

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A LIFESTYLE PERSPECTIVE IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** In the field of education, teachers and administrative personnel play a role that goes beyond traditional teaching and management functions. Their work actively contributes to the holistic development of individuals in a process where learning and well-being are interrelated. However, the demands of the school environment, the emotional burden of pedagogical work, and the daily challenges of adult life often downgrade self-care to a secondary concern. This can negatively impact lifestyle, affecting physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

**Objective:** To analyze the lifestyles of young and adult members of the educational community of Colegio San Francisco Javier in Pasto, Colombia, specifically teachers and administrative staff.

**Theoretical Framework:** Continuing professional development is now recognized as an important part of strengthening the professionalism of educational personnel. However, it is often exclusively oriented towards updating disciplinary content or pedagogical techniques, neglecting aspects related to the personal sphere. On the other hand, pedagogical knowledge (both theoretical and practical) promotes the consolidation of teaching and learning strategies through approaches, models, and curricular components related to didactics. This helps guide institutions and inform professional decisions that contribute to school welfare.

**Methodology:** A qualitative cross-sectional approach was used with a sample of 119 teachers and administrative staff members with an average age of 40.5±22.5 years, being 70% (n=83) of the sample were female, and 30% (n=36) were male. The ATLAS.ti software (version 24) was used for data processing, which allowed for transcription, coding, and organization of the information. Thematic networks were constructed from the responses obtained through structured interviews with open-ended questions focused on the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions influencing the participants' lifestyles.

**Results:** The findings related to the physical dimension reveal a clear understanding of the importance of self-care for personal and professional well-being. Participants' experiences highlight the importance of promoting conditions that encourage regular physical activity, particularly as a way to counteract the sedentary lifestyle resulting from long work hours in the school setting. Regarding the psychological dimension, the need for emotional support, time for self-reflection, and significant human connection is evident. The narratives demonstrate an ongoing effort to balance the demands of work with the care of one's inner whole, positioning mental health as a central aspect of an educator's life. Finally, concerning the spiritual dimension, value is placed on experiences that foster self-discovery, transcendent connections, and the pursuit of meaning. However, there is a clear need to strengthen spiritual accompaniment, particularly in cases where emotional or existential challenges affect pedagogical practice.

**Conclusions:** The results highlight the necessity of promoting professional training spaces that integrate a holistic wellness approach into the ongoing development of educational personnel. This concept is grounded in the belief that healthy lifestyles are integral to a school culture that fosters the well-being of the whole person.

**Keywords:** Professional development, lifestyle, educational context.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In today's world of globalization and constant technological, social, and cultural transformation, changes in human behavior are evident [1]. These changes generate new ways of perceiving, thinking, and acting

within one's environment, which can affect daily habits and lifestyles. Lifestyles can be understood as routine behaviors that significantly impact quality of life [2].

Lifestyles today are shaped by the cultural dynamics that accompany globalization and technological advances. These influences have substantially altered how people relate to one another and organize their daily activities [3]. From this perspective, lifestyle is conceived as a construct integrating behaviors, attitudes, values, preferences, and practices that define a particular way of inhabiting the world [4].

These lifestyles should not be viewed as static entities, but rather as dynamic social constructs shaped by historical, economic, and sociocultural factors that are constantly evolving. Globalization and changes in work configurations, especially since the second half of the 20th century, have caused profound social structural transformations, altering relationship forms and the transmission of fundamental values [5].

The field of education is not immune to this scenario of transformation. Educational professionals are affected by these dynamics, which impact both their personal lives and professional performance. In teaching practice, traditional teaching models focused on knowledge transmission are common, reflecting established habits and beliefs [6]. However, educators' attitudes, practices, and lifestyles play a crucial role in their well-being and the quality of the educational process they provide because they directly impact their students' learning experience.

Therefore, teachers' lifestyle choices significantly impact not only their overall health and well-being, but also the quality of the educational process and student motivation. The attitudes, habits, and behaviors of teachers can influence classroom dynamics and promote or limit the adoption of healthier, more active lifestyles by students [6].

In this context, it is important to recognize that professional challenges teachers face is often related to their living conditions, which affect their physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being. The demanding nature of teaching can generate high levels of stress, negatively impact job satisfaction and lead to emotional exhaustion and decreased professional performance [7].

