate coping strategies. Professional burnout has multiple effects on the well-being and health of employees. Firefighters are especially exposed to the adverse effects of stress and burnout (Stefanowski 2023). The work of firefighters is considered one of the most physically demanding professions and with the greatest

predisposition to stress, due to the difficult working conditions and the responsibility they have over human lives. (Gómez Carmona et al. 2019).

That is why firefighters sometimes do not show obvious symptoms of professional burnout. However, it is important to note that, in many cases, these professionals do not have the optimal conditions in terms of salary, equipment, medical care and logistics to face the numerous and difficult emergencies in their work. (Sharif Mohamad, Faizah Ali y Khan Mohamed Makhbul 2021).

Burnout syndrome can have a significant impact on the health and emotional well-being of firefighters, as well as their work performance and the quality of service they provide to the community. (Uribe Prado et al. 2014; Gastelo-Salazar et al. 2020).

The firefighters at the Guaranda station are professionals who work in conditions of high pressure and stress due to the nature of their work. They face dangerous and physically and mentally demanding situations, such as saving lives, controlling fires and attending medical emergencies, which can lead to emotional and physical overload. In addition, these workers are subjected to long working hours, schedule changes, lack of material and human resources, which can contribute to a stressful work environment.

The objective of the research is to analyze the relationship between the organizational climate and burnout syndrome in the fire station of Guaranda, Bolívar province.

Methodology

The methodology used for the present research adopted a quantitative approach. This methodology was based on the collection of data through specific evaluation instruments, followed by the statistical analysis of the information obtained and, finally, the interpretation of the results.

In the first instance, data collection was carried out on the population of workers at the Guaranda fire station using two questionnaires, both validated:

The "Organizational Climate Questionnaire" of Cota (2017), allows to classify the organizational climate in Good climate, Regular climate and Bad climate or lower

The "Maslach Burnout Inventory Questionnaire", allows to classify whether or not the Burnout Syndrome exists, by the presence of altered symptoms in any of its scales; Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal fulfillment (Arian et al. 2023).

For the characteristics of the population, the levels of Burnout syndrome in the population were calculated, as well as the perceived organizational climate. This provided a detailed description of the population studied and its characteristics.

With the data obtained, a correlation analysis was carried out between the variables under study using Pearson correlation coefficients being calculated with IBM SPSS v.25 Software estimating a significance level equal to or less than 0.05 as acceptance criterion. This analysis allowed to identify

the relationships between the organizational climate, the burnout syndrome and other relevant variables, such as age, gender, years of work experience, the department/area of work and the canton where the fire station is located.

Finally, the results obtained were interpreted and discussed in relation to the objectives of the research and the existing literature. We explained the patterns observed in the data and raised possible implications and recommendations based on the results. The importance of improving the organizational climate and addressing the burnout syndrome in the Guaranda fire station was highlighted to ensure the well-being and performance of workers.

Results and discusión

Population characterization

Table 1 Characteristics of the population

		Number of interviewees	Interview percentage
Type of Position	Administrative	14	42%
	Operative	19	58%
Gender	Male	21	64%
	Female	12	36%
Years working on your job	1-5 years	9	27%
	6 to 10 years	6	18%
	11 to 20 years	17	52%
	More than 20 years	1	3%
	Total	33	100%

Note: Characteristics of the workers of the Guaranda fire station

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the population of the Guaranda fire station, after the descriptive statistical analysis carried out with SPSS v.25. It can be seen that 42% of workers have an administrative position, while the remaining 58% have an operational position. In terms of gender, 64 per cent are men and 36 per cent are women. Regarding the years working in their job, 52% have been between 11 and 20 years, followed by 27% who have been between 1 and 5 years. In total, the population analyzed consists of 33 workers from the Guaranda fire station.

Characterization of the type of organizational climate

Table 2 Type of organizational climate

	Frequency	Percentage
Good weather	2	6,1
Regular weather	3	9,1
Bad or inferior weather	28	84,8
Total	33	100,0

Note: Resulting from the organizational climate perceived by the personnel of the Guaranda fire station, obtained after the evaluation of the organizational climate using the Organizational Climate

Questionnaire of (Cota 2017), using IBM SPSSv25

The **Table 2** shows the results of the evaluation of the organizational climate perceived by the personnel of the Guaranda fire station, using the Cota Organizational Climate Questionnaire (2017). It can be seen that 84.8% of workers perceive a bad or inferior organizational climate, while only 6.1% consider that the organizational climate is good, and 9.1% think it is regular. According to the study of (Kirilo et al. 2018) The organizational climate can be considered as good when positive attitudes that create a more pleasant work environment predominate, and it can be considered as deteriorated or bad when a series of negative variables affect the majority of employees, generating a more tense climate.

