

Work-related stress, organisational commitment, and coping strategies in teachers: A narrative critical review

Estrés laboral, compromiso organizacional y estrategias de afrontamiento en docentes: revisión narrativa crítica

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SUMMARY

Background: Teaching is consistently characterised by high psychosocial demands, with clinically meaningful stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression reported across diverse educational settings. This narrative critical review synthesises recent evidence (primarily 2019-2025) on (i) work-related stress and burnout profiles in teachers, (ii) links with organisational commitment and work retention, and (iii) coping strategies and organisational responses associated with better occupational mental health.

Methods: A semi-structured search of multidisciplinary and regional databases was complemented by targeted screening of reference lists to capture Latin American evidence. The synthesis adopts a job demands

resources perspective to connect workload, emotional labour, administrative burden, and role conflict with psychological outcomes and organisational trajectories.

Results: Particular emphasis is placed on post-pandemic findings and on heterogeneity arising from measurement choices, sector differences, and contextual adversity.

Conclusions: The review closes with practice-oriented implications for schools and health systems, prioritising feasible organisational interventions alongside individual coping resources.

Keywords: Occupational stress, teachers, Burnout, professional, organizational commitment, adaptation, psychological.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47307/GMC.2026.134.S2.35>

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Recibido: 20 de diciembre 2026

Aceptado: 1 de febrero 2026

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RESUMEN

Introducción: *La docencia se asocia de manera consistente con altas demandas psicosociales y con reportes de estrés, burnout, ansiedad y depresión en distintos niveles educativos. Esta revisión narrativa crítica sintetiza evidencia reciente (principalmente 2019-2025) sobre: (i) perfiles de estrés laboral y burnout en docentes, (ii) su relación con el compromiso organizacional y la permanencia laboral, y (iii) estrategias de afrontamiento y respuestas organizacionales vinculadas a una mejor salud mental ocupacional.*

Método: *Se realizó una búsqueda semiestructurada en bases multidisciplinarias y regionales, complementada con rastreo dirigido de referencias para captar evidencia latinoamericana. La síntesis se organiza desde el marco de demandas-recursos laborales, conectando la carga de trabajo, el trabajo emocional, la carga administrativa y el conflicto de rol con desenlaces psicológicos y trayectorias organizacionales.*

Resultados: *Se enfatizan los hallazgos pospandemia y la heterogeneidad derivada de la medición, del sector y del contexto.*

Conclusiones: *La revisión concluye con implicaciones prácticas para las escuelas y los sistemas de salud, priorizando las intervenciones organizativas viables junto con los recursos individuales para afrontar las dificultades.*

Palabras clave: *Estrés laboral, docentes, agotamiento profesional, compromiso organizacional, afrontamiento.*

INTRODUCTION

Work-related mental health has shifted from being an individual concern to a measurable occupational health priority with system-level costs. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that, in 2019, around 15 % of working-age adults lived with a mental disorder, and that depression and anxiety are associated with the loss of approximately 12 billion working days each year, with major economic implications (1). Within this landscape, teaching stands out as a profession simultaneously exposed to sustained psychosocial demands and expected to deliver consistent performance under public scrutiny, resource constraints, and frequent organisational change.

Burnout is frequently invoked to describe teachers' distress, yet its clinical status and scope

require precision. WHO classifies burnout in ICD-11 as an occupational phenomenon (not a medical condition), conceptualised as a syndrome arising from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed, characterised by exhaustion, mental distance/cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy (2,3). This definition is consequential for how the problem is framed: the unit of analysis is not only the individual teacher but also the organisational conditions that shape exposure to chronic stress and the feasibility of recovery.

Current teacher-focused evidence indicates that psychological strain is not marginal. In a rapid systematic review and meta-analysis conducted during the COVID-19 period, pooled prevalence estimates among teachers suggested clinically relevant levels of stress (~30 %), anxiety (~17 %), and depression (~19 %), albeit with substantial heterogeneity across settings and measures (4). Beyond acute pandemic effects, a meta-analysis of teacher burnout during COVID-19 reported a high pooled prevalence, underscoring that sustained occupational stressors can lead to widespread burnout symptoms when protective job resources are insufficient (5). A broader scoping review synthesising stress, burnout, anxiety, and depressive symptoms among teachers likewise documents wide prevalence ranges. It identifies multilevel drivers that combine workload, role conflict, emotional labour, classroom management pressures, and organisational factors (6).

