



PROFILES OF ACTIVE INDIVIDUALS IN RELATION TO A SERIES OF WORKING CONDITIONS

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Abstract: *In this paper, we analyse profiles of the active population in relation to some new situations of working time overload and from the viewpoint of labour intensity: the relationship between certain socio-demographic characteristics, the experimentation of some new situations such as the ones described above and the behaviour in relation to employers and labour market, in general. All these types of situations that might occur on the job can be framed into the wider category of “working conditions” and represent, together with the factors with negative impact that can be grouped under the heading “working relationships”, the main factors generating stress on the job. The impact of these factors is heightened on one hand by the general socio-economic context and on the other hand by certain individual characteristics of the employees. The data show that a relatively significant share of the individuals included in the sample of our research experimented on the job stress generating situations, among which the most encountered one is work overload, either by compulsory overtime or by increasing the work intensity or sometimes because of both. On the other hand, the general economic context represents a cause for on the job stress, because of the increased pressure on the employer and employee.*

Keywords: *profiles, active population, job loss, working time, work overload*

Introduction

The following analysed social data were gathered within the research regarding discrimination in Romania, developed by the Association for Socio-Economic Development and Promotion CATALACTICA, within the SOPHRD/97/6.3/S/54973: “Support for Women Discriminated on the Labour Market” (December 2010 – November 2013) with financing from the Social European Fund 6.3 “Promoting Chances Equality on the Labour Market”.

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The quantitative research of the project was realised on a representative sample for population aged between 18 and 65 years, in the five development regions of interest for the project: Bucharest-Ilfov, North-East, South-East, South-West Oltenia and West. The projected and achieved volume of the sample was of 5000.

- *Sample volume*: 5000 working individuals aged between 18 and 65 years;
- *Representativeness*: the sample is representative for the non-institutionalised adult population from the five development regions, with a representativeness error of $\pm 1.64\%$, at a confidence level of 95%;
- *Field survey*: data were gathered in the year 2011;
- *Type of sample*: probabilistic, two-stages sample, with stratification in the first stage;
- *Stratification criteria*: *development regions* (Bucharest-Ilfov, North-East, South-East, South-West Oltenia and West) and the *type of locality*, according to the number of inhabitants (rural locality with less than 1500 inhabitants, rural locality with over 1500 inhabitants, towns with under 30 thousand inhabitants, towns with 30 to 100 thousand inhabitants, towns with 100-200 thousand inhabitants and large towns with more than 200 thousand inhabitants);
- *Sample structure*: After applying the stratification criteria and obtaining a proportional share with the one of the population aged between 18 and 65 years, for the region Bucharest-Ilfov was maintained the proportional repartition (800 questionnaires out of the 5000), and for the rest 4200 was used a disproportion coefficient of 70% for the urban area, and of 30% for the rural area. (The total number of localities included in the sample projected in this manner is of 91, from among which 44 in the urban area and 47 in the rural area – their selection is random, for each segment after applying the stratification criteria mentioned above and the disproportion coefficient);
- The total number of sampling points is of 295 and for each sampling point the average number of questionnaires was of 15 for the urban area and 25 for the rural area. The sampling points from the urban area are represented by voting sections (the lists used were the ones for the election of the President in 2009) and for the rural area the sampling point was the village. The designed sample contained also “reserve” sampling points (both for the urban area and for the rural area), extracted on the same stratification criteria as the actual sample;
- *Sampling*: probabilistic selection of the voting sections within the segments of the urban area. For the selection of the individuals, both urban and rural area, was used the systematic method with statistical step;
- *Validation*: the sample was validated based on the NIS and Eurostat data available for the year 2010;
- The questionnaires were applied at the residence of the subjects, in accordance with the methodology;
- By data processing was used a weighting variable for the return to the proportional, representative form of the sample’s structure, in accordance with the stratification criteria.

Profile of Active Individuals in Relation to the Working Situations and Conditions

In the paper, we analyse the profiles of active population in relation to the experimentation of some overload of the working time or from the viewpoint of labour intensity. More specifically, the questions we pose and intend to answer refer to the relationship between certain socio-demographic characteristics, the experimentation of some situations like the above described and behaviour in relation to employers and labour market, in general.

All these types of instances that might occur on the job and which could be framed in the wider category of “working conditions” represent, together with the negative impact factors that can be grouped in the category “working relationships”, the main factors generating stress on the job.

