

Stress among Brazilian Security Guards: Analysis of Vulnerability Factors

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Abstract Fraught with cognitive, physical, and emotional consequences, stress is a phenomenon that may be generally understood as a form of exhaustion under specific conditions. The work environment can be an important stressor. Through a quantitative study, different aspects of stress and its consequences in the security guard profession are reviewed. The main factors of vulnerability to stress in Brazilian security guards employed by a private company were evaluated and correlating with sociodemographic parameters. Security guards were selected by non-probabilistic criteria (*i.e.*, by convenience). Data were collected using a sociodemographic characterization questionnaire, and the Scale of Vulnerability to Stress at Work (*EVENT*) employed to assess the stress levels to which the participants were exposed. Security guards generally showed a low vulnerability to stress. Correlations among variables were non significant ($P > 0.05$), the strongest correlation, that between the civil state (*i.e.*, married *vs.* single) variable and the pressure at work factor ($r^2 = 0.25$, $P = 0.119$) indicated that vulnerability to stress in this case was extremely low. This correlation was stronger because 56% of the sample population were married. It is assumed that no vulnerabilities were identified because of the personnel management policies adopted, which targets, early in the selection process, adequate psychological profiles for the specific organizational culture and work environment.

Keywords Stress, Vulnerability, Security guards

1. Introduction

As a phenomenon that occurs in the organism, stress should be addressed from various perspectives: cognitive, physical, and emotional. This process is present in daily life, in relationships with other people, at work, and even in leisure environments. Hence, developing an understanding of this process will depend on an analysis of each individual, their context and culture, as well as their perception through challenges and opportunities presented. Work conditions are known to be an important cause of stress, particularly elements of the work environment such as: excess workload, reduced number of workers, unfavorable work climate, difficult interpersonal relationship, and others [1].

Vulnerability factors to stressful circumstances in daily life may serve in evaluating the main driving forces of work stress [2]. By working to avoid such circumstances it is possible to minimize stress effects on workers, providing them a better quality of life and raising productivity. In the growth of violence and criminality in Brazil has led companies to rely on private security guards to protect and secure their properties and employees. The work routine

exposes such security professionals to a number of risks and situations that may induce a stressful state, harming the worker's personal life, and leading to physical and psychological damage [3].

Given the complexity of this phenomenon and the issues involved, and concerns regarding the mental health of professional security guards, the present study sought to identify those stressor vulnerabilities which predominate among security guards of a private company in a Brazilian city, as well as analyze the attendant personnel management policies and procedures. To achieve this purpose, a general explanatory survey on the theme was undertaken. This was followed by an effort to catalog the participants' main sociodemographic characteristics and identify the intensity of stress vulnerability with respect to the scales of climate and organizational operation, pressure at work, and infrastructure and routine. Finally, correlations were made among factors of vulnerability to stress and sociodemographic characteristics of the sample population.

2. Stress: Concept, Functioning, and Consequences

Stress is a commonly used word to express affliction, fatigue of the bodymental faculties, and irritation. Though no scientific studies have proven that people suffer more from stress nowadays than in past times, this term has

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become commonplace in daily interchanges. It may be perceived that a stressful situation may impair individual's quality of life, harming their social and individual environments [4]. These reactions are known to represent very primitive environmental responses and are part of human nature due to their evolutionary advantage, where stress refers to a pattern of reactions that somehow guide the organism to attack stressor agents [1]. Selye [5] named this reaction General Adaptation Syndrome, and defined it as consisting of a series of responses growing in the organism upon the emergence of any fact demanding from the subject an effort to adapt. The author indicates that such effort may also occur in a psychosocial way. In psychology, stress is defined as a response to psychosocial issues that cause uneasiness. Its scientific study considers four steps: (i) stressful situations that may easily trigger stress, and which are perceived in a physical and social environment; (ii) reactions to these stressful situations; (iii) individual - environment situations, comparing the expectation of the individual with what the environment presents; (iv) the stress process, considering not only the individual - environment matter, but perceiving their interaction, which triggers the process [6].