These patterns matter because teacher well-being is linked to organisational stability and educational continuity. Teacher attrition and intention to quit have been consistently associated with burnout and job satisfaction at the meta-analytic level; burnout appears to confer substantial risk for leaving intentions across contexts (7). In parallel, organisational commitment remains a relevant construct for understanding retention, discretionary effort, and the likelihood that a teacher will sustain engagement when demands escalate. Teacher turnover intention has also been examined meta-analytically as a function of work experiences and organisational variables, underscoring its downstream relevance as an outcome of chronic strain (8).

Two theoretical lenses are particularly useful for organising a narrative synthesis that is both psychologically coherent and occupationally actionable. First, the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory provides a parsimonious account of how high demands (e.g., workload, emotional demands, work–home conflict) drive a health-impairment process. In contrast, resources (e.g., autonomy, social support, feedback, supportive leadership) can buffer the effects of demands and foster motivation (9). Second, the transactional model of stress and coping frames strain as the product of appraisal and coping efforts, making coping strategies central to understanding why teachers exposed to similar stressors may exhibit divergent outcomes (10). This also aligns with widely used operationalisations such as the Brief COPE, which differentiates coping responses (e.g., problem-focused, emotion-focused, avoidance) that can be mapped onto adaptive and maladaptive trajectories under chronic occupational stress (11).

In Latin American settings, the case for an explicit occupational-health framing is strong: contextual constraints (institutional instability, resource limitations, exposure to violence in some territories, administrative burden, and inequities) can plausibly intensify job demands while constraining available resources. Empirical work from Colombia and the region has reported meaningful associations between psychosocial risk factors and stress and burnout indicators among teachers, underscoring that conclusions drawn solely from high-income contexts may be incomplete (12).

Research question. In teachers, what does recent evidence indicate about the interplay between work-related stress/burnout, organisational commitment, and coping strategies, and which organisationally actionable implications emerge for occupational health and educational management?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design and reporting approach

This manuscript was developed as a narrative critical review (non-systematic knowledge synthesis) to integrate conceptual frameworks with recent empirical evidence on teacher work-related

stress/burnout, organisational commitment, and coping strategies. The methodological approach was written to ensure transparency and internal auditability consistent with established guidance for narrative reviews. To strengthen reporting quality, the manuscript was cross-checked against the Scale for the Assessment of Narrative Review Articles (SANRA) domains (e.g., justification of importance, clarity of aims, description of the literature search, referencing, presentation of evidence, and relevance of the endpoint) (13,14). In addition, reporting choices (abstract length, bilingual requirements, and currency expectations for references) were aligned with the journal’s author guidelines for narrative reviews (15).

Research questions

General question (stated in the Introduction).

Structured question (PECO; prespecified for this review)

- **Population (P):** Teachers and school-based teaching staff (pre-primary, primary, secondary, and equivalent teaching roles; higher education included only when explicitly framed as teaching work).
- **Exposure (E):** Work-related stress and/or burnout (including chronic occupational strain operationalised through validated instruments or clearly stated definitions).
- **Comparator (C):** Lower exposure levels (e.g., lower demands, higher resources), alternative organisational contexts (e.g., higher support versus lower support), or between-group comparisons reported in the included literature; when no explicit comparator was present, within-sample gradients were considered.
- **Outcomes (O):**
 - **Primary outcome:** Indicators of **organisational commitment** (affective, normative, continuance, or equivalent operationalisations).
 - **Secondary outcomes:** (i) **coping strategies** and coping profiles; (ii) **retention-related outcomes** (turnover intention/withdrawal cognitions) when directly linked to commitment; (iii)

teacher mental health correlates (e.g., stress severity, burnout dimensions, anxiety/depressive symptoms) when analytically connected to the triad under review.

Information sources

A semi-structured search was conducted across multidisciplinary and health/psychology-oriented databases to capture research on organisational psychology, occupational health, and education. Core sources comprised Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, PubMed/MEDLINE, and APA PsycINFO. To strengthen regional coverage, SciELO and Redalyc were additionally searched. Google Scholar was used for citation chaining (forward and backward) and to identify regionally disseminated evidence not indexed by all commercial platforms (14).

Search dates, languages, and currency rules

Searches were conducted between 1 September 2025 and 30 November 2025, with iterative refinements and a final update in late November 2025 to capture recently indexed publications. No restriction was imposed on publication year at the search stage; however, evidence was prioritised towards the most recent five years for empirical claims, while earlier “classic” sources were retained only where needed to define constructs or foundational frameworks (e.g., commitment dimensions; coping theory) (15). To aid traceability, the final narrative synthesis retained 34 sources, listed in the References.

