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INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT AT WORK MEDIATES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEGATIVE AFFECTIVITY AND BIOMARKERS OF STRESS

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Introduction: Work-related stress is the process by which the exposure to perceived stressful situations (i.e., job stress) triggers psychological, physiological, and physical responses in the individual (i.e., psychophysical strain). Individual characteristics, such as negative affectivity (NA), may affect the relationship between job stress and psychophysical strain. Objective: The study examined the role of NA in the association between interpersonal conflict at work (ICW) and Interleukin 1 beta (IL-1 β), a possible biomarker of stress according to the Allostatic Load model. Methods: 121 workers of an Italian healthcare organization completed a self-report questionnaire aimed at determining NA and ICW. Additionally, participants underwent a clinical interview, followed by a blood sample withdrawal. The hypothesized relationships were tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), controlling for gender. The results: ICW was positively associated with IL-1 β , after controlling for the effect of NA and gender. Additionally, NA was positively associated with ICW, whereas the association between NA and IL-1 β was not significant, after controlling for the effect of ICW and gender. Overall, ICW completely mediated the relationship between NA and IL-1 β , after controlling for the effect of gender. Conclusions: From a theoretical point of view, this study suggests that NA may affect the exposure to conflict at work, which, in turn, is associated with higher levels of IL-1 β , a biomarker of stress (Girardi et al., 2015). From a practical standpoint, health professional could implement interventions aimed at helping workers to cope with their negative emotions, in order to reduce conflict at work, and, consequently, work-related stress.

Biography

Damiano Girardi has completed his PhD in Psychological Sciences in 2012 from Padua University. He is now research fellow at Padua University. His research interests focus on the role of individual characteristics (like negative/positive affectivity, workaholism, perfectionism) in the stress process, and on physiological biomarkers of work-related stress. He has published several journal articles and book chapters on work-related stress.

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