Occupational Stress and Mental Health Outcomes Among the Emergency Medical Services Population

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Emergency Medical Service (EMS) providers experience high levels of occupational stress due to long hours, short staffing, and patient deaths, among other factors. Little is known about the impact of occupational stress on mental health and burnout among EMS providers. The current study evaluates these associations and examines the moderating role of empathy, gender, and resilience on associations between occupational stress and mental health. In July 2022, EMS providers (n=565) completed an anonymous, electronic survey containing demographic questions and validated measures of occupational stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, empathy and resilence. The cross-sectional survey was distributed via EMS listservs. Descriptive/bivariate statistics were conducted for variables of interest. Separate multivariable regression models evaluated associations between occupational stress and mental health outcomes. Gender, empathy and resilience were examined as potential moderators using interactions. EMS providers indicated high levels of mental health difficulties (34% anxiety, 30% depression, 49% burnout). Increased occupational stress associated with increased anxiety (OR =1.09), depression (OR=1.09), and burnout (OR=1.07). No moderation analyses were significant, however, greater empathy was independently associated with greater anxiety. Greater resilience was associated with lower depression, anxiety, and burnout. EMS providers experience high occupational stress which is directly associated with mental health difficulties and burnout. The results underscore the need for intervention programs to reduce occupational stress and promote resilience. Understanding the full scope of EMS mental health is imperative to protect this group that provides critical support.

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American Psychological Association: Complimentary student affiliate memberships
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