

Burnout Syndrome In Military Personnel: Risk Factors And Professional Impacts

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Abstract:

Background: Burnout Syndrome (BS) has become a frequent psychological concern in daily life. It is believed to be an emotional disorder that affects individuals' personal lives, prompting them to question their responsibility and personality within the work context.

Objective: his study aimed to analyze the relationship between age and burnout levels across the domains of professional achievement, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization in military personnel.

Materials and Methods: The methodology was based on a quantitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach, using questionnaires and the Maslach Burnout Inventory to identify factors associated with the onset of Burnout Syndrome.

Results: The study revealed a positive relationship between age and burnout, showing that older individuals displayed lower levels of depersonalization, while emotional exhaustion did not significantly vary with age. Regarding professional performance, the results indicated that the variable "sedentary lifestyle" showed a significant difference: non-sedentary individuals had higher averages in professional achievement. Additionally, emotional exhaustion was significantly higher in individuals with interpersonal and professional conflicts. Statistical analysis revealed that 10.4% of participants scored high in all burnout domains, confirming a concerning prevalence of the syndrome among military personnel.

Conclusion: The findings underscore the importance of addressing burnout syndrome in the military, highlighting that factors such as a sedentary lifestyle and interpersonal conflicts are associated with higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

Key Word: Risk Factors. Burnout Syndrome. Military Police.

Date of Submission: 04-11-2024

Date of Acceptance: 14-11-2024

I. Introduction

Burnout Syndrome (BS) has become a frequent psychological concern in daily life, believed to be an emotional disorder that focuses on the individual's personal life, leading them to question their responsibility and personality resulting from the work context (Carneiro et al., 2019). Burnout defines the syndrome in three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, related to the feeling of emotional depletion, reduced competence, and loss of interest in work; depersonalization, characterized by emotional insensitivity and coldness towards the team; and low professional achievement, defined as a negative self-assessment regarding one's job, leaving the individual feeling unhappy and dissatisfied with their work (GoeS et al., 2015).

It is essential to evaluate Andrade's (2017) understanding that individuals' attitudes in the work environment are directly influenced by their personal characteristics, such as personality, motivation, skills, and

abilities. An individual's initiative at work positively impacts their professional quality of life, as well as their physical and mental health. Several studies have shown the consequences of work on the health of police officers, highlighting the need to identify the causes and implement prevention strategies to minimize or even eliminate health issues faced by police officers, ultimately contributing to the preservation of public order (Ascari, 2016).

In this context, Military Police (PM) is one of the professions that suffer the most from daily stress, as they are constantly exposed to danger and aggression, frequently intervening in conflicting and high-tension situations. Due to these characteristics, the PM is one of the professions with the highest vulnerability to developing BS, considering it a specific type of chronic stress (Costa et al., 2007). Moreover, they operate with uncertainty about what will be demanded of them in each action they take and the repercussions of their work. Given these conditions, it remains a deduction and assumption regarding how much this affects their health (Pires, 2017).

This study sought to understand the factors that trigger the onset of Burnout Syndrome among military personnel at the 9th Battalion of the Military Police in the municipality of Araguatins-To, aiming to propose preventive measures that can improve the overall working conditions and well-being of public security agents. In general, studies focusing on public safety often restrict themselves, for the most part, to police institutions, primarily highlighting the technical aspects of the profession, thus necessitating further studies and research concerning health issues faced by police officers in the occupational realm (Fraga, 2005).

According to Silva et al. (2018), nursing plays an important role in critically contributing to health promotion in the work environment. Its role in the police officers' work process is to suggest measures that help reduce or prevent burnout through active coping strategies aimed at promoting the health of these workers—measures intended to decrease stress and pressure at work, thereby ensuring an improvement in quality of life and creating a less exhausting work environment. In light of this, the objective of the present study was to analyze the relationship between age and burnout levels in the domains of professional achievement, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization among military personnel.

II. Material And Methods

This study, with a quantitative and exploratory descriptive approach, assessed the levels of burnout in 42 military police officers from the 9th Battalion in Araguatins-TO, using a questionnaire that included 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 work 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 highlight the importance of monitoring the mental health of police officers, emphasizing the need for prevention strategies and psychosocial support to mitigate the impacts of the syndrome on their careers.

