

METHODOLOGIES TO POINT OUT THE OCCUPATIONAL STRESS - SURVEY OF WORK STYLES SWS QUESTIONNAIRE

ILEANA VĂCARU

Public Health Authority Alba

Abstract: *There is a rising interest for studying the type A behaviour pattern as an occupationally mediated risk factor for heart diseases, but also for other diseases. The SWS (Survey of Work Styles) questionnaire is probably the most complete structural test, which describes the persons liable to develop and show clinical signs as a result of occupational stress, with an obvious increase of the coronary heart diseases. This questionnaire was approved to be used in Romania in 2006, for an indefinite period of time, being applied in the following fields: work psychology, industrial and organizational psychology, services applied psychology, educational psychology, and school and vocational counselling.*

Keywords: *occupational stress, psychology, diseases, risk factor*

Rezumat: *Există un interes crescând pentru studiul modelului de comportament de tip A (Type A Behaviour Pattern) ca un factor de risc mediat profesional pentru bolile cardiace, dar și pentru diverse alte afecțiuni. Chestionarul SWS (Survey of Work Styles) este probabil cea mai completă probă structurată care descrie persoanele predispuse spre manifestare și somatizare excesivă a stresului ocupațional, cu repercursiuni directe asupra incidenței afecțiunilor coronariene. Acest chestionar a fost avizat în România în anul 2006, pe o perioadă nedeterminată, având următoarele domenii de utilizare: psihologia muncii și industrial-organizațională; psihologia aplicată în servicii; psihologie educațională; consilierea școlară și vocațională.*

Cuvinte cheie: *stres ocupațional, psihologie, afecțiuni, factor de risc*

INTRODUCTION

In 2002, the first Pan-European campaign fighting against the occupational stress, pointed out the fact that the occupational stress occupied the second position in the hierarchy of occupational health issues in the European Union.(1) The scientific studies showed that the occupational stress affected over 40 millions employees in the countries within the European Union, being on the second position in the occupational pathology in terms of frequency, after the posture disorders.(2,3) The studies showed that women had higher levels of stress, but for both women and men, stress could be a problem in all the fields of activity and at

all levels of an organization.

WORKING HYPOTHESIS

The SWS questionnaire is useful for screening, classifying or diagnosing, intervention description and planning and also for monitoring. The SWS questionnaire is a psychometric tool used in many areas of research and consulting services.

METHODS

The SWS tool has been developed by Douglas Jackson, one of the modern psychometricians, to be applied especially in the occupational environment. It has 96 items and generates a score on six structural scales and on two general scales (A type) and the application takes about 15-20 minutes. It is used as it follows: psychodiagnosis and/or therapy, individual and organization intervention for issues, such as: occupational stress, detection of the type A behaviour, the organizational audit of stress.

RESULTS

The questionnaire allows the calculation of the scores on five categories and the interpretation of the individual answers to the items of the questionnaire. The investigated population groups are as follows: group 1, the group of the foster care providers having a handicapped child to take care of and group 2, the group of the foster care providers having a normal child to take care of. The categories and the scores calculated from the SWS questionnaire are presented in the table bellow (Table 1).

The comparison of the average values of the scores calculated for „ANGER”, in the group of the foster care providers having a handicapped child to take care of, and in the group of the foster care providers having a normal child to take care of, did not show a statistically significant difference between the average values of the calculated scores.

In case of the „COMPETITIVENESS” scores, there were statistically significant differences between the average values of the scores in the two groups, but however, the difference was not high (43.47 in group 1, as compared to 41.20, in group 2).

CLINICAL ASPECTS

Table no. 1. Summary of the results of the five scores categories between the investigated population groups

	Anger	Competitiveness	Impatience	Job Dissatisfaction	Time Urgency
Group 1	35.36	43.47	36.83	33.27	47.26
Group 2	35.23	41.20	39.19	34.69	42.84
Difference	0.13	2.27	-2.36	-1.41	4.41
p	0.8116	0.0359	0.1033	0.1921	<0.01
Test	nonparametric	parametric	nonparametric	parametric	nonparametric

For the average values of the scores for „IMPATIENCE”, there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups.

Also, in case of the comparison of the score average values for the “JOB DISSATISFACTION” category, there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups.

For the category of “TIME URGENCY”, there were statistically significant differences between the two groups in the nonparametric test. As an average value, the scores for group 1, the group of the foster care providers having a handicapped child to take care of, were higher than those for the group 2, the group of the foster care providers having a normal child to take care of (47.26 as compared to 42.84).

- Rosenman RH, Brand RJ, Jenkins D, Friedman M, Straus R, Wurm M. Coronary heart disease in Western Collaborative Group Study. Final follow-up experience of 8 1/2 years, The Journal of the American Medical Association August 25 1975;233(8).

CONCLUSIONS

- SWS questionnaire was developed to respond to the need of psychometricians to have a tool focused on self-evaluation, based on a quantitative approach, in terms of resources involved, in order to be able to „measure” the type A behaviour pattern.
- This tool, besides the diagnosis function, can be used to evaluate the results of psychotherapy, and also for the comparison of the scores before and after the therapy.
- The SWS questionnaire is a useful tool in many situations, from the diagnosis of accommodation disorders, to the management coaching. Together with a cognitive-behaviour paradigm in the counselling activity, the scale derived from SWS can be very useful in the identification of dysfunctional thoughts (or irrational believes) that can have an impact on the performance of the subject at the workplace (and not only).
- SWS offers a general score for the type A behaviour pattern, based on the sum of the six subscales and also a type A secondary score, based on the items, consonant with those elements which, in the Structured Interview of Rosenman (4) are the most coherent predictors.

REFERENCES

- <http://ro.osha.europa.eu>. Agenția Europeană pentru Securitate și Sănătate în Munca România.
- <http://stres.protectiamuncii.ro>. Dr. Adriana Todea, Institutul de Sănătate Publică București, 10 oct. 2002.
- Niculescu T, Todea A, Toma I, Pavel A, Niculescu R. Medicina Muncii, Ed. Medmun, Bucuresti, 2003.