Language eligibility included English, Spanish, and Portuguese. This decision was adopted a priori to reflect the bilingual/trilingual publication landscape of education and occupational health research and to reduce language-driven selection bias in Latin American contexts, particularly given the inclusion of SciELO and Redalyc as information sources.

Database-specific search strings

Search strings were structured around four concept blocks combined with Boolean operators: (*teachers*) AND (*work stress/burnout*) AND

(*organisational commitment*) AND (*coping*). Syntax was adapted to each platform as follows (representative final strings):

Scopus (TITLE-ABS-KEY): TITLE-ABS-KEY (teacher* OR educator* OR “school staff” OR “teaching personnel”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“work stress” OR “job stress” OR burnout OR “emotional exhaustion”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“organisational commitment” OR “organizational commitment” OR affective OR normative OR continuance) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (coping OR “coping strategies” OR resilience OR “emotion regulation” OR “psychological capital”)

Web of Science Core Collection (Topic; TS=): TS=(teacher* OR educator* OR “school staff” OR “teaching personnel”) AND TS=(“work stress” OR “job stress” OR burnout OR “emotional exhaustion”) AND TS=(“organisational commitment” OR “organizational commitment” OR affective OR normative OR continuance) AND TS=(coping OR “coping strategies” OR resilience OR “emotion regulation” OR “psychological capital”)

PubMed/MEDLINE (Title/Abstract + MeSH where applicable): ((teacher*[Title/Abstract] OR educator*[Title/Abstract]) AND (“occupational stress”[Title/Abstract] OR “work stress”[Title/Abstract] OR burnout[Title/Abstract] OR “emotional exhaustion”[Title/Abstract]) AND (“organizational commitment”[Title/Abstract] OR “organisational commitment”[Title/Abstract] OR affective[Title/Abstract] OR normative[Title/Abstract] OR continuance[Title/Abstract]) AND (coping[Title/Abstract] OR “coping strategies”[Title/Abstract] OR resilience[Title/Abstract] OR “emotion regulation”[Title/Abstract]))

APA PsycINFO (Title/Abstract/Subject terms; platform-adapted): (TI,AB,SU(teacher* OR educator* OR “school staff” OR “teaching personnel”)) AND (TI,AB,SU(“work stress” OR “job stress” OR “occupational stress” OR burnout OR “emotional exhaustion”)) AND (TI,AB,SU(“organisational commitment” OR “organizational commitment” OR affective OR normative OR continuance)) AND (TI,AB,SU(coping OR “coping strategies” OR resilience OR “emotion regulation” OR “psychological capital”))

SciELO (advanced search; Spanish/Portuguese variants included): (docent* OR profesor* OR teacher*) AND (estrés laboral OR “estrés ocupacional” OR burnout OR “agotamiento emocional” OR “exaustão emocional” OR “estresse ocupacional”) AND (“compromiso organizacional” OR “comprometimento organizacional” OR “organizational commitment”) AND (afrentamiento OR coping OR “estrategias de afrontamiento” OR resili* OR “regulación emocional”)

Redalyc (advanced search; Spanish variants prioritised): (docentes OR profesores OR teacher*) AND (“estrés laboral” OR “estrés ocupacional” OR burnout OR “agotamiento emocional”) AND (“compromiso organizacional” OR “organizational commitment”) AND (afrentamiento OR coping OR “estrategias de afrontamiento” OR resiliencia OR “regulación emocional”)

Google Scholar (for citation chaining and sensitivity searches): teachers “organizational commitment” burnout, and coping and targeted combinations such as: teacher burnout “turnover intention” organizational commitment Docentes “compromiso organizacional” burnout afrontamiento.

Results from Google Scholar were used selectively to support citation chaining and to identify relevant regional articles; inclusion still required full-text availability and alignment with eligibility criteria.

Eligibility criteria

Records were eligible when they:

1. Focused on teachers/teaching staff in school-based settings (any educational level),
2. Examined work-related stress and/or burnout (or closely related occupational strain constructs), and
3. Reported empirical links to organisational commitment and/or explicitly described coping strategies in relation to occupational strain.

Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies were eligible. Systematic reviews/meta-analyses were used to contextualise the magnitude and consistency of findings when they directly addressed teacher stress/burnout and related outcomes. Commentaries were excluded unless they provided a widely adopted conceptual model with clear traceability and relevance to the triad.

Screening, selection, and study inclusion (narrative review)

Because this review followed a narrative (semi-structured) design and incorporated iterative citation chaining, the selection process did not adhere to a preregistered PRISMA-style flow with fixed stopping rules. Instead, screening and inclusion were guided by the prespecified PECO framework and the review’s conceptual scope to capture the most relevant and informative evidence across contexts.