The impact of these factors is heightened, on one hand, by the general socio-economic context and, on the other hand, by certain individual characteristics of the employees. The strong imbalances of the relationship between the labour supply and demand, in some instances, such as the recent economic crisis, leads to amplifying the impact of stress generating factors on the job and to the emergence of new stress generating factors like jobs’ restructuring, changes in the contractual conditions or employee layoffs. In this context, we intend to analyse the correlation between forms of labour market exit and the frequency of experimenting certain instances on the job.

Regarding the relationship between labour conditions and relations on one hand, and the individual characteristics of the employees on the other hand, we intend to analyse if the incidents of working time or tasks overload is different for those with various educational backgrounds of different gender or dissimilar family budgets.

Active population in the sample – as expected, the structure of the employed individuals’ sample, according to initial occupation, the highest share is the one of employees with average or low (under-average) skills, a relatively important share (10% out of total employed individuals) being represented by those involved in day-labour or in labour with seasonal character.

Inactive population in the sample– includes pensioners, unemployed, the jobless and the homemakers, as well as those pursuing a certain form of education at the time of data gathering (students). Pensioners represent over half of the total in this category, while one third of the inactive population registers homemakers.

Table 1. Basic occupations in the sample

	N	%
Pensioners	937	51%
Unemployed	200	11%
Inactive, homemakers	599	33%
Pupils, students	91	5%
Total:	1827	100%

Out of the inactive individuals, currently, almost one third have already retired from the activity for less than two years. Over one third of those retired in the last two years were included into the category skilled workers, craftsmen, mechanics, drivers and the lowest share is the one of the categories: employers, managers, free-lancers, consultants, respectively military, police officers, firemen, aviation and customs' officer.

Regarding the occupational path of those retired from activity, there are significant differences depending on the position previously held. From those retired in less than two years, the current pensioners are to a share of 75% from the category with medium or high skills. Between the current unemployed, the most important share is held by skilled workers, followed by workers in services', trade and tourism, respectively unskilled workers in non-agricultural sectors. If aggregated, these three categories represent 70% out of those who declared to be unemployed at the time of data gathering.

Those who at the time of data gathering state to be jobless represent, in a share of over 50%, skilled or unskilled workers. Together with those who worked in trade/tourism, these two categories accumulate three-quarters from the total of the jobless ones who are not considered as unemployed. The share of the jobless is almost double compared with the one of the unemployed in the case of unskilled workers which shows the increased social vulnerability of these categories of low skilled workers.

Three quarters of the current students have worked in seasonal jobs or in fields with high personnel fluctuation and based on short-term contracts, such as trade, tourism or public catering services (pubs, restaurants). Considering that the data were collected in April and May 2011, we can assume that part of these individuals might have found employment again, as summer was approaching, in the seasonal jobs.

In the context of the heightened severe economic crisis during 2010, it is interesting to analyse to what extent exiting the labour market represented an effect operationalised in collective or individual layoffs.

How the Loss of the Last Job has occurred.

For almost two thirds of unemployed individuals, exiting the labour market occurred by retirement (48%) or by activity end based on the agreement of the parties (15%), while almost one third declare to be laid off and a tenth to have submitted their resignation and 4% to have been the subject of firing.

One fifth of those who have been individually fired consider that it occurred for subjective reasons, due to the existence of some faulty working relationships, while over three quarters consider that the firing grounds were objective.

The very significant share of those laid off (25% out of the total individuals exiting the labour market for the last two years) provides a measure regarding the importance of the economic crisis impact on the labour market. The reasons for which individuals resigned are diverse, but among these, the most important seems pertaining to dissatisfaction regarding the level of payment for their work and the working conditions.

In the context of the economic crisis and of its effects on increasing the precariousness of job supply, it seems somewhat surprising to have a relatively significant share of individuals resigning for reasons as the above-mentioned ones, under the conditions in which just 5% from them declare to have opted for this action because they have identified a better job. The fact that almost half of those who resigned justify their option based on the low wage level, respectively on the hard-working conditions illustrates that the quantitative aspect of the job supply precariousness is double by their qualitative precariousness, as well.

