

Analysis of the working conditions of medical staff during the COVID-19 pandemic

INTRODUCTION: The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the working conditions of medical staff. Overcommitment and the lack of balance between high efforts and low rewards caused negative emotions and stress reactions of professionally active medical workers. The increased level of stress required effective coping with stress in order to reduce its negative effects. The study was aimed at assessing the working conditions of medical staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

MATERIAL: Physicians, nurses and paramedics participated in the study. The study involved 559 participants, aged 22 to 82, with work experience ranging from 1 to 55 years.

METHODS: The Perceived Stress at Work Questionnaire (PSwP), the Effort Reward Imbalance Questionnaire (ERI) and the author's questionnaire on the working conditions of medical staff during the COVID-19 pandemic were made available online to employees of three university hospitals and the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Centrum Pulmonologii in Bydgoszcz. The research was carried out between April 20, 2021 and June 12, 2021. Statistical analysis was performed in SPSS AMOS 26.0.

RESULTS: The model verifying the assumptions of the research hypotheses turned out to be quite well suited to the data: [$\chi^2/df = 3.16$; RMSEA = 0.062 (0.032-0.095); GFI = 0.989; AGFI = 0.960; TLI=0.905; CFI = 0.962], explaining 30.1% of the stress variance, 52.1% of the effort-reward imbalance variance, and 45.1% of the overcommitment variance. Stress increases the overcommitment of medical staff and the level of imbalance between effort and reward. A higher level of coping increases the level of effort-reward imbalance. Coping with stress and adaptation are positively related. Fear and anxiety are significantly negatively related to both adaptation and coping with stress.

CONCLUSIONS: With the increase in overcommitment and imbalance between effort and reward, medical professionals active during the COVID-19 pandemic experience an increase in stress at work. As stress levels increase, medics show an increase in coping with stress. However, with the increase in the level of fear and anxiety, medical staff experience a decrease in coping with stress and deterioration of professional adaptation.