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The relationship between personality traits and burnout in medical staff in public vs private institutions

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Abstract. This research explores the relationship between personality traits and burnout among medical staff in public and private institutions. The study uses a complex methodology, including hypothesis testing, participant selection, and various research instruments, to examine correlations between specific personality traits and levels of burnout. Data analysis reveals significant links, highlighting the influence of the work environment on burnout. The results provide essential insights into the complexity of burnout, its impact on the effectiveness and well-being of health professionals.

Keywords. personality traits, burnout, medical staff, public vs private institutions, mental health

1. Theoretical aspects of research

Burnout syndrome is considered to be a three-dimensional concept composed of: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and low personal achievements. Therefore, the burnout syndrome is mainly found in professionals whose professional activity involves direct interpersonal relationships.

Burnout can be compared to the highest level of stress, namely the third stage of the general adaptation syndrome (Mark & Smith, 2012). If the stress persists for a significant period of time, then the professional will gradually lose the interest or motivation that led him to assume the role or function, the responsibility that brought him to the point of exhaustion.

As mentioned by Balgiu (2010), the notion of burnout received different specifications in content depending on the field and sample researched. So, it points out a series of perspectives on the concept, taken from the study of Himle et. of (1987). The latter demonstrated the fact that



burnout is not limited to a single aspect, but has multiple facets. In this sense, burnout can be either a response of the body unable to adapt to stressful conditions (Maslach, 1976), or a negative phenomenon closely related to professional activity and the workplace, or, in a broad sense, a state of boredom, either the act of generally experiencing exhaustion, or occupational stress.

Sindromul Burnout este o stare de epuizare emoțională, de depersonalizare și de diminuare a performanțelor, susceptibilă să apară la persoanele care lucrează cu alte persoane (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1986).

From the perspective of Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter (2001), professional exhaustion, also called burnout, consists of a syndrome of physical and emotional exhaustion, which involves the development of a negative attitude towards the self, a professional attitude of underestimation, disapproval, leading to an absence of involvement, but also to a diminution of positive feelings, until their total disappearance. Burnout is described, therefore, as a syndrome of exhaustion, depersonalization and significant reduction of involvement in the development or improvement of professional activity (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Therefore, professional burnout is the result of the persistence of stress and its chronicity, the awareness of an imbalance in the context of the workplace, the impression, the belief that there is an imbalance between individual possibilities and resources and the demands of the workplace.

Personality traits comprise a person's way of thinking, feeling, perceiving and relating to others. These traits are evident from late childhood or adolescence and include what is unique about us and what we share with others. Over time, many studies have identified and assessed the main personality traits.

Regarding the present study, it aims to analyze, in particular, the connection of three of these traits with the level of burnout, so, in what follows, we will review the following concepts: extraversion, conscientiousness and emotional stability.

Extraversion is considered one of the traits described in the factor theory of personality. According to Eysenck's model, it is defined, together with introversion, as the degree to which an individual is willing to interact with other people (Eysenck, 1967). This personality trait is associated with sociability, dynamism and the inclination to experience positive emotions (Costa, McCrae, 1992). Extroverts are communicative, expansive, sociable, warm, cheerful, enthusiastic, love to be in a group and be leaders, active, easily bored in the absence of external stimuli and tend to seek excitement. Introverts are reserved, calm and independent, and are not as enthusiastic as extroverts, which, however, does not mean that they are pessimistic or unhappy.

Regarding the conscientiousness personality factor, consulting the specialized literature, we present the definition of the concept below:

Conscientiousness is the attitude that is revealed by the effort a person makes in order to carry out activities (quantitatively and qualitatively) in accordance with the norms of improvement (Popescu-Neveanu, 1978). Likewise, "Conscientiousness represents man's capacity for self-regulation and self-control, which focuses on elements of inhibition and proactive aspects" (Digman, 1990, apud Iliescu and Sulea, 2015). So, by conscientiousness we mean organized people, who like to have a well-structured, well-controlled work environment, who are able to work continuously and focus on achieving the proposed objectives for a long time, who are willing to invest a lot of work and are not distracted by temptations (Costa and McCrae, 1992).



