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MANAGING EMOTIONS FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COMPARISON

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to give a better understanding to the managers about emotions and how to use them to improve the company effectiveness. The thesis is: the good management of emotions could improve the company internal environment. These analyses are enriched by outcomes of international study about the perceptions of business students in Bulgaria, Romania and Uzbekistan regarding some of their emotions that might influence their decision to start a business. The research on the intentions of these students is helpful in shaping better strategies meant to promote a safe working environment and additional corporative benefits. The literature review shows that emotions in organizations are not any different, only the context in which they are placed is different. When thinking of an organizational background, most people put an emphasis on rationality and logical thinking. The research methodology has two main parts: 1/ Literature review on scientific publications; 2/ Analyses on the findings of a survey on students from Bulgaria, Romania and Uzbekistan about their intentions to start family businesses, including questions about their emotions. The students have been approached in two periods – 2021/2022 and 2023/2024. The literature review and the student responds confirmed the thesis of this article that the good management of emotions could improve the company internal environment, which is also the main contribution of this manuscript.

Keywords: emotions management, family business, student intentions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Fisher (2019) appreciates the importance of encouraging positive emotions at work (such as happiness, pride, interest, compassion, gratitude and other emotions that are more discreet than some of the negative emotions like anger). If the management of an organization understands both the positive and negative implications of emotions among their employees

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while they work and interact with their colleagues, managers or subordinates, better outcomes can occur.

There are many research papers in recent years that show that happiness at work can contribute to higher profits and higher productivity in general for a company (Bataineh, 2019; Hsieh, 2010) and this reason only should determine managers to create and implement strategies and human resource (HR) policies meant to raise the happiness level of their employees.

If the employees are happy, they can work better, maintain their concentration for longer periods of time, communicate better with their colleagues, and are more driven and this can also be contagious. Happiness at work can come from multiple sources: personal or professional aspects of their lives. What is important is to make people confident enough to share with others at least a part of their feelings. Happiness can transfer to other people too, while shared sadness or grief can become less of a burden for the employees feeling these emotions and thus making them more focused on their tasks.

Managing emotions of the employees is among the important factors for the business success of every company. Therefore, this paper gives a better understanding to the corporative managers about emotions and how to use them to improve the company profits. The thesis is: the good management of emotions could improve the company internal environment. On the base of this thesis, it is possible to create different hypotheses:

H1: Literature provides basic theory about managing emotions.

H2: Students from Bulgaria, Romania and Uzbekistan have emotions, which could influence their intentions to start firms.

The literature review discusses Hypotheses 1.

The Hypotheses 2 is analysed on the base of an international study about the perceptions of business students in Bulgaria, Romania and Uzbekistan regarding some of their emotions that might influence their decision to start a business.

The literature review and the student responds confirmed the thesis of this article that the good management of emotions could improve the company internal environment, which is also the main contribution of this manuscript.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW - EMOTIONS AS AN ELEMENT OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

Emotions in organizations might seem to some people as a contradiction because many consider that profitability, productivity and efficiency of businesses have nothing to do with emotions. Research in the last years shows that emotional intelligence is an important indicator of success and empowering people to show their positive emotions and help them to cope in difficult times with the negative ones is paramount. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2025), emotion is “a conscious mental reaction … subjectively experienced as strong feeling usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioural changes in the body”. Emotions in organizations are not any different, only the context in which they are placed is different. When thinking of an organizational background, most people put an emphasis on rationality and logical thinking. As Armstrong (2004) states, an “organization is an emotional place” because it cannot exist without people and people have emotions which are and should be expressed in a healthy and productive way.

In order to better understand the role of emotions in organizations, it is important to understand their role in general, for us, the relationships we have and the way we make decisions that also influence other facets of our lives. Tyng et al. (2017) highlight the impact that emotions have on “perception, attention, learning, memory, reasoning, and problem solving”. According to Paul Eckman Group (2025), “emotions change the way we see the

world". Taking into account the effect that emotions have on so many aspects, it is important to study them in an organizational context where the productivity of the employees might be affected by their emotions.

Paul Ekman (2025) identified six basic emotions which are shared by all of us: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise and disgust. And when an employee feels these emotions at work, it can interfere with his or her efficiency and in the end, it might affect the productivity of other coworkers too through a process of emotional contagion. This is one of the reasons managers in organizations should acknowledge and validate the emotions felt by the employees, encourage them to express themselves in a safe way and communicate their needs and wants.

Another concept that is frequently debated in relation to emotions refers to emotional intelligence (EI) which indicates the capacity of an individual (or organization if the term is extended and seen in a broad way) to understand his or her emotions, but also the ones of the other people and manage them in a healthy and secure way - according to Dong et al. (2022), EI "is an important psychological factor that affects the growth and development of organizations". Humans have emotions and they should learn how to manage them in order to grow as individuals, and the same perspective can be applied to organizations too. Ruskova et al. (2025) give their attention to the co-management as a tool for satisfying the interests of the different participants and reach sustainability in the organization.

