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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INVESTIGATION OF THE WORKPLACE BOREDOM AND JOB SATISFACTION TO THE AMBULANCE PERSONNEL OF CRETE, GREECE

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Abstract

Background: Numerous of studies have been done to healthcare professionals about job satisfaction and workplace boredom, but very few to ambulance staff. The mental health and emotional well-being of ambulance staff appears to be affected by the emergency character of the work they provide.

Aim: The aim of the present study was to investigate the degree of job satisfaction and workplace boredom to the ambulance staff of Crete.

Material & Methods: It was a cross-sectional study. The ambulance personnel of Crete included in the study. The job satisfaction scale (23 items) and the Boredom Proneness Scale (28 items) were used for data collection. The statistical analysis was performed by the SPSS. V.22.0.

Results: The studied sample consisted of 142 ambulance personnel. Most of them were male (81%), married (72.9%), and had attended secondary school (63.4%). The job satisfaction was 71.1 ± 5.7 and was found to be negatively related to how often someone felt upset ($r = -0.192$, $p = 0.02$), how often they felt frustrated ($r = -0.196$, $p = 0.019$) and the frequency that one feels bored ($r = -0.515$, $p < 0.001$). The score of the Boredom Propensity Scale was 113.4 ± 18.4 . Women had statistically significantly greater score in Boredom Propensity Scale than men (118.9 ± 22.6 vs. 112.1 ± 17.1 , $p = 0.037$). The overall workplace boredom syndrome was found to be positively related to the frequency the participants are engaged in risky behaviors ($r = 0.426$, $p < 0.001$), how often someone felt upset ($r = 0.393$, $p < 0.001$), how often they felt frustrated ($r = 0.333$, $p < 0.0001$) and the frequency that one feels bored ($r = 0.212$, $p = 0.011$).

Conclusions: Job satisfaction of the sample is at a medium level, while the professional boredom at a fairly high level. The professional boredom is higher in women.

Keywords: Workplace boredom, job satisfaction, ambulance, personnel, staff.

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INTRODUCTION

The first empirical studies on workplace boredom syndrome were performed before and during World War II and focused on performing the work in a laboratory.¹ Since then, several studies have been conducted in various professional fields, which investigate the feelings of employees in general and in particular, those of stress, job satisfaction and workplace boredom syndrome.^{2,3}

Workplace boredom is defined as an unpleasant situation, which "deactivates" the person during his work.⁴ Interest in workplace boredom is due to the variety of consequences that this phenomenon can have, which include low quality of life, depression, low job satisfaction, work-related stress, alcohol and drug abuse, unproductive behavior, absenteeism, accidents at work and low job performance.⁵⁻⁷

The number of studies that have been done to measure job satisfaction in healthcare is important. Most of these studies measure job satisfaction of nurses^{8,9} and physicians.^{10,11} In addition, several studies have been conducted on workplace boredom syndrome. These kinds of studies are focused on nurses and medical staff.^{12,13} A study found that the mental health and emotional well-being of ambulance staff appears to be affected by the emergency character of the work they provide, especially in the event of an accident. The high prevalence of anxiety and stress symptoms experienced by ambulance staff seems to be due to their inability to cope with the stress caused by their daily work.¹⁴

Similarly, high levels of stress were found in a study conducted in Norway. Nevertheless, this research indicated the organization and working conditions as key stressors.¹⁵ A later study, which investigated the relationship between internal communication, job satisfaction and organizational commitment in 468 ambulance staff, showed that internal communication between employees was a particularly important predictor of work their satisfaction.¹⁶

The National Emergency Center (E.K.A.B.) of Greece contributes significantly to the quality upgrade of the overall health services provided, working consistently to reduce mortality, hospitalization time and the frequency of temporary or permanent disability and disability. It also contributes to the reduction of the cost of the provided health services, but also to the reduction of the degree of migration to the big urban centers by creating a sense of security in the inhabitants of the region. For this reason, there are developed Nationwide 12 centers (Athens, Thessaloniki, Patra, Heraklion, Larissa, Kavala, Ioannina, Lamia, Alexandroupoli, Tripoli, Kozani and Mytilene).¹⁷

