



Analysis of the Influence of Stress on the Educational Performance of Employed Students

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EUROSTAT studies have shown that working during college increases the chances of employment later, and the number of employed students in the European Union is increasing year by year, as a consequence of the actions taken in the context of the EU 2020 Strategy which aims to increase young people's participation in education as well as the labour market. This issue must be taken into account by Romanian stakeholders (managers, universities and students) as the highest rate of students who were not employed, according to data from 2018, was in proportion of 91% in Romania. It is for this reason, we have carried out this paper in order to study stressors and their influence on performance and we have shown that college stressors influence college performance, while work stressors influence work performance and those from college. Given these results, we have developed a set of recommendations for managers, students and universities to deal with this situation.

Keywords: Europe 2020 Strategy, occupational stress, stress factors, stress – performance relationship, college –work relationship.

1. Introduction

In our contemporary society, with the increase of technical, industrial and informational progress, in which the multilateral and multicultural development of mankind is a necessity, the status of being a student is not enough. Ever since college, many students have to be hired for various reasons: paying for their studies, employers' requirements to gain as much professional experience as possible, students' desire to put into practice their achieved theoretical knowledge or the desire to become financially independent. The need of some and the pleasure of others to play the dual role of student - employee, is an important source of stress.

Occupational stress is today an increasingly widespread phenomenon, being declared the disease of the 21st century. Organizations, willing to adapt to the competitive market in a relatively short time, are embarking on an unstable path, which endangers both the physical and mental health of their employees and its results characterized by lack of motivation, absenteeism, resignations, flow disorder production, recruitment and training of new employees, all of which generate costs.

The literature presents a series of researches that address the complex issue of organizational stress and its implications on performance in the workplace. On the one hand, Mielu Zlate (Zlate, 2007) says that even at a low level of stress, performance is undermined and there is no evidence of an increase in initial performance. On the other hand, Jamal M.

considers that the relationship between stress level and performance level is a curvilinear one. Thus, for the beginning, gradual but slight increases in stress are associated with increased performance, but at a certain level, additional increases in stress lead to decreased performance.

Although there is a wide range of papers specialized in occupational stress and its influence on workplace performance, this issue has not been studied from the dual perspective of the employed student. Thus, through this paper I propose a new approach, having as the research object the problem of stress from two perspectives in which the main actor is the employed student: the correlation between workplace stress and workplace performance, on one hand, and the correlation between stressors from college and performance from college, on the other. The purpose of this paper is to formulate recommendations to reduce stressors from the perspective of the student, manager and faculty and to improve student productivity.

2. The conceptual framework on stress in organizations

One of the major contemporary challenges organizations have to face in occupational health and safety is stress at workplace. The rapid pace of economic transformation is leading to the suffocation of employees, mainly due to pressure, overwork, dehumanization of work and the sluggishness of one's own future. According to a European opinion poll conducted by the EU - OSHA, in the European Union, about half of workers consider stress to be a common factor at work and that, this is the explanation for a large part of all lost working days (EU-OSHA, 2019).

According to some researchers, stress is seen as a reaction or response of the individual to situations in which he is unable to meet the required requirements. It is diffuse and difficult to detect, but its accumulation leads to mental and social problems (Craveț, 2014).

American researchers delimit two types of stress: eustress, the beneficial stress that manages to motivate and mobilize the individual in the professional activity; and distress, stress with a negative impact on the mental and physical health of the stressed person (Șleahțițchi, 2007).

The literature has identified several stressors that affect the employees of an organization. They can be grouped as follows:

Organizational stressors. Factors belonging to the organization can be divided into the following directions: organizational actions (arbitrary reviews of professional performance, inequities in payments); processes (poor communication, ambiguous objectives); structures (lack of participation in decision-making, limited opportunities for advancement); the content of the work (complexity of the work, incorrect distribution of tasks); working conditions (excessive noise, indoor congestion) (Григорьевич, 2008).

