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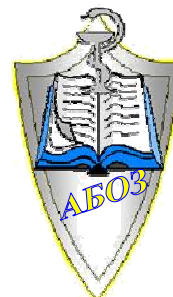
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STRES ZAWODOWY FUNKCJONARIUSZY SŁUŻBY WIĘZIENNEJ PRACUJĄCYCH W BEZPOŚREDNIM KONTAKCIE Z WIĘŹNIAMI

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF PRISON OFFICERS WORKING IN A DIRECT CONTACT WITH PRISONERS

Robert POKLEK¹

STRESZCZENIE

Praca personelu więziennego jest trudna i frustrująca. Stres wynika między innymi z nadmiernego przeciążenia obowiązkami służbowymi, brakiem satysfakcji z pracy, autokratycznym stylem zarządzania, kontaktów z więźniami, atmosfery i stosunków międzyludzkich wśród pracowników. Opracowanie przedstawia wyniki badań nad stresem ponad 130 funkcjonariuszy (strażników, wychowawców, pielęgniarek) pracujących z więźniami. Badania przeprowadzono metodą sondażu diagnostycznego i wykorzystano standaryzowane narzędzie psychologiczne Kwestionariusz Stresu Służby Więziennej.

Słowa kluczowe: służba więzienna, personel penitencjarny, stres zawodowy, stres personelu więziennego

ABSTRAKT

The job of prison personnel is difficult and frustrating. Stress results from, inter alia, overloading with responsibilities, the lack of job satisfaction, autocratic management style, contact with prisoners, atmosphere at workplace and human relations with colleagues. Experiencing of the frustration on the job and the professional stress can have the influence for life of family, is because an undesirable social aspect. The treatise presents the results of the research on stress of over 130 officers (prison guards, educators, nurses) working with prisoners. The methodology of research includes diagnostic poll method and standardized psychological tool – the Questionnaire of Stress of Prison Service.

Key words: prison service, penitentiary personnel, occupational stress of prison personnel.

INTRODUCTION

Prison personnel is an important part of the prison system, but it is not a single social category. It includes officers 1) constantly working in direct contact with prisoners, 2) the officers of the time limited contact with prisoners, 3) those whose contact with prisoners is sporadic or not at all.² Conditions of work of the prison service and the high demands posed by the society, make the prison service officers' job very difficult and dangerous, but also very responsible, which results in high emotional tension, stress and psychosomatic costs, especially in the officers with a long job seniority.³ Job responsibility of the prison staff focuses not only on ensuring the safety for themselves and prisoners but also on bringing individuals who respect the law back to the society.⁴

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² MACHEL, H. *Więzienie jako i instytucja karna resocjalizacyjna*, Gdańsk 2003

³ POKLEK, R. *Elementy kultury fizycznej w psychologicznym warsztacie antystresowym* [w:] *Promocja zdrowia we współczesnym więziennictwie*, K. KLUKOWSKI, P. ŁAPIŃSKI, A. WIZA A. KACZMAREK, Kalisz 2006.

⁴ KARASZEWSKA, H. *Personel więzienny jako realizator idei resocjalizacji* [w:] *Służba więzienna wobec problemów resocjalizacji penitencjarnej*, W. AMBROZIK, P. STĘPNIAK, Poznań – Warszawa – Kalisz 2004.

At the same time differentiating factor for professions related to the provision of social security is a threat to life and health of the officers of such services in the course of professional activities.¹ Prison worker's occupation requires, in addition to moral values, psychomotor features, specific knowledge and skills, also high resistance to stress.² A large group of penitentiary staff's stressors result from the direct contact with the prisoners. Risks include intervention and neutralisation of extreme situations, pathological reactions of prisoners who are mentally ill, depressed, addicts with low intellect and people likely to have been infected with HIV or AIDS.³ The negative interactions between staff and prisoners of certain categories can result in the direct threat of physical aggression.⁴ In addition to physical violence, officers are exposed to the verbal forms of aggression and signs of disrespect.⁵ Additional stress is the pressure resulting from threats, blackmail and exposure to manipulation by prisoners.⁶ The source of stress for the staff may be responsibility for inmates and the need to help them in life situations.⁷ In addition, excess responsibilities and workload,⁸ and a very large number of persons per one officer under his care, may deepen frustration.⁹ Occupational stress of prison officers is also associated with the paramilitary nature of the service and autocratic management style,¹⁰ the professional role within the society¹¹ and the negative attitude of the society towards people working in prison.¹² The poor state of human relations in the workplace may also result from protectionism, subjectivity in the treatment and evaluation of staff, applying non-official criteria for promotion and reward. The result may be the feeling of loneliness, undervalued, the lack of sufficient stimulation from superiors, the lack of confirmation of the role, low self-esteem of skills, and the relationships between co-workers may raise jealousy and envy.¹³