Some people can experience intense emotions during some events in their lives and this might interfere with work. Smart organisations which also have EI offer support to their employees during difficult times because they are not machines and can make mistakes if their mind is not focused on work. The employees should not be afraid to talk and organizations should create an organizational culture in which people feel comfortable expressing themselves without fearing that they will lose their job or have their salaries cut. Mental health is as important as physical health.

When people do not regulate their emotions well, this interferes with the climate in the office, affecting other employees too. For example, if an employee is always angry, the other colleagues reduce communication with him or her and this can lead to efficiency problems in the organization. The sadness felt by people can also affect the quality of their work. The solution is to help these employees by offering them support, such as anger management training or counselling. Not all organizations have the financial power to offer these services to their employees, but creating a climate where the employees can freely communicate and where they feel validated, heard and seen is definitely a sign of emotionally intelligent organizations.

Women empowerment is a result of the equity between women and men at work. A business where both men and women are empowered and treated equally leads to the fact that the employees feel happier and more satisfied, and they feel they have a meaningful job. These aspects are important contributing to higher productivity and efficiency.

The gender equity is rather important, because the managers cannot be fair to men and women without offering them equal chances. This equity leads to emotional stability of the women and men at work, which is rather important for the managers to improve the corporate success and increase the financial profits.

When integrated into everyday routines, even relatively small initiatives can shape motivation, strengthen collegial ties, and build self-confidence. The greater difficulty often lies not in the design of such measures but in embedding them within the organisational fabric so they withstand changes in leadership and fluctuations in resources. Placed alongside experiences from other national contexts, these five initiatives reveal patterns that are at times broadly shared and at other times distinctly local. Linking such observations with indicators, ranging from personal goal commitment to perceived peer support and experiences of

loneliness, offers a more nuanced perspective on the ways in which internal CSR takes effect. Establishing these connections between policy intentions, concrete practices, and observed outcomes forms a necessary step toward shifting CSR from aspirational rhetoric to durable organisational change.

If positive emotions like happiness are having a positive impact on the productivity and profits of an organization, that does not mean that a company should strive for keeping their employees more at work while providing some services to them to maintain their satisfaction. Even if in the short term, a not-so-balanced relationship between work and personal life might not be dangerous, in the long term this can lead to burnout and chronic stress and these are bigger problems for the company. Such a person might not work well and might need medical leave and in the end, these cost the company more.

Understanding student well-being and performance requires examining multiple psychological and social dimensions, including goal orientation, perceived social support, loneliness, and self-perceived competence. These constructs are particularly important in educational contexts, where they influence academic success, mental health, and long-term development. Social support from peers and friends has been shown to buffer stress, enhance resilience, and improve academic engagement (Zhang & Qian, 2024). Students who feel supported are more likely to cope effectively with academic pressures and maintain positive mental health. Gender differences are evident in this domain. Female students typically report higher levels of perceived social support and are more likely to seek emotional support during difficult times (Rueger et al., 2010). In contrast, male students may rely less on social networks for emotional support, which can affect their coping strategies and overall well-being.

Loneliness is another significant concern in student populations, particularly during transitional periods such as entering university. It is associated with a range of negative outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and decreased academic performance (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006). Studies consistently show gender differences in experiences of loneliness. Female students often report higher levels of loneliness, possibly due to greater emotional sensitivity and relational expectations (Khan et al., 2025). However, male students may be less likely to express or report loneliness due to social norms surrounding emotional expression, potentially masking its true prevalence.

3. METHODOLOGY DESIGN AND FINDINGS

The methodology in this article has been designed to provide a practical research. The research adopts a comparative and longitudinal approach, enabling the analysis of differences across time periods, countries, and gender groups. The target group is the student community from three universities and more exactly - the perceptions regarding feelings of loneliness and connectedness among business students in Bulgaria, Romania and Uzbekistan. Here are the analyzed students' responses from three universities. The survey has been done in 2021/2022 and again in 2023/2024 with a questionnaire, designed under the international academic network INTERGEN. All questions were translated into the official language of the countries. The respondents were approached by face-to-face meetings, by e-mail or by Messenger (Deneva at al., 2025).

The main objective of this study was to examine students' perceptions of goal orientation, perceived social support, loneliness, and self-perceived competence within the context of higher education. Specifically, the research aimed to analyse how students from Bulgaria, Romania, and Uzbekistan perceive these dimensions and how these perceptions differ across two time periods (2021/2022 and 2023/2024).

Statement 18. My priority is to achieve important goals.

Statement 19. I feel support from my friends when I am in troubles.

Statement 20. Most of the time I feel lonely.

Statement 21. I consider that I do my duties in an excellent way.