In an organization, the stressors that affect the work of managers and subordinates differ at some point. Thus, one of the causes of stress, manifested at the level of managers is the diversity and the frequent novelty of the activities faced by the manager. At the same time, we mention the high responsibilities of a manager. Often, the manager has to choose and sacrifice some interests in favor of others, choices that are accompanied by strong emotions. At the level of subordinates, we find another range of sources that cause a state of stress. Among them is the mismatch with the type of manager. The negative emotion comes as a result of the conflict between the subordinate's tendency to revolt against certain behaviours and decisions of management and his desire to keep his job. Delegation, a practice used by many managers, often puts subordinates in a difficult situation. On one hand, they are eager to

assert and promote, still, the effort they have to make to solve their own tasks, as well as the many tasks received from the manager lead to depression or lack of performance (Belostecinic, 2010)

Group-related stressors. The professional group is a potential source of stress, and its main stressors are: lack of cohesion in the group, lack of social support, conflicts between individuals or between groups or communication problems (Caramete, 2002).

Stress factors related to the individual. The factors that depend on the employee represent the totality of personal problems, as well as his specific features. Among the most important risk factors that can be sources of stress at work are the following (Григорьевич, 2008): (1) organizational culture and how stress is viewed in that environment; (2) professional training to provide all employees with the necessary qualification to perform the tasks; (3) the totality of the requirements to which the employees are subject; (4) the degree of exposure to physical risks; (5) support from the team and management for work integration; (6) the existence or absence of conflicts.

There are asserted theories that analyse the effects of stress on performance are divided, starting from the presumption that people are different and they react differently to stressful situations at work. On one hand, some researchers believe that the relationship between stress levels and performance levels is curvilinear. Thus, for starters, gradual but slight increases in stress are associated with increased performance, but at a certain level, additional increases in stress lead to decreased performance. But there is another point of view, promoted by psychologists J. Greenberg, RA Baron or Mielu Zlate (Zlate, 2007), who says that even at a low level of stress, performance is undermined and there is no evidence of the increase the initial performance. In support of this view, a number of arguments have been made, including: prolonged exposure to stress, even at low levels, negatively affects performance; relatively moderate stress leads to the disorganization of the individual and causes him to focus more on the negative emotions produced by stress than on the tasks he has to perform.

According to M. Jamal (Jamal, 1984), S. Rabinowitz and S. Stumpf, performance can be negatively affected by several factors, including role conflict, due to confusions created at the level of role signals that lead to the difficulty of the role. Also, performance could be affected by the ambiguity of the role because the overload of the role leads to physical, emotional, cognitive exhaustion which, subsequently, participates in the deterioration of the quality of performance.

From the medical, psychological or behavioural consequences of stress we are going to analyse the economic and social ones. Stress, as we presented earlier, contributes to decreased performance and productivity in the workplace, thus affecting the evolution of the organization and the economy as a whole. In the United States, for example, the annual economic cost of stress was estimated at \$ 300 billion in 2013 and \$ 500 billion in 2017, a rising trend. In the US, every working day has more than 1 million workers absent from work due to stress disorders (2019).

The European Union estimated the economic cost of stress in 2016 at 617 billion euros a year. This total cost includes absenteeism costs (€ 272 billion), productivity losses (€ 242 billion), health care costs (€ 63 billion) and social assistance costs in the form of severance disability payment (€ 39 billion) (2014).

The social cost of stress includes all the expenses for the restoration and maintenance of the staff. Therefore, the existence of occupational diseases has the effect of reducing the

life of staff, reducing work capacity, all of which lead to social spending to recover staff or to retire (Saunier, 2007).

3. Analysis of the student-labour market relationship from the perspective of performance

Recruitment during college has become an item on the agenda, with serious implications for students' academic performance as well as their motivation to study. On one hand, it enriches the baggage of practical knowledge, but, on the other, it also increases the probability of dropping out, especially for those working in their first year of college, as well as the probability of extending their studies (Mirică, 2018).

The most common form of student employment is part-time. From the students' perspective, part-time work is often an introduction to the real world that will help them in both personal and career development. Higher education institutions should identify opportunities to increase the degree to which students may become more familiar with work and expose them to part-time professional and career experiences.

A variety of studies have examined the impact of part-time employment on student performance, most of them considering that this type of work gives students less time to study. In addition, students who choose to work part-time while having full-time academic assignments are the most stressed (Faizuddin, 2017)

For a broader understanding of the study-work phenomenon and its implications, we will analyse an existing set of statistical data in this chapter.