¹ CZAJKOWSKI, M. *Kobiety w wybranych grupach dyspozycyjnych polskiego społeczeństwa. Kontekst socjologiczny* [w:] *Kobiety w grupach dyspozycyjnych społeczeństwa. Socjologiczna analiza udziału i roli kobiet w wojsku, policji oraz innych grupach dyspozycyjnych*, (red.) K. DOJWA, J. MACIEJEWSKI, Wrocław 2007

² POKLEK, R. *Skuteczność psychologicznego warsztatu antystresowego w profilaktyce syndromu wypalenia zawodowego funkcjonariuszy Służby Więziennej*, Kalisz 2006

³ PEETERS, M.C.W., SCHAUFELI, W.B., BUUNK B.P. *The role of attributions in the cognitive appraisal of work related stressful events: An event recording approach* "Work and Stress", 1995, Nr 9, 463-474; SZYMANOWSKA, A. *Więźniowie i funkcjonariusze wobec norm obyczajowych i prawnych*, Warszawa 1998

⁴ PIOTROWSKI, A., PICH S. *Sense of safety among mid-level medical personel at polish penal instytutions* [w:] *Komplexné sociálne zabezpečenie vojenského profesionála*, (red.) P. HAMAJ, M. MARTINSKA, E. ZAVODNA, Liptovský Mikuláš 2010

⁵ POKLEK, R. *Inwentarz Psychologiczny Syndromu Agresji Z. B. Gasia w diagnostyce penitencjarnej – normalizacja narzędzia*, „Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego”, 2008, Nr 61

⁶ CHMIELEWSKA, H. *Psychologiczne aspekty izolacji* [w:] *Zagadnienia penitencjarne. Skrypt dla słuchaczy szkoły podoficerskiej SW*, Kalisz 2004

⁷ PIĄTEK J. *Stres pomagania ludziom w kryzysach* „Nowiny Psychologiczne”, 1998, Nr 1

⁸ DIGNAM, J.T., BARRERA, M., West S.G. *Occupational stress, social support and burnout among correctional officers* “American Journal of Community Psychology”, 1986, Nr 16, 701-724

⁹ THOMPSON, T., *Holistic health comes to prison* “Federal Prison Journal”, 1994, Nr 3, 55-59

¹⁰ PIOTROWSKI, A. *Wizerunek medialny Służby Więziennej*, „Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego”, 2010, nr 67-68. s. 85-93; MACHEL H. *Autorytarny styl kierowania personelem więziennym i jego konsekwencje (refleksje na tle własnej praktyki penitencjarnej)* [w:] *Wina – Kara – Nadzieja – Przemiana*, (red.) J. SZALAŃSKI, Łódź – Warszawa – Kalisz 1998

¹¹ SCHAUFELI, W.B., PEETERS M.C. *Job stress and burnout among correctional officers: A literature review* „International Journal of Stress Management”, 2000, Nr 7, 19-48

¹² CHEEK E.E., MILLER, M. *The experience of stress for correctional officers: A double bind theory of correctional stress*, “Journal of Criminal Justice”, 1983, Nr 11, 105-130

¹³ NAWÓJ, J. *Ryzyko i koszty wykonywania zawodu funkcjonariusza więziennego. Stres zawodowy, zagrożenia i profilaktyka* [w:] *Rozwiązywanie problemów alkoholowych w społecznościach więziennych*, (red.) R. CIBOR, J. NAWÓJ, Cieszyn 1997; NAWÓJ J. *Syndrom wypalenia zawodowego funkcjonariuszy więziennych* [w:] *Wina – Kara – Nadzieja – Przemiana*, (red.) J. SZALAŃSKI, Łódź – Warszawa – Poznań 1998; MACHEL, H. *Psychospołeczne uwarunkowania pracy resocjalizacyjnej personelu więziennego*, Gdańsk 2001

Powerlessness resulting from the inability to change the existing situation can lead to chronic stress and, consequently, the burnout syndrome.¹ The effects are numerous and extremely damaging, taking the nature of physiological, psychological and behavioural disorders.² They influence the quality of work in contact with prisoners, superiors and subordinates and colleagues working on equal positions.³ Stress at work can make officers transfer professional problems to other areas of life, especially family. The literature indicate that stress at work is as a source of family tension and conflicts, neglecting the role of parent or partner and general malaise.⁴ This justifies the need to explore the phenomenon of occupational stress of prison officers to find the ways to minimise its effects.

1. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The subject of the study was the concept of occupational stress characteristic for the prison personnel. The aim included to determine the level of occupational stress of Prison Service officers performing various duties in the direct contact with prisoners. The following research questions were to be answered: 1) What is the level of stress and the dominant stress factor for Prison Service officers working in the direct contact with the prisoners?; 2) Do specific duties (protection, resocialization, medical care) differentiate the study population? The study was based on the diagnostic poll method, using a testing technique. In this regard, a standardised tool – the Prison Service Stress Questionnaire by A. Piotrowski – was used. It is a psychological test which allows to determine the level of severity of five specific factors of occupational stress experienced by prison staff: 1) workload, 2) dissatisfaction with work, 3) management style, 4) contact with inmates; 5) atmosphere at work. The sum of the results obtained in different scales of the questionnaire enables to estimate the overall level of occupational stress of each respondent. The study was conducted from February to July 2012 among the officers who participated in various training sessions held in the Central Prison Service Training Centre in Kalisz. The participants were 134 officers PS of which 63 were women and 71 men. The officers worked in the security department (51 people), the penitentiary department (55 people) and health services (28 people).

2. RESULTS OF RESEARCH

Answering the research question about the level of stress of officers required grouping the results into 3 categories: low (1-4 sten), average (5-6 stents) and high (7-10 sten). The distribution of the sub-categorised results is presented in figure 1. Among the respondents, the level of subjective sense of *the workload* is distributed almost evenly on the results of average and high (about 35%), the least number of participants achieves low results at this scale. In the group of participants there are most frequently people heavily overloaded, and those that feel the average load on official duties.

¹ DOLLARD, M.F., WINEFIELD, A.H. *A test of the demand-control/support model of work stress in correctional officers* "Journal of Occupational Health Psychology", 1998, Nr 3, 243-264

² BASIŃSKI, A., BASIŃSKA, B. *Sytuacje traumatyczne w pracy funkcjonariuszy służby więziennej* [w:] *Służba żołnierzy i funkcjonariuszy służb państwowych wykonujących zadania w warunkach ekstremalnych. Tom 8.*, Warszawa 2004; POMIANKIEWICZ, J. *Stres i wypalenie zawodowe funkcjonariuszy Służby Więziennej*, *Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego*, 2010, nr 67-68, s. 47-60

³ POKLEK, R. *Efektywność psychologicznego warsztatu antystresowego w profilaktyce syndromu wypalenia zawodowego funkcjonariuszy Służby Więziennej* [w:] *Służba żołnierzy i funkcjonariuszy służb państwowych wykonujących zadania w warunkach ekstremalnych. Tom 8.*, Warszawa 2004

⁴ CIOSEK, M. *Stres w pracy zawodowej funkcjonariuszy więziennych* „Przegląd Penitencjarny i Kryminologiczny”, 1090-1991, nr 18; MACHEL, H. *Psychospołeczne uwarunkowania pracy resocjalizacyjnej personelu więziennego*, Gdańsk 2001

Perhaps this is due to the job on a specific position and implementation of more or less aggravating tasks, or individual differences which influence the subjective perception of reality as more or less aggravating.

The scale of *dissatisfaction with work*, the majority of respondents obtained results showing the average level of dissatisfaction (41%) or low (38.8%). Working in the prison environment can be a source of many failures, due to the subjects of interaction (demoralised people) and specifics of the institution (totality). But it depends on the staff whether they feel the satisfaction from achieving even minimal positive effects in the everyday work. The results of the analysed scale indicate that the majority of the officers are well prepared to work in the prison environment, as evidenced by the fact that only 20.1% of respondents show a high level of dissatisfaction from performing their duties. They do not worry about failures, and enjoy even the small successes.

The management style is not a source of occupational stress for most respondents - more than 56% achieved low result and 25.4% the average level of the stressor. Interpersonal relations between prison staff are based on the superior - subordinate principles which is characteristic for the total institution. Probably people who decide to take a job in prison are aware of the necessity for subordination and a single, sometimes autocratic management style and consequently, it is not a source of frustration for them. It is proved by the result of a few officers (17.9%) achieving high results at this scale .

