
Organizational Stress for Retail Store Employees in Romania Is Spa Tourism a Solution?

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Abstract

The term organizational stress appeared with people's lifestyle and job evolution and it is used to show the direct link between the work environment and the employee's wellbeing or health. This concept exists in all countries, and measures taken to decrease its effects are becoming increasingly more obvious. Such measures are being implemented in Romania also and, given the country's high spa tourism potential, treatment programs in spa resorts would be the most obvious measures to decrease organizational stress and recover employee productivity.

This study aims to address the main concepts related to organizational stress and to present the main benefits related to treatment of organizational stress in Romanian spa resorts. This research was carried out on 101 retail store employees of a supermarket chain. This job, due the requirements, is associated with high levels of stress. The data were processed using the Epi Info statistical software.

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From the analysis we conducted resulted that the employees we questioned have a low degree of personal satisfaction – in 57% of cases, declaring that their lifestyle since employment as retail store employees is less healthy, with fewer outdoor recreational activities - 65%. In regards to the presence of organizational stress, there are various associated symptoms, with correlation between headaches and increased heart rate (p value=0,003), insomnia (p value = 0,006) or back pain (p value=0,042).

Keywords: *employee productivity recovery, organizational stress, retail store employees, spa tourism, spa in Romania;*

JEL Classifications: *L83, J20.*

Introduction

Stress is considered by many researchers to be the "disease of our century". Although it's not actually a disease, it is associated with the way we conduct our daily activities: often in a hurry, with many problems to solve, seeking jobs based on material benefits.

Several definitions of this concept emerged throughout time (Kranner et al., 2010). Hans Selye, considered to be the "father of stress", defines it as being "a cognitive and behavioral effort to reduce, master, or tolerate external or internal demands which exceed personal resources" (Iamandescu, 2005).

The most common physiological consequences of stress are characterized by a "series of disorders that Selye considers to be adaptive diseases: kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, disorders of the digestive system and nervous system diseases. The cardiovascular system ranks first among the affected organ systems and sometimes the consequences are dramatic" (Caramete, 2002).

Although stress is most often perceived as a negative concept, the term "positive stress" or eustress is also being used by authors and it is defined as the impulse felt by everyone to carry out and finish their duties. "A typical reaction to positive stress is the constantly growing level of energy that an individual exhibits until reaching the optimum performance level" (Heenan, 1998). However, it can turn into negative stress in an instant.

Occupational stress – different points of view quoted in literature

Occupational stress is a form of stress that occurs "when there is a discrepancy between the demands in the environmental or at the workplace and the individual's ability to meet them or keep them under control." This is an

important source of professional burnout and it is also a source of motivation loss.

Occupational stress affects both the employees and the employers (Motowidlo et al., 1986) and "it is an important determinant of job satisfaction" (Azman et al., 2009, p.18). The employers are concerned with workplace absenteeism – a increasingly acute problem facing enterprises in all countries.

On the other end, the employee is turning into a workaholic, which means a substantial investment in work (Harpaz et al., 2003). The term "workaholics" entered the literature in 1971, when it was defined by researcher Oates as the need felt by some employees to work continuously. It affects both males and females, but the effects on female employees are influenced by changes in society and the growing needs of the modern family (high quality children education services, the desire to have a complex medical insurance plan) (Aziz et al., 2012; Brock et al., 2011).

The effect of stress on the employee should not be ignored. Data shows that in Canada, out of every 15 deaths, stress was a major factor in at least 11 cases. In the USA stress is the cause of half of premature deaths, while Norway spends more than 10% of GDP every year to treat the diseases caused by stress (Oprea, 2012).

Also, it is noteworthy how jobs and employers' demands have changed over the last 50 years. Major economic, technological and political changes had a great influence on companies and especially on human resource demands.

In general, the number of manufacturing jobs has declined and services nowadays are characterized by a high degree of knowledge (Powell et al., 2004), thus becoming more competitive. This way, the employee has become more vulnerable, especially since the economic crisis has led managers to adopt controversial measures such as staff restructuring or turning full-time into part-time employment (Tausig et al., 2011).