Table 2. Main reasons for resignation

	N	%
I didn't like what I was doing	6	3%
No promotion opportunities	2	1%
Much too small salary	51	28%
Hard/inadequate working conditions	29	16%
I didn't get along with the boss/colleagues	8	4%
I have found a better job	9	5%
I was asked/forced to	5	3%
Others	72	40%
Total:	180	100%

From another viewpoint, the phenomena associated to the economic crisis, and the layoffs and salary cuts trigger a relatively high rate of conflicts brought by employees to court. At the time of the data gathering (2011), 13.8% from the total respondents, either employed or unemployed/inactive for less than two years, state that the organisations they work or have worked for were individually or collectively sued by employees or by the trade unions.

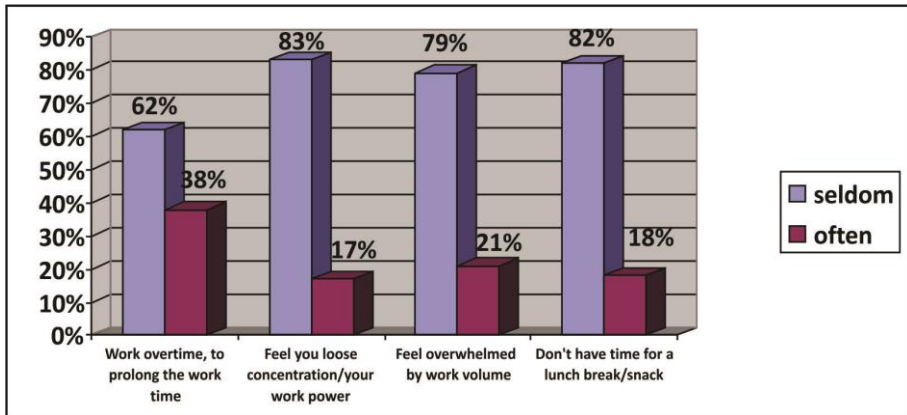
It would be expected to have currently a higher weight of conflicts employer-employee in court, considering the layoffs from the public field mentioned above.

Profiles of Employees Experimenting Overload Instances of the Working Volume/Time

More than one third (38%) of the interviewed individuals state that they have experimented instances of working overtime often and very often, one fifth from the respondents declaring that they have felt frequently overwhelmed by the working volume. In order to simplify the analysis, the answers were re-coded and thus resulting a binary-type variable with the variants: very seldom/never + seldom, respectively often + very often.

Less than one fifth of the respondents experimented often and very often, the instance when they did not have time to take their snack/lunch at the job and only 17% stated that it happened frequently to lose work power and concentration on the job.

Figure 1. The frequency of the four instances' emergence in the case of jobless persons, who became inactive for less than two years



It is interesting to notice that for each of these issues experimented on the job, the recorded values for individuals inactive for less than two years are very close to the ones registered for individuals who declare themselves as employed at the time of data gathering. Moreover, the outcomes are close to those recorded for the same categories of answers in a research performed before, in the year 2010¹ (the differences are of maximum one percent, for each of the categories). Thus, there seems to be a certain time consistency regarding the frequency at which such instances emerge, which seem to be related to certain structural aspects of the labour market and not accidental phenomena. The frequent emergence order for the four instances is the same in the case of former and current employees. Both for the former employees and the current ones, overtime and extended working hours are situations that emerge with a relatively high frequency on the job. Also, less than one fifth of the former/current employees have experimented often and very often the situation of not having time even for just a snack during the working day.

The analysis of the incidence of these negative conditions on categories of individuals laid-off or resigning ones, and pensioners or individuals resigning based on parties' agreement, reveal sensibly different profiles for the two categories.

¹ The previous research (2010) was achieved by the same team of researchers. See for results: Tomescu C., Căce S., (coord). „Studiu asupra fenomenului de mobbing și a altor forme de discriminare la locul de muncă în România” [Study about the mobbing phenomenon and other discrimination forms on the job in Romania, Romanian language], Expert Printing House, 2010: 80

The relationship between the way in which the retirement from activity occurred and the frequency of volume or working time overload

The correlations presented in this article are valid for the respondents who are pensioners, unemployed, inactive plus homemaker, pupil plus student and are inactive for less than 2 years, the exit from activity occurring either by dismissal, resignation, layoff, or by labour contract end based on parties' agreement or retirement.

