

**Radu-Ioan Popa**

**IMAGES AND INSTANCES  
OF ORGANIZATIONAL PATHOLOGY**

**Presă Universitară Clujeană**

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OF ORGANIZATIONAL PATHOLOGY**

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*I dedicate this book to my beloved parents.*

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His main research interests follow the organizational domain, with regard to the study of organizational pathology, vulnerable groups at the workplace and the human-artificial intelligence interactions. His numerous research articles and projects address organizational management, vulnerable persons’ integration on the labor market and artificial intelligence mechanisms themes.

The present book is the result of research interests and activity across time, of continuous study and constant collaboration with researchers, practitioners, mentors and colleagues from the national and international academic environment, to whom I am deeply grateful and I thank them for their unwavering support, orientation, models and ideas, and most of all inspiration.

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# I. PREFACE

Same as a human body, the organizational structure and environment undergoes constant evolutions, transformations, challenges, disfunctions, paving the way towards multiple endings or scenarios, in which organizational maturity may be reached, adapting after a series of crises or on the contrary rushing towards an imminent downfall. At present, we may witness the dynamic transformations of the organizational domain at its best, which claims the necessity for more research and understanding, analysis and intervention in order to make people's life at work more adaptable, flexible, resilient and fulfilling.

Overall, the organizational pathology comprises the needs of people at work, their challenges and troubles, their fears and behaviors, their expectations and strategies to attain them. The organization structure is built around its people, its employees and its ideas, so by extension, its maladaptation, malfunctioning or "healing", adaptation and improving reside in the workers who are comprised in its matrix, its procedures and objectives, its written or unwritten laws of conduct, its story or expectation for success or failure. In other words, the organization represents its people, its employees and like so it embodies their endeavors, efforts, dilemmas, behavior, manifestations and adaptation.

Nowadays, more than ever, employees have to adapt to ever changing work settings, skills improvement and continuous education, shifting markets and products, digitalization of the work act, smart systems for work at work, new health conditions and illnesses management and survivorship. One might consider it is quite a "piece" to "digest" inside the organizational structure, this entire shape-shifting phenomenon, but the process is yet somehow natural, people adapting to everyday changes in their own individual way, either good or bad, leading either to resilience, adaptation, change or avoidance, counterproductive behaviors and pathological manifestations.

The fact that employees benefit from new forms of the work act (e.g. see the teleworking phenomenon, accentuated by the global pandemic, the case of digital nomads, wondering in various geographical areas while keeping close contact to their job in the virtual environment etc.) alongside an increase in work mobility rates, generate the need to reevaluate the classical team work management, personnel and organization administration. Moreover, the work act takes place in interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary sectors, forcing the employee to be partnership and skill aware, while acting in a cross – section production unit. We as employees, allocate most of our daily lives on work tasks or work related objectives, as stated also by the work – family or family – work conflict paradigm. A considerable percentage of time in the personal space is utilized for work purposes. So what happens when this environment is affected by pathological elements? How does the employee or the system react to it? How are even people aware that they apply a toxic conduct or that they are being a sure victim of a non-functional, disorganized and "ill" structure? Some insights might be provided in a certain degree by the organizational pathology domain. This is a strong motive for future endeavors in exploring pathologies and risks in organizations, keeping in mind that at the moment the scholarly literature presents heterogenous views, with few approaches in this direction.

The present theme and book follow a plan to investigate, underline and present a few “representatives” of the organizational pathology world, some major instances and phenomena, that can impact the organization existence and employee life in a dramatic way. The focus falls probably more on the individual’s stance, trying to uncover some of the causes and consequences behind such processes, which impact the organizational level.

The book contains chapters that are structured following an easy-access readability while pointing out the major variables and themes with regard to the individual, the group and the organizational settings and pathologies, from a social sciences focal mirror. The research journey will take the reader through aspects of employee conduct, group functioning, organizational identity and many more. Moreover, the work proposes also an inventory of the most important organizational pathology phenomena, with a practical twist, useful for both practitioners and researchers worldwide. Studying the specific elements of organizational pathology may offer a valuable insight and explain the mechanisms that trigger well-known processes inside the organization such as: coping strategies, deviant behaviors, the development of chronic diseases, mental health impact, and so on. Supplementary, these events pay a serious challenge to work security as we all know it, affecting employee performance and task engagement, return to work process, team development, efficiency and stability, trust climate and supportive settings, cultures that values creativity, expression, tolerance and the well-being of employees at work.

The book’s subjects draw attention among other, upon the importance of studying the task pathology, the traumatic events and mechanisms, the perception bias, the discrimination and inequality themes, victimization, all in a work environment and with direct impact on how people act, perform, assume and engage in tasks, on how people interact and share their values, expectations and views at the job, on how people build their career plans and work around their motivations and aspirations, on how they cope with success or failure, or on how they integrate the organization’s culture, objectives and vision for the future. The academic literature describes numerous references on specific dimensions of organizational pathology, giving on occasions a detailed analysis on occupational stress, on burnout, on workaholism, on bullying at the workplace and mobbing, on corporate crime and coping strategies, and the list can go further. The social sciences perspective adds at the same time a more comprehensive approach, presenting in many cases the mechanisms “behind the scenes” of such events, providing explanations or at least questions that lead to researching more into the causes of organizational maladaptive case and framework.

Going a bit further than just exploring the evolution, itinerary, adaptation or disappearance of an organization as a whole or structure, the present book addresses more the employee, person-level pathology exploration, following a three lair frame, from the individual to group and organization settings. Some variables will be very familiar to the public, while others will pose new questions and interest. All in all, the present work synthesizes, in a concise and reader-friendly way, the major red lines to be considered in the employee and organization work life with respect to various challenges, maladaptation, difficulties, deficiencies, deviance and crises in times of constant change.

## II. THE CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATIONAL PATHOLOGY

Organizational pathology domain has undergone numerous transformations, critiques, debates, approaches and evolutions, both conceptually and methodologically, leaving an open request for more research and unity in divergent views. The next section highlights some general and specific perspectives over its past and present terms and models.

### II.1. General views

The term organizational pathology has a very extensive coverage, including the evolution of organizations, from adaptation to resistance and change. The scholarly literature usually describes the concept in a broader sense as a dimension that emerged from the interest of solving organizational level challenges but also from the need to create an inventory of organizational disfunctions, which may determine risks, to which the management level has to address efficiently, in order to tackle such “threats”. From organizational stress or mobbing to burnout, addictions and myths, there is an abundance of specific examples with various solution and strategy outlooks that the organization may undertake.

In the narrow sense, the approach describes the individual manifestation and conduct at work, whether deviant, defiant or simply adaptive to a dysfunctional, neurotic setting, where psycho-behavioral disorders become points of interests. Both views are utilized at different levels, as mentioned before, from individual to group and organization. Some authors prefer to acknowledge the concept through its managerial description of organizational evolution stages, all the way to decline, failure and disappearance (Anheier, 1999; Mellahi & Wilkinson, 2004; Samuel, 2010; Ponomariov & Boardman, 2011; Boardman & Ponomariov, 2023). Most perspectives introduced a biological analogy, comparing the organization with a human body, where internal and external aspects might intervene at any given time, posing a threat to the structure survival, adaptation or change, redirecting its course towards most commonly accepted negative outcomes. Boardman and Ponomariov (2023) highlighted the term “organizational disease” in this view, stating that in any likely event, the performance of the organization would be at risk, all the way to vital functions, which ensure actually the existence and survival of the company on the market.

The same authors stated that a complex analogy can be generated with regard to a living matrix with common features of a biological structure containing elements as follows (Boardman & Ponomariov, 2023):

#### 1. *Organs*

The authors explain the fact that an organization covers core in-built structures that operate on the basis of central nodes of information, with a strong formal character. If we were to extend probably an interpretation and to give a specific example, a human resources

or accounting department might constitute a vital sub-unit for the functioning of the company.

## 2. *Brain*

As expected, the comparison relates to the management and leadership levels, structures which ensure the company strategic and decision level functioning. As one might expect, coordinating, monitoring, implementing, creating and planning are key actions in “leading the way” for the organization towards positive or negative outcomes.

On a positive perspective, the leadership level, through its power stance can ensure stability, efficiency, units coordination and problem solving, resource distribution, projecting and many more.

At the opposite view, if the leadership takes a pathological trajectory and manifestation, the same units will be affected and the examples can be numerous: creating an atmosphere of fear, generating high rates of turnover, stimulating mobbing, motivating social injustice, leading the company astray and so on.

## 3. *Sustenance*

The same authors conclude that the company same as a living structure, runs on various resources. In this case, the relation with the external environment is crucial, the company’s leadership ideally ensuring the constant flow of external inputs in order to keep the production process ongoing.

## 4. *Psychic*

For a body to function in optimal parameters, the “hidden” part, represented by the psychic needs to be accurately calibrated and balanced, stimulating, motivating and leading towards a general sense of constant well-being. As such, the organization culture and climate need to maintain a healthy and sage course for its people. Knowing its psychological internal world, a manager or counsellor can solve the delicate challenges of a subtle conflict for example between two employees. Acknowledging the informal roles and relations between the team members, a leader can manage better the objective acquirement and the act of leading, just to emphasize another example. The art of leading will reside in the capacity to prevent and manage in efficiency terms variables that are subtle and can pose a challenge to the organizational equilibrium.

## 5. *Non-vital organs*

This component refers in the authors opinion to non-central or non-vital function structures within or to which the organization can appeal to, in order to attain its tasks, production or any other action according to the specific sector of activity. To some extent,

such structures can affect to a certain degree the performance and efficiency of an organization but not in dramatic terms. A good example for the practical area would be again the outsourcing of human resources and personnel services, recruitment and selection or even training and team-building processes to which the company adheres but delegates them to other units outside its in-home setting. Another example may be represented in the case of some payroll services or customer support which still function within the organization's frame but do not particularly constitute vital functions. Of course, every organizational setting is specific and should be addressed with contextual awareness and personalized consciousness. In other words, one sub-unit might be peripheral for one company in a given context while for another one might occupy a core, leading role. The interchangeability is dynamic and constantly shifting.

From another perspective organizations have long been analyzed under the life-cycle paradigm, which positions itself in the broader scientific theories of natural systems, in a long complex debate between ecological approaches which take into account context and external variables (e.g. size of company, its history, type of industry etc.) versus pathological ones which focus more on specific internal variables (e.g. culture, climate, leadership, objectives etc.), analyzing sub-units or single case company at a time (Samuel, 2010). Several scholarly literature works have presented across time various positions on the decline topic of organizations, the concept being integrated into the management theory as such (Argenti, 1976; Guy, 1989; Scott, 1997; Anheier, 1999; Mellahi & Wilkinson, 2004; Ilin, 2004; Samuel, 2010; Su & Junge, 2023).

Other scientific opinions argue that to a certain point organizations may be perceived as natural systems but in reality the analogy should not be extended beyond certain lines and with certainty not to assess the company as a true biological system (Samuel, 2010), keeping in mind that in definition the structure of an organization contains a collective of people, employees that work together, detain individual and common goals (Scott, 1997), interact and focus on effort, performance, adaptation, coping strategies, constantly following the context solicitations, personal needs and perspectives, ensuring survival on the labor market and pursuit of well-being. In a capital reference work, Scott (1997) divided the types of organizations into four existing types, based on a functional (rational or social) and relational environment criteria, which resulted in: 1. Rational and closed systems; 2. Rational and open systems; 3. Natural and closed systems; 4. Natural and open systems. With regard to these four types of organizations certain major theories can be mentioned as clear representatives inside the four categories.

In the case of the closed and rational system view, the classical scientific management theory elaborated by Frederick Taylor, the organizing and administration theory by Henry Fayol or the well-known bureaucracy theory created by Max Weber envision the best this particular type of organization (Ilin, 2004). For the second group of organizations seen as closed and natural systems, the theory ground base lies in the social behavior approach, where scholars such as Douglas McGregor, George Mayo or Fritz Roethlisberger focused their approach on studying human relations at work and personal factors. Moreover, the

institutional theory created by Philip Selznick or the cooperant behavior theory by Chester Barnard can also be added to the present category (Ilin, 2004).

Scrolling shortly through the management history, the organizational perspective on viewing the company as a rational, closed or open system has slowly gave up place for newer stances that favor a natural and open stance, especially after the '70. The contingency theory with representatives such as Tom Burns or Joan Woodward, alongside cost transaction theory by Oliver Williamson exemplify quite well the open and rational system group type (Ilin, 2004). In the case of natural and open systems, the last group, theories like the organizational information theory by Karl Weick or the ecological analysis paradigms, dependency on resources, population ecology model or institutional theory, either represented by Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, or John Meyer and Brian Rowan, can constitute top examples (Ilin, 2004).

Going beyond these short examples and paradigms, the post-modern era reserves new trends and theory that shift the classical view on organizational structures, beyond the functional and environment criteria, towards more complex, detailed stances and contexts in an organization's life and death, success and failure matter, valuing more new additions such as culture, climate, vision, function dynamics, change or resistance to it, organizational development, gender roles and social power and many more. In addition to the taxonomy of life-cycle construct in the case of organizations, proposed by Hanks et al. (1993), which cover famous models from Greiner (1972), Adizes (1979), Quinn and Cameron (1983), Scott and Bruce (1987) to Kazanjian (1988), in the more recent years, we have witnessed endeavors to refine the classical stage models and follow towards a more unitary, single model, in which cycles influence the control design and effectiveness (Sofiah, 2010; Cummings et al., 2014; Freshwater, 2020). The life cycle models complete in a certain regard the biological analogy of the living organization to all phases included in the process. Following this trend, the organizational pathology has somehow imported a clinical approach, which in turn generates new implications at every phase or stage on the organization's life, no matter its type, rational or natural, closed or open. Disfunctions in an organizational structure are likely to appear in every step along the organization's evolution, from "birth to demise", some being bound specifically to certain phases, marking a decline or simply adverse conditions that challenge the momentum. As an example, Dejours (2001) described four potential pathology types with regard to the organizational and work environment:

1. *overloading pathologies* – include excessive work tasks, shorten time for fulfillment and increased rhythm for executing such tasks. In terms of outcomes, this type of pathology will lead to occupational stress, burnout, musculoskeletal disorders, chronic diseases, mental illness, conflict, turnover, putting the employee ultimately to "sudden death" in some cases;

2. *post-traumatic pathologies* – highlight the work incident and accident occurrence as well as its follow-up effects. The pathology here may reveal post-traumatic stress disorders, return to work challenges after a major incident, recovering after a long-term

illness, living and adapting to work while suffering from a mental illness, personality disorder or disability, dealing with discrimination and harassment at the workplace in the absence of organizational justice, group conflict, absenteeism and many more;

3. *common sense distortion pathologies* – reiterates the evaluation and recognition systems topic as well as the perception and decision-making inside the organizational setting. Usually the pathology in this case addresses imbalances in the rewarding system, conflict between expectations, efforts and results of employees, the absence of objective and logical perception over numerous variables in the organization (e.g. misperception of resources, of distributive and procedure justice, of organizational reality, of team members etc.), adding here the indirect and sometimes hidden effects of rumors, gossip and myths;

4. *solitude pathology* – describes the concept and principle of fear in the author's view, collecting various sources for this state (e.g. from losing the job, being isolated, rejected or uninformed, an always victim of harassment and negative evaluation etc.). The pathology will reside in self-isolation, conflict, depression, personality disorders, mental illness, turnover, avoidance behavior to low self-esteem, satisfaction or motivation, alongside poor performance, presenteeism or absenteeism, and so on.

The same author organized and synthesized the major approaches for organizational pathology, mentioned briefly below (Dejours, 2001):

1. *with regard to mental disorders* – which underlines an association between specific causes inside the organization that can generate the development of a neurosis or psychosis (e.g. time pressure, decision limitations, task constraints etc.);

2. *with regard to epidemiology* – which use statistical data and analysis, comparing samples and populations in order to identify pathogen work environments and specific work contexts;

3. *with regard to existential approach* – which explores the time frame dilemma between work and living time, alongside the personality variables;

4. *with regard to cognitive approach* – which focuses on studying pathological effects in various work contexts and situations, identifying nonadaptive responses to a given task;

5. *with regard to aggression approach* – which highlight various factors that may harm the person, employee in a work environment, physically and psychologically;

6. *with regard to psychoanalytical approach* – which explores the inner state, causes and reactions of the person in question, as a main mechanism that weights more than the external organizational context and reality.

In another view, Zlate (2007) was stating that modern organizations are challenged by phenomena such as organizational disfunctions (e.g. conduct and regulation deviation), crises (e.g. critical moments, losses, confusion, dramatic ruptures and transitions), organizational, occupational or mental illnesses or diseases, leading to serious disadaptation effects, which in turn affect to a high degree the employee personal, social and professional life. The effects at the workplace are visible in reducing the work capacity, affecting the

employee relations, their well-being and subjective state, work performance and efficiency (Zlate, 2007).

In conclusion, the organizational pathology domain constitutes a dynamic source for future analysis, policy and strategy implementation, solicited by the constant everchanging world of the organization. Even difficult at times to define as a domain, with divergent views and points of interests, future research and pioneer work will need to provide answers for the inner depths of organizational malfunctioning in the upcoming years. It is worth mentioning that the organizational pathology presence and consequences are so visible, close and influential that its causes, mechanisms and solutions can't be ignored or left aside without being addressed.

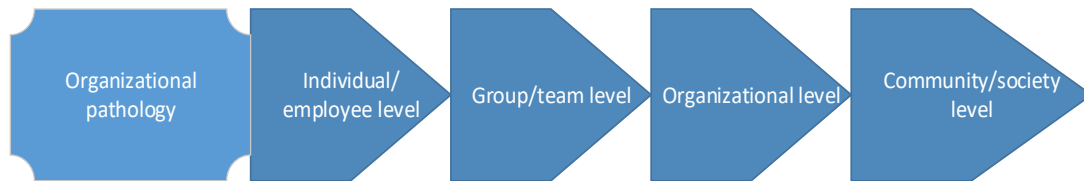
## II.2. Specific views

The organizational pathology designates and comprises any disfunction, from the individual, group to company level, that may in turn generate, maintain and increase risks levels, various threats and malfunctions at work, affecting the balance and well-being of its own individuals and structure.

There are several definitions present in the scholarly literature, the concept being addressed either in a transformative process manner for a vivid, living system that "battles" challenges (Miller & Miller, 1995) or in a contextual key, where the company is seen caught between inability to reach efficiency, sustainability and development, torn down by constant crises (Faghih, Bavandpour & Forouharfar, 2016). Pathology can be defined also as an effect that blocks the company in reaching its potential, its objectives and performance level, through various deficiencies, errors, contradictions and conflicts, challenging task, responsibility and objective fulfilment (Şerb & Cicioc, 2013; Anastasiadis & Spence, 2019; Özdemir & Yalçın, 2023). In addition, Kets de Vries and Miller (1984) stated the fact that organizational pathology can be observed as an extension of the individual pathology in the organization, where for example a neurotic style of leadership adopted by the representatives of the management team can trigger organizational dysfunction, in some cases this particular style of governance imprinting the same profile on the company typology as well. In another work, Kets de Vries outlined the serious effects that a dysfunctional leadership has on the organizational setting and culture, blocking the opportunity of revitalization in many situations (Kets de Vries, 2001).

The contagion from individual level to organizational level has often been discussed in terms of leader, employee, context, information influence, where norm violation generates deviation (Robinson & Bennett, 1995), individual insecurity and alienation may affect the organizational climate, triggering excessive regulation, control and an obsession for rules and procedures (Kersten, 2005), while employees holding back from expressing their opinions and sharing knowledge due to mistrust and a misguided belief that their contribution is insignificant will support the appearance of organizational silence (Alpaslan & Kayalar, 2012). Following these debates, Figure 2.1. synthesizes the major levels to which organizational pathology can act upon or emerge. This perspective takes into account

an organizational structural criteria, which describes the foundations lairs on which the organization is built, developed all the way to its impact on the local community and furthermore society implications and presence.



**Figure 2.1.** – Levels of organizational pathology presence

As Figure 1.1. suggests, at individual level, the organizational pathology can be a cause or an effect of a specific dysfunction that takes place at a very personal level for the employee, who might trigger changes and a wave of effects in the following sectors in our diagram, as well as vice-versa. At person level, the negative impact can be as much damaging as per the entire structure. Imagine the effects of a toxic leadership upon the employee motivation, work satisfaction or performance. How about a full mobbing experience on the victim, that ultimately will lead the person to isolation, depression, losing self-esteem and developing chronic conditions at work due to the traumatic events? On the other hand how will a paranoid organization will engage in community participation? Its own insecurities will create a gap between the need to excel, the need to control or the need to avoid?

For the group level, the effects of pathology range from hidden conflicts to manifest ones, myths and rumors themes, discrimination and abuse, deviant behaviors and so on. At this stage, the effects apply both at individual level and group ones.

The organizational level includes both individual and group units, where as expected the pathology may reside in the company already built culture, general climate, set of rules and procedures, vision about the performance and the care for its own human resources.

The organizational pathology might extend also in the community or society area where the organization resides and acts, sometimes through indirect effects and measures, observed in the local partnership the company has with the local community, the degree and under what circumstances it participates in the development of the community, how it plays the role of a vivid supporter of the setting it is part of or simply acts on quick resource grab, “consuming” local assets and then moving on to the next area of interest.

Inside the theoretical framework, Samuel (2010) described in a detailed manner other variables that accompany the organizational pathology as a complex concept, among which the organizational niche that includes certain resources vital for the company existence, and to which their reduction or erosion decreases the chances of the organizational survival and the possibility to thrive on the market. The same author mentions the “shocks”, contained in the general environment, surrounding the company, and which may pose as real threats to the structural base of it (e.g. various economic crises, war, health crises, politics etc.)

(Samuel, 2010). The author also mentions the importance of four major variables (structural, cultural, behavioral and socio-economic) circulating inside the task environment, with detain a more direct influence and impact on the trajectory of the company (Samuel 2010).

Beyond terms of failure, life-cycle, chronic disease or personality disorder which apply to the organizational setting, Dejours (2001; 2006) mentioned the concept of alienation, which in the author's perspective represents a detachment from the organizational reality, based on the absence of recognition at work and leading the way to a vivid denial of reality, with multiple effects at individual, social, collective and cultural level. Moreover, Petersen and Willig (2004), presented four major trends that can offer some in-depth insight into the new forms of pathology development, mentioning Axel Honneth and "the erosion of the accomplishment principle", Jean-Pierre Le Goff and the "neo-liberalism as light barbarism", Christophe Dejours and the "principle of fear", to Emmanuel Renault and the "fragilization of identity".

All these ground theories, explain from various stances the risks of "social suffering", where the individual is caught between the need to be recognized, the obligation to follow strict imposed demands, left in an artificial semi-autonomy, living with the constant fear of failure and reprisal (Petersen & Willig, 2004). Under these conditions, the pathology finds a "nurturing" field for manifestation, leading the way for more severe grips on the organization and employee day to day normal functioning and optimal balance.

In Honneth's (1995; 1996) view, from a social psychology and sociology position, the decline of "classical forms of the industrial sector" with regard to acknowledge accomplishment in the case of its employees, alongside the new waves of rewarding systems and their increased variety, all the way to the hazardous situations of success or failure in today's society, have led in the author's opinion to the erosion of the accomplishment principle inside organizations. This situation will ultimately give way for potential disruptions in the workplace, job status, tasks, well-being, mental health of employees, as well as new levels of tension for recognition if the society will not value, accept and identify the new extensions of work accomplishment variation (Petersen & Willig, 2002; 2004). As a result, from an organizational pathology perspective, there is much to explore concerning systems of rewarding inside the company, failure of achievement and its consequences on the employee, team or the organization, elements of distributive, procedure and interpersonal justice etc. It is highly important for the employee to have a clear perception on the job profile and demands, responsibilities and tasks, obligations and rights, communication channels and roles in order to ensure a transparent work trajectory.

