

Analysis Of The Relationship Between Social Variables And Burnout Syndrome In Military Personnel

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Abstract:

Burnout syndrome is a sociopsychological alteration that arises as a response to emotional tension and exposure to specific stressful situations in the workplace, triggered by continuous stressors. It generally manifests in three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished professional achievement.

Objective: This study aimed to relate social variables and burnout syndrome among military police officers of the 9th Battalion in the municipality of Araguatins-TO.

Methodology: The methodology adopted a quantitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach, utilizing questionnaires and the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

Results: The results revealed that the average age of the police officers is 42.83 years, with a predominance of married individuals (83.3%) and high educational attainment (88.1% with higher education). Although most do not have smoking habits, approximately 19% consume alcohol, and 19% are sedentary. The data indicate that age and years of service are vulnerability factors for burnout syndrome, highlighting the need for interventions focused on the mental health of these professionals.

Conclusion: The research emphasizes the urgency of implementing mental health strategies for military police officers, considering the vulnerability associated with age and years of service, with the aim of mitigating the risks of burnout syndrome and promoting well-being.

Keyword: Burnout Syndrome; Mental Health; Military Police

Date of Submission: 06-11-2024

Date of Acceptance: 16-11-2024

I. Introduction

Burnout syndrome or occupational burnout syndrome has been developing in various professional areas, with prevalence mainly in professions that involve greater interaction with people, such as healthcare, education, security, among others. This syndrome is a psychic, emotional, and stressful disorder characterized by feelings of depersonalization. Its development arises from mental overload and physical exhaustion related to work. This pathology was first defined by the German psychoanalyst Herbert J. Freudenberg (1970), who delineated the term burnout as a state of mental and physical exhaustion that is closely linked to stressful work and high tension load (Ferraz et al., 2012; Trigo et al., 2007).

According to Silva (2018), the negativity of Burnout Syndrome (BS) is related to decreased job satisfaction, lack of empathy, loss of productivity, increased absenteeism, and even professional dropout. Furthermore, it can lead to socio-family repercussions, substance abuse, depression, or even suicidal ideation.

Several studies have shown the consequences of work on the health of police officers, raising the interest and need to identify the causes and implement prevention strategies to minimize, or even eliminate, health issues for officers, ultimately contributing to the preservation of public order (Ascari, 2016).

In light of this context, the present study aims to relate social variables to Burnout Syndrome in military police officers from the 9th Battalion in the municipality of Araguatins-TO. Through this investigation, it sought to understand how factors such as age, length of service, and social support can influence the development of this syndrome, contributing to the formulation of interventions and mental health policies aimed at improving the quality of life and performance of these professionals.

II. Material And Methods

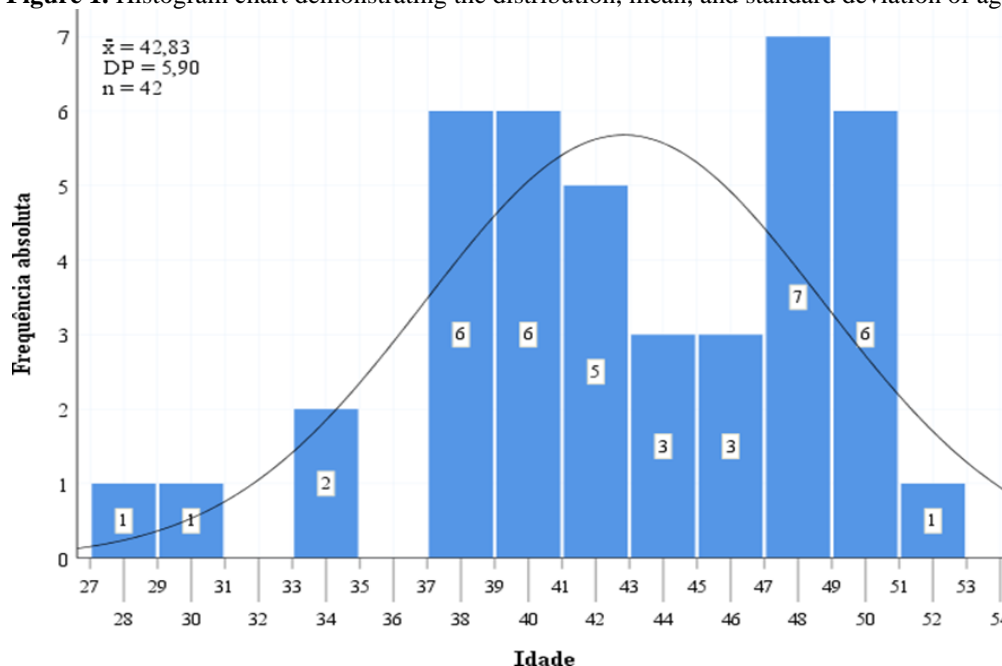
This study, using a quantitative and exploratory descriptive approach, assessed the levels of burnout in 42 military police officers from the 9th Battalion of Araguatins-TO, utilizing a questionnaire containing sociodemographic information and elements from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Data collection took place between February and March 2020, conducted by the researchers at the beginning of the shift, and all participants agreed to the Informed Consent Form (ICF). The project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (opinion no. 3,689,565), ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of the data. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS (version 26.0), including frequency and mean exceptions, as well as tests for displaying and comparing burnout scores. The results reveal the importance of monitoring the mental health of police officers, highlighting the need for prevention strategies and psychosocial support to mitigate the impacts of the syndrome on their careers.