For example, in 2016, 54% of young people in the European Union (EU) did not work at all during their studies. The highest rate of unemployed students was in Romania (91%), followed by Greece (78%), Bulgaria (77%) and Spain (74%), while the lowest rates were in Finland (8%) and Sweden (17%). The data obtained in 2009 and 2016 are not fully comparable due to slightly different definitions, but it can be reasonably concluded that work during studies has become more widespread over time. In the EU, the rate of young people not working while studying fell from 65% in 2009 to 54% in 2016.

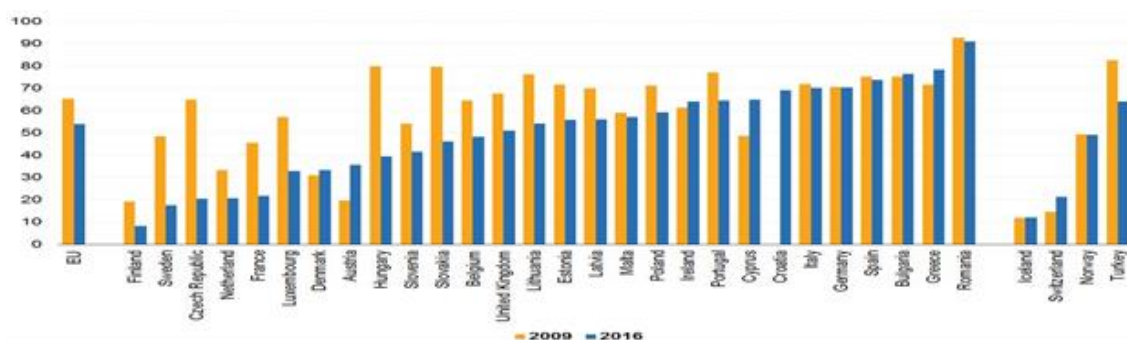


Figure 1. People aged between 15 and 34 who did not work during their studies, 2009 and 2016.

Source: Eurostat, *Young people on the labour market - statistics*, 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2UInTWf>, accessed on March 22, 2021

In the EU, the unemployment rate among young people without work experience in education was 15.7% in 2016, while in the case of people with work experience outside the curriculum it was 8.1%. In Romania, the unemployment rate for students who worked only outside the curriculum was 7.1%, and for those who studied based on work was 10%. Therefore, working during studies increases the chance of finding a job later (Eurostat, 2019).

In some countries, young people start working much earlier than in other countries, for example in the form of summer jobs or student jobs. It is also possible to be on education and on the labour market at the same time, leading to an overlap. Thus, EU Member States are divided into 5 groups (Eurostat, 2019).

There is a first group of countries where very few students are employed or unemployed. For the countries in this group, the overlap between the labour market and education is very small. This could be the case, for example, of young people who finish their studies before looking for a first job and there are only a few part-time or summer jobs for students. The countries in this group are Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Cyprus, Romania and Slovakia.

There is one last group of countries with high levels of employment among those in education, of almost no unemployment among those in education. Germany and Austria are in this group. They set up apprenticeship or vocational training systems in secondary education. These factors explain the large number of young people who are both in education and employees.

In the context of the European Commission's EU 2020 Strategy (EC, 2019) which has several objectives for participation in education and the youth labour market, at least 40% of young people must have a tertiary education; employment rate in age of 20-34 years, within 3 years of graduation, should be at least 82%. We can assert that the increase in the level of education of young people will lead to an increase in the percentage of young people who work during their studies, and, thus, it becomes all the more necessary to find efficient ways for Romania to align with the European trend and strategic objectives.