The drive for recognition is internally and socially powerful, naturally present in numerous forms, and shaping at work the employee's professional endeavor, status and identity. When the tension becomes too high, when there is a gap between expectations, effort, results and context reality, when the recognition becomes the only motivation to strive and succeed, and failure is perceived as a constant threat, extreme ending and the measure of all measures, the pathological disturbances are triggered, encircling the aim of

work, the steps and manifestations of daily life withing the job and the perceptions on work value, employee task interest and behavior, career attitudes and future promotion.

For Le Goff (1999; 2000), today's organizational spectrum surpasses a neo-liberalism stage, which skips the critical and evaluating acceptance, seen rather as a mixture of "imposed" autonomy, transparency and responsibility for the grace of "blind modernization", which in turn may trigger new ways of repression, manipulation, destabilization in the work area, risking the security and stability of employees, constantly challenged to adapt to frequent modifications in the organizational setting, calibrating their competences and finally running out of time and space to keep up (Petersen & Willig, 2004). The pathologies in this frame would cause a collapse in the mental state of the employee, creating uncertainty, fear, avoidance whereas the person would question hers or his personal competences to fulfill the increased demands for efficiency and performance, under constant monitoring and evaluation, leading probably to a new manifestation of dehumanizing work (Le Goff, 1999; Petersen & Willig, 2004).

In the new era of constant company surveillance of its workers time, tasks, objectives and performance, the trend of overcontrolling has known new forms and heights. As an example, for the case of digital work or teleworking, employees are asked within an increased degree to report on their progress, reaching milestones or daily indicators, besides their job related tasks, which generate higher levels of stress, fatigue and overburdening in a so-called "autonomy work position". The outcomes will be visible in the employee level of burnout, exhaustion, low work satisfaction or dissatisfaction, conflictual instances, work-family conflict, working overtime to meet never-ending demands which surpass the person own resources, competences and equity principles.

In the perspective of Dejours (2001; 2006) as previously presented, besides the alienation concept, the new term of fear describes the context in which the employee's expectations, views and efforts sweep between the constant fear of dismissal, the evaluation of its own abilities, and the fear of evaluation, especially the fear of negative assessment from a psychological stance. These fears trigger again the accomplishment rush and dilemma, pathological speaking, the obsessive fear of incompetence and exclusion at work, will surely generate various negative coping mechanisms. Dejours (2001; 2006) also expresses concern around the "suffering act at work" as being the new reality, new norm and sadly new normality (Petersen & Willig, 2004), leading the way for new pathological expressions (e.g. lack of motivation, depression, fatigue, exhaustion, burnout, low work satisfaction, increased work-family conflict, counter-productive behaviors, passivity, absenteeism or presenteeism etc.). Under these circumstances, the employee is caught between the constant fear of reprisal at work, the need for success and the daily suffering of not doing so. In general, people enjoy a secured job and predictability when it comes to their work roles, status and position, but the organizational setting will test their tolerance, patience, competence, loyalty and obedience on numerous occasions and in a wide variety of situations, creating a context in which some will adapt in a negative way, some will thrive on others, some will succeed but at a costly price and some will fail in a dramatic way.

Going over to Renault (2000; 2023) and the paradigm of weakening the identity in organizational structures and society alike, the process explains a transformation of the employee, trying to reach the company imposing demands and targets, seeking various channels of social recognition, going from identity weakening to “transmutation”, all in all for the recognition desire by the company. The “price” for success and “being a good worker” will reside eventually in high levels of psychological pressure, suffering, pathological manifestations, stress, bullying, mobbing and depression, losing identity in order to repress alienation and protect from weakening (Renault 2000; 2023; Petersen & Willig, 2004). Same as in the trends presented above, employees drive force for the job achievements solicit a personalized adaptation to the work context, to the company expectations for performance and success, to the internal written, non-written, acknowledged or non-acknowledged rules, procedures and steps. In every case, the need for success will pressure every worker in individual ways, while the risk of pathological disturbances will be present along the way.

From a strict organizational pathology point of view, the lack of clear evaluation systems for performance, transparent and equitable procedures for promotion, a true autonomy, where it applies, for decision making and task management, and in the absence of a person centered leadership, may determine numerous reactions and coping mechanisms from the employee side, that do not serve the positive purpose of the company nor the person itself. As a result and example, the employee can decide to adopt counterproductive behaviors (e.g. to evade a negative evaluation or sanctions; or simply rebel against the system), can easily quit (increasing the turnover rate), or can “roboticize” his activity to an extent where personal identity and human touch are minimalized or lost in the transition. On top of this, at the moment, the wide variety of changes and challenges that companies are undergoing due to many factors (e.g. economic crisis, pandemic, war, migration, environmental catastrophe, high unemployment rates, under education, trade wars etc.) add extra pressure on maintaining a certain stability, security and normality at work.

There are many instances in which organizational pathology takes shape. What is important to retain is that an organizational pathology pattern may present itself in effects or “symptoms” which can be visible or not, “chronic” or “acute”, some mechanisms or patterns evading an untrained look or the managerial care and attention. These consequences can manifest on the short or long term depending on the cause, specific context, aim and impact level. Moreover, an organizational malady or disease (given the biological metaphor) has the tendency to be contagious in terms of phenomenon, inclined to develop and multiply until the whole system is endangered with imminent collapse if unattended in good time. It is also important to visualize that a specific pathology may as well be a representation of the company’s organizational and management problems, as presented in most classical works on the matter but also a key image on the employee level misconducts and deviant behaviors which can in return extend to organizational level. In Table 2.1., the four major paradigms were organized under a concept synthesis and a common ground, underlining the major outcomes and implications related to the organizational pathology domain.

**Tabel 2.1.** – A vision over theoretical postulates with regard to organizational pathology outcomes – adaptation after Petersen and Willig (2004)

AUTHOR	MAJOR CONCEPT	COMMON GROUND	ORGANIZATIONAL PATHOLOGY OUTCOMES
Axel Honneth	ACCOMPLISHMENT	RECOGNITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disruption in job status</li> <li>• confusion</li> <li>• psychological disturbances</li> <li>• erosion of integration</li> </ul>
Jean-Pierre Le Goff	ADAPTATION		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pressure on mental capacity of employee</li> <li>• work uncertainty</li> <li>• insecurity</li> <li>• pseudo-autonomy</li> <li>• pseudo-responsibility</li> </ul>
Christophe Dejours	FEAR		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• alienation</li> <li>• suffering</li> <li>• depression</li> <li>• defense strategies</li> </ul>
Emmanuel Renault	IDENTITY		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identity transmutation</li> <li>• mental pressure</li> <li>• psychological tension</li> <li>• stress</li> <li>• depression</li> <li>• bullying</li> </ul>

As observed the common ground of recognition acts as a connecting drive agent for all four paradigms, in which by simplifying the theory, it can be stated that the employee finds itself trapped between the need to succeed and the risk of failure, both versions implying there is the constant threat of a negative pathological outcome. Zlate (2007) divided the organizational pathology domain into two major structures, referring to the first one as containing variables related to work, conditions and constraints while for the second structure, involving the organizational environment, factors and conditions. In his view, this calibration resulted in work pathology branch, with Dejours (2001) and Santiago-Delefosse (2004) as representatives, and the organizational pathology branch, with Kets de Vries (2001) as a major reference author.

In conclusion, organizational pathologies can be present at work under various forms and interactions, their effects covering a wide range of manifestations and implications. Typologies and taxonomies are often scarce on the matter and follow disparate frameworks and criteria, as well as the studies on these topics. Usually work sectors such as business, training and health have drawn more attention for research on pathology in the last years, but there is still a lot to uncover in the broad organizational domain.

### **III. MANIFESTATIONS AND INSTANCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL PATHOLOGY**

The wide and complex variety of organizational pathology instances, phenomena and manifestations are subject to various individual research and study cases. In this book, several representatives were selected in order to provide an overview on the major and most common cases that impact organizational life. The following subsections were divided, for a better reader experience, in pathologies that are related to individual, group or organizational level. Of course each of the selected variables can function at all three levels no matter its correspondence here. All organizational disturbances are interlinked, marking changes at different moments in the organizational context and life, in various degrees and intensity, for specific sectors, levels and units of work activity.

#### **III.1. At individual/employee level**

In the next subchapters, several major pathologies are presented in relation with the individual or employee level, where the individual constitutes the key point of interest, observed at work and the challenges he must endure, given the outcomes a disturbance can create in the absence of prevention or efficient management strategies.

##### **III.1.1. Occupational stress**

Probably one of the most cited and researched dimensions in organizational pathology, the occupational stress has been a point of interest since the dynamic changes in the organizational structures of the 80s. Numerous authors point out the increased attention in researching the topic, the articles growing exponentially in matter of years (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991; Sava, 2004; Pitariu & Vîrgă, 2007; Zlate, 2007; Spector, 2024). Of course the broader concept of stress has been the highlight of many social and psychological studies for years on, but the particular occupational or professional stress has been always uncovering step by step various unchartered mechanisms and effects. A very dynamic concept with multiple implications on task performance, levels of satisfaction and motivation among employees at the workplace, well-being or health conditions alike, organizational processes and pathology, occupational stress has been very difficult to define and integrate in a specific term frame (Cooper & Cartwright, 1997; Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2001). Ever since 1970, Selye's definition of stress has been developing around the idea of non-specific responses of an individual to various solicitations in the external environment which trigger a general adaptation syndrome (Selye, 1976; 1980). His perspective, even though with a strong clinical approach, has led to the acceptance of later positive and negative stress concept. Following later studies, the concept of occupational stress was classified in a tri-dimension definition of occupational stress in terms of reaction,

stimulus and interaction as follows (Cooper, Dewe & O’Driscoll, 2001; Sava, 2004; Pitariu & Vîrgă, 2007):

1. *reaction level* – occupational stress is defined as a general adaptation syndrome, to various disturbances, threats and external variables that trigger a response from the individual, determining various outcomes like motivation and satisfaction decrease, physical and mental deterioration, losing energy and will etc. Selye’s theory stands as a major representative for this level.

2. *stimulus level* – in this case, occupational stress is defined as a dynamic force that determines a request or a reaction to the specific situation. The individual is constantly facing stress agents and being challenged to control and maintain a certain balance.

3. *interaction level* – from this perspective, occupational stress can be seen as a trade between the person, stress factor, circumstances and responses, in his endeavor to restore equilibrium.

More organizational views on the topic have acknowledge occupational stress as a physical and psychological stress generated by the imbalance of the individual’s abilities, coping mechanisms, resources, needs and expectations with the job demands (Yu et al., 2024), or as a harmful and emotional response to the mismatch between job requirements and the employee capacity, competences, resources and needs (Girma et al., 2021) or simply as an ongoing stress that is connected to the workplace (Kaur, 2011). Other authors consider occupational stress as a worker’s response when the task demands and pressure do not comply with the employee’s needs, abilities, knowledge and surpass the person’s ability to manage them (Khudaniya & Kaji, 2014; Desouky & Allam, 2017), as a process through which work solicitations and psychological responses relating to them generate alterations in the employee physical and mental health on short, medium or long range of time (Zhang et al., 2021), or defined as a role stress in which any physical or mental experience is a result of a “clash” between required abilities and resources, available ones in reality and the demand to perform the role (Huang et al., 2024).

The scholarly literature contains specific models, which were introduced in order to approach the occupational stress process and outcomes. These perspectives are limited to featured job positions and predictor variables. Most commonly known are as follows:

1. *job demands-resources model* - defines occupational stress as a response to the existing disproportion between work tasks and personal assets at hand for the employee to fulfill such demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2014; Li et al., 2021).

2. *demand-control model* - describes occupational stress as a result between the high level workload and the low levels of autonomy and control over the demand from the employee stance (Karasek, 1979; Kain & Jex, 2010; Osa & López-Araújo, 2020).

3. *effort-reward imbalance model* - details occupational stress as an outcome of the high level work effort combined with low control over the recognition and reward process (Siegrist, 1996; Siegrist, 2016; Siegrist, 2017; Ren et al., 2019).

**Table 3.1.** – Models for exploring occupational stress in organizational settings

<b>AUTHORS</b>	<b>MAJOR ASSOCIATION</b>	<b>VARIABLES</b>	<b>RESULTS</b>
Lazarus and Folkman (1984)	Individual – dynamic transactional appraisal process – environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Individual</li> <li>• Personality</li> <li>• Personal resources</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. First evaluation</li> <li>2. Second evaluation</li> <li>3. Adaptation strategy</li> </ol>
Cooper, Kirkcaldy and Brown (1994)	Stress agent - response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Person</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Psychological reactions</li> <li>2. Physiological reactions</li> <li>3. Behavioral reactions</li> </ol>
Johns (1996)	Stress agent – stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personality</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reactions</li> <li>2. Anxiety reduction</li> <li>3. Direct confrontation</li> </ol>
Pitariu and Vîrgă (2007)	Situation – person - result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political, economy and life conditions</li> <li>• Organizational requirements and constraints</li> <li>• Job safety</li> <li>• Demographic variables</li> <li>• Individual differences</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Behavioral reactions</li> <li>2. Performance</li> <li>3. Behavioral effects</li> </ol>
Lee, Kim and Park (2022)	Occupational stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaction</li> <li>• Individual features</li> <li>• Coping styles</li> <li>• Interactional justice perception</li> <li>• Organizational support</li> <li>• Rewards and recognition</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. First level outcomes (psychological, behavioral, cognitive, physiological)</li> <li>2. Second level outcomes (job performance, job related attitude, counterproductive behaviors)</li> </ol>
Jung et al. (2023)	Occupational stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burnout (exhaustion and disengagement)</li> <li>• Grit (passion and perseverance)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Depression</li> </ol>

Table 3.1. highlights just a few examples of such models alongside their main associations, concepts, variables involved and outcomes. Other models as the person-environment fit or the diathesis-stress are renowned for explaining the occurrence of occupational stress (Palaniappan, 2023). Apart from these major models, throughout time, numerous other patterns were designed with the purpose to better understand and explain occupational stress mechanisms and variables, that describe, in detail, the source, process and the moderating effects.

As a brief analysis, the triad consisting of person-environment-stress factor dominates every organizational equation, when managing stress at the workplace, raising awareness that every work context should be addressed situationally, in a personalized manner and with the appropriate methodology.

Statistically, around the globe, an approximate minimum number of 3 million employees face serious occupational stress challenges (with a rate prevalence between 30% to 52.5%), while a staggering 28% of employees inside the European Union declare they are affected by occupational stress, where of course the numbers may be higher (Eleni et al., 2010; Yan et al., 2022). In another study, data highlighted that around 83% of workers are battling occupational stress in the United States of America, which in turn has led to 120.000 deaths (Girma et al., 2021). The economic costs are high. Hassard et al. (2018) concluded that occupational stress caused an estimated cost of 221.13 million to 187 billion dollars, with a range of 70% to 90% production loss. Given the numbers, at the moment occupational stress is one of the leading causes for health and economic burden on the organizational sector and public health domain (Zhang et al., 2024). Another grim review stated that the global economy is set to lose an estimated 16 trillion dollars between 2011 and 2030, in human capital and labor losses due to mental illness and occupational stress related effects (Bloom et al., 2011; Yorita et al., 2023). In another study case, in South Korea, Evans-Lacko and Knapp (2016), stated that the average annual cost per person, with regard to absenteeism due to depression motives, reached 181 dollars while the presenteeism phenomenon associated caused by depression, reached a staggering 2114 dollars, in terms of cost per person, as a mean value.

In a more recent study, Jung et al. (2023), underlined the importance of studying the association between occupational stress and pathological symptoms, alongside mediating mechanisms and moderating effects, analyzing the working environment under models of demand-control and effort-reward. As mentioned before, the occupational stress affects more frequently the employees' physical and mental health, being acknowledge as a major trigger cause for burnout and depression at the workplace (Xu et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2022).

Moreover, stress was clinically linked to a front position in the leading causes of death in the world, in relation with cardiovascular diseases, where occupational stress being a key risk factor in this equation (Quick & Cooper, 2003; Quick & Henderson, 2016; Schnall, Dobson & Landsbergis, 2017). At the same time, the high turnover rates in the pandemic have been related to occupational stress cause, among others (Maharani & Tamara, 2024). In education organizations, as example for the USA setting, a high

percentage of 5.3% inside the labor force is represented by pre-retirement in association directly and specifically with teacher employees attrition (who voluntarily quit their jobs and exit the educational work sector), turnover in this case involving huge financial, economic, organizational, human resources and education costs (Borman & Maritza, 2008; Kelly & Northrop, 2015; Sutchter, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2016) where educating, training, preparing, inducting, maintaining, developing and supporting a teacher constitutes a long, difficult, time and resource consuming process (Lambert et al., 2019).

On top of it, the COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated occupational stress negative outcomes as well as its intensity, increasing in the last years, correlated pathologies. The burden on job demands, working conditions and activity in key sectors such as health services or education has generated new levels of occupational stress (Starystach, Dauner & Bär, 2023). Employees facing the new pandemic reality had to switch to remote work, dealing with a greater work-family conflict and vice-versa, higher levels of occupational stress that ultimately led to anxiety, depression, burnout, fatigue. Isolation, lack of support from peers or the organization, differences in technology knowledge and usage, limited access impacted the level of performance, creating inequalities among employees as well (Kaup et al., 2020; Minihan et al., 2022). Supplementary, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the occupational stress as a global health urgency, reaching numerous contents and contexts (WHO, 2020). Higher levels of occupational stress during the health crisis of 2020 accumulated and generated higher levels of work pathologies, among which depression became a main subject. In a study by Martins et al. (2022), it was reported that 70% of employees (nurses) working in the health sector service, during the COVID-19 pandemic, experienced high levels of depression, possibly related to professional stress. These results are also confirmed by another study, on the same work profile sample, in China, where 34.3% of employees battled depression during the outbreak (Zheng et al., 2021). A study by He et al. (2023) highlighted the impact of occupational stress on mental health conditions (e.g. depressive symptoms, sleep disorders etc.) in the case of civil servants, a relation mediated by social support and work-family conflict variables. The impact on occupational health worldwide is generally monitored and acknowledged (Girma et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021).

### *Occupational stress sources*

As any organizational disturbance, occupational stress is caused by a variety of so called “stressors” or “stress agents” which can trigger usually a negative response from the individual, as well as a positive one (Ismail et al., 2010; Shinde & Patel, 2014).

The scholarly literature describes a multitude of factors that can generate stress, certain authors grouping them into five categories with regard to (Cooper, Dewe & O’Driscoll, 2001; Sava, 2004; Pânișoară & Pânișoară, 2016):

1. *work activity* (e.g. overloading or underloading in quantity or quality terms, time pressure, inappropriate work schedule, improper work conditions, frequent sanctions, frequent work travels etc.);
2. *job role* (e.g. role conflict, vague character of demands, dynamic adaptation to technology evolution, decision-making etc.);
3. *work relations* (e.g. professional interactions with superiors, with colleagues, with subordinates, discrimination, favoritism etc.);
4. *structure and organizational climate* (e.g. inefficient communication, excessive bureaucracy, commitment and sense of belonging etc.);
5. *career development* (e.g. routine fear, job loss fear, promotion challenges etc.).

Pânișoară and Pânișoară (2016) showed that a negative affectivity, which reflects a low self-esteem, combined with a low emotional control may contribute to the employee self-exposure to various stress agents, making the person more vulnerable to such threats.

In 1996, Johns assigned the work stress factors to three major levels as follows (Johns, 1996):

1. *executive and managerial level* (e.g. role overloading, degree of responsibility etc.);
2. *operational level* (e.g. inappropriate work conditions, inadequate job design etc.);
3. *representation level* (e.g. organizational interface challenges, public relations tasks, public representation etc.).

The National Institute on Occupational Safety and Health acknowledged six dimensions that may generate, maintain and develop occupational stress: task design; management style; interpersonal relations; work roles; career expectations; environment conditions (NIOSH, 1999).

In another research paper, Anbazhagan and Rajan (2013), citing also previous works and authors, structured stress causes into individual (containing personality features and constraints of change), group and organizational ones (among which task overload, work role challenges, under-participation, inadequacy of role authority, job difficulty, feeling of inequity, role stagnation, midlife crisis and job requirement capacity mismatch).

Following a review paper by Shen and Slater (2021), results showed that stress sources for academic personnel are bound also to external factors (e.g. heavy workload, administrative problems, unfair reward, publication targets, program supervision, benefits, increased changes, competition, expectations etc.) and internal factors (e.g. role conflict, lack of job control, role clarity, miscommunication, conflict etc.).

In other studies concerning hospitality management work sectors, causes for occupational stress reflected poor working conditions, extensive work hours, low payment, work overload, work shifts, specific features belonging to the hospitality services area (Min, Kim & Lee, 2015; Park et al., 2020; Ma, Ren & Zhao, 2021; Ahmad, Barakbah & Singh, 2021; Khairy & Mahmoud, 2022).

Belkić and Savić (2008) divided the factors generating occupational stress in seven categories: low charge of tasks; intense solicitations; strictness; time pressure from external sources; aversiveness or noxious exposures; avoidance; conflict or uncertainty.

Bolliger et al. (2022) identified in another research work, specific indicators that may constitute different job related stressors, grouping them into: physical work environment (containing ambient, posture, and other bio factors); intensity (including work features in terms of objectives, number of tasks, pace, interconnections and significance); time (representing work schedule and duration, flexible work hours range and structure); social setting (including support and other work behaviors); skills (referring to variables such as decision making, work styles, participation and training); views (containing career, security and employment perception); organizational factors (structural, process oriented and financial); physical status (employee's health).

Isfianadewi and Noordyani (2020) mentioned among occupational stress causes the following: problematic organizational structure, lack of social support from the management team and work peers, work overload, role conflict, job complexity, fast changes, low payment, distance for commuting to workplace.

Şanlıtürk (2021) observed another set of key factors in generating occupational stress at work among employees, mentioning the following: dissatisfaction with the work unit, overload work program, prolonged fatigue, heavy workload, lack of protective equipment, inadequate salary, negative environmental conditions, lack of team harmony, infection fear, failure etc.

Nelson et al. (2001) proposed in another study a model consisting of three major categories for occupational stress: working conditions (management relation, decision contribution, peer work relation); demographic features (gender, work experience, marital status); work capacity (external and internal). Other authors highlighted the importance of other occupational stress sources such as (Lee, Kim & Park, 2022): job demands (e.g. amount of workload, time pressure, paperwork, budget, policy compliance, public relations, business requirements, competition, conflict etc.); degree of autonomy; peer conflicts; lack of rewards; organizational culture.