Records retrieved from the databases were first screened for obvious irrelevance and duplicates. Title/abstract screening was conducted to identify potentially eligible sources that address teachers, work-related stress/burnout, organisational commitment, and/or coping strategies. Full-text assessment was then undertaken for sources considered likely to contribute materially to at least one of the review’s thematic axes (stress/burnout; commitment; coping; integrative implications).

In addition, backward and forward citation chaining was applied to key papers and high-yield reviews to identify seminal conceptual contributions and regionally relevant empirical studies not consistently indexed across platforms. Inclusion decisions were reached through discussion among authors when eligibility was ambiguous (e.g., mixed occupational samples, overlapping constructs, or unclear operational definitions), ensuring alignment with the prespecified PECO criteria and avoiding scope drift.

Data charting (extraction)

For each included source, charted fields comprised: study setting/country, educational

level, sample characteristics (where applicable), instruments/definitions used for stress/burnout and organisational commitment, coping operationalisation, direction and nature of reported associations, and contextual modifiers (e.g., workload, leadership support, organisational climate, crisis periods). This charting supported thematic synthesis and helped distinguish convergent evidence from areas where findings diverged due to measurement or contextual differences.

Synthesis approach

Evidence was synthesised narratively through a concept-driven thematic structure:

1. Work-related stress and burnout in teaching (definitions, measurement, heterogeneity),
2. Organisational commitment (conceptual dimensions and links to strain/retention-related outcomes),
3. Coping strategies and coping profiles (including individual and organisational resources), and
4. Integrative implications for occupational health practice and education management.

Interpretation was deliberately constrained to associational language unless a cited source provided stronger identification. Conceptual integration drew on occupational stress frameworks and coping theory, with explicit attention to measurement heterogeneity and contextual variability.

Quality assurance (internal audit)

No formal risk-of-bias tool was applied, as would be expected in a systematic review. Instead, internal quality assurance relied on SANRA domains to ensure clarity of objectives, adequate description of the search approach, appropriate and current referencing, evidence-based argumentation using concrete data where available, and a clinically/occupationally relevant endpoint (13).

Ethics statement

This study is a narrative review of publicly available sources and did not involve primary data collection from human participants. Therefore, formal ethics approval and informed consent were not applicable.

RESULTS

Work-related stress and burnout in teachers

Evidence base (2020-2023) anchored to meta-analytic synthesis. Teacher distress in the contemporary literature is typically reported as (i) *stress/anxiety/depressive symptoms* and (ii) *occupational burnout dimensions*, often assessed in parallel but not interchangeable constructs. A large systematic review and meta-analysis aggregating 54 studies (256 896 teachers across 22 countries) reported high prevalence estimates for stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms during 2020-2021, with marked between-study variability attributable to context, measurement, and study design (16).

Burn-out prevalence estimates vary materially by instrument and setting. In a meta-analysis focused specifically on teachers' burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic (nine cross-sectional studies from multiple world regions), the pooled prevalence was estimated at 52 %, accompanied by extreme heterogeneity. Subgroup analyses indicated that prevalence differed when burnout was measured with different instruments (e.g., higher pooled estimates in studies using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory or the Maslach Burnout Inventory, versus lower pooled estimates in studies using the Professional Fulfilment Index or the Burnout Assessment Tool) (17). This pattern makes instrument choice a non-trivial methodological driver of the apparent burden.

Measurement heterogeneity is a substantive interpretive constraint, not a technical footnote. Burnout has evolved into a multi-instrument field with partially overlapping operational definitions, and cross-study comparisons routinely conflate differences in thresholds, subscale selection, and construct boundaries (e.g., exhaustion-only versus multidimensional formulations). A recent review

of burnout theory and measurement synthesises how instrument families (e.g., Maslach-derived measures, Copenhagen-derived measures, newer frameworks) differ in their conceptual emphasis and psychometric assumptions, which can reshape prevalence and correlational profiles even when populations are comparable (19).

A pragmatic taxonomy for this review. For the purposes of the present narrative synthesis, “work-related stress” is treated as a broader appraisal-based response to demands exceeding perceived resources, while “burnout” is treated as the downstream occupational syndrome/phenomenon characterised by sustained exhaustion and disengagement/cynicism (as operationalised by the primary studies). This distinction is used to prevent category drift when linking distress to organisational commitment and coping strategies later in the synthesis (19).