4. Determining the correlation between stress and performance among employed students

Research methodology

Based on the theoretical support presented in the previous chapters and the student's own experience, I can say that the stress level is negatively correlated with the performance obtained as presented in the conceptual model below:

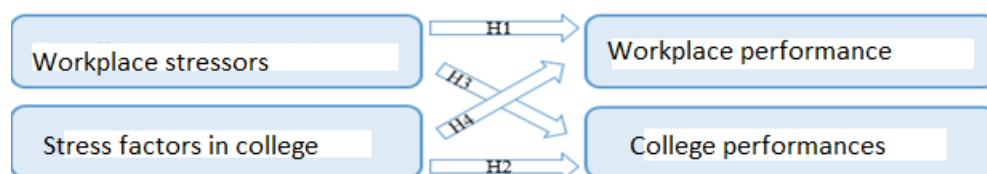


Figure 2. Research hypotheses

Source - author processing

The way to evaluate the stress-performance phenomenon is the questionnaire-based survey. For this purpose, we developed a questionnaire using the Google Forms platform taking into account the theme of the study and the socio-professional specifics of the students concerned. The questionnaire is preceded by a preamble and comprises a number of 65 questions with multiple choice answers structured so as to allow the identification of: workplace stressors, college stressors, workplace and college performance level. The questionnaire is structured in three parts. The first part contains 8 questions on demographic and social characteristics, the second part contains 30 questions on stressors and performance

within the organization and the third part has 27 questions on stressors and performance at college. To get a data set as accurate as possible we used the Likert scale.

The population on the basis of which the analysis is made is represented by the employed students at the Galati Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, the sample of the survey being 115 students who answered the questionnaire, out of which 63.5% were from the undergraduate cycle, 26.1% from at the master's degree and 10.4% from the doctorate. The respondents are 61.7% female and 38.3% male; 62.6% are on a budget, the remaining 31.3% are on tax; 85.2% are unmarried and 12.2 % are married; the proportion in which students are distributed by place of residence is approximately equal between home, rent and dormitory.

The distribution of the questionnaire was done online through social platforms.

The results of this survey are evaluated using statistical methods. Therefore, for quantifying data and testing hypotheses we used Microsoft Excel software and simple linear regression that determines the value of the dependent variable (Y) based on its linear link with one or more independent variables (X). In this case, the dependent variables are workplace performance and college performance, and the independent variables are those groups of factors that cause stress.

Results analysis

Based on the results obtained, we can see that the most intensely felt stress factor at work is the requirements at work with an average of 3,388, followed by decision-making authority with 2,959, and the least felt stress factor groups the skills required with an average of 2,061.

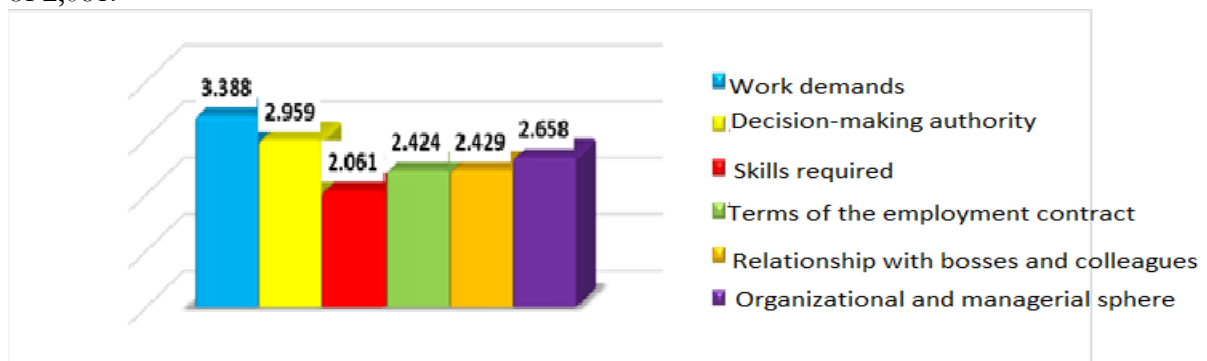


Figure 3. Environments of stressors at work

In the case of stressors at college, the decision-making authority is the one that is felt at a high level, with an average of 3,426, and the skills being the least felt source of stress, with an average of 2,717.

