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Wypalenie zawodowe u lekarek weterynarii – epidemiologia i etiologia

Burnout in female veterinarians – epidemiology and etiology

Rozprawa doktorska na stopień doktora

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Summary

So far, the issue of occupational burnout among female veterinarians in Poland has not been widely analyzed, nor have systemic support measures for this professional group been implemented. Such actions are urgently needed, as research shows that women in this profession are twice as likely as men to experience burnout-related crises and suicide attempts.

The aim of this doctoral dissertation was to examine the phenomenon of occupational burnout among female veterinarians in Poland, with particular attention to its epidemiology, etiology, and protective factors. In the context of dynamic demographic changes in the profession and the growing proportion of women, the study analyzed the psychosocial and organizational determinants of burnout and their relationship with individual factors such as lifestyle and work organization.

The study was conducted among 385 practicing female veterinarians using standardized tools: the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI), the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ II), and Original Questionnaire Examining Individual Factors Related to Lifestyle and Work Organization Among Female Veterinarians (ICŻiP). The selection of research tools was based on the theoretical Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, which assumes that burnout occurs when job demands exceed the available resources. Organizational and individual resources can act as a “protective buffer,” helping to manage stress and prevent its negative effects.

The results indicate a high level of burnout in the studied group, particularly in terms of psychophysical exhaustion. More than half of the participants experienced chronic fatigue, difficulties in recovery, and a decline in work energy. At the same time, significant psychosocial burdens were observed excessive work pace, high emotional demands, lack of team and supervisory support, low predictability of duties, and difficulties maintaining work–life balance. Statistical analysis confirmed that increased occupational demands combined with a lack of resources (e.g., autonomy, support, recognition, development opportunities) significantly contribute to the occurrence of burnout. Additionally, lifestyle factors were identified as important risks irregular sleep, lack of physical activity, difficulty separating work from private life, and lack of recovery techniques. Qualitative analysis of participants responses highlighted the strong emotional burden of the work, resulting from exposure to animal suffering and excessive client expectations, combined with insufficient systemic professional support. Lifestyle plays a key role in preventing burnout particularly sleep, physical activity,

relaxation techniques, and attention to recovery. Protective factors also include a sense of work meaning, a positive team atmosphere, autonomy, and opportunities for professional growth.

The present study, according to the best Author's knowledge, is the first in Poland to comprehensively take into account all organizational and psychosocial factors leading to occupational burnout. Its added value lies in the inclusion of individual factors, such as lifestyle and work time organization. It was also the first study in Poland to focus exclusively on female veterinarians, which is a strength of the research.

It is essential to implement preventive measures at both the individual and organizational levels, including the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and work culture, development of soft skills, psychological and team support, flexible work arrangements, and the establishment of systemic support programs. These findings may serve as a basis for further analyses and for designing comprehensive solutions to support the professional well-being of female veterinarians in Poland.