

1. Background and Aims

The world of work has undergone major changes, some of them affecting workers' mental health. Currently we assist to an increase of psychosocial risks, psychological disorders, and factors that affect the health and well-being of the person and the group (Dextras-Gauthier & Marchand, 2016, Eurofound, 2012; ILO, 1986, Leka & Cox, 2008; Riedl et al, 2012). These changes affect a large number of professions and have a particular impact on health professionals. Veterinarians are particularly vulnerable to burnout (Kipperman, Kass, & Rishniw, 2017; Rohlf, 2018) and are exposed to suicide four times higher than the general population (Bartram & Boniwell, 2007), and twice higher than other health professionals.

This study aims to analyze the prevalence of burnout in Portuguese veterinary doctors and to verify if they vary according to sociodemographic and professional characteristics.

2. Method

A socio-demographic questionnaire and the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2007; Campos, Carlotto & Maroco, 2012) were distributed online through the Union of Veterinary Practitioners. A total of 1425 veterinarians, 33% males, aged between 24 and 88 years (M=37.4 SD=9.71, having 50% between 24 and 35 years old), 56% with partner, 55% without children, 81% graduated after 1997, 69% with gross income up to 1500 euros, 98% work as employees, 67% employed in pet clinics, 57% work up to 40 hours per week and 52% have an indeterminate employment relationship.

3. Results

Moderate levels of exhaustion and disengagement were found (Table 1), with 14% of the sample presenting high values of exhaustion (4 or higher) and 7% of disengagement (Figure 1). Exhaustion results from prolonged exposure to certain demands of work and is manifested by intense physical, affective and cognitive tension. Disengagement refers to the distance from work, to remoteness due to lack of identification and willingness to continue to do so (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Demerout, Mostert, & Bakker, 2010). In order to analyze the prevalence of exhaustion and disengagement (Table 2), multiple linear regression analysis was performed (Maroco, 2010), where the significance levels of the F test presented values lower than 0.05 for exhaustion in the personal variables (sex, age and number of children) and organizational and labor variables (workload, main area of activity, work regime, and work situation). Regarding disengagement, it is predicted more by organizational and labor variables (work regime, work situation and main area of activity) than by individual variables. Thus, exhaustion seems to be related with female, younger veterinary and with less children, with more workload, working in clinics, having a unstable situation and working for other or for public institutions. Disengagement seems to be related with less children, more workload, unstable situation and working in clinics. These results are very high, although there are no national studies to compare them. However, if we consider that 38% of the subjects claim to receive a gross salary of up to 1000 euros and that 82% graduated after 1997, we conclude that this professional group perceives negatively their professional situation in financial terms and professional stability, since 57% works for others and 34% are in a regime of provision of services, right time or uncertain time.

Table 1. Descriptive values for Burnout dimensions

Burnout (1-5)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D.
Exhaustion	1,00	5,00	3,199	,793
Disengagement	1,00	5,00	2,807	,820

Figure 1. Percentage of burnout levels for each dimension

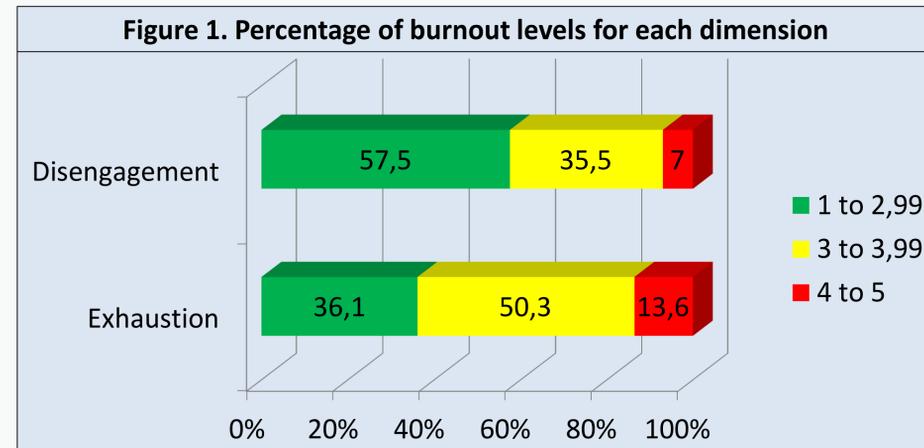


Table 2. Regression of individual and job variables on burnout dimensions

Dependent variable	Predictors (Enter method)	R ²	R ² change	F (sig)		
Exhaustion	Individual variables	,065	,065	23,125 (.000***)		
	Job variables	,102	,037	11,032 (.000***)		
Disengagement	Individual variables	,004	,004	1,365 (.244)		
	Job variables	,068	,064	18,222 (.000***)		
Dependent variable	Predictors (Stepwise method)	R ²	R ² change	Beta	t (sig)	F (sig)
Exhaustion	Sex (male to female)	,051	,051	,188	6,994 (.000***)	76,289 (.000***)
	Age	,064	,013	-.097	-3,367 (.001***)	48,619 (.000***)
	Number of children	,067	,003	-.060	-2,160 (.031*)	34,051 (.000***)
	Workload	,019	,019	,141	5,153 (.000***)	26,282 (.000***)
	Main area activity (clinic to industry/labs)	,031	,012	-.181	-5,938 (.000***)	21,312 (.000***)
	Work regime (own to other /public)	,047	,016	,150	4,949 (.000***)	21,980 (.000***)
Disengagement	Work situation (stable to unstable)	,058	,011	,106	3,948 (.000***)	20,563 (.000***)
	Number of children	,003	,003	-.055	-2,065 (.039*)	4,263 (.039*)
	Work regime (own to other /public)	,196	,038	,234	7,753 (.000***)	53,248 (.000***)
	Work situation (stable to unstable)	,249	,062	,158	5,948 (.000***)	44,213 (.000***)
	Main area activity (clinic to industry/labs)	,258	,066	-.075	-2,482 (.013*)	31,643 (.000***)

* p<0,05; ** p<0,01; *** p<0,001

4. Conclusions

We found that nearby 14% of the veterinary doctors felt high levels of exhaustion and 7% high levels of disengagement, values that alert psychological sufferance of this professionals at their job. Although European reports state that about a quarter of workers feel stressed most of the time (Eurofound, 2012; EU-OSHA, 2014) because of high work intensity, tight deadlines and imbalance between work and family life; this study points to other factors, namely low salary and job instability.

5. References

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