The fact that work-related stress is a factor that affects individuals at a personal level, at a community level and even within the family is an increasingly known and accepted fact. In the United States, 96% of the Top 500 companies have started employee support programs meant to help employees and their families combat the effects of work-related stress (Bhagat et al., 2010).

Occupational stress in the context of several trades

Regarding the link between the levels of stress and a certain job, it is a known fact that certain occupations are more demanding than others and involve

a higher degree of stress. Table1 exemplifies various activities and factors that determine stress.

Table 1

Field of activity	Levels of stress in different activities	Reasons for work-related stress
<p>FINANCIAL Accountants, brokers, mortgage advisors, bank cashiers.</p>		<p>Stress is specific for institutions where money is being handled and more money means more stress for the staff.</p>
<p>SALES Managers and sales and marketing consultants, advertising executives.</p>		<p>This category of employees is permanently required to reach certain goals with a limited budget and tight deadline.</p>
<p>TECHNOLOGICAL Computer programmers and technicians, statisticians.</p>		<p>Specialists in information technology are forced to keep pace with the most innovative industry. Technicians must deal with hardware issues and explain complex operations to novices.</p>
<p>MEDIA Reporters, producers and newspaper, magazine or television editors.</p>		<p>Calm periods alternate with episodes of racing against time when chasing a new topic that has to be ready in a short time.</p>
<p>MEDICAL Nurses, doctors, anesthetists, pharmacists, therapists.</p>		<p>When dealing with human health and life and death situations, it is very stressful to make the right decision quickly. Usually, the mere contact with human suffering is stressful.</p>
<p>PUBLIC WORK Human resource managers, social workers, counselors, any director who is in charge of a team.</p>		<p>Activities that require discretion and diplomacy sometimes make relationships with colleagues very difficult. Sometimes staff cutbacks must be made, disciplinary measures must be taken and other such painful decisions must be implemented on co-workers.</p>

Source: Hindle, 2001, p. 26.

Thus, the main feature of a profession can also be the main source of stress. In the case of financial professionals, dealing with money can sometimes cause anxiety; medical professionals such as doctors and nurses caring for patients often exceed the job demands, affecting their personal schedules.

In the sales environment, in the context of retail store development, jobs are associated with a high degree of stress (such is the case for supermarket employees) because they include several elements: dealing with money, working with people, achieving targets.

In addition to the implications of stress for a company or institution, its effects on the lives of employees should not be neglected because it carries a big cost: the risk of illness or even death. Thus, the establishment of stress management programs supported by both private companies and the state becomes necessary, as spending needed for the treatment of diseases associated with stress increases every year.

Measures for lowering occupational stress level - Spa tourism, a key factor

It is very difficult to remove stress from the workplace; it may even be impossible. However, managers must constantly seek new ways to make the workplace climate more attractive and to lower the pressure felt by employees.

In this regard, there are several measures that have been identified over the years, such as "reducing the number of changes required for each individual or team, decreasing the complexity of procedures and tasks, providing the possibility for employees to express their opinion to someone such as their leaders, their colleagues or to qualified advisors, providing social and sports programs and providing material benefits such as lunch."(Marinescu, 2013)

The fact that stress reduction programs bring multiple benefits is well known to companies. The latest such programs are called wellness programs and they are aimed at improving both the physical and the psychological aspect of the employees. They may include alcohol abuse counseling, healthy diet classes and physical exercise programs. An example of such a program is NEW START, developed by the Weimar Health Institute in California. Each of the letters found in the name of this program stands for a factor meant to diminish daily stress levels: N stands for nutrition, E for exercise, W for water, S for sunshine, T for temperature, A for air, R for rest and T for trust (Stoica et al., 2010). It is assumed that these elements, when introduced in the daily activities, reduce the negative effects of stress by tackling this problem at its core.