The conscientiousness factor has two components in the BFQ (Big Five Questionnaire) caution and persistence. People who score high on this factor consider themselves meticulous, attentive, orderly, precise and persistent. Those with lower scores are considered to lack meticulousness, disorganized, lacking perseverance and without any interest in matters related to precision and order (Digman, 1990, apud Iliescu and Sulea, 2015). In this sense, a conscientious person is not spontaneous, but prefers things to be planned, so these people may have difficulty adapting to requirements that require a high degree of flexibility and may be easily destabilized by borderline, unforeseen situations that must manage them. A high degree of conscientiousness can be perceived as obsession and stubbornness. For this very reason, people with a low score on the conscientiousness factor are seen as more flexible and spontaneous.

At the same time, according to Roberts et al. (2009), conscientiousness implies taking responsibility, self-discipline and a preference for well-organized, planned things, conscientious people finding it difficult to adapt to spontaneous situations.

Next, regarding emotional stability, we mention a series of definitions, which can be found in specialized literature, perspectives of several authors mentioned in the work of Cerlat (2018, p. 17-19):

„Emotional stability is an important contributor to the maintenance of organized behavior, to a conjunctural focus, in both ordinary and highly emotional situations”. Eysenck uses the term „neuroticism”, explaining emotional stability with the help of indicators of lability of the nervous system. Eysenck also describes the typical emotionally unstable (neurotic) as „below average in intelligence, will, emotional control, sensory acuity, and ability to assert oneself” (Eysenck, 1959, 1975). Also, Emotional Stability represents the ability of man to maintain his emotional balance in situations involving a high level of stress. It is opposed to emotional instability or neuroticism, and emotionally stable people are characterized by constancy in their initial, basic state and/or have the ability to quickly return to it after interacting with axiogenic stimuli.

People feel the need for such stability, to ensure the harmonization of the personality and its effective and timely adaptation to the social environment. According to Aristotle's conception: „emotions must be present in appropriate doses, proportional to the triggering event, must be expressed at the appropriate time, be in accordance with the emotional trigger and the circumstances in which it occurred. Therefore, they must be expressed in an appropriate manner, which does not cause damage and does not prevent the realization of the individual's activity” (Aristotle, apud Goldie, 2000). In other words, emotional stability echoes beyond us, making its presence felt not only in the experiences and states felt in an inner reality, but also in the actions we carry out, in the way we interact with others, but also in the work and the results obtained from it.

The emotional stability factor mainly refers to the characteristics known as „positive affectivity” and is manifested by the appropriate control of impulses and emotions (McCrae & Costa, 1987).

In this sense, emotional stability is a dynamic and functional trait of the human personality, which actively participates in the effective achievement of the proposed goals, allowing us to flexibly respond to stimuli, without losing our nature and continuing to maintain our initial balance from the point of view of emotional view. Thus, emotional stability contributes to maintaining the dynamic balance between the emotional state felt at the level of inner reality and that which



characterizes external reality, the surrounding world, and reaching a maximum level of efficiency in emotional and behavioral responses in situations considered stressful (Cerlat, 2018).

2. Research methodology

2.1. Research objectives

The objectives of the present research have been outlined in such a way as to be in accordance with the purposes of the research. Therefore, the objectives will suggest the intention of the study to discover the existence of internal links between the dimensions of the burnout syndrome and the personality traits of the tested medical personnel.

In this sense, the objectives of the research were formulated as follows:

The general objective is to identify the relationship between burnout and the personality traits of nurses employed in state and private institutions.

As specific objectives, we mention:

- identifying significant differences in the degree of burnout between medical personnel working in the state sector and those working in the private sector
- identifying a correlation between the level of burnout and conscientiousness, extraversion, respectively, emotional stability, as personality traits.

2.2. Research hypotheses

Regarding the research hypotheses, they are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: It is hypothesized that there are significant differences in the level of burnout between public and private sector employees

Hypothesis 2: It is assumed that there is a significant and positive correlation between the level of burnout and conscientiousness.

Hypothesis 3: It is assumed that there is a significant and negative correlation between the level of burnout and extraversion.

Hypothesis 4: It is assumed that there is a significant and negative correlation between the level of burnout and emotional stability.

2.3. Research participants

The present research was carried out on a sample composed of 60 participants, 19 male and 41 female, of which 26 work in the private sector and 34 are employees of the state medical system, from the city of Bucharest.