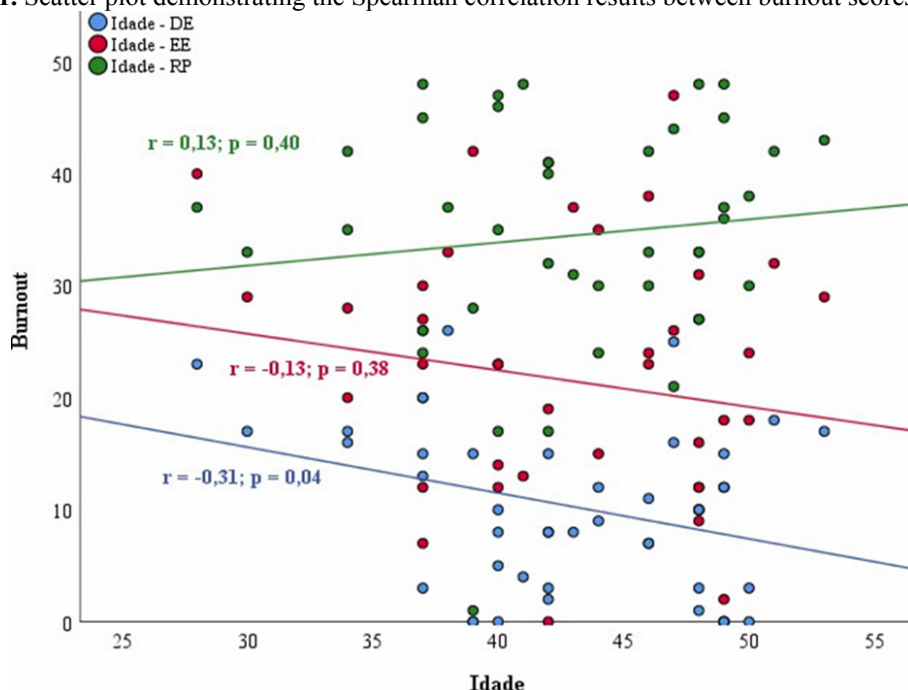
III. Result Discussion

This section represents an analysis of the correlation between age and burnout levels. On the vertical axis, there is a scale from 0 to 50, and the horizontal axis displays the distribution of age. Each point corresponds to an individual: the green indicates the variable of professional achievement, red represents emotional exhaustion, and blue denotes depersonalization.

A positive relationship was observed between age and burnout in professional achievement; however, the other variables showed significantly negative numbers, indicating that higher burnout is associated with younger individuals ($r = 0.13$; $p = 0.40$). For emotional exhaustion, the correlation was negative ($r = -0.13$; $p = 0.38$), but the p-value was not significant for Burnout Syndrome.

In terms of depersonalization, the correlation was ($r = -0.31$; $p = 0.04$), indicating a significant and negative correlation. This suggests an inversely proportional relationship—meaning that as one variable increases, the other decreases. Specifically, as age increases, depersonalization decreases. This implies that 31% of the data is negatively related; that is, a higher age corresponds to lower levels of depersonalization, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Scatter plot demonstrating the Spearman correlation results between burnout scores and age.



Burnout scores consistent with the syndrome were obtained for 10.4% of the participants, indicating high levels across all three domains, according to Lima et al. (2018) in their study on the prevalence of burnout syndrome among military doctors at a public hospital in Rio de Janeiro. Furthermore, in the comparison of burnout scores with other exploratory variables, as shown in the following Table 3, the data for burnout syndrome (BS) revealed a significant difference in professional achievement scores between sedentary individuals. The variable of sedentarism reached a significant relevance with a value of $p = 0.04$, showing that the mean score for professional achievement (RE) was significantly higher in non-sedentary individuals (36.26 ± 8.69) compared to sedentary individuals (26.75 ± 12.66). This indicates that a higher mean score in professional achievement is significant for sedentary individuals.

The mean score for emotional exhaustion was significantly higher ($p = 0.03$) among individuals experiencing interpersonal (25.42 ± 13.34) and professional conflicts (16.77 ± 10.71) compared to those who reported no conflicts. This supports the idea that individuals with interpersonal or professional conflicts experience greater emotional exhaustion.