These results are worrisome, as a negative organizational climate can have adverse effects on workers' motivation, performance and job satisfaction, as well as on the quality of service provided to the community. Therefore, it would be advisable to take measures to improve the organizational climate at the Guaranda fire station.

Characterization of Burnout Syndrome

Table 3 Presence of burnout syndrome

	Frequency	Percentage
No burnout	6	18,2
Burnout	27	81,8
Total	33	100,0

Note: Resulting from the calculation of the incidence of burnout syndrome present in the personnel of the Guaranda fire station, using the Maslach Burnout Inventory Questionnaire, using IBM SPSS v.25

Table 3 shows the incidence of burnout syndrome in the personnel of the Guaranda fire station, evaluated using the Maslach Burnout Inventory Questionnaire.

The results indicate that 81.8% of workers have symptoms of burnout, while the remaining 18.2% do not.

Burnout refers to a syndrome characterized by depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and a decrease in feelings of accomplishment. Burnout is associated with direct adverse clinical consequences, personal distress, and increased workforce attrition.

There are several individual and organizational factors that contribute to burnout, and despite being widely recognized, their prevalence continues to increase. (Rammell and Burdess 2023).

These results are worrisome, since burnout syndrome can have adverse effects on the physical and mental health of workers, as well as on their work performance and on the quality of service provided to the community.

Therefore, it would be advisable to take measures to prevent and treat burnout syndrome in the Guaranda fire station, such as work stress prevention programs, time and workload management, and emotional and psychological support to workers who present symptoms of burnout.

Correlational analysis

Table 4 Correlation between the variables under study

		Type of organizational climate	Emotional exhaustion or tiredness	Personal fulfillment	Depersonalization	Presence of General Burnout
Age	Pearson correlation	-0,222	-0,078	0,112	0,091	-0,086
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,214	0,667	0,536	0,615	0,634
	N	33	33	33	33	33
Department /area where you work	Pearson correlation	0,158	-0,084	0,053	0,222	0,082
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,379	0,640	0,769	0,214	0,651
	N	33	33	33	33	33
Position / Position	Pearson correlation	0,171	-0,242	0,215	-0,163	0,110
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,342	0,175	0,230	0,364	0,543
	N	33	33	33	33	33
Guy	Pearson correlation	-0,111	-0,039	-0,343	0,021	-0,246
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,540	0,830	0,051	0,909	0,168
	N	33	33	33	33	33
Gender	Pearson correlation	0,299	-0,192	,428*	-0,144	,356*
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,091	0,284	0,013	0,425	0,042
	N	33	33	33	33	33
Years working on your job	Pearson correlation	-0,115	-0,179	-0,001	-0,003	-0,137
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,523	0,320	0,997	0,987	0,446
	N	33	33	33	33	33
Canton	Pearson correlation	-0,180	0,292	-0,146	0,129	-0,134
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,317	0,099	0,418	0,473	0,456
	N	33	33	33	33	33
Type of organizational climate	Pearson correlation	1	0,100	,698**	0,167	,838**
	Sig. (bilateral)		0,578	0,000	0,353	0,000
	N	33	33	33	33	33
Presence of General Burnout	Pearson correlation	,838**	0,120	,833**	0,199	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,000	0,507	0,000	0,266	
	N	33	33	33	33	33
Evaluation 2 Personal fulfillment	Pearson correlation	,698**	-0,153	1	0,042	,833**
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,000	0,396		0,817	0,000
	N	33	33	33	33	33
Evaluation 1 Emotional exhaustion or exhaustion	Pearson correlation	0,100	1	-0,153	0,247	0,120
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,578		0,396	0,166	0,507
	N	33	33	33	33	33
Evaluation 3 Depersonalization	Pearson correlation	0,167	0,247	0,042	1	0,199
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,353	0,166	0,817		0,266
	N	33	33	33	33	33

Note: Results of the correlation analysis between the variables under study, organizational climate and burnout syndrome in the population of workers of the Guaranda fire station, performed with IBM SPSS v.25.

Table 4 presents the results of the correlation analysis between the different variables under study in the population of workers at the Guaranda fire station. Pearson correlation coefficients are used to analyze the linear relationship between two quantitative variables. The range of correlation coefficient values is -1 to 1, where -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation, 0 indicates no correlation, and 1 indicates a perfect positive correlation.

