

A cultural approach to work-related stress

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"The widespread use of the term stress is also objected to on the grounds that it can be used to explain everything and as a result explains nothing".

(Cassidy, 1999)

Introduction

The concept of stress is widespread both in the scientific literature and in the language. A definition across the different literatures says that: "The response of the body and mind to strains or burdens that demand adaptation; it is any hindrance that disturbs an individual's mental and physical well-being" (Kahn, 2006, p. 344). In this sense it is therefore closely linked to emotions, seen as a physiological, cognitive and behavioral response to environmental stimuli.

The importance of emotions in the stress reaction led to the definition of psychological stress (Lazarus, 1966; 2006) taken up by Lazarus & Folkman (1984) that define psychological stress as "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (p. 19). Lazarus was among the first to highlight the importance of cognitive and psychological condition of phenomenon of stress emphasizing the role of subjective condition in which the stressor is experienced and the initial measurement of the stimulus with respect to a limited view of stress as response to stressors that seem not invariant (Tosi & Pilati, 2002; Gabassi, 2006).

In the analysis of work-related stress and occupational ill health, working discomfort and the diseases defined as "stress-related" type nonspecific multifactorial etiology are increasing (Bernardi & Sprini, 2004). The definitions that most often to define work-related stress, classify it as "a set of harmful physical and emotional reactions that occur when the demands posed by the work are not commensurate with the skills, resources or needs of the worker" (Niosh, 1999).

The European Agreement on work-related stress, signed in October 2004, is an important reference for much of the literature produced till now. The inscription of work related stress within the work environment comes from the implementation by the competent institutions of the Agreement.

The detection, prevention and reduction of *problems of work-related stress* is the new challenge that the world of work organizations must confront. Stress, the agreement states, "is a state that is accompanied by malaise and physical, psychological or social dysfunctions [...] different people can react differently to similar situations and the same person may, at different times of his/her life, react differently to similar situations. Stress is not a disease but prolonged exposure to stress may reduce effectiveness at work and cause health problems".

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In the national context such provisions have been implemented by Legislative Decree 81/08¹ followed by information provided by Legislative Decree no. 106/09², which reaffirms the obligation for all employers, both of public and private sectors, the detection of risks from work stress.

The regulatory path is specified further by the enactment by the Commission advisory to the health and safety of the Circular of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the 18/11/10³. This Circular provides the first formal indications for stress work-related and, in particular, the guidelines with respect to the methodology to be used in the detection of these risks, with an indication of the need to apply a criterion of evaluation can provide "objective and verifiable indicators, if possible numerically appreciable".⁴

Our Perspective

We share the socio-constructivist and culturalist epistemological view typical of social science in the last three decades (Gergen, 1985; Herré & Gillett, 1994; Cole, 1996) and use a psychodynamic approach to understand sense-making process (Salvatore, Ligorio & De Franchis, 2005). In this perspective, sense-making is not related to semantic negotiation between social actors; is not explicit agreement on the meanings of shared objects but expresses the affective dynamics of symbolization categorizing the experience from generalized and homogeneous unconscious affective sets (Salvatore & Venuleo, 2008; Mossi & Salvatore, in press). Sense-making, from this view, is not individual (in the mind of social actors) but related to actual and contingent interpersonal space of relation. Acting, speaking, producing signs, social actors make sense on their shared space, affective context (Salvatore, 2004) and this framework rule the affective attribution about a role (e.g. good or bad), norm (useful or useless), task or goal; this affective framework leads social actors to interpretation of their interpersonal context. Following this approach, we will focus on affective construction of interpersonal space; sense-making will be object and purpose of clinical psychology and so we will focus on the "affective construction of stressor" by social actors rather than on the "individual response" to stressors (Carli & Panicia, 1999; 2003). In this direction shared emotional symbolizations, giving a sense to the reality and orienting individuals within a context, will be the subject of analysis. Stress stops being identified with a state of the world caused by exogenous factors, to become a way for giving a sense to the relational context. These modes of giving a sense to the reality can be an important source of information for the clinical psychologist's (Carli & Panicia, 2003) intervention. So, stress becomes a form of sense-making rather than individual cognitive and behavioral response to environmental

¹ Entitled "Implementation of Article 1 of Law August 3, 2007, No 123 concerning the protection of health and safety in the workplace "OJ No 101 of April 30, 2008 Also known as the Consolidated Security.

² Entitled "Supplementary provisions of the decree and remedial April 9, 2008, n.81 for the protection of health and safety in the workplace", OJ Av.180 of August 5, 2009.

³ On November 18, 2010 the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has issued the "Circular Letter as to the approval of the information necessary to assess the risk of work-related stress in art. 28, paragraph 1 bis of Legislative Decree 9 April 2008, No 81, and subsequent amendments and supplements "in which the Standing Advisory Committee on Health and Safety at Work provides guidance on risk assessment-stress for all public and private employers. The entire text is to be found at http://www.lavoro.gov.it/Lavoro/Notizie/20101118_stresslavorocorrelato.htm

⁴ This survey is divided into two phases, one is necessary - the draft - the other is possible. The events of "stressful" nature, are divided into three factors:

- Sentinel events ie events that interrupt the regular course of work such as illness, accidents, etc..
- Job content factors affecting the adjustment of the production process, such as amount of work and work rhythms;
- Factors affecting the work context, the relational aspects of the employment relationship as the decision-making autonomy or interpersonal conflicts.

Only in cases where major elements of risk are present, corrective or educational measures are adopted.

events and can be seen as pretext for clinical intervention rather than object of it (Salvatore & Scotto di Carlo, 2005; Montesarchio & Venuleo, 2009).

Stress as real object

The regulatory framework mentioned above is well suited to be read as a summary of the main theoretical and methodological guidelines in the literature on work-related stress. The critical reading we propose in these pages wants to highlight that the nature of this phenomenon called stress has become so pervasive and reified in our social system as to join an almost *inevitable* sort of *materialization* of a state of the organizational world, that little is suitable to be discussed. Stress is something that exists, that exists, almost independently present in the workplace; what varies is the health of the individual, i.e. it can have a strong defense system or be attackable and susceptible easily⁵.