Following a more functional criteria, Lázló (2008) classified stress factors in: 1. stress sources intrinsic to work process with regard to physical agents (e.g. noise levels, chromatics, illumination, temperature, ambiance etc.), a view supported by other works (Sava, 2004; Akgül & Aksoy, 2021; Davey et al., 2024), repetition and monotonous tasks (Cox, 1993; Suls, 2001; Loukidou, Loan-Clarke & Daniels, 2009), high vigilance requirements job demands (Szalma et al., 2004; Belkić et al., 2004; Teo & Szalma, 2011; Masoudian & Razavi, 2019), work volume (Waldenström et al., 2002; Verhoeven et al., 2003; Légeron, 2015; Marks et al., 2024), dynamic work rhythm (Pavalko & Smith, 1999; Van Emmerik, 2002; Härmä, Kecklund & Tucker, 2024), working in shifts (Stavem, Hofoss & Aasland, 2003; Härmä, 2006; Choi & Kim, 2022; Goncalves Coelho et al., 2023); 2. stress sources with regard to work role in terms of ambiguity (Frone, 1990; Cox, 1993), role conflict (Jimmieson, 2000; Piko, 2006; Sharma & Lata, 2013; Choi, 2024), responsibility towards people (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001); 3. stress

sources generated by work relations with focus on social support (Sargent & Terry, 2000; Peeters & Le Blanc, 2001; Van Emmerik, 2002; Kittel & Leynen, 2003; Verhoeven et al., 2003; Bellman et al. 2003; García-Herrero et al., 2013; Singh, Singh & Singhi, 2015) and workplace violence in terms of bullying, mobbing, psychological terror, harassment and post-traumatic stress (Garcia et al., 2018; Buselli et al., 2021; Forresi et al., 2022; Hamidi Shishavan et al., 2023); 4. stress sources related to career development represented by the absence of development or promotion opportunities and job insecurity (Cox, 1993; Ferrie, 2001; Lee et al., 2004; Kopp et al., 2007; Ongori & Agolla, 2008; James & Henderson, 2016; Leka et al., 2023); 5. stress sources related to organizational structure and climate in terms of decision making, autonomy and control (Kittel & Leynen, 2003; Verhoeven et al., 2003; Freitas, Moreira & Ramos, 2023; Bamal & Duhan, 2023; Rafiei et al., 2024); 6. stress sources related to work-family conflict (Bellman et al., 2003; Yuan et al., 2023; Weale et al., 2023; Maharani & Tamara, 2024).

Other studies found that heavy workloads, unrealistic job demands, understaffing, extended working hours, technostress, budget cuts, communication, solicitations mismanagement, job insecurity, power abuse, profession development absence, social status, work and job dissatisfaction, may lead to a variety of occupational stress manifestations (Topper, 2007; Majid & Haider, 2008; Bramble, 2013; Lindén, Salo & Jansson, 2018; Damayanti et al., 2020; Smith, Bazalar & Wheeler, 2020; Cameron, Pierce & Conroy, 2021; Bano et al., 2023). Bano et al. (2023) mentioned other factors such as role overload, under participation, peer or group relations, low status, difficult work conditions and lack of profit, as major triggers for occupational stress. Palaniappan (2023) structured the causes for occupational stress in work load (in terms of quantity, difficulty and inadequate skills), job insecurity (e.g. low payment, status and stagnancy), lack of support (e.g. inadequate management procedures, disorganization, lack of job clarity, multitasking solicitation), office politics, interpersonal conflicts, physical discomfort (e.g. environment, inability), prolonged working hours, lack of work-life balance, workplace harassment (e.g. violence, threats, bullying), high expectations.

Occupational stress can be triggered, as observed before, by a multitude of factors, leading to various manifestations, at numerous levels, from individual/employee level to group/team and organizational level. The intensity, form, duration and impact degree vary depending on the specific organizational context, cause, participants and solution strategies. Common patterns may be identified in different organizations, while at the same time, in other cases, organizations with common background context, when compared, will present occupational stress outcomes dramatically different.

That is why an organizational diagnosis should be personalized and context related when tackling occupational stress, given the fact that its manifestation develops under the singularity rule and law. For example, in a medium-size company, specialized in public services, employees who work under constant time pressure on the related job tasks, may cope in a normal, natural way with the understanding of a fast service and reply job, while at the same time, in another company within the same business sector, employees may feel

the effects of occupational stress presence, coping with the situation by various conducts: complaints, absenteeism, conflicts, sick leave, low participation etc.

In conclusion, every organizational setting needs to be analyzed and approached individually, by identifying clearly the specific factors that trigger occupational stress, understanding them fully and taking the appropriate countermeasures and building optimal prevention strategies for the long run.

### *Occupational stress outcomes*

Stress has been evaluated for a very long time through its direct results and symptoms on the person's capacity to act, to work, to take action or decisions, to interact and relate to others, to react and respond in an expected manner and to a certain degree that immediate reactions become visible and produce various effects. In time, the research common acceptance extended the dimensions of stress impact, the variables that moderate or mediate its effects, reaching out for hidden, long term or subtle effects of occupational stress phenomenon. In fact as occupational stress has diversified its forms and models, so it happened with its evaluation methodology and directions for research.

From a pathology point of view, depression has been accepted widely and frequently as a major occupational stress result, sometimes as a single episode manifestation, other times as an associated event, alongside absenteeism, turnover or job dissatisfaction (Ashong et al., 2016). In other works, the presence of burnout, fatigue, feelings of attrition signal the presence and results of exposure to occupational stress (Crofford-Truter, Fouché & Theron, 2017; Schwanzer et al., 2022) while in others health risks and psychological diseases prevail (Rotaru, 1997; Cooper, 2006; Cooper, 2008; Brate 2008; Schwanzer et al., 2022).

As a mean of protection and prevention, Lambert et al. (2007; 2010) suggested that students preparing to be future employees, especially for a challenging profession, should focus on developing efficient coping skills and strengthen personal stress prevention resources, ahead of job entry and practice.

Rutter (2006) outlined the negative effect of stress on neural structures, while anxiety, fatigue and a low level of life and work satisfaction (Schwanzer et al., 2022) will lead further more to physiological outcomes in terms of cardiovascular and digestive diseases, immunity disorders, respiratory illnesses, or neurological conditions (Cohen, Tyrrell & Smith, 1991; Sapse, 1997; Klein et al., 2016; Schwanzer et al., 2022). In another research work, Hansen et al. (2006) highlighted the fact that bullying as a major stress agent can generate high levels of anxiety, depression, negative affectivity and somatization, which constitute high costly effects.

No matter the cause, occupational stress poses a constant threat to the well-being of employees, the balance of work and life settings and the optimal functioning of organizational entities, structures and people, nurturing an environment of fear, insecurity and risks.

Apart from direct outcomes of stress agents on employees, teams and organizations functioning, there are a variety of supplementary indirect consequences of stress manifestations. Occupational stress can create a constant atmosphere of tension at work, a fearful climate and increased pressure points that regulate every employee, team and

organization work process. Other indirect effects may be difficult to observe, such as level of mistrust, employee adaptation, informal practices, employee resilience or health conditions. These outcomes sometimes are bound to a complex collection of interactions and associations, difficult to encapsulate and analyze in a direct causal formula.

**Table 3.2.** – Summary of major effects in the case of occupational stress at work

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>EFFECTS</b>
Physiological	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cardiovascular diseases</li> <li>2. High blood pressure and sugar</li> <li>3. Musculoskeletal disorders</li> <li>4. Digestive disorders</li> <li>5. Immune system failure</li> <li>6. Neurological conditions</li> <li>7. Burnout</li> <li>8. Sleep disturbances</li> </ol>
Psychological	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personality disorders</li> <li>2. Psychosis</li> <li>3. Neurosis</li> <li>4. Depression</li> <li>5. Anxiety</li> <li>6. Irritability</li> <li>7. Aggressive conducts</li> <li>8. Burnout</li> <li>9. Frustration</li> <li>10. Impatience</li> <li>11. Emotional lability</li> <li>12. Cognitive disorders</li> <li>13. Addictions</li> </ol>
Social	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Isolation</li> <li>2. Bullying</li> <li>3. Group conflict</li> <li>4. Mobbing</li> <li>5. Harassment</li> <li>6. Discrimination</li> </ol>
Organizational	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Turnover</li> <li>2. Low or lack of performance</li> <li>3. Low or lack of efficiency</li> <li>4. Low or lack of productivity</li> <li>5. Low or lack of concentration</li> <li>6. Low or lack of motivation</li> <li>7. Low or lack of job satisfaction</li> <li>8. Low work-life balance</li> <li>9. Counterproductive behaviors</li> <li>10. Absenteeism</li> <li>11. Presenteeism</li> <li>12. Work incidents and accidents</li> <li>13. Complaints</li> </ol>

For a quicker and easier itinerary read-through the major effects of occupational stress at work, direct or indirect, several categories were created and presented in Tabel 3.2. Of course these are just a few selected examples, keeping in mind that the effects of occupational stress cover a much wider range of manifestations, levels and areas. As seen in Table 3.2., the results of occupational stress can impact every level on the organizational structure and beyond. The negative impact depends highly on the intensity degree, duration, subjective perception, association with other factors, chain reaction of other effects and damage coverage, direct or collateral, for every specific situation or setting, that the company finds itself. These outcomes affect both the employee and the organization alike, extending the negative results beyond their borders sometimes into the community level and family domains. The outcomes of the occupational stress sustain in return the presence of this challenging pathology, fueling a circular effect-cause, which leads to higher and newer levels of occupational stress and of course more visible or invisible damage to the organization and its people.

For example, Yousaf et al. (2020) mentioned high turnover rates as a result of occupational stress, among reduced work output, high accidents rates, absenteeism, low performance and work-family conflict (Toquam et al., 1997; Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010; Falconier et al., 2015; Armstrong et al., 2015). As a potential threat and mechanism, turnover high rate will generate in exchange more feelings of insecurity among the remaining employees, task overloading, fatigue, anxiety just to mention a few, which ultimately will fuel more occupational stress and turnover tendencies among the remaining personnel. The circular association between stress agents, occupational stress and negative outcomes create a chain reaction that ultimately can lead to severe downfalls in the overall functioning of an organizations and its personnel, where without the proper prevention and intervention plans, functional and existential threats will affect the organization's future. In another research study, Kennett, Quinn-Nilas and Carty (2020) observed the academic stress indirect effect on students in relation with resilience, adaptation and health outcomes, stating that learning, resources finding and level of control act as mechanisms in moderating these effects.

Occupational stress stance can explain key trigger points for other “maladies” in the organizational structure and setting. Often seen as a normality state by the managerial expectation grid, in order to achieve performance, its boundaries between a positive motivational push and a negative pathological state with multiple chronic ill implications are fragile, blurry and sensible, more frequently in the favor of the second one, unfortunately.

### *Occupational stress coping strategies*

Following the fact that occupational stress nowadays can undertake many forms and manifestations, with a wide range of effects, it has been observed that also the various and numerous coping strategies and responses match its complexity.

From the individual/employee level, to group/team and organizational level, structures have learned each specifically to respond and adapt more or less optimal to this precise pathological manifestation. The complexity and multitude of coping strategies limits the present debate to name and present just a few.

Starting with the individual – employee level, people may attempt to control rationally the stress challenge, finding valid explanations and grasping on strategic solutions, collecting as much information as possible, utilizing logic and problem solving based approaches (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

In this regard, employees at the workplace will be motivated to overcome the stressful incident through focusing on investigating the cause, variables and effects, while discussing matters with their managers and colleagues, adopting a correct and reality based stance on the matter and trying to address the stress cause in order to resolve the situation that they face.

As another strategy, employees may adopt an emotional control of stress, where more likely they will avoid the matter at hand, refusing to accept a logical and pragmatic solution and giving way for various negative coping strategies that minimize artificially the stress presence and impact, creating the conditions for more problematic outcomes (Luce, 1998; Anderson, 2003; Pitariu & Vîrgă, 2007; Bano et al., 2023; Modula et al., 2024).

Employees at work, depending on the organizational context and stress specificity, can choose and adopt from a huge collection of coping strategies in order to relieve, maintain and develop the stress factor.

Starting with the well-known research by Carver, Scheier and Weintraub (1989) which described various strategies to cope with stress (e.g. from active involvement, planning, restraining, seeking social support, to positive reinterpretation, avoiding competition, acceptance, denial, cognitive and behavior disengagement, addictions or spiritual orientation etc.) as major examples for employee potential means of reaction in response to occupational stress, trends in the last years have shifted to a more personal growth approach in terms of education and support.

Anderson et al. (2022) study results on safety personnel coping strategies related to stress at work, showed that there are several measures used in high demand stressful jobs to confront occupational stress:

1. *education* – where employees learn about the causes and consequences of stress related factors, associations with other diseases or illnesses, potential treatments which in return supports a better adaptation to the work environment and tackling stress at the workplace.

2. *self-reliance* – expressed the use of classical concepts such as problem oriented or emotion focused practices, where employees use self-reflection in some cases to orient their behavior and observe changes while in other cases they refer to algorithm strategies, trial and error, in order to solve a stressful situation. In other situations, in this perspective, employees focused on managing self-control over the stressful event, while taking

intentional steps to solutions and decisions. Results on self-reliance also showed a preference for “me time”, as to cope with stress, employees refer to spending time alone, either for individual tasks or just for simple recovery and quiet time, away from stress.

3. *treatment* – refers to employees seeking pharmaceutical and other medical services in order to cope and overcome stress. This dimension explains the fast track solutions especially to physical symptoms of stress and psychological outcomes (e.g. fatigue, burnout, sleeping disorders, anxiety and depression etc.).

4. *psychotherapy* – described seeking and accessing mental health services, counselling and psychotherapy, psychological treatments as a strategy to restore balance and well-being, even if impeded by difficult accessibility and return to work challenges.

In another study, Bano et al. (2023) explored the coping strategies with focus on library and information professionals, results underlining actions like: 1. matter focus; 2. wishful thinking; 3. detachment; 4. searching for social support; 5. self-blame; 6. tension decrease.

At the same time, Modula et al. (2024), in a research review, organized the coping act for law enforcement personnel in adaptive, maladaptive, resilience and seeking support coping strategies. The authors underlined several subthemes in a variety of research studies grouping them with regard to occupational trauma which include stress related challenges, as follows (Modula et al., 2024):

1. *Adaptive coping strategies*

a. confrontation (employees address the stress and trauma directly, imposing an offensive strategy in direct contact with the challenge);

b. emotion-focus (employees center on the emotional reaction and state with regard towards the traumatic event);

c. positive reappraisal (employees adopt an introspective approach, in which they alter the situational negative impact through allocating a more positive significance to the event, reassessing meanings in different notes);

d. positive reframing (employees restructure information and change personal mindsets in a positive key, searching and attributing significations that create an acceptable, optimistic view);

e. problem-focus (employees search and test various solutions to the traumatic event and stress, their orientation being on the solving, practical strategy with reference to cause, process and outcome in obstacle terms);

f. task-orientation (employees try to organize and prioritize specific tasks in order to address stress agents in an efficient way);

g. spirituality or religion (employees seek and refer to spiritual or religious support, exercising belief for emotional support);

i. stress management (employees seek to train, implement and use techniques, which allow the development of skills that help them reduce and overcome stress matters in an optimal way).

## 2. *Maladaptive coping strategies*

a. distancing (in this case, employees may build and impose a physical or psychological “distance” from the traumatic event and stress);

b. self-distraction (employees adopt a temporary scheme in which attention is diverted elsewhere, away from the negative effects of the event);

c. escape or avoidance (the most common situation in which employees steer clear of the stressful situation itself and its consequences);

d. social isolation (as seen before, in other research studies, sometimes employees seek out alone time, separating from the social network that could provide support, and living in a solitary mode, during and after the stressful incident);

e. self-blame (attributing the fault to the personal responsibility and cause of the entire stressful situation);

f. denial (the simple refusal to acknowledge and accept trauma reality and its effects);

g. repression (as commonly known in psychotherapy, the person will suppress any associated ideas and emotions with regard to the event in discussion);

i. mental disengagement (employees will separate mentally from the outcomes of the traumatic event);

j. substance use (employees will incline to alcohol, drugs and other substances, in order to cope with the stressful event, leading slowly towards addictions).

## 3. *Resilience coping strategies*

a. humor (induces a positive stance among employees facing challenges, being a way to restore emotional balance, optimism, positive perception and hope);

b. visualization or self-mental preparation (in this case, employees prepare “for the worst to come”, personally adopting a defensive position against any potential stress threat);

c. self-emotion regulation (employees focus on understanding, adjusting and adapting their emotions with regard to the situation);

d. self-control (motivates employees to practice control over their reactions, responses and conduct towards stress and trauma);

e. self-responsibility or acceptance (it stimulates employees to accept the situation and take control over the outcomes of the event);

f. self-reliance (stated also by Anderson et al., 2022, refers to employees taking control and action by themselves, accessing their own resources and skills to confront various situations, adapt and change);

g. planning (it involves the ability of employees to organize their steps in acquiring a resolution for managing stress and to find the proper work-life equilibrium);

- i. knowledge expansion (employees seeks to collect more information on the trauma event, understanding the process and consequences, while processing knowledge and developing personally);
- j. venting the experiences (it involves employees' sharing their emotions and personal experiences upon the event).

#### 4. *Support seeking coping strategies*

- a. social support (employees activate and utilize their social support networks in order to manage the traumatic event, during and after the stress experience);
- b. emotional support (describes a specific help in understanding the person's in case emotional struggles, adaptation and balance seeking, from a colleague, manager, family member, friend point of view etc.);
- c. psychological support (explains the strategy in which employees seek and access a more complex form of support, from emotional, cognitive, behavioral dimensions all the way to social, motivational, well-being point of view);
- d. professional support (employees seek specialized services and resources that are designed to manage stress and trauma outcomes, such as counselling, psychotherapy, occupational therapy and medicine etc.).

Employees, at work, from an individual point of view, as observed previously, can embrace a multitude of coping strategies when it comes to manage occupational stress. Many times, the tendency towards easy and quick solutions to overcome a crisis situation leads to maladaptive behaviors or strategies that guide the employee astray from the real solution at stake. The fear of conflicts or negative evaluation, the need to avoid problems at all costs, by ignoring them or refusing them, backfire in higher levels of stress, marking their presence more acute, complicating prevention and real efficient solutions inside the organization. Each coping strategy that the employee adopts is connected to a complex collection of factors and variables (personal, situational, organizational) and must be analyzed with great care and within its real context if the best solution must be found and implemented by the management team.

Anbazzhagan and Rajan (2013) mentioned also that the scholarly literature categorized coping strategies into individual (which include work-focused, emotion-focused, escape or avoidance and approach) and organizational (which include health maintenance, leadership training, stress reduction workshops).

Shen and Slater (2021) showed in a review work, that employees in the academic sector refer more to problem-focused strategies when coping with stress, cognitive appraisal, emotion-focused and social interaction, diverting attention on other matters and less on maladaptive coping.

In another example, Khairy and Mahmoud (2022), observed that in the hospitality services sector, problem solving, avoidance and social support coping strategies impact

occupational stress manifestation, where social exchange moderates the association with turnover intention of employees in this work area.

In the case of group or team coping strategies at the workplace, the manifestations presented previously might apply as well, to a certain degree, at this level. From a social sciences perspective, including the social psychology paradigms, groups will follow in some cases the ingroup – outgroup approach, referring to occupational stress as an outside source that threatens the ingroup balance and functioning. If performance or cohesion are threatened by stress challenges at group level, its members can decide and select from a multitude of solutions, either individually or collectively, or both. In some cases, the group can choose to ignore or avoid the problem, in other cases it can adopt an offensive stance, to approach the topic directly, being solution driven and problem-focused. In another situation, the group might decide to “outsource” its stress related problems, “contaminating” other work groups, teams, departments and organizational structures, in a bid to solve the ingroup conflict and stress challenge, or simply to invest outside sources with the cause and responsibility for it. In a research work, Kamphuis, Delahaij and de Vries (2021) explored the team coping concept, in terms of individual and team level strategy efforts, as a collection of individual interventions in a group, with regard to common tasks and objectives. The authors analyzed interactions between burnout symptoms, exposure to danger, individual and team coping, in an organizational military context, results showing that the negative effects of danger exposure can be buffered by team coping, allowing further practical suggestions for team’s capacity to support individuals facing occupational stress and hazards at work, acting as a supplementary resource for resilience, cohesion, unity, task engagement and consensus inside the group (Kamphuis, Delahaij & de Vries, 2021). From this perspective, adopting a team coping strategy that help its members, individually, to overcome the negative effects of occupational stress, constitutes a positive and efficient way to counter stress at work. Same authors state that if team coping can influence individual results in a positive manner, and if team leaders understand its nature and significance, they may support such strategies, actions and interventions in order to address various work tasks and objectives in a personalized approach (Kamphuis, Delahaij & de Vries, 2021).

On a opposite view, the group or team coping may resort to maladaptive strategies, in which individual employees might be influenced negatively in managing occupational stress. As an example, let us imagine an organizational context in which a team is highly emotion-focused, when dealing with occupational stress and task demands, while the individual or team member is problem-focused, trying to find practical solutions and resolve the matter. A potential new conflict might emerge even from divergent views between the two levels on resolving stress at work, adding more pressure on one entity or the other. If the employee, as a team member gives in, the team coping will determine him to adopt more likely the same type of coping as the group tendency. In this case there will be a clear shift from problem-focused strategy towards an emotion-focused strategy. One can imagine an even more complicated scenario, in which team coping might imply to deny the presence of occupational stress and its effects, refusing the reality in its true image,

pressuring even more the team members or employees, resulting in an increase in the levels of stress and leading to maladaptive responses and organizational pathologies.

In conclusion, coping at group/team level may function in both directions, negative or positive, impacting the individual/employee level coping strategy in certain situations.

In the case of organizational level coping strategies, Kuo (2013) mentioned that there is an unsystematic approach towards the topic research, more studies being needed on such an important subject, and a reduction in the heterogeneous terminology (Rodríguez et al., 2019). Same authors referred to organizational coping in two types of strategies in dealing with occupational stress (Rodríguez et al., 2019): 1. co-active coping (where individual strategies are imitated, replicated and shared by the organization); 2. collective coping (where collective strategies are being displayed and utilized by the entire organization or by its management representatives). In this case, individual coping strategies to stress, can be generalized and extended at organizational level, becoming well-established policies of action and conduct in a crisis time. In time, by constant replication and usage, these practices can become “ways” of managing stress at the workplace, either positive or negative, influenced by the organizational culture, context and outcomes. Rodríguez et al. (2019) also mentioned that in a way organizational coping to stress can be explained through the famous social comparison theory by Leon Festinger and the extension paradigm on stress, anxiety and affiliation, later developed by Stanley Schachter, in the 50s, where employees will push for a common social reality, replicating the same coping strategies in relation with same stress agents that their co-workers confronted.

As mentioned before, in the study by Anbazhagan and Rajan (2013), organizational coping strategies can refer also to some specific and technical measures inside the organization that can include health maintenance, leadership training with regard to stress management and stress reduction actions, workshops and procedures.

In another study, Palaniappan (2023) quoting the The National Institute on Occupational Safety and Health, presented several coping strategies at organizational level that can address the occupational stress in order to support employees:

1. monitoring workloads, task allocation, skill fitting and execution time;
2. offering a clear job description in terms of work objectives, responsibilities, tasks and roles;
3. providing access to sufficient resources for task completion;
4. establishing training for new tasks implementation, skills development, technology updating;
5. ensuring transparent communication and supporting employees opinion sharing and decision making;
6. fitting, adapting and applying the optimal leadership style to the employees and organization.

At individual/employee or organizational levels, the management team plays a vital role in regulating and validating steps, procedures and policies to prevent and manage

occupational stress at the workplace. Without the clear vision and support of this organizational component, the employee will find itself alone and limited in resources to address occupational stress in efficient and adaptive ways, giving way to maladaptive coping strategies that will impact negatively the employee functioning and performance at work, before extending to the organization itself.

In conclusion, organizational coping strategies take individual/employee ones to a general, systemic, procedural response in order to prevent and to manage stress in the organization. Depending on every specific organizational setting and organization's profile, culture, climate, history and background, these initiatives may prove positive or negative, related outcomes underlining the company profile, behavior and habits in addressing occupational stress.