III. Result Discussion

In the initial phase of the study, an effort was made to examine the sociodemographic and labor conditions of the participants, specifically the military police officers from the 9th Battalion of the Military Police of Araguatins-TO. Figure 1 shows the age variation of the 42 military personnel, represented by the blue bars indicating how many officers fall within each age range.

In this distribution, there is a central average indicated by the line showing the peak number of individuals aged 42.83, who are more represented in relation to the onset of Burnout Syndrome, with a standard deviation of $SD = 5.90$.

Figure 1. Histogram chart demonstrating the distribution, mean, and standard deviation of age.



Source: Research data, 2020.

In light of the above, Almeida et al. (2017), upon conducting a similar study, found a predominance of individuals aged 31 years or older related to stress factors. In another study involving 560 military police officers, the age range of participants varied from 19 to 54 years, with a median age of 36 years and a prevalent age group between 36 and 45 years (Arroyo, 2019). Based on this result, it can be inferred that individuals of older age are more susceptible to varied indices for the development of Burnout syndrome.

Consistent with these findings, a study conducted by Batista et al. (2010) on Burnout Syndrome in municipal schools in the city of João Pessoa, PB, concluded that among the 265 subjects studied, the average age was 43.5 years (minimum of 20 and maximum of 66; SD = 10.4).

Thus, the age group that prevails in the research may be a vulnerability factor for the occurrence of Burnout Syndrome. Alves (2017) relates this finding to the professional's years of experience and the context of changes in which they are inserted, which in turn generates insecurity or frustration when they realize that their anxieties and desires have not been fulfilled by the chosen career.

Franco et al. (2011) state that the older a person is, the more years of service they may have, along with greater responsibilities. The need to care for others leads to insecurities, anxieties, and tensions that interfere with these individuals' self-criticism, resulting in feelings of incompetence and devaluation, especially when related to age.

Table 1. Characterization of the sociodemographic and labor profile (n = 42).

	n	%
Marital Status		
Married	35	83,3
Separated	2	4,8
Single	5	11,9
Children		
None	4	9,5
Three or more	17	40,5
One to two	21	50,0
Education Level		
Elementary	2	4,8
High School	3	7,1
Higher Education	37	88,1
Income		
4 a 6 salaries	21	50,0
7 a 11 salaries	13	31,0
> 11 salaries	8	19,0
Work time		
2/5 years	5	11,9
>10 years	15	35,7
> 20 years	22	52,4
Workload		
12/36 hours	12	28,6
12/48 hours	2	4,8
24/48 hours	20	47,6
Working hours 8h	8	19,0
Days off		
3x / week	38	90,5
4x/ weeks	4	9,5
Work outside the Institution		
No	36	85,7
Yes	6	14,3

n, absolute frequency; %, relative frequency.

Source: Research data, 2020.

When evaluating the sociodemographic conditions of the participants, the following results were obtained, as shown in Table 1: 42 subjects were surveyed, of which 83.3% are married or live with partners, 11.8% are single, and 4.8% are separated/divorced.

When asked about the number of children, most participants reported having one to two children (50%), three or more (40.5%), and those with no children (9.5%). Campos (2013), in his study on the sociodemographic factors associated with cases of Burnout, found similar results to this research, where the majority of participants were married or in stable unions (58.62%), those who identified as single made up 28.45%, and divorced or widowed individuals had a lower percentage (12.93%).

Another study conducted with military police officers in Rio Grande do Sul showed a predominance of male individuals who were married; however, unlike the findings of this research, most had only one child (De Almeida et al., 2017). These findings can be explained by the fact that having a partner, whether in a formal marriage or just cohabiting, is associated with a lower likelihood of developing Burnout Syndrome, as having someone to share concerns and emotional experiences can make individuals more resilient to the condition (Fernandes et al., 2012).

Regarding education, it was found that 88.1% have completed higher education, 7.1% have a high school education, and only 4.8% have elementary education. The data are consistent with several studies on Burnout

Syndrome in military police, such as that conducted by Almeida et al. (2017), where the prevalence of higher education among participants was 58.76%. Another study by Arroyo, Borges, and Lourenço (2019) on the quality of life of military police officers indicated that among 506 officers, 40.1% had completed higher education.