Additionally, teachers' daily practices can serve as models for students, influencing their motivation levels and encouraging them to adopt healthier behaviors within the school environment [6]. Thus, teachers' well-being is important not only for their personal performance but also for creating positive, stimulating learning environments.

Clearly, the lifestyle of teaching staff is influenced by various factors inherent to their profession, such as workload, administrative and academic demands, and the structural conditions of the educational environment. Long working hours combined with lesson preparation, continuous assessment, and extracurricular responsibilities often make it difficult to adopt and maintain healthy habits. This jeopardizes the teachers' overall well-being and, consequently, the quality of the educational process.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Lifestyles can be understood as dynamic constructs shaped by lessons learned and experiences acquired throughout the life cycle. These styles do not emerge in isolation but rather develop in close relation to the sociocultural context in which a person is immersed. This context conditions one's way of acting, perceiving the world, and relating to others [2]. Therefore, lifestyle is closely linked to human development. Behaviors incorporated in the early stages of life tend to persist over time and directly influence health and quality of life in later stages [8].

From this perspective, lifestyle cannot be reduced to daily habits or routines alone; it includes a broader set of dimensions, such as values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior patterns, that define how people live their lives. These dimensions reflect fundamental aspects of human development because they manifest in everyday decisions that aim to achieve comprehensive well-being [4].

In this vein, the literature highlights two evolutionary stages in lifestyle configuration: an emancipatory phase associated with young adulthood (ages 18-29) and a consolidated stage corresponding to middle adulthood (ages 30-64) [1]. Both phases are influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors, as well as individual elements such as family environment, economic situation, cultural practices, and ethnic characteristics. Often internalized unconsciously, these elements shape and reproduce habits that persistently influence lifestyle.

The evolutionary stages of lifestyle, especially in adulthood, are influenced by work and professional dynamics that structure daily life. This period is considered a time for self-realization, when individuals seek to establish themselves in various aspects of their lives, including the emotional, professional,

political, and economic realms. However, the transformations inherent in the current context of globalization impose significant demands that can generate high levels of stress. This sustained pressure affects physical health and emotional balance, directly impacting lifestyle configuration [4].

In this scenario, adopting a formative and comprehensive vision within the continuous training processes of teaching and administrative staff in the educational field becomes essential. Promoting well-being in its physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions requires developing pedagogical strategies that address professional needs and encourage healthy lifestyles. These strategies contribute to a more comprehensive and humanized education oriented toward the holistic development of individuals within the school context.

In the context of continuing education, it is important to integrate teacher professional development with the specific scientific knowledge of the disciplines that comprise the priority areas of the curriculum. This integration strengthens pedagogical practice and enables the constant updating of the knowledge that underpins educational work [6].

From this perspective, pedagogical knowledge (understood as the synthesis of theory and practice) acquires essential educational value. It enables the design and consolidation of teaching and learning strategies based on diverse approaches, models, and curricular components. Organized from a didactic perspective, these elements guide pedagogical decision-making and contribute to strengthening school well-being, positively impacting teachers and students alike.

Consequently, continuing education takes on a transformative dimension when it includes spaces for critical reflection on fundamental aspects, such as balancing personal and professional life, managing emotions, and understanding the deeper meaning of the educational task. Integrating these dimensions improves academic performance and the motivation and sustained commitment of teaching and administrative staff [9].

Although continuing education has established itself as a key resource for professional development, it often focuses solely on updating disciplinary knowledge or incorporating new methodologies without considering the personal aspects of educators [10]. This limitation underscores the urgent need to rethink training processes from a holistic perspective and incorporate intentional strategies that promote healthy lifestyles as an integral part of human development and working life.

Promoting the well-being of educators in educational institutions is not only an ethical responsibility but also a strategic investment in the quality of teaching and learning processes [11]. Teachers and administrators who take care of their physical health, regulate their emotions, and find purpose in their work become significant role models within the school community. In short, caring for educators means caring for school. However, this care must be part of a structured, contextualized training program sensitive to the specific realities of each educational environment and cannot be based on isolated or superficial actions.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative cross-sectional approach was used with a sample of 119 teachers and administrative staff members with an average age of  $40.5 \pm 22.5$  years, being 70% ( $n=83$ ) of the sample were female, and 30% ( $n=36$ ) were male. The ATLAS.ti software (version 24) was used for data processing, which allowed for transcription, coding, and organization of the information. Thematic networks were constructed from the responses obtained through structured interviews with open-ended questions focused on the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions influencing the participants' lifestyles.