Organisation-level correlates repeatedly appear in teacher samples. A systematic review of K–12 teacher stress and burnout during the COVID-19 period highlights organisational characteristics—particularly leadership practices—as salient correlates of teachers’ stress/burnout indicators, alongside teacher-level factors (e.g., self-efficacy for online teaching, perceived vulnerability) (18). Although the review’s focus was pandemic-era schooling, its emphasis on organisational conditions aligns with the analytic need in this manuscript to treat schools as work systems rather than viewing distress solely as an individual phenomenon.

Longitudinal inference remains limited even in high-visibility contexts. The same K–12 systematic review documents that relatively few studies captured pre–post change using measurements taken both before and during the pandemic, thereby constraining causal or temporal claims about increases in burnout or stress (18). This limitation is material for interpretation: the evidence base supports the *presence* and *correlational structure* of teacher distress in relation to organisational and individual factors, whereas time-ordered trajectories require stronger prospective designs.

Instrument examples relevant for triangulation (exhaustion/disengagement emphasis). Where included, primary studies employed alternative burnout tools beyond the MBI/CBI families,

such as the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, which captures two core domains—exhaustion and disengagement—using both positively and negatively keyed items and has been catalogued for work-related burnout assessment in occupational research (20). This review treats such measures as conceptually aligned with the exhaustion–disengagement core when integrating evidence across studies.

Organisational commitment in teachers

Three-component structure as the organising definition. The review treats organisational commitment as a psychological bond that shapes whether teachers remain, persist, and invest discretionary effort in their school/organisation. The primary conceptual anchor is the three-component model—*affective commitment* (desire to remain), *continuance commitment* (perceived costs of leaving), and *normative commitment* (felt obligation to remain)—because it provides separable mechanisms with distinct behavioural implications (21).

Commitment is positioned in the evidence base as a retention-relevant “protector”. In a meta-analysis of 94 quantitative studies examining antecedents of teachers’ turnover intention, commitment appears among the most consequential protective correlates (alongside trust and professional identification), whereas burnout is reported as the strongest risk-related correlate in the same evidence synthesis (22). This framing is methodologically useful for the present review because it places organisational commitment in a plausible downstream position of chronic strain while remaining compatible with non-causal (associational) interpretation.

Burnout–withdrawal links provide a bridge from distress to organisational outcomes. Meta-analytic evidence on teacher attrition indicates that burnout dimensions are consistently and meaningfully associated with teachers’ intentions to quit, and that this risk signal is substantial relative to other job-attitude indicators (23). In a narrative synthesis, this relationship is relevant because organisational commitment can be read as one of the proximal organisational attitudes through which chronic exhaustion and disengagement plausibly translate into withdrawal

cognitions, even when studies operationalise commitment and turnover intentions differently.

Teacher-specific structural evidence aligns stress with lower commitment. In an occupational health structural model focused on teachers, work stress was modelled as a negative predictor of organisational commitment, with a sizeable, standardised path (approximately -0.4) reported in the modelling framework (24). Although single-study coefficients should not be treated as stable effect sizes, this pattern is directionally coherent with the broader retention literature and supports treating commitment as stress-sensitive rather than fixed.

Regional evidence supports the same directional linkage in Latin American settings. A study of teachers in South Lima examined the predictive contribution of job stress and job satisfaction to organisational commitment, providing an empirical example—within a Spanish-language regional outlet—that commitment is meaningfully related to proximal working conditions and strain-related indicators in school staff (25). This is pertinent for the present manuscript's scope because it reduces reliance on evidence from a narrow set of schooling systems when discussing organisational implications.

Mechanistic compatibility with JD–R motivational pathways in teaching. Within the JD–R logic applied to teacher samples, job resources are commonly positioned as drivers of motivational states (e.g., work engagement) that relate to organisational commitment, while high demands relate to burnout. A teacher-focused empirical paper applying this framework reports a motivational process in which job resources predict organisational commitment through engagement, supporting a dual-process interpretation that is conceptually aligned with the present triad (stress/burnout–commitment–coping/resources) (26).

Coping strategies and coping profiles in teachers

Coping is conceptualised as the cognitive and behavioural efforts deployed to manage demands appraised as taxing or exceeding available resources (10). In teacher samples, coping is most often operationalised using multidimensional instruments (e.g., the Brief COPE), which

distinguish approach/problem-oriented strategies (e.g., active coping, planning), emotion-focused strategies (e.g., acceptance, emotional support), and avoidant strategies (e.g., denial, behavioural disengagement) (11). For this narrative synthesis, coping is treated as a process contingent on controllability and resource context, rather than as a uniformly protective trait.

