

# Compassion Fatigue in Portuguese Firefighters: Preliminary results of the Compassion Fatigue Scale

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## Introduction

Compassion fatigue, a distinct form of burnout that can occur in persons regularly exposed to trauma and suffering (e.g., hospital emergency and pre-emergency professionals), is an emergent health topic, due to its medium- and long-term impact on health. However, to the best of our knowledge, there is only one measure of compassion fatigue, directed to the general population.

## Aim

Develop and study the psychometric properties of a Compassion Fatigue Self-report in Portuguese firefighters.

## Method

**Participants:**

**286 firefighters:**

69% males, 31% females.

Age: 18 - 63 years ( $M = 38.48$ ;  $SD = 10.19$ ).

Previous exposure to a limit situation: 78%.

**Self-Report Measures:**

**Compassion Fatigue Scale** (CFS, Sousa, et al., 2025), developed in the present study: 35 items.

**Professional Quality of Life scale** (ProQOL, Stamm, 2009; Carvalho, 2011): 30 items, 3 dimensions: burnout, compassion satisfaction, secondary traumatic stress.

**Procedure:**

Step 1) Development of a pool of items, based on theories and definitions of compassion fatigue.

Step 2) Qualitative analysis of the relevance of the items for the assessment of compassion fatigue (face and content validity).

Step 3) Items reformulation and pilot testing.

Step 4) Study validation.

Step 5) Request for formal authorizations to disseminate the protocol among firefighters.

Step 6) Data collection and quantitative analyses.

**Observational cross-sectional study**

## Results

**Face and Content Validity**

35 items submitted to interrater agreement  
(2 non-specialists and 2 specialists)

Interrater agreement		
Superior to 75%	50 – 75%	Inferior to 50%
17 items	11 items	7 items
Included	Reformulation before inclusion	Excluded
Final testing version: 28 items		

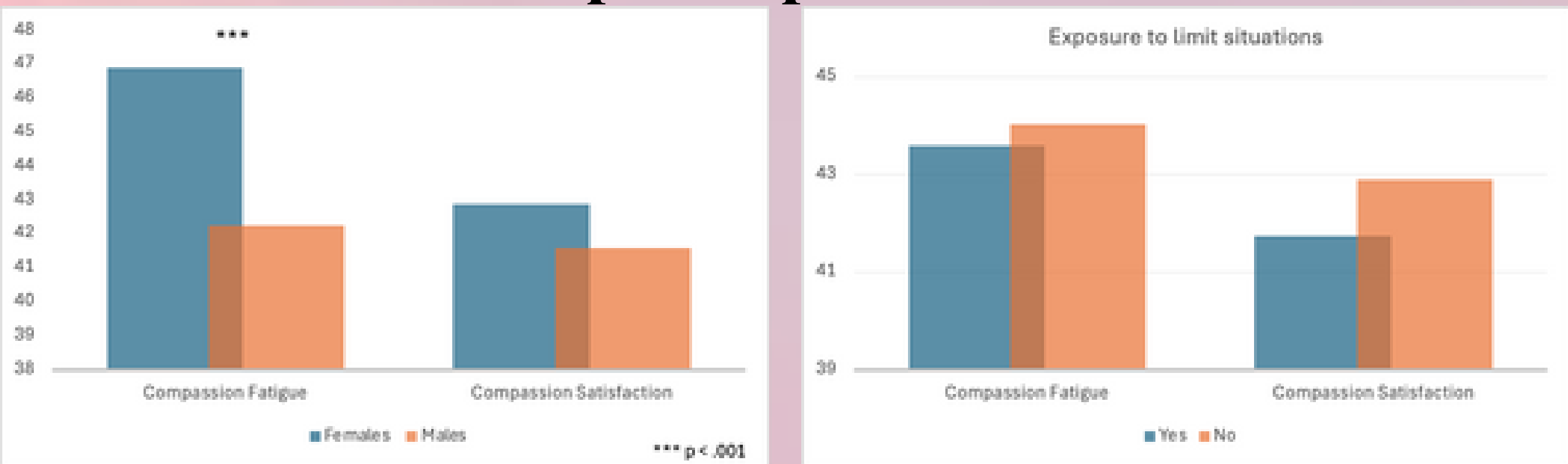
## Results

Internal Structure and Reliability	Fator 1	Fator 2
	Compassion Fatigue	Compassion Satisfaction
10 – Imbalance between physical and mental resources and work demands.	0.74	
19 – Restless after a day's work.	0.69	
4 – Influence of the exposure to distress in well-being.	0.69	
9 – Physical or emotional exhaustion after a day of work.	0.68	
14 – Feeling tired at work.	0.67	
3 – Constant fear of failure at work.	0.66	
17 – Difficulty dealing with failure in a task.	0.65	
6 – High levels of stress due to the exposure of others suffering.	0.64	
2 – Nervous before going to work.	0.63	
12 – Can't fall asleep easily.	0.58	
7 – Easily get involved in other people's problems.	0.57	
16 – Impact of fatigue on performance at work.	0.57	
11 – Low motivation for work.	0.54	
5 – Prioritization of others needs over my own.	0.54	
20 – Feeling responsible for people's problems.	0.53	
15 – Don't feel like doing activities outside of work.	0.53	
1 – Constantly thinking about other persons difficult situations, even outside of working hours.	0.49	
23 – Feeling good about helping others.		0.90
22 – Enjoying practicing my profession.		0.88
28 – Liking to help others.		0.86
26 – Happy to help people with my work.		0.86
24 – Consider myself a useful person.		0.80
25 – Considerate of the people I work with.		0.79
21 – Happy performing my professional duties.		0.78
13 – Feeling motivated to work.		0.67
8 – Feeling the duty to help people in need.	0.31	0.62
27 – Feeling fulfilled only if feel useful.		0.45
Eigenvalue	6.67	6.20
Explained Variance (%)	24.71	22.96
Cronbach's Alpha	.91	.93

**Intercorrelations and Concurrent Validity**

	ECS	
	Compassion Fatigue	Compassion Satisfaction
ECS		
Compassion Satisfaction	.18**	-
ProQOL		
Compassion Satisfaction	.007	.61***
Burnout	.36***	-.49***
Secondary Traumatic Stress	.63***	-.04
** p < .01; *** p < .001		

**Group Comparisons:**



## Conclusions

CFS can be a reliable and valid self-report measure of compassion fatigue in firefighters. Future studies should analyse the invariance of the structure in a representative sample of firefighters and in other helping professions.

## References

Carvalho, P. (2011). *Estudo da fadiga por compaixão nos cuidados paliativos em Portugal: Tradução e adaptação cultural da Escala Professional Quality of Life-5*. Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Porto

Stamm, B. H. (2009). *Professional Quality of Life: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5* (ProQOL). Available from [www.proqol.org/](http://www.proqol.org/)