



Faculty of  
Psychology and  
Educational Sciences  
"Ovidius" University  
of Constanta, Romania



# BLACK SEA JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGY



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## **The influence of stress and personality traits on job performance.**

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**Abstract:** This research addresses the complexity of the relationship between perceived stress, personality traits, and job performance. The main purpose of the study is to analyze how stress experienced by employees influences job performance and how personality traits can moderate this relationship. Thus, we measured these variables on a sample of 30 participants aged between 20 and 40, employed by Vodafone Romania. In order to evaluate the professional performance, we analyzed the points obtained by the employees in the analysis of performance indicators (KPI) called target lines. The obtained results show that stress is a strong predictor of professional performance, with a positive correlation between the two variables. Regarding personality traits, it can be observed that professional performance is strongly influenced by the person's level of conscientiousness. It can also be seen that personality factors such as emotional stability and conscientiousness are important when we want to have stress-free and productive employees. Finally, the present study supports and demonstrates the idea that stress and personality traits are predictors of performance.

**Keywords:** job performance, perceived stress, personality

### **1. The stress.**

The influence of stress on workplace performance is a current topic as many managers believe that they could make better decisions and that their subordinates could perform more effectively if they worked under less stress. Occupational stress has been associated with absenteeism at work, low turnover and also accidents at work. Stress is ubiquitous in our society, becoming an integral part of everyday life. The level of stress that is optimal for all people is not yet known. Positive stress can bring anticipation and vital energy into human life, so under a certain amount of stress we can all evolve. Our goal is not to eliminate stress, but to learn how to manage it and how to use it to help us.

Therefore, it is very important for both the individual and the organization to know how to keep stress at the optimal productive level. The 1990s brought radical policy changes and major structural changes in the behavior of the typical Romanian man. Occupational stress



before the 1990s was totally different from the occupational stress of today. Considering the fact that multinationals offer extremely many jobs, an impressive percentage of working Romanians (28.6%) currently work in a corporation. In the current context, the chronicity of daily stress has become an increasingly common problem in people's lives, and the depletion of their resources leads to increasingly dramatic consequences both professionally, in terms of work efficiency and risks, as well as personally, succeeding in many situations to affect their interpersonal relationships and, at the same time, their physical and mental health.

In 1936, the concept of stress was used for the first time by Hans Selye, who introduced it to life science. He defines stress as „the force, pressure or effort exerted on a material object or person that resists these forces and tries to maintain its original state” (Selye, 1993). Beehr and Newman (1978) define occupational stress as „a condition arising from the interaction between people and their jobs and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from normal functioning”. Following these definitions, Baum distinguishes stress as a negative emotional experience, accompanied by psychological, biochemical and behavioral changes aimed at reducing or adapting to the stressor, by manipulating the situation to modify the stressor or to smooth out the effects (Baum, 1997, apud Zlate, 2004).

The main symptoms that presuppose the presence of stress in the human body are listed by Liță (2006): fatigue, headaches, insomnia, concentration problems, nervousness, feelings of guilt, especially of blaming colleagues and irritability with apathy. According to Selye, if the stress-causing agents are present for a longer period, the general phenomenon of adaptation takes place which evolves in three stages: that of recording the alarm reactions (the shock stage in which the manifestations are physiological and the counter-shock stage in which they are present endocrine manifestations), the resistance stage (the body adapts and recovers after the interaction with the causative agent) and the exhaustion stage (the body still has minimal adaptation resources and as a result the vegetative reactions are diminished, and the adaptation is no longer achieved).

The adaptation of the organism to the environment is continuous, and when there is a discrepancy, a significant imbalance between the demands of the environment and the ability of the organism to respond to them, stress occurs (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). As the authors mention, this imbalance is subjectively perceived through two filters of the person: the primary one, which estimates the level of risk of the stress-causing agent, and the secondary one, through which the person assesses his ability to cope with that agent. Depending on the effect on the body, stress can be:

- positive - eustress according to Selye, which causes positive adaptation reactions, beneficial for the body, producing energy, motivation, positive emotions, which provide the necessary support for optimal functioning and adequate management of the respective situation (Lazarus et al., 1980).

- negative - distress according to Selye, which causes unpleasantness, discomfort, generator of negative emotions, which have the opposite effect of positive emotions, as they reduce attention and limit it to less favorable aspects (Lazarus et al., 1980).

Occupational stress is related to professional activity and is the result of the imbalance between mental resources and the demands of professional activity (Bogathy, 2004). Up to a certain level, it can have favorable effects on employees, contributing to achieving special results (eustress). Over a long period, however, it turns into distress, with negative effects on health (Jurcău & Moldovan, 2003). As Bogathy (2004) points out, job insecurity, excessive professional demands every day, the multitude of changes in professional life represent increasingly stressful factors for employees. These factors are divided into factors related to the



work performed by the employee, related to the role of the employee, factors related to workplace relations, those related to career development and factors involved in the organizational structure and climate.

