

## **Abstract**

### **Introduction:**

Professionals working with individuals who have experienced trauma are exposed to the psychological consequences of indirect trauma exposure. Among the most frequently described negative outcomes is secondary traumatic stress (STS); however, increasing attention is also being paid to the possibility of positive changes, referred to as secondary posttraumatic growth (SPTG). The aim of the study was to identify the psychosocial determinants of secondary traumatic stress and secondary posttraumatic growth among professionals working with trauma-exposed individuals.

### **Method:**

The study involved 226 professionals - psychologists and psychotherapists - working with individuals who had experienced trauma. The following instruments were used: the Secondary Traumatic Stress Inventory, the Secondary Posttraumatic Growth Inventory, the Empathic Sensitivity Scale, the Resilience Assessment Scale (SPP-25), the Core Beliefs Inventory, the Cognitive Processing of Trauma Scale, and the Social Support Scale. Statistical analyses included, among others, correlation analysis, hierarchical regression analysis, and mediation analysis.

### **Results:**

In the studied group, professionals most frequently reported low to moderate levels of secondary traumatic stress, whereas secondary posttraumatic growth was typically at a moderate or high level. Higher levels of STS were associated with greater disruption of core beliefs and more frequent use of maladaptive cognitive strategies, particularly regret and denial, alongside the protective role of social support. Secondary posttraumatic growth was positively associated with personal resources, especially resilience, as well as with constructive cognitive coping strategies, including positive cognitive restructuring. It was also more frequently observed among individuals receiving supervision. Disruptions in core beliefs were positively related to both STS and SPTG. Mediation analyses indicated that cognitive trauma processing strategies function as mediators in the relationship between resources and the consequences of secondary trauma exposure.

### **Conclusions:**

The findings highlight the significant role of personal resources and cognitive processing of work-related experiences in shaping both negative and positive consequences of secondary trauma exposure. Taking these factors into account may be important in designing preventive, training, and supervision programs for professionals working with trauma-exposed individuals.

**Keywords:** empathy, cognitive trauma processing, resilience, secondary posttraumatic growth, secondary traumatic stress, social support.