### *Occupational stress prevention and management*

In the organizational pathology spectrum, the scholarly literature on occupational stress describes numerous approaches for prevention and management. Usually these practices follow the stress models and conceptual framework presented previously in dedicated sections. Specifically, if stress is addressed using the stimulus, reaction, interaction or transaction paradigms, then the management practices will be adapted accordingly to these scripts. Zlate (2007) was offering an example in this sense, stating that if a management practice considers occupational stress as a stimulus or stress agent then the attention and solution strategies will focus on work and tasks, as well as on the work environment features (e.g. work conditions accommodation, redesigning jobs, work time adjustments, team organizing etc.).

As stated before, occupational stress prevention and management can be implemented at individual/employee, group/team or organizational level, depending on where stress effects act and where the causes originate. Unfortunately, in many situations, managerial strategies refer to quick solutions, targeting immediate effects, failing to observe origin sources or causes, in-depth or hidden effects that relapse in the same area or elsewhere, sometimes with increased intensity and chain effect reaction.

Le Blanc, Jonge and Schaufeli (2000) proposed several types of managerial interventions in countering occupational stress, approaches found in other works as well (Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2001; Le Fevre, Kolt & Matheny, 2006; Zlate, 2007; Cooper, 2008; Lázló, 2008; Pânișoară & Pânișoară, 2016):

1. *identification* – which involves pinpointing the real stress factors concerning work and the reactions to it;
2. *primary prevention* – which focuses on the reduction of stress agents, either in number or intensity (e.g. time management, clarifying roles, job enrichment, redesigning jobs, task and effort efficient programming, organizational structures and processes adaptation, health programs, interpersonal skills training, promoting work-life balance and

realistic expectations upon work, efforts and outcomes, personal development of employees, didactic stress management etc.);

3. *secondary prevention* – which solicits modifying the way employees respond and react to stress agents (e.g. improving communication, conflict management and decision-making, organizational development, career management, organizational diagnosis, projecting better organizational policies, coaching, consultation, co-worker support groups, career planning, learning adaptative coping strategies, using cognitive-behavioral techniques etc.);

4. *therapy* – which describes the support services offered to employees already challenged with occupational stress negative effects (e.g. accessing support and health counselling services, employee assistance programs, work guidance, psychotherapy, psychological counselling etc.);

5. *recovery* – which describes procedures to return to work for the employee, adapt to the old or new job setting, readjust to work tasks, integrate or reintegrate in the work field (e.g. job rotation and replacement, planned and gradual return to work, job, organization or career change etc.).

These types of procedures can be applied with success after a complete and complex organizational analysis and diagnosis, keeping in mind that each organizational setting is unique and dynamic. The management team should be aware that occupational stress causes may vary and interchange rapidly, many times triggering a chain reaction effect with other consequences and variables, at different levels, from individual to organizational. Identifying the real causes and their explicit mechanisms with direct and indirect outcomes should be a starting red line in every stress management intervention and solution.

In systematic review, Anchors et al. (2024) presented and organized several research articles on stress management interventions, at individual and organizational level, resulting specific application categories for the employee level such as mindfulness usage, stress education, relaxation training, resilience training, clinical supervision, support resources and educational programs. As for the organizational level, the same authors mentioned care models use, rostering, organizational interventions and education packages (Anchors et al., 2024).

From another perspective, Horan et al. (2018) outlined the importance of supervisor training in stress management themes and support, which can help bolster workplace stress interventions.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest towards technology based stress management interventions, observed in several clinical and organizational studies. For example, Kowalski et al. (2024) presented interesting results in using mobile health (mHealth) for organizational contexts, mentioning the need for short and consistent interactions between the user employee and the application, taking into consideration engagement intention and habit building which are sensible to workplace environment, social support climate and management encouragement. By self-monitoring moods, providing information daily on stress and recovery, measuring engagement, the authors

analyzed a variety of predictors alongside stress, such as burnout, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety, supporting the idea that these online interventions, apart from the classical, on-site procedures, offer the employee a better access to such measures, easier to scale and standardize, reducing potential stigma, being an alternative or a complementary procedure to existing, standard, at work interventions (Ebert et al., 2014; Howarth et al., 2018; Phillips et al., 2019; Torous et al., 2021; Kowalski et al., 2024). In another research paper, Durden et al. (2023) explored the use of another application entitled “Woebot”, through the WB-LIFE platform, concluding that the program may be associated with reduced stress and burnout, alongside increased resilience in individuals with clinical or non-clinical of mood and anxiety symptoms. Moreover, van der Feltz-Cornelis et al. (2023) presented the design and development of the European Platform to Promote health and well-being in the workplace (EMPOWER), a digital program built for intervention in work stress, which addresses both employees and employers. The authors prepare the application for a multimodal intervention, with focus on occupational stress, well-being, mental and physical health, work productivity, structuring the platform and website as follows (van der Feltz-Cornelis et al., 2023):

1. *for employees - application*
  - a. well-being and mental health at work (e.g. psychoeducational materials, tools for reducing work stress, cognitive restructure, emotion tracking, problem-solving skills etc.);
  - b. work functioning (e.g. modules to reduce presenteeism, absenteeism or sickness absence, individual goal setting, improving work functioning etc.);
2. *for employees - website* - reducing psychosocial stress at work through recommendations;
3. *for employers - website* - reducing psychosocial stress at work through recommendations.

Weerasekara and Smedberg (2023), outlined the importance of designing digital stress management interventions in terms of screening and self-assessment, supervision, using chatbots, online leisure activities, giving access to information on stress management topics, introducing support networks, expert opinion, alongside general principles such as focus, simplicity, familiar settings, privacy and security, confidential frame, customized content. These new guidelines may orientate future application developments in addressing occupational stress at the workplace, with more specific requirements, versatility, adaptability and covering new manifestations of work stress in a digital task oriented environment. In another study, Nixon et al. (2022) demonstrated, in a pioneer work trial, the positive effects of web-based stress management interventions, in stress reduction for employees, despite difficult work conditions, and increased occupational self-efficacy, for short term, outlining that organizational interventions are still needed to reduce occupational stress on the long run.

So far, technology does not surpass or exclude the in-person, on site standard interventions for occupational stress reduction, whether at individual/employee, group/team

or organizational level. The coming years, the tech evolution, the appearance and development of artificial intelligence (AI), the positioning of human-centricity and regulations will define the path for such strategies and the mode of conducting them in a secure, efficient and optimal setting.

In conclusion, occupational stress management prevention and management, including interventions, outline numerous actions that can be taken nowadays in tackling causes, effects and impact of stress on employee work life, in various forms and at different organizational levels. However, the present dynamics and new challenges to the work environment, new types of stress pathologies and associations, new crises, solicit a constant attention, a vital need for research and phenomenon understanding, alongside adequate procedures, regulations, policies and strategies in order to ensure the well-being and health of employees and their organization.

### **III.1.2. Burnout**

As a follow-up of occupational stress, burnout has been described in the academic literature as a chronic form of professional exhaustion, being highly associated with occupational stress, long term effects and other organizational pathologies, in some instances representing a cause for it, while in others becoming a vivid effect of stress. Ever since the 70s there have been many research papers on the burnout theme, the term itself and conceptualization going through a series of reforms and refining processes, as well as its definition and methodologies.

As in the case of occupational stress, burnout can impact the individual/employee, group/team and organizational level, with multiple costs in physical and mental health, social and economic negative outcomes, threatening the well-being of employees and their work-life balance for longer periods of time.

Several authors outlined major similarities and differences between stress and burnout, stating that (Schaufeli & Buunk, 1996; Zlate, 2007; Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2009; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2023): 1. stress and occupational stress may import a wider coverage in work-life sectors and manifestations than burnout which relates more specifically to the work area; occupational stress can reside in temporary, episodic sources while burnout originates from a constant tension; 3. stress solicits temporary adaptations while burnout envisions a long term imbalance, a prolonged maladaptation effect; 4. stress is engulfed in more psychological cues than burnout which detains a more concrete and objective constraints; 5. stress can exist independently while burnout is bound to stress. In many organizational settings, the two pathologies work alongside together, forming a toxic association, with tragic, generating a series of effects on work processes, organization and employees, supporting and sourcing their existence upon a circular collection of factors and mechanisms. For example, employees challenged with frequent stressful events or stress agents, to which they address with maladaptive coping strategies, facing constant failures, frustration, incapacity to meet the demands and

requirements, will be more likely sensible to exhaustion, a sense of constant insufficient and inappropriate resources, opening the path for burnout installation and development.

Following Zlate's (2007) research work and existing scholarly literature up to more present times, burnout definitions can be structured on some historical paradigm background, trend and specific representative authors as presented in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3.** – Trends for defining burnout in organizational settings

<b>AUTHORS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>	<b>FEATURES</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Freudenberger (1975) Maslach (1976) Perlman and Hartman (1982)	The 1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specific to some professions, bound to offer support</li> <li>• a form of chronic fatigue, depression and frustration</li> <li>• failure in producing expected rewards</li> <li>• response to chronic emotional stress</li> <li>• emotional and physical exhaustion</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. reducing involvement</li> <li>2. lowering productivity</li> <li>3. health pathologies</li> <li>4. conflicts</li> <li>5. behavioral changes</li> <li>6. physical disorders</li> <li>7. depersonalization</li> </ol>
Maslach and Jackson (1981)	The 1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a syndrome of emotional exhaustion</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. depersonalization</li> <li>2. reducing professional achievement</li> <li>3. losing motivation</li> <li>4. sense and perception of work burden</li> </ol>
Leiter and Schaufeli (1996) Maslach and Leiter (1997)	The 1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a form cognitive, emotional and physical resources depletion, present in all occupations</li> <li>• relation crisis</li> <li>• work crisis</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emotional exhaustion</li> <li>2. Decreasing professional efficacy</li> <li>3. Impact on professional activities</li> </ol>
Shirom (2003) Truchot (2004)	The 2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• affective reaction to stress</li> <li>• need for cultural items exploration</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. depletion of individual energy resources</li> <li>2. emotional exhaustion</li> <li>3. physical fatigue</li> <li>4. cognitive discouragement</li> </ol>
Schaufeli, Leiter and Maslach (2009) Bakker and Demerouti (2017)	The 2010s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work life characteristics</li> <li>• extended cultural context</li> <li>• disproportion between demands and resources</li> <li>• a constant divergence between organizational and employee mission, vision and values</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. constant failure to meet the demands</li> <li>2. impossibility to rest and regenerate</li> <li>3. insufficient resources</li> <li>4. value conflicts</li> <li>5. lower involvement</li> <li>6. exhaustion</li> </ol>

AUTHORS	TIME FRAME	FEATURES	OUTCOMES
Bakker and de Vries (2021)  Schaufeli, Desart and De Witte (2020)	The 2020s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• occupational phenomenon</li> <li>• cognitive impairment</li> <li>• situational and individual factors</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. health and job related outcomes</li> <li>2. chronic fatigue</li> <li>3. limited effort</li> </ol>

As seen in Table 3.3., latest developments on the burnout topic underline the importance of exploring and uncovering wider dimensions and specific mechanisms that support the formation, development and maintenance of burnout, beyond the classical view on sources, effects and coping strategies. In another specific view, Maslach and Leitner (2016) defined the phenomenon as a mental health case syndrome, represented by extreme tiredness, a general disbelief or cynicism and of course lack of efficiency, caused by a negative association between work and chronic occupational stress, expanding the understanding of burnout from the individual psychological state to perception, behavioral and functional levels, comprising so more directions when it comes to this pathology impact and observed effects.

The new occupational developments, the appearance of new jobs, technology advances, new concepts of performing work, the clash of cultural factors and perceptions, alongside a deepening gap between corporate and individual vision, objectives and values will force new frontiers in studying burnout at the workplace.

Burnout in numbers presents a dramatic and negative perspective over its prevalence and impact. In 2015, the prevalence of burnout was 10% among employees inside the European Union and 17% among employees in non-EU countries (Schaufeli, 2018) while in another study by Pendell (2018), on US population, data showed a staggering 28% among employees belonging to those born between 1980 to 1996 (Generation Y). The World Health Organization introduced burnout in the International Categorization of Diseases (ICD-11), even though its recognition as a medical condition is not supported so far (WHO, 2019). Moreover, increases in burnout rates have been accelerated, alongside occupational stress and work pressure, during and following the COVID-19 pandemic (Prasad et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2023; Nagarajan et al., 2024), leading in time to a lack of work commitment, task disengagement, detachment from the work itself, and costly high turnover rates, absenteeism, inefficiency, low performance or none, disruptive behaviors, various work pathologies and a problematic work climate (Ahmad, Barakbah & Majdi, 2021; Smith et al., 2023). Some studies have placed, for example, just for the health care system, the burnout rate among employees between 68% to 86% in 2021, after the COVID-19 2020 pandemic outburst (Khan et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2022), while others to 78.7% (Singh et al., 2024), their high levels being associated with turnover tendencies and early retirement, soliciting more support and safety for the workplace as measures, understanding better burnout evolution and dynamics, employee recovery and adequate interventions for prevention, management and rehabilitation at individual, team and organization levels (Singh et al., 2024).

In another study, a meta-analysis conducted by Swider and Zimmerman (2010), the authors examined the burnout dimensions (exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment) in association with personality traits and specific work outcomes such as absenteeism, turnover and job performance, results showing that personality may predict strongly the experience of burnout, having moderate effects on work dimensions presented before. On the opposite, in a national longitudinal study, Lauden et al. (2020), explored global health experiences, well-being and burnout in medical staff, results not showing a clear association between these experiences and the exposure to burnout, levels and improvement. Some other authors even questioned the existing evidence on job stressors as predictors on burnout, as being unclear and inconclusive, with problematic diagnostic criteria and definitions, describing it as an elusive syndrome, overlapping depression and stress (Bianchi & Schonfeld, 2023). Apart from numerous associations of burnout with other pathologies such as occupational stress, fatigue, depression, other illnesses or sicknesses, observed in the research endeavors, in the last years there has been a shift towards more in-depth analysis of burnout mechanisms, especially after a major crisis such as COVID-19. Unfortunately as of this moment most of the recent scholarly literature has prioritized somehow the health care system, which on hand is a normal approach in a world health crisis but for the medium and long term, there will be a more soliciting need to address other systems and occupations concerning burnout not only front line, high demand or risk jobs. Throughout the long history of burnout study and research in organizations, several models were created and many attempts to structure them according to a variety of criteria, either on specific frameworks (e.g. process model, tridimensional model, phase model) or on non-specific terms (e.g. coping centered models, resources centered models)(Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Shirom, 2003; Zlate, 2007; Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2009; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Following these models, burnout has gone through multiple adaptations, reforms and enrichment processing, resulting in today's organizational phenomenon. Each of the above mentioned models highlighted a certain area of interest, discovering more and driving the management towards various strategies to address this pathology. Just as in the case of occupational stress, the organizational setting, organization's individuality and specific matter at hand can dictate the use of an adequate model, every pattern being in a constant dynamic.

As an overall conclusion to this section, by exploring burnout in the new organizational stances, it can be stated that future studies will focus more on the expansion of burnout in a wider variety of occupations, in newer job demands facing tech revolutions and AI, technostress, current changes in occupational profiles, and newer pathologies associations at the workplace. Moreover, by understanding its variations, its sociodemographic patterns and cultural variables, alongside key moderators and mediators, employee needs, perceptions and work preferences, optimal and specific interventions can be developed and applied in various organizational cases, the need for increased support from managerial level being evident. Another future key point of interest resides in the exploring further and in more detail the pathological newer sources and outcomes of burnout, such as bullying, mobbing, discrimination, organizational injustice, work terror

climate, fear of negative evaluation, lack of support or learning environment at the workplace etc.

### *Burnout sources*

The inventory of burnout causes is “generous” and complex, adding new sources with every new research investigation on various organizational settings and study cases. In this section, just a few examples were selected and presented due to the extensive scholarly literature on the matter and limited frame to present all in detail.

As in the case of occupational stress, burnout can be generated by individual/employee, group/team or organization level factors, sometimes individually or in mixed compositions. If initially, as stated in various reference works, burnout was viewed as being triggered by individual psychological factors, personality features (Freudenberger, 1975; Swider & Zimmerman, 2010) or by psychosocial factors, on the basis of interaction or relations (Maslach, 1976), later on, the perspective was extended to various other more specific sources, among which: work load, role stress, role conflict, role ambiguity, low degree of decision making participation and autonomy, low social support, workplace and communication characteristics, low resources constantly addressing high demands, failure to meet the expectations at work, inadequate or absence of reward for completing tasks, effort – cost – outcomes imbalances, lack of free time, constant work-family conflict, fear of negative evaluation, fear of job loss, perceived low job security (Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Shirom, 2003; Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2009; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Sterkens et al., 2023; Çınar et al., 2023; Sterkens et al., 2024; Üngüren et al., 2024).

In more recent years, the focus also fell on sources such as discrimination, harassment at the workplace, favoring coworkers in comparison with others on subjective basis, bullying, mobbing, technostress, poor management practice and interventions, organizational and technological change, low payment policies, improper information sharing between co-workers, workplace relations, organizational climate and culture (Kemper et al., 2020; Çınar et al., 2023; Sterkens et al., 2023; Üngüren et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2024). Beyond the standard organizational common causes, the 2020 health crisis plunged the organizational world and at work pathologies to new unexpected settings and results, burnout being triggered by job higher demands, response time, teleworking, family-work balance and conflict, lack of managerial support, personal and organizational resources collapse, mental health disorders, social isolation and exclusion (Khan et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2024; Song et al., 2024; Gawlik, Melnyk & Tan, 2024; Pagán-Garbín, Méndez & Martínez-Ramón, 2024).

In a meta-analysis research paper, Aronsson et al. (2017) underlined supplementary factors like organizational injustice and low job control, besides other variables mentioned before, while Feher et al. (2024) mentioned the internet addiction as a new input for burnout syndrome.

In time, the collection of sources for generating burnout at the workplace, unfortunately, has diversified intensively, creating a web of interactions among numerous variables that support each other in maintaining this pathological phenomenon, developing conditions for it to thrive. If not addressed properly, timely and efficiently, burnout has irreparable effects on the well-being of employees, direct physical and psychological health and the good functioning of the organization.

Just as in the case of occupational stress, the burnout syndrome impacts individual/employee level (e.g. sources: workload, harassment, bullying, job demands, lack of skills, lack of reward, personality disorders, mental health conditions, family-work conflict and vice versa, role stress, role ambiguity, role conflict, various fears on future job security and outcomes, mismatching task efforts and high end expectations etc.), group/team level (e.g. sources: mobbing, social isolation and exclusion, conflicts, toxic leadership, biased information exchange etc.), organizational level (e.g. sources: organizational climate and culture, insufficient resources, lack of adequate policies and strategies, faulty management, organizational change, absence of support policies etc.).

In conclusion, the burnout sources vary across every level of the organizational frame, their dynamics allowing them to manifest either at a singular level or at multiple structures at a time. Unfortunately the practice and organizational reality prove a more pessimistic perspective, in which burnout usually manifests at more levels at a time, on the basis of interaction with chain reaction variables, affecting a lot of work patterns from individual sector to the organization's general domain. In other words, as a simple example, employees worn out with workload pressure constantly, role conflict or ambiguity, will be more likely to engage in group work conflicts, adding more pressure to their work relations, leadership and coping strategies. At the same time if they will be confronted with a toxic organizational climate, built on uncertainty and fear, high demands jobs and low support, the negative calculation will lead with a high probability towards burnout manifestation, affecting all three levels as its sources exist there.

### *Burnout outcomes*

In view of the burnout outcomes, numerous articles have explored, described and presented a tremendous amount of this syndrome's results. Due to its long history of research, the burnout phenomenon has been analyzed in various organizational contexts and settings, leading to a complex inventory which yet has been completed. New research studies keep on presenting constantly, up to date, new discoveries and hidden effects of this threatening pathology and implications.

Generally speaking, the burnout syndrome impacts same as in the case of occupational stress, multiple layers and sectors of the organizational structures and life. Same as before, the reference here will focus on the three stage design output structure, following effects at individual/employee, group/team and organizational levels.

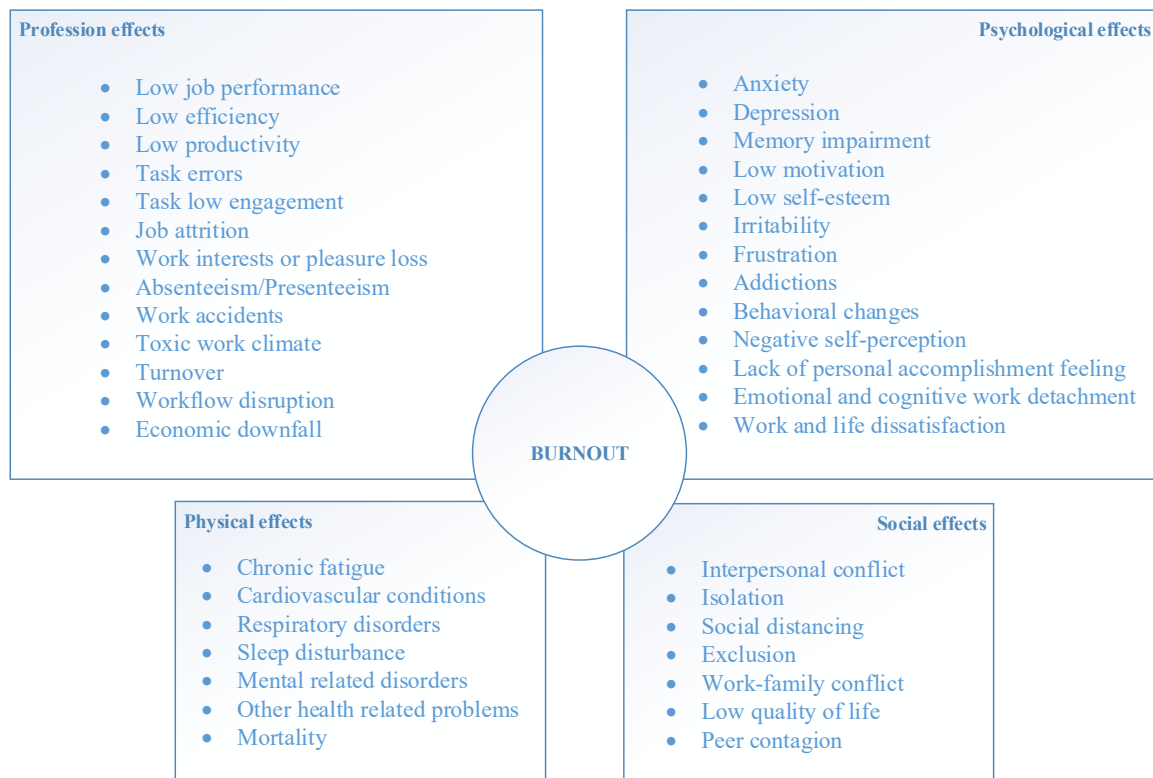
Across time, studies underlined either direct, physical effects (e.g. chronic fatigue, sleep disturbance, cardiovascular conditions, respiratory disorders, acute pain etc.),

revealing the immediate risk on employee health and well-being (Bakker & Costa, 2014; Çinar et al., 2023; Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2023; Butz et al., 2024) or psychological outcomes (e.g. anxiety, depression, negative perceptions on work, memory impairment, emotional and cognitive detachment from work etc.), describing a complex collection of personal stances on emotions, perceptions, behaviors and cognition (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010; Lubbadah, 2020; Çinar et al., 2023; Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2023).

Supplementary, other research papers invoked the job related effects and social “costs” of burnout development in organizations, drawing the premises for a more wider acceptance and exploration of this pathology (Maslach & Leitner, 2016; Aronsson et al., 2017; Mendes & Miguel, 2024).