Stress may be considered a process that starts with the recognition and assessment of stressors, leading to a series of changes in the organism. Further, it also represents an interlocked action that is started and regulated by the central nervous system, which provides information about the environment, interpreting cues and reacting based on the information perceived. Therefore, when this assessment concludes that the prevailing situations may cause damage, loss or impose excessive demands upon the individual, a stress response is generated. Since stress is observed to be a multiple determinant (e.g., biological, cognitive, and even social factors) phenomenon, it must be studied from several perspectives, so as to take into account different ways in which the phenomenon can be triggered [1].

There are several physiological, psychological, and behavioral consequences to stress. Physiological consequences can include: increased blood pressure, cortisol and catecholamine, hypertension, cardiac disease, and ulcers. Among the psychological consequences are: dissatisfaction, congenital disorders, burnout, depression, and even mental disorders. Short term behavioral consequences can be responsible for absenteeism, decreased productivity, and active participation in the processes [7, 8]. The facts or mechanisms that may trigger the stressor state are presented in several forms, and may determine, along with subjective characteristics of each individual, the degree of illness in each case [7, 8, 9, 10].

Selye [5] classified the reactions that subjects may present when faced with a stressor into three reaction stages: alarm, stage, and exhaustion. He also posits the existence of a stress that relates to positive responses, which he called eustress, in contrast to stress arising from negative experiences, termed distress. The latter may cause considerable damage to individuals' biopsychosocial

welfare. Although the work of Hans Selye is relatively old, his findings are still valid and influence many researchers. Selye was a pioneer in stress research, elucidating how it functioned in an animal model; however, his findings were soon generalized to humans. Selye emphasized that stress is not concerned with the event itself, but rather with an individual's reaction to it [11]. Therefore, a state of stress may lead to a positive or negative behavior, depending on how each individual perceives and assesses a given situation. The assessment performed on individuals must consider their background, practices, experiences, along with the context, in seeking a better response to that stimulus [12]. Therefore, the perception of organizational stress does not originate in stressful events, but rather through many individual characteristics such as age, self-efficacy, anxiety traits, adaptability, personal motivation, and interpretation of unplanned events [13, 14]. Stress may arise from internal (*i.e.*, how humans behave, their personality and principles) and external sources (*i.e.*, the demands of everyday life to which the individual is exposed (*e.g.*, problems at work, with family, social relationships, losses, &c. [12, 15]).

França and Rodrigues [7] suggest that as individuals become more involved and concerned about a certain issue, the more they tend to become vulnerable to stress. These experiences are influenced by the beliefs the individual has developed throughout their life. However, stress cannot be considered as something that occurs only in the face of significant events or stressful situations of high impact (e.g. death of a loved one, divorce, &c.). Indeed, research has shown that stressful situations mainly arise from simple events such as being late for work, missing one's bus, spending hours stuck in a traffic jam, the loss of personal objects, and other routine daily events [16]. Often the result of external stressors, these situations, unlike those associated with high impact stresses, usually occur on a more frequent, often daily basis, thus representing constant originators of stress symptoms. These external demands apply powerful pressures on the subject, who must adapt and seek out coping strategies in order to have a healthier and more comfortable personal life [16].

2.1. Stress at Work

Work-related stress from work is a global problem. Studies carried out in the United States found that a quarter to a third of workers identified themselves as being exposed to high levels of work-related stress. Similarly, ISMA (International Stress Management Association) studies have shown that at least 70% of Brazilian workers suffer from work stress, and that the remaining 30% are victims of burnout, a stress-related disorder [17].

Many stimuli can generate symptoms related to occupational stress in the professional environment. These stimuli are directly connected to the threatening responses (physical and emotional) which occur when the worker does not have the skills or resources to complete the work activities demanded by their employer [2]. Moreover,

excessive noise and pollution, poor lighting, as well as the neglect of problems related to ergonomics and damaged equipment, can harm people and prevent them from working efficiently. Lack of teamwork, high leadership turnover and poor colleague cooperation when job performance requires a team approach also represents an important source of work pressure [1, 2].