During the first period (2021/2022), 705 respondents from Bulgaria, Romania and Uzbekistan shared their answers:

-200 from the University of Ruse "Angel Kanchev", where 220 are females and 69 are males.

-200 from the University of Craiova, where 154 are females and 46 are males.

-216 from the Management Development Institute of Singapore in Tashkent, where 65 are females and 151 are males.

During the second period (2023/2024), 1036 respondents from Bulgaria, Romania and Uzbekistan shared their answers with us:

-568 from the University of Ruse "Angel Kanchev", where 441 are females and 127 are males.

-201 from the University of Craiova, where 150 are females and 51 are males.

-267 from the Management Development Institute of Singapore in Tashkent, where 125 are females and 142 are males.

In addition, the study seeks to identify and compare potential differences between male and female students in relation to the selected constructs.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following tables provide students' responds.

Table 1. Responds to Statement 18 "My priority is to achieve important goals".

Statement 18	***1-No***	***2-Rather No***	***3-N/A***	**4-Rather Yes**	**5-Yes**
Bulgaria 2023/2024	1.4%	1.1%	9.0%	28.9%	59,7%
Bulgaria 2021/2022	0.0%	3.1%	3.8%	34.9%	58.1%
Romania 2023/2024	1.5%	2.5%	4.5%	25.4%	66.2%
Romania 2021/2022	0.5%	0.5%	4.0%	31.0%	64.0%
Uzbekistan 2023/2021	2.2%	2.6%	7.1%	15.4%	72.7%
Uzbekistan 2021/2023	0.9%	1.9%	2.8%	17.1%	77.3%

Source: Authors' own research.

According to the responses to Statement 18 (Table 1) most of the respondents look to achieve important goals in their life, although there is a decrease in their positivism in all three universities in the second period (2023/2024), compared to the responses in the first period (2021/2022).

Table 2. Responds to Statement 19 "I feel support from my friends when I am in troubles"

Statement 19	***1-No***	***2-Rather No***	***3-N/A***	**4-Rather Yes**	**5-Yes**
Bulgaria 2023/2024	1.9%	1.9%	11.6%	26.8%	57,7%
Bulgaria 2021/2022	1.0%	2.1%	6.2%	42.6%	48.1%
Romania 2023/2024	15.4%	15.4%	17.9%	23.9%	27.4%
Romania 2021/2022	4.5%	15.0%	11.0%	33.5%	36.0%
Uzbekistan 2023/2021	12.7%	10.1%	13.9%	27.0%	36.3%
Uzbekistan 2021/2023	12.5%	11.6%	10.6%	27.8%	37.5%

Source: Authors' own research.

According to the responses to Statement 19 (in Table 2) most of the respondents feel support from their friends in times of troubles. The Uzbek and Bulgarian respondents keep their answers without big differences in both periods, while the Romanian students have a significant reduction of their positive answers from 69.5% in the first period to 51.3% in the second period.

Table 3. Responds to Statement 20 "Most of the time I feel lonely".

Statement 20	***1-No***	***2-Rather No***	***3-N/A***	**4-Rather Yes**	**5-Yes**
Bulgaria 2023/2024	54.0%	18.8%	15.7%	5.8%	5.6%
Bulgaria 2021/2022	50.5%	29.1%	9.3%	4.8%	6.2%
Romania 2023/2024	47.8%	22.4%	8.0%	8.0%	13.9%
Romania 2021/2022	59.0%	24.5%	4.5%	7.5%	4.5%
Uzbekistan 2023/2021	32.2%	24.7%	13.5%	18.0%	11.6%
Uzbekistan 2021/2023	39.4%	25.9%	11.1%	11.6%	12.0%

Source: Authors' own research.

According to the responses to Statement 20 (in Table 3) most of the respondents don't feel lonely. All respondents indicate less loneliness in the second period, compared to the first period. Perhaps the COVID-19 restrictions have influenced this trend.

Table 4. Responds to Statement 21 "I consider that I do my duties in an excellent way".

Statement 21	***1-No***	***2-Rather No***	***3-N/A***	**4-Rather Yes**	**5-Yes**
Bulgaria 2023/2024	1.2%	1.9%	11.8%	37.3%	47.7%
Bulgaria 2021/2022	1.4%	1.4%	6.6%	50.9%	39.8%
Romania 2023/2024	2.5%	3.5%	15.4%	36.3%	42.3%
Romania 2021/2022	1.5%	7.0%	15.5%	46.0%	30.0%
Uzbekistan 2023/2021	4.5%	12.4%	14.2%	43.4%	25.5%
Uzbekistan 2021/2023	6.5%	10.6%	17.6%	40.3%	25.0%

Source: Authors' own research.

According to the responses to Statement 21 (in Table 4) most of the respondents consider that they do their duties in an excellent way. This is quite positive self-confidence, which is important for the success in their personal life and career development.

