

## Burnout And Lifestyle Of Principals And Entrepreneurs

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### Abstract:

**Research Question (RQ):** What kind of lifestyle do the principals and entrepreneurs lead? Does the lifestyle of principals and entrepreneurs influence burnout?

**Purpose:** To find out, based on the results of a questionnaire, what kind of lifestyle both researched groups lead. Does lifestyle have an influence on the occurrence of the phenomenon of burnout.

**Method:** We used the method of data collection by questionnaire. Acquired data were analyzed using SPSS, descriptive and inference statistics.

**Results:** Results showed, that both groups lead a similar lifestyle and that lifestyle influences burnout with principals, as well as entrepreneurs.

**Organization:** School principals and entrepreneurs are the heads of individual organizations or companies, the goal of which is success. To be successful in their work, they must adapt their lifestyle, which can be healthy or unhealthy. If their lifestyle is unhealthy, it can lead to burnout.

**Society:** With results of the questionnaire we would like to answer the question about the lifestyle of both groups and its influence on the occurrence of burnout.

**Originality:** The study of lifestyle and the occurrence of burnout in these two groups is the first study in this area.

**Limitations/Future Research:** In continuation, research groups could be submitted to the research fields of effort physiology and tracking of certain haematological parameters, such as cholesterol, blood sugar and stress hormones - adrenaline, noradrenalin, cortisol. Thus, we could carry out an even more in depth research of the connection between lifestyle and burnout.

**Keywords:** lifestyle, burnout, entrepreneurs, managers.

## 1 Introduction

Principals are managers in public management. Management is represented by people, who are collectively or individually responsible (Greener, 1987, in Šugman et al., 2002, p. 16) to the institution that they are employed by. The essence of a manager's work is coordination (Rozman, Kovač & Koletnik, 1993, in Šugman et al., 2002, p. 216). A successful principal nowadays requires both the skills of manager and the skills of a leader. When we talk about the organisational and economic aspect of leading schools, the manager skills and abilities are certainly more desirable. However, these alone will not suffice, when the principal wishes to manage his employees well and efficiently. Principals, who can use the right measure of both in their work can certainly be more successful, as this helps them ensure support of the co-workers, are oriented towards the people in the organisation, their needs and the understanding of environment, within which they operate (Poličnik, 2006, p. 13).

An entrepreneur is the key element of the entrepreneurial process; only a quality, serious and mature entrepreneur can lead a company to success (Rajter et al., 2008, p. 25). A very important role of the entrepreneur is management and leading, but often, the entrepreneur is also an innovator, as they must know how to evolve an entrepreneurial opportunity into an entrepreneurial idea, which is interesting for the market, while ensuring assets and resources for realisation (Gomezelj Omerzelj et al., 2008, p. 22).

Principals and entrepreneurs are thus leaders, capable of quick adaptation to changes. For this, they are prepared to work from early morning hours and until evening, sometimes overnight. They are ready to adapt their way of life and sacrifice themselves to make the organisation or company successful.

We have involved principals and entrepreneurs from all over Slovenia into the research. We realise, that good awareness, hard work, perseverance and various preventive actions may warn people and draw more attention to the care for one's own health and that, which happens to them, and thus prevent many a loss of a very significant human resource, not only for the organisation, but for the country as a whole.

The purpose of the research is to, based on both research groups, confirm or deny the first research question, which we have asked ourselves, that is, what is the lifestyle that the principals of elementary and high schools and kindergartens lead and what is the lifestyle of entrepreneurs.

The goal of the research is to determine if the lifestyle or its elements actually influence the burnout of mentioned groups

## **2 Theoretical Foundations**

### **2.1 Review Of Literature And Theoretical Foundation Of The Problem**

Lifestyle is the way of life. It has an important role in the everyday life of each individual. It determines our well-being and stress resistance (Youngs, 2001, p. 89). It is a voluntary behaviour and the decision regarding behaviour and consumption patterns, which people select on their own (Blaxter, 1990, in Starc & Kovač, 2007, p. 29). From the perspective of an individual, we can understand it as a multitude of practices, activities, cultural orientations and wishes, which are expressed in clothing, eating and functioning habits (Ule et al., 2000, in Starc & Kovač, 2007, p. 30).