Thus, the consequences of the action of these factors on a professional level can be the lack of interest of employees, avoidance of assuming responsibilities, inflexibility, communication problems, resistance to change, decrease in motivation and professional satisfaction, decrease in work quality, making erroneous decisions or decrease in interest and customer orientation (Broadbridge, 2002). Therefore, the accentuated and permanent stress associated with the demands of the job leads, most of the time, to physical and emotional exhaustion and to a decrease in performance at the workplace. In this sense, it appears as a psychological syndrome, the Burnout syndrome, which has been researched over time and introduced into medical terminology in 1974.

## **2. Personality traits.**

How we define personality influences the choice of variables when studying personality-related phenomena. In a classic textbook published as early as 1937, Allport reviews definitions of the concept of personality. It catalogs 50 different senses, which can be arranged along a continuum from our observable ways of being to our inner selves. The definition that he himself proposed, namely „personality is the dynamic organization, internal to the individual, of the psychophysical systems that determine his particular adaptation to the environment” (p. 48 ), is a „biophysical” conception centered on "what is an individual really is, regardless of how others perceive or evaluate his qualities” (p. 40) and how the underlying mechanisms are structured within that individual.

With the popularization of personality in the field of psychology, scientists presented their own view of personality and its structure, which led to the emergence of biological, genetic, evolutionary, psychodynamic, humanistic, behavioral and cognitive approaches to personality and trait theory of personality (Aniței et al., 2016). The most well-known approach is the theory of personality traits, due to the development of the Big Five model or the Five Factor Model by Costa & McCrae (1997). The approach proposes extraversion, kindness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and autonomy as personality traits. This view was well received by the scientific community, which led to the development of an instrument to measure them, as they are considered fundamental and facilitate the knowledge of an individual's personality.

Extraversion represents the psychological inclination towards the outside and adaptation to the social environment, being associated with qualities that include sociability, assertiveness and good mood. Thus, extraversion is characterized by the breadth of activities, finding satisfaction from external activities or situations, and creating energy from external means. The trait is marked by pronounced engagement with the outside world. Conscientiousness is the tendency to display self-discipline and act with kindness, being correlated with attributes such as perseverance, orderliness, or meticulousness (Matthews et al., 2009). Regarding the importance of this trait, Barrick et al. (2001), demonstrated that both the conscientiousness factor and the emotional stability factor are dimensions that anticipate work performance, more so in terms of conscientiousness, this being a trait that correlates more suggestively with professional performance. Therefore, the study carried out by them established the fact that the conscientiousness factor is a determining characteristic of performance, since seriousness is the basis of a well-done task.



Agreeableness is the personality trait that measures trustworthiness, honesty, altruism, conformity, modesty, and sensitivity and indicates concern for social welfare (Costa & McCrae, 1997). Because it is a social trait, research has shown that one's agreeableness is positively correlated with the quality of relationships with team members.

Agreeableness also positively predicts transformational leadership skills. Emotional stability is the personality trait that allows maintaining an emotional balance in the efficient achievement of the proposed goals, being associated with calmness, balance and confidence in one's own strength. Studies indicate that this is an important predictor of professional performance. Autonomy is the personality trait that implies independence, adopting one's own style, the ability to make decisions in accordance with personal ideas and breaking away from conformity, conservative views and traditional values (Matthews et al., 2009).

Thus, personality traits play a crucial role in determining how individuals experience, manage and adapt to occupational stress, ultimately influencing their performance at work. The importance of these traits in relation to stress and professional performance can be highlighted in different aspects, such as adaptability to stress, the management of interpersonal relationships at work, the approach to risks and novelty at work or time management and organization. By understanding the interplay between personality traits, stress, and job performance, organizations can develop more personalized and effective human resource management strategies, creating a work environment that fosters employee success despite everyday challenges.

### **3. The workplace performance.**

Performance can be interpreted as the diligent performance of job responsibilities (Bartol, 1999; Briscoe & Claus, 2008). According to Atatsi et al. (2019), performance is the degree to which employees meet the demands of the assigned job in a well-managed manner within given resources. Job performance is a combination of task performance, contextual performance and adaptive performance (Koopmans et al., 2011). Motowidlo (2000) views task performance as an involvement in the performance of assigned tasks by an organization. In addition, it refers to an individual's participation in achieving organizational effectiveness by performing activities that are part of the formal compensation system and detail the specifications as highlighted in job descriptions (Kuranchie - Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016).

Similarly, contextual performance is defined as those behaviors that exceed formally described work objectives (Koopmans et al., 2011). Social facilitation and work engagement are the main characteristics of contextual performance (Van Scotter, 2000). Adaptive performance is about employees learning new things on the job. Individual task adaptability is the degree to which people cope with/support changes affecting their positions as workers. It is affected by technological innovation, work improvement and changes in techniques, so that workers are forced to modify their actions at work (Griffin et al., 2007). Adaptable people may be better able to focus on their tasks, thereby enhancing their task performance (Shoss et al., 2012).

