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Internal Security 2/2012: 265-274

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://internalsecurity.wspol.eu/2-2012/fatigue-and-professional-burnout-in-police-officers-and-firefighters

Published by:

Police Academy in Szczytno
e-mail: wwip@wspol.edu.pl
http://www.wspol.edu.pl

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Abstract. *Excessive demands, work overload and the working time arrangements are an important cause of burnout and fatigue in employees. Specific working time arrangements are characteristic of the internal security services, such as police officers and firefighters. This applies to both the ordering of day and night shifts and the length of shifts. Depletion of personal resources is a common component for acute fatigue and burnout. However, fatigue has a short-term effect, whereas burnout has a chronic effect. The aim of the study presented here is to assess the relationship between fatigue and burnout in two professional groups with high psychosocial risks. The group examined consisted of 174 people, 89 police officers (11 women) and 85 firefighters. Correlational design was used. The Fatigue Scale was applied to measure fatigue at work, and The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory was used to measure exhaustion and disengagement. The results of our study showed that in comparison with firefigthers, police officers were more fatigued, more exhausted and more disengaged. Fatigue was related to exhaustion and disengagement. The effective size of the relationship between fatigue and exhaustion and between fatigue and disengagement was similar and moderate in both groups. In conclusion, the differences between police officers and firefighters in fatigue and burnout may be explained by different demands and working time arrangements. Depletion of energy resources is visible in exhaustion and disengagement. The practices of limiting the negative and direct results of work, such as fatigue, may help to prevent the escalation of chronic conditions such as burnout.*

Keywords: human resources, job burnout, fatigue, exhaustion, disengagement, police officer, firefighter

Background

Workers affected by burnout are less effective at work, they are more often absent, and their physical and mental health deteriorates. There is no doubt that for this reason, organisations and society suffer losses. Excessive demands at work and work overload are a major cause of burnout and fatigue in employees[1]. Fatigue is a subjective state of exhaustion in which the willingness and ability to take the physical and mental effort decrease[2]. Ensuring public safety is one of the priorities of the state. The officer who is tired and burnt-out may not be able to perform his or her task, because each person has a limited pool of resources. These reasons have led the authors of this work to address the problem of the role of fatigue at work and its relationship to burnout in police officers and firefighters.

[1] Schaufeli W.B, Bakker A.B, Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: a multi-sample study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 2004, Vol. 25, pp. 293–315.

[2] Chang F.L, Sun Y.M, Chuang K.H, Hsu D.J, Work fatigue and psychological symptoms in different occupations of high-elevation construction workers. *Applied Ergonomic*, 2008, Vol. 40, pp. 591–596.

Fatigue immediately after work (acute fatigue) is the individual's reaction to high demands placed at work. It is also a signal that energy resources are running out and one needs to rest[3]. Acute fatigue should be completely reduced by the rest between shifts. However, fatigue that cannot be reduced may become a chronic condition that will have negative consequences in the daily activities and the quality of life.

One of the major causes of fatigue is the working time arrangements, including time of day and night as well as overtime. The specific working time arrangements are characteristic of paramilitary formations (e.g. police officers and firefighters). This applies to both the ordering of day and night shifts and the length of shifts. The work of police officers is organised in such a way that a single shift usually lasts eight hours, although there are also twelve-hour shifts. However, firefighters usually work on twenty-four-hour shifts. In the work of police officers fast rotations of shifts and short breaks between them may lead to fatigue[4]. In the work of firefighters longer periods of rest between shifts may be conducive to relaxation and recuperation[5]. Accidents occur more often during night shifts. This problem is also evident among police officers returning from day shifts to night shifts[6]. Two factors overlap here: fatigue resulting from the disruption in the regulation of circadian rhythm, and fatigue which is the result of overload.

Overtime is the primary cause of fatigue in American police officers working in the uniformed department[7]. Some police officers start their shift already being tired, which makes it difficult for them to perform their duties well. However, police officers are much more concerned about the level of fatigue observed in their colleagues. They claim that such a long working time precludes them from relaxing after work.

Prolonged fatigue may lead to burnout[8]. Burnout consists of two key components: exhaustion and depersonalisation. Exhaustion is a sense of loss of the energy to perform work, experiencing psychosomatic symptoms or irritability. According to the new approach proposed by researchers from Dutch universities[9],

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Vila B.J, Impact of long work hours on police officers and the communities they serve. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 2006, Vol. 49, pp. 972–980.