The important issue of this evaluation, however, seems to be the medical–scientific one: a qualified doctor, with the help of any experts, has to carry out this survey, providing objective and verifiable indicators we have just discussed.

The context aspect seems to be a further key of the intervention, among other things, several authors have been proponents of this approach, which has also enabled the translation and enhancement within the law.

Recall of all, in relation to the so-called interactional theories, which focus primarily on the structural characteristics of the interaction of a person with the working environment, the Demand-Control model by Karasek (1979) and the Person Environment Fit Model (P-E Fit) by French, Caplan and Van Harrison (1982), or, the so-called transactional theories, that primarily deal with cognitive assessment and coping, the Effort-Reward Imbalance by Siegrist (1990, 1996, 2002), the transactional model by Cox and Mackay (Cox, 1978; Cox & Mackay, 1981) and the model of environmental pressures by Cooper (Cooper & Marshall, 1976, 1978; Cooper, Sloan & Williams, 1988).

The frame of these models is the assumption that stress is an individual phenomenon closely related to the personality traits of the individual and in close relation with the context within which the individual interacts, as a place - container of different stressors, these related to the practical organization of the place, social relations (conflicts, uneases, abuse of power), the dimensions of individual experience in the environment.

The individual, the context and the mutual interaction between the two instances, seem to become the links around which to inscribe the dynamics of organizational groups that oversee the construction of the stress phenomenon. In this perspective by organizational dynamics we mean the process of constructing *meanings* that social actors put in place at the time of their communicative exchanges. Thus, stress, intended as a precipitate of cognitive and relational categories, opens a further perspective, which helps to direct its look beyond just the individual dimension, instead of intervening in the contingency of symbolic and unconscious dynamics through every aspect of living together, shared within a given context.

A drop of water taken in isolation has its own molecular structure, spilled in a full glass of water, even if maintains its original structure, comes to adapt to the shape of its container, and in the

⁵ In this sense, can be read the same circular of the Ministry of Labour of 11.18.2010 (see note 4), which precedes the implementation of measures for improvement of labor relations only after the detection of organizational deficiencies, using indicators "objective ". As if the need to improve the climate, the sense of belonging to the organization and the overall quality of the work aspects were marginal, secondary, and not connected in a circuit to the homeostatic production of a vicious cycle that feeds a culture of claim or the control (Carli, 2003).

same way, to paraphrase an isolated thought within a universe of thoughts tends to produce a "common" thought. By container, unlike what one might think, we do not mean merely the environment, but the wider cultural dimension. The culture is so pervasive and impressive as to be invisible to the eyes of someone who is steeped in that culture. Culture as the elephant, imposing and at the same time *invisible*, like the frenetic beating of wings of the dragonfly "that accompanies the minutiae of everyday life, like gossip, or play, or the invention of a metaphor" (Mantovani, 1998, p. 6). Culture is not as a defined container, but as an open space, a *frontier* space, continually changing, dynamic and pluralistic.

Dynamic as it follows paths recursively individuals co-construct in their life narratives, pluralistic because individuals within a shared environment never stay the same as themselves but, on the basis of a common ground, re-define the meanings underlying their relationship in the "here and now" of that well-defined field of interaction.

Work Organization between innovation and change

The inscription of stress in work organizations has found its own reasons in the link, used by much of the literature, with changes occurred in the last thirty years within those contexts.

Innovation, flexibility, global market, new technologies are just some of the things that have gone through these situations by defining new structures in a both logistical and relational view, or in the systems of living together. "to cling to a place is not so important if this place can be achieved and abandoned when you want it [...]. On the other hand, to cling too much, overloading the link with mutually binding involvement can be extremely damaging if opportunities appear elsewhere. It is likely that the Rockefeller's desire was to build huge factories, railroads and oil pipelines and hold them as long as possible [...] Bill Gates, on the contrary, has no hesitation to break away from what he had created the day before" (Bauman, 2006, p. XXI).

Bauman's words highlight the variety of work cultures, in the sense that every work environment can be perceived by social actors in different ways depending on the objectives and the contingency of a given "historic" moment. The NIOSH in a publication on "The Changing Organization of Work and the Safety and Health of Working People" (NORA/NIOSH, 2002), points out specifically the revolutionary changes occurring in work organizations have been so advanced as to make immediate identification of the problematic implications that may arise on health and well-being. It is a *condition* in which the work has gone through and still goes through important changes: we have moved from a worker seen as the first productive resource to a worker as support to production. From the revolution due to the introduction of machines in the factories recent introduction of more sophisticated and advanced softwares. From the square market to the global market. From direct sales to market strategies, from paper to electronic documents. By paper mail to email. It is a transition from long-term to temporary work. From the stable and routine work to the so-called flexible working. These and many other changes are the result not only of a changing work organization but also of an entire society that turns suddenly.

All of these "combinations", but, are nothing more than a reflection of changing cultures, that transform and renew themselves. According to Dohrenwend (1978) in a critical situation which may be one resulting from a stress condition, the person should be considered in that circumstance, investigating the subjective dimension (educational background, socialization, coping skills) and situational variables (environmental support, political power, economic resources, etc.).

According to the author "[...] the transitory stress reactions are the result of this dynamic interaction between the individual and the micro and macro-environment, from which also the possible consequences, both positive (psychological growth) and negative (psychopathology), of the crisis

derive" (Di Maria, Lavanco & Lo Piccolo, 2000, pp. 222-229). Through the inscription of stress in the employment context, the cultural dimension that runs through every moment of the resulting critical experience emerges too. And as Gabassi (2006) pointed out culture can be seen "according to the evolutionary stage of the organization, as ensuring stability and continuity, sometimes flexibility and efficiency, as well as obstacle and impediment to a change that is essential for the survival of the organization itself" (p.70).