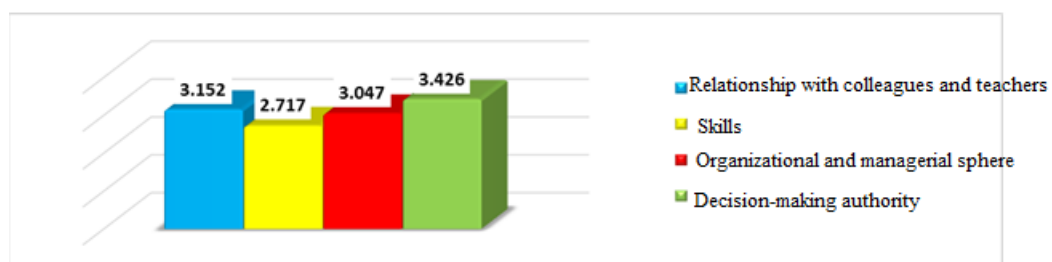


Figure 4. College stressors averages

In order to test the stated hypotheses, we used the linear regression equation, the results being presented in the tables below.

Table 1. Analysis of the relationship between organizational stressors and workplace performance

Assumption	Name	R ²	F	p	B	t	p	Valid/Invalid
H1 A	Work demands (-)	0,026	3,105	0,080	0,121	1,762	0,080	Invalid
H1 B	Decision-making authority (-)	0,100	12,642	0,001	-0,217	-3,555	0,001	Valid
H1 C	Skills required (-)	0,300	48,510	0,000	-0,469	-6,964	0,000	Valid
H1 D	Terms of the employment contract (-)	0,210	30,047	0,000	-0,395	-5,481	0,000	Valid
H1 E	Relationship with bosses and colleagues (-)	0,526	125,409	0,000	-0,611	-11,198	0,000	Valid
H1 F	Organizational and managerial sphere (-)	0,101	12,797	0,001	-0,243	-3,577	0,001	Valid

Given that for 5 out of 6 relations $F > F_{critic}$, and the probability associated with $t_{statistic}$ is below 0.05, we can say that the models are valid and the independent variables (decision-making authority, skills required, terms of employment contract, relationship with chiefs and colleagues, organizational and managerial sphere) negatively influence the dependent variable (performance at work), taking into account the sign of the regression coefficient (B). Regarding the requirements at the workplace, the results showed that the independent variable is not related to the dependent one because $p > 0.05$.

Table 2. Analysis of the relationship between stressors in college and performance in college

Assumption	Name	R ²	F	p	B	t	p	Valid/Invalid
H2 A	Relationship with colleagues and teachers (-)	0,036	4,339	0,039	-0,187	-2,083	0,039	Valid
H2 B	Skills (-)	0,182	25,232	0,000	-0,330	-5,023	0,000	Valid
H2 C	Organizational and managerial sphere (-)	0,099	12,554	0,001	-0,387	-3,543	0,001	Valid
H2 D	Decision-making authority (-)	0,032	3,805	0,053	0,127	1,950	0,050	Valid

In the case of the second hypothesis, it was found that all 4 independent variables (relationship with colleagues and teachers, skills, organizational and managerial sphere, decision-making authority) have a negative influence on the dependent variable (college performance) given the value of the regression coefficient (B) and we can say that the models are valid because the probability associated with them is greater than 0.05. In addition, referring to the values of the coefficient of determination (R²), we can see that the variation of performance in college could be explained in proportion of 3.6% of the relationship with colleagues and teachers, 18.2% of skills, 9, 9% of the organizational and managerial sphere and 3.2% of the decision-making authority.

Table 3. Analysis of the relationship between organizational stressors and college performance

Assumption	Name	R ²	F	p	B	t	p	Valid/Invalid
H3 A	Employment requirements (-)	0,011	1,309	0,254	0,081	1,144	0,254	Invalid
H3 B	Decision-making authority (-)	0,032	3,844	0,052	-0,128	-1,960	0,052	Valid
H3 C	Skills required (-)	0,047	5,610	0,019	-0,191	-2,368	0,019	Valid

Assumption	Name	R ²	F	p	B	t	p	Valid/Invalid
H3 D	Terms of the employment contract (-)	0,072	8,878	0,003	-0,240	-2,979	0,003	Valid
H3 E	Relationship with bosses and colleagues (-)	0,076	9,380	0,002	-0,240	-3,062	0,002	Valid
H3 F	Organizational and managerial sphere (-)	0,003	0,375	0,541	0,045	0,612	0,541	Invalid

Given that for 4 out of 6 relations $F > F_{critic}$, and the probability associated with $t_{statistic}$ is below 0.05, we can say that the models are valid and independent variables (decision-making authority, skills required, terms of employment contract, relationship with chiefs and colleagues) negatively influence the dependent variable (college performance), taking into account the sign of the regression coefficient (B). Regarding the demands within the work and the organizational and managerial sphere, the results showed that the independent variables do not influence the dependent one because $p > 0.05$.