[5] Brough P, Comparing the influence of traumatic and organisational stressors on the psychological health of police, fire and ambulance officers. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 2004, Vol. 11, pp. 227–244.

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[7] Vila B.J, Kenney D.J, Tired cops. The prevalence and potential consequences of police fatigue. *National Institute of Justice Journal*, 2002, Vol. 248, pp. 16–21.

[8] Leone S.S, Huibers M.J.H, Knottnerus J.A, Kant I.J, A comparison of the course of burnout and prolonged fatigue: A 4-year prospective cohort study. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 2008, Vol. 65, pp. 31–38.

[9] Demerouti E, Bakker A.B, Vardakou I, Kantas, The convergent validity of two burnout instruments. A multitrait — multimethod analysis. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 2003, Vol. 19, pp. 12–23.

exhaustion is not limited to the emotional aspect, but also includes cognitive and physical aspects. Depersonalisation describes a state in which one distances oneself emotionally, has negative feelings and cynical attitude towards clients and co-workers. In the new depiction of burnout, depersonalisation is one of the components of disengagement that is defined as having negative attitude towards the subject of work, its content and the work itself. Disengagement is rather associated with professional identification and the desire to continue working in the profession.

The problem of exhaustion among Norwegian police officers resulted from the excessive amount of work. Furthermore, exhaustion was associated with poorer subjective assessment of health, as well as its worse objective state[10]. Emotional exhaustion was observed almost three times more often in American police officers suffering from sleep difficulties, which are regarded as an indicator of fatigue, depersonalisation was observed 1.6 times more often, and depression was diagnosed twice more often[11].

Burnout is the result of two mechanisms. Excessive demands lead to exhaustion and health deterioration, and poor personal and organisational resources are the reason for the loss of motivation and, consequently, disengagement[12]. Therefore, it appears that fatigue may intensify exhaustion more than disengagement.

Acute fatigue at work differs from burnout. Although strength depletion is the common component, acute fatigue after work has a short-term effect, whereas burnout has a chronic and lasting effect[13]. While the problem of burnout in police officers has been discussed quite frequently[14], it has rarely been linked to fatigue experienced immediately after work. Previous studies on fatigue among American police officers have some limitations due to the cultural context. To our knowledge, the relationship between the role of acute fatigue and burnout in uniformed officers has not yet been sufficiently examined.

The aim of the study presented here is to assess the relationship between fatigue and burnout in police officers and firefighters. We assumed that police officers are more tired and burnt-out in comparison with firefighters (hypothesis 1) and that fatigue is more related to exhaustion than disengagement (hypothesis 2).

[10] Burke R.J, Mikkelsen A, Burnout among Norwegian Police Officers: potential antecedents and consequences. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 2006, Vol. 13, pp. 64–83.

[11] Rajaratnam S.M.W, Barger L.K, Lockley S.W, Shea S.A, Wang W, Landrigan C.P, O'Brien C.S, Qadri S, Sullivan J.P, Cade B.E, Epstein L.J, White D.P, Czeisler C.A, Harvard Work Hours, Health and Safety Group, Sleep Disorders, Health, and Safety in Police Officers. *JAMA*, 2011, Vol. 306, pp. 2567–2578.

[12] Demerouti E, Bakker A.B, Vardakou I, Kantas, *op. cit.;* Schaufeli W.B, Bakker A.B, *op. cit.*

[13] Leone S.S, Huibers M.J.H, Knottnerus J.A, Kant I.J, *op. cit.*; Schaufeli W.B, Maassen G.H, Bakker A.B, Sixma H.J, Stability and change in burnout: a 10-year follow-up study among primary care physicians. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 2011, Vol. 84, pp. 248–267.

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Material and Methods

One hundred and seventy-four participants completed the evaluation, including eighty-nine police officers and eighty-five firefighters. There were eleven women (police officers only) in the group. The police officers worked mainly in the uniformed department (69%) and in the criminal department (20%). The prevailing organisation of work was based on eight-hour shifts (70%). Most police officers (80%) worked on regular night shifts (at least once a week). All firefighters worked in fire stations. The prevailing organisation of work was based on twenty-four-hour shifts with at least forty-eight-hour rest period (93%). Participation in the study was voluntary.