In a study on the nursing sector, Çinar et al. (2023) structured the burnout effects into three major categories: 1. physical (e.g. experiencing pain, physical fatigue, sleep disorders etc.); 2. psychological (e.g. introversion, mental fatigue, mood shifts, decreased sense of commitment, focus problem, feeling of loneliness and inadequacy etc.); 3. behavioral (e.g. relationships disruptions, emotional manifestations etc.).

No matter the case, the burnout effects cover a complex and wide area inside the organizational pathology spectrum. Thus a few representative examples were extracted from previous research works, selected and presented systematically in Figure 3.1., allocating them to best known and general categories (profession, psychology, social and physical effects) for an easy access identification. These effects impact, as mentioned before, the individual/employee, group/team and organizational levels, being prone to appear specifically in one sector or in multiple areas, depending on the specific cause, organizational setting, context, chain effects and variables associations.



**Figure 3.1.** – Burnout effects and selective categories

As presented in Figure 3.1., the variety of effects mentioned in the four categories can interact in multiple cases and modes, generating specific outputs further on. It is worth mentioning, for example, that in the case of an employee challenged with burnout, who manifests anxiety as a result, low motivation at work and cognitive detachment from tasks, there is a high chance for a work accident to take place, leading to more tragic results for the person itself, co-workers and any other entity involved. These effects might appear as a singular function or activate at the same time as multiple indicators in some situations, while in others they can trigger a chain of effects, increasing the negative impact.

The burnout syndrome, as an organizational pathology manifestation needs further investigating and causal relation validation, its closeness to occupational stress and depression complicating the diagnosis process. However, so far, the discovery and interest to test new dimensions with regard to burnout, will complete present knowledge gaps and validate previous studies.

### *Burnout prevention and management*

As in the case of occupational stress, the burnout syndrome, generates inside the organizational setting, various manifestations and adaptation responses in individual, group and organizational areas.

With regard to the individual employee level, people actions tend to cover a wide collection of strategy responses when confronted with burnout, depending on the context,

degree of intensity, associated effects, contagion, management policies and responses, degree of support, individual differences, personality dimensions etc.

Similar as in the case of occupational stress response, coping strategies for burnout come identical in form and features, ranging from adaptive coping strategies, maladaptive coping strategies to resilience coping strategies and support seeking coping strategies. Depending on the situational factors at work, the individual's own resources to tackle and manage burnout as well as the support network, burnout may be dealt with efficiently, by harmonizing the work program, task support, accessing counselling services and management support.

On the other end, if left unattended the implications may reside in various medical conditions and pathologies occurrence, frequent association with fatigue, depression and mental illness, in some scholar views (Shirom, 2003), while others see distinct outcomes and paths for their process (Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2001; Zlate, 2007; Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2023). Even so, the clear effects of burnout, lead the individual to resort to various adaptative behaviors that can support positive solutions to burnout (e.g. seeking advice and specialized counselling, taking medical leave, professional reorientation, seeking management or team support, reconfiguring job design, tasks and objectives, reconsidering expectations and relating them to organizational realities, weighing objectively personal resources, effort degree, expected outcomes and projections etc.) or on the other hand refer to immediate, more easy access negative strategies (e.g. generating interpersonal or team conflict, isolating, taking medication without specialized evaluation, supervision and recommendation, developing various addictions, sabotaging projects and peers tasks, engaging in unmotivated leave of absence, presenteeism, absenteeism etc.) which will heighten the impact on the professional and personal life of the employee, affecting performance, motivation, self-esteem, satisfaction at work, the professional relation with coworkers and the management team, challenging the well-being and the normal functioning on the job.

Among the renowned researchers and authors works on the burnout topic, presented in previous sections of this chapter, several have developed, in time, specific instruments that offer a useful tool, both for the research and practice area, for exploring the burnout syndrome and its associations. It is worth mentioning that the methodological debate and refining strategies are a continuous process regarding these tools, as such views differ or oppose at times on their psychometric features. Aside from any debate, a few examples were selected next, in order to present the most well-known:

A. Authors: Maslach, Leiter and Jackson (2017) – constructed one of the most well-known instruments for burnout measure and developed various versions in time, addressing both general and specific work sectors, with a clear focus on the classical concepts of “emotional exhaustion” which comprises 5 items, “depersonalization” which includes 5 items, and “reduced personal accomplishment”, supported by 6 items and their measurements in the standard design. Several forms were developed and some are mentioned as follows (Maslach, Leiter & Jackson, 2017):

- Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI);
- Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey (MBI-GS);
- Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Service Survey (MBI-HSS);
- Maslach Burnout Inventory – Student Form (MBI-SF);
- Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI-ES);
- Maslach Burnout Inventory – Medical Staff Survey (MBI-MP).

B. Authors: Schaufeli, Desart and De Witte (2020) - in redefining the concept perspective on burnout, the team developed an assessment tool (Burnout Assessment Tool – BAT) that evaluate four major core dimensions of burnout with regard to “exhaustion”, “mental distance”, “emotional and cognitive impairment”. Version BAT-C tool includes 23 items for its standard form, while 12 items are allocated for its shorter version. The same authors built also a secondary symptoms scale, which contains 10 items, and measures two factors: “psychological complaints” (e.g., sleep disorder, pressure, concern etc.) and “psychosomatic complaints” (e.g., muscular pain, migraine etc.).

Some item examples are as follows, with regard to various BAT dimensions (Schaufeli, Desart & De Witte, 2020):

1. *exhaustion*: “Everything I do at work requires a great deal of effort”, “At the end of my working day, I feel mentally exhausted and drained”.
2. *mental distance*: “At work, I do not think much about what I am doing, and I function on autopilot”, “I struggle to find any enthusiasm for my work”.
3. *cognitive impairment*: “When I’m working, I have trouble concentrating”, “I make mistakes in my work because I have my mind on other things”.
4. *emotional impairment*: “I do not recognize myself in the way I react emotionally at work”, “I get upset or sad at work without knowing why”.

C. Authors: Kristensen et al. (2005) - built an inventory (Copenhagen Burnout Inventory - CBI) which addresses the work-related burnout, structured on a 19-item self-reported measure, exploring personal, work or client-related pathology phenomena. Some item examples would be (Kristensen et al., 2005):

1. for exploring personal themes: “How often do you feel tired?”, “How often are you physically exhausted?”, “How often are you emotionally exhausted?”.
2. for evaluating work-related themes: “Do you feel worn out at the end of the working day?”, “Are you exhausted in the morning at the thought of another day at work?”.

D. Authors: Shirom and Melamed (2006) – created a 14-item tool (Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure - SMBM), that contains 3 subscales, to which the respondent selects answers to each individual item, on a frequency scale consisting of 7-points, where 1 refers to option – “almost never”, all the way to 7 which refers to option – “almost always”. The mean score can be calculated across the 14 items, as a total score, representing the degree of burnout. The subscales and some item examples are presented below (Shirom & Melamed, 2006):

1. *physical fatigue* (6 items): “I feel physically drained”, “I feel fed-up”.
2. *cognitive weariness* (5 items): “I feel I am not thinking clearly”, “I have difficulty concentrating”.
3. *emotional exhaustion* (3 items): “I feel I am unable to be sensitive to the needs of coworkers and customers”, “I feel I am not capable to being sympathetic to coworkers and customers”.

E. Authors: Halbesleben and Demerouti (2005) – developed an 16-item inventory (Oldenburg Burnout Inventory - OLBI) that evaluates physical, affective and cognitive exhaustion (which include feelings of physical, affective and cognitive fatigue, the need for rest), as well as disengagement in work (highlighting the negative attitudes, behaviors and distancing from work). The are two major scales and a few examples listed below:

1. *exhaustion* (8 items): “After my work, I regularly feel worn out and weary”.
2. *disengagement* (8 items): “I frequently talk about my work in a negative way”.

F. Authors: Gil-Monte (2011) – designed a questionnaire with 20 items (Burnout Syndrome Evaluation Questionnaire for Education Professionals - CESQT-PE), measuring scores on a Likert scale with 5 levels (where potential answers range from 1 - never, 2 - a few times per year, 3 – a few times per month, 4 – a few times per week, 5 – everyday). The survey contains 4 major dimensions. Dimensions and some item examples are also given below (Gil-Monte, 2011):

1. *enthusiasm for work* (5 items), explores the employee need to achieve professional goals, in terms of personal achievement: “My work is a stimulating challenge for me”.
2. *psychological strain* (4 items), investigates physical and emotional exhaustion at work: “I think I'm saturated with work”.
3. *indolence* (6 items), observes the occurrence of indifference, disbelief and negativity towards work activities: “I label or classify students based on their behavior”.
4. *guilt* (4 items), explores the guilt degree presence for previous negative attitudes or behaviors in association with work, peers and professional relations: “I have regrets about some of my behaviors at work”.

G. Authors: Pines and Aronson (1988; 2005) – structured 21 items on the burnout theme as a one-dimension questionnaire (The Burnout Measure – BM), focusing on exhaustion at physical, emotional, and mental level, on a 7-point rating scale, which gives the respondent the option to select for each item an answer ranging from “never” to “always” (1 - never, 2 - once in a great while, 3 - rarely, 4 - sometimes, 5 - often, 6 - usually, 7 – always).

The instrument itself can be applied to a variety of work sectors, exploring a self-report on the state of burnout in the case of each employee. Later in 2005, the same authors developed a shorter version for the survey, comprised of just 10 items, outlining the needs and solicitations of practitioners and researchers for easy, quick, time and space efficient

application and measurements (item e.g. “being tired”, “can’t take it anymore”, “feeling trapped” etc.).

The constant developments and research on the burnout topic inside the organizational field, have led to continuous refining of the measurements and evaluation methodology (Schaufeli, Enzmann & Girault, 1993; Malach-Pines, 2005; Gerber et al., 2018; Shoman et al., 2021; Shoman, Hostettler & Canu, 2023; Deroncele-Acosta et al., 2023; Cao, Hassan & Omar, 2024). The construct itself generates challenges in approaches and defining, due to its complexity and close associations with occupational stress. However, the surveys mentioned above and many other instruments offer a vital insight both for research and practice levels, consolidating the comprehension and management of the burnout syndrome at work, in a continuous development.

Beyond the individual level, burnout expands with its effects at group/team level, members exchanging in some cases by contagion the outcomes of its presence. In this case, work groups and teams resort to various coping strategies as well.

As in the case of the individual level, the strategies can be divided here in positive or negative, adaptive or maladaptive. For example, a team might deal with burnout in rethinking their work and task process, optimizing roles, time and assignments while organizing their activity, taking decisions together and discussing matters at hand, as a positive coping strategy.

In another case, the team might solicit support from the management level, outside coordination and counselling in order to address the burnout challenges as another example of positive coping strategy. On the opposite side, in another situational context, the work group can decide to isolate employee individuals or team members perceived as confronted with burnout as a maladaptive coping strategy solution. Another example of maladaptive coping strategy is described by sabotaging project process, results or deadlines in terms of delays, refusing tasks, avoiding duties as a measure to reduce the workload, task pressure, and burnout intensity. This strategy unfortunately will eventually generate more occupational stress, negative outcomes, potential sanctions and increase the burnout syndrome among employees who perceive a constant failure in keeping up with the increased demands, expectations and results.

At work group or team level, burnout can generate a diversity of solutions and strategies adopted by its members, both positive or negative, in their effort to cope with the syndrome. Beyond the contagion effect, at this level, burnout can intensify its impact by the wide coverage it detains over the group members and multiplication risk occurrence. At the same time, as presented previously, if the group or team redirect their efforts towards tackling burnout by raising awareness, acknowledging its presence and effects, working together towards sustainable and positive solutions, its negative impact can be reduced and removed. As always, in every situation the organizational context and specific variables will dictate the process, manifestation and solution strategy adopted by each individual or team in part.

In the case of organizational level, the burnout syndrome can be addressed at a policy level, through clear regulations and actions to be taken, in order to prevent or manage burnout at the workplace among employees. Coping at organizational level involves the decision making sectors and management stakeholders that can set a formal framework for burnout prevention and management. On the contrary, if the company leadership fails to understand the risks and burnout threats, this situation may lead to a generalized context of fatigue, work and performance disruptions, a decreased general sense of commitment to task, work, objectives, values and ultimately company vision. On top of it, burnout will affect the organizational climate and interpersonal environment at the workplace, raising concerns about the capacity of the company's culture to respond and resolve the matter adequately.

In the multiple levels approach of the Job-Demands Resources (JD-R) theory, Bakker, Demerouti and Sanz-Vergel (2023), outlined the process in which, at organizational level, through job design, climate building, human resources practices, ensures the training of management representatives, leaders, who later on, impact the team level in terms of well-being, shaping behaviors, which further will influence the individual level on the same basis. So, by establishing a certain regulation, strategy or coping solution at the organizational level, will create effects with no doubt in the other two, team and individual sector.

Keeping the employee in a gain cycle, while paying attention to the general well-being, personality and job demands-resources, and giving access to daily job resources and crafting, while exercising work engagement will improve job performance (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2023). On the opposite, keeping the employee in a constant cycle of losing, where job requests lead to burnout and inefficiency, will generate negative results at all three levels (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2023).

Ensuring an adequate job profile and demands through a proper, realistic and objective design, developing a support climate, completed by valid human resources practices, are vital in taking action against the burnout phenomenon, preventing its negative outcomes and managing its impact on the employees and the organization itself.

In another work, Pitariu and Vîrgă (2007), highlighted several interventions that can be applied as a stress control strategy in organizations, that can work as general guidelines for the burnout phenomenon, among these: adequate job description and profiles (with focus on role conflict, role ambiguity, expectation-effort-result bias etc.), scientific evaluation of job profile, reward system based on transparency, competence and ethics, personnel selection and promotion based on validated psychological techniques, organizational context adaptation, management training, work and organizational psychology resources usage.

Beyond job design, a climate of support, human resources policies and practices, adjusting job demands to job resources and vice versa, the academic literature has explored and advocated for creative job crafting, proactive management, adaptive work design, counselling services, training for leadership, supervision practices and feedback, raising awareness campaigns, access to information, co-worker support and services, burnout resilience and intervention trainings, well-being programs at work, government regulations

for work-life balance and so on (Bakker & Costa, 2014; Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2023; Butz et al., 2024; Riese et al., 2024; Bovee, 2024).

Other authors have suggested recreational or leisure activities to counter burnout effects at work, all the way to professional reorientation, job changing and profession enhancement (Pressman et al., 2009; Fuseini, 2024).



**Figure 3.2.** – Burnout intervention strategies and organizational levels

In Figure 3.2., several burnout strategies for prevention and intervention were structured systematically, according to the organizational level and usage. The measures can be applied at different levels in the organization's structure as the sectors are interlinked.

In conclusion, prevention and management strategies for handling burnout at the workplace can be applied and redirected at all three functional levels – individual, group/team and organizational, either in primary (e.g. applying direct measures such as job crafting, evaluating reward system, reassigning tasks etc.), secondary (e.g. burnout resilience training for employees, objective term planning etc.) or tertiary modes (e.g. counselling services, return to work policies, workplace accommodation, support programs etc.).

The success rate will depend on the preparation of employees, management readiness and resilience degree to withstand the occurrence and manifestation of burnout. By activating all necessary resources, from government policies and regulations to all internal strategies and practices, burnout phenomenon can be prevented and addressed if present already, in a vivid partnership between employees, management and state ruling.

Reinforcing positive coping mechanisms and accessing the right approach from the variety of existing measures, must fit the organizational context, employees and organization's specific needs.

### III.1.3. Workaholism

Since the first introduction of the concept of “workaholism” by Oates in 1971, the term has been developing across time in various conceptual approaches and interpretations, leaving an open room for debate and opposite views, with some references considering it as an pathologization of a normal behavior extreme manifestation while others placing it in the addictions category, where employees are challenged with uncontrolled and compulsive work behavior (Andreassen & Pallesen, 2016).

More recent scholarly literature has defined workaholism both in positive terms such as a supplementary effort or increased performance or negative terms such as health risks and various pathologies at work, with regard to attitudes, cognitions, emotions and behaviors (Schaufeli, Shimazu & Taris, 2009; Andreassen & Pallesen, 2016).

Other authors placed the workaholism term in the broader concept of “heavy work investment”, considering it a subtype of the latter, and clearing the pejorative perceived character of its first stance, with a clear focus on the work act itself (Snir & Harpaz, 2012). On the opposite, Andreassen and Pallesen (2016) argued that there is a difference between heavy work investment and workaholism in terms of behavior fallout and the uncontrolled and compulsive manner to which the work is processed, both becoming markers of the second concept.

In a detailed recent review, Morkevičiūtė and Endriulaitienė (2023) have highlighted the major contradictions and dilemmas when defining the term, pointing out also a certain differentiation between workaholism and work addiction this time, where for the first stance, workaholism is defined by an excessive work behavior while work addiction describes a more psychological construct, with pathology referencing.

It is quite difficult to define the concept due to its complexity, lack of consensus, wide range of usage and historical evolution, where at times the two terms were used interchangeably in some cases, while in others it was a clear distinction, work addiction defining more clinical aspects, in the clinical psychology, while workaholism being attributed to the organizational sector (Clark et al., 2016; Bodó et al., 2024).

So, workaholism can be described as a work addiction, in which employees become obsessed with work, put on an excessive effort while facing negative outcomes. It can also be seen as a behavioral pattern, trait or attitude by some views (Jackson et al., 2016; Kenyhercz et al., 2024).

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that workaholism was not accepted in the addiction categories, stipulated by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – 5<sup>th</sup> edition (DSM-5) nor by the International Classification of Diseases – 11<sup>th</sup> edition (ICD-11), due to lack of scientific consensus, opposing perspectives and definitions, as well as due to the complexity of measurements.

Andreassen and Pallesen (2016) described workaholics as employees who exercise most of their time in work, in tasks, people who think and plan on work continuously, being driven by a constant need to increase working, in order to repress guilt, anxiety, helplessness, depression, while avoiding work pauses or non-work episodes (which creates

stress, anxiety, irritability etc.), with huge costs over the work-life balance, health, relationships, well-being.

The loss of control, compulsions, counterproductive behaviors and results will follow the same patterns as in general addictions, affecting perceptions, attitudes, emotions, cognitions, conducts and balance for the long term.

In relation with workaholism, the same authors synthesized the major related concepts giving some clear definitions which can help the reader navigate through the complex approach of this phenomenon (Andreassen & Pallesen, 2016):

- *workaholism* – describes a work style dominated by work concerns and uncontrollable motivation for it, the effort affecting employee health, relations and personal time and balance;

- *work engagement* – defines the dedicated involvement into the work act, energetic and positive;

- *harmonious work passion* – explains the motivation behind the work and profession dedication in terms of choice, job adherence, personal importance and representation;

- *obsessive work passion* – it follows the same features as the harmonious work passion, with the mention, that employees in this case, lack the choice autonomy for work, the act itself becoming a strategy to avoid personal guilt;

- *work flow* – indicates a full mental immersion and involvement in the work process;

- *work over-commitment* – defines a collection of attitudes, emotions and behaviors directed to quench the need for acceptance and recognition;

- *type A behavior* – well-known concept inside the personality theories, which describe an employee with competitive traits, self-driven, highly motivated, active, performance orientated;

- *perfectionism* – highlights a personality trait with focus on high expectations, demands and standards, fear of negative evaluation and failure, strict self-evaluation;

- *obsessive-compulsive feature* – describes another personality trait characterized by extreme order, rigid behavior, perseverance and ego-centered regulations.

Ng, Sorensen and Feldman (2007) underlined three dimensions in explaining workaholism, represented by affect (with pleasure, guilt and anxiety inside the work act), cognition (as containing obsession towards work) and behavior (with an excessive degree between work and personal life).

Zlate (2007) presented several criteria that apply in the case of general addictions, which in turn can be related to workaholism in defining it, such as: 1. behavior impulse resistance incapacity; 2. preceding high tension; 3. certain satisfaction throughout behavior manifestation; 4. loss of control; 5. length of manifestation in terms of duration.

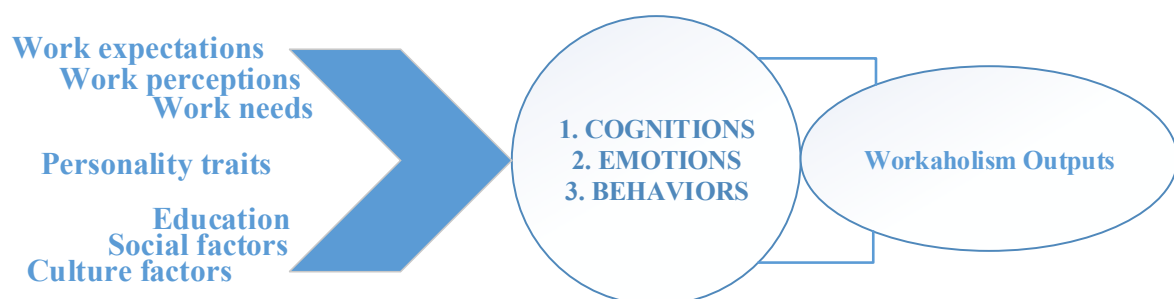
For a more easier understanding and efficiency, the term workaholism will be kept in this section discourse, referring to its causes, effects and interventions, inside the work domain and organizational pathology.

### *Workaholism sources*

From an organizational pathology perspective, sources have varied in generating workaholism behavior. Andreassen and Pallesen (2016) have structured them into determinants, comprising various researched dimensions:

1. neurobiological base – e.g. serotonin and dopamine levels etc.;
2. distortion of needs – e.g. degree of autonomy in work, competence level etc.;
3. personality variables – e.g. neurotic traits, narcissism, perfectionism etc.;
4. cognitions – e.g. social comparison process, case attribution and interpretations, cognitive schemes etc.;
5. learning styles – e.g. social learning, learning models, reinforcement etc.;
6. family background – e.g. family dynamics, demands, over-protective styles etc.;
7. culture dimensions – e.g. technology, globalization, job security etc.

In another study, Aziz and Cunningham (2008) indicated the work-life imbalance, work or occupational stress can act both as associated source factors as well as outcomes of workaholism. Bodó et al. (2024), in a longitudinal study, observed personality dimensions in addictions towards work, drawing attention on the need to monitor personality organization and disorganization, as potential risks for workaholism occurrence, development and perpetuation. Moreover, Clark, Lelchok and Taylor (2010) specified that beyond certain Big Five personality factors, narcissism and perfectionism become positively associated with some workaholism dimensions. The same authors mention the need to study further the situational context, organizational culture and work features for a more profound comprehension of interactions between personality traits and workaholism negative or positive outcomes (Clark, Lelchok & Taylor, 2010), as well as identity and utility motivations that stand behind the workaholic behavior (Rothbard & Edwards, 2003), as well as work centrality, expressive and economic orientation, interpersonal relations and financial needs (Harpaz & Snir, 2003).



**Figure 3.3.** – Workaholism source categories and employee individual dimensions impact – an organizational view

Following a scholarly literature synthesis and analysis, Figure 3.3. encompasses main source categories as potential determinants for the workaholism process, in association with individual components that can be impacted, generating effects in the organizational context.

Dong and Li (2024) indicated that employment competition, overwork trends, justice climate and employee perceptions in organizations, workaholic leaders, may act as sources for employee workaholism, creating an environment in which external pressure may by contagion force excessive work in order to satisfy the demands. In the same view, She et al. (2024) raised awareness on leaders workaholism, negative and positive influence on employee creativity, resilience, competition as coping actions.

In the well-known work of Ng, Sorensen and Feldman (2007), principal sources for workaholism were organized into three categories: 1. dispositions (e.g. achievement traits, values, self-esteem); 2. socio-cultural experiences (e.g. negative social experiences, learning process, competition etc.); 3. behavioral reinforcements (e.g. prizes and sanctions, winner system, organizational environment etc.).