2.4. Research tools

To carry out the present study, two questionnaires were applied, each measuring one of the studied constructs and representing the research instruments.

The FFPI questionnaire was completed to measure personality traits. It includes 100 items assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, namely: 1 = suits him very little; 2 = fits him a little; 3 = fits about halfway; 4 = suits him a lot; 5 = suits him very well. The FFPI assesses five superfactors of the Big Five model.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory questionnaire - Maslach C. Jackson, S. E. (1981) was used to assess the level of burnout, which is carried out on the three dimensions of the scale, namely:



emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP) and efficacy cognitions and professional achievement. The questionnaire contains 25 items and is structured on 3 dimensions:

1. Emotional Exhaustion (9 items) - 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 15, 16, 18, 22.
2. Depersonalization (6 items) - 5, 11, 12, 17, 20, 25
3. Reduction of Personal Achievements (10 items) - 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 14, 19, 21, 23, 24.

As a response method, we used a 5-point Likert scale, as follows: 1 – very rarely, 2 – rarely, 3 – sometimes, 4 – frequently, 5 – very frequently. The advantage of this scale is that it allows a greater variety of responses and thus decreases the risk of obtaining the same response from most test subjects..

2.5. Results

This chapter aims to analyze the statistical data obtained as a result of the present research from the perspective of the hypotheses in order to verify, from a statistical point of view, their validity. At the same time, we will support and psychologically interpret the results of the research, providing the explanation based on the theory and studies previously carried out and already existing in the specialized literature. In the following, we will analyze, one by one, each of the hypotheses of this research:

Hypothesis 1: It is hypothesized that there are significant differences in the level of burnout between public and private sector employees.

Table 2.5.1. Comparison table between the level of burnout of employees in the state sector and the level of burnout of employees in the private sector

Test Statistics ^a	
	burnout
Mann-Whitney U	42.500
Wilcoxon W	393.500
Z	-5.963
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

a. Grouping Variable: mediu

From the analysis of the Mann-Whitney U coefficient in Table 2.5.1, it follows that we obtained a significance threshold of less than 0.05, which suggests that there are significant differences between the two variables and indicates that the hypothesis is confirmed.

Since the launch of the hypothesis, we started from the premise that the staff in the state system face more difficulties than those in the private system. In public systems, resources can often be more limited, including equipment, staff and funding. They can also have a higher volume of patients, they can face more restrictions and bureaucratic procedures that often hinder efficiency, the working conditions are often below those of the private system and, compared to the private system, there is no as much recognition of individual efforts and performance which can affect morale and job satisfaction. In this sense, we consider the difference in the Burnout level between the two categories of participants to be justified



Therefore, this research finds that medical staff employed in state institutions face a higher level of burnout dimensions than those working in the private environment.

Hypothesis 2: It is assumed that there is a significant positive correlation between the level of burnout and conscientiousness

Table 2.5.2. Correlation table between burnout and conscientiousness

Correlations		burnout	conscientiousness
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.930**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	60	60
	Correlation Coefficient	.930**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	60	60

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As a result of Spearman's correlation testing (Table 2.5.2), the existence of a significantly positive correlation between the level of burnout and conscientiousness, as a personality dimension, at the significance threshold of $p < 0.01$ (0.000)

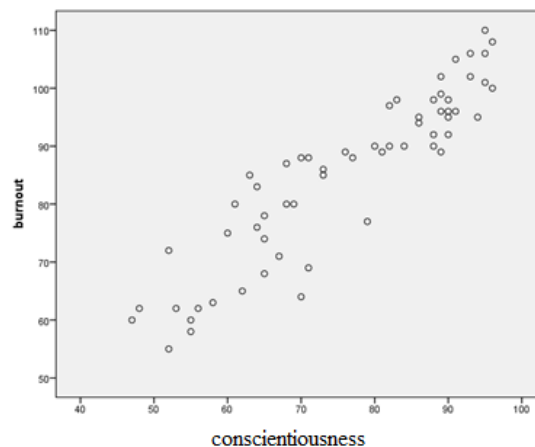


Figure 2.5.1. The scatter plot for the variables burnout and conscientiousness

The statistical analysis of the data obtained after testing the study participants indicates that the hypothesis supporting the existence of a significantly positive correlation between the level of burnout and conscientiousness is confirmed. In this sense, the cloud of points is the graphical



representation of the correlation between the two variables, and as can be seen in Figure 2.5.1, the points are arranged around the right-facing diagonal, also supporting the validity of the hypothesis.