A healthy lifestyle includes healthy and regular nutrition with no vices, a proper balance between work and rest, maintaining physical and emotional capacity, balance between the physical and intellectual effort and a genuine contact with nature. Of course, it also includes the knowledge and control of oneself, inter - human relationships, personal means of relaxation and constant learning (Ramovš, 2009, p. 5). A negative element of unhealthy life, along with smoking, alcohol and drug abuse is, most commonly, an unhealthy diet, closely related with the occurrence of excess weight and obesity, as well as diabetes (Novak, 2010, p. 29).

Physical activity is one of the methods, which efficiently influences our well - being as it has an important role in the prevention of development of many a disease and reduction of potential health issues (Karpljuk et al., 2009). Sports activity reinforces and maintains psychological health and contributes to a better self - image and self - valuing (Karpljuk et al., 2009). There are many people, who are aware of this, however, the fast pace of life means more and more obligations at work and in personal life, as well as a country, which does not employ right ways to encourage employee health care, due to which they neglect it (Štefančič, 2011). Bilban (2007) advises, as a path to avoid burn - out, a definition of one's goals, based on realistic foundations. The individual must increase the attention paid to one's own health, which involves both nutrition and drinking habits, as well as healthy physical activity. One of the measures of burnout prevention is also spending at least some of the time without previously set obligation, taking the time to relax, refresh old friendships and establish new ones and ceasing to carry frustrations and anger within us.

Burnout is a psychological exhaustion, which appears with individuals, constantly exposed to pressure and negative stress in the work place. Burnout is not only the exhaustion at the end of a work days, but a progressing cycle of exhaustion and loss of vitality, which influences an individual's emotions, body and mind (Stevens, 1995, p. 25). Maslach (1998) defied burnout as a psychological syndrome, which is expressed as emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation

and reduced efficiency and is a consequence of chronic intrapersonal stressors at work (Maslach, 1998, in Pšeničny, 2006, p. 1). Research, based on a three dimensional concept of burn - out, these are the aforementioned emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and a reduced sense of personal fulfilment, were carried out based on the concept of Christine Maslach (2001). Maslach (2001) developed the MBI questionnaire - Maslach Burnout Inventory, which is one of the best known burnout questionnaires in the world (Maslach et al., 2001). This questionnaire was also used in our survey for the identification of burn - out. Černelič Bizjak (2007) states, that, in Slovenia, as much as a third of health related absences from work (regardless of position or profession) is a consequence of burnout(Černelič Bizjak, 2007, p. 30). Šubic (2007) adds that, in Slovenia, 10% of employed individuals are burnt out with over 50% of employed individuals, that is every fourth Slovenian, already showing the initial symptoms of burn - out. The danger increases with higher education and how demanding the work place is (Šubic, 2007, in Boštjančič, 2010), where the positions of entrepreneur as well as the principal, as a manager in public management, are also placed.

## **2.2 Thesis Development**

With the research, we wish to confirm the thesis, that entrepreneurs and principals have a similar life style, which may also influence the occurrence of burn - out.

## **3 Method**

### **3.1 Data Collection**

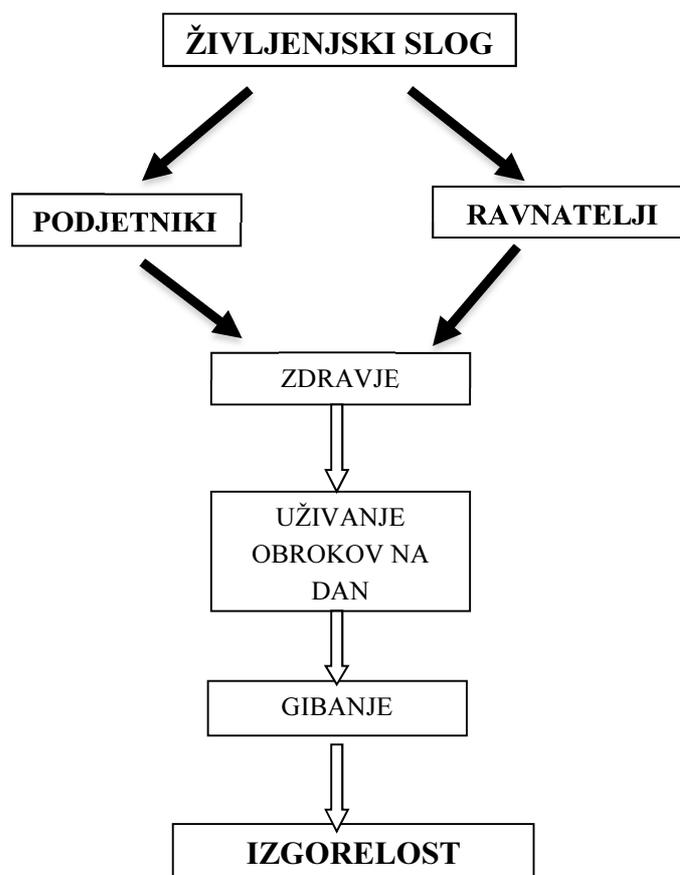
Surveys had been sent through electronic messages with a request for permission in advance.