Among the factors that hinder employee performance, stress is the most important factor that has negative implications (Kinyita, 2015). It is observed that stress has a negative effect on the psychological, behavioral and physiological state of individuals. It damages employee motivation, morale and performance at work. Moreover, it has a negative relationship with job satisfaction, which interferes with work energy and results in lower performance levels. Stressed employees experience poor health conditions in addition to having poorer work



experiences in the workplace. This further decreases their energy to focus on their work and thus their performance decreases. Sources of workplace stress such as role overload, role ambiguity, and role conflict lead to disruption of work flow.

Employees experiencing high levels of stress may have low job commitment and satisfaction (Saleem & Gopinath, 2015), which distracts them from their important work-related tasks and hinders their overall performance. Alternatively, employees who feel more job satisfaction are more productive and have the ability to deal with complex situations. The sales sector, in the case of this paper, is generally perceived as a stressful profession, characterized by strict regulatory policies, heavy workloads and ever-changing customer demands. These challenges can harm the psychological and physical health of employees (Huber, 2000). A combination of stressful events, such as organizational pressures to conform, interpersonal conflicts, and lack of professionalism, can affect employee performance. Inadequate job skills and mismatch between efforts and rewards are common factors that create stress among employees and affect their task performance.

The literature provides evidence for factors such as excessive workload, inadequate workspace, inadequate resources, poor company messaging policies, and tight deadlines (Botha & Pienaar, 2006) having negative effects on workplace performance. Similarly, workplace stress hinders a person's self-efficacy, and as a result, employees feel they have less control over their work. This sense of lower self-efficacy can lead to hindering contextual performance by creating inadequacies in communication and damaging relationships with co-workers and managers. Stressed employees see their jobs as having poor social support and may develop a lack of confidence, which also negatively influences their contextual performance.

At the same time, work stress can damage employees' thought processes and hinder their ability to adopt new practices. This slows their work rate, thus hindering their adaptive performance (Roster & Ferrari, 2020). Several studies have seen stress as having a negative effect on performance. However, this is not always the case. For example, Siswanto et al. (2019) noted workplace stress as a motivating factor for adopting new practices for better performance. In another recent study, Harras (2019) argues that stress can reverse the U-shaped relationship with employee performance. At first, stress increases work motivation, and after a certain threshold, work motivation begins to decrease and performance decreases due to unfair distribution of work, irrelevance of work, complexity and monotony.

Professional performance is affected by a large number of factors. Thus, the influence of personality traits and stress on it is essential in the context of the contemporary work environment. Individual traits such as emotional stability or level of conscientiousness contribute to how employees manage their emotions and approach work tasks. At the same time, occupational stress can negatively affect the psychological health of employees and, implicitly, their performance at work. For this reason, the study of the complex relationship between these factors is absolutely necessary, especially to create an organizational climate that encourages the balance between professional demands and employee well-being.

#### **4. Research methodology.**

##### **4.1. Research objectives.**

The main objective of the present research is to identify whether the level of perceived stress influences performance at work.

Secondary objectives are:

-Identifying a correlation between workplace performance and conscientiousness;



-Identifying a correlation between the level of perceived stress and conscientiousness.

#### **4.2. Research hypotheses.**

Regarding the hypotheses of the study, they are as follows:

**Hypothesis 1:** It is hypothesized that there is a significant positive correlation between the level of perceived stress and job performance.

**Hypothesis 2:** It is hypothesized that there is a significant positive correlation between job performance and conscientiousness.

**Hypothesis 3:** It is hypothesized that there is a significant negative correlation between the level of perceived stress and conscientiousness.

#### **4.3. Description of the participants group.**

The sample on which this research was carried out is made up of 30 employees from the Vodafone Romania company on the position of sales agent and is made up according to gender, background and age. The sample consists of 9 men (29%) and 21 women (71%), both categories having urban backgrounds. Regarding the age of the subjects, they ranged in age from 20 to 40 years, with 18 aged between 20 and 30 (65%) and 12 between 30 and 40 (35%). Convenience sampling was used as the sampling method.

#### **4.4. Research tools.**

To carry out this research, two work tools were used, as follows: Perceived Stress Questionnaire and Five Factors Personality Inventory (FFPI). At the same time, performance indicators were used to evaluate the performance at the workplace - reaching the sales target (KPI).

##### *4.4.1. Perceived Stress Questionnaire.*

The questionnaire was developed by Levenstein et al. (1993). This is a relevant instrument for measuring perceived stress and consists of 30 items. The items have as answer options one of the digits from 1 (almost never) to 4 (almost always). For eight of the 30 items, the rating is done in reverse. At the end of the questionnaire, a perceived stress coefficient (QSP) was established that shows the level of stress felt by the employees. The obtained scores will be between 30 and 120 and will allow subjects to be placed in one of the following categories: low stress, moderate stress and intense stress.