The ethical considerations aligned with the guidelines of the Helsinki Declaration and the American Educational Research Association's ethical code. This entailed obtaining informed consent from teachers and administrative personnel.

### **4 RESULTS**

In terms of gender, women tend to place a greater emphasis on healthy eating and the impact of workloads on sedentary lifestyles. Spiritually, they value spaces for meditation and guidance in values. Psychologically, they emphasize the need for therapy and emotional support. Conversely, men emphasize exercise and "balance," with more responses related to a calm and active lifestyle. Physically, they mention exercise and discipline more often. Psychologically, stress management is a

strong theme. These results align with previous literature identifying women's interest in nutrition and emotional well-being, as well as men's interest in physical activity and stress management [12].

The 119 participants were grouped by age range. Young people (aged 18 to 25) prioritized academic balance and exercise. Adults (aged 31 to 40) showed greater concern for stress and sedentary lifestyles. Those over 50 highlighted spirituality as the central axis of well-being. These results align with research indicating that the perception of well-being evolves with age, shifting from a physical orientation to a spiritual and reflective one [13]. The following table presents the main findings by age range.

*Table 1. Findings by age range.*

<i>Age range</i>	<i>Findings</i>
<b>18–25 years</b>	They seek a balance between study and exercise, emphasizing the importance of not becoming academically overwhelmed.
<b>26–30 years</b>	They highlight the difficulty of maintaining physical activity due to their workload; spiritually, they seek meaning in life.
<b>31–40 years</b>	There is greater awareness of sedentary lifestyles and stress, the need for psychological help, and breaks at work.
<b>41–50 years</b>	They talk about physical wear and tears and the importance of maintaining healthy habits; they value spaces for spiritual reflection.
<b>51–60 years</b>	They report more physical limitations, and spiritually they show a greater inclination toward established practices (prayer, meditation).

When asked how they would describe their lifestyle, women were more likely to describe it as healthy, adequate, or normal. Some women mentioned that their workload led to a sedentary lifestyle. Men tended to use terms such as calm, active, or balanced, and some provided more extensive reflections. Many participants who described themselves as "healthy" associated it with diet and exercise, while those who described themselves as "sedentary" linked it to an excessive workload or hours.

A healthy lifestyle was mainly perceived as having a balanced diet and moderate exercise. This coincides with the findings of papers, who point out that healthy lifestyles are related to self-care practices, particularly in highly demanding academic and work contexts [14]. Conversely, the sedentary lifestyle category was associated with a lack of time, academic or work overload, and a lack of motivation. These findings are consistent with previous research, which suggests that sedentary lifestyles among young adults and educators increase as professional responsibilities increase, resulting in negative consequences for physical and mental health [15]. The following table summarizes the most important findings.

*Table 2. Findings for lifestyle perception.*

<i>Answers</i>	<i>Findings</i>
<b>Healthy / appropriate</b>	Associated with diet and moderate exercise.
<b>Normal / calm</b>	Related to work-life balance and rest.
<b>Active</b>	Some mention daily exercise.
<b>Sedentary</b>	Justified by excessive workload or lack of motivation.

Based on the above information, the relationships were analyzed in terms of the three lifestyles and configured as a complex relationship in which the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions converge. These dimensions are interconnected through processes, habits, and conditions that determine individuals' quality of life. The following graph illustrates these relationships.