Coping profiles rather than single tactics

Evidence suggests that teachers' coping clusters into interpretable profiles (co-occurring strategy patterns) that map onto differences in well-being. A mixed-methods study identified distinct coping profiles and showed that their configuration—rather than any single strategy—was associated with indicators of teacher well-being (27). This supports a profile-based reading of coping as a compound behavioural repertoire shaped by repeated occupational exposures.

Coping under high-demand contexts (pandemic-era schooling as an exemplar)

During the COVID-19 shift to remote/virtual education, evidence from language teachers indicates that approach-oriented coping is associated with more favourable work-related states (e.g., engagement), whereas avoidant tendencies are associated with less adaptive patterns (28). These findings are consistent with the broader occupational stress literature: when demands are high and controllability is constrained, acceptance/reframing can be functional when paired with planning and support-seeking, whereas disengagement-based coping may increase depletion over time.

Coping as a moderator of overload–exhaustion pathways

Empirical work in academic teaching contexts further indicates that coping style can moderate the association between work overload and emotional exhaustion, reinforcing the interpretation that coping effectiveness is conditional on both exposure intensity and strategy type (29). Although moderation estimates vary by design and measurement,

the directional signal is consistent with treating coping as a plausible buffer (or amplifier) within the stress → exhaustion trajectory.

Intervention-oriented coping supports: what is defensible from reviews

From an intervention perspective, mindfulness-based programmes have been synthesised as potentially beneficial for reducing stress and burnout-related outcomes among teachers, although reviews also note variability in intervention content, delivery, and follow-up periods that constrain generalisation (30). More broadly, a recent scoping synthesis of teacher well-being and burnout interventions documents substantial heterogeneity in intervention families (e.g., mindfulness/meditation, physical activity, therapeutic techniques, professional development, multi-component programmes) and reinforces that multi-level approaches are more consistent with occupational health logic than stand-alone individual skills training (31).

This narrative synthesis supports an interpretation in which teacher work-related stress and burnout emerge from a demand–resource configuration within the school as a work system, with coping operating as a context-dependent regulatory process rather than a universally protective trait. In JD–R terms, sustained job demands (e.g., workload, emotional demands, role conflict) are expected to energise a health-impairment pathway towards exhaustion and disengagement, whereas job resources (e.g., autonomy, collegial support, supportive leadership) contribute to a motivational pathway that is more compatible with organisational attachment (9). Coping processes, as framed by the transactional model, shape how demands are appraised and managed and may buffer (or amplify) the translation of stress into burnout, depending on controllability, resource availability, and the coping profile employed (10).

Within this logic, organisational commitment is conceptualised as a retention-relevant organisational attitude sensitive to chronic strain. The three-component model remains useful for distinguishing among teachers who remain due to affective attachment, perceived costs, or obligation—mechanisms that are

unlikely to respond identically under sustained stress exposure (21). In the present framework, burnout (especially exhaustion/disengagement) is expected to co-occur with reduced affective commitment and increased withdrawal cognitions, while organisational resources and well-designed preventive supports are expected to protect both well-being and organisational stability.

Importantly, the framework is consistent with authoritative occupational health guidance that prioritises organisational interventions (job design, manager capability, supportive policies) alongside worker-level supports, explicitly avoiding an exclusive focus on individual coping as a substitute for psychosocial risk management (32,33). In this review, coping is therefore interpreted as complementary—most likely to be effective when the school context provides feasible resources and when upstream risk is reduced.

Conceptual model diagram

The conceptual model is summarised in Figures 1 and 2 to support consistent interpretation across the three thematic axes (stress/burnout; organisational commitment; coping) and to clarify the hypothesised directions of association as described in this narrative synthesis (9,10,21,32,33).

DISCUSSION

The evidence synthesised in this narrative review is consistent with an occupational framing in which teacher distress reflects a system of demands, resources, and regulatory processes, rather than an isolated individual vulnerability. Meta-analytic estimates indicate that clinically relevant symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression were common among teachers during 2020–2021, albeit with wide heterogeneity across countries and measurement approaches (16). Similarly, pooled burnout prevalence during the pandemic period was high and highly instrument-dependent, underscoring that prevalence values are not directly comparable unless the operational definition, thresholds, and subscales are aligned (17,19).