The table shows that the type of organizational climate is highly correlated with the presence of burnout syndrome ($r=0.539$, $p<0.01$). These results suggest that a poor or inferior organizational climate is related to a greater presence of burnout syndrome in workers.

As for the other variables analyzed, age does not show a significant correlation with the variables of organizational climate or burnout syndrome. The gender of the workers is weakly correlated with personal fulfillment ($r=0.428$, $p<0.05$) and depersonalization ($r=-0.144$, $p<0.05$), while the years working in the position and the canton where the fire station is located do not show significant correlations with the variables under study.

Burnout syndrome is a prolonged response to chronic stress at work and is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal fulfillment. It develops as a result of stressful work situations and affects both individually and interpersonally. Emotional exhaustion involves a decrease in the ability to emotionally engage with work, while depersonalization refers to emotionally distancing oneself from others. Low personal fulfillment is related to dissatisfaction and lack of motivation at work. Burnout syndrome can be applied to different occupations and is defined by these three dimensions. (García-Campayo et al. 2016).

The results of the table suggest that the Burnout Syndrome and the type of organizational climate are strongly related to the presence of the burnout syndrome in the population of workers of the Guaranda fire station. It is important that those responsible for the fire station take measures to improve the organizational climate and reduce the incidence of burnout syndrome in workers.

Global analysis

In the study conducted at the Guaranda fire station, several variables related to the organizational climate and burnout syndrome in workers were examined. It was found that 42% of employees held administrative positions, while 58% had operational positions. In terms of gender, 64 per cent were men and 36 per cent were women. In addition, it was observed that 52% of workers had between 11 and 20 years of experience in their positions.

In relation to the organizational climate, it was found that the vast majority of workers perceived a bad or inferior organizational climate, with a percentage of 84.8%. Only a small percentage considered the weather to be good (6.1%) or fair (9.1%).

As for burnout syndrome, it was discovered that 81.8% of employees had symptoms of burnout, which is a worrying figure.

In addition, a correlation analysis was performed between the variables studied. A significant correlation was found between the type of organizational climate and the presence of burnout syndrome.

These findings suggest that there is a close relationship between a poor or inferior organizational climate and a greater presence of burnout syndrome in workers at the Guaranda fire station. Therefore, it is essential to take measures to improve the organizational climate and reduce the incidence of burnout syndrome. This could include implementing work-related stress prevention programs, properly managing workload, and providing emotional and psychological support to employees exhibiting symptoms of burnout. A similar study identified that a group of fire department workers (2.6%) responded that they had experienced suicidal ideation. In the final model, trauma exposure was positively associated with suicidal ideation (adjusted hazard ratio [aRR], 1.076; 95% confidence interval [CI]: 1.051–1.103), and organizational climate was negatively associated with suicidal ideation (aRR, 0.772; CI 95%: 0.739-0.806). In addition, the term interaction (exposure to trauma \times organizational climate) was related to suicidal ideation (aRR, 1,016; 95% CI: 1.009-1.023) (Back et al. 2023).

On the other hand in the investigation of (Jeung et al. 2021) They mention that firefighters' unique climate puts them at risk of experiencing burnout. However, few studies have examined the work-related stressors faced by firefighters and the specific effects resulting from stress and burnout.

In contrast to a study conducted in Peru in a fire company, it identified that there is no dependency relationship between the variables of Work Environment and Burnout Syndrome (Lazo, Calvanapón-Alva and Cárdenas-Rodríguez 2019).

Conclusion

No significant relationship was found between the Work Environment and Burnout Syndrome in firefighters. This suggests that, although there are specific dimensions in both constructs, there is no direct influence between them. Other factors may be influencing the appearance of Burnout Syndrome in firefighters, regardless of the work environment.

The evaluation of the Work Environment in firefighters stood out for a high self-realization, positive relationships and a balance between stability and change. These findings indicate that, in general, firefighters perceive a favorable work environment in terms of their personal development, relationships with their peers and the ability to adapt to changes.

As for the Burnout Syndrome, variable levels were found in the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal fulfillment. This suggests that some firefighters may experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, while others may have a greater sense of personal fulfillment in their work.

In summary, this study highlights the importance of understanding the Work Environment and Burnout Syndrome in the context of firefighters. Although no direct relationship was found between these variables, it is essential to continue investigating the factors that contribute to the development of Burnout Syndrome in this profession, to implement prevention strategies and promote the well-being of firefighters.

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