

## 1. Introduction

Previous research has shown that police officers are exposed to several stressful situations over time due to several stressors, such as the nature of the job and organizational factors. Exposure to intense and permanent stress over time, can lead police officers to burnout, eliciting physical diseases, depression, aggressive behaviors and even suicide (Blum, 2000; Brown & Campbell, 1994). Personality traits of police officers have been investigated (Abrahamsen & Strye, 2010; Bonifacio, 1991; Goldstein, 1968) previously, and sensation-seeking trait was considered a pro-social behavior/trait frequently presented among police officers (Gomà-i-Freixanet & Wismeijer, 2002; Grant & Terry, 2005). Furthermore, sensation-seeking appears to be related with age (Zuckerman, 1994), which has been identified as a protector of stress (Hintsanen et al., 2009), which is known to be an antecedent of burnout (Freudenberger, 1974).

**Key words:** Burnout, Sensation-seeking, Police officers.

## 2. Aims

To investigate burnout levels and its association with sensation seeking and age among Portuguese police officers.

## 3. Method

**Participants:** sample of 470 male Portuguese police officers (from Public Security Police) aged 23-53 years (M=34,37 SD= 5,97).

**Instruments:** Demographic questionnaire; sensation-seeking was assessed using the Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking (AISS, Arnett, 1994), and Burnout using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-HSS, Maslach & Jackson, 1997), using both adapted Portuguese versions.

**Procedure:** Data was collected among Portuguese Police Officers during 2009, using self-completion questionnaire, anonymous and confidential.

**Data analysis:** SPSS-18 was used to do a descriptive, and correlation analysis (*R Pearson*).

## 4. Results

The sample shows low emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, high professional accomplishment and moderate sensation seeking (Table 1). Sensation seeking is not correlated with any of the sensation seeking subscales, and age is negatively correlated with intensity of activities and total score of sensation seeking (Table 2).

**Table 1. Means for burnout and sensation seeking levels**

	Dimensions	Mean	S.D.
MBI (0 - 6)	Emotional exhaustion	1,79	1,18
	Depersonalization	1,07	1,05
	Personal accomplishment	4,74	0,99
AISS (1 - 4)	Novelty	2,48	0,42
	Intensity	2,37	0,44
	Total Sensation seeking	2,42	0,36

**Table 2. Correlations between age, burnout and sensation-seeking**

	Sensation-seeking	Novelty	Intensity	Total Sensation seeking
Burnout				
	Emotional exhaustion	0,064	-0,029	0,020
	Depersonalization	0,052	0,035	0,052
Personal accomplishment	0,070	-0,003	0,039	
Age		0,008	<b>-0,174**</b>	<b>-0,103*</b>

\*p < 0,05 \*\*p < 0,01

## 5. Conclusions

Portuguese police officers present low levels of burnout and moderate levels of sensation seeking. Burnout levels are not associated with sensation seeking personality traits. These results contradict previous associations found between sensation seeking traits and burnout levels respectively among Indian (Desai & Chauhan 2009) and Finish (Hintsanen et al., 2009) police officers. It is believed that these findings may be partially due to the high mean age of the sample under study. In agreement with this explanation, age in this study appeared to be negatively associated with sensation seeking levels of the participants. Another possible explanation for the nature of results found, may be cultural differences associated with Portuguese police officers. Thus, further research is recommended analysing sensation seeking and burnout levels among Portuguese police officers, controlling for age differences and cultural factors among this population.

## 6. Bibliography

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