

Hardiness and Depression among Slovenian Secondary School Teachers

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According to research teachers' work is among the most stressful. Hence, it can affect their psychological well-being and health as well as well-being of the students. Work related stress is thus one of the main mental burdens teachers encounter. The imbalance between the demands that individuals face at work and the resources available to cope with those demands causes stress that can lead to depression. On the other hand, hardiness construct was defined as the ability to recover from difficulties or a strategy of effective coping and adjusting in difficult situations. We studied hardiness and depression as indicators of mental health of secondary school teachers. More precisely, we wanted to assess whether teachers with higher levels of hardiness are less prone to depression symptoms.

Depression is a common and serious mental illness that adversely affects individual's well-being, mindset and acting. It causes feelings of sadness, loss of interest in activities that one enjoys, physical problems, and diminishes one's ability both at work and at home (Parekh 2017). Depression is according to WHO (2019) one of the most disabling disorders. It is a comorbid illness that affects physical health and causes losses of life quality and working ability (Netterstom et al. 2008).

Hardiness on the other side can change one's stress perception patterns and stress-related consequences. Maddi (2016) defined hardiness as the personality trait that helps individuals survive and cope with stressful life events without experiencing a distress. It is a pattern of strategies that allow individuals change their perspective on stressful events.

411 secondary school teachers from public secondary schools in Slovenia participated in the study. However, only 240 were taken into analysis due to incomplete answers. Beck's Depression Questionnaire (BDI-II) with 21 items was applied. We also used the Dispositional Resilience Scale (DRS II; Sinclair & Oliver 2003) with 18 items about individual resilience and vulnerability (Lo Bue et al. 2016).

Results show that majority of participants (212) did not report of depression symptoms. 15 participants were reporting of mild depression symptoms and may have minor difficulties in performing normal work or social activities. 13 participants were reporting of moderate depression symptoms and might have more evident problems in social interactions, as well as in work and home activities. Depression was correlated to the following factors of hardiness construct: control, challenge, commitment, helplessness and alienation, but not to rigidity. We conclude that hardiness and depression are connected constructs so when in stress, individuals with low levels of hardiness are more likely to be depressed than individuals with higher levels of hardiness. Implications of these findings are discussed.

Keywords: hardiness, depression, work stress, secondary school teachers, Slovenia