Contacts with inmates are also not highly stressful factor, since only 14.2% of the surveyed officers show a high level of stress associated with this type of stressor, and most respondents achieved an average score (44%) or low (41.8%). The job of the officers of the security and penitentiary department is mainly based on the direct contact with inmates. The fact that for the majority of respondents these contacts with the prisoners are not a problem, actually demonstrates the right choice of profession or immunization for this kind of stressors. This issue requires more study, because high resistance to stress, resulting from the contact with the ward in the support and service occupations, may be a sign of a kind of insensibility and the indicator of depersonalization of interpersonal relations, which is one of the symptoms of the burnout syndrome.

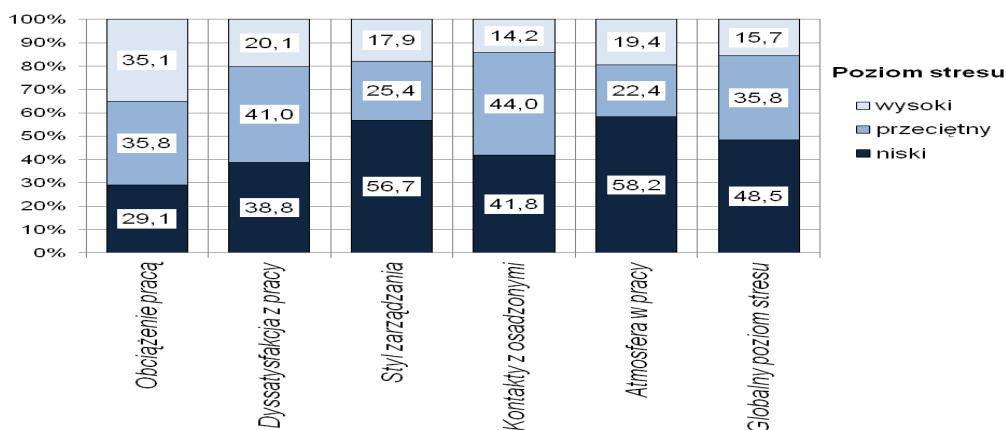
Low scores dominate on the scale associated with the atmosphere at work - more than 58% of the respondents, which indicates a fairly good working environment integration and cohesion between officers representing a specific professional group.

On the *Global stress intensity scale*, almost half of the officers has a low level of general stress (48.5%). PS officers' work is difficult, especially when most tasks are performed in the direct contact with inmates. However, too high levels of stress could adversely affect the performance of duties according to the applicable rules and the principles of professional ethics of prison service. Among the respondents, as in the general population of the prison staff, there are highly stressed people, but there are far fewer of them (only 15.7% of respondents show a high level of stress level).

Analysing the average profile of the respondents' stress it can be concluded that the dominant stress factor is the workload. Average results, while the highest, are in the range of average results. The average severity of stress also applies to dissatisfaction with work. The results on the other factors and the global level of stress are low.

Of the six scales of the Prison Service Stress Questionnaire, 2 differentiate significantly the study population of prison officers working in the direct contact with the prisoners. The differences relate to the scales of *The workload* and *The management style*. In case of the other scales the differences statistically insignificant.

Picture 1 Cumulative percentage distributions of the results of stress level of prison service officers working in the direct contact with prisoners (n = 134) Source: own study



Picture 2 An average stress profile of prison service officers working in the direct contact with prisoners (n = 134) Source: own study