Workload is the main trigger for work-related, especially when available resources are insufficient or inadequate to perform quality work [18]. Pressure in the workplace has also been noted as another major cause of work-related stress symptoms [2]. This pressure can be defined as the accumulation of functions and activities that should be performed without error in a short time — usually to meet deadlines — which may include taking on the work of others, or new tasks and responsibilities.

Some authors explain that the way the work is performed may trigger stress. As much of the worker's suffering tends to originate in poor relations within the work organization, much more energy is devoted in maintaining the individual's integrity than is applied to the work at hand, leading to displeasure and tension [9]. As pressure increases and demands become greater than one can withstand, the consequences become apparent through physical symptoms, and biological changes that lead to the disease may also ensue.

2.2. Security Guards' Workplace Stress

As the result of a number of triggers, private security companies have proliferated throughout Brazil and the world. Amongst these triggers are people's insecurities with regard to the violence and criminality to which they are exposed, and visible government incompetence and impotence in the face of rapidly expanding crime [3].

The rise in employment of security guards began with the aforementioned heightened demand for security services. Companies needing to supply individuals for this market were forced to train and certify professionals for such activity. According to the Brazilian Code of Occupations (*CBO*), the job of security guard entails surveillance activities in public and private areas aimed at minimizing criminality and irregularities. Moreover, the role of such individuals is to maintain people's safety, to enforce compliance with laws, to control access and movement of people, to provide general surveillance and escort services, and report to the public and law enforcement agencies [19]. The exposure to risk and the level thereof with each of these professionals' tasks is reflected by a certain level of stress. Tied to their wide-ranging activities, several work-related factors may be classified as stressors. These include work shifts, long hours, a climate of fear, tension, and constant pressure, as well as abusive behavior by superiors [20]. Factors such as employers not supplying sufficient or adequate uniforms or protective equipment, company irregularities with government organizations, and non-payment of employees' wages are also to be considered.

Studies have found that in addition to not receiving proper health care and protection in the workplace, security guards are often overwhelmed with responsibilities, incriminated in instances of security failures. All this has a negative reflect on their health [21].

Recently, Silva *et al.* [22] when comparing the effects of day vs. night work on the health of Brazilian security guards, found no effect of shift time on worker dissatisfaction. They indicated that security guards reported insomnia as a major impact of working night shifts, while those working day shifts reported a lack of leisure time as a negative factor, resulting in tiredness, fatigue, and stress.

Feijó, [20] noted that security guards that work the night shift are more vulnerable to stress than those who work the day shift. Nighttime work requires adapting one's circadian cycle, adapting to peaceful and quiet environment without constant supervision, and being exposed to external life risks. Another study [23], assessing the occurrence of burnout and exposure to stressful situations in security guards, found that although 41% of participants experienced a critically stressful situation at work, symptoms of burnout were negatively related to emotional support and being in a stable and loving relationship, indicating that these external factors may be related to the improvement of stress-related symptoms.

Since Brazilian businesses usually outsource security services, security professionals often feel abandoned after being hired as they lack any daily contact with the company that hired them. As a result they often create new links with the contracting company. This situation may also trigger stress symptoms given the lack but need for contact with others [20]. Although it is a high-risk occupation with several possible stressors, the present authors noted a paucity of studies on this profession.

3. Method

3.1. Sample and Sample Techniques

The present study represents quantitative cross-sectional research, with sample selection occurring by convenience. The subjects of the study were security guards of a private company, provider of outsourced security services, located in a city of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The company staff comprises a total of 67 security guards, 39 (58%) of which participated in the survey, 37 men and 2 women. The professionals sampled worked in several different positions as dictated by the security company, and on different pay scales and shifts as required by the client and the company itself. All individuals surveyed were trained and certified to perform as security guards.