Think of a new organizational structure that a hypothetical company suddenly decides to implement, without involving its employees. The decision *falls from the top* and perhaps invests a particular individual who suddenly is in charge of new responsibilities. Let's imagine the impact that this change will have both on the individual, in terms of subjective perceived capacities, and on the rest of the group, if the event is symbolized in a persecutory way and the person labeled as "unable". It may happen then that these factors *build* a break into the collusive system and can undermine the emotional implicit agreement that until then had allowed the maintenance of an adequate and functional "role play". Recalling the construct of collusion (Carli & Paniccia, 1999; Carli, Grasso & Paniccia, 2007), ie the process of emotional socialization of the context, arising from a common affective symbolization by those who took part in that context, we can think of stress as a time when the organization through a failure of collusion in which the emotional premises allowing, up to that moment, to function in a certain way fail. In this sense, it may happen that the relationship with the organization brings to workers' mind feelings of "*inadequacy*", of "*persecution*", of "*incapacity*", of "*guilt*", emotions that can become "*all-encompassing experiences*" (recalling in this sense, the theory of bi-logic proposed by Matte Blanco) able to make the experience of organizational life as something very problematic.

In this sense, stress can not be measured with an absolute value, as usually happens, but should be seen as a relational phenomenon that is born within a recursive relationship between individuals in interaction with their work environment.

At most it can be understood as a precipitate of the *inability to manage emotions*, arising from the totalizing and deficit emotions in relation to a context, such as the work organizations with a strong productive impact, because it's characterized by objectives, costs, profits, benefits and *relations*, as they can't be regardless of interpersonal relationships.

Methods and tools

The study, outlined as well, is inscribed within a framework that provides, by public and private institutions work, the periodic detection of work- related stress.

The request is received by the leaders of some local offices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, or by Provincial Departments of Labour (PDL) agree with the person responsible for the safety and competent physician, who commissioned the survey of stress risk⁶ at the University of Salento.

In line with the theoretical considerations, outlined above, it was considered appropriate not to separate the investigation on risk of stress from the assessment on the symbolic representation of the context of the office, in the belief that both would have said something more about the state of the organization and ultimately on the indications for intervention.

The research therefore took the views of employees into account rather than relying on macro indicators of the phenomenon of stress, for example, turnover, absenteeism, shared spaces, benefits, facilities, etc..

⁶ The DPL, in the exercise of its powers, not only carry out surveillance on safety in the workplace, they must also operate so effectively in their offices to achieve such survey. The survey covered the D.P.L. Brindisi, Lecce and Taranto.

In the preparation of logistic activities of research, it was necessary to consider the difficulties arising from the geographical location of the offices and those designed to maintain contact with each of the employees scheduled to be involved in the initiative, and for these reasons it was deemed appropriate to resort to a tool self-administered in the form of compilation rather than make an interview in the form of interview. The questionnaire was then prepared and administered by the research team responsible for the research (in the double role of external and internal reference)⁷ and six trainees of the degree course in Psychological Sciences and Techniques at the University of Salento.

The survey instrument delivered and presented personally to each employee is therefore composed of *three distinct parts*. In the *first part* respondents were asked to express their evaluations of the 9 stimuli that were work-related using the technique of the Semantic Differential. The semantic differential (SD) is a data collection technique originally proposed by Osgood (1952; Osgood *et al.*, 1957) with the aim of identifying the nature and define a measure of emotional concepts in question. It is one of the most used in psychological research precisely because "new knowledge has expanded the scope of studies on the structure of emotions and the semantics of qualifiers and concepts" (Capozza, 1977, p. 33). According to Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957) the affective meaning of a concept is placed in a multidimensional space.

The incentives offered through the DS were referring to two distinct areas and an intermediate, each with 3 stimuli:

- Perception of self (myself, myself as an employee of the DPL, the future);
- Perception of the organization (the Ministry of Welfare, the Provincial Labour, Public Administration);

The third area is between the two previously described and evaluates oneself in the primary context to which one belongs (the DPL field where I work, my colleagues, a user who comes in contact with the DPL).

The respondents were asked to rate each of the nine stimuli using 17 bipolar adjectives with a strong emotional density⁸.

The second part of the questionnaire aimed to detect the attitude of the life environment (work and social). The attitude was elicited by the proposition of some questions in regard to which respondents were invited to express their attitudes toward aspects of social and everyday life.

This part of the questionnaire was built based on the ISO methodology, widely used in psychosocial research (Carli & Paniccchia, 1999; Carli & Salvatore, 2001). Respondents are asked to express their point of view on 135 questions, with multiple choice, constructed to facilitate the expression of perceptions/opinions/judgments on three general areas:

- image of the social environment (reliability of the social structures and institutions, expectation on developing the territory ...);
- image of Public Administration (PA's mission, its problems ...);
- image of the Provincial Department of Labor (PDL areas of relevance, determinants of work processes, relationships with internal and external customers).

The *third part* of the questionnaire, more specific than the general purpose of the survey which launched the research initiative, was aimed specifically to detect the stress at work. This section has been built based on a suitably adapted version of the purposes of a similar questionnaire

⁷ In fact one of the drafters of Article also serves as an official at the Ministry of Labour and PS.

⁸ Forms that are capable of delivering a high emotional value, regardless of the linguistic context within which they are located (Carli & Paniccchia, 2002).

prepared by the Institute for Prevention and Safety at Work - ISPESL - (Fattorini, 2008) for private business organizations.

The three reunited instruments were quite complex in terms of total amplitude (26 page sides plus 4 pages with presentation and instructions), but the administration was handled by contacting individual respondents by the research team - both in terms of delivery and return - and this has still allowed to meet the necessary criteria of representativeness for the purposes of exploratory research.

The questionnaire was provided to all employees of the three PDL under investigation, for a total of 324 employees.

In addition to the classic distinction of gender, respondents were asked the age, the period of service in two distinct categories (more or less than 10 years of service), the role (inspection personnel or administrative) and the area of distinct membership into three areas⁹: area A, the lowest level of placement, ushers/switchboard operators; the area B, administrative workers; the area C, executive workers and officials.

The next step was the elimination from the sample of all questionnaires whose answers were left completely blank (108)¹⁰.

