

ORIGINAL PAPER**Health Education Interventions in Secondary Schools in Larissa, Greece**

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: School plays an important role in solving society's health problems. Teachers are assigned a double role, that of the educator and that of the carrier of health-related behaviours and attitudes.

Aim: The present study aims at investigating: a) the type and frequency of health education programs in secondary schools, and b) the teachers' voluntary un-compensated contribution in promoting health-related behaviours by acting as role-models.

Method: The data collection period lasted two months in the beginning of the school year 2007-2008. We used a 4-section questionnaire. The initial sample of 287 teachers which was selected by cluster random sampling, were secondary education teachers with permanent positions, working in 4 junior high-schools, 3 general high-schools, and 2 vocational high-schools in Larissa county. The final sample consisted of 216 teachers (response rate 75.3%).

Results: 25% of the participants had attended seminars in health education, while 60% had read some handbook on Health Education in the last five years. 96 had participated in an organised health education program, and 70 were in charge of one. In 30% of the programs, the subjects were about mental health and they usually lasted about 6 to 12 months. 83% of the participants stated that they advise students, at least once per semester, on relaxation and satisfaction from life.

Conclusion: The teachers' socio-demographic and pedagogic profile, and their previous experience on health issues, may constitute prognostic indicators for their voluntary teaching of health education and, moreover, they are related with a teacher's decision to get involved in health education interventions.

Key Words: Health education, secondary schools, Greece