In a study over nurse educators, Abou, Alsayed and Alnajjar (2024) stated that pressing job demands, expectations, work-life imbalance and quality of life can act as risk factors for workaholism, burnout and turnover in academic organizations, underlining that work-related variables (e.g. workload, staff shortage, job demands, time constraints, unfair work assignments etc.), personal variables (e.g. personality traits, social status, dispositions, lack of personal time etc.), identity variables (e.g. appreciation and competence need, perfectionism, desire for self-efficacy, high sense of responsibility and accomplishment, promotion and merit, self-satisfaction etc.) identify as antecedents and source generators for various consequences in the workaholism equation. The same authors concluded that attention should be also given, in research, practice and organizational interventions, to differences in perceptions over workaholism and life balance, alongside demographic features in terms of age and work experience, as well as position rank, workload and administrative duties (Abou, Alsayed & Alnajjar, 2024).

In the same view, Hynes and Cullinane (2024), examined workaholism in the academic sector, reaffirming that internal drivers (e.g. certain personality traits) and external drivers (e.g. learning environments, culture, norms, expectations, competition etc.) can lead to workaholism occurrence. The authors raise awareness on how the academic work sector is prone and exposed to workaholism, where the mechanism of organizational and family norms through excessive job demands leads ultimately to effects on behavior, motivation, emotions and cognitions, on a negative basis (Hynes & Cullinane, 2024).

From another point of view, Jackson et al. (2016) solicited more research on the biological and socio-cognitive dimensions in employee personality, moving the attention on individual differences that can explain better factors and mechanisms in generating workaholism. Moreover, the social representation and naturalization process research of the construct can offer key insight on how employee vivid experience shape work addiction at the workplace, where the individual is caught between the request to work hard and the limit no to cross certain lines (Negura, Plante & Namian, 2023).

In conclusion, the vast majority of sources generating workaholism or work addiction, are present both in individual components as well as in contextual ones, highly related to personal learning antecedents and experiences, in conjunction with the organizational environment features, culture and job demands. Every case of workaholism must be analyzed individually related to the employee and the context, by identifying exact and specific sources in order to address the most appropriate strategies and actions for intervention.

### *Workaholism outcomes*

As a process with multidimensional implications, this behavioral pattern presents numerous outcomes for the individual, group or team and organizational level. In this section certain research highlights are presented, with an emphasis on major workaholism features, symptoms and effects.

Morkevičiūtė and Endriulaitienė (2023) found that most authors generally refer to seven specific symptoms when they describe and define workaholism as an addictive behavioral pattern: salience, tolerance, mood change, conflict, withdrawal, relapse, and problems. In another study, Kenyhercz et al. (2024) referred to just four of these elements (salience, conflict, mood change and problems) as major elements of work addiction that are associated with difficult social interactions.

In another view, Zlate (2007) structured and presented several psychological and behavioral features of workaholism according to the scholarly literature as follows: 1. work excess; 2. work obsession; 3. seizing work's objective purpose; 4. irresistible attraction towards work without pleasure gaining; 5. breaking personal and social balance; 6. perceiving work as a limitless pleasure; 7. reducing interests to work only; 8. behavior control difficulty; 8. discomfort and guilt in relation with work denial or refusal; 9. need to increase time, rhythm and quantity allocated for work despite health risks; 10. fatigue denial; 11. high performance standards and expectations set with exaggerated resources image and self-capabilities. These symptoms occur in certain stages, from discreet start manifestation level, personal disturbances, to increased costs and late somatic disorders (Castro, 2004; Zlate, 2007).

Gillet et al. (2018) examined workaholism and work engagement impact on social relations (e.g. work-family conflict), work behaviors (e.g. performance), physical health (e.g. sleep disorders), psychological health (e.g. burnout), observing that workers who display high levels of workaholism and a decreased work engagement are at risk for burnout manifestation, sleep disorders and work-family conflict.

Cook and Gilin (2023), on another study over work engagement and workaholism, found that workaholics are more exposed to burnout and to work-family conflict than the work engaged ones.

Abou, Alsayed and Alnajjar (2024) presented a series of consequences related to pressure determinants of workaholism on employees in the education sector, for example: 1. *work-related* - low performance, conflict risk, turnover intent, burnout, job dissatisfaction

etc.; 2. *personal* – work-family conflict, life dissatisfaction, low self-care, absence of personal time and leisure time, social life disruption, family obligations conflict, low quality of life; 3. *health* – sleep disorders, fatigue, various pains, anxiety, irritability, emotional distress.

Focusing on the social life aspects, in a series of meta-analysis (focusing on work-life imbalance, social functioning, family relations, intimate relation quality, friends, colleagues, community relations), Kenyhercz et al. (2024), found that work addiction impacts negatively social relations, their quality, the work-life balance, increasing work-family conflicts and social dysfunctions.

On a specific work sector, Quinones, Griffiths and Kakabadse (2016), found that in the case of compulsive internet work users there is a higher risk in developing maladaptive behaviors related to work and subsequently workaholism.

In another study, Harpaz and Snir (2003) tested several associations of workaholism with variables such as work centrality (significance and importance of work for the employee), expressive orientation (perception of work in light of satisfaction, interest and variety), economic orientation (perceived importance of material resources), interpersonal relations (the dynamics of work contacts), adding also indicators as number of work hours per week and financial needs, results showing a significant relation between workaholism and the economic drive and work centrality.

Ng, Sorensen and Feldman (2007) mentioned that workaholism outcomes reside in job and career satisfaction levels, mental health, perfectionism, coworker distrust, social relations, physical health, performance.

Snir and Harpaz (2012) considered this work pathology to be a “heavy work investment” subtype and classified its sources in external or internal indicators, either controllable or uncontrollable and stable. For the external factors, the authors indicated basic financial needs, job and employer requests, organizational culture, industry sector, labor-market conditions and cross cultural differences while for the internal dimensions they included addiction to work, fear, obsessive-compulsive personality, work passion, low leisure preference, high living standards effort, work values (Snir & Harpaz, 2012).

In recent works, Andreassen and Pallesen (2016) included in the outcome frame for workaholism, results such as emotional and health problems, interpersonal conflicts, sleep disorders, psychosomatic symptoms, impaired job and life satisfaction, as well as work performance. The authors also classified major work addiction symptoms in: *salience* (preoccupation for work), *tolerance* (work increase), *mood* (work as a way to avoid certain dispositions), *withdrawal* (mood shift when work not possible), *conflict* (tension with personal needs and others), *problems* (impact on leisure, health and social networks), *relapse* (remission of previous behavior patterns after control episode), (Andreassen & Pallesen, 2016). As modern day explanations for workaholism, the authors indicated dispositional, sociocultural and behavioral reinforcement factors (Andreassen & Pallesen, 2016).

Beyond the standard symptoms and observed effects in the case of workaholism, the scholarly literature offers a detailed view over numerous typologies and features that

encompass a variety of manifestations and behaviors. Here are just a few mentions that highlight certain categories in a temporal order, the sources and content being much more abundant and complex.

For example, a typology developed by Oates himself in 1971 stated (Oates, 1971; Zlate, 2007; Malinowska & Tokarz, 2014; 2021) several instances for workaholism: 1. “dyed-in-the-wool”; 2. “converted”; 3. “situational”; 4. “pseudo”.

Another author, Rohrlich in 1981, stated the following types (Rohrlich, 1981; Zlate, 2007; Malinowska & Tokarz, 2014; 2021): 1. “hostile”; 2. “ashamed”; 3. “defensive”; 4. “competitive”; 5. “lonely”; 6. “culpable”; 7. “latent”; 8. “frustrated”; 9. “narcissistic”; 10. “obsessive”; 11. “passive-dependent”; 12. “psychotic”; 13. “pseudo-workaholic”.

Later in 1987, Naughton described four major categories (Naughton, 1987; Zlate, 2007; Malinowska & Tokarz, 2014; 2021): “job-involved”, “compulsive”, “non-workaholic”, “compulsive non-workaholic”.

In 1990, Fassel introduced other four types of workaholism (Fassel, 1990): 1. “compulsive workers”; 2. “binge workers”; 3. “hidden workers”; 4. “work anorexics”.

Later in 1997, Scott, Moore and Miceli defined three structures based on task drive and feature typology (Scott, Moore & Miceli, 1997; Malinowska & Tokarz, 2014; 2021): “compulsive-dependent”, “perfectionist”, “achievement-oriented”.

In 2000, Robinson proposed four types of workaholics, with regard to task orientation – relentless, procrastinating, high-stimulus seeking and bureaupathic, while in 2013 it was completed by another classification – “relentless”, “bulimic”, “savoring” and “attention-deficit” (Robinson, 2000; Robinson, 2013).

On another view, when referring to types of “heavy work”, Snir and Harpaz (2012) indicated two categories with specific subtypes: 1. situational heavy work investors (a. “needy type”; b. “employer-directed”); 2. dispositional heavy work investors (a. “workaholics”; b. “work-devoted”; c. “intimacy-avoiders”; d. “leisure-low-interested”).

In recent works, in 2010, Glicken identified and described six types of workaholism types (Glicken, 2010): 1. “loner”; 2. “frightened”; 3. “burned-out”; 4. “incompetent”; 5. “dictatorial”; 6. “manic-depressive”. In another study, Innanen, Tolvanen and Salmela-Aro (2014) observed two profiles, in a longitudinal study – engaged and exhausted workaholic, the first category being in association with subjective well-being, detachment from work, relaxation, sufficient rewards, life satisfaction, while the latter being challenged with social pessimism when promoting through career.

In 2016, Andreassen and Pallesen citing other scholarly literature sources (Spence & Robbins, 1992; Scott, Moore & Miceli, 1997; Robinson, 2013) indicated key features for workaholic types, from which major defining concept were selected, adding their primary fears, in this section as follows: *compulsive-dependent* (work detachment incapacity - fear of pausing or not working), *perfectionist* (excessive interest for details - fear of failure), *achievement oriented* (success extreme seeker - fear of losing), *bulimic* (swing between procrastination and work effort - fear of imperfection), *relentless* (non-stop fast work - fear of low standards), *savoring* (enjoying continuous work - work quality fear), *attention deficit* (seeks work stimulation - routine fear), *careaholic* (work for others approval - fear of

failing others), *enthusiastic* (pleasure for work - fear of dissatisfaction), *non-enthusiastic* (need to be work involved - fear of satisfaction).

Beyond numerous typologies, symptoms and effects of workaholism, there should be a greater attention given to work and life values of the employee as well, both in research and practice. These dimensions interact with the employee's beliefs, attitudes towards work, perception of job and related tasks, motivation to perform or not, as well as the resilience towards workaholism or its embrace. Work values shape the drive to work for every employee, but in the case of workaholics they can offer an insight for the intrinsic or extrinsic sources that mobilize the individual to an excessive act (Malinowska & Tokarz, 2021), and the motivation to succeed.

In conclusion, workaholism consequences interfere dramatically with employee well-being at the workplace, affecting performance, work-life balance, interpersonal relations, mental state and health. These effects unfortunately, if not attended, may extend beyond the individual job level, stepping into the personal life of the employee, the group or team activity and finally reaching the organization's optimal functioning and results.

#### *Workaholism prevention and management*

As a constant concern for the organizational sector, workaholism has gained in recent years more attention, its effects being somehow stimulated by the new tech advances, more immersed experiences in the teleworking, technostress, virtual work environments, to which human centered approaches try to find solutions.

So far, the scholarly literature has presented a generous variety of prevention and management measures, that on one hand stimulate adequate workload distribution, human resources policies and practices, counselling and support services, same as in the case of occupational stress or burnout, while on the other hand it advocates for rebalancing work-life proportions, regaining a certain accepted quality of life and well-being among employees through new creative initiatives and actions.

As an example, Gillet et al. (2018) mentioned several actions that can prevent workaholism occurrence and its management like: adequate workload distribution, human resources policies and practices adapted to employee requests, access to job resources and organizational justice, job autonomy, supporting life balance, introducing organizational segmentation norms, limiting workplace tele-pressure, decreasing communication work-home boundary crossing, adopting an optimal work schedule which contains adequate breaks and time off from tasks, accessing mentoring and counselling services, creating a support culture inside the organization.

As a practical implication, managerial sectors should diagnose, analyze and manage work values in relation to motivations, in terms of adjusting them to a support, balanced, enjoyable, autonomous and more efficient work environment (Malinowska & Tokarz, 2021).

Abou, Alsayed and Alnajjar (2024) mentioned that there are specific strategies that can help tackle work addiction situations at individual level (e.g. time management, healthy lifestyle, building strong social relations, favoring hobbies and leisure time, behavioral

therapies, distancing from work in off work time etc.) and at institutional level (e.g. support environment at work, flexible work schedule, employee motivation and engagement programs, professional and leadership development, organizational justice, team building etc.).

In another study, Hynes and Cullinane (2024) stated that, both prevention and management strategies for workaholism, should focus on several procedures at hand: good health encouragement, reasonable demands and resources, supervisor training, respecting diversity and inclusion in job design, adequate funding models, sustainable work practices, well-being support, promotion and prioritizing, creating an organizational culture of health, dismantling performance and reward policies that generate workaholism, positive coping strategy adoption for every employee. Moreover, several other authors, including Jackson et al. (2016) acknowledged that socio-cognitive dimensions of personality can be the primary focus in counselling and intervention services, in order to reduce the negative effects of workaholism.

Andreassen and Pallesen (2016) mentioned group or individual interventions to address workaholism, cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, organizational interventions (e.g. use of transformational leadership style, use of positive role models, introduction of a proper reward system and flexible work schedule, applying life-work balance programs and career coaching, addressing basic psychological needs and enhancing work engagement etc.), self-reliance and self-support as major planned interventions that can help reduce this pathology negative effects and ultimately eradicate it.

The intervention plan can be built according to the organizational context and needs. Each structure has its own features and responds differently to the workaholism pathology.

Similar to the source and outcome treatment, an optimal solution strategy needs to answer specific points and questions in order to be successful: 1. what is the real source for the behavior?; 2. are there any secondary antecedents associated with the behavioral cause?; 3. what is the specific portrait of symptoms and how does the manifestation takes place?; 4. are there any side effects?; 5. which are internal factors and which are external factors?; 6. identifying the outcomes and structuring them according to specificity, degree, duration and impact; 7. what are the best types of intervention and how to follow up long-term effects? 8. which solicit immediate attention?; 9. who are the stakeholders involved?; 10. how can the support network be activated and who is responsible for what inside the solution strategy?.

As a primary step, answering the questions mentioned above, can lead to building up a proper intervention and management plan for a case in work addiction. In next steps the strategy plan can be refined in detail in order to respond the complex specific situation the employee and the organization find themselves in.

The scholarly literature contains several evaluation instruments for workaholism, developed in time, from which a few examples were extracted and presented briefly next (McMillan et al., 2002; Schaufeli, Shimazu & Taris, 2009; Andreassen et al., 2012; Andreassen & Pallesen, 2016; Clark, Smith & Haynes, 2020; Urbán et al., 2019; Gonçalves et al., 2023; Gürbüz et al., 2024):

A. Work Addiction Risk Test (WART) – developed initially as a one factor solution, in 1989 by Robinson, later was restructured as a five factor instrument, focusing on dimensions like “overdoing”, “self-worth”, “control-perfectionism”, “intimacy” and “mental preoccupation”, which describe the symptoms of work addiction. The test has known several refining stages, in which the 25 items, referring to “compulsive tendencies” (9 items), “control” (7 items), “impaired communication” (5 items), “inability to delegate” (1 item), “self-worth” (2 items) were reconceptualized in the revised version WART-R model, with four factors (“over-commitment”, “impatience”, “hard-working”, and “salience”), and only 17 items. Respondents select individual responses on a 4-point frequency scale where options range from 1 (never), 2 (sometimes), 3 (often) to 4 (always). Below are some item examples on various dimensions (Urbán et al., 2019):

1. *impatience*: “I get impatient when I have to wait for someone else or when something takes too long”.
2. *hard-working*: “It is important that I see the concrete results of what I do”.
3. *over-commitment*: “I find myself doing 2 or 3 things at one time such as writing a memo and talking on the phone while eating lunch”.
4. *salience*: “I spend more time working than on socializing with friends, on hobbies, or on leisure activities”.

B. Workaholism Battery (WorkBAT) – contains a tridimensional framework, focusing on “work involvement” (8 items), “drivenness” (7 items) and “work enjoyment” (10 items) and it was authored by Spence and Robbins in 1992. The test is built around 25 items, on a 5-point Likert scale (where options range from 1 – strongly disagree, to 5 – strongly agree). Later versions reduced the items to 19, and just two factors (drivenness – 12 items and work enjoyment – 7 items), while using a 7-point Likert type answer scale. Other authors completed the 25 items with another 39 items for work behavior on a 4-point Likert type scale. Below are some item examples on various revised dimensions (Spence & Robbins, 1992; McMillan et al., 2002):

1. *work enjoyment*: “My job is so interesting that it often doesn’t seem like work”; “I do more work than is expected of me strictly for the fun of it”.
2. *work drivenness*: “It’s important to me to work hard, even when I don’t enjoy what I’m doing”; “I often find myself thinking about work, even when I want to get away from it for a while”.

C. Dutch Work Addiction Scale (DUWAS) – is the result of extensive research upon work pathology, conducted by Schaufeli and Taris in 2009. The scale is exploring two major dimensions: “compulsive work” (5 items) and “excessive work” (5 items) – DUWAS-10. Across time several other versions of the test comprised either an increased number of items – DUWAS-16, or different stances of responses, from the observer perspective (DUWAS-OR) or the self-reporting position (DUWAS-R), or adding a third

dimension entitled “overwork” (4 items), alongside infusing more items to “compulsive work” (7 items) and “excessive work” (9 items). Below are some dimensions and examples from the short version form of the instrument, where the respondent has to choose from a 4-point Likert scale answer grid (where options comprised 1 – never, 2 – sometimes, 3 – often, 4 – always) (Schaufeli, Shimazu & Taris, 2009):

1. *excessive work*: “I find myself continuing to work after my co-workers have called it quits”; “I seem to be in a hurry and racing against the clock”.

2. *compulsive work*: “I feel obliged to work hard, even when it’s not enjoyable”; “I feel guilty when I take time off work”.

D. Bergen Work Addiction Scale (BWAS) – explores core components of work addiction, through one dimension scale, integrating 7 items (“cognitive salience”, “tolerance”, “mood”, “relapse”, “withdrawal”, “conflict” and “health problems”), constructed by Andreassen and collaborators in 2012, on a 5-point Likert scale (where options range from 1 – never, 2 – rarely, 3 – sometimes, 4 – often, to 5 – always). Some examples for items and dimensions are as follows (Andreassen & Pallesen, 2016):

1. *tolerance*: “Spent much more time working than initially intended?”.

2. *conflict*: “Deprioritized hobbies, leisure activities, and exercise because of your work?”.

3. *mood*: “Worked in order to reduce feelings of guilt, anxiety, helplessness and depression?”.

E. Multidimensional Workaholism Scale (MWS) – differentiates conceptually between workaholism and work addiction, with a focus on the first, the instrument being authored by Clark, Smith and Haynes in 2020. The measure contains 16 items, on four factors, respondents choosing answers on a 5-point Likert scale (where options are 1 - never true, 2 – seldom true, 3 - sometimes true, 4 - often true, 5 - always true): “motivation” (inner tension to work – 4 items), “cognition” (uncontrollable thoughts related to work – 4 items), “emotion” (negative emotions outside the work act – 4 items), “behavior” (excessive working – 4 items). Below are some dimensions and examples (Clark, Smith & Haynes, 2020):

1. *motivation*: “I always have an inner pressure inside of me that drives me to work”; “There is a pressure inside of me that drives me to work”.

2. *cognition*: “I feel like I cannot stop myself from thinking about working”; “It is difficult for me to stop thinking about work when I stop working”.

3. *emotion*: “I feel upset if I have to miss a day of work for any reason”; “I am almost always frustrated when I am not able to work”.

4. *behavior*: “I tend to work beyond my job’s requirements”; “I work more than what is expected of me”.

Gonçalves et al. (2023), presented in their work also very interesting views on the strengths and limitations of scales involved in measuring workaholism or work addictions.

On a different perspective, Snir and Harpaz (2012) pointed out several interest questions for future research endeavors in the measurement sector for heavy work investment, in terms of time and effort, that can also be transformed in focus subjects to be evaluated in the future: 1. commuting and travel time to work, alongside telework, second job case; 2. time unit measurement for work – days, weeks, months, years; 3. limit for work time and its extensions; 4. cutoff points for job sectors, specificity, and sex variables differences if any; 5. effort evaluation difficulty; 6. type of measurement validity, fidelity and replicability – self-reports, observer report or other measures. The same authors draw three major directions for future research: a. situational factors; b. time and culture variables; c. similarities and differences between generations (Snir & Harpaz, 2012).

As a general rule, every assessment tool, investigating workaholism or work addictions, either in self-report mode, peer-to-peer or evaluator stance, must be adjusted to the organizational context and culture in which the evaluation is taking part. Features of the organizational culture, situational environment, climate and individual differences must be taken into account when building and applying a specific evaluation methodology.

The instruments in the research sector for testing and evaluating workaholism and work addictions, undergo constant methodological developments and optimization, given the fact that the complexity of the concept pushes the instrumental approach to a difficult challenge in light of validity and generalizing results, not to mention cultural factors and individual differences.

Even so, the above mentioned instruments and many others, can provide the necessary framework for both the research and practice sector, supporting an easier access to understanding workaholism at work, employee perceptions, attitudes and choices. The methodology can be a useful tool kit for any management initiative that solicits a well-documented start before applying any action or strategy inside the organization.

### **III.2. At group/team level**

In the next subchapter, mobbing was selected and presented briefly as a challenging pathology that impacts the group/team level inside the organization, where the individual is caught between the victim role or the aggressor, taking part in various manifestations and behaviors, that compromise the group/team performance, social roles, communication, professional relations and overall functioning, generating negative outcomes that extend beyond the group/team sector, without the proper prevention and intervention actions. Being defined as a group aggression, committed regularly and systematically towards a victim employee, it seemed well fitted to be discussed as an organizational pathology, present at group/team level.

### III.2.1. Mobbing

As a general definition, mobbing describes a form of aggression directed towards an employee, by a group of aggressors (e.g. coworkers, supervisors, associates etc.), as an extreme type of social stressor, exercised systematically and with a certain frequency that produces long-lasting negative effects for the victim in the physical, psychological and social areas (Zapf, 1999).

The scholarly literature has often used various terms for describing mobbing, depending on the research trend and theory support, most commonly references making appeal to workplace bullying (as a negative behavior which encompasses different types of aggressions directed towards a fellow employee) (López-Vílchez, Grau-Alberola & Gil-Monte, 2024; Hodgins et al., 2024), workplace harassment, workplace bullying (Faldetta & Gervasi, 2024), group bullying, psychological terror at work, work abuse or simply mobbing which describe the same forms of abuse, maltreatment, oppression, moral degradation or ethical rules violations (Temli Durmuş, 2023; Bencsik, Poór & Juhász, 2024; Ilieva, Stoilkovska & Todosovski, 2024), which can cause severe damage to the victims (Bershadskyy & Seidel, 2024).

In other words, the practice of harassment with a regular frequency and repeated in time, directly or indirectly, discreet or manifest, from a group of co-workers towards an individual employee can be defined as mobbing (Zlate, 2007).

From another perspective, Davenport, Schwartz and Elliott (1999) defined mobbing as an abusive group behavior, manifested at the workplace, with a focus on emotional abuse, in a direct or indirect way, in opposition with bullying which describes an individual act of aggression towards another employee in their view. The scholarly literature boundaries and concept limits are often in a grey zone when depicting mobbing, in some cases the terms being used interchangeably, while in others being structured as distinct and in association.