The total number of respondents at the end of the survey was of 216 questionnaires.

The data were analyzed using multidimensional statistical techniques, appropriate to measurement scales characterizing the three different tests of the survey: principal component analysis (PCA) for the semantic differential and multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) for the other two areas of the questionnaire.

Both techniques have allowed us to detect the factors by which to group the responses by extrapolating the dimensions with which respondents expressed their preferences with respect to the stimuli presented.

Each of these multi-dimensional analyses has enabled the extraction of the factors that organize the data variability, which was interpreted by us as a latent dimension of meaning that constitutes the affective meaning shared by participants in the organizational context (Mossi & Salvatore, 2011).

The following sections describe the main dimensions of each analysis.

Analysis of semantic differential

The 9 stimuli multiplied by the 19 pairs of bipolar adjectives are the 153 variables analyzed by principal component analysis (ACP).

An initial screening was carried out on raw data to verify the linearity and normality of distributions and the presence of univariate or multivariate outliers. This first test involved the need to transform

⁹ This view has recently been superseded by the new contract of employment of ministerial staff, however, effectively divides the roles of employees in the perceptions of competence of each of them. For this it has been repeated, although not currently in force.

¹⁰ Employees are given a wide margin of time to respond to the questionnaire. Be advised that part of the staff, the one in charge of inspections at farms, operates outside of the office for most of the week. In addition, because of its complexity in order not to disrupt the normal organization of work, the sensors have gone several times to ask - and sometimes solicit - the return of the questionnaire. In the absence of a discussion following the survey, it is difficult to speculate on the reasons which led about a third of employees not to respond at all. While this attitude may derive from a lack of sense of belonging to the organization, it could also be understood as a manifestation of their opposition and their own discomfort, which led not to take value to a business survey felt as 'sets' rather than as the result of a choice of self-assessment would have shown to all staff and provide some insight on the state of 'health' of the office.

the proceeds of the 9 items from raw numerical values to values on a logarithmic scale (Barbaranelli, 2007).

Through the ACP 3 factors (Table 1) have been identified explaining a total of 29% of the total variability (1° 16% 6.4% 2°, 3° 5.6%).

On the factorial matrix was applied varimax rotation of factors in order to allow greater readability of the same. Table 1 shows the saturation factor for each variable in each of the 3 factors.

Table 1 Composition of Factors of Semantic Differential.

1° FACTOR	SAT	2° FACTOR	SAT	3° FACTOR	SAT
Small-Large (COLLEAGUE)	0,77	Clear-Confused (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	0,61	Cold-Warm (FUTURE)	0,73
Good-Bad (COLLEAGUE)	-0,75	Near-Far (MINISTRY OF WELFARE)	0,61	Small-Large (FUTURE)	0,67
Cold-Warm (COLLEAGUE)	0,71	Mite-Aggressive (USER)	0,60	Tense-Relaxed (FUTURE)	0,65
Rough-Smooth (COLLEAGUE)	0,71	Good-Bad (WELFARE MIN)	0,60	Full-Empty (FUTURE)	0,64
Near-Far (COLLEAGUE)	-0,70	Weak-Strong (WELFARE MIN)	-0,59	Round-cornered (FUTURE)	0,63
Active-Passive (FIELD WORK)	-0,67	Near-Far (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	0,59	Active-Passive (FUTURE)	-0,61
Active-Passive (COLLEAGUE)	-0,66	Good-Bad (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	0,58	Rough-Smooth (FUTURE)	0,58
Good-Bad (FIELD WORK)	-0,66	Precise-Vague (MINISTRY OF WELFARE)	-0,58	Beautiful-Ugly (FUTURE)	-0,56
Precise-Vague (FIELD WORK)	0,65	Rough-Smooth (USER)	-0,58	Precise-Vague (EMPLOYEE)	-0,55
Beautiful-Ugly (COLLEAGUE)	-0,64	Beautiful-Ugly (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	0,58	Weak-Strong (FUTURE)	0,55
Mite-Aggressive (COLLEAGUE)	-0,64	Round-cornered (USER)	-0,57	Clear-Confused (FUTURE)	-0,54
Clear-Confused (COLLEAGUE)	-0,63	Clear-Confused (MINISTRY OF WELFARE)	0,56	Near-Far (FUTURE)	-0,54
Rough-Smooth (FIELD WORK)	0,62	Full-Empty (MINISTRY OF WELFARE)	-0,54	Precise-Vague (MYSELF)	-0,52
Full-Empty (COLLEAGUE)	0,62	Clear-Confused (PDL)	0,53	Precise-Vague (FUTURE)	0,52
Cold-Warm (FIELD WORK)	0,61	Clear-Confused (USER)	0,53	Good-Bad (FUTURE)	-0,51
Full-Empty (FIELD WORK)	0,61	Beautiful-Ugly (MINISTRY OF WELFARE)	0,52	Full-Empty (EMPLOYEE)	0,48
Weak-Strong (FIELD WORK)	0,61	Precise-Vague (USER)	-0,52	Variable-Constant (FUTURE)	0,46
Tense-Relaxed (FIELD WORK)	0,60	Cold-Warm (MINISTRY OF WELFARE)	-0,52	Weak-Strong (MYSELF)	0,43
Precise-Vague (COLLEAGUE)	0,59	Tense-Relaxed (USER)	-0,51	Variable-Constant (EMPLOYEE)	0,42
Near-Far (FIELD WORK)	-0,59	Round-cornered (MINISTRY OF WELFARE)	-0,51	Hot-Cold (OFFICIAL)	0,41
Clear-Confused (FIELD WORK)	-0,57	Active-Passive (MINISTRY OF WELFARE)	0,51	Weak-Strong (EMPLOYEE)	0,40
Beautiful-Ugly (FIELD WORK)	-0,56	Rough-Smooth (PDL)	-0,50	Mite-Aggressive (FUTURE)	-0,39
Tense-Relaxed (COLLEAGUE)	0,56	Silent-Noisy (USER)	0,49	Small-Large (EMPLOYEE)	0,39
Empty-full (DPL)	0,54	Active-Passive (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	0,48	Silent-Noisy (COLLEAGUE)	0,35
Good-Bad (PDL)	-0,53	Round-cornered (PDL)	-0,48	Cold-Warm (MYSELF)	0,31
Round-cornered (FIELD WORK)	0,52	Weak-Strong (PDL)	-0,47	Angular-Round (OFFICIAL)	0,30
Active-Passive (PDL)	-0,51	Precise-Vague (PDL)	-0,47	Active-Passive (EMPLOYEE)	-0,30
Weak-Strong (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	0,51	Precise-Vague (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	-0,47	Full-Empty (MYSELF)	0,30
Weak-Strong (COLLEAGUE)	0,51	Cold-Warm (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	-0,47	Tense-Relaxed (EMPLOYEE)	0,29
Round-cornered (COLLEAGUE)	0,50	Cold-Warm (USER)	-0,46	Weak-Strong (USER)	0,28
Small-Large (FIELD WORK)	0,50	Silent-Noisy (PDL)	0,46	Tense-Relaxed (MYSELF)	0,28
Small-Large (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	0,50	Rough-Smooth (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	-0,46	Rough-Smooth (MYSELF)	0,27
Small-Large (PDL)	0,47	Variable-Constant (USER)	-0,43	Rough-Smooth (OFFICIAL)	0,26
Variable-Constant (FIELD WORK)	0,47	Tense-Relaxed (MINISTRY OF WELFARE)	-0,43	Clear-Confused (EMPLOYEE)	-0,26
Beautiful-Ugly (PDL)	-0,43	Mite-Aggressive (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	0,43	Round-cornered (MYSELF)	0,26
Mite-Aggressive (FIELD WORK)	-0,42	Small-Large (MINISTRY OF WELFARE)	-0,43	Active-Passive (MYSELF)	-0,23
Near-Far (PDL)	-0,41	Predictable-Unpredictable (USER)	0,43	Variable-Constant (MYSELF)	0,23
Cold-Warm (PDL)	0,40	Beautiful-Ugly (USER)	0,42	Silent-Noisy (MYSELF)	0,22
Tense-Relaxed (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	0,29	Variable-Constant (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	-0,42	Clear-Confused (MYSELF)	-0,19
Variable-Constant (COLLEAGUE)	0,27	Silent-Noisy (SETTORELAVORO)	0,42	Beautiful-Ugly (EMPLOYEE)	-0,19
Full-Empty (USER)	0,25	Predictable-Unpredictable (SETTORELAVORO)	0,41	Predictable-Unpredictable (PDL)	0,18
Small-Large (MYSELF)	-0,21	Full-Empty (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	-0,40	Beautiful-Ugly (MYSELF)	-0,18
Small-Large (USER)	0,20	Tense-Relaxed (PDL)	-0,40	Predictable-Unpredictable (COLLEAGUE)	0,17

