

PSYCHOPATHOLOGIE

Burnout et victimisations : effets des agressions des personnes détenues envers les personnels de surveillance

Burnout and victimisation: Impact of inmates' aggression towards prison guards

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MOTS CLÉS

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Résumé La prison est un milieu de travail particulier en raison de l'enfermement auquel sont soumises les personnes qui en font l'expérience. Les personnels, les surveillants notamment, sont chargés du maintien de cet enfermement et vivent par conséquent des situations de stress et de violence très intenses (c'est également le cas des personnes incarcérées). Les passages à l'acte des personnes incarcérées à l'encontre du personnel, par leur fréquence, leur soudaineté ou leur gravité, peuvent rendre ce milieu de travail incontrôlable, insécure et imprédictible. Trois formes de situations propices au développement de pathologies ou de souffrances psychiques comme le trouble de stress post-traumatique ou le *burnout*. C'est sur ce point que se centrent nos recherches. Plus particulièrement, l'étude présentée ici vise à examiner l'impact des situations de victimisation sur les niveaux de *burnout* des surveillants de prison. Deux cent trente-cinq surveillants de prison provenant d'établissements pénitentiaires français ont participé à cette étude. Ils ont rempli la version française validée de l'inventaire de *burnout* de Maslach (MBI). Les résultats montrent que le sexe, l'âge ou encore le niveau d'études différencient peu les niveaux de *burnout* des surveillants. A contrario, l'ancienneté, le type de prison et les victimisations distinguent de manière significative les niveaux de *burnout* des surveillants. Notre recherche montre de manière claire que les variables dispositionnelles

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(sexe, âge, niveau d'études) n'ont pas d'impact sur les niveaux de *burnout*. Ce sont les variables situationnelles (victimisation, type de prison) qui réfèrent à la qualité des relations entretenues avec les personnes incarcérées qui ont un effet significatif sur la souffrance des surveillants. Ces résultats apportent une meilleure compréhension du développement du burnout et offrent des outils d'intervention psychothérapeutiques aux cliniciens qui travaillent dans le champ de la psychopathologie en milieu professionnel.

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Summary

Introduction. – Prison is typically considered as a dangerous setting partly because of promiscuity and violence, which leads to a whole series of suffering and frustration among prisoners. Due to their occupation, prison guards must ensure the safety of the inmates, their colleagues, as well as any other persons working in prison and in the prison setting. Thus, correctional guards are the "Bumper excitement" of prison violence and suffer from stressful and traumatic events. Indeed, inmates' sufferings and frustration are firstly expressed towards them because they share daily relationships with inmates. In addition, correctional guards are faced with the high inmate suicide risk. One potential consequence of these chronic stressful situations is burnout. Burnout is described as a three-dimensional syndrome composed of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and sense of lack of personal accomplishment. Burnout is a severe psychological suffering, which can lead to depression. It has been initially identified among persons who are working with patients. Nevertheless, research shows that burnout is not a psychopathology of work but of the relationship with others. In other terms, burnout seems to arise when people share stressful, chronic and violent relationships with someone else. Burnout doesn't appear per se in any international classification of mental disorders: clinicians often use the diagnosis of adjustment disorder.

Purpose. – Our aim is to assess the impact of victimization on burnout among guards in French prisons. Prison guards were chosen for two major reasons. First, the custodial role of correctional officers is typically described as a stressful occupation, sensitive to burnout. Second, prison is generally considered "dangerous". Indeed, victimizations and aggressions frequently occur. Consequently, we hypothesize that burnout levels will be high for prison guards. We also hypothesize that the intensity of the victimizations (verbal, physical or armed aggression) will heighten burnout levels.

Material and methods. – Two hundred and thirty-five prison guards were involved. Among these 235 correctional guards, there were 46 women and 188 men, ranging from 22 to 56 years old. Victimization were very common: more than 87% had experienced an aggression, whether verbally, physically or armed. They were asked to fill out the French form of the Maslach burnout Inventory (MBI). The MBI is a 22-item self-report measurement that assesses the three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Items are rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 ("never") to 6 ("every day"). We have statistically created a new global level of burnout with the three dimensions. It is called "burnout level". We have assessed two sets of independent variables (VI): demographic VI (age, sex, tenure, level of studies) and correctional VI (penal status of prison, victimizations). Regarding our dependent variables, we have four levels which are (1) global burnout (GB), (2) emotional exhaustion (EE), (3) depersonalization (D), and (4) personal accomplishment (PA). For the purpose of our study, we carried out variance analyses (Anova) in order to compare the averages of our groups of subjects. Further to Anova, we chose the Bonferroni/Dunn post hoc test.

Results. – The results indicate that demographic variables such as age, sex or level of studies have no significant effect on GB, EE, D and PA levels. Tenure has a significant effect on GB and D levels. Concerning correctional variables, results show that the penal status of prison has a significant effect on GB and EE. Prison guards working with inmates incarcerated for more than 5 years report higher GB and EE than their counterparts working with inmates not already convicted. Victimization have a significant effect on GB, EE, D and PA levels. Prison guards with physical or armed aggressions report higher global GB, EE, D and PA levels than prison guards without aggressions. Furthermore, prison guards with physical or armed aggressions report higher global GB and D levels than prison guards with verbal aggressions. Two major points are highlighted by our study. First, characteristics of prison and inmates are related to burnout among prison guards. Second, victimizations lead to burnout.

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