

LOW SELF-ESTEEM AS A RISK FACTOR FOR DEPRESSION INCIDENCE AMONG HEALTHCARE WORKERS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN LATVIA

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Objectives. It is a well known fact that higher risk for developing depression is associated with lower levels of self-esteem but causality of it still remains an unanswered and highly debated question. Aim of the study is to assess 9 months incidence of depression and its association with self-esteem levels among health care workers (HCW) during COVID-19 pandemics in Latvia.

Materials and Methods. A longitudinal quantitative study in the population of HCW in Latvia was done during April-June 2020 with repeated online surveys. Data was collected every 3 months in a 9 month period. Participants were selected by a non-probability sampling approach. Participants without symptoms of depression during the first survey were included in later surveys. Depression was assessed using Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), cut-off score-10. Self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (RSES) where a score of 10-25 indicates low, 26-29 medium and 30-40 high level of self-esteem. Data analysis was performed using SPSSv25 and analysed with the Chi-Square Test.

Results. 232 HCW were included in data analysis, of whom 40.9% (N = 95) developed symptoms of depression during the first 9 months of pandemics. In the beginning 7.3% had a low, 13.8% medium and 78.9% high self-esteem levels, after 9 months – 13.4, 20.3 and 66.4%. Rosenberg's self-esteem test median for those with depression decreased from 32 (IQR 27.0–36.0) to 29 (IQR 25.0–33.0), for those without depression – 34 (IQR 32.0–37.0) and during 9 months median didn't change (IQR 30.0–38.0). Lower self-esteem was associated with higher 9 months incidence of symptoms of depression ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions. 40.9% of HCW developed symptoms of depression during the first 9 months of COVID-19 pandemics in Latvia. Those HCW with lower self-esteem scores after 9 months were more likely to develop depression. The study reveals that self-esteem is a variable that is associated with incidence of symptoms of depression.