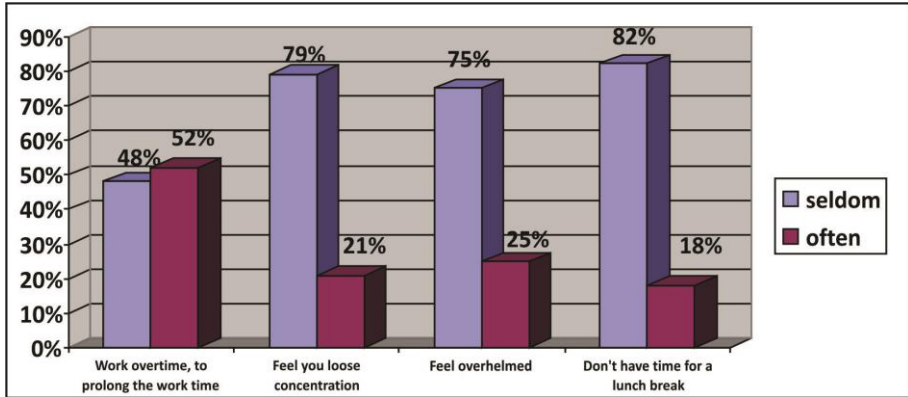
Resignation, dismissal and layoff are exceptional situations and have a higher degree of unpredictability in relationship to labour contract end, based on the agreement of the parties or by retirement.

The four instances experimented by the respondents described above depending on which the profiles of inactive individuals will be built, are as following: the obligation of working overtime, the situation of losing the concentration/work power capacity on the job, the instance of feeling overwhelmed by the working volume, and the situation of not having enough time for lunch of even just a snack on the job.

The activity ending by firing and the link to the frequency of instances of on the job overload.

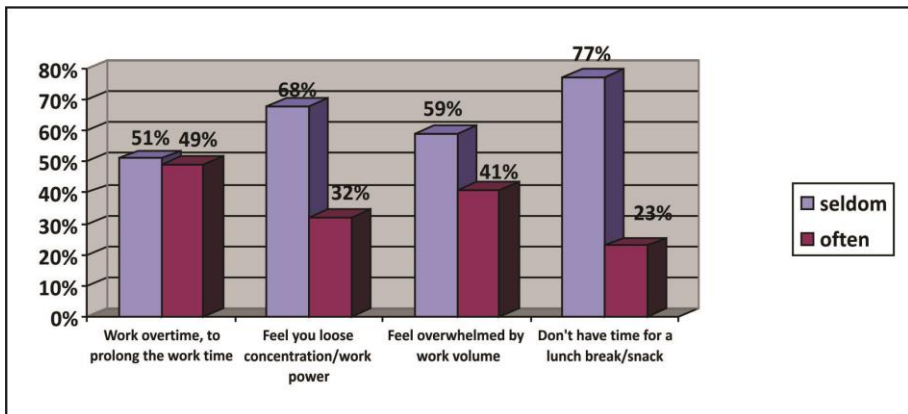
Those who left by individual firing seem to have experimented to a higher extent the instance of having worked overtime, as well as the one of feeling overwhelmed by the working volume. It is interesting to notice that the fact that those individually fired have found time to a higher extent, against all the other categories analysed in this chapter, for lunch (just 3% of them declare that they frequently didn't have time for eating during the working time on the job!). Even though there aren't enough data for building a profile for the ones dismissed from their positions based on certain behavioural patterns, the number of cases is rather small, thus the hypothesis of a reverse correlation might be logically inferred between the allocated time to the job tasks and the probability of being dismissed in the context of an increased necessity of rendering efficient the activity during time of crisis.

Figure 2. The relationship between activity ending by firing and the frequency of on the job overload



In the case of those who resigned from their last job, all mentioned instances appear with a significantly higher frequency against the values for the entire sample of those who terminated their activity for more than two years. Those who resign feel to a higher extent, against all other categories, overwhelmed by the working volume and represent the category stating to the highest extent the frequent loss of the work power and concentration on the job. The single situation in which a somewhat higher frequency emerges for another category is the one of those who left by individual firing and it is related to overtime.

Figure 3. The relationship between activity ending based on dismissal and the frequency of on the job overload:



Regarding all other categories that exited from activity for less than two years, it is noticed that the lowest frequency of all types of instances of the job overload is

represented for the category of those who left by retirement, as well as the low frequency in all considered instances for all these categories in relationship with the first two analysed above (dismissed, respectively resigning individuals).

For the variable ‘overwhelmed by the work volume’ significant statistical differences are noticed between the categories: laid-off, end by parties’ agreement, respectively, by retirement.

