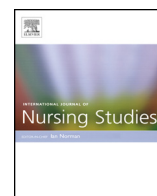




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The influence of work characteristics, emotional display rules and affectivity on burnout and job satisfaction: A survey among geriatric care workers

Géraldine Rouxel^{*}, Estelle Michinov, Virginie Dodeler

Département de Psychologie, Centre de Recherches en Psychologie, Cognition et Communication (CRPCC, E.A. 1285), Université Rennes 2, Rennes, France

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ABSTRACT

Background: Previous studies have demonstrated that geriatric care employees are exposed to a large number of factors that can affect their levels of job satisfaction and occupational stress. Although working with elderly people is emotionally demanding, little research has been done on the role played by perceptions of emotional display rules, alongside more traditional work characteristics and individual factors, in the prediction of geriatric care employees' wellbeing.

Objectives: The aim of the present study was to examine the role played by work characteristics (job demands, job control, emotional display rules) and individual (affectivity) factors to predict job satisfaction and burnout among French geriatric care nurses.

Method and participants: Questionnaires were sent to 891 employees working in 32 geriatric care centers in France. A total of 371 valid questionnaires (response rate: 41.60%) were analyzed using structural equation modeling techniques.

Results: Results revealed two main processes of burnout and job satisfaction among women geriatric care workers, namely a salutogenic process and a pathogenic process. As expected, negative affectivity, low job status, perceived negative display rules and job demands are involved in the pathogenic process; while positive affectivity, perceived positive display rules and job control are implied in the salutogenic one. More specifically, as expected, negative affectivity is a positive predictor of burnout, both directly and indirectly through its impact on perceived negative display rules and job demands. Moreover, negative affectivity was negatively related to job satisfaction. Simultaneously, positive affectivity can predict job satisfaction, both directly and indirectly through its impact on perceived positive display rules and job control. Positive affectivity is also a negative predictor of burnout.

Conclusions: Practical implications are discussed to support intervention programs that develop healthy workplaces, and also to inform nurses about how to manage emotional display rules in retirement homes.

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^{*} Corresponding author at: Rennes 2 University, Department of Psychology, CRPCC (E.A. 1285), Place du Recteur Henri Le Moal, CS 24307, F-35043 Rennes Cedex, France.

E-mail addresses: geraldine.rouxel@univ-rennes2.fr (G. Rouxel), estelle.michinov@univ-rennes2.fr (E. Michinov), virginie.dodeler@univ-rennes2.fr (V. Dodeler).

What is already known about the topic?

- Burnout in the nursing profession, especially among elderly care nursing staff has been largely studied.
- Some job and environmental factors were found to be the most influential factors of burnout among geriatric care nurses.
- Few studies have examined factors related to personality and environmental variables to understand burnout but also job satisfaction among geriatric nurses.

What this paper adds

- This paper explores the underlying environmental and personality factors related to job satisfaction and burnout in French geriatric care employees.
- Negative affectivity is a predictor of burnout (and negative predictor of job satisfaction) through its impact on perceived negative emotional display rules and job demands.
- Positive affectivity is a predictor of job satisfaction (and negative predictor of burnout) through its impact on perceived positive display rules and job control.

1. Background

As in many other industrial countries (WHO, 2012), in France today, there are more and more elderly dependents with specific diseases requiring care in specialized structures. In this sector, occupational strain of geriatric care workers is particularly great, especially with the increase in elderly people with severe and chronic diseases. The arduous nature of this kind of work results in recruitment difficulties and a high turnover of nursing staff working in the geriatric sector (Karantzas et al., 2012; Westermann et al., 2014). This raises questions about precisely why it is difficult to recruit employees in the geriatric sector, and how retain geriatric care workers. The purpose of this investigation is to examine the main environmental and individual factors, pathogenic or salutogenic, that contribute to occupational stress (burnout) and job satisfaction in French geriatric care workers.

1.1. Burnout in geriatric care workers

Occupational burnout is a psychological syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, a distanced, cynical attitude toward work and other people (depersonalization), and a decline in personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1996). Burnout has notably been associated with impaired job performance, absenteeism and turnover (Karantzas et al., 2012). It has been described in many individuals who are under constant pressure and exposed to chronic interpersonal stressors in the workplace (Maslach and Leiter, 2005). Staff who provide long-term inpatient geriatric care are exposed to a large number of factors that can lead to the development of burnout syndrome (Gandoy-Crego et al., 2009; Kozak et al., 2013; Pisaniello et al., 2012; Westermann et al., 2014).

While burnout syndrome has been extensively studied in a variety of occupational groups, few studies to our

knowledge have assessed the prevalence of occupational burnout in geriatric care workers in France (Decoster et al., 2011; Estryin-Béhar et al., 2011). The European PRESST-NEXT longitudinal survey conducted in various health specialties, together with research by Estryin-Béhar (2011, 2012), has revealed that employees working in geriatric centers in France have to deal with increasingly intense and fragmented work, isolation, and difficult relationships with families and residents. Moreover, the daily confrontation with pain and death requires emotional labor. One of the study objectives was therefore to investigate the specific stressors perceived by staff members in French geriatric centers, such as psychosocial work characteristics and emotional demands, and test their impact on occupational burnout and job satisfaction.

1.2. The effect of psychosocial work characteristics on burnout and job satisfaction

The job strain model (Karasek, 1979) is perhaps the most influential model of stress in the workplace at the present time (Luchman and González-Morales, 2013), despite some limitations (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Karasek's original model focused on two psychosocial work characteristics: *job demands* (pathogenic factor) and *job control* (salutogenic factor). According to the job strain model, workers who are exposed to high levels of demands, but have low levels of job control are more likely to exhibit increased levels of depression, fatigue, cardiovascular disease and mortality. The job demands to which geriatric care members are exposed include time pressure, workload, lack of autonomy, confrontation with suffering, physical stress, shift work and staff shortages (Kozak et al., 2013; Westermann et al., 2014). Other factors, such as lack of social support and recognition among colleagues and from superiors, are also present. Staff must deal with problems with residents and colleagues, working in what can sometimes be a hostile environment (Evers et al., 2001). These aversive working conditions can have undeniable effects on job satisfaction and the likelihood of burnout (Akerboom and Maes, 2006; Demerouti et al., 2000; Van Bogaert et al., 2013a,b).

The psychosocial work characteristics listed above that are traditionally invoked to explain work stress are not always enough to enable us to understand the processes that can lead employees to suffer from burnout or feel dissatisfied with their jobs. As elderly people in geriatric centers frequently make emotional demands on staff, the study of emotions at work may also contribute to a better understanding of these processes (Brief and Weiss, 2002; Zapf et al., 2001).

1.3. The effects of perceived emotional display rules on burnout and job satisfaction

According to Ekman, emotions are expressed in response to the display rules prescribed in different social settings (Ekman et al., 1969). "Display rules were defined as procedures learned early in life for the management of affect displays and include deintensifying, intensifying, neutralizing, or masking an affect display" (Ekman et al., 1969, p. 86).

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