Table 4. Analysis of the relationship between stressors in college and performance in the workplace

Assumption	Name	R ²	F	p	B	t	p	Valid/Invalid
H4 A	Relationship with colleagues and teachers (-)	0,013	1,560	0,214	-0,110	-1,249	0,214	Invalid
H4 B	Skills (-)	0,032	3,818	0,053	-0,135	-1,954	0,053	Valid
H4 C	Organizational and managerial sphere (-)	0,042	5,054	0,026	-0,245	-2,248	0,026	Valid
H4 D	Decision-making authority (-)	0,006	0,754	0,386	0,055	0,868	0,386	Invalid

In this situation it was found that only the skills and organizational and managerial sphere have a significant negative influence on workplace performance ($p > 0.05$), the other variables (relationship with colleagues and teachers, decision-making authority) do not significantly influence the dependent variable.

In order to establish further recommendations, we analysed two problems that emerged from the results of the questionnaire: namely, on one hand, the proportion in which the company manager is concerned with the student's college program when establishing with him the work schedule and, on the other hand, the proportion in which students consider that the faculty takes into account their desire to work when developing the study program.

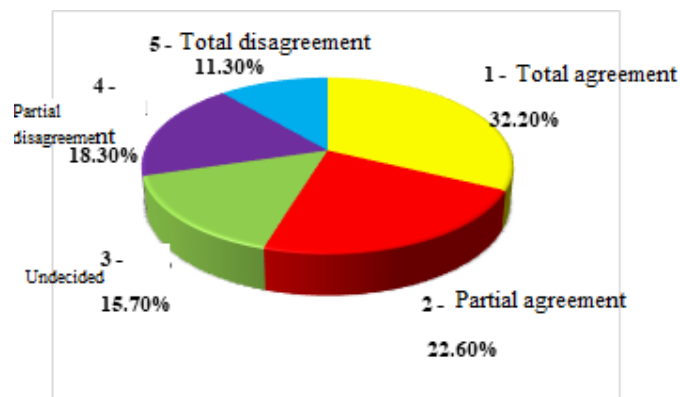


Figure 5. The proportion in which managers take into account the college program of students

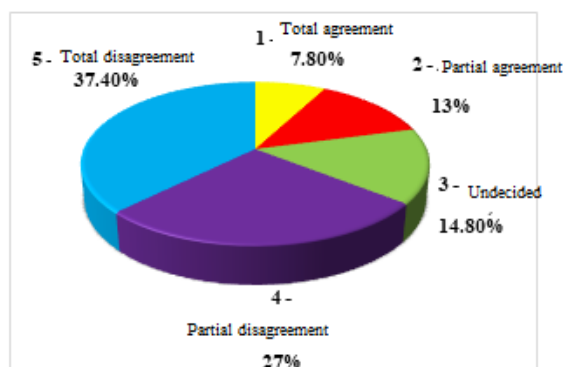


Figure 6. The proportion in which the faculty takes into account the students' desire to work

Therefore, we note that more than half of the respondents (54.8%) state that managers take into account the college program, 31% believe that, although they have some flexibility, it is not enough to balance college and work, and 11.30% of students do not have the opportunity to negotiate the work schedule, which is a fixed one. The variation of the data can be explained by several factors, among which the work schedule of the organization, if it works after Romanian time or after other time zones as is the case of many multinationals, if it is a part-time or full-time program, if there is or not the possibility to work from home, etc.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the faculty, 64.4% of the students consider that the college program is not developed in accordance with their desire to work, and 20.8% consider that the program is satisfactory and they can combine the two activities. The variation of the data in this case can be explained by the differences that exist at the level of series or groups in terms of scheduling hours, some groups having breaks between hours, time that could be used more effectively.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, we can say that the research results confirmed most of the research hypotheses (3/4), and the theory on the influence of stress on performance that is confirmed is the one stated and supported by psychologists J. Greenberg, RA Baron and Mielu Zlate (Zlate, 2007), which states that even at a low level of stress, performance is undermined and there is no evidence of an increase in initial performance.