In support of the results obtained in this research, we note the fact that there are studies that have tried to show that the conscientiousness factor correlates positively with burnout, since precisely the sense of responsibility and the desire to do things as correctly as possible could be precursors of the feeling of burnout (Huebner & Mills, 1994, apud Balgiu, 2010).

Conscientious people are distinguished by showing perseverance and are hardworking and eager to achieve success (Digman, 1990, apud Iliescu and Sulea, 2015). At the same time, a person with a high level of conscientiousness prefers planned things, so these individuals may have difficulties in adapting to requirements that require a high degree of flexibility and can be easily destabilized by the limit situations, unforeseen, that they have to manage. In this sense, we find justifiable the hypothesis according to which conscientious people present a higher level of burnout, so that the environment in which medical personnel work is constantly changing.â

Hypothesis 3: It is assumed that there is a significant negative correlation between the level of burnout and extraversion.

Table 2.5.3. Correlation table between burnout and extraversion

Correlations		Extraversion	burnout
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.692**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	60	60
	Correlation Coefficient	-.692**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	60	60

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As a result of Spearman's correlation testing (Table 2.5.3), the existence of a significantly negative correlation between the level of burnout and extraversion, as a personality dimension, at the significance threshold of $p < 0.01$ (0.000).

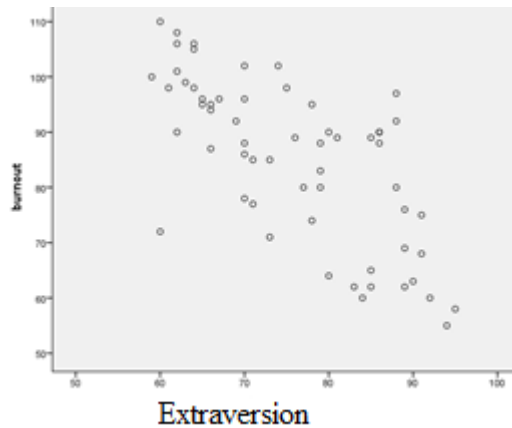


Figure 2.5.2. Scatter plot for the variables Burnout and Extraversion

The statistical analysis of the data obtained after testing the study participants indicates that the hypothesis supporting the existence of a significantly negative correlation between the level of burnout and extraversion is confirmed. In this sense, the cloud of points is the graphical representation of the correlation between the two variables, and as can be seen in Figure 2.5.2, the points are arranged around the left-facing diagonal, also supporting the validity of the hypothesis.

Regarding the relationship between burnout and personality factors, Balgiu (2010) points out that certain studies on this topic have identified extraversion as a factor that strongly correlates with emotional exhaustion and reduced personal achievements (Mills & Huebner, 1998). The same authors point out that Zellars et al. (2000) reveal a correlation between extraversion, depersonalization and decreased achievement.

Another study that supports the confirmation of our hypothesis is that of Layman & Guyden (1997), which suggested that introverted people have a higher risk of developing burnout than extraverted people. Also, extraverts tend to experience more positive emotions, with a higher frequency, and have more interpersonal relationships, so also more developed communication skills. These are optimistic people and they tend to reassess problems in a positive way.

Extraverted traits confer an advantage in healthcare jobs where higher levels of uncertainty occur in the workflow, as reported by Moutafi et al. (2007). They also support the fact that extroverts tend to focus on the good and positive side of experiences and this temperament allows them to make decisions with team members, an idea that explains the negative relationship between the level of burnout and extraversion.

Finally, we point to the perspective of the authors Judge, Heller & Mount (2002) following whose meta-analysis revealed that subjective well-being and greater job satisfaction were correlated with extraversion. This aspect could explain the negative correlation of trait extraversion scores with burnout dimensions..

Hypothesis 4: It is assumed that there is a significant negative correlation between burnout level and emotional stability.