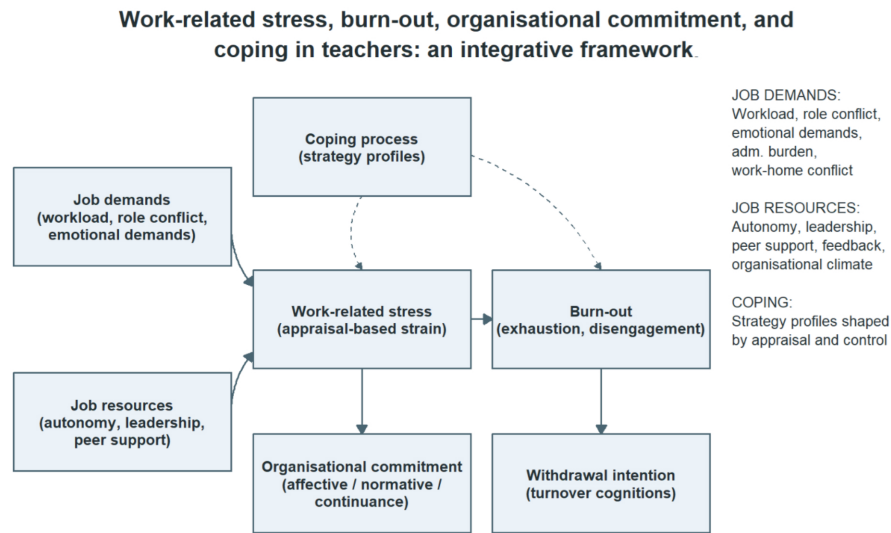


Figure 1. Work-related stress, burnout, organisational commitment, and coping in teachers: an integrative framework. Source line: Synthesised by the authors, informed by WHO guidance on mental health at work and the Job Demands–Resources model, alongside commitment theory and transactional coping theory (9,10,21,32,33).

Note. Boxes represent conceptual domains used in the present narrative synthesis. Solid arrows represent the primary associational pathways described across the evidence base; dashed arrows represent buffering/moderation (context-dependent) relationships. “Job resources” include autonomy/decision latitude, supportive leadership, peer support, feedback, and organisational climate; “job demands” include workload, role conflict, emotional demands, administrative burden, and work–home conflict. Coping is treated as a process contingent on appraisal and controllability rather than a uniformly protective trait. The framework is informed by JD–R theory, the transactional model of stress and coping, the three-component model of organisational commitment, and occupational guidance on psychosocial risk management (9,10,21,32,33).

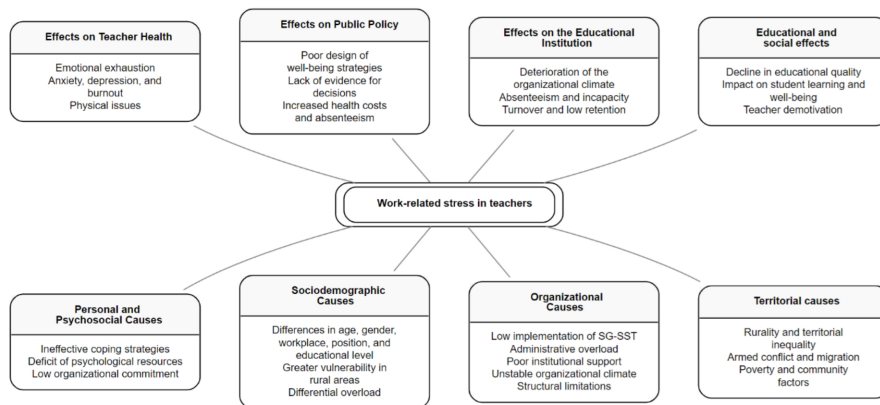


Figure 2. Work-related stress, burnout, organisational commitment, and coping in teachers: a conceptual framework. Source line: Synthesised by the authors, informed by WHO guidance on mental health at work and the Job Demands–Resources model, alongside commitment theory and transactional coping theory (2,19,20,24).

Note: The model summarises the pathways described in this narrative review: job demands and organisational constraints increase stress and burnout risk; job resources and supportive leadership buffer this association; coping operates as an adaptive process shaped by appraisal and resource availability; burnout is associated with reduced organisational commitment and increased withdrawal intentions. The framework integrates evidence from occupational health guidance and contemporary models of work stress (2,19,20,24).

This heterogeneity in measurement is practically consequential for education systems. When burnout is treated as exhaustion-only in one study and as a multi-dimensional syndrome in another, downstream associations with organisational attitudes (including commitment) will differ in magnitude and sometimes in direction (19). Accordingly, the most defensible interpretation is that burnout and stress indicators are reliably associated with adverse occupational outcomes among teachers, whereas the precise prevalence and relative contribution of each burnout dimension depend substantially on measurement decisions (16-20).