Acute fatigue at work was measured by Fatigue Scale[15]. This scale consists of six items that concern decrease in activation, decrease in motivation, and physical fatigue immediately after work. The 5-point scale was used to measure responses (1 — "Strongly disagree", 5 — "Strongly agree"). A higher score indicates more fatigue after work. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was good in this study (α=0.92).

Burnout was evaluated by means of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory[16] (Polish version by R. Cieślak). It measures two aspects of burnout: exhaustion and disengagement. The responses were given on a 4-point scale (1 — "Agree", 4 — "Disagree"). A higher score describes more serious burnout. Reliability coefficients of the scale of exhaustion and disengagement were good in this study (α=0.82 and α=0.73 respectively).

Results

First, it was examined whether there are any differences between the two professional groups in the field of fatigue and burnout. For this purpose, *t*-student test was used and the effect size of the results was calculated by means of *d*-Cohen's coefficient. The coefficient with a value of 0.5 indicates the moderate effect size, and the 0.8 coefficient indicates a large effect size[17]. These results were presented in Table 1.

The police officers were more tired with their work than the firefighters. At the same time they were more exhausted and more disengaged than firefighters. Thus, hypothesis 1 was confirmed. The effect size of these results was large.

Next, the correlation between variables was analysed by means of *r*-Pearson coefficient. Acute fatigue in police officers and firefighters was moderately related to exhaustion (r=0.40 and r=0.41 respectively) and disengagement (r=0.43 and r=0.44 respectively).

[15] Basińska B.A, Wilczek-Rużyczka E, Zespół wypalenia zawodowego i zmęczenie w kontekście pracy zmianowej i stresu zawodowego wśród pielęgniarek chirurgicznych. *Przegląd Psychologiczny*, 2011, No. 54, pp. 99–113.

[16] Demerouti E, Mostert K, Bakker A.B, Burnout and work engagement: A thorough investigation of the independency of both constructs. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 2010, Vol. 15, pp. 209–222.

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Table 1. The differences between police officers and firefighters in fatigue and burnout

	Police officers n= 89		Firefighters n = 85		*t*	*d*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Fatigue	16.75	4.12	9.99	3.94	10.75*	1.69
Exhaustion	19.40	3.75	14.35	3.79	8.68*	1.35
Disengagement	19.26	3.17	15.35	3.56	7.60*	1.16

Note: * $p < 0.001$, *M* — mean, *SD* — standard deviation, *t* — the Student's *t*-test, *d* — Cohen's *d* coefficient

Regression analyses were performed next, and the effective size of the results was measured by means of Cohen's coefficient. The 0.15 coefficient indicates a moderate effect size and the 0.35 coefficient indicates a large effect size[18].

Regression models were first analysed for exhaustion. In the group of police officers fatigue at work explained 15% of variance in exhaustion (F=15.27 $p < 0.001$). The effect size of this result was moderate (f^2=0.18). In the group of firefighters fatigue explained 16% of variance in exhaustion (F=16.84 $p < 0.001$). The effective size of this result was also moderate (f^2=0.19). Fatigue at work intensified exhaustion in police officers and firefighters.

Similar method was used in the study of the relationship between fatigue and disengagement. In the group of police officers fatigue explained 17% of variance in disengagement (F = 18.19 $p < 0.001$). The effective size of this result was moderate (f^2=0.21). Fatigue at work in firefigthers explained 18% of variance in disengagement (F=19.67 $p < 0.001$). The effective size of this result was also moderate (f^2=0.22). Disengagement was explained with fatigue in both police officers and firefighters. Hypothesis 2 was not supported because exhaustion and disengagement were explained to a similar extent with fatigue in both professional groups.

Discussion

Summing up the results of our study, police officers were more fatigued with their work, more exhausted and more disengaged in comparison with firefighters. The results indicate that fatigue intensified exhaustion and disengagement to a similar extent.