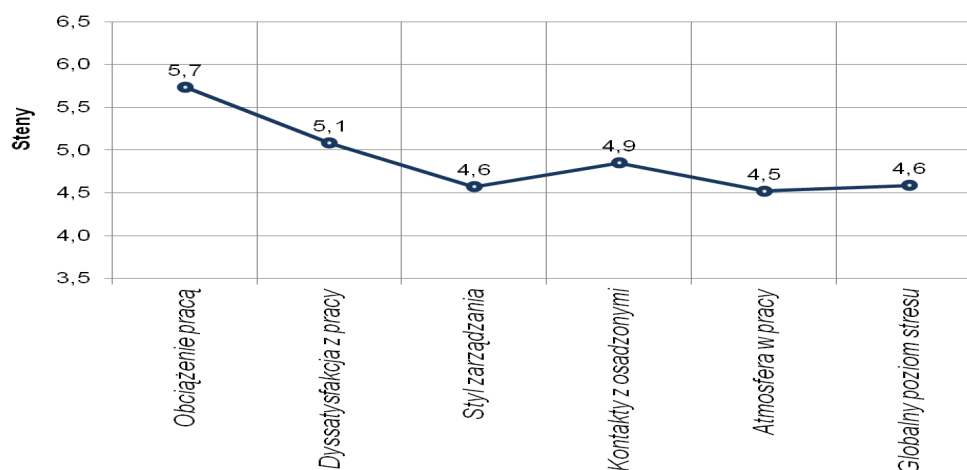


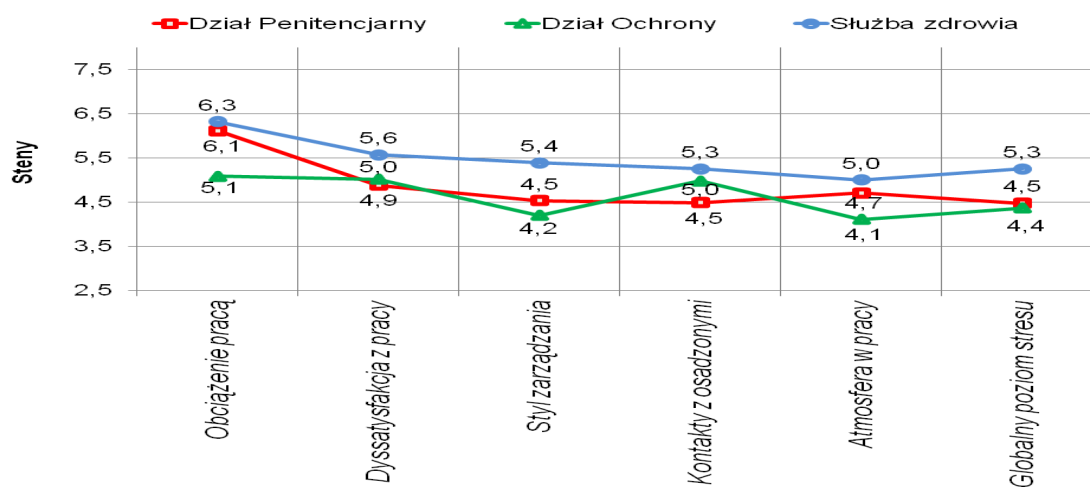
Table 1 Differentiation of the average results of stress factors depending on the service department

Scales of PSSQ	Penitentiary department		Security department		Health services		F	p
	M	sd	M	sd	M	sd		
The workload	6,12	1,96	5,09	2,26	6,32	1,98	4,555	0,012
Dissatisfaction with work	4,88	1,56	5,02	1,84	5,57	1,57	1,582	0,209
The management style	4,53	1,70	4,20	1,71	5,39	1,93	4,306	0,015
Contacts with inmates	4,49	1,53	4,98	1,83	5,25	1,58	2,16	0,119
Atmosphere at work	4,71	2,15	4,11	1,56	5,00	2,26	2,293	0,105
Global stress	4,47	1,53	4,36	1,96	5,25	1,76	2,535	0,083

Symbols: M - arithmetic mean, SD - standard deviation, F - (univariate analysis of variance) statistic value F; p - level of statistical significance. Source: own study

In order to verify accurately the differences between the groups at the scales in which the analysis of variance showed significant differences, the Duncan multiple range test was applied. On a scale of *The workload* the representatives of prison health services (nurses) have a similar level to the officers of the penitentiary department (educators), and compared with the officers of the security department, their level is much higher (the difference in Duncan's test significant at $p = 0.011$). Whereas, the security department officers show the lowest level of the workload and also differ from prison educators ($p = 0.027$). On the scale of *The management style*, the personnel of health services has the highest level of sensitivity to the prison management style and differs from the educators at $p = 0.026$, and the security officers at the level of $p = 0.003$.

Picture 3 Average profiles of prison service officers' stress depending on the service department (n = 134) Source: own research.



Analysing the average profiles of officers working for the departments in the direct contact with prisoners, it can be concluded that the highest scores are achieved by the representatives of prison health services.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The respondents often show low or average intensity of particular factors of occupational stress. The dominant stress factor is the workload.
2. The specificity of duties, resulting from the work in a specific department, significantly differentiates respondents in the 2 out of 6 analysed the factors of stress. The differences relate to the workload and the management style.
3. The security department officers show the lowest level of the workload and statistically differ in this respect from penitentiary educators and prison nurses.
4. The officers of prison services have the highest levels of stress resulting from the management style in a penitentiary unit, but at the statistical level they only differ from the security department officers.

One should conduct further research and search for the relations between stress experienced by the officers and their family life as well as their functioning in other social roles (informal, friends, neighbours, community, etc.).

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