The present sample was composed of 94.9% ($n = 37$) male security guards and 5.1% ($n = 2$) female, with an overall average age of 36.51 years ($SD = 11.91$). Some 56.4% ($n = 22$) were married, 12.8% ($n = 5$) were single, and 5.1% ($n = 2$) were separated; 71.8% ($n = 28$) of the

sample reported having children, with average of 1.23 (SD=1.03) per couple. Regarding education, 43.6% (n = 17) had completed high school and 25.6% (n = 10) had completed elementary school, while 20.5% had not completed elementary school; 7.7% (n = 8) had not completed high school, and 2.6% (n = 1) had completed higher education. Moreover, 87.2% (n = 34) reported performing at least one leisure activity, from these 30.8% (n = 12) reported going on walks, and 28.2% (n = 11) referred to playing soccer.

3.2. Research Instruments

Three instruments were employed: a sociodemographic characterization questionnaire, an interview with the person in charge of personnel management policies, and the Scale of Vulnerability to Stress at Work (*EVENT*). Statistical analysis was performed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 21.

The questionnaire for subject characterization was designed to collect data from participants, such as age, gender, education, marital status, participation in leisure activities, length of time working as security guards, work shift and schedule. The interview with the Human Resources professional sought to identify the existence and nature of personnel management policies, and to acknowledge the main procedures adopted.

The Scale of Vulnerability to Stress at Work (*EVENT*) [2] serves to assessment how much the circumstances of everyday work influence the individual’s behavior, including the characterization of fragility facing stress. The *EVENT* uses a 3-point Likert scale, meaning the participants may choose among answers: corresponding to “never” (0), “sometimes” (1), and “often” (2). Security guards scored their answers based on their experiences and perceptions of the employer organization, expressing opinions on the company’s values, routines, place and work conditions, mood among colleagues, and how they felt about work performance. To build the variables relating to sources of stress, the instrument comprises 40 items divided into three main areas of focus regarding stressor identification: (i) climate and organizational operation, (ii) pressure at work, and (iii) infrastructure and routine. The *EVENT* is classified by the sum of scores from the items marked by the subjects, with a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 80; the higher the score, the greater the vulnerability to stress [2].

In terms of reliability, the Rasch model for the total items ranged from 0.98 to 0.99. Cronbach, Spearman Brown and Guttman α values of 0.88, 0.83 and 0.83, respectively, were recorded for Factor 1; 0.88, 0.85 and 0.85 for Factor 2, and 0.77, 0.75 and 0.75 for Factor 3. At between 0.77 and 0.85, these alpha values for the Spearman-Brown and Guttman test were considered high.

3.3. Procedure

This company for which the security guards worked was chosen for its prominent position in the security industry in

the region where it is located.

The company’s personnel management policies prioritize training and professional development programs for security guards, both in terms of technical skills and behavioral attitudes. With regards to the recruitment and selection process, we verified and confirmed that in the recruitment process, all candidates completed a mandatory security guard training course. Candidates were found physically fit for the job, wrote standardized and regulated tests from the Brazilian Federal Council of Psychology. These tests are certified as being highly reliable and their validity with respect to score assessments has frequently been confirmed. Such tests aim to assess characteristics related to behavior, impulsivity, and aggressive traits, amongst others. In addition to testing and professional training, motivation and job-related experience were assessed [2].

4. Results

Regarding duration of employment in this field, the average was 89.10 months (SD = 86.47), and the average time within the current company was 84.56 months (SD = 90.981). With regards to work shift, 74.4% (n = 29) said they worked at night. Moreover, 82.1% (n = 32) reported working in a 12 x 36 scale (scale of 12 working hours followed by 36 hours of rest), and 82.1% (n = 32) reported having a fixed work schedule.