According to the data of the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services (AJPES), in the year 2010, in Slovenia, 55.734 economic companies were operational, along with 71.242 independent entrepreneurs (Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services, 2010). Surveying was carried out on a sample of randomly chosen entrepreneurs with a public e-mail address. The survey was sent to a total of 700 e-mail addresses, 156 entrepreneurs, that is 22,3% of entrepreneurs, clicked the link, while there were 91, that is 13%, surveys, suitable for data processing.

The sample of principals included principals of elementary schools, high schools and kindergartens. According to the data from the year 2011 (Ministry for Education, Science and Sports, 2011), there are 451 elementary schools, 163 high schools and 373 kindergartens in Slovenia. The survey was sent to a total of 490 e-mail addresses of principals, found on the websites of schools and kindergartens. 131, that is 26,7%, clicked the link, while there were 96, that is 20%, surveys, suitable for processing.

### 3.2 Theoretical (Data) Model Of The Research And Measuring Instrument

The Research Model that we designed (Figure 1) is set in stages. First, based on the results, we have studied the lifestyle of principals and entrepreneurs. Then, through MBI questionnaire (Maslach Burnout Inventory), we explored the incidence of burn - out, which, according to results, is present in both research groups. From all the acquired data and literature, which was available to us, we will organise various promotional actions about a healthy lifestyle in the future, which will warn of the unhealthy lifestyle and the occurrence of burn - out. With this, we wish to help individuals, companies and organisations.



*Figure 1: Research Model: Lifestyle elements which may lead to burn - out. Translation: življenjski slog - lifestyle, podjetniki - entrepreneurs, ravnatelji - principals, zdravje - health, uživanje obrokov na dan - meals per day, gibanje - physical activity, izgorelost - burnout.*

The questionnaires were divided into three segments. To identify burnout, we used the *MBI-ES Burnout Questionnaire* (Maslach, Jackson & Schwab, 1996), which identifies three dimensions of burnout, those being emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal fulfilment. The already mentioned questionnaire MBI (Maslach Burnout Inventory) contains

22 points, which describe feelings, related to work. The survey participants used a seven stage scale , from 0 (never) to 6 (every day), with the points adjusted to individual research groups. The second part of the questionnaire is adapted according to the questionnaire Countrywide Integrated Noncommunicable Disease Intervention, 2008. The questionnaire covered 8 fields, those being: socio - demographic questions, burnout, health condition, smoking, eating habits, alcohol, body weight and physical activity.

All areas were covered by 80 questions. At first, we acquired basic data from the respondent, such as gender, age, marital status, education, time of employment in the function and total time of employment, which amounted to 11 questions. In continuation, we asked about health (16 questions), divided into two parts - a subjective evaluation of health (evaluation of a respondent's own health on a scale from 1 to 5) and an objective evaluation of health (questions regarding health issues, medical diagnoses, use of medicine). The questions regarding burnout were responded to with claims (22 questions), 2 questions related to smoking (time and regularity of smoking), 12 questions encompassed dietary habits (frequency of meals, drinking, dietary preferences), 7 questions related alcohol (frequency and quantity of alcohol consumption), followed by questions about body weight (3 questions: body weight, body height and happiness with body weight). The final segment of the questions regarded the physical activity of the responded and contained 7 questions, relating to the type of recreational activity in free time, the path to work and quantity of physical activity.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

In the research part, we used the method of data collection with a survey questionnaire. Acquired data was processed with the use of the SPSS software. In accordance with the set questions, purpose and goals of the research, we used descriptive and inference statistics.

