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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

THE SPECIFICITIES OF THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL DIAGNOSIS FOR OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AT THE TEACHERS FROM INSIDE THE HIGHSCHOOL CYCLE IN THE DISTRICT OF ARGES

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The research hypotheses:

Up until the present moment, numerous studies on the various areas of the socio-professional field have been effectuated all of them making reference of a common subject: stress. Following its introduction into science by Seyle, many articles and monographies were written on this concept that has generated and keeps generating quite a lot of argumented controversies (Zlate, M. 2000).

Thus, quite a series of aspects have been treated by the special field of interest literature: defining or elaborating the levels of work stress; the interdisciplinary approach of stress; stress with regards to sickness and health; the theoretical, anatomical and psycho-physiological fundaments of stress; physical stress from the psychological and psycho-somatic perspective (Barsan, B 2001). The socio-professional overdemand, the time constraints, the daily pressures lead to stress, but all these generate the visible life of the iceberg.

The unseen face of the cumulated and diversified action of the stress factors is noticed either too late, when distress, chronic tiredness, depression, or the symptoms of a cardiovascular or psycho-somatic disease are already present, as a direct consequence of the defective management of stress as a process. With regards to the stress costs, these have become extremely great, both for organizations, as for the national economies, through the absenteeism causes by sickening, accidents, productivity decrease and personnel fluctuations (Brate, A.T. 2004). The occupational stress is not necessarily a negative phenomenon; at an optimal level it can become an important motivating factor and can be essential to accomplishing a dynamic adjustment to new situations (Legeron, P. 2003).

Teachers are an important socio-professional category in the life of a society and are subjected to different pressure factors that might lead to a multitude of stress reactions.
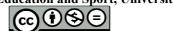
The research methodology

The research objectives

The fundamental idea was that the effects of the professional stress depend on the external factors specific to the socio-professional environment (various sources of pressure), as on internal factors (individual differences) that may act as a variable moderator, a receptive mediator of the stress process.

As a **hypothesis**, we have considered that an important role inside the perception of stress and relations between its sources, is played by copying mechanisms and personality factors (individual differences).

Thus, the following **work hypotheses have** been formulated:

1. We presuppose that the managerial role negatively influences the action potential of the home/work balance as a stress control strategy.
2. The more numerous the personal responsibilities, the lower the teachers' ability to exert influence; the feeling of incapability in influencing surrounding things and events appears.
3. We also presuppose that the more sociable a person is, the more it can assume responsibility of the taken decisions.

Here are thus our proposed **objectives:**
1. Capturing the impact of the stress factors and of the stress relations with regards to teachers;
2. Obtaining a multidimensional profile of the professional stress at teachers;
3. Identifying the foreseeing factors for the effects of the occupational stress at teachers.

Procedure

Our research targeted the teachers from the pre-university learning, high schools and secondary schools (the national colleges: I.C.Bratianu, Zinca Golescu, Alexandru Odobescu and the general schools No: 1,3,3,4,14,20), but inside the urban areas as in the rural ones.

A pre-research has been made based on a questionary of semi-open questions, in order to identify the real stress factors inside this professional environment; discussions of an informal nature were led and psychological instruments specific to this domain were used: the Freiburg personality questionary and the Management Indicator of Socio-professional Pressure.

The questionaries were applied individually, the voluntary teacher participation being solicited. The statistic program SPSS has been used for data elaboration.

Subjects

The participants were 80 pre-university learning teachers of an average age of 39.88 years, out of which 23 men (28.8%) and 57 women (71.2%). The seniority ranged in between 1 and 37 years, meaning that 95% of the subjects worked part time and 5% full time. With regards to their motivation for engaging in additional hours, 45 (56.3%) do it of their own choice, 8(10%) due to the fact that this is expected from them, 14 (17.5%) in order to finish what they had begun and 13 (16.2%) of the subjects do not do additional hours. Only one teacher follows a firm program of physical exercises, while 30% of them do not do sport. 25% of them smoke (6 men and 14 women), 31,3% consume alcohol (15 men and 10 women), 22,5% of them consider themselves to be subjected to external pressures and only 11 of them have been sick in the last 3 months.

As for their didactical degrees, 28 of them have a Ist grade didactical certification, 11 of them have a IInd grade didactical certification, 16 of them have finalized, while 25 have no didactical degree. The self – evaluation of their professional efficiency and performance varies in between 50 and 100, with an average of 84,83%.