Having organized data, an analysis accounting for *EVENT* factors was undertaken. For the “Climate Factor and Organizational Operation” and “Pressure at Work” factors (Factors 1 and 2), the average scores among the security guards were 8.66 (SD = 9.44) and 6.12 (SD = 3.86), respectively, both considerably lower than 15, the average for the general population. With respect to Factor 3, Infrastructure and Routine, participants presented an average of 4.97 (SD = 2.74), compared to a general population average for of 6. In this case, the fact that the participants’ average value was close to the midpoint of the scale, indicates a certain fragility in this factor.

In summary, the security guards sampled presented low vulnerability to job stress in relation to the three factors studied. The results of score frequencies are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *EVENT* scores according to rate and number

Event Scores	Climate and Organizational Operation		Pressure at Work		Infrastructure and Routine	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Lower	56.4	22	79.5	31	25.6	10
Below average	28.2	11	20.5	8	38.5	15
Average	5.1	2	0	0	7.7	3
Above average	5.1	2	0	0	23.1	9
Higher	5.1	2	0	0	5.1	2

In a further analysis, which represents a general average of vulnerability to stress (*i.e.*, combining stress factors 1, 2, and 3) the guards' overall score was 6.79 well below the standard score of 36 points. This suggests that few stressors were identified.

Correlations were then drawn between data from the sociodemographic (work shift, job experience, age, marital status, among others) and *EVENT* questionnaires (stress vulnerability scores). The lower the vulnerability score the lower was the participant's stress level.

Considering that Pearson correlation coefficients (r) did not exceed (\pm) 0.25 and none were significant ($P > 0.11$) none of the parameters could be considered critical or indicative of heightened vulnerability to stress (Table 2).

Table 2. Pearson's correlation coefficient between the sociodemographic questionnaire and the *EVENT* factors; indicated by correlation coefficient (r) and probability (p)

	Climate and Organizational Operation	Pressure at Work	Infrastructure and Routine
Age	r : -0.17 p : 0.290	r : -0.17 p : 0.291	r : 0.05 p : 0.743
Marital Status	r : 0.03 p : 0.832	r : 0.25 p : 0.119	r : 0.04 p : 0.766
Years of Work Experience	r : -0.11 p : 0.482	r : 0.04 p : 0.83	r : -0.14 p : 0.377
Work Shift	r : 0.08 p : 0.614	r : 0.13 p : 0.402	r : -0.11 p : 0.497

Though non-significant, the highest correlation observed ($r = 0.25$) was for the relationship between marital status and Factor 2 (Pressure at Work) might, imply that pressures at work may be a stressor to security guards, if at a very low and probably negligible level.

5. Discussion

Given the surveyed security guards's profiles and stress factor levels, the organizational environment may be considered of low risk for stress. The present results sheds light on theoretical models of stress which includes environment-organism relationships [23]. Under this approach, environmental stimuli mobilize different adaptive capacities in the individual, which only result in a stress response when the individual's physical/cognitive/behavioral features do not meet the criteria to sustain the stimuli presented in either an acute or chronic basis [24].

Environmental factors are important in explaining such interactions. A company can offer features that increase or decrease the possibility of individuals being exposed to a number of stimuli that are considered stressors, through a conscious attempt by management to minimize the effect of stressors in the organizational environment [23]. In this sense, it can be inferred that the management policy of the company whose employees were under study might influence the results, particularly depending on the manner

in which the employer maintains a policy which includes the handling of possible illnesses due to work schedule.

The lack of documented stress in the present study may be related to the form of recruitment and selection adopted, which identifies the potential for good performance in the routine work of security guards. It is noteworthy that in Brazil psychological assessments are commonly adopted to identify specific skills during recruitment and selection stages. Such assessments are validated in detail for the standardization of their use at the national level. Moreover, psychological tests allow one to identify possible factors such as aggression and impulsivity, which may be relevant minimizing stress levels among professionals whose work is to protect society [26, 27].