Before trying to interpret these results, we would like to look at the level of fatigue and burnout in the police officers and firefighters examined as compared to other professional groups. The police officers were less fatigued after work than surgical nurses, and they declared the similar level of fatigue to a group of psychiatric nurses[19]. Firefighters experienced less fatigue than the above-mentioned groups of nurses. However, the level of burnout can be referred to the results of employees in other countries, due to a lack of Polish studies applying this method. The groups

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] Wilczek-Rużyczka E, Basińska B.A, Stress, fatigue and burnout — the differences between psychiatric and surgical nurses. *Psychology & Health*, 2012, Vol. 27(S1), p. 139.

of police officers and firefighters were less exhausted and less disengaged than American firefighters and the general population of this country[20]. In comparison with the Greek employees, the group of police officers was exhausted to a similar extent but more disengaged, and the group of firefighters presented a lower level of the two components of burnout[21].

Differences between fatigue and burnout in police officers and firefighters can be explained with different demands and the working time arrangements. Distribution of tasks and demands per shift is different in case of each group. Increased vigilance and full attention are constantly required from police officers, which intensifies acute fatigue. Time pressure and exposure to a number of interpersonal relationships during work undoubtedly cause stress[22]. The work of firefighters in these respects is less absorbing. They are required to be ready to respond quickly, and to be alert during rescue operations. However, during the tasks performed at a fire station, work overload and time pressure are not felt as strongly.

The working time arrangements may also be important. As other studies have demonstrated[23], overtime is a significant cause of fatigue. This problem is also serious in Polish uniformed officers. In a group of police officers, extending eight-hour shifts is equal to shortening the time needed for rest. It also occurs that the time off between shifts is shorter than the time required by law for employees (11 hours). Such a situation may lead to fatigue and burnout understood as states of energy and resources depletion[24]. It will also hinder the recovery of the depleted persona resources. The working time arrangements in the case of firefigthers seem entirely different. After a twenty-four-hour shift, firefighters are given at least two days off. This means that the organisation provides a sufficient amount of time for rest and recovery of personal resources of their employees. It is also a time when one can forget about work and mentally distance oneself from it[25].

Similar patterns of the relationship between fatigue and burnout in firefighters and police officers have been observed in this study. It means that the greater the fatigue in officers, the greater the exhaustion and disengagement. Burnout shows the process of personal resources depletion. The violation of energy resources is noticeable directly in relation to exhaustion, but also indirectly in relation to depersonalisation[26]. In our study, professional identification is correlated to acute fatigue to a similar degree as exhaustion. These correlations are very important in the context of the results of recent studies[27], which showed that fatigue in police officers co-occurs not only with exhaustion and depersonalisation, but also with depression and even suicide attempts.

[20] Halbesleben J.R.B, Demerouti E, The construct validity of an alternative measure of burnout: Investigating the English translation of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory. *Work & Stress*, 2005, Vol. 19, pp. 208–220.

[21] Demerouti E, Bakker A.B, Vardakou I, Kantas, *op. cit.*

[22] Ogińska-Bulik N, *op. cit.*

[23] Vila B.J, *op. cit.*; Vila B.J, Kenney D.J, *op. cit.*

[24] Schaufeli W.B, Bakker A.B, *op. cit.*

[25] Brough P, *op. cit.*

[26] Schaufeli W.B, Maassen G.H, Bakker A.B, Sixma H.J, *op. cit.*

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The study has some limitations. Firstly, it is a correlational study, consequently, only correlations can be discussed and not causal relationships. However, the problem discussed is largely justified in theory, and the limitation is a consequence of the use of self-report methods. Secondly, the group comprised the officers who wanted to participate in the study. Therefore, further studies using random sample methods should be conducted. Despite these limitations, the study has some advantages. It uses a new approach to burnout[28]. In addition, studies among operational uniformed officers are very important.

Conclusions

The study presented here shows the relationship between acute fatigue and burnout. From a practical point of view, management staff may limit direct, negative impact of the work, such as fatigue, through the implementation of appropriate methods. In this way, managers may also prevent or reduce intensification of chronic consequences such as burnout. It seems that in professions with high psychosocial risk, such as police officers and firefighters, burnout is difficult to avoid. However, this phenomenon can be limited by the implementation of managerial programmes which minimise it.