Method: Principal Component, Rotation: Varimax

The *first factor* includes all the adjectives that express an opinion about, "my colleagues", "PDL of the industry where I work" and "DPL" or stimuli related to the internal context of the office immediately. The factor does not seem to differentiate between adjectives related to the aspects of evaluation, potency or activity according to the dimensionality identified by Osgood. This factor therefore seems to express an internal dimension, what is 'inside' the organization. In reports the semantic values of the adjectives appear towards a positive slope (great, good, warm, smooth, active, etc.) or a negative one (small, poor, cold, rough, passive, etc..).

The *second factor* groups together instead bipolar adjectives basically around 3 stimuli "Public Administration", "the Ministry of Welfare" and "a user who comes in contact with the PDL."

Basically, as in the first factor, there is a clear distinction around the three-dimensional evaluation of the SD. Rather it would seem that the responses are related to the institution itself and by reference to relations with what is "outside", ie the boundary, the external environment of the proximal relationships. In this factor in the semantic values reports of adjectives are increasing to a negative side (confused, distant, aggressive, bad, weak, etc.) and decreasing towards the positive one (clear, close, warm, good, strong, etc..).

The *third factor*, finally, brings together the stimuli, "the future", "myself" and "myself as an employee of the PDL". Again there is a differentiation in terms of dimensions of the bipolar adjectives used, rather the stimuli related to a personal dimension of time seem to dominate. The correlation, however, seems geared towards a positive outlook but detached from the organization, which instead is linked to the previous factors.

Reports appear, in the semantic values, increasing towards the positive side of the adjectives (hot, great, relaxed, full, round, etc.) and decreasing toward the negative one (cold, small, tense, empty, angular, etc..).

Results of the perception of the context

As described in the introduction, the data obtained from the answers provided by employees in the second part of the questionnaire were subjected to statistical analysis using the technique of multi-dimensional multiple correspondence. The calculations made showed the dimensions around which the procedures associated with each question, expressing the highest values of contingency.

In this analysis, all the answers to the questionnaire were selected as active variables and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents were selected as explanatory variables, as well as resulting from the information required in the final part of this section of the questionnaire. The total active variables - 150 with 664 initially associated mode - have been reduced to 145 - with 493 detailed rules - using as a cutoff for inclusion in the actual analysis of the individual mode, a presence that was at least 8% of the distribution between the alternative answers provided for each question¹¹.

The first two dimensions explain 93.6% of variability according to the formula of the revaluation proposed by Benzecri. In particular, the first dimension can explain 19.72% of the total variability (88, 6% appreciation) while the second dimension explains the variability of 4.87% (4.94% with inflation).

¹¹ In this analysis, as in the next ones even non-response were considered in the analysis, however, as an expression of an attitude towards the objects of study in general and research in particular (see Salvatore & Scotto di Carlo, 2005; Mossi & Salvatore, 2011).