The goal of reducing workplace stress levels is becoming wider and it is moving from a personal and company level all the way to a national level.

The Romanian legislation and the Labor Code contain articles and paragraphs related to reducing workplace stress levels: art. 175 stipulate the obligation of the employer to ensure the safety and health of employees, and art. 112-121 regulate the maximum of hours per week an employee can work (Labor Code, 2014). Also, under law no. 330 from November 5th 2009, "bonuses are to be granted for those activities carried out under special conditions (stress, risk, etc.) (330, Annex II/12).

Organizational stress has climbed to an alarming rate in Romanian society also. According to a study conducted in 2014 by a company that sells diet supplements, 80% of Romanian said they are stressed at work, a rate double to the European average (Mediafax, 2014). In these circumstances, taking measures to combat occupational stress becomes vital.

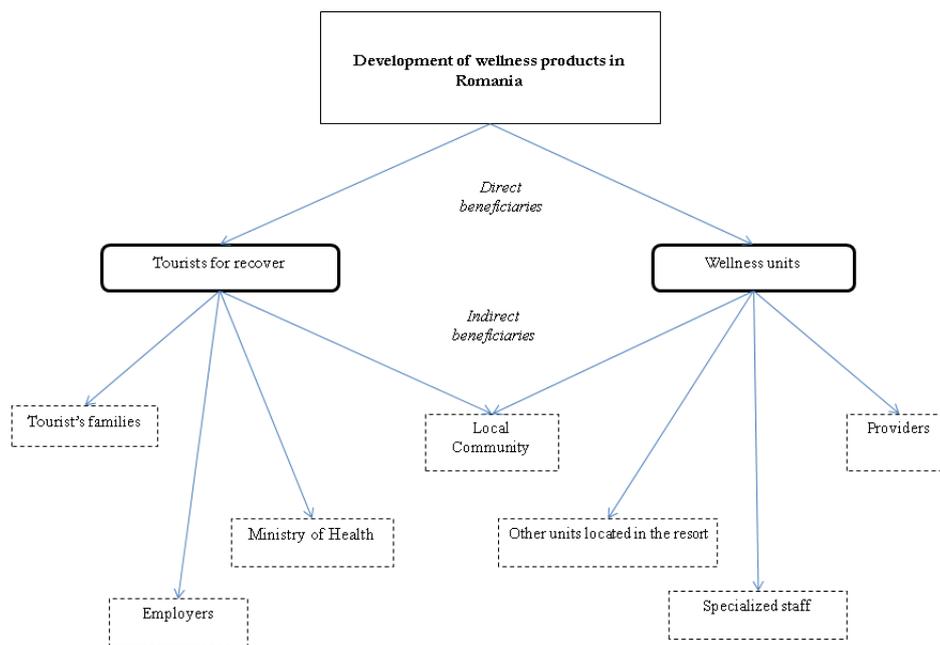
Taking into account the large number of resorts where stress-related illnesses can be treated and the fact that treatment programs in resorts such as Olanesti Spas, Calimanesti-Geoagiu, Sângeorz Spas, Slănic Moldova (Guide spas, 2011, p. 56) are known to help employee recovery, we believe that health tourism is a key factor in reducing employee stress. Arguments in this regard are the facts that Romania's tourism potential (Bac, 2012) in general, and Romania's spa potential, in special are remarkable, with various recovery programs and resorts available (Minciu, 2004, p.164), and that a third of Europe's natural mineral springs are in Romania (Tourism Development Master Plan, 2009).

Another element that strengthens the role of spa resorts in reducing workplace stress levels is the legal framework that encourages such treatment options. According to Art. 22 of law 346/2002, all insured citizens are entitled to spa treatment plans, between 12 and 18 days a year (Pensii Neamt, 2014). Also, companies are entitled under Art. 21, paragraph 3, letter C of the Tax Code to cover the cost of employee benefits for treatment and rest, which are deductible from the income tax up to a 2% maximum limit.