At the same time, significant differences from the statistical viewpoint exist for the three groups mentioned above also regarding the variable “not having time for lunch break”.

Figure 4. The relationship between the form of ending activity (layoff, parties’ agreement, retirement) and the frequency of the situation of feeling overwhelmed by the working volume:

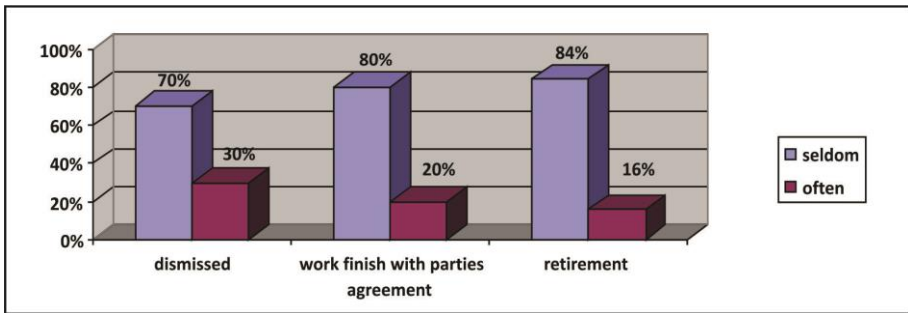
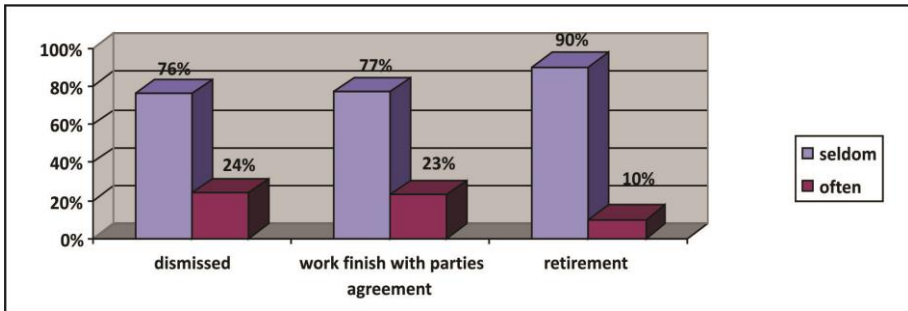


Figure 5. The relationship between the forms of ending activity (layoff, parties’ agreement, retirement) and the frequency of the instance of not having time for lunch break:



Hence, there is a statistically significant link between the way of ending the activity and the frequency of instances as those mentioned above. Those who were dismissed or resigned, as well as those laid off are those who were most often subjected to working overtime, and to having to fulfil a task volume which was felt as huge and leading to no

time for lunch break during a working day, and they were therefore most often those who felt that they lose their concentration and work power.

At the opposite pole, those who exited active life are placed, by going into retirement. Doubtless, one of the factors that determine these differences pertains to the different structure of the sample of those exiting by retirement that as seen previously contains in a share of 75% individuals with average or high-skills, and to very low shares former employees with low-skills or unskilled workers. It is to be assumed, if we speculate, that the respective individuals had superior positions in the hierarchy of power relationships at the job and availed themselves of levers more important in relationship to less skilled individuals and lesser length of service for defending themselves against abuse, such as work overload.

Association with various socio-demographic variables of the emerging frequency of the mentioned above situations of overloading the working time/volume:

Overtime

- *Gender association* is significant from the statistical viewpoint: those stating that they have worked overtime often/very often are rather more men (56%), while women say to a less share that they have worked overtime often or very often (44%).
- *The association with the educational level* is not a significant one from the statistical perspective. Irrespective of the educational level, the weights of pertaining to the two sub-groups do not differ significantly (the repartition in the two sub-groups is approximately identical for all levels of education).
- *The association with the marital status* is significant from the statistical viewpoint. In the frequent instance of working overtime are preponderantly individuals living in common-law relationships (over half of the category). This situation is less often encountered in the case of widowers and of married couples (only 37% from them declare that they work frequently overtime).
- *The association with the family budget* is also a significant one from the statistical viewpoint. Overtime is delivered to the largest extent by those who have a family budget not exceeding 700 lei and by those whose family budget exceeds 4000 lei. The smaller share of the working overtime individuals is placed on the income per family interval between 700 and 4000 lei, while the highest share is recorded by those with incomes over 8000 lei – almost three quarters from them declare to work overtime at their job often and very often.

