

Health, stress, and coping of Correctional workers: a comparison of shift and day workers.

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The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of work type (day vs. shift work) while controlling for Sense of coherence (SOC) on physiological (cardiovascular and digestive symptoms) and psychological (psychological distress, perceived stress, cognitive and somatic anxiety) well-being. Ninety-nine workers (age $M=47$) from two correctional centres participated in this study. Participants completed a modified version of the Standard Shiftwork Index (SSI) that also included measures to assess Sense of coherence and perceived stress. A MANCOVA (covariate: SOC) indicated that Dayworkers had significantly more cardiovascular symptoms in comparison to Shiftworkers. No other well-being measures were found to be significantly different across work type. Workers' self-reports showed a high frequency of prisoner interactions as a primary source of stress, and non-prisoner contact work as the least stressful aspect of work. A second MANCOVA (covariates: Length of service and SOC) accounting for prisoner contact (high-demand vs low-demand) indicated that High-demand contact workers had significantly more digestive symptoms than Low-demand workers and that Length of service in High-demand prisoner contact increased risk of cardiovascular symptoms. Significant proportions of all well-being measures including general sleep disturbance were found to be explained by SOC. High-demand workers also reported more diagnosed health conditions than Low-demand workers; no significant difference was shown between Shiftworkers and Dayworkers. Strong SOC workers adopted an engaged coping style (i.e. talked more to colleagues, problem solved, used positive comparisons, reacted assertively in conflicts, etc). Strong SOC Shiftworkers were also found to report taking more time to engage in leisure and sport activities and spending more time socializing with other shiftworkers. The findings from this study provide evidence that SOC is an important individual characteristic that influences individual well-being and preference towards coping style. Specifically, individuals with a strong SOC are more likely to report greater well-being and a greater preference towards positive, engagement type coping styles. This study also provided evidence that high stress prison work environments appear to exacerbate health risks to Dayworkers in comparison with Shiftworkers due to the increased daytime contact with prisoners. Implications for these findings in relation to the previous research are discussed.