Viewed in terms of trade and opportunities resulting from attracting this group of tourists, the creation of recovery and treatment packages designed to help with the recovery of employee productivity comes to the aid of hoteliers also. This way, the effect of wellness programs becomes a benefits multiplier for all parties involved directly or indirectly; such a link is exemplified in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The multiplier effect of Romanian wellness resorts development



Source: Developed by the authors based on research conducted between 2013 and 2014

There are two different levels of beneficiaries that benefit from the development of wellness packages: a direct level, consisting of tourists who come to recover from work-related stress and the establishments offering these packages (hotels / SPA resorts) and an indirect level of beneficiaries derived from the direct level. Among those who also benefit from employee work potential recovery are their families and employers, and also the Ministry of Health.

Some of the benefits for those who follow these recovery programs are better work performances (Rod et al., 2008), a higher level of creativity, a decrease of conflict level at work and absenteeism (Abdullah et al., 2012).

Such wellness packages bring benefits not only to the units who develop and sell those packages but all sorts of other services and service providers such as catering, retail, tourist centers, therapy and wellness services staff and wellness equipment and product suppliers. Also, the local community benefits from tourists and the units that offer wellness programs.

The taxes obtained from these activities, in addition to those levied by the local authorities contribute to the development of the resort involved and help improve its image, attracting new groups of tourists. Another benefit is the creation of jobs, an opportunity for the local population.

Another indirect beneficiary of reducing work-related stress is the Ministry of Health. By encouraging treatment programs in spa resorts, the Ministry of Health will be able to save resources needed for treating illnesses derived from work-related stress and the overall population health will improve. Also, the health of retirees who benefited from such treatment plans will improve by reducing the incidence of stress-related disorders, thus resulting in fewer resources needed for overall treatment.

In order to study the details related to the trend of these services on the Romanian tourism market, we interviewed representatives of the hotels that offer wellness services advertised at the Romanian Tourism Fair, held between November 13th and 16th of 2014. In total, we spoke with 11 representatives from hotels rated at 2, 3 and 4 stars from places such as: Sovata, Govora Spas, Herculane Spas, Targu Secuiesc, Targu-Mures, Eforie Nord, Tusnad, Balvanyos Spas, Felix Spas and Geoagiu.

All respondents answered that there is demand for wellness services aimed at employee productivity recovery and work-related stress reduction and that although there are plenty of foreign tourists seeking these services, most of them are Romanians. Because most jobs are very demanding and involve a level of almost total dedication, representatives of hotels were certain that the demand for wellness services will register an upward trend. In regards to the services offered in the treatment and recovery packages, the most sought after service is massage therapy. Next are sauna, herbal baths, sensory rituals for face and body, algae and saltwater therapy, chocolate therapy, chromo therapy.

The accommodation units in the spa resorts with wellness services available offer tourist a solution to regain work productivity, and hoteliers a niche to exploit.

Research Methodology

In this study we analyzed the lifestyle of people working in a stressful environment, namely retail store employees at a German supermarket chain.

In recent years, retail chains had an exponential growth both in terms of the arrival of foreign companies such as Kaufland, Carrefour, Metro Cash & Carry, Billa, Auchan, Cora, and also by their expansion throughout the territory, bringing an increase in the number of retail sector employees (Competition Council, 2013).

We chose this profession for the study because it is a topical subject in Romania, with retail chains extending in all major cities. Under these circumstances, many young people who seek employment become part of a supermarket team. The premises from which we started when we defined this profession as stressful come from observations made during research visits and interviews with employees. These premises are:

- Direct contact with the public, both on the aisles and at the cash registers, often having to deal with different types of individuals.
- Direct contact with money, some of them handling this resource from the time they receive it from customers all the way until they hand it over to the bank representatives.
- Continuous verification of merchandise status, including shelf life, and any failure is an offense that workers are responsible for.
- Continuous rotation of tasks without prior notification – any worker can be asked to change duties from cashier to shipping and receiving aid or aisle worker. This factor is amplified by the fact that the employee's productivity depends to a large extent on the productivity of his/her co-workers.
- Productivity inspections carried out directly by the management team, or indirectly using the false customer method.
- This job requires the employee to stand up for long periods of time, with short breaks available to sit down, with the exception of cashiers but their chairs are not adapted to supporting their backs, as they have no backrest.
- Long working hours. The stores schedule is between 06:30/07:00 and 22:00/23:00 (it varies in different cities), from Monday till Saturday, and until 21:30/22:00 (also varies in different cities) on Sundays. The actual working hours are extended because workers are required to come to work an hour early (the first shift) and leave up to two hours later after closing the store (those working the second shift). Thus, for both shifts, the work schedule constantly exceeds 8 hours / day.
- The employees are required to work during weekends also, with days off being rotated among employees and often dispersed throughout the week.

Given the characteristics of this job, spending part of their vacation in one of the country's **spa resorts** can be one of the main recommendations to restore retail store employee productivity. Choosing this option, derived from Romania's spa potential, is rooted in the population's spa tradition – this aspect not only eliminates the population's resistance caused by change and by offering a new solution on the market, but also offers the possibility of a low-cost stay and discounts such as SPA Decade (National Association of Travel Agencies in Romania, 2014). Another argument is that stress treatment can be combined with other recreational activities suitable for others also, regardless of age (walks, outdoor sports, horse riding), offering beneficiaries the opportunity to travel with their families.

Taking into account the work conditions and the growing number of employees in this sector of the economy throughout the country, analyzing employee lifestyle is a topical issue, more so since there are few such details available on Romania in regards to this topic.

For this research we conducted a descriptive, cross-sectional pilot study based on the self-administered questionnaire that was distributed to supermarket employees. The group chosen for this study is represented by a segment of the population that we chose using criteria convenient for conducting this study, such as geographical position – the stores chosen for this study are located in the capital city – Bucharest, and in the eastern regions of the country; accessibility; also, recently opened stores (within the last 6 months) were not included in the study. In the selected stores - 6 stores – no criteria for inclusion / exclusion were used for the 110 employees.

The study was conducted between 2013 and 2014 and it included the following steps: documentation, data collection, processing and interpretation. Data were processed using the EPI Info statistical software and since not all of the supermarket chain employees were questioned, this is a pilot research.

The questionnaire was composed of two parts: the first part was about the personal characteristics of the subjects, composed of 4 questions, located at the beginning, and the second part had 19 specific questions. The questions had pre-formulated answers (closed questions) to facilitate data processing and shorten the time necessary to complete the questionnaire. In terms of specific questions, they were questions with two possible answers: YES / NO.

Assumptions

The assumptions made in the study were:

(h1): Retail store employees' lifestyle is less healthy than when they were unemployed;

(h2): Retail store employees have a low level of life satisfaction;

(h3): Retail store employees have symptoms associated with occupational stress;

Results and discussion

Out of the 110 questionnaires, 9 could not be used because they were not completed according to instructions, leaving 101 questionnaires for analysis. In terms of gender, age and social status, the retail store employees considered for this study have the following structure, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Structure of the sample

Gender Frequency

Frequency variable: Gender

What is Your gender?	Frequency	Percent
Male	28	28%
Female	73	72%
TOTAL	101	100%

Children frequency

Frequency variable: children

Do you have children?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	54	53,47%
No	47	46,53%
TOTAL	101	100,00%

Age Frequency

Frequency variable: Age

What is your age?	Frequency	Percent
<20	2	2%
20-29	44	44%
30-39	20	20%
40-49	30	30%
50-59	5	5%
TOTAL	101	100%

Social Status Frequency

Frequency variable: Social Status

Social Status	Frequency	Percent
Married	55	54%
Unmarried	41	41%
Divorced	4	4%
Widowed	1	1%
TOTAL	101	100%

Source: Developed by the authors based on research from the period between 2013 and 2014

Respondents are mainly females - 72.28%, most of them in the age group of 20-29 years. In regards to social status, the proportion of married subjects is

close to that of unmarried subjects (54.46% and 40.59%), and 53.47% of subjects have children.