In the detail of the results obtained (Figure 2) we can verify that the *first dimension* groups, in both semi-axis of response, variables that relate to the improvement of working environment, relationships with colleagues are perceived as efficient and sense of esteem and competence. But even - especially on the positive semi-axis - the description of the good employee and organizational structure within which one works. On closer inspection, however, what characterizes the two semi-axis are the preferred choices in each of them: generally medium/high on the negative semi-axis (choices such as enough, much) compared with missing or negative responses that characterize the opposite semi-axis. The style of response that is polarized along the two semi-axis seems to manifest a sort of adherence to the "commonplace", on the one hand the 'good', those who express themselves in a largely enthusiastic about the context, the other the 'bad', who show opposition and unconventionality.

Overall, therefore, it would seem that this dimension represents a culture based on invariability of the context and commitment (or not) is substantiated by employees in the form of participation in the detection of stress to be placed in the institution. On the one hand, the personnel involved in research that responds - not coincidentally - with a vision of sustained optimism about the context and relationships lived next to it, on the other hand the responses of those who denies the activity, feels foreign in relation to it, does not take part (or rather, we shall say, participates only in part) showing mainly a form of mistrust towards the establishment or disinvestment.

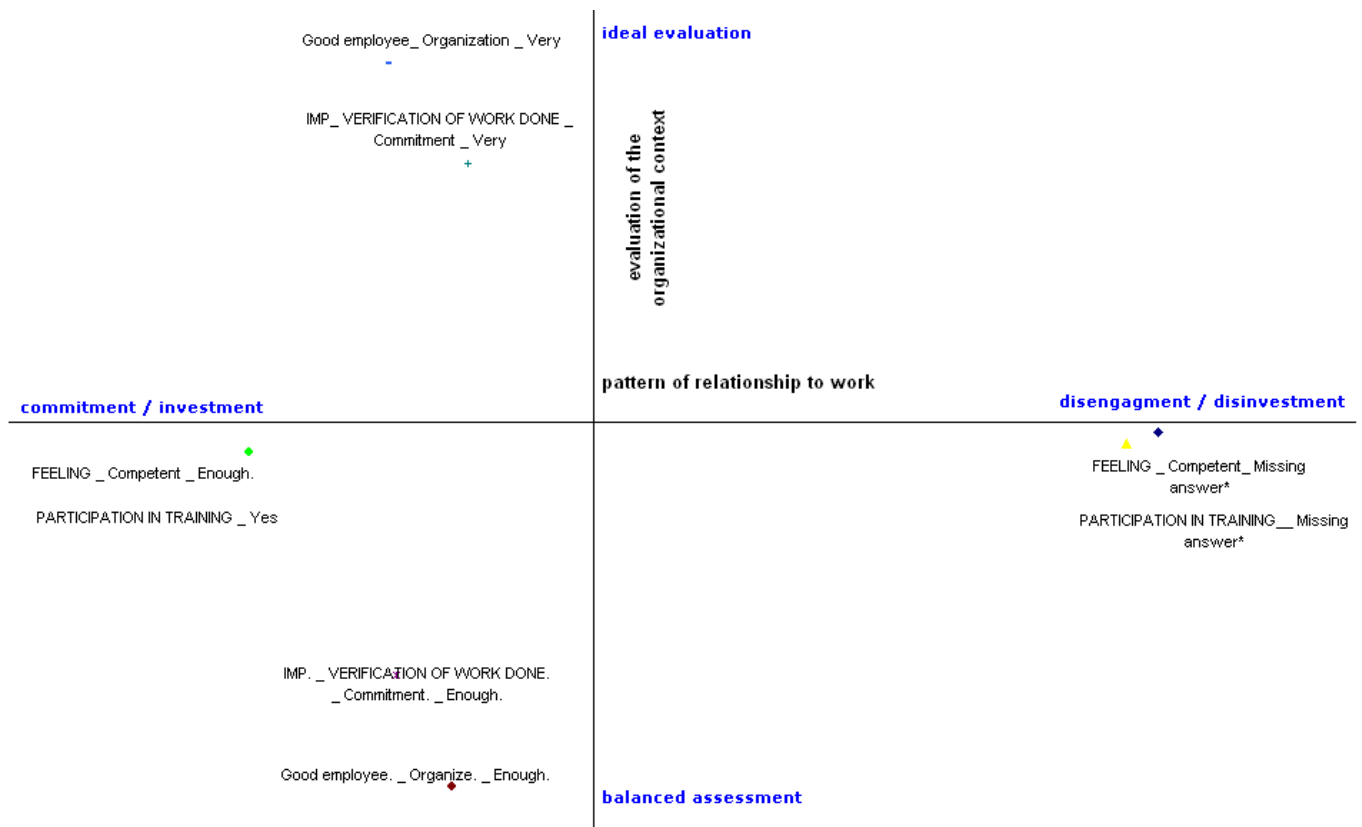
For these reasons, *this dimension has been called "patterns of relations with work,"* characterized by a positive semi-axis on the disengagement/divestment and the negative of commitment/investment.

To complete the examination of the dimension we can add that from the point of view of the illustrative if the semi-axis is characterized by negative responses mainly by male staff-profile inspection or otherwise of Area C - which is the area of officials - the positive semi-axis is characterized by the absence of any response that characterizes the respondent.

The second dimension brings together the relevant variables that describe the actions to be a good employee or to develop the quality of the upgrade, and also those related to the analysis of the significance of problematic factors that directly affect the organization or the working procedures. Basically, it seems that the dimension underlying the responses is attributable to organizational processes as a whole, the differentiation is played in the opposition between the two semi-axis is described by which the development envisioned for the organization. In fact, while the moderate axle negative mode are used, within which the employee is described as a good figure or program that organizes activities, or even gives reasons and who knows, these same actions on the positive semi-axis becomes very relevant. Similarly, while the semi-axis negative development of the training involves the fact that moderately connect to the objectives of the work or to contact the competent trainers, the semi-axis opposite these variables account for a much greater degree. Or, as the last semi-axis on the intellectual level of the employee has 'very often', has just the opposite of 'enough'. It appears then that the opposite poles of the dimension defined by the two semi-axis are arranged in two alternative ways in which the organizational context is interpreted: on the one hand seems to prevail in moderation, on the other hand seems to prevail over a sense of high efficiency, most of idealization of functions.