## **4 Results**

### **4.1 Lifestyle Of Principals And Entrepreneurs**

To identify the lifestyle of both groups, we focused on three questions, which cover the three essential elements, defining lifestyle as healthy or unhealthy:

1. Care for one's health (Table 1).
2. Frequency of meals (Table 2).
3. Physical activity (Table 3).

Burnout of the respondents was identified with the question "burnout at workplace", which was responded to on a 5 level Likert scale (Figure 1, Figure 2). To answer the question "Does lifestyle influence burnout of both research groups?" we have used the subjective evaluation of current health of the respondents (Table 4).

1. *Health care*: For this reply, we took the question from the survey, which provides a subjective evaluation of an individual's personal care for health, it being "How much do you care for your health?" (Table 1).

A majority of principals stated that their care for their own health is fairly good (53,7%), followed by those who think they do little or too little (34,1%). Among entrepreneurs, 46,0% responded, that they care for their health too little, followed by those, who think that they care for it fairly well (40,4%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Care for health

How much do you care for your health?	principals	entrepreneurs
A lot	8,5%	7,2%
Fairly good	53,7%	40,4%
A little, too little	34,1%	46,0%
Almost don't	3,7%	5,9%
Don't know what to say	0,0%	0,4%
Total	100,0%	100,0%

We have excluded respondents who selected the answer "Don't know what to say", while we ascribed values from 1 (almost nothing) to 4 (a lot) to other replies and calculated the average value.

The results have shown, that, on average, by self evaluation, the principals take better care of their health ( $M = 2,7$ ) than the entrepreneurs ( $M = 2,5$ ).

## 2. Frequency of meals (Table 2):

The respondents answered a closed type question on the average number of meals per day. We excluded replies "0", "23" and "34", since we assumed, that they do not represent the actual state with the respondents. Based on other replies, we calculated an average number of meals per day.

Table 2. Frequency of meals

How many meals do you usually eat per day?	principals	entrepreneurs
<i>M</i>	3,4	3,8

On average, less meals are consumed by principals ( $M = 3,4$ ).

## 3. Physical activity (Table 3):

To calculate the average number of days each week, when the respondents are physically active, we only considered values between 0 and 7.

Table 3. Number of days of recreational physical activity each week.

Usual number of days of recreational physical activity each week	principals	entrepreneurs
<i>M</i>	3,2	3,1

On average, principals are more recreationally physically active each week ( $M = 3,2$ ), however, the entrepreneurs are very close ( $M = 3,1$ ).

## 4.2 Occurrence Of Principal And Entrepreneur Burnout

To better understand the reply to the second question, we will present the burnout results for both groups in the following part. We measured burnout with the MBI questionnaire - Maslach Burnout Inventory, which contains 22 points, describing work related feelings. Respondents used a seven point scale to decide on statements, with replies ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (every day), while the points were adjusted to each individual researched group. Spaces on the measuring scale are not even, so average grades need to be treated relatively in the sense that the highest average grade in the reply "I have done a lot of useful things in my

work." means, that the respondents, on average, most commonly feel that way, while the lowest average grade for the statement "I do not much care, what happens to some of my employee." means, that the respondents generally feel this way most seldom.