##### *4.4.2. Five Factors Personality Inventory (FFPI).*

The tool can be applied to a non-clinical population aged between 14 and 65 years. It consists of 100 items, grouped into five scales: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness and Autonomy. As a response, subjects have the opportunity to choose an answer from 1 (fits very little) to 5 (fits very much). After calculating the reverse-scored items, the score for each scale is obtained by summing the item ratings. The obtained scores are then converted to T-scores, which are referenced to the questionnaire benchmark. A T-score is considered low if it is lower than 40 and high if it is higher than 60. T-scores between 40 and 60 are considered average (Albu & Porumb, 2009).

##### *4.4.3. Performance indicators.*

In order to evaluate the performance at work, we analyzed the scores obtained by the employees when analyzing the performance indicators (KPI) called target lines, which are as follows:



1. Mobile voice activation new customers;
2. Activation of fixed services for new customers;
3. Extending the contracts of existing customers by granting personalized offers based on the needs of the consumer;
4. Sale of prepaid cards.

The achievement of the 100% incentive indices, which are as follows, will also be analyzed:

1. Sale of mobile terminals;
2. Sale of accessories.

One point was awarded for each target and incentive line that reached 100%, and one more point was awarded for each target line that exceeded 120%. Thus the scores offered were between 0-12.

## 5. Research results.

### 5.1. Interpretation of hypothesis number 1.

**Hypothesis 1:** It is hypothesized that there is a significant positive correlation between the level of perceived stress and job performance

In order to be able to test the issued hypothesis, in an initial stage, we will characterize the data collection, using indices of central tendency. According to the descriptive analysis of the data, we found that the scores obtained for perceived stress correspond to the mean 82.86, the median 78 and the standard deviation 15.51, while the scores obtained for school performance correspond to the mean 7.97, the median 8 and the standard deviation 1,752 (*table 1*).

Table 1. Indices of central tendency for stress and performance variables.

Descriptives				
			Statistic	Std. Error
stress	Mean		77.07	2.832
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	71.27	
		Upper Bound	82.86	
	5% Trimmed Mean		76.19	
	Median		78.00	
	Variance		240.616	
	Std. Deviation		15.512	
performance	Mean		7.97	.320
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	7.31	
		Upper Bound	8.62	
	5% Trimmed Mean		7.85	
	Median		8.00	
	Variance		3.068	
	Std. Deviation		1.752	

Next, we checked the normality of the data distribution. After testing the normality of the data, we obtained the significance threshold higher than 0.05 for the stress variable (normal distribution) and lower than 0.05 for the performance variable, which is why we will use the Spearman non-parametric correlation method (*table 2*). This can also be observed in the histograms of the two samples (*figure 1* and *figure 2*).





Table 2. Test of normality for perceived stress and job performance variables.

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
stress	.142	30	.127	.918	30	.023
performance	.226	30	.000	.878	30	.003

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

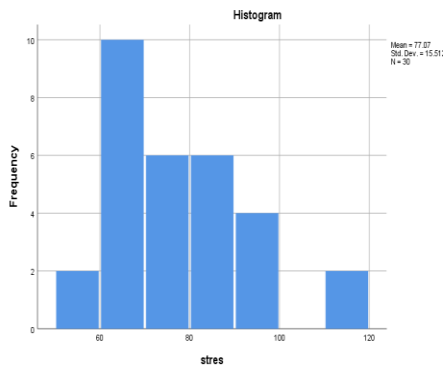


Figure 1. Sample histogram for the stress variable.

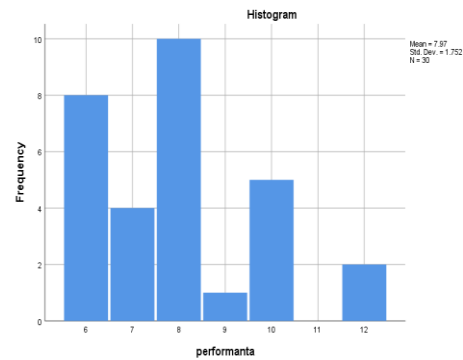


Figure 2. Sample histogram for the occupational performance variable.

In the following, to verify the hypothesis of the present study, we calculated the correlation coefficient between the two variables. As a result of the Spearman correlation test (*table 3*), the existence of a significantly positive correlation between the level of stress and performance at work resulted, at the significance level  $p < 0.01$  (0.000). The statistical analysis of the data obtained after testing the study participants indicates that the hypothesis supporting the existence of a significantly positive correlation between the level of perceived stress and performance at work is confirmed. This can also be observed in the graphic representation of the correlation of the two variables (*figure 3*).

Table 3. The result of the Spearman Test for the stress variable and the performance variable.