A comparative assessment of male and female students provides important insight into how key psychological and social factors are experienced across genders in higher education. The four selected statements (covering goal orientation, perceived social support, loneliness, and self-perceived competence) represent essential dimensions of student well-being and academic functioning. Previous research suggests that male and female students may differ in their levels of social connectedness, emotional expression, and self-evaluation, which can influence both their academic performance and overall experience. Therefore, analysing gender-based differences in responses to these statements enables a deeper understanding of potential disparities and supports the development of more targeted educational and support strategies.

Table 5. Comparative answers from male and female students

Male	Indicator	Female
4.62	My priority is to achieve important goals	4.54
3.87	I feel support from my friends when I am in troubles*	4.06
2.09	Most of the time I feel lonely*	1.89
3.84	I consider that I do my duties in an excellent way*	4.09

*p values smaller than 0.05

According to results presented in Table 5, several notable gender differences can be observed across the four analysed statements. Both male (M = 4.62) and female students (M = 4.54) report high levels of goal orientation, indicating that achieving important goals is a strong priority regardless of gender, with only a slight advantage among male students. More pronounced differences appear in the domain of social support, where female students (M = 4.06) report higher perceived support from friends compared to male students (M = 3.87). This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that female students tend to rely more on social networks and are more likely to perceive and seek emotional support. Regarding loneliness, male students report higher levels (M = 2.09) compared to female students (M = 1.89), indicating a greater tendency toward feelings of social isolation. This may reflect differences in emotional expression or lower utilization of social support among male students. Finally, in terms of self-perceived competence, female students (M = 4.09) rate themselves higher than male students (M = 3.84), suggesting greater confidence in fulfilling their duties effectively. This result may point to stronger self-regulation and responsibility among female students in academic contexts. Overall, while goal orientation appears relatively similar across genders, female students demonstrate stronger social connectedness and self-perceived performance, whereas male students report slightly higher levels of loneliness. These differences highlight the importance of considering gender-sensitive approaches in supporting student well-being and academic success. However, the obtained results should be interpreted with caution, given the significant imbalance in the sample structure, where female respondents considerably outnumbered male participants. This disproportion may have influenced the overall findings and potentially limited the comparability between gender groups. Therefore, any conclusions regarding gender differences should be viewed as indicative rather than definitive.

4.1. Practical implications

Managers should create an organizational culture that appreciates the expression of emotions as something valuable for the company, to the benefit of the employees and also of the business. Research shows that there is a positive correlation between positive emotions like happiness and productivity at work. So, these emotions should be encouraged more by creating an environment where people feel that their emotional needs are met too. Negative emotions like anger or sadness should not be disregarded either, because they can negatively influence the work of the employees if they are not managed healthily by counselling or other form of therapy. Organizations have to adjust their human resources policies to provide their employees with the opportunities and the framework to express their emotions in a creative and positive way, enhancing the well-being of the employees and also the results of the company.

The responses from the INTERGEN survey in Bulgaria, Romania and Uzbekistan confirm Hypothesis 2. They reveal the potential of the feelings of belonging and connectedness for the future entrepreneurs. Education of business students is of utmost importance in shaping entrepreneurs that encourage the expression of emotions and vulnerability as a strength not a weakness. While neither university claimed that these measures constituted a complete transformation, both saw gradual but steady shifts in campus climate.

5. CONCLUSION

The practical implications for managing emotions in the organizations consist of the following:

First. The organizational culture should include the expression of emotions as a priority because the employees are humans and not machines, so they have feelings, sometimes they are happy, sometimes they are sad or angry and frustrated and all of these impact them in their work even if they do their best to control and hide what they are feeling;

Second. Having a management style that empowers people and encourages them to express themselves and ask for help when they need it;

Third. Having teambuilding events to strengthen the bond between the co-workers and thus, make them more willing to help each other at work;

Fourth. Developing volunteering projects in which the employees can show emotions like compassion or gratitude and help those experiencing sadness or grief in their lives by offering them the opportunity to engage in these activities as volunteers.

Fifth. Offering counselling or targeted training for people overcoming difficulties in managing emotions like anger, frustration, sadness, and grief;

Sixth. Providing services or other benefits during working hours that make people happier. It does not have to be something big or costly: massage sessions a day a week for the employees, offering healthy snacks and drinks, the possibility to work remotely on some days and thus grant them more flexibility and help with the balance between work and personal life.

These implications of encouraging people to express their emotions at work are related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) oriented to the organization's own employees, so to an internal dimension of CSR. Companies preoccupied with the well-being of their employees are more attractive to candidates who might apply for a job (Men & Robinson, 2018; Hardaker & Fill, 2005). The entire HR policy should be oriented in such a way and the organizational culture should be a strong one, putting people in the centre, as being the most important asset of a company.

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