Table 2.5.4. Correlation table between burnout and emotional stability

Correlations		burnout	Stability emotional
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.720**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	60	60
	Correlation Coefficient	-.720**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	60	60

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As a result of Spearman's correlation testing (Table 2.5.4), the existence of a significantly negative correlation between the level of burnout and emotional stability, as a personality dimension, at the significance threshold of $p < 0.01$ (0.000).

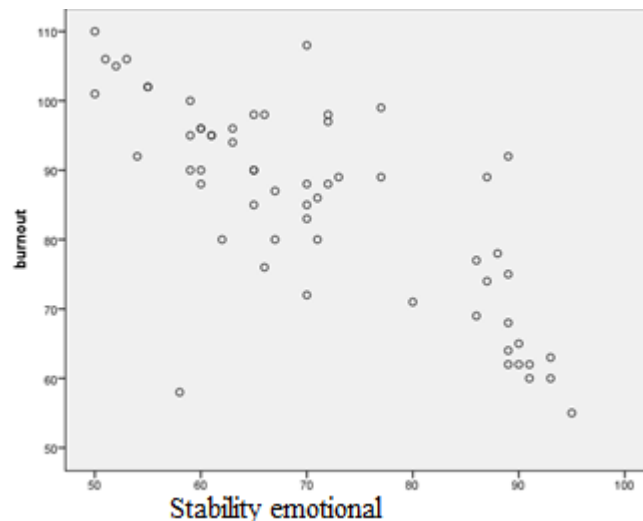


Figure 2.5.3. Scatter plot for the variables burnout and emotional stability

The statistical analysis of the data obtained after testing the study participants indicates that the hypothesis supporting the existence of a significantly negative correlation between the level of burnout and emotional stability is confirmed. In this sense, the cloud of points is the graphical representation of the correlation between the two variables, and as can be seen in Figure 2.5.3, the points are arranged around the left-facing diagonal, also supporting the validity of the hypothesis.

In support of our hypothesis, we identified in the specialized literature the fact that Mihaela Minulescu (2008) supports the idea that there are studies that have shown that exhaustion, from an emotional point of view, is closely related to the emotional stability factor, while the dimension depersonalization correlates with both emotional stability and autonomy and extraversion. In other

words, independent and emotionally stable, balanced people present a lower risk of exhausting their own resources.

Molavynejad et al. (2019) argue that the strong relationship between dimensions of burnout and neuroticism in this study can be explained by the fact that the latter is a factor with an increased potential for vulnerability, which produces negative emotions, maladjustment and increased individual sensitivity to stress. The same authors state that neuroticism correlates significantly positively with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, but also significantly negatively with personal achievement.

In this sense, the relationship that is established between emotional stability and the level of burnout is a negative one, which may be due to the underdeveloped ability of unstable people from this point of view to control their emotions and manage them properly in situations that present a high degree of stress, as is the situation of medical assistants.

Conclusions

In the present day-to-day life, the chronic stress of daily life is a more common problem in people's lives. Likewise, the depletion of employees' resources in the workplace produces increasingly dramatic consequences both professionally, in terms of work efficiency and risks, and personally, succeeding in many situations to deeply affect their interpersonal relationships and, at the same time, their physical and emotional health.

In the current context, the study of burnout has become more important, the approach is a necessity among scientific research in the field of psychology, extensive knowledge of the way it acts on the individual being an advantage and a substantial help in the process of optimizing professional activity on a large scale.

The specialized literature has sought over time to explain why some people are more prone to burnout syndrome than others. It was found, therefore, that a significant contribution to the occurrence of burnout in an individual's life has its psycho-individual characteristics, so that personality traits can influence this process of gradual exhaustion.

The aim of this paper was to identify the way in which personality traits can influence the occurrence of burnout, namely the way in which people who experience more of this syndrome present certain specific characteristics, such as conscientiousness, extroversion and emotional stability.

Finally, the present study supports and demonstrates the idea that there are significant differences between the level of burnout of health care workers employed in the public sector and health care workers employed in the private sector, in the sense that those employed in the public sector had a higher level of burnout than those employed in private institutions, and, at the same time, the current research found a positive correlation between burnout and conscientiousness, respectively, negative correlations between burnout and extraversion, emotional stability, as personality factors..

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