Correlations			
		stres	performance
stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.981**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
performance	Pearson Correlation	.981**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

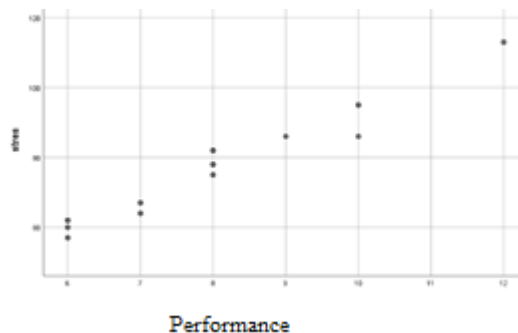


Figure 3. Graphic representation of the correlation between the stress variable and the performance variable.

Such a strong correlation between the two dimensions studied can signal a problem that is quite common within an organization. This would be the fact that stress is a strong predictor of job performance. In other words, the higher the stress level, the more performance can increase. This can undoubtedly lead to burnout when performance demands are very high. In multinationals, in general, performance requirements increase from one month to the next without taking into account the impact this may have on the health of employees. In order to support the validity of the hypothesis, I also consulted the specialized literature regarding the influence of stress on workplace performance and found out that there are many extensive researches that have reached the same conclusions.

Cincotta (2005) concluded in his study that job stress is an important predictor of performance in the organization where it was carried out. The relationship between job stress and employee performance is consistent with the notion of the job stress model. Karasek's (1979) developed a model of workplace stress where he explains that job expectations and the high level of control over employees, including making decisions without consulting them increases the risk of workplace stress both physiological stress and psychological stress (Kain and Jex, 2010) In addition, Edward's (1998) P-E compatibility theory suggests that a lack of compatibility between job demands and personal resources can induce two forms of stress: physiological (high blood pressure, increased serum cholesterol and low immunity) and psychological (sleep disturbances, anxiety, panic attacks, dysphoria and restlessness). Ismail et al. (2015), conducted a study in a multinational organization on a sample of 132 people where he analyzed the influence of psychological and physiological stress on workplace performance. The results of the study say that these two variables are strongly correlated with each other and thus support our hypothesis.

So, based on the specialized literature and following the application of the tests, it can be assumed that the two dimensions studied - perceived stress and performance at work - are strongly correlated due to the fact that stress is an important predictor of performance. The workplace where pressure is placed on employees to reach a sales target, can cause the appearance of stress (both psychological and physiological) and thus can bring a totally different result than the one expected by the managers.



## 5.2. Interpretation of hypothesis number 2.

Hypothesis 2: It is hypothesized that there is a significant positive correlation between job performance and conscientiousness.

Table 4. Indices of central tendency for performance and conscientiousness variables

Descriptives				
			Statistic	Std. Error
conscientiousness	Mean		74.80	1.153
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	72.44	
		Upper Bound	77.16	
	5% Trimmed Mean		74.72	
	Median		74.00	
	Variance		39.890	
	Std. Deviation		6.316	
performance	Mean		7.97	.320
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	7.31	
		Upper Bound	8.62	
	5% Trimmed Mean		7.85	
	Median		8.00	
	Variance		3.068	
	Std. Deviation		1.752	

In order to be able to test the issued hypothesis, we will characterize the data collection, using indices of central tendency. According to the descriptive analysis of the data, we found that the scores obtained for Performance at the workplace correspond to the mean 7.97, the median 8 and the standard deviation 1.752, while the scores obtained for Conscientiousness correspond to the mean 77.16, the median 74 and the standard deviation 6.316 (*table 4*).

After testing the normality of the data, we obtained the significance threshold greater than 0.05 for the variable Conscientiousness, suggesting a normal distribution, and for the variable Performance at work we obtained the significance threshold below 0.05, suggesting an asymmetric distribution (*table 5*). These results can also be seen in the histogram of the two variables (*figure 4* and *figure 5*).

Table 5. Normality test for performance and conscientiousness variables.

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
conscientiousness	.105	30	.200*	.971	30	.567
performance	.226	30	.000	.878	30	.003

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.  
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

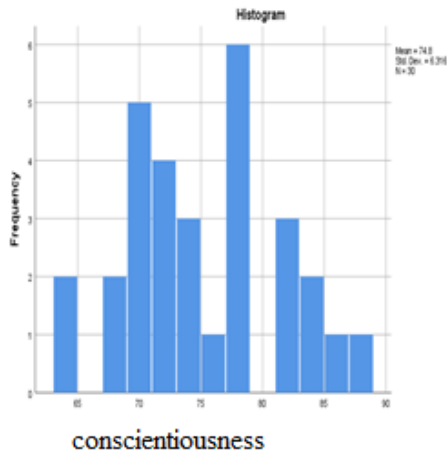


Figure 4. Sample histogram for the conscientiousness variable.