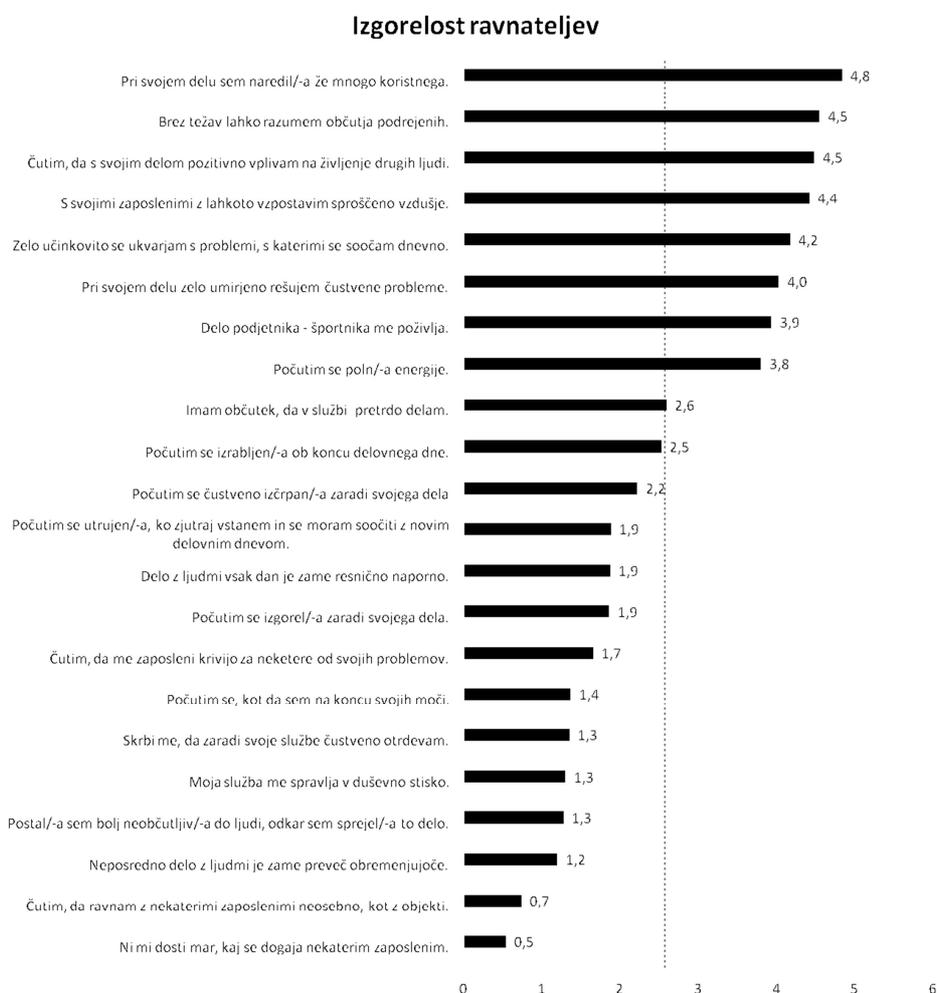


Figure 2: Principal Burnout

Principals most commonly feel, that they have done a lot of useful in the course of their work ( $M = 4,8$ ), that they have no trouble in understanding the feelings of their subordinates ( $M = 4,5$ ), feel, that they positively influence the lives of others with their work ( $M = 4,4$ ) and that they very efficiently deal with daily problems ( $M = 4,2$ ). They most seldom feel, that direct work with people is overburdening for them ( $M = 1,2$ ), that they treat some employees impersonally ( $M = 0,7$ ) and that they do not much care, what happens to some of their employees ( $M = 0,5$ ). The vertical line on the diagram shows the average of all statements ( $M = 2,6$ ) – feelings with a higher average value are felt by principals at an above average

frequency, while feelings with a lower average value are felt with a below average frequency (Figure 2).

