

## INTRODUCTION

The operational aspects of psychological assessment are well documented (e.g. Murphy and Davidshofer, 1994). Essentially, the process involves the administration of one or more valid psychological tests in order to assess a person's suitability to a task or situation. The resulting data and report are then used by police psychologists to assist in determining the suitability of the applicant for police duties. In Catalunya, this task is carried out during basic training for police career agent in the evaluation of psychological conditions for the use of the weapon.

Police work can be one of the most stressful jobs, and it frequently leads to the development of burnout syndrome. In their day-to-day tasks, police officers are constantly subjected to various stressors (de la Fuente, Aguayo, Vargas and Cañadas, 2013). The most widely accepted definition of the burnout syndrome is one that describes it as a response to chronic work stress made up of three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and low personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Some studies showed that personality characteristics, and positive and negative affectivity explained significant variance in each of the burnout dimensions (Alarcon, Eschleman and Bowling, 2009).

## AIM

The goal of this research consists in predicting the burnout syndrome in T2 by using personality and psychopathology measures in T1.

## RESULTS

Our results showed that Emotional Exhaustion is predicted by Tough-Mindedness, Gender, Schizophrenia and marginally by Independence ( $R^2=.32$ ,  $F_{3,61}=9.46$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Depersonalization is predicted by Tough-Mindedness and the number of clinical symptoms in CAQ ( $R^2=.15$ ,  $F_{2,60}=5.44$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Finally, Personal Accomplishment in Job was predicted by Bored Depression and Psychopathic Deviation ( $R^2=.22$ ,  $F_{2,60}=8.52$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

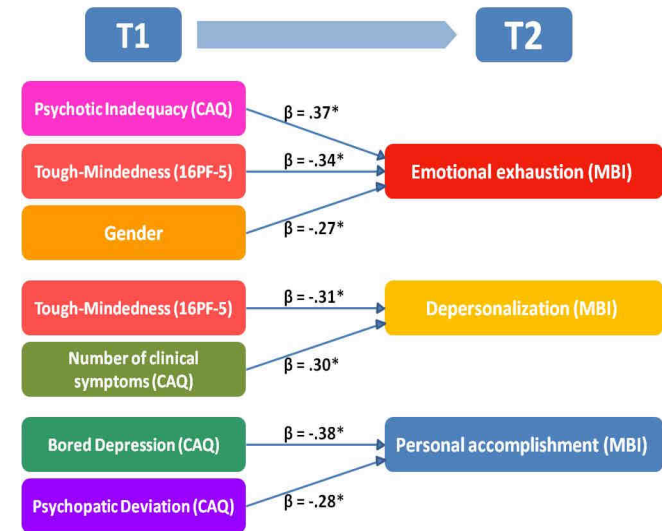


Figure 1. Standardised B-values (coefficients)

## METHOD

### PARTICIPANTS

The sample comprised 65 police candidates enrolled in the Catalan Institute for Public Security (ISPC), who successfully completed the training course. Women accounted for 16.9% (n = 11; average mean = 36.18; SD = 5.23) of candidates, while men accounted for 83.1% (n = 54; average mean = 35.46; SD = 5.16). The educational level attained included Elementary school studies (20% of the sample; n = 13), High school (61.5% of the sample; n = 40) and College (18.5% of the sample; n = 12).

### PROCEDURE

The selected candidates were part of a larger sample of candidates to local police who initiated the Basic Training Course for Police (CFBP) in ISPC after having completed their compulsory recruitment processes. During the CFBP, the applicants were assessed collectively, in groups of 25 students, with the guide of an expert psychologist. Participants indicated only their identification number as a student, allowing to match it later on with his file.

According to the Order 219/1996 of 12 June that regulates the police weapons possession, the final sample (comprising 65 police officers) returned to the ISPC for the assessment of their psychological conditions in order to keep and bear firearms. The assessment process is compulsory for all candidates, and they received no compensation for their participation in the study. This process occurred in a period between 2 and 5 years (2009-2014) depending on the police force after their initial training. It was distributed in two sessions. The first session included a battery of tests (e.g. MBI) administered collectively. The second session consisted in an individual structured interview with an expert psychologist about his psychological condition to carry a firearm.



## CONCLUSIONS

These results are comparable to other samples in our close context, such as Spain, France or Italy (de la Fuente, Aguayo, Vargas and Cañadas, 2013). The results show that, if appropriately assessed, individual characteristics could serve as a target for burnout prevention interventions. Police work can be one of the most stressful jobs, and it frequently leads to the development of burnout syndrome.

Emotional exhaustion reflects a feeling of being emotionally overwhelmed by one's work. As seen, Gender, Tough-Mindedness and Psychotic Inadequacy predict the scores in this MBI subscale. That would mean that characteristics such as being woman, receptive, open-minded, with feelings of being unsuccessful would contribute to feel emotionally overextended.

Depersonalization is related to an impersonal response toward the others. Tough-Mindedness and the number of clinical symptoms predict the scores in this MBI subscale, pointing out that being receptive and open-minded or having psychological disadjustments are related with lack of compassion or empathy. Personal accomplishment regards to a feeling of professional self-competence, and it is linked to the dimensions of Bored Depression and Psychopathic Deviation. The underlying interpretation would suggest that avoiding interpersonal relationships and enjoying risky situations would conduce to positive feelings of self-competence.

As a conclusion, MBI subscales Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization are predicted by Tough-Mindedness. Then, this dimension could be considered a protective factor. Indeed, the higher the score in Tough-Mindedness (being resolute or unempathic) the lower the score in Emotional Exhaustion or Depersonalization. Thus, police officers with low scores in Tough-Mindedness (being intuitive and receptive) would be prone to show distress and emotional coldness. For this reason, should be appropriate to include strategies of coping during the training to deal with these feelings before experiencing burnout syndrome.

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