Although having a degree is not a requirement for joining the military police, it is an important component for adding value and knowledge to police officers, serving as an alternative form of interaction and possible improvement in quality of life, as well as facilitating career advancement. The police career itself demands discipline and dedication to studies; while the positions of soldier and officer only require a high school diploma, certain positions necessitate specific training, which further encourages officers to pursue a degree.

Regarding professional tenure, the results show that 22 military officers (52.4%) reported having 1 to 20 years of service, 35.7% have more than 10 years, and 11.9% have 2 to 5 years. Concerning weekly days off, 90.5% of military officers have 3 days off per week, and only 9.5% have 4 days off per week. Among the 42 officers surveyed, 85.7% reported not working another job outside the institution, while only 14.3% have another job.

The data found in this research are consistent with results from various studies, such as one on job satisfaction among military police conducted by Almeida et al. (2016), where most participants had between 21 and 30 years (31.98%) of service, and 42.58% supplemented their income through extra activities. These findings have a direct impact on the number of professionals showing signs and symptoms of Burnout Syndrome since a longer duration of service correlates with increased stress due to prolonged exposure to stressors associated with the military career, such as constant confrontations with criminality, exposure to life-threatening risks, an authoritarian environment, excessive workload, and lack of recognition evidenced by low salaries.

Due to this dissatisfaction with their pay, many professionals feel "forced" to take on additional jobs, resulting in a dual workload that, according to Rodrigues and Ribeiro (2014), leads to emotional overload, significantly contributing to the development of Burnout Syndrome. The perception of a high workload is associated with a high frequency of health complaints and medical diagnoses, especially for neuropsychic complications, including irritability, fatigue, anxiety, irregular sleep, and headaches (Castro, Rocha, and Cruz, 2019).

In this perspective, Wagner, Stankievich, and Pedroso (2012) highlight that years of service in police activities negatively affect the mental health of workers, which in turn decreases their quality of life. Table 2 allows for an analysis of the officers' responses regarding lifestyle aspects, considering unhealthy habits such as smoking, alcohol consumption, and illicit drug use, as well as examining physical exercise practices, sedentary behavior, sleep patterns, and involvement in conflicts (with coworkers, family, neighbors, or friends).

Table 2. Characterization of Lifestyle Habits (n = 42)

	n	%
Smoking		
No	41	97,6
Yes	1	2,4
Alcoholism		
No	34	81,0
Yes	8	19,0
Illicit drug use		
No	42	100,0
Yes	0	0,0
Sedentary lifestyle		
No	34	81,0
Yes	8	19,0
Physical activity		
No	5	11,9
Yes	37	88,1
Sleep pattern		
Normal	29	69,0
Insomnia	12	28,6
Hypersomnia	1	2,4
Conflicts		
No	22	52,4
Interpersonal	12	28,6
Professional	8	19,0
Family Interaction		
Good	39	92,9
Poor	3	7,1

n, absolute frequency; %, relative frequency.

Source: Research data, 2020.

The results showed that only 19.0% consume alcoholic beverages, while 88.0% engage in physical activity, with at least 19.0% being sedentary (11.9% do not practice any exercise). Regarding sleep patterns, 28.6% reported having insomnia, and 69.0% indicated a normal sleep pattern. Examining the averages obtained for the variables of conflicts and family interaction, it was found that 52.4% of these military police reported no conflicts, 28.6% reported interpersonal conflicts, and 19.0% reported professional conflicts during their work hours. Finally, it was noted that 92.9% of the military personnel have a good family interaction.

Lifestyle habits significantly impact the quality of life of the population. Therefore, various studies focus on verifying this variable, relating it to certain pathologies, including mental health issues such as Burnout Syndrome (BS).

It is well known that engaging in physical exercise brings numerous benefits to human health. Supporting the findings of this study, research conducted by Soares (2016) on the relationship between levels of physical activity and cases of Burnout in military police found that 77% of participants reported exercising regularly. These findings may be explained by the specific demands of the profession, which requires better physical conditioning to ensure that officers can perform their routine military activities.

Bernardo et al. (2018) affirm that regularly practicing physical activity and maintaining adequate physical fitness can help sustain the work capacity of military police and also provide health benefits. They further emphasize that engaging in physical exercise and maintaining a good quality sleep pattern are essential for improving the quality of life and maintaining the physical and mental health of these workers.

The findings of this research are relevant as they provide updated data on the behavior of military police, demonstrating a change in their lifestyle habits, such as improved interpersonal relationships. This contrasts with the studies of Minayo et al. (2007), which highlight the peculiar behavior of police officers, who tend to be suspicious and prefer to be in safe environments, thereby restricting their circle of friends.

IV. Conclusion

This study highlights that social variables, including age, length of service, and social support, significantly influence the occurrence of Burnout Syndrome among military police officers at the 9th Battalion in Araguatins-TO. The results suggest an urgent need to implement mental health policies tailored to these professionals, taking into account their specificities and social contexts. Such interventions can not only mitigate the effects of Burnout but also promote a healthier work environment, contributing to operational efficiency and the well-being of these public servants.

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