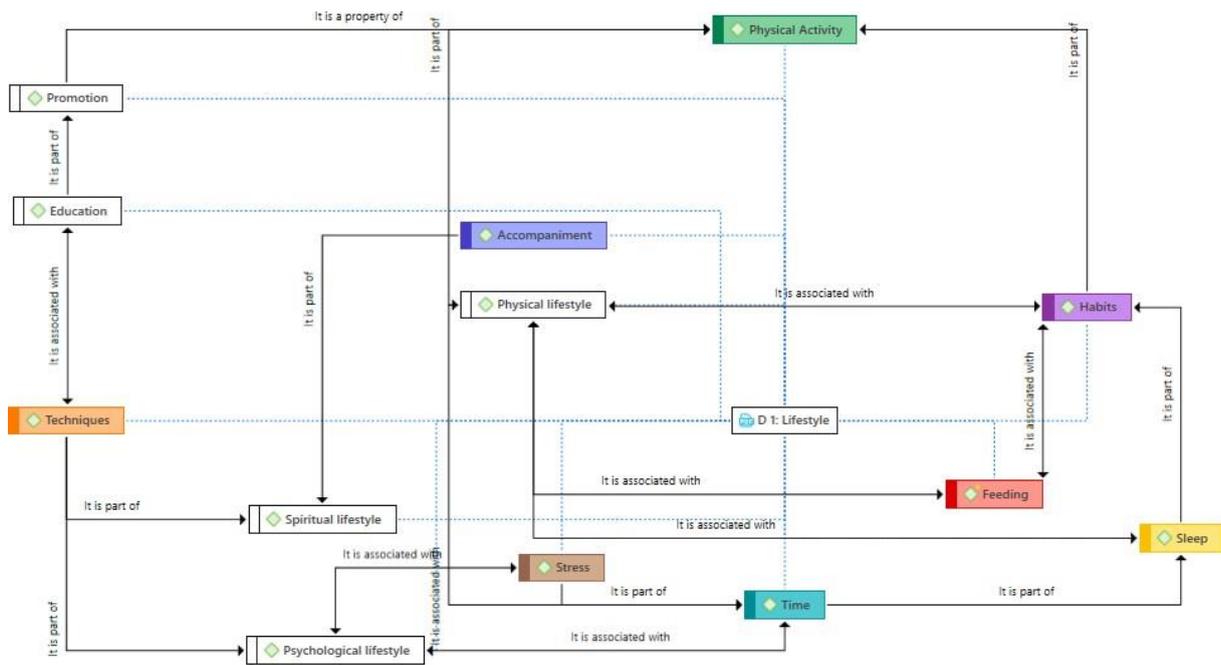


Figure 1. Relationships between physical, spiritual, and psychological lifestyles.

First, a healthy lifestyle consists of physical activity, diet, habits, and sleep. These elements are directly related and influence each other. This shows that a healthy lifestyle depends on integrating physical activity, adequate rest, and balanced nutrition. Habits connect diet, sleep, and physical activity and are key to establishing healthy, sustainable behaviors over time.

On the other hand, the psychological lifestyle revolves around time management, stress management, and applying techniques. Proper time management is directly related to reduced stress levels and improved emotional well-being. Similarly, techniques strengthen individual coping skills, contributing to psychological balance and encouraging the adoption of stable lifestyles.

For the spiritual lifestyle, education and promotion are essential processes. Through training and disseminating knowledge, these processes enable the use of techniques that build a more comprehensive sense of life. Although these actions are in the spiritual sphere, they impact other dimensions by fostering the awareness and motivation necessary for lasting changes in habits and daily life organization.

A strong emerging theme is support, which is understood as a mediator between individual practices and the establishment of healthy lifestyles. Its presence alongside physical activity and habits suggests that collective or guided interventions significantly impact adherence to and continuity of healthy behaviors.

Therefore, lifestyles can be understood as multidimensional networks where physical, psychological, and spiritual elements are closely linked. This concept indicates that health and wellness interventions require a comprehensive approach. In this approach, the promotion of physical activity and nutrition are not considered in isolation but rather in constant dialogue with education, support, time management, stress reduction, and the construction of spiritual meaning. Consequently, programs that address these dimensions simultaneously are needed to strengthen habit formation, psychological capacity building, and community support as central pillars for achieving a full and sustainable lifestyle.

#### 4.1 Physical lifestyle

The main needs identified for this lifestyle were regular exercise, reduced workloads, and healthy eating promotion. From an institutional perspective, participants recommended implementing active breaks, sports programs, and balanced nutrition campaigns. These suggestions highlight the need for educational policies that focus on physical well-being through collective strategies, rather than relying solely on individual responsibility [13]. For a physically active lifestyle, the main needs identified were increased sports activity, reduced academic or workloads, and promotion of healthy eating. In terms of actions expected from the institution, participants suggested active breaks, sports programs, and nutrition campaigns. The following table presents the consolidated information.