Other terms that in time were associated conceptually with mobbing, with regard to relation, equivalence, containment or partial manifestation, indicated aggression, persecution, dominance, harassment at the workplace, workplace violence, antisocial behavior at work, undesirable behavior, psychological violence, moral harassment, emotional abuse, bullying, psychological terror, bossing, stalking, petty tyranny, abusive leadership, passive aggressive behavior, toxic leadership etc. (Kovacs, 2008; Çoban, 2014; Góralewska-Słońska, 2019; Romero Starke et al., 2020).

Beyond Konrad Lorenz studies or Heinz Leymann specific research on psychological terror at the workplace, mobbing as a concept, process and paradigm has underwent gradual developments, new perspectives and insight since the '80s and '90s (Kovacs, 2008; Manotas, 2015; Ribeiro & Sani, 2024). Notably, the term mobbing has been used in close relation with bullying, even though the latter describes more frequently a one to one aggression, an individual confrontation, more visible and direct than the discreet mechanism and hidden effects of mobbing, conducted by a group of aggressors towards a victim.

In more recent works, the term mobbing or workplace bullying has been acknowledged to describe negative behaviors, aggressive interpersonal acts, unfairness, subtle but also vivid sanctions attributed subjectively to the victim, verbal abuse, favoring one's self while degrading the victim, "game-playing" with the victim, exclusion from the decision-making process, from work task and processes, denying and biasing communication, assigning unattainable goals or tasks (Hodgins et al., 2024; Bencsik, Poór & Juhász, 2024; Bershadskyy & Seidel, 2024).

Beyond the concept debate and various perspectives on the matter, mobbing as an organizational pathology, generates countless effects on the work effort, status, equilibrium and well-being of the employee, extending, as in the case of previous pathologies, from the individual stance to group/team and organizational level.

No matter if defined as psychological terror, workplace mistreatment, violence at work or emotional abuse, the research and managerial intervention must focus on preventing its occurrence in the work sector and manage its damaging outcomes by clear actions, regulatory mechanisms and efficient strategies, training of groups or teams at the job. Same as in the case of occupational stress, burnout or workaholism it is vital to recognize its sources, its manifestations, the degree of impact and its solutions in order to reestablish the much needed balance at work.

### *Mobbing sources*

The scholarly literature depicts mobbing as a pathology with multiple causes, which in turn can be related to the tasks itself, to the work environment, the management practices and the employee attitudes and responses.

The complexity and multitude of sources for generating a mobbing phenomenon restricts the present debate on the topic to just a few representative examples and mentions.

Leymann (1996) stipulated four risk factors, potential responsible for mobbing behavior: 1. faulty work design; 2. faulty leadership behavior; 3. victim's social stance; low moral standards in the group. Later, Zapf (1999) indicated organizational factors, work group social system factors and individual factors as sources for potential mobbing. In another work, Zlate (2007) mentioned three major sources that pose a risk for mobbing emergence, some being responsible also for other pathologies such as occupational stress or work addictions: 1. organizing work (e.g. task overloading, lack of rules and procedures, role conflict, role ambiguity etc.); 2. task design (e.g. redundant acts, monotone process, work boredom, lack of stimulation etc.); 3. employee or team coordination (e.g. group dynamics, leadership roles, lack of supervision etc.). Other authors observed that mainly organizational and aggressor related factors lead to mobbing emergence at the workplace, in a higher tendency than individual or social factors (Ertürk & Cemaloğlu, 2014).

Davenport, Schwartz and Elliott (1999) stipulated four potential causes for mobbing emergence at the group/team level: a. forcing a member to adapt to the group norms and regulations; b. disliking a fellow worker and taking action in anonymity; c. seeking pleasure from tormenting others and boredom; d. confirming stereotypes and prejudices. The same

authors indicate that there are specific factors at organizational level that may initiate mobbing (e.g. faulty management, stressful work environment, monotony, lack of ethics, type of organization, organizational change etc.) (Davenport, Schwartz & Elliott, 1999).

In a more recent study, Temli Durmuş (2023) added to the list of generating factors several other variables such as the personality traits, organizational culture, leadership influence, competition, hidden or direct conflicts, cling to power and fear of losing gained social positions and status.

As an observation, the sources for mobbing can be integrated into task centered approaches or human resource centered category, or both, depending on the process features and activating mechanism. A manager desire to dominate, to control and manipulate, alongside disciples that out of fear or gaining opportunity team up in a collective aggression towards a victim describe a mobbing source that is highly related to the user and not the task itself. On the other hand, in another organizational context, where inside a department there is a lack of regulations, legal provision applications, and a tendency to overload tasks, the victim can become the mobbing target for employees that do not understand the work act and process, are themselves under huge pressure and occupational stress, and mobbing becomes a coping strategy by extreme, to a dysfunctional climate and culture, where performance, coherence, unity and tolerance are absent. In the same view, Hodgins et al. (2024) structured cause factors involved in mobbing into individual and work environment ones. A review on workplace bullying in the academic education sector, revealed as sources for the phenomenon at work, themes such as the impact of neoliberalism at the workplace (which through economic and managerial models, exacerbated competition, job insecurity created the risks for bullying), and the complex and malevolent gender power dynamics (by maintaining subordination and vulnerability among employees outside the organization's power structures) (Hodgins et al., 2024).

Bershadskyy and Seidel (2024) mentioned personal benefits as a force drive to increase mobbing rates and participation.

As observed, factors exposing the group/team at conducting mobbing resides either in organizational features, related to culture, climate, values etc., or work features as overloading, role conflict, faulty job design etc., and individual predictors such as fear of losing, competition, follower effect, groupthink syndrome, conflicts, social comparison and faulty leadership etc.

In conclusion, the few markers presented above, if recognized and acknowledged in time, alongside a swift, proper and efficient managerial intervention can help reduce the negative impact and spread of the mobbing phenomenon inside the work group or team, preventing further escalation. A key indication resides in recognizing correctly the pathology, accepting it and trying to activate solutions.

### *Mobbing features and actions*

The variety and detailed definitions for mobbing offer a good insight into the major features, that describe and support the objective diagnosis for this specific pathology.

It can be stated that as a process, mobbing involves repetition, intention from the aggressor, while the action is unjustified towards the victim, advancing negative effects while there is an imbalance in power between the two sides (Davenport, Schwartz & Elliott, 1999; Zlate, 2007; Kovacs, 2008). Later Kovacs (2008) completed the list with other characteristics such as the systematic character, intrusive and subtle manner, defenseless type and systemic orientation etc. In another perspective, Faldetta and Gervasi (2024) proposed using the scapegoat framework when researching workplace bullying, giving some insight that by valuing resource interactions among group or team members, may result in positive imitation changing the negative reciprocity into a positive one.

In other words mobbing can be defined as a cyclic phenomenon in the organization, which generates a hostile climate and frequent damages to the victim employee, while maintaining an active risk of escalation, and sourcing a constant power imbalance between the two opposing sides.

Leymann proposed five major phases which describe the mobbing process (Davenport, Schwartz & Elliott, 1999; Manotas, 2015): 1. the conflict phase – in which incidents commence at the workplace with no apparent connection but paving the way for an escalation; 2. the aggression phase – refer to more direct and visible confrontation, attacks redirected towards the victim under a variety of expressions from the other employees; 3. management involvement phase – describes the actions and steps taken by the managerial level with the regard to the situation created, either positively (e.g. regulation, active solutions, objective analysis etc.) or negatively (e.g. avoiding interfering, teaming with the aggressors, participating in mobbing etc.); 4. the branding phase – the victim is isolated and casted aside, labeled as a problematic and not being capable to be part of the group or team; 5. exclusion phase – eventually the employee victim is dismissed (e.g. fired, resignation, transferred etc.) which will only deepen the physical and mental challenges of it, from health related illnesses to depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The phase structured process can indicate for a start the mechanism behind the mobbing pathology and unravel certain critical moments in its development, useful for any managerial intervention and solution exercise. It is recommended that in order to prevent a further escalation, strategies should focus on the first phase, where conflicts do not take the toll to a greater intensity and negative developments. Phase two and three also constitute frames for action, but the challenges for management decisions and solutions become greater, alongside damage and impact that already create effects. In phase three, the management intervention has a last call to resolve and intervene in tackling mobbing manifestation, if it decides to approach it by objective measures, solution oriented and protecting victims and not by teaming up with the aggressors, stand-by, avoid or exclude the victim itself.

In addition to the five phases, Davenport, Schwartz and Elliott (1999) indicated Leymann's five categories of mobbing behaviors (which structure 45 distinct conducts) with specific examples and features, which constitute a well-known typology already: 1. assault on personal expression (e.g. interruptions on the victim speech, limiting victim's

ways of expression, critique, threats via different communication channels, innuendoes, non-verbal denials etc.); 2. assault on social relations (e.g. isolation from co-workers, peers avoid contacts with victim or are denied any interaction, enforcing a “cloak of invisibility” on the employee etc.); 3. assault on reputation (e.g. rumors, ridiculing the victim, gossip, negative imitation, beliefs, values and opinions are attacked as well as other variables in education level, privacy, ethnicity, nationality etc.); 4. assault on professional and personal life (e.g. denial of tasks, the victim has to undertake meaningless chores, overloading, underloading etc.); 5. assault on the health status (e.g. physical abuse, violence, harassments etc.). As indicated, mobbing can emerge and develop into a variety of behaviors at the workplace, sometimes escaping the direct and visible identification, but with the same negative impact on the employee well-being, professional and personal outcomes. It is necessary to detect mobbing in its first phases and behavioral manifestation, in order to address it correctly, fairly, firmly and efficiently. The process of healing must focus on the victim but also on the group/team resolving issues, attitudes and beliefs in order to attain balance and cohesion once more. As a golden rule prevention remains the best key to action, more efficient than early identification and intervention.

The same authors identified three major levels or degrees in which the victim employee can adopt a coping strategy ranging from a first degree (which includes victim’s resistance, adaptation or quitting), second degree (which implies the victim is confronted with negative effects, challenged with the return to work, resistance or avoidance), and a third degree (where the rehabilitation of the employee is not possible, following the intense physical and mental results on the person) (Davenport, Schwartz & Elliott, 1999).

**Table 3.4.** – Mobbing actions and behavioral expressions

<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>ACTIONS/BEHAVIORS</b>
Communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Blocking various expressions</li> <li>2. Constant interruptions</li> <li>3. Verbal mocking</li> <li>4. Constant critique</li> <li>5. Verbal threats</li> <li>6. Contact refusal</li> <li>7. Ignoring messages</li> <li>8. Constant demands</li> <li>9. Use of sarcasm, hints and irony</li> <li>10. Silencing</li> </ol>
Psychological	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Passive-aggressive responses</li> <li>2. Intimidation</li> <li>3. Psycho-terror</li> <li>4. Aggressive conduct</li> <li>5. Harassment</li> <li>6. Moral mistreatment</li> <li>7. Annoying</li> </ol>

LEVEL	ACTIONS/BEHAVIORS
Social	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Isolation</li> <li>2. Rumors and gossip</li> <li>3. Ridiculing</li> <li>4. Inventing images, stories and myths</li> <li>5. Attack on identity, beliefs and values</li> <li>6. Humiliation and defamation</li> <li>7. Discrimination</li> <li>8. Generating prejudice</li> </ol>
Health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Violence threats</li> <li>2. Dangerous task assignment</li> <li>3. Compromising physical and mental health</li> </ol>
Professional	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Task overload</li> <li>2. Task underload</li> <li>3. Setting unattainable goals</li> <li>4. Depriving of specific tasks</li> <li>5. Discrediting</li> <li>6. Sabotage</li> </ol>
Organizational	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teaming with the aggressors</li> <li>2. Delaying or avoiding intervention</li> <li>3. Sanctioning the victim</li> <li>4. Ignoring and non-recognition</li> <li>5. Exclusion</li> </ol>

In Table 3.4., following the scholarly literature sources, several mobbing conducts directed towards the employee victim from the group/team, are synthesized and presented as examples in association with a major level correspondence (Leymann, 1996; Davenport, Schwartz & Elliott, 1999; Zapf, 1999; Zlate, 2007; Kovacs, 2008; Ertürk & Cemaloğlu, 2014; Arnejčič, 2016; Temli Durmuş, 2023; Bencsik, Poór & Juhász, 2024).

In another work, Arnejčič (2016) divided the levels of mobbing impact in environmental, behavioral and individual skills – grouped in a first cluster while beliefs, values, individual identity and organizational culture in a second cluster. The same author stated there are specific mobbing types for each level in part, some general examples being exclusion, isolation, negative influence, assaulting self-esteem and self-confidence, imposing prohibitions and demands, toxic work climate, identity harassment, personal beliefs and values denial etc. (Arnejčič, 2016).

In addition to mobbing phases, levels and degrees, as presented previously there are a series of action types and behaviors which reveal the mobbing expression in its various forms.

In its process, mobbing impersonates numerous forms of behavioral expressions as observed above. Ertürk and Cemaloğlu (2014), in a research study over the education sector, structured the main causes for mobbing into organizational, perpetrator, victim and social group related categories.

In mobbing, the employee faces a full assault on his dignity, integrity, credibility while being constantly and systematically intimidated, abused and humiliated while the

work or team members push their conducts for forcing the person either in acceptance or leaving the circle.

At the same time, this wide collection of stances raise the awareness on the majority of levels it can impact, create effects and disturb the harmony of the individual, group/team or organization. Whether is disturbing communication, social and professional relations at work, “demonizing” the victim social image and status and creating professional setbacks, generating health conditions for the employee, mobbing leaves a long trace of negative effects on the individual, group/team and the organization all together.

### *Mobbing outcomes*

As in the case of multiple sources, the pathology of mobbing generates multiple and diverse range of effects, compromising the optimal functioning of the employee at work, the group/team integration and organizational performance.

In their work on mobbing, Davenport, Schwartz and Elliott (1999) mentioned that the victim will face confusion, feelings of isolation and paranoid stances, trying to fight off constant assaults and waiting in vain for support. Coming back to the degrees of mobbing, the employee will encounter emotional instability, irritability, sleep disorders, lack of focus in first degree, followed by health problems, depression, addictions, absenteeism, anxiety in second degree, all the way to a third degree, where panic attacks, heart attacks, accidents, suicide attempts, violence and other illnesses will take the lead (Davenport, Schwartz & Elliott, 1999).

In another view, Zlate (2007) outlined that at individual/employee level, effects will reside in anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, behavioral disorders, lack of motivation, work satisfactions and performance, early retirement, low self-esteem, emotional and social imbalances and lack of adaptation capacity.

For the group/team and organizational level, effects described high turnover rates, absenteeism, sick leaves, devaluing communication and interpersonal relations at work etc. (Zlate, 2007).

Kovacs (2008) advocated for analyzing mobbing in terms of victim diagnosis, aggressors and accomplices profiles, alongside witnesses in order to better understand the process outcomes on interaction, organizational context, management and other extra-organizational variables. Yusop, Dempster and Stevenson (2014) found that work grade is associated with bullying and mobbing, the two phenomena occurring top-down and horizontally in the organizational work environment, where employees experience the impact of bullying much more than the mobbing effect.

In a study by Elçi et al. (2014), results showed an association of mobbing on turnover intention effect, while organizational silence moderates this interaction. On a five-year follow-up study, Romero Starke et al. (2020) indicated an increased risk of cardiovascular disease in the case of mobbed persons.

In another study, Góralewska-Słońska (2019) concluded that employees challenged with mobbing are facing risks of burnout effects, while López-Vílchez, Grau-Alberola and

Gil-Monte (2024), found that workplace bullying will likely generate work withdrawal, continuous discomfort and development of further bullying, alongside a depreciation of work conditions.

Other studies supported the need for increased attention, research and intervention, stating that mobbing impacts negatively employee motivation and productivity, leading to accidents, depression, social misery, illness, low productivity, high turnover rates and resignation (Temli Durmuş, 2023; Ilieva, Stoilkovska & Todosovski, 2024).

Ilieva, Stoilkovska and Todosovski (2024) mentioned two levels of mobbing effects – a. personal (e.g. emotional distress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, sleep disorders, weak immune system, health issues, chronic conditions, mental health problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, impact on personal and social life, low overall life satisfaction and well-being etc.); b. organizational (e.g. work dynamics, performance, low job satisfaction, increased turnover, low efficiency and productivity, absenteeism, low morale, legal risks, impact on reputation etc.).

In summary, the effects of mobbing must be analyzed and addressed in a situational and personalized approach, taking into consideration the resources at hand, the level reached and management willingness to involve, the group or team members awareness and openness for change, and the regulatory frame. Each effect can complete the process profile and hand in vital information for building an optimal strategy for the case.

### *Mobbing prevention and management*

As stated before, prevention is the golden rule in mobbing. Unfortunately on many occasions, intervention comes short to address this syndrome in time or at an early stage.

However, there are various methods and strategies to be implemented even when the phenomenon took place and risks escalation.

Davenport, Schwartz and Elliott (1999) observed that in terms of coping strategies, the employee can resort to grieving in some cases, sometimes it will be caught between reaction and response, in other cases people adapt in various survival modes. Avoiding isolation, protecting self-esteem, focusing on perspective and managing anger, loss and betrayal, all the way to professional help seeking and taking legal action may well constitute ways of preventing and managing mobbing at work from an individual stance (Davenport, Schwartz & Elliott, 1999).

Zlate (2007) indicated education programs, early managerial interventions, conflict management and reconciliation, profession rehabilitation and legal actions as frontline measures in mobbing management, while Ribeiro and Sani (2024), emphasized problem-focused coping strategies and accessing social support networks, resilience programs and violence management, alongside supportive work environment, stakeholder collaboration. The same author underlined the role of leadership and organizational culture in preventing mobbing occurrence at the workplace (Ribeiro & Sani, 2024).

Kovacs (2008) outlined several measures from a prevention, intervention, case study and social view, mentioning: educational workshops, manager instruction programs,

regulations and norms, team-building, monitoring, procedure code, constant research, nominating people in charge of the topic, work design, professional rehabilitation, legal action, law statements and government policies.

Bencsik, Poór and Juhász (2024) described several actions to be considered in advancing an objective anti-harassment strategy:

1. creating and implementing a clear anti-harassment policy;
2. stating a clear definition of prohibited harassment conduct types;
3. establishing complaint procedures;
4. offering support and protection of complainants and witnesses against retaliation;
5. protecting privacy rights of all parties;
6. ensuring confidentiality throughout the process;
7. constant management and employee training on such topics;
8. implementing clear and fast measures against harassment and aggressors.

Beyond individual/employee level, this type of organizational pathology creates an imbalance also inside the group/team level, to which it belongs too. Mobbing does not stop after the victim has resigned, the group can always find new targets for harassment. On many occasions, the group will divide into various power and “war factions”, in their attempt to dominate the work stage so the imbalance and negative effects will pour in continuously. While the mobbing victim is present, all the group efforts will focus on getting the process through the well-known phases and levels, aggressors forgetting sometimes their own performance demands, tasks and objectives.

At group/team level, mobbing can result occasionally in direct conflicts and clashing with collateral casualties on both sides. To some extent there is always a risk of conflict extension to outer-groups, resulting in anarchy, which at organizational level will affect the entire quality and quantity of work (Davenport, Schwartz & Elliott, 1999). At this point, the entire organizational functioning is at risk of fracturing, affecting the company’s culture, climate and objectives, its brand, legal stance, overall productivity and profit, collaborations and development, leading to high rates of turnover, absenteeism and sick leaves, and in some cases to failure and closure.

In addition to measures and strategies at hand, the scholarly research sources present several instruments for mobbing syndrome evaluation (Leymann, 1996; Çoban, 2014; Silva et al. 2021). As a brief example:

A. Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorization (LIPT45) – was developed by Leymann (1996) as an inventory with 45 items, with five response options ranging from – 0 (nothing at all), 1 (a little), 2 (moderately), 3 (much), and 4 (extremely). As mentioned previously the items were divided into 5 categories or dimensions:

1. self-expression and communication;
2. social relations;

3. reputation;
4. professional and personal life;
5. health status.

Below are some item examples on various dimensions (Leymann, 1996):

1. *self-expression and communication*: “Your superior restricts the opportunity for you to express yourself”, “Colleagues restrict your opportunity to express yourself”, “Contact is denied through looks or gestures”.

2. *social relations*: “You cannot talk to anyone; access to others is denied”, “Colleagues are forbidden to talk with you”, “You are treated as if you are invisible”.

3. *reputation*: “People talk badly about you behind your back”, “Unfounded rumors about you are circulated”, “You are forced to do a job that affects your self-esteem”.

4. *professional and personal life*: “Supervisors take away assignments so that you cannot invent new tasks to do”, “You are given meaningless jobs to carry out”, “You are given tasks that are way beyond your qualifications in order to discredit you”.

5. *health status*: “You are forced to do a physically strenuous job”, “Physical abuse is present”, “Causing general damages that create financial costs to you”.

B. LIPT inventory and item repository opened the path for many researches and methodological exploration following the ‘90s. A more recent example derived from the framework is the study of Vveinhardt and Streimikiene (2015), who based on previous developments of Questionnaire for Diagnostics of Mobbing as Discrimination in Employees’ Relations in Order to Improve Organizational Climate, designed a new universal instrument entitled Mobbing and Single Cases of Harassment in Employees’ Relations (MSCH), which comprises 21 questions and 47 items, structured on a Likert scale. The variables focus on three major scales (Vveinhardt & Streimikiene, 2015): 1. communication interferences in work relations (represented by “communication” and “isolation” subscales), 2. negative opinion and work character (including “reputation” and “tasks” subscales), 3. physical state and consequences (containing subscales with regard to “health” and “harm”). The authors allocated items as follows (Vveinhardt & Streimikiene, 2015): a. *communication* – 11 items; b. *isolation* – 5 items; c. *reputation* – 15 items; d. *tasks* – 8 items; e. *health* – 5 items; f. *harm* – 3 items. The 21 questions are also divided in 10 questions about demographic features and 11 questions about harassment duration and frequency, reactions, support, aggressor, coping means and effects (Vveinhardt & Streimikiene, 2015). The survey brings to attention the new dimensions on cultural context and organizational environment, when exploring mobbing at work.

Below are some dimension and item examples (Vveinhardt & Streimikiene, 2015):

1. *communication and isolation*: “When I speak, somebody constantly interrupts me”, “Productivity of my work is criticized”, “I am treated as an empty place”.

2. *reputation and tasks*: “I am sneered, mocked”, “I have been attacked due to my political views”, “I have got the work tasks that exceed my qualification in order to discredit me”.

3. *health and harm*: “Slight physical violence has been used against me because I should have been taught”, “They behave with me particularly harshly”, “The situations, because of which I experience material expenses, are specially created”.

As an overall perspective, the mobbing process, manifestation and effects should interest more the study and implementation policies for clear resolutions, solution strategies and regulations. There is still a lack of coordination between acting stakeholders in the matter. The management team needs support from legislation and experts in the organizational pathology themes. As it was observed above, on many occasions, mobbing engulfs all three levels of interest in the company, starting with the individual/employee victim, being generated by a group of aggressors, having the potential to extend to the entire team and organization, which can be led astray in an accomplice mode that will deepen the negative effects even more and halt a potential solution approach.

Beyond the need for further investigation into mobbing at the workplace, activating collaboration among stakeholders and training groups or teams to cohesion and partnership, designing policies and regulations, a specific attention and support should be given to mobbing victims, in terms of rehabilitation process, identity, self-esteem, self-confidence and reputation rebuilding, as well as return to work support and adjustment, communication strategies, job and task design, protecting health and well-being of every employee at the workplace.