- The results of the first hypothesis (h1: Retail store employees' lifestyle is less healthy than when they were unemployed) are expressed in the following figure (Figure 3). Two questions were used to analyze this aspect: "When I was not working, I was more involved in outdoor activities" and "Before I got hired I had a healthier lifestyle".

Figure 3

Lifestyle of retail store employees before hiring			
Outdoor Activities Frequency		Life Style Frequency	
<i>Frequency variable: Outdoor Activities</i>		<i>Frequency variable: Life Style</i>	
<i>Weight variable:</i>		<i>Weight variable:</i>	
<i>Include missing: False</i>		<i>Include missing: False</i>	
1. When I was not working, I was more involved in outdoor activities	Frequency	2. Before I got hired I had a healthier lifestyle	Frequency
Yes	66	Yes	66
No	35	No	35
TOTAL	101	TOTAL	101

Source: Developed by the authors based on research conducted between 2013 and 2014

For each question, the number of those who answered affirmatively, stating that they had a healthier lifestyle, with more outdoor activities than today is 66, thus confirming the hypothesis. Their response can be explained by the fact that before getting hired they had enough free time to play sports, but once they started working in shifts, sports and the care for a healthy lifestyle no longer play such an important role in their lives.

Given the importance of an active lifestyle, characterized by plenty of movement, spending vacation days in spa resorts such as Slanic Moldova (Slanic Moldova Mayor's Office, 2012) with a climate suitable to lowering organizational stress is an excellent choice. Alternating relaxation treatment procedures with outdoor walks helps restore tonus and compensate for sedentary periods.

One vital advantage of these relaxation treatment procedures is that they can be done during any season, which is also an advantage for employees and for resorts and wellness centers. Retail store employees can go on their vacation and take advantage of lower rates for quality services. They can avoid the busy periods experienced during tourist seasons, thus obtaining better results after completing their treatment.

- The results of the second hypotheses (h2: Retail store employees have a low level of life satisfaction) are presented in Table 2. Five questions were formulated. They were directly aimed at evaluating the levels of life satisfaction, the way they perceive their activity, the way they consider their professional life to be and if there is any direct link between these aspects and the tensions that may appear between them and the persons close to them.

Table 2

Combined Frequency - Hypothesis 2

<i>Group variable: Hypothesis 2</i>		<i>Combine mode: Automatic</i>	
Hypothesis 2	Frequency	Percent	
I feel useful and satisfied at work	74	73,27%	
I am satisfied with my life	58	57,43%	
I generally do not have time to go out with my friends	55	54,46%	
My professional life seems unrewarding	42	41,58%	
I often disagree with those close to me	37	36,63%	

Fields are Boolean. Denominator = 101

Source: Developed by the authors based on research conducted between 2013 and 2014

Analysis of the results showed that the level of life satisfaction caused by their workplace is high: 73.27% of respondents feel useful at work and 54.43% are satisfied with their lives. However, 41.58% answered that their professional life is unrewarding. Taking into account the answers obtained for the first four questions and the fact that the answers for three of these questions have over 50% positive

responses, the hypothesis is confirmed. The retail store workers that we questioned don't have a high level of life satisfaction, and, as a consequence, their relationship with those close to them is tense for 36.63% of respondents.

The relaxing climate of Romanian **spa resorts** can help increase the level of life satisfaction of retail store employees by offering them a break from the stresses of modern work environments and also help them become more optimistic through specific treatment procedures such as massage, herbal baths, sauna and adequate physical exercises. A vacation spent in a spa resort can also help ease the tense relationships between the retail store employees and those close to them.