Instruments of measurement

The Management Indicator of Socio-professional Pressure (IMP) (translated and adapted for the Romanian subjects by **Adrian Brate**, 2004) encloses more than one questionary, corresponding to the measured variables investigated by means of a Likert subscale from 1 to 6, subscale that measures the level of the stress sources, of the copying mechanisms, of the individual differences and of the effects stress, as follows:

    a) Socio-professional pressure sources:
       1)Work overload
       2) Interpersonal relations;
       3) Merit recognition;
       4) Organizational climate;
       5) Personal responsibility;
       6) Managerial role;
       7) Stress, tiredness, daily harassment.

    b) Copying mechanisms:
       1) Problem focus;
       2) Life-work balance;
       3) Social support.

    c) Personality (individual differences):
       1) Impatience;
       2) Control;
       3) Personal influence.

    d) Effects:
       1) (Personal) Work satisfaction from the post;
       2) Organizational satisfaction (versus the organization);
       3) Commitment, implication toward the organization;
       4) Mental state;
       5) Resilience, optimism, mobility, flexibility;
       6) Physical symptoms;
       7) Energy level.

The **Freiburg personality inventory** elaborated by H.Selg, Z. Fahrenberg and R.Hampel is a multi-phase questionary constructed by combining a classical psychological system with one extracted from the psychiatric nosology. It can be used both clinically and non-clinically. The scales included are: nervousness, aggressiveness, depression, excitability, sociability, calm, tendency to dominate, inhibition, sincerity, extraversion, emotional instability and masculinity.

PRESENTING AND INTERPRETING DATA

Following the date presentation and interpretations, the averages have been calculated, as well as the minimal and maximal values for the scales of the multidimensional diagnosis questionary on the socio-professional stress (table no 1).

The teachers obtained average scores for the variables that measure the sources of the occupational stress, which represents the lack of a socio-professional distress, as per their perception. As to the work overload, they have scored values closer to the superior limit, which may indicate a possible stress source.

Table no.1 Descriptive data from the IMP questionary for the 80 teachers under study

Variables	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Alpha
Work overload (PW)	23.38	4.94	10	33	.70
Interpersonal relations(PR)	33.16	7.41	8	45	.85
Merit recognition (PC)	15.30	2.97	4	21	.55
Organizational climate (PO)	14.38	3.18	4	20	.52
Personal responsibility(PP)	15.43	2.89	8	23	.56
Managerial role (PM)	12.61	4.09	4	20	.51
Life-work balance (PH)	21.23	5.85	6	34	.72
Daily tiredness (PD)	14.35	2.98	8	21	.67
Type A pulsion (TD)	14.80	2.27	10	22	.42
Impatience(TI)	21.15	3.38	15	28	.72
Control (LC)	16.02	3.06	9	25	.64
Personal influence (LI)	11.93	2.66	4	18	.69
Problem fucussin (CO)	24.98	3.97	14	34	.60
Life-work balance (CD)	17.24	2.97	10	24	.68
Social support (SS)	11.53	2.45	5	17	.58
Post satisfaction (JI)	24.30	4.13	10	35	.82
Organizational satisfaction (JO)	21.19	4.34	12	32	.78
Organizational security (OS)	17.26	3.70	8	26	.71
Organizational commitment (OC)	17.04	2.77	8	23	.67
Mental state (MA)	19.75	4.90	8	30	.76
Resilience/optimism (MR)	17.24	2.96	10	23	.61
Level of trust (MW)	9.74	2.72	4	18	.60
Physical simptopms (PA)	12.89	3.28	6	18	.60
Energy level (PE)	24.30	4.13	10	35	.58

The prevailing copying strategies are the problem focussing (that is, the teachers need to organize and plan in due time, with a view to problem solving) and the ability to efficiently balance the home problems with the ones at the work place. Another strategy for facing stress is represented by the social support, the help the teachers often get from their colleagues and a helping hand on which they are counting on.

The strategies for fighting stress are efficiently used both by men and women, and when it comes to the individual differences (personality), it is to be noticed that women have a higher influencing ability.

Once the diagnosis of the socio-professional stress is accomplished, we can pass to the structuring of the interventions for managing stress.