For these reasons, *this dimension has been defined as 'evaluation of the organizational context'* with a balanced assessment on the negative semi-axis and an ideal evaluation, where the semi-axis is also characterized by the absence of specification of the gender of the respondent.

Figure 2. Multiple Correspondence Analysis on background variables



Results of the perceived stress

Also for the third part of the questionnaire was used as a form of statistical analysis the technique of Multiple Correspondence Analysis. Even in this case was essentially to do with alternative response categories differentiable only as alternatives.

The calculations performed have seen as active all the questions and variables, as explanatory variables, the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents as identified at the end of the questionnaire on the perception of the context.

The variables initially considered were 123 with 406 associated response modes. After selection using criteria such as access threshold value of 8%, the variables were reduced to 83 with 217 associated modes. The examination of the results obtained with the ACM led to the choice of three dimensions, which explain 97.4% of the total variability according to the formula proposed by the revaluation by Benzecrì (Figure 3).

In particular, the first dimension explains 24.9% of the total variability (the 91, 6% with the formula re-evaluated), the second dimension explains the variability of 6.24% (4.8% with inflation), and finally, the third dimension explains 3.32% of the variation among the data, corresponding to 1% with the formula of the appreciation Benzecrì.

Going into detail of the analysis, the first dimension associated with those variables related to the practical aspects of work organization, such as pay (appropriate or not), the time, the means employed to reach the workplace, the organization shifts, relational repercussions within the family, the reward system and well-being guaranteed by the organization. Overall, therefore, are all aspects related to work organization, both in its process aspects than in the outcome. What characterizes the two semi-axis that make up the factor is that while on the negative semi-axis

there are response modes that critically describe their work commitments (for example, is viewed favorably the reconciliation of work and private life, but in a non-satisfactory salary or bonus system used, although some may feel useful and independent work from the point of view of personal fulfillment in an idealized form apparently), on the opposite semi-axis - positive - for the same or for certain aspects to them related, aggregate all non-response.

So, as the primary factor of context assessment, a substantial disengagement from the international collections seems to be present, by dividing the dimension of those who exercise their own critical assessment, although they feel integrated in the organization and those who prefer not to declare or exposure in trial. For this reason the dimension has been called "*representation of self and organization*" on the semi-axis where there is a negative aspect of confusion (in the double sense of confusion and fusion) with the institution and on a semi-axis opposite of resistance, almost of survival.

From the point of view of the illustrative conditions, on the negative semi-axis there are mainly respondents with more than 10 years of work, while the reverse side is characterized by the lack of answers about the kind that is the area or the role or the same work years.

The second dimension extracted by the ACM is characterized by the presence of variables that may be related to experiences in the work experience. We find the relationship with superiors (for example, assessing whether the supervisor is properly using the skills and recognize the results), or to refer to the values, the emotional state and the way people live their relationships with colleagues.

The two semi-axis on the dimension seem to be characterized precisely around to different positions, around these experiences: on the negative semi-axis we find a feeling of adequacy and control, by contrast, on the positive semi-axis, an experience of discomfort and ineffectiveness.

This dimension has been precisely defined "*living organization*", with the two opposite poles that designate the quality of this experience.

With regard to the explanatory modes the negative semi-axis is characterized by negative responses of the male respondents, while the positive semi-axis from the female ones.

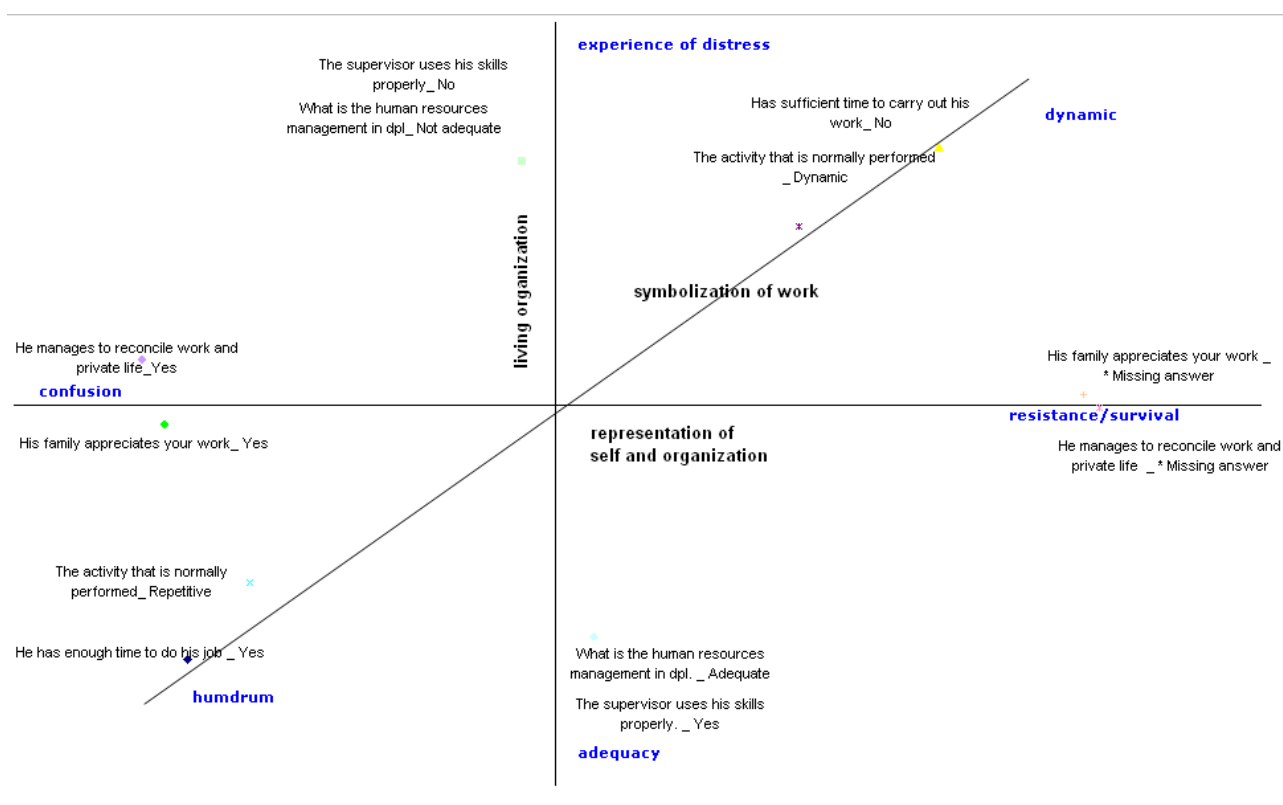
Finally, *the third dimension* includes variables related to the perception and management of time and the perceived risk in their work.