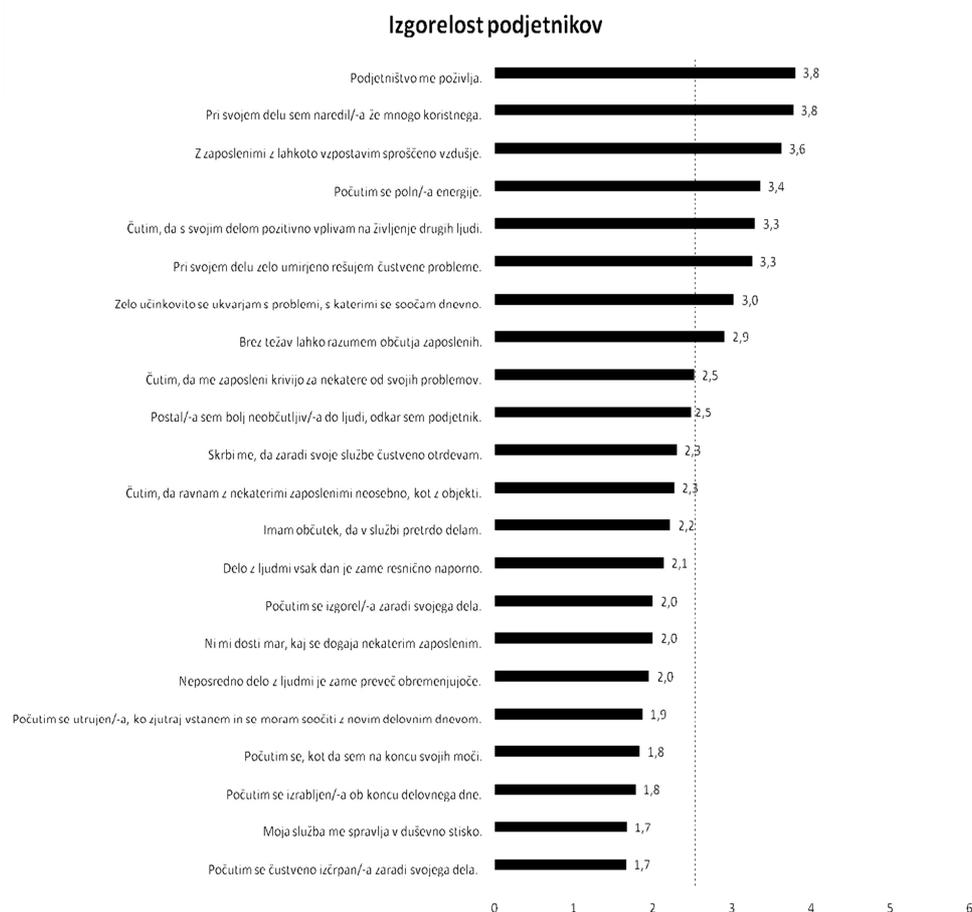


Figure 3: Entrepreneur Burnout

Entrepreneurs most commonly feel, that entrepreneurship livens them up ( $M = 3,8$ ), that they have done a lot of useful in the course of their work ( $M = 3,8$ ) and that they find it easy to establish a relaxed atmosphere with their employees ( $M = 3,6$ ). They least frequently feel, that they are at the end of their strength ( $M = 1,8$ ), that they are drained at the end of the work day ( $M = 1,8$ ), that work puts them in emotional distress ( $M = 1,7$ ) and that they are emotionally exhausted due to their work ( $M = 1,7$ ). The vertical line on the diagram shows the average of all statements regarding burnout ( $M = 2,5$ ) (Figure 3).

### 4.3 Health Evaluation

»Does lifestyle influence burnout?« To be able to find an answer to this question, we have selected the question in the survey, which refers to a subjective evaluation of the current

health. We assume that those, who evaluate their health as good or very good, lead a healthy lifestyle and thus provide a better evaluation than the others. We have gotten the following results:

Table 4: Health Evaluation

How do you evaluate your current health?	principals	entrepreneurs
Very bad	0,0%	0,7%
Bad	3,7%	4,0%
Intermediate	21,0%	30,6%
Good	60,5%	47,1%
Very good	14,8%	17,6%
Total	100,0%	100,0%

Among principals, 60,5 % evaluate their health as good, followed by those who consider it intermediate (21,0 %). Among entrepreneurs, 47,1 % evaluated their health as good, while 30,6 % opted for intermediate (Table 4).

On average, principals have evaluated their health as a little bit better ( $M = 3,9$ ), than the entrepreneurs ( $M = 3,8$ ).

## 5 Discussion

The lifestyle of respondents, regarding the three elements of lifestyle from this research (health care, frequency of meals and physical activity), does not differ considerably. The burnout levels do not differ considerably either, as the average value of all statements, made when surveying principal burnout was  $M = 2,6$ , while it was  $M = 2,5$  for entrepreneurs. According to Maslach and Leiter (2002), burnout at workplace is not only a problem of the individual, the defects of the character, behaviour or productivity, as in this case, the solution would be simple: change people or get rid of them. Burnout is a problem of the social environment, within which people work, regardless of the work they do, the interpersonal interactions they shape and the way they carry out their work tasks. If a work place does not acknowledge the human side of work, the risk for burnout is higher (p. 17—18). Frequently, it is a consequence of chronic stress and characteristic for professions, which mainly deal with

human resources, which also includes principals and entrepreneurs. It is the last phase of an unsuccessful solving of stressful situations (Černelič Bizjak, 2007).