The staff of E.K.A.B. of Crete consists of 236 ambulance staff. Most of them (99 ambulance staff) are located in Heraklion, followed by Chania with a staff of 39 ambulance staff. The E.K.A.B. serves all types of incidents (chronic diseases, emergencies, road accidents, etc.). In Crete, about 50.487 incidents were served in 2015, ie about 138 incidents per day. Most of the incidents concerned in Heraklion (20,313) and the fewest in Anogia (360).¹⁷

The aim of the present study was to investigate the workplace boredom syndrome and the level of satisfaction of ambulance personnel of E.K.A.B. in the island of Crete, Greece.

METHODOLOGY

Study design and settings

This cross-sectional study was conducted in the island of Crete, Greece, between March and June 2019.

Participants

Totally, 142 out of 236 ambulance personnel were participated in the study. The inclusion criteria of the study were voluntarily agreed to participate the study and were working at least for more than one year as an ambulance personnel.

Data collection

The data collection was done with a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire included 4 categories of questions. The first category referred to the demographic characteristics of the participants, as well as questions related to their work conditions. The second category of questions was referred to their feelings. Scales of job satisfaction and job boredom were also used.

Job Satisfaction

The job satisfaction scale consists from 23 questions related to the factors from which the employee in each case derives satisfaction, as they have emerged through various surveys. Totally, 23 of 36 items of Job Satisfaction Survey of Spector were chosen, which is free of use. The evaluation was done on a 5-point Likert scale. The lowest score on the satisfaction scale is estimated at 23 points while the maximum at 115 points. The Cronbach a scale was found 0.809.¹⁸

Workplace boredom syndrome

The workplace boredom syndrome was estimated with the Norman D. Sundberg Boredom Proneness Scale. All questions were answered on a 7-point Likert scale. The scale is free of use and available online at <https://workinprogressdotnet.wordpress.com/2011/06/06/boredom-proneness-scale-bps/>. The overall score on the workplace boredom scale is calculated by adding all question's score for each participant. The reliability of the scale, based on Cronbach's a (0.814), is very good.¹⁹

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was done with the IBM SPSS V22. Descriptive statistics of the variables were presented with frequencies and percentages. Data were analyzed using parametric and no parametric tests. Independent sample t-test was performed to compare the values of the means from two groups and the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was used to determine to compare the means of two or more independent groups. Also, post-hoc comparisons were performed with Bonferroni test. The statistical significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Ethics

All directives of the Helsinki Declaration have been followed and informed consent was obtained from the participants.

RESULTS

Demographic of participants are shown in table 1. Most of participants were males (81%), married (72,9%), had children (76.6%) and had attended secondary school (63.4%). The number of children ranges from 1 to 4. Most of the participants had

2 children (56.7%), while 23.1% of the sample had 1 child, 15.4% had 3 children and 4.8% had 4 children. The average age of the participants was 43.5 years (range 28 to 59 years). The average work experience of participants was 13.9 years (range 1 to 29 years). Most of the participants (95.1%) had cyclical schedule.

Job Satisfaction

Table 2 presents the participants' answers to the job satisfaction questionnaire. The mean value of satisfaction is estimated at 71.1 ± 5.7 with a minimum value of 52 and a maximum of 83. No statistically significant differences were found in overall job satisfaction between men and women (71.3 ± 5.9 vs. 70.5 ± 4.2 , $p = 0.468$), between age groups ($p = 0.088$) and marital status ($p = 0.271$). Also, no statistically significant differences were found between total job satisfaction and children (68.9 ± 3.2 vs. 72.1 ± 2.1 , $p = 0.468$), previous work experience ($p = 0.561$) and shift job (70.1 ± 1.9 vs. 72.1 ± 2.1 , $p = 0.321$).