Table 3. Needs mentioned for physical lifestyle.

<i>Most frequently mentioned needs</i>	<i>Expected actions from the school</i>
<b>More exercise/sports</b>	Active breaks, sports programs.
<b>Less work or academic load</b>	Spaces for physical and mental rest.
<b>Balanced diet</b>	Activities that promote healthy habits.

According to participants, physical lifestyle is centered on the need for exercise and active breaks and confirms that healthy habits are not only an individual responsibility but also require structural support. Thus, well-being arises when institutional contexts facilitate the development of strengths. In this sense, schools must be active agents in promoting physical health [16].

The Sankey diagram below shows how various factors converge in the configuration of physical lifestyle. The elements represented (physical activity, promotion, sleep, and nutrition) are shown as determinants that, when integrated, form the basis of this dimension of lifestyle. The figure representation not only shows the direct relationship between each of these factors and physical lifestyle, but also the relative weight that each component has in this process.

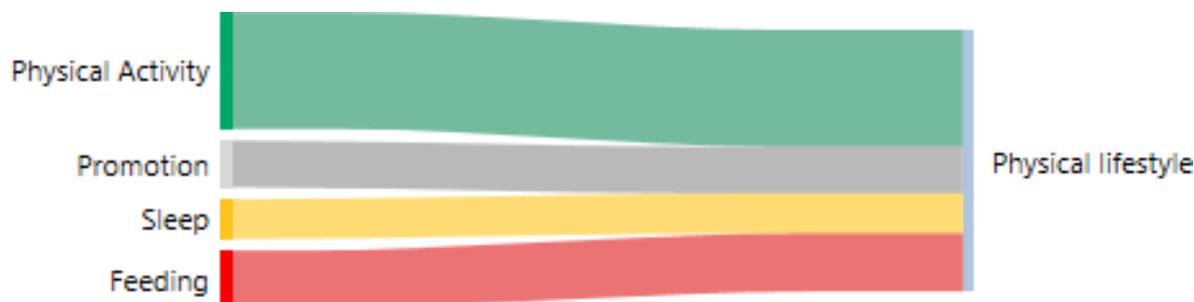


Figure 2. Physical lifestyle configuration.

Physical activity appears to be the most important factor. This finding reinforces the scientific evidence supporting the idea that regular exercise is fundamental to maintaining health, preventing chronic diseases, and improving overall well-being [17].

However, the graph also shows that a healthy lifestyle involves more than just exercise; it requires other essential components as well. Nutrition plays a central role in this context, demonstrating that nutritional quality and balance significantly impact on physical performance, recovery, and the prevention of risks associated with sedentary lifestyles or poor diets. Similarly, although sleep is shown to be a moderately important factor, it is indispensable for physiological restoration, hormonal regulation, and cognitive functioning. This highlights its integral role in a person's physical and psychological well-being [18].

On the other hand, health promotion is included as a cross-cutting factor that improves the adoption and maintenance of the other factors. While it is not a habit, its influence lies in education, awareness, and support. These elements facilitate the adoption of healthy practices, such as physical activity, proper nutrition, and adequate rest.

The graph suggests that a physical lifestyle should be viewed as a multifactorial framework in which physical activity is central, though it cannot be sustained without nutrition, sleep, and health promotion strategies. An integrated reading of these components underscores the need for intervention programs that adopt a holistic approach where physical exercise is complemented by balanced nutrition, healthy sleep routines, and ongoing educational and promotional processes. Only with this comprehensive approach can we guarantee a sustainable physical lifestyle that positively impacts people's overall health.

## 4.2 Spiritual lifestyle

Three needs were identified in this context: spaces for personal connection, the pursuit of life's meaning, and practices of reflection or meditation. This approach can be a valuable tool in schools because it fosters resilience and a sense of meaning in life from a pluralistic perspective. Participants suggested that schools promote meditation workshops, reflection days, and value-based guidance. These findings align with existing literature emphasizing that spirituality in educational settings enhances resilience and

promotes overall well-being [19]. The literature also indicates that, when understood as the search for purpose, spirituality becomes relevant in situations of academic overload and work stress [20]. Participants suggested that schools promote reflection workshops, spirituality days, and guidance on values. The following table presents the consolidated information.

Table 4. Needs mentioned for the spiritual lifestyle.