How often is it occurred to you that you are losing work power/concentration?

- *Gender association* is not statistically significant: men and women declare to equal extent that they felt loss of work power/concentration.

- *The association with the educational level* is also statistically insignificant: irrespective of the educational level, the weights of pertaining to one of the two sub-groups do not differ significantly (the distribution into the two sub-groups is approximately identical for all educational levels);
- *The association with the family budget* is also statistically significant and shows a very similar pattern to the association with the frequency of working overtime, with the amendment that both shares and amplitude of the interval where these instances are sensibly lower. In the situation of losing work power and concentration often and very often are found to a share of 23% those with family budgets of fewer than 700 lei, respectively 23% of those with family budgets between 4000 and 5000 lei, while one third of those with a family budget exceeding 8000 Lei are found in this instance. Under one fifth of those with family budgets between 1000 and 4000 lei declare that they experiment frequently such instances at the workplace.

How often did you feel overwhelmed by the work volume?

- *The association with the family budget* is the only one with statistical significance. The distribution of answers follows a pattern comparable with the one recorded in the case of the other variables analysed in this under-chapter, respectively higher frequency for the margins of the income interval and lower frequency for the average values. Those experimenting, to a larger extent, the frequent situation of feeling overwhelmed by the work volume are those with household incomes of less than 1000 lei, respectively those with incomes above 4000 lei and the highest percentage is recorded in the case of those with incomes of over 8000 lei.

How often did you miss lunch break/having a snack at the workplace?

In the case of this variable, the only statistically significant association emerges linked to the family budget. Those from families with incomes sensibly above the average experiment to a larger extent the situation of not taking lunch breaks during the working day. It is interesting to notice that, if for the other instances emerging at the workplace, the higher frequency was registered in the case of those with incomes sensibly under the average, and in the case of those with the highest incomes, in the case of this last analysed variable the pattern of answers' distribution changes significantly. In other words, those with precarious resources work more than the majority, to an extent comparable to the one of those with high incomes, and they feel to equal extent as the latter the pressure of work overload at the workplace, however, they still find time to take a snack, as compared with the ones with incomes above average who manage to take a snack to a less extent.

Conclusions

A relatively important share of the respondents experiment or have experimented at the workplace stress generating instances, among which the most often encountered one is the one of work volume overload, either because of the obligation of work overtime or because of increased work intensity or simultaneously both instances. It is remarkable

that two categories of individuals at the extremes of the family budget interval are faced to a larger extent, with situations as the one described above.

If, referring to those with a family budget of under 700 lei, most of these individuals find themselves in power relationships with low negotiation power and are forced to accept instances such as the ones presented above, for most of those at the other extreme of the incomes' interval, the higher work volume is expected to have correlations with the increased complexity and responsibility degree corresponding to their job tasks.

On the other hand, by analysing the data collected during the field research, it results that the impact of the crisis faced by the economy and society for the last three years is significant also regarding the configuration of some profiles of the active population in relationship with the experimentation of some overload instances of the working time and/or from the viewpoint of work intensity. At the same time, the general context triggered by the economic crisis represents a reason in itself for stress on the job, because of the increased pressure on the employer who transfers this pressure also at the level of the employee.

Next to the direct effects of the crisis on the labour market, an operationalised effect based on indicators such as the percentage of 25% of the respondents who declare to have exited the labour market during the last two years by collective layoffs increases the pressure on those continuing to be active on the labour market.

Moreover, even under the conditions of the severe precariousness of the job supply, of hard working conditions, the perception of the imbalances regarding the relationship between the work volume and difficult working conditions on one hand, and the level at which this work is paid, on the other hand, is an important enough motivation for one tenth of those exiting the labour market for the last two years to opt for resignation (a very hazardous option, in the mentioned context and under the conditions in which just 5% from these resigning individuals motivate their action by finding a better workplace).

Just the same, both those who left by resigning from the last workplace and those who were laid off or fired declare, to a larger extent, that they have frequently experimented instances such as task and overtime overload, against those who exited the labour market without any hindrances, either by retirement or based on parties' agreement. However, at least regarding the pensioners' category, in the comparative analysis with the first group, other factors should be considered such the more advanced age and experience (length of service) at the workplace, which provide to those close to pensioning a superior statute and, by correlation, better working and contractual conditions.

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