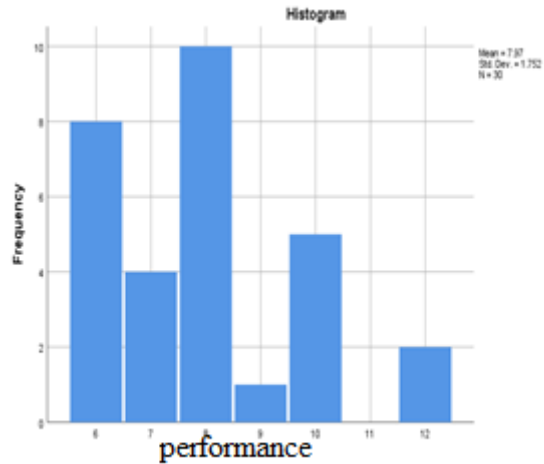


Figure 5. Sample histogram for the performance variable.

Thus, a non-parametric calculation method was chosen to test the hypothesis, namely the Spearman Test. As a result of the Spearman correlation test (table 6), the existence of a significantly positive correlation between the level of conscientiousness and performance resulted, at a significance threshold of  $p < 0.05$  (0.031). This result is also supported by the graphic representation of the correlation of the two variables, which can be seen in figure 6 below.

Table 6. Spearman Test result for conscientiousness variable and performance variable.

<b>Correlations</b>				
			performance	conscientiousness
Spearman's rho	performance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.713**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.031
		N	30	30
	conscientiousness	Correlation Coefficient	.713**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.
		N	30	30
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

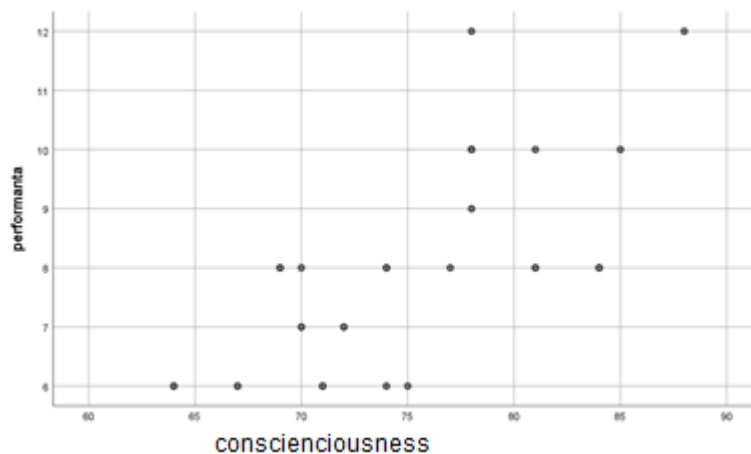


Figure 6. Graphic representation of the correlation between the conscientiousness variable and the performance variable.

The statistical analysis of the data obtained after testing the study participants indicates that the hypothesis supporting the existence of a significantly positive correlation between workplace performance and conscientiousness is confirmed. People with a high level of conscientiousness are orderly, have a well-structured and controlled work environment, are able to work continuously and focus on achieving the proposed objectives. They are also willing to invest time in work, they are meticulous, attentive and persistent. All these attributes are beneficial for a person working in the field of sales and above all, they can lead to achieving performance more easily than other people who do not have this personality factor.

In accordance with the results obtained by this research, we found in the specialized literature a series of studies that support the existence of an association between workplace performance and conscientiousness. Dimitriu and Constantin (2010) did a study in which they investigated the predictive factors of performance in terms of sales agents and concluded that people who have a high performance in sales also have a high level of conscientiousness. Also, Bratko et al. (2006), conducted a research in which they concluded that performance is directly correlated with conscientiousness and autonomy. The correlation between conscientiousness and performance has the greatest stability precisely because it has been identified in all fields of activity.

In the study conducted by Barrick et al., (1991) 2 factors of the Five Factors Personality Inventory model were identified that had significantly positive correlations to be strong predictors of performance at work. Their research shows that the conscientiousness factor determines 22% of performance figures, and extraversion determines 13% of performance figures. Another study conducted by Hertz and Donovan (2000) shows us similar results. They measured in their research both contextual performance and performance in specific tasks that correlated with conscientiousness.

Therefore, following the application of the tests and after consulting the specialized literature, we can conclude that the two dimensions studied, conscientiousness and performance at work, are strongly correlated. This may be because conscientious individuals have certain traits—well-organized, diligent, achievement-oriented, reliable, and self-determined—that favor performance. Important to add is that the two dimensions correlate across all domains of activity because persistence and commitment to goals (found in conscientious subjects) are strong predictors of performance.



### 5.4. Interpretation of hypothesis number 3.

Hypothesis 4: It is hypothesized that there is a significant negative correlation between the level of perceived stress and conscientiousness.