Final conclusions

Following the psycho-diagnostic evaluation of the socio-professional stress perceived by the subjects under study, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1.The copying mechanisms, strategies of fighting stress, when efficiently used, determine the perception of the pressure sources as a lower level and positive results with regards to the stress effects;

2. Likewise, it has been observed that there is a strong connection in between the personality traits of the questioned teachers and the professional solicitations seen as stress factors. We concluded that a well balanced structure and behavior are compatible with the perception of a lower socio-professional stress;

3. At the same time, certain personality factors and copying mechanisms have the role of foreseeing the stress effects: the control and personal influence, the life-work balance, impatience, problem focusing, aggression scales (FPI-2, FPI7), sociability, calm, extraversion, masculinity;

4. In what concerns the bettering of the organizational climate of the learning institution, it is recommended that accent should be placed on the development of an organizational culture more co-operate and supporting towards the employees and with a higher span towards the beneficiaries of the learning act, towards increase of group homogeneity, towards the development of the team problem solving perspective, improving communication inside schools and also improving the leading and management style adopted by school managers;

5. In order to reduce the pressure caused by the demanding specificities of the teaching activities which teachers face, the following are recommended: a warm attitude towards pupils, keeping pupils preoccupied during classes, planning and organizing lessons in due time, bettering their physical condition and ensuring a wide range of lesson resources;

6. As to the professional and collegial inter-personal relationships, it is recommended to assertively express one's opinion and feeling towards colleagues, to ask for the advice of the more experienced teachers, to continuously participate to formation classes;

7. The job satisfaction is negatively related to the work overload, interpersonal relationships and organizational climate. In conclusion, the exaggerated perception of the professional solicitations that overpass a certain limit, the unsatisfying inter-personal relationships and organizational tensions decrease the job satisfaction for the questioned teachers;

8. The greater the tiredness, and daily stress, the more difficult it is to accomplish the life-work balance, the harder it is to disconnect, the more are the optimism and flexibility affected;

9. The problem focusing and social support are not among the mainly teacher used strategies of stress control; it is however to be noticed that there is a weak positive correlation in between the social support and the personal responsibility;

10. The managerial role negatively influences the action potential of the home/work balance as a stress control strategy (r = - 0 , 25 ; p < 0 , 05) ;

11. Sociability negatively correlates (r = -0,22 ; p <0,05) with assuming responsibility for the actions and decisions taken.

12. The calm scale negatively correlates with work overload(r = - 0,29 ; p<0,05), inter-personal relationships(r= - 0,22 ; p<0,05), merit recognition(r = 0,26 ; p <0.05),, organizational climate(r = - 0,30 ; p<0,05), personal responsibility(r = - 0,32 ; p<0,01) and home-work balance(r = - 0 , 26 ; p< 0,05) ;

13. The merit recognition positively interacts with the Sincerity scale(r = 0,2; p <0,05). Subjects inclining towards dissimulating small weaknesses, the ones wanting to leave a good impression, those lacking sincerity and the spirit of self-critic, those perceive merit recognition as a source of pressure;

14. Masculinity badly interacts with the organizational climate(r = - 0,27 ; p<0,05) and personal responsibility(r = - 0,25 ; p <0,05).

The work environment is a stressful one and people use a large variety of management of the stress sources and their effects.

The individual differences influence teachers in the choosing of the stress fighting modalities, and the stress responses are various and specific to each individual. Thus, we have considered that the stress control strategies and personality can play a moderate role in reducing the stress state or action of the stress factors.

15. The problem focusing also interacts well with the teachers' flexibility and optimism in dealing with problems.

16. The life- work balance positively interacts with the job satisfaction, with the mental state, the physical symptoms and level of energy, and in conclusion, the teachers capable to clearly separate the home troubles from the work ones perceive work as being satisfying, are pleased with their mental state and are more energetic.

17. The organizational satisfaction is negatively influenced by the impatience in solving problems and is positively influenced by control, by the teachers' ability to influence and control the events taking place inside the organization and outside it. The organizational satisfaction positively correlates with personal influence also, as with the ability to exert the ability to freely take decisions inside the professional activity.

18. The organizational satisfaction positively correlates with Sociability, while organizational security is negatively influenced by the inhibition dimension.
19. The optimistic, well balanced, perseverant, energetic, frustration tolerant teachers show a higher degree of implication towards the organization, are more dedicated to it and perceive work as being a factor of improvement of the quality of their life, as opposed to those showing low resistance to frustration, are irritable, susceptible and emotional.

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