- The results of the third hypothesis (h3: Retail store employees have symptoms associated with occupational stress) address the job requirements of retail store employee. For this we considered 12 questions related to specific stress related symptoms and behavior. These are exemplified in Table 3.

Table 3

Cumulative Frequency - Hypothesis 3

<i>Group variable: Hypothesis 3</i>	<i>Combine mode: Automatic</i>	
Hypothesis 3	Frequency	Percent
I have a good memory	85	84,16%
My job makes me tense	66	65,35%
At home I think about work-related activities	65	64,36%
My back hurts often	63	62,38%
I often have headaches	45	44,55%
I find working with people to be an exhausting activity	35	34,65%
I have insomnia	32	31,68%
I have frequent abdominal pains	31	30,69%
I cry and I easily get discouraged	31	30,69%
I often have shortness of breath	21	20,79%
My heart rate is high (I have tachycardia)	17	16,83%
Working with money makes me anxious	13	12,87%

Fields are Boolean. Denominator = 101

Source: Developed by the authors based on research conducted between 2013 and 2014

In terms of stress-related symptoms: headache, tachycardia, abdominal pain, shortness of breath, insomnia and poor memory, data analysis showed that only the respondents who answered Yes to having frequent headaches came close to 50% while those who answered Yes to having different symptoms reach an average of 30%. High percentages of positive answers were obtained for the questions concerning the existence of work-related tensions (65.35%) and not being able to forget work-related concerns after finishing their shift (64.36%). Since daily work involves maintaining an unhealthy posture, with the back and shoulders bent forward and the cashiers' chairs don't have the adequate backrest, a large percentage of respondents - 62.38% answered "yes" to having frequent back pain.

Answers to questions covering two important aspects about the activity of retail store employees - dealing with money and working with people, showed that the employees are suited for this job: money causes anxiety to only 12.8% of them and only 34.65% find working with people to be tiresome.

The most common symptom of work-related stress turned out to be persistent headache, in 44.55% of cases. By applying linear regression (Figure 4) we observed that there is a direct link between headache and tachycardia (p value = 0.003), insomnia (p value = 0.013), not being able to forget work-related concerns after finishing their shift (p value = 0.006) and back pain (p value = 0.042).

Figure 4

Linear regression

Correlation between headache and tachycardia						
Variable	Coefficient	95% Confidence	Limits	Std Error	F-test	p-value
Headache (yes/no)	0,384	0,13	0,637	0,128	9,0139	0,003392
Constant	0,381	0,277	0,485	0,052	52,7741	0
Correlation between headache and insomnia						
Variable	Coefficient	95% Confidence	Limits	Std Error	F-test	p-value
Insomnia (yes/no)	0,263	0,056	0,469	0,104	6,3705	0,013193
Constant	0,362	0,246	0,479	0,059	38,2535	0

Correlation between headache and not being able to forget work-related concerns after finishing their shift						
Variable	Coefficient	95% Confidence	Limits	Std Error	F-test	p-value
Work problem (yes/no)	0,347	0,152	0,542	0,098	12,4631	0,000632
Constant	0,222	0,066	0,379	0,079	7,942	0,005833
Correlation between headache and back pain						
Variable	Coefficient	95% Confidence	Limits	Std Error	F-test	p-value
Back pain (yes/no)	0,208	0,008	0,408	0,101	4,2442	0,042007
Constant	0,316	0,158	0,474	0,08	15,6807	0,000141

Source: Developed by the authors based on research conducted between 2013 and 2014

In each of the four correlations, p value is less than 0.05, with a positive coefficient, which means that there is a direct and positive link between headache and each of the other symptoms presented.

Thus, given the presence of symptoms and reactions associated with work-related stress in the case of retail store employees interviewed in this study, hypothesis 3 is also confirmed.