Overall job satisfaction was found to be negatively related to how often someone felt upset ($r = -0.192$, $p = 0.02$), how often they felt frustrated ($r = -0.196$, $p = 0.019$) and the frequency that one feels bored ($r = -0.515$, $p < 0.001$).

Workplace boredom syndrome

Table 3 presents the participants' answers to the Boredom Propensity Scale. The mean value of s Boredom Propensity Scale is estimated at 113.4 ± 18.4 with a minimum value of 81 and a maximum of 175. Women had statistically significantly greater score in Boredom Propensity Scale than men (118.9 ± 22.6 vs. 112.1 ± 17.1 , $p = 0.037$). Also, workplace boredom syndrome did not have a statistically significant difference between age ($p = 0.321$), children ($p = 0.226$), marital status ($p = 0.414$), level of education ($p = 0.331$), years of service ($p = 0.249$) and cyclical schedule ($p = 0.111$).

Overall workplace boredom syndrome was found to be positively related to the frequency the participants are engaged in risky behaviors ($r = 0.426$, $p < 0.001$), how often someone felt upset ($r = 0.393$, $p < 0.001$), how often they felt frustrated ($r = 0.333$, $p < 0.0001$) and the frequency that one feels bored ($r =$

0.212, $p=0.011$).

DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to investigate the degree of job satisfaction and workplace boredom of the ambulance staff of E.K.A.B. Of Crete. The sample consisted of a total of 142 people, of whom the largest percentage were men. Regarding their level of education, it was quite high.

The employee financial incentives and wages and fair rewards in general seem to be associated with high employee satisfaction.²⁰ In our study, most of participants do not consider their pay to be fair in relation to the work they offer, few believe that their profession utilizes their skills and qualifications. A fair system of promotion of employees significantly increases the job satisfaction.²¹ In the present study, the majority of the sample does not consider that the promotion system is reliable and fair. These characteristics can reduce employee's satisfaction.

Researchers and professionals in both public and private sectors agree that participatory management and initiative improve employee satisfaction and give meaning to their job.^{22,23} In the present study, most of participants considered their job to be interesting, while they do not take initiatives. The ambulance staff do not seem to have the same privileges as other healthcare professionals, and they are neutral in terms of the cooperation they are offered or the moral rewards they receive. The work environment and its conditions, including relationships with their colleagues, significantly affect the job satisfaction of nurses. In particular, good relationships with colleagues are a very important and positive factor for their job satisfaction.²⁴ Similarly, in the present study, it seems that the job satisfaction of participants is positively affected by the good atmosphere between the colleagues and the warm and friendly relationships.

The promotion of social work provided through their profession and the pride they feel for the work they offer seem to influence most participant's feelings about their work. According to the above there is an average job satisfaction for most

participants, which tends to higher levels, as the largest percentage of the sample is between 71-75 points on this scale.

In contrast to previous studies, which showed that women reported greater job satisfaction than men overall job satisfaction did not differ statistically significantly between the two sexes in the present study.²⁵ According to the results of the present study, job satisfaction does not differ either between different age groups or individuals of different marital status. This is in contrast to previous research, which showed that overall job satisfaction is higher in married people, compared to unmarried people,²⁶ while it is statistically significantly related to a highly positive age individual.²⁷

On the other hand, emotions seem to be statistically significantly related to the participant's overall job satisfaction. In particular, the frequency with which one feels irritated is negatively and statistically significantly related to one's overall satisfaction, as well as the frequency of frustration and boredom associated with a decrease in overall satisfaction. Previous research agrees with our result, which shows that job satisfaction brings positive emotions to employees, in the sense that they are less nervous, angry and do not get disappointed so easily.²⁸ The workplace boredom of participants is at a high level, as the largest percentage of the sample has boredom levels above 110 points. In particular, most of the sample find it difficult to concentrate on their activities, while time passes slowly at work, with the largest percentage without knowing what to do. Also, most of participants supported that have things to do in their minds. It is very unpleasant to them to be away from other people. It has been found that monotony at work creates impasses and does not help people not to feel bored at work.⁴