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***Streszczenie**. Istotną przyczyną wypalenia, jak również zmęczenia pracowników, są nadmierne wymagania, przeciążenie pracą i organizacja czasu pracy. Szczególna organizacja czasu pracy jest charakterystyczna dla służb bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego, takich jak policjanci i strażacy. Dotyczy to sposobu rotacji zmian dziennych i nocnych oraz długości poszczególnych służb. Ostre zmęczenie pracą i wypalenie zawodowe łączy komponent wyczerpania sił, zmęczenie jednak ma charakter krótkotrwałego stanu, podczas gdy wypalenie ma charakter przewlekły i trwały. Celem niniejszej pracy była ocena relacji pomiędzy zmęczeniem pracą*

a wypaleniem zawodowym w dwóch grupach zawodowych wysokiego ryzyka psychospołecznego. W badaniu wzięło udział 174 osób, w tym 89 policjantów (11 kobiet) i 85 strażaków. Zastosowano podejście korelacyjne. Do oceny ostrego zmęczenia zastosowano Indeks Zmęczenia Pracą. Wypalenie zawodowe, w tym wyczerpanie i bark zaangażowania, szacowano za pomocą Oldenburskiego Kwestionariusza Wypalenia Zawodowego. Wyniki badania pokazały, że policjanci w porównaniu do strażaków, byli bardziej zmęczeni po pracy, wyczerpani i mniej zaangażowani. Zmęczenie pracą nasilało zarówno wyczerpanie, jak i brak zaangażowania wśród policjantów i strażaków. Siła tych związków w obu grupach zawodowych była podobna i umiarkowana. Podsumowując, różnice pomiędzy policjantami i strażakami w zakresie zmęczenia oraz wypalenia można tłumaczyć innymi wymaganiami oraz organizacją czasu pracy. Naruszenie zasobów energetycznych jest widoczne w wyczerpaniu i braku zaangażowania. W zawodach wysokiego ryzyka psychospołecznego trudno uniknąć wypalenia zawodowego, ale można je ograniczać poprzez wspieranie działań minimalizujących to zjawisko. Praktyki ograniczające bezpośrednie negatywne skutki pracy, takie jak zmęczenie, pomogą zapobiegać nasilaniu stanów przewlekłych, jakim jest wypalenie zawodowe.

***Резюме**. Существенной причиной эмоционального выгорания, а также усталости сотрудников являются чрезмерные требования, рабочие перегрузка и организация рабочего времени. Особая организация рабочего времени является характерной для служб внутренней безопасности, т.е. сотрудников полиции и пожарной охраны. Это касается порядка чередования дневных и ночных смен, а также их продолжительности. Сильная усталость от работы и профессиональное выгорание включает в себя элемент истощения сил. Однако, усталости своейственна кротковременность, в то время как для выгорания характерны продолжительность и устойчивость. Целью настоящей статьи является анализ соотношения между утомлением от работы и профессиональным выгоранием в двух профессиональных группах с высоким уровнем психообщественного риска. В исследованиях приняли участие 174 человека, в том числе 89 полицейских (11 женщин) и 85 сотрудников пожарной службы. Был применен корреляционный метод. Оценка сильного утомления и переутомления проводилась с помощью индекса утомления от работы. Профессиональное выгорание, включая истощение и безразличие к своим обязанностям и происходящему на работе, оценивалось с помощью Ольденбургской анкеты по выявлению синдрома профессионального выгорания. Результаты исследования показали, что сотрудники полиции по сравнению с сотрудниками пожарной службы были более утомлены и истощены после работы, а также проявляли меньший интерес к ней. Среди полицейских и сотрудников пожарной охраны утомление от работы повышало уровень истощения, а также появлялось в отсутствии увлечения работой. Связь между этими факторами в обеих профессиональных группах оказалась на похожем умеренном уровне. Авторы пришли к выводу, что разницу результатов в уровне утомления и выгорания в группе полицейских и пожарников можно объяснить различными требованиями и организацией рабочего времени. Нарушение энергетических ресурсов человека проявляется в истощении и безразличии к своим обязанностям и происходящему. В профессиях, связанных с высоким психообщественным риском, трудно избежать профессионального выгорания, однако его можно значительно ограничить, проводя действия, которые минимализируют его развитие. Практические действия, ограничивающие непосредственное негативное воздействие данной профессии, такие как утомление, помогают предотвратить хронические состояния, к которым относится профессиональное выгорание.*