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Protection and risk factors of burnout: Detached concern and humor

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Burnout is a negative state characterized by emotional and mental exhaustion. Detached Concern (DC) refers to an act of balance between empathic concern and detachment, which serves as a protective emotion regulation resource for human service professionals against burnout. Humor is often seen as a coping strategy. However, there are positively as well as negatively connotated styles. We studied how eight comic styles and the DC dimensions empathic concern and detachment predict the burnout dimensions emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. In total, 135 healthcare professionals answered the questionnaires Comic Style Marker, DC and the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Sarcasm and low detachment predicted emotional exhaustion, and sarcasm and low empathic concern predicted depersonalization. Personal accomplishment was predicted by benign humor and low sarcasm. Furthermore, benign humor partially mediated the correlation between empathic concern and personal accomplishment. The results emphasize the protective function of DC on burnout and are extended towards the role of different comic styles. Benign humor seems to serve as a means of empathic concern.

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