Organisational commitment emerges as a retention-relevant construct that is plausibly strain-sensitive in teacher samples. The three-component model remains useful for distinguishing attachment-based commitment from cost- or obligation-based staying, which is important when interpreting whether “retention” reflects positive engagement or constrained choice (21). Meta-analytic evidence on teacher turnover intention indicates that burnout is a prominent risk correlate, whereas commitment-related constructs are major protective correlates (22,23). This pattern aligns with the current framework: chronic strain and burnout co-occur with weaker organisational attachment and stronger withdrawal cognitions, whereas resources and supportive organisational conditions are more compatible with sustained commitment (22-26).

Coping should be interpreted as a context-dependent buffer rather than a universal solution. Profile-based evidence suggests that coping strategies co-occur in meaningful configurations related to well-being, and moderation evidence indicates that coping styles can alter the strength of the overload–exhaustion association (27,29). Intervention reviews provide a cautious basis for individual-level supports (e.g., mindfulness-based programmes), but they also highlight variability in content and effectiveness and reinforce that skills programmes are more defensible when embedded within organisational prevention rather than used as stand-alone substitutes for work redesign (30,31). This interpretation is consistent

with occupational guidance emphasising that psychosocial risks are managed primarily through organisational measures, supplemented by worker-level supports (32,33).

Implications for occupational health practice and education management

Three implementation priorities are defensible from the convergent evidence and guidance:

1. Embed psychosocial risk management in routine school governance: WHO guidance and ISO 45003 support the use of an occupational health approach: identify psychosocial hazards, assess risk, implement controls, and monitor effects as part of continuous improvement (32,33). This implies moving beyond episodic “well-being activities” towards structured risk controls aligned with workload, role clarity, job control, and supportive leadership.
2. Rebalance demand–resource configurations rather than relying on coping alone: Global occupational evidence indicates that adverse working environments (including excessive workloads and low job control) pose mental health risks and carry productivity costs (34). In schools, practical levers include: (i) reducing avoidable administrative burden; (ii) stabilising schedules and expectations; (iii) protecting time for planning and recovery; and (iv) strengthening leader capability for supportive supervision and fair workload allocation.
3. Use system-level monitoring to target prevention: OECD frameworks on teachers’ well-being and TALIS reporting can be used as templates for what to monitor (working conditions, professional thriving, self-efficacy, leadership climate), enabling targeted interventions for high-risk settings rather than uniform programmes. Within a school system, this can be operationalised through periodic, brief, validated surveys linked to actionable indicators (workload, role conflict, support, autonomy) and an explicit response plan.

Limitations of the evidence base and of this narrative review

The underlying literature is frequently cross-sectional and self-report-based, and operational definitions of stress, burnout, commitment, and coping vary substantially across studies. These features constrain time-ordered inference and complicate comparisons of effect sizes across contexts. For the review itself, the narrative design prioritises conceptual integration over exhaustive enumeration; the Methods therefore emphasise transparency (sources, dates, strings, language scope, and selection logic) while avoiding PRISMA-style reporting that would be incongruent with the review type (13,14).

CONCLUSIONS

Teacher work-related stress and burnout are best understood as occupational outcomes shaped by demand–resource configurations in schools, with coping functioning as a regulatory process whose effectiveness depends on contextual and strategic profiles. Organisational commitment remains a central retention-relevant outcome, likely to be strain-sensitive among teachers. The most defensible practice direction prioritises psychosocial risk management and organisational controls, complemented by targeted worker supports rather than replaced by them (22,23,32,33).

DECLARATIONS

Author contributions (CRediT): E.A.T.-S.: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Funding acquisition. B.J.B.-V.: Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing, Visualisation. M.F.-R.: Investigation, Validation, Writing – review & editing, Supervision. Y.G.-C.: Investigation, Data curation, Writing – review & editing, Visualisation. J.R.-C.: Investigation, Validation, Writing – review & editing. G.S.: Investigation, Data curation, Writing – review & editing, Visualisation.

Funding: MINCIENCIAS: Programa de formación e inserción de capital humano de alto nivel para las regiones para el bienio 2021–2022. Universidad Simón Bolívar. Código: 1090444952, USBolivar, COLDOC.

Conflicts of interest: The authors report no conflicts of interest.

Data availability: No new data were generated or analysed. Data sharing is not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: This study did not conduct experimental interventions with human or non-human participants, nor did it collect data from individual patients.

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