

DISTURBANCES OF EATING BEHAVIOR DURING WORKPLACE SUFFERING

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The Clinical Centre for the Psychopathology of Work of our Operating Unit for Mental Health has followed for approximately five years a number of patients who present various psychopathologies of workplace bullying. These can be placed along a continuum characterized by symptoms of anxiety, mood disturbance, sleep disturbance, the use of psychoactive substances, aggression, either other or self directed, and disturbances of eating behaviour. The aim of this research is the evaluation of changes in eating behaviour and their extent in a sample of patients followed by our centre. For 12 months we tracked a sample of 86 patients (44 male and 42 female) aged between 28 and 67 years (average 49 years), chosen at random from patients of the Clinical Centre for the Psychopathology of Work. Participants responded to a questionnaire, both at the beginning and the end of the research period, regarding their eating habits and the use of psychoactive substances (smoking and alcohol consumption). The Body Mass Index (BMI) of the participants was calculated each month over the 12 months of observation. The average weight of participants at the end of the observation period was 71.7 kg, (sd 13.3) with a range between 51 and 107 kg. The average BMI of participants passed from an initial value of 23.7 (sd 3.1) with a range from 18.3 to 31.2 to a final value of 25.1 (sd 3.3) with a corresponding range of 18.4 to 35.7. Of the 86 participants, 20 (23.3%) lost weight, on average 5.5 kg (sd 5.4), in a range between 1 kg and 19 kg. The average BMI of these participants decreased from 24.4 (sd 3.2) with a range from 19.7 to 29.4 to 23.9 (sd. 2.8) with a range between 19.5 and 28.2. 60 participants (69.8%) showed an increase in weight on average of 9.6kg (sd 6.8) with a range from 1.5kg to 26kg. Their average BMI increased from 23.5 (sd 2.9) in a range of 18.3 to 31.3 to 25.1 (sd 3.4) with a range of 18.9 to 35.7. Only 6 of the participants (6.9%) maintained a constant weight over the observation period. At a descriptive level 32 of the 86 participants smoked and of these 28 (87%) increased smoking levels. Furthermore 12 participants were habitual consumers of alcohol and 10 of these (83%) increased alcohol consumption. Analysis of the data indicates that a significant percentage of the participants showed a change in eating behaviour ($p > 0.05$). Amongst participants only 6.9% remained at a constant body weight, 69.8% registered an increase and 23.2% a decrease. Such values would indicate that patients affected by workplace bullying do not only demonstrate psychopathological repercussions but also a series of potential endocrine-metabolic complications as a possible consequence of neuroendocrine modification deriving from malnutrition, either through over or under eating. Evidence of this kind might be expected to stimulate the specialized institutions concerned with work problems to consider the pathology in terms of innested structures at various levels; existential, social, professional and psychiatric as well as biological and endocrino-metabolic.