Table 3. Results of the comparison of burnout scores with other exploratory variables.

	Average \pm Standard deviation		
	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Professional Accomplishment
Income **	$p = 0,81$	$p = 0,17$	$p = 0,70$
4 a 6 Salaries	$20,76 \pm 11,54$	$12,14 \pm 6,07$	$33,10 \pm 10,70$
7 a 11 Salaries	$23,46 \pm 13,46$	$9,15 \pm 8,63$	$35,85 \pm 8,74$
> 11 s Salaries	$20,38 \pm 13,15$	$7,50 \pm 7,54$	$35,75 \pm 11,44$
working time**	$p = 0,56$	$p = 0,27$	$p = 0,07$
2/5 years	$26,60 \pm 12,34$	$14,20 \pm 6,53$	$27,20 \pm 5,17$
>10 years	$21,33 \pm 12,68$	$10,73 \pm 7,03$	$33,07 \pm 13,41$
> 20 years	$20,50 \pm 12,16$	$9,18 \pm 7,59$	$37,05 \pm 7,36$
Days off *	$p = 0,53$	$p = 0,94$	$p = 0,09$
3x / week	$21,24 \pm 12,58$	$10,37 \pm 7,31$	$35,08 \pm 10,40$
4x/ week	$24,25 \pm 8,73$	$10,00 \pm 8,16$	$28,50 \pm 3,87$
Work outside the Institution *	$p = 0,87$	$p = 0,29$	$p = 0,81$
No	$21,42 \pm 12,91$	$9,92 \pm 7,60$	$34,36 \pm 9,88$
Yes	$22,17 \pm 7,49$	$12,83 \pm 4,79$	$35,00 \pm 12,51$
Ethanolism*	$p = 0,97$	$p = 0,22$	$p = 0,55$
No	$21,74 \pm 12,14$	$10,85 \pm 7,49$	$35,35 \pm 8,71$
Yes	$20,63 \pm 13,35$	$8,13 \pm 6,31$	$30,63 \pm 14,90$
Sedentarism*	$p = 0,94$	$p = 0,72$	$p = 0,04$
No	$21,68 \pm 12,60$	$10,59 \pm 7,60$	$36,26 \pm 8,69$

Yes	20,88 ± 11,21	9,25 ± 6,09	26,75 ± 12,66
Conflicts **	p = 0,03	p = 0,17	p = 0,22
No	16,77 ± 10,71	8,27 ± 6,23	33,45 ± 12,69
Interpersonal	25,42 ± 13,34	13,00 ± 9,52	38,08 ± 7,03
Professional	28,75 ± 9,71	12,00 ± 4,87	31,75 ± 2,25
*Mann-Whitney; **Kruskal-Wallis			

Source: Research data, 2024.

The burnout syndrome results from a continuous process of exposure to stress, leading to emotional exhaustion. The main aggravating factors include sedentarism, the presence of conflicts, substance abuse, excessive workload, and a distinguishing characteristic of the syndrome: depersonalization, marked by a feeling of diminished personal accomplishment at work.

Thus, the data obtained in this study are consistent with other studies on burnout syndrome in military police, such as the one by Lima et al. (2019), which identifies the aggravating factors that lead to depersonalization within the military category. The study concluded that most participants fell within the medium to high levels of emotional exhaustion.

IV. Conclusion

The results of this study highlighted the relationship between age and the different domains of burnout syndrome among workers, emphasizing risk factors that influence mental health in the workplace. While professional accomplishment showed a positive correlation, suggesting greater job satisfaction among older individuals, the scores for depersonalization indicated a significant negative manifestation, suggesting that aging may contribute to a decreased emotional disconnect from work. The lack of statistical significance in the relationship between emotional exhaustion and age points to the complexity of burnout, which appears to be more associated with factors such as interpersonal conflicts and a sedentary lifestyle than with age alone.

This overview underscores the need for policies and interventions that promote well-being in the workplace, considering factors such as the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the management of interpersonal conflicts. The positive impact of programs focused on physical and mental health within organizations can be crucial in mitigating the effects of burnout, especially among individuals facing emotional vulnerability due to conflicts and exhausting working conditions. Thus, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the syndrome, reinforcing the importance of preventive and supportive strategies that take into account the sociodemographic profiles and specific risks of the environment.

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