

*The relationship between Eustress, Sources of Stress and Strategies of
Savoring Among University Teachers in Portugal*



Susana Fonseca & Filomena Jordão
Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences
University of Porto, Portugal

ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions no longer offer work environments with low levels of stress as before (Winefield, Gillespie, Stough, Dua, Hapuarachchi & Boyd, 2003). This research aims to explore the relationship between eustress, sources of stress and strategies of savoring among higher education teachers in Portugal. Data were collected by an inventory applied to a sample of 239 Portuguese teachers. Our results suggest associations between eustress and behavioral expression and sharing with others strategies. The results point associations between behavioral expression and organizational climate and work conditions, between memory building and organizational climate and working conditions. In future research, it may be beneficial analyze other variables such as job satisfaction, distress and coping strategies, making the study of the stress of university teachers more complete and exhaustive.

INTRODUCTION

The conclusions of the studies on higher education professionals stress show that, highest levels of stress are experienced (Winefield et al., 2003) and that work-related stress result in costs to the organization and the community. However, several studies, have showed that, during a stressful event, people rather than experience distress, they may also experience eustress (Nelson & Simmons, 2003). Consistent with the Holistic Stress Response Model (Nelson & Simmons, 2003), eustress is defined as “a positive psychological response to a stressor, as indicated by the presence of positive psychological sates” (p. 104).

This authors introduced, in their Holistic Stress Response Model, the concept of savoring. The concept was later conceptualized by Bryant and Veroff (2007), who present savoring as the process through which people actively get pleasure and satisfaction with the positive experience. Savoring works as a moderator of the impact of positive events on positive emotions in order to amplify or dampen its intensity and reduce or extend the duration of a positive feeling (Bryant & Veroff, 2007).

In this study we intend to explore the relationship between eustress, sources of stress and strategies of savoring among higher education teachers in Portugal.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

METHOD

SAMPLE

Table 1 – Sample Distribution

Personal information			
Sex			
Men	Women		
93	146		
Age (years)			
22-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	> 51 years
10	75	95	59
Years of Work			
<10 years	10-20 years	21-30 years	21-30 years
84	98	51	6
Organizational information			
Legal form			
Private	Public	Other	
38	172	29	
Work contract			
Indefinite	right resolvent	resolute uncertain	Other
137	71	22	9
Education system			
University	Politecnic	Other	
55	136	48	

MATERIAL and PROCEDURE

For data collection was used an inventory, consisting the Sources of Stress on Higher Education Teachers Questionnaire (Jordão & Pinto, in press), the Ways of Savoring Checklist (Bryant & Veroff, 2007), the Eustress Scale (O’Sullivan, 2011, translated and adapted version) and a questionnaire that included sociodemographic and institutional variables. We displayed the instrument on-line and send a email, into the directors/presidents of all higher education institutions in Portugal, requesting its dissemination.

DATA ANALYSIS

We obtained 239 answers and we perform inferential analyses considering a p value ≤.05, namely, Correlation Coefficient Pearson where used to analyze the association between variables.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Correlations				
		Eustress	Behavioral expression	Sharing with others
Eustress	Pearson Correlation	1	,153*	,160*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,018	,013
	N	239	239	239
Behavioral expression	Pearson Correlation	,153*	1	,509**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,018		,000
	N	239	239	239
Sharing with others	Pearson Correlation	,160*	,509**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,013	,000	
	N	239	239	239
Memory building	Pearson Correlation	,071	,553**	,420**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,271	,000	,000
	N	239	239	239

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Our results suggest associations between eustress and behavioral expression (p=.018) and sharing with others (p=.013) strategies.

Correlations							
		Behavioral expression	Sharing with others	Memory building	Job characteristics	Organizational climate	Work conditions
Behavioral expression	Pearson Correlation	1	,509**	,553**	,068	,138*	,114
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,298	,033	,079
	N	239	239	239	239	239	239
Sharing with others	Pearson Correlation	,509**	1	,420**	,011	,058	-,009
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000	,868	,369	,885
	N	239	239	239	239	239	239
Memory building	Pearson Correlation	,553**	,420**	1	,037	,176**	,097
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000		,572	,006	,137
	N	239	239	239	239	239	239
Job characteristics	Pearson Correlation	,068	,011	,037	1	,469*	,558**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,298	,868	,572		,000	,000
	N	239	239	239	239	239	239
Organizational climate	Pearson Correlation	,138*	,058	,176**	,469*	1	,473**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,033	,369	,006	,000		,000
	N	239	239	239	239	239	239
Career development	Pearson Correlation	,114	-,009	,097	,558**	,473**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,079	,885	,137	,000	,000	
	N	239	239	239	239	239	239
Work conditions	Pearson Correlation	,151*	,084	,136*	,435**	,405**	,366**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,019	,194	,036	,000	,000	
	N	239	239	239	239	239	239

**., Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results point associations between behavioral expression and organizational climate (p=.033) and work conditions (p=.019). As well as, between memory building and organizational climate (p=.006) and working conditions (p=.036).

Contrary to literature that points that individuals when exposed to a stressful working condition can produce eustress (Simmons, 2000), we did not find any association between sources of stress and eustress.

CONCLUSIONS

We can conclude that institutions of higher education in Portugal should allow sharing, improve the conditions and characteristics of the work and careers of its teachers, fostering high levels of eustress. This study is a further contribution to the limited research on eustress, factors that cause stress and strategies of savoring among higher education teachers.

REFERENCES

Bryant, F., & Veroff, J. (2007). *Savoring: A New Model of Positive Experience*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Nelson, D., & Simmons, B.. (2003). Health Psychology and Work Stress: a More Positive Approach. In J. Quick & L. Tetrick (Eds.), *Handbook of Occupational Health Psychology*, 97-119. Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association.

O’Sullivan, G. (2011). The Relationship Between Hope, Eustress, Self-Efficacy, and Life Satisfaction Among Undergraduates. *Social Indicators Research*, 101(1), 155-172.

Jordão, F., & Pinto, A. (in press). Desenvolvimento e estudo psicométrico da Escala de Fontes Organizacionais de Stresse da Docência no Ensino Superior. *Psychologica*.

Simmons, B. (2000). *Eustress at work: Accentuating the positive*. Dissertation. Faculty of the Graduate College, Oklahoma State.

Winefield, A., Gillespie, N., Stough, C., Dua, J., Hapuarachchi, J., & Boyd, C. (2003). Occupational Stress in Australian University Staff: Results From a National Survey. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 10(1), 51-63.