### **III.3. At organizational level**

Going beyond individual/employee and group/team levels, the last section presented briefly here is dedicated to certain specific pathologies that threaten the general, organizational, macro level. Of course the effects will impact also the previous two dimensions, the organization structure engulfing employee and team modules.

The academic literature presents a variety of specific examples for deviance at this general level, from organization’s “personality” disorders or neuroses, as a collective manifestation, to organizational myths, injustice and corruption, all the way to corporate crime, global crises and decline.

At this particular level, the symptoms and manifestations have to be approached with a wider scientific lens, the complexity and interconnectivity among variables, hardening the path for every management solution or strategy. In times of change or development, in times of crisis or mergers, the organization will act as an entire “body” with stances of resilience, adaptation, accommodation or on the contrary with resistance, opposing a

smooth transition or objective solution, at times embracing deviant forms for succeeding or simply survival on the global market “play board”.

Next two cases were selected for a short introduction and discussion, namely the organization’s “personality identity” and its dysfunctions, as well as the generalized deviant and corrupt practices, nurtured by the company own culture, habits and needs.

### **III.3.1. “Personality” disorders of organizations**

Same as in the case of a troubled or dysfunctional individual personality at work, the organization itself functions as a unifying structure, prone to import behavior like actions, styles of being, practices and unwritten norms of conduct, that in part represent the individual manifestations of its members, but by constant exercising them, it generalizes the collection of such behaviors to a standardized way of acting and being, as a whole.

Some authors referred to the term of collective personality, which describes the overall personality of a group, a community or an organization, on the basis of the well-known concept of syntality, defined by Cattell long ago (1948), and explaining specific features (Zlate, 2007) as:

1. the collection of attitudes and perceptions of employees create a specific existential climate inside the organization;
2. the sum of vantage points towards responsibilities, tasks, work, solutions and problems indicate a general trend;
3. same as the individual personality, the collective personality encompasses a unique manifestation that can be identified from outside the organization as a unofficial brand or symbolic mark;
4. it is accepted, practiced and lived at times unconsciously by its members;
5. it impacts the work environment, culture and climate, practices and functions.

From another perspective, the collective personality can shape the organizational culture, while at the same time being a product of it. The famous organizational culture typology designed by Harrison and Stokes (1992), supports four major models:

1. oriented towards power
2. oriented towards roles
3. oriented towards achievements
4. oriented towards support

From a collective personality approach, the *power-oriented* culture will describe a constant competition for resources trend, an acceptance of strong and rigid hierarchy

dedication, where leaders have the legitimate power over everything, and employees are limited to work and dependency. Strong at first look, these type of cultures do not promote a win-win situation, competition being prone to become aggressive and damaging to those who can't keep up the work pace. There is a downfall in leadership which at times can be become extremely authoritarian and toxic.

In the case of *role-oriented* culture, an adaptation of the collective personality will define a precise and strongly structured work environment, task fulfilment and performance oriented, with a real "cult" for formality, regulations, procedures and roles, where individual autonomy will be a taboo subject and control will be the highlight of the day. The disadvantage in this situation consists of excessive formalizing every aspect of work, from tasks to employee conduct and identity, restraining creativity, self-expression and autonomy.

As for the *achievement-oriented* culture, a collective organization's "personality" will bring forward a structure that is valuable and valuing its people, a "personality" built on altruism and building "the bigger picture", in an effort beyond personal satisfaction, in order to contribute to society, where every employee is important, part of the team and has a vital role and contribution. There is still a risk to lean towards elitism, intolerance and schizoid behavior, building an environment does is highly revered but not in compliance with the demands of the real world.

The last type of culture, *support-oriented*, solicits a context of trust between employees, who feel valued and cared for, the organization behaving like a frame for professional and personal life mixture, relying on a sense of belonging and connection. The pathological risks may reside here in constructive debate or conflict avoidance, the need for cohesion and equality undermining individual differences, skills, expectations and needs.

As it can be observed that organizational culture represents a specific unitary mindset and behavioral trend. It can be viewed as an expression of the organization's profile and style of relating, defining its "personality". Of course at the base, the individual, and especially those holding the power key and management roles define the accepted conduct and style of functioning in their personalized context of work. For example, if the management will exercise dysfunctional behaviors, this will likely generalize to organizational level manifestation and pathology. The study of organization's "personality" and especially its tendencies towards disorders offers insight and a deepening sense of how functions, behaviors and perceptions become rules, standard manifestations, values and ways of existing, even in a maladaptive frame with the suite of negative consequences.

On the other hand, numerous theoretical approaches on organizational culture structured a wide variety of types and instances, classifying general features of these organizations in their action plans, rules of conduct and task engagement. It is important to understand and differentiate between each typology in order to approach the specific structure of each organization.

**Table 3.5.** – Pathological “personality profiles” of organizations – a synthetic model of Kets de Vries and Miller theory (1984)

<b>TYOLOGY</b>	<b>ORGANIZATIONAL “PERSONALITY” PATHOLOGY FEATURES</b>
PARANOID ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• obsession for hidden motives</li> <li>• hypersensitivity</li> <li>• overcontrolling</li> <li>• tormented by constant suspicion and mistrust</li> </ul>
COMPULSIVE ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a cult of perfectionism</li> <li>• overconcern with details</li> <li>• dogmatic</li> <li>• exercising power distance</li> <li>• manifesting coldness in employee relations</li> </ul>
DRAMATIC ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a need for attention</li> <li>• narcissistic</li> <li>• constant seeking stimulation</li> <li>• lack of focus</li> <li>• preoccupation for theatrical emotional display</li> </ul>
DEPRESSIVE ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focus on the past and remorse</li> <li>• practicing guilt and a sense of uselessness</li> <li>• low motivation and interest for activities</li> <li>• a general state of worthlessness</li> <li>• lack of hope</li> </ul>
SCHIZOID ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• indifference and lack of emotion as major trends</li> <li>• pathological detachment</li> <li>• lack of interest for the present and future</li> <li>• withdrawal from the context</li> <li>• estrangement towards the work environment</li> </ul>

In this regard, the famous work and research by Kets de Vries and Miller (1984) revealed five major pathological “personality” styles for organizations which can describe specific organizational profiles. For an easier user readability, the five styles or typologies are presented in Table 3.5., in a synthetic overview, alongside some of their major features (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1984; Samuel, 2010).

Each of the profiles contains specific ways of behaving in the organizational context, influencing individual/employee and group/team levels as such. New comer employees, in a certain organization setting and profile, are prone to embrace the company’s values and conducts, even with the disadvantage that they are imbalanced, dysfunctional and harmful on the long run for members. These profiles can escalate and extend by contagion to various other levels of impact.

The way to cope with a paranoid organization for example is to bring forward, from within, power solutions, mediated through management and employees working together as a team, with a focus on rebuilding trust, accepting employee autonomy and supervise

performance in a balanced way while applying frequent reality checks and objective measures.

In another study, Slowinski et al. (2002) indicated that in a case of an organizational change, merger or acquisition, the organization's culture is often blamed for faulty integration or structural error (e.g. cultural differences are used to explain problematic decision-making), creating a risk for shaping a schizophrenic type profile for the organization, that builds its inner world and explanations for every outside change or crisis.

“Personality” disorders of organizations explain the mechanisms of disruptions inside the management governing style, action trends, accepted and denied behaviors, the relation with employees and their response to demands, tasks and work environment. Counselling services, training and coaching of leaders must take into consideration the full analysis of organizational culture, its features, its strong and weak points, alongside the identification of collective personality and irregularities by case, in order to provide a stable, efficient and objective intervention plan, adapted to the field realities, which in turn on occasion escape the untrained eye with regard to discreet negative manifestations, hidden sources and actors of influence.

### **III.3.2. Corporate deviance and crime**

Another organizational pathology that threatens the overall organization's functioning refers to corporate deviance and in its more severe and chronic forms, taking the shape of corporate crime.

Samuel (2010) defined corporate crime as illegal and criminal actions, coordinated by and for the organizational power position, wealth, control and influence maintenance or expansion. The same author indicated that corruption, as a collection of unethical, immoral, illegal activities, usually refers to the individual sector (Samuel, 2010), potentially being contained in corporate crime, as a wider systemic pathology, that requires an entire apparatus in motion and resources.

Among examples of corporate crime behaviors describe constant violations of reporting, false statements of productivity and profit, covering health incidents and risks, mimicking occupational safety procedures, policies and principles, applying unjust labor regulations, misleading marketing, production and placement of non-compliant, dangerous products, unfair and unloyal competition, environment violations, political blackmail and influence for economic purposes etc. (Clinard & Yeager, 2006; Samuel, 2010). On another view, Alcadipani and de Oliveira Medeiros (2020), outlined and presented a critical perspective upon the concepts of corporate social irresponsibility and critical management studies endeavors to study and explain corporate harm, concluding that approaches so far have been limited to certain paradigms, ignoring shifting dynamics, cultural contexts and differential stances, while other authors evidenced the influence of corporate capitalism and profit maximization over healthcare sector services, principles and potential negative impacts on the well-being of beneficiaries (Perry & Bernasek, 2024). In addition to the concept of corporate harm, discussing the Fraud Model by Kassem and Higson (2012),

Boddy, Freeman and Karpacheva-Hock (2024) proposed several directions to be taken into account when analyzing features of a corporate psychopath and pathology as follows:

1. opportunity dimension – the mechanism will encompass threats and acts of bullying towards opponents, while advancing to higher positions of power and control;
2. capability dimension – it states having the skills to commit to corporate crime;
3. personal integrity dimension – the corporate harm features abusive behaviors of others, exploitation, avoiding social norms;
4. motivation dimension – corporate crime is driven by power, prestige and wealth outcomes at any cost, aside from any ideology.

Moreover, the authors give insight on the profile of a potential corporate psychopath stating: a. creating a disorganized environment for fulfilling personal goals, leads to more fraud and contagion of other co-workers b. the personality traits are identifiable and subject to predictive profiling; c. the presence of this pathology will affect employee integrity, honesty, leading to maladaptive coping strategies; d. uses coercion and manipulation (Boddy, Freeman & Karpacheva-Hock, 2024).

So why is corporate crime tolerated beyond its well-known sources? An interesting view is supported by the convenience theory that brings together a collection of possibilities, the opportunity to conceal and commit and a will for deviance, based on choice or innocence (Gottschalk, 2024). The theory explains that sometimes threats generate avoidance behaviors and gain seeking in the organizational sector, while maladaptive conducts are based on organization's deterioration, lack of supervision (Gottschalk, 2024), corruption, law bias and an existing crime syndicate apparatus. Another reason lies in its condition of a certain anonymity, the aggressors hiding in the collective corporate responsibility, which on frequent occasions covers the leads, tracks, evidence of individual or organized group illegal actions. From another point of view, its mechanisms may reside in the classical theory of corporate violations, elaborated by Braithwaite (1989) which refers to opportunity, sub-culture, differential shame and control.

In terms of specific actions of corporate crime, the scholar literature sources indicate various neutralization patterns (Cohen, 2008; Schoultz & Flyghed, 2020): responsibility, injury, victim, knowledge, deviance, literal, interpretative, implicatory denial, condemning the accusers and appeal to loyalty, moral indifference, scapegoating etc. In other words, corporate crime as an organizational pathology resorts to a diverse set of actions and protective mechanism, in order to protect the gained assets, ranging from complete denial, to changing stories and social desirability, distancing from the problem or placing false targets in the way of any investigation. The mechanisms are quite complex and indicate an elaborate structure at organizational level, prepared to face any outside evaluation, threat or compromising initiative in order to protect a pathological balance and grip of power. For example the artificial offering of support, openness and willingness to comply with regulations, as well as providing public apologies, in order to obtain a favorable perceived

remorse from the employees or society, stands on many situations as an escape strategy from public blame and legal action.

**Table 3.6.** – Corporate crime violations type after Clinard and Yeager (2006)

TYPE OF VIOLATION	ACTIONS
ADMINISTRATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• refrain from reporting</li> <li>• incomplete or biased reports</li> <li>• evade license and permits</li> <li>• incomplete event recording</li> <li>• avoid rules for registration</li> </ul>
FINANCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fake reports</li> <li>• audit manipulation</li> <li>• artificial interventions</li> </ul>
ENVIRONMENTAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• refrain from environment obligations</li> <li>• refrain from ecological measures</li> <li>• profit risk over environment risk</li> </ul>
LABOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• power abuse over employees</li> <li>• modern day work abuse</li> <li>• labor migration misuse</li> <li>• blocking unions, compensations and rights</li> <li>• hiring scams</li> </ul>
MANUFACTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• depreciation of product quality</li> <li>• unsafe products marketing</li> <li>• hiding vital product information</li> </ul>
TRADE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• market monopoly</li> <li>• secret agreements</li> <li>• deceiving customers</li> <li>• price manipulation</li> <li>• false advertising</li> </ul>

In Table 3.6. several corporate crime categories are presented in brief with a few concrete action examples, following the classification designed by Clinard and Yeager (2006) and specified also by Samuel (2010).

In another interesting research, Georgiadou (2023) observed that in a corporate crisis communication, the perceived remorse detains a mediating role on apology's effectiveness, in a specific situation. Appealing to such mechanism, the organization may try variations of messages in order to fulfill certain objectives and receive public approval, in spite of misleading practices and marketing, for example. The dissimulation of acts and passing on the responsibility on false targets it is also quite well explained by the scapegoat phenomenon in organizations.

In conclusion, corporate crime actions vary in intensity and diversity, putting at risk the entire wellbeing of the organizational balance, its employees and functioning for the

future, betting on a extreme win situation on the short time while sacrificing success for the long run.

### *Corporate crime prevention and management*

In view of recent studies, organizational deviance and corporate crime fall under the responsibility of specific stakeholders that can prevent and stop such cases and phenomena to escalate and develop. State regulations and law enforcement need to be applied accordingly, swiftly and efficiently alongside regulatory compliance and public inquiry when such situations appear. Beyond the external supervision, internal transparency, rules and clear procedures, supported by employees can withstand such manifestations.

A specific observation draws attention to the organizational culture and society politics which need to be considered in the evaluation process. Unfortunately in some contexts, the collaboration between political power and corporate interests will generate more obstacles for detection and investigation over faulty legislation implementation (Reeves-Latour & Morselli, 2017).

In another work, Alvesalo et al. (2006) proposed several initiatives for preventing and controlling corporate crime such as: corporate crime prevention partnerships between regulatory agencies, workers organizations, consumer groups, environmental pressure groups and so on; redefining forms of surveillance while considering social movements, employees, supervisors, victims and aggressors; data on corporate crime should be made public available and disseminated for awareness purposes on risks, responsibility and vigilance enhancement; raising public support for control measures. Moreover, Cheng et al. (2023) supported the introduction of subjective well-being measures at the workplace that empower employee satisfaction in order to prevent and lower organizational misconduct, risk behavior, in the absence of formal financial supervision. The same authors indicate that informal factors can complete formal practices, if they are guided accordingly and efficiently, promoting social capital and regulating corporate behavior which impact investment strategies, policymaking, supervision, market integrity, fair and ethical business practices (Cheng et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the organization's "personality" disorders impact the inner environment for work, affecting processes, employee efforts and expectations, their work satisfaction and performance, encouraging practices that on the long run will disturb the normal functioning of the organization itself. On the other hand corporate deviance and crime, address a more wider area of negative contagion, putting at risk internal and external actors, from its own employees, management team to business partners, local communities and the society overall. All in all, both pathologies at organizational level have a reputation for negative impact and prolonged effects, on many occasions the end residing in turbulence, conflict, victims on all sides, disruptions and the organization's demise.

## IV. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The present implications of various organizational pathologies are set in a constant dynamics, highly related to changes in the labor market, job design, organizational culture, evolution, failure and reinventing.

Transformations and adaptation in organizations will happen naturally, but how these will undergo the process is another matter. Leaning towards a fluid, flexible, easy, optimal evolution or clinging on to a dysfunctional path, escalating negative resources thought to be solutions? That is a question that the organizational pathology domain tries to draw attention and raise awareness that on many occasions, the company has a choice and resources at hand to adapt, survive and live efficiently, harmonious and positive or not.

Nowadays, people spend more time at the workplace, being in a so called “work mode” even when outside this sector. Their efforts, struggles and hopes engulf the personal and professional life with a focus on success. Probably at present, employees feel the need for success more than ever, work making the only sense in a troubled and challenged society. The organizational culture and climate, the overall demands and expectations, the cult of success and failure, the corporate system and laws, the global market and organizational mentalities have shaped in time how we perceive the work act, its sources and outcomes. The perception and attitude contagion works both ways, from employees to the organization and vice-versa. That is why when a pathology occurs, usually all levels of interest are affected.

As work evolved, changed, became diverse and complex so did the pathological forms and maladaptive behaviors. People have to work in stressful environments, higher demands, insecure jobs, crisis imminent settings, interconnected and across specialty sectors and the list goes on. They are forced to find coping strategies which sometimes prove maladaptive.

The book itself underlines a few selected major pathologies at individual/employee, group/team and organizational level, with a preference for the sources identification, process and manifestations examples, alongside prevention and management interventions. In addition, the attention is directed towards forms of conduct and maladaptive functioning with risks for the employee as well as for the organization. Moreover sections are organized in a specific pattern in order to provide a clear approach to each individual pathology, with plenty of examples and views, providing study and research opportunities for academics, researchers, practitioners and students alike.

The exploration of employee coping strategies, deviant behaviors, numerous risks for physical and mental health, in relation to task performance, adaptation at the workplace, team membership and cohesion, turnover tendency and stability, support climate are just a few examples presented and discussed in the book’s chapters. Only by understanding the mechanisms behind employee behavior and response to a challenging situation, a real common sense can be built around optimal intervention and solutions. More specific, the exploration and comprehension of work interactions and values, work styles and expectations, solution strategies in case of success or failure combined with the need for

security, integration and acceptance, offer a helpful insight into how the company and its people take action, believe and respond in their own work environment and what factors drive them into such positions.

The book contains numerous academic literature references, offering a detailed overview upon past and present research, underlining trends, major theories and evaluation instruments, all in a valuable structured collection. In addition, it is intended to organize and present in a synthetic way principal milestones and developments in the study of occupational stress, burnout, workaholism, mobbing, organization's personality disorders, corporate deviance and crime.

Ever since the introduction section, the conceptual debate is presented from a social sciences perspective and throughout the discourse it is maintained in order to favor a more personalized approach of the employee and its struggles at work. The view, whether is psychological, sociological or any other social discipline basis, tries to raise questions and draw some red lines on various pathologies, exercised at work.

In accordance with the proposed structure of the book, in chapter three, after refining the concept framework for organizational pathology in chapter two, in terms of general and specific descriptions, the section comprises few selected manifestations and instances of organizational disruptions, referring in particular to: 1. individual/employee level; 2. group/team level; 3. organizational level.

In the case of individual/employee level, there are three major pathologies taken into discussion: a. occupational stress; b. burnout; c. workaholism.

Occupational stress is one of the most researched dimensions in the pathology area, numerous models stating valid paradigms in its analysis. Models like Job demands-resources model (work stress seen as a response to the existing imbalance between the job demands and the employee's resources), Demand-control model (which treats stress as a result between the high level workload and the low levels of autonomy and control over the demand) to Effort-reward imbalance model (which describes occupational stress as an outcome of the high level work effort combined with low control over the recognition and reward process) are explored alongside a chronological framework of representatives, variables, associations and results which bring up to date state of the art discoveries on this theme. Furthermore, occupational stress is treated and described with regard to various sources of interest for the reader, potential outcomes and a clear inventory of effects. Supplementary in this section, coping strategies are presented as well, structured into adaptive and maladaptive typologies for a clear and practical differentiation.

The subchapter contains also a section dedicated to occupational stress prevention and management, facilitating ways for the research and practice sector to adopt future investigation methods and intervention procedures, testing validities, optimal stances and programs.

In the next subchapter, burnout as a chronic form of professional exhaustion, it is discussed as being highly associated with occupational stress, with long term effects and other organizational pathologies. In this case, there were also indicated in a structured and chronological way, the major trends for defining burnout in the organizational settings, with

representatives, time frame, features and outcomes. The section also contains a useful inventory of principal profession, psychology, social and physical effects, that can help any research or practical endeavor in preparing an adequate intervention program.

Moreover, the main instruments evaluating burnout are presented, alongside their methodologies and characteristics, as follows:

1. Maslach Burnout Inventory
2. Burnout Assessment Tool
3. Copenhagen Burnout Inventory
4. Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure
5. Oldenburg Burnout Inventory
6. Burnout Syndrome Evaluation Questionnaire for Education Professionals
7. The Burnout Measure

These instruments constitute a well-founded research approach that open the path for constant refining and development, helping not only the burnout intervention strategies at different organizational levels but also the measurement of a complex and multifaced concept.

Following burnout, in the next section, workaholism or work addiction is addressed by a definition and concept debate. Due to its complexity, lack of consensus in the academic world, wide range of usage and historical evolution, it was necessary to present various views on the theme, clarifying the term representations, either from a clinical perspective, or from an organizational attribution point of reference.

The main sources which are presented, can be categorized in: neurobiological patterns, personality variables, cognition distortions, social contexts and cultural dimensions.

Distorting the perceptions on effort and expected results, work addiction claims effects in multiple sectors of life, from work-related (e.g. low performance, conflict, turnover intent, burnout etc.) to personal spectrum (e.g. work-family conflict, life dissatisfaction, low self-care, social life disruption, low quality of life etc.) and health conditions (e.g. sleep disorders, fatigue, pain, anxiety, irritability etc.).

In addition, several main instruments evaluating work addictions are presented in this section of the book, naming:

1. Work Addiction Risk Test
2. Workaholism Battery
3. Dutch Work Addiction Scale
4. Bergen Work Addiction Scale
5. Multidimensional Workaholism Scale

Just like in the case of burnout, by developing such methodologies, there can be an easier access to insights and interpretation of this organizational disturbance.

In the next subchapter, mobbing is presented as a major threat, belonging to the group/team level but with negative interactions upon the individual/employee and organizational level, described as a form of aggression directed towards an employee, by a group of aggressors from within or related to the organization. Sources like organizing work (e.g. task overloading, lack of rules and procedures, role conflict, role ambiguity etc.), task design (e.g. redundant acts, monotone process, work boredom, lack of stimulation etc.) and employee or team coordination (e.g. group dynamics, leadership roles, lack of supervision etc.) are just a few examples of key factors in generating mobbing. In this section several features, typical actions and behavioral expressions are given as examples and presented specifically for study use, future research, management awareness and intervention objectives. The Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorization (LIPT45) and the Mobbing and Single Cases of Harassment in Employees' Relations (MSCH) instruments are also described and given reference as main methodology approaches.

In the last subchapter of part three of the book, the discussion focuses on two major pathologies manifestations at organizational level: personality disorders of organizations and corporate deviance and crime. At this stage, specific pathological personality profiles of organizations are important to be recognized, alongside typical features and reactions, their overall impact generating trends of actions, work styles, negative outcomes for employees and themselves. On the corporate crime theme, the book follows certain violations categories and acts, as depicted by the scholar literature, worth mentioning that at this level, the entire organizations is at risk of total failure, lack of adaptation and finally demise, impacting negatively employees, communities and the society.

In the end, as a general conclusion, it must be stated that the organizational pathology domain for research and intervention needs to be further developed and sustained with new and more studies, practitioners views and policy development. Beyond any doubt, the organizational life reached new forms and implications, too important to be neglected or misinterpreted, keeping in mind that for the future, employee health, balance and well-being, must always prevail and develop in healthy and adequate work environments.

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