The way of life and stress are factors, which frequently influence illnesses affecting an individual. Care for oneself represents the maintenance of personal health (Bobovnik, 2012). It includes the activities of an individual, the family or the community with the intention of improving or maintaining health and preventing disease. It represents all decisions, taken by individuals for themselves or their families with the intention of staying physically and mentally fit. Exercise, healthy dietary habits, self curing, personal hygiene and avoidance of unhealthy vices (e.g. smoking) are all included in it. Care for oneself also represents a care for minor health issues and chronic conditions, as well as health after being released from a hospital (Bobovnik, 2012). A subjective evaluation of health condition says a lot about how an individual feels. On average, principals ( $M = 3,9$ ) and entrepreneurs ( $M = 3,8$ ) were very similar in self evaluation. Košiček (1998) states that caring for ones health means healthy living and we leave healthily if we strive to expose ourselves as little as possible to the so called risk factors, which are negative influences on our health, which lead to the development of chronic degenerative disease. Many people only begin to think about health once they fall ill or lose their health. A person who truly respects health and is aware of its value strives to maintain and reinforce it and, as much as possible, avoid disease (Berčič & Sila, 2001, p. 74). From the acquired results, we may concluded that lifestyle influences burnout.

Many things can be found in literature, that connect both research groups, principals and entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur, leading a company on their own, is a manager as well and a manager, too, can become a very successful entrepreneur. They are guided by an immeasurable desire to succeed. Thus, these people are ready to sacrifice many a night, without a week passing, when the drive to work makes them forget their free time. Thus, the acquired results do not surprise.

## **6 Conclusion**

Both questions we asked can be replied to affirmatively according to the obtained results. our research has shown, that entrepreneurs and principals, both in terms of lifestyle and in terms of burnout, do not differ significantly. This was consistently shown by results, as, regarding all researched lifestyle elements, both groups have a similar average. The average of self evaluation of health is  $M = 2,7$  for principals and  $M = 2,5$  for entrepreneurs. The average of the frequency of meals is  $M = 3,4$  for principals and  $M = 3,8$  for entrepreneurs. The average of weekly physical activity for principals is  $M = 3,2$  and for entrepreneurs, it is  $M = 3,1$ . The average of all statements on burnout amounted to  $M = 2,6$  for principals and  $M = 2,5$  for

entrepreneurs. The subjective health evaluation for principals was  $M = 3,9$  and averaged  $M=3,8$  for entrepreneurs. Thus, major and significant deviations were not present.

This type of research, which would involve the mentioned research groups in the comparison of lifestyle elements and their influence on the occurrence of burnout as a modern day illness has not yet been detected in literature.

With this research, we wished to prove, that lifestyle or its elements are very significant, not only for the individual, but also for the company or organisation within which they operate. If an individual is of good health, which means that they have a healthy lifestyle, there is very little possibility for burnout to occur. This influences work success, well being and self confidence. The very ways of notifying the public about a problem of the modern time such as burnout is a step in the right direction, specifically, towards awareness that many face burnout and perhaps do not even know it. If a person is aware, why they feel the way they do, they may react in a timely manner. Everything is connected. A healthy, content person will work well, do more in a shorter time and positively influence others with their positive disposition. More such people mean more success which, through time, does not only assure the success of a small company or organisation, but an entire country.

In the future, both groups could continue to be researched, moving into the field of physiology of effort and following of some haematological parameters, which would show actual physical state of principals and entrepreneurs. These measurements would have to be conducted in laboratories, thus opening a new field of research, where a more detailed exploration of similarities and differences in terms of lifestyle and burnout could be carried out.

The survey questionnaire, which was sent to the principals and entrepreneurs, contained 80 questions of the closed type. Completion took at least 15 minutes. Since this questionnaire was reasonably long and since some questions referred to privacy, the respondents perhaps did not wish to answer particular questions or fill out the questionnaire.

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