There is a statistically significant difference between the two sexes in terms of their overall boredom propensity scale, with women being more bored at work compared to men. This finding is not in agreement with previous research, which showed that men express higher levels of workplace boredom compared to their female colleagues,^{29,30} while agreeing with other studies, which show women express higher levels of occupational boredom compared to men.³¹

On the other hand, variables such as age, which is confirmed by previous studies,³² the presence or absence of children, marital status and level of education, do not seem to have a statistically significant effect on level of workplace boredom of the ambulance staff. In contrast, at the level of education, previous studies have shown that higher levels of education are associated with higher levels of workplace boredom. In addition, workplace boredom is more pronounced in people who live alone (eg single, divorced, widowed, etc.), compared to people who are married.³³

It was found that working conditions, such as the work experience of the employees, the employment status and the job shift do not affect the level of workplace boredom of participants. In contrast, other studies have shown that the work environment and working conditions play an important role in workplace boredom. In particular, flexible working hours are associated with workplace boredom.^{34,35} Advanced years of work experience significantly increases the workplace boredom of employees.³⁵

The job satisfaction of the ambulance personnel of Crete is at a moderate level, while the workplace boredom they feel is at a high level. In terms of satisfaction, it does not differ between the sexes, while financial incentives and fair rewards in general are able to increase employee satisfaction. In addition, the adoption of a fair promotion system can positively affect the satisfaction of the ambulance personnel. Emphasis is placed on participatory management and the ability to take initiatives. It is noted that the overall job satisfaction does not differ statistically significantly between the age groups. The workplace boredom can be reduced by increasing the participation of ambulance personnel in new activities, which will alleviate monotony. Emphasis should be placed on women, as women feel more workplace boredom than men. Finally, more flexible working hours could be adopted by ambulance personnel in order to reduce the boredom levels, and especially to those employees that work many years.

CONCLUSIONS

The job satisfaction of the ambulance personnel is at a moderate level, while the workplace boredom they feel is at a high level. In terms of satisfaction, it does not differ between the sexes, while financial incentives and fair rewards in general are able to increase employee satisfaction. In addition, the adoption of a fair promotion system can positively affect the satisfaction of the Crete's ambulance personnel. It is noted that the overall job satisfaction does not differ significantly between the two sexes, nor between the different age groups. The workplace boredom can be reduced by increasing participation in new activities, which in turn will alleviate monotony. It is noted that emphasis should be placed on women, as women feel more workplace boredom than men. Finally, it could be adopted by E.K.A.B. more flexible working hours in order to reduce the boredom of ambulance personnel, especially those who work for many years in E.K.A.B. and have higher levels of boredom.

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ANNEX

Table 1. Demographics and work-related variables of participants

variables	N	%
Gender		
Males	115	81.0
Females	27	19.0
Marital Status		
Unmarried	32	22.9
Married	102	72.9
Divorced	5	3.6
Widowed	1	0.7
Children		
Yes	105	76.6
No	32	23.4
Educational Level		
Primary School	2	1.4
Pre-high school	2	4.9
High School	39	27.5
Secondary School/College/University	90	63.4
Master	4	2.8
Work-related studies		
Yes	104	73.4
No	38	26.6
Shift Job		
Yes	135	95.1
No	7	4.9