In order to develop recommendations for combating and managing stressors, it is necessary to mention that stress management has many advantages, including: considerable reduction in costs incurred and born by the company, a significant reduction in absenteeism, a significant reduction in stress disorders at the workplace, increasing involvement, motivation and productivity. Thus, we are talking about stress management, an issue that should be addressed to by every organization.

- For **students**, working during college is not necessarily to the detriment of their academic performance, the most important thing is that they set their goals both educationally and professionally to avoid regrets and subsequent overload; decide on short- and medium-term priorities; to analyse the advantages and disadvantages before making a decision. An employed student must organize his time in the most efficient way, the most well-known time planning techniques being: goal-based management, mind mapping, priority list, Gantt chart, spreadsheet, etc. Effective time management reduces the stress caused by: lack of time to assimilate the material during verification sessions, to complete projects, homework, and insufficient time to complete tasks at work. Moreover, in order to achieve performance, it is



necessary not to forget the human side, to take responsibility in relation to our own physical and mental health, namely to balance the balance between personal and professional life, to give ourselves time for breaks and relaxation; things that, for a new student on the labour market, are not necessarily a priority because they tend towards fast results and the highest possible performance. Some authors recommend energetic practices to reduce tensions at work, self-massage the face because it relaxes, releases the fatigue accumulated in front of computer screens or files to solve, irrigates the skin, stimulates it and helps to put our ideas in order.

- **Managers** are the ones who must ensure the satisfaction of employees in their work to create a vector of relational harmony and performance for the company. Hiring a student brings both benefits and new problems to manage. Some relevant recommendations in relation to the results of the questionnaire are: (1) creating a positive relational climate because one of the keys to the dynamism of the team lies in the ability to talk about their ideas and actions in a positive way; (2) the valorisation of the tasks granted to the students who, at a certain moment, can consider their task as monotonous, being necessary here the awareness of the manner in which their tasks are inscribed in the logic of the whole; (3) offering training courses to help students better understand the environment and the tasks they have to perform and their moral support during the study; (4) clarity of directives, as lack of clarity leads to absenteeism, confusion, lack of productivity and, of course, stress; (5) creating flexible work schedules; (6) development of screening services for depression, anxiety, stress, training services for performance management, time management, stress management, career management services; (7) encouraging participatory management; (8) rewarding and supporting student development; (9) providing social support and feedback; (10) demonstrating a high level of consideration by respecting employees and listening to them when a problem arises; (11) Encouraging staff, in case of hard work, in which everyone has to mobilize, to respond to shorter deadlines, is much more effective than permanent control, here intervening the role of the manager, of the manager's team and the spirit of dynamism and support.

- **Universities** need to be aware of the lives of contemporary students and introduce an element of flexibility as a means of structuring tasks and requirements to support this. A first step would be to develop a computer program with which to structure the schedule in order to eliminate the too long breaks and create time management courses at the level of each faculty. I also believe that it is necessary to develop a stress management service, that is, a student psychological assistance service or an occupational health service in order to eliminate the problems caused by stress in college and work that reduce performance. Based on the results obtained, there is a need to adapt the curricula to the latest requirements of the labour market so that students are much better prepared at the workplace; exam scheduling is done in the presence of serial representatives, so that students can manage their time between work and college; improving ergonomic conditions in classrooms (light level, equipping classrooms with necessary materials, ventilating classrooms) taking into account that research has shown that, when people learn or work in an oxygenated environment, visually pleasing, they become more productive, more creative and have a better ability to solve problems.

The limitations and constraints of the research lie in the lack of time and the lack of a database of students working within the ESA. In order to ensure the continuity of this research topic, I propose as a personal goal the comparative analysis of stress in multinationals and in state institutions and I consider it appropriate to research the level of stress depending



on profession or personality, this paper being a first theoretical and practical support for future research.

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