



New Trends  
in Psychology

## The Influence of Stress on Pandemic Students

Cristina Ștefănescu<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** In relation to the faculty, the student shows non-specific responses to the solicitations given by the faculty, specifically in the pandemic, when he had to adapt more to a new system, the online one. In the context of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital transformation of education has necessitated a rapid response, including from the European institutions. The digitalization of education provided the premises for the use of games for educational purposes, which can stimulate students' participation in the instructional-educational process. It matters a lot how we respond cognitively to stress, how we manage to interpret reality so that it is to our benefit. I'd rather see the full side of the glass and enjoy online interactions than be afraid that I might get infected if I went to college physically. Importantly, it is not the traumatic event itself that leads to growth (no one is grateful for COVID-19), but rather the way the event is processed.

**Keywords:** covid-19; pandemic; students; stress; digitization; optimism; change

### Introduction

Stress is defined by Hans Selye (Selye, 1984) as early as 1926 as a non-specific response of the body to a specific stress. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (Cooper, 2002) defines work stress as the totality of working conditions that lead to stress.

---

<sup>1</sup> Student, 3rd year, Faculty of Communication and International Relations, program: Psychology, Danubius University of Galati, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Blvd., 800654 Romania, Tel.: +40372361102; Fax: +40372361290, Corresponding author: cristina.stefanescu86@gmail.com.

In relation to the faculty, the student shows non-specific responses to the solicitations given by the faculty, specifically in the pandemic, when he had to adapt more to a new system, the online one. Stress also arose when the student had to return to the faculty benches, to get used to colleagues and teachers, wearing a mask and walking away. The fear of getting infected, as well as the barrier of communication given by the restrictions, also caused stress.

In the context of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital transformation of education has necessitated a rapid response, including from the European institutions.

Thus, the European Commission has developed a set of important resources for educational communities in all Member States. It is essential that they be promoted in the school communities in Romania, as they offer a guarantee of quality and are available free of charge:

- School Education Gateway is a platform with a complete set of online courses, teaching materials, tutorials and newsletters on educational topics, important resources for teachers who need support;
- eTwinning - an important resource platform through which European level teachers can communicate and co-create collaborative learning projects and resources;
- Learning Corner, a platform for children, with educational games and learning materials;
- SALTO-YOUTH, an online learning and communication platform for youth workers;
- Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), a virtual community for lifelong learning through technology;
- Erasmus + Virtual Exchange, a platform for online youth exchanges
- Online teaching in times of crisis, the online learning mode for educators, developed by the European Institute of Innovation Technology (EIT).
- Edu hack is a capacity building program for academics who want to learn how to produce digitized learning experiences by experimenting with innovative approaches and tools <https://eduhack.eu/course/>.

The digitalization of education provided the premises for the use of games for educational purposes, which can stimulate students' participation in the instructional-

educational process (gamification recommendation also included in the European report *Shaping Digital Education Policy*)

At us, at Dunărea de Jos University, the courses took place gradually, first on Zoom, or Google Classroom, and then to use Microsoft Teams as a rule. At Danubius we use the online system through Sakai, Big Blue Button, the university platform proving useful in online interactions, where colleagues from the centers could also participate.

From the perspective of a rigorous research, I will stop to study a group of students from Babeş-Bolyai University (Cotoranu et al, 2021) in Cluj. They discovered after a study applied online, through the Google Forms platform, a sample of convenience among students from different specializations at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, regardless of ethnicity, religion, sex, social category, in March – April 2021, an average level of anxiety of the respondents, a possible explanation for this result could be their adaptation to the situation generated by the Covid-19 pandemic, respectively to the exclusively online academic environment or the hope that the vaccine will solve the problem and they will be able to return in college in classical format. Following the interpretation of the results, it is observed that the Covid-19 pandemic has a negative psychological impact on the majority of students participating in the study, regardless of the specialization in which they are enrolled; However, it can be seen that students in the field of Conflict Studies, Advertising (3.36) and Public Sector Human Resource Management (3.30) have a slightly higher level of anxiety (3.42) compared to with students from other specializations (e.g. “Journalism / digital media” - 2.82 or “Letters” - 3.09) a total of 321 answers.

The results of the research also show that respondents face a number of problems during the pandemic, among which we mention: difficulty concentrating (29.6%), lack of motivation (20.9%), state of monotony / loneliness (11.8%), academic challenges regarding online courses (8.4%), as well as the increase in the volume of projects and topics during the semester (9.3%) and the increase in the consumption of unhealthy foods (6, 2%).

Here it is very important to control the eating behavior, to have a better routine of common daily activities but also to socialize in the pandemic, as the study shows and I was able to conclude.

Personally, I think that the pandemic has managed to bring good things, the method of online teaching being preferred by many in postgraduate courses and continuing

education courses. I myself have participated in many such events that I would not otherwise have been able to attend, due to the long journeys and lack of time.

It matters a lot how we respond cognitively to stress, how we manage to interpret reality so that it is to our benefit. I'd rather see the full side of the glass and enjoy online interactions than be afraid that I might get infected if I went to college physically.

Of course, other elements must be considered, objectively speaking, not all students have access to a laptop and sometimes internet connections can be poor and therefore the quality of a seminar or course may suffer. But I consider these things to be natural and patient, and perhaps with the better intervention of the officials, things could have been resolved in time.

However, we must be careful not to cultivate a toxic positivity, a thought that leads to a false path to the discovery of good things. It's like when a psychologist tells the patient, it doesn't matter if your wife left you, you'll find another one, it's full of women in this world. What evidence does he have to say that? In the same way, in a pandemic, we need to take care of our emotions and thoughts as students. Or there are phrases like: I don't want to read negative news, I just want to smile, to be all happy. Let's not forget that sadness is also part of life and has a functional character. You can't be happy when someone dear to you dies because of COVID19.

The antidote to toxic positivity is "tragic optimism," a phrase coined by existential-humanist psychologist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl (Frankl, 2009). Researchers studying "post-traumatic growth" have found that people can grow in many ways in difficult times - including having a greater appreciation of life and relationships, as well as increased compassion, altruism, purpose, and use of strengths. It is important that the traumatic event itself does not lead to growth (no one is grateful for COVID-19), but rather the way the event is processed, the changes in worldview that result from the event, and the search for of the meaning that people make during and after it.

## References

Cooper W.S. (2002). *Managing Workplace Stress*. NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Cotoranu, D.; Creța, C. & Moldovan, O. (2021). The psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students. *Transylvanian Journal of Administrative Sciences* 1 (48) / 2021, pp. 36–52. Babeș-Bolyai University.

Frankl, V (2009). *The man in search of the meaning of life*. Bucharest: Meteor Press.

Selye, H. (1984). *Science and life*. Bucharest: Ed. Politică.