According to the descriptive analysis of the data, we found that the scores obtained on the stress level test correspond to the mean 77.07, the median 71 and the standard deviation 15.512, while the scores obtained on conscientiousness correspond to the mean 71.60, the median 74 and the standard deviation 6.409 ( table 10).

Table 10. Indices of central tendency for perceived stress and conscientiousness variables.

Descriptives			
		Statistic	Std. Error
conscienciousness	Mean	71.60	1.170
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	69.21
		Upper Bound	73.99
	5% Trimmed Mean	71.56	
	Median	71.00	
	Variance	41.076	
	Std. Deviation	6.409	
stress	Mean	77.07	2.832
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	71.27
		Upper Bound	82.86
	5% Trimmed Mean	76.19	
	Median	78.00	
	Variance	240.616	
	Std. Deviation	15.512	

The next step consisted in testing the normality of the two samples. After testing the normality of the data, a significance threshold higher than 0.05 was obtained for both variables, which suggests the presence of a symmetrical distribution on both samples (*table 11*). Thus, to test the correlation between the two variables, a parametric method will be used, namely the Pearson Test. Also, the normality of the distribution can be observed in the histogram of the samples of the two variables (*figure 10 and figure 11*).

Table 11. Normality test for stress variable and conscientiousness variable.

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
conscienciousness	.137	30	.155	.923	30	.033
stress	.142	30	.127	.918	30	.023
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

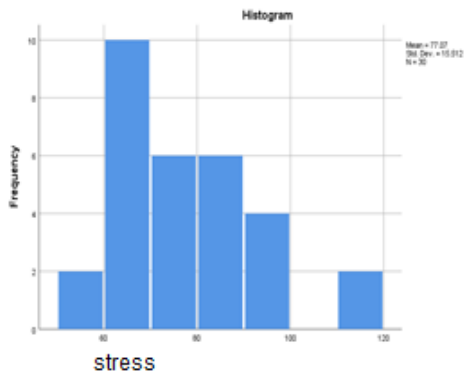


Figure 10. Sample histogram for the stress variable.

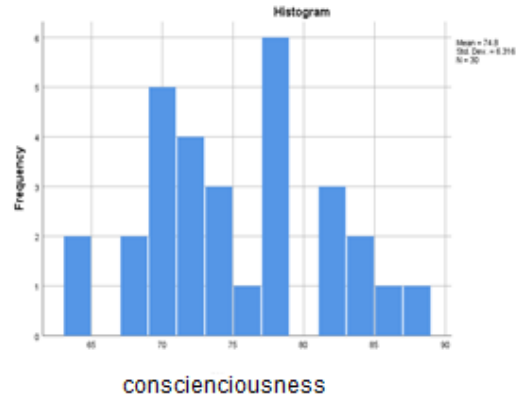


Figure 11. Sample histogram for the conscientiousness variable.

The table below (*table 12*) shows the results of the Pearson Test. As a result of testing this correlation, the existence of an insignificant negative correlation between stress level and conscientiousness resulted, at a significance threshold equal to  $p > 0.05$  (0.484). This can also be observed in the graphic representation present in figure 12.

Table 12. The result of the Pearson Test for the stress variable and the conscientiousness variable.

Correlations			
		conscienciosness	stress
conscienciosness	Pearson Correlation	1	-.133
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.484
	N	30	30
stress	Pearson Correlation	-.133	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.484	
	N	30	30

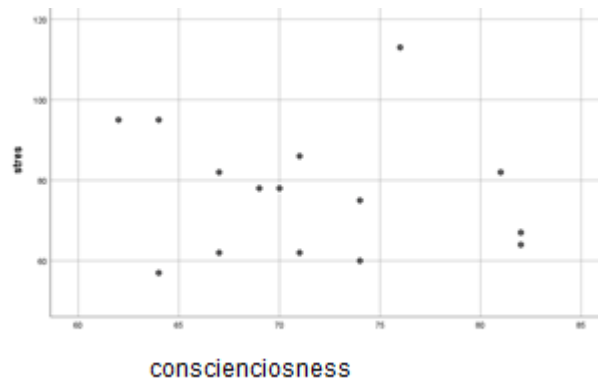


Figure 12. Graphic representation of the correlation between the stress variable and the conscientiousness variable.



The statistical analysis of the data obtained after testing the study participants indicates that the hypothesis that supports the existence of a significant and negative correlation between the level of perceived stress and conscientiousness is not confirmed. Conscientiousness is an important factor in how people appraise and respond to stressful situations. However, the exact role that conscientiousness plays in the adaptation process is not clear. This personality factor is related to an increase in stress management, stress tolerance, and the ability to avoid stress. Conscientious individuals being well-organized, diligent, achievement-oriented, reliable, and self-determined may develop lower levels of stress than individuals who do not exhibit this personality trait.