<i>Most frequently mentioned needs</i>	<i>Expected actions from the school</i>
<b>Connection/meditation spaces</b>	Meditation and reflection workshops.
<b>Meaning of life / philosophy</b>	Support in values and spirituality.
<b>Personal practices (prayer, relaxation techniques)</b>	Maintain or expand spiritual wellness programs.

The spiritual dimension involves searching for meaning in educational life, not by reducing it to religious practices, but by embracing reflection, meditation, and values. This concept aligns with the work of [19]. For older adults and postgraduates, spirituality emerges as a vital resource amid uncertainty and exhaustion. Recent research confirms that spirituality promotes resilience and life satisfaction in students and teachers [19, 21].

A Sankey diagram representing the spiritual lifestyle configuration shows the convergence of three main factors: habits, techniques, and accompaniment. The width of the lines indicates the relative importance of each factor in shaping the spiritual aspect of one's lifestyle, demonstrating how the interaction between daily practices, methodological resources, and external support strengthens one's spiritual experience.



Figure 3. Spiritual Lifestyle Configuration.

Although habits are an important component, they appear to have a lower impact compared to other factors, suggesting that their impact on a spiritual lifestyle is less decisive in isolation. However, habits can serve as a starting point for consolidating sustained spiritual practices because they generate routines that promote internalizing values and reflective practice [22].

In contrast, techniques carry significant weight in the diagram, indicating that specific methods, such as meditation, prayer, mindfulness, and ritualized practice, play a central role in spiritual strengthening. These techniques structure the experience, provide tools for introspection, and promote processes for coping with stress or adversity. They articulate the spiritual with the psychological and social.

Accompaniment is presented as the most relevant factor in the spiritual lifestyle. This finding shows that the spiritual dimension transcends the individual and consolidates through interaction with others. Accompaniment, when considered in terms of guidance, community, mentoring, or therapeutic support, is essential to sustaining spiritual practice, reinforcing motivation, and giving meaning to processes of personal transformation. Thus, the spiritual lifestyle is nourished by both individual autonomy and belonging to support networks that enhance spiritual experience.

In general, the graph shows that a spiritual lifestyle is the result of a comprehensive process involving personal practices, structured methodologies, and collective dynamics. This suggests that spiritual development cannot be understood as solely an individual effort, but rather as a process requiring discipline, concrete tools, and a supportive social environment. Thus, it underscores the importance of programs and strategies that promote spiritual habits and techniques as well as spaces for accompaniment that reinforce the spiritual dimension as an integral component of a healthy, well-rounded lifestyle.

### 4.3 Psychological lifestyle

The data aligns with the literature in recommending that schools invest in psychological support programs, mindfulness, and care pathways to reduce emotional exhaustion. In the psychological sphere, participants expect schools to provide psychological support and develop awareness campaigns. Educational institutions play a pivotal role in promoting mental health, addressing not only individual issues but also implementing preventive strategies that impact academic performance and school community [13]. The most frequent psychological needs were access to therapeutic support, stress management, and the availability of mental breaks. Expected institutional actions were awareness campaigns and psychological support programs.

Table 5. Needs mentioned for psychological lifestyle.

<i>Most frequently mentioned needs</i>	<i>Expected actions from the school</i>
<b>Therapy / psychological support</b>	Awareness campaigns and access to professional support.
<b>Stress management</b>	Guidelines and workshops on emotional self-control.
<b>Personal time / reflection</b>	Spaces for mental rest.

Finally, from a psychological perspective, the need for therapeutic support and stress management underscores the importance of preventive mental healthcare, as evidenced by the existing literature [13]. These results can also be interpreted considering the concept of well-being as a dynamic balance between resources and demands [23]. When academic or work demands exceed personal resources, symptoms of exhaustion and stress emerge.

The Sankey chart representing psychological lifestyle illustrates the influence of three main factors: techniques, time, and stress. Each component contributes differently to the configuration of psychological well-being, reflecting the interaction between coping resources, personal organization, and emotional conditions that determine an individual's mental quality of life.

