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Burnout, depression and quality of life among the Romanian employees working in non-governmental organizations

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Abstract

This study focuses on analyzing the relation between burnout, anxiety and quality of life among 60 employees (Mage = 36.3, SD = 6.21) who work in non-governmental organizations that provide social services. We used The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), The Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A) and World Health Organization Quality of Life Scale. The results have shown significant correlations between burnout and anxious symptomatology ($r = 0.58$), as well as between burnout and both physical ($r = -.36$) and psychological ($r = -.43$) quality of life, highlighting that burnout might have a contribution to employees' perception regarding quality of life.

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1. Introduction

The unprecedented competition of the intern and international markets forces the organizations, no matter their nature, to permanently look for ways of reaching higher performances, new ways of motivating their managers and employees and ways of increasing the productivity along with using lower costs. Many theoreticians argue that from the view of the human resources, the employees of an organization represent a resource of lasting competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1998; Wright, McMahan & McWilliams, 1994). Managing the human capital represents an important factor of the organizational performance (Adler, 1988).

Also, studies show the existence of a direct correlation between the existence of high stress levels and the conditions of performance and competition (Boersma & Lindblom, 2009). Research has shown that there is a high

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risk of exhaustion among the employees who work with people and situations which are problematic from a medical, psychological and social perspective. These situations will mostly affect the employees of institutions such as the nongovernmental organization which have a profile of activity specific to social services.

Burnout is a form of personal distress (Maslach & Leiter, 1998) and first emerged as a social problem, which, according to these authors includes three basic concepts: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal achievement. For the employees who activate in the medical field and the one of educational and social assistance, studies have repeatedly shown that those experiencing burnout have undergone long periods of work-related stress and job demands. In other words, the burnout syndrome is a chronic condition characterized by a state of complete depletion of individual energy, associated with an intense frustration with work activities (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001).

For example, in a study conducted by Fore, Martin & Bender (2002) a high burnout level has been recorded in the case of special education teachers, compared to the burnout level of regular teachers and the existence of higher depressive symptoms. Another study has shown that the young adults with high education are the ones who report higher burnout levels (Petty, Brewer & Brown, 2005). In addition, several studies have revealed that burnout was associated with increased symptoms of anxiety among different samples of employees who work in a healthcare environment (e.g., Turnipseed, 1998).

As for the quality of life, research conducted in the field of human resources psychology shows that there is a strong connection between one style of productive life and the employees' life (Garman, Corrigan & Morris, 2002). In another study, the authors (Dyrbye et al., 2006) were interested in verifying the existence of burnout, quality of life and depression in minority and non minority US medical students. The results have shown that minority students were more likely to have a low sense of personal accomplishment and quality of life in several domains.

Conrad and Kellar-Guenther (2006) examined the relationship of compassion fatigue, burnout and satisfaction among Colorado child protection workers. The results of another study conducted by Sprang, Clark, & Whitt-Woosley (2007) shows the implications of compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction, and burnout on the quality of life of the mental health providers in a rural state. Consistently, the home caregivers of patients with dementia proved to experience lower quality of life as they experienced higher levels of burnout (Takai et al., 2009), while in the case of German nurses, burnout seemed to have a mediating role between working conditions and life satisfaction (Demerouti et al., 2000).

Based on the assumption that a high level of the anxious symptomatology and the existence of the burnout correlate to the quality of life, in the present study we analyze the correlations between these variables found among the employees working in non-governmental organizations with social services profiles. Thus the hypotheses we have built are the following: 1) there is a positive association between the burnout level and the anxious symptoms and 2) there is a negative association between burnout and the quality of life.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The research has implied the participation of 60 Romanian subjects, out of which 42 were female and 18 male. The average age was of 36.3 years with a standard deviation of 6.21. The subjects are employed in multiple non-governmental organizations from Bucharest and work in the domain of social services, psychology and kinesiotherapy. Their job consists in forming multidisciplinary teams that address the needs of people with different problems (such as the bedridden persons with different pathologies, the very low income elderly people with chronic health issues, or the chronic patients with severe mental illness).

All participants have high education and have been employed in these institutions by knowledge testing. The sampling procedure consisted in a non-probabilistic manner, based on freely selecting the subjects based on their consent to complete the questionnaires. The participants were assured that the confidentiality of the data was secured and received verbal indications related to the instruments' filling. The present study has been built based on a correlational design. The variables were assessed using the participants' responses on a series of questionnaires for levels of burnout, anxiety and perception of the quality of life.

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