Table 2. Answers of participants to the job satisfaction questionnaire

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel that my pay is fair for the job I offer	45 (31.7)	67 (47.2)	22 (15.5)	7 (4.9)	1 (0.7)
2. My profession utilizes my skills and qualifications	9 (6.3)	23 (16.2)	48 (33.8)	52 (36.6)	10 (7)
3. There are little chances of promotion	17 (12)	10 (7)	24 (16.9)	46 (32.4)	45 (31.7)
4. The promotion system in my job is fair	63 (44.4)	35 (24.6)	32 (22.5)	12 (8.5)	-
5. My supervisor is good at his job	24 (16.9)	31 (21.8)	39 (27.5)	37 (26.1)	11 (7.7)
6. I am satisfied with the privileges that my job gives me	26 (18.3)	45 (31.7)	51 (35.9)	20 (14.1)	-
7. I get the recognition I deserve from my job	22 (15.5)	36 (25.4)	55 (38.7)	24 (16.9)	5 (3.5)
8. Sometimes I feel that my work does not make sense	24 (16.9)	62 (43.7)	22 (15.5)	25 (17.6)	9 (6.3)
9. My job contributes to the achievement of my professional goals	7 (4.9)	40 (28.2)	52 (36.6)	41 (28.9)	2 (1.4)
10. My job encourages me to take initiatives	22 (15.5)	25 (17.6)	34 (23.9)	51 (35.9)	10 (7)
11. The supervisor is unfair to me	21 (14.8)	59 (41.5)	53 (37.3)	8 (5.6)	1 (0.7)
12. The benefits of my job are similar to those enjoyed by employees in other public sector organizations	48 (33.8)	47 (33.1)	16 (11.3)	26 (18.3)	5 (3.5)
13. My job provides me with the conditions for cooperation with others	11 (7.7)	28 (19.7)	47 (33.1)	43 (30.3)	13 (9.2)
14. The goals set by the organization are clear	15 (10.6)	35 (24.6)	33 (23.2)	53 (37.3)	6 (4.2)
15. There is no moral reward in my job	24 (16.9)	27 (19)	21 (14.8)	47 (33.1)	23 (16.2)
16. I have a very large workload	2 (1.4)	14 (10.1)	50 (36)	45 (32.4)	28 (20.1)
17. I have a good time with my colleagues	-	-	33 (23.2)	83 (58.5)	26 (18.3)
18. My job promotes society as a whole	1 (0.7)	2 (1.4)	38 (26.8)	66 (46.5)	35 (24.6)
19. I'm proud to do this job	1 (1.4)	2 (1.4)	9 (6.3)	67 (47.2)	62 (43.7)
20. There are privileges that we do not have while we are entitled to them	-	3 (2.1)	11 (7.7)	79 (55.6)	49 (34.5)
21. There are several quarrels in my workplace	5 (3.5)	18 (12.7)	40 (28.2)	76 (53.5)	3 (2.1)
22. My supervisor at work is tough and strict with subordinates	14 (9.9)	45 (31.7)	53 (37.3)	15 (10.6)	15 (10.6)
23. Relationships with my colleagues are warm and friendly	3 (2.1)	16 (11.3)	47 (33.1)	73 (51.4)	3 (2.1)