The research method used in the present study has been well accepted by respondents. Based on a study carried out with female police officers in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Bezerra, Minayo and Constantine [25] stated that for participants group discussions represented not only a single instance of reunion among professionals, but also a private moment when their thoughts could be expressed, particularly considering that their employers do not usually offer this opportunity to employees.

Given the small proportion of women in a study conducted in 2012 [29], it was difficult to assess inclusive actions for women in the security sector, given that the social context in this segment remains largely male. According to this study, a gender inequality exists in the context of the security sector, where some believe that a female presence may ultimately weaken some workstations [29]. It is also worth noting that the profession often limits women's access because of work shifts may conflict with traditionally female-associated family matters and raising children. Women also are more emotional and assumed to be more vulnerable than men, especially those who are inserted in a family environment. Thus, it is believed that women themselves choose professions that offer them more security. In this regard, Bezerra, Minayo and Constantino [28] found that amongst women police officers this type of work was a stress trigger correlated with family relationships factors. Considering this fact, it may be said that, in the case of the company and the sample researched, the results were not likely skewed by the low number of women.

In addition to age limits, training courses require time, causing the individual to start the activity at an older age. This in turn may be a positive aspect when considering the increased experience of an older professional, allowing greater resistance to the stressors of the profession. This may be justified considering the correlation indexes analyzed in Table 2, which identified low vulnerability with respect to the age factor and the factors of climate and organizational operation, pressure at work, and infrastructure and routine. However, regarding factors of climate and organizational operation, and pressure at work, the correlation is negative, emphasizing that the lower the age perception of respondents, the greater their vulnerability

to the above-mentioned factors.

Given the non-significant correlations, vulnerability was not significant. Therefore, it may be stated that the presence or absence of stress in the security guard profession is not directly related to the age of individuals in the present sample. However, when considering marital status, it was found that the factor of pressure at work presented a low vulnerability to stress. The correlation found being positive, showing that if the security guard is married, pressures at work may have a marginally greater impact on this individual, than on a security guard that is single.

Regarding work in shifts and the use of leisure time outside the job of security guards, it was found that 90% of them practice some leisure activity, including walks, soccer games, gym, outings, fishing, among others. This shows that despite working in shifts, either day or night, and the fact that most of the sample was married, they find time for leisure, which is believed to be a way to channel stress acquired during work. When considering the correlation indexes verified, it was found that the shift dimension showed a negative correlation with the factor of infrastructure and routine, representing that the lower the perception of security guards regarding their work shift, the higher the vulnerability to stress with infrastructure and routine of the company. Despite this correlation, no vulnerabilities were identified in any of the three factors regarding work shift, considering that rates found were far from the 0.05 percentile value considered for the study.

In another point of view, considering professional activity, data showed that, on average, participants have 7.6 years of experience in the security guard activity. This period may be considered satisfactory, but it may be a stressful aspect due to the long time performing the same activity, which physically and psychologically overwhelms the individual.

Considering this aspect, verifying the identified correlation coefficients for the dimension of experience, it is negatively correlated to factors of climate and organizational operation, and infrastructure and routine. Hence, it is understood that the less experience of security guards, the greater their vulnerability to stress under the two factors mentioned.

However, given the high average of experience found, and correlation indexes verified, it appears that vulnerability to stress concerning the work experience of security guards is not significant. In general, none of the sociodemographic dimensions verified (age, marital status, experience, and work shift) are shown as vulnerability to stress in the factors of the *EVENT* analyzed.

These results indicate that, although many stressors are part of the routine of these professionals, they present low vulnerability to stress. It is believed that these factors are linked to two factors: labor management policy, which seeks qualified professionals from the start and aims to maintain an operation that includes handling possible illnesses due to work schedule; and the use of standardized psychological tests, used to identify the accurate profile,

which allows to identify factors that may be related to how the subject behaves routinely. In this sense, it is understood that among the behavioral and subjective aspects of the security guards sampled, no agents of significant impact on professionals with a profile that shows resilience were identified, at the time of recruitment.