After consulting the specialized literature regarding the influence of conscientiousness on stress at work, I found out that there is research that has reached the same conclusions, but at the same time there are also results that contradict the hypothesis. The study carried out by Corcaci (2019) concludes that the level of stress is partially dependent on the level of conscientiousness shown by the respondent. The study was conducted in Iasi on a sample of 60 subjects. The study carried out by Balgiu, (2014) on 286 subjects concluded that conscientiousness is negatively correlated with perceived stress due to its three facets (will, self-discipline and rationality). The resulting negative correlation is justified if we consider that disinterest in improvement and superficiality can be predictors for a high degree of stress.

The conscientiousness factor was found to be a strong predictor of problem-based coping strategies such as planning, finding appropriate solutions, and positive appraisal of events. Individuals characterized by high conscientiousness are less likely to experience stress during the university training period. However, subsequent studies report no significant correlations between conscientiousness and stress levels (David & Suls, 1999). Conscientiousness is conceptualized by some authors as a general protective factor against stress. It is characterized by an individual's tendency to be well-organized, diligent, thorough, achievement-oriented, reliable, and self-determined. Conscientious individuals, as opposed to non-conscientious individuals, typically exhibit high levels of self-regulation, persistence, and impulse control (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

In the professional field, the results are similar. The impact of perceived stress on professional performance in conscientious individuals can be complex, with both negative and positive aspects. First, conscientious people tend to take on additional responsibilities and be perfectionists, which puts them at greater risk of occupational stress. Stress can negatively affect their usual level of effectiveness, as these individuals may feel strong internal pressure to perform to their high standards. On the other hand, a moderate level of stress can boost performance and creativity in these people, giving them extra motivation to achieve their goals. However, under excessive or chronic stress, conscientious individuals can become burned out and experience a decrease in productivity at work.

Thus, it has been empirically established that conscientiousness is an important factor in how people evaluate and respond to stressful situations; however, the exact role it plays in the adaptation process is unclear (e.g., Lee-Bagglely et al., 2005). Conscientiousness is believed to be related to an increase in stress management, stress tolerance, and the ability to avoid stress (Besser & Shackelford, 2007).

So, following the application of the tests and after consulting the specialized literature, we can conclude that stress and conscientiousness correlate negatively. In other words, conscientious individuals may develop lower levels of stress than individuals who do not exhibit this personality trait. Effective stress management is therefore crucial for maintaining





optimal professional performance in conscientious individuals, ensuring a balance between ambition and well-being.

### **Conclusions.**

This research analyzed the impact of stress and personality traits on workplace performance. Stress is very important for both the individual and the organization and we should learn how to manage it and how to use it to help us. Positive stress can bring anticipation and vital energy into human life, so under a certain amount of optimally productive stress we can all evolve. There are two main streams through which workplace stress can occur. The first stream highlights traditional workplace stress, namely increased workload, role conflict, lack of autonomy, and lack of social support. These elements can lead to workplace tensions and hinder performance. The second stream pertains to aspects of personality, examining how workers' abilities and their physical environment affect performance and how person-environment "misfit," if any, leads to stress responses.

As can be seen, adaptation to the environment can also be facilitated by personality factors. We chose to analyze the conscientiousness factor, to put in relation to stress and performance at work, with the aim of obtaining an overview of how we can better adapt to the professional environment. Thus, perceived stress and performance at work are strongly correlated: employees who reached more target lines perceived a higher level of stress. A professional environment in which pressure is placed on employees to reach a sales target, the existence of role conflict and the lack of autonomy can cause stress (both psychological and physiological).

It also turned out that the conscientiousness personality factor correlates strongly with job performance. Many studies have concluded that there is a significant correlation between the variable "sales performance" and the variable "conscientiousness", in the sense that people who have been evaluated as having high sales performance also have a high level of conscientiousness. Important to add is that the two dimensions correlate across all domains of activity because persistence and commitment to goals (found in conscientious subjects) are strong predictors of performance. It is also an important factor in how people evaluate and respond to stressful situations. The exact role that conscientiousness plays in the coping process is not clear, but it has been shown to be related to an increase in stress management, stress tolerance, and the ability to avoid stress.

Therefore, we can conclude that job performance is influenced by perceived stress and conscientiousness. A low stress level but also a high performance can be more easily achieved by a conscientious individual. So managers or leaders must take into account the optimization of the employee's adaptation to the professional environment, the dosage of the pressure they put on employees to reach the desired numbers, but also the evaluation of personality traits.

Regarding the limits of the research, we will mention a number of aspects that need to be taken into account. In this sense, we believe that we can mention as limitations of the present study the relatively small number of participants, together with the sampling method used, which was one of convenience. Finally, the actual procedure of testing the participants also represents a limitation of the research, because the application of the questionnaires was applied in the online environment, and our control in terms of direct interaction with the participants was not possible. Thus, future directions require taking into account the testing of a significantly larger number of employees belonging to the territory of Romania, as well as the use of randomization of participants as a sampling method, which can increase the degree of validity of the results.



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