

MODERATORS AND MEDIATORS OF STRESS RESISTANCE

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The first chapter, **STRESS AND ITS MANAGEMENT** (Karel Paulík), presents a theoretical analysis of phenomena with central significance for managing the demands arising from the process of human adaptation to conditions of life. The analysis draws on theoretical resources from Czech and international researchers, and addresses the issue of managing stress from both processual and dispositional viewpoints. Key concepts – load, stress, resistance, coping – are analyzed in general terms and in view of professional working conditions. The author also addresses conceptual and methodological issues. Stress is characterized as part of the system of relationships between demands (in general terms, all stimuli disturbing the balanced state of the organism – homeostatis – and requiring a reaction) and the possibilities of individuals to deal with these demands. Stress is seen as a special type of load, in which the homeostasis is disturbed to a large degree (leading to a significant discrepancy between demands and the individual's possibilities to deal adequately with those demands), and adaptive reactions require increase effort – which may not always lead to the desired results (some functions or the entire organism may be damaged or destroyed). The author discusses several theoretical conceptions of stress based on biological and psychological approaches. He also mentions a number of undesirable results of inadequate stress management, especially a reduced feeling of well-being, lower quality of life, and other phenomena involved with health or life/work satisfaction. Particular emphasis is placed on the issue of mediating factors of stress management. In line with the view taken by several authors (R. S. Lazarus, R. M. Baron, D. A. Kenny, G. N. Holmeck and others), moderators and mediators are distinguished from each other; they include personality variables often mentioned in connection with stress resistance (hardiness, SOC, locus of control, dispositional optimism, self-confidence, Big Five variables).

The second chapter, **MEDIATING FACTORS OF MANAGING WORK STRESS** (Karel Paulík), focuses on issues of the moderating and mediating effects of certain personality variables on the subjective perception of stress in a set of respondents not differentiated according to profession and including technical professionals, helping professionals and employees of public administration and services (N=803), and in a set of teachers working at the second level of primary education. The author draws on a comparison of teachers and other professionals, comparing Czech (N = 463) and Slovak teachers (N = 509). The analysis focuses on extensive material yielded by original research in the Czech Republic and Slovakia using common and less common mathematical-statistical methods of data processing.

The third chapter, **'RESISTANCE AND GENDER'**, consists of three relatively independent parts, and focuses on selected issues connected with the relationship between gender (as a social concept) and stress management. The first section, entitled 'The mediating influence of gender roles in stress resistance' (P. Saforek), analyzes the way in which gender identity and gender roles can be viewed as moderators of stress. The research surveys groups of teachers at primary and secondary schools (N = 699) and university students (N = 394).

The 'space' of gender roles is discussed on the basis of factor analysis. This analysis identified 3 factors – types of gender roles described as the 'traditionalist approach' (based on common gender stereotypes), 'woman in second place', and 'equality of sexes'. The results lead to the conclusion that there exists a relationship between personality variables connected with stress resistance (expressed in summary values of hardiness and SOC) and the

interpretation of gender roles.

The second part of the third chapter – ‘Stress resistance and attitudes to gender in women working as teachers’ (K. Pavlica) – summarizes an analysis of research into the connections between certain personality characteristics of primary and secondary school teachers (N 447) and their management of work-related stress. The results suggest that there is a probable relationship between several personality characteristics related to stress resistance (SOC, dispositional optimism and especially hardiness) and attitudes to gender roles as outlined above – divided into ‘traditionalist’ attitudes, ‘woman in second place’, and ‘equality of sexes’.

The third and final part of the chapter is entitled ‘Gender and masculinity-femininity in the role of factors influencing perception of stress’ (Anna Schneiderová) and reports on research carried out with university students as respondents (N = 340) and focusing on masculinity, femininity and androgyny as factors in stress resistance. The results suggest that the most positive influence on stress management is exercised by androgyny – incorporating both masculine and feminine gender characteristics. Individuals with a higher level of androgyny, as well as masculine individuals, possessed lower levels of neuroticism, sufficient self-confidence, higher dispositional optimism, and higher general arousability. Androgynous individuals also had higher SOC values (unlike masculine individuals, where the only component with a higher value was manageability). Among the factors with a positive influence on perception of stress in androgynous individuals is competitiveness (the opposite of agreeableness). By contrast, the least favourable factor for stress management was femininity as based on the traditional concept of gender roles (gender stereotypes), typified by sensitivity, a tendency to mental exhaustion, higher anxiety and levels of fear. Factors with a positive influence on stress management in feminine individuals are comprehensibility, agreeableness, and (in women) extraversion. Masculinity is a significant factor in stress management because it is generally characterized by stability, optimism, higher levels of SOC and arousability. Masculine women add extraversion and conscientiousness to these variables. Masculine men display high levels of comprehensibility.