The incidence of these symptoms can be lowered or even prevented through recovery and treatment programs recommended by the family doctor or specialist in **spa resorts** such as Herculane Spas, Tuşnad Spas, Eforie Nord, Felix Spas, Slănic Moldova, Geoagiu Spas. Resorts such as the Wellness Center in Tuşnad Spas (Wellness Tusnad, 2013, The International Health Center in Felix Spas (Felix Spa, 2013), Ana Aslan Health Spa in Eforie Nord (Ana Hotels) offer modern wellness centers alongside the old services.

The advantages and limitations of research

This research was carried out on 110 retail store employees in a supermarket chain (with 101 questionnaires being used out of the total). The stores included in this study are located in the capital city Bucharest and the Eastern regional stores. Since not all of the supermarket chain stores were included in the research, this is a pilot study.

The main **advantage** of this study is that, since all the respondents worked for the same supermarket chain branch, we were able to distribute all the questionnaires within a short period of time. The questionnaires were initially collected by the store managers, thus making questionnaire recovery time-efficient.

Another advantage comes out of the questionnaire structure - the fact that the questions formulated were mostly closed questions - helped improve the efficiency of data recovery, input and analysis. The time required to answer the questions was short, offering respondents the chance to treat each question seriously.

The main **limitation** of this study is the small number of stores included in the research. Not all of the supermarket chain employees were questioned and so the results do not reflect the situation of the entire supermarket chain.

Also, stress level and the associated symptoms were not measured – the questions used in the questionnaire were only related to their presence, not their quantification (such as: blood pressure, headache/back pain intensity, frequency and persistence of insomnia episodes).

Another limitation of this research is the fact that respondent preference for work performance recovery done through treatment programs in spa resorts was not questioned. Instead, the most convenient and cost effective option was chosen, given the country's huge spa potential and the existence of low-cost spa services and state-sponsored spa treatment plans, coupled with the low level of income of a junior-level retail employee and the significantly higher prices of other treatment programs. Thus, choosing the anti-stress spa treatment solution is based on the local Romanian factors rather than research.

The retail store industry is well represented in Romania, with supermarket chains being an important source of jobs but there are few studies in regards to the retail store employees in this country, making this research an important starting point. The analysis will be extended to other supermarket chains in order to be able to compare the data obtained from each chain and thus be able to study the important aspects of work-related stress issues for the retail store employees in Romania.

Conclusions

Organizational stress is a topic issue, requiring solutions designed for each company or country. This study's main theme is work-related stress for retail stores employees at a supermarket chain in Romania and proposes treatment and

recovery programs in spa resorts to be an adequate answer to the growing concern raised by work-related stress. The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are:

- Given the availability of the Romanian spa resorts, the treatment of organizational stress-related medical conditions is readily obtainable, with the potential of even improving employee productivity
- A treatment and recovery program in spa resorts is an important starting point for a healthier working population
- The job requirements for retail store employees bring a high level of work-related stress
- The respondents in this study answered they don't play sports, especially after they got hired. This fact leads to an unhealthy lifestyle.
- Their individual life satisfaction level is low, answering that they are not satisfied with their career
- Stress-related symptoms and work-related behavioral changes are specific to these employees, but they vary between individuals. The most common are headache, tensions related to having a demanding work schedule, and not being able to forget work-related concerns after finishing their shift

The hypotheses were confirmed, reinforcing the need for the development of programs for the treatment and recovery of employees and productivity improvement. The supermarket chains represent powerful employers for the Romanian economy and their profits depend largely on having healthy employees. The treatment of conditions associated with work-related stress in Romanian spa-resorts is an investment in the supermarket chains' image and income. These spa resorts also have the potential to be inspiring locations for productive workshops and company meetings.

In the present context of the market economy, the activity of the retail store employees is becoming increasingly important, and stress-related issues associated with this form of employment must be treated seriously by the employer. Taking into account the high potential of Romanian spa resorts, recovery and treatment programs are the most obvious solution available. There are potential benefits for many, such as the employers, the retail store employees, the spa resorts and the wellness centers. These recovery and treatment programs should become part of the job offer thus motivating employees and improving the level of employee health.

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