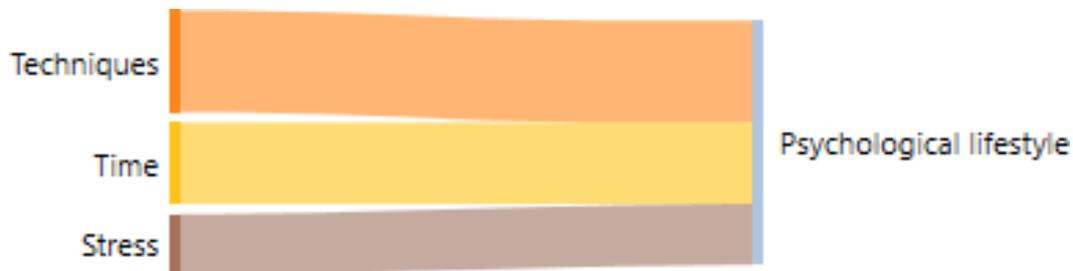


Figure 4. Psychological Lifestyle Configuration.

These techniques demonstrate a notable flow, suggesting that relaxation, meditation, mindfulness, conscious breathing, and cognitive-behavioral strategies are essential for emotional regulation and psychological well-being. These practices reduce anxiety and stress levels and promote resilience and positive coping with everyday adversities [24].

Meanwhile, time appears to be an equally important factor in shaping one's psychological lifestyle. Effective time management directly relates to balancing work, academics, family, and personal demands. It reduces the perception of overload and helps maintain adequate levels of motivation and personal satisfaction. Conversely, a lack of control over this resource is associated with a greater vulnerability to exhaustion and a deterioration of emotional well-being.

Stress is a determined factor in this lifestyle, with an impact that is constantly reflected in daily life. Depending on the individual's ability to manage it, stress can be both a risk factor and a catalyst for change. When not managed properly, stress can trigger negative consequences for mental health. However, when kept at moderate levels and under control, stress can function as a stimulus for developing adaptive strategies.

Overall, the graph suggests that psychological well-being is structured around the interplay of internal resources, environmental organization, external demands, and the capacity to manage stress. Thus,

psychological well-being depends not only on reducing discomfort but also on strengthening skills, making conscious use of time, and learning effective coping mechanisms. Therefore, mental health intervention programs must promote strategies that address these three dimensions to encourage more balanced and sustainable psychological lifestyles.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study confirm that lifestyles in educational contexts are part of an interconnected network of physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects that must be considered together. Each dimension contributes to the well-being of teaching, administrative, and student staff, and their interaction is influenced by personal factors and institutional conditions. Therefore, practices such as physical exercise, emotional management, and the search for meaning are more effective when promoted from a systemic rather than an individual perspective.

A central conclusion is that lifestyle in the school environment is experienced as a sense of balance between the body and mind, demands and self-care, and the personal and collective. However, this balance is constantly threatened by rigid work structures, heavy workloads, and a lack of institutional support. Therefore, improving lifestyles within educational institutions requires coordinated, sustained actions sensitive to each group's realities, beyond isolated interventions or occasional campaigns.

On the other hand, participants understand well-being as a balance between the body, mind, and spirit. This balance is affected by workload and the institutional environment. This confirms that lifestyle changes depend on structural factors, such as workload and institutional policies, and that the most effective intervention is comprehensive, not just individual. Therefore, educational institutions must proactively promote well-being by offering exercise programs, spaces for secular spirituality, and preventive psychological support. Finally, sociodemographic differences demonstrate that well-being needs evolve with life stage, gender, and academic level. This requires differentiated and flexible policies.

One limitation of the study is the lack of representation of people with pre-existing health conditions, whose experiences could provide insight into additional barriers to adopting healthy lifestyles. Furthermore, as this is a cross-sectional study, definitive causal relationships cannot be established. Thus, it would be appropriate to expand the research using longitudinal designs and larger samples.

In conclusion, educational institutions have the opportunity and responsibility to promote healthy lifestyles. This involves encouraging exercise, balanced nutrition, and psychological care, as well as creating meaningful and supportive spaces that provide comprehensive training. Cultivating the well-being of students is an ethical and strategic commitment to improving educational quality. Schools that care for, support, and listen to their students produce better citizens and become more humane, fair, and sustainable spaces.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This research is part of the research project registered with the Vice Rector's Office for Research No. 20850, entitled "Lifestyles of young adults (aged 18 to 29) and adults (aged 30 to 64) belonging to the Association of Jesuit Colleges of Colombia – ACODESI".

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