

Impact of economic crisis on mental health in Romania

Raluca Nica

Director

Romanian League for Mental Health

May 2013, Dublin

Impact of economic crisis on mental health in Romania

- Economic crisis has started in 2008 – 2009 in Romania when the government took the following decisions:
- Reduce with 25% of the salaries of the state employees – over 1, 4 million people
- To fire 10% of the state employees
- To stop new employment in all state domains

Impact of economic crisis on mental health in Romania

- Economic crisis affects the factors determining mental health.
- Protective factors are weakened and risk factors strengthened.
- Employment benefits mental health
- Job security, sense of control of work and social support at work are factors promoting the mental health of employees
- Stable employment, secure incomes and social capital predict good mental health.

Impact of economic crisis on mental health in Romania

- Poverty, financial problems and social deprivation are major socioeconomic risk factors for mental health problems and disorders
- Alcohol consumption is negatively associated with mental health of the population.
- Alcohol consumption plays a considerable role in increasing suicide, especially among men

Impact of economic crisis on mental health in Romania

| PROTECTIVE FACTORS | RISK FACTORS |
|--|--|
| Social capital and welfare protection | Poverty, poor education, deprivation, high debt |
| Healthy prenatal and childhood environment | Poor prenatal nutrition, abuse, harsh upbringing, poor relationship to parents, intergenerational transmission of mental health problems |
| Healthy workplace and living | Unemployment, job insecurity, job stress |
| Healthy lifestyles | Alcohol and/or drug use |

Impact of economic crisis on mental health in Romania

- The current economic crisis is increasing poverty in the European Region. The economic crisis hits people with low income – and those made poor through loss of income or housing – the hardest
- The economic crisis has increased the number of households in high debt, repossession of houses and evictions.

Impact of economic crisis on mental health in Romania

- The current economic crisis is probably increasing the social exclusion of vulnerable groups, low-income people and people living near the poverty line in the Europe (children, young people, single-parent families, unemployed people, ethnic minorities, migrants and older people.)
- Economic pressure, through its influence on parental mental health, marital interaction and parenting, affects the mental health of children and adolescents
- The effects of extreme poverty on children include deficits in cognitive, emotional and physical development, and the consequences on health and well-being are lifelong

Impact of economic crisis on mental health in Romania

- Research has revealed that people who experience unemployment, impoverishment and family disruptions have a significantly greater risk of mental health problems, such as depression, alcohol use disorders and suicide, than their unaffected counterparts
- Especially men are at increased risk of mental health problems and death due to suicide or alcohol use during times of economic adversity.

Impact of economic crisis on mental health in Romania

- Unemployment contributes to depression and suicide
- Young unemployed people have a higher risk of getting mental health problems than young people who remain employed
- Evidence indicates that debt, financial problems and housing payment problems lead to mental health problems
- The more debt people have, the more likely they are to have mental disorders overall

Impact of economic crisis on mental health in Romania

- The research data indicate that social protection responses are crucial in mitigating mental health in the economic crisis.
- Governments need to target social protection interventions to address priority needs among the most vulnerable people, providing high coverage among the people with the lowest income and providing support for families at risk.

Impact of economic crisis on mental health in Romania

Current research suggests that the mental health effects of economic crises depend on action in five key areas:

- 1. Active labor market programs
- 2. Family support programs
- 3. Control of alcohol prices and availability
- 4. Primary care for people at high risk of mental health problems
- 5. Debt relief programs