Given the low number of women in the sample in the present study, its conclusions may only be applicable to male security guards.

To understanding the present results, the cognitive mediation model proposed by Lazarus [30] was adopted. This postulates that a stressor only has a stressful effect on the individual when that individual evaluates the situation as a threat or realizes that their resources are insufficient in dealing with the situation at hand [31].

In an individual's response to potentially stressful stimuli, the interpretation of external or internal events as threatening, neutral or beneficial is critical [32]. This model emphasizes the role of cognitive mediation in triggering stress [33]. Some of the individual's cognitive factors which must be considered include their beliefs (about themselves, the world, the future), their thoughts, selective attention, perception of control over the situation and cognitive distortions. All of these play a fundamental role in the perception and overall assessment of a situation. This knowledge base depends on past and ongoing processes of cumulative learning or experience, which may be invoked during the interpretation of stimuli as threatening or not [34, 35].

Among the behavioral, cognitive and subjective aspects security guards are evaluated on at the moment of recruitment, those which could negatively affect the cognitive mediation process established between the company and the applicant for the job are particularly singled out.

As our literature review has shown, although the security guard profession is growing exponentially, there are limited studies on this area. Thus, the present study provides the possibility to rethink recruitment practices and selection criteria for high risk jobs, thereby identifying suitable positions for the proposed profiles. Since these professionals must exhibit resilience with respect to work-related stressors, an evaluation of their professional skills on a regular basis can assist in mapping out their quality of life.

Although *EVENT* scale is validated only in Brazil, it is possible that further studies can validate it in other countries, adding new data to this field and generating new hypotheses. Other instruments that assess these same aspects and are validated for other countries can be used.

6. Conclusions

The present study aimed to identify the vulnerability to stress predominant in a sample of security guards of a private security company, identifying sociodemographic items showing significant correlation.

Literature review showed that stress is a recurrently observed phenomenon at work, and although security guards are constantly exposed to factors of vulnerability to stress, there are few studies assessing its occurrence and associated data worldwide.

Through data analysis, it was found that although sometimes there were indexes indicating correlation among variables, it was considered not significant, as the index observed well above $P = 0.05$; explaining that as the value is closer to the 0.001 percentile, security guards would be more vulnerable to stress under the specified factor. This low vulnerability may be attributed to personnel management policy held by the company, which conducts psychological assessments during the selection process, in order to find the appropriate professional to perform the tasks of a security guard. The lowest P value found was 0.119 for the marital status dimension and the factor of pressure at work, but considering the identified correlation coefficient value of 0.25, vulnerability to stress in this case is extremely low. This correlation was the highest found by the fact that 56% of the sample were married, therefore pressure at work turns out to be a stressor reflecting on family life.

The present findings add significantly to the existing knowledge on the psychology of security guards. Within this particular domain of employment it is important for psychologists to investigate more precisely a team of workers' script cognitive mediation, and thus help minimize the stress process. Another contribution of this study, is the apparent feasibility of establishing psychoeducational programs for the development of cognitive skills that promote an enhanced quality of daily relationships, even where stressors are present. In so doing, the presence of stressful events would not become synonymous with triggering a process of occupational stress.

The presents results encourage one to undertake further studies related to the cognitive mediation process and occupational stress, as well as to assess the effectiveness of psychological interventions targeted towards improving the repertoire of cognitive mediation of workers.

However, the research presented some limitations since it was not possible to investigate the entire population of security guards of the company. The lack of participation did not compromise the conclusions verified, but they could have represented a greater number of Brazilian security guards. Another limiting factor of the research was the inability to correlate with other studies, given the lack of studies on this professional field and the differences of methods to measure stress in such researches. Thus, further qualitative researches are suggested in order to deepen the perception of security guards to stressor agents.

Thus, it may be defined that the work of a security guard, specifically in the company researched, does not offer vulnerability to stress. Possibly the personnel management policies adopted in Brazil are appropriate for the selection of security guards.

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