On the negative semi-axis there are the response that are part of a time control linked to repetition and boredom of the work and a low perception of risk in their work, on the other side there is a sense almost of frenzy, poor organization of time but also a high risk perception.

We called this dimension "*symbolization of work*" putting the monotony "label" on the extreme negative opposite and dynamism "label" on the opposite one.

The illustrative modes of this dimension place the administrative area B with more than 10 years while working on the negative side, while we find the profile of inspection or otherwise belonging to C area with less than 10 years of work on the positive side.

Figure 3. Multiple Correspondence Analysis on stress perception variables



Emotion, context, and stress: an overview

After having determined the location of respondents derived from both the results obtained in the analysis of semantic differential relative to Principal Components, and the factorial coordinates on the responses obtained in the second and third parts of the questionnaire - the perception of the context and stress-related risks assessment – it has been possible to correlate all the results obtained using a correlation between variables and using in this regard, the factorial scores and the coordinates of individual respondents.

Table 2 shows the significant correlations obtained.

As one can see, with regard to the factors highlighted in the SD, the greater the positive vision of what is perceived inside, the more it proceeds to the commitment and the balance within the context that is experienced with a sense of adequacy in relation to the perception of stress (correlation value and significance).

A worst perception of what is off (2nd factor) is significantly associated with a perception of an ideal in the evaluation of the organizational context and with an experience of dislocation and the dynamic (or perhaps 'frenetic') in the living and the symbolization of stress (correlation value). However, it is also significant that a positive perception of the temporal development (3rd factor) is associated with the sensation of dynamism rather than to that of monotony (correlation value).

Equally significant correlations also occur between the first dimension of the context and the first dimension of stress (correlation value). In this case, the results indicate that if disengagement in the relation with the work occurs, it is associated with a significant representation in survival between oneself and the organization or, in the same way, the demonstration of commitment in the approach to work is associated with confusion in the representation.

It is also significant that an assessment of the idealized organizational context is associated with confusion in the representation of the self and organization and to the experience of distress

(correlation value), or, in a mirror image, is associated with a balanced representation of organizational survival and effectiveness of an experience.

Table 2. Pearson correlations between factor scores of the scale

	Inside Organization Perceived	Outside Organization Perceived	Future and Development	Patterns of Relationship to Work	Evaluate Organizational Context
Inside Organization Perceived				-0,183(*)	-0,343(**)
Outside Organization Perceived					0,430(**)
Future and Development					
Patterns of Relationship to Work (commitment-investment)	-0,184(*)				
Evaluate Organizational Context (ideal-balanced evaluation)	-0,343(**)	0,430(**)			
Representation of Self and Organization (confusion vs. survival)				0,322(**)	-0,138(*)
Living Organization (adequacy vs. experience of distress)	-0,528(**)	0,298(**)			0,365(**)
Symbolization of Work (dynamic vs. humdrum)		0,286(**)	0,253(**)		

(*)level of significance 0.05; (**)level of significance 0.01;

Conclusions

This study specifically investigates the stress within a Public Administration.

Although it appears necessary to make use of the results obtained in similar assessment to provide a more structured investigation of the phenomenon, we believe that the results presented provide a useful and consistent information from their specificity.

In fact, while the Court finds that the implementing rules on work-related stress assessment require, according to ministerial regulations, "objective" indicators, they call at the same time the need to carry out a survey of homogeneous groups of workers. Reaffirming the need for more global action, with the involvement of working groups, if we detect "risk" cues. Because of this, it would seem implicit that an assessment of stress, beyond the instruments used, should be focused on the dynamics of management/organization relationships.

In this sense, the carried out research, so far from providing general results in terms of instrument, has a potential value as a method of evaluating work-related stress in Public Administration. It remains to see if other evidence (such as absences because of sick, interpersonal conflicts, shifts, etc..) can be found which are able to detect the organizational discomfort, as the very ministerial circular seems to suggest. These technologies would then determine, through longitudinal research, how these sentinel events can be related to the experience of workers.

Considering the obtained results we can see that the categorization of emotional events on the one hand, the of reading social context on the other hand, together with the experienced discomfort related to working conditions, are aspects that do not disown a cultural reading of the phenomenon under study. It would seem that whoever has an emotional representation characterized by the use

of positive connotations, even categorizes the surrounding context and his/her work within the positive polarity. And this also happens in reverse.

At least in this sense, we feel, therefore, to assert that there is a shared frame of meaning between cultural groups with different valuations that can produce effects in the work context.

We started with the idea that the detection of stress should not be interpreted as a given dispositional, individual pathology present 'a priori', but had to be weighed within a contextual dimension where different cultural and interpersonal dynamics are co-constructed and emotionally shared by the organizational context. There was therefore a partial interpretation of the world that reverberates even in the workplace.

This brings us to the definition of stress as a response to what is perceived as a hindrance, not simply a bad relationship with the work, but rather a vision of what is needed to be changed. One way to interpret events, that is probably able to affect recursively - through the management of the dynamics of power - even the employment context, changing the balance and recording the progress of the organization.

In this sense it is useful to read stress not as an individual cue, but collectively, as data provided by the group, organized by the community. Using more traditional models of psychological reading of events, as a sort of group dynamic rather than a personal failure. So proposing a critical reading concerning organizational cultures that generate a sense of helplessness that seems to refer to the evaluation of stress.

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