Table 3. Answers of participants to the Boredom Propensity Scale

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. It is easy for me to concentrate on my activities	1 (0.7)	7 (4.9)	12 (8.5)	17 (12)	2 (21.8)	63 (44.4)	11 (7.7)
2. Frequently when I am working, I find myself worrying about other things	1 (0.7)	14 (9.9)	20 (14.1)	29 (20.4)	33 (23.2)	39 (27.5)	6 (4.2)
3. Time always seems to be passing slowly	5 (3.5)	27 (19)	37 (26.1)	37 (26.1)	4 (2.8)	29 (20.4)	3 (2.1)
4. I often find myself at "loose ends," not knowing what to do	17 (12)	53 (37.3)	13 (9.2)	22 (15.5)	17 (12)	7 (4.9)	13 (9.2)
5. I am often trapped in situations where I have to do meaningless things	22 (15.5)	57 (40.1)	17 (12)	16 (11.3)	-	12 (8.5)	4 (2.8)
6. Having to look at someone's home movies or travel slides bores me tremendously	10 (7)	44 (31)	13 (9.2)	38 (26.8)	3 (2.1)	26 (18.3)	8 (5.6)
7. I have projects in mind all the time, things to do	-	10 (7)	19 (13.4)	22 (15.5)	43 (30.3)	32 (22.5)	15 (10.6)
8. I find it easy to entertain myself	3 (2.1)	11 (7.7)	11 (7.7)	39 (27.5)	28 (19.7)	47 (33.1)	3 (2.1)
9. Many things I have to do are repetitive and monotonous	-	28 (19.7)	36 (25.4)	32 (22.5)	18 (12.7)	16 (11.3)	11 (7.7)
10. It takes more stimulation to get me going than most people	12 (6.6)	45 (31.7)	16 (11.3)	29 (20.4)	15 (10.6)	15 (10.6)	10 (7)
11. I get a kick out of most things I do	6 (4.2)	8 (5.6)	27 (19)	35 (24.6)	36 (25.4)	18 (20.4)	(0.7)
12. I am seldom excited about my work	8 (5.6)	50 (35.2)	17 (12)	19 (13.4)	6 (4.2)	29 (20.4)	13 (9.2)
13. In any situation I can usually find something to do or see to keep me interested	3 (2.1)	21 (14.8)	8 (5.6)	32 (22.5)	21 (14.8)	53 (37.3)	4 (2.8)
14. Much of the time I just sit around doing nothing	25 (17.9)	44 (31.4)	14 (10)	11 (7.9)	20 (14.3)	19 (13.6)	7 (5)
15. I am good at waiting patiently	9 (6.3)	29 (20.4)	12 (8.5)	22 (15.5)	23 (16.2)	41 (28.9)	6 (4.2)
16. I often find myself with nothing to do, time on my hands	-	34 (23.9)	10 (7)	20 (14.4)	43 (30.3)	24 (16.9)	11 (7.7)
17. In situations where I have to wait, such as in a line, I get very restless	1 (0.7)	13 (9.2)	16 (11.3)	26 (18.3)	26 (18.3)	40 (28.2)	20 (14.1)
18. I often wake up with a new idea	2 (1.4)	16 (11.3)	10 (7)	39 (27.5)	27 (19)	28 (19.7)	20 (14.1)
19. It would be very hard for me to find a job that is exciting enough	-	32 (22.5)	19 (13.4)	41 (28.9)	13 (9.2)	25 (17.6)	12 (8.5)
20. I would like more challenging things to do in life	-	16 (11.3)	7 (4.9)	38 (26.8)	32 (22.5)	36 (25.4)	13 (9.2)
21. I feel that I am working below my abilities most of the time	10 (7)	17 (12)	4 (2.8)	43 (30.3)	22 (15.5)	27 (19)	19 (13.4)

22. Many people would say that I am a creative or imaginative person	6 (4.2)	14 (9.9)	5 (3.5)	33 (23.2)	30 (21.1)	39 (27.5)	15 (10.6)
23. I have so many interests, I don't have time to do everything	4 (2.8)	40 (28.2)	15 (10.6)	44 (31)	16 (11.3)	16 (11.3)	7 (4.9)
24. Among my friends, I am the one who keeps doing something the longest	6 (4.2)	20 (14.1)	10 (7)	49 (34.5)	15 (10.6)	41 (28.9)	1 (0.7)
25. Unless I am doing something exciting, even dangerous, I feel half-dead and dull	3 (2.1)	48 (33.8)	9 (6.3)	30 (21.1)	18 (12.7)	28 (19.7)	6 (4.2)
26. It takes a lot of change and variety to keep me really happy	7 (4.9)	39 (27.5)	15 (10.6)	30 (21.1)	16 (11.3)	23 (16.2)	12 (8.5)
27. It seems that the same things are on television or in the movies all the time; it's getting old	27 (19)	46 (32.4)	21 (14.8)	17 (12)	17 (12)	12 (6.6)	2 (1.1)
28. When I was young, I was often in monotonous and tiresome situations	25 (17.6)	54 (38)	33 (23.2)	15 (10.